**Theological problems in A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami’s writings**

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# A. Sambandha jñāna: problems with jīva tattva

## 1. The jīva is sat-cit-ananda- full of knowledge, eternity and bliss

Sri Sridhar Swami writes in his commentary on the Visnu purana verse, hladinya-samvit-aslistah (see CC 18.114), that hladini (bliss) and samvit (knowledge) is present *only* in Bhagavan, and not in the jīvas. Agreeing with this, Sri Rupa Goswami in the Bhakti rasamrta sindhu explains that hladini and samvit descends at the bhāva stage (i.e. when sadhana is successful) into the jīva, and this mixture is called ‘bhāva’.

Knowledge and bliss inhere only in Bhagavan- they are his personal energies. The jīva does not have knowledge inherent in it. Rather, all its knowledge is acquired by and stored in the mind, which is external to the jīva. The jīva has no mechanism to store knowledge within itself as samvit is not its energy. Knowledge of śāstra and indeed anything else needs to be given to the jīva by the guru. This agrees with our everyday experience.

There is also the erroneous notion that the jīva is full of bliss. In actuality, the jīva’s nature is ‘absence of misery’ as experienced during deep sleep. Sri Jīva Goswami explains this at length. The bliss of the jīva is not the same as hladini śakti. In the material world, the jīva is full of misery actually, as again explained in the hladinya-samvit verse. When the jīva gets bhāva, then and only then can it experience bliss.

## 2. The jīva desires to reject Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world and come to the material world

The mechanism of desire is misunderstood because Bhaktivedanta Swami appears to present desire as an inherent property of the jīva. This contradicts Sri Jīva, who explains that icchatva- the capacity to desire is inherent to the jīva, not iccha or desire itself. The difference between the two is important.

If iccha is inherent to the jīva, then the jīva can desire independently from Kṛṣṇa. But this cannot happen, as it violates Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy and control over everything. Icchatva means that the jīva can desire, but not independently. To desire, one needs to have knowledge to act on. As we saw in point 2, knowledge is not inherent to the jīva. Therefore, the jīva is dependent on the senses and the mind to provide information to it; based on this information, the jīva can desire – i.e. choose a desired course of action. Therefore, all desires ultimately depend on the mind and the senses, which are Kṛṣṇa’s energy, not the jīva’s.

In the spiritual world, the mind and senses are made of the hladini śakti (as explained in the Caitanya Caritamrta). Because the only purpose of the hladini śakti is to serve Kṛṣṇa, this śakti cannot function to present the option of ‘rejecting’ Kṛṣṇa and to independently enjoy. Once in the spiritual world, the jīva, being a dependent desirer, can never have the desire to reject Kṛṣṇa. The notion that the jīva can reject Kṛṣṇa while in Vaikuntha reflects a fundamental lack of understanding of the basic principles of jīva-tattva (which falls under sambandha jñāna).

## 3. Having been in the spiritual world, the svarupa (form) of the jīva needs only to be re-discovered or re-remembered by sadhana

Nothing could be farther from the truth. The scriptures explain that the jīva has been in the material world from beginningless time, and has never been in the spiritual world. The jīva has no svarupa because it is formless - the jīva is anu or atomic as explained in the Paramatma sandarbha, and the anu being without parts has no form. Form is superimposed on the jīva in the form of the physical body, which develops according to the state of the mind.

Sadhana involves a conscious choice as explained in the Bhakti rasamrta sindhu. This choice occurs when one chooses the guru, and the sthayi bhāva (permanent mood in the mind) of the guru (for example a Narayana devotee, or Rama devotee, or Kṛṣṇa devotee) is the sthayi bhāva that the disciple ultimately gets as the fruit of sadhana by the guru’s mercy. Once achieved, the sthayi bhāva can never change. This sthayi-bhāva is responsible for developing the spiritual body upon the body’s demise.

This misconception has created the rather strange notion in the minds of devotees that they might be a stick, a cow or a peacock in the spiritual world. These notions contradict the prayer that followers sing at tulasi arti everyday in ISKCON temples- kara nija dasi – make me a maid-servant. An astute person would not but help notice this.

