The Guru's Tongue: Metaphor, Imagery, and Vernacular Language in Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Traditions[1]

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> The praises for Kṛṣṇa are the uterine blood, while the seed syllable is the semen.
> The guru's tongue (*guru-jihvā*) is the penis, while the ear of the disciple is the vagina.
>
> So, your birth should result from these things.
> You should really try to understand how you can be born through the grace of practitioners.
>
> —Ākiñcana-dāsa, *Vivarta-vilāsa* (The Play of Transformation)[2]

INTRODUCTION: VERNACULAR TANTRA AND BENGAL

THESE VIVID PASSAGES from a seventeenth-century Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā text provide us with a good example of the richness and complexity of vernacular (in this case, Bengali) tantric literature. We will analyze these passages later in this essay, but they help to introduce us to some of the issues regarding the scholarly study of tantra,[3] especially those concerning differences between South Asian tantras composed in Sanskrit and others composed in Bengali and other vernacular languages. Most prior scholarship, especially in the area of Hindu tantra, has emphasized the more abstract and elite Sanskrit-based texts; more recently, however, scholars of tantra have demonstrated that important tantric traditions have been expressed in vernacular languages such as Bengali, Hindi, and Malayalam.[4] In addition to honoring the career of Jim Sanford, this essay has two objectives: (1) to briefly review modern metaphor theories and consider their use in the study of vernacular tantra, and (2) to apply these insights to brief selections of seventeenth-century Bengali Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā texts. But first we must consider the general background of vernacular tantra in Bengal.

To begin with, the area of northeastern India including greater Bengal and Assam has historically been one of the most fertile arenas for the development and growth of Buddhist and Hindu tantrism. The renowned Buddhist centers of Tamralipti and Nālandā were located here, and Buddhist tantrics traveled throughout the region, including active exchanges between Bengal and Himalayan regions such as Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet. As noted by S. C. Banerji in his survey *Tantra in Bengal*, from "the Tibetan Bstan-hgyur and Lama Tārānātha's history of Tibet, we learn about quite a number of other Buddhist tantras by Bengali authors. Their Sanskrit originals are lost, and are preserved only in Tibetan versions and, in a very few cases, in Chinese."[5] But tantrism was also being expressed in proto-vernacular languages like "old Bengali" or Apabhraṃśa, surviving in manuscript form as collections called *caryāpadas* and *dohas* (ca. 950–1150 CE) by their discoverer, Haraprasad Sastri.[6] These important texts suggest a vital vernacular tradition of Buddhist tantrism in Bengal, outside of the walls of universities and the elite, for the songs of the *caryāpadas* and *dohas* reveal aspects of domestic village life like dancing, cooking, music, and boating. In contrast to the refined philosophy and abstractions of many Sanskrit- and Tibetan-based tantras, these short Buddhist works focus more on the experiences of specific gurus and particular practices rather than developing a more general tantric system.

Although the origins of Hindu tantrism are as obscure as those of Buddhist tantra, we also find many examples of both elite and popular expressions.[7] While this is not the place to examine the many important tantric teachers and texts connected with Bengal, it should be noted that some of the most renowned works are the *Sarvollāsa* of Sarvānanda (ca. 1425 CE), the famous *Tantrasāra* of Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamavāgiśa (ca. 1580 CE), and the *Śyāmārahasya* of Pūrṇānanda (ca. 1575 CE).[8] But these texts tended to be written by, and intended for, upper-caste Hindus; as with Buddhist tantrism, various tantric movements flourished among village and rural people, and among the lower castes and outcastes. It is especially among these groups that vernacular tantric traditions developed. As with Buddhist tantrism, in contrast to most Sanskrit-based tantric traditions, Bengali vernacular tantrics, such as the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, the Bāuls, and the Kartābhajās, did not emphasize cosmic abstractions or complex philosophies.[9] Instead, these widespread movements and their gurus were concerned with the problems of everyday life, the human body, and desires. In their own ways, Sahajiyās,

Bāuls, and Kartābhajās confronted the issues of cosmology, physiology, sexuality, and soteriology and came up with their own distinctive vernacular responses. Perhaps it is not surprising that they embraced the concept of *saṃdeha* or liberation "with a body" far more than most Sanskrit-based texts, for whom the physical body was still regarded as less real than, for example, the subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*, in Śaiva tantras).[10] Although all tantras regard some type of body as "real" and useful for liberation, Bengali vernacular tantras have placed great emphasis upon the physical body as the basis of *sādhana* (psychophysical ritual and meditative practices).

Perhaps as an extension of this *saṃdeha* worldview, Bengali vernacular tantrics tended to embrace a cosmological continuum of substance and consciousness, as opposed to the more dualistic model proposed by Sāṃkhya and Sanskrit-based systems, e.g., the contrast between *puruṣa* (consciousness) and *prakṛti* (matter). Although vernacular traditions employ classical South Asia homologies between the body and the cosmos, microcosm and macrocosm, these connections are not based so much upon the precise use of mantras as much as they are upon the use of specifically *bodily* rituals such as ritual sexual intercourse, ingestion of sexual and other substances, devotional singing, and visualization. This focus on embodiment and, in a way, the local and immediate world, led in turn to development of various religious metaphors dealing with "taste," "touch," and "sight" (to name just a few). As a result, we find Bengali vernacular tantric communities making use of esoteric discourses and rituals expressing these polyvalent metaphors to comprehend and achieve cosmic processes, beings, and liberation.

Descriptions of the subtle inner yogic bodies and regions use imageries and metaphors from Bengali culture and the Gangetic delta, so that, for example, the better-known *cakras* and *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* of Śaiva and Śākta systems are often replaced in Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā teachings by the more hydraulic and riverine images of enchanted ponds (*sarovara*) and winding rivers (*bāṅkānadī*). In the *Amṛtaratnāvalī* of Mukunda-dāsa (ca. 1600 CE) we find the following (vv. 96–98):[11]

> Through the ninth door[12] is the Pond of Lust (*kāma-sarovara*).
> Thus has been proclaimed the story which all the *śāstras* discuss.
>
> There are the Pond of Lust (*kāma-sarovara*) [and] the Pond of Self-Consciousness (*māna-sarovara*);

> The Pond of Divine Love (*prema-sarovara*) [and] the Pond of Indestructibility (*akṣaya-sarovara*).
>
> The four ponds lie within the heart.
> If you have a body (*deha*), you can reach the other shore.[13]

In other Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā, Bāul, and Kartābhajā texts we also find extensive use of references to Bengali sweets, flowers, animals, villages, marketplaces, and even local coinage. To be sure, many of these have pan-Indian cognates, but they exist in these texts as specifically Bengali variants, located in, and expressing, Bengali culture and contexts.

In grappling with the fundamental tantric issues of sexuality, ritual transformation, and cosmic powers, Bengali vernacular tantras reflect not just a need to balance the feminine with the masculine, but, perhaps reflecting the prevalence of Śaktism and other goddess traditions in the region, a frequent *emphasis* upon the cosmic feminine, the role of the female ritual partner (*gopīs*, *nāyikās*), and (especially with Sahajiyās) the necessity of the inner visualized female form (*śrīrūpa-mañjarī*) as prerequisites to final liberation. In addition to this important valorization of the feminine, we find among the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās the process of what Joseph O'Connell calls "anamnesia," a ritual transformation whereby the practitioner seeks to "remember" (*smaraṇa*) his/her "true nature" (*svarūpa*) as a participant in the cosmic drama (*dhāma-līlā*) of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.[14]

Finally, the academic study of Bengali vernacular tantric traditions (as well as those from other regions) has been hampered not only by Orientalist strategies, terminologies, sanitizing, and censorship (as Andre Padoux, Doug Brooks, Tony Stewart, and Hugh Urban have argued),[15] but also by the problems of attempting to study "local" and vernacular tantra without having the discourse constrained by the generic reductionist concept of Sanskrit-based "tantra" or "tantrism" (itself an Orientalist and scholarly construct). This essay will demonstrate the vernacular "Bengali" and local nature of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā tantric traditions. Rather than understanding them from the perspective of Sanskrit-based, elite tantric traditions, we will encounter them on their own terms, hopefully appreciating their richness and complexity.[16]

In this short essay I would like to consider some of these problems of studying "local" and vernacular tantra by referring to selections from two seventeenth-century Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā texts that I have

translated.[17] Information gleaned from these wonderful, if challenging esoteric texts can illustrate not only important aspects of vernacular tantric literature, but also show how the use of modern conceptual metaphor theories (especially those developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, see below) can help us to better understand the imaginative worlds expressed by vernacular texts and traditions. One way to "liberate" local tantras from the constraints of the dominant Sanskrit-based model of "tantra" is to explore the vernacular language itself, to coax out the often-profound metaphors and entailments that "live" in the texts.

