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Titles and Abstracts:

Enframing Caitanya

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What is Caitanya's significance in religious and secular narratives at the turn of the twentieth century? Indeed, can the import of a figure like Caitanya be exhausted by the theological parameters of the Gaudīya tradition? Or, in that remarkable period of the late nineteenth century, must we search for Caitanya elsewhere as well to complete the picture? How must we understand the Caitanya that appears in the newly documented literary histories of Bengali language; in discourses that generate the notion of the "folk" and the "classical" respectively; as a Hindu Luther, representative of religious and social reform; and as an icon of indigenism in a period of rising anti-colonialism? In this paper, I seek to unravel some of the frames of knowledge that re-cast the figure of Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya (1486-1533) from his singular status within various strands of Bengali Vaisnava traditions as a partial to full *avatāra* of Krishna and invoked multiple other Caitanyas. On the one hand, such a move sought to implant this late-medieval Sanskrit scholar and Vaiṣṇava devotee within the grand narrative of a classical and Hindu Bengali past. On the other hand, such interpretations secularized and humanized the Caitanya that was a complex theological concept (*aṁśa-avatāra*, *yugala-avatāra*) and a beloved deity (*svayam Bhagavān*, *Mahāprabhu*) for millions of his Bengali devotees. In the process, I argue, popular memory of a key regional divinity is re-written within nationalist frames. The success or failure of this re-writing, however, remains moot, at best.

Being Modern but Authentic:

Notes from Swami B. H. Bon's 'On the Way to Vaikuntha'

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In this paper I will examine conceptions of identity from the viewpoint of a Gaudiya Vaishnava consciously straddling the divide of a colonial and a post-colonial India as well as traditional and modern conceptions of mundane and supramundane identity: Swami Bhakti Hriday Bon Maharaj (1901-1982), particularly through his autobiographical work "*Baikunther Pathe*" or "*On the Way to Vaikuntha*". Swami Bon was a disciple of the reformist Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, but one that in different ways sought to reconnect to traditional Gaudiya Vaishnavism as well. The challenges of modernity are clearly mirrored in the material at hand, particularly so for the case of "identity", both in a quotidian and a religious, supra-mundane sense. However, are the innovations of Bhaktisiddhanta visible as well? If identity is seen as something

continually recreated and processed (following, e.g., James E. Cote and Charles G. Levine), rather than as something at some point attained and then preserved, how does Bhaktisiddhanta's idea of a spiritual form gradually revealed by the spiritual practice itself instead of being given as it is by the preceptor show up in this material?

Bābā Premānanda Bhāratī:
A Trajectory into and through Bengal Vaiṣṇavism to the West

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Surendranāth Mukerji (1858-1914), scion of the mercantile branch of a prominent Kolkata family, was a successful journalist in the intellectual, political, and religious life of Bengal in the late 19th century. First converted to Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇava devotion through Girish Chandra Ghosh's play *Caitanya-līlā* in 1884, he became a *sannyāsī* in the lineage of Lokanāth Brahmachārī in 1890 and then, for a decade, participated in the multi-layered and poly-centric Bengal Vaiṣṇava religious world of the period, in the enthusiasm that surrounded Prabhu Jagadbandhu, and with leaders like Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇ Dās Bābājī and Rāmdās Bābājī. While living as a bābājī in Rādhākūṇḍ in 1902, he received a calling to take Kṛṣṇa devotion to the West, a summons that meshed well with his opposition to Western religious arrogance and to his prior career as a "publicist." Traveling to London with scant resources, he succeeded in arriving in New York in October 1902. With only the prior example of Swami Vivekānanda's mission, he set out to create a Vaiṣṇava mission in the West by preaching devotion to Kṛṣṇa, practicing devotion in a circle of close disciples, using the print media to increase the scale of his audience (newspaper coverage, periodicals, and his book *Sree Krishna – the Lord of Love*), establishing links with other religious movements that could expand the range of his work (notably New Thought and esoteric Christianity), and exploiting the appeal of his criticism of political and religious imperialism. In return, he used the salience of his Western mission in an effort to influence the direction of the Indian independence movement and to develop Vaiṣṇava religious practice, especially in Chennai.

In Bābā Bhāratī's trajectory from journalist → bhakta → sannāysī → bābājī → missionary → religio-political fixture, I identify four issues in the relationship between Bengal Vaiṣṇavism and the modern world: (1) the complex and paradoxical, multi-layered and poly-centric character of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism in his experience; (2) the construction of a mission to the West and the mix of random/personal/strategic and normative elements in the mix; (3) the grounds for claiming "authenticity" in tradition, whether through devotion's self-authentication or by institutional approbation; and (4) the criteria and significance of success in such a mission, ultimately, what enduring gift Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism brings to the modern world.

Vaisnava Eulogy and Monastic Geographicity: Rereading *Krishnamala*

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The historicity of Indian-language literary texts has generated a lively debate over the last decade among historians of early and later modern South Asia. (Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam, 2003; Guha 2004; Pollock 2007; Curley 2008; K. Chatterjee 2009; Talbot 2012) I will argue that the spiritual genealogy embedded in such histories needs to be teased apart before we can recover the histories narrated within. In order to begin this process, I will reread a long lyric poem titled *SriKrishnamala*, a spiritual biography of Krishna Manikya, a monk-cum-governor of domains identified by postcolonial Indians as 'Tripura'. Written in the late eighteenth century, and only published in the late twentieth century, this lyric eulogy of a Vaisnava governor speaks of a tributary relationship with the Mughal Emperors mediated through Vaisnava gurus and gosains. I will place this texts within a larger geography of hills and plains and identify it as monastic geographicity. This was the domain attached to the central Himalayan location of 'Tippera' in the eighteenth century. In the conclusion I will suggest reasons for the eclipse of this vernacular spiritual biography as evidence for Assamese and Bengali historians.

Forms of Authority and Organization

Within Vaishnava Institutionalization Processes in Colonial Bengal

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The period of colonial modernity in South Asia is conventionally considered as a phase of religious renewal and remaking that brought in its train a range of transformations from its pre-colonial context. Some scholars like Joseph O'Connell have categorized this phase as the emergence of 'hard' institutions that was a departure from earlier forms of 'soft' and 'medium' institutions. Historically speaking, the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century saw the emergence of several Bengali Vaishnava societies carrying the suffix *Sabha*, *Samaj*, and *Sanmilani* which, in effect, constituted 'new' collective institutional aggregates set up essentially by middle class educated Bengali's in an era of reformist Vaishnava attitudes. Such societies not only spearheaded the Vaishnava renewal process but also provided avenues for the emergence of organizational perspectives, structures and institutionalisation.

In this paper I take a cross section of several such societies from the locality-based 'Hari Sabhas; the *Gauranga Samaj* (1899) of the nationalist journalist-turned-devotee Sisir Kumar Ghosh; the *Krishna Chaitanya Tattwa Pracharini Sabha* (1909) of Dr. Priyanath Nandi in which the *Gauranga Samaj* was said to have merged; and the *Gaudiya Vaishnava Sanmilani* (1911) of Atul Krishna Goswami among others. Most of these religious societies shared a complex relation with past traditions even as they began creating new spatial networks and institutional practices. This paper explores the ways in which the emergence of such institutions transformed the pre-colonial Vaishnava institutional basis revolving round *sampradaya*, *vamsa*, and *paribar* and yet continued to

have links with them? What were the aims, activities and social basis of these new institutions? How did such institutions tackle issues of authority and legitimacy within the Gaudiya tradition? The paper seeks to historically contextualize the emergence of Vaishnava institutionalization in the backdrop of its colonial Bengali setting.

**Selling Salvation:
Bhaktivinoda Thakura and the Re-branding of
Vaishnavism in Nineteenth-century Bengal**

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Until the latter decades of the 19th century, Gaudiya Vaishnavism remained an historical outlier in the reform, revitalization and recovery of modern Hinduism. Colonial perceptions that Gaudiya Vaishnavism was institutionally submerged in unseemly rural Bengali social networks/practices and controversial scriptures like the Bhagavata Purana, Gita Govinda and Bhagavad Gita led many middle-class Indian elites to eschew the tradition in favor of alternative varieties of religious devotion. It was within the context of this environment that the religious savant Bhaktivinoda Thakura (1838-1914) embarked upon a successful, decades-long campaign to re-brand Gaudiya Vaishnavism in a manner befitting its theological beauty, depth and promise as a religion for modern times. By the turn of the 20th century, Bhaktivinoda's brand of Gaudiya Vaishnavism was positioned to succeed not simply in the colonial marketplace of religion but on the world stage.

Bhaktivinod's Doxography of World Philosophies

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The Western-educated middle class Bengalis often formed their intellectual opinions about Europe by reading European literature and philosophy and Tapan Roychoudhury notes in his *Europe Reconsidered* how these Bengali intelligentsia “happened to be the first Asian social group of any size whose mental worlds got transformed through interactions with the West.” (ix). This presentation will give an overview of the dynamics of encounter and response in the works of a Vaishnava member of this Bengali intelligentsia, Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinod, in the specific area ‘world philosophies.’ In discussing his Sanskrit/Bengali work *Tattvaviveka*, which is a Vaishnava ‘doxography of world philosophies,’ this paper will try to explore how Bhaktivinod was responding to the to some of the European discourses on civilizational difference which posited that philosophy was essentially European. By placing thinkers like Yang-tse, Descartes or Shankara into a ‘philosophical system’ based on Vaishnava theology, I argue, Bhaktivinod seems to counter some these European notions that excluded India from the history of philosophy.

***Rādhātantram*: Appropriation and Linguistic Strategy**

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The *Rādhātantram* (RT), a relatively late text of unknown authorship, is not at all, as its name might suggest, a Vaiṣṇava text. Rather it cleverly appropriates the locally very familiar Rādhā – Kṛṣṇa mythology and imposes it upon a Mahāvidyā Śākta structure to propound Śākta teachings. Kṛṣṇa here is a form of Mahāviṣṇu and not vice versa, and is not the Supreme Being; Rādhā is his tantric guru, elevated to the status of an independent goddess.

As it turns out, there are quite a number of Kālīkula tantras in which Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa is Kālī's son, and the Goddess is the Ultimate Reality. I am interested in that appropriation of imagery from a rival school, as well as the author's choice of language in a move I term "reverse vernacularization" to convey his message. The RT offers the opportunity to explore the relationships between religious schools in Bengal, the fluidity of theology, and the role of language in establishing sectarian status. My work explores the ways Sanskrit has been used in the early modern period as it investigates the interaction of class/caste with language and text production.

"Vaisnavas are the True Saktas":

Vaisnava and Sakta Bhakti in Modern West Bengal

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As a Gaudiya Vaisnava informant in Navadvipa stated in interview, "Vaisnavas are the true Saktas, for we worship Radha, who is the true goddess (*sat devi*).” This view was shared by many of the Vaisnavas with whom I spoke. However, other Gaudiya Vaisnavas stated that Saktas worshipped Kali, the "black witch," and that Saktas were opposed to Vaisnavas, even their enemies.

Vaisnavism and Saktism are the two major forms of bhakti found in modern West Bengal. Saivism there is considered to be a sub-type of Saktism, for as Saktas say, "Sakti and Siva cannot be separated, like milk and its whiteness." Bhakti towards other deities, like Ganesa or Hanuman, is much less prominent.

Who is a Sakta in the Bengali context? Often, the lines of definition are fluid. From the colonial period, we shall include understandings of Radha as a Sakta goddess in 'The Radha Tantra,' and the Sakta goddess Kali as understood by the eighteenth century poet Ramprasad. For the post-colonial period, we shall examine Sakta imagery in both the popularly accepted Vaisnavism of the Gaudiya school, and the popularly unaccepted Vaisnavism of the Sahajiyas. While the major form of Bengali Vaisnavism is the Gaudiya tradition, the paper will also mention the role of Saktism in the shamanic and yogic forms of Vaisnavism practiced by outsiders to the traditional Gaudiya Vaisnava lineages. We shall include poetry by Kazi Nazrul Islam, a Muslim who wrote both Sakta and Vaisnava poetry.

We shall look at a range of theological interpretations, from universalism (Krishna and Kali are essentially the same) to tolerance (Kali worships Krishna as her son, and feeds him bananas) to rivalry (worshippers of Kali call Krishna immature and sensual, and thus they are opponents of Vaisnavism, while worshippers of Krishna call Kali grim, bloodthirsty and deluded). We shall examine the question of whether Vaisnavas can be called Saktas.

**When a Royal Paṇḍit is Refuted:
Court, Conflict, and Controversy in Eighteenth Century Bengal**

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In 1717 AD, Jaisingh II, a famous Kachvāhā king and the founder of Jaipur, sent Kṛṣṇadeva Bhaṭṭācārya (b. the end of the seventeenth century) as the representative of the Gauḍīyas to the court of Nawāb Zāfār Khan in Bengal, in order to settle the so-called the *svakṛtyā-parakṛtyā* controversy. In this debate, Kṛṣṇadeva attempted unsuccessfully to establish the *svakṛtyā* doctrine according to which the Gopīs in Vṛndāvana were married to Kṛṣṇa. In 1719 AD, a similar debate arose again at the court of Murshid Quli Khan (r. 1717~1727) in Bengal, in which another Gauḍīya author called Rādhāmohana Ṭhakura (b. 1698 AD) established the *parakṛtyā* doctrine, according to which the Gopīs were married to someone other than Kṛṣṇa.

In this paper, I first examine the Bengali records on these two debates together with their social contexts. Then I trace the origin of this debate in the works of Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmīs. In this section I argue against previous scholarship (e.g. Bose 1930) and suggest that Rūpa clearly supported the *parakṛtyā* position. Finally, I briefly overview the ways in which this *parakṛtyā* doctrine influenced religious groups such as the Bāuls, the Kartabājās, and the Sahajīyas in Bengal in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. Based on this study I argue the following two points: (1) As far as Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal was concerned, there was a strong cultural and religious connection between the pre-modern and the modern periods; (2) Muslim rulers in eighteenth century Bengal seem to have adopted the policy of noninterference in relation to doctrinal conflicts among their Hindu subjects.

**Love of woman: love of humankind?
Interconnections between Baul esoteric practice and social radicalism**

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So-called Bauls are usually known to others through their songs. Indeed these have recently been listed among 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity' by UNESCO. What is less well-known is that the oral tradition has had a long and complex relationship with various kinds of written texts. In this paper, I propose to focus on a text comprising part of an autograph manuscript by Raj Krishna Misra a.k.a.

Raj Khyapa. Written in Bengali verse, this text dates from the early years of the last century (c.1908-1912 C.E.). An informal, highly intimate work, it was written at a moment of crisis in Raj's life, when, as a once respected renouncer and guru, he was compelled to distance himself from his lover, a married woman. The text constitutes an invaluable bridge between the composer's life, especially as represented in his autobiography, and his less personalised but signed Baul songs. As such it provides insights into the kind of contribution personal factors may make to a genre considered to be a vehicle for timeless truths: Baul songs. It also elucidates connections between esoteric practice and radical attitudes towards divisions of religion, gender, class, caste etc. It supports the argument for a correlation between a high valuation of women and a committed love relationship (as opposed to a less discriminating eroticism); and in turn between these factors and a critique of social, religious and gender boundaries.

The Sahajiya Body: Methodological Reflections on a Sensitive Ethnography

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Although the primary aim of this conference is to study 'modern' forms of Bengal Vaishnavism, my paper is based on intense fieldwork carried out in the contemporary period among sahajiya-Vaishnavas of the Bengali town, Navadvip. Sahajiya practices have strong resemblances with South Asian tantric traditions centered on bodily and carnal disciplines, but they claim to be Vaishnavas and thus frame their rituals within an orthodox Vaishnava discourse. Substantive issues of sahajiya religiosity in particular and world tantrism in general, have been documented and analysed in ample religious studies literature. My focus however will be slightly different, with an aim to add to already-existing knowledge about sahajiya practices and theology. I want to reflect on ways in which an anthropologist of religion can hope to gain access to and familiarize oneself with sahajiyas and their highly esoteric rituals, including ingestion of bodily excreta, and sexual practices learnt from gurus. In general, I will discuss ethnographic nuances of theorizing esoterism. I will do this by critically analyzing my fieldwork experiences among sahajiya-Vaishnavas. Also, analyses of methodological questions throw significant new light on substantive ones.

I argue that a study of sahajiya ontology requires both a thorough discursive understanding of linguistic issues, and an affective immersion in their lifeworld. This is because the body-space, body-substances, as well as physical sensations of sexual pleasure are thoroughly conceptualised by sahajiyas within an established Vaishnava discourse. This helps them verbalise their experiences of physical sensations, which might otherwise appear to be antithetical to articulated exegesis. However, corporeal materialities on which the efficacy of sahajiya practices depends belong to the domain of affect, in being associated with the most intimate, interior and ineffable perceptions.

Sahajiyas treated me like a seeker/scholar, not participant-sharer. Also initially, sahajiyas never 'told' me anything. They discussed religious issues of considerable complexity by reciting poems, proverbs, couplets and charts composed by sahajiya gurus, in response to my questions. The terms used in these texts are a part of mainstream Vaishnava

vocabulary but with hidden meanings describing their rituals. Thus one of the significant ways in which I made sense of sahajiyas' relations with their bodies was through sensitivity towards their highly complex linguistic sensibilities. I will discuss ways in which I interpreted the sahajiya language and ratified my understandings.

However, sahajiya language is deeply metaphorical. Thus sahajiyas, to communicate their philosophy, and I, to understand and translate them, both find metaphors essential. This is because only a fleshy philosophy is able to understand cognitive mechanisms as reflections of the body's' perceptions and relations. So sahajiyas' use of metaphors to communicate the deepest aspects of their ontology can be interpreted through theories of cognitive science and phenomenological embodiment. In addition however, I will also discuss 'sympathic' aspects of intuiting the other's body through one's own corporeal affectivity.

Legal Conflicts in the Post-charismatic History of the Gaudiya Math

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After the demise of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī (1874-1937) on January 1, 1937, a court case was filed at the High Court of Calcutta about succession in the Gaudiya Math, the Vaishnava institution that Bhaktisiddhānta had founded in colonial Calcutta in 1919. The court case put to test several ideas that were central in Bhaktisiddhānta's innovations, such as the institution of a new samnyāsa order and his prominent role as brāhmaṇa despite his kāyastha caste, which became key issues in court in reference to inheritance laws. The court case proved to be a watershed in the history of the Gaudiya Math and created the basis for a new institutional development that will reach a global impact in the second half of the 20th century. The paper argues that Bhaktisiddhānta did not clarify the institutional structure of the Gaudiya Math and left to his disciples to creatively develop his movement according to their own capacity and skills. This may have been caused by Bhaktisiddhānta's ambivalent view about institutionalised religion, and internal institutional tensions that he may have come to regard as insurmountable

Theorizing Bengal Vaishnavism:

Bipin Chandra Pal and New Perspectives on Hindu- Bengali Religious Life

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Structurally, this paper is divided into two broad halves. The first part engages with certain general but critical questions pertaining to developments within Bengal Vaishnavism in colonial Bengal and the second, with the hermeneutical apparatus that Bipin Chandra Pal(1858-1932) brought to bear on the study of Bengal Vaishnavism and Vaishnav life.

In the first part, I interrogate the reasons that may possibly explain the renewed interest in Vaishnavism in colonial Bengal, especially given the long standing scholarly

preoccupation with neo-Vedanta in the same region. My earlier researches on Hindu revival, it has to be admitted, was partial to the latter and the present paper, therefore, may be seen as a corrective to what was hitherto missing in cultural studies concerning nineteenth century Bengal.

In what remains of this paper, I seek to understand the intervention of Bipinchandra Pal as a Vaishnav ideologue. This intervention, I find, was important for a number of reasons. First, Pal appears to perform the role that Jiva Goswami once performed at Vrindavan viz. the act of theorizing Gaudiya Vaishnav theology and giving that theology a pan-Indian appeal. In a sense, the writings of Pal de-provincialize Gaudiya Vaishnavism by constructing a general theory around Vaishnav history, theology and aesthetics. As far as I know, Pal is also the first Vaishnav theoretician who seeks to examine the categories of ‘incarnation’ and ‘avatarhood’ within a framework of comparative religion. And his point, unlike that of Bankimchandra, is not necessarily political. What compounds the matter is that at the time he was drawn towards Vaishnavism, Pal also emerges as an important spokesperson for a burgeoning “Hinduism”. The inter-relationship between the two needs a closer examination. It would be also worth speculating if an engagement with Vaishnavism pushed him towards greater caution in employing political violence. Sister Nivedita, as I recall, took note of this mellowing militancy as early as 1909-10.

Jaban Haridās: The Strange Tales of the Sufi who Practiced Kṛṣṇa *Dhikr*

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The companion of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (1486-1533) named Jaban (*yavana*) Haridās has been routinely reported to be a “converted Muslim” whose practice of *nām kīrtan* or *jap* was considered to be exemplary—reputedly reciting the name more than 300,000 times per day. Although he was held up as the exemplar for the most basic of the sixty-four *vaidhī* ritual acts for *gauḍīya vaiṣṇavs*, there is no evidence that Haridās converted—sixteenth century Bangla did not even have a word for conversion. What are the implications even today, of the community positioning this Musalmāni foreigner (*jaban*) into the critical rôle of instruction in the most basic of all prescribed Vaiṣṇav ritual actions? How has the contemporary community of Vaiṣṇavs attempted to rectify this seeming anomaly?

Claiming high ground: Gaudiya missionizing rhetoric on the adhikāra of worship

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With its English periodical, *The Harmonist*, in the 1920s and 1930s, the Gaudiya Math aimed to position itself as a confident voice of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava tradition and forward-thinking vision in the wider world of imperial Britain. In this presentation I discuss two of the journal’s articles, “Idolatry” (May 1928) and “Gandhiji’s Ten Questions” (January 1933), to consider rhetorical means by which the authors argued and defended their perspectives on image worship and the issue of untouchability in relation to temple entry and worship, respectively. The general approach in both articles may be characterized as

“claiming high ground”—staking out what their authors aim to show to be the more reasonable and inclusive, if not universal, positions, to validate the institution’s missionizing agenda in the modern context while maintaining practices of temple worship—typically associated at the time with reactionary Hinduism.

**Singing in tune with God:
the eighteenth-century musicology of Narahari Cakravarti**

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While Narahari Cakravarti is well remembered in the sectarian histories of Bengali Vaishnavism as a prolific hagiographer, he was also an extremely meticulous compiler of musicological texts, and a music theorist in his own right. This paper will explore several of his works (including *Saṅgītasārasaṅgraha*, *Gītacandrodaya*, and *Bhaktiratnākara*) relating to systems and debates cultivated in non-sectarian Hindustani musical circles. Narahari presented his findings as a deeply informed commentary on the music and dance of the *rāsamaṇḍal*: if the devotee was to please God through musical acts of worship, or to truly appreciate the music of Krishna himself, he required a through grounding in *rāga*, *tāla*, and a discerning sense of performance practices. In itself this knowledge was not a vaishnava domain, yet could be digested and disseminated for devotional uses. Examining these works in detail provides an insight into how early modern Bengali vaishnavas related themselves to trans-regional, multilingual musical networks that extended from Orissa to Braj, and drew on secular sciences to enrich theological conversations.

**Victorian Morals, Vaiṣṇava Quarrels:
Sources of Nineteenth-century Anti-Sahajiyā Polemics**

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Though the Bengali or Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition is reported to have had significant numerical presence in Bengali society at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, Vaiṣṇavas had become an increasing source of discomfort to Calcutta’s indigenous elite, or *bhadraloka*, and their moral sensibilities. The tradition regularly came in for criticism by this social group on account of its perceived promotion of sexual and other forms of moral deviance. Yet by the latter half of the nineteenth-century a substantial section of the Bengali *bhadraloka* had begun to turn to Vaiṣṇavism as a source of religious and cultural inspiration. The Bengali *bhadraloka*’s involvement with the tradition appears however to have been determined from the outset by its colonial moral formation. *Bhadraloka* Vaiṣṇavas thus made a concerted attempt to set apart an ‘authentic’ or ‘pure’ tradition from all that did not meet the demands of their new moral framework. This dissociative undertaking took shape perhaps most notably in a broad polemical campaign against what are commonly designated Vaiṣṇava ‘minor sects’ (*upasampradāya*), which were often denounced as forms of Vaiṣṇava deviance on account their alleged *sahajiyā*-type sexual ritual practices and other forms of morally transgressive behaviour. In this

paper I propose to examine the nature of this late nineteenth-century polemic against the Vaiṣṇava *upasampradāyas*, tracing some of the key moral sources that inform it. I particularly seek to highlight the importance of reading this polemic in the light of brāhmaṇical trends displayed by the Gauḍīya tradition in the pre-colonial context. These trends appear to have persisted well into the nineteenth-century, finding a notable degree of affinity with *bhadraloka* morals. In sum, I aim to problematise the notion that the late nineteenth-century Vaiṣṇava polemic against the *upasampradāyas* can be taken as a definitive sign of colonial ‘rupture’ within the Gauḍīya tradition.