This author likens the ISKCON experience to driving with a fogged window. One can make out some dim shapes, but is never really sure what is what. Followers react to the many many uncertainties created by books like the Bhagavad Gita As It Is or the Nectar of Devotion, by viewing uncertainties as inevitable because of the mystical nature of bhakti, or because of their own fallen state. This unfortunately puts followers in a vicious circle of ignorance and ineffective practices.

## 4. The jīva has free will

This is another way of saying that desire (and not the capacity to desire) is inherent to the jīva. Refer to point 3.

## 5. The jīva was envious of Kṛṣṇa and therefore finds itself in the material world.

The notion that the jīva is originally envious is false because the scriptures explain that the jīva has been in the material world eternally. The acaryas use the Sanskrit word ‘anadi’ to express this, which unfortunately has been misinterpreted to mean ‘a long time ago’. Some jīvas may despise Kṛṣṇa in the material world, but there was no ‘original envy’ or ‘original sin’ that caused these jīvas to descend into the material world. The jīvas cannot desire independently of the mind. There is no envy intrinsic to the jīva, and all jīvas when stripped off the mind and body are pure and blameless atmas.

## 6. The jīva is part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa

Sri Jīva explains in the Paramatma Sandarbha that the jīva is part and parcel of Paramatma. The jīva is Paramatma’s śakti.

## 7. Like an ocean and its drop, the jīva, which is part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, has the same qualities as Kṛṣṇa albeit in limited ‘quantities’

This analogy can be problematic, because then Kṛṣṇa would be the net sum of the jīvas. It also seems to contradict śāstra. Kṛṣṇa mentions that the jīva is an amsa of his (in the 15th chapter of the Gita), but in Gaudiya theology, the jīva has a specific ontological category- the tatastha śakti. The word tatastha means that the jīva can be under the control of māyā or under the control of the hladini śakti. It does not mean that like Kṛṣṇa, the jīva possesses the hladini śakti or māyā śakti (as would be implied by the ocean and a drop). These śaktis are distinct, and will always remain distinct.

# B. Sambandha jñāna: problems with Bhagavad tattva.

## 1. The material world was created against Kṛṣṇa’s wishes to facilitate the jīva’s enjoyment[[1]](#footnote-1).

This notion violates fundamental principles of Bhagavad-tattva as explained by Sri Jīva Goswami in the Sandarbhas. To make a long story short, Sri Jīva explains that Bhagavan acts only (and only) for his devotees. Therefore, Jīva explains the simple fact that the world exists to facilitate bhakti (devotion) for bhaktas (devotees). Note also that the world is eternal, and therefore there could be no ‘initial’ time at which Bhagavan, against his wishes, created the material world. The notion that Bhagavan also acts against his wishes violates his Bhagavatta- Lordship.

## 2. Brahman liberation (sayujya mukti) is not permanent

This notion is false because it contradicts Jīva Goswami’s Bhagavat Sandarbha and shows a fundamental misunderstanding of Brahman. Brahman is Kṛṣṇa himself, but devoid of attributes. The word mukti means freedom from the subtle and gross bodies. Sri Jīva Goswami explains that Brahman liberation (sayujya mukti) is eternal.

ISKCON books **QUOTE NEEDED** present the notion that the jīva gets restless after being in the Brahman effulgence for some time, and then comes to the material world. The problem is that after attaining Brahman, the jīva cannot desire anything being devoid of a mind and senses (see point A2). The jīva identifies with Brahman in this state, and this identification is permanent.

This misunderstanding pervades the books, making it very difficult for readers to understand what Brahman is or isn’t.

## 3. Kṛṣṇa has put us to sleep in Vaikuntha, and this world is just our dream[[2]](#footnote-2)

In response to a question by his disciples about his opposite statements on the jīva’s fall (the jīva fell and also did not fall), Bhaktivedanta Swami responded that the jīvas are actually not in the material world. They (i.e. us) are in Vaikuntha right now, but Kṛṣṇa has put them (us) to sleep in Vaikuntha, while showing them a dream that they are in the material world. Therefore they have not fallen (still in Vaikuntha), but have fallen (dreaming of the material world).

Unfortunately, this notion opposes the strong emphasis of the Gaudiya acaryas on the reality of the material world. The world is not false, it is our identification with it which is false. We are in the material world from beginningless time. This notion also gives Kṛṣṇa a task, which he does not do (this is not anywhere in śāstra) – of putting jīvas to sleep and weaving dreams for them. Kṛṣṇa has nothing to do with the world of māyā, and is busy in his Lila.

Along those lines, Bhaktivedanta swami’s commentary on the first verse of the Bhagavatam rather closely follows Sridhar Swami’s commentary. Following Sridhara swami’s approach, Bhaktivedanta swami takes yatra trisargo mrsa to mean that the material world is unreal. The Goswamis would bristle at this translation, as Sri Jīva spent a lot of time in the Sandarbhas countering such notions. The claim that the material world is unreal or is like a dream squarely belongs to the Advaitavadis and the Gaudiyas are supposed to refute them following in the footsteps of Sri Jīva!

To be fair, Bhaktivedanta swami does make the point that the material world is real in different places elsewhere, but he also states that the material world is a dream. As a result, there is no end of confusion on this topic. **VISVANATH AND JIVA ALSO DIFFER ON THIS** Devotees quote one sentence after another, mining the large literature left behind by Bhaktivedanta swami, and argue relentlessly. As just one example, see <http://www.dandavats.com/?p=17732>. But the quote mining and quote wars just demonstrates that there is no possibility in ISKCON to resolve these problems as Bhaktivedanta swami is no more, and most devotees refuse to accept any other person (such as Sri Jīva Goswami) as authoritative.

It is this writer’s personal experience that there is never any such confusion, on any topic, in Sri Visvanatha, Sri Jīva, Sri Sanatana or Sri Rupa’s writings. Each of these acaryas was rigorously trained in the sat darsanas and were experts in Sanskrit, Indian poetics and so on. Considering that Bhaktivedanta swami only met his guru thrice for short periods (a day at most), it might be assumed that he was not trained rigorously in śāstra by his guru (a process which takes decades of learning), was misinformed, and was ‘learning on the job’. Unfortunately, legions of ISKCON followers are paying the price of confusion, and no real hope of ever resolving these things. It is this writer’s experience that almost any statement, on any topic made by Bhaktivedanta swami could be contradicted with another opposing statement from him (see point C9 for more on this).

# C. Abhidheya jñāna- bhakti tattva

## 1. Raganuga bhakti as the fruit of vaidhi bhakti

In one of the sections of the Nectar of Devotion, Bhaktivedanta Swami asserts that the practice of vaidhi bhakti will lead to raganuga bhakti, which he translates as spontaneous devotion. This contradicts Rupa Goswami who explains that raganuga and vaidhi bhakti are two different sadhanas. The translation “spontaneous devotion” applies to ragatmika bhakti –which is indeed spontaneous love of the pure devotees in Goloka Vrndavana- but not to raganuga bhakti. The unfortunate result is that followers have false notions about what raganuga and vaidhi bhakti really are. Practitioners do not have a clear understanding of the goal of raganuga uttama bhakti, of the meaning of raganuga bhakti, and a clear understanding of the process to achieve their goal. The problems surrounding jīva tattva discussed above preclude any chance for a thinking devotee to even begin to ask if his or her practices are appropriate for the achievement of the goal.

## 2. Ajnata-sukrti

Bhaktivedanta swami instructed his followers to do sankirtana in the streets. The concept driving this instruction is that the onlookers hear Kṛṣṇa’s name, and therefore get benefitted. The notion that hearers will get benefitted is called ajnata –sukrti (literally good credits obtained without their knowledge). This also has been used to emphasize the power of prasada- giving someone prasada can purify them even though they may not even know that it is prasada. There is only one problem – the words ajnata sukrti are not present in the śāstras, and are an innovation coined by Bhaktivinoda Thakura in his writings.

Instead, forcing onlookers to hear Kṛṣṇa’s names ignores the Padma purana’s injunction that it is an offense to instruct another on the holy name when the person does not have sraddha or is not willing to hear. Such chanting can and does irritate them, and as a result the chanter commits an offense to the name.

Ajnata sukrti unfortunately ignores the basic teaching of Rupa Goswami that sraddha- faith – is a pre-requisite for bhakti. Giving someone prasada when the person can dis-respect it by throwing it away again amounts to an offense on the part of the giver.

## 3. Jñāna versus bhakti.

Any action requires proper knowledge, and without knowledge, proper action cannot ensue. This includes the actions of bhakti. The knowledge of bhakti is distinct from jñāna; jñāna specifically means the pursuit of Brahman liberation in the Goswami’s books, and therefore is deprecated by them.

Judging by the attitudes amongst practitioners, Bhaktivedanta Swami’s books appear to have created the impression that *all* knowledge (popularly called jñāna in ISKCON circles) is inferior, and that chanting alone is sufficient and enough. QUOTE NEEDED But even chanting can be done in two ways: the correct way, and the incorrect way. Without knowledge of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra, of the offenses that accompany it etc. etc., how can one chant? Many an intelligent follower deprecates the value of clear comprehension of the basic principles of bhakti. There is little appreciation of the fact that jñāna of bhakti is distinct from jñāna of the Brahma-vadis. Jñāna of the Bhagavatam is not jñāna but bhakti!

The deprecation of knowledge by his followers has resulted in a strangely contradictory attitude among the followers that on the one hand seek to dismiss the many sastric irregularities in Bhaktivedanta swami’s teachings as being of concern only to those overly concerned with knowledge (the jnanis), and on the other hand support the distribution of books that have the express purpose of giving ‘knowledge’ (which is also a stated mission of ISKCON).

There is also the ethical problem that the movement represents itself as presenting ‘bonafide knowledge’ without ‘manufacturing anything’ and delivering it as one ‘delivers mail’. Such assertions mislead the public, because they ignore ground realities that are pointed out in this document. They amount to dishonesty in the name of saving another’s soul, but puts the followers in very difficult situations when the sleight of hand is ultimately discovered. By then, most followers are paralyzed by the fear of not being offensive to the founder acarya, and are forced to continue on despite their many internal disagreements with his books.

A key principle of raganuga uttama bhakti is that the disciple must be completely surrendered to the guru, and not maintain fundamental disagreements with the guru. Without this attunement between the guru and the disciple, there is no possibility for advancement in bhakti, because attunement to Bhagavan occurs through attunement with the guru. Yet, this writer is aware of prominent followers in the movement who *fundamentally* disagree with Bhaktivedanta swami on key issues, while gamely continuing on in the movement. They develop their own rationalizations like “this is Mahaprabhu’s movement, not Prabhupada’s movement”, “The inconsistencies are only due to time, place and circumstance”, “Prabhupada is a pure devotee, so we should not and cannot challenge him”, “how can thousands of people across the globe chant and worship in his temples if he did not have any śakti?”

In ISKCON, the end justifies the means- as long as one gets another to chant the maha-mantra, it doesn’t matter if the books have problems. What the members seem to ignore is that Bhaktivedanta swami’s books contradict his own claims of fidelity and authenticity, and lead to questions about his legitimacy. History has shown that numbers of followers are not a yardstick to measure truth. The yardstick has and must remain fidelity to śāstra, and with very good reason.

The ethical question of why members should represent the movement as presenting “bonafide knowledge”, when they themselves internally harbor deep disagreements about the knowledge, is a hard one to face, and most ignore it. The price is paid by converts who enthusiastically study the numerous books that can take years to read- only to find after years of study (if they persevere and are honest) that there are irreconciliable and non-trivial conceptual differences with the Goswamis in Bhaktivedanta swami’s books. And the ultimate price is paid by Gaudiya Vaisnavism, whose tenets are becoming distorted and whose revered and ancient acaryas appear to have been rendered irrelevant/ inapplicable to present times by the sheer size of Bhaktivedanta swami’s followers.

## 4. An artificial divide between the actions of bhakti and other actions

Most followers do not understand that uttama bhakti is a twenty-four activity, which includes sleep! Rupa Goswami explains that the word anusilanam in the definition of bhakti indicates all (>2000) verbal roots in Sanskrit- that is, all actions in the day are included under uttama bhakti.