Edward C. Dimock presented some of the basic beliefs and practices of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions and discussed the problematics of determining their origins in his now-classic *The Place of the Hidden Moon*.[18] However, for the convenience of those readers not familiar with his work I will provide a quick overview of these fascinating traditions. The Sahajiyās may be considered—in the very broad sense—an interaction of tantric yoga with Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, with the resultant a quite distinctive vernacular tantric tradition.[19] First, Sahajiyās adapt classical devotional interpretations of Kṛṣṇa, transforming him from a supreme being (as *bhagavān*, quite distinct from ordinary human beings) into the inner cosmic form (*svarūpa*) of every human male. Rādhā is transformed from the consort or *hlādini-śakti* ("bliss emanation") of Kṛṣṇa into the *svarūpa* of every woman. For Sahajiyās, in other words, the goal is not to worship Kṛṣṇa or imitate Rādhā and the *gopīs* in a dualistic *bhakti* sense, but rather *to become* Kṛṣṇa or Rādhā themselves, in a monistic tantric manner. Second, by expressing these alternative and antinomian notions of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in Bengali language and verse, and embedding these narratives in specific Sahajiyā teaching lineages, they move Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā even further from the Sanskrit-based and classical formulations into the local cultural and cognitive realities of Bengali men and women.

As Dimock has shown, Kṛṣṇa and his erotic encounters with Rādhā would seem to be natural choices for adaptations by late medieval Sahajiyā tantrics as they sought to express the need to reverse the phenomenal flow of creation—engendered as the "play" of male and female powers—"upwards against the current" (*sroter ujāna*) back to the unitive state of Sahaja, the "Innate" or "Primordial" condition. Of course, the popular notion of the religious leader Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (ca. 1486–1533 CE) as the dual incarnation of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, devel-

oped by Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja (ca. 1615 CE) in his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*,[20] was also taken up by some Sahajiyā gurus as a clear reflection of their own belief that all Sahajiyās must themselves realize the indwelling of both male and female powers within their own physical bodies.

CONTEMPORARY METAPHOR THEORIES AND THE STUDY OF VERNACULAR TANTRA

If we can set aside the controversy of possible Sahajiyā influence on orthodox Vaiṣṇavism,[21] we can turn our attention to how vernacular tantric traditions are expressed in some Sahajiyā texts, such as the *Amṛtaratnāvalī* of Mukunda-dāsa (ca. 1600 CE) and the *Vivarta-vilāsa* of Ākiñcana-dāsa (ca. 1650 CE).[22] Of interest is the fact that, in contrast to most other tantric traditions that have extensive written commentaries based on major or "root" texts, there appears to be no such tradition of written commentaries in Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions. So the modern scholar is immediately challenged when dealing with the intricacies and details of the existing texts (many of which remain unstudied manuscripts in Bengali archives and libraries). We lack traditional guides to the texts, but we can turn to other methods. One fruitful way to do this is to explore the metaphors that lie at the heart of the texts. To begin with, the basic Vaiṣṇava notion of *avatāra* is itself a wonderful metaphoric process, for it enables an abstract, cosmic, divine being to be expressed in more earthly, concrete terms—one of the basic functions of either religious metaphor (such as "God is love") or everyday metaphor ("Life is a journey"). Whether it is Viṣṇu taking form as a fish or a boar or a man-lion or Kṛṣṇa taking form as a baby, a friend, or a lover, it is this shape-shifting nature of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa that lends itself to additional tantric reinterpretation and metaphorical elaboration.

Until recently, metaphor has been studied by Western scholars primarily as a linguistic and poetic device. And, as scholars of South Asia know, metaphor is given extensive treatment in classical Indian aesthetics and dramaturgy in terms of *rūpaka*, *alaṃkāra*, and *dvani* (ideas that continue in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava and Sahajiyā aesthetics).[23] But over the past several decades a decidedly modern theory of "conceptual metaphor" has emerged, based on the efforts of a wide range of scholars, including linguists, philosophers, literary critics, folklorists, cognitive scientists, and anthropologists.[24] A methodology using concepts

from this emerging field shows great promise in our efforts towards understanding religious texts and discourse. Vernacular religious traditions may be contrasted to classical and elite traditions not only because they developed in (and responded to) different social, cultural, and historical contexts, but also because they make distinctive uses of metaphors in their attempt to construe and express sacred realities and beings. These are not metaphors just in the sense of literary and poetic devices; the modern understanding of conceptual metaphors connects metaphors to fundamental cognitive, physiological, and neurological processes—many of which we are only just beginning to understand.

As linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson observe in their wonderful groundbreaking collaboration *Metaphors We Live By*, "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." [25] According to Johnson, metaphor is

> conceived as a pervasive mode of understanding by which we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind. So conceived, metaphor is not merely a linguistic mode of expression; rather, it is one of the chief cognitive structures by which we are able to have coherent, ordered experiences that we can reason about and make sense of. Through metaphor, we make use of patterns that obtain in our physical experience to organize our more abstract understanding.[26]

Following the groundbreaking work of Lakoff and Johnson, Gary B. Palmer applied their insights to culture and cognition in his useful *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics*, wherein he argues that different languages and metaphors correspond to different cognitive models and worldviews.[27] For our purposes it is worthwhile to note Palmer's argument that human communities operate with "folk cognitive models," models of reality that operate in the minds of speakers of a given language.[28] Thus, vernacular tantric traditions like the Sahajiyās are not just using different languages to express the same basic tantric worldviews; they are in fact expressing distinct cognitive and cosmological models. That is one of the reasons why the Sahajiyā cosmophysiology of lotus ponds and rivers is so different from the Śaiva models of *cakras* and *nāḍīs*; although structurally similar, the metaphors used are different, as are the entailments and the subtle meanings.

According to Palmer, one of the major goals of language, especially metaphors, is to convey images from one person to another. This is also a major goal of tantric *sādhana* and initiation, as gurus experience cosmic realities and bodily sensations, then share them with disciples using rituals, texts, and discourses. But, just as tantric imagery is always essentially secretive and esoteric (*gupta, rahasya, marma*), so are images never directly related by language; rather, to quote Palmer, they are "mental representations that begin as conceptual analogs of immediate, perceptual experience from the peripheral sensory organs."[29] This is why we must pay close attention to the vernacularity of the traditions we study, for if the key to tantric visualization and *sādhanas* are the images of deities and the disciples' connections with them, the shaping influence of vernacular language and culture must be understood. Although not referring to religious images per se, Palmer observes that images are[30]

> Indirect conceptual analogs of the environment, broadly construed to include society, natural phenomena, our own bodies and their organic (and mental) processes, and the rest of what is often called "reality" or "the world out there."

So, to summarize, we could argue that basically all imagery is structured by culture and what Palmer calls "personal history."[31] Thus, in order to understand and appreciate vernacular or elite tantric imageries, we must understand the context of the culture and the language.

In an earlier essay[32] I suggested how modern conceptual metaphor theory can help us to understand tantric visualization and ritual processes; here I will apply this methodology to the issues of vernacular language and tantric traditions. In order to appreciate the basic theory, a bit of linguistic terminology must be used, that involving so-called "target" and "source" domains. For example, regarding the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor (which exists in variants worldwide, and is found in Sahajiyā texts as well), Lakoff observes:

> The metaphor involves understanding one domain of experience, love, in terms of another domain of experience, journeys. More technically, the metaphor can be understood as a mapping (in the mathematical sense) from a source domain (in this case, journeys) to a target domain (in this case, love). The mapping is tightly structured. There are ontological correspondences, according to which entities in the domain of love (e.g. the lovers, their common goals, their dif-

> ficulties, the love relationship) correspond systematically to entities in the domain of a journey (the travelers, the vehicle, destinations, etc.).[33]

Thus, for most metaphors, the basic taxonomy is: TARGET-domain IS SOURCE-domain, and much of the theory explores these "ontological correspondences," as well as their various meanings. This same basic relationship can be applied to virtually any metaphor, for example: ARGUMENT IS WAR or IDEAS ARE FOOD. The multiple meanings found in the source domain (war, food) may have complex relationships with those in the target domain (argument, ideas), and a wide range of semantic and lexical implications or entailments are the result. Thus, we can have, respectively, expressions like "He attacked my position" and "Your thesis is hard to digest." So, even in cases of nonreligious language, what we find are local and vernacular expressions being linked to underlying metaphorical constructions and to Palmer's "folk cognitive models."

The same applies to specifically religious metaphors, which tend even more to be polysemic. An example from the *Amṛtaratnāvalī* helps to illustrate this complexity (vv. 162–164):

> That Pond is visualized as having a pleasing shape.
> I will tell you about it, please listen carefully!
>
> That Pond is adorned with precious gems (*maṇika*).
> That eternal Abode (*dhāma*) is inlaid with the Jewels (*ratna*).
>
> In the four directions there are four landing-stairs, connected to the path of the village leader.[34]
> The landing-stairs are redolent with the [scents] of musk, vermilion, and sandalwood.

This passage, which describes the visualization of one of the inner ponds of the yogic body, also contains images of stairs, villages, leaders, and ritual cosmetics. But beyond this basic level of simple description, there is a deeper underlying level of metaphorical process at work. When we examine Sahajiyā religious metaphors (and there are many), such as THE BODY IS A POND SYSTEM or REALITY IS FLUID or SAHAJA IS A CONTAINER or SĀDHANA IS A JOURNEY, we find that important aspects of the source domain (the relatively "concrete" notions of a pond system, fluid, container, journey) tend to be applied to the target domains (the more abstract notions of body, reality, Sahaja, and *sādhana*)

in ways that attempt to maintain metaphorical consistency. Thus, the local or "folk" details of a river system (e.g., banks, landing stairs, waters, villages, ponds, current, boats) are connected to the body in a way that the Sahajiyās thus envision these details as part of the subtle inner body. In other words, the "cognitive topology," the "nooks and crannies" as it were, of the source domains (the "concrete" image) tend to constrain and structure how the target domain (the "abstraction") is perceived and experienced. This is why we must pay attention to the specifically local images and vernacular Bengali expressions that are used to indicate cosmic abstractions like Kṛṣṇa, Sahaja, or the subtle body; it also suggests why the Sahajiyā subtle physiology is typically envisioned not as fiery energy centers and ascending *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* (more typically features of Sanskritic texts), but rather as the movement of fluids along a river, past villages, and into a series of inner ponds. There is a metaphorical and cognitive consistency that leads to what Tony Stewart calls "coherent metaphoric worlds."[35]

Metaphors are thus useful because they enable what Mark Johnson calls "the imaginative structuring of experience" in human life, which consists of "forms of imagination that grow out of bodily experience, as it contributes to our understanding and guides our reasoning."[36] And it is here where we can gain an appreciation for the use of local, folk, and vernacular expressions, for it is this very function of metaphor that allows mystics such as the Sahajiyās to "imaginatively structure" their yogic, emotional, and sexual experiences. This is based upon what modern theorists call "image schemata," essentially "a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience."[37] Although we are still learning more about such cognitive schema as we learn more about neurophysiology and other areas, schema theory has been reviewed by Ronald W. Casson.[38] Casson states that schemas are "conceptual abstractions that mediate between stimuli received by the sense organs and behavioral responses" and that they "serve as the basis for all human information processing, e.g. perception and comprehension, categorization and planning, recognition and recall, and problem-solving and decision-making."[39] While this is not the place to explore the neurophysiological aspects of schema, it is worth quoting Palmer on why they are essential to our study of language and culture:[40]

> To understand a word as its speaker intended or to use it appropriately, it is necessary to know the schema or schemas to which it be-

> longs in a particular context of use. Words evoke systems of meaning, and often, as in metaphor, they evoke two or more systems at once. Whole vocabularies pertaining to the landscape, the body, kinship, and other topics all have their own underlying schemas. Along such schemas, words and idiomatic phrases are distributed more or less systematically.

Some such schemata, such as the "verticality schema" (and the meaning or value of "up" versus "down") or the "container schema" (which can "mark off" a mental space and turn an idea or experience into a "vessel") are perhaps universally found with humans, but it is likely that there are important local and individual expressions—issues that we are still working out.

Metaphors thus work together with bodily experience and image schemata to create "coherent metaphoric worlds," allowing us to interact with, and even to "enter," those worlds. It is precisely this process of what Lakoff and Johnson call "mapping" that we can find in Sahajiyā notions of subtle physiology and ritual process, of identifying men with Kṛṣṇa and women with Rādhā. This "mapping" (itself a spatial metaphor) allows for not just analysis and manipulation of the embodied condition and the material world, but for gradual transformation of the bodies of the male and female practitioners and the attainment of Sahaja.

Although the preceding discussion of contemporary metaphor theory is necessarily brief, and the issues are often quite subtle and nuanced, I trust that it has shown how metaphors may be related to language, thought, imagination, and basic experience. In addition to being useful literary devices, metaphors are embedded in our ways of thinking about ourselves, others, and the world. Like the operating system of a computer that runs quietly "in the background" of what we see on the screen, metaphors and image schemata exist underneath our words and thoughts and actions. They are at the heart of vernacular language. As it turns out, they are very "real." Lakoff observes that "metaphors impose a structure on real life, *through the creation of new correspondences in experience. And once created in one generation, they serve as an experiential basis for that metaphor in the next generation*."[41] This is precisely what seems to have happened in medieval Sahajiyā communities, as influential gurus like Mukunda-dāsa and Ākiñcana-dāsa developed distinctive metaphoric worlds based upon their own yogic experiences, expressed them orally and in written texts, and then passed

them down to their own students. Through their development of such metaphoric worlds they were able to express and disseminate their experiences to others in greater Bengal.

Some further examples of these visionary worlds from the *Amṛtaratnāvalī* will help to illustrate this metaphorical richness (vv. 42–50):

> This dharma is the purest, without division or simple lust (*kāma*).
> The abode (*dhāma*) beyond the heavenly Virajā River is transcendent.[42]
>
> Along the far shores of the Virajā River is The Land (*deśakhāna*).
> Sahajapur is that Village (*grāma*) which is called "Eternal Bliss" (*sadānanda*).
>
> To the west of that [river] is [a village called] Kaliṅga Kalikā;
> The female partner (*nāyikā*) of that place is called Campaka Kalikā.[43]
>
> [In that place are] the Tree of Emptiness,[44] and lotuses of one hundred and one thousand petals.
> The Land surrounds that tree and the waters of the Lotus Pond.
>
> To the north [of the Virajā River] is the Village called Place of Bliss (*ānandapura*).
> [In that place are] mystics (*rasikas*), the grove (*kuñja*) of *rasa*, and the abode of the God of Love (Manmatha, or Kāmadeva).
>
> Forever blissful, forever overwhelmed, forever desirous,
> the Together-Born Inner Person (*sahaja-mānusa*) always makes [its] home there.
>
> To the east of that [Virajā River] is the heavenly village of Sahajapura.
> That is the eternal abode of the Together-Born Person.
>
> Forever blissful, forever overwhelmed, forever desirous,
> the Together-Born Person always makes [its] home there.[45]
>
> To the south of that [river] is [the Village called] Place of Conscious Bliss (*cidānandapura*);
> a Land called Radiant Moon (*candrakānti*) is not far away.

When we consider such lovely inner worlds depicted in Sahajiyā texts, we need to bear in mind that these visionary worlds are connected to underlying metaphorical structures and experienced by Sahajiyās as very real—more "real" than the outer realm of zamindars, geckos, and monsoons. Sahajiyās did not just attempt to construe

their esoteric language so that it made sense in the ordinary world; rather, to paraphrase literary critic Samuel Levin,[46] they construed the world to make sense of the esoteric language. It is thus this profound "process of construal" that we must be sensitive to, by noting regional phrasings, local references, and above all metaphorical consistencies (or, in some cases, inconsistencies).

For esoteric mystical traditions like the Sahajiyās, ritual practices—ranging from the beginner's practices of singing and dancing adapted from Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *vaidhi-bhakti* to the tantric sexual rituals practiced at the advanced stage of *siddha*—thus allow for a visualized inner cosmos and body that is construed in terms of the metaphors, be they "rivers," "ponds," "flowers," or "villages." There is, of course, a physical component, as parts of the human body and material world are homologized with the metaphors, such as the vagina with a lotus, the penis with a honeybee, the urethra with a river, and so forth. Verse 133 of the *Amṛtaratnāvalī*, for example, quoting another text by Mukundadāsa, *The Garland of Bees* (*Bhṛngaratnāvalī*), compares men to bumblebees, allowing possible entailments such as taking honey, flitting from flower to flower, and so forth: "Protected by the lotuses of the Pond which is a sea of Divine Love and nectar, men become bumblebees. How can the passionate ones, clinging to the feet of the blessed Body, enter the world inside the body?"[47] This esoteric "process of construal," then, allows for not just metaphoric language based upon concepts, but also for religious realities and concepts "created" by the metaphoric language. The religious adept is thus "projected into," engages, and responds to such metaphoric worlds as coherent reality, not at all fictive illusion.[48] For Sahajiyās, they really become bees, alight in floral realities.

Folklorist Barre Toelken, in his wonderful study of European and American folksongs and ballads, *Morning Dew and Roses*, argues that "We will not want to read meaning into a song, but rather attempt to read meaning out by carefully noting . . . the relationship of the metaphor to the assumptions in its culture and by charting its coherent relationships to the song in which it appears."[49] When reading such material (or listening to it), the scholar should be sensitive to the "range of metaphorical possibilities" within the text and the culture, and will discover that this range can span "almost explicit metonymy to complex suggestive metaphor."[50]

In the case of Sahajiyā texts, which are often riddle-like in their use of uninflected language and esoteric vocabulary (which, along with the lack of written commentaries, makes their study quite vexing for modern scholars!), there is an interesting range of imagery and metaphor, much of which is "hydraulic" in nature, based upon sexuality, fluids, rivers, ponds, and flowers. We find similar imageries and tropes in other Bengali vernacular tantric traditions, such as Bāul, Śākta, and Kartābhajā songs.[51] This consistency suggests that such choices are neither coincidental nor random. In explaining the polysemy of Euro-American "riddle songs," Toelken observes:

> The more fully we can perceive the vernacular system from which the song grows and in which such references make sense, the more we will realize that there is not a strict code of any sort, but rather a field of metaphorical possibility, a pool of culturally recognizable resources in the language and in everyday jokes and formulations.[52]

Thus, in a way, we return to Lakoff and Johnson's basic point about metaphor, that the relationship between the target and source domains (between the denotative and connotative, "love" and "journey," or "woman" and "lotus flower") is not simple and predictable, and certainly not a simple or even predictable "code." But now we will turn to an examination of selected passages from Sahajiyā texts to apply some of these insights regarding metaphor and vernacular language.

SACRED JEWELS AND FLUIDS: THE *AMṚTARATNĀVALĪ* OF MUKUNDA-DĀSA

We have already examined some verses from the *Amṛtaratnāvalī* or *Necklace of Immortality* of Mukunda-dāsa, which was composed around 1600 CE. In its over three hundred couplets we find a rich trove of metaphors and Bengali cultural references—as well as the tantric visualizations and ritual procedures that are its main focus. As with other Bengali vernacular tantras, it expresses a worldview emphasizing embodiment, the transformative and salvific powers of ritual sexual intercourse, and the importance of "substance" in the religious quest. The very title, *Necklace* (*ratnāvalī*) *of Immortality* (*amṛta*), is itself a polysemic metaphor, for it suggests not only the uses of jewels and bodily ornamentation in tantric ritual, but the more fundamental notion that the practitioner must "fashion" and then figuratively

"wear" an encircling mandala made out of the "jewels" or *ratna* which, in the esoteric language of the text, are yogically-reversed sexual fluids. Called *vastu* or "stuff" by Mukunda-dāsa, these fluids are created and joined when the male practitioner, as Kṛṣṇa, joins with his female partner, who is visualized as Rādhā. The process is one in which the male is believed to draw the female sexual fluid (*rati*) from the woman's vagina into his penis, where it joins with his semen (*rasa*) and is then caused to move upwards along the "crooked river" (*bāṅkānadī*), through four inner ponds (*sarovara*), and finally up to Sahaja itself.[53] (Some have playfully termed this the "reverse-fountain-pen technique," but it is a variant of the tantric practice of "reverse suction," such as the *vajrolī-mudrā* of Siddha traditions).[54] As abstract and mystical as these inner places may be, they are all accessible through the fluids of the human body, connected to the very "stuff" (*vastu*) of this world.

That Mukunda-dāsa and other medieval Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās would use a substantive term like *vastu* in their description of subtle physiology is significant, for it illustrates the use of several different kinds of ontological metaphors identified by Lakoff and Johnson: entity, substance, and container metaphors. Abstractions like the experience of a "divine body" (*deva-deha*) and associated states of consciousness are expressed and made more accessible through the use of such images. As Lakoff and Johnson note:

> Our experience of physical objects and substances provides a further basis for understanding—one that goes beyond mere orientation. Understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind. Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them—and, by this means, reason about them.[55]

Because of the use of such "substantive" metaphors to express mystical experiences, the metaphoric world of the *Necklace* has a particular character or quality that distinguishes it from the metaphoric worlds of some Sanskrit-based tantric or Kṛṣṇa traditions, which often use different kinds of metaphors. Whereas the metaphoric world of the *Necklace* is expressed primarily through metaphors of substances and fluids, other types of tantric worlds—for example, those expressed using the better-known systems of *cakras* and *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*—use metaphors

of energy, sound, power, and light.[56] Although this is not the place to explore the many fascinating issues arising from such differences (and similarities), it should be clear that, once a basic metaphorical world is established, certain entailments and outcomes are possible—while others are not. In other words, a cosmophysiology based primarily (though not exclusively) upon fluids and substances will probably have some dynamics or "feel" (to use a modern sensory metaphor) that vary from one based primarily upon energy, sound, and light.

Mukunda-dāsa is quite clear about the importance of substance and fluid, for early in the text (vv. 7–12), immediately after offering homage to notable Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authorities like Caitanya, Nityānanda, and the Gosvāmins, he discusses the importance of *rasa*, understood on several levels—as a religio-aesthetic experience, as a sexual substance, and even as an alchemical term (as mercury).[57] However, since the basic meaning of *rasa* is "juice" or "essence" (as from a sugar cane), this allows Mukunda-dāsa to develop entailments based upon the core image of a "sweet fluid" that causes delightful sensations when "tasted." Thus, *rasa* can be the rapturous aesthetic or devotional experience of "sweet" emotions, and it can also be the essence that derives, not just from a cane, but from the penis. Furthermore, those who experience *rasa* are called *rasikas* ("aesthetes," "connoisseurs," or "tasters"), and Mukunda-dāsa compares their experiences to floating upon a river (vv. 8–9):

> Those devotees who are rasikas seek the subtle inner Body (*śrī-rūpa*).
> Their minds are constantly bobbing (*ḍubāya*) about in the *rasa*.
>
> With minds submerged (*magna*) in *rasa*, they float along.
> *Rasa* can only be produced by keeping the company of *rasikas.*

Both meanings of *rasa*—as aesthetic experience and sexual substance—share similar entailments, for both "experience" and "semen" can "flow" like a river. This riverine entailment or extended meaning of the basic substance/fluid metaphor also helps to suggest why the subtle physiology of the *Necklace* consists of a system of a river and ponds, and not the more familiar *suṣumṇā-nāḍī* and *cakras* of other traditions: fluids naturally run through rivers and streams and into ponds. Recalling the earlier metaphors of love and *sādhana* as a journey, which defines a path and surfaces, if mystical experience is being expressed in terms of fluidic metaphors, then the later stages of the process of liberation may be expressed as passage along a river, being

contained by the two banks of the river, flowing into a pond, and leaving the waters through landing-stairs (*ghāṭ*) to enter neighboring celestial villages (*grāma*). Of course, much of this also reflects the natural topology and climate of deltaic Bengal, with its innumerable streams, rivers, and bodies of water. In other words, the experiences of substances, fluids, rivers, and bodies of water may have been adopted as metaphors and then projected in order to refer to, categorize, group, and quantify profound mystical and sexual experiences.

But Mukunda continues this use of substance metaphors as he introduces the importance of vastu as a "cosmic substance" made out of yogically-reversed sexual fluids, which are then used to generate the inner visualized form of the female ritual partner. Some relevant passages (vv. 10–12) are:

> [Through the experience of] that *rasa*, you should internalize the principles of Substance (*vastu*).
> Indeed, the Together-Born Substance (*sahaja-vastu*) and the principles of *rasa* are to be regarded like precious jewels (*ratna*).
>
> Influenced by the jewel [of Together-Born Substance] the *rasa* [assumes] the shape of the Body (*rūpa*).
> The Body was born [by] the rituals of *rasa*.
>
> Then, in the company of *rasikas*, she who possesses the Body (*rūpavatī*) [must appear].
> Your own inner identity [requires] sporting as he who experiences *rasa* (*rasavati*).

We can detect many aspects of Sahajiyā ritual and discourse reflected in these few passages, especially the practice of ritual sexual intercourse, the yogic reversal of sexual fluids, and the use of those fluids to create the inner "Body" (*rūpa*) of the female partner. Written in riddle-like vernacular Bengali, they help to illustrate the quite distinctive character of Sahajiyā worldviews and ethos.

THE GURU'S TONGUE: THE VIVARTA-VILĀSA OF ĀKIÑCANA-DĀSA

In addition to their specifically religious usages, metaphors may also be used to claim authority and legitimation. Such examples may be found in the *Vivarta-vilāsa* (The Erotic Sport of Transformation) of Ākiñcana-dāsa, an extensive treatise of several thousand couplets

composed about 1650 CE. Much of this work is devoted to arguing that the renowned Bengali devotional leader Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (1486–1533 CE) and other notable Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas were in fact secretly practicing Sahajiyā sexual rituals (a claim hotly contested then as now by orthodox Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas).[58] Ākiñcana-dāsa quotes extensively from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja and from other texts in order to argue for this "privileged" Sahajiyā reading of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava history.[59] Most of the work is composed in Bengali, although there are some quotations from Sanskrit works like the *Bhagavad-gītā* and philosophical and aesthetic works by Gauḍīya scholars. Ākiñcana-dāsa had several goals in composing the *Vivarta-vilāsa*, including outlining the basic Sahajiyā worldview and ritual practices; however, it is clear from his extensive discourse with the mainstream Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition that issues of authority and legitimation were at the core of the text as well. Thus, we can also find sophisticated uses of metaphors for these purposes; some, such as the first example below are like Mukunda-dāsa's uses in the *Amṛtaratnāvalī*, essentially describing *sādhana* and *deha-tattva*. Others, like the vivid metaphor of the guru's tongue (*guru-jihvā*), are more complex, weaving issues of authority into those of cosmology, physiology, and *sādhana*.

Like Mukunda-dāsa and other Sahajiyā gurus, Ākiñcana-dāsa embraces a basically substantive and hydraulic cosmophysiology, and the metaphors help him to do this. One such example of a substance or ontological metaphor reflects not only traditions of ritual sexual intercourse and alchemy, but also the Bengali love of making candy and other sweets:[60]

> Without the help of experienced devotees, devotion to the divine juice (*rasa*) cannot be understood.
> The alchemical candy (*bhiyāna*) is ritually prepared using the instrument of divine love.
>
> * * * * * * * *
>
> The alchemical candy was made by seizing the divine juice,
> and blending into that precious treasure the female and the male principles.
>
> As many sugar-drops and candy pieces that can be made from the juice of the sugarcane,
> that much cosmic substance (*vastu*) and power (*śakti*) are to be gained in the great mystical condition (*mahābhāva*).

In *The Immortal Acts of Caitanya* (2.23.23) it is said:

> From the sugarcane plant come seeds, stalks, juice, and molasses, but
> they share the same basic essence.
> Sugar candy is really just the finest white sugar mixed with spices.
>
> Just as the flavor of these products of the sugarcane gradually increases,
> so does religious appreciation increase due to passion and divine love.
>
> The juice and cosmic substance are always present in a special place.
> If they remain, what happens? You must understand all of this.
>
> Take the juice in that place and mix spices with it.
> You must fashion the confection by transforming that juice.

Using the quaint and intriguing substantive metaphor of candy-making, this couplet clearly reflects the cultural context of Bengali village life. The underlying "folk cognitive model" is that of transforming worldly substances like sexual fluids (*rasa*) into powerful alchemical substances or pills which, like candy (*bhiyāna*) can be ingested to achieve the higher stages of Sahajiyā *sādhana* and immortality. As with many Sahajiyā practices, there are additional devotional elements of *bhakti* and "divine love" (*prema*) adapted from Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism—hence the citation from Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja's great work in an attempt to legitimize this tantric alchemical procedure and locate himself within the lineage of Caitanya and Kṛṣṇa-dāsa. Furthermore, all of this refers to the underlying hydraulic or fluidic metaphorical world found in most other Sahajiyā cosmologies. To the best of my knowledge, few if any other tantric traditions use this metaphor of candy-making, which seems specific to vernacular Bengali texts.

The metaphor of the guru's tongue, although clearly connected to issues of cosmophysiology, initiation, and empowerment, also takes us to Sahajiyā attempts to claim authority and legitimation. As Hugh Urban has convincingly shown in his study of the nineteenth-century Kartābhajās, Bengali tantric movements have attempted to deal with their marginal status by employing a number of strategies of appropriation, transformation, and concealment.[61] In the case of the earlier Sahajiyās, we find not only attempts to claim the teachings and personalities of Gauḍīya traditions, but also the goal of achieving an entirely "new birth" that would distinguish the Sahajiyās from others. These issues appear in the following key passage from the text, which has a number of metaphors, such as those of fluids, substances, and especially the basic "container" metaphor in which THE BODY IS

A CONTAINER. This is connected to a polysemic convergence of images of "birth," "initiation," and "speaking/hearing," all of which lead to the creation of the inner yogic body. It is worth quoting much of this passage to illustrate its richness:[62]

> Those rituals which deserve the highest praise involve childless asceticism.
> Please, I implore you, behold and understand the secret meanings!
>
> There is a full pitcher (*kumbha*) upon his head.
> When there is such a full pitcher, the practitioner becomes very powerful.
>
> Then divine love appears in his body.
> Thus everyone says: "That inner country is truly a fine place."
>
> Hear about the different kinds of birth from the manuals of the practitioners and from the mouths of practitioners.
> It is not even worth considering other viewpoints concerning the nature of devotion.
>
> The grace of the guru and the grace of practitioners come after the grace of mother and father.
> This tells you that there are two separate and distinct births.
>
> There is no birth at all without uterine blood, semen, vagina, and penis.
> How can that be? I will discuss its significance.
>
> At first there was a birth due to the bonding between mother and father.
> But behold how just a little grace from the guru can cause a rebirth (*punarjanma*).
>
> That also involves uterine blood, semen, vagina, and penis.
> Clear your mind and listen, for I speak the essence of this.
>
> The praises for Kṛṣṇa are the uterine blood, while the seed syllable is the semen.
> The guru's tongue is the penis, while the ear of the disciple is the vagina.
>
> So, your birth should result from these things.
> You should really try to understand how you can be born through the grace of practitioners.
>
> The eye and ear are some of the five organs of knowledge (*jñāna-indriya*).
> In the beginning and intermediate stages of practice, you must make them compassionate.

Use the organ of knowledge that is the ear to hear about birth.
Use the eye to see the grace of the practitioners and the eternal order (*nitya dharma*).

You will then progress gradually through the three stages of practice: Beginner, Intermediate, and Perfected.
Hear with the ear and see with the eye how these are all really one process.

You must realize, brother, that everything has its uterine blood and semen.
Semen and uterine blood will develop when one assumes the condition (*bhāva*) of Rādhā ("Prosperity").

The condition of being Rādhā I call the "law of loving another's spouse" (*parakīyā dharma*).
All of the principles of greed and devotion can be found in that condition.

There is much to comment about regarding this wonderful passage, which extols the virtues of "childless asceticism," an ironic (and seemingly oxymoronic) phrase since this is an asceticism using ritual sexual intercourse.[63] However, whereas ordinary sexual intercourse, through the bodies of the father and mother, leads to the birth of the ordinary physical body of flesh and blood, the Sahajiyās seek a form of "rebirth" (*punarjanma*) as the inner subtle body (*śrī-rūpa*). This passage makes use of various container metaphors: the pitcher upon the head, referring to the reservoir of semen according to Bengali folk culture, and, among Sahajiyās, to the uppermost pond (the *akṣaya-sarovara*), which is fashioned out of reversed sexual fluids.[64] But the most vivid couplets refer to the creation of this inner bodily container, which is made metaphorically from "uterine blood, semen, vagina, and penis." Instead of having a fleshly body born of mother's blood and father's semen (again based on the Bengali folk model), the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava praises (*kīrtana*) for Kṛṣṇa (used by Sahajiyās in early stages of practice) are equivalent to the blood (*śoṇita*), while the "seed-syllable" or *bīja-mantra* used by the guru during initiation is compared to semen (*śukra*). Of note here is the transformation of sounds into substances and sexual fluids—yet another example of the core fluidic ontological metaphor. As far as the containers that hold these vital sound-fluids, the guru's tongue is creatively compared to the penis; metaphorically both share a similar function: they both deliver the female/male sound/fluid to what will be the "womb" for the "birth" of the yogic body. The disciple's ear is thus compared to the vagina/womb, as the receptacle

for the conjoined principles. So, the guru's tongue and the disciple's ear serve as polysemic metaphors for initiation, epistemology, birth, and salvific passage. But beyond this the guru's tongue also expresses the Sahajiyā claim to authority and legitimation, and the disciple's ear (and, by extension, head) provides the "vessel" within which both the "new body" and the "new power" are to grow.

Still, as the penultimate couplet notes: "You must realize, brother, that everything has its uterine blood and semen," meaning that the Sahajiyā worldview is grounded in substance, in stuff, in fluids—just as the surrounding world of medieval Bengal was based upon substances and sexuality. In contrast to the classical Sāṃkhya philosophy, which valorizes the consciousness of *puruṣa* over the matter of *prakṛti*, Ākiñcana-dāsa and Mukunda-dāsa argued that even mystical experiences (*bhāva, mahābhāva, rasa*) are grounded in substance and stuff. Such is the "folk cognitive model" that we find in the vernacular tantric traditions of the Sahajiyās, a model made all the more vivid and "real" through the skillful use of religious metaphors.

CONCLUSION

So what have we learned about vernacular religious metaphors in seventeenth-century Sahajiyā texts? To begin with, we must approach our understanding of such texts through the larger context of medieval Bengali culture and language. Sahajiyā tantric texts express a worldview quite distinct from other Bengali Sanskrit tantric texts due at least in part to the vernacular language of Bengali. Behind the Sahajiyā cosmophysiologies we can find "folk cognitive models" that are in turn connected to Bengali language and culture. Thus, using this methodology of modern metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics we can better understand the development and expressions of medieval tantric discourse. Although the goal of Sahajiyās is to become the indwelling cosmic being known as the *Sahaja-mānusa* (the "innate" or "together-born" man), this soteriology is fully grounded "in the flesh" of the practitioners, promoted through their control of erotic energies and substances, and legitimated through the secretive power of the guru's tongue. Just as we are only beginning to appreciate the richness and diversity of vernacular tantric traditions like the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of medieval Bengal, we are also just beginning to understand the important role that metaphor and cognition play in the development of language and in the formation of culture and religion. Much

of what I have written here must be considered at best as a "work in progress," but I trust that it will inspire others to study vernacular texts and make further investigations into the fascinating world of metaphor. The "guru's tongue," so to speak, may have much to say to scholars of tantric traditions.

NOTES

1. This particular essay grows out of a much earlier draft presented at a workshop in September 1997 at the University of Pennsylvania that dealt with the problem of addressing the ambiguities inherent in delineating a living Bengali vernacular tantra in concrete geographic, social (economic, political, religious, academic), and psychological spaces. Organized by Tony K. Stewart (North Carolina State University), this workshop, entitled "Constrained by Choice? The Places of Bengali Vernacular Tantra," also included the following participants: Rachel Fell McDermott (Barnard College), Hugh Urban (Ohio State University), Jeffrey J. Kripal (Rice University), Carol Salomon (University of Washington), Rebecca Manring (Indiana University) and Jason Fuller, Pika Ghosh, and Dina Siddiqui (University of Pennsylvania). Subsequent drafts were also presented at a meeting of the Society for Tantric Studies at Flagstaff, Arizona in October 2002, and at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Toronto, Ontario in November 2002. Portions of this essay also appear in *Alternative Krishnas: Regional and Vernacular Variations on a Hindu Deity*, ed. Guy Beck (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 19–32, and in *Yoga: Essays on the Indian Tradition*, ed. Ian Whicher and David Carpenter (London: Routledge, 2003), 162–184. My thanks to Charles Orzech for his useful suggestions on this current version, and to Jim Sanford for all of the many years of friendship, collegiality, scholarship, and fun.

2. Ākiñcana-dāsa, *Vivarta-vilāsa*, ed. Kṛṣṇa Bhattacharya (Calcutta: Taracand Dasa and Sons, n.d. [approx. 1988]), 114–115. This text was composed around 1650 CE. All translations of this and other Bengali texts by the author, with thanks to the late Edward C. Dimock Jr. and to Tony K. Stewart of North Carolina State University for their tremendous help in working with such difficult texts. I would also like to thank Dr. Ramakanta Chakravarti of the University of Burdwan and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad for his help during my studies in Calcutta in 1987–1988. Final responsibility, of course, remains with the author.

3. It has been well established, by scholars such as Andre Padoux, Douglas Brooks, and others, that the very categories of "tantra" and "tantrism" are Western Orientalist constructions. However, as Hugh Urban notes in his recent study of the Kartābhajās, *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), "Tantrism is perhaps much better understood as a product of the scholarly imagination, which we find it useful to employ as a tool or heuristic device" (p. 179). In this essay I will also use the terms as heuristic devices, but look forward to continuing discussions with colleagues about the problematics associated with the terms.

4. See, for example, Hugh B. Urban, *Songs of Ecstasy: Tantric and Devotional Songs from Colonial Bengal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), which includes a superb introduction to the Kartābhajās and fine translations of many of their enigmatic vernacular songs. Also see his *Economics of Ecstasy*, noted above; Rachel McDermott, *Mother of My Heart, Daughter of My Dreams: Kālī and Umā in the Devotional Poetry of Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and *Singing to the Goddess: Poems to Kālī and Umā from Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) and *Kiss of the Yoginī: "Tantric Sex" in Its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Sarah Caldwell, *Oh Terrifying Mother: Sexuality, Violence, and Worship of the Goddess Kali* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and my own various works, cited in note 17 below. A useful recent study of various aspects of tantra in both Asia and the West is Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

5. See S. C. Banerji, *Tantra in Bengal—A Study in Its Origin, Development and Influence* (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1978), 70.

6. See, for example, Atindra Mojumdar, *The Caryāpadas*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1973).

7. By using the terms "elite" and "popular" or "vernacular," I am not suggesting that these are two completely polar areas of culture; obviously, people who spoke Bengali and Sanskrit lived in the same region. However, as this essay will argue, the uses of elite or vernacular languages can often influence how one perceives and experiences the world. Still, in the broadest sense we should consider "elite" and "vernacular" as possibilities along a continuum of language, culture, and society.

8. For more on these and other texts see S. C. Banerji, *Tantra in Bengal*, 74–122.

9. For the Kartābhajās, see Urban, *Economics of Ecstasy*. For the Bāuls, see Carol Solomon, "Bāul Songs," in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 187–208, and Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

10. For an excellent treatment of the issues regarding *saṃdeha* versus *videha* ("without a body"), see Andrew O. Fort and Patricia Y. Mumme, eds., *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

11. My translations of the *Necklace of Immortality* are based upon a manuscript edition of the *Amṛtaratnāvalī* found in the collection of the Department of Bengali at the University of Calcutta, mss. #6451. Two other versions have been consulted and are often referred to when there are important variations or agreements: "M1" refers to mss. #595 in the University of Calcutta collection,

while "P" refers to the printed version found in Paritos Dasa, *Caitanyottara prathama cāriṭi sahajiyā puṅthi* (Calcutta: Bharati Book Stall, 1972), 131–159. The author expresses his gratitude to the American Institute of Indian Studies for their support during 1979–1980 and 1987–1988. This work could not have been carried out without the assistance of the Registrar of the University of Calcutta, Archivist Tushar Mahapatra, and Department Heads Asit Kumar Bandhopadyaya and P. Dasa. During 1987–1988, Dr. Ramakanta Chakravarti of the University of Burdwan and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad shared with me his great knowledge of Bengali religions and manuscripts. Deepest thanks are also extended to the late Professor Edward C. Dimock of the University of Chicago, who guided me in the translation of this difficult text and suggested many useful readings of obscure passages. Professor Tony K. Stewart of North Carolina State (Raleigh) also suggested many useful changes and interpretations. The final responsibility for the translation, however, rests with the author.

12. The ninth door or orifice of the human body is widely known in yogic literature. It is often the last opening before the tenth door—which serves as the first opening to the yogic body. For a discussion of the Buddhist tantric views, see Alex Wayman, "The Nine Orifices of the Body," in *The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1974), 139–150. The Śrīvidyā school of Hindu Śaktism envisions a total of nine *cakras*; see Douglas Renfrew Brooks, *Secret of the Three Cities: An Introduction to Hindu Śakta Tantrism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 56–58, 157–163.

13. On the importance of the symbol of the heart in the Kaula tantric system of Abhinavagupta, see Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Siva: Kaula Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Shaivism of Kashmir*, ed. Harvey P. Alper (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), passim. Line 98b is missing from M2 and is supplied from M1 and P.

14. See Joseph O'Connell, "Were Caitanya's Vaiṣṇavas Really Sahajiyās? The Case of Rāmānanda Rāya," in *Shaping Bengali Worlds, Public and Private*, ed. Tony K. Stewart (East Lansing, MI: Asian Studies Center, 1989), 11–22; and also his "Rāmānanda Rāya: A Sahajiyā or a Rāgānugā Bhakta?" *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 36–58.

15. See, for example, Urban, *Economics of Ecstasy*, and Brooks, *Secret of the Three Cities*.

16. These complicated issues have been addressed in a number of venues over the past few decades, including the University of Pennsylvania workshop in 1997, by the participants in the Tantric Studies Seminar of the American Academy of Religion (AAR; which ran from 1996–1999), the Tantric Studies Consultation of the AAR (2004–2006), and by colleagues in the Society for Tantric Studies, which has met several times, most recently in 2002 and 2005.

17. See notes 2 and 11 above for information on the Bengali versions of the two texts. Standard scholarly works on the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās in English are Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 3rd ed. (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969), especially pp. 113–156; Manindramohan Bose, *The Post-Caitanya Sahajiā [sic] Cult of Bengal* (Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1986; original ed. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1930); and Edward C. Dimock, Jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-sahajiyā Cult of Bengal* (1966; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). My own works include: "Shapes for the Soul: A Study of Body Symbolism in the Vaiṣṇava-sahajiyā Tradition of Medieval Bengal" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1985); "On the Concept of Vastu in the Vaiṣṇava-sahajiyā Tradition of Medieval Bengal," in *Religions and Comparative Thought: Essays in Honour of the Late Dr. Ian Kesarcodi-Watson*, ed. Purusottama Bilimoria and Peter Fenner, Sri Garib Dass Oriental Series, no. 62 (Delhi: Śrī Satguru Publications/Indian Books Centre, 1988), 141–149; "Boating Upon the Crooked River: Cosmophysiological Soteriologies in the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Tradition of Medieval Bengal," in *Shaping Bengali Worlds, Public and Private*, ed. Tony K. Stewart, South Asia Series Occasional Paper, no. 37 (East Lansing: Asian Studies Center/Michigan State University, 1989), 29–35; "The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Traditions of Medieval Bengal," in *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Princeton Readings in Religion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 333–351; "Cosmic Substance in the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Traditions of Medieval Bengal," *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1996–1997): 183–196; and "*The Necklace of Immortality*: A Seventeenth-Century Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Text on Ritual Sexual Intercourse and the Transformations of the Body," in *Tantra in Practice* (see note 9), 308–325; "The Necklace of Immortality: Metaphoric Worlds and Body Symbolism in Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Tantric Traditions" in *Yoga: Essays on the Indian Tradition* (see note 1), 162–184; and "Contemporary Metaphor Theory and Alternative Views of Krishna and Rādhā in Vaishnava Sahajiyā Tantric Traditions," in *Alternative Krishnas* (see note 1), 19–32. Scholarly works in Bengali include Manindra Mohan Basu (Bose), *Sahajiyā sāhitya* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1932); Paritos Dasa, *Caitanyottara prathama cāriṭi sahajiyā puṅthi*, and *Sahajiyā o Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava dharma* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. M. Private Ltd., 1978); and Gopināth Kavirāja, *Tantrik sādhana o siddhānta*, 2 vols. (Burdhwan: Bardhāman Visvavidyalaya, 1969–1975), which covers the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās in various places. Excellent introductions to Hindu Tantrism, as well as useful studies of specific traditions, may be found in Brooks, *Secret of the Three Cities* and Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Siva*. On the Kartābhajās, see Urban, *Economics of Ecstasy* as well as the accompanying volume of translations, *Songs of Ecstasy: Tantric and Devotional Songs from Colonial Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

18. Dimock, *Place of the Hidden Moon*.

19. As Hugh Urban demonstrates in *The Economics of Ecstasy*, the Kartābhajās may be regarded as a later branch of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, also combining tantra and *bhakti*—but in distinctive ways that reflect the colonial context.

20. See the superb new edition, including an introduction and commentary: Edward C. Dimock, Jr. and Tony K. Stewart, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja: A Translation and Commentary*, Harvard Oriental Series 56 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000). The fruit of many years of labor by the late Edward C. Dimock, Jr. and his student Tony K. Stewart, this volume will become the new standard work in the field.

21. See the works by Joseph O'Connell noted above and also my own "Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Appropriations of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism," *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 8, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 77–90 for debates concerning Sahajiyā influences on the Gauḍīyas. There is no debate about Gauḍīya influences upon the Sahajiyās.

22. Selections from these texts are translated in my contributions to two recent anthologies: "The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Traditions of Medieval Bengal" and "*The Necklace of Immortality*: A Seventeenth-Century Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Text on Ritual Sexual Intercourse and the Transformations of the Body."

23. For a brief survey of Western views through the mid-twentieth century, see Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor* (London: Methuen and Co., 1972). On the basic traditions of Sanskrit aesthetics, see A. K. Ramanujan and Edwin Gerow, "Indian Poetics," in *The Literatures of India: An Introduction*, ed. Edward C. Dimock, Jr. and others (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 115–143.

24. Perhaps the most comprehensive collection of essays, examining metaphor from a range of disciplines, may be found in Andrew Ortony, ed., *Metaphor and Thought*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Another valuable collection is Sheldon Sacks, ed., *On Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). The URL for The Center for the Cognitive Science of Metaphor Online is http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rohrer/metaphor.htm. This has many links to other related sites.

25. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3. See also the later work by Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). I am indebted to both of these works for helping me to appreciate the pivotal role of metaphor in the medieval Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions. More recently, I have been inspired by a groundbreaking work on cognitive science: Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). I applied some of this more recent methodology to my paper delivered at the 2006 meeting of the American Academy of Religion Tantric Studies Consultation, "Blended Worlds and Emergent Beings: Metaphors, Cog-

nitive Science, and the Study of Tantra." More of these insights will appear in a forthcoming publication.

26. Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, xiv–xv.

27. Gary B. Palmer, *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996). Palmer also includes a nice discussion of the evolution of cultural linguistics from the days of Boas on.

28. Ibid., 36.

29. Ibid., 47.

30. Ibid., 47.

31. Ibid., 49.

32. "The Necklace of Immortality: Metaphoric Worlds and Body Symbolism in Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Tantric Traditions."

33. Ibid., 207.

34. Only ms. #6451 finishes the line this way; ms. #595 and the printed edition conclude with "built with golden vessels" (*bāndhā svarṇaputẹ*). #6451 reads: *bāndhā sarddā pāthe*. However, #595 and the printed version make more sense. This couplet also seems to describe the Rādhākuṇḍa in the *Kuñjavarṇana* of Narottama Dāsa, and suggests some of the preparations for *mañjarī-sādhana*. The cosmetics are used by the *mañjarīs* as they adorn themselves for the service of the divine couple in love play.

35. Personal correspondence. My thanks again to Tony Stewart for his guidance and inspiration over these many years.

36. Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 215.

37. Ibid., xiv.

38. Ronald W. Casson, "Schemata in Cognitive Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 12 (1983): 429–462.

39. Ibid., 430; cited in Palmer, *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics*, 63.

40. Palmer, *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics*, 66.

41. George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought* (see note 24), 241.

42. Verses 41b through 46 are found only in ms. #595 and #6451, not the printed text.

43. *Kaliṅga Kalikā* translates as "Orissan Flower Bud," while *Campaka Kalikā* is "Magnolia Bud." These obscure references to the flower buds may represent female ritual partners seated in a circle.

44. *Śūnya-vṛkṣa* is translated as "tree of emptiness." The usage of the term *śūnya*, "void," "empty," may reflect Buddhist tantric ideas. It can also mean "void," or "non-ejaculated" when applied to the term *śukra*, "semen"; thus, this tree may be a metaphor for the phallus while in use during the ritual.

45. The first line of this couplet is found only in ms. #6451 and P, thus duplicating couplet 47. Such repetition suggests the possible use of this couplet as a mantra.

46. See Samuel Levin, "Language, Concepts, and Worlds: Three Domains of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought* (see note 24), 121.

47. This passage refers to earlier references to bees, suggesting that the inner experiences of the sweet nectar of divine love transform humans into bees. Beyond the metaphorical connection to coitus, this possibly means the ability to fly about and such, reminiscent of the classical yogic powers known collectively as *siddhis*.

48. This is very much what goes on in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practice of *rāgānugā-bhakti-sādhana*, adapted by Sahajiyās for beginners. In this, one envisions, and gradually identifies with, a character in the mythical love-play of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. See David L. Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

49. Barre Toelken, *Morning Dew and Roses: Nuance, Metaphor, and Meaning in Folksongs* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 34.

50. Ibid., 35–36.

51. See, for example, Urban's works (cited above) on the Kartābhajās and, on the Bāuls, Openshaw, *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal*.

52. Toelken, *Morning Dew and Roses*, 39.

53. The four ponds are, in ascending order, the *kāma-sarovara* ("Pond of Lust"), the *māna-sarovara* ("Pond of Egotism"), the *prema-sarovara* ("Pond of Divine Love"), and the *akṣaya-sarovara* ("Pond of Indestructibility"). For more on these ponds, see my "*The Necklace of Immortality*: A Seventeenth-Century Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Text," 313–314.

54. See White, *The Alchemical Body*.

55. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 25.

56. This is not to say that Mukunda does not make some use of these other metaphors, especially sound and color/light, or that other traditions eschew metaphors of fluid and substance. However, Mukunda clearly emphasizes the primacy of the substance/fluid metaphors over these others.

57. See Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary,* rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 869, cols. 2–3. On the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava and

Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā interpretations, see Dimock, *Place of the Hidden Moon*, 20–24. An extensive treatment of alchemy may be found in White, *The Alchemical Body*.

58. See note 21 above for works addressing this controversy.

59. See Urban, *Economics of Ecstasy*, for ways in which the Kartābhajās also claimed that noted Gauḍīyas were practicing secret tantric rituals.

60. This passage appeared in my "The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Traditions of Medieval Bengal," 348. Used by permission. I have used the seventh printed edition of the *Vivarta-vilāsa*, ed. Kṛṣṇa Bhattacharya (n.d.; see note 2). It was purchased in Calcutta in 1988. The excerpt comes from pp. 92–93.

61. See Urban, *Economics of Ecstasy*, especially chaps. 3–5.

62. This passage appeared in my "The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Traditions of Medieval Bengal," 349–351 and from Bhattacharya, *Vivarta-vilāsa*, 113–114.

63. Compare this to the Kartābhajā phrase that men must become eunuchs and women must become castrated men. See Urban, *Economics of Ecstasy*, e.g. 98–100.

64. For a good overview of the basic Bengali model of procreation, which is transformed by the Sahajiyās, see Ronald B. Inden, *Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) and Ronald B. Inden and Ralph W. Nicholas, *Kinship in Bengali Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).