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(c. 1200 to 1800 CE)

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ABDUL MOMIN CHOWDHURY
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to the
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and to
Millions of Freedom Fighter Martyrs
and the
Millions Who Suffered the Brutalities
of the Occupied Forces
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Creating the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Community

Some time in the last decade of the 16th century, perhaps a few years later, a great gathering of vaiṣṇavas took place in the town of Kheturi, a small village on the Padma River about twelve miles from what is now the city of Rajshahi in Bangladesh. According to hagiographer Narahari Cakravartī, the convener of this gathering was a soon-to-be-famous devotee named Narottamadās, who had resettled in Bengal, along with his two companions Śyāmānanda and Śrīnīvāśācārya, after long years in Vṛndāvana. They had gone there to study with the Gosvāmī scholars who had been deputed by the godman Kṛṣṇa Caitanya to reclaim Vṛndāvan’s sacred geography and compose a new theology fitting of his innovative style of devotion. Resettled in family estates in Kheturi, Narottamadās was celebrating the formal installation of five images of Kṛṣṇa: Vallabhikānta, Brajmoḥan, Rādhākānta, Rādhāraṇa, and Govinda in the company of Rādhā, and one solitary image of Gaurāṅga, the Golden-Limbed One, Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. The event proved to be a crystallizing moment for the tradition known today as gauḍīya vaiṣṇava, for it was during this month-long festival that Caitanya devotees from all over Bengal and Orissa came together for the first time as a group since Caitanya’s passing, some three quarters of a century earlier.

For most of the last two decades of Mahāprabhu Caitanya’s life, devotees from Nadiyā and other parts of Bengal would make the annual pilgrimage to Nilācal or Puri to spend a month with Caitanya and his companions during the rathayātra or Car Festival of Jagannāth. Between the time of the last pilgrimage to Puri and the time of the Kheturi festival, the devotees of Caitanya had naturally disaggregated, for they had lost their impetus to
collective pilgrimage with his passing, but also because the times were unsettled. With the collapse of the stable Husain Shâh dynasty and the demise of Gajapati kingship in Orissa, the shifting militarised landscape of the succeeding Afghan kings, and the ongoing conflict with generals of the increasingly dominant Mughal armies, group travel was sporadic at best, fraught with a kind of danger not known during the life of Caitanya. It was only toward the end of the 16th century with Mughal pacification of the region that relative ease of movement was restored. During this intervening period, devotees clustered around the prominent early followers of Caitanya, gradually segregating into distinct lineages—the companions and followers of such figures as Nityânanda, Advaitâcârya, Śrivâs, Narahari Sarkâr, and others—and they settled in different parts of Bengal and Orissa. With little impetus to congregate, they drifted their separate ways. Each group slowly developed its own distinct style of worship, and each generated its own perspective on the nature of Caitanya’s divinity. These perspectives were captured in hagiographies of Caitanya commissioned by the heads of each of the lineages. While they all held Caitanya to be Krsna in some form or another, their views were increasingly independent, though not too divergent to be rectified. Recognizing this seemingly inevitable disaggregation of what had during Caitanya’s life been a tightly knit community, the now quite old Jiv Gosvâmi and the few others remaining in Braj had commissioned their enterprising trio of students to return to Bengal in an effort to consolidate the community. By the time of the Kheturi gathering, several generations had passed and not one of the devotees who knew Caitanya was still alive, so the project was both easy, because they were starting afresh, and difficult, for the initial bond that created the community was now absent. It was a religious project of assembly in the guise of re-assembly.

The great festival of Kheturi was clearly not the result of happenstance. Four times in immediately previous years Śrînîvâsaâcârya had assembled regional groups of devotees to celebrate the one-year death anniversaries of those last devotees who had been alive during Caitanya’s life. The first gathering was convened by Yadunandan, disciple of Gadâdhar Dâs in Kâtoyâ. Śrînîvâsaâcârya convened the next one in Yaïjgrâm at his own estate; it was slightly larger, an event which seems to have become the prototype for the gatherings, a combination of celebratory kirtan and extended instruction in the nature of devotion according to Rûp Gosvâmi’s devotional esthetic. The celebration of the passing of the illustrious devotee Narahari Sarkâr took place slightly further south in Śrîkhaṇḍa, and lasted for twelve days, following the now-established pattern. Śrînîvâs took a large entourage to Kâncangadîyâ village in Murshidabad to initiate two younger disciples and celebrate the passing of Dwija Haridâs. Then came the fifth, Kheturi. This
gathering was slightly different because it focused on the installation of six images, significant because each image represented a plank in the corporate theology developed by the Gosvāmis over the course of the 16th century. After Kheturi, there would be two more death anniversary gatherings, but none matched the size and scope of Kheturi, which was more than one full year in the planning.⁴ Narottamādas’ gathering drew devotees from the whole of Bengal and Orissa, numbering in thousands according to the devotional history Premvilās.⁵ During the festival at Kheturi, the trio of the Gosvāmis’ star pupils shared with those gathered a systematic approach to the worship of Kṛṣṇa in the company of Rādhā. After the initial formal greetings of contingents arriving from a distance, everyone was invited to join in kirtan sessions, chanting the names of Kṛṣṇa and singing of his various exploits. These sessions would last for hours and as they were moved, the devotees would dance in celebration.

After several of these kirtan sessions—and the record of the Narottamvilās is not clear just how long it took—one in particular seems to have suddenly brought the entire community into a sympathetic mode. Significantly, the narrative reports that Narottamādas had dreamed that when the images were formally installed, Caitanya would make himself present, manifest himself to those gathered, an intuition that lent additional verve and expectation to the proceedings. As the key devotees danced, eyewitnesses reported seeing the miraculous appearance of Caitanya in the company of his entourage, his eternal dhām.⁶ Narahari Cakravarti records the manifestation like this⁷:

Everyone was drunk with dance. Such astounding streams of tears flowed down the faces of all, their bodies glistening with garlands and sandal. Narottam became intoxicated singing of Gaur’s qualities—and that Gaur Rāy [Caitanya] appeared, agitated, and with his company. He brought Nityānanda, Advaita, Śrīvāsa, Gadādhar, Murāri, Svarūpa, Haridāsa, Vakreśvar, Jagadīś, Gauridāsa, and all the rest. When they became perceptible, visible to the eyes of everyone present, they were ecstatic. Every person there forgot completely both himself and that time, as if they were transported into the great pandemonium that swept Navadvīp [years earlier].

. . . the companions of Śrī Prabhu [Caitanya] danced without number . . . The manner of that dance intoxicated the worlds, filling them with delight, the earth shuddered from the trampling of feet. Both the manifest and unmanifest came together as one. Just how amazing [it was] to be possessed in that dance—that experience cannot be fully disclosed. . . . Just as the Lord had promised Narottam in his dream, he manifested himself, made himself visible, to all who were present in the fury of that commotion. Who can fathom such otherworldly action as this? And just as quickly it was revealed, it was covered over and disappeared.
The 'unmanifest' (aprakāta), that is, the eternal but not visible activities (lilā) of Caitanya and his cohort, had for a moment become visible or "manifest" (prakāta) to those present. With this vision, the imprimatur of Caitanya and his disciples was granted to the activities of these new leaders of the community, cementing their authority, for as Narahari Cakravarti wrote in the Narottamvilās, Caitanya had been seen to dance with Śrīnivāsācārya, Caitanya’s left-hand man Nityānanda paired with Narottamādās, and Caitanya’s right-hand man Advaitācārya with Śyāmānanda and Rāmānanda. The remaining key devotees from the time of Mahāprabhu’s Navadvīpālī were matched to other prominent devotees who had made the journey to Kheturi (NV: 94-95). Caitanya’s dhām was made present, but more importantly, it was understood to have been mapped onto the new circle or maṇḍalī of Vaiṣṇavas, resulting in a profound realization: wherever gaudīya vaiṣṇava devotees are present, there is Caitanya and his entourage, and where there is Caitanya, there is Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. To participate in those gatherings was to experience by replication the original impetus of Caitanya’s devotional world, and simultaneously to participate in the heavenly realm of Kṛṣṇa. That notion certainly remains steadfast to this day among practicing vaiṣṇavas.