## 5. Unconventional and contradictory translations of the Bhagavad Gita

The book Bhagavad Gita As It Is presents unconventional translations of the terms karma yoga and jñāna yoga, which has caused confusion among even the intellectuals in the movement. Where Rupa Goswami defines bhakti as ‘uncovered by karma and jñāna’, Bhaktivedanta Swami defines karma yoga as ‘action in Kṛṣṇa consciousness’. A reader would have difficulty in distinguishing karma yoga from bhakti yoga after studying the Bhagavad Gita As It Is alone. The book does not follow the commentaries of the predecessors on these translations, even though there is a popular notion that it follows Baladeva Vidyabhusana’s treatment of the Gita. While it does borrow some notions (like translating karta as the soul (Baladeva) as opposed to ahankara (Visvanatha) in chapter 18), it essentially represents a peculiar kind of interpretation of the Gita.

Yet, we are told by the author himself that book presents ‘unchanged’ knowledge passed on through the “parampara”, and that it presents the knowledge ‘As it is’. This is a contradiction. Novelty alone is not grounds for challenging the interpretation but the misleading title and claims about it being faithful to its predecessors are false. In the world of its followers though, the purpose is to get people to chant, and that should be enough[[3]](#footnote-3).

Bhaktivedanta swami’s translation of the Gita also contradicts rather glaringly, the 25th chapter of the eleventh canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam, where Kṛṣṇa himself separates karma, jñāna and bhakti rather categorically. It is a matter of no small concern that an acarya considered prominent and bonafide by his followers presents knowledge in the Gita, which is in direct contradiction to the most sacred book for his followers - the Bhagavatam, and which contradicts the definition of uttama bhakti given by Rupa Goswami.

Apart from just inconsistent presentations, devotees have paid a steep price for this confusion. Because practitioners tend to adopt practices of jñāna or karma outlined in the Gita, when in fact this is forbidden by Rupa Goswami in the Bhakti rasamrta sindhu. The devotee’s adhikara is different from that of a jnani or a karma yogi. A bhakta should only perform bhakti, and not follow the practices of karma or jñāna. The result is a hodgepodge of practices that devotees follow without understanding the distinction even between these three.

## 6. Chanting

There is a notion that numbers of rounds in chanting are of paramount importance in sadhana. Practitioners tend to feel that the amount of advancement correlates with numbers. This goes against Sri Rupa Goswami’s instruction that sadhana bhakti is not like a normal sadhana (practice). Lifting 50 pounds every day for 10 minutes is likely to build better muscle than lifting 50 pounds every other day for 5 minutes. But Kṛṣṇa’s names do not behave according to such mathematical laws according to Sri Rupa. Quality is by far more important than quantity.

**STILL SANKHYA WAS PRESCRIBED – SANKHYA PURVAKA NAMA GANA, 6 GOSWAMIS DID 1 LAKH JAPA DAILY.**

The pressure created by the arbitrary 16 rounds (arbitrary because this number is not mentioned anywhere in śāstra) creates a mentality of ‘finish the rounds’ in the minds of the devotees, and promotes inattentive chanting – chanting while driving, while walking, while doing any number of things. This has been listed as an offense in the Padma purana. This hurts the chanter, and produces few if any tangible results, and ultimately results in a decrease in faith in the power of chanting. Chanting becomes just another routine, and an irritable one, which means that the devotee has created offensive samskaras for chanting. This is a greatly unfortunate occurrence.

**RUPA GOSWAMI WROTE THE JAUNDICE VERSE IN UPADESAMRTA**

It would seem far better to customize the number of rounds to individual devotees, as has been the traditional practice.

## 7. Preaching

Bhaktivedanta swami’s books have created the impression that each member must do their bit to ‘preach’. The movement is called a ‘preaching movement’. As applied by the followers, it seems of no apparent concern that a necessary pre-requisite for preaching should be both realization and knowledge. Members consider it their sacred duty to preach, but internally may harbor doubts about the theology. The notion that preaching is a part of sadhana has created a zone of comfort within members who tend to drown out their own doubts, by preaching to others and netting a ‘catch’. Whether preaching is compassion for others on the part of members or an effort to burnish their own ego by promoting their gurus remains unclear. Members may even lie to potential donors so as to bring their money to the temple (which is presumed to give ajnata sukrti to the donors). Preaching is most definitely not listed among the 64 limbs of bhakti outlined by Sri Rupa. Nor does the practice of deceitful behavior in the name of preaching find support in the Goswamis’ books.

## 8. Transcendental competition

 We are told by Bhaktivedanta swami that transcendental competition is good because it promotes preaching (for an ISKCON writer’s view of this topic, see <http://btg.krishna.com/transcendental-competition>). **MORE CONCRETE QUOTE NEEDED** We are told that distributing Bhaktivedanta swami’s books in a mood of competition with other sādhakas is a transcendental achievement that pleases Kṛṣṇa. Examples are given of the gopas competing with Kṛṣṇa or the gopis’ beauty and Kṛṣṇa’s beauty (as in the article at the link above). This concept fails to take note of the difference between sādhakas and siddhas. Does Rupa Goswami list ‘competition between sādhakas’ as a limb of bhakti? Can there be any comparison between a siddha’s actions and a sādhaka’s actions? Did Rupa and Sanatana Goswami, who were playing the part of sādhakas, compete with each other or anyone else? Is there any example of competition between sādhakas in the history of Gaudiya Vaisnavism?

A competitive attitude permeates ISKCON, where devotees tend to establish a pecking order for just about everything- the number of rounds, the seniority in terms of age, the relative prestige of gurus, the knowledge of śāstra, the capacity to sing kirtana, the number of books one might have penned, the number of devotees one has ‘made’, the amount of donations one has brought, etc. etc. A genuine seeker would feel distinctly uncomfortable in this institution- it is more like a corporate organization than a sanga of devotees. Unfortunately, this writer has never observed any ‘transcendence’ in these competitions in ISKCON across its different temples. Quite far from the truth- competition is observably seen to inflate or deflate egos and create ill will between followers and their corresponding gurus.

## 9. Mutual contradictions

Bhaktivedanta swami’s books are copious. The numerous letters, and the several transcribed conversations and lectures make for a bewildering amount of information to read. Establishing a single theological point beyond any doubt is a major challenge for followers. Members are seen to differ on practically every issue owing to vast contradictions in the books, letters and lectures. Here are just a few

1. Brahmin versus Vaisnava
	1. Vaisnavas are superior to Brahmins as they are transcendentally situated.
	2. Without Brahmin diksa, the Vaisnava is not allowed on the altar. (giving Brahmin diksa to a Vaisnava appears similar to giving a high school diploma to someone with a PhD).
2. Sannyasa
	1. Sannyasa remains the last stage in life to be aspired for by ISKCON male followers.
	2. Yet, sannyasa was not allowed in Gaudiya Vaisnavism. This was started by Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati. None of the Goswamis nor their followers took sannyasa. **WHAT ABOUT BHEK, A NON ISKCON SANNYAS?** Sannyasa is part of varnasrama dharma, not bhakti. Sri Rupa and Sri Jīva Goswami categorically state that a person who has sraddha for bhakti should not continue varnasrama duties.
3. The jīva falls, the jīva does not fall
	1. In numerous places, the jīva is mentioned to have fallen from the spiritual world.
	2. In other places, the jīva is explained to never fall from the spiritual world. The arguments in the movement go on relentlessly over this point.
4. Varnasrama
	1. On the one hand, Bhaktivedanta swami deprecates varnasrama in some contexts and lauds Vaisnavism.
	2. On the other hand, he mentioned in his final days that 50% of his work remained undone because he had not established Varnasrama. Varnasrama and its place within the movement remains a vexing issue for the followers to this day[[4]](#footnote-4).
5. Science
	1. Bhaktivedanta swami is distinctly and unambiguously antagonistic toward science, including scientists whom he generally calls rascals and atheistic demons.
	2. On the other hand, Bhaktivedanta swami expresses the desire that his followers engage with scientists to give social acceptability to the movement. This is what Bhaktivedanta Institute is attempting to do, but with not much success.

# D. Prayojana – the goal

## 1. Back to Godhead.

Back to Godhead is ‘salokya’ mukti (being on the same planet as Kṛṣṇa), but the unfortunate emphasis on this phrase can and has created a desire for salokya in the minds of practitioners, instead of for uttama bhakti. Uttama bhaktas, Rupa Goswami explains, do not accept salokya mukti even if it is presented without active service to Kṛṣṇa. Also, we are gently told by the phrase ‘Back to Godhead’ that we were with Godhead, and then we fell.

## 2. Prema is dormant in the heart of the jīva and needs to be awakened by chanting[[5]](#footnote-5).

This is sahajism. Saha means with. Ja means born. So saha-ja is born with (prema). In reality, as Sridhar swami explains, hladini śakti or prema is Bhagavan’s śakti, and is only with Bhagavan. Only when he desires to give it, can the jīva get prema. As prema is the goal of life, once prema is acquired, the jīva can never come under māyā again. When the jīva gets prema (or more accurately bhāva, which is the first ray of prema), the jīva becomes fixed in what is called ‘sthayi bhāva’.

To say that someone who eternally has prema is now under māyā implies that Radharani herself can come under māyā, and any pure devotee and even Kṛṣṇa himself can come under māyā. Jīva Goswami explains in the Sandarbhas that Kṛṣṇa does not come under māyā ever because of his svarupa śakti- the hladini śakti, or prema. Therefore, this notion is an offense toward prema, toward bhakti, toward Sri Radharani and toward Sri Kṛṣṇa himself.

To be continued.

1. Srila Prabhupada – “Yes. You forced Krishna to allow you to come. Just like sometimes a child forces his father. Father says, “My dear son, do not do this. Do not go there.” But he insists, “Oh, I must go. I must go.” “All right, you go at your risk. That’s all. And you suffer. What can be done?” Because you are Son of God you have got independence, full independence, almighty—therefore you have acquired the quality of your father. You have got little independence. So God does not interfere with your little independence. If you persist that “I must go and enjoy independently,” so God says, “All right, you can go.” This is the position. You have to take sanction. That is a fact. But when you persist, God sanctions. And you come and enjoy”. Melbourne, Australia June 25, 1974. Also refer to Sacinandana swami’s interview at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bYOeR2sI_8>, at around the 3:50 mark. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See <http://www.dandavats.com/?p=4275> for a detailed description of Prabhupada’s views on the subject. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. It might be useful to note here that ISKCON may not belong to an unbroken parampara. There is good circumstantial evidence that Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati may not have taken initiation from Gaura Kishore Das Babaji. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati is definitely known to have taken sannyasa from a photograph of Gaura Kishore Dasa Babaji. Sannyasa is forbidden in Gaudiya Vaisnavism. No Gaudiya Vaisnava, from the Goswamis all the way to Gaura Kishore Dasa Babaji, took sannyasa. Taking sannyasa from a photograph is a radical innovation, and might justify the ritwik movement in ISKCON. There is also clear evidence that Bhaktivinoda Thakura was disowned by his guru. However, this document demonstrates that there is certainly no ‘parampara’ in terms of fidelity to the Goswamis’ writings; and the Goswamis are the founders of Gaudiya Vaisnavism. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It may be useful to note here that there is absolutely no tradition in Gaudiya Vaisnavism to give ‘Brahmana diksa’ or ‘second initation’ to anyone. This is quite simply not allowed by the Goswamis, who categorically state that a Vaisnava does not become qualified to carry out the duties of Brahmins. This innovation, started by Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, has resulted in a new ‘caste system’ where ISKCON converts become Brahmins, and their children wear sikhas, learn Vedic rituals and so on. ISKCON Brahmins perform Vedic rituals for local Indian families; that the priest is not actually born in a Brahmin family, but rather was ‘appointed’ as one after becoming an adult is suppressed. This is an enormous deception, particularly given that the Goswamis absolutely do not give permission to Vaisnavas to perform non-Vaisnava (but Vedic) rituals of any kind. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bhaktivedanta swami translates the following verse as follows (CC Madhya 22.107):

*nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema ‘sādhya’ kabhu naya
śravaṇādi-śuddha-citte karaye udaya*

Translation:  “Pure love for Kṛṣṇa is eternally established in the hearts of the living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, this love naturally awakens. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)