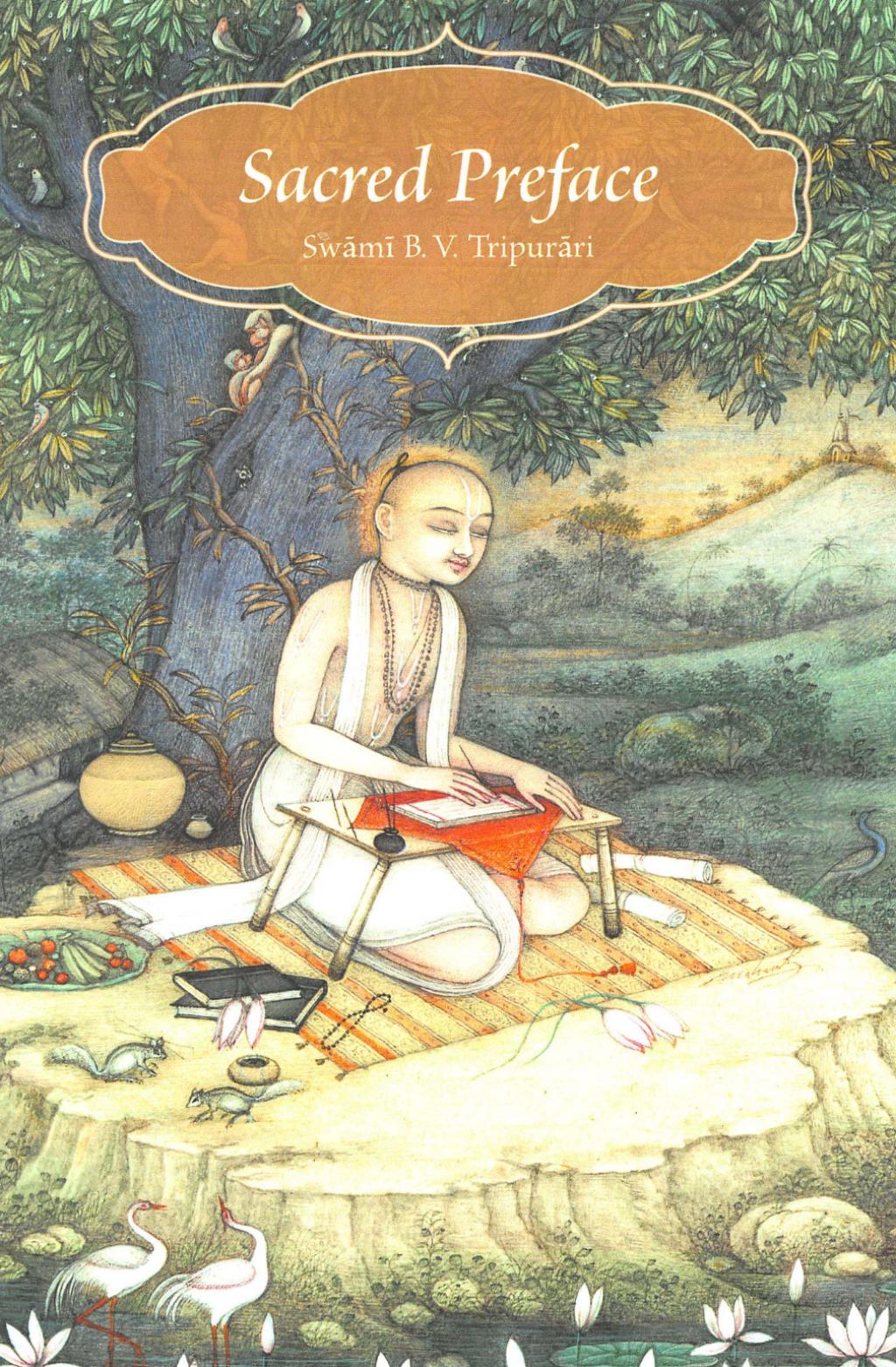


Sacred Preface

Swāmī B. V. Tripurāri



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*To the present-day members
of the Gauḍīya sampradāya
in all of its branches.*

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Abbreviations

- Bg. *Bhagavad-gītā*
Brs. *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu*
Cb. *Caitanya-bhāgavata*
Cc. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*
ŚB *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*
Vs. *Vedānta-sūtra*

Preface

Gaudiya Vedānta is a rich tradition of mysticism that draws a theistic conclusion from the sacred revelation of the East—the Upaniṣads. The word *upaniṣad* literally means to “sit near.” The implication is that by sitting near the teacher he or she can whisper a secret into one’s ear or impart uncommon knowledge that those engrossed in material pursuit have no interest in.

The sounds of the Upaniṣads are thought to be unauthored and then discovered by sages in meditation, who later wrote them down, much like mathematical equations that describe the mysteries of the physical world are often thought to be discovered by mathematicians rather than invented by them. These sounds—*śruti*—of Eastern revelation were first reasoned about in the *Vedānta-sūtra* in an effort to discover their concordance. They represent the earliest form of theology, systematic reasoning as to the significance of revelation.

Various schools of Vedānta exist today—monists, dualists, qualified dualists, dualistic monists, and more—each of which has its own commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* in an effort to render the cryptic *Sūtras* into a longhand philosophical metanarrative. Among these schools, Gauḍiya Vedānta is unique in that it posits that there is no need for a separate commentary on the *Sūtras* because Veda Vyāsa, the legendary author of the *Vedānta-sūtra*, authored his own commentary, otherwise known as *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. So says the *Garuda Purāṇa*, *artho 'yam brahma-sūtrāṇāṁ*.

Thus with regard to Eastern revelation, Gauḍīya Vedānta is centered on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. This most sacred text is the sun around which the balance of revelation orbits. From the Gauḍīya perspective, the distilled essence of the *Bhāgavatam* is found in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and *Sacred Preface* is a commentary on *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*'s fourteen-verse invocation.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* can be explained literally, esoterically, or interpretively and still reach the same conclusion, and the same holds true for *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. The literal and esoteric explanations appear similar at first glance. However, the esoteric explanation is one in which the tender faith of the literal interpretation has been made firm by the exercise of integrating one's heart of faith with one's head—with spiritual reasoning. Thus spiritual reasoning derived from the interpretive perspective serves to support one's practice and help drive it to perfection. Such reasoning is termed *sāstra-yukti*, or spiritual logic that seeks to understand and explain the underlying essence and far-reaching implications of revelation.

This integration of faith with reason is one aspect of the interpretive voice. It serves to ground the Godhead's *līlā* in the philosophy that underlies it. An example of this interpretive voice is how the *Bhāgavata* employs majestic descriptions of Kṛṣṇa primarily for the purpose of showcasing Kṛṣṇa's *līlās* of intimacy. For example, one chapter of the *Bhāgavatam* describes the Godhead lifting Mount Govardhana, yet this majestic description serves essentially as a background to illustrate the intimate love of his friends, who feel he requires their help to lift the mountain. Thus the extent to which God literally appeared on Earth and performed miracles is not the primary concern of the text. Its concern is to make clear through theology, philosophy, and sacred narrative that God has friends whose love renders his Godhood incidental.

Moreover, the text wants to make its readers aware that they can attain such divine love in intimacy.

Another aspect of the interpretive voice in any commentary is its integration of the philosophical implications of the text with prevailing currents of thought in any given era. This book attempts to present the essential message of the text in light of contemporary thought, which if done successfully will speak loudly as to its universality and enduring nature. For example, what is the nature of matter as it is understood *today* and how shall we understand the text in light of such an understanding? While these are interesting questions, it should be noted that the interpretive voice seeks to integrate the text with scientific observations/interpretations that are subject to change. Indeed, science currently needs a new concept of matter if physics is to be more than a pragmatic tool with only technological success, for all efforts to interpret quantum theory in a manner compatible with everyday intuitions have failed. Thus there is a need for a new understanding of matter, and with this new understanding comes the need for an ongoing interpretive Gaudiya voice in the *guru-paramparā* tradition.

The voice of *Sacred Preface* is primarily an interpretive one. At the turn of the twentieth century, the great Kedarnātha Bhaktivinoda was the first in the Gaudiya lineage to use the interpretive voice to interface Gaudiya Vedānta with modernity. Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda was himself educated by the British and served as a magistrate in the British occupation of India. Although from the East himself, he is arguably the first Western convert. Growing up with a disdain for *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* and its apparent departure from Victorian moral sensibilities, he converted to the *Bhāgavata dharma* after becoming acquainted with the text as represented in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. In turn, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda reached out to Thoreau, Emerson, and Parker, the first American

transcendentalists, among others, and spawned the modern birth or reincarnation of Gauḍīya Vedānta, of which I am a child.

My *gurudeva*, the most revered A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, considered his divine service throughout the world an extension of the vision of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda. When asked about the statement of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda that he was leaving the world while his work remained unfinished, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “He could have done everything, but by his mercy he left something for us to do.” Upon passing from this world, my esteemed *parama-guru*, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the foremost disciple of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, requested that his followers live on to keep the current of Bhaktivinoda alive in the world.

This book is a humble effort to serve as a ripple in the current of Bhaktivinoda, employing the interpretive Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava voice first invoked by Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, the voice in which my most revered *śikṣā-guru*, Bhakti Rakṣaka Śridhara Deva Goswāmī, encouraged me to speak. May this book succeed in securing the blessings of my *gurus* and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, regardless of which branch of the figurative tree of Śrī Caitanya’s divine dispensation they are affiliated with, and may it also encourage others to “sit near” and hear the endearing insights of Gauḍīya Vedānta.

Introduction

A book dealing exclusively with the significance of the preface to another book may seem somewhat peculiar. However, if that preface is a sacred preface—an invocation that seeks to summon the supernatural and its blessing—how well that preface succeeds should be of interest in our times. After all, whether or not there is a transnational reality is a subject of considerable debate.

The sacred preface, or *maṅgalācaraṇa*, of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta invokes the presence and blessing of a fivefold expression of divinity and serves as a prologue to the body of the text, which constitutes a hagiography of the extraordinary spiritual figure Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. That fivefold expression of divinity includes the Godhead himself, the expansion of himself (*prakāśa*) deep within the supersubjective transtemporal/spatial realm of divine play, his descent (*avatāra*) into the objective, mortal world of *karmic* implication, and his primary power and perfected intermediate power (*śaktis*). This fivefold Godhead is termed in Sanskrit the *pañca* (fivefold) *tattva* (metaphysical truth).

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, the author of the text, explains that a *maṅgalācaraṇa* typically consists of three elements: offering respect to the Deity of the text (*namaskāra*), a cryptic explanation of the gist of the text (*vastu-nirdeśa*), and the invoking of a benediction upon the text's readers (*āśirvāda*). Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa includes these three elements in his *maṅgalācaraṇa* in two *namaskāra* verses,

one *vastu-nirdeśa* verse, and one *āśīrvāda* verse. Although his *maṅgalācarana* is technically complete with these four verses, uncharacteristically he proceeds with what constitutes a rather extended *maṅgalācarana*, complete in fourteen verses. Ten of them were composed by Kṛṣṇadāsa, and four of them were composed by three of his revered predecessors, who had employed them in their own books. All fourteen of the verses glorify and explain the significance of the Pañca-tattva.

The success of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī's *maṅgalācarana* is apparent, at least in terms of how it affected him personally. It gave rise to a lively, lengthy, and spiritually substantial commentary on each of the verses. His auto-commentary covers the first seven chapters of his book and offers deep theological insight into the possibilities that lie within the supersubjective realm of consciousness proper. Unlike ancient and modern texts that deal with the nature of consciousness by describing its relationship with matter—either identifying it with matter or distinguishing it from matter—Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta* goes further, exploring the possibilities of love within the supersubjective consciousness world. It deals with the immortal (*amṛta*) character (*carita*) of consciousness proper—the consciousness of consciousness. The format for this exploration involves the discussion of the fivefold features of the Godhead personified as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and four of his principal sixteenth-century associates—Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadādhara, and Śrīvāsa.

The divine *līlā* of Śrī Caitanya took place over five hundred years ago in West Bengal and is now a historically well-documented event. Theologically, it represents an extension of the eternal *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa. As such, Gaura *līlā* serves to extend Kṛṣṇa's experience of sacred aesthetic rapture beyond the limits of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. In the process, the door of opportunity opens for spiritual

seekers to experience the heights of sacred aesthetic rapture in transcendence. In this spiritual endeavor, one follows in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya himself, for in this *līlā* Kṛṣṇa appears as a devotee of himself and teaches by example. He appears in pursuit of the experience of Rādhā’s love, Rādhā’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whereas in Kṛṣṇa *līlā* Kṛṣṇa is the object of Rādhā’s love, in Gaura *līlā* Kṛṣṇa seeks Rādhā’s experience, transforming himself into the perfect vessel of love rather than love’s perfect object. Gaura is Kṛṣṇa in the ecstasy of his greatest devotee, Śrī Rādhā.

Rādhā’s love for Kṛṣṇa is the main act of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, whereas Kṛṣṇa’s elders, friends, and subordinates all play essential supporting roles. These supporting roles are guided by Kṛṣṇa’s primary expansion in the form of his elder brother Balarāma, who also presides over the sacred ground of being, knowing, and loving—the *dhāma*—on which the drama of *līlā* is performed. And this Rāma appears in Gaura *līlā* along with his associates as Nityānanda Rāma to support Gaura in his effort to experience Rādhā’s ecstasy. He also widely distributes the opportunity to experience this ecstasy. No one in Gaura *līlā* brings more attention to Gaura than Nitāi.

This opportunity to enter the ecstasy of divine *līlā* also requires the descent (*avatāra*) of the Godhead into the world of our experience. As such, the *avatāra* constitutes the compassion of the Godhead. In Gaura *līlā*, *avatāra-tattva* is represented by Advaita Ācārya. Śrī Advaita calls Śrī Kṛṣṇa to the world to effect its salvation at a time that happens to coincide with Kṛṣṇa’s desire to experience Rādhā’s ecstasy. Thus there is an exoteric as well as an esoteric reason for the descent of Śrī Caitanya.

His esoteric, internal purpose is one that he can realize only with the help of Rādhā herself. Thus she is represented in Gaura *līlā* by Gadādhara Paṇḍita. In Gaura *līlā* the young celibate Paṇḍita schooled Śrī Caitanya in the philosophy and theology of the

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which is centered on Rādhā’s love for Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā is the Goddess of *bhakti*—Bhakti-devī—and *bhakti* is the essence of Kṛṣṇa’s internal primary *sakti*. Gadādhara Pañḍita’s role in Gaura *līlā* is to teach Gaura Kṛṣṇa about the nature and sweet-ness of Rādhā’s love for Kṛṣṇa, to share his own (Rādhā’s) *bhāva* with him.

The overflow of this schooling and Kṛṣṇa’s attempt to experience Rādhā’s love for him from her vantage point is that those of this world are blessed with the zenith of compassion. In this *līlā*, regardless of one’s qualification or lack of it, not only does one have opportunity to be released from *karmic* bondage (*mukti*) and participate in divine *līlā* (*prema*), one can also experience the acme of sacred aesthetic rapture. Rādhā’s *bhakti* is bestowed indiscriminately! Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, the fifth and final member of the Pañca-tattva, represents the successful effort to take advantage of this opportunity. He thus represents the Godhead’s intermediate power imbued with *bhakti*.

In the opinion of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, to experience all that one can of Rādhā’s love requires (1) the perfect object of love showing the way by his example, (2) acquaintance with the supporting roles of that love, (3) the descent of the Godhead into the world of our experience, (4) Rādhā’s blessing—*bhakti*, and (5) a consciousness-constituted individual self unto whom *bhakti* is bestowed. Again, these five personified are the Gauḍiya Pañca-tattva: Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu Nityānanda, Śrī Advaita, Gadādhara, and Śrīvāsa.

The present book, *Sacred Preface*, is a lengthy commentary on Kṛṣṇadāsa’s *maṅgala* verses with contemporary philosophical sensibilities in mind. Chapter 1 explores Kṛṣṇadāsa’s first *namaskāra* verse that introduces the Pañca-tattva along with the principle of the *guru*. Following the lead of Kṛṣṇadāsa himself, I have taken the

liberty to comment in detail about *guru-tattva* in this chapter and only summarily discuss the five features of divinity, all of which are treated at length in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2 comments on the presiding Deities of the text—Śrī Caitanya and Śrī Nityānanda—with regard to their historicity and transhistorical nature. Chapter 3 explores the implication of Kṛṣṇadāsa’s argument from scripture that supports the primacy of Kṛṣṇa. Various means for attaining self and God realization that correspond primarily with either the Godhead’s being, knowing, or loving are also played out. In this chapter Kṛṣṇa is identified as the personification of the Godhead centered on loving, who is thus experienced through the *yoga* of loving (*bhakti*), and furthermore Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is identified with Kṛṣṇa. I have followed this section with a modern philosophical argument in support of the same truth, an argument centered on the nature of consciousness that distinguishes consciousness from both the mind and brain and explains its prospect as a unit of *ānanda*/love leading to the necessity of the Kṛṣṇa Deity.

Chapter 4 discusses the descent of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya from the supersubjective world into the objective world of our experience and his gift to the world, the exoteric reason for his descent. Chapter 5 explores the philosophical ground on which the Godhead as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya stands as both the perfect object of love and the perfection of love combined. Thus in this chapter we find not only Kṛṣṇa but more so Rādhā, with these two dynamically joined together as the singular Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. This chapter stands as a philosophical/theological panentheistic footing from which to step up into chapter 6, where arguably the deepest theological questions known to the world are asked by the Godhead himself about himself—God’s own existential crisis. Here we explore the esoteric reasons for Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya’s descent.

Chapter 7 discusses the ontological truth concerning the personal expansion of Śrī Caitanya as Śrī Nityānanda, Śrī Caitanya's other self. This chapter explores the notion of a transtemporal/transpatial realm of *līlā*, or divine play, and how the pursuit of divine compassion logically necessitates the manifestation of the world constrained by time and space. Chapter 8 centers on this compassion, and once again the nature of divine descent—*avatāra-tattva*—is discussed, but here in relation to the person of Advaita Ācārya. Chapter 9 discusses the truth about ourselves as individual units of consciousness—the nature of our materially oriented present and our spiritually oriented prospect. Special attention is given to our spiritual prospect and thus the nature and power of *bhakti*. Śrī Caitanya's associates Śrīvāsa and Gadādhara represent these *śakti-tattvas*, the Godhead's intermediate and primary *śaktis*—ourselves and *bhakti*—respectively.

My hope is that *Sacred Preface* will make apparent the extent to which Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *māṅgalācaraṇa* succeeds. The startling insights of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and his Gaudiya predecessors of yore are timeless, and thus the measure of their relevance today remains significant. Again, Kṛṣṇadāsa's *māṅgalācaraṇa* concerns the consciousness of consciousness—Kṛṣṇa consciousness—and posits that consciousness exists for the purpose of selfless love. Such insight into the charming prospect of that love in transcendence affords one the opportunity to form a comprehensive emotional bond with the Godhead, as well as the wisdom and compassion to improve the world of our present experience.

1. Offering Homage

*vande gurūn iśa-bhaktān iśān iśāvatārakān
tat-prakāśāṁś ca tac-chaktih kṛṣṇa-caitanya-samjñakam*

“I offer my respects in homage to the initiating and instructing *gurus*, the devotees of the Godhead, his *avatāras*, his expansions, his primal *sakti*, and the Godhead himself named Śri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja begins his sacred preface by offering his respects to his *gurus* (*vande gurūn*). Likewise, Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī began his treatise on *sādhana-bhakti* by advising his readers to first take shelter of *śrī guru*—*ādau gurv-āśrayam*. Their emphasis on *śrī guru* serves to underscore the importance of this principle in the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava world. Indeed, there is no better way to invoke auspiciousness than to honor one’s *gurus*. It can even be said that without *guru bhakti*, there is no Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*. Furthermore, while *guru bhakti* is a limb of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*, some devotees go so far as to make Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* a limb of *guru bhakti*. This reversal, Śrī Jīva writes, delights Śrī Kṛṣṇa even more than worshipping him directly!¹

While the Gauḍiya lineage emphasizes the necessity of *śrī guru* perhaps more than any other lineage of Eastern spirituality does, someone might point out that the West’s encounter with *gurus* of various Eastern traditions has been far from a wholly positive

experience. How to reconcile this discrepancy? Broadly speaking, it can be said that misrepresentation is at the root of the problem. Adding to this difficulty is the fact that spiritual seekers have misunderstood what is to be expected from the *guru*. Thus it is apparent that even while *śri guru* is the vessel that transports us from ignorance to knowledge, we must first have enough knowledge to choose a genuine guide. In this important decision, the sacred texts prove invaluable.

The *Bhāgavata* offers salient advice to help one navigate the waters of selecting a *guru*, such that one can more readily avoid misrepresentation. What are the essential qualities of the *guru*? What should one expect from the spiritual guide? The *Bhāgavata* answers these questions. It also informs us what is expected of one seeking the *guru*'s guidance—what the qualities of the disciple are. All this is done in one key verse, a verse that is most cited by the Gauḍiya *ācāryas* as an explanation of the qualities of both the *guru* and disciple.

“Therefore one who is interested in a comprehensive solution to the struggle for existence and the pursuit of wise love should surrender to a *guru* who is expert in explaining the essence of the sacred texts—their implications and ramifications in consideration of time, place, and circumstances—and who is also fixed in God realization, as evidenced by the ability to quell the tide of human passion.”²

We should understand that *śri guru* is not for everyone. This manifestation of divinity is intended for those interested in making a comprehensive solution to life's problems. As opposed to a band-aid solution that merely treats symptoms—a so-called solution that often solves one problem only to create another—the solution offered by *śri guru* is comprehensive. It would be more accurate, however, to say that *śri guru* gives a comprehensive solution not to the world's problems but rather to our perception of a world of problems.

Shall we free the fly caught in the spider's web only to allow the spider to go hungry? What is the meaning of kindness in a world in which one being is food for another? In this world, one person's feast is another's funeral. And all of this, the *guru* teaches, is a product of misunderstanding—*māyā*. It is all a mistake, an error in perception. Śrī *guru* manifests to help us correct this error of perception, to change our angle of vision, and thus treat the disease rather than merely its symptoms.

The disciple is one who is prepared to die an ego death to live in divine love. Such a desperate person is preoccupied (*jijñāsuḥ*) with the Supreme Good (*śreyah uttamam*), which includes within it ending the material struggle for existence. That Supreme Good is wise love—*prema-bhakti*—reposed exclusively in the divine root of all existence. Only wise love has the power to turn faults into ornaments, problems into solutions. With this in mind, one should approach śrī *guru* (*gurum̄ prapadyeta*) and give up any piecemeal effort to solve the puzzle of Viṣṇu *māyā*.

What are the qualifications of śrī *guru*? Śābde pare ca niṣṇātām. Here the *Bhāgavata* speaks very practically. It speaks in terms of observable characteristics. Śrī *guru* has heard with his or her heart (*sābde*) and is thus well versed in theoretical knowledge (*niṣṇātām*) of the Godhead (*pare*). Śrī *guru* has not learned the text by committing it to memory but rather has entered into the text and thus understands how to extend its capacity to shed light. The *guru*'s feeling and taste for the text allow him or her to deeply understand its implications and thus fully explain its meaning. In other words, śrī *guru* speaks the language of love required to live in the text. Thus he or she is capable of extending the argument of revelation—its relevance—such that its universal application for all times and circumstances is brought to light.

The sacred texts map the inner landscape on the course to *prema*, and śrī *guru* guides the course. This connection between map

and guide is significant. The map stands as a standard of revealed knowledge that *śri guru* is fully acquainted with. *Śrī guru* is thus not one to make it up along the way. The spiritual preceptor represents a tradition rooted in revelation and a particular perspective on the revealed texts and thereby the Godhead. This perspective has been practiced, passed down, and leaves many examples of those who successfully traversed the course to its perfection.

Furthermore, *śri guru* is *upaśama-āśrayam*, free from lust, anger, greed, and so on. The spiritual guide is sheltered (*āśrayam*) in equipoise (*upaśama*) with regard to human passions. This equipoise is only possible if one has taken one's stand on the ground of being (*brāhmaṇi*). *Śrī guru* is also free from material bias and thereby uncompromised. These are significant accomplishments, even as they speak to us of the entry level of spiritual attainment. Decorated with these qualities, *śri guru* stands like the towering lighthouse in the night for those lost at sea, dissipating the shadows of their fear and illuminating their hearts with the hope that the shore is near.

The above explanation of the words *upaśama-āśrayam* is repeated throughout the Gauḍiya commentaries. As with *śri guru*'s quality of being well versed in theoretical knowledge, these more internal qualities, which speak more directly of inner realization, are nonetheless observable. What is the value of speaking about those qualities that are not observable? How will such knowledge help us to navigate the waters in pursuit of the guide?

To be sure, there are other essential but less readily observable attainments that *śri guru* should possess, particularly within the Gauḍiya tradition. Nevertheless, without the observable qualities mentioned above, these more esoteric realizations will not manifest. Material dispassion arrived at through spiritual practice is followed by spiritual emotion. In other words, spiritual emotion does not manifest before material dis-

passion manifests in our prospective spiritual preceptor, we have good reason to believe that the more significant attainment of spiritual emotion lies beneath the surface.³

While the *Bhāgavata*'s advice is very practical, what constitutes a command of theoretical knowledge and equipoise on the part of the guide is arguably left open to interpretation. However, the inner necessity of the disciple described in this verse is unambiguous. Along with this inner necessity, it is a combination of our sincerity and our previous *bhakti-saṁskāras* (impressions from prior encounters with *bhakti*) that determine our ability to connect with the principle and person of *śrī guru*. Should our choice prove less than ideal, we are then better prepared to choose again and come, as we must, under the affectionate care of a genuine guardian angel of Gauḍiya Vedānta.

Before exploring the commentary on Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's first *māṅgala* verse in greater depth, allow me to first cite the following poetic insight of B. R. Śridhara Deva Goswāmī on the unavoidable role of the *guru* in our lives.

To err is human. To err is inevitable for all, being not perfect. Still, no one wants to remain imperfect. There is an element within all that is animate that tends towards perfection. If it were not so, we would feel no want at all. Our tendency towards perfection is certainly very weak and limited; otherwise we could attain the goal at once. Our limited capacity and tendency for perfection makes room for the guide or *guru*.

The imperfect is not so if it is not in need of help, and that also from beyond itself. The perfect is not perfect if it cannot assert itself or help others, and that too, of its own accord. So the guidance to perfection or Absolute Truth is necessarily a function of the Absolute itself, and the divine agent through whom this function manifests is *śrī guru* or the divine guide.⁴

In Kṛṣṇadāsa's explanation of his first *māṅgala* verse, he describes a plurality of *gurus* while emphasizing that the principle of *guru*—*guru-tattva*—is at the same time one. Just as the head of state of a particular country may be represented by ambassadors in different countries, similarly the singular, indwelling presence of the Godhead within individual beings manifests as a delegated power—*guru-tattva*—in a plurality of *sādhus*, who in turn represent the Godhead and guide individual beings on the course of the interior landscape in pursuit of a loving union with the Godhead.

Such designated representatives are divided into two basic categories: initiating (*dikṣā*) and instructing (*sikṣā*) *gurus*. The initiating *guru* plants the seed by imparting the *mantra* and the instructing *guru* waters the seed of spiritual culture. The initiating *guru* more often than not also serves as the instructing *guru*; however, there is room for a plurality of instructing *gurus*.

Dikṣā without *sikṣā* may be likened to a seed without water or sunshine, and *sikṣā* without *dikṣā* to water and sunshine without a seed. A weak seed may nonetheless flourish with sufficient water and sunshine, and a strong seed may flourish in spite of less than desirable water and light. While both *gurus* are essential, one *guru* may take precedence over another in the *sādhaka*'s life. Which *guru* is the most important one? The *guru* that the student feels has helped him or her the most. In this realm, only love is the law.

The *dikṣā mantra* imparted by the initiating *guru* is a particular sound formula that corresponds with the form of God. This correspondence is analogous to the way in which harmonic motion in string theory is thought to be at the foundation of the physical world and can be translated into mathematical formulas. As Plato reasoned that mathematical formulas inhabit an actual world of their own, which is timeless and without physical location, Gauḍiya Vedānta reasons that its *guru*-given *mantra* is a sound formula that inhabits the subjective world of consciousness proper,

a transtemporal, timeless world of God. Because the initiating *guru* imparts the *mantra*, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa describes the *guru* as representing the *rūpa*, or form of the Godhead. He describes the instructing *gurus* as representing the *svarūpa*, or nature of the Godhead. Thus the initiating and instructing *gurus* are one in that they are both equally divine manifestations of the Godhead but are simultaneously different in terms of their functions.

Although Kṛṣṇadāsa seeks to establish the divinity and absoluteness of the *guru*, by also introducing the notion of a plurality of *gurus*, he inadvertently introduces a measure of relativity as well. A plurality of *gurus* makes for nuanced variety in the teachings within the tradition. Although the scriptural conclusions that form the basis of the lineage are adhered to by all, each *guru* explains these teaching in consideration of time and circumstance, adjusting details as need be to deliver the underlying principles of the tradition. Furthermore, *gurus* may also differ in terms of their internal experience of the Godhead. Their love of God, that is, may take various shapes, manifesting in different spiritual sentiments for Kṛṣṇa, all of which are included within the ideal of the tradition. Thus a particular *guru* in the lineage may appeal more to some than others, both in terms of external and internal considerations.

With regard to external considerations that arise in relation to sharing the tradition with the world, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda in his *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā* acknowledges a cultural filter through which revelation passes. As the world changes, so too does the representation of the Godhead in consideration of the changing world. As the modern world moves from folk psychology and folk science to modern psychology and modern science, examining the natural world with greater scrutiny, the teaching of the tradition is presented with new analogies and insight in consideration of current understandings of the nature of the world. Thus a succession of *gurus* is required from generation to generation.

What would the *guru* of the previous generation say today? This question is answered in the succession—*śri guru-paramparā*—by the present-day representation of the lineage. If relativity in the words of the previous *ācārya* becomes apparent, the thoughtful disciple determines the underlying eternal principles—the ground of unchanging truth that such details were intended to shed light on. It is on this ground of *tattva* that both the present and previous *ācāryas* stand, adjusting details as need be.

When Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī wrote *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, there were various *gurus* guiding the lineages of the budding Gauḍiya tradition. Kṛṣṇadāsa himself had more than one *guru*—one initiating *guru* and more than one instructing *guru*. It is this healthy spiritual environment with a plurality of *gurus* that he invites his readers to take part in, and such an environment naturally fosters a perspective on one's *gurus* that helps to draw one more deeply into the philosophy—*guru-tattva*—underlying the experience of any particular *guru*.

In this healthy perspective, the person of the *guru* does not disappear nor lose his or her absoluteness, even as a measure of external relativity becomes apparent. The perception of relativity fosters within the student the need to go deeper and embrace the spirit of the *guru*'s instruction should it conflict with the letter of the law. The apparent virtue of blindly following is replaced with the knowledge that *śri guru* teaches us not to follow blindly. Shades of blind faith are dispelled in the light of well-reasoned faith that is comfortable with a degree of uncertainty in the context of an ideal that is spiritually dynamic. One's heart of faith is thus harmonized with one's head. And again, while the personalities of one's *gurus* do not disappear as relativity enters the picture, the philosophical principle of *guru-tattva* takes center stage as one sorts out the relative from the absolute in preparation to enter a veritable land of *gurus*.

Upon entering that land of *gurus*—the transtemporal, transpatial world of spiritual emotion—the individual person in whom the principle of *guru-tattva* is manifest again comes to the foreground. Initially, the disciple emulates the particular Vaiṣṇava serving in the capacity of *śrī guru*. Progressing along the path, the student learns to think and act spiritually and develops a spiritual mind of his or her own. This progress enables one to harmonize the absolute and relative aspects of the *guru*, to identify with substance over form. As a more essential understanding of *guru-tattva* comes to the foreground and a more childlike understanding of what it means to follow one's *gurus* recedes to the background, one's intelligence is spiritualized and one's practice deepened. This stage is followed by an enduring taste for spiritual practice, as what was once medicine now becomes food. As one's practice is driven by taste, spiritual attachment for the Deity of one's heart manifests and spiritual emotion follows. It is in these later stages of spiritual progress that the philosophy underlying the *guru* phenomenon recedes to the background and the person of the prominent *guru* in one's life comes to the foreground anew, appearing not in a practitioner's body to teach *bhakti* in practice, but in an internal spiritual body, a meditative form of love of God that the disciple follows in the footsteps of.

Kṛṣṇadāsa supports his emphasis that the instructing and initiating *gurus* are equal manifestations of the indwelling Godhead by citing ten verses from the greater body of sacred texts, which were the accepted standard of knowledge in his time. It is noteworthy that Kavirāja Goswāmī's supporting verses include the core spiritual conclusions of the tradition. It was indeed skillful on his part to have chosen verses to support his contention that the *guru* is a manifestation of the indwelling Godhead that at the same time contain the essential teachings of the lineage, and then to place these verses at the onset of his book.

Kṛṣṇadāsa first cites the well-known verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava that he himself is the *guru*, *ācāryam mām vijānīyān*.⁵ This verse requires no further explanation. The second of Kavirāja Goswāmī's *pramāṇa* verses is also straightforward, and among all of the verses he cites, it best supports the author's contention. In this *śloka*, Uddhava tells Śrī Kṛṣṇa that it is not possible within the long lifetime of Brahmā to repay the debt to Śrī Kṛṣṇa that one incurs as a result of his appearing in two forms, internally as the *caitya-guru* (the Godhead) and externally as the *ācārya* (a representational form of the Godhead).⁶

Out of the remaining eight evidential verses cited, seven of them are particularly important in their own right in terms of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy. The first verse is one of the four verses that Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura has described as the *Bhagavad-gītā*'s *catuh-ślokī*, the four essential verses of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The following six verses consist of the two well-known introductory verses that precede the *catuh-ślokī* of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and the four essential *Bhāgavatam* verses themselves. The eighth and final verse is the original composition of Bilvamaṅgala Thākura, which serves as the *māngala* verse for his *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmrta*. All of these *pramāṇa* verses with the exception of Bilvamaṅgala Thākura's verse are examples of Kṛṣṇa in the role of the *caitya-guru* speaking to his devotee from within his devotee's heart.

Despite the Gauḍiya wealth to be mined from these verses, Kavirāja Goswāmī uses them here only for the sake of supporting his contention that the original *guru* is the indwelling *caitya-guru*. In Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism, the *caitya-guru* is Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself, and this singular Kṛṣṇa appears externally in a representational sense as both the initiating and instructing multitude of *gurus*. But again, the placement of these verses at the onset of the text is significant, and one cannot help but feel that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, while sup-

porting his contention by citing them, also wants to let his reader know the nature of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's inner instructions—*siksā* filled with Gauḍīya *siddhānta*.

As mentioned above, the first of these remaining verses is one of the four nutshell verses of the *Bhagavad-gītā* found in chapter 10 (Bg. 10.10): "To those who are constantly devoted, who worship me with love, I give the power of discrimination by which they come to me." In this verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he gives those who are constantly devoted to him with love the understanding by which they can come to him. This seems straightforward. However, under scrutiny the question arises as to what distance those who are constantly devoted to Kṛṣṇa with love must travel to reach him, for is he not already attained by those possessed of love for him?

Twentieth-century commentator Pūjyapāda B. R. Śridhara Deva Goswāmī resolves the apparent contradiction found in this verse and in doing so demonstrates how it speaks to us of the highest ideal of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism—*parakiyā-bhāva*, Rādhā's apparent paramour love for Kṛṣṇa. He does so by focusing on the word *upayānti* ("they come to me") found in the verse and connecting this verse with the one that precedes it.

Pūjyapāda Śridhara Deva Goswāmī explains that this verse is speaking about the devotees mentioned in the previous verse of the *Gītā* who are described as *ramanti*, engaged in romantic love with Kṛṣṇa. In Kṛṣṇa's divine drama within the world of consciousness, these handmaidens appear to be married to persons other than Kṛṣṇa. Thus their romantic relationship with Kṛṣṇa is an instance of paramour love, wherein their marriage serves as an obstacle to their meeting secretly with Kṛṣṇa. Although they are united with him in love from within their hearts, within the drama they need special instruction about how to rendezvous with Kṛṣṇa externally in the dead of night. Śridhara Deva Goswāmī comments,

For those who have already come into divine relationship with me...I give them the special inspiration to come to me as a paramour (*upapati*).... [In] the expression *mam upayānti te* (“they will come to me”), the word *upayānti* must be defined as *parakiyā-bhāvena-upapati*. *Pati* means husband, and *upapati* means paramour. This is Vṛndāvana *bhajana*, and this is the meaning of *upapati* [*upayānti*].⁷

Thus Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa has cited Kṛṣṇa’s own words in this *Gitā* verse as evidence that Kṛṣṇa is the instructing *guru*, and at the same time by citing this particular verse he has hinted at the nature of the highest reach of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism’s central instruction, the paramour love of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa, which her handmaidens assist her in pursuing and experience vicariously themselves. However, although this verse speaks of Kṛṣṇa instructing his devotees, it does not clearly say that he does so from within their hearts. Indeed, in the Vraja *līlā* he speaks directly to them. To underscore the fact that he does instruct his devotees from within as well, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa next cites the *Bhāgavata* verses surrounding Brahmā’s *antara-darśana* (internal vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa), the *catuh-sloki* (four essential verses of the *Śrimad Bhāgavatam*), and the two verses that introduce them.

In these verses, Kṛṣṇa enlightens Brahmā from within Brahmā’s heart just before Brahmā sets the world in motion. Thus they serve as clear evidence that Kṛṣṇa himself instructs his devotee from within. At the same time, the instructions that Kṛṣṇa gives in these verses summarize the entire philosophy of the *Bhāgavata*. They are in essence the entirety of the *sikṣā* that the *guru* imparts, following the lead of Kṛṣṇa speaking to Brahmā at the dawn of creation.

Thus these six essential verses are worth discussing in some detail in an effort to better understand what Kṛṣṇadāsa has in mind

by citing them. Let us look first at the setting in which they are spoken and the questions Brahmā asks that give rise to them. Then we shall unpack their meaning through an extended paraphrase translation followed by further reflection on their significance.

The *Bhāgavata* depicts Brahmā in search of his source at the dawn of creation. In answer to his soul-searching, Brahmā hears two Sanskrit syllables that represent the essence of meaningful life, *ta* and *pa*—*tapa*. The Sanskrit word *tapa* implies “heating.” Here it refers to the fire of self-sacrifice—a life of devotion. It is by the fire of self-sacrifice that one moves forward in this world. If there is anything to gain in this world, it is to be found in the act of giving. Give and grow, give and live a life worth living. And if we are to give comprehensively, we must do so without motive. We must also give to the center, by which the circumference and all within its circle will be served. Following this directive, Brahmā proceeded to meditate on these two syllables. He sat in meditation for years on end and eventually the center of all sacrifice personified, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, appeared within his heart. At that time, Brahmā asked Kṛṣṇa four questions: two questions concerning *sambandha* (the manner in which all things are related), one question concerning *prayojana* (the goal of life), and one question concerning *abhidheya* (the means to attain the goal of life). These questions are as follows:

1. What is the nature of your form in all respects? (*sambandha*)
2. How do your various energies interact? (*sambandha*)
3. What is the nature of your *līlā*, which is filled with *prema* for you? (*prayojana*)
4. How can I attain you? (*abhidheya*)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied to Brahmā’s questions in six verses, two of which preface and explain in brief that which he explains in greater detail in the four essential verses of *Śrimad Bhāgavatam*. The four

essential verses answer Brahmā in the order of his questions and thus deal with *sambandha*, *prayojana*, and *abhidheya* in this order.

The following is a paraphrasing of the essence and far-reaching implications of these six verses as revealed by the principal Gaudīya ācāryas. Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke the following to Brahmā:

VERSE 1

Please take this confidential knowledge of my opulence (*jñāna*) and the special and more confidential knowledge of my sweetness (*vijñāna*) in relation to my original form—*svayam bhagavān*—and my *śaktis*. Knowledge of my form is *jñānam*, and knowledge of the distinction between me and my *śaktis* is *vijñāna*, special knowledge, or *viśeṣa-jñāna*. I give this to you in theory (*jñāna*), although it is the secret of sacred sound—*śāstra*—and the secret of *nāma dharma*. It is now yours to realize (*vijñāna*) with my blessing. It culminates in the mystery of the highest love for me—*prema* (*rahasyam*), which is attended by various *bhāvas* (*tad-aṅgam*) and is attained by *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti* supported by *vaidhi-sādhana-bhakti* in the form of hearing, chanting, and meditating on me (*tad-aṅgam*). Now you should endeavor to tread this path of *prema*, paying close attention.⁸

VERSE 2

I bless you that you may realize in *prema* all that I am, appearing as the cowherd son of Nanda—my form, qualities, nature, activities, and existence. Let these be awakened within you by my mercy.⁹

VERSE 3

Knowledge of my form is this: I existed along with my eternal retinue both in Vaikunṭha in my form as Nārāyaṇa and in my confidential abode Goloka in the form of a cowherd before

the world of material experience was manifested from me. I am its cause and I am also the effect of the world itself in that the world is constituted of my energies and nothing more. It is I who also oversee the world and enter into it in the form of countless *avatāras*. And when by my arrangement the world again becomes unmanifest, I continue to exist along with my associates and abode.¹⁰

VERSE 4

You ask about my *śaktis*. My *śaktis* are dependent upon me. They do not exist independently of me. Under the influence of my *māyā-śakti*, the *jīva-śakti* perceives value in that which appears unrelated to me and which is unrelated to the *jīva* itself, when in fact there is no value therein. Such perception is only a reflection of that which has real value. It is only darkness, as opposed to that which gives *prema* to the *jīva-śakti*—my *svarūpa-śakti*.¹¹

VERSE 5

The nature of *prema* is very confidential. It is something like the gross elements, which are all-pervasive yet localized within the bodies of the *jīvas*. Similarly, although I myself am all-pervasive, I appear within the hearts of my *prema-bhaktas*. Indeed, in *prema* I appear within their hearts and also outside their hearts standing in front of them. My mother saw me to be all-pervasive, but with the rope of her love, she tied me up and I could not escape. I am the Supreme Controller, but I am controlled by my devotees' *prema*. My *līlā* is behind everything and yet it appears on Earth. I am one with everything and different from it at the same time, and this inconceivable metaphysical reality is the canvas on which the art of my pastimes of *prema* is drawn.¹²

VERSE 6

The means to attain me—to attain *prema*—is thus. First of all, one must be interested in understanding the highest truth. Such interest will be best served at the feet of the *guru*. There, one will learn systematically what *karma* is, what *jñāna* is, what *yoga* is, what *bhakti* is, and ultimately how *prema-bhakti* is the highest truth. The *guru* will teach the student all of these things and thus directly and indirectly explain the glory of *prema-bhakti*, drawing from the sacred texts and thereby making the disciple one-minded. One must then follow me in the form of the *guru* by enthusiastically rendering service. Enthusiastically means at all times and in all circumstances—those favorable and those unfavorable—making this effort one's life and soul.¹³

Having examined the verses themselves on the basis of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava commentaries that explain their significance, let us reflect briefly on them to better understand how they answer Brahmā's questions.

In the first introductory verse, the words *jñāna* (knowledge) and *vijñāna* (special knowledge) appear several times, all with different meanings. In the first instance, the word *jñāna* refers to knowledge about God's majesty and the word *vijñāna* refers to special knowledge of God's sweetness. In the second instance, the word *jñāna* refers to knowledge of God's form and *vijñāna* refers to the special knowledge of how God interacts with his *saktis*. In the third instance, *jñāna* refers to theoretical scriptural knowledge and the word *vijñāna* refers to realization of that theoretical knowledge. All of this *jñāna* and *vijñāna* referred to thus far constitutes *sambandha-jñāna*, or a conceptual orientation. After blessing Brahmā in verse 2, Kṛṣṇa gives this *jñāna* and *vijñāna* to Brahmā in verses 3 and 4 (*sambandha-tattva*).

However, in verse 1 Kṛṣṇa also identifies the special knowledge he will give Brahmā with both the goal of *prema-bhakti* and the means to attain it in the form of *rāgānugā-sādhana* and *bhāva-bhakti*. Kṛṣṇa then explains the goal of *prema* in verse 5 (*prayojana-tattva*) and the means to attain it in verse 6 (*abhidheya-tattva*). Thus through two introductory verses, Kṛṣṇa explains to Brahmā the nature of the insight he will share with him, encourages him to endeavor to attain it himself, and then blesses him. Then in four subsequent verses, he shares this insight with him. In this way, Kṛṣṇa answers all of Brahmā's questions.

In answering Brahmā's questions, Kṛṣṇa describes himself as the uncaused cause of the objective world of matter, who appears in the subjective world of pure consciousness in forms that correspond with both majestic and intimate love of God. He explains that the world of material experience is a manifestation of his *śaktis*, or potencies. It is the effect and he is the cause, but in as much as his potencies rely on him and have no independent existence, he is also the effect as well as the cause. He is the world and he is beyond the world in a panentheistic sense. Two of his *śaktis* make up the material world, and of these two, his intermediate *śakti* is constituted of consciousness and his secondary *śakti* is constituted of matter, the latter deriving meaning from the former. He also mystically appears from time to time in the material world as an *avatāra*. Through the influence of his primary *śakti*, salvation and love of God (*prema*) are attained. *Prema* is the goal of life. Furthermore, *prema* overwhelms him in a manner that makes intimate love of God possible, causing the infinite to appear in a finite-like form.

After citing the foregoing verses from the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrimad Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇadāsa cites one final verse. He cites these verses to establish his contention that Kṛṣṇa is the *caitya-guru*, or the guide of the individual soul residing within the soul's heart, from

where he gives instruction to the soul and from where he manifests externally in the form of a great devotee of himself. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's final evidence is from the auspicious invocation of Bilvamaṅgala Thākura's *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmrta*. In his first verse, the Thākura writes,

All glory to my *guru*, Śrī Somagiri, who is like a wish-fulfilling jewel (*cintāmaṇi*). All glory to my instructing *guru*, the God who wears a crown of peacock feathers. The tips of his lotus toes, which are like the tender leaves of wish-fulfilling trees, are the ideal that is forever wished for and attained by Jayaśrī in the best of *lilās*.¹⁴

The deepest truths of this verse were well known to Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. He penned an extensive commentary, the *Sāraṅga-rāngadā*, on Bilvamaṅgala Thākura's *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmrta*, a book that he describes later in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* as one “for which there is no comparison in the three worlds.”¹⁵

Relative to how he has cited the verse here in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, three kinds of *gurus* are respected and the words that refer to them also all indicate Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The three kinds of *gurus* are the one who initially shows one the path of *bhakti* (*vartma-pradarśaka-guru*), the initiating *guru* (*dikṣā-guru*), and the instructing *guru* (*sikṣā-guru*). They are referred to by the words *cintāmaṇi*, *somagiri*, and *bhagavān sikhī-piñcha-maulih*.

In his commentary on this verse, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Goswāmī explains that the word *cintā*, from the word *cintāmaṇi*, also means “meditation,” and *maṇi* means jewel. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the jewel of all meditation. The word *soma*, from the word *somagiri*, means “nectar” and *giri* means mountain. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a mountain of nectar. The words *bhagavān sikhī-piñcha-maulih* refer to the “God whose head is adorned with peacock feathers,” Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Cintāmaṇi was also the name of the prostitute who initially set Bilvamaṅgala Thākura on the path of *bhakti*. Somagiri was

the name of his initiating *guru*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa adorned with peacock feathers is described in this verse as the Thākura's *sikṣā-guru*. Just how he acted in this capacity is described by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in his *Sāraṅga-rāṅgadā* commentary to the verse. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa cites the following verse from *Bhaktirasāmr̥ta-sindhu* in this regard:

How to whisper into each other's ears, how to flatter messengers (so that they agree to carry messages), how to cheat one's husband deftly, how to proceed towards a flower grove in the dead of night, how to act deaf when the elders give good advice, and how to keep one's ears alert for the music of the flute? O Kṛṣṇa! The fair sex of Vraja has recently been studying these arts from a school where your budding youth happens to be the *guru*.¹⁶

Steeped in *bhāva*, Bilvamaṅgala Thākura entered the romantic *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with instructions like these, having been blessed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of three different manifestations of *guru-tattva* to whom he offers his respect in this verse. Hence it is a fitting verse for Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja to rest his case with, the case for the *guru* being a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.

Thus we have learned that the *guru* is one with Kṛṣṇa in a representational sense. Aside from this, he or she is also a devotee steeped in a particular sentiment for Kṛṣṇa. Thus *guru-tattva* and *bhakta-tattva* overlap. As we leave the subject of *guru-tattva* and enter into a discussion of *bhakta-tattva*—*iśa-bhaktān*—we find room to discuss the higher and final vision of the *guru*: the sense in which one *guru*, as a superlative devotee, is different from another *guru*, not in terms of external differences, but rather in terms of internal and eternal differences. To do so we must look at *śrī guru* as the embodiment of love of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī *guru*, serving as either the initiating or instructing *guru*, is a realized soul who directly represents Śrī Kṛṣṇa and whose ecstasy, or

bhāva, one follows into eternity to serve Kṛṣṇa in the same ecstasy. In Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, this ecstasy is that of a handmaiden of Rādhā or a friend of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.¹⁷ It was Kṛṣṇa in the form of Śrī Caitanya who appeared with the intent of experiencing Rādhā's love for himself from her perspective. He taught by his example that we could experience this pinnacle of *prema* in the role of Rādhā's handmaiden.¹⁸ Śrī Caitanya's other self, Nityānanda Rāma, who accompanies him, embodies the ecstasy of fraternal love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

These two, Gaura and Nityānanda, are the *samaṣṭi*, or macroscopic, *gurus* of the Gauḍīya lineage. Gaura is Kṛṣṇa in his *ācārya-līlā*, appearing along with Nityānanda Rāma. Those who represent these two in the lineage are the *vyaṣṭi*, or microcosmic, manifestations of *guru-tattva*. The two prominent spiritual sentiments of the lineage's *samaṣṭi-gurus*, fraternal and romantic, complement one another. They are examples of two types of *rāga-bhakti*—*sambandha-rūpa* and *kāma-rūpa*—embodied in Kṛṣṇa's eternal entourage in his Vraja *līlā*.¹⁹ Pursuing these serving sentiments is what is known as *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Accordingly, it takes two forms, *sambandhānuga* (following *sambandha-rūpa-bhakti*) and *kāmānuga* (following *kāma-rūpa-bhakti*), respectively.

Of the two, the romantic ecstasy of Rādhā's handmaiden affords greater intimacy and is thus considered to be the zenith of sacred aesthetic rapture—*rasa*. As mentioned above and as we shall see in greater detail ahead, it is Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa that Śrī Caitanya pursued. The desire to taste this love is the genesis of the entire lineage as well as its highest reach. This raises an obvious question: why do some choose the fraternal sentiment instead? The answer is tied to the fact that Śrī Caitanya does not appear alone. Indeed, he is assisted by others who descend along with him. Among them, Nityānanda is very prominent, and as mentioned, he embodies the fraternal sentiment—*sakhya-*

rasa. Thus this sentiment is also found within the lineage, even as Nityānanda points others in the direction of Śrī Caitanya and the Rādhā *bhāva* he personifies.²⁰

That said, in his *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu* Rūpa Goswāmī addresses the general but important question as to why one devotee chooses one sentiment and another devotee chooses a different one.²¹ He reasons that because all *ātmās* are equal, they should all choose the highest ideal. However, we see that they do not. Thus there is another factor that influences one's choice. Śrī Rūpa informs us that in this life one chooses one *rasa* over another on the basis of previous impressions of that same *rasa* in this or previous lives. These impressions are not intellectual transmissions. Even unknowingly they influence one's *citta*, the internal, subtle medium of perception. Generally speaking, material impressions are imprinted on the *citta*, and they subsequently reinforce material habits. In spiritual practice, this *citta* is cleansed of such material impressions, or *saṃskāras*. However, in *sādhana-bhakti*, the heart of which is *sādhu-saṅga*, or saintly association, not only are material impressions removed, spiritual impressions are imprinted on one's *citta*. These impressions foster further spiritual practice as well as a particular type of spiritual perfection.

In his commentary on Śrī Rūpa's verse, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura underscores the idea that "previous *saṃskāras*," or *vāsanās* that gradually foster a taste for a particular loving spiritual emotion for Kṛṣṇa, are most definitely *bhakti-saṃskāras* acquired through *sādhu-saṅga*. By contrast, material *saṃskāras* need to be cleansed away to make room for *bhakti-rasa*. Cakravarti Thākura says it thus in his *Sārārtha Darśinī* commentary on the *Bhāgavatam*: "If the devotee giving mercy has *sānta-bhakti*, then the recipient obtains *sānta-bhakti*. The same holds true for *dāsyā* and other types of *bhakti-rasa*."²²

In other words, the *rasa* that one chooses is relative to the devotional impressions one receives from one's *gurus* and saintly association of this and previous lifetimes. Śrī *guru* appears in our lives as Śrī Kṛṣṇa's ambassador in terms of teaching the spiritual conclusions of the lineage, and in this sense *śrī guru* is one with him. At the same time, *śrī guru* is different from Kṛṣṇa in the sense that he or she embodies a particular loving ecstasy for Śrī Kṛṣṇa that may be different from that of another Vaiṣṇava *guru*. Again, the first aspect of the *guru* is as a representative of Kṛṣṇa, of which there are many. This is the sense in which all *gurus* are one. The higher aspect, which internally differentiates one *guru* from another, relates to the individual Vaiṣṇava and the details of his or her spiritually realized sentiment for Kṛṣṇa. We have the chance to go through the window of opportunity that *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas place before us, and to thus serve eternally under the guidance of those Vaiṣṇavas who appear before us in the role of *śrī guru*.²³ The Vaiṣṇava *guru*'s own *ānanda* represents that of one of Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates, whose ecstasy his or her disciples follow in the wake of.

In his well-known *Gurvaṣṭakam*, the venerable Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura has described the *guru* as both God in a representational sense and also the embodiment of a particular loving sentiment for God. To further clarify and emphasize these two aspects of *śrī guru*, it will be prudent to examine the words of Cakravartī Thākura.

In the seventh verse of his *aṣṭakam*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī informs us that *śrī guru* is in quality (*tvena*) one with God (Hari), appearing directly (*sākṣād*) before us. He says that this is heralded throughout the scriptural canon and acknowledged by the saints, *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhīḥ*. This is the first impression of *śrī guru* that guides the disciple. It fosters reverence and attention as the student comes to under-

stand that God has appeared in a form tailored specifically for him or her.

However, the following line of Viśvanātha Cakravartī's verse further clarifies what the scripture means when it says that *śri guru* is qualitatively God. The *guru* is more godly than he or she is God. He or she has a relationship with God that makes the *guru* dear to Kṛṣṇa, *kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya*. Because the *guru* is dear to God, he or she is considered competent to represent him, and as such one should regard *śri guru* as though God himself were present. This is the general meaning of the Ṭhākura's seventh verse of his *Gurvaṣṭakam*.

A closer look at Śrī Viśvanātha's verse speaks to us of a more developed vision of *śri guru*. This perspective is aligned with the words *kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya*, "However, he is very dear to Kṛṣṇa." This truth about *śri guru* endears the disciples to the spiritual person of the *guru* even more than seeing him as the representative of God. Let us examine the implications of this description.

Śrī *guru* is directly of the quality of Hari, but as we look more closely with eyes of love, we find that he or she embodies a particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa. As *sādhana* is perfected, *bhāva* manifests along with eyes to see *śri guru* in terms of his or her love for Kṛṣṇa. While *śri guru* is God in a representational sense, he or she is love of God in every respect. Śrī *guru* is the very embodiment of a particular spiritual sentiment with a corresponding internal, spiritual form.

As the faithful disciple develops this mature vision of *śri guru*, he or she continues to serve the preceptor externally in reverential love bordering on friendship. Internally, the disciple contemplates the significance of *śri guru*'s relationship with Kṛṣṇa—the *guru*'s *bhāva*—*kṛṣṇānandāya dhimahi*. It is this higher internal impression of *śri guru* that will eternally guide the mature student in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *līlā-seva*.²⁴

Our discussion of *guru-tattva* concludes here, which brings us to the topic of *bhakta-tattva*, the truth about the Vaiṣṇavas. The disciple's realization of all that *guru-tattva* constitutes is in no way better facilitated than by association of such devotees, in whose company one finds one's *guru*. Such realized devotees accompany Śrī Caitanya in his descent and constitute one of the five forms of divinity (Pañca-tattva). Along with *śri guru* (the sixth subject), the Pañca-tattva is the focus of this first *maṅgala* verse and by extension the subject of Kṛṣṇadāsa's entire *maṅgalācaraṇa*. Thus we shall proceed to discuss *bhakta* or Vaiṣṇava *tattva*, the second of six *tattvas* mentioned in Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's first *maṅgala* verse.

In his own comments on this *tattva*, Kavirāja Goswāmī cites two well-known verses from *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* that stress the importance of *sādhu-saṅga*. These two verses serve as a bridge to two more *Bhāgavata* verses, and finally Kavirāja Goswāmī concludes with a final decisive statement on Vaiṣṇava *tattva*. The brevity of this section on Vaiṣṇava *tattva* is partially because *guru-tattva* and *bhakta-tattva* overlap. Indeed, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa cites the first two *pramāṇa* verses without any introduction to the topic of Vaiṣṇava *tattva*. Thus it might be construed that these two verses serve to further elucidate the topic of *guru-tattva*. This understanding is further supported by the fact that the *guru*, as we have discussed, is in essence Kṛṣṇa within appearing externally in the form of a devotee. However, the import of the verses cited is the efficacy of *sādhu-saṅga*, the power of association with *sādhus*, rather than the extent to which the devotee *sādhu* represents Bhagavān and is thereby one with him. At the same time, one or more such devotees will obviously serve the *sādhaka* in the capacity of *guru*, and thus the overlapping of the two topics. These *Bhāgavata* verses Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa cites first are from the eleventh and third cantos respectively:

Therefore a wise person rejects unholy association and becomes attached exclusively to holy people, whose words cut off one's excessive mental attachment.²⁵

In the association of the truthful (my devotees), discussion of my virtuous acts is a rejuvenating elixir for the heart and ear, and the churning of such discussions leads very quickly to liberation and the *bhakti-mārga*, which takes one step-by-step from initial faith to love of God.²⁶

The first of these two *Bhāgavata* verses follows a lengthy description of King Purūravā's attachment to worldly association and its downside. The lesson to be learned from this story is stated in the verse itself: wise persons reject worldly association and instead embrace the association of saintly devotees.

The second verse, which is more well known, speaks of the preoccupation of saintly devotees and the gradual result of embracing their association. Such devotees are absorbed in chanting about Kṛṣṇa. One who associates with them develops initial faith in the culture of *bhakti*, leading to the attainment of *bhakti*. The essence of this second verse on *bhakta-tattva* is also emphasized in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Therein Kṛṣṇa describes the characteristics of his devotees as *satataṁ kīrtayanto mām*, leading to *tusyanti ca ramanti ca*.²⁷ He says that his devotees are always chanting about him and they are nourished by this and take pleasure in it. Here the *Gītā* says that such association of devotees, in which preoccupation with his name, form, qualities, and pastimes is the very force that brings them together, leads naturally to *sambandha-rūpa* (*tusyanti*) or *kāma-rūpa-bhakti* (*ramanti*) of the *rāga-mārga*. To associate with them is to embrace their lifestyle. Here it is significant that on the *bhakti-mārga* one advances by attachment to advanced devotees, whereas on the *jñāna-mārga* one advances by detachment. Later in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa states that

it is *sādhu-saṅga* that gives birth to *bhakti*: *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-janma-mūla haya ‘sādhu-saṅga’*.²⁸

Kavirāja Goswāmī next explains that the devotee is the abode of Bhagavān, who is seated in his heart. To support this position, he cites the following two *Bhāgavata* verses and concludes his discussion of *bhakta-tattva* by commenting that devotees are of two types: the retinue of Bhagavān (*pāriṣad-gaṇa*) and practitioners (*sādhaka-gaṇa*).

Saints are my heart and I am their hearts. They know nothing other than me and I know nothing other than them.²⁹

Saints of your caliber (Vidura) are actual places of pilgrimage, for Bhagavān, who carries the mace, resides in their hearts.³⁰

Following *bhakta-tattva*, we come to *avatāra-tattva*, the third category mentioned in Kṛṣṇadāsa’s opening *mangala* verse. The Sanskrit word *avatāra* literally means a crossing (*tara*) from up (*ava*) to down. It speaks of the appearance within time and space of that which is not restricted by either of these two constraints. The *avatāra* is a specific emotional moment in the eternal life of the Godhead manifest in form. At the same time, the *avatāra* appears within time as if its beginning were datable—a particular spiritual, emotional reality of the Absolute appearing at the juncture of time and eternity. This appearance is in the eternal present tense. Unlike the Western notion of the incarnation, the *avatāras* are numerous and reoccurring like the emotional moments in our own lives.

The various types of *avatāras* are also purposeful within the context of being manifestations of the playful life of the Godhead. For example, the *guṇa* and *puruṣa* *avatāras* serve particular cosmic functions, such as generation/creation, maintenance, or

annihilation. The *lilā-avatāras* appear in the world to deliver the devoted and establish *dharma*, as do and more so the *yuga-avatāras*, who establish the *dharma* for each of the Hindu ages. The *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* is the empowerment of an individual *ātmā* with a particular potency of the Godhead—the power of knowledge, devotion, and so on—or in the form of a *śaktyāveśa*, the Godhead may empower himself for a particular purpose.

Aside from descending emotional moments of the Godhead—*avatāras*—there are those manifestations of divinity that remain within the timeless transspatial realm and for the most part never cross into time's watch.³¹ Kṛṣṇadāsa turns to them next, referring to them as *prakāśa*—manifestations/expansions.

Amongst these manifestations, the first constitutes expansions of one form of Kṛṣṇa into many for the sake of participating more fully in one particular *lilā*. For example, the original Kṛṣṇa manifests into many forms to participate more fully in his *mahā-rasa* with the milkmaids of Vraja, apparently dancing with each one individually as if she had his undivided attention. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa expands himself into many forms to associate with all of his queens simultaneously in his Dvārakā *lilā*. In each of these examples, Kṛṣṇa appears exactly the same in many forms. In the second type of *prakāśa*, Kṛṣṇa manifests in a slightly different form with a different emotional makeup. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa calls the first group merely *prakāśa*. He names the second group *vilāsa*. Kavirāja Goswāmī cites two verses from Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī's *Laghu-bhāgavatāmrta* to support his explanation:

If numerous forms, all equal in their features, are displayed simultaneously, such forms are called *prakāśa-vigrahas* of the Lord. When the Lord displays numerous forms with different features by his inconceivable potency, such forms are called *vilāsa-vigrahas*.³²

Thus we find a very complex theology in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. One God appears singularly and also in multiplicity, while also expanding into many different forms representing varied states of emotive content. All of this occurs beyond the world of our sensual, mental, and intellectual experience. Furthermore, in still other emotional forms, the same singular Godhead crosses down into our world of our experience (*avatāra*). But it does not end here. Kṛṣṇa has *śakti*.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja turns to the topic of Bhagavān's *śakti* next. Here again, as with his discussion of the *avatāras* and *prakāśa* expressions of divinity, he limits his discussion of this important principle. *Śakti-tattva* is arguably more important and more complex than the *tattva* concerning various forms of the Godhead—Viṣṇu *tattva*. Thus the subject is dealt with extensively in the text ahead. Here, however, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa merely introduces the concept.

In his commentary, only one type of *śakti* is mentioned—the primary *śakti* of Bhagavān, his *svarūpa-śakti*.³³ While *śakti-tattva* accompanies the various manifestations of the Godhead, she is most fully manifest as Rādhā standing on the left side of Vraja-kiśora Kṛṣṇa, the fountainhead of all the Godhead's appearances. As we shall see in the chapters that lie ahead, Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti* and Rādhā in particular are central to this sacred text concerning the immortal character of consciousness in the form of Śrī Caitanya.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa completes his sixfold explanation of his first *māṅgala* verse in a manner that leaves the reader in anticipation of what is to follow. While the first topic, *guru-tattva*, was explained in some detail, the other five—the devotees, the incarnations, the expansions, the *śakti*, and Bhagavān himself—are only briefly explained even though they warrant considerable discussion.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa is brief because in his first *māṅgala* verse he is merely offering his respects to these five *tattvas* represented

by Advaita, Nityānanda, Gadādhara, Śrīvāsa, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya—the famed Pañca-tattva—along with the *guru-tattva*. In other words, this first *maṅgala* verse, like his final verse invoking auspiciousness, is a *pranāma* to the five features in which the Godhead himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, appears. It differs from the final *maṅgala* verse only in that it includes his *pranāma* to *guru-tattva*. As we shall see, Kṛṣṇadāsa’s brevity here is compensated for ahead, as he describes these five *tattvas* in greater detail by way of discussing the persons in Gaura *līlā* who embody them.³⁴

NOTES

1. *Bhakti-sandarbha* 237
2. ŚB 11.3.21
3. The Gauḍīya lineage also cites nine externally observable symptoms that serve as indicators that the sprout of *bhāva*, or *bhakti* in ecstasy, has been attained. See Brs. 1.3.25–26.
4. Excerpted from B. R. Śridhara Deva Goswāmī’s 1930s homage to his *guru*, Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura. *Bhakti Rakṣaka Śridhara Deva Goswāmī, Śrī Guru and His Grace* (San Jose, CA: Guardian of Devotion Press, 1983), viii.
5. ŚB 11.17.27
6. ŚB 11.29.6
7. Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj, *Śrimad Bhagavad-gītā: The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute* (Nabadwip, India: Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, 1985), 179–80.
8. ŚB 2.9.31
9. ŚB 2.9.32
10. ŚB 2.9.33. This verse deals with *sambandha*.
11. ŚB 2.9.34. This verse deals with *sambandha*.
12. ŚB 2.9.35. This verse deals with *prayojana*.
13. ŚB 2.9.36. This verse deals with *abhidheya*.
14. *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta* 1
15. Cc. 2.9.307

16. Brs. 2.1.333

17. More typically the friend of Kṛṣṇa is a *priyanarma-sakhā*, who in the context of his fraternal love is intimately involved in *mādhurya-rasa* in a manner that allows such a friend to assist Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in their romantic love for one another. In the course of such service, the *priyanarma* also experiences *rūḍha-mahābhāva* that is otherwise exclusive to *mādhurya-rasa*.

18. While Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja speaks of four *bhāvas* of Vraja, his fourth verse speaks of *ujjvala-rasa*, or romantic love, and within that *unnata-ujjvala*, the brightest jewel of *mādhurya-rasa*—Rādhā *dāsyam*. Later in the conversation between Rāmānanda and Śrī Caitanya, we also find that this Rādhā *dāsyam* is the highest ideal. Suffice to say that serving as a handmaiden of Rādhā is what Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta* is all about. In contrast, Vṛndāvana dāsa, whose hagiography of Śrī Caitanya precedes Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's work and to which Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa defers, pines for *sakhya-rasa*, being influenced by Nityānanda Rāma.

19. *Sambandha-rūpa-bhakti* is divided into three relationships: servitude (*dāsy*), fraternal (*sakhya*), and parental (*vātsalya*) love. Nityānanda Rāma presides over these three and his personal *sakhya-bhāva* is also mixed with *vātsalya-bhāva* and *dāsy-bhāva*. In turn, *sakhya-bhāva* itself is of four types: *sakhya* mixed with *dāsy*, *sakhya* mixed with *vātsalya*, unmixed *sakhya-rasa*, and the special *bhāva* of the *priyanarma-sakhā*, whose *sakhya* is influenced by *mādhurya-rasa*. Of these four, *priyanarma-sakhya-rasa* is the prominent form of *sakhya* found in the Gauḍiya lineage.

20. It was Nityānanda who first boldly asserted the divinity of Śrī Caitanya and identified him with Kṛṣṇa long before any of the lineage's texts were penned. It was Nitāi and his associates, who are considered to be incarnations of the twelve principal friends of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in their Vraja *līlā*, who began initiating disciples for the Gauḍiya lineage. The influence of *sakhya-rasa*, although more prominent in the first and second generation of the *sampradāya*, continues to this day. Texts such as *Preyo-bhakti-rasārṇava* (eighteenth century) and *O My Friend! O My Friend!* (twenty-first century) are good examples.

21. Brs. 2.5.38

22. Śrila Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: Sārārtha Darśini*, vol. 5, comment on SB 6.14.5 (Chennai: Sri Vaikuntha Enterprises, 2010), 266.

23. There are exceptions wherein the disciple serves under the guidance of *śrī guru* but in a different sentiment from that of the *guru*. Such exceptions are nuanced instances of divine will, as in the famous case of Śyāmānanda Pañdita, or a result of differing *bhakti-saṃskāras* from previous lives.
24. It is the *guru* as the embodiment of a particular *bhāva* of the Vraja *līlā* that the *rāgānugā-sādhaka* typically follows in the wake of.
25. ŚB 11.26.26
26. ŚB 3.25.25
27. Bg. 9.14, 10.9
28. Cc. 2.22.83
29. ŚB 9.4.68
30. ŚB 1.13.10
31. Although rarely, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa do descend.
32. *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.21 and 1.15
33. Technically, *bhakta-tattva* is also *śakti-tattva*, but Kṛṣṇadāsa has already discussed *bhakta-tattva* separately and thus *śakti-tattva* here refers only to Kṛṣṇa's primary *śakti*.
34. The exceptions are Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura and Gadādhara Pañdita, representing the liberated form of Kṛṣṇa's intermediate or *jīva-śakti* and his primary *śakti* respectively. See the final chapter for my own discussion of these two divinities.

2. The Presiding Deities

*vande śri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nityānandau sahoditau
gauḍodaye puṣpavantau
citrau śan-dau tamo-nudau*

Praṇāmas to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Nityānanda Rāma. They have arisen simultaneously on the eastern horizon of Gauḍa—together like the sun and moon—to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and wonderfully bestow benediction upon everyone.

Kavirāja Goswāmī explains his second *namaskāra* verse thus:

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who previously played in Vraja, their splendor more magnificent than millions of suns and moons, have arisen in the East—the horizon of Gauḍa—out of empathy for the entire creation. The appearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Prabhu Nityānanda has filled the whole world with *ānanda*. As the sun and moon dissipate darkness and by their appearance illuminate all things, these two brothers preach *prema-dharma* and dispel darkness—ignorance covering living beings—with the gift of essential truth, ultimate reality. I call the darkness of ignorance *kaitava*—cheating. It all begins with desire for *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*.¹

Here Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja identifies Śrī Caitanya as the cowherd Kṛṣṇa of Vraja and Nityānanda Rāma as Kṛṣṇa's *prakāśa*, his elder

brother Balarāma. Other than Kṛṣṇa's immediate expansions of himself for *līlā* with his friends and lovers, Balarāma is Kṛṣṇa's most significant expansion.² He represents a tidal wave of fraternal emotion in the ocean of *bhakti-rasa*. He will be discussed in detail in *maṅgala* verses 7 through 11. The notion that Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa himself rather than an *avatāra* of Kṛṣṇa is addressed in detail in Kavirāja Goswāmī's third and fourth *maṅgala slokas*. While his first *maṅgala* verse was a general *namaskāra* verse, this one is specific. Thus Kṛṣṇa and Rāma in the form of Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda Rāma are the presiding Deities of Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta*. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa offers his respect to them—*namaskāra*.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa composed both this verse and the first verse of his sacred preface. Of all his *maṅgala* verses, both those that he composed and those taken from elsewhere, this present verse is perhaps the most poetic. To herald the appearance of the supernatural within the natural world, it speaks of prominent aspects of nature acting in a supernatural manner. It stretches our imagination to aid us in understanding the inconceivable fortune that the divine advent of Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda Rāma brings to the world of material desire. Thus its poetry is not at the cost of its profundity.

However, before we examine Kṛṣṇadāsa's poetic device, let us first discuss the historicity of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, with whom Kṛṣṇadāsa identifies Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda. Kṛṣṇadāsa tells us that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma “previously played in Vraja.” This statement might lead someone to question if there is a historical, “real” Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to begin with. There is. At the same time, modern historical sensibilities are not the last word on what is real. Theology and spiritual experience also have a role to play.

Kṛṣṇadāsa refers to the playful pair in their Vraja *līlā*—*vraje vihare*. This is an important point we will return to. Kṛṣṇa and

Balarāma are better known historically by their Mathurā and Dvārakā metropolitan epithets, Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa. Originally, European scholars dismissed the historicity of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, Vāsudeva, and Saṅkarṣaṇa altogether and viewed them as four distinct mythological figures. More recent scholarship continues to debate their historicity but acknowledges that the two pairs are two persons with four different epithets, not four separate persons.

Images of Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa dating to 200 BCE are embedded on stones near Chilas in northern Pakistan with their names mentioned below their images. Vāsudeva and Sankarṣaṇa appear on Greek coins of Agathocles in the second century BCE. The inscription on the famous Heliodorus column in Besnagar shows that members of the Grecian ruling party bowed to the “God of gods,” Vāsudeva, who is to be known through “self-constraint, generosity toward others, and consciousness.” The column dates to the second century BCE and demonstrates that the Greek ambassador who established it converted to the Hindu worship of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa and that his Grecian constituents referred to themselves as *Bhāgavatas*. Further archeological evidence of ancient worship of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma has also been found and literary evidence abounds. Perhaps the most significant archeological evidence that corresponds with the written spiritual history of Kṛṣṇa is the ruins of an ancient city off the Indian coast of Gujarat. These ruins roughly correspond with Kṛṣṇa’s Dvārakā kingdom over which he is said to have reigned as a prince.

Here I have only highlighted a portion of the empirical evidence concerning the persons Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. But this merely tells us that stories about them and worship of them date back into ancient times. We could of course side with those who, based on all the available evidence—archeological, astronomical, and

literary—conclude Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma physically walked among us. But mathematician and former NASA scientist N. S. Rajaram's *Search for the Historical Krishna*, while laboring hard to establish the historicity of Kṛṣṇa, leaves devotees with a different Kṛṣṇa from the miraculous one that is the central figure of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* residing in the hearts and meditative minds of his devotees.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma may have walked among us, but was their splendor actually greater than millions of moons? Obviously the Hindu sacred texts of yore spoke about them poetically, as does Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in speaking about their appearance in the form of Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda Rāma. Such narratives are “based on a true story.” But how true is the story?

Attempts to objectify the lives of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in an effort to make them “real” derive partially from the need of the faithful, whose faith is fostered at least for some time by locating the supersubjective meditative reality within the objective material world. Although the spiritual practitioner seeks to enter the meditative supersubjective world, he or she remains for some time largely identified with the objective physical world. In other words, such practitioners’ default for determining the “real” is tied to their identification with the objective physical world, even while the teaching is that the meditative supersubjective world with its scriptural parameters is the real world and the objective material world is illusory—here today and gone by nightfall. There is a real objective physical and psychic world, but it is not what it appears to be—it is *māyā*.

The novice’s need to objectively verify the historicity of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in every detail with which they are described in the sacred narratives is problematic, to be sure. Indeed, if this materially conditioned necessity is not transcended, it ends up distorting the very text in which such sacred narratives are found, turning

them into something they are not. Texts such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are not objective history, psychology, or science books in any modern sense, even while they tell a sacred history, address yogic psychology, describe the methodology or science of spiritual practice, and describe the nature of consciousness and matter with an emphasis on the former.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* teaches that not everyone who saw Kṛṣṇa with his or her eyes saw him for who he is. For he is only truly seen with eyes of devotion. And eyes of devotion lend to descriptions of that which is ineffable, or that about which not enough can be said. The experience of the authors of the sacred narratives is such that if one were to take all the world's oceans and turn them into ink, all the world's land mass and turn it into paper, and assign all the world's human population with the task of describing the two brothers Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, they could not do justice to any particular aspect of their lives, appearance, qualities, or *līlās*. Such is the testimony of the learned devotees.

Sacred narratives are poetic yet theologically and philosophically profound. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is the best example of such literature, centered as it is on the divine play of the sweet Absolute. Other than the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which the *Bhāgavata* is arguably the theological sequel to, no sacred narrative of the East has been circulated more widely or translated into as many dialects. It enjoys more than eighty learned Sanskrit commentaries, and its narrative of Kṛṣṇa *līlā* has been depicted in art, drama, and music from ancient times to our modern times. It is arguably the richest sacred book the world over in language, philosophy, and theology. Unlike any other sacred text, it walks a tightrope between the majesty and intimacy of the Absolute. Its story: “The life story and love life of Reality the Beautiful—Kṛṣṇa the heart of the Godhead.” The text is said to be written in *samādhi-bhāṣya*,

the language of meditative trance, and only couched in Sanskrit. It is with eyes closed to the world of material exploitation and the inner eye fixed in devotional meditation that one sees Kṛṣṇa as he is, more real than any mundane historical figure will ever be.³

While we have considerable poetic textual evidence for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma's earthly advent, we have no accepted archeological or other reliable historical evidence for their pastoral *līlās*. Yet it is these very humanlike *līlās* that stir the hearts of millions of devotees—these narratives are by far the most popular. And for good reason. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma's humanlike *līlās* resonate with our humanity. Like no other descriptions of God, they serve to foster a bond with our human condition, our human psychology, in a manner that makes Kṛṣṇa seem as one of us in all his divinity. This is the very Vraja *prema* experience of *mamatā* (my-ness)—the sense that “Kṛṣṇa is ours”; “he is one of us.”⁴ Given the nature of the Deity, this bond in turn enables humanity to ascend beyond its own limits. Thus the oxymoron of divine humanism becomes more than a figure of speech in the persons of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma's pastoral *līlā* tells us that he who is all-powerful only plays, with nothing to accomplish. The Sanskrit word *līlā* means “divine play,” and it only fully applies to Kṛṣṇa's Vraja *līlā*. His majestic *līlās* involve duties and the worldly concern of establishing *dharma*, but his Vraja *līlā* is not concerned with these things. Vraja is his own internal world made manifest with the assistance of his primary *śakti*. As he wills, so it happens by her effort.

Vraja Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Balarāma is the all-playful, and this in turn implies that he is all-powerful among all the Hindu divinities. What must be the power of one who has nothing to accomplish, who plays unconstrained by time and without any negative repercussions? What is the power of anything else com-

pared with the charm and beauty by which Kṛṣṇa rules? Such must be the nature of the perfect object of wise love in intimacy and such is the experience of the devotees of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. They represent the very hope of humanity as to what life could and should be—what life is, but what we on our own cannot realize.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja refers to the playfulness of the Vraja *līlā* when he describes Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and identifies them with Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda Rāma—*vraje ye vihare piurve kṛṣṇa balarāma*. The Sanskrit word *līlā* is rarely used in *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* outside of the descriptions of the Vraja pastoral *līlā* of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, and then only as an adjective to describe the playful way in which majestic Kṛṣṇa effortlessly dispenses with those opposed to devotional life. Kṛṣṇadāsa does not identify Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda Rāma with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma’s majestic exploits. He writes about Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda as poetically and devotionally as the legendary Vyāsa wrote in the language of wise love—*samādhi-bhāṣya*—about Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as they appeared on Earth in his own heart of hearts.

These two, Gaura and Nityānanda, appeared thousands of years after the composition of *Śrimad Bhāgavatam*, but the *līlā* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was central to their lives and their own *līlā* parallels that *līlā*. As we shall see in the chapters ahead, Gaura *līlā* is also the natural and necessary extension of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. Śrī Caitanya’s extraordinary life of devotional ecstasy, which knows no comparison in the religious world, was derived from his complete absorption in Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. If wise love and compassion are desirable, the measure to which Śrī Caitanya embodied these virtues illustrates the value of preoccupation with Kṛṣṇa. He has been described as the most munificent appearance of the Godhead the world has witnessed. Were Kṛṣṇa not “real” in a meaningful sense that renders modern historicity less than the deciding factor,

we would not expect to see such self-control, self-sacrifice, compassion, extraordinary ecstasy, and love of God manifest in our Eastern Saviors. Indeed, Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda are all the proof one needs as to the reality of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Thus it is no wonder that Kṛṣṇadāsa speaks of them here as he does, comparing them to not one wonder of the natural world, but two such wonders occurring at the same time—the simultaneous rising of the sun and moon.

Sunrise at sea level on the Ganges delta in Nadia is called *arunodaya*—“reddish rising.” It is a time at which time appears to stand still. Across the endless green fields of flatland rice paddy, the sun is born and begins to warm the break of day. Time begins again as well, with the dawn of a new day. It is as if one could run through the fields and touch the sun, as if the large reddish orb of another planet had landed on earth. *Aruṇa* is the color of fraternal love, the baseline of affection in Kṛṣṇa’s Vraja *līlā*. In the Ganges delta, the awe-inspiring nature of the sunrise is overwhelmed by a sense of intimacy. That celestial body around which the earth revolves, on which its life depends, has come to earth and made himself accessible—warm, effulgent, but not hot or unfriendly to the naked eye. And with him arises the hope of a new day, a better day.

Kṛṣṇadāsa likens the appearance of Śrī Caitanya in West Bengal to his experience of this natural phenomenon. But the sunrise alone or any natural occurrence, however awesome, however meaningful, is not a fit comparison to the beauty, meaning, and prospect that the appearance of Śrī Caitanya brings to the world. Still, one has to start somewhere and attempt to put to words the ineffable in order to make one’s speech successful. And yet Śrī Caitanya’s appearance is only one half of the story. Gaura and Kṛṣṇa are never alone. With Śrī Caitanya comes Nityānanda,

likened here to the rising moon of reflective light, soothing and illuminating the night of the soul's material sojourn. Nitāicānda is *akhaṇḍa-guru-tattva*. He finds us in the darkness and leads us to the light that he himself is a reflection of. As large as he looms, he sees himself as a derived and dependent entity and speaks to us as to our nature that is so much more so. As the moon depends on the sun for its effulgence, Nityānanda Rāma's life is lit by the fire of love for the golden God, for Gaura *prema*. And Gaura is never ever without him. In some form, he is always there like no other in the service of Gaura.⁵

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja draws upon two separate naturally occurring events that are extremely significant in their ramifications for humanity on a daily basis. He then suggests that should they combine together and appear simultaneously, such an extraordinary event might give us some sense of the significance of the combined appearance of Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda Rāma. Kavirāja Goswāmī writes, *Nityānandau sahoditau*. The word *sahoditau* refers to both the figurative, simultaneous rising of the sun and moon, as well as to the oneness of Gaura and Nityānanda. *Saha* means “together with,” and suggests action in common. Kṛṣṇa Caitanya appears together with Nityānanda Rāma, his other self, who knows nothing other than the service of Śrī Caitanya. Rāma without Kṛṣṇa is not whole. While other manifestations of the Godhead are partial manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, they are each emotionally whole unto themselves. Balarāma, on the other hand, is the most complete manifestation of the Godhead other than Kṛṣṇa, yet he is not emotionally whole without him. He exists wholly and solely for the service of Kṛṣṇa. *Uditau* means “rising high,” “exalted.” Nityānanda causes the name and person of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya to rise high on the spiritual horizon through his part in the conversion of the downtrodden and even immoral members of society.

Kṛṣṇa Caitanya made the exalted position of Nitāi Avadhūta clear to all of his devotees lest he be misunderstood owing to his often unorthodox behavior, which results from his overflowing with Vraja *bhāva*.

Gaura and Nityānanda appeared together on *gauḍa-udaye*, the eastern horizon of Gauḍa—West Bengal. *Gauḍa* means sweet. *Gauḍa-deśa* is the sweet country that is nondifferent from Vraja, the land of sweetness, *mādhurya-mayī*. As the sun and moon rise in the east, *udaye* implies this direction. East is the spiritual direction, to which we shall turn to uncover the secret treasure of our spiritual inheritance. Light arises in the east, the direction of the gods. The *mādhurya* humanlike sweetness of Kṛṣṇa in his *aprākṛta-lilā* looks ordinary and mundane (*prākṛta*), but it is godly to the extreme (*aprākṛta*).

Gauḍa represents his sweetness, and *udaya* the eastern direction, that of his *aiśvarya*, his majesty. When he who is all-majestic appears as if ordinary and readily approachable, this is truly sweet. When the two sweet Gods, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, appear as Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Nityānanda Rāma, there is something more added to their sweetness: *audārya*, sweetness magnanimously distributing itself.

On the eastern horizon of the land of *mādhurya*, they appeared like the sun and moon, as if these two luminary orbs had simultaneously arisen. Kavirāja Goswāmī describes this as *citrau*, brilliant and wonderful. This wonder (*camatkāra*) is the basis of aesthetic rapture (*rasa*)—that which Gaura and Nityānanda came to bestow, wonderfully and with brilliance like that of the simultaneous rising of the sun and moon.

The word *pūṣpavantau* indicates the sun and moon. *Pūṣpa* implies nourishment. These two Gods nourish our soul sweetly, as the sun gives vitality and produces rain to nourish the crops and

the moon is said to make them succulent. Viśvambhara—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya—sustains the universe with *bhakti*, and the ever-blissful Nitāī makes the world joyful by giving everyone Gaura.⁶

It is the compassionate, magnanimous heart of the Godhead that rises on the eastern horizon. Kavirāja Goswāmī says, *śam-dau*, indicating that the appearance of Gaura-Nityānanda is *mādhurya* with the addition of *audārya*. Śama is the son of Dharma. Śama indicates the absence of worldly passion and the peacefulness that follows this absence. Gaura-Nityānanda bestow (*dau*) this soothing *śama*, giving rise to the trace of *ānanda* in the *ātmā* and introducing it to the Prema Puruṣottama and thereby the *prema-mādhurya* of Vraja *bhakti*.⁷

Kavirāja Goswāmī then says, *tamo-nudau*. Gaura-Nityānanda take away the darkness of ignorance (*tamah*). What is this ignorance? Kavirāja Goswāmī says, “It is known as *kaitava*, cheating, and it appears in four forms: desire for piety, economic development, sense indulgence, and liberation.” Desire for these four goals of life are the darkness (*tamah*) of ignorance, especially the desire for monistic *mokṣa*, which ignores one’s innate potential as a lover of God.⁸

Gaura-Nityānanda’s gift, their benediction (*śam-dau*), is *pañcamā puruṣārtha*, the fifth goal of life. *Gopāla-tāpanī śruti* refers to it as *turyātito gopālah*, “Gopāla beyond the ‘fourth.’”⁹ Mokṣa is the fourth and final goal of life—or so it is often thought. But Gaura-Nityānanda take us higher, and the method to their madness is *nāma-saṅkirtana*. Kavirāja Goswāmī says, “The Absolute Truth, Kṛṣṇa (*sambandha*), Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* (*abhidheya*), and *prema-rūpa* (*prayo-jana*) can be realized by *nāma-saṅkirtana*, which is the essence of all bliss (*saba ānanda-svarūpa*).”

Gaura-Nityānanda’s *nāma-saṅkirtana* dissipates the darkness of the heart and brings us to *niṣṭha-bhakti*, fixed in the service of

two *Bhāgavatas*—the book *Bhāgavata* and person *Bhāgavata*, who embodies its message.¹⁰ Kṛṣṇadāsa instructs us that serving these two is the door to *bhakti-rasa*:

These two brothers remove the darkness from one's heart, causing one to directly meet two *Bhāgavatas*. One *Bhāgavata* is the great scripture—*Bhāgavata sāstra*. The other is the *bhakta*—the shelter of *bhakti-rasa*. Through these two *Bhāgavatas*, these brothers give *bhakti-rasa*, and in turn, their own hearts are controlled by such *prema*. One astonishing thing is that these brothers both appear at the same time. The other astonishing thing is the extent to which they illuminate the core of the heart.¹¹

The nature of this *bhakti-rasa* is that having removed all ignorance from the heart, it imprisons Kṛṣṇa therein. *Prema-bhakti*, that is, has the power not only to dissipate the darkness of ignorance, but moreover to overwhelm Kṛṣṇa. We see such *prema* in the poetry of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's second *māngala* verse.

After briefly explaining his *namaskāra* verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa is quick to cite the *vastu-nirdeśa* verse of Śrimad *Bhāgavatam*. This significant verse serves as scriptural evidence for his notion that the desire for *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, or even *mokṣa* cheats the *jīvātmā* out of its highest prospect. It also speaks of the power of *bhakti* to capture Kṛṣṇa within one's heart:

Completely rejecting all religious activities that are materially motivated, this *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all. Such truth uproots the threefold miseries. This beautiful *Bhāgavatam*, compiled by the

great sage Vyāsadeva [in his maturity], is sufficient in itself for God realization. What is the need of any other scripture? As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of *Bhāgavatam*, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within his heart.¹²

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is thus about *prema*, not *kaitava-dharma* and not even *mokṣa* unto itself. It is a veritable new testament among the ancient books of the East that has been compared to the very heart of our Eastern Savior, Śrī Caitanya. With the assistance of Nityānanda Rāma, Śrī Caitanya shares the essence of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* with the world, which as we shall see in subsequent chapters, is nondifferent from that which he himself embodies.

NOTES

1. Cc. 1.1.85–90
2. These expansions appear in the Vraja *līlā* during Kṛṣṇa's *rasa-līlā* with his handmaidens (*mādhurya-rasa*) and during his picnic lunches with his cowherd friends (*sakhya-rasa*).
3. Inner meditative experience of Kṛṣṇa, like that of Brahmā described in chapter 1 and here in the meditation of Vyāsa, is surpassed in spiritual excellence by a more profound external appearance of Kṛṣṇa, in which he is experienced before one's eyes. See *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* 2.3.179–82.
4. Brs. 1.4.1
5. Nityānanda Rāma expands to manifest as Gaura Kṛṣṇa's bed, shoes, sacred thread, and so on.
6. Viśvambhara is Śrī Caitanya's birth name. It means "one who maintains the universe."
7. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Līlā Puruṣottama, but in his appearance as Śrī Caitanya he becomes the Prema Puruṣottama, from the Supreme Person of divine play to the Supreme Person of divine love.
8. Devotional *mokṣa*, while deeply meaningful and theistic, is also rejected in that the desire for it gets in the way of attaining Vraja *prema*.

9. *Gopāla-tāpani śruti* 2.95
10. ŚB 1.2.18
11. Cc. 1.1.98–101
12. ŚB 1.1.2. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, tenth canto, part 1 (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1972), 52.

3. The Perfect Object of Love

yad advaitam brahmopaniṣadi tad apy asya tanu-bhā
ya ātmāntar-yāmi puruṣa iti so 'syāṁśa-vibhavaḥ
śad-aiśvaryaiḥ pūrṇo ya iha bhagavān sa svayam ayam
na caitanyāt kṛṣṇā jagati para-tattvam param iha

That which the Upaniṣads refer to as the nondual Brahman is the effulgence of his body; that which is called the *puruṣa* or Paramātmā that dwells within everyone is his partial manifestation; he who is known as Bhagavān replete with six opulences—*svayam bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself—is Śrī Caitanya. In this world there is no truth superior to him, the highest truth.

This third *maṅgala* verse is Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *vastu-nirdeśa-śloka*, in which he states the essence of the *tattva* of his text: Śrī Caitanya is Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself. There is no truth superior to him. Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān are aspects of him. Śrī Kavirāja's verse is based on two verses from Śrimad Bhāgavatam that are foundational to Gaudīya Vedānta: SB 1.2.11 and SB 1.3.28. These verses establish the supremacy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja extends this supremacy to Śrī Caitanya. All that is true about Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also true about Śrī Caitanya. The two, Gaura and Kṛṣṇa, are the same person. In his own explanation of this *vastu-nirdeśa-śloka*, Kavirāja Goswāmī acknowledges that the points it

raises are controversial but encourages his readers not to shy away from them. He suggests that by confronting these points, one's own conviction in their accuracy will only be strengthened.¹

It is apparent from Kṛṣṇadāsa's explanation of his *vastu-nirdeśa-sloka* that he intends his text to play a significant role in establishing the credibility of the budding Caitanya *sampradāya*. It is also clear that his text is chaste to the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs' revelations concerning Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya's identity and the philosophy and theology that they articulated to support their realizations. The two *Bhāgavata* verses that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa draws from in writing his own verse are the basis of Śrī Jīva Goswāmī's three treatises on the *sambandha-jñāna* of Gauḍīya Vedānta: *Bhāgavata-sandarbha*, *Paramātmā-sandarbha*, and *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*. Kavirāja Goswāmī's explanation of his verse is addressed to those familiar with Sanskrit and alternative explanations of these key *Bhāgavata* verses.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's verse mentions Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān, three well-known Vedāntic terms referring to the Absolute—terms that are often considered synonymous. While Kṛṣṇadāsa agrees that Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān are different names for the Absolute, he does not consider the three names entirely synonymous. In his verse, these names refer to God's effulgence, his manifestation as the Oversoul of the world, and his form for *līlā* in the world beyond—Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān respectively. Gauḍīya Vedānta further contends that the former two manifestations arise from the latter. This insight constitutes a unique contribution to the world of Vedānta.

These three manifestations of divinity are three distinct, objective realities. However, they also constitute subjective experiences of the Absolute relative to different approaches to the Godhead. But first let us look at them as objective realities—as eternal aspects of the Absolute: aspects of existence (*sat*), knowledge (*cit*), and love (*ānanda*), corresponding to Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān.

One can exist but not have knowledge or love, but one cannot have knowledge without existence. Similarly, one can exist and have knowledge but not love, but one cannot love without both existing and having knowledge. In this way, love includes knowledge and existence. In the view of Vedānta, Bhagavān is that manifestation of the Absolute that loves and is loved by his devotees. Gauḍiyas reason therefore that Bhagavān is also the all-encompassing expression of the Absolute.

If we were to analyze the Godhead's existence—the manifestation that is Brahman—it would not be devoid of knowledge or love. However, neither would its knowledge or love take precedence over its existence. If we were to analyze the Godhead's knowledge—the manifestation that is Paramātmā—it would not be devoid of existence or love; indeed, it would exist more fully than Brahman unto itself. However, neither would its existence or love take precedence over its knowledge. Finally, if we were to analyze the Godhead's loving aspect—the manifestation that is Bhagavān—we find that such love entails the culmination of existence and knowledge, even while existence and knowledge serve only as a backdrop to *līlā*, the divine play of love.

However, one may legitimately ask, “Can we really emphasize any one of these three aspects of the Absolute over another?” As valid as this question appears, it is readily dismissed merely by pointing out that Eastern revelation delineates three distinct paths to transcendence: *jñāna*, *yoga*, and *bhakti*.² These three practices (*sādhanas*) correspond to three distinct goals (*sādhyas*). *Jñāna* primarily seeks the Absolute’s existence—Brahman; *yoga* primarily seeks the Absolute’s knowledge—Paramātmā; *bhakti* primarily seeks the Absolute’s love—Bhagavān.

Let us now take a closer look at these three ideals and their corresponding paths. The *jñāna-mārga*, the path of knowledge, is fourfold in practice. It entails transrational introspection

(*viveka*); detachment (*vairāgya*); the cultivation of six virtues, which together are taken as one practice (*sad-sampat*): (1) tranquility (*śama*), (2) rational control of the senses (*dama*), (3) satiety (*uparati*), (4) tolerance (*titikṣā*), (5) faith in revelation (*śraddhā*), and (6) mental concentration (*saṃādhāna*); and lastly, a longing for liberation (*mumukṣutva*). In the *jñāna-mārga*, the practitioner seeks complete unity with the Absolute, as all difference is thought to arise from ignorance born from attachment. The identity that arises from attachment to objects and experiences that do not endure is not a lasting one, and infinitely more important than such objects and experiences is the experiencer itself: consciousness. While in the ephemeral world things are “here today and gone tomorrow,” that which experiences them—consciousness—endures eternally.

In the *jñāna-mārga*, consciousness is understood to be primal and irreducible, in part because the very attempt to reduce the conscious entity to matter requires consciousness. In other words, the very act of making the claim that consciousness is reducible refutes its premise. One can no more deny the foundational role and irreducible nature of consciousness than one can rationally say, “I am dead.” One can say that consciousness is not this and not that material object or force—*neti neti*—but this does not make consciousness any less meaningful. The fact that consciousness is not comparable to anything of the physical or natural world leads logically to the conclusion that it is non-physical or supernatural.

Jñānis realize the temporal nature of the world and its false variety in contrast to the eternal nature of consciousness and its likeness to the underlying, unified consciousness of Brahman. They seek to realize an eternal existence devoid of the illusion that gives rise to attachment. Thus eternal existence is their ideal. *Jñānis'* knowledge is primarily knowledge of the ephemeral nature

of the world and the disappointment that lies in attachment to it. Their knowledge thus fosters detachment, which in turn serves their pursuit of eternal existence. Upon attaining eternal existence, knowledge itself, the individual knower, and the object of knowledge are thought to merge in oneness of “absolute being.”

There is no sense of lasting reciprocal love in the *jñāni*’s ideal. To the extent that loving is about giving, we find love in the *jñāni*’s ceasing from taking. However, this love constitutes merely forgoing worldly exploitation—*karmic* acquisition. Thus for the *jñāni*, both knowledge and love are centered on existence. Indeed, Brahman is pure existence without dualities—without any other to know or to love. The *jñāni* is satisfied to know that he or she exists.

Yoga-sādhana, on the other hand, consists of an eightfold practice. It begins with the embrace of that which is favorable to *yoga* (*yama*) and a rejection of that which is not (*niyama*). This is followed by sitting (*āsana*), breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), withdrawal of the senses from sense objects (*pratyāhāra*), concentration (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and yogic trance of omniscience (*samādhi*). *Yoga* is a very sophisticated methodology for gaining control over one’s entire physical body, both the outer limbs as well as the internal organs and their functions—from posture and agility to control of one’s digestion, evacuation, sexual energy, and so on. It also achieves control over the subtle, psychic dimension of one’s material experience, giving rise to psychic powers. Such comprehensive control and subsequent powers imply attainment of knowledge, knowledge like that of the all-knowing Īśvara or Paramātmā. Whereas the *jñāna-mārga* dismisses the world altogether, *yoga* fosters an acute awareness of the world through meditation on the Paramātmā, the aspect of the Absolute that oversees and permeates this world. There is no more effective means to attain *yoga-samādhi* than *īśvara-pranidhāna*, submission to and prayerful meditation on the Paramātmā.

From the absolute unity of Brahman, the *yogic* perception of Paramātmā involves a subtle differentiation between oneself and the Godhead, culminating in a beatific vision in eternal passive adoration. Thus the perfected *yogi* exists eternally like the *jñāni* but knows something more than mere existence. The *yogi* knows of an other and also loves in a passive yet positive sense. This passive love of the *yogi* takes two forms: passive adoration of and identification with the Paramātmā and a compassion for others resulting from understanding their sorrows.³ Thus the existence and love of the *yogi* are centered on knowledge. Yogi Krishnamacarya calls this attaining Vaikuṇṭha. From the Gauḍiya perspective, the successful *yogi* attains *sānta-rasa* to the feature of Paramātmā manifest in Vaikuṇṭha.⁴

From the existence of the *jñāni* and the knowledge of the *yogi*, we come to the love of the *bhakta*. While *bhakti* is a *yoga* in one sense, Yogeśvara Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the master of *yoga*, also distinguishes the two. Concluding his teaching on mystic *yoga* in the sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa encourages us to become *yogīs*, for it is better, he says, to be a *yogi* than it is to be a *jñāni*.⁵ Here he indicates that a knowing existence (knowing a spiritual other) is more transcendently perfect than merely existing and knowing what ignorance is. However, Kṛṣṇa goes on to say that better than the *yogi* is the devotee.⁶ In other words, Kṛṣṇa advocates the life of transcendental love, within which existence and knowledge are present, although the devotee experiences them as incidental to loving.

Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas reason that Bhagavān is the primal aspect of the Absolute on account of his loving nature and capacity. Moreover, they consider that Kṛṣṇa is the primal form of Bhagavān because the fullest range of loving relationships are possible with him.⁷ The practice of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* as taught by the Gauḍiyas' central text, *Śrimad Bhāgavatam*, is primarily focused on three

expressions of love: *śravanām* (hearing), *kirtanām* (chanting/singing), and *smaranām* (meditating). Hearing about the object of one's love fosters singing about it, and this singing in turn fosters deep meditation.

Devotees hear about and glorify the names, forms, qualities, and various *līlās* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Gradually they become absorbed in deep and continuous meditation on these *līlās* such that a meditative body arises out of identification with a primary loving sentiment for Kṛṣṇa. This meditative spiritual form enables the devotee to enter the circle of the Godhead's own love life. *Bhaktas* are uninterested in eternal existence in the sense of emancipation experienced by the *jñāni*. They don't care for liberation from the confines of material existence because loving Kṛṣṇa has so much power to attract him that he himself comes within the world as various *avatāras*.

As devotees don't approach Kṛṣṇa for eternal existence, neither do they approach Kṛṣṇa for knowledge of his Godhood, controlling power, or omniscience. Indeed, the devotees seek loving union in intimacy with Kṛṣṇa that is only possible when his Godhood is suppressed. Such is the divine ignorance of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* in *prema*. *Prema* makes the omnipotent—the infinite—appear finite for the sake of intimacy. Devotees seek neither eternal existence nor transcendental knowledge, but they experience these two incidentally as a byproduct of *bhakti*. Devotees desire only love of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in whom the transcendent being of Brahman and the all-knowing influence of the Paramātmā are relegated to supporting roles in Bhagavān's life of love. In love, knowing and existing are in one sense inconsequential, while at the same time the being and knowing within love constitute the most perfect forms of existing and knowing. While the *jñāni* loves to exist and the *yogi* loves to know and exist, the *bhakta* exists and knows only to love.

The inner circle of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* is so love laden that Kṛṣṇa himself loses sight of his Godhood and the world (knowledge). In the midst of Bhakti-devī's love for him, personified as Rādhā, he undergoes an existential crisis, questioning his position as Rasarāja, the king of love. Love, in other words, subordinates not only existence and knowledge in the life of the *bhakta*, but in the case of Kṛṣṇa it subordinates the existence and knowledge of God himself. Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān are one nondual Absolute known variously by the distinct paths of *jñāna*, *yoga*, and *bhakti*. Steam, ice, and water are one substance, but water is at the same time that from which steam and ice are derived. Similarly, Bhagavān is the full face of the nondual reality, while Paramātmā and Brahman are derivative.

The notion that God is best described as being, knowing, and loving is not exclusive to Hinduism. Eastern Orthodox theologian and philosopher David Bentley Hart has chosen these terms to describe that which the Godhead is essentially constituted of. Hart translates the Sanskrit *sac-cid-ānanda* into “being, consciousness, bliss” and uses it as the subtitle to his book *The Experience of God*. Citing Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, Hart suggests that this Hindu definition of God corresponds with the Christian Trinity. Hart also draws his readers’ attention to the Sufi thinker Ibn Arabi, who “plays upon the common etymological root of the words *wujūd* (being), *wijdan* (consciousness), and *wajd* (bliss) in order to describe the mystical knowledge of God as absolute Reality.”

However, Hart accords equal importance to all three of these aspects of the Godhead, as do other traditions that embrace this concise definition of God. It is the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas who have insightfully identified different Hindu paths primarily with either the *sat*, *cit*, or *ānanda* of the Godhead. Accordingly, they conclude that if the loving aspect of the Absolute is its primal aspect,

then Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with whom mystics experience the full range of transcendental love, is the fountainhead of all manifestations of ultimate reality. He and his devotees exist only to love and do so independently of conscious awareness of Kṛṣṇa's Godhood. As their love subsumes their knowledge of the object of their love's divinity, they experience a condition of divine ignorance deep within the supersubjective world of consciousness proper.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja takes us a step further. He wants his readers to understand not only that Kṛṣṇa is the full face of Bhagavān but also that his own Deity, Śrī Caitanya, is Kṛṣṇa himself. As Kṛṣṇa is not an *avatāra* of the Godhead but rather the *avatārī*, the source of all *avatāras*, similarly Śrī Caitanya is the self-same *avatārī*. Such arguments were controversial in the religious atmosphere surrounding the writing of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Kṛṣṇadāsa's arguments surely remain controversial, if known at all in today's intellectual climate, where religion itself is in question and thus controversial for different reasons. Today's argument concerning the existence of God is also largely dominated by an Abrahamic notion of God. In Kṛṣṇadāsa's own time and circumstance, the dominant interpretation of Eastern revelation was that Nārāyaṇa, not Kṛṣṇa, was the source of all *avatāras*. "Nārāyaṇa" literally means the shelter (*ayana*) of all beings (*nāra*).

To establish his point, Kṛṣṇadāsa cites the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, a book that is described in the sacred texts of the East as the natural commentary on the aphorisms of Vedānta, aphorisms intended to tie together significant statements of the Upaniṣads into a coherent theology.⁸ He refers to the third chapter of the *Bhāgavatam*'s first canto where the subject is *avatāra-tattva*. This chapter seeks to explain the source of the *avatāras* in the context of giving a brief description of various descents of Bhagavān. At the outset of the chapter, Bhagavān is described as the source of the Paramātmā, referred to as the *puruṣa*. This *puruṣa* is described

as the source of the world as well as the medium through whom the *avatāras* descend.

After a brief description of various *avatāras*, this section closes with the statement *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*, a phrase that Jīva Goswāmī has labeled the *paribhāṣā-sūtra*, or the key to understanding the essential *tattva* of the entire text. Kṛṣṇadāsa explains this statement in accordance with an idea drawn from the *Ekādaśī-tattva* that a predicate should not precede its subject. Kṛṣṇa is the subject of the phrase *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*. He is the known. However, what is not commonly known about him is that he is *svayam bhagavān*. In other words, not only is he Bhagavān, he is the original (*svayam*) form of Bhagavān. He is the *avatāri* of innumerable *avatāras*. Among other things, the word *svayam* means “of his own accord.” It thus indicates independence. Kṛṣṇa is not an *avatāra* of Bhagavān, a dependent manifestation of Bhagavān, but rather the independent source of all *avatāras*. Indeed, he is the source of Nārāyaṇa himself, from whom in his *puruṣa* or Paramātmā form the *avatāras* appear in the world.⁹ The *Bhāgavatam* makes it clear that while Kṛṣṇa appears in the world as if an *avatāra*, he is at the same time the source of all *avatāras*.

The truth of this straightforward statement—*kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*—is later played out in the *Bhāgavatam*'s tenth canto narrative of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. In the thirteenth chapter of the tenth canto, Kṛṣṇa manifests a theophany much like he does in the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā*. In this display of majesty, the four-headed Brahmā sees innumerable Nārāyaṇas emanating from Kṛṣṇa, each manifesting innumerable universes in a multiverse cyclical cosmology of expanding and contracting universes, in which time extends in both directions with no beginning or end. Kṛṣṇadāsa highlights the key verse from this chapter, in which Brahmā professes the truth of *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*.¹⁰

Kṛṣṇadāsa's scriptural genius is apparent, as is the fact that he is well schooled in the teachings of his predecessors, the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs. The brief analysis above does not do justice to his insight. One must understand the time in which he lived to appreciate his contribution. Suffice it to say that despite the straightforward nature of his explanation of this section of the *Bhāgavatam*, other lineages, both theistic and monistic, have drawn different meanings from the same text. In so doing, they miss the possibility of intimacy with the Absolute and are left with an eternal relationship with the Godhead's majesty, best represented in the four-armed Nārāyaṇa. Still, to each his own. What is best is that which is best for each and every devotee, and this is the position Kṛṣṇadāsa takes in relation to opposing interpretations that envision Kṛṣṇa as but one expansion of Nārāyaṇa. He understands their angle of vision, and in an inclusivist approach, he accommodates it.

Five hundred years ago, the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs placed value on sacred aesthetic rapture (*rasa*) above all else. Thus they evaluated any particular manifestation of the Deity in terms of the Deity's ability to taste and reciprocate love. They demonstrated that their understanding of God was supported by revelation and reason, and while it is good reasoning to reckon with revelation, let us proceed in discussing the notion of "Kṛṣṇa" on the basis of reason, leaving revelation alone for the time being. We shall thus proceed with a modern argument centered on the nature of consciousness in an effort to arrive at the same conclusion that the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja did by way of citing revelation.

THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness is very difficult to define. *The International Dictionary of Psychology* states, "The term is impossible to define

except in terms that are unintelligible without a grasp of what consciousness means.”¹¹ From the perspective of Gauḍīya Vedānta, the problem in defining consciousness is that it is not a *thing*, an object of the physical world. Thus there is no *thing* to compare it with and thereby define it. It is nothing like the objective, non-experiencing physical world. Rather it is the polar opposite—the seat of experience. In part, consciousness is the ground of the experience that we exist.

If I were asked what was the most profound experience I have had in my life, I would reply that it is the fact that I experience at all. This ability to experience makes me very different from physical matter. Ultimately, it makes me a unit of consciousness. Consciousness is not matter any more than experience is part of nonexperience. Although I cannot always trust my particular experiences, I have implicit faith in the very fact that I experience. And because I experience, I am not physical matter. Interestingly, while I am not matter, it is precisely for this reason that I matter at all.

Hume considered the self but a collection of experiences in connection with which no experiencer exists. Gauḍīya Vedānta agrees yet disagrees with such an assessment. The self that arises out of sense experience in pursuit of sense objects is false. Identification with these experiences aids in the construction of a false self, one that like sense experience itself is fleeting. The “I” constructed out of a sense of “mine” is as illusory as our false sense of proprietorship is. Nothing belongs to any of us, at least not in any enduring sense.

But at the same time, the sense of self that is based on the false ego (*ahankāra*) is a real psychic construct, as opposed to a physical construct. It is constituted of subtle mental matter. It is the self that plays itself out through the physical body. Here I am speaking about the realm of the mind that in Gauḍīya Vedānta is a subtle form of matter, which is not reducible to physical matter.¹²

This notion is similar in ways to Chalmers's property dualism, in which physical and mental properties are distinct. But this psychic realm is dismissed by many in modern science, where the dominant consensus is that mind is nothing more than the brain, and mind is conflated with consciousness proper.

Be that as it may, in Gauḍīya Vedānta this false illusory self that does not endure and that we all identify with rests nonetheless on a real eternal self, the witness and existential agent of action. This real eternal self animates the world of thought and things and posits value in them. It is consciousness proper, the "Self" as opposed to the "self." It is this Self that is not reducible to the natural world, neither its physical nor psychic dimensions. It speaks loudly beyond words, "I am," and it knows this beyond thought. It animates both the psychic dimension of matter, through which material experiences occur, and the physical dimension of matter, through which action occurs.

Psychic matter is illumined by the reflection of consciousness proper. This illumination enables mind stuff to have subjective experience, giving rise to the false self and the unfolding of physical matter. Consciousness proper thus exists unto itself as the basis of all experience, without which the psychic dimension of matter ceases to be the theater of qualitative material experience. Thought arises from psychic matter, having been illumined by consciousness and subjected to impressions of the physical world. In turn, consciousness approves or disapproves of any particular mental proposition.

On the other hand, perhaps the most popular scientific reductive conjecture is that consciousness, often conflated with mind, is an emergent property of physical matter and thus inherent within it. Could this idea be true? Stranger events have not occurred. To think of consciousness as such would be to think of emergent properties observed in physical matter in a way that is entirely

unlike any example nature provides. In every known material example of emergent properties, that which emerges is found to have been already present in some form within that which it emerges from. But there is nothing that even remotely resembles first-person experiential existence within third-person objective, nonexperiential physical matter. In other words, there is nothing like consciousness in the brain, nor is there an evolutionary place for it since evolution is conceived of as a continuous process that molds preexisting properties into more complex forms but which cannot produce entirely novel properties. Consciousness is clearly such a novel property.

Hume gives an example of bile emerging from the liver. The liver is similar to the brain, although it is less sophisticated. Consciousness, however, is nothing like bile, the liver, or the brain, all of which have much in common. Brains are no doubt complex machines, but they will never assume a subjective attitude. Through artificial intelligence, we attempt to replicate the human brain, but however sophisticated such a replication is, it is not accompanied by feeling. Although there have been advances in the field of artificial intelligence, if its goal is to create machines that feel, today's progress can be compared to climbing a tree in the name of getting closer to touching the moon. Falling in love with "Her" in Spike Jonze's film involving artificial intelligence is pure fiction now and forever.

Furthermore, analogies prove nothing, and Hume's analogy in support of consciousness being an emergent property of the brain is not a particularly good one. Better analogies for the opposite notion—that consciousness is nonphysical and at the same time influences the brain—are not hard to find. For example, quantum theory clearly demonstrates that the observation of an object instantaneously influences the behavior of other distant objects—*even if no physical force connects them.*¹³ Comparing this

quantum phenomenon to how consciousness moves matter, while proving nothing, can stimulate and help to guide our thinking on the subject. Thus by way of an analogy better constructed than Hume's, we are better equipped to conceptualize nonphysical causation, which in Gauḍīya Vedānta derives from the existential witnessing and willing presence of consciousness in proximity to matter.

Note that despite my effort thus far, I have not defined consciousness. I have merely shed light from the Gauḍīya Vedānta perspective on the nature of consciousness. Vedānta informs us that consciousness is “not this, not that,” *neti neti*. That is to say, again, that consciousness is not a *thing* at all, nor is it a thought. It is unto itself. Without consciousness, there is no consciousness. This is the general view of Vedānta. At least with regard to the difficulty in defining consciousness, no one of consequence in philosophy and the sciences today disagrees.

However, from the Gauḍīya Vedānta perspective, the difficulty in defining consciousness and its elusive nature in no way renders it less significant. Indeed, this only speaks of how significant it is. If we know what it is not, and it is not matter, we understand that consciousness is not subject to temporal and spatial constraints, as all material objects are. Thus consciousness has always been and will always be. It is not subject to the biological demise of the organism that it appears identified with, and it is a willing agent of action in this world. It somehow moves mind and matter.

Vedānta aside, many in philosophy and science are trying their best to demonstrate that consciousness *is* matter and thus that it does not matter much. Understandably from the Vedānta perspective, this is proving to be a very difficult task. Dozens upon dozens of speculations clutter the landscape of today's metaphysical naturalism, none close to conclusive. To his credit, well-known naturalist Sam Harris writes,

The idea that consciousness is identical to (or emerged from) unconscious physical events is, I would argue, impossible to properly conceive—which is to say that we can think we are thinking it, but we are mistaken. We can say the right words, of course—“consciousness emerges from unconscious information processing.” We can also say, “Some squares are as round as circles and 2 plus 2 equals 7.” But are we really thinking these things all the way through? I don’t think so.¹⁴

British philosopher Michael Lockwood testifies as follows:

Let me begin by nailing my colours to the mast. I count myself as a materialist, in the sense that I take consciousness to be a species of brain activity. Having said that, however, it seems to me evident that no description of brain activity of the relevant kind, couched in the currently available languages of physics, physiology, or functional or computational roles, is remotely capable of capturing what is distinctive about consciousness. So glaring, indeed, are the shortcomings of all reductive programmes currently on offer, that I cannot believe that anyone with a philosophical training looking dispassionately at these programmes, would take any of them seriously for a moment, were it not for a deep-seated conviction that current physical science has essentially got reality taped, and accordingly, *something* along the lines of what the reductionists are offering must be correct.¹⁵

Obviously, the idea that the complexity of consciousness can be reduced to physical matter may not be correct. The Gauḍīya Vedānta position and that of a good number of other thinking people is that it is not. What I submit below is scientifically informed theistic reasoning underlying the Gauḍīya belief that consciousness proper is not physical or psychic and, furthermore,

that there is a logical necessity within the supersubjective world of consciousness for a perfect object of love, which the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa correspond with. I will cover the following five points.

1. Consciousness is not reducible to matter, and as such it has causal efficacy in relation to matter.
2. The idea that consciousness is not reducible to matter is universally intuitive, well reasoned, and supported by strong common sense.
3. This view does not contradict any scientifically known natural laws.
4. There are credible scientific hypotheses that support this view, and there is also strong evidence from mysticism to support it.
5. This evidence from theistic mysticism also leads naturally to the logical necessity for a Godhead that corresponds with the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa as the perfect spiritual object of love—the heart of divinity, *svayam bhagavān*.

INTUITION, REASON, AND STRONG COMMON SENSE

Vedānta maintains that denying that consciousness is causal is illogical. In Western philosophy such denial has been called a “performative contradiction.” This contradiction was mentioned earlier in our discussion of the *jñāni*’s notion of consciousness as primal, a notion that is shared by the *yogī* and the devotee. A performative contradiction is an instance when a claim is at odds with the presuppositions or implications of the act of claiming it. Such is the denial of a causal role to consciousness, for the very act of denying requires consciousness. David Ray Griffin makes the following insightful observation:

Three of our (hard-core) commonsense beliefs are our presuppositions (1) that we have conscious experience, (2) that

this conscious experience, while influenced by our bodies, is not wholly determined thereby but involves an element of self-determining freedom, and (3) that this partially free experience exerts efficacy upon our bodily behavior, giving us a degree of responsibility for our bodily actions.¹⁶

Griffin distinguishes hard-core beliefs from soft-core beliefs. Hard-core convictions cannot be denied without self-contradiction. Such hard-core beliefs are universal in human society and are differentiated from soft-core common sense beliefs in that soft-core sensibilities “are *not* common to all peoples and *can* be denied without self-contradiction.”¹⁷ Any number of superstitions are soft-core beliefs, a kind of common sense that observation later demonstrates to be false.

Griffin’s three hard-core beliefs are common to everyone, be they spiritual or materialistic in their worldview. A worldview that denies these beliefs is illogical and contradictory. Such a worldview also relativizes our moral life in that it leaves no one responsible for behavior good or bad. It also renders our human discourse no more truly meaningful than the sound of raindrops falling from above, reminding us of the caustic remarks of Whitehead: “Scientists animated by the purpose of proving themselves purposeless constitute an interesting subject for study.”

Griffin’s three beliefs are those that we all presuppose in practice, and thus to verbally deny their validity is self-contradictory. One cannot implicitly affirm something that one explicitly denies and expect to be taken seriously. For example, one cannot meaningfully say, “I am dead.” These three beliefs are as old as humanity, but unlike other beliefs of old, they are not superstitious.

As Griffin points out, unfortunately all of the existing reductive notions of consciousness from philosophy and neuroscience deny at least one and in most cases all three of these hard-core

beliefs. Thus such naturalist or materialist notions of consciousness are counterintuitive, lack strong common sense, and are arguably irrational.

In her book, *Consciousness: A Brief Insight*, Susan Blackmore writes that ninety percent of the people in the world are dualists, including herself in the ten percent that are not. Dualists basically think that consciousness is in some way different from their brain and body and that consciousness plays a causal role in our lives. I would disagree with Blackmore: one hundred percent of people are dualists, including Blackmore herself, inasmuch as actions speak louder than words.¹⁸ That is, in our everyday practical life we act as though our thoughts influence our physical actions. To believe otherwise—that consciousness or the mind is physical and non-causal—is highly irrational.

WHAT ABOUT SCIENCE?

For the naturalist/physicalist, perhaps the greatest obstacle to embracing the reasoning above lies in science's inability to conclusively observe the causal role of consciousness. Exactly how does an immaterial, transnatural reality influence the natural material world?¹⁹ How does the subjective realm move the objective realm? While it is thought that we have determined the basic forces that govern the natural world—gravity, electromagnetic force, strong and weak nuclear forces—where and how does consciousness fit in? This question is especially troubling when looking at the issue from the perspective of classical physics, which views the world as a closed system—a machine—functioning perfectly without any outside influence and in which all action is predetermined, leaving no room for free will.

Causal or physical closure is the notion that the natural world universally functions as a closed system with no scope for influence from anything outside of itself, be it a soul, its volition, or God.

However, causal closure comes into question in quantum physics, within which uncertainty and randomness are acknowledged. Furthermore, the universal application of conservation laws, on which the assumption of causal closure is based, is just that, an assumption of the physical sciences, not a fact, as it is commonly presented.²⁰ In particular, there is little if any data to support the belief that causal closure occurs within living bodies and especially within brains, and this becomes more clear when we look at the mind-brain arguments from a quantum physics perspective. Suf-
fice to say that the assumption of universal causal closure goes far beyond what science has been able to establish and probably what it can ever establish.²¹ And if universal or comprehensive causal closure is not a scientific fact—at the very least not within the human body and brain—it makes little sense to dismiss otherwise well-thought-out and scientifically sound notions of immaterial causation on the basis of this assumption alone.²²

Highly regarded physicist Henry Stapp looks at the consciousness/brain issue from an orthodox von Neumann quantum perspective, as opposed to looking at it through a classical physics lens. In doing so, he asserts that causal closure does not apply in this domain. About the von Neumann perspective Stapp com-
ments, “Contemporary physical theory allows, and in its orthodox von Neumann form entails, an interactive dualism,” a dualism that is “similar to that of Descartes.”²³

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the classical physics foundation, on which all reductive theories of conscious-
ness are constructed, has been turned on its head by the quantum shift that has shaken the foundation of physics. Arguably, interest in the sciences in consciousness has come to the fore only because of this quantum shift. As Stapp points out, “The founders of quantum mechanics made the revolutionary move of bringing conscious human experiences into the basic physical theory in a fundamental

way. In the words of Niels Bohr, the key innovation was to recognize that ‘in the great drama of existence we ourselves are both actors and observers.’” Quantum theory is necessarily relevant to brain science, for according to the principles of contemporary physics, it must be used to explain the behaviors of all macroscopic systems that depend on the behavior of their atomic constituents, and brains are certainly systems of this kind.

In regard to our discussion on consciousness, Stapp’s work is worth singling out for a number of reasons. In *Irreducible Mind* Edward and Emily Kelly explain the reasons that they chose to highlight it:

1. Unlike many popular writers on quantum mechanics, Stapp knows the physics inside out.
2. He is consistently conservative and orthodox in his use of quantum theory, staying as close as possible to its empirically proven foundations and postulating no exotic quantum states or processes.
3. He is serious about establishing connections with main-line psychology and neuroscience.
4. He has provided useful comments on a number of related quantum theoretic proposals that lean in broadly similar directions but are less satisfactory on various technical grounds.

To this list I add the following reason for highlighting his work herein. Stapp is open-minded enough to have written “A Report on the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta Form of Vedic Ontology,” comparing it with the contemporary scientific perspective. In principle, this undertaking is the characteristic of a genuine scientist, a person who is more than willing to think outside of the box.

Stapp remarks that his model “makes consciousness causally effective, yet it is compatible with all known physical laws of

physics, including the laws of conservation of energy.”²⁴ Stapp has demonstrated how volition, a nonphysical reality, could theoretically influence the physical system in its act of selection among nature’s random quantum mechanical alternatives. His theory suggests that consciousness acts from outside the physical system to influence it and theorizes how such action takes place by exploiting the small residual indeterminism of quantum physics. Stapp calls his theory “quantum interactive dualism.”

As Edward and Emily Kelly point out, what Stapp and his quantum theory allies have done in the least is successfully undermine the scientific foundation of present-day materialist monist psychology and neuroscience. In doing so, they have opened the door to alternative brain-consciousness theories of a dualist/interactive nature that are more consistent with both fundamental science and everyday experience.²⁵ Stapp has shown that it is possible to think about the world in a scientifically sound manner that is not deterministic, that dispenses with comprehensive causal closure, and involves an agent of action.

Furthermore, the work of Stapp and other quantum advocates underscores the outdated nature of the mechanistic understanding of matter central to classical physics. Unlike the Newtonian mechanistic worldview, in which matter was thought to be composed of solid objects, we now know that the objects we perceive are not solid at all. Indeed, the objective world has become more subjective than Newton or anyone else could have imagined. In his groundbreaking twentieth-century book, *The Concept of Mind*, Gilbert Ryle was thought to have exorcised the ghost of consciousness from the machine of the body with his “ghost in the machine” characterization of Descartes’s mind/body dualism. Noam Chomsky points out that what the history of science has shown is just the opposite: the machine-like notion of matter has been exorcised, while the “ghost” of consciousness remains. Thus it

is the nature of matter, not consciousness, that is now in question! Those insistent that consciousness is reducible to matter first need to explain exactly what matter is.

In their book *The Matter Myth*, physicists Paul Davies and John Gribbin write that Ryle was correct to dismiss Descartes but he did so for the wrong reason—"not because there is no ghost but because, ultimately, there is no machine."²⁶ In the words of physicist Joseph Ford, the materialistic mechanistic paradigm is one of the "founding myths" of classical physics. It tells us that reality is nothing but a collection of material particles interacting with one another with no purpose whatsoever. As post-mechanistic science points out, however, we now know that the universe possesses an innate tendency to self-organize and thus whispers to us of a purpose-driven world. The very nature of matter being in question along with our inability to account for consciousness within present-day science arguably calls for a new approach to science, a second scientific revolution. In his book *Particle Physics and Inflationary Cosmology*, Stanford physicist Andrei Linde puts it like this:

Will it not turn out, with the further development of science, that the study of the universe and the study of consciousness will be inseparably linked, and that ultimate progress in one will be impossible without progress in the other...will the next important step be the development of a unified approach to our entire world, including the world of consciousness?²⁷

Indeed, aside from the problem consciousness raises in relation to our present-day understanding of time and space, there are other pressing concerns that speak to us of the need for a new understanding of matter. In consideration of quantum mechanics, science needs a new concept of matter if physics is to be more than a pragmatic tool with only technological success. All major

quantum physicists, including all of its founding figures down to contemporary Nobel laureates, have gone on record to say that we do not yet understand the physical reality underlying quantum theory. To interpret quantum theory realistically in a manner compatible with everyday intuitions, current classical or quasi-classical space-time visualizations do not suffice. All possible combinations of such ideas have been tried, and they generate only more confusion. Thus the need for a new understanding of space and time.

In his paper “Quantum Theory, the Symbol Grounding Problem and the Chinese Room Argument” in the book entitled *Quantum Interaction: Third International Symposium, QI 2009*, Ravi V. Gomatam posits such a new understanding of matter.²⁸ Addressing the famous Chinese room argument given by the philosopher John Searle, Gomatam suggests that everyday objects can be understood as objective “symbols” that are constituted of semantic information or subjective meaning, rather than as classical matter that is thought to consist solely of primary properties such as weight, mass, length, and so on. Gomatam refers to his new concept of matter as objective semantic information.²⁹

Gomatam explains that classical physics conceives of ontological Kantian “things” as meaningless tokens, identified solely by primary quantitative properties. In contrast, he sees quantum mechanics as describing “things” not merely in terms of primary properties such as mass, weight, velocity, and so on, but also as “symbols” that carry an objective representation of semantic/subjective content. For example, a book can be described in terms of its physical properties, but it can also be described in terms of its semantic content, its meaning. When we describe a book in terms of its physical properties, we have a Kantian meaningless description, but when we describe it in terms of its semantic content, it is understood to be a symbol of an idea—a meaningful description of the object. This symbolic description of

matter speaks to us of Gomatam’s “relational properties,” which are the objective counterparts to subjective qualities. They enter science and its understanding of matter via Gomatam’s macroscopic quantum mechanics.³⁰

In my private discussions with Professor Gomatam, he has pointed out that his idea of symbols as carriers of objective semantic information is entirely in line with the *Bhāgavata*’s Sāṅkhya description of matter. Thus his theory opens the door for a science of the natural world that is both scientific and theistic, allowing for consciousness and God as ontological categories alongside matter. Such would constitute a form of fusion philosophy in which ancient Eastern philosophical notions about matter and consciousness combined with modern insights forms a new, much needed, and more complete science.³¹

However, in the present argument we have not stepped outside of modern science or reframed the argument by suggesting a new science through which to consider the topic. Instead, we have merely stressed the fact that today’s science is woefully unsuccessful in its attempts to reduce consciousness to matter. Suffice to say that a worldview that includes both matter and consciousness as distinct yet interactive is far from unreasonable or scientifically prohibitive. Nonetheless, there is nothing unreasonable about rethinking science itself and reframing the above argument to begin with, for there is much to life that modern science does not include.

Today there are a number of credible theories, both quantum and nonquantum, that posit a nonreductive role for consciousness and mind.³² Stapp’s quantum theory and others like it have their detractors, as do other nonquantum theories positing irreducible consciousness. But so too does every other scientific and philosophical theory on the subject that considers consciousness reducible to or a product of the physical world—theories from

neurophysiology, psychotropics, introspectionism, psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology, computer science, quantum mechanics, and evolutionary biology.³³ Thus it is clear that this issue is far from being decided by modern science. In the least, we are left with one question regarding the two options: which is more troubling, the idea that consciousness is reducible to matter or the idea that we can't conclusively/scientifically demonstrate how consciousness is immaterial yet causal to the satisfaction of all concerned? Obviously, for the reasons stated above, I think the latter option is less troublesome, as would Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

When it comes to measurement and observation, our ability to objectively demonstrate what we subjectively believe in is limited. For that matter, we cannot even demonstrate objectively that we exist in terms of our subjective experience that we do, while our experience that we do exist is arguably the only thing we really *know*. In the final analysis, we have inconclusive yet credible scientific thinking that supports our intuitive, hard-core common sense as to the causal nature of consciousness—that the subjective world somehow moves the objective world. We also have the fact that nothing in science today comes close to demonstrating that consciousness is reducible to or arises out of matter. With regard to the science/philosophy, I leave it to those interested to study the wealth of literature concerning consciousness, keeping in mind that the scientific study of consciousness is in its infancy and that our understanding of matter has been radically transformed to the extent that mainstream science is still catching its breath as it tries to keep up with it.

Modern science as a whole was born Christian. In its adolescence it became agnostic. Now in its adult life it is heavily influenced by atheism. But if it is to live into the wisdom of old age, I argue that it must become a mystic. With that said, we now turn to the mystics, who offer observable data worth considering,

data that is all too often dismissed because of being misunderstood, misrepresented, or unknown to most. I will label the mystic tradition “objective subjectivity.”

MYSTICISM—“OBJECTIVE SUBJECTIVITY”

While science acknowledges the subjective reality of qualia without the ability to explain it physically,³⁴ science today is largely opposed to the subjective notion of “I am (a self)” in terms of there being an actual entity we call ourselves who experiences qualia, be it a self constituted of psychic matter or a Self constituted of consciousness itself. But this seems arbitrary if not unreasonable. Human beings *know* certain objective facts on the basis of their subjective experience alone. If we can *know* from the first-person subjective perspective that qualia exists—that we experience—why can’t we also know as conclusively from that same perspective that we are actual entities with a degree of free will, as subjective experience leads us to believe? Why draw the line at qualia—subjective experience—and deny the subjective experiencer? If qualia are not physical, does it make more sense to think that they randomly create the illusion of an individual self or that they themselves are the experiences of a nonphysical self? First-person subjective experience has its place in knowing what we know and knowing what is true/real.

Philosopher and psychologist William James emphasized the primacy of introspection and first-person reporting in pursuit of a scientific study of mind and consciousness. Such a study would underscore rather than dismiss first-person testimony, as many in the scientific community do today. While contemplatives’ experiential reporting may sound speculative to one who is not familiar with contemplative life, mystics offer in the least an area of research worthy of skeptics’ attention. Furthermore, as Emily Kelly points out, it is more widely accepted today that the difference between

objective and subjective methods of knowing is one of degree rather than kind, and the collapse of classical introspectionism in the West was more a result of the ascendancy of behaviorism than it had to do with any inherent problems in a first-person methodology.³⁵ Thus we move rationally from third-person objective reporting to first-person subjective reporting as we turn toward mysticism in pursuit of the nature of consciousness.

Mysticism is found in all of the major religious traditions.³⁶ It constitutes a spiritual experiential orientation, as opposed to a socioreligious orientation to life. The mystic subset of Hinduism is *yoga/Vedānta*. The focus of such mysticism is to realize all of the implications of what it means to be consciousness: self-realization and God-realization. The means to do so is a systematic approach to isolating consciousness—one’s self/*ātmā*—from matter, both its psychic and physical dimensions. The idea is to experience and arguably demonstrate that consciousness exists independently of mind/matter. This subjective experience is arrived at by invoking a great deal of objectivity within what could be called a first-person introspective discipline. The objectivity takes the form of detachment from sense objects through a gradual process of external withdrawal and internal focus.

The *yogin/Vedāntin* is schooled in this detachment. That is, he or she is schooled as to the ephemeral nature of things—things of sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch—and thoughts themselves. The *yogin* learns that attachment to things and thoughts creates an illusory and selfish sense of self or ego/identity that, like things and thoughts, is here today but gone tomorrow. Desire for things, the Buddha teaches, is the cause of suffering. The *Gītā* teaches that attachment to the temporal is the womb from which suffering is born.³⁷ Thus the pursuit of enduring life and happiness is not found in relation to things that are experienced. It is found in relation to the self that experiences. Armed with such reasoning, the mystic

cultivates a sense of detachment. The mystic learns to control the mind and senses rather than being controlled by them and drawn through the flow of thought into an imaginary, worldly sense of self. He or she is objective to the extreme, as detachment from things allows one to look at them objectively, having dismantled one's biases.

The “boy-become-man” in Kipling’s famous poem “If—” sets the bar for a believable supernatural: a human who has risen above his or her passions and who practically speaking is human no more—a *sādhu*. This bar is the ground of mysticism, that which the mystic’s experience is rooted in.

The ideal of science is one thing. Scientists are another. Like other world citizens in human dress, scientists are also helplessly human. But the mystic is not a world citizen in any practical sense. Passions transcended, the world holds no charm. Living within, the mystic experiences a humbled yet heightened sense of self. He or she experiences the “more” that we intuitively sense we are—more than the fleeting sense of identity derived from attachment to sense objects.

With objective sensibility as to the ephemeral nature of the world of things and thought, the mystic goes within and does not come up empty-handed. Without doing and without thinking in relation to things of the world, he or she has and knows more by way of direct experience of the consciousness we are constituted of. Indeed, go within or go without is the mystic’s *mantra*. A person profits more by gaining deep, abiding experience of the nonmaterial self than he or she does through material acquisition. “Being” derived from or identified with “having” is an impoverished form of existence in the very least. The mystic’s sense of being has nothing to do with having and it is rich with universally desirable characteristics.

While we refer to such a person as a mystic, he or she is really what we all agree constitutes the perfect human, one who

loves one's neighbor like oneself by way of experiencing that which all beings have in common beneath the superficial dress of differences in race, religion, psychological disposition, and so on. In the language of the *Gitā*, the perfect mystic is one who sees the suffering of others as if it were one's own. Here we are not speaking of unverifiable subjective experiences, we are speaking about observable behavior that is rare yet undeniably ideal, sought after to one extent or another by different methodologies the world over. However, unlike all of such methodologies, genuine ego-effacing spiritual discipline from mysticism is aimed exclusively at attaining this ideal.

However, other than the arguably supernatural yet observable external results attained by such spiritual discipline, adepts also make objectively unverifiable claims as to the nature of their internal experience and its implications. They claim, for example, that they have realized that as a unit of consciousness, they are eternal, and thus survive biological death. Such claims are not unreasonable in that we can see that such spiritual adepts are largely aloof from bodily and emotional necessities. They live with less—much less—and offer more to the world in the form of their universal compassion. While their subjective experience is not something we can determine the veracity of in the laboratory, the objective and systematic methodology the mystics subject themselves to and the consistent results—the subjective experiences—the mystics report, when combined with the observable fact that such mystics have risen above human passion, must be given consideration in any honest effort to demystify or understand consciousness. While anyone can say anything about their subjective spiritual experience, we find remarkably consistent cross-cultural reporting of experiences among mystics from all religious traditions. With the effacing of the conventional ego self—the fleeting, selfish psychic identity—the mystics experience the more that arguably we are,

the consciousness that is the ground of being on which the dance of actual love proceeds.

Appealing to his atheist base, Sam Harris cautions secularists for failing to “connect to the character of those [meditative] experiences” and for failing to “give some alternate explanation for them that is not entirely deflationary and demeaning and gives some warrant to the legitimacy of those experiences.”³⁸ But Harris dismisses the extraordinary claims as to the nature of the mystic’s deep subjective experience, despite the extraordinary observable evidence that accompanies them. His belief is that they are extraordinary experiences that speak to us of the potential of the human to experience a meaningful and fulfilling human life, rendering humanity in Erich Neumann’s term *homo mysticus*, anthropologically speaking rather than theologically. Thus Harris believes the mystics’ experiences of consciousness cannot be dismissed because mystics tell us something about consciousness that to date is not accessible by other means. Nonetheless, he thinks that any metaphysical interpretations of their experiences are not to be believed.

Harris and others of his opinion would be more believable if they had deeply experienced what the mystics do that requires complete control of the wayward mind. I submit that Harris’s unwillingness to accept the metaphysical claims of such mystics lacks objectivity and speaks more to us of his investment in metaphysical naturalism cited by Lockwood above. After all, claims that consciousness is not reducible to matter—that it is transnatural—are perfectly reasonable. If consciousness is not physical, it is arguably not bound by time and space and thus has no beginning and no end—it is eternal.

Many mystics experience the consciousness that they are constituted of as undifferentiated or indeterminate, a unified field—the ground of being underlying the psychic and physical

reality. This experience is real enough to render the entire coming and going of material names and forms illusory. Their experience is deeply profound and inherently meaningful, a knowing that can be labeled “enlightenment.” And this experience is boundlessly joyful. This joyful state often has corresponding external symptoms, such as weeping and horripilation. Accomplished mystics feel as if the struggle for existence has ended in eternal living peace. They have won the struggle for existence and are humbled by it, as if having been blessed. They experience that consciousness is constituted of enduring existence, enlightenment, and boundless, indeterminate love/bliss. From the vantage point of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, they have experienced that they are a spark of the fire of the Absolute, and thus like the Godhead, they themselves are constituted of *sac-cid-ānanda*.

Eastern Orthodox theologian and philosopher David Bentley Hart reasons that *sac-cid-ānanda* are three words that

perfectly designate those regions of human experience that cannot really be accounted for within the framework of philosophical naturalism without considerable contortions of reasoning and valiant revisions of common sense. They name essential and perennial mysteries that, no matter how we may try to reduce them to purely natural phenomena, resolutely resist our efforts to do so, and continue to point beyond themselves to what is ‘more than nature’...They are prior conditions that must be in place before anything called nature can be experienced at all, and as such they precede and exceed the mechanisms of natural causality. They are, to adopt a mediaeval term, transcendental.³⁹

The basic and generic mystic experience of the Godhead as undifferentiated consciousness related above appears to correspond with something like the Brahman described in the *māngala* verse

under discussion. As such, mystics of this persuasion love to exist and their claims are not unreasonable. After all, even materially speaking, it is only because of consciousness that we sense that we exist. Consciousness is also the basis of all knowing. If we do have free will, it is only because of consciousness, and love is grounded in freedom of choice or voluntary action.

However, as we have learned at the onset of this chapter, within the broad category of mysticism there are different approaches to exploring the nature of consciousness. I have generalized about the experience of nontheistic mystics, those who in the end find no “other” in their experience, rendering their loving, their *ānanda*, indeterminate. Let us turn now to the experience of theistic mystics.

FROM CONSCIOUSNESS TO KRŚNA

The theistic mystic reasons that it is better to exist to love than to love to exist. The latter is included in the former. He or she reaches this conclusion merely from examining the nature of human experience. If consciousness is the unseen mover of the world, it moves in pursuit of love. That is to say that we move in search of love and cannot rest until we find it. Our human experience is love-driven. Unfortunately, that which we repose our love in is temporal, unlike our consciousness-self. We may withdraw our attention from the external world and focus on the world within, concluding that the full face of love is indeterminate self-love that gives rise to universal compassion and is arrived at through deep self/consciousness exploration. But this is the position of nontheistic mystics. Theistic mystics agree that the mere appearance of an “other” arising out of material names and forms is false. However, based on their everyday experience, theistic mystics conclude that our pursuit of love need not end in silence, stillness, and the experience of absolutely no “other.” They are

driven further than nontheistic mystics in pursuit of love. They see a consciousness-self in pursuit of its potential to love looking for that love in the wrong place—in matter rather than within consciousness itself, deep within the subjective world.

Thus they conclude that there must be a “consciousness-constituted other” in which to repose one’s loving propensity. In other words, theistic mystics pursue differentiation within the unity of consciousness, a determinate—*saviśeṣa*—consciousness center rather than an indeterminate—*nirviśeṣa*—one. In Kṛṣṇādāsa Kavirāja’s language, drawn from the sacred text of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, such theistic mystics seek Bhagavān, not Brahman. They reason that Brahman is derived from Bhagavān because in order to love one must exist, and Brahman represents the Godhead’s face of existence. Kavirāja Goswāmī likens it to the aura of Bhagavān. From concentrated *sac-cid-ānanda*, an undifferentiated, less condensed aura of consciousness emanates. Brahman is the halo of Bhagavān, who is the ever-still Brahman moving. Brahman that is everywhere—the underlying ground of being—has nowhere to go should it decide to move. But Bhagavān is Brahman in motion, and that motion is love-driven. In love, all contradictions are resolved. In love, faults turn into ornaments, and the impossible is entirely possible.

However, one theistic mystic may have an experience that appears at odds with the experience of another. Are the differences a result of cultural projections from the objective world being thrust on transcendence that in reality is *nirviśeṣa*? Or do such differences represent ontological truths of the supersubjective realm—the many facets of the Godhead? Kavirāja Goswāmī takes the latter position. He acknowledges that the Godhead is multi-faceted, appearing as various *avatāras* or personified spiritual emotions of the Godhead that correspond with the love of his devotees. In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, these facets are said to be *asankhya*

(uncountable).⁴⁰ They all engender nuanced expressions of majestic, or in the case of Kṛṣṇa, intimate love of God, and there is no reason to believe that they do not extend cross-culturally.⁴¹

If the theistic reports are grounded in an ego-effacing spiritual tradition, it is reasonable to conclude that the differences that arise in different mystics' approaches to exploring consciousness constitute the result of the love-driven nature of their pursuit. The love of the child for the father *causes* the father to take a shape that the child can relate to, even when it means that the father crawls on his hands and knees and pretends to be a horse. Variety based on love is the spice of the consciousness world, a variety that does not compromise its nondual nature.

The theistic mystic reports variegated experience in transcendence and personal individuality that results from replacing the objective brain/mind interface with a consciousness-constituted interface that affords one experience of other consciousness-based realms, in which time and space do not rule, and in which logic from the objective world of material experience does not hold up.⁴² In Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's world, this interface is *bhakti* proper, constituted of the essence of Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti*, about which there is much to be said in the pages ahead. Suffice to say herein that the theistic mystic sees through spiritual eyes anointed with the salve of love.

One's potential for love is fully realized in relation to Bhagavān—the Godhead. Kṛṣṇadāsa's argument is that Kṛṣṇa is *svayam bhagavān*—Bhagavān left to himself to love without reservation, with no reverential gap between himself and those who love him. The gap between worshiper and object of worship is bridged as the two become one in love. Such love is so absorbing that Kṛṣṇa practically loses sight of his divine existence, thereby facilitating the union of intimacy between the *ātmā* and himself. This notion of the Godhead is what Kṛṣṇadāsa posits when he tells us, echoing

the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, that Kṛṣṇa is *svayam bhagavān*—*kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*.

Thus we have seen that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa’s controversial argument of times gone by has currency in today’s world when properly understood: the consciousness that we are constituted of—an individual unit of being, knowing, and loving—must experience as a natural outcome of mystic pursuit of its own loving capacity a significant “consciousness other” that exists for love alone. Although this nuanced nondual reality is known variously as Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān by different approaches, it is most perfectly known by love. The form of God that corresponds with the fullest expression of love, unfettered by reverence, is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is the *āśraya-vigraha* of the *Śrimad Bhāgavatam*, under whom all *avatāras* are sheltered. Furthermore, this Kṛṣṇa is Śrī Caitanya appearing for his own purpose, and it is to this assertion that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja turns in the pages that follow.

NOTES

1. Cc. 1.2.117
2. The path of *karma* is not a path leading to transcendence unto itself. When, however, *karma* becomes *niṣkāma*, or without desire for the results of one’s action, it becomes a “*yoga*,” leading to transcendence.
3. Bg. 6.32
4. Some *yogīs* aspire for Paramātmā *sāyujya*, merging with the Paramātmā, as opposed to the eternal beatific vision of *sānta-rasa*.
5. Bg. 6.46
6. Bg. 6.47
7. See ŚB 1.3.28 and Brs. 1.1.11.
8. *artho 'yam brahma-sūtrāṇāṁ* (*Garuda Purāṇa*), cited in Cc. 2.25.143–44 as scriptural evidence for the idea that *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* is the natural commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* composed by the legendary author of the *Sūtras*.
9. ŚB 1.3.1
10. ŚB 10.14.14

11. Stuart Sutherland, *The International Dictionary of Psychology* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 95.
12. In Vedānta, the “mind” is fourfold: *buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra*, *citta*, and *manas*.
13. Einstein referred to this mystery of how two quantum-entangled objects interact as the “spooky action” of quantum mechanics. Bohr referred to it as an example of nonphysical “influences.”
14. Sam Harris, “The Mystery of Consciousness,” accessed July 26, 2015, <http://www.samharris.org/blog/item/the-mystery-of-consciousness>.
15. Michael Lockwood, “Consciousness and the Quantum World: Putting Qualia On the Map,” in *Consciousness: New Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Aleksandar Jokic and Quentin Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 447.
16. David Ray Griffin, *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 137.
17. Ibid.
18. There are of course many forms of dualism. Gauḍīya Vedānta can be described as transrational dualistic nondualism (*acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*) and will be discussed in greater detail in chapters ahead. In this form of dualism, matter and consciousness, although as different from one another as night and day, are at the same time both aspects (*saktis*) of one underlying reality (*advaya-jñāna-tattva*).
19. This argument against any form of dualism or interaction between consciousness and the physical system most often rests on a picture of causation that requires physical impact, such as two billiard balls colliding. But as Rosenblum and Kuttner suggest in *Quantum Enigma*, this ignores the possibility that the interaction need not involve such contact. Rather, interaction may involve a more ethereal force or energy or derive from the fact that consciousness and matter are in conjunction with one another.
20. For good reading that questions causal closure belief, see Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *Naturalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008).
21. David H. Lund, *The Conscious Self: The Immaterial Center of Subjective States* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2005), 366.
22. If one accepts universal causal closure, the question arises as to how the conservation of energy would be maintained if causal power from consciousness flows in and out the physical system. This concern can be answered by the fact that consciousness could influence only the distribution of energy without

altering its quantity, keeping the physical law of conservation of energy intact. Furthermore, conservation principles are not ubiquitous in physics.

23. The quantum interactive dualism of Stapp is different from Cartesian dualism and leaves open the question as to whether consciousness is different in substance from matter, while lending itself to the conclusion that it is. Gauḍīya Vedānta's *acintya-bhedābheda* is also different from Cartesian dualism. It acknowledges a simultaneous unity and difference between matter and consciousness. Both matter and consciousness are *saktis*, or potencies/energies of the potent/energetic Godhead.

24. Henry P. Stapp, *Mind, Matter, and Quantum Mechanics* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1993), 23.

25. Edward Kelly and Emily Williams Kelly, *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), Kindle edition.

26. John Gribbin and Paul Davies, *The Matter Myth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 309.

27. A. D. Linde, *Particle Physics and Inflationary Cosmology* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1990), 317.

28. Ravi V. Gomatam, "Quantum Theory, the Symbol Grounding Problem and the Chinese Room Argument" in *Quantum Interaction: Third International Symposium, QI 2009*, ed. Peter Bruza, Donald Sofge, William Lawless, C. J. van Rijsbergen, and Matthias Klusch (Berlin: Springer, 2009).

29. While the notion of semantic information has been invoked by a few writers, such as Paul Davies and Manfred Eigen, Gomatam's idea of objective semantic information is different and unique, arising out of his own work in quantum mechanics of macroscopic objects.

30. Gomatam points out that quantum mechanics applies in principle to both the micro and macro realms. He says that all of the problems involved in explaining the underlying causes of observed/observable phenomena in quantum theory—so-called interpretational problems—arise out of linking observation to properties of atomic systems directly, without first developing a quantum theory of the macro world where the observations take place. He avoids all these interpretational problems by applying his idea of quantum objects as symbols first to the macroscopic level, not at the atomic or microscopic level.

31. Marzenna Jakubczak suggests such fusion philosophy in her article "The Sense of Ego-Maker in Classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga" in *Cracow Indological*

Studies, vol. 10. The term “fusion philosophy” was originally coined by Mark Siderits in *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons*.

32. For a nonquantum example see Hane Htut Maung, *Consciousness: An Enquiry into the Metaphysics of the Self* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu, 2006).

33. Hane Htut Maung, *Consciousness: An Enquiry into the Metaphysics of the Self* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu, 2006), iBooks edition.

34. In his well-known book *The Conscious Mind*, David Chalmers has arguably shown that qualia cannot be identical to the physical brain and its processes.

35. Edward F. Kelly and Emily Williams Kelly, *Irreducible Mind, Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2007), Kindle edition.

36. Flashes of mystic experience can and have occurred outside of any spiritual practice or orientation. However, in all of the recorded instances that I am aware of, those experiencing such flashes have in turn embraced a spiritual perspective, given an appropriately broad interpretation of the spiritual.

37. Bg. 5.22

38. Sam Harris, “What’s the Point of Transcendence?” accessed November 2, 2015, <http://www.samharris.org/blog/item/whats-the-point-of-transcendence>.

39. David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 44–45.

40. ŚB 1.3.26

41. In his *Gitā* commentary to 4.9, Thākura Bhaktivinoda acknowledges that *avatāras* of the Godhead appear cross-culturally.

42. In Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, time is experienced as playing a nondestructive role that merely facilitates the sequencing of eternal, nonlinear events.

4. Blessing the Readers

*anarpita-carīm cirāt karunayāvatirṇah kalau
samarpayitum unmatojjvala-rasāṁ sva-bhakti-śriyam
hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitah
sadā hrdaya-kandare sphuratu vah śaci-nandanah*

With a view to bestow the wealth of his own *bhakti*—the brightest jewel of sacred aesthetic rapture—which had not been bestowed for a long time, Hari, endowed with a beautiful golden radiance like that of a blossoming kadamba flower, has descended in Kali *yuga* filled with compassion. May he, the joy of Śacī, forever reside within and illumine the hollow of your heart.

In this fourth verse of his sacred preface, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa benedicts his readers. This is his *āśīrvāda-śloka*, a verse in which the author offers a blessing. He prays that Śrī Caitanya, the son of Śacīdevī, may forever reside in and illumine the hearts of his readers. In his explanation of this verse, Kṛṣṇadāsa compares the golden-complexioned son of Śacī to a lion, and the cave in which he would like him to dwell to the hearts of all souls. This cave is situated within the mountain of the *jīvas'* resistance to their own best interest. May the son of Śacī enter and reside therein. Kṛṣṇadāsa prays that with the power and courage of a lion's roar, extending his neck with confidence even when confronted with an elephant of worldly desire, Śrī Śacīnandana might drive away

the elephant of the *jīvas'* worldliness and in doing so, prepare the *jīvas'* hearts for the gift of *unnatojjvala-rasa*.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's *āśirvāda-sloka* was originally composed by Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī. Śrī Rūpa employed it as the *namaskāra* verse of his drama *Vidagdha-mādhava*. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja explains this later within the narrative of his own text.¹ Therein we find that Mahāprabhu was embarrassed on hearing this *sloka* and mildly protested as he heard it amidst several devotees, all of whose hearts were gladdened by its recitation.

SACINANDANA/VIŚVAMBHARA

The verse invokes Gaura's name in connection with his mother, Śacī—Śacinandana. Śrī Rūpa prays that the blessing he himself received as he composed this verse might be extended to the hearts of others—*sphuratu*—that Gaura *līlā* might manifest therein in the way it manifested in his heart. How did it manifest? Which *līlās* in particular appeared in Rūpa Goswāmī's heart as he composed this verse? This question is answered with the name “Śacinandana.”

Śrī Rūpa remembers in trance and experiences—*sphūrti*—the tender dealings between Śacī and her youngest son. It was he who, after her husband's demise and after her eldest son became a mendicant, vowed to care for her and stated that even if he himself should leave home for spiritual life, “You are my mother in whichever country I reside. The fortunate soul who utters ‘Śacinandana’ purchases me and my associates. One who says ‘Śacī,’ calls me ‘Śacī’s son’ or calls Navadvipa ‘Śacī’s place’ has spoken all the scriptures, the Vedas, and the Vedānta.”² It was Śacī in whose hands he placed himself even after becoming a monk, and Śacī who, despite her attachment to him, gave him to the world.

As such *līlās* appear in his heart, Śrī Rūpa prays that they may also appear in our hearts. They teach us that Gaura's love for Śacī

and the residents of Nadīyā is both something that he cannot live without and something that he cannot withhold from others. At the cost of love in separation, he gives a special form of this love—*unnatojjvala-rasa*—to others regardless of their qualification. He gives the deepest love to the broadest audience. That which is rarely bestowed (*anarpita*), he comes to generously bestow (*samarpayitum*). Such is the nature of the *bhakti* of Śrī Śacidevi's Viśvambhara.

Śrī Caitanya was named Viśvambhara at birth, “one who maintains the universe.” The verbal root *bhṛ* in the name Viśvambhara means “to support, to protect.” The son of Śaci, Viśvambhara Miśra, supports the world, not in an ordinary sense, but rather by nourishing it with his *prema*. This *prema*, the ripened fruit of *bhakti* (*prema-bhakti*) brings Kṛṣṇa under his devotee’s control, causing Kṛṣṇa to preserve and protect his devotee. In the presence of such *prema*, there is no room for impiety or worldliness, and furthermore it belittles the ideal of salvation. Indeed, Śrī Caitanya’s own *bhakti*—his *prema*—exemplifies the zenith of our spiritual potential, the height of inner experience in the subjective realm of consciousness. In contrast, our present position constitutes the low end of conscious experience, deriving as it does from consciousness absorbed in the objective world of matter.

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE WORLDS

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, like his predecessors the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs, understands that the principal force in the world is subjective—consciousness. He was not as much concerned with the objective forces, such as gravity, electromagnetism, and strong and weak nuclear forces that govern the objective, physical world of matter. He was concerned with the primary forces that govern consciousness: the forces of *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *mādhurya*—love of God—to be explained ahead. It is through this lens that he

views Śrī Caitanya, the very center of the supersubjective world of consciousness appearing in the objective world of matter.

Of the two—consciousness and matter—consciousness is primal, as we saw in the previous chapter. But its subjective nature does not lend itself to being discussed in mathematical language, a language of measurement dealing with quantities rather than qualities, which has been employed in pursuit of controlling and conquering the natural world. The subjective world is perhaps better described through poetry because in poetry anything is possible and such is the nature of the subjective world. Poetry is also a language that can be used to foster participation in the natural world, envisioning ourselves as participants in that which is magical and larger than ourselves. When we describe the natural world poetically, it can loom larger than life and appear to extend beyond its physical limits, limits that do not constrain the subjective world. As such, poetic descriptions of this sort, even when focused on the physical world, can draw our attention to the inner, subjective world and its limitless possibilities.

Like the rishis of yore, Kṛṣṇadāsa is a *kavi* (poet). Indeed, his name bears the title “*Kavirāja*,” which means king of poets. Thus even when he does speak about the objective world of matter and its natural laws, he does so poetically from the perspective of a transcendentalist steeped in the experience of the self and the possibilities found in the subjective world of consciousness—the potential to love. His book is after all entitled “The Immortal Nectar of the Beautiful Character of Consciousness”—Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. His tome seeks to explore not merely the difference between matter and consciousness, the primary study of consciousness we find in the Upaniṣads, but the immortal character of consciousness—the consciousness of consciousness.

As we shall see in the chapters that follow, while the word *caitanya* means “consciousness,” Śrī Caitanya himself embodies the consciousness of consciousness. He represents the zenith of the immortal life of consciousness—*mahābhāva*, the opportunity to taste *unnatojjvala-rasa*—above and beyond the constraints of the natural world. Thus it is quite extraordinary that he descends within it.

Describing that descent, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja speaks poetically about the natural world in terms of cyclic time, the time cycle of Kali (Kali *yuga*), a day in the life of the four-headed Brahmā. In doing so, he seeks to underscore the rarity of Śrī Caitanya’s appearance within the world of time and space while sharing a glimpse into how in Purāṇic time the natural world was conceived.³

In his explanation of his verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa tells his readers what he means when he writes that Śrī Caitanya rarely appears in this world: he comes once in the day of Brahmā at the cusp of a particular Kali *yuga* immediately after Kṛṣṇa appears in the world. The four *yuga* cycles—Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali—last 4,320,000 years, and one thousand of these four *yuga* cycles constitutes one day of Brahmā. Thus one day—twelve hours—of Brahmā’s long life of one hundred years endures for 4,320,000,000 of our years. The one hundred years of Brahmā’s life is thought to be the duration of the expansion of the universe, which itself is part of a multiverse filled with expanding and contracting universes.

In terms of today’s popular atheism-versus-theism debates, Brahmā is an imaginary “sky god.” In ancient Greek terminology, he is the “demiurge,” an intermediary between the realm of eternal forms and the mutable realm, a technician or cosmic craftsman. In Hinduism, he is also seen as a cosmic craftsman as the personification of the creative power in nature. In Gauḍiya Vedānta, he is primarily a devotee of Kṛṣṇa demonstrating the proper use of intelligence.

Brahmā is different from God. He is a lowercase “god.” As such, he is embedded in nature and dependent on her, while in contrast, nature is wholly dependent on the uppercase God, who is the ground of being.⁴ In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa informs us that belief in and subsequent worship of such gods is for less intelligent people. Such persons are characterized as those in pursuit of material perfection, primarily through material acquisition and the preservation of their material egos. This is an imaginary pie-in-the-sky pursuit, and the gods that correspond with such pursuits are not the concern of Gauḍiya Vedānta.

Although Brahmā represents the personification of intelligence and its creative power (*rajas*), the sacred texts emphasize that in order for Brahmā to be successful in his craft he must be further infused with divine power. Thus the creative power in nature is unleashed after being infused with consciousness and divine will, resulting in an intelligence-driven cosmos. In Gauḍiya Vedānta, Brahmā is further depicted as intelligence harnessed in an ego-effacing, devotional spiritual pursuit. Brahmā is primarily engaged in *dhīmahi*, the intelligence of meditation, and only secondarily in acts of material creation. It is such spiritualized intelligence that Gauḍiya Vedānta venerates and patiently pursues. As we can see from the example of Brahmā, the perfection of such pursuit takes time, much of which Brahmā has at his disposal.

When speaking about the natural world, Hinduism acknowledges much longer notions of time than any other religious tradition. In some respects its cosmology is roughly consistent with modern theories on cosmology like those of Paul Steinhardt, who posits an expanding and contracting multiverse that involves time with no beginning or end expanding forward and backward. Each expansion of a universe is set off by a big bang, which follows a previous bang with no beginning to this infinite series of

bangs and no end to them in sight. Furthermore, each succeeding expansion of a universe is informed by the previous one that has contracted, which brings to mind the Hindu notion of how each expanding universe is informed by the moral quality and natural law—*karma*—of the previous universe.

Regarding modern multiverse scientific conjecture, Ned Denny in his review of Brian Greene's *The Hidden Reality: Parallel Universes and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos* compares the popular multiverse meditations of modern science with descriptions of the cosmos found in the well-known theophany of *Bhagavad-gītā*'s eleventh chapter:

Until recently, a physicist would have regarded this scene as the picturesque delirium of a pre-scientific age. Most still would. And yet the contemplation of the unspeakable flowering of an infinity of worlds is no longer the province of “mystics, charlatans and cranks,” as the leading string theorist Michio Kaku has written, but instead occupies “the finest minds on the planet.” Welcome to the multiverse. . . . What seems certain, as Greene writes, is that “what we’ve thought to be the universe is only one component of a far grander, perhaps far stranger, and mostly hidden, reality.” And what a delicious irony it is that science, that model of sober investigation, is inexorably returning us to vistas so peculiarly like the deranged imaginings of our “superstitious” past.⁵

CYCLICAL TIME

Hindu rishis were perhaps the first to articulate the concept of cyclical time. Their experience, which caused them to conceive of time and nature as cyclical, was not merely their observance of the cycling of the seasons or the coming and going of day and

night, which may have influenced other ancient cultures to think cyclically. Rather, the rishis conceived of time and nature as cyclic because they located an immoveable center around which they observed all things coming and going. That center was themselves: consciousness, the *ātmā*, the observer, the witness distinct from matter, around which the world of matter circles. The rishis saw this cycling microcosmically around themselves—the *ātmā*—and macrocosmically around the Paramātmā—the Godhead—expanding and contracting in beginningless cycles. Their world was neither a geocentric nor a heliocentric experience, but rather an *ātmā*-centric, and by extension, a Paramātmā-centric experience. For the rishis, nature was a consciousness-driven reality rotating endlessly—the beginningless play of *samsāra*—release from which involves becoming properly centered: turning inward.

Despite the West's long Christian-based scientific flirtation with linear time, today the three main theories that concern physicists—classical physics, relativity, and quantum physics—arguably all subtly point to cyclical time, even while the idea of linear time remains a practical one by which we accomplish much. Euclidean mathematics may have utility, but is it real? No one has ever observed a straight line in nature—in the earth sphere we call home.

Thus the arrow of linear time finds itself surrounded by cyclical time: notions about cyclical time predate those of linear time (*Purāṇas*), appear within its midst (Nietzsche), and follow after it (quantum theory). A line has been drawn, but some doubt circles it, bringing its validity into question.

A circle has a pattern and exhibits rhythm and order, whereas a line has none of these characteristics. While a line may be accidental or random, a circle always displays rationality and purpose. If the process of nature is to be defined, it must have a pattern. A series of changes that has no beginning or end and no purpose is

patternless. Any particular point in a line either stands by itself or in relation to its entire past. If it stands by itself, it cannot be defined, owing to its being unrelated. If it stands in relation to its entire past, it also cannot be defined because the entirety of its past is ultimately untraceable.

If, however, the process of nature is cyclical, every point in the circle is part of a coherent system and thus is rationally understandable. The problem of infinite regress need not trouble us when conceiving of the world order as cyclical from the *yogic* perspective of Hinduism. The logical fallacy of infinite regress occurs when understanding any member of a series is dependent upon knowledge of its antecedent. However, if the process of nature is conceived of as cyclical, then every member of the series is understandable in light of the entire process, which is complete and consistent within itself. The *Upaniṣads* posit a cyclical universe that expands and contracts, followed by another expanding and contracting universe, ad infinitum, but each cycle is complete in itself, and its complete understanding is not dependent upon knowledge of the previous cycle.

KALI YUGA

It is admittedly difficult to reconcile the Vaiṣṇava/Hindu *yuga* cycles with present-day scientific understanding of our past.⁶ This is so because although the Hindus insightfully envisioned the earth and its universe to be heirs to a very distant past, in doing so they also assumed the existence of advanced human civilization on earth dating back millions of years. Or so it would appear. Such an appraisal, however, errs in conflating sacred Purāṇic time and its sacred narrative with history as we know it today.

Purāṇic “history” has little to do with measurable, historical continuity, and the *Bhāgavata* that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja draws on for

his purposes in explaining this *mangala* verse never claims to be a history in the contemporary sense of the term. It retells narratives found in other Purāṇas and Itihāsas from its own perspective to make its own points. Given this fact about its composition and purpose, there is little reason to insist on an interpretation of the *yuga* cycles that passes the test of historicity and archeology.

The *Bhāgavata* leaves the literal world of empiricism, history, authorship, and linear narrative and represents that place where time and eternity meet momentarily. It invites us to quickly cross over the threshold on which it rests between the two worlds—from empirical measurement to the immeasurable. The *Bhāgavata* invites us to live in another world beyond measurement, the world of the measurer—consciousness, *caitanya*—and its source. It prods us to leave the small and self-centered world of measurement—the myth of *māyā*. It asks us to literally leave the shadow of *māyā* and enter the sun of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. And it implores us to do so now—at this very moment—with its emphasis not only on Kali *yuga* but a particular Kali *yuga* and the rare, golden opportunity it affords us.

That said, under scrutiny we find that ancient India was not without science or mathematics, which forms the basis of modern science. Indeed, ancient Hindu cosmology, in which the *yuga* cycles play a part, was based on precise mathematical calculations. However, these calculations are not in point-for-point competition with those of modern science. Ancient Hindus used mathematical calculations to arrive at their sense of time within narratives suggesting a hidden, divine meaning behind the physical world. This is a meaning that appears out of the meditative mind, opening one to the experience of the Deity and his world of divine play. The eternal return of the cosmic cycles corresponds with the internal yogic return of reincarnation, to the soul's return to its source in *susupti*, andulti-

mately its final attainment from which there is no return.⁷ As such, the *Bhāgavata*'s cosmology is a veritable drama of deliverance from material existence in which the Deity, of which time is an aspect, interacts with humanity. Ancient Hindu cosmology was a means of framing philosophical concerns that involved time, motion, the soul, the finite, and the infinite. Thus modern science and the *Bhāgavata* look at the world from entirely different angles of vision.

There is at the same time value in discussing Hinduism in light of modern science and bringing Hinduism into today's ongoing discussion of science and religion. But in doing so, there is no need to dispense with the *Bhāgavata*'s descriptions of nature, but rather to understand what the *Bhāgavata* is saying and what it is not saying about nature. It speaks poetically about nature and takes into consideration empirical evidence of its time. Its aim is to give descriptions of the natural world that foster the pursuit of divine life. The *Bhāgavata* also speaks pragmatically and essentially about a Darwinian "struggle for existence"—*jivo jivasya jivanam*, "one living being is food for another"—thereby providing negative as well as positive impetus for transcendence.

As we have seen in chapter 3, the *Bhāgavata* does offer us a basic semantic description of the nature of matter appropriated from Sāṅkhya philosophy—one of the dominant intellectual currents of the time—altered and subsumed within the text, which is itself centered on *bhakti*. We have noted that it is entirely possible that this description can help to inform a new understanding of time and space, which is much needed today. Should this come to pass, the question of Hindu *yuga* cycles' empirical truth can be revisited and reconsidered perhaps in terms of a fractal notion of time, in which set patterns of time types are repeated.⁸

The Vaiṣṇava has no difficulty noting the observations of modern science as they develop century after century, with new

discoveries displacing old theories to the discomfort of those entrenched in an earlier paradigm. Such observations are certainly of interest at times and occasionally appear to the Vaiṣṇava as a window into the theological world. The Vaiṣṇava mind has no difficulty in understanding the discoveries of modern science and their implications, nor does it object—within limits—to taking advantage of them as they are passed on through the hands of modern technology. Indeed, within those limits it also bows to modern science and technology. But it is the limits that are important, for the Vaiṣṇava lays prostrate before an entirely different ideal from that of today's dominant materialistic sense of life's meaning or lack of it. Only as much as this ideal is served by any scientific observation or technological advance is it worthy of the highest respect.

Of course, there are members of the scientific community who find God in nature as observed through modern science—those who find transcendent wonder in empirically observed order, complexity, and beauty, as well as in the randomness and ruthlessness of the natural world. And there is no reason that modern followers of the *Bhāgavata* and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja cannot embrace today's observations of the natural world and draw from them the same inspiration to pursue inner spiritual life that devotees of ancient times did. Thus if we look at the *Bhāgavata* as an ongoing story of the life of Bhagavān and his *sakti*, as we should, new commentary can be written with regard to the natural world that takes into consideration present-day empirical observations. Such commentary would continue to posit contemplation of nature through a *Bhāgavata* lens, resulting in the same outcome: descriptions of nature that provide a meditation on her that serves to illuminate the self and its source, providing both positive and negative impetus for a life in pursuit of *prema*.

Today Vaiṣnavas live in both worlds, those of modern science and meditative insight, albeit with a particular understanding of the implications of modern scientific observation. The secularist in contrast lives in only one lonely world. While it is free from what some might consider the religious baggage of *yuga* cycles and Deities, it is at the cost of one's self. In the metaphysics of today's popular naturalist universe, there is no "self" of either lower or uppercase—no sacredness at all and no overriding purpose.

In contrast to the meaninglessness of naturalist cosmology, Hindu scripture posits an entirely sacralized, consciousness-filled universe. Such a universe gives humanity a singular meaning, that of integrating one's self with its transcendent source through a variety of sacred methodologies. Such methodologies bear singular yet varied results—Brahman, Paramātmā, or Bhagavān. Unlike the secular understanding of the universe, in which individuals are thought to make sense of the world and find a relative purpose of their own, if any at all, the Hindu world is purposeful unto itself and thus it gives humanity its meaning, not vice versa. In short, the Hindu universe has a "*dharma*" because it has a soul.

While the Hindu contribution to science is immense by way of its invention of the number zero, from the Vaiṣṇava perspective there was no need to utilize this insight for anything more than facilitating immediate needs.⁹ With "zero help" from the East, the West in contrast has gone from zero to an infinity of invention and acquisition and back again with its now dominant materialistic sense that the world has no overarching meaning at all, while remaining busy all the time trying to improve it.¹⁰ Hindu cyclic time reminds us that regardless of what one does within the world, it will come to an end—a long pause—before it starts over again in an effort to remind us of the same. Cyclic time speaks, that is, with great force as to the need to transcend the circular ways of

the world, where reason unto itself provides no firm ground to rest from endless circles of thought. As such, it would be hard to imagine a world more antithetical to the modern materialistic Western mind and its sense of what the world is like than the sacred universe of the Hindus.

It is within this scriptural universe that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has located and explained Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. The modern secular worldview appears as mythical to him as his sacred world does to the modern secular mind. Like the ancient world, the modern secular world is also unavoidably meaning-driven and myth is its method. Today's naturalist myth is the pursuit of salvation through science, a salvation that, if at all attainable, is arguably undesirable—transcending the hell of human frailty and attaining the heaven of robotic perfection. This secular world's relative meaning is nothing more than a human construct and is in this sense completely imaginary. While the secular world is not ontologically grounded, it is absolutely militant against any ultimate meaning other than the insistence that there is no ultimate meaning at all. It is busy creating solutions to material problems—many of which it has created—at the cost of the loss of its soul. The secular worldview diverts one from one's real self in the name of an objective study of the physical world. However, it does not even involve studying nature herself per se, but rather “the nature of human investigation of nature,” to quote Heisenberg. Thus the observer—consciousness/*caitanya*—takes precedence, even while the materialist consciously tries to reduce it to meaningless matter, which itself is impossible to know perfectly in its virgin state. The fact that the physical world of matter can never be fully measured and understood is precisely what the *Bhāgavata* asserts, and thus it strongly suggests that we not make such measurement our only aim in life. The Sanskrit word for illusion, *māyā*, also means “to measure.”

Although empiric observation is limited in terms of the kind of knowledge it can afford us, there is much that it can tell us about the world. But what can it tell us about time? As far as we know today, the Gaudiya time we refer to as Kali *yuga* is a questionable empirical reality. However, so too is time itself. Newton's notion that time is an absolute has been overturned and science now thinks we know that time is subjective and relative, if it exists at all. Thus empirically speaking, there is no time to question time. However, to be sure, we live in an era of quarrel (*kali*) and hypocrisy, and there is reason to think that better times existed before ours. Furthermore, the *Bhāgavata*'s emphasis is not as much on its *yuga* cycles as it is on the importance of using our time to enter the timeless inner world of consciousness proper.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Thākura Bhakti-vinoda acknowledged in his *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā* that the *Bhāgavata*'s position on the Kali *yuga* was different from that of the modern secular position and that, empirically speaking, the latter's position may be correct. This possibility had no bearing on his conviction as to the value of the dispensation of Śrī Caitanya. In an effort to support more literal thinking on the subject, some have reasoned that the *yuga* cycles are shorter in length and thus do not speak to us of a human civilization dating back millions of years. Others suggest that archeology as a science is fatally flawed.¹¹ In a broader, less literal sense, some modern sociologists have also identified with the Hindu *yuga* cycles. "Social cycle theory," which argues that events and stages of society and history repeat themselves in cycles, lends itself to such identification. Pitirim Sorokin, for example, reasons that the Hindu cyclical theories are much nearer to reality than the linear notion of ongoing evolutionary progress. Like the Hindus, he envisions a cyclical pattern of time, in which repeating time periods are characterized by particular

qualities. He considers the present era of modernity one dedicated to technological progress leading ultimately to decadence, a notion similar to the Hindu descriptions of the Kali *yuga*. Thus speculation abounds in both material and spiritual directions.

However, it seems best at this point to conclude that the ancients wove together their sense of time and history with their Purāṇic and spiritual sensibilities to speak about the natural world differently than we do today and with a view to plumb the depths of the subjective world. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and those before him who founded the Gauḍiya lineage made sense out of the obvious spirituality of Śrī Caitanya within the context of their spiritual, historical, and cosmological sensibilities. Indeed, the person of Śrī Caitanya fits perfectly with the description of the Kali *yuga-avatāra* in Śrimad Bhāgavatam.¹² Furthermore, he at times manifested the characteristics of various *avatāras* of Purāṇic lore and thus gave credence to such lore and the idea of a world hidden from the world of empiric observation. This world should be of interest today to those who want to experience the nonphysical nature of consciousness and its potential to love. This experience may have the power to bring us much closer to truth than today's myth of an arrow of infinite and ongoing progress aimed at a target of material acquisition.

There are no doubt a number of ways to think about the issue, but to be sure, the Kali *yuga* is part of a sacred reality, one in which Śrī Caitanya appears and is fully understood, even as he simultaneously appears in the world of empiric observation. Appearing in the world as he does, Śrī Caitanya towers above our empirical attempt to know things with his insight into the nature of that which knows—consciousness—demonstrating how deeply it can love. Hindu scripture speaks of other *yugas*—better ones—but scripture's entire emphasis is on this Kali *yuga*. The sacred sound

of the *Bhāgavata* was written down for the times that are with us. They are troubled times and simultaneously a time of opportunity in contrast to previous *yugas*. And what a golden opportunity it is! Take heed. “Now” is a time like no other! This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja wants to say to his readers when he cites Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī’s verse as a blessing to his readers—*anarpita-carīṁ cirāt karunayāvatīrṇah kalau ...*

GAURA’S GIFT

Śrī Caitanya’s benediction may be better understood by looking more closely at the ordinary course of events for the materially conditioned *jivas*. The world issues forth from the Paramātmā (the Soul of the world) and then again collapses in a manner analogous to his outgoing and incoming breath. With his outgoing breath, the One becomes many, and the many move from relative homogeneity to heterogeneity. The homogeneous condition is one of deep sleep (*susupti*), and while each *ātmā* is individual, its individuality is not fully manifest in this state. As each individual *jivātmā* manifests, it is distinguished from every other *jivātmā*, yet nonetheless all *jivas* are uniform. Like their source, who is impartial, the *jivas* are all equal to one another. However, with the manifestation of the objective world and the subsequent interaction of the subjective *jivas* with objective matter, a further differentiation results. This superficial differentiation resulting from *karmic* law places *jivas* at odds with one another, absorbed in material ego and identified with matter. Hence the Darwinian struggle for existence. This struggle has no beginning. That is, God has no beginning and neither does the world consisting of his *śaktis*, nor does the principle that connects the objective and subjective realities—*karma*. All are *anādi*, beginningless.

God exists along with his potencies (*saktis*). The subjective units of consciousness, or *jivas*, are constituted of his *tatastha-sakti*, and the objective world is constituted of his *māyā-sakti*. God does not make the world, or anything for that matter. His nature is thus not determined by how he makes the world but by how he conducts himself in relation to it, to his *saktis*. In general, he defers to his *māyā-sakti* and is thus just. As the *jivas* express themselves in relation to the objective world, the objective world responds. This is the principle of *karma*. The *māyā-sakti* responds to the *jivas* in kind. At the same time, God, being partial to his devotees, gives them the right to distribute *bhakti* and thus change the course of the *jivas* from material pursuit to spiritual awakening. Such devotees are in this sense expressions of his mercy. Thus he is both just and merciful. Both influences, *karma* and *bhakti*, are moving in the world.

Should one come under the influence of *bhakti*, one's spiritual prospect lies in the nature of *bhakti*'s influence. We learned this in chapter 1. Under a particular influence of *bhakti*, each *jīva* has the opportunity to distinguish itself from another in spiritual variety. This variety, unlike material variety, is not superficial and does not compromise unity and put *jivas* at odds with one another. But the opportunity to enter Kṛṣṇa's Vraja *līlā* and engage in *līlā-seva* in this realm of intimacy is rare. And rarer still is the opportunity to experience the nature of Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa from her vantage point.

This is Gaura's gift to the world. It is *sva-bhakti-śriyam*, Śrī Caitanya's own *bhakti*. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, his *bhakti* is the love of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa, and this fact is implied here in this *marigala* verse with the word *śriyam*. Her love is supreme. However, it is not possible for any devotee to become Rādhā, as Śrī Caitanya has. How then does he bless the world with the

opportunity to taste this love? In what manner does he give his own *bhakti* to others?

In one sense, he does so by way of distributing the four *bhāvas* of Vraja: *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *mādhurya*. These are the spiritual loving sentiments of servitude, friendship, parental love, and romantic love centered on Kṛṣṇa. Just as these sentiments drive the material world more than gravity, electromagnetism, and strong and weak nuclear forces, these subjective forces animate the world of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. Therein, the philosophical truth that Kṛṣṇa is God is overshadowed by the intensity of divine love in intimacy. As such, Kṛṣṇa appears as one of the village inhabitants of Vraja, as the perfect object of servile, friendly, parental, and romantic love. In *tattva*, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa belong (*svakiyā*) to one another, but this philosophical truth is overshadowed by the sense—their *bhāva*—that theirs is a paramour (*parakiyā*) relationship. This relationship is facilitated directly and indirectly by the four *bhāvas* of *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *mādhurya*. Thus the entire Vraja *līlā* is about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love for one another.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja informs us that Śrī Caitanya came to bless the world with these four *bhāvas*. However, as explained in chapter 1, these four are further classified as two, *sambandha-rūpa* and *kāma-rūpa*. In the Gauḍiya lineage, we find both of these forms of *bhakti*. However, we do not find *dāsyā* or *vātsalya*—two expressions of *sambandha-rūpa*—unto themselves. We find *sambandha-rūpa* in the person of Nityānanda Rāma, who represents pure *sakhya* as well as *sakhya* mixed with *dāsyā* or *vātsalya*. In the Gauḍiya lineage, we also find *sakhya* influenced by *mādhurya* as well as the *kāma-rūpa* of pure *mādhurya*. While *mādhurya*, or *ujjvala-rasa*, is the primary gift of Gaura and no one has done more than Nityānanda to extend the gift of Gaura to the world, Nityānanda Rāma's own *sakhya-rasa* has understandably also influenced a number of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas.

Thus these two *rasas* constitute the spiritual window of opportunity the lineage affords its members.

Devotees absorbed in *sakhya-rasa* influenced by *mādhurya* directly participate in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's romantic life. This *bhāva* is not found in any other Vaiṣṇava lineage. Such cowherds' love exceeds parental love in that it has access to the intimacy of Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa. Its leader is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's closest friend, Subala. Among all of the Vraja associates of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, none can turn the mind of Rādhā toward Kṛṣṇa after one of their lovers' quarrels better than Subala-sakhā. Moreover, Raghunātha dāsa Goswāmī understands Subala to be the very form of *sakhya-rasa* bestowed by Rādhā, or the form that Rādhā herself accepts to experience the full measure of *sakhya-rasa*.¹³ Although the sentiment of Subala and other such cowherds is fraternal love through and through, its *mādhurya* component is closely aligned with Rādhā or another *yūtheśvari*. Thus this form of *sakhya-rasa* has a *sakhi* element, and for this reason Rūpa Goswāmī has referred to it as *sakhi-bhāva*.¹⁴

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has said, "Without the help of *sakhi-bhāva*, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa cannot experience the fullest measure of romantic love."¹⁵ While one can argue that this statement includes the *sakhi-bhāva* of *sakhya-rasa*, here Kṛṣṇadāsa refers more to the *sakhis* themselves, the girlfriends of Rādhā. When making this important point, Kṛṣṇadāsa speaks directly of the *gopis'* love for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. More so, he speaks of certain *gopis'* love for Rādhā that exceeds their love for Kṛṣṇa. Such *sakhis* never desire direct romantic union with Kṛṣṇa, but rather only servitude to Rādhā, assisting her in her union with Kṛṣṇa.¹⁶

This form of romantic love is called *unnatojjvala-rasa*. While there are many forms of romantic love, or *ujjvala-rasa*, this particular variety is the one that Śrī Caitanya offers the world. Thus while

the dispensation of romantic love can be found outside of Gaura *līlā*, and even the opportunity to become a confidante of Rādhā in some form of *tad-bhāva-icchāmayī mādhurya-rasa*, the form of *mādhurya-rasa* in which there is no trace of any desire to directly consort with Kṛṣṇa is only available from Gaura.

The wisdom of this love rests on the fact that the experience of romantic love for Kṛṣṇa reaches its zenith in Rādhā. She alone tastes the full measure of *mādhurya-rasa*. Other *gopīs* who consort directly with Kṛṣṇa do not experience the same measure of intimacy, for only Rādhā can fully satisfy Kṛṣṇa. In this she has no equal. Thus direct union with Kṛṣṇa on the part of any *gopī* does not include all that Rādhā experiences in her divine romantic union with Kṛṣṇa. However, unlike any of her other *sakhis*, Rādhā's younger, prepubescent handmaidens are free to mix with the divine couple in service during the high point of the divine union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in a way that no other participant in the *līlā* is afforded. The handmaidens' lack of interest in direct union with Kṛṣṇa combined with their extreme fidelity in service to Rādhā allows these handmaidens to experience all that Rādhā does by way of their complete identification with her, much in the same way that some Catholic saints experience the wounds of Christ in their own bodies—stigmata. In other words, Rādhā's handmaidens indirectly experience what Rādhā does, and in doing so they experience greater intimacy than *gopīs* in other forms of romantic love, who occasionally unite directly with Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā's handmaidens experience more of Kṛṣṇa indirectly than others do in direct union with him. And they also experience Rādhā to an extent that none of her other friends do. Their experience is *unnatojjvala-rasa* in the fullest sense of the term.

In his *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*, Raghunātha dāsa Goswāmī writes of Rādhā's handmaidens' special position thus:

I take shelter of the handmaidens of the Queen of Vṛndāvana led by Śrī Rūpa Mañjari. They lovingly satisfy her by offering hazelnuts and other delicacies, massaging her feet, bringing fragrant water, and arranging trysts with her gallant. Thus they have become most dear to her and are allowed to enter the scene of the Divine Couple's most intimate affairs without the slightest discomfiture, a reward not given even to her dearest friends.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura describes the qualifications of Rādhā's handmaidens in his *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta*:

Rūpa Mañjari and the other handmaidens of Rādhāraṇī, one sparkle of whose toenail is brighter than a flash of lightning, are certainly qualified in all respects, whether in talents or in coquettishness, to become *yūtheśvaris* or *nāyikās* themselves (group leaders and leading ladies), and yet they are completely devoid of any attraction for such glories. They would much rather bathe constantly in the nectarean ocean of Rādhā's service.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī embraced this *bhāva* himself, and he writes about it in his *Kṛṣṇa-lilāmṛta*, comparing these *sakhis* to the blossoms, or *mañjarīs*, of a vine. It is this kind of metaphor from which Rādhā's handmaidens derive their popular title *mañjarīs*. *Mañjari-bhāva* is the way in which *jīvas* blessed by Śrī Caitanya's own *bhakti* can taste Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa.

Just as the moon enlivens the lilies, so Kṛṣṇa is the bright moon who enlivens the lily-like hearts of the residents of Vṛndāvana. His pleasure-giving potency is personified in Rādhā, who is like a creeper whose fruits are *prema*. Her girlfriends are the unlimited branches, leaves, and flowers, which expand out from her self and

are thus equal to her. For this reason, when that winding creeper of love is watered with the heavenly potion of Kṛṣṇa's sporting activities, the leaves and flowers (the *sakhis*) find hundreds of times more pleasure than if they were themselves to be sprinkled.

At the beginning of this chapter, we learned that Rūpa Goswāmī composed this *māṅgala* verse. It must be noted that the *unnatojjvala-rasa* referred to in the verse is that which Śrī Rūpa himself embodies. In Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *līlā* he is Rūpa Mañjari, Śrī Rādhā's foremost handmaiden. Thus in this verse Śrī Rūpa speaks about his own experience without directly saying so, and it is this experience that he was empowered to distribute, to give all that he is to the world. Although this verse was originally written as the *namaskāra* verse of Śrī Rūpa's *Vidagdha-mādhava*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja employs it in his text as his *āśīrvāda-śloka*, a verse benedicting his readers.

It is the experience of Śrī Caitanya in Rādhā *bhāva* that Kṛṣṇadāsa seeks to share with the world through Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta*. Verily, his book explains Rūpa Goswāmī's experience of all that Śrī Caitanya is, the final word of Gauḍiya orthodoxy regarding the contribution of Śrī Caitanya. Śrī Caitanya distributed his own *bhakti-sva bhakti śriyam*—in the form of the supporting *sakhyā-bhāvas* of Vraja and *mañjari-seva* in particular.¹⁷ One cannot become Rādhā, as did Kṛṣṇa for all intents and purposes in the form of Śrī Caitanya, but by the mercy of Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī and his followers, one can taste Rādhā *bhāva* through Rādhā *dāsyam*, or *unnatojjvala-rasa*.

GAURA IS KRṢNA: THE EVIDENCE

This desire to bestow Vraja *rasa* is one of the reasons for Kṛṣṇa's descent in the present Kali *yuga*. Kṛṣṇadāsa addresses this reason in the present *māṅgala* verse under discussion. Other reasons for his

descent are addressed more fully in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's following two *maṅgala* verses. Distributing Vraja *prema* is not something that any other *avatāra* of Kṛṣṇa can do. Only Kṛṣṇa himself can bestow the *bhāvas* of *prema-mādhurya* that he alone experiences in relation to his intimate devotees.¹⁸ It is with this theistic reasoning that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja continues his argument from the previous chapter: Kṛṣṇa is *svayam bhagavān* and Śrī Caitanya is the self same Śrī Kṛṣṇa, not a partial manifestation of his divinity.

Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa in his *ācārya-līlā*, the *līlā* in which he takes the role of an *ācārya*. An *ācārya* is one who establishes a spiritual lineage or represents such a lineage in a prominent, ongoing sense—shedding new light. In his *Sarvasamvādīni*, Śrī Jīva Goswāmī describes Śrī Caitanya as the presiding Deity of his own *sampradāya*, its founder. Surely Śrī Caitanya is such an *ācārya*, Kṛṣṇa in his role as a world teacher/realizer of a highly nuanced expression of devotional Vedānta. However, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja emphasizes another sense of the term *ācārya* in describing the descent of Śrī Caitanya. The word *ācārya* speaks of one who teaches by example, behavior, or character (*ācāra*). Example speaks louder than precept, and in his *ācārya-līlā*, we find Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya teaching primarily by his example and emphasizing this point to his followers. Kavirāja Goswāmī cites Kṛṣṇa's thinking thus, "Unless one personally engages in *bhakti*, one cannot teach it to others," In support of this, he references *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.21, 3.24, and 4.7–8.

Our Kavirāja also cites Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, who writes, "While there may be many *avatāras* of Kṛṣṇa who spread auspiciousness everywhere, who other than Kṛṣṇa himself gives *prema* even to the vines/*gopīs*?"¹⁹ This is a clear reference to the *prema-mādhurya* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who bestowed such *prema* even on the vegetation in Vraja, as the *gopīs* bear witness.²⁰ The Sanskrit word *latā* in Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura's verse (*latāsu*) literally means

“vines.” However, it also refers to the *gopis* themselves, who alone experience the height of *mādhurya-prema*, the likes of which Kṛṣṇa himself desired to experience from their vantage point. This desire points to a further internal reason for Kṛṣṇa’s descent as Śrī Caitanya, which is discussed in detail in the following two *maṅgala* verses. Here it is sufficient to say that the *gopi*s’ love—and Rādhā’s *prema* in particular—that wraps itself around the beautiful dark boy of Vraja like a golden vine wraps itself around a dark *tamāla* tree, while beautifying the *tamāla* tree, is indeed the most beautiful thing of all. Although Kṛṣṇa’s Rāma *avatāra* caused plants to weep, as related in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, they did so out of love in separation on one single occasion. In comparison, the plants of the Vraja *līlā* wept daily even when meeting Kṛṣṇa. Furthermore, while Sitā alone consorts with Rāma as his only wife, Kṛṣṇa is surrounded by limitless Goddesses endowed with *parakiyā-mādhurya-bhāva*. It is the *gopi*p’s love for Kṛṣṇa that Śrī Caitanya desired to digest and distribute, something only Kṛṣṇa could choose to do for he alone experiences it. Thus it should be obvious that Gaura is Kṛṣṇa himself.

These are indeed beautiful ideas, and Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa is bold in stating them by way of attributing his own statements to Kṛṣṇa himself—Śrī Kṛṣṇa revealing his mind through the pen of Kavirāja Goswāmī. However, lest his assertions be dismissed as fanciful, Kṛṣṇadāsa proceeds in his fourth *maṅgala* verse to cite scriptural evidence for Kṛṣṇa’s descent into the world as Śrī Caitanya. Thus he locates Śrī Caitanya on the map of Eastern revelation, the standard of knowledge in his world. In the previous chapter, in which he established the primacy of Kṛṣṇa in relation to other *avatāras*, we saw some of Kṛṣṇadāsa’s scriptural genius. Continuing his argument in his commentary on the present *maṅgala* verse, the brilliance of his scriptural insight continues to shine. He begins his

argument by referring his readers to the *Mahābhārata* and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which are said to be the primary scriptures for the present age of Kali.

In the section of *Mahābhārata* listing one thousand names of Viṣṇu, we find names that fit the description of Śrī Caitanya's early life as a householder and his later life as a renunciate.²¹ These are the two basic divisions of his *līlā* that correspond with the divisions of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's early life as a village cowherd and later life as a prince. In his household life, Śrī Caitanya is named in consideration of his golden hue—Gaurāṅga. Viṣṇu's names *suvarṇa-varṇa* and *hemāṅgo* are synonymous with Gaurāṅga. Caitanyadeva's early *līlās* also point repeatedly to his youthful beauty and his form decorated with sandalwood pulp. In *Mahābhārata* we also find Viṣṇu described in this way—*varāṅgaś candanāṅgadī*. The junction between Śrī Caitanya's early and later *līlās* is centered on his acceptance of the renounced order, *sannyāsa*, and among the thousand names of Viṣṇu we find *sannyāsa-kṛc* (he who accepts *sannyāsa*) and other names that describe the character and nature of one in the renounced order: *chamah sānto* (peaceful and equipoised) and *niṣṭhā-sānti-parāyaṇāḥ* (the highest resort of devotion and peace). In this section of *Mahābhārata*, Viṣṇu's names that correspond with Śrī Caitanya's early *līlās* are grouped together, as are those that correspond with his later *līlā*. Thus, for example, his name describing him as one who takes *sannyāsa* is followed by his names describing the nature of a devotional renunciate. It should also be noted that no other *avatāra* of Viṣṇu has been identified as a *sannyāsin* or as one having a golden complexion. Indeed, Viṣṇu is typically of dark complexion and described as an enjoyer, hardly a renunciate.²² And the descriptions of Śrī Caitanya's superhuman adherence to the *dharma* of *sannyāsa* at the young age of twenty-four make clear the godly measure of his embrace of renunciation

in the context of *bhakti*. Indeed, his renunciation was such that it astounded even the elderly renunciates of his time.

Regarding the God/Viṣṇu of golden complexion, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa refers us to *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* and Kṛṣṇa himself. Therein we find that Gargācārya, while presiding over the name-giving *śamskāra* for the child Kṛṣṇa, described the dark boy Kṛṣṇa as one who also appears at other times in different colors: white, red, and golden. In consideration of other verses yet to be cited, it becomes clear that these three colors and Kṛṣṇa's own dark complexion, for which Garga named him Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa* also means "black"), are references to the *yuga* cycles. White, red, and black/syāma refer to the Satya, Tretā, and Dvāpara *yuga-avatāras*, respectively. The fact that the golden color refers to a special Kali *yuga-avatāra* is something we must turn to Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas to understand, and in doing so glimpse the depth of their understanding of Kṛṣṇa. It is perhaps the depth of their understanding of Kṛṣṇa that lends the most credence to their claim that Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa himself.

The description of Kṛṣṇa's name ceremony conducted by Garga in Nanda's cowshed is found in the *Śrimad Bhāgavatam*'s tenth canto.²³ The description of the various *yuga-avatāras*, or descents of God in the different *yuga* cycles, is found in the eleventh canto.²⁴ Drawing on these sections of the *Bhāgavata*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja makes his case for the scriptural veracity concerning Śrī Caitanya's divinity and his identification with Kṛṣṇa in particular. Let us examine the evidence in some detail beginning with Garga's statement concerning Kṛṣṇa's appearance at other times in different colors. Interestingly, these colors also correspond with the now-modified notion of four human races: white, red, black, and yellow, and thus arguably were intended to speak of Kṛṣṇa's all encompassing human appeal as well. But our interest here is with the word *pīta* (yellow/golden) in Gargamuni's

verse and this in conjunction with the *yuga* of Kali and its *dharma* of *saṅkirtana*, described in the eleventh canto.

In the fifth chapter of the eleventh canto, Mahārāja Nimi asks Karabhājana Muni about the various *yugas*—their *dharmas* and their *avatāras*. After discussing the Satya, Tretā, and Dvāpara *yugas*, the *muni* speaks about the Kali *yuga*. Muni Karabhājana says, “Listen closely of how even in Kali *yuga* there is worship through secret, esoteric methods revealed in the *tantra*.²⁵ Here we are asked to pay close attention (*tat śṛṇu*) when hearing about this Kali *yuga*. Furthermore, we are told that the method of worship in this Kali *yuga* is based in the *tantra*, a clear reference to the esoteric practices central to *rāgānugā-bhakti*.²⁶ *Rāgānugā-bhakti* pursues the spontaneous and inborn (*rāgātmikā*) *bhakti* personified in the eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa’s pastoral *līlā*. Qualification for this practice is derived from the grace of *rāga-mārga sādhus*.²⁷ It is the divine dispensation of Śrī Caitanya’s Kṛṣṇa, who is distributing Vraja *prema* in the context of *saṅkirtana*, the *yuga-dharma*.

Kṛṣṇa’s disguise is described in the successive *Bhāgavata* verse. After instructing us to pay close attention concerning the *dharma* of Kali *yuga*, the *Bhāgavata* gives a concise description of a particular Kali *yuga-avatāra* and the method of his worship. It speaks of how he is to be worshiped and how he himself worships in the guise of a devotee: “The intelligent people (of Kali *yuga*) engage in the sacrifice of *saṅkirtana* and thus honor he who is Kṛṣṇa (the *yuga-avatāra*) but describes Kṛṣṇa and thus at the same time is not Kṛṣṇa (not of black complexion nor directly Kṛṣṇa), but rather *twiśākṛṣṇa*, shining with brilliance or golden in complexion, disguised as a devotee of himself (Kṛṣṇa Caitanya) and accompanied by his associates and weapons—his major and minor limbs.”

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja next proceeds to further analyze the *Bhāgavatam*’s description of this particular Kali *yuga-avatāra*. He

shows how the verse conforms with much of what we know of Śrī Caitanya. Kavirāja Goswāmī's explanation closely follows that of Śrī Jīva Goswāmī, who was the first to write about this verse as a reference to Śrī Caitanya. Even Sanātana Goswāmī, whose commentary preceded that of Śrī Jīva, did not explain the verse in this way. However, while revealing this explanation in his *Sarvasamvādhini*, Śrī Jīva says that he wrote about this verse under Rūpa and Sanātana Goswāmī's direction and with their help: "May they be victorious—the treasures of Mathurā, Śrila Rūpa and Sanātana—who taught me the principles and made me write this book." Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa comments on this *Sarvasamvādhini mangala* verse of Śrī Jīva thus: "Rūpa and Sanātana are my [Jīva's] *guru* and *parama-guru*, respectively. May they be victorious, that is, may their elevated natures be revealed. They are the treasures or wealth of Mathurā." Thus their supervisory status is indicated."

Śrīdhara Swāmī's understanding of *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* 11.5.32 is that it speaks of Kṛṣṇa's appearance at the end of the Dvāpara *yuga* that overlaps slightly into the very beginning of Kali *yuga*. The reasoning of these earlier commentators is that there is no *yuga-avatāra* in Kali *yuga* and Viṣṇu is therefore known as Triyuga, or he who appears in three *yugas*. However, even this understanding speaks of a special Kali *yuga* because Kṛṣṇa himself only appears once in a day of Brahmā. This rare event illustrates just how special this particular *yuga* is.

Earlier in the *Bhāgavatam*, Prahlāda also alludes to a special understanding of this verse when he says that Viṣṇu is called Triyuga because in Kali *yuga* he appears in disguise (*channa-kalau*).²⁸ Similarly, the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* implies that in Kali *yuga* there is a hidden *avatāra*: "Hari, the Deity, is not seen in Kali in a *plainly* perceived form. Therefore, because he is (plainly)

visible in Satya and the other two *yugas* and not Kali *yuga*, he is called Triyuga."

Under the guidance of his own *gurus*, Jīva Goswāmī draws on the two verses cited in the previous paragraph to help him to reveal the depth of the eleventh canto verse describing Śrī Caitanya. Indeed, hearing his brilliant explanation, one wonders how the verse could have been thought of otherwise. It is preceded by a verse stating that worship in Kali *yuga* is derived principally from the *tantra*. In saying this, the preceding verse also asks the reader to pay special attention to the verse under discussion, to listen closely—*tat śrīmu*—to the description of the Kali *yuga-avatāra*, implying that there is a deep meaning embedded within it. Then the verse itself describes Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who by the time of Śrī Jīva's commentary had appeared in the world and thus made this verse more readily understandable, personifying it as he does. Let us examine the verse in some detail.

It is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya who is *kṛṣṇa-varṇam*. That is, he is constituted of the syllables (*varṇam*) *kṛṣṇa* in that his name is made of them, and furthermore he is Kṛṣṇa-like—Kṛṣṇa *tattva* or in the category of Kṛṣṇa, another meaning of *kṛṣṇa-varṇam*. Taking still another possible understanding of *kṛṣṇa-varṇam*, it describes one who utters the syllables *kṛṣṇa*. Indeed, these two syllables were constantly on Śrī Caitanya's lips, transporting the rest of his being into ecstatic trance. He is Kṛṣṇa, but in the role of a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. He is Kṛṣṇa in his *ācārya-lilā*, Kṛṣṇa teaching how to worship himself by his own example. Thus he is Kṛṣṇa and he is not Kṛṣṇa (*akṛṣṇa*). And he is not black (*akṛṣṇa*) but splendidous, lustrous, golden (*tviṣā*). That he revealed himself to be Kṛṣṇa to Rāmānanda and others is well-documented, yet he did this while appearing outwardly as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, the likes of which there is no comparison. When Kṛṣṇa teaches how to be his own devotee, we

can expect his example will be extraordinary. Indeed, his own associates, stalwart devotees themselves, were startled by the measure of his love for Kṛṣṇa. His *prema* spawned numerous biographical works and a following still vibrant today, one noticed by other religious traditions. Over five hundred years after his appearance, Christian theologian John Moffitt expresses his view of Śrī Caitanya in his *Journey to Gorakhpur: An Encounter with Christ beyond Christianity*:

If I were asked to choose one man in Indian religious history who best represents the pure spirit of devotional self-giving, I would choose the Vaishnavite saint Chaitanya, whose full name in religion was Krishna Chaitanya, or “Krishna consciousness.” Of all the saints in recorded history, East or West, he seems to me the supreme example of a soul carried away on a tide of ecstatic love of God. This extraordinary man, who belongs to the rich period beginning with the end of the fourteenth century, represents the culmination of the devotional schools that grew up around Krishna.

When he debated with philosophers, Chaitanya could be as scholarly as the great teachers, or *acharyas*, of old—Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.... In his teaching of the path of devotion to the general public, however, he continued to stress utter devotion to the Lord. This devotion was to be developed through hearing and singing the name and glories of Krishna, meditating on his form and attributes and his life on earth, worshipping him in his temples, resigning oneself to his will, trying to do only what would please him, serving his devotees, and showing kindness to all beings.

Chaitanya aroused in his followers a flood of passionate love of God. As a result, a wave of religious fervor swept over

Bengal and Orissa. Yet despite the emotionalism his teachings brought about, he himself was extremely strict. He closely watched the morals of those who were around him, sternly reprobating any form of self-indulgence. Though literally worshipped by thousands as Krishna himself, he led a simple and even austere life.

Chaitanya delighted intensely in nature. It is said that, like St. Francis of Assisi, he had a miraculous power over wild beasts. His life in the holy town of Puri is the story of a man in a state of almost continuous spiritual intoxication. Illuminating discourses, deep contemplation, moods of loving communion with God, were daily occurrences.²⁹

Moffit's testament speaks loudly to us of the universal appeal of Śrī Caitanya in the present day. Śrī Caitanya's power to persuade lies in his love-intoxicated chanting and dancing. Thousands of years earlier, Muni Karabhājana described this Kali *yuga-avatāra* as one whose weapons (*astra*) are his long outstretched arms raised rhythmically above his head as he dances and sings in Śrī Kṛṣṇa *sankirtana*. He also uses the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa as his weapon, capable of stealing into the hearts of others before they realize it. He uses these weapons to vanquish impiety and opposition to *bhakti*. Although his *aṅgas* (limbs) are also his weapons (*astras*), his expansion (Nityānanda) and his *avatāra* (Advaita) are also his limbs. Similarly, his sub-limbs (*upāṅgas*) are his ornaments, sandalwood bracelets decorating his form, or alternately they are the followers of Advaita and Nityānanda and others headed by Śrīvāsa, as well as his confidantes like Gadādhara. Those who are spiritually intelligent (*su-medhasā*), and thus possessed of *bhakti-sukṛti* and corresponding subtle theistic discrimination, will worship him through the sacrifice of *sankirtana*, following the lead of his associates.

Concluding his explanation of Karabhājana Muni's *Bhāgavata* verse, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī reveals who his primary audience is by citing two verses of Yāmunācārya. It appears that he is concerned with arguments arising from another lineage, Rāmānu-jācārya's Śrī Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. After writing, "But faithless unbelievers do not see what is clearly evident, just as owls do not see the rays of the sun," Kavirāja Goswāmī refers such unfortunate members of the most prominent Vaiṣṇava lineage of the time to the words of their own saint. Rāmānuja's predecessor Śrī Yāmunācārya writes,

O my Lord, those influenced by demoniac principles cannot realize you, although you are clearly the Supreme by dint of your exalted activities, forms, character, and uncommon power, which are confirmed by all the revealed scriptures in the quality of goodness and the celebrated transcendentalists under the influence of the divine nature.

O my Lord, everything within material nature is limited by time, space, and thought. Your characteristics, however, being unequaled and unsurpassed, are always transcendental to such limitations. You sometimes cover such characteristics by your own energy, but nevertheless your unalloyed devotees are always able to see you under all circumstances.³⁰

YUGA-AVATĀRA

Having established the scriptural support for his insight concerning the divinity of Śrī Caitanya, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja next turns to the *yuga-avatāra* aspect of Śrī Caitanya. Typically the *avatāras* who teach the *dharma* of each *yuga* appear in the world through Mahā-Viṣṇu. As the primal *puruṣa* of this world, he is a prominent yet partial manifestation of Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa, who is himself

a person of many faces. The many faces of Nārāyaṇa appear in the world for different purposes: for *līlā*, for the empowerment of others, for establishing *dharma*, and so on. In this way, they assist him when he himself appears as Mahā-Viṣṇu in his function as the compassionate overseer of the world. However, as we have learned from the previous chapter, Śrī Caitanya's descent is somewhat different from that of other *avatāras* in that he is the source of Nārāyaṇa, who is one of *his* many faces. Nonetheless, when he appears in the world, he does not defy convention. Thus he appears at the request of Advaita Ācārya, the Mahā-Viṣṇu of Gaura *līlā*.³¹ The time for Mahāprabhu's dispensation arose out of internal reasons and at the same time those internal reasons corresponded with the need to establish the *yuga-dharma*. Thus along with the distribution of *rāga-bhakti*, Mahāprabhu takes the place of the *yuga-avatāra*. His work as the *yuga-avatāra* is thus the external reason for his appearance.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja relates how Advaita Ācārya, who at the time was arguably the leading Vaiṣṇava in West Bengal, expressed frustration at the impiety of the general public and its ambivalence if not opposition to Śrī Kṛṣṇa *sāṅkirtana*. His frustration in turn gave rise to immense compassion. As empathy more readily arises in one closer to the suffering one empathizes with, Advaita Ācārya is a veritable abode of compassion as both a devotee and the overseer of a world of suffering. The compassion of Śrī Caitanya is naturally tied to the *yuga-avatāra* aspect of his descent, the external aspect of his appearance that is in consideration of the material world's inhabitants, who suffer perpetually in rounds of birth and death. Here we find a theistic ladder of love on which compassion lies at the bottom rung. The *prema*—the *ujjvala-rasa*—of Rādhā is the final step into a love that is unlimited yet ever expanding.

Śrī Caitanya's internal or esoteric reasons for incarnating no doubt inform the unique nature of his role as the *yuga-avatāra*, and thus his compassion is saturated with *prema*.³² His dispensation of the *ujjvala-rasa* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's intimate circle of devotees is exceptional and certainly corresponds with the esoteric reasons for his appearance. As the *yuga-avatāra*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya doesn't merely benedict the world with a means of deliverance from its *karmic* web, he delivers the world and grants it entrance into his inner circle. Thus the combination of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya's exalted *prema* along with his compassion is the combination of *mādhurya* with *audārya*, which leads to the possibility of drowning the entire world in love of God. Śrī Caitanya's compassionate dispensation is drawn down by the compassion of Advaita Ācārya, the God of this world who presides over its suffering population. Despite Kṛṣṇa's absorption elsewhere, Śrī Advaita asks Kṛṣṇa to show compassion to his constituents. Apparently, this is a request Kṛṣṇa cannot refuse. However, nor can he grant it without also blessing the world with the opportunity to pursue *rāga-bhakti*, given who he is. Thus he fulfills the role of the *yuga-avatāra* as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya at Advaita's request and then some, blessing the world with the opportunity to taste *ujjvala-rasa*.

Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī has described Śrī Caitanya as the most compassionate *avatāra*—*mahā-vadānyāya-avatāra*. When the *avatāri* agrees to personally descend at the compassionate request of his Mahā-Viṣṇu aspect, through whom all *avatāras* descend, he does so in style. He shows compassion in great measure, not only benedicting the masses—the least qualified—but also benedicting them in an unprecedented manner in terms of the quality of the benediction he dispenses. It is one thing to bless the most qualified with the highest benediction and quite another to benedict the least qualified (as people are considered to be in Kali *yuga*) with the

highest benediction. This is what we find in Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya as the *mahā-vadānyāya-avatāra*. He blesses the world with Kṛṣṇa *prema*—*kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te*.

The way that Advaita made his request was simple. He worshipped with water from the Ganges and blossoms of *tulasī*, India's sacred basil. The simplicity of Advaita's *pūjā* is notable. Kavirāja Goswāmī cites the *Gautamiya-tantra*: “Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is very affectionate toward his devotees, sells himself to a devotee who offers him merely a *tulasī* leaf and a palmful of water.” Advaita Ācārya is certainly an uncommon devotee and his method of worship was pure. Although Ganges water and *tulasī* blossoms are not difficult to acquire, Advaita offered them with uncommon love, and thus the world knows something about love that in our times has never been known before.

NOTES

1. Cc. 3.1.132
2. See Śrī Jīva Goswāmī's *ṭīkā* on this verse.
3. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* explains in its fifth canto description of the natural world that it will speak about the world “in accordance with the estimation of scholars” of that time—*pramāṇa-lakṣanato vyākhyātah/tad-vida* (5.21.1–2). The text also qualifies its entire description by informing us that overall the world is a transformation of the *guṇas* and that no one can explain it comprehensively—*na vai mahārāja bhagavato māyā-guna-vibhūteḥ kāṣṭhāṁ manasā vacasā vādhigantum alam vibudhāyuṣāpi puruṣas* (5.16.4). Its overriding reason for describing the cosmography at all is to foster absorption in Bhagavān in its readers, and according to commentator Viśvanātha Cakravartī, to describe a form of the universe as a manifestation of divinity suitable for *bhakti-miśra-yogīs* to meditate on (ŚB 5.16.3). By contrast, this form is said to be one devotees of Bhagavān do not meditate on, being attached to his personal form. Thus the *Bhāgavatam* is not as concerned with the details of the world of matter, but with glorifying the Godhead (in this case indirectly) such

that its readers may be better facilitated in transcending the world. In doing so, it posits an intelligent world and a gradation of consciousness everywhere.

4. In contrast to Brahmā, the Godhead Viṣṇu is “all pervading/omniscient.” His transformation, Śiva, is “consciousness/eternal existence.” Kṛṣṇa is “all-attractive/beauty.”

5. Ned Denny, “The Hidden Reality: Parallel Universes and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos by Brian Greene—Review,” accessed March 22, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/mar/20/brian-greene-universes-review-denny>.

6. For a good overview of the similarities in epistemology and ontology between modern science and Hinduism, see Jonathan Edleman’s *Hindu Theology and Biology: The Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Contemporary Theory* (Don Mills, Canada: Oxford University Press, 2012).

7. In Gauḍīya Vedānta the source of the materially bound *jīva* is Mahā-Viṣṇu. The “return,” in terms of liberation within *prema*, is to the source of Mahā-Viṣṇu, *svayam bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

8. It is also notable that the entire Bhāgavata Sāṅkhyā section of the *Bhāgavatam*’s “Kapila-gītā” is spoken not with an emphasis on describing the precise nature of matter as much as the need and means to transcend the influence of matter.

9. Albert Einstein once expressed modern science’s debt to ancient India, from where the number zero has surfaced and without which modern science would not exist.

10. This is not to say that there are no mystics originating in the West. There are, and the two cultures are obviously not as distinct from one another as they once were. The fact that I, as a person born in the West, am writing this book speaks to the extent to which the East/West dichotomy no longer exists.

11. Alain Daniélou and René Guénon have argued that the *yuga* cycles cover much shorter periods of time. Yuktesvara has also argued for different calculations of the time span of the *yugas* as well as their order. Daniélou also argues for the limits of anthropology with regard to its ability to objectively uncover the truth of our human past. Michael Cremo has highlighted anthropological errors and excessive human bias in the scientific process in an effort to make a case for ancient, advanced human civilization. His paper, “Puranic Time and the Archeological Record,” presented at the World Archeological Congress, was selected for publication in one of the official conference proceedings

volumes by Routledge. But perhaps the most plausible theory that can be used to substantiate an ancient civilization that corresponds with Purāṇic time is the many-interacting-worlds theory of physicist Howard Wiseman. This theory holds that not only do universes branch into clusters of universes every time a quantum measurement is made, as they do in the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics, but that other universes interact with and influence our universe, making very different historical scenarios on our planet a possibility.

12. SB 11.5.32

13. In his Śrī Śrī Rādhikā Aṣṭottara-Śata-Nāma-Stotram, which consists of 108 names of Rādhā, Raghunātha dāsa Goswāmī cites the name *subala nyasta*, which has this meaning.

14. In his *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura describes this inclination as a desire for *śringāra-rasa* (*śringāra-bhava-spṛhas*) on the part of the *priyanarma-sakhās*. However, this desire is not for direct romantic union with Kṛṣṇa. When such a desire for a compatible primary *rasa* appears in the heart of a devotee of a different *rasa*, the desired *rasa* becomes an *aṅga-rasa* of the *aṅgi-rasa* one is situated in (Brs. 4.8.17). Jīva Goswāmī also states that the *aṅga-rasa* serves as an *udīpana-vibhāva* for the *rasa* the devotee is situated in (Brs. 2.1.18). In other words, the *sakhya-bhāva* of the *priyanarma-sakhās* is complemented by the influence of *mādhurya-rasa*, just as yogurt mixed with sugar remains yogurt but becomes sweeter.

15. Cc. 2.8.203

16. Cc. 2.8.207. This verse refers only to the *mañjari-gopis*, because all other *gopis*, including Rādhā's other types of friends, have some desire for direct union with Kṛṣṇa.

17. Nityānanda did more than anyone else to place Gaura in the limelight and in this way promote *mañjari-bhāva*. Indeed, it is taught that without his grace, this *bhāva* cannot be attained. However, as a byproduct some members of the lineage have been influenced and blessed by his *sakhya-bhāva*.

18. *Prema-mādhurya* is one of the four qualities that Kṛṣṇa possesses. It is not found in Nārāyaṇa or any of his *avatāras*.

19. Jīva Goswāmī cites this verse in his *Pṛiti-sandarbha*, as does Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* commentary. Śrī Jīva references Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta 2.85, while Baladeva is silent as to where Bilvamaṅgala's

verse is found. While I am not aware of any other compositions on the part of Bilvamaṅgala Thākura, I have been unable to find this verse in his Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta. No edition of this book I am aware of has a second chapter and hence no 2.85 that corresponds with Jīva Goswāmi's reference.

20. ŚB 10.35.9
21. *Mahābhārata* 13.135.92
22. Viṣṇu's twofold *avatāra* of Nara-Nārāyaṇa is a renunciate, but he is not of golden complexion.
23. ŚB 10.8.13
24. ŚB 11.5.35
25. ŚB 11.5.31
26. The Gauḍīya *mantras*, visualizations, and ritual worship have been drawn from the *tantra* texts such as *Gautamiya-tantra*.
27. Brs. 1.2.309
28. ŚB 7.9.38
29. John Moffitt, *Journey to Gorakhpur: An Encounter with Christ Beyond Christianity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 129–36.
30. *Stotra-ratna* 12–13
31. Advaita Ācārya's ontological position is discussed in chapter 8.
32. It is generally thought that Śrī Caitanya appears for three esoteric reasons and one exoteric reason. However, his desire to bestow *rāga-bhakti* in the context of disseminating the *yuga-dharma* (the one exoteric reason) at the request of Advaita Ācārya arguably amounts to an additional one-half esoteric reason for his descent.

5. A Philosophical Stepping-Stone

rādhā krṣṇa-pranaya-vikṛtir hlādini śaktir asmād
ekātmānāv api bhuvi purā deha-bhedam gatau tau
caitanyākhyam prakaṭam adhunā tad-dvayam caikyam āptam
rādhā-bhāva-dyuti-suvalitanā naumi krṣṇa-svarūpam

Rādhā is the transformation of Kṛṣṇa's love, his *hlādini-śakti*. Although Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are one, from beginningless time they became two and then appeared on Earth. Now these two have again become one as Śrī Caitanya. *Pranāma* to he who is Kṛṣṇa himself, endowed with Rādhā's heart and hue.

In the previous chapter, we learned that Śrī Caitanya appeared at the request of Advaita Ācārya to inaugurate the *yuga-dharma*. This is the external reason for his descent. We also learned that Kṛṣṇa appeared as Śrī Caitanya to fulfill his desire to distribute *rāga-bhakti*. This reason for his appearance is more internal but merges together with his external reason for appearing and thus is considered separately from the three primary internal motivations for his descent, which we will explore in this chapter.

Both this fifth and the following sixth *maṅgala* verse deal with this esoteric subject matter. The fifth verse serves as an intermediate philosophical stepping-stone on which we can pause to catch our breath and from where on firm metaphysical footing we can begin our final ascent to the climax of Kavirāja Goswāmī's *maṅgalācarana*.

The sixth verse constitutes a theological zenith, the height of which is incomparable anywhere on the world's religious landscape. In this verse, transcendence and immanence meet, as the inner world of the Godhead's auto-psychoanalysis overflows into humanity.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's fifth *maṅgala* verse helps us to segue from the exoteric reason for the appearance of Śrī Caitanya, discussed in the previous chapter, into the esoteric reason for his advent. We are informed that the singular Kṛṣṇa 'becomes' two as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and further that Śrī Caitanya is a rare yet eternal occurrence in the life of the Absolute that constitutes a dynamic unity of these two divinities—the combined form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Furthermore, while these events occur in eternal time, they nonetheless manifest within human time before us.

Previously we learned that Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa in the dress of a devotee of himself—Kṛṣṇa's *ācārya-lilā*—distributing his own name and *prema*. Here we learn that Śrī Caitanya's *prema* is synonymous with that of Rādhā, and that he is in some mysterious sense Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined—Kṛṣṇa imbued with Rādhā's golden countenance, complexion, compassion, and character. Thus we enter deeply into the *tattva* of the inner world of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *lilā*.

This *lilā* of love (*pranaya*) is a transcendental affair conducted under the influence of the loving aspect (*ānanda/hlādini*) of the Godhead's primary *śakti*. It is the eternal dance of *śakti/śaktimān* constituting a dynamic integration of oneness and difference that blossoms and bears fruit, culminating in the person of Śrī Caitanya. Understanding this truth, we are better equipped to understand the esoteric reasons for his descent discussed in verse 6.

A TRANSCENDENTAL HISTORY

Let us now first explore the significance of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī's fifth *maṅgala* verse in some detail. We shall begin, as

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja himself has done, by citing some of the history that surrounds the timeless events mentioned in his verse: the singular Kṛṣṇa manifesting as the dyad of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and these two becoming one as Śrī Caitanya—Kṛṣṇa in the *rati* of Rādhā. This history picks up from the fourth *maṅgala* verse, in which the Kali *yuga* is mentioned and Śrī Caitanya is identified with the *yuga-avatāra*.

With the onset of the *yuga* arose the necessity of the *yuga-avatāra*, the protector of *dharma* for the given age. However, the *yuga-avatāra* is not typically *svayam bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has no direct concern with the protection of *dharma*. The protection of *dharma* is the concern of Viṣṇu, the Paramātmā (Oversoul of the world), through whom the *yuga-avatāras* descend. Nonetheless, this *yuga-avatāra* is contained within *svayam bhagavān*—the *avatārī*—as are all other facets of the Godhead. Thus when Kṛṣṇa himself personally appeared at the end of the Dvāpara *yuga*—a rare event—the protection of *dharma* was accomplished by the Viṣṇu within him.

If Kṛṣṇa did not appear to protect *dharma* in this world, why then did he appear? He appeared for an internal, esoteric purpose. He who has no necessity—not even to protect *dharma*—appeared to pursue love, which does not answer to reason. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? *Svayam bhagavān* exists only for love and not even for law or sacrifice, which are the concerns of his Viṣṇu *avatāra*. If it is argued that Kṛṣṇa himself is concerned with establishing *dharma*, this is true only of Mathureśa and Dvārakesha Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa of Vraja is Līlā Puruṣottama in the fullest sense of the term. The word *līlā* applies most completely to him alone.

Thus Kṛṣṇa appeared with a purpose of his own, a purpose that is transcendent to the protection of *dharma*. Similarly, when *svayam bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears as Śrī Caitanya—Prema

The sixth verse constitutes a theological zenith, the height of which is incomparable anywhere on the world's religious landscape. In this verse, transcendence and immanence meet, as the inner world of the Godhead's auto-psychoanalysis overflows into humanity.

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's fifth *maṅgala* verse helps us to segue from the exoteric reason for the appearance of Śrī Caitanya, discussed in the previous chapter, into the esoteric reason for his advent. We are informed that the singular Kṛṣṇa 'becomes' two as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and further that Śrī Caitanya is a rare yet eternal occurrence in the life of the Absolute that constitutes a dynamic unity of these two divinities—the combined form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Furthermore, while these events occur in eternal time, they nonetheless manifest within human time before us.

Previously we learned that Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa in the dress of a devotee of himself—Kṛṣṇa's *ācārya-lilā*—distributing his own name and *prema*. Here we learn that Śrī Caitanya's *prema* is synonymous with that of Rādhā, and that he is in some mysterious sense Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined—Kṛṣṇa imbued with Rādhā's golden countenance, complexion, compassion, and character. Thus we enter deeply into the *tattva* of the inner world of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *lilā*.

This *lilā* of love (*pranaya*) is a transcendental affair conducted under the influence of the loving aspect (*ānanda/hlādini*) of the Godhead's primary *śakti*. It is the eternal dance of *śakti/śaktimān* constituting a dynamic integration of oneness and difference that blossoms and bears fruit, culminating in the person of Śrī Caitanya. Understanding this truth, we are better equipped to understand the esoteric reasons for his descent discussed in verse 6.

A TRANSCENDENTAL HISTORY

Let us now first explore the significance of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī's fifth *maṅgala* verse in some detail. We shall begin, as

in the love that animates his world—*dāsyā, sakhyā, vātsalyā*, and ultimately *mādhuryā*—our interest in following in the footsteps of his devotees who embody such love.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja emphasizes that while Kṛṣṇa's intimate devotees in his pastoral *līlā* love him in the above four basic ways—as a servant, friend, parent, or lover—each devotee's love is subjectively experienced as the best of all. Indeed, each devotee's love is the best. Nevertheless, objectively speaking we find that *mādhurya*, or romantic love, involves greater intimacy. Within *mādhurya-rati*, there are two basic divisions, *svakiyā* (married love) and *parakiyā* (paramour love). *Parakiyā* appears only in Kṛṣṇa's pastoral *līlā* and it reaches its zenith in Rādhā. As we shall see, her love for Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from *svayam bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself. She is the perfect example of *prema*—Mahābhāva Svarūpiṇī Rādhe.

Thus the two—Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa—are in this sense one. At the same time, the dyad of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa eternally exists, as the one Kṛṣṇa becomes two when we look more closely. And these two again become one as Śrī Caitanya when we look more closely still. After all, love involves two becoming one, while remaining two. As Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love for one another overflows into the world, Rādhā's love is showcased, and indeed, it catches the eye of Kṛṣṇa such that he desires to taste it himself. This desire is the genesis of Śrī Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa in the role of Rādhā, whose appearance in this world constitutes an encore appearance of Kṛṣṇa. In this appearance, which occurs at the onset of the Kali *yuga* that follows the rare Dvāpara *yuga* in which Kṛṣṇa himself appears, Kṛṣṇa takes the form of a devotee of himself.

A PHILOSOPHICAL CANVAS

Kavirāja Goswāmī's fifth *maṅgala* verse reveals the nature of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love for one another, their simultaneous identity and

difference, and their dynamic unity. Our commentary explains that just as Kṛṣṇa externally established *dharma* but was internally motivated by the desire to showcase the intimate love of his pastoral *līlā*, similarly Gaura Kṛṣṇa distributes the *yuga-dharma* but in the context of doing so gives Vraja *prema*. How could it be otherwise? The two are the same person. However, why two different appearances to give the same blessing? Why is Kṛṣṇa's complexion *śyāma* (blackish) in color and Gaura Kṛṣṇa's golden?

As mentioned above, the answer to these questions lies in Kṛṣṇa's desire to taste Rādhā's love for himself from her perspective. In his sixth *maṅgala* verse, Kavirāja Goswāmī explains in detail the reason for all of this and how it comes to pass, all of which is concerned with the deeper esoteric reason for this rare event. Here in verse 5, he is concerned with the underlying philosophical canvas on which the art of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's loving union in the form of Śrī Caitanya appears.

TRANSFORMATION OF DIVINE LOVE

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's fifth *maṅgala* verse first states that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love for one another is conducted under the influence of the *hlādīni-sakti*. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa uses the word *pranaya* to describe this love. Although *pranaya* means "love," in Rūpa Goswāmī's aesthetics of *bhakti-rasa*, the word takes on a particular meaning within the more general idea of love, applying as it does in *bhakti-rasa* only to *sakhya*/fraternal and *mādhurya*/romantic love of Kṛṣṇa.

Sakhya-rasa is based on *pranaya*, the central ingredient of which is *viśrambha*, or confidence. This is a confidence that arises out of identification with the object of one's love. It is not a monistic identification in which love and those in love disappear, but rather a loving identification that causes a loss of one's sense of

self in terms of its being different from one's object of love—two persons become one with one another.

In *mādhurya-rasa*, *pranaya* reaches its highest expression. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa consider each other's life, mind, intellect, body, and belongings to be the same. Whatever belongs to Kṛṣṇa is Rādhā's; whatever is Rādhā's belongs to Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā's happiness is Kṛṣṇa's happiness, and Kṛṣṇa's happiness is Rādhā's happiness. This is the feeling of *pranaya*. If we touch our body with our feet, do we apologize? We do not hesitate to wipe our face with our garments, do we? Similarly when Rādhā touches Śrī Kṛṣṇa with her feet, she is not embarrassed; neither does she seek permission to wipe her face with his golden yellow robe. In brief, lack of self-consciousness is the main symptom of *pranaya*. It is central to *sakhya-rasa* and reaches its zenith in *mādhurya-rasa*. It is not found in *dāsyā-rasa* or *vātsalya-rasa* because such identification and sense of equality, in particular between lover and beloved, runs contrary to love in servitude and parental affection.

The dynamic loss of self-consciousness—*pranaya*—and identification with one's object of love is intensified in *mādhurya-rasa* in that it is interchangeable with *māna*, an ingredient of this *rasa* that is absent in *sakhya-rasa*. *Māna* is the jealous love that causes Rādhā to sulk and admonish Kṛṣṇa, and it is in the context of this *māna* that *pranaya* arises in the form of an intimate state of renewed trust that follows arguments, apologies, and forgiveness. However, in *mādhurya-rasa* *māna* also sometimes follows *pranaya*, in which case *māna* arises out of *pranaya* and then creates differences between lovers for the sake of *rasa*, only to give way once again to *pranaya*. Thus in this *rasa*, *pranaya* gives way to *māna* and *māna* gives way to *pranaya*. Rūpa Goswāmī has tried to help us understand these laws of love—*rasa-tattva*—with his statement that “love moves in a crooked way.”²

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartipāda writes in his *Ānanda-candrikā* that the word *pranaya* also speaks to us of that which is described later in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in a poem that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa attributes to Rāmānanda Rāya. Therein, Śrī Rāmānanda writes that Rādhā says, *nā so ramaṇa, nā hāma ramaṇī, duṇḍhu-mana mano-bhava peṣala jāni*: “It is not that he is the enjoyer and I am the enjoyed. His mind and my mind have become one.”³ This then is the sense of *pranaya* that Kavirāja Goswāmī’s fifth *mangala* verse seeks to convey. As Rāya Rāmānanda spoke these words to Śrī Caitanya, Śrīmān Mahāprabhu covered Rāmānanda’s mouth. And then he saw the two, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, as one in the person of Śrī Caitanya—Kṛṣṇa within and Rādhā without, and thus golden in complexion. This is the limit of limitless love, the *mādanākhyamahābhāva* of Śrī Rādhā that Śrī Caitanya personifies and peddles for the cost of one’s faith.

On Rūpa Goswāmī’s ladder of love (*bhakti-rasa*), *pranaya* is followed by the developments of *rāga*, *anurāga*, *bhāva*, *mahābhāva*, and *mādanākhyamahābhāva*, which is the zenith of *mahābhāva*. Here, however, the word *pranaya* refers to the *pranaya* within *mādanākhyamahābhāva*—the deepest sense of loving identification between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It refers to Śrī Rādhā’s complete merging in love with Kṛṣṇa. She is the very form of *mahābhāva—mahābhāva-svarūpiṇī*—and she alone tastes this limit of love. She is the origin of love of Kṛṣṇa.⁴ Thus the words *rādhā kṛṣṇa-pranaya-vikṛtī* in this *mangala* verse tell us that Śrī Rādhā is a transformation of love of Kṛṣṇa—Kṛṣṇa transformed into love of Kṛṣṇa.

As the singular Kṛṣṇa becomes the plural Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the two express love for one another. Kṛṣṇa experiences his own *svarūpa-sakti* transformed and manifest from within himself to appear before him personified as Rādhā. These two then seek to become one, not by returning to their former state, but by

becoming one in love for one another. As they are successful, they exchange hearts and minds. This, however, finds them again as two—a dilemma—the final solution to which is their dynamic unity in the person of Śrī Caitanya.

PRIMAL ŚAKTI

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja identifies Rādhā as the primal *śakti* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by using the words *hlādīnī śaktir asmād*. Śrī Rādhā presides over the mutual love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the sense that she personifies his primal *śakti*. Kṛṣṇa dances in his fullness to the song that is Rādhā herself. She is Kṛṣṇa *kirtana*. To her tune, he dances and comes to know himself as he could not otherwise, and through such *kirtana*, he is known to others as well. She is the *kirtana* of Kṛṣṇa personified, through which he seeks to experience and describe himself such that others can do the same. *Śaktimān*—the energetic source—expresses itself by way of its *śakti*—its own energy. The energetic is known by its energy—Kṛṣṇa is known by Rādhā. Furthermore, Rādhā is the *guru* of Kṛṣṇa. He is her pupil in the school of dance led by her song. The two are one yet different at the same time, as are the *guru* and disciple. The disciple identifies with the *guru* and in this sense makes the *guru* a manifest reality. Likewise, the *guru* also manifests or gives shape to the sincere seeking that constitutes the disciple.

The spiritual necessity of Kṛṣṇa gives rise to Rādhā and she in turn assists him in being all that he can be in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. Similarly, *śrī guru* manifests in response to the necessity of the disciple, and under the tutelage of the *guru*, the disciple realizes his or her potential. Thus with this *maṅgala* verse, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja introduces the philosophical foundation of *acintya-bhedābheda*: inconceivable, simultaneous identity and difference between *śaktimān* and *śakti*—Bhagavān and his primal

potency and all of his other potencies derived from this primal potency as well.

Kṛṣṇa's primal potency consists of three elements—*sandhini*, *samvit*, and *hlādīni*—all three of which are implied here in the word *hlādīni*. These three elements are the fullest expressions of existing (*sat*), knowing (*cit*), and loving (*ānanda*). As such, this *sac-cid-ānanda* of Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti* is different from the *sac-cid-ānanda* inherent in Bhagavān. It is also different from the *sac-cid-ānanda* inherent in the *jīvātmā*. It is different from that of the *jīvātmā* in that the *sac-cid-ānanda* of the *jīva* is infinitesimal and does not have the power to dispel the influence of the *māyā-śakti* or to overwhelm Kṛṣṇa in *prema*. It is different from Bhagavān's *sac-cid-ānanda* in that he derives more pleasure from it than he does from that which is inherent in himself. His *svarūpa-śakti* enables him to taste himself in a manner that he could not do unto himself. Thus Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti-ānanda* (the bliss of his internal *śakti*) gives him more pleasure than his *svarūpānanda* (the bliss of his own form). His *svarūpa-śakti-ānanda* is the transformation of his *svarūpānanda*, and it is personified as Śrī Rādhā, who then serves as the object of his love.

Without such a transformation, he is left with no object in which to repose himself. This subject-object interplay in the world of consciousness is what allows the Absolute to be referred to as *rasa*, as it is in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*'s *ānanda valli*—*raso vai sah*, “Brahman is *rasa*.” When Kṛṣṇa's being, knowing, and, above all, his loving are reposed in Rādhā, his loving attains new heights. As we shall see, it causes him to ponder the nature of Rādhā's experience, who in effect is giving pleasure to her source and thus arguably knows more about pleasure—about love—than he does!

The difference between the *jīvātmā*'s *sac-cid-ānanda* and that of Bhagavān is that the *jīvātmā*'s inherent *sac-cid-ānanda* is infinitesi-

mal. Because it is so, it cannot overwhelm Bhagavān. In contrast to the *svarūpa-śakti*, the *jīva-śakti* can be overwhelmed by Kṛṣṇa's *māyā-śakti*, his shadow in the form of material energy. Neither a bright fire (Bhagavān) nor its heat and light (*svarūpa-śakti*) can be overwhelmed by its smoke (*māyā-śakti*), but its sparks (*jīva-śakti*) can be covered by smoke to the extent that they shed no meaningful light. Nor can the spark unencumbered by smoke shed light in comparison to the fire. Furthermore, the blazing fire's heat and light, which cannot be covered by smoke, give meaning to the fire itself. As Rādhā gives meaning to Kṛṣṇa, she also gives meaning to the *jīvātmā*: with the ingress of *bhakti*—the essence of Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti*—into the heart of the *jīvātmā*, the *jīvātmā* has the potential to overwhelm Kṛṣṇa with love, to please Kṛṣṇa and experience his pleasure reciprocally.

As fire, its heat and light, its sparks, and its smoke are all one and different, so too are Kṛṣṇa and his *śaktis*, in that his *śaktis* are dependent on him. They have no separate existence or meaningful purpose unto themselves. Kṛṣṇa and his *śaktis* are at the same time one with each other and different from each other, and among his innumerable *śaktis*, Rādhā is the fountainhead. In the same way that he is the fountainhead of all *avatāras*, she is the fountainhead of all of his *śaktis*. He is *svayam bhagavān* and she is *svayam śakti*. Rādhā is partially manifest as Nārāyaṇa's consort Lakṣmī, she is more fully yet still only partially manifest as Kṛṣṇa's queens in Dvārakā, and she manifests different emotional aspects of herself as the milkmaids of Vraja.

Thus Śrī Rādhā, being born of Kṛṣṇa's love and being love itself with the power to overwhelm Kṛṣṇa, is in turn the object of Kṛṣṇa's love. Because of her, he tastes love as he could not otherwise, and through her he causes others to taste him as they could not otherwise. As much as Rādhā is one with Kṛṣṇa, she

is the Deity of his devotees, and as much as she is at the same time different from him, she is their ideal of devotion. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love for one another dances on a stage of *acintya-bhedābheda*, a metaphysical foundation that makes for an Absolute that, although all-pervading, is moving nonetheless. It is moving out of fullness, *svayam bhagavān* driven by his *svayam-śakti* and those touched by her (Bhakti-devī). As such, love of Kṛṣṇa (Rādhā) and Kṛṣṇa are simultaneously one and different.

ACINTYA-BHEDĀBHEDA

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda* follows the lead of his predecessors and Śrī Jīva Goswāmī in particular. It is scripturally based in Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.8, *parasya śaktir vividhaiva śriyate*: "The Absolute has *śakti*," and is logically based on the idea that in order for something to exist it must have power. The power inherent in being and by which it expresses itself is one with it and different from it at the same time.

Reality is both static and dynamic at once (one and different). It is static in the sense that it is still. It has no purpose to fulfill, no necessity, and thus no need to move. However, it is at the same time dynamic and thus moving. It is dynamic in the sense that it expresses itself in its fullness. It expresses itself not in search of fulfillment, but rather in celebration of its fullness. It has a necessity not out of incompleteness, but rather born of its fullness.

The Absolute is a unity of love, which is stillness and motion at once. One in search of love never rests until love is found, yet once finding love, that very love sets one in a motion of its own. The Absolute moves and it does not move, it is near and far at the same time, *tad dūre tad v antike* (Īśopaniṣad 5). It is nondual consciousness, and the consciousness of this consciousness is love. It exists for no purpose inasmuch as love knows no reason. There

is no reason to the rhyme of the world. Reality exists for the joy of itself, and it is out of joy—out of love—that the One becomes many and the world issues forth—*loka-vat tu lilā-kaivalyam*.⁵ Because it is about love (*ānanda*), reality not only exists (*sat*) but is also cognitive (*cit*)—*sac-cid-ānanda*. From this fire of love, sparks and smoke are byproducts. Thus the reality of the bound *jīvas* as conscious entities and the world as their existential realm follows. They constitute the intermediate (*jīva-śakti*) and secondary (*māyā-śakti*) powers of the absolute respectively.

Understanding the positive content of Brahman/consciousness lies ultimately in knowing Brahman to be a unity of love between itself and its primary power (*svarūpa-śakti/Rādhā*). This tells us more about consciousness than merely stating that it exists because it cannot be denied (denial being an act of consciousness). The Absolute as Bhagavān is a unity of love between itself and its primary power that causes it to express itself in *lilā*, or divine play. This statement offers us compelling insight as to why it exists in the first place as well as why it includes as byproducts of itself the world and the *jīvas*. Whatever exists must do or cause something. Brahman exists because it is a unity of love, in love with itself. It includes the world and the *jīvas* because they constitute partial expressions of this love corresponding with the Godhead's desire to bestow *bhakti*. Together they are necessary aspects of the all-loving Godhead that facilitate his being compassionate. Bhagavān and his powers, by which he expresses himself, interpenetrate one another and are thus one and different simultaneously, just as a person and his or her power are both one with and different from the person at the same time.

If the Absolute's power is wholly nondifferent from the Absolute, what need is there to call it anything such as “power,” and in this way distinguish it? If the Absolute's power is wholly different

from the Absolute, this would compromise the nonduality of the Absolute. And what scope is there for love if Bhagavān is not both one and different from his primary power, for love itself requires unity as much as it does diversity. Because it is impossible to conceive (*acintya*) of the power of the absolute as entirely different from it, Gauḍīya Vedānta calls the Absolute one (*abheda*), and because it is equally impossible to conceive of the power of the Absolute as entirely identical with it, Gauḍīya Vedānta calls the Absolute different (*bheda*). Brahman/Bhagavān is its power and is not its power. The two are thus interpenetrable and not entirely distinct, as are attributes from their substance despite their inseparability.

Brahman is neither absolutely one with nor absolutely different from its *śaktis*. Were Brahman absolutely one with the world and the *jīvas*, their faults would be those of Brahman. Were Brahman absolutely different from the *jīvas* and the world, this would constitute a type of dualism that contradicted the scriptural account of Brahman's nonduality.⁶ However, knowing that both identity and difference coexist in the same object does not tell us how they do so. Logical thinking precludes their simultaneous presence in the same object. The inconceivability of the relation between the *bheda* and *abheda* of the Absolute is evident from the contradiction it involves.

It is thus on this metaphysical, theistic canvas, in which God is greater than the universe and also includes and interpenetrates it, that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has drawn his picture of the interplay of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In any form of panentheism, we find the best of both the pantheistic and theistic worldviews. We find a world that is not divorced from God, a world in which the personhood of the Godhead is not lost. Pantheism lacks a personal Godhead and theism separates the world from God. In panentheism, we

find a personal God who is also the ground of being. Thus it is not surprising that a number of theologians from different religious traditions are turning to a panentheistic perspective. Michael Brierley comments that “there are many areas, of which ecology is just one, in which panentheism both corresponds more closely to people’s experience and also is more sensitive to ethical concerns than alternative forms of theism. Among these other areas is dialogue between science and religion.”⁷

However, unlike Western forms of panentheism that are popular today, Jīva Goswāmī’s panentheism offers a very clear notion of the personhood of the Godhead intertwined with a primal *sakti*—not merely a world of matter (*māyā-sakti*) and consciousness (*jīva-sakti*) with an abstract notion of a personal God. In Western forms of panentheism, all descriptions of the personal Godhead fail to tell us in any detail about that God’s personality, arguably rendering the Godhead less lovable. Charles Hartshorne, David Tracy, Joseph A. Bracken, Arthur Peacocke, and Philip Clayton, as well as feminist theologians Sallie McFague and Grace Jantzen, to name a few, all embrace some form of panentheism but tell us little if anything about the personality of the Godhead that lies beyond or constitutes more than the world. The “more than the world” that God constitutes is more abstract than not in all such forms of panentheism. But as we have seen, this is hardly the case in the panentheism of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism’s panentheism literally embraces a personal God, whose *saktis*—*māyā-sakti* and *jīva-sakti*—are the world. While they transform to manifest the world, Kṛṣṇa does not. He plays in the embrace of his primary *svarūpa-sakti* deep within the supersubjective world of consciousness proper—a transspatial, transtemporal realm. Thus he is the ground of our being and he also has a life of his own with Rādhā, his primary *sakti*.

The loudest objections to panentheism from theism do not touch this consciousness-constituted world. They appear in relation to the world of our present experience, the world that theism is principally preoccupied with. Let us look at these objections briefly before we conclude this chapter: (1) Panentheism ties the Godhead too closely to the world and thus to evil; (2) Panentheism violates the doctrine of creation ex nihilo (God created this world out of nothing).

In regard to the first objection, in Jīva Goswāmī's panentheism the Godhead is not judged by what he makes, such as a world in which there is evil, but rather by how he acts in relation to what already exists. God exists and his being includes his *saktis*, the powers of the powerful. They have no beginning. He is just in relation to his *māyā-śakti* and merciful in relation to his *jīva-śakti*. His justice involves deferring to his *māyā-śakti* with regard to the *jīva-śakti*'s willful interaction with her and her subsequent response. This is the principle of *karma*. As the *jīva* takes from the world under the illusion of thinking that by material acquisition it will become more and attain fulfillment, the *jīva-śakti* incurs a *karmic* debt to the world. The just Godhead does not interfere when his *māyā-śakti* seeks payment. However, through the agency of his devotees, by whom he has been purchased, he also exhibits mercy in the form of bestowing the opportunity of *bhakti*, resulting in *karmic* release and loving union with himself. As there cannot be mercy without justice, the Godhead is not directly associated with the evil of the world. It derives from the willful interaction of the *jīva-śakti* with *māyā-śakti*, an interaction that has no beginning—*anādi karma*. Indeed, through the agency of his devotees, God indiscriminately shows mercy to the *jīva-śakti*, despite its *karmic* debt.

In response to the second objection, our answer lies first in examining the doctrine of creation ex nihilo (God created this

world out of nothing) with greater scrutiny. As Christian theologian and philosopher Keith Ward notes, “It is irrelevant to a doctrine of creation ex nihilo whether the universe began or not: that the universe began was usually accepted because of a particular reading of Genesis 1.”⁸ This doctrine was affirmed by early church fathers in opposition to the notion of a sky god working on preexistent matter and fashioning it, which seemed to threaten the sovereignty of God by limiting God’s power and creativity to the recalcitrance of the material God had to work with.⁹ Thus the theory of creation ex nihilo does not mandate that the universe must have a beginning. As such, it is not necessarily at odds with Gaudiya’s panentheism and beginningless world cycles.

Gaudiya Vedānta attributes the world and its plurality of souls not to a magical creation out of nothing but to the boundless joy of the Godhead. Out of joy the Godhead desired to become many to celebrate his fullness—*loka-vat tu lilā-kaivalyam*. The emphasis in this *sūtra* is that God manifests the world effortlessly. It is a doctrine of creation in which God’s sovereignty and creativity is not limited in any way other than by his own imagination. While material nature already exists, in its unmanifest form it has no meaning or purpose. Indeed, its observer-dependent potentialities are themselves the result of the Godhead glancing lovingly upon his *māyā-śakti*. Without the Godhead reflecting upon it or imagining it and sustaining it in all respects, there is no natural world. Within Christian theological circles, it is often thought that the central concept of creation ex nihilo is not that the world is produced out of nothing at some point in time, but rather that it is a caused reality which needs the divine sustenance at every moment of its dependent existence. Frederick Copleston’s explication of Aquinas is a good example: “Every finite thing depends existentially on God at every moment of its existence, and if the

divine conserving activity were withdrawn, it would at once cease to exist.”¹⁰

However, what we have learned from this chapter is that while the entire world rests on Kṛṣṇa, his life rests in the hands of Rādhā. She embodies how to love Kṛṣṇa. Exactly what she experiences in doing so is a curious question. And it is this question that Kavirāja Goswāmī turns to in support of his contention that the singular Kṛṣṇa eternally becomes the dyad of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and that this dyad again becomes one in a most dynamic sense in the person of Śrī Caitanya. Ahead in his sixth *maṅgala* verse, Kavirāja Goswāmī strengthens this argument considerably by granting his readers a glimpse into the climax of the transcendental love life of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa where we find Śrī Kṛṣṇa deeply perplexed.

NOTES

1. Bg. 4.8
2. *Ujjvala-nilamani* 15.102
3. Cc. 2.8.194
4. *Govinda-lilāmṛta* 11.22
5. Vs. 2.1.33
6. See ŚB 1.2.11. As mentioned in chapter 3, Gaudiya Vedānta’s dualism lies within its overarching nondualism and in this sense constitutes more of a category dualism than a substance dualism, even while consciousness is substantially different from matter.
7. Michael W. Brierley, “The Potential of Panentheism for Dialogue between Science and Religion” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Phillip Clayton and Zachary Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 635–36.
8. Keith Ward, “God as a Principle of Cosmological Explanation,” in *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, ed. Robert J. Russell, Nancey C. Murphy, and C. J. Isham (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory, 1993), 247–62.

9. Ankur Barua, “God’s Body At Work: Rāmānuja and Panentheism,” accessed August 19, 2015, cambridge.academia.edu/AnkurBarua.
10. Frederick C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1955), 137.

6. The Godhead in Existential Crisis

śri-rādhāyāḥ pranaya-mahimā kiḍrśo vānayaivā-
svādyo yenādbhuta-madhurimā kiḍrśo vā madiyah
saukhyam cāsyā mad-anubhavataḥ kiḍrśam yeti lobhāt
tad-bhāvādhyah samajani śaci-garba-sindhau harinduh

What is the nature, the glory of Śrī Rādhā’s love? What is the nature of my amazing sweetness that she alone tastes? What is the nature of Rādhā’s happiness that results from experiencing me? Greedy with desire to answer these questions, Hari, richly endowed with her ecstasy, appeared like the moon from the ocean of Śaci’s womb.

From the previous verse, we have understood the philosophical stage of inconceivable, simultaneous unity and diversity upon which the divine drama of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa *līlā* is played out. We have also learned how these two become one in Śrī Caitanya, giving rise to Gaura *līlā*. In the present verse, we learn the internal causes for this divine union that is Śrī Caitanya—the deepest esoteric reasons for his descent. We move, that is, from viewing this phenomenon from the vantage point of *tattva* to viewing it from the vantage point of *bhāva*, from philosophy to the ecstasy of it all. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja generously invites us into the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to consider three extremely private questions arising in God’s heart that shake the foundation of his existence. Veritably

we enter God's adolescent existential love crisis that underscores what it means to be "Kṛṣṇa"—*svayam bhagavān*—standing as he must in supplication to Rādhā.

We enter this drama by way of Gaura *līlā*. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa informs us that his own insight into this subject came from Svarūpa Dāmodara, Śrī Caitanya's intimate associate and secretary. Svarūpa Dāmodara knows the heart of Śrī Caitanya. In Gaura's *antya-līlā*, we find Śrī Caitanya in his arms in ecstasy. It is in this final *līlā* that Gaura realizes the full measure of the reason behind his own existence. It is here that Kṛṣṇa as Gaura fully experiences Rādhā's love for him.

The form of Rādhā *bhāva*—Prabhu's heart—gave rise incessantly to happiness and sorrow. In his final *līlā*, Prabhu Gaura, maddened in Kṛṣṇa *viraha*, acted in error and spoke deliriously. At night he uttered incoherently, his arms around Svarūpa's neck, his heart profusely overcome in ecstasy. When a *bhāva* arose within Prabhu, Dāmodara pacified him, singing songs, citing verses, and giving him bliss.¹

Here Gaura is tasting the adolescence of the Absolute—Kṛṣṇa's *kiśora-līlā*—just as Rādhā did during the divine couple's manifest *līlā* in human society. It is in this adolescent form—Kiśora Kṛṣṇa—that Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* of love ascends to its apex. However, despite the fullness of his youthful love life with Rādhā that he descended to relish and showcase, his *nara-līlā* (humanlike pastimes) left him struggling with three unfulfilled desires and thus three questions:²

1. What is the glory and nature of Rādhā's love?
2. What is the measure and nature of my sweetness that Rādhā alone fully tastes?
3. What is the happiness that Rādhā experiences from loving me—the nature of the state in which she is engrossed?

In thinking thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded that he could answer these questions and fulfill his desires only by assuming the role of Rādhā himself! Thus the need arose for another *līlā*—Gaura *līlā*—in which Kṛṣṇa attempts to play the role of Rādhā. In this sense Gaura *līlā* is the natural extension of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. Kṛṣṇa finds himself stunned by Rādhā’s love for him, knowing her sacred aesthetic experience exceeds the measure of his own. Thus he finds himself questioning his identity as Rasarāja, when it becomes clear that there is so much about *rasa* he has no experience of.

The Upaniṣads have dubbed him *rasa: raso vai saḥ*. And although he reciprocates in all mellowes of divine *rasa*, his experience of *rasānanda* pales in comparison to that of Śrī Rādhikā. As his *līlā* does not afford him her experience, and on this account fails to fully satisfy him, similarly his ability to outwardly showcase the virtues of his *līlā* is also hindered, as his head spins and his heart stops only to throb again more forcefully. Gaura *līlā* is the answer to these two problems. Gaura *līlā* is as if Kṛṣṇa has gathered his wits to formulate a strategy to deal with the shortcomings of his own *līlā*. While his strategy is brilliant, it is risky as well. He will lose sight of himself, not only as God, but also as the son of Nanda and Yaśodā. He will awaken in a new *līlā* as a *sādhaka* struggling to find himself. His Godhood will surface and again submerge. His cowherd identity will shine forth like a blue sapphire only to transform into a golden one in search of himself. Will he find himself again and will his strategy succeed? How will his devotees be affected by it? What will become of the world in the meantime if *svayam bhagavān* checks out?³ How will Mahā-Viṣṇu react? While one may have such concerns, they cannot check Kṛṣṇa’s necessity to taste love like never before. Such are the internal reasons for the appearance of Śrī Caitanya. These internal reasons arise in Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, about which some discussion is in order before we examine the reasons themselves in greater detail.

That God “plays” is not a notion outside Western thought. Plato indicated it indirectly when he described human beings as God’s “toys”—“and with regard to the best in us, that is what we really are.” We are thought by Plato to have been the verse of God’s poetry, although responsible for what we are at present. This implies both action under the law of *karma* as well as God’s life beyond the *karmic* realm of cause and effect. The phenomenal world is the play of God, and at the same time he has his own life transcendent to the phenomenal world. As Meister Eckhart says, “This play was played eternally before all creatures.” Vedānta tells us that the phenomenal world is caused by nothing more than this play of God. Thus the Absolute moves out of joy in aesthetic rapture.

In Kṛṣṇa *līlā* we encounter the “play that is played eternally before [the creation of] all creatures,” and also the notion that *at play* God is and we are “what we really are.” As mentioned earlier in chapter 2, the Sanskrit word *līlā*—divine play—in its most complete sense applies only to Kṛṣṇa’s pastoral *līlā*. Therein we find that God has nothing to do but play, to be himself in association of those who have realized all they can be, as members of the inner circle of God’s play. And one who has no duty to perform and who thus only plays is all-powerful, for it takes power to play, just as it takes resources to retire.

The Godhead’s omniscience and omnipresence foster this play, which in turn outshines both of these conditions. Omniscience and omnipresence leave nothing to know and nowhere to go. However, in Kṛṣṇa’s play, his omniscience is suppressed and he enters a condition of divine unknowing and finds this condition more fulfilling. This condition of unknowing is facilitated by his *svarūpa-sakti*, by *bhakti*. It is a loving condition and love transcends knowledge but is also the highest knowledge, higher than omni-

science.⁴ God's omnipresence is also suppressed in Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, as he who is everywhere moves nonetheless by the force of *bhakti*.

For the finite to mix intimately with the infinite, the infinite must assume a finite-like appearance. Without doing so, the infinite's majesty will prevail, leaving no room for intimacy, and intimacy cannot be a pretense. Thus the part that Kṛṣṇa plays in intimate love of God is one that he plays well. Indeed, he becomes the part he plays. Kṛṣṇa is a cowherd more than he is anything else, the omniscient Godhead included. In his divine unknowing, not only is his omniscience suppressed—the sense that he is God—but other things are suppressed as well. Relative to the present *māngala* verse of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Vraja Kṛṣṇa does not know the highest reach of love, even as he engages in his love play. He does not know Rādhā's rapture from her perspective—the highest reach of *bhakti*, which has the power to dethrone omniscience and makes the immobile, omnipresent Deity dance.⁵ Thus another *līlā* is required, one in which this aspect of Kṛṣṇa's unknowing is undone—Gaura Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*.

Having briefly considered some of the implications of divine unknowing, let us now explore the first of Kṛṣṇa's questions: "What is the glory and nature of Rādhā's love?" Through the pen of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, we find ourselves deep within Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, listening to Kṛṣṇa's thoughts about himself in his adolescence. His childhood was successful because of the love of his parents; his boyhood was successful because of the love of his friends; his adolescence was successful because of the love of Rādhā. However, Rādhā's love in particular is problematic for him. Despite the fact that Kṛṣṇa is constituted of the full measure of bliss—*pūrnānanda*—the *prema* of Rādhā drives him mad:

I am made of *ānanda*, full knowledge, the whole truth,
nonetheless Rādhā's *prema* drives me mad.

I do not know the strength of her love,
by which she continually overwhelms me.
Rādhā's *prema* is my *guru*. I am her dancing disciple.
She makes me dance in various wonderful ways.⁶

Rādhā's *prema* thus exceeds the *prema* of Kṛṣṇa many times over! Although it is unlimited, it nonetheless continues to grow; although it is profound, it is pride-less; although it appears otherwise at times, it is always pure.

We learn from the commentary of Viśvanātha Cakravartī on the first verse of Śrimad Bhāgavatam that Kṛṣṇa taught the original poet Bharata Muni about the *ādi-rasa*, his romantic love *līlā* with Rādhā that moves like a river between the banks of union and separation. However, it appears that Bharata was not the best student of *rasa* theory. Indeed, he and his students misunderstood *bhakti-rasa* to refer to mundane heroes and heroines in the temporal realm. Thus he developed his secular theory of *rasa* that is but a shadow of actual divine *rasa* at best.⁷

It also appears that although Kṛṣṇa inspired Bharata with knowledge of *rasa-tattva*, Bharata also misunderstood that in *śṛṅgāra*, or romantic *bhakti-rasa*, the hero and heroine enjoy equally. While this is true in mundane relationships, in which there is no spiritual or real *rasa*, Rādhā's *ānanda* in the world of actual *rasa* exceeds that of the perfect hero, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, many times over!⁸ Thus Kṛṣṇa longs to understand its nature, its glory. And although he understands something about it, comprehensive understanding is only possible by the direct experience of Rādhā herself. Dilemma. This then is Kṛṣṇa's first question: What is the depth or extent of the *prema* Rādhā possesses for me?

Kṛṣṇa's sweetness is reflected in the mirror of Rādhā's love. Although Kṛṣṇa's sweetness is full and complete, it appears newer

and newer before the mirror of Rādhā’s love. Rādhā’s love, her *hlādini*, appears in Kṛṣṇa’s innumerable devotees. In turn, this *hlādini* causes him to appear in innumerable forms in order to reciprocate with the varied love of his innumerable devotees.

The sweetness of Kṛṣṇa’s form—*rūpa-mādhurya*—is incomparable. It is one among four qualities that he alone possesses. None of his *avatāras*, not even Nārāyaṇa, possess this *rūpa-mādhurya*, nor his *vēnu-mādhurya*, *līlā-mādhurya*, or *prema-mādhurya*. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam states, “That form astonishes even the Lord of Vai-kunṭha. It is the pinnacle of auspicious qualities and enhances the beauty of his ornaments.”⁹

And all of this sweetness—this *mādhurya*—has *aiśvarya* as its backdrop. Indeed, *aiśvarya* is an integral ingredient to Kṛṣṇa’s *mādhurya*. Just as a jewel shines more brilliantly on a black backdrop, similarly the backdrop to Kṛṣṇa’s sweetness is his Godliness, for his *līlā* is sweet largely because it is apparently devoid of Godliness and thereby affords intimacy. God in humanlike form is sweet, whereas the human form itself is not so to the same degree, if at all. The beauty of Kṛṣṇa’s form is such that blinking in its presence is an inestimable loss. But although Kṛṣṇa’s form is sweet because he is God in humanlike form, his form is also sweet because it corresponds with the sweetness of Rādhā’s love. Because Kṛṣṇa’s sweet form corresponds with Rādhā’s love, his sweetness is best taken advantage of by her and not Kṛṣṇa himself. Thus Kṛṣṇa’s second question is “How does Rādhā view my spectacular sweetness?”

Kṛṣṇa’s third query concerns the nature of Rādhā’s bliss, the pleasure she feels as a result of pleasing him. This question is a natural consequence of Kṛṣṇa’s first two questions. To fully understand the glory of Rādhā’s love and to experience his sweetness from her vantage point, Kṛṣṇa must somehow experience her

mahābhāva, her ecstasy. Before discussing this ecstasy, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja again refers to Svarūpa Dāmodara. He alone understands this subject—*mahābhāva*—and it is from him that even Kṛṣṇa as Śrī Caitanya must learn about it.¹⁰ Thus it is very deep, a love Śrī Caitanya labored for within the Gambhīra.¹¹ As Kavirāja Goswāmī sets out to explain what it is about Rādhā’s ecstasy that attracts Kṛṣṇa’s mind, driving Kṛṣṇa to somehow taste it himself, he refers to Rādhā’s ecstasy as *adhirūḍha-bhāva*.¹² Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa explains at length that the underlying foundation of this *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva* is selflessness. It is *prema* (selfless spiritual love) and not *kāma* (selfish sense desire), even while it is sometimes referred to as *kāma*.¹³ Despite its similarity to *kāma* in appearance, *prema* is as different from *kāma* as night is from day.

While it is true that spiritual life is selfless, Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas recognize a gradation of spiritual selflessness. In this gradation, selflessness first takes the form of calculated self-sacrifice and culminates in spontaneous self-forgetfulness. In between these two poles of love, there are numerous degrees of selflessness. While all of them include forgoing the selfish desire that fosters the conventional, illusory sense of self, many of them nonetheless contain elements of calculated spiritual self-concern that fall short of the spontaneous self-forgetfulness we find in the *gopis* and most fully manifest in Śrī Rādhā.

Rūpa Goswāmī refers to Rādhā and the *gopis*’ love as *samartha-rati*, “competent love.” In contrast, the love of Kṛṣṇa’s queens in Dvārakā is referred to as *samañjasa-rati*, “strong love.” Unlike *samartha-rati*, *samañjasa-rati* contains elements of spiritual self-concern. Thus *samañjasa-rati* serves as a good example to help explain spiritual selfishness in relation to spiritual selflessness—self-sacrifice in comparison to self-forgetfulness. The example of Rukmiṇī’s *samañjasa-rati* is high on the ladder of spiritual

selflessness but nonetheless contains trace elements of spiritual self-concern absent in the *gopis'* *samartha-rati*. Rukmini's ecstasy does not reach to the level of *mahābhāva* and her spiritual self-concern is what denies her this experience. Rukmini could not consider forgoing Vedic *dharma* with regard to marriage rites in her quest to attain Kṛṣṇa as her husband. Her love for him was thus constrained by scriptural proscription. The *gopis*, on the other hand, were prepared to and indeed did forgo Vedic law in their pursuit of loving romantic union with Kṛṣṇa, answering to the clarion call of Kṛṣṇa's flute. They cast all concerns as to their reputation to the wind, and in doing so appeared selfish, lustful, and greedy for Kṛṣṇa's love in complete self-forgetfulness, desiring only to please him regardless of the apparent consequences. Because of this, their love is called *kāma-rūpa*. It takes the shape of *kāma* even while it is its polar opposite. In this way, it hides itself from all but the most discerning eye.

In *samartha-rati*, one's self concerns are united with Kṛṣṇa's personal desires. One's personal desire is only to fulfill the desire of Kṛṣṇa. Thus *samartha-rati* is competent to subjugate Kṛṣṇa. The strength, the competence, of this *rati* to capture Kṛṣṇa is apparent by the fact that while Kṛṣṇa's mind could not be agitated even in the midst of sixteen thousand love arrows of *samañjasa-rati* hurled at him at once by his queens in Dvārakā, his mind and senses are readily overwhelmed by the *gopis'* love.¹⁴ Their selfless *samartha-rati* is further denoted as *rūḍha-mahābhāva*, "full blown great ecstasy." Only the *gopis* and Kṛṣṇa's intimate friends who assist him in his romantic affairs with the *gopis* taste this ecstasy.¹⁵

When this full-blown great ecstasy expands exponentially, Śrī Rūpa refers to it as *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva*. It has two divisions, *modana* and *mādana*. Both *modana* and *mādana* imply amorous romantic pleasure. *Modana* means "joy," and *mādana* means "joy and

trembling,” indicating a type of intoxication in love. *Adhirūḍha-modana-mahābhāva* appears only in Rādhā’s group, not all *gopīs*, and *adhirūḍha-mādana-mahābhāva* appears only in Rādhā herself. It is the property of Rādhā alone and thus it is she who is one with Kṛṣṇa in love, as we learned from the previous chapter. She is the golden vine ornamenting the dark *tamāla* tree of Kṛṣṇa, and as she experiences him, so too do the flowers on the vine of Rādhā. As she is nourished, so too are her handmaidens in Rādhā *dāsyam*. Just as among all forms of Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa is *svayam bhagavān*, similarly among all forms of *rati*, *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva* is the zenith of spiritual love. Thus the question arises as to how Kṛṣṇa can taste it, covetous for love as he is. This is his third question, the third desire that he is driven greedily to pursue: “When she realizes the depth of my incredible sweetness, what is the nature of the state in which she is engrossed?” If he is successful in his quest, his other two questions will be answered, his threefold desire fulfilled.

These three questions arise as Kṛṣṇa in his most introspective moments understands that while he is the perfect object of love, capable of captivating everyone, nonetheless Rādhā’s love captivates him. This appears contradictory. He is the most lovable object, but upon reflection he realizes that he has an object of love! Is Rādhā then not the perfect object of love and not Kṛṣṇa? The whole world worships him but he worships her. Is Rādhā greater than he is? How could that be, given that he is God? Thinking thus, Kṛṣṇa realizes that her glory is derived from something she experiences in him, something that he cannot see or experience from his vantage point. The love that is Rādhā—*mahābhāva-svarūpiṇī*—derives from something within himself that she alone experiences. She knows him like no other. Thus he is the perfect object of love, but exactly what that means in the most complete sense he cannot experience.

In the *Gitā*, Kṛṣṇa promises to reciprocate in kind with those who approach him.¹⁶ The *gopis'* love, and Rādhā's love that much more, is so great that Kṛṣṇa found himself unable to live up to his word. He confesses this truth to them in the *Bhāgavata*:

The debt incurred I cannot pay
in a life of Brahmā's time.
More than this, what can I say?
Your love for me itself is more than I in mystic way.¹⁷

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja tells us that it is here in these core texts embraced by all Vedāntins that we find Śrī Caitanya. While other verses that speak more directly about Śrī Caitanya have been cited to support his divinity, it is this verse from *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* that is without a doubt the most compelling scriptural evidence, even while it makes no direct reference to Śrī Caitanya at all.

Śrimad Bhāgavatam is a lengthy treatise spread over twelve cantos consisting of approximately eighteen thousand verses. The verse cited above is but one of them, one that overtly says nothing about Śrī Caitanya. However, it is the quality of this verse that must be considered, as well as its placement in the text. It appears at the height of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's *rasa-lilā*. The five chapters covering this *lilā* are the climax of the *Purāṇa*. The text leads up to this *lilā* in twenty-eight chapters and essentially reflects back on it in the remaining fifty-seven chapters. It is at the conclusion of the fourth of its five chapters, *rasa-pañcādhyāya*, that this verse appears. At this point in the *lilā*—the consummation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love for one another—Kṛṣṇa bows to Rādhā's love, and only then does the *rasa* dance go forward unabated and without interruption.

Theologizing on the basis of this verse, wherein Kṛṣṇa reveals his mind to Rādhā and the *gopis*, Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas come to the logical conclusion as to the genesis of their Deity, Śrī Caitanya.

Suddenly the creditor has become the debtor. Rādhā's love dethrones Kṛṣṇa. Thus he must make it clear to the religious world who actually reigns supreme. Commenting on this *Bhāgavata* verse in his *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta tīkā*, Sanātana Goswāmī points in the direction of Śrī Caitanya. Allow me to follow his hint to its logical theological conclusion. In this verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that Rādhā's virtue (*sādhunā*), her saintly love for him, is her own reward.

Looking deeper, because Kṛṣṇa cannot reciprocate in kind with the love Rādhā embodies and approaches him with, he is left to eternally sing of its virtue the world over. To do this—to make a feeble attempt to repay her—he must himself become a *sādhu* devoted to her. Instead of telling her that her saintliness (*sādhunā*) is her own reward, Kṛṣṇa tells Rādhā that he will arrange for a *sādhu* (*sādhunā*) to reward her by making others into her devotees. And this is precisely what he does in the form of Śrī Caitanya, and he does so once in every day of Brahmā. Kṛṣṇa promises Rādhikā that once in every day of Brahmā he will appear as a *sādhu* and sing the glory of her love, enlisting others in her service! Jaya Rādhe! Jaya Gaurahari!

Thus it is love of Kṛṣṇa, and Rādhā's love in particular—the *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva* that she is constituted of—that ascends to the throne. God is found more than anywhere else within “love of God”—within *adhirūḍha-mādanākhya-mahābhāva*. While one may not believe in God, it is harder not to believe in love of God—at least it is hard not to believe in Śrī Caitanya's love of God. In his love of God, we find swooning in ecstasy, intoxication, contagious delirium, torrential tearful elation, horripilation—all at the mere utterance of Kṛṣṇa's name and all philosophically and theologically well grounded. His ecstasy is not epilepsy, as misconstrued by the medically uninformed, unless perhaps there is a highly contagious form of the disease. Endowed with Rādhā's *mahābhāva*, Kṛṣṇa

appears as Śrī Caitanya to sing the glory of her love, a love that he himself lives for and longs to experience, a love that overflows into the hearts of everyone he comes in contact with.

Thus it is by contemplating the implications of Kṛṣṇa's confession to Rādhā that Śrī Caitanya is born. Arriving at such an extraordinary conclusion is the natural result of deeply penetrating insight into the nature of Kṛṣṇa's psychology. Gaura *līlā*, although more commonly thought of as a bridge to Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, resides deep within Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. It is the logical extension of Kṛṣṇa *līlā* arising out of his most introspective moments. Gaura is Kṛṣṇa in crisis. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness of Rādhā. On earth he appears like the full moon from the ocean of Śacidevi's affection.

Ancient Indian mythology envisions the moon to have risen out of the ocean. Interestingly, as far-fetched as this may sound, it corresponds in one sense with the scientifically credible giant impact theory that posits the idea that the earth was impacted by another planet when the young earth was less solid, perhaps in a plastic, fluid, or even gaseous state. The theory goes on to suggest that a gob of material may have swung away and eventually became our solid, orbiting moon. The hole left by this suggested upheaval is thought to be the basin of our Pacific Ocean. Thus the moon—believe it or not—may have been born from the ocean. Similarly, the affectionate ocean of mother Śaci's love for her son Viśvambhara Miśra gives birth to the golden moon of Śrī Śacinandana. He in turn as Śrī Caitanya has the capacity to melt the solidified world of our mental constructs, making all things possible.

Within Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, parental affection for Kṛṣṇa is at odds with his secret love affair with Rādhā. Although his parents want nothing other for him than Rādhā's hand, the situation in the *līlā* makes this impossible. This in turn gives rise to the necessity of *parakiyā-bhāva*, secret paramour love. Thus in Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, *vātsalya-rasa* indirectly

facilitates the secret union of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, whereas in Gaura *līlā* Śacidevi's maternal love gives birth to their eternal union for everyone to witness, as the full moon dissipates the darkness of night. It is she too who ultimately blesses his *sannyāsa* and thereby facilitates his distribution of *prema* to the masses. Jaya Śacinandana! Jaya Śacinandana!

NOTES

1. Cc. 1.4.106, Cc. 1.4.107, Cc. 1.4.109, and Cc. 1.4.110.
2. It is thought that Kṛṣṇa's *nara* (humanlike) *līlā*, which is played out in human society, is the most complete manifestation of his transcendental love life. It is something like a drama filmed "on location."
3. In *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.24 Kṛṣṇa tells us that if he were to give up his duty the entire world would fall into ruin.
4. In the ninth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa explains *bhakti* to be *rājā-vidyā*, the king of knowledge.
5. In his *Rāgavartma-candrikā*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura notes that Kṛṣṇa's omniscience is not lost altogether when he is consumed by Rādhā's love. Thus he can hear the prayers of his *sādhakas*.
6. Cc. 1.4.122–24
7. Here I am following one of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's interpretations of this seminal verse found in his *Sārārtha Darśinī*.
8. Cc. 1.1.257–58
9. SB 3.2.12
10. Svarūpa Dāmodara is considered to be Lalitā-sakhī in Kṛṣṇa's Vraja *līlā*. She is well acquainted with the nature of Rādhā. Lalitā-sakhī is Kṛṣṇa's most suitable guide to help Kṛṣṇa enter into Rādhā's ecstasy in his appearance as Śrī Caitanya.
11. The Gambhira is a small stone room in which Śrī Caitanya resided in his pursuit of Rādhā *bhāva* under the guidance of Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāya Rāmānanda. The word Gambhira means "deep."
12. It is also referred to as *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva* in order to distinguish this *bhāva* from any other *bhāva*.

13. In Brs. 1.2.273, Rūpa Goswāmī refers to it as *kāma-rūpa*.
14. ŚB 10.61.4
15. *Sārārtha Darśinī* commentary of Viśvanātha Cakravartī on ŚB 9.24.65.
16. Bg. 4.11
17. ŚB 10.32.22

7. *The Worlds Above and Below*

*saṅkarṣaṇah kārana-toya-śāyī
garbhoda-śāyī ca payobdhi-śāyī
śeṣaś ca yasyāṁśa-kalāḥ sa nityā-
nandākhyā-rāmāḥ śaraṇāṁ mamāstu*

May he who is known as Nityānanda Rāma be my shelter. Saṅkarṣaṇa, Kāraṇodakaśāyī, Garbhodakaśāyī, Kṣirodakaśāyī, and Śeṣa are his plenary portions and portions of his plenary portions.

With his seventh *maṅgala* verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī begins a five-verse glorification and explanation of the ontological reality of Śrī Caitanya’s other self, Nityānanda Rāma. Previously we learned of the one God in two forms as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—śakti and śaktimān. In this chapter we learn of another manner in which the one God, *svayam bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, manifests in two bodies—not as śakti and śaktimān, but as a plenary expansion of himself. This plenary expansion makes for a second, delegated śaktimān (energetic source) through whom many tasks are accomplished. In this case, Kṛṣṇa expands and expresses himself as Balarāma (Rāma). As we shall see, Śrī Balarāma is principally an emotional wave of fraternal love in the ocean of *bhakti-rasa*—Kṛṣṇa’s elder brother in *līlā*—senior in *līlā* while secondary in *tattva*. Just as Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa himself, Śrī Nityānanda is Balarāma. Thus the ontological status of Balarāma is that of Nityānanda as well—Nityānanda

Rāma. This is the Rāma “who gives pleasure to Kṛṣṇa.”¹ Appearing as Nityānanda, he gives pleasure to Gaura. The two, Nitāi and Rāma, are the same person in an extraordinary extension of the same *līlā*—from Kṛṣṇa *līlā* to Gaura *līlā*.

In this seventh *marigalācarana* verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa mentions five different manifestations of Nityānanda Rāma: Saṅkarṣaṇa, Kāraṇodakaśāyī, Garbhodakaśāyī, Kṣīrodakaśāyī, and Śeṣa. This verse serves as a summary of the four *marigala* verses that follow it. He focuses on Saṅkarṣaṇa in his eighth *mangala* verse, Kāraṇodakaśāyī in his ninth, Garbhodakaśāyī in his tenth, and both Kṣīrodakaśāyī and Śeṣa in his eleventh *mangala* verse. In total, he has dedicated five *marigala* verses to Nityānanda Rāma, all of which speak of his *aiśvarya* (majesty). Saṅkarṣaṇa is behind the manifestation of the timeless, transspatial realms of *līlā* both intimate and majestic, and Kāraṇodakaśāyī, Garbhodakaśāyī, and Kṣīrodakaśāyī are involved in the manifestation of time and space, the *sṛṣṭi-līlā* of creation. Śeṣa, while partially involved with time and space, is also involved with personal service to either Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Caitanya in their respective *līlās*.

In the first of his five verses glorifying Nityānanda Rāma, Kavirāja Kṛṣṇadāsa draws our attention to Balarāma. He is the immediate expansion of Kṛṣṇa, who further manifests in five forms for *līlās*—either intimate, majestic, or creative. Again, Nityānanda is Balarāma himself in the same sense that Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa himself. Balarāma is the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa even as he has his origin in Kṛṣṇa. To say that he has his origin in Kṛṣṇa is not to say that he begins in time. It is to say that aspects of Kṛṣṇa are found in him but not all aspects of Kṛṣṇa’s emotional disposition. Of all eternal manifestations of Kṛṣṇa composed of slightly different emotional dispositions—*vaibhava-prakāśa*—Balarāma is most like him.² He has the emotional disposition of a slightly older,

affectionate brother, and as such he is Kṛṣṇa's best friend in the *līlā*. His friendship is manifest more prominently in the intimate *līlās* of Vraja, while the sense of his being Kṛṣṇa's elder is manifest more prominently in Kṛṣṇa's Dvārakā *līlā*, even as the two nuanced sentiments overlap into each of these *līlās*. As the elder brother, his fraternal love for Kṛṣṇa is mixed with parental love, and as the personification of the serving ego, his fraternal love is also tinged with servile love. Thus he presides over *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, and *vātsalya rasas*—*sambandha-rūpa*—leaving the domain of *mādhurya-rasa*—*kāma-rūpa*—to Śrī Rādhā.

While there have been attempts over the centuries to link Nityānanda with *mādhurya-rasa*, such a connection is not found in Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta*. Indeed, when Gaura in his *sannyāsa-līlā* manifests himself as Rādhā during the Puri Ratha-yātrā, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa sees Nityānanda offering prayers in deference to her/him from a distance.³ Kavirāja Goswāmī's predecessor and an earlier biographer of Śrī Caitanya, Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, does however emphasize that in Kṛṣṇa *līlā* Nityānanda as Balarāma consorts with his own *gopīs*. Nonetheless, he does this only to emphasize the divinity of Balarāma, for Balarāma's interaction with his *gopīs* is clearly secondary to his fraternal love for Kṛṣṇa. Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Ṭhākura refers to Balarāma's relationship with his own *gopīs* as *maryādā*, not *rāga-mārga-bhakti*,⁴ and Jīva Goswāmī in his *Gopāla-campū* envisions Balarāma marrying these milkmaids only incidentally upon returning to Vraja, while the primary purpose for his return is to pacify Kṛṣṇa's *rāga-mārga gopīs*. In pacifying them, he purely represents Kṛṣṇa, without any desire to enjoy them personally.

Thus Rāma's fraternal love and his presiding over *sambandha-rūpa rāga-bhakti* takes precedence over his relationship with his own *gopīs*, and his relationship with Kṛṣṇa's *gopīs* is not personally

romantic. Nonetheless, Balarāma does manifest himself in a *śakti-tattva* form as Rādhā's younger sister, Anaṅga-mañjarī.⁵ Therefore, some have reasoned that it is in this form that he experiences *mādhurya-rasa* with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has not mentioned Anaṅga-mañjarī in his treatment of Nityānanda Rāma, nor has Vṛndāvana dāsa in *Caitanya-bhāgavata*. However, in his *Govinda-lilāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has identified her as a *śakti* expansion of Ananta Śeṣa.

While in Kṛṣṇa *līlā* Anaṅga-mañjarī has no direct relationship with Balarāma, in Gaura *līlā* she appears as Nityānanda Rāma's consort, Jāhnavā.⁶ Although Nitāi remains absorbed in fraternal love of God, after his passing we find a prominent connection with *mādhurya-rasa* in the lineage stemming from Jāhnavā. Suffice to say that in the opinion of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī, Nityānanda appeared to serve Gaura Kṛṣṇa in fraternal love, to distribute that same love, and also to facilitate Gaura's pursuit and distribution of *mādhurya-rasa*. It is thought that he further facilitated this distribution through his expansion Jāhnavā-devī.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam highlights Balarāma's fraternal love for Kṛṣṇa as well as the parental and servile love that augment it.⁷ The *Bhāgavata*'s fifteenth chapter of its tenth canto pays tribute to Balarāma, while centering on fraternal love of God—*sakhya prema*. Although we find an apparent reference to Rāma's romantic life therein, this too speaks only of his friendship with Kṛṣṇa. Commenting on Kṛṣṇa's praise of Rāma in terms of his relationship with milkmaids in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 10.15.8, Rūpa Goswāmī informs us that this is merely a display of joking (*hāsyā-rasa*) between Kṛṣṇa and Rāma within the context of *sakhya-rasa*.⁸

This fifteenth chapter of the *Bhāgavata*'s tenth canto summarizes the essence of Kṛṣṇa's *paugānda* (boyhood) *līlās* with his friends and cows—from boyhood to adolescence (*kiśora*). It is

Kṛṣṇa's *paugānda-līlā* that highlights *sakhya-rasa*, and as one would expect, this period of Kṛṣṇa's age is itself an "exciter" or *udippaṇa-vibhāva* for this sentiment, of which Balarāma is the leader.⁹ Balarāma leads the other cowherds as the perfect example of *sakhya-rasa*. Although he is God himself, he personifies the serving ego and knows nothing other than service to Kṛṣṇa.¹⁰ The venerable A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda contrasts him with Kṛṣṇa by referring to Kṛṣṇa as the "Supreme Personality of Godhead served" and Balarāma as the "Supreme Personality of Godhead servitor." Thus Balarāma is served both in consideration of his serving ego that others seek to also embody and as an object of service unto himself. He is the leader of *sakhya-rasa* who both accepts service as an object of fraternal love and embodies fraternal love centered on Kṛṣṇa. He appears in Gaura *līlā* as Nityānanda Prabhu accompanied by twelve associates who follow him from Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. These are the well-known *dvādaśa* (twelve) *gopālas* (cowherds).

Arguably it was Nityānanda Rāma and his twelve associates who started the Caitanya *sampradāya*. While Gaura taught the worship of Kṛṣṇa, the chanting of his name, and the following of his instructions, Nitāi boldly asserted that it was Gaura who should be worshiped, Gaura's name that should be chanted, Gaura's instructions that should be followed—*bhaja gaurāṅga kaha gaurāṅga laha gaurāṅgera nama re*. Nitāi proclaims that those who worship Gaura purchase him outright—*ye jana gaurāṅga bhaje sei amāra prāṇa re*. He made such claims in Bengal long before the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs were instructed by Gaura to write philosophy and theology concerning the nature of his descent, long before they wrote extensively about him and the *bhakti* that he embodied. Following Nitāi's lead, his twelve associates opened centers from which they taught about Gaura/Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* and established lineages of *sakhya-rasa*.

Kavi-karṇapūra has divided the early leaders of the Gaudiya *sampradāya* into two groups, *gopālas* and *mahāntas*. The *gopālas* were the associates of Nityānanda and identified with *sakhya-rasa* in Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. They were the first organization within Gaudiya Vaiśnavism and were appointed directly by Śrī Caitanya to propagate *nāma-dharma*. By the end of the sixteenth century, another group of *upa-gopālas* (subordinate *gopālas*), who are mentioned later in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's text, formed further *sakhya-rasa* lineages.¹¹ It is from these lineages that the *seva-pūjā* of Gaura-Nityānanda comes to the world, originating in the house of Gauridāsa Paṇḍita, who is identified in Kṛṣṇa *līlā* as Subala-sakhā, Kṛṣṇa's bosom buddy.

Predating Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī, Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, the legendary Vyāsa of Caitanya *līlā*, penned his *Caitanya-bhāgavata* under the inspiration of Nitāi—*antaryāmī* Nityānanda. Vṛndāvana dāsa conceived of himself as a *sakhā* in Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. His *iṣṭa-devatā* in his practicing life was Śrī Nityānanda. He saw Gaura to be nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. He writes that it would be improper to compare Gaura as he sits on the banks of the Ganga with his students to the full moon surrounded by stars, for the moon has spots and Gaura is spotless. Nor can Nimāi Paṇḍita be compared in that setting to Bṛhaspati, the *guru* of the gods, for Bṛhaspati is partial to the gods and Gaura is partial to everyone. However, he writes, there is one thing in this world he can be compared to. And as his readers are pressed in sacred wonder to turn the page of *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, so too are they filled with *camatkāra* to read his comparison: Gaura and his classmates parallel Kṛṣṇa sitting among his *gopa* friends in *sakhya-rasa* along the bank of the Yamunā!

Such is the early beginning of Caitanya Vaiśnavism's connection with *sakhya-rasa*, presided over as it is by Nityānanda Rāma. Nityānanda Rāma also plays a significant role in the "final word" of

Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism in the form of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. As we shall see ahead, it was also Nityānanda who inspired our venerable author, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa, to leave home and take up residence in Vṛndāvana from where he would pen his masterpiece. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta is written mostly in Bengali, and as such, it gives the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs' realizations concerning Śrī Caitanya, which were written in Sanskrit, back to Bengal and from there to the rest of the world. Thus Nityānanda Rāma, who is situated in *sakhya-rasa*, played a major role in circulating the news of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's descent in pursuit of Rādhā's love.

Let us now examine the second of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's five definitive *maṅgala* verses on Nityānanda *tattva*.

*māyātite vyāpi-vaikuṇṭha-loke
pūrnaiśvarye śri-catur-vyūha-madhye
rūpaṁ yasyodbhāti saṅkarṣaṇākhyāṁ
tam śri-nityānanda-rāmam prapadye*

I surrender unto the lotus feet of Śrī Nityānanda Rāma, who is known as Saṅkarṣaṇa in the midst of the *catur-vyūha* [consisting of Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha]. He possesses full opulences and resides in Vaikuṇṭha-loka, far beyond the material creation.

In the form of Balarāma, Nityānanda Rāma is the friend and elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, but as mentioned earlier, he is also the Deity presiding over spatial and transpatial existence. He presides over the timeless transgeographic space of divine play, and he also presides over the realm of time and space in his creation *līlā*. This timeless spiritual expanse with *līlās* ranging from intimate to majestic is the subject of Kṛṣṇadāsa's second of five *maṅgala* verses concerning Nityānanda *tattva*. This verse speaks of his role therein in his form

of Saṅkarṣana, both Mūla-saṅkarṣana and Mahā-saṅkarṣana. But before speaking about his roles in these realms, a word about the nature of the transspatial realm is in order.

Here the transcendental realm is described as *māyātīte*, far beyond (*ati*) the illusory world (*māyā*). It is *vyāpi-vaiküñtha-loke*, an all-expanding realm free from suffering, a realm full of majesty—*pūrṇaiśvarya*. However, the distance between the two realms—transcendent and mundane—is measured subjectively. The *māyic* realm is one of suffering and the transcendent realm is one of freedom from suffering, distanced by a measurement of feeling. And the distance is considerable. The further we enter the transcendent realm, the further we are removed from suffering, ultimately even from the notion that it exists at all.

From our everyday experience, we know that we must “go within” to become free from the constraints of the space around us. Even materially speaking, our “space” is a subjective one. While there is, no doubt, an objective world of matter constrained by time and space, we can only experience our subjective experience of it. But is there a supersubjective realm beyond things and thought? If there is, are there any laws that govern it or is it whatever we want it to be? Vaikuṇṭha is such a supersubjective realm, but it is not lawless and thus it is a particular world at the same time. It is the inner world of God’s mind and heart, the land of his daydreams that all come true.

Vaikuṇṭha has two basic divisions, majesty and intimacy. If we were to travel from our present world within time and space to the realm of Vaikuṇṭha’s majesty, we would first reach a border region of undifferentiated consciousness. We would have moved from a world of illusory names and forms that are here today but gone tomorrow and thus not real in an enduring sense. This world of illusory names and forms is not friendly—as much as we iden-

tify with the forms and names of this world, it appears that one living being is food for another. One being's feast is another's funeral. In very Darwinian fashion, the *Bhāgavata* describes it thus: "Those who are devoid of hands are prey for those who have hands; those devoid of legs are prey for the four-legged. The weak are the subsistence of the strong, and the general rule holds that one living being is food for another."¹² As we have seen in chapter 4, Darwin's "survival of the fittest" is phrased "one living being is food for another"—*jivo jīvasya jīvanam*—in the poetry of the *Bhāgavata*. In short, we live in a mean-spirited place, struggling with one another within the constraints of time and space. But of course the *Bhāgavata* does not stop there. It tells us how to end our ego of exploitation. As we die to the killing within us, we find that no one is chasing us anymore. The less we take, the less we owe. With the end of taking, we enter the border region of Vaikuṇṭha—its halo.

It is hard to imagine a realm more expansive than one that transcends the limits of time and space. However, because this border region is merely a land free from exploitation, it lacks in terms of affection. To cease from taking does not constitute giving in the full sense of the term. Thus the distance between this border region and the realm of Vaikuṇṭha proper is one of affection. In Vaikuṇṭha the person behind the aura of light that constitutes Vaikuṇṭha's border region is experienced in passive adoration—*sānta*—and more so through a serving identity/ego—*dāsyā*. Here we find the God of the world of God's imagination. Here we find forms and names that are eternal and constitute expressions of the loving that they facilitate. The love and affection between oneself and one's source is far more spacious and accommodating than the mere absence of taking. From the small-mindedness of the world of time and space to the broadmindedness of pure

impartiality, we enter the realm of spiritual partiality. This is the realm of reverential love—Viṣṇu agape.

Beyond the majesty of Vaikuṇṭha is Mahā-Vaikuṇṭha, also known as Goloka. It appears smaller in size than Vaikuṇṭha, especially the center of the whorl of its lotus—Gokula. This is the realm of spiritual intimacy, where small is big and beautiful in that it is more accommodating. There is no overt majesty that creates distance between lover and beloved. The gap between the object of worship and the worshiper is bridged, as worship and self-sacrifice turn to love and self-forgetfulness. Here God is not thought of as God. He is Kṛṣṇa, the son of the cowherd Nanda and thus born of bliss—Nanda-nandana, the bliss of bliss.¹³ This realm appears small in that it is humanlike and apparently narrow and self-centered. Here a transcendental eros retires agape. For the sake of intimacy, the infinite appears in an apparently finite form. While humanlike in appearance, this form is concentrated *sac-cid-ānanda*. Here we find the specificity required for the full face of love to manifest. If God is all-loving, he must love not only compassionately and in the way the master loves his students, but in fraternal, parental, and ultimately romantic love. In Gokula we find the transcendental Cupid and his *kāma-vijaya-līlā* of romantic love. Here the hope of humanity is realized, its intuitive sense that love is the goal is confirmed in a manner that retires the labor of reason and the need to know, what to speak of the need to have.

It is in the realm of Gokula that Nityānanda Rāma as Bala-rāma revels in fraternal love with Kṛṣṇa, cowherding and sporting with comrades. As the *jīva* moves from this center of the whorl of the lotus that is Goloka, intimacy is diminished and majesty increased. For these more majestic *līlās*, Kṛṣṇa expresses himself as Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, the son of the warrior Vasudeva of the

neighboring metropolis and capital city Mathurā. In the Mathurā *līlā*, Vasudeva is thought to be Kṛṣṇa's real father and Nanda his foster father. As Kṛṣṇa manifests in accordance with the loving sentiments of his devotees in Mathurā, Balarāma expands along with him as Mūla-saṅkarṣaṇa. Both Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa and Mūla-saṅkarṣaṇa Balarāma then move further toward the majestic love of their devotees by settling in Dvārakā. Along with them, Kṛṣṇa's principal son and grandson, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, who are also expansions of himself, manifest as well. These four Deities, Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha, represent the primary fourfold expression of divinity within Goloka—the famed *catur-vyūha*. Here in Kavirāja Goswāmī's second verse concerning Nityānanda Rāma, the name Saṅkarṣaṇa refers first to Mūla-saṅkarṣaṇa Balarāma, who among these four Deities presides over the existential aspect (*sandhini/sat*) of Goloka. It is Balarāma/Mūla-saṅkarṣaṇa who manifests in the eternal present in the transpatial realm of *līlā* in Goloka.

The *catur-vyūha* then makes a secondary appearance to preside over the Vaikuṇṭha realm of pure majestic love. In this realm, Saṅkarṣaṇa is referred to as Mahā-saṅkarṣaṇa, and again, it is he who, as if in an afterthought of extended service, manifests the transspatial realm of agape. Therein, Vāsudeva Nārāyaṇa is preoccupied with the *līlās* of Vaikuṇṭha and the extraordinary liberated statuses of *sālokya*, *sārūpya*, *sāmipyā*, and *sārṣṭi*.¹⁴ However, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa informs us that despite this transcendent preoccupation, Nārāyaṇa also has a desire to bestow these liberated statuses on others.¹⁵ His desire to express compassion is facilitated by Mahā-saṅkarṣaṇa, who is also the shelter of the *jīva-śakti* and the Deity related to ego, or individual sense of identity. Thus another *līlā* is born—*sṛṣti-līlā*—the play of creation and the manifestation of time and space, as he who is transcendent becomes immanent as well.¹⁶

This brings us to Kavirāja Goswāmī’s third of five *māngala* verses describing the truth about Nityānanda Rāma.

*māyā-bhartājāṇḍa-saṅghāśrayāṅgah
śete sākṣat kāraṇāmbhodhi-madhye
yasyaikāṁśah śri-pumān ādi-devas
tam śri-nityānanda-rāmān prapadye*

I offer my full obeisances unto the feet of Śrī Nityānanda Rāma, whose partial representation called Kāraṇodakasāyī Viṣṇu, lying on the Kāraṇa Ocean, is the original *puruṣa*, the master of the illusory energy, and the shelter of all the universes.

The Godhead’s desire to bestow liberation—his compassion—requires another world. Here in this verse, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja identifies the Deity from whom this world issues forth. Mahā-saṅkarṣaṇa incarnates as Kāraṇodakaśāyī, also known as Mahā-Viṣṇu. He is the *ādi-avatāra*, the original *avatāra* through whom all other *avatāras* appear. He is sometimes described as having thousands of heads and hands for this very reason: innumerable *avatāras* manifest through him.¹⁷ In this verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa refers to him as *pumān ādi-devah*, the original Person/God. However, he is the original God in terms of those manifestations of the Godhead who cross from up to down (*avatāra*), from the transpatial realm into time and space. Rather than presiding far beyond *māyā*—as Mahā-saṅkarṣaṇa does—Mahā-Viṣṇu is the master of *māyā*—*māyā-bhartā*.

In this verse, the objective world of time and space is referred to as an “egg.” The words *aja* and *anḍa* speak literally of “unborn eggs.” The master of *māyā* manifests the cluster of unborn eggs. With his glance of consciousness that arouses matter, nature takes shape and the multiverse is formed. The unhatched, egg-like universes are said to be so numerable that it is as if they emanate

from Mahā-Viṣṇu's pores.¹⁸ The truth is that they are innumerable, as the entire expanse of time and space knows no bounds. The attempt to measure it with any finality is the folly resulting from the influence of *māyā-śakti*. As we have learned earlier, *māyā* means “illusion” as well as “to measure.” And the measure of its illusory power is itself inestimable.¹⁹

Furthermore, while the universes are said to emanate from Mahā-Viṣṇu, in another sense they are unborn in that the entire multiverse remains within the body of God. As the *Bhagavad-gītā* declares, the world rests within the unmanifest form of God—*jagad avyakta-mūrtinā*. He is the soul of the world that is his body.²⁰ But this is really a symbolic embodiment. In other words, the world is dependent on God as the body is dependent on the soul. But unlike our souls that are dependent on our bodies to act in this world, the world soul is in no way dependent on the world to accomplish anything. Furthermore, the world is not part of God in a manner that would make the world’s defects his defects, as explained in chapter 5.

The word *kāraṇa* in this epithet for Mahā-Viṣṇu—Kāraṇām-bhodhi—means “cause.” He is the first cause, even as he himself has nothing to accomplish, depicted as he is floating comfortably on a raft within the “causal ocean”—*kāraṇāmbhodhi*—an ocean of *cit* that is causal only in that it is the resting place of the first cause. The world of Mahā-Viṣṇu’s concern, his jurisdiction, is the world of cause and effect—the realm of *karma* as opposed to the realm of *lilā*. While his own participation in this world is termed *sṛṣti-lilā*, his participation is distant. He is more of a witness, whose watch or glance sets the world of *karma* in motion, while he himself remains aloof from *karma*’s influence. As first cause, he is merely expressing his fullness, and thus the world is manifest out of joy and not for any necessity on the part of the Godhead. The One, it is said,

becomes many out of *ānanda*, a love that transcends reason. The *Sūtras* of Vyāsa concisely state it thus, *loka-vat tu līlā-kaivalyam*: “The motive of God in manifesting the world is only sport, as we see in ordinary life people sometimes dance for no reason other than joy.”²¹ In other words, his “creation” is motiveless and thus *līlā*. But here in the *sṛṣti-līlā*, we find *līlā* transitioning into *karma*. The two, *līlā* and *karma*, are worlds apart. However, Mahā-Viṣṇu’s *sṛṣti-līlā* sets the world of *karma* in motion. While he does not enter this world, he glances at it, and thus his *amṛṣābhāsa*, or reflection in the form of innumerable *jīvas*, sets the world in motion.

At first glance, dualism appears discernable in the world of Mahā-Viṣṇu. There is consciousness and there is matter, two different substances very much unlike one another. Consciousness is the mover; matter is moved and only then has movement of its own. As discussed earlier, in today’s world some would be quick to ask why can’t we observe consciousness if consciousness moves matter. Of course, we sense that consciousness moves matter and live as if it does. But perhaps the best answer to this query, which implies that dualism is false and consciousness is not causal, lies in exploring the implications of the very power to observe. In other words, the act of observation itself is above matter’s pay-grade, and when it is understood as such through spiritual practice, the reality of consciousness’s causal role becomes evident. One has to do the spiritual math—*sādhana*.

However, in Mahā-Viṣṇu’s world, matter—having been moved—also moves itself, and to a great extent. The *Gītā* states that through misidentification with matter, the *jīva* thinks that it is the doer of that which is in actuality done by matter.²² In other words, the brain is responsible for much of what we mistakenly think to be a product of our volition—for many of the neural causal connections discovered by modern neurology are what they

appear to be. Nonetheless, they are not the cause of consciousness itself. Consciousness is pan-psychic, or underlying all of matter, but it is manifest to greater or lesser degrees relative to the body it identifies with. In the human body, it manifests most fully and thus becomes more aware of itself. In human life, it experiences the world vicariously, witnessing through neural causal connections that involve interactions between subtle (mind) and gross (brain) matter. Independent of consciousness proper, the mind and brain do not experience at all. As macrocosmically there is power in God's glancing—the witnessing and willing of Mahā-Viṣṇu—microcosmically there is also power in the witnessing and volition of the individual observer, the *jīvātma*. As quantum mechanics has shown us, often something particular happens only because someone else is present as a witness.

Thus arguably substance dualism, in which consciousness and matter are thought to be entirely divorced substances in the strictest sense, is not at play in Mahā-Viṣṇu's world. While consciousness is causal, at the same time matter causes much of what we mistakenly attribute to consciousness, and furthermore both consciousness and matter are not entirely different substances. Matter "shapes" the extent to which consciousness is expressed and in this sense consciousness is partially dependent on matter, an idea not foreign to a number of today's prominent thinkers.²³ Furthermore, both matter and consciousness are *śaktis* of Bhagavān. Thus the world of Mahā-Viṣṇu is a nondual world consisting of God (the energetic) and his *śaktis* (energies), which have no existence independent of him. *Māyā-śakti* and *jīva-śakti* are different from one another in that one is animate and the other inanimate, one conscious and the other unconscious, but they are united as energies of their energetic source. Moreover, the energetic and its energies are also one and different.

As the glance of Mahā-Viṣṇu lights the world, he himself becomes engulfed in effulgence.²⁴ With the addition of light (the *jīvātmās*), the otherwise dark world is illumined with self-awareness and the power of observation. The light of the *jīva-sakti* illuminates and activates the shadow of *mahā-sakti*. The movements of the shadow are a product of light, its partial presence. Because the *jīvas* are an *amśābhāsa* of Mahā-Viṣṇu, they constitute only partial light and thus cast a shadow. The interplay of partial light and the shadow it casts is the dance of this world, a dim reflection of the *līlā* that animates the world of light—the *dhāma* (light/abode) of Vaikuṇṭha. As a partial manifestation of Mahā-Viṣṇu, the *jīvas* bear the stamp of individual identity/ego that he presides over. Thus one's sense that "I am," both one's sense of existing at all (*aham-artah*) and one's sense of existing in relation to the natural world (*ahaṅkāra*), comes from Mahā-saṅkarṣaṇa/Mahā-Viṣṇu.²⁵

Upon manifesting the multiverse, the first *puruṣa* Mahā-Viṣṇu enters each of its universes in another form. This Deity is the subject of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's next *māṅgala* verse.

yasyāṁśāṁśah śrīla-garbhoda-sāyi
yan-nābhya-abjam loka-saṅghāta-nālam
loka-sraṣṭuh sūtikā-dhāma dhātus
tam śrī-nityānanda-rāmam prapadye

I offer my full obeisances unto the feet of Śrī Nityānanda Rāma, a partial part of whom is Garbhodakasāyī Viṣṇu. From the navel of Garbhodakasāyī Viṣṇu sprouts the lotus that is the birthplace of Brahmā, the engineer of the universe. The stem of that lotus is the resting place of the multitude of planets.

From Kāraṇodakasāyī comes Garbhodakasāyī Viṣṇu. The light of life—consciousness—issues from Kāraṇodakasāyī Viṣṇu. With

Garbhodakasāyī Viṣṇu's divine appearance inside each of the universes, we move from this light of life to psychological/biological life. The Sanskrit word *garbha* means "womb." This Viṣṇu form—Garbhodakasāyī—who is a part of a part of Nityānanda Rāma, floats effortlessly on the waters within the universal egg. The water within each universe is compared to the perspiration of Garbhodakasāyī. And where there is water, there is life—psychological /biological life, or life dependent on material conditions.

Modern science is perplexed with the question, "What is the biological makeup of consciousness." Vedānta informs us that this question has a bias, and then asks us to rephrase the question: "Is there a biological makeup to consciousness?" To which Vedānta replies, "No," supportive arguments for which we have seen in chapter 3.

As mentioned previously, Kāraṇodakasāyī presides over our illusory sense of identity, that which is formed when the individual units of consciousness meet matter and make it matter—to themselves that is. The illusory material ego identifies itself as "I am this," or "I am that." This subtle identification is the function of the *ahankāra*, one of the four components of subtle or psychic matter. These four are *citta* (awareness of an object), *buddhi* (understanding what an object is), *manas* (desiring or rejecting the object), and *ahankāra* (identifying with or relating to the object). While Kāraṇodakasāyī presides over *ahankāra*, it is Garbhodakasāyī who presides over *buddhi*—understanding or intelligence.

Garbhodakaśāyi's first-born is the highly intelligent four-headed Brahmā. This four-headed Brahmā in his form of Hiranyagarbha represents the collective of all individual *jīvātmās*.²⁶ Brahmā is the purest of those *jīvas* under the influence of the principle of *karma*, as well as the embodiment of all such beings. He is thus both a *jīva* soul and the *samaṣṭi-jīva*, or initial collective of all *jīvas* once they

manifest from within Mahā-Viṣṇu. *Śrimad-Bhāgavatam* describes both Brahmā's lotus seat sprouting from the navel of Nārāyaṇa and Brahmā himself as the collective of all materially conditioned *jīvas*. Brahmā alone is born from the lotus, but his desire to create the world is largely a result of his being the embodiment of innumerable *jīvas*, whose desires necessitate the creation of the world for their fulfillment. In this sense, the materially conditioned soul is first born as Brahmā after each cycle of creation, and it is Brahmā who then as the creative principle facilitates the *jīvas* further in terms of arranging a suitable environment in which they can express themselves in relation to their dormant *karma* carried over from the previous world cycle. Brahmā is the personification of the *karma bija*, the seed of fruitive or *karmic* action, and he desires to create, as he himself is a creation.

However, he also desires something more: to know his source and the “why” of his existence. In the midst of the waters of Viṣṇu's womb, Brahmā swims in what Romain Rolland, in disagreement with Freud, referred to as the “oceanic feeling” of limitlessness and connectedness that transcends belief. In Rolland's view, one may justifiably call oneself spiritual on the basis of this oceanic feeling alone, independent of any belief system. This is the universal human intuitive sense that there is more to life than what merely meets the eye and mind—that we have a meaningful relationship with our source. Intelligent as he is, Brahmā knows that he is not alone. In an existential crisis, he begins his search through introspection and devotion and follows the stem of his lotus seat in an inward meditation. Although he desires to do something, he is told to sit still and that he will “know” more than he can by any movement. “Don't just do something, sit there.” Thus he comes to meet his maker, Garbhodakasāyī Viṣṇu, the soul of the universe.

It is described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* that Brahmā saw only one foot of his creator.²⁷ Commentators have thus surmised that he saw Vraja Kṛṣṇa, who stands with his feet crossed, his body in a threefold bending form. Because Kṛṣṇa's feet were crossed, Brahmā saw only one foot planted on the ground. The implication of this is that while Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu is a part of a part of Nityānanda Rāma, and Nityānanda is himself an expansion of *svayam bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa himself appeared before Brahmā personally, demonstrating that Garbhodakaśāyī is his partial manifestation. Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally appeared to initiate Brahmā into the *rāgamārga*, the path leading to the *prema* of Vraja's intimate pastoral *līlā*, as we have seen in chapter 1. Thus the personification of the *karma-bija* received the *kāma-bija*, the seed of spiritual desire. As a result, Brahmā was empowered to create as well as to exhaust his *karmic* propensity in the context of pursuing *prema*. While he represents the beginning of our material sojourn, he also represents the beginning of a lineage leading to the end of our *karmic* plight and entrance into *prema*.

yasyāṁśāṁśāṁśah parātmākhilānāṁ
 poṣṭā viṣṇur bhāti dugdhābdhi-sāyi
 kṣauṇī-bhartā yat-kalā so 'py anantas
 tam śri-nityānanda-rāmāṁ prapadye

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the feet of Śrī Nityānanda Rāma, whose secondary part is the Viṣṇu lying in the ocean of milk. That Kṣirodakaśāyī Viṣṇu is the Supersoul of all living entities and the maintainer of all the universes. Śeṣa Nāga is His further subpart.

From Kāraṇodakaśāyī and the initial cause in the form of light/consciousness that sets the world in motion, we came to

Garbhodakaśāyī and the womb and water, which represent the manifestation of psycho-biological life. Now in this verse we come to an ocean of milk and the heart residence of Viṣṇu, referred to by the epithet Dugdhābdhi-sāyī—“he who lies in the milk ocean.” *Dugdha* means milk, and milk represents affection flowing in maternal/parental love. As much as the *jīvātmās* are born from Viṣṇu and psychologically and biologically outfitted by the expansion of this same Viṣṇu, the multitude of *jīvātmās* are affectionately overseen by an expansion of this expansion of Viṣṇu. Śeṣa is an expansion of the Viṣṇu who is said to reside in the milk ocean as well as in the heart of every individual *jīva*. He witnesses, sanctions, and waits for the *jīvātmā* to turn toward him. From the Viṣṇu who gives rise to the multiverse to the Viṣṇu residing in each universe, we now come to the Viṣṇu residing in every atom, and smaller still, in every infinitesimal *jīvātmā*. Thus as his name implies, Viṣṇu is “all-pervading.” This Viṣṇu is part of a part of a plenary portion of Nityānanda Rāma.

While Kāraṇodakaśāyī presides over *ahankāra* and Garbhodakaśāyī over *buddhi*, Dugdhābdhi-sāyī presides over *manas*, or the function of accepting or rejecting in the realm of desire. Again, one perceives (*citta*) and identifies (*ahankāra*), having understood (*buddhi*) and having desired (*manas*). These four elements of psychic matter are spiritualized when one worships the *catur-vyūha*—Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa Pradyumna, and Aniruddha respectively. Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha are other names for the three *puruṣa-viṣṇu-avatāras* under discussion.

Material perception, judgment, desire, and identification—the functions of psychic matter—result in a sense of one’s being the enjoyer—an enjoying ego—which drives material life. But the *Bhagavad-gītā* tells us that attachment to the pursuit of material enjoyment is the womb from which suffering is born.²⁸ In his form

as Śeṣa described in this *māngala* verse, the Godhead shows the way to remedy this travesty. It is Śeṣa in two forms who Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa turns to as he comes to the conclusion of his description of the ontological position of Nityānanda Rāma.

Śeṣa means support. The multiverse expands, and it is Śeṣa who supports and holds the worlds together. Śeṣa is an expansion of the Viṣṇu of the heart and milk ocean. Derived as he is from Saṅkarṣaṇa, he is related to the concept of gravity, which the name Saṅkarṣaṇa has an etymological relationship with.²⁹ This is one form of Śeṣa. His second form is the personification of the serving ego that shows by example the way that the *jīvātmā* can disentangle itself from the world of time and space. As an empowered *bhakta-avatāra*, Śeṣa embodies service to Viṣṇu. Service lies at the foundation of the *jīvātmā*. The *ātmā* is by nature a serving or dedicating unit of experiential existence. In any imagery of Viṣṇu, Śeṣa is present. He lies as Viṣṇu's bedstead below and rises up as his umbrella above, serving as both simultaneously in the image of a serpent.

With his brief description of Śeṣa on whom Viṣṇu rests, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa also rests. He has thoroughly described the ontological position of Nityānanda Rāma in five *māngala* verses. Having done so, he cites an example of the merciful nature of Nityānanda, an example of how Śrī Nityānanda intervened in his life. Opening the door to his own private spiritual life and its inner experience, he reveals his heart. While such matters should be kept confidential, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa reasons that should he not reveal his inner experience, the full measure of Nityānanda Rāma's mercy will not be known.

Kṛṣṇadāsa relates how he left his residence at his brother's home and became homeless upon realizing that his brother had disregard for Nityānanda. Such was his own regard for Nityānanda

Rāma. And this did not go unnoticed. That very night Nityānanda mystically appeared to him in a dream accompanied by a host of his associates, who were disposed, dressed, and decorated like Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma's cowherd friends. In a stunning manner, Nityānanda revealed to Kṛṣṇadāsa that he was Balarāma, and thus in writing about him Kṛṣṇadāsa repeatedly refers to him as "Nityānanda Rāma."

Repeatedly chanting "Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa," Nityānanda Rāma made the homeless Kṛṣṇadāsa feel at home. In effect he told the humble mendicant that those who leave the material comforts of hearth and home for him attain residence in the heartland of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa's pastoral playground—Vṛndāvana. Nityānanda Rāma gave Kṛṣṇadāsa residence deep within the meditative, supersubjective world of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. He made him a world soul like himself, one that while in the material world is not of the material world. Upon awakening, Kṛṣṇadāsa immediately set off for the representation of Kṛṣṇa's place of *līlā* in this world, Śrī Vṛndāvana. From there in a humble setting, blessed by Nityānanda Rāma, he immersed himself in the otherworldly ocean of Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta*, riding its waves as he wrote.

NOTES

1. There are a number of other Rāmas found in the sacred texts; for example, Paraśurāma and Dāśarathi Rāma.
2. *Svayam-prakāśa* manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, particularly those manifest during his *rasa-līlā*, in which he stands next to each *gopī*, are more emotionally like him than Balarāma but have no enduring manifestation throughout the entirety of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*.
3. Cc. 2.14.235–36
4. See commentary of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura on Cb. 1.1.22.
5. Anaṅga-mañjari is depicted as being desirous of and engaging in direct union with Kṛṣṇa, unlike those in *mañjari-bhāva*.

6. *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* 66
7. ŚB 10.12 references the paternal aspect of his friendship with Kṛṣṇa and 10.13 references the servile aspect.
8. *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 5.346
9. However, Balarāma is not directly involved in Kṛṣṇa's romantic life like Kṛṣṇa's *priyanarma-sakhās*.
10. Cc. 1.6.88
11. Māns Broo, *As Good As God: The Guru in Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism* (Åbo, Finland: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2003), 55–56.
12. ŚB 1.13.47
13. In Sanskrit the verbal root *nand* means “bliss.”
14. *Sālokya* (to live in the abode of God), *sārṣṭi* (to attain similar majesty to that of God), *sāmīpya* (to be part of God’s retinue), *sārūpya* (to attain a form like that of God). These statuses of liberation are attained with two different dispositions: those who are predominantly desirous of the statuses themselves or those predominantly desirous of *prema*, attaining these statuses as a byproduct. The latter is preferable. But above these are the devotees who have no desire for these attainments at all and desire only *prema*. These are the devotees of Kṛṣṇa’s Vraja *līlā*, as opposed to God’s Vaikuṇṭha *līlā* where the former two dispositions are operative. (See Brs. 1.2.55–58, Jīva Goswāmī’s commentary)
15. Cc. 1.5.29–30
16. See Viśvanātha Cakravarti’s *Sārārtha Darśinī* commentary to ŚB 9.24.58. Therein Viśvanātha states, “The cause of the creation of the world is mercy to the *jivas*.” This statement does not necessarily contradict the idea that the creation arises merely from the joy of the Godhead because the desire to bestow compassion arises out of the joy of fullness and not out of material necessity, even while it requires someone in need.
17. *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.2.11
18. Nothing is outside of God. Matter is an aspect of God but not an aspect of his conscious self. Thus he glances inward and the result is the multiverse.
19. Bg. 7.14
20. This should not be confused with the idea presented earlier that Kṛṣṇa’s form is concentrated *sac-cid-ānanda*.
21. Vs. 2.1.33

8. Divine Descent

*mahā-viṣṇur jagat-kartā māyayā yah sājaty adah
tasyāvatāra evāyam advaitācārya iśvarah
advaitam harinādvaitād ācāryam bhakti-śamsanāt
bhaktāvatāram iśam tam advaitācāryam āśraye*

Īśvara Advaita Ācārya is the *avatāra* of Mahā-Visnu, who manifests the material world in conjunction with *māyā*. Because he is nondifferent from Hari, he is called Advaita, and because he propagates *bhakti*, he is called Ācārya. He is both God and the *avatāra* of God in the form of a devotee. I take shelter of him.

The term “Īśvara” is invoked when describing the feature of the Godhead who presides over the world, Mahā-Viṣṇu. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa uses it in reference to Śrī Advaita, whom he describes as a particular manifestation and *avatāra* of Mahā-Viṣṇu. He is not called Advaita because he is an Advaitin or monist, but rather because he is nondifferent from God, being his *avatāra*. This is underscored by the fact that he teaches the path of *bhakti*, not the path of *jñāna*. He is also called Advaita or “nondual” because of his role in causing the dyad of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to descend as one in the person of Śrī Caitanya.

Thus among the five figures of divinity described in Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa’s opening verse, Advaita is a third form of God along with Śrī Caitanya and Śrī Nityānanda, rather than one of God’s *saktis*

like Gadādhara and Śrīvāsa, who are discussed in the following chapter. Advaita is a form of God much less removed from the world than Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are. Mahā-Viṣṇu is the *jagat-kartā*, or “world-maker.” While world-making sounds like an enormous undertaking, Mahā-Viṣṇu more or less does it in his sleep. We have heard about him in the previous chapter as a partial manifestation of Nityānanda Rāma and in chapter 4 we also heard of his compassion and his role in bringing Śrī Caitanya to the world. Here again we briefly look at his role in world-making—his *sṛṣṭi-lilā*—in order to understand the precise ontological status of this *avatāra*, Śrī Advaita Ācārya.

In Aristotelian terms, Mahā-Viṣṇu is the efficient cause of the world and his *māyā-sakti* is the material cause. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa uses the Sanskrit terms *nimitta* (efficient) and *upādāna* (material/ingredient) cause to say the same thing. In Gauḍiya Vedānta, Mahā-Viṣṇu’s will is the efficient cause and nature is the ingredient cause. Viṣṇu’s supernatural will impregnates matter and the world manifests.

However, Kṛṣṇadāsa points out that material nature is composed of two parts that in their own way constitute efficient and ingredient causes. In the *Bhāgavata-sandarbha*, Śrī Jīva Goswāmī explains that material nature’s two aspects are *jīva-māyā* and *guṇa-māyā*. These two parts serve as efficient and ingredient causes of the *jīva*’s experience of the material world.¹ *Jīva-māyā* is the efficient cause in that it deludes the *jīva* like an intoxicating beverage. *Guṇa-māyā*, which consists of the manifest material elements, is the ingredient cause.²

Kṛṣṇadāsa next explains that just as material nature is composed of efficient and ingredient aspects, similarly Mahā-Viṣṇu has two forms that constitute efficient and ingredient aspects of himself. In one form, Mahā-Viṣṇu wills and metaphorically glances over

material nature impregnating her with innumerable *jīvas*, and in a second form Mahā-Viṣṇu infuses material nature with the ingredient of creative power, making her fertile. Thus the world is made manifest, and Advaita Ācārya appears within it as an *avatāra* of this second form of Mahā-Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī refers to him as an *aṅga* (limb) of the body of Mahā-Viṣṇu.³

He is Mahā-Viṣṇu's *avatāra* extraordinaire. Unlike the many *avatāras* of Mahā-Viṣṇu who enter the world and are *amṛtas*, or parts of Mahā-Viṣṇu, this second form of Mahā-Viṣṇu is more intimately related to Mahā-Viṣṇu himself and is thus referred to as his *aṅga* (limb) rather than his *amṛta* (part). He does not descend into the world like the other *avatāras*, but rather he is a manifestation of Mahā-Viṣṇu that assists him equally in manifesting the world. He is *advaita* in the sense of being undivided from Mahā-Viṣṇu, as a limb is undivided from the body it is attached to.

Intimately connected with Viṣṇu and his glance of consciousness that is also identified with Mahādeva or Śiva, Advaita Ācārya is considered a combined form of Śiva and Viṣṇu—Mahā (Mahādeva) Viṣṇu. Thus this aspect of Mahā-Viṣṇu is closely involved with *jīvas* and their subsequent plight in relation to material nature. Mahā-Viṣṇu never touches *māyā*, and while the *jīvas* also never touch *māyā*, unlike Mahā-Viṣṇu they nonetheless come under her influence. Mahā-Viṣṇu witnesses their predicament and seeks to remedy it. The particular form of Mahā-Viṣṇu that Advaita Ācārya is an *avatāra* of is most suited to bestow the compassion felt by both Viṣṇu and Śiva.

The subject of compassion first appeared in these pages in chapter 4, and there also in the context of discussing the contribution of Advaita Ācārya. Here it may be useful to explore the subject in more detail, to examine the place of compassion in the life of Bhagavān. Unlike many Western forms of panentheism,

Gauḍīya Vedānta posits that Bhagavān is impassible, or incapable of feeling material suffering.⁴ He is not subject to any internal transformation or emotional experience that occurs under the influence of his *māyā-śakti*. Although he has a rich emotional life, his *rasānanda* occurs entirely under the influence of his fully spiritual primary *śakti/bhakti*. All material suffering, on the other hand, occurs only under the influence of his *māyā-śakti*. Thus he is not privy to material suffering in terms of any direct experience of it. However, there is no greater impetus for empathy than having experienced suffering oneself. As such, Bhagavān's impetus for compassion at first glance appears limited.

Although Bhagavān has no personal experience of material suffering, he nonetheless has abstract knowledge of it. However, this abstract knowledge of material suffering does not drive his life and provides only a secondary, indirect impetus for his compassion. His life is driven by his love for his devotees, who are either entirely under the same internal *śakti* that governs his emotional life (in the case of *nitya-siddhas*) or gradually coming under its influence through their *sādhana* (in the case of *sādhana-siddhas*). In other words, Bhagavān is driven by *bhakti*.⁵

Thus the direct impetus for and object of his compassionate glance is his devotees in this world who are pursuing *prema-bhakti*. He comes to the world out of compassion for them and only indirectly out of compassion for those not yet touched by *bhakti*. Indeed, it is primarily through the compassion of such devotees that his compassion is passed on to the rest of the world. Such devotees do have direct experience of material suffering, and their resultant compassion for others does not go unanswered by Bhagavān. Out of love for his devotees, his compassion flows to those whom they feel empathetic toward. His devotees are thus the principal impetus and vehicle for his compassion. In his *Gitā*

Bhūṣaṇa, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa comments on how the devotees' compassion plays out. Such devotees lament for those who are suffering and think that no one should have to suffer for any reason.⁶ Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura and Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda also describe the compassion of devotees as a secondary quality inherent in their *bhakti*.⁷

However, the question remains as to the cause of the compassion of Advaita Ācārya, Nityānanda Rama, and Śri Caitanya. They are all Bhagavān, but they find themselves in a *līlā* filled with compassion. They have no personal experience of material suffering, but they do have abstract knowledge of the suffering condition of material existence. Furthermore, they are all experiencing *bhakti* from the perspective of a devotee.

The difference in perspective between Bhagavān and his devotees is nicely illustrated in *Śri Caitanya-caritāmṛta* when Śri Caitanya glorifies Vāsudeva Datta, one of his eternally liberated devotees. At that time, Vāsudeva expressed great compassion and requested that Śri Caitanya liberate all materially conditioned *jīvas* in the universe by giving him [Vāsudeva] their *karma* so that they would be free to transcend material existence. While Śri Caitanya deeply appreciated the compassion of Vāsudeva, in the mood of Bhagavān he also replied with an air of aloofness to the material condition, teaching that material suffering as a whole has no end and that the liberation of an entire universe was not of much consequence from Kṛṣṇa's perspective.⁸ In contrast, elsewhere we find Śri Caitanya absorbed in the *bhāva* of a devotee expressing great concern to Haridāsa Ṭhākura for the suffering of even trees, plants, and insects.⁹

Thus Bhagavān is only indirectly moved by the suffering of the *jīvas*, whereas the primary cause of his compassion is his love for his devotees. As we have seen earlier, sometimes ācāryas have written

about the measure of compassion that arises in Bhagavān's *puruṣa* form as a result of his abstract knowledge of material suffering as if it were a partial cause of his *līlā* of creation. However, more often they have stressed that the cause of Bhagavān's descent into the world is his love for his devotees who are not yet liberated, and through such devotees his compassion is extended to the rest of the world. The special case of Gaura *līlā*, wherein Bhagavān is in the *bhāva* of a *bhakta*, is perhaps why Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja repeatedly depicts Śrī Caitanya, Nityānanda Rama, and Advaita Ācārya as being filled with compassion for the suffering animation.

Śrī Advaita appears in the world to distribute *bhakti*, and because he teaches and exemplifies *bhakti* he is called "Ācārya." In this sense he is also the extension of the compassion of Mahā-Viṣṇu that the world arises out of. There is no more efficacious means to alleviate the suffering of the world than *bhakti*. Śrīmān Advaita knows this all too well and thus he laments at the unwillingness of the *jīvas* to avail themselves of the opportunity he embodies.

As the original *avatāra*, Mahā-Viṣṇu is the source of innumerable *avatāras*, including those who embody lessons on *dharma* relative to time and circumstance—*yuga-avatāras*. In the form of Advaita Ācārya, this source of *yuga-avatāras* is personally present in the world. As we have seen in chapter 4, he calls feelingly for Kṛṣṇa himself to appear in the place of the *yuga-avatāra* at a time when Kṛṣṇa is deeply absorbed in introspection and desiring to know himself as only Rādhā does.

Kṛṣṇa's pursuit of Rādhā's perspective has consequences for the world. Rādhā is Kṛṣṇa's compassionate nature personified, and the loving union of the two thus gives rise to a very compassionate Kṛṣṇa—Gaura Kṛṣṇa. Thus a *līlā* of his own is played out in the world. Śrī Advaita, the world soul, manages this *līlā*. He arranges for the necessary players in the *līlā* to assemble and calls Gaura

Kṛṣṇa to appear on the world stage. When his compassionate dispensation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa *sankirtana* is sufficiently set in motion, it is Advaita to whom Gaura turns for permission to turn within and concentrate exclusively on the pursuit of Rādhā *bhāva*, leaving the continued propagation of *nāma-sankirtana* to Nityānanda and others. Thus we learn by Gaura's example that the compassionate outreach of Kṛṣṇa *sankirtana* leads naturally to inner meditative life and further spiritual pursuit.

Compassion is the baseline of experiential spiritual life. It arises out of identification with the plight of others and is only possible in the fullest sense if one becomes acquainted with what one's self and others are—consciousness, atoms of *sac-cid-ānanda* with the potential to love. As much as we continue to misidentify ourselves with the changing dress of body and mind, we are limited in our ability to express empathy—to love.

A young boy loves a young girl and so too does a tiger, each from their own embodied perspectives. A sage loves the same young girl as well, but he or she sees beyond the facade of a young girl. The sage sees the self within all bodies. Such a sage sees the plight that arises out of the dress of a young girl as well. What the young boy and the tiger express in the name of love is not the empathy of the spiritual adept. While psychology can help the men of Mars and women of Venus enter into one another's mental world, even if we can do that to the extent that we can retire the man-woman dichotomy, we will have gone nowhere in terms of understanding the plight of the embodied *ātmā*.

As we learned in chapter 3, the superlative *yogin* is one who truly loves his or her neighbor as oneself because such an accomplished transcendentalist knows every self to be something other than what it appears to be to one's mind and eye. Having pointed this out in the sixth chapter of the *Gitā*, Kṛṣṇa concludes the same

chapter by informing us that of all types of *yogins*, those who are united with him in love—*bhakti*—are best.¹⁰ Those who love him wisely in the *yoga* of *bhakti* also know how to love everyone else, constituted as they are of consciousness—individual units of his *jīva-śakti*.

Gaura has shown by his own example how compassionate love for all animation arising in the context of the culture of *uttamā-bhakti* precedes the attainment of *bhakti-rasa*. He left his *rasa-kirtana* in Nadiyā to give *bhakti* to the world, fulfilling the desire of Advaita. He walked the breadth and much of the length of Bharata broadcasting Śrī Kṛṣṇa *sankirtana* wherever he went. With Advaita's permission, he entered a life of solitude in his Puri residence, the Gambhīra. Thus he taught by his example how to enter his *rasa-kirtana* of Nadiyā. He showed compassion for the suffering animation and administered the medicine of Kṛṣṇa *sankirtana*, and in due course this same *sankirtana* took him inward, where he explored the depths of the ocean of *bhakti-rasa*. Following his example, showing kindness to all *jivas* in the context of *nāma-sankirtana*—*jīve dayā kṛṣṇa-nāma sarva-dharma-sāra*—the *sādhaka* eventually enters the depths—*gambhīra*—of *bhakti-rasa*. Thus the *sādhaka* gradually gains entrance to Gaura's *rasa-kirtana* of Nadiyā, where his dispensation begins, leading all willing *jīvas* step by step into the courtyard of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura in eternal nocturnal Nadiyā *sankirtana*. Such was the wish of the compassionate Advaita—Sītānātha.

In Śrī Advaita, we meet the full measure of the compassion of God in human form. He is exceeded in compassion only by Śrī Caitanya himself, whose compassion surpasses that of Mahā-Viṣṇu in the sense that it results in the highest love of God in intimacy, as opposed to reverential love of God.¹¹ Then again, it is Advaita who called Gaura Kṛṣṇa to the world. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa proclaims,

Because of Advaita's worship with *tulasi* and Gaṅgā *jala*, because of Advaita's crying out, Prabhu descended with his people. Because of Advaita, Mahāprabhu propagated *kirtana*; because of Advaita, Mahāprabhu saved the world!¹²

Above and far beyond Advaita's compassionate love is his *dāsyabhakti*, and this is what Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja highlights in his extended explanation of the ontological position of Advaita Ācārya—his *dāsyabhakti* for Śrī Caitanya. Compassion for the plight of the suffering is not in and of itself *bhakti-rasa*. As we have seen in the previous chapter, compassion arises in the context of Nārāyaṇa desiring to bestow *bhakti-rasa* and secondarily the perks of Vaikuṇṭha. Vaikuṇṭha's majestic love of Nārāyaṇa is expressed primarily in servitude—*dāsyā*.¹³ Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa describes Advaita Ācārya as the personification of servile love—*dāsyā-rasa*. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's auto-commentary on his two *maṅgala* verses glorifying Advaita Ācārya offers a glimpse into a world viewed through the lens of this *dāsyā-rasa*.

From the vantage point of one's own *bhāva*, one will see that *bhāva* as the best. One will sometimes compare one's own *bhāva* with the *bhāvas* of other devotees and find reason to think that those in other *bhāvas* in fact aspire for one's own *bhāva*. This is the light in which Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa has cast Advaita, and through his pen he has made Advaita Ācārya glorify his own *dāsyabhāva* such that Advaita sees those in *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *mādhurya* primarily relishing *dāsyabhāva*. This represents the subjective vision of Vaikuṇṭha, where *dāsyā-rasa* prevails.

However, in a broader sense the objective reality does play into his subjective vision: All varieties of sacred aesthetic rapture—*rasa*—are constituted of a serving ego. Central to all varieties of sacred aesthetic rapture is the ego of servitude. The

material, exploitative ego must be converted into a serving ego. All *jivas* are constitutionally subordinate to Kṛṣṇa, *jivera ‘svarūpa’ haya—kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa.*’ The *dharma* of the *jīva* is to serve. The serving ego is overtly manifest in the majestic realm of Nārāyaṇa and underlies all expressions of love in the intimate realm of Kṛṣṇa *līlā* as well. Śrī Advaita says through the pen of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja that each expression of love in intimacy—*dāsyā, sakhyā, vātsalyā,* and *mādhuryā*—is a particular expression of servitude.¹⁴ Although Advaita speaks from the vantage point of his own *bhāva*, he also speaks of an objective truth: *dāsyā, sakhyā, vātsalyā,* and *mādhuryā* are all forms of divine service, even as they appear to be expressions of self-centered enjoyment.

Servitude pervades all of the expressions of sacred aesthetic rapture, while *dāsyā-rasa* itself is a particular type of service and sacred aesthetic rapture. It manifests in both majestic and intimate forms of divine love.¹⁵ In Vaikuṇṭha’s majestic *dāsyā*, Nārāyaṇa is the object of love. This same Nārāyaṇa manifests as the three Viṣṇu forms discussed in the previous chapter. Among the Viṣṇu forms, we find something very peculiar. Here the perfect object of majestic love expresses a desire to experience *dāsyā* in relation to Kṛṣṇa, appearing in the form of Śrī Caitanya! This is alluded to in *Śrimad Bhāgavatam* and played out in full in Caitanya *līlā* through the person of Advaita Ācārya.¹⁶ Although Advaita Ācārya is senior in age to Śrī Caitanya within the *līlā* and is thus formally revered by him, Śrī Advaita desires to taste *dāsyā-rasa* in which Śrī Caitanya—Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his *ācārya-līlā*—is the object of his love in servitude. Steeped in *dāsyā-rasa* and filled with compassion for all *jīvas*, Śrī Advaita calls Kṛṣṇa to this world. Although the formalities of the *līlā* mandate that he himself is revered, Śrī Advaita takes great strides to establish that he considers himself the servant of Śrī Caitanya. Thus in his *bhāva* of servitude he exemplifies the

cornerstone of Gaudiya philosophy—*krṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*, “Krṣṇa is the fountainhead of all expressions of the Godhead.” What to speak of all *jīvas*, all expansions and *avatāras* of Krṣṇa desire to taste the love of serving him. In the *līlā* of Śrī Caitanya, Mahā-Viṣṇu does so as Advaita Ācārya.

Advaita Ācārya thus teaches us something central to the mystery of Gaura *līlā*: we are to serve Gaura in *dāsyā-bhāva*. This is also exemplified by the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs. They served Gaura in *dāsyā-bhāva* and as a result they simultaneously experienced *gopī-bhāva* of Krṣṇa *līlā* within. Although Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa does not make any such claims about Advaita experiencing a particular *bhāva* in Krṣṇa *līlā* as a result of his *dāsyā-bhakti* in Gaura *līlā*, other authors do. Service to Gaura gives rise to love of Krṣṇa in the intimacy of *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *mādhurya*, even while this *dāsyā-bhāva* for Gaura in and of itself is extraordinary. The *dāsyā* of Gaura *līlā* is intimacy bordering on fraternal love, not majestic *dāsyā*.

Thus we find Mahā-Viṣṇu in the midst of his *sṛṣti-līlā* appearing within the world to open a special window of opportunity, and this in the context of tasting for himself the ecstasy of servitude. All *jīvas* of his world emanate from him, as the one becomes many. The many have a natural affinity for and interest in their source, *śeṣa-bhūtah parasya vai*.¹⁷ We see this interest in Brahmā and for that matter in every *jīva* in human dress. Here that source, the Paramātmā in the form of Śrī Advaita, expresses interest in *his* source. In the context of his doing so, all *jīvas* also get the opportunity to unite, not only with their source, but with the source of their source. Advaita gives the gift of Gaura and Gaura gives the gift of Śrī Krṣṇa *prema-prayojana*.

NOTES

1. *Bhāgavata-sandarbha* 18
2. Sāṅkhya philosophy also posits that material nature is composed of both efficient and ingredient causes but in a very different sense. In Sāṅkhya, matter is thought to have an inherent power that can be differentiated from its basic ingredients. However, Kṛṣṇadāsa refutes the Sāṅkhya idea that material nature creates the world without the influence of the *puruṣa*.
3. The notion of two forms of Mahā-Viṣṇu involved in creation appears to be a unique insight of Kṛṣṇadāsa. Although Sadāśiva is thought of as another form of Mahā-Viṣṇu and Kavi-karṇapūra identifies Advaita Ācārya with Sadāśiva (and also as a cowherd boy in Vṛndāvana), Sadāśiva is not described as being involved in the *sṛṣṭi-līlā*. The creative glance of Viṣṇu is referred to as Śambhu, a lesser manifestation of Sadāśiva.
4. See *Bhakti-sandarbha* 180 and *Paramātmā-sandarbha* 93.
5. See *Sārārtha Darsinī* 9.4.63–68.
6. *Gitā Bhūṣaṇa* 12.13–14
7. See Viśvanātha Cakravartī's *Sārārtha Darsinī* commentary on ŚB 3.25.21 and chapter 8 of *Jaiva Dharma*.
8. Cc. 2.15.160–80
9. Cc. 3.3.67
10. Bg. 6.47
11. Under the influence of Śrī Caitanya, Advaita Ācārya can also bless one with love of God in intimacy, whereas independent of such influence Mahā-Viṣṇu cannot.
12. Cc. 1.6.34–35
13. Neutrality—*śānta*—is also present in majestic love. However this *rasa* can be converted to *dāsyā* through association with *dāsyā bhaktas* (see *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*), whereas *dāsyā* cannot be altered. Majestic *dāsyā* can also be imbued with reverential fraternal love.
14. Cc. 1.6.49
15. *Dāsyā-rasa* with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his Vraja *līlā* is primarily expressed by acting as a household servant in the house of Nanda Mahārāja.
16. See ŚB 10.89, where Mahā-Viṣṇu goes out of his way to get the *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa.
17. See *Paramātmā-sandarbha* 19.

9. Divine Potencies

*pañca-tattvātmakam kṛṣṇam bhakta-rūpa-svarūpakam
bhaktāvatāram bhaktākhyam namāmi bhakta-saktikam*

Pranāmas to Kṛṣṇa in the form of five ontological truths (Pañca-tattva): Kṛṣṇa in the form of a devotee of himself, his expansion of himself as his devotee, his *avatāra* as his devotee, his intermediate *sakti* as his devotee, and his primary *sakti* as his devotee.

The final verse of Kavirāja Goswāmī's *manigalācaraṇa* ends where his sacred preface began, in praise of a fivefold divinity centered on Śrī Caitanya. These fourteen verses constitute a doctrine of Pañca-tattva, five divine truths or Kṛṣṇa in five features: Kṛṣṇa himself in the form of a devotee, the expansion of himself in the form of a devotee, his *avatāra* in the form of a devotee, and his intermediate and primary *saktis* in the form of devotees. In essence, the only difference between this final verse and the first one is the inclusion of the principle of *śrī guru* in the first verse, as it is most appropriate to glorify the *guru* at the onset of a book about *bhakti*. Again, there is no Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* without *guru bhakti*.

It is clear that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī fully embraces Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara's revelation that Kṛṣṇa appeared in five features (the Pañca-tattva doctrine). In his *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*, a book that sheds light (*dīpikā*) on the enumeration (*uddeśa*) of

the associates (*gaṇa*) of Gaura, Kavi-karṇapūra attributes both this doctrine and this *maṅgala* verse to Svarūpa Dāmodara Goswāmī. Kavi-karṇapūra's work precedes Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta and identifies all of Gaura's principal associates with the principal associates of Kṛṣṇa in his Vraja *līlā*.

Once Śrī Caitanya was identified completely with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the task of identifying his associates arose, for there is no meaning to Vraja Kṛṣṇa without his associates and *dhāma*, his sacred domicile. This in itself is an extraordinary insight into the nature of Vraja Kṛṣṇa on the part of the early Gauḍiyas. They understood Kṛṣṇa well enough to know that if he were to appear in his original form, he would have to do so in the company of his devotees endowed with *prema-mādhurya*. As we have learned, love of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa are interpenetrating realities. Love of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa are one, even while they are at the same time different from one another. They are one in that neither exists independently of the other, and they are two in terms of how they interrelate.

After repeatedly witnessing Śrī Caitanya manifest the *bhāva* of various mythic *avatāras* of the unseen Purāṇic world, that world became that much more real to the devotees of Nadiyā. They understood their historical time of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in relation to that subjective, meditative world, its *yuga* cycles and manifestations of divinity. Gradually the devotees of Nadiyā, many of whom were sober scholars, authors, poets, and the like, began to conceive of Śrī Caitanya as the *yuga-avatāra* forecast in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, a special *yuga-avatāra* for a special Kali *yuga*.¹

The eyewitness accounts of the Eastern savior's numerous apostles are far too compelling to dismiss, and thus we must take their sense of his divinity seriously. Gaura's miraculous acts, extraordinary virtue and character, knowledge, spiritual power, and beneficence all convinced them of his Godhood. At the same

time, his extraordinary devotion to Kṛṣṇa exceeded anything the community of devotees had ever experienced or anything that had been recorded in the sacred texts. Gaura's humility, selflessness, and spiritual passion taught them by example a previously uncharted path to *prema*. As we have seen, for good reason they understood him to be *svayam bhagavān*, the fountainhead of all manifestations of the divine, even as he played the role of a devotee.

Gaura's associates realized that Navadvipa was nondifferent from Vṛndāvana and that they themselves were his associates in Kṛṣṇa's Vraja *līlā*, appearing along with him in an extension of that very *līlā!* Nadiyā is *sādhana-siddha-bhūmi*, that sacred place where *siddhas* perform the *līlā* of *sādhakas*, and where Kṛṣṇa pursues the role of Rādhā. It is from this sacred place and from the collective influence of the Pañca-tattva that all *jīvas* in this Kali *yuga* have been afforded the opportunity to enter into Vraja *līlā-seva*. Gaura *līlā* gives Kṛṣṇa *līlā*.

In the preceding discussion of the second to the thirteenth *marigala* verses, we explored the *tattvas* of Śrī Caitanya, Śrī Nit-yānanda, and Śrī Advaita, all forms of the Godhead appearing as devotees. In this final *marigala* verse, we explore in greater depth the truth about the devotees, the associates of Śrī Caitanya constituted of his intermediate (*taṭastha*) and his primary (*svarūpa*) *śaktis*. Along with Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Nityānanda Prabhu, and Advaita Prabhu, two *śakti-tattvas* are included in the Pañca-tattva. They are personified as Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura (*taṭastha-śakti*) and Gadādhara Paṇḍita (*svarūpa-śakti*). They represent the two types of souls, two types of perfect devotees.

In the stage of *ruci*, one has keen interest in the lives of such devotees. One's *sādhana*, which was previously one's medicine, now becomes one's food. Whereas before *ruci* one identifies divinity with God and *guru*, after *ruci* one broadens one's recognition to include

the lives of spiritually advanced devotees. The lives of advanced devotees are compelling examples of what it means to love Kṛṣṇa, and love of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa correspond with one another. In this stage, the idea that the *guru* is the embodiment of love takes precedent over the idea that he or she is God's representative, *sākṣād-dharitvena*. Thus the expansion of one's notion of divinity from preoccupation with God and *guru* to one that includes the Vaiṣṇavas enriches one's sense of the divinity of the Deity and the *guru* as well. This is Vaiṣṇavism. As much as this expanded spiritual sensibility is lacking, one remains a novice or Vaiṣṇava-prāya—almost a Vaiṣṇava. In this final *maṅgala* verse, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja uses the word *bhaktākhyām* (those who are referred to as devotees) to refer to the Vaiṣṇava associates of Śrī Caitanya who are constituted of Kṛṣṇa's *taṭastha-śakti*—śrīvāsādi gaura-bhakta-vṛṇda.

Because Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura represents Kṛṣṇa's *taṭastha-śakti*, he is also identified with Nārada. Nārada exemplifies the teaching that the *taṭastha-jīva* can exist under the influence of either Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti* or his *māyā-śakti*, as an enlightened or materially conditioned entity respectively. Furthermore, Nārada, and by extension Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura of Gaura *līlā*, represents the entirety of *taṭastha-śakti* in perfection, which includes both liberated *nitya-siddha* and *sādhana-siddha taṭastha-jīvas*.² In the *Bhāgavata*, Nārada is depicted as one who shows the way as a *sādhana-siddha*.³ Thus although he is a *nitya-siddha*, he plays the role of a *sādhana-siddha* for the purpose of teaching others. To teach us, the *Bhāgavata* shares the example of Nārada's life as a *sādhaka* and a glimpse into his apparent previous life. Through the lives of the devotees, the theory of *sādhana* is demonstrated as a practical reality. Thus Nārada/Śrīvāsa shows the way by example, which as we know, speaks louder than precept.

The Sanskrit word *taṭastha* speaks of the line that demarks water from the shore. Unto itself, the *taṭastha-jīva* is neither here

nor there. Its personhood is realized in association with either the *svarūpa-śakti* or the *māyā-śakti*. As we shall see ahead, any attempt to define the *tatāstha-jīva* that does not take into consideration its potential of personhood is incomplete. Its personality, material or spiritual, is a combination of its inherent nature—as doer, knower, and experiencer—and the nurture derived from its environment. While the influence of the *māyā-śakti* results in a superficial sense of identity that is here today and gone tomorrow, the influence of the *svarūpa-śakti* results in a spiritual identity suitable for *lilā-seva*. The influence of the *māyā-śakti* impedes the exercise of will, and the influence of the *svarūpa-śakti* facilitates it.

The will of the *tatāstha-jīva* expressed in relation to the *māyā-śakti* animates the material world. The movements of the material world then influence the will of the *jīva* and condition it to make the same poor choices again and again. By contrast, the influence of the *svarūpa-śakti*, which orchestrates the play of God by way of facilitating his will, frees the *tatāstha-jīva* from *māyā-śakti*'s influence and facilitates the *jīva*'s exercise of will within the circle of God's play. Thus it is in *lilā-seva* that the *tatāstha-jīva* expresses desires that are its own while at the same time pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. For example, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's friends in *lilā-seva* of *sakhya-rasa* are not automatons. When viewed from the *bheda* perspective of the *bhedābheda* metaphysic, they have different desires, all of which please Kṛṣṇa in the context of *sakhya-rasa*. The *svarūpa-śakti* facilitates these desires and the very identity of loving fraternity.⁴

Thus the *tatāstha-jīva* has three *svabhāvas* or natures:

1. I am American, Indian, etc. (insubstantial).
2. I am (substantial with untapped potential).
3. I am a *gopā/gopī* (substantial and fully realized potential).

The first nature is an acquired material identity that will not stand the test of time. It is a mixed existence, where consciousness interacts with matter and in this sense mixes with it.

The second nature is a substantial sense of enduring existence in contact with nothing material either good or bad—no material variety—and also no spiritual variety. This existence expresses no developed personality because it has nothing to interact with, nothing to like or dislike, and thereby no opportunity to express a personality. In his *Paramātmā-sandarbha*, section 19, Śrī Jīva Goswāmī cites Jāmātā Muni's description of the *jīvātmā*:

It is not inert, it is not mutable, and it is not awareness only. It is aware of itself and it is self-luminous, it has unchanging form, it [always] resides in its true nature, it is conscious, it pervades the body, it is of the nature of consciousness and bliss, it is the referent of [the word] “I,” there is a different self in each body, it is indivisible, and it is eternally pure. Furthermore, it has the intrinsic characteristics of being an apprehender, agent and qualitative experiencer, and by its own nature and at all times it is an inherent part of the indwelling Lord.⁵

Again, this self requires an environment, spiritual or material, to express its will and be the qualitative experiencer that it is.

The third nature is the *jīva* expressing itself under the influence of the *svarūpa-śakti*. This influence results in a spiritualization of one's present material body that has now become a *sādhaka-deha*, a spiritual practitioner's body. The *sādhaka-deha* is a work in progress as the practitioner seeks to bring his or her senses in touch with sense objects for the purpose of divine service. Because the practitioner's body is used for service, it is not a mere appendage, an object of hatred and loathing that extends to the entirety of the natural world. Indeed, the practitioner's body is venerable as

it is spiritualized, and the practitioner's perspective of the natural world is also spiritualized as it too is engaged in loving service to the Godhead. This spiritualization of the world involves the transformation from an exploiting ego to a serving ego. The serving ego matures in the context of spiritualizing one's *sādhaka-deha*. When the *sādhaka-deha* is fully spiritualized, a corresponding internal meditative spiritual body (*siddha-deha*) in which to engage in *līlā-sevā* manifests. This inner spiritual identity and body is similar to that of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself—Para Brahman.

The difference between Brahman and Bhagavān is *bhakti*, the essence of Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti*. While *nirviṣeṣa* Brahman is formless, quality-less, and motionless, Kṛṣṇa is Para Brahman, the form of eternity, knowledge, and bliss—*sac-cid-ānanda-rūpāya*. He exhibits qualities and dances in *līlā-mādhurya*. Under scrutiny, we find that this form corresponds with the influence of *bhakti*. Kṛṣṇa appears to different devotees in a form that corresponds with their love for him. The same holds true for his qualities and *līlās*: they correspond with a particular influence of *bhakti*, the essence of Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti*.

Arguably, *nirviṣeṣa* Brahman can be conceived of as a diluted, formless manifestation of Kṛṣṇa not influenced by his *svarūpa-śakti*. In other words, *nirviṣeṣa* Brahman has no qualities because there is no *bhakti* associated with this expression of the Godhead. Brahman is everywhere and thus motionless, still. Kṛṣṇa is also Brahman, Para Brahman. But this expression as Para Brahman is moving—indeed, dancing! What makes him move? What makes him dance? *Bhakti*, the essence of the *svarūpa-śakti*. Thus, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has described Śrī Kṛṣṇa as a student in the dancing school of Rādhā's *prema*⁶

Similarly, the *tatatha-jīva* influenced by *bhakti* realizes its potential to love and becomes a personified form of *dāsyā*, *sakhya*,

vātsalya or *mādhurya-rasa*, with corresponding qualities and participation in *līlā-seva*. It ascends to its loving potential above and beyond *ātmānanda* and *brahmānanda*. Under the influence of *bhakti*, its will is perfectly in tune with the ultimate object of love, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *tatasthā-jīva* thus becomes definable in terms of personality, form, qualities, and movement, as Kṛṣṇa himself is in comparison to the undefinable nature of formless, quality-less, immovable Brahman, in which there is no *bhakti*. The indeterminate *ānanda* of Brahman turns to determinate *ānanda* in Bhagavān/*bhakti*, and acquaintance with this determinate *ānanda* constitutes a deeper penetration into transcendence.⁷

This depth of penetration into transcendence wholly corresponds with what we perceive our nature to be as we shuffle on the surface of material existence. In other words, here in material existence we consider ourselves doers, knowers, and experiencers—persons. And indeed we are, relative to our environment. In stark contrast, the sense of self in Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra* and the sense of self in Advaita Vedānta are very different. They are different from one another, different from the sense of self in Gauḍīya Vedānta, and different from our everyday experience. The *Yoga-sūtra* self is merely a witness, not an agent of action. And the individual self in Advaita Vedānta is an illusion altogether. It is not a doer, knower, or experiencer in the here and now nor in the hereafter. Thus by comparison, the self of Gauḍīya Vedānta corresponds with our everyday sense of self as well as our spiritual potential—our third nature described above—whereas the *Yoga-sūtra* and Advaita Vedānta selves do not and in this sense arguably appear to be somewhat of an artificial imposition.

This third nature of Gaudiya Vedānta is represented within the Pañca-tattva as Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. Again, he is often said to

represent all *tāṭastha-jīvas*, both *sādhana-siddha* and *nitya-siddhas*—*śrīvāsādi gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*. After explaining how he came to write *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in the following chapter of his book, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja dedicates four entire chapters to introducing the associates—*bhakta-vṛnda*—of Śrī Caitanya, the principal players in the drama of Gaura *līlā*. All of these players are also associates of Kṛṣṇa in his Vraja *līlā*, either perfected *tāṭastha-śakti-jīvas* or those constituted of *svarūpa-śakti*, who will be discussed ahead. Only after having discussed these devotees does Kṛṣṇadāsa begin the narrative of Gaura's manifest pastimes.

With regard to the Vraja *līlā*, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura/Nārada has also been identified with Kṛṣṇa's *brāhmaṇa* friend Madhumaṅgala, who plays an integral role in the romantic life of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura exhibited Madhumaṅgala's characteristics during the Herā-pañcamī festival held in Jagannātha Puri.⁸ In identifying Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura with Madhumaṅgala, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa follows the lead of Śrī Jīva Goswāmī, who has identified Nārada with Madhumaṅgala in his *Gopāla-campū*.⁹

In Gaura *līlā*, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura appears as an elder of Śrī Caitanya. His courtyard hosts the eternal nocturnal *rasa-kirtana* of Nadiyā. Entry into this courtyard and Gaura's *kirtana* is reserved for highly qualified devotees. However, Śrī Caitanya took his *saṅkirtana* from the courtyard of Śrīvāsa to the streets of every town and village to show the way to enter the courtyard of Śrīvāsa in *rasa-kirtana*. Just as Kṛṣṇa's Mathurā and Vraja *līlās* point back to the superexcellence of the Vraja *līlā*, similarly Śrī Caitanya's *saṁnyāsa-līlā* causes him to leave Nadiyā. In doing so, he shows the way that all souls can enter his *rasa-kirtana* in Nadiyā hosted by Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. The way of entering is Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-saṅkirtana*, which cleanses the heart and leads naturally to the *līlā-smaranam*.

we find Śrī Caitanya absorbed in during his final days in Jagannātha Purī. Following Śrī Caitanya through this progression, one gains entrance to the *kirtana* hall of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, in which Gaura revealed to his associates their Vraja *līlā* identities. Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura has facilitated Gaura's *sāṅkirtana* more than any other of his associates. He gave his house to host this *rasa-kirtana* without concern for his family members should they interfere. His home is the residence (*vāsa*) of Rādhā (*śrī*), in that it fully facilitates Gaura Kṛṣṇa's Śrī Kṛṣṇa *sāṅkirtana*.

From the perspective of Gaura *līlā*, the *sādhaka*'s ideal is to enter into this *kirtana* in the unmanifest Gaura *līlā*. Indeed, all of the teachings and examples set by Mahāprabhu in his *sannyāsa-līlā* (*sambandha-jñāna*) are the foundation that gives support to this courtyard *kirtana*, enabling Nimbā Pañḍita to dance in ecstasy, completely at home in the house of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. That which Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya experiences in his final hours in the Gambhīra, which renders him unapproachable, is fully available in the privacy of Śrīvāsa Āṅgana, where Nimbā Pañḍita devoid of *aiśvaryā* performs his *mādhurya kirtana* in the intimacy of *śrīvāsādi gaura-bhakta-vṛṇda*.

Our prospect—the realization of our potential—is possible by the grace of Bhakti-devī, the essence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti*. Thus we turn now to the final member of the Pañca-tattva, Śrī Gadādhara Pañḍita, who represents this *tattva*—*svarūpa-śakti-tattva*. Like Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, Gadādhara is also a devotee, but he is a different kind of devotee. As we have seen, this difference is not merely one of a differing *bhāva*. It is an ontological difference. Again, Śrīvāsa and Gadādhara are constituted of different *śaktis*, *tatasthā-* and *svarūpa-śaktis* respectively. It is only when the *svarūpa-śakti* makes an ingress into the *tatastha-jīva* that the *jīva* can experience *bhakti*. Unto itself, the *tatastha-jīva* does not have the

power to dispel the influence of *māyā-śakti*. Under the influence of the *svarūpa-śakti*, however, it gains the power to not only dispel *māyā* but also the power to overwhelm Kṛṣṇa.

Even in its perfection in *līlā-seva*, the *tātaṭastha-jīva* is distinguished from the devotees constituted of Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa-śakti*. For example, Rūpa Goswāmī in his Vraja *līlā* identity as a handmaiden of Śrī Rādhā—Rūpa-mañjari— is classified as a *prāṇa-sakhī* in Śrī Rūpa's *Ujjvala-nīlamani*. In contrast, *tātaṭastha-jīvas* who serve in the wake of Śrī Rūpa's ecstasy are classified as *nitya-sakhis*. The latter class follows the former. *Tātaṭastha-jīvas* who enter the circle of eternal *līlā-seva* as handmaidens of Rādhā cannot attain the status of a *prāṇa-sakhī* but rather serve under them as *nitya-sakhis*.

Kavirāja Goswāmī describes Gadādhara and others like him to be *śakti-avatāras* and *antaraṅga-bhaktas*. However, this type of devotee is not limited to Rādhā and her expansions. In his *Anubhāṣya*, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura makes the following comment about these *antaraṅgā-bhaktas*: "Some of them are situated in conjugal love and others in parental affection, fraternity, and servitude."¹⁰ In his *Bhāgavata* speech, Thākura Bhaktivinoda writes,

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is served by Śrī Rādhikā herself and simultaneously by her multiple bodily forms in the shapes of the residents of Vraja. The services of the other milkmaids, of Nanda and Yaśodā, of Śrīdāmā and Sudāmā, and of all the associates and servitors of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, are part and parcel of the service of Śrī Rādhikā.

Rādhā-sahasra-nāma as found in Raghunātha dāsa Goswāmī's *Stavāvali*, describes Kṛṣṇa's most intimate friend, Subala-sakhā, as the form that Rādhā manifests for the sake of tasting fraternal love for Kṛṣṇa—*Subala-nyasta*. Subala and Rādhā are also look-alikes. *Gautamiya-tantra* describes Kṛṣṇa's friends Śrīdāmā, Sudāmā,

Vasudāmā, and Kīṅkiṇī as embodiments of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *antah-karana*, representing his intelligence, egoism, heart, and mind.

Much has been said about the *svarūpa-śakti* in the preceding chapters and even in the previous paragraphs. We have discussed its influence on the *jīva-śakti*, on *māyā-śakti*, and on Bhagavān. We have learned of its constituents: *sandhini*, *saṃvit*, and *hlādini*, and so on. Thus our remaining task is but to elaborate herein on the person of Gadādhara Paṇḍit. As we shall see, the remaining task is considerable.

Earlier in the discussion surrounding Śrī Caitanya and the cause of his descent, emphasis was given to the position of Śrī Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's primary *śakti*, for as we have learned, Śrī Caitanya is Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined. But in Gadādhara Paṇḍita, we find a second manifestation of Rādhā in Gaura *līlā*. While Gaura in his most complete sense is Kṛṣṇa in the *bhāva* of Rādhā—Kṛṣṇa turning into Rādhā—Rādhā is also present separately in his *līlā* as Gadādhara Paṇḍita.

Thus Gadādhara Paṇḍita is perhaps the most difficult member of the Pañca-tattva to fathom. The reason for this is obvious: if Gaura is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa combined, how can Gadādhara also be Rādhā? Indeed, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has not taken up the task of explaining this complex theological subject. His treatment of Gadādhara is limited at best. He has labored lovingly throughout his treatise to emphasize the unity of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the form of Śrī Caitanya and to explain the background of this unity.

Perhaps he thought that to then speak in detail of how Gadādhara is also a manifestation of Rādhā would be too much to expect his readers to digest in one already theologically complex text. Did he perhaps disagree with the identification of Gadādhara with Rādhā? We know from the written record that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa agrees with Svarūpa Dāmodara in identifying Gadādhara Paṇḍita

as a member of the Pañca-tattva and that accordingly he also identifies him as the personification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's primal *sakti*.¹¹ Nonetheless, he never openly equates him with Rādhā as others before and after him have done.

The earliest identification of Gadādhara with Rādhā is found in Kavi-karṇapūra's reference to Svarūpa Dāmodara's position on this subject found in *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*:

The *avatāra* of love, previously Rādhā Vṛndāvaneśvarī, is now the dearmost of Gaura: Paṇḍita Gadādhara. As revealed by Svarūpa Dāmodara, he was the Lakṣmī in Vraja of yore—the beloved of Śyāma in Vṛndāvana—today the goddess of Gaura, Śrī Paṇḍita Gadādhara. Lalitā—Anurādhā—is Rādhā's closest friend. She too has entered Pandita Śrī Gadāi. So says the drama *Caitanya-candrodaya*.¹²

But Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja is the spokesperson for the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs, who did not identify Gadādhara with Rādhā in their writings. For that matter, they spoke sparingly about the divinity of Śrī Caitanya himself and more about Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. However, they explained Kṛṣṇa *līlā* so thoroughly that it becomes apparent to the thoughtful reader that there must be a solution to Kṛṣṇa's problem: Kṛṣṇa's position as the *āśraya-ālambana* puts constraints on his capacity to relish *rasa*. This understanding is the unshakable foundation on which Gaura *līlā* arises and towers over Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, underscoring the position of Rādhikā. In this way, the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs laid the foundation on which Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī built the temple of Śrī Caitanya, identifying him with *svayam bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and moreover with Śrī Rādhikā.

Thus the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs have supplied the most compelling evidence for the divinity of Śrī Caitanya—his identification with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—even while doing so indirectly.

However, there is no conclusive evidence that they have identified Gadādhara with Rādhā, if any at all.¹³ He who was entrusted to represent their teachings and make them available in the more common and spoken Bengali does not identify Gadādhara with Rādhā either.

However, it is doubtful that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja did not accept that Gadādhara is Rādhā. Nor is it probable that the Vṛndāvana Goswāmīs did not, despite not writing about it. Both the Goswāmīs and Kavirāja Goswāmī are indebted to Svarūpa Dāmodara. Indeed, Raghunātha dāsa Goswāmī was placed under his care by Mahāprabhu himself. Svarūpa Dāmodara was thus the *śikṣā-guru* of Raghunātha dāsa, whom Śrī Caitanya affectionately referred to as the “Raghu of Svarūpa”—‘*svarūpera raghu*’—*āji haite ihāra nāme*.¹⁴ Furthermore, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has also identified himself as a disciple of Raghunātha dāsa Goswāmī—*śrī-guru śrī raghunātha*.¹⁵ And Svarūpa’s voice is clear, echoed as it is in Kavikarṇapūra’s work and recorded in his own *Gadādhara-aṣṭakam*. In the latter, he identifies Gadādhara as he who “reveals his form as Rādhā amongst his intimate associates.”¹⁶ Thus Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa had other reasons for not directly noting that Gadādhara is Rādhā. Other than his possible concern that making this identification would unnecessarily complicate his effort to explain Śrī Caitanya’s identification with Rādhā, the very nature of Gadādhara, the Rādhā of Gaura *līlā*, may have played a part. Let us then look at the nature of Gadādhara Pañdita.

How can Gadādhara be Rādhā at the same time that Gaura is Rādhā? The not-so-simple answer is that he can and cannot. Gadādhara is Rādhā, but in Gaura *līlā* she is serving Gaura Kṛṣṇa in *dāsyā-bhāva*, giving herself entirely to Gaura Kṛṣṇa as only she can. As much as Gaura is able to embody the mood of Rādhā, the Rādhā *bhāva* of Gadādhara is diminished. “Diminished” means

that Gadādhara's Rādhā *bhāva* is transferred to Gaura Kṛṣṇa. When and to the extent that Gaura Kṛṣṇa is successful in experiencing the *bhāva* of Rādhā, Gadādhara, who is present with him to watch over him in his experiment of tasting her *bhāva*, appears only partially present as Rādhā. At such times, Gadādhara's giving of his Rādhā *bhāva* to Gaura leaves him the *bhāva* of Lalitā or a lesser manifestation of Rādhā, who is the fountainhead of all *sakti-tattva*. This is something only Rādhā can do. Thus Gadādhara is fully Rādhā even when experiencing the *bhāva* of a lesser expression of herself in the context of his servitude for Gaura Kṛṣṇa.

As a follower of Vṛndāvana dāsa Thākura, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa agrees with the Thākura's disapproval of the worship of Gaura as the object of romantic love. Although Gaura is Kṛṣṇa, he should be worshiped in light of the particular mood he is in and not in the mood of a paramour lover that the *gopis* worship Kṛṣṇa of Vraja in. Thus although Gadādhara is Rādhā, he serves Gaura in consideration of Gaura's mood. Had Kṛṣṇadāsa emphasized the fact that Gadādhara is Rādhā, he may have thought that in doing so he would inadvertently open the door to the idea that Gadādhara is Rādhā in all respects and Gaura is Kṛṣṇa in all respects and thus Gaura can be worshipped as the object of paramour love as Kṛṣṇa in Vraja is worshiped. Not emphasizing Gadādhara's identification with Rādhā, he has instead emphasized that Gaura is Kṛṣṇa in the mood of Rādhā, and thus Gaura, as we have seen, is arguably more Rādhā than he is Kṛṣṇa. This emphasis in turn makes Gadādhara's position as Rādhā nuanced from what it is in the Vraja *līlā*.

Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa addresses this issue in his *Caitanya-bhāgavata*. Therein he explains that Śrī Caitanya never mixed intimately with women and thus Vaiṣṇava *sādhus* never refer to him as one who enjoys intimately with young ladies—Gaurāṅga-nāgara. Although one can argue that because Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa

himself, all types of glorification can be offered to him, because he is in a particular *bhāva*, thoughtful devotees only glorify him in consideration of the mood he is in.¹⁷ Thus Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura explains that it is inappropriate to think of Gaura as Kṛṣṇa without taking note of the *bhāva* that Gaura Kṛṣṇa is pursuing. As such, desiring to taste *mādhurya-rasa* with Gaura is a disturbance to Gaura Kṛṣṇa's desired *bhāva*.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī instructs us similarly, "It is firmly established that *gopi-bhāva* is experienced only in relation to Vrajendra-nandana Kṛṣṇa and no one else."¹⁸ *Gopi-bhāva* here refers to the paramour love of the Vraja milkmaids. Only these village women experience this *parakiyā-bhāva* and only in relation to Vraja Kṛṣṇa. Thus Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, like his predecessor Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, disapproves of what is sometimes referred to as *gaura-nāgara-bhāva*, the so-called *bhāva* of paramour love centered on Gaura Kṛṣṇa. Accordingly, Gadādhara is Rādhā, but Rādhā in the mood of giving her *gopi-bhāva* to Gaura Kṛṣṇa that he might experience it for himself rather than being the object of it. Again, what is cautioned against here is the notion of desiring to serve Gaura Kṛṣṇa in the *bhāva* of a *gopi*, when he himself is steeped in *gopi-bhāva*. This *gopi-bhāva* is experienced only in relation to Vrajendra-nandana Kṛṣṇa, not even Gaura Kṛṣṇa, and certainly not anyone else.

In Nadiyā, Gaura tastes various *bhāvas*, manifesting the ecstasy of various *avatāras*, of Kṛṣṇa himself, of different *śakti-tattvas*, and so on. Of all of these, Rādhā's *bhāva* is supreme, and it is this *bhāva* that Gaura has come to taste and lose himself in. But in the manifest *līlā* of Nadiyā, he is not exclusively focused on cultivating this *bhāva* in the way that he is in Jagannātha Puri. In Nadiyā, Gadādhara is protecting Gaura from himself. If Gaura should try to tear his chest apart upon being told that Kṛṣṇa is in

his heart, as Gaura pursues Kṛṣṇa in the ecstasy of his highest devotee, Gadādhara is there to protect him. Indeed, Śacidevi appointed him to watch over her son for this very reason. In the Nadiyā *līlā*, Rādhā as Gadādhara is protecting Gaura Kṛṣṇa out of concern for what her *bhāva* might do to him. Thus Gadādhara Pañdita follows Gaura like his shadow. The two are inseparable. Murāri Gupta describes the intimacy of their relationship, comparing it to Rādhā tendering to Kṛṣṇa in Vraja: Gadādhara would decorate Gaura with garlands and sandalwood paste, prepare his bed, and often sleep near him.¹⁹

Gadādhara Pañdita was approximately the same age as Śrī Caitanya, and they were classmates in Navadvīpa. Both were *brāhmaṇas* by birth. Thus they had a natural bond through age and *varṇa*. When Gaura entered the *āśrama* of renunciation, Gadādhara followed suit. Gadādhara never married and also left home with Mahāprabhu when the latter took *sannyāsa*. Thinking that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya would reside in Puri for his *sannyāsa-līlā*, Gadādhara took a vow to remain in this sacred earthly abode of Jagannātha Swāmī—*kṣetra-sannyāsa*—for the balance of his life. Caitanyadeva gave him the famous Toṭā-gopinātha Deity, whom Gadādhara devoutly worshiped and before whom for the pleasure of Śrīmān Mahāprabhu he daily recited Śrimad Bhāgavatam.

Kavirāja Goswāmī's text is centered more on Gaura's Puri *līlā* than it is on his earlier, sweeter *līlā* of Nadiyā. The Puri *līlā* is not as intimate as Gaura's Nadiyā *līlā*, but it is more instructive to *sādhakas*. In Puri, Gaura teaches us how to enter the Nadiyā *līlā*. In Puri, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, the great *sannyāsin*, is seriously engaged in an effort to fully and exclusively experience Rādhā's spiritual emotions. He is engaged in his *sādhana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa *sankirtana* that leads to his internal life of *līlā-smaraṇam* and the culture of Rādhā *bhāva*.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja casts Gadādhara with a timid disposition throughout his text and more so in Purī Dhāma, unlike the nature of Rādhā's temperament depicted in the Goswāmī *līlā-granths* and the more technical manuals such as *Ujjvala-nilamaṇi*. Therein, Rādhā is a bold lover who controls Dhīra-lalita Kṛṣṇa. But Gadādhara's temperament in Purī is more like that of Rukmiṇī in Dvārakā, and Kṛṣṇadāsa makes this comparison.²⁰ Furthermore, Purī in Gaura *līlā* corresponds with Dvārakā of Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. In Vṛndāvana, Rādhā plays the leading lady's role. In Dvārakā, this part goes to Rukmiṇī, her expansion.

It is in Purī that Gaura Kṛṣṇa ultimately becomes successful in his effort to fully and irreversibly experience Rādhā *bhāva*. In his final verse of *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, Gaura becomes Rādhā. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja writes that this last verse was spoken by Rādhā herself. Kṛṣṇadāsa places the speaking of the *Śikṣāṣṭakam* verses at the very end of the Purī *līlā*. In these later years, Mahāprabhu turns to a life of solitude and internal *bhajana*, supported in his effort to experience Rādhā *bhāva* by Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya.

Where is Gadādhara in all of this? He has all but disappeared from the *līlā*, remaining in separation from Gaura in the seva of Toṭā-gopinātha. As Gaura becomes Rādhā, Gadādhara recedes more and more to the background. The more Gaura enters Rādhā *bhāva*, the more Gadādhara, with the loss of that *bhāva*, represents the slightly lesser *bhāva* of Lalitā or Rukmiṇī. Throughout his text, Kṛṣṇadāsa has emphasized that Śrī Caitanya is Rādhā, even more than he has emphasized that he is Kṛṣṇa. Thus he arguably depicts Gadādhara as a vitiated form of Rādhā. As Gaura flourishes in Rādhā *bhāva*, Gadādhara dwindles, serving in separation.

This, however, is a dwindling that does not diminish his position, but rather showcases his selflessness. He relinquishes his *bhāva* so that Gaura Kṛṣṇa may be successful in accomplishing

what he has descended for. Thus Gadādhara shows the way in Gaura *līlā*. No one knows Gaura like Gadādhara, just as no one knows Kṛṣṇa like Rādhā. His service, his sacrifice that Gaura might be successful, stands like a lighthouse showing the way to the shore of the most intimate service to Gaura. This is the full expression of *dharma—prema-dharma—samsiddhir śri-gaura-hari-toṣṇam*.

Rādhā initially tried to stop Kṛṣṇa in his pursuit of her *mahā-bhāva*, concerned as to what her *bhāva* might do to him, what the world would think of him, and what it would mean for her to be placed so prominently in the limelight. But Kṛṣṇa, true to his nature, was determined to taste it at any cost. Thus she accompanied him in his pursuit to protect him should he lose himself in her love. Furthermore, she dispatched her dearmost friends, Lalitā and Viśākhā (Svarūpa and Rāmānanda), who are well acquainted with her *bhāva*, to assist him further when as Gadādhara she could no longer directly participate without hindering his pursuit. At that time, at the height of Gaura's triumph, she stood in his shadow as he basked in glory. So glorious is Gadādhara that his role properly understood diminishes the glory of Gaura, even while Gadādhara seeks no recognition at all and outwardly appears diminished in his own status as Rādhā, all but disappearing from the scene. The truth of the matter is that without Gadādhara, Gaura Kṛṣṇa could not have been successful in his effort to experience Rādhā's *prema*. Gaura's only hope for success rests in the outstretched hands of Gadādhara Pañdita, who gives Gaura his entire self, while quietly disappearing into the background. Thus Gadādhara is arguably the most important among all of Śrī Caitanya's associates. None can compare to him. Jaya Gaura-Gadā! Save the best for the last, as we come to the end of our discussion on Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa's *maṅgalācarana* and the end of our discussion of the Pañca-tattva, its last member, Śrī Gadādhara. It is said that Śrī Caitanya left

the world entering into the Deity of Ṭotā-gopinātha. Thus there is no *samādhi-mandira* for his divine form. Similarly, there is no *samādhi-mandira* for the *divya-rūpā* of Gadādhara. Gadādhara left just after Gaura, entering into the Rādhā Deity of Ṭotā-gopinātha. Jaya Gaura! Jaya Gadādhara!

Kavirāja Goswāmi's focus in his commentary on this final *maṅgala* verse marks the beginning of a tidal wave of love of God that is Śrī Caitanya-cariṭāmṛta. He envisions a plundering of the secret storehouse of *prema* on the part of the Pañca-tattva. With the plundering of this storehouse comes the redistribution of its wealth of *prema* to the poorest of the poor, the penniless paupers of the world, who have nothing to show for their beginningless efforts toward material acquisition. This distribution also benedicts the wise, who alone to themselves taste only self-love—ātmānanda—which even if multiplied a trillionfold does not compare to an atomic particle of *prema*—bhaktiyānanda. This distribution is the height of magnanimity, for it gives the highest thing—Vraja *prema*—to anyone and everyone regardless of their qualification or lack thereof. This is Gaura's *audārya-lilā*, the magnanimous distribution of mādhurya, love of God in intimacy. These five features of the Godhead represent a unique theological window into the world beyond time and space. Yet they descend into the world of our experience to not only deliver us from the limits of time and space, but moreover to plunge us into an ocean of *bhakti-rasa*. