Notes

1. INTRODUCTION

1. I use the word *idol* because it comes closest to the Bengali term *vigraha*. One must however bear in mind that the term often had a problematic disparag-
ing use in the colonial discourse: to signify Hinduism’s irrational trends.

Throughout the book I will use phrases such as “deity-consort,” “divine
couple,” and “deity-couple” to refer to Radha-Krishna.

2. I retain the category of Bengal-Vaishnavism since my ethnography was
based in West Bengal, although scholars have suggested that it is better to use the
term Chaitanyaite Vaishnavism (Case 2000, 28), given the wide geographical
spread of Chaitanya-influenced Vaishnavism in eastern and northern India,
especially Vrindavan, and in Bangladesh.

3. For detailed analyses of Bengal-Vaishnava theology, see Chakrabarti
(1996, 62), De (1986, 277, 282, 225–47), Dimock (1963, 109,115), and

4. Parry (1994) describes Banaras for instance as the quintessential city of
deadth, helping souls travel to the next life-cycle.

5. Devotees articulate spatial understandings in multiple ways. This is
because in Bengali the terminology for space, place, sites, etc. is diverse and
dependent upon the context of use. Thus, *jayga* or *sthan* refers to any space/
place/site, *dhāma* to a sacred physical place, and non-physical sites such as the
body or mind are often referred to as *bhandalpatra* (vessels), which manifest
Vrindavan if appropriately cultivated. In view of this flexible vocabulary, to
minimize confusion I generally use English phrases such as *sacred place* when
analyzing Bengal-Vaishnava place-experiences.


8. Chaitanya, although married, did not have children.
9. Next in number are the descendants of Chaitanya’s associate, Advaita Acharya.
   12. See Massumi (2002) for this distinction between emotion and affect.
   15. See also Haberman (1988) and Lynch (1990).
   16. Athanasiou, Hantzaroula, and Yannakopoulos (2008), Clough and Halley (2007), Gregg and Seigworth (2010), and Thrift (2008), among others, champion this theoretical shift.
   17. This is why Navaro-Yashin (2009) argues that ethnography in its most productive moments is often trans-paradigmatic, the paradigms in my analysis of Bengal-Vaishnava experiences being the phenomenological, discursive, and affective ones.
   18. Not all theorists agree with the notion of rasa as impersonal, however; some argue that it is of a personal nature (Haberman 2003, xlvi–vii).

2. DISCOVERING GUPTA-VRINDAVAN
   1. Gourango or Gour, “the fair-skinned one,” is Chaitanya’s epithet, others being Nimai, “born under a Nim tree,” and most commonly Mahaprabhu, “the great god.”
   2. See Eck (1999), Ghosh (2005), and Morinis (1984, 14).
   3. See also Bharati (1968, 54) and Das Babaji (1987, 8–9).
   4. Texts produced as glorifications of Hindu pilgrimage places.
   7. This eighteenth-century Vaishnava text is cited by proponents of both birthplaces as their prime geographical/historical reference. In chapter 12 of the book, the author, Narahari Chakrabarti, mentions that Navadvip, the nine islands, are together shaped like a lotus, within which, in a site called Mayapur, Chaitanya’s house is located (Chakrabarti 1912, 710–13, esp. 713).
8. Stewart (2010, 309) similarly argues that the *Bhaktiratnakara* makes extensive use of rhetorical strategies and is thus not considered historically accurate by scholars.

9. *Nava* can mean both “nine” and “new” in Bengali.

10. Divine images being shifted due to changes in royal policies was a common South Asian phenomenon. Peabody (1991), for instance, describes how western Indian Vallabha statues used to be hidden in royal authorities’ turbans under the fear of Mughal emperors; and Stewart (2010, 278) speaks about Jagannatha’s image being similarly relocated in sixteenth-century Orissa.

11. An exception is the famous babaji-owned Samajbari temple, located in the hub of pilgrimage-routes.

12. *Taste* here is a shorthand translation of *asvadan*, refined spiritual savoring. Vaishnavas use the term *asvadan* to describe the act of enjoying any emotion or mood which brings them pleasure.

3. **IMAGINING IN GUPTA-VRINDAVAN**

1. Bengal-Vaishnavism views the relation between Radha and Krishna as an extramarital one. Love without possession increases the passionate relish, according to them.

2. *Manjari sadhana*, as the essence of emotional *bhakti* in Bengal-Vaishnavism, developed after the seventeenth century (Haberman 1988, 108–09) and further during the twentieth (113). For philosophical/ritual details of the practice, see Haberman (1988, 1992) and Wulff (1984).