Whether this moment is understood literally, as devotees read it, or as a metaphor for the inculcation of divine love, as scholarly interpreters might approach it, makes no difference. What is important is that the hagiographical tradition here, so lovingly recorded by Narahari Cakravarti, has identified this moment as the precise point when the new gaudīya vaiṣṇava tradition was fixed into its current form. But according to the record, it was not sufficient to have the passing experience of the presence of Caitanya and his band of followers, for the experience of that passing event might well dissipate over time. To cement the truth of that experience, the trio of scholars resorted to their scholastic training by distributing copies of texts that undergirded the Gosvāmi theology and ritual system, the arsenal of interpretive tools necessary to perpetuate that realization of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s love afforded by Caitanya Mahāprabhu. These texts included copies of the Sanskrit works of the Gosvāmis, such as Rūp Gosvāmi’s adaptation of classic rasa aesthetic theory to the world of bhakti devotion in the Bhaktirasāṁśasindhu (Ocean of the Nectar of Immortality that is the Essence of Devotion [to Kṛṣṇa])8 and the Ujjvalanilāmani (The Blazing Sapphire [of Rādhā’s Love]),9 the metaphysical and commentarial works of Jīv Gosvāmi,10 and ritual texts, eulogistic poetry, and devotional dramas by these and various other authors—scores of issued texts are given by name. But most significantly, this trio of devotees distributed copies of Kṛṣṇadās Kāvīraj’s Bengali and Sanskrit Caitanya caritāmṛta, the last major hagiography of Mahāprabhu of the 16th century.11
As the name suggests, the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* was not so much interested in the specific acts of Caitanya, though many of those previously unreported by other hagiographies were included; rather the author sought to elucidate the meaning of those acts. To do that, Kṛṣṇādās included short summaries of the significant Gosvāmī theological and ritual writings to enable the reader or auditor better to interpret Caitanya’s life. In that process, he created a new hermeneutic for the tradition that hierarchized and systematized the many competing beliefs about Caitanya’s and Kṛṣṇa’s divinity. Kṛṣṇadās was uniquely situated to undertake that task for he alone of all the devotees gathered in Braj had sat at the feet of all eight of the Gosvāmis. In this new theological dispensation, all the various forms of Caitanya’s divinity were recognized and hierarchized, but looming above all the rest was the esoteric proposition that Caitanya’s ultimate divine form was an androgyne, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa mysteriously fused into a single body, constantly in union, constantly in separation (*CC 1.4 passim; 1.17.293-97; 2.8.229-42*). To love Caitanya, who a few short years earlier had lived among them, was to love Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, for they were understood to be not different. Kṛṣṇadās wrote that Kṛṣṇa had taken this dual form in order to savor Rādhā’s own experience of loving Him—and that novel perspective, which shifted the emphasis of gaudiya theological interest to Rādhā, as the embodiment of pure love, *prema*, changed the tenor of devotion from that point forward. This theological move, credited by Kṛṣṇadās to Caitanya’s closest companion late in life, Śvarūp Dāmodar, had been anticipated but not fully expounded in the earlier hagiographies of Caitanya. But to achieve this highest goal required a long ritual process that rested on the foundation of older mechanical or *vaidhī* rituals for communal experience to ensure the worshiping community could first replicate the original experiences of the eternal activities of Caitanya and Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. For the adept practitioner who sought to experience the highest reaches of Rādhā’s and Kṛṣṇa’s love play, a very sophisticated and strenuous yogic practice or *sādhanā* would allow entry to eternal Vṛndāvana as part of Kṛṣṇa’s personal retinue. With these practices, the distinct *gaudīya vaisnava* style of worship took its place among the other major forms of Kṛṣṇa worship that had swept northern India in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The text of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* was a devotional *tour-de-force* that served as a template for the creation of the community, explaining the relationship of the various *guru* lineages, the nature of devotion, the niceties of ritual worship, each placed in the narrative context of Caitanya’s actions in his ascetic years, and all of which put the devotees quite literally on the same page. As a result of the events of the Kheturī festival, the community coalesced, soon to take the form recognized
today. Taking home the copies of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, which served as a primer to the Gosvāmi theological texts, devotees of these diverse lineages finally possessed the practical means to unify their beliefs, to codify ritual, to map social relationships onto spiritual lineages so that every devotee came to know his or her place in Caitanya’s, that is, Rādhā’s and Kṛṣṇa’s, realm, the *maṇḍalī* of like-minded practitioners known as the *gaudīya vaiṣṇava sampradāya*. It started with the simple metaphor of the tree of *bhakti* articulated in the opening book of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* (1.7-9) with Caitanya’s *gurus* and *paramagurus* pronounced as the roots, Caitanya as the main tap root and trunk, and four other close associates as the four main branches.16 With that seemingly simple mapping came a stepwise ritual agenda that would lead to salvation, a map that with precious little variation is still followed today.

It is perhaps significant that the key figure in bringing together the community in the massive celebration of Kheturī was not a *brāhmaṇa*. Narottamādās was a *kāyastha* by birth, the son of Rājā Kṛṣṇānanda Datta, *zamindār* of Gopālpur. Kṛṣṇānanda, along with his younger brother, Puruṣottam Datta, underwrote the staggering expenses of this month-long gathering, as carefully detailed in the *Narottamvilās*. Significantly, then and later, Narottamādās as a non-*brāhmaṇa* initiated *brāhmaṇas* as well as devotees of all social ranks. While there were some recorded precedents for Narottamādās’ actions by Caitanya himself, Narottamādās opened up the tradition in ways that today are hailed as socially revolutionary. It was not just through his initiations that he transformed the devotional world of Bengal, but through his writings. Previously only devotional songs and hagiographies of Caitanya had been composed in Bangla, but in a first for the tradition, Narottamādās chose to compose theological and ritual material in a simple, unadorned form of the vernacular—no doubt following the lead of Kṛṣṇādās Kavirāj whose synopses of significant theological writings of the Gosvāmis guided the new interpretations of divinity and devotion. While his companions, especially Śrīnivāsaśācārya, systematically copied and circulated the Gosvāmi Sanskrit corpus to devotional communities throughout Bengal, Narottamādās composed original, innovative works in Bangla. These short treatises of two- to four-hundred couplets each were small enough to be easily taught, but when taken together, more than a dozen definitively recognized titles (and another dozen of less certain provenance) introduced in stages the nature of worship from simple to advanced. They systematically consolidated the new pragmatics of both mechanical *vaidyā* forms of ritual as well as the more advanced yogic forms known as *maṇjari sādhanā*.17 In this, Narottamādās seems to have recaptured much of the excitement generated by the earlier hagiographical tradition that focused on Caitanya decades earlier,
but fitting his non-*brāhmaṇ* social standing, he made the simple as well as more abstruse reaches of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship accessible to all. The foundation for all of these innovations was the understanding that Caitanya was Kṛṣṇa in all forms, *svayam bhāgavan*, best apprehended as Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*. But it was not possible to understand fully how this was so and what that meant until Caitanya’s own scriptural authority heralded that identity and the implications of it for his followers. That scriptural authority took the form of sacred biography: throughout the 16th century, the record of Caitanya’s life gradually emerged as the explicit analogue to Kṛṣṇa’s life. Only then could the believing population fully comprehend what had transpired, that Kṛṣṇa Himself had descended to grace the earth for some forty-eight years; and just as importantly, after he had left for Golok, instruction in how they might continue to experience his presence.

**The Recorded Life of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya: The Early Years**

The sacred biographies of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (*né* Viśambhara Miśra, 1486-1533 CE) constitute one of the largest hagiographical literatures of early modern India. The only biographer who knew Caitanya intimately was his senior devotee Murāri Gupta. He began by jotting notes, a *kaṭacāra* or “notebook” as it is often called, but fleshed out into a more expansive text that was completed within a few months of Caitanya’s passing. The text as we have it today is composed in a simple Sanskrit idiom that is relatively easily understood by Bangla speakers. Unfortunately manuscripts no longer exist, so the text survives only in the printed edition by respected editor and *vaiśṇava* publisher Mṛṇālkānti Ghoṣ. The significance of this text, which is now known by its attributed name as *Kṛṣṇa-caitanyacaritamra*, lies in its sequencing of events, for it provides the standard chronotope narrative of Caitanya’s life.

The life, Murāri describes, starts with a miraculous birth in the scholastic center of Navadvipa, and describes flashes of divinity in the joyful play of the young Nimāi, as he was affectionately known—though those around him appear to have suffered a quick amnesia after these displays, maintaining his covert identity. His schooling was a lesson in misbehavior punctuated by startling moments of brilliant scholarship. By the time Murāri wrote, all of Caitanya’s devotees understood him to be the new Kṛṣṇa in the Kali Age—even before he took initiation as a *sannyāsi* when he was about twenty-four years old—so the story of his early life was made to replicate that of Kṛṣṇa in the Dvāpara Age. The hagiographer Jayānanda Miśra, a mid-16th century devotee, popularized this literary conceit more than any other hagiographer with a simple proposition that whatever Kṛṣṇa had done in the Dvāpara Age, the young Nimāi did the same in the Kali Age. Going by the title of *Caitanya*
Maṅgal, his narrative resembled the increasingly widespread maṅgal kābya compositions celebrating the ways in which goddesses and gods developed their following in Bengal, and his followed suit. He wrote that Nimāi inevitably acted like the baby Kṛṣṇa, Bālgopāl; that he would coquettishly assume Kṛṣṇa’s alluring trihaṅga pose; that his mischeviousness, as before, was indulged by all the men and women of Navadvīp; that he enacted a reprise of the subduing of the serpent Kāliya; and of course, when he slept, serpents would emerge to hover over his head in protection. He also made clear that the Nadiya region in which the young Nimāi grew up was ruled by a king who had young boys killed out of fear for his own demise, just as Kṛṣṇa’s parents Vasudeva and Devaki had experienced (though Viśvambhar does not grow up with foster parents as Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had done).21

While Murāri’s Sanskrit Kṛṣṇacaitanyacaritāmṛta sets the basic chronology of significant events, it was within a few short years filled in and expanded by Vṛndāvan Dās in the longest hagiography, his monumental Bangla Caitanya Bhāgavat.22 He writes that the first rupture of the idyllic childhood came when Viśvambhar’s older brother Viśvarūpa decided to renounce the world. He was persuaded to return home by Viśvambhar, but as soon as his father began to arrange for his marriage, he escaped, never to be seen again. As the sole remaining son, Viśvambhar promised to remain a householder and take care of his anguished parents, a promise he would not keep. He appeased them by getting married to a woman named Gopālī, the daughter of local brāhmaṇ. For a time he appeared to be headed for the rather nondescript life of a practicing paṇḍit when he suffered another rupture at the sudden death of his father, Jagannāth Miśra. Now responsible for his mother Śaci and his new bride, the young Viśvambhar undertook a trip to the less-settled eastern regions of Bengal, performing ritual services in areas bereft of proper brāhmaṇical support. By all accounts, his meeting of that pent-up demand made for a financially successful tour, so within the year he returned to Navadvīp only to discover that his wife, Gopālī, had tragically died from snakebite. Later hagiographers would spiritualize her demise as death by the snakebite of separation, viraha, from her beloved husband, the same emotion experienced by the gopīs who longed for the absent Kṛṣṇa. Viśvambhar’s mother wasted no time in arranging a second marriage to another local brāhmaṇ woman named Viṣṇupriyā, about whom devotees over the years have felt ambivalent, for Viśvambhar would soon abandon her.

Vṛndāvan Dās wrote that one year after the death of Viśvambhar’s father, he went with a group of vaiṣṇavas to the customary pilgrimage city of Gayā; his mission was to perform the śrāddh rituals or funerary obsequies for his departed father. After discharging those duties, he met outside of Gayā an ascetic named Īśvara Purī, disciple of the famous Mādhavendra Purī, who
huddled with Viśvambhar privately for three days. The hagiographies uniformly report that they were sequestered in a cave, which is a standard trope in hero mythology for entering the womb of the earth during which one is transformed and reborn—and transformed he was. He exited the cave a bhāvaka, god-maddened, swept up in an emotional ecstasy for the love of Kṛṣṇa, the likes of which his companions had never before witnessed. It is the next few dramatic months, not even one full year, on which the bulk of hagiographical writing was focused. For it was during that time that the nucleus of the original community of vaisnavas coalesced into a cohesive group and in that process shaped a new way of worshiping Kṛṣṇa and his lover Rādhā.

Among the dozens of figures in Navadvīp who that fateful year congregated around the light-completed and now highly charismatic Gaurāṅga, four figures stood out. The first was Advaitācārya, a traditional brāhmaṇ hailing from Śrīhatṭa or Sylhet, who had settled in nearby Śāntipur and who, the biographers all agree, was the agent responsible for calling upon Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇ to send help to alleviate the woes of vaisnavas. It was Vṛndāvan Dās who was the first to credit Advaitācārya with the instrumental role of precipitating Kṛṣṇa’s descent to earth (CBh 1.2.74-99). Each subsequent author acknowledges Advaitācārya’s centrality in effecting the appearance of Caitanya; his importance was such that he was the only member of the inner group of devotees to become the subject of his own hagiographical portrait, most significantly, the Advaita Maṅgal of Haricarāṇ Dās. As his name suggested, Advaitācārya had at one point early in his life accepted the teachings of the non-dualism of advaita vedānta, but in his later years his devotional presence was felt throughout the region. He recognized the religious propensities of Viśvambhar’s elder brother, indeed their mother Śaci accused him of fomenting Viśvartạp’s religious agitation to the point of facilitating his renunciation, just as she would blame him for inciting Viśvambhar to do the same (Caitanya Bhāgavat 2.26). After Viśvambhar’s transformative experience in Gayā, Advaitācārya’s gravitas as a senior scholar and devotee legitimized the devotional activities of Caitanya and his following. Advaitācārya became a regular fixture in the gatherings for chanting the name and singing of the exploits of Kṛṣṇa which were held in the extensive inner compounds of the private residence of the wealthy devotee Śrivās.

For something less than a year after Viśvambhar’s return from Gayā, Śrivās emerged as a pivotal figure who, as primus inter pares, represented the love of all devotees for Gaurāṅga. But he was also pivotal because he had resources to host on a regular basis all of the vaisnava devotees in and around Navadvīp for lengthy kirtan sessions, sessions that often lasted
through the entire night. In these group sessions, the initial tiny group of hardy devotees established what would later become the five most basic forms of vaidhī or ritual worship: gathered in the company of like-minded devotees they performed kirtan, the chanting of the names of Kṛṣṇa, singing and telling stories of his exploits, often accompanied by dancing which just as often led to spontaneous displays of emotion; they performed pūjās to the images of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, among other forms of Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa, and most importantly, in these gatherings that were open only to like-minded devotees, they recreated the idyll of Braj where Kṛṣṇa and cowherd companions, gopas and gopīs, played. Because the walls of the compound afforded privacy, their activities were witnessed only by those present. While these regular gatherings appear not to have been overly popular with the neighbors, it was in that time and place that the real significance of Viśvambhar’s mission was realized by the devotees.

During these often raucous and emotion-filled occasions this select group began to believe that Kṛṣṇa had descended to earth in the form of the golden-limbed Gaurāṅga, divine in his own right, a belief styled the gauraparāmyavāda. At other times he was understood to be Kṛṣṇa as an avatār, and eventually Kṛṣṇa Himself, svayam bhagavān, the complete godhead as the source and container of all forms of God and creation. One by one, the evidence grew in the minds of the devotees, as each reported encounters during their devotional ecstasies with some kind of display or manifestation of divinity by Gaurāṅga, sometimes elusive, at others vividly, even terrifyingly, explicit. Murāri and Vṛndāvan Dās reported that to some he appeared as Narasiṁha the fearsome Man-Lion, or Varāha the Boar, or Rāma of the Rāmāyaṇ; but mostly he appeared as Kṛṣṇa, the companion to the cowherd boys, but more often as the lover of the cowherd girls of Braj. The activities of kirtan spurred a number of local singers to compose lyrics or padas not just about the Kṛṣṇa they already knew, but about their experiences with the new or nabin Kṛṣṇa, the golden limbed Gaurāṅga. The outpouring of new songs by composers or padakartās such as Mādhav Ghoṣ, Vāsudev Ghoṣ, Mukunda Datta, and Govinda Dās perhaps captures the growing excitement that electrified the community.25 Of all the hagiographers, only Vṛndāvan Dās could match the verve and excitement captured by the padakartās, and he devotes the entire madhya khaṇḍa of the Caitanya Bhāgavat—some 11,000 riveting lines in twenty-six chapters—to this transformative year of gatherings and interactions among the devotees.

With the advantage of some decades of hindsight into the devotees’ perception of Caitanya’s divinity, Vṛndāvan Dās wrote in a vivid poetic style that ripples with the exhilaration of the times. He captured the efflorescence and contagion of this new bhakti for Kṛṣṇa and for Caitanya, no doubt the
result of instruction by his guru, Nityānanda, who had quickly become an essential part of the group. An avadhūta-style ascetic, immediately upon his arrival in Navadvīp, he was hailed by Gaurāṅga as not-different from his departed brother Viśvarūp; and so it was that Nityānanda was initiated into the inner circle, one of the five key purveyors of bhakti in the early theology. Gleaned from the stories of Nityānanda and other devotees, Vṛndāvan Dās’ spellbinding account stands as the most profoundly emotional statement of what it meant for those early followers to be in the presence of their God. Murāri hinted, but Vṛndāvan Dās more clearly stated that the inner circle had come to realize that when Kṛṣṇa descends to earth in his complete form, as svayam bhagavān, he does not come alone but appears replete with his entire physical and social environment. Everyone and everything that had been in Braj accompanies him to earth. As a result, the activities of everyone around Gaurāṅga gained a new ontological significance, for they were in some fundamental way replications of what had transpired in the mythic Urzeit of Braj—the same experience, as was noted above, was recaptured to energize the Kheturī festival nearly a century later. As key players came to realize their roles in relation to Gaurāṅga, the new Kṛṣṇa, everyone in his entourage eventually discovered his or her place and previous identity. Viśvambhar’s parents, Miśra Purandar and Śacī Mātā, were Vasudeva and Devakī, but also Kṛṣṇa’s foster parents Nanda and Yaśodā. Kṛṣṇa’s older brother Balarām had to be identified with Viśvarūp; but with Viśvarūp’s disappearance, the role fell to newcomer Nityānanda, the avadhūta ascetic, who was even presented to and treated by Śacī Mā as her son. Gaurāṅga’s first wife Lakṣmīpriyā was understood to be both Rukmiṇī and Jānakī in mysterious combination, while his second wife Viṣṇupriyā was Satyabhāmā, and so forth and so on. It was, curiously enough, a male devotee Gadādhar, an early pre-Gayā companion of Gaurāṅga who—because of his excessive and utterly selfless devotion to Gaurāṅga—was understood to assume the role of Rādhā. Nearly all of the hagiographers reported that in this early period Gadādhar embodied the love of a sakhi companion or gopī, specifically Rādhā, for he was inseparable from Viśvambhar as Kṛṣṇa and tended him with a loving devotion that was incomparable.

With this understanding of the descent of the dhām, the community soon recognized that Gaurāṅga and his four key companions—Advaitacārya, Nityānanda, Gadādhar, and Śrivās (who explicitly stood for all of the other devotees)—represented the five key metaphysical elements or pañca tattva necessary for the inculation of the new form of devotion that became distinctively gaudiya vaisnava in outlook. These five figures provided the trunk and branches of the wishing tree of bhakti that allowed every devotee to find his or her place in relation to Caitanya. This was the first truly novel
theological perspective created by this group and dates back to the year of ecstasy Gaurânga spent with his devotees in Navadvîp. As the new Kṛṣṇa, Viśvambhar had brought Braj to earth in Navadvîp, and everyone around him was part of the original cast around Kṛṣṇa. Some decades later, the pāṇḍit-devotee Kāvikārnâpūr (nê Paramânand Sen), son of Caitanya’s intimate Navadvîp companion Śivânanda Sen, would enumerate in tabular form more than two hundred Braj-based identities among the immediate followers of Caitanya in a small Sanskrit text called the Gaurâganaoddeśadīpikā or “Lamplight of the followers of Gaura.” To be a vaiṣṇava follower of Gaurânga was to replicate in fractal-like precision the earlier mythic history of Kṛṣṇa in Braj. This configuration of the dhām set the foundation of the new community—as confirmed in Kheturi a century later—for it was replicable in any time and any place, providing a cohesion and consistency to belief and practice among like-minded devotees.

It is hard to imagine the intoxicating effect of this realization, the euphoria that must have been experienced by those lucky enough to be present; but it would not last, for less than a year after his return from Gayâ, Viśvambhar abandoned his wife Viṣṇupriyâ and renounced the householder’s life for that of an ascetic sannyâ. The community immediately interpreted his departure on the model of Kṛṣṇa who had abandoned Braj to go and fight King Kâṃsa in Mathurâ. In a short text titled Śrīgaurâṅga Sannyâs, the famous padâkârta Vâsudev Ghoṣ expressed the feelings of all of the devotees through his portrayal of the devastating loss felt by Gaurâṅga’s mother Śacî and wife Viṣṇupriyâ. Theirs was the exquisite agony, viraha, experienced by the lover who is separated from the object of devotion and love. Viraha was to become the defining trope of this new religious tradition, for it became synonymous with the experience of Caitanya in his experience of Râdhâ’s pain. But unlike Kṛṣṇa’s departure for Mathurâ in the Bhâgavat purâna which signaled a turn away from the play of love toward the martial world of slaying demons and evil kings, eventually fomenting the great Bhârata wars, Gaurâṅga’s departure moved in the opposite direction, away from a householder’s life to make people aware of the love of Kṛṣṇa as the key to entering heavenly bliss. It was a message fit for a new age—and from this point forward, Gaurâṅga’s expression of divinity took a completely novel path, one of divine androgyny.

**Gaurâṅga as Kṛṣṇa Caitanya: the Later Years**

According to Vṛṇḍâvan Dâs (CBh 2.26.216-17), Viśvambhar was inducted into the Bhârati order of ascetics by Keśav Bhârati with the initiatory name of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, “He who makes the world conscious (caitanya) of Kṛṣṇa.” With this renunciation, he departed Navadvîp for good, but did not sever relations with his Navadvîp followers, for prior to his final departure from the home of Advaitacârâya in Śântipûr, all of the hagiographers record
two concessions he made to his followers. He acceded to the wish of his mother to remain close by in Nilacal or Puri, the home of Jagannāth, so that she could receive regular news of him. He also granted tacit permission for the devotees of Nadiya to make the annual pilgrimage to Nilacal during the month-long car festival or rathayātā of Jagannāth. These trips, which would be undertaken annually for the last eighteen years of Caitanya’s life, were arranged and financed once again by Śrīvās. When he finally left Nadiya for Nilacal, he was accompanied by several devotees, including Nityānanda, Gadādhar Paṇḍit, Mukunda Datta, and Jagadānanda, though given the politics of being named one of his privileged companions, the hagiographers mildly disagree about the others making the trip. After a rather meandering journey south, he arrived in Nilacal. He was promptly introduced to the well-connected and highly respected scholar Śrīvāsa Bhaṭṭācārya, who joined his entourage as a supporter and follower. Śrīvāsa’s public imprimatur of Caitanya’s position functioned much as Advaitācārya’s earlier support to sanction and legitimize. With the advantages provided by Śrīvāsa’s support, Caitanya would stay in Nilacal but a short while before embarking on a pilgrimage to the southern regions of the subcontinent, possibly to look for his brother, but ultimately to return north. He finally resettled in Nilacal, making one last trip to Braj. He spent the remainder of his life in Nilacal increasingly transported by the experience of Rādhā’s viraha; but his charisma attracted an extraordinary group of prominent and influential scholar devotees.

Writing in the 1580s, paṇḍit Kavikarṇapūr carefully argued in his partially allegorical Sanskrit drama Caitanya Candrodaya (Act 3) that when Caitanya played Rādhā in the famous episode of the dān lilā, the play-within-the-play, he was not just acting, but revealed that he was mysteriously Rādhā herself. Writing about the same time, Locandas, who was a prominent padakartā and important disciple of Narahari Sarkār, likewise argued in his Bangla Caitanya Maṅgal (1.2.[20] 590-94) that Kṛṣṇa descended as Gaurāṅga bearing the outward golden color and inward emotional life of Rādhā. These statements anticipated Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj’s formal exposition (CC 1.1-4. passim) of this novel form of divinity as a divine androgyny—Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enigmatically fused into a single form—an experiment by Kṛṣṇa that allowed him to experience for himself the exquisite love of Rādhā that otherwise always lay just outside his grasp. Kṛṣṇadās argued that this was the primary reason for Kṛṣṇa’s descent as Caitanya, but it did not mean that he was not also fulfilling the functions of the other forms of divinity earlier hagiographers had projected. His identity as yugāvatār, as lilāvatār, as daśāvatār, and so forth were confirmed but deemed coincidental. His experience of being Rādhā finally came to dominate and left Caitanya increasingly delirious during his last years. Kṛṣṇadās refers to this madness
as the intoxication of pure love or prema, characterized as divine possession or āveśi, presenting physical symptoms that resemble epilepsy or mrgivyādhi. It was the viraha for Kṛṣṇa that seems to have driven him mad.

The Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj records most completely the six years of Caitanya’s southern pilgrimage and his final eighteen years in Nilācal. Lest there by any doubt, Kṛṣṇadās frequently stated that all he was doing was completing the story that Vṛndāvan Dās had left incomplete, a savvy rhetorical strategy that ultimately sanctioned both texts and established a clear hierarchy of authority within the hagiographical tradition. What Caitanya actually did was portrayed by Kṛṣṇadās anecdotally because his daily actions were monotonously repeated over those last years; as a result he tended to focus on the arrival and interactions of key devotees with Caitanya during this period. According to Kṛṣṇadās’ account, Sārvabhauma was the first significant follower to acknowledge Caitanya’s position, and the other men who were drawn to Caitanya as an ascetic in Nilācal were, like Sārvabhauma, a decidedly different lot than his associates in Navadvīp. These men were highly educated and erudite aesthetes, playwrights, theologians, and importantly, many of them were in the employ of the administration of Rājā Pratāparūḍra, the Gajapati king of Utkal and Kaliṇga. First among these government officials was one high-ranking administrator named Rāmānanda Rāy, whom Caitanya met on his pilgrimage south. The colloquy in which Rāmānanda reportedly saw with his own eyes Caitanya’s androgynous form proved to be a landmark in the development of gauḍīya vaiṣṇava theology (CC 2.8). Caitanya would meet him again on his return and despatch him to Nilācal to await his return. As he roamed further south, Caitanya recruited the traditional brähmana Gopāl Bhaṭṭa, a young vaiṣṇava devotee, whom he sent to Braj with concerns to develop an authoritative brähmanical ritual procedure for devotees.

After Caitanya returned to Nilācal, another recognized scholar, Svarūp Dāmodar, would become Caitanya’s amanuensis—and it was his aesthetic and theological acumen that would come to shape the future movement, providing an explanation for how and why Caitanya was both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. For many of Caitanya’s final years, one of Svarūp’s students was Raghunāth Dās, who later in Braj passed on what he knew of Caitanya’s life and Svarūp’s theology directly to Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. Caitanya’s following in Nilācal was quickened by the arrival of two brothers who would become famous as Rūp Gosvāmi and Sanātana Gosvāmi. Both had been high ranking officials in the administration of Sultan Husain Shah back in Bengal, Rūp reportedly functioning as the Sultan’s personal secretary. Eventually, even the Gajapati himself, Rājā Pratāparūḍra, numbered among Caitanya’s devotees, though close association with the king seems to have flummoxed
Caitanya, who preferred to remain aloof from such worldly powers. These scholar-devotees, with their strong ties to worldly power and wealth, would create an environment in which the new form of Viṣṇu belief and practice could flourish, for they cultivated favor and protection in Utkal from the ruling Gajapati dynasty, later in Braj from the newly consolidated power of the Mughals in the middle and later decades of the 16th century—even support to build temples—and in Bengal with a number of zamindārs who controlled wealth locally. This same pattern of connection to financial resources and the wielders of governing power would enable the trio of Nārottamācārya, Śrīvīṇasaṁcarā, and Śyāmānanda to build and sustain the new communities of ViṣṇuVaishnavas in Bengal nearly a century later; the support of Rājā Virhaṁbrīr is significant here. This type of connection has remained a hallmark of the community and a guarantor of its worldly success. But these connections in and of themselves would prove of little value without a religious ritual process backed by a sound theological platform to unite the community—and that is precisely what Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja supplied by utilizing the theological insights of Svāturupādamodar and the gosvāṁśīs to hierarchize and standardize a new ViṣṇuVaishnava sacramental regimen inspired by Caitanya and focused on Kṛṣṇa’s love of Rādhā.

The New Theology of Divine Love

The interest in the līlās of Nārāyaṇa as Kṛṣṇa the cowherd lover was not an event that materialized solely with the advent of Caitanya. While the written record is sparse for the earliest known periods of ViṣṇuVaishnava practice in the greater Bengali region, based on the material culture that has survived, primarily statues and inscriptions, the emphasis was on the celestial sovereignty of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa. The emphasis on the āiśvarya dimension of Nārāyaṇa’s divinity dates to the 7th-8th centuries, with statuary in blackstone, granite, marble, and bronze. Viṣṇu’s preferred form is the awesome Nārāyaṇa, with four arms, each equipped with emblems of sovereignty—conch, lotus, disc, and club—often accompanied by consort Lākṣmī. The zoomorphic forms of Varāha the boar, Matsya the fish, Kūrma the tortoise, and the theriomorphic form of Narasiṁha, join Vāmana the dwarf as his most common avatārs. In the early period Bālarām as Halāyudh or the “holder of the plough” eventually begins to take Kṛṣṇa’s place among the avatārs, which points to Kṛṣṇa’s gradual displacement of Nārāyaṇ and his elevation to svayam bhagavān or supreme lord. Rām’s image is not so prominent. It was during the late Pāla (8-12th century) and throughout the Sena dynasties (11-12th century) that the adolescent Kṛṣṇa emerged as the most popular regional form: the cowherd Gopāl and the flute-playing Govinda. These loveable images come to dominate the ViṣṇuVaishnava sensibility; awe-inspiring celestial sovereignty appropriate to court (āiśvarya) was displaced by a more approachable pastoral love (mādhurya). By the 13th
century, the axis of emphasis had shifted nearly completely to the love play of Kṛṣṇa and gopīs.

The royal courts throughout northeast India had the Sanskrit epics and purāṇas read as public markers of a cultured and stable kingship, regardless of nominal religious orientation. The Sultanate courts in Bengal in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries continued this tradition piecemeal, and importantly were the first to patronize poets who wrote in Bangla as opposed to the more cosmopolitan Sanskrit—no doubt a marker of regional independence. Poet Mālādhar Basu of Kufingrām was awarded the title of Guṇarāja by Ruknuddin Barbak Shah (r. 1459-1474) for his Bangla Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya or “The Triumph of Kṛṣṇa,” a retelling of tales from the Bhāgavata and Viṣṇu purāṇas. Contemporary to Guṇarāja were the first to compose the earliest extant retelling of the Rāmāyaṇa in Bangla. To this day, Kṛttivās’ rendering is favored, but with the Bengali expectation of affection over celestial sovereignty as a sign of divinity, Rām’s maltreatment of Śitā seems incongruous, perhaps explaining his diminished popularity compared to Kṛṣṇa. The cult of Rām remained primarily a literary concern of the courts and literati. Among Caitanya’s followers, only Murāri, by his own admission, was understood to be a committed Rām devotee (KCC 2.7.10-18) and, according to Kavikarṇapūrī, Murāri was appropriately understood to be none other than Hanumān in the descent of the dhām (GGUD v. 91).

In the courts, the Bangla Mahābhārata proved somewhat more popular than Rāmāyaṇa, but the martial imagery seemed to serve regal interests while the contemplative philosophical sections yielded to narratives of martial action. It was in the court of Paragal Khān, governor of Chittagong during the reign of Husain Shah and his sons (r. 1494-1538), that Paramēśvar Dās composed the first known Bangla Mahābhārata. Chuti Khan, son of Parāgal, commissioned a second Bangla Mahābhārata by Śrīkar Nandi. But it was Kāśirāma Dās’ early 17th century, Pāṇḍavavijaya or “Triumph of the Pāṇḍavas” that became the favored Bangla version. For gauḍīya vaishnava religious belief and practice, however, these Bengalis sought their inspiration elsewhere: they found it in the love of the adolescent cowherd Kṛṣṇa—and Caitanya above all came to embody it.

The emergence of Kṛṣṇa as adorable cowherd was much earlier bolstered by the circulation of the Sanskrit Gitagovinda or “Song of the Cowherd Lord” by Jayadeva (c. 1200 CE), a text that Caitanya cherished. The twenty-four songs of the Gitagovinda supplement the tenth book of the Bhāgavata purāṇa, which hints but does not name Rādhā as Kṛṣṇa’s favorite. About a century and half later, Baṛu Candidās composed the Śrīkṛṣṇakirtan or “The Celebration of Lord Kṛṣṇa” in thirteen sections or khaṇḍas of colorful, earthy Bangla that stirringly depicted the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Each section
was devoted to a separate encounter, many of which were not to be found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Subsequently, 15th century poets such as Vidyāpati and Candīdās composed lyrics in Maithili, compositions that provided inspiration to the poets around Gaurāṅga who wrote in the closely related idiom of Brajabuli. For all its inspiration, it was impossible for poetry to state analytically this celebration of the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa; nor was it possible for the increasingly unstable Caitanya to do it himself. So he turned to the band of intellectuals around him to explain how *bhakti* could be carefully cultivated through an understanding of emotions.

Bhārata’s *Natyaśāstra* classified human emotion or *bhāva* into nine basic types (*viz.* love, mirth, anger, sorrow, disgust, terror, heroic energy, astonishment), but it was Abhinavagupta who later extended this concept to suggest deliberately refined emotions could become a platform for salvation through the tasting of the unmediated experience of their distilled essence or *rasa*. Drama was considered the best way to experience this *rasa*, the abstracted pure nature of emotions unsullied by the impinging exigencies of everyday life, because drama is completely controlled. Using the model of scripted drama for individual practice in his Sanskrit *rasa śāstra*, Rūp Gosvāmī emended the set of *bhāvas* appropriate for cultivating *bhakti* and he developed a programmatic scheme for doing so: five fundamental emotions of love could be distilled from Kṛṣṇa’s dramatic play starting from a base of deferential submission toward God. The lowest *bhāva* called *repose* or *śānta* reflects a reverential love, equivalent to what a subject might feel for the remote king, calming and in awe of his majesty. *Dāsya* or servitude is equivalent to the love of a servant for his master, an intimate but servile interaction. *Sakhya* is companionship with God, the easy affection of friends, such as that of the cowherd *gopas* to Kṛṣṇa. *Vātsalya* is parental love marked by total devotion to God as one’s child, found in the indulgent, protective, and all-consuming love of Nanda and Yaśodā. But the pinnacle of this progressive hierarchy is erotic love or *śṛṅgāra*, the special relationship of the *gopis* to Kṛṣṇa, but best embodied in Rādhā’s love. In this devotional system, *śṛṅgāra* is deemed most satisfying to Kṛṣṇa because the erotic mode is understood to encompass all the other forms of *bhāva*. But satisfaction is not just a function of the comprehensiveness of *śṛṅgāra*; it is largely the result of its indeterminacy. The love of Rādhā and the *gopis* contains an element of unpredictability, of playfulness that not even Kṛṣṇa can know in advance—and for God, say Rūp and the other theologians, that is both a delight and a challenge. That love play is called *līlā*, an activity equivalent to the “licking of the flame” as its etymologies suggest. It is the selfless love of Rādhā that most mesmerizes, precisely because she is so fickle, *bāmatā*, “crooked” or “left-handed.” Rādhā then is the ultimate object of Kṛṣṇa’s affections and the figure most likely to satisfy him, so devotees who participate in Kṛṣṇa’s activities through their
replication of the dhām, must do all they can to ensure the interaction of the couple; to do anything else would be selfish and not the result of loving Kṛṣṇa.

To inculcate this devotion, a devotee first participates in straightforward mechanical rituals, vaidhī injunctions prescribed in daily, monthly, and annual installments. In his Sanskrit Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu (1.2.90-92, 238-45), Rūp Gosvāmī enumerates sixty-four vaidhī rituals, the top five of which are deemed most efficacious for inculcating devotion: chanting the name (nāma) of Kṛṣṇa in song (kīrtana); recalling (smarana) and listening (śravaṇa) to the narratives of Kṛṣṇa’s lilās; serving his image with devotion (pūjā); living in the company of other holy devotees (śādhus); and residing literally in or transporting oneself mentally into the realm (manḍala) of Mathurā. These are the same five that were routinely practiced in Nilaścāl when the devotees gathered in their all-night kīrtan sessions during the year prior to Gaurāṅga’s renunciation. Rūp argues that when practiced diligently, the love that ensues will eventually give way to a spontaneous passion. This transformation is called rāga-nugā, the “following of passion,” and its first marks are the so-called sāttvika bhāvas or involuntary manifestations of the presence of love: lacrimation, perspiration, stupefaction, horripilation, trembling, shouting, breaking of the voice, and loss of consciousness. These affects no doubt contributed to the misunderstanding of what the devotees were doing—and that misapprehension is to this day not uncommon. But the advanced devotee will eventually redirect these energies into a strenuous yogic-based practice called mañjarī sādhanā.38

The yogic practice of mañjarī sādhanā is designed to enable the adept to enter the mythic Urzeit of Kṛṣṇa’s Braj in Vaikuṇṭha heaven. The devotee discovers his or her true identity as a just-pubescent girl among the denizens of Braj—a key but minor member of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal dhām whose mission is to serve Rādhā in every way. The process hinges on a complex yogic visualization in which the devotee mentally constructs the worlds of Braj and once those are stabilized, begins to act out the dramatic scripts of the Kṛṣṇa lilās, the stories and dramas learned through the vaidhī ritual acts incumbent upon every devotee. When practiced with diligence, these enacted dramas will eventually deviate from their scripts and become spontaneous. At that moment the devotee is no longer simply remembering and re-enacting the stories of Kṛṣṇa, but is directly witnessing the myriad of ever-fresh activities of eternal Braj. Through this meditation, the devotee momentarily enters heaven; after a lifetime of such practices, the dying devotee simply slips into eternal Braj and does not return. Quickened by mechanical rituals, the devotional bhāvas are refined and abstracted through yoga to yield a spontaneous but vicarious experience of the love of Kṛṣṇa through Rādhā. This experience is, in some sense, self-selective because not everyone has the
emotional makeup to effect that outcome; it is an ideal that is held up and admired by all devotees, who start with and may get no further than practicing the simplest form of devotion: chanting the names of Kṛṣṇa. It was the simplicity of that act that seems to have opened the door to everyone.

**Reaching Out: Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and Social Reform**

The gauḍīya vaiṣṇava proposition that all anyone has to do is chant the name of Kṛṣṇa in order to attain salvation has undoubtedly contributed to the larger perception that Caitanya was a radical social reformer. As noted in the opening of this chapter, the malleability of the tradition and its willingness to accept people of different social ranks, of different ethnicities, and who were actively engaged in other religious traditions was not something that transpired instantly. Rather, it was the result of a gradual change in outlook that was the result of devotees exploring the logical implications of significant stories from the hagiographies and their subsequent confirmation in the still-developing theology and praxis of the 16th century. Because the shift in attitudes was already having an effect, albeit somewhat piecemeal, it was the work of kāyaṭha Narottamādās that seemed to crystallize these liberalizing notions in the practices of the newly reconstituted community following the seven festivals organized by him and by Śrīnīvāsa-cārya and Śyāmānanda. The full extent of this expansive mood can be seen centuries later with the inclusion of non-Indians, such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness or ISKCon, however uneasily they mesh with the community at large. Their inclusion confirms the openness of the tradition at the most basic level. Whether ironically or presciently—no one can know for sure—it was the figure of Haridās Ṭhākur who came to embody that initial impulse to chant and whose extraordinary performances served as a gateway for outsiders into the community. First in Navadvīp then later in Nilācal, Caitanya held up Haridās as the ideal chanter of the name, the exemplar for emulation (**CC** 3.4.94-99). The hagiographers report that he chanted upwards of three lakh names per day, a figure far in excess of anyone else then or now (**CBh** 1.1.170; **CC** 3.4.296). The symbolic role that Haridās played in opening the gauḍīya vaiṣṇava community to outsiders stems from his status as jaban, indeed he is called the jaban Haridās far more often than Haridās Ṭhākur. During the 16th century, the term jaban—the Bangla derivation of the Sanskrit yavana, literally “Ionian,” or simply “foreigner”—denoted first a non-native Indian or foreigner who wears a cap and a beard, but only secondarily connoted a musalmānī religious orientation, though today most Bangla speakers equate jaban with the modern political identity of Muslim. He was a sīfī practitioner of some indeterminate order, though the number and style of his recitation points to a chishtiyya training. The *Caitanya Bhāgavat* and the *Caitanya
Caritāmṛta both refer to him as a pīr or jindā pīr (Persian zinda). The textual evidence makes clear that he was a musalmāni follower of Caitanya who practiced Kṛṣṇa jikir (Arabic dhikr or Persian zikr), the sūfī recitation of the names and attributes of God. Notably several of the sūfī orders grant practitioners the freedom to choose the names of God they use for jikir, including local vernacular names that are not of Arabic or Persian origin, which is what Haridās appears to have done. Though he was a part of Caitanya’s inner circle of followers for a quarter century, the jaban Haridās retained his status as mleccha: he was denied entrance to the Jagannāth temple (CC 2.11.146-52) and would exclude himself or be excluded from formal ritual events involving brāhmans. In his final years he lived in a hut on the oceanfront with Sanātan, who likewise considered himself mleccha.

He was resolutely held apart, in spite of special moments where Haridās’ untouchability was ignored, significantly when he first met the orthodox brāhmaṇ Śārvabhauma Bhāṭṭācārya in Nilācal who openly stated that he embraced Haridās despite his impurities (KCCM 14.47-48), and then at Haridās’ death when Caitanya and others danced with his body, cleansed it for burial, and then buried it on the beach, building a mound over it and erecting a fence around it, that is, making a proper dargā (Pers. dargāḥ) or sūfī tomb (CC 3.11.15-106). The building of the dargā for Haridās—whose name is almost a generic placeholder for “He who loves God”—confirms that he remained to the end a musalmāni mleccha who practiced Kṛṣṇa jikir.39 As a rule mlecchas were marginalized or even banished in social situations, yet in overtly religious contexts, those differences could be effaced. The result has been dramatically effective: as it has come to be understood, inculcating the love of God through chanting the name, is open to anyone, even a mleccha. Promoting the jaban Haridās as the model signaled that the participation was easy and open to all.

There were other significant moments that suggested in certain circumstances, the normal rules of brāhmānical pollution and purity were set aside, for instance the brief episode of the woman who elevated herself by placing her feet on Caitanya to get a glimpse of the image of Jagannāth, an act that horrified his companions, but which Caitanya excused because it was in the context of her eager desire to get darśan of the Lord (CC 3.14.21-28). This leniency was an exception born of context, for Caitanya’s prevailing attitude toward women outside the setting of worship was reportedly one of disdain (CC 1.17.236-38; 3.5.31-51; 3.13.77-87); he even banished devotee Choṭa Haridās for contact with a woman, an incredibly harsh penance that ended with his suicide by drowning (CC 3.2.100-164). Interestingly, the jaban Haridās triumphed in the face of the most overt attempt to make him succumb to the sensuality of a prostitute—and to restrain the bodily appetites, he chanted the name nonstop for three days and nights (CC 3.3.91-135 and 3.3.214-48).
The appetite for food presents another seeming anomaly that helps explain how and when the usual rules regarding pollution and rank can be abrogated, openings that allow those of lower rank access to the central activities of the vaiṣṇava community. The meals prepared for Caitanya were often lavish in the extreme, in spite of the fact he was an ascetic. All of the hagiographers write about the food preparation, but Kṛṣṇadās tells in dizzying detail the scores of special food preparations the devotees provided. The normal social constraint for lavishly feeding an ascetic appears to be nullified because of the devotees’ belief that they were feeding Kṛṣṇa Himself. The food left over after first offering it to Caitanya became prasād, the ingestible grace passed on to the devotee. The fixation on this food exchange is so great that the hagiographers record any number of designations for its powerful remnants. The food offering to the deity or naivedya becomes, after consumption, prasād; it is called God’s leftovers or remains (avaśeṣa, avaśiṣṭa, śeṣa, śespātra) and once eaten by another devotee, rubbish (ucchiṣṭa, jhutā, phelā). Jayānanda says that eating prasād is as good as darśan of Jagannāth, pilgrimage to Kāśi, bathing in the Gaṅgā, and listening to the Bhāgavata purāṇa (JCM 6.5.9-23). While food exchange is a pan-Indian system for social ranking—here the devotees clearly indicate their subordination to Caitanya—the sharing and consumption of prasād generates a curious inversion that ultimately glorifies the lowly.

The prasād of Jagannāth could be procured only by those entering the temple and it was called mahāprasād for its salvific potency. Caitanya would often share his leftover mahāprasād with the jaban Haridās, Sanātana, and Rūp. Caitanya’s consumption of the mahāprasād of Jagannāth produced a multiplying effect on its purity and power, a complete inversion of the brāhmaṇical expectation of greater pollution. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj wrote that his own guru, Raghunāth, would scoop rotting mahāprasād that had been eaten, shared, and then discarded into the sewage ditch, then call it sublime (CC 3.6.308-20). On the surface this may seem puzzling, but the message that comes through is a celebration of the humility of the committed devotee, the dāsyā or servitude, which is arguably the most important prerequisite for devotion. But the devotees extended by analogy prasād’s multiplying effect even further to include anyone who practiced the vaiṣṇava path. In this exchange economy centered on grace embodied in God’s leftover food, the lower the devotee fell in the chain of distribution, the greater the power and the greater the blessings. It was not enough to be a dās or servant devotee of Kṛṣṇa, but the servant of a servant, dāsānudās. The inversion of social status was celebrated as higher form of service in the eyes of Kṛṣṇa. Yet, when Caitanya would arrange food for the group in other social situations apart from the consumption of mahāprasād, he carefully observed the status of all brāhmaṇs present by placing them in ordered ranks to receive food prior to
everyone else. The message that people eventually took away from these seemingly contradictory actions was that in overtly devotional settings involving vaisnava, no distinctions were made among the participants, and humility and subservience were prized; but in situations outside explicitly devotional activities, the regular social observances of rank and pollution were acknowledged and operational. It is easy to see how people of lower social status might appropriate this perspective and embrace the vaisnava path as an opportunity for upward social mobility—another appeal that abrogates the strict divisions of rank or varṇa. This would, in part, explain the eventual emergence of a distinct casteless vaisnava jāti still found today.40

How these ideas first translated into the popular imagination is suggested by the hagiographer Jayānanda in his popular Caitanya Maṅgal. To practice as a vaisnava, no matter one’s other social standing, elevated the practitioner above all others. He wrote that a caṇḍāla or jaban who practices ranks above a non- vaisnava brāhman (JCM 11.32-38), indeed vaisnava practitioners stand above all four varṇas, even above renunciant sannyāsis—but among vaisnava devotees there can be no distinctions (JCM 3.20.7-23). To serve the body of an honorable practitioner—he names the jaban Haridās as the example of just such a mahant—is more important than serving an image of Kṛṣṇa (JCM 2.28.10-19). Jayānanda parroted verbatim Kavikarṇapūrī’s statement that when Gaurāṅga danced in kirtan, he proclaimed that he was devoid of any social identity other than vaisnava; he was neither ascetic nor householder, neither brāhman nor kṣatriya, neither vaisya nor śūdra, but only a servant of a servant of a servant (Skt. dāsadānudāsa) of Gopināth (KCCM 16.4; JCM 4.1.9-13). All of the hagiographers have made similar suggestions—and these kinds of statements, once circulated gradually left an indelible mark on the social organization of gauḍiya vaisnava s, but they were not alone in the region.

Similar liberal attitudes toward the fraternity of vaisnava also prevailed among the neo- vaisnava of Assam somewhat before the advent of Caitanya. While a direct connection would be difficult to establish, it is clear that they participated in the great networks of religious aśrama the stretched through the mountain regions and into the plains, including Navadvip for its scholastic centers.41 Notably Advaitācārya and several other devotees in Navadvip hailed from Sylhet, which suggests a possible familiarity. The founder of the neo- vaisnava tradition was Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568 CE), followed by disciple Mādhavadeva (1489-1596 CE). Śaṅkaradeva articulated a religious program called eka śaraṇa nām dharma or “practice of the name as the sole refuge.” To organize his followers, he created the institution of the satra, a semi-monastic community which is open to devotees of all social ranks, and which is headed by a guru called the satrādhikār. The group of
devotees is called the bhakat and Śaṅkaradeva wrote in his compilation titled *kirtana Ghoṣa* that there is no differentiation of rank or jāti in the bhakat. Central to the life of the community is the kirtanghar or nāmghar, a large open structure or prayer hall where devotees chant the names of God, sing the celestial songs or baragīt, produce dance-dramas or aṅkiya nāt for religious instruction. The satra also serves as a general cultural and political center for each community. Significantly, because of the appeal of the tradition to all ranks of society and the simplicity of its practices, ekaśāraṇa induced a number of traditional or ādibāśi groups to join, groups such as the Koch, Āhom, Kāchāri, Čuṭiyā, and Nāgā.42 The spirit of this social leveling among the neo- vaiṣṇavas certainly resonates strongly with gauḍīya vaiṣṇava sensibilities developing side-by-side starting in the 16th century. The independence and different directions the Assamese satras have taken similarly parallels the emergence of different self-contained or semi-independent vaiṣṇava maṇḍalīs within the larger gauḍīya network. In Orissa, the local a parallel movement emerged in the 16th century, centered around the paṇca sakhā or “five companions,” who created a ritual and theological system focused on the supremacy of Jagannāth and his play in the void, śūnyatā, terminology that suggests the imprint of prior Buddhist beliefs in the area.43 It is difficult to judge how far these beliefs affected the vaiṣṇava communities of Utkal, largely because of the activities of Śyāmānanda, the third of the previously mentioned trio of Gosvāmi-trained devotees, whose ancestral reach stretched across much of what is northern Orissa today. But at least one scholar sees a triangulation between gauḍīya, paṇca sakhā, and tantrik sahajiyā vaiṣṇavas.44

The leveling of social distinctions, combined with the fascination to develop love as a tool for salvation, inevitably spread among tantrik practitioners who found the gauḍīya vaiṣṇava conceptual structure amenable to their own concerns to use the body as a vehicle for salvation. From shortly after the time of Caitanya, the record includes individuals who appear to be connected to extensive networks of like-minded gurus and students self-identified as vaiṣṇava sahajiyā, and their links to what today scholars call mainstream gauḍīya vaiṣṇava authors, such as Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, are well-documented.45 For them, Caitanya as the androgyne provides the explicit model for all worshipers: the principles of Rādhā as female and Kṛṣṇa as male are to be found in every human being, but one’s gender indicates the stronger presence of that particular element. Because erotic love, śṛngār, is the ultimate and most inclusive form of love, the physical practice of śṛngār in ritual sexual intercourse can be used to ensure that both partners experience the simultaneous union and separation that Caitanya himself must have experienced by himself within himself. This practice is a culminating
event that occurs only after long and disciplined cultivation of agelessness that enables the practitioner to experience this ecstasy in an unadulterated way—again following the trajectory of Rūp Gosvāmi’s instructions—without the selfishness that drives lust and the lower bodily appetites. Once more, the gauḍīya vaiṣṇava construction of emotion opens the door to greater inclusion, a mark of its extraordinary incisiveness in describing a common human yearning.

With the spread of the gauḍīya vaiṣṇava tradition to all levels of Bengali society, it is no surprise that Caitanya is hailed as a great social reformer, but a closer reading of the record suggests that the political agenda for equality was a by-product of his desire to spread the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to all. The hagiographies agree that Caitanya willingly accommodated any vaiṣṇava devotee, but the tradition continues to acknowledge that context is critical. The area in and around Navadvip today—some five centuries after Caitanya—serves as a microcosm of this larger history. In an extraordinarily sensitive ethnography and ethnology, Sukanya Sarbadhikary examines the sensory domains, the world of affect, of the experience of being a gauḍīya vaiṣṇava in four socially distinct communities in and around Navadvip—householder and temple-managing gosvāmi mahants, ascetic bābājis, tantrik sahajiyās, and followers of ISKCon. She traces how the emotional lives of devotees are transformed by their ritual and spatial environments in completely distinct ways, even though they all live in close proximity and have more than occasional social interactions. Phenomenologically, each group seeks to enter and cultivate an interiority that is gupta Vṛndāvan, the secret world of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s love, heaven itself. She teases out the subtle nuances of affect for each group, demonstrating not only how they differ, but how the differently interiorised experiences become social practices that generate strong empathic continuities. Not surprisingly, the four groups share in the commonality of kirtan, the practice of singing, creating a sonic landscape that is understood to manifest directly Radha’s and Krishna’s passions, yet socially these groups remain apart. Caitanya is their shared inspiration, his stories are shared, the texts his followers produced celebrating Caitanya’s extraordinary religiosity are likewise common to all. Yet each group comes to inhabit a different physical and sensory world—each one liberating, but still socially constrained, hinting at the emancipating work of the tradition that still finds itself bumping into social differences that resist full accommodation into a Kṛṣṇa-centric world.
Notes and References

1 It is important to note that the terms 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' (both capitalized) will refer only to the contemporary political rhetoric where the religions are seen as exclusive bounded entities. References prior to the nineteenth century to vaisnava, sufi, musalman, jaban, and so forth, will not be capitalized in order to signify a religious orientation, rather than a fixed political-religious identity. The boundaries separating the communities were much more porous than the politics of the last two centuries would suggest.

2 Narahari Cakravarti, Narottamvilas, edited by Ramnarayan Vidyaratna, Murshidabad, 1300 BS, ch. 6: 69-71; hereafter cited as NV.


4 Narahari Cakravartī [Ghanaśyam Das], Bhaktiratnakar, edited by Ramnarayan Vidyaratna, 3d ed. (Murshidabad: Ramdev Misra at Radharaman Press of Baharampur for Haribhaktipradayini Sabha, 1332 BS); the festivals are surveyed in ch. 9.


6 The dham of Kṛṣṇa is constituted of all of his companions in Brāj as well as the landscape itself; wherever Kṛṣṇa goes, his dham accompanies him. When Caitanya was recognized as Kṛṣṇa, his own followers were understood to be 16th century descendants of Kṛṣṇa's companions.


8 Rūpa Gosvāmin, Bhaktirasāṁṛtasindhu, edited with Bangla translation by Haridās Dās, including the commentaries Durgasamgamanī Ṭikā of Jīva Gosvāmin, Artharāṭṭapadīpikā of Mukundadāsa Gosvāmin, and Bhaktisāra-pradarsini Ṭikā of Viśvanātha Cakravartin, 3d ed. Mathurā, 495 GA); for an English translation, see David

9 Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Ujjvalanilamani*, edited with Bengali translation by Haridās Dās, with the commentary *Svāmapramodini Tīkā* of Viṣṇudāsa, Navadvip, 469 GA).

10 Jiva Gosvāmin, *Bhāgavata sandarbha*, edited by Puridās Mahāśay, 6 bks. in 2 vols. (Vṛṇḍāvan: Haridās Sārampa, 1357 BS); also called the 'six' or *Ṣat sandarbha*, the set includes *Tattva, Bhāgavat, Paramāmī, Kṛṣṇa, Bhakti, Pritī*.


13 The first two devotees sent to Braj and to bear the honorific title of Gosvāmi were Bhūgarbha and Loknāth, neither of whom composed texts. The remaining Six Gosvāmins, as they are frequently tagged, included Gopāl Bhaṭṭa, Raghunāth Dās, Raghunāth Bhaṭṭa, Rūp, Sanātana, and Jīv, the nephew of the latter two and who sent the trio back to Bengal. In later configurations, Kṛṣṇadās would himself become one of the eight. See Nareścandra Jān, *Vṛṇḍāvaner Chay Gosvāmi*, Kolkata, 1970; see also the individual entries in Haridās Dās, *Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhān*, 4 parts in 2 vols. Navadvip, 471 GA, vol. 2, pt. 3.

14 For a summary of the argument, see the Introduction to the Dimock and Stewart translation of the CC: 99-106.

15 For an extensive study of the way the *Caitanya caritamṛta* came to define the tradition, see Tony K. Stewart, *The Final Word*, chs. 5-7; the Khetūṛī festival is addressed in ch. 7.

16 The social organization called the *mandali* and the fractal nature of community replication is explored in Tony K. Stewart, 'Replicating Vaiṣṇava Worlds: Organizing Devotional Space through the Architectonics of the Mandala,' *South Asian History and Culture* 2, no. 2 (April 2011): 300-336.

17 For a study of his life and works, including full texts of sixteen compositions, see Nirdadprāśād Nāṭh, comp., *Narottamdās o tāhār rasanāvali*, Kolkata, 1975.

18 For the most comprehensive study of the textual tradition of the Caitanya hagiographical corpus, see Bimānbhāri Majumār, *Śri Caitanya Cariter Upādān*, Calcutta, 1959. For the most extensive study of the intellectual history and theological positioning of the texts in this tradition, see Stewart, *The Final Word*, esp. chs. 3-6. For an extraordinary compilation of and composite assembly of the life of Caitanya from hagiographical works, see Walther Eidlitz, *Kṛṣṇa -Caitanya: Sein Leben und Seine Lehre*, Stockholm


20 Chronotope—how time and space are configured in narrative—is a term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in the essay ‘Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel’ in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, translated by Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist, Austin, 1981: 84-258.

21 Jayānanda Miśra, *Caitanya Māgbal*, edited by Bimenbehari Majumdar and Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay, with English and Bangla Introductions, Calcutta, 1971; hereafter cited as *JCM*. These and many other stories can be found in some twenty-three chapters of the text, 2.1-23, then with scattered additional allusions throughout, such as Gaurāṅga’s release of Tilottama from imprisonment in a tree, in chapters 2.37-38.

22 Vṛndāvan Dās, *Caitanya Bhāgavat*, edited with the commentary *Nitāikaruṇākallollinī Tikā* by Rādhāgovinda Nāth, 6 vols., Kolkata, 1373 BS; hereafter cited as *CBh*.

23 There is a myriad of studies that have documented the entrance into the cave as a transformative moment in the psyche of the hero, e.g., Joseph Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Bollingen Series 17, 2d ed. Princeton, 1968; for the many different versions of the trope, see Stith Thompson, *A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books and Local Legends*, revised and enlarged, 6 vols. Bloomington, 1955-58, esp. vol. 6, “Heroes” Z200-Z299.


25 Altogether the number of *padas* exceeds ten thousand. The largest collection of *padāvalī* compiled by scholars is the *Padakalpataru* compiled by Vaisnava Das, edited with an introduction by Satīscandra Rāy, 5 vols., Sāhitya Parisat Granthāvalī, no. 50 Kolkata, 1322-38 BS. Within the tradition, the most comprehensive collection is *Xripadāṁrārasamudra*, compiled by Radhamohan Thākur, edited by Umā Rāy, with the Sanskrit commentary *Mahābhāvanusārini Tikā* by the compiler Calcutta, 1391 BS. For *padas* devoted exclusively to Caitanya, numbering several thousand, see *Gaurapadatarabhāgini* compiled by Jagadbandhu Bhadra, edited by Mrōlâkānti Ghos, 2d ed., Sāhitya Parisat Granthāvalī, no. 10, Kolkata: 1341 BS.

26 The *pandit* Kaviṅkarnapūr identified well in excess of two hundred of Caitanya’s companions with their heavenly counterparts; see Kaviṅkarnapūr [Paramānanda Sen], *Gauraganoddeśadipika*, edited with Bangla translation by Rāmnārāyan Vidyāratna, 4th
ed. Murshidabad, 1329 BS; hereafter cited as GGUD. Importantly several of the hagiographers would refer to the five key figures, only occasionally substituting Haridās Thākur or Narahari Sarkār for Śrīvāsa, but seldom naming the Pañca tattva theory until Kavikarnaṇḍūr and Kṛṣṇa dās Kavīrāj articulated explicitly the concept. Kṛṣṇadās explains the wishing tree of bhakti in CC 1.9-12.

27 Vāsudeva Ghoṣ, Gaurāṅga Sannyāsa, edited by Abdul Karim Shahitya Visarad, Kolkata, 1324 BS.

28 Kavikarnaṇḍūr [Paramānanda Sen], Caitanyacandrodayam nāṭakam, edited with commentary and Bangla translation by Manindranāth Guha, Pānihāṭi, 24 Pargānas: Sāvitrī Guha, 1378 BS.

29 Locan Dās, Caitanya maṅgal, edited by Mrṇālkānti Ghoṣ, with the padaś of Locan Dās, Kalikātā: Amṛtabājār Patrikā Office, 1354 BS.

30 These experiences, first detailed by Murāri and Vṛndāvan Dās, come to occupy much of Kṛṣṇadāś’s narrative of Caitanya’s last years; among the most detailed descriptions, see the following chapters: CC 2.8; 2.17; 2.18; 2.19, and much of the entire antya līlā.

31 For a detailed analysis of this unique rhetorical strategy, see Stewart, The Final Word, ch. 6.

32 See Gopāla Bhatta, Haribhaktivilāsa, with the commentary Dīgārśiniṭṭka of Sanātana Gosvāmin, 2 vols. (Barahanagar, WB: Pāṭhabāḍī Āśram, n.d.). Some scholars credit Sanātana with the text.


34 As reported in the Premvilās, Virhaṃvīr became the disciple of Śrīnīvāsācārya after the famous incident where his men stole the manuscripts of Gosvāmi texts and the CC (see PV 13: 161-86). He also constructed an extensive temple complex in Viṣṇupūr; see Pika Ghosh, Temple to Love: Architecture and Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Bengal, Bloomington and Indianapolis 2005.

35 Sources for this survey are Ahmad Sharif, Bāmnālī oBāṅglā Sāhitya, vol. 2 Dhaka, 1390 BS; Sukumar Sen, Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itihās, 5 vols. 1347-65 BS–Reprint: Kolkata, 1383-88 BS, vol. 1, parts 1-2; and Asit Kumār Bandyopadhyay, Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itibṛttā, 4 Vols. 1365-80 BS, Reprint, Kalikātā: 1373-90 BS, Vols. 1-2.

36 See the introduction to David Haberman’s translation of Bhaktirasāṃrutasindhi; see also Sushil Kumar De, Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal, 2nd ed. Calcutta, 1961 for an outline of the developing theology; and idem., History of Sanskrit Poetics, 2 Vols., 1960, Reprint in Calcutta. 1976 for the rasaśāstra. For this section, see also Cinmayī Caṭṭopādhyāy, Bhaktirasera Vivartana, Research Series, no. 77 Calcutta, 1972.


Today scholars routinely refer to the ‘converted Haridās’ and even have generated a karmic explanation for his status, that is, in a former life he had mistreated the sacred basil *tulsi* and was cursed to be born in a *musalmān* family (see Haridās Dās, *Gaudīya vaisṇava abhidhāna*, 3:1409, cols. 2-3). But conversion does not at all seem to be the issue, for there is no concept in 16th century Bangla that maps onto the contemporary notions of the term, which is based largely on 19th and 20th century Protestant Christian notions of rational assent to religious propositions that result in a conscious change of heart. The participation of Haridās was much more subtle than that, for he did not have to change his practice while participating with the devotees.


Indrani Chatterjee has documented irrefutable evidence of extensive monastic networks connected by kinship, mendicancy, agriculture, and sharing of resources that makes clear exclusion based on religion was not the norm, hence Haridās’ presence among the vaisnavas is not as jarring as contemporary rhetoric would have us believe. See Indrani Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, Memories of Northeast India*, Delhi, 2013. The inter-relation of religious mendicants, such as süfis, sannyāsīs, nāths, vairāgīs, and so forth is also widely confirmed; see Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (3rd ed.), Calcutta, 1969.


The two standard English studies of the sahajiyās are: Manindra Mohan Bose, *The Post Caitanya Sahajiyā Cult*, Calcutta, 1930; Reprint–Delhi, 1986 and Edward C. Dimock, Jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā Cult of Bengal*, 1966; Reprint–Chicago, 1989. For an example of a text connecting directly to Kṛṣṇadās, see Ākiñcan Dās, *Vīvarta-vilās [arthāt caitanya upāsan evaṁ nigudhā sādhana tattva]* Kalikātā, 1281 b.s; see also Stewart, *The Final Word*, ch. 8.