3. Imagination, in other religious contexts like Christianity and Buddhism, has mostly only been understood in terms of visualization (see Caro 1995; Lewis 1995; Lyons 2006; Williams 1997).

4. This is most probably an abbreviation of the term Jiva Goswami uses to describe the devotee’s perfected self: *antas-cintitabhista-tat-sevapoyagi-deha*, or an inner cognized body which is suitable for Krishna’s service (Haberman 2003, liii–iv).

5. Worshipping and serving divinity in a feminine, subservient mood, and imagining the consort’s sexuality without desiring it for oneself are experiences shared by devotees in other South Asian contexts as well (Marglin 1985, 1990; Narayanan 1999, 42; van der Veer 1987, 691–92, 1988, 162).

6. Stewart’s (2011) observations support the arguments I make in this chapter.


8. van der Veer (1989, 458) argues that in the Hindu context, body and mind are not separate entities.

9. Interestingly, the Bengali word *dharan* refers to the spatial logic of holding in a container, and *dharana*, to thinking/intuition, thus hinting at a spatial sense of the mind (McDaniel 1995, 44).

10. See chapter 1 for an analysis of the autonomy of affect.

11. For debates in Indian philosophy on the impossibility of ascertaining the ontological differences between dream-life and waking-life, see Chakrabarty (2009).
12. In Hindu culture, touching the dust on someone’s feet symbolizes reverence for that person. Marglin (1990, 228) also argues that Krishna’s desire for his lovers’ foot-dust has sexual connotations of his desiring their sexual fluid.

13. Bengal-Vaishnavism has a stronghold in the Indian state of Manipur, and a significant number of Manipuris live and worship in Navadvip.

14. Aratis are performed in Samajbari temple eight times a day. Of these, two aratis are performed privately and witnessed only by the priest, since they commemorate the deities’ most intimate erotic pastimes.

15. Her biography (Bhattacharya 1998) is sold in shops outside Samajbari. Although Bengali does not have pronouns depicting gender differentials, throughout the chapter I will refer to “he” and “she” as devotees’ spiritual genders embodied during different stages of practice.

16. These convulsions were a manifestation of one of the eight signs (asta sattvika bhavas) well attested in Vaishnava literature as external expressions of heightened internal devotional states (Das 2014, Part 2, 1680; Haberman 2003, xxxviii, 242–71).

17. Bindis are round colored pastes put on women’s foreheads; alta is a red liquid Bengali women paint around their feet.

18. Figures 7 and 8 are not from my fieldwork collection. Borrowed from Stewart (2011), they are typical instances of the kind of yogapitha pictures practitioners possess.

19. I use typical Vaishnava names as pseudonyms for practitioners. I also do not mention which temples/ashrams they live in.

20. Some of these books are written in verse-forms describing deities’ lilas from the author’s perspective in the mood of Krishna’s lover and Radha’s handmaiden-friend. Some describe life-events and ritual discipline of practitioners, and others, compulsory Vaishnava rituals. Some contain pictures and descriptions of the lotus-shaped spiritual places (see Babaji 2004; Das 1975; Das 2003; Das 2004–2008; Das Babaji 2001; Das Babaji undated).


22. Ideally, one may embody any of five emotional moods (bhavas) toward the deities: ordinary peaceful subservience (santa), servility (dasya), companionship (sakhyya), parental affection (vatsalya), and erotic (madhur). Bengal-Vaishnavism, and Rupa Goswami especially, privilege the last one, influenced by the srngara rasa of Sanskrit poetics (De 1986, 197; Haberman 2003, lxiv, 355–63, 381–83, 396–546; Stewart 1999, 611–31). However, the devotee’s eroticism is further qualified as the manjari’s love in real practice.

23. For similar arguments on the generative capacities of pain, see Asad (2003), Scarry (1987), and Schimmel (1997, 275).

24. As we will see, smaran is a technical term and part of the ritual structure of sixty-four vaidhi bhakti acts (Das 2014, Part 1, 897, Part 2, 1678–79; Haberman 2003, 57).

25. This is similar to what Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994, 5) identify as the “peculiar fascination of ritual,” where “actors both are, and are not, the authors of their acts.”
26. Most of my interlocutors narrated the sensitive experiences of *manjari sadhana* through references to paradigmatic or exemplary spiritual figures, rather than talking about their personal experiences. These exemplary figures were sometimes characters from famous Vaishnava scriptures, sometimes practitioners of older generations, and at other times distant friends.

27. Details of these *vaidhi bhakti* acts can be found in Bhatta (1911), Haberman (2003, 35–71), and Stewart (1999, 697–702). Gopal Bhatta’s *Haribhakti Vilasa* is in fact an essential text of the Vaishnavas. It states 137 rules and minute details of the correct methods of worship, including rituals of the body, initiation, fasts, *pujas* for special occasions, and idol installation and worship.

28. A widely circulated anecdote says that townspeople often saw a young girl walk out of an ascetic’s room late in the night. Suspicious, they went in to check. They discovered that the girl was the ascetic; during his intense imagination, the man’s demeanor changed completely to his essential form as a young girl.

29. Three or four senior *babajis* alternately perform this service in the temple. Once annually, on a special Vaishnava festival, nine *babajis* wear the *sari* and perform *arati* together. However, whether or not a practitioner may adorn the physical body in a feminine form is a debated issue among Vaishnavas (Haberman 1988, 94–103).

30. For details of *ragatmika* and *raganuga bhakti*, see Haberman (2003, 77–85) and Stewart (1999, 702–05).

31. The eight periods (three hours each) are early morning, pre-noon, noon, afternoon, evening, late evening and very late night/dawn. For details, see Rupa Goswami’s *Astakaliyalilasmaranamangala stotram* (cited in De 1986, 673–75).

32. Hardy (1983, 100–04) argues that engaging sensuous *bhakti* with practices of intellectual *bhakti yoga* is a way of sublimating erotic principles into disembodied ones. In *manjari sadhana*, however, we see a very productive engagement of both.

33. Unlike most other practitioners, Kunjabihari knows elementary English. He used the words *discipline, sense, concentration*, and *practice*. This phenomenology of breathing approximates the balance between “intensive concentration” and “mindful awareness” that Cook (2006, 125) describes in case of Theravada Buddhist meditation. McDaniel (1995, 40–41) mentions, too, that in Indian philosophical systems, cultivation of mental calm is associated with clarity in perception and sensation.

34. This shift from the *karan sharir* to the *manjari svarup* (essential self) corresponds to the transformation of *jiva-sakti* to *svarup-sakti* theorized by Jiva Goswami. The relation between Krishna and the devotee’s feminine self as part of Krishna’s own *svarup* is one of simultaneous sameness-and-difference (De 1986, 313–14).

35. Stewart (2011, 307) argues that the concept of *mandala* is used in the *yogapitha*’s imagining.

36. This is why some *manjaris* are placed in the lotus’s innermost sub-petals.

37. Haberman attributes such instances to “intense religious voyeurism” (1988, 189). However, I would not use the term *voyeurism* in these cases, since Navadvip’s practitioners make a clear case against self-gratificatory aesthetics.
38. This approximates Scheper-Hughes and Lock’s (1987, 16) idea of the “body image” as an individual’s imagining of the body in relation to its perception, memory, affect, cognition, and action.

39. Some practitioners follow an even more complex route. They first imagine and serve Chaitanya and his associates in Navadvip (in the form and mood of a Brahmin boy of around 12 years), and then proceed to Vrindavan, since Navadvip is spiritually equivalent to Vrindavan.

40. Recent anthropological studies of the senses have similarly questioned the false agonism between the body’s felt dimensions and mind’s thinking potentials (Gell 1995; Leavitt 1996, 514; Lutz and White 1986; Mitchell 1997, 84).

41. This episode has a striking resemblance to one cited in the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* and mentioned by Jiva Goswami (Haberman 2003, 90). This shows the discursive connections in such paradigmatic recollections.

42. These emotional states are described in *Ujjvala Nilamani* by Rupa Goswami (De 1986, 214–15; Haberman 2003, lxvii).

43. See also Goswami (1982), Hawley and Wulf (1982), and Rosenstein (1998, 2000). Radha’s gaining greater pleasure than Krishna is the foundation of the argument for the androgy nous dual incarnation of Chaitanya: Radha-Krishna fused in one body so Krishna could apprehend the bliss that Radha enjoys by loving him (Stewart 1999, 99–106).

44. On details of the difference between *kama* and *prem*, see Stewart (1999, 454).

45. Bengal-Vaishnavas use gastronomic metaphors of *asvadan* and *rasa* to explain emotional processes.

### 4. BODYING GUPTA-VRINDAVAN

1. Once initiated, however, they are only recognized as Vaishnavas, since Vaishnavism is ostensibly an anti-caste religion. Thus, it was impolite to probe Vaishnavas about their exact caste backgrounds.

2. There are a couple of exceptions—temples in Navadvip within which some *sahajiyas* reside. For anonymity reasons I am not naming them.


4. Some scholars refer to *sahajiyas’* or tantrics’ bodies as “microcosmic” entities reflecting macrocosmic truths. But White (2009, 175) argues that “microcosm” is a Western concept with no Sanskrit correspondence and that practitioners’ bodies must be conceptualized as universes in themselves.


6. See also Coakley (1997, 4) and Ingold (2000, 170).

7. For discussions on *sahajiyas’* origins, see Klaiman (1983, 37) and O’Connell (1989). For debates on whether the *sahajiya* religion developed before or after Chaitanya, see Bose (1986, 156–59) and Dasgupta (1976, 116). For the history of the relation of Vaishnavism with *sahajiya* religion, see Dimock (1966, 25–67).

9. Renouncer sahajiyas are not burned, like ordinary Hindus, but buried, since renunciation already symbolizes their death to the social world. They are seated in a yogic posture with a cloth tied around their heads and turmeric, sandalwood, ghee, honey, and flowers put on their bodies after bathing.

10. This refers to sahajiyas’ marriage practice, which is completely different from orthodox Hindu marriages. They exchange garlands (mala) and put sandalwood paste (chandan) on each other’s foreheads. The flexibility that such a simple ceremony offers is criticized by others as a mark of sahajiyas’ licentiousness.

11. Unlike in ordinary Hindu discourse, where karma refers to the ethics of living and its relations with transmigratory cycles of life and death, sahajiyas use the term to refer to their spiritual practices. In the ordinary discourse there is a teleology inherent in the term such that good karma implies good fruits, and bad karma, negative results. In the sahajiya discourse, however, the term connotes a distinct ethicality of presentism. Thus, karma (sexual practices of the right kind) must aim at no “fruit” of sexual action, that is progeny, but desire present sensual pleasure for its own sake.

12. Many refugee settlements have developed along railroad tracks in Bengal (Jalais 2005, 1760).

13. Gold (1999, 70) says that tantric cults exemplify these overlaps.

14. Yukta-vairagya literally means being yukta (associated) with this-worldly affairs, while also being a vairagi (renunciate); or conversely, maintaining a renunciate mentality within the material world (Das 2014, Part 1, 630). In the sahajiya context this would mean a non-ejaculatory ethic of sexual relationships.


17. As for other Vaishnavas, the Chaitanya Charitamrita is a most significant text for sahajiyas since it presents the philosophy of the Bhagavata Purana and rasaesthetics in a systematic manner (Bose 1986, 270). But sahajiyas interpret it in terms of their own practices. Stewart (2010, 348–62) argues that Vivarta Vilasa, by Akinchana Das, presents an essentialized reading of the Chaitanya Charitamrita through the lens of sahaja yoga theology and thus is an important text for sahajiyas. Few of my interlocutors referred to this text.

18. In the past there have been rumors of ISKCON devotees’ being involved in rape cases.


20. Other scholars have also stressed the importance of oral explanations when studying secret religious/sexual practices (Hayes 2003, 167; Simmer-Brown 2001, xvi).

21. Bose (1932, 1934) provides an excellent collection of sahaja poems and their philosophical meanings. He does not provide any ritual explanations.
of the texts, however, and that is natural, since it is only possible to be tentative about those meanings.

22. I am not providing the texts’ vernacular forms, in view of issues of fair use.

23. The literal equivalences of “fire” and “air” are provisional. I am not sure that there is any singular correlation.

24. Other possible tantric readings of this poem (composed by the poet Chandidas) are provided by Bose (1934, 1–2, 27–28) and Dimock (1966, 59).

25. In sahajiya cosmology, the tantric chakras (the body’s energy-centers) are referred to as lotuses.

26. This refers to the genitals’ energy-region. It literally means place (adhis- than) of the self (sva).

27. Bose (1986, 141) and Das (1988) also mention them. Das (1988, 79, 82, 92) says that they first appeared in a seventeenth-century sahajiya text, Amritaratnabali, by Mukundadev Goswami. I also found references to them in a few vernacular texts from my fieldwork collection.

28. Chaitanya means “perceptive consciousness.” Thus sahajiyas imply both its literal meaning and the saint’s name.

29. I believe that the other substances are added to ameliorate the odor. But sahajiyas never said this because they ascribe divinity to body-fluids.


31. Apart from diksha and shiksha gurus, renouncer sahajiyas also have a sannyas guru. During this occasion, a senior renouncer–woman is appointed as a symbolic mother for their new lives and is known as bhikkha ma (beggar–mother).

32. Some receive new names at this stage.

33. Openshaw (2007, 323–26) describes a similar renunciation ceremony among bauls.

34. When women reach menopause, some men look for other partners, while others continue to live together and borrow body-substances like menstrual blood from other sahajiyas. Only a few sahajiyas said that they stopped their ingestion and sexual rituals after renunciation.

35. See also Bose (1934, 1–2, 1986, 42–44) and Dimock (1966, 158–61). Sahajiyas think of rule-bound sexuality as procreative (kama), and spiritual sexuality, or raganuga bhakti, as pleasure-for-itself (prem) (213–14).

36. This classification of chakras comes close to that of the Hindu tantras (Bose 1986, 125–32; Dimock 1966, 176–77).

37. These logics are similar to those of goswamis and babajis (see chapter 3).

38. Fillippi and Dahnhardt (2001, 353) show that Ananda Yoga practices depend on similar experiences of air/sonic vibrations within the empty heart-space.

39. While some said that they pull back fluids before orgasm, others seemed to suggest that they take the mixture of fluids back into the body after the fluids meet in the vagina.

41. See Fillippi and Dahnhardt (2001, 356) and Hayes (2000, 310).
42. This is different from monist bauls, who associate the cranium with transcendental space (Salomon 1994, 272).
43. Gold (1999, 73–74) says similarly that in Nath cosmological understandings, bindu (sperm) converges with nad (sound).
44. Sarukkai (2002, 469) says that when the external senses are subdued through yogic postures, inner body-sounds can be heard.

5. SERVING GUPTA-VRINDAVAN
4. Devotees receive Vaishnava names once initiated.
5. See De (1986, 174), Haberman (2003, 71–77), and Stewart (1999, 699–700) for discussion of these five main principles of the sixty-four vaidhi bhakti acts.
6. There have also been persistent international rumors of ISKCON’s involvement in mysterious deaths, sex scandals, and weapons hoarding, which are also popularly narrated by Bengalis generally and in Navadvip particularly.
7. Even foreigners, through intensive reading practices, understand and use Sanskrit and Bengali terms with theological import. The significance of the concept of yukta-vairagya was discussed in chapter 4. See also Haberman (2003, 75).
8. The Bhagavad Gita for instance has an extensive commentary by Prabhupad (1986), titled The Bhagavad Gita As It Is.
10. On Bengal-Vaishnava debates on caste, see Dimock (1963, 112).
11. This ideal of the corporate samnyasi is yet another embodiment of the philosophy of yukta-vairagya.
15. On details of the idols’ installations, see Brahmachari (2007), Dasi and Dasi (2004), and Svami (2004).
16. For an analysis of “attending Krishna’s image” as a form of vaidhi bhakti, see Packert (2010) and Valpey (2006).
17. English editions are published by BBT Mumbai.

6. LISTENING TO VRINDAVAN
3. Attali (1985, 4) makes a similar point about theorizing through rather than about sound.

4. These physical responses are part of *asta sattvika bhavas*, mentioned in note 16 of chapter 3.

5. Sound-experience is intimately connected to place-experience. The homophonic pair “hear” and “here” points to the ear’s tendency to locate the present here and now. Thus, sound studies trace “locality” in the “nature of sound” (O’Shaughnessy 1957, 483). Most studies *situate* or emplace the sources, objects, and/or directionality of sound (Pike 1970; Schryer 1992, 219). So Connor (2004, 153–72) speaks about the “umbilical continuity” or “sonic tactility” sounds have with their sources, and Pasnau insists on “putting sound back to where it belongs” (1999, 325, emphasis added).


7. My analyses here have strong resemblances to Shannon’s (2004) discussion of *dbhikr* experiences.


9. The poems were composed in Bengali, Sanskrit, and Vrajabuli, a medieval Bengali dialect.

10. I realized later that the energy-center around the chest is known as *anahata*, literally “unstruck sound,” which she meant is struck when the *khol* plays.

11. Schimmel (1997, 279) similarly demonstrates the importance of the flute-aesthetic in Sufism.

12. The strings are tighter and the surface smaller at this end. Thus, its sounds are sharper and higher-pitched.


14. See also Gold and Gold (1984, 120) and Williams (1997, 223).

15. In contrast, in Buddhist meditative imaginings, the gradual movement is from silence, to sounds, to silence (Cooper 2001, 182).

16. Krishna is imagined as the dark lord, and Radha as the fair maiden.

17. See also Beck (1993, 94, 104) and Davidson (1995).

18. See also Ernst (2005, 26), Gold (1999, 73), and Salomon (1995, 190).

7. **Conclusion**

1. See Burghart (1983) and Cook (2006, 2010b) for related debates on the community bases of renouncers’ religious lives, and thus necessary revisions of Dumont’s theories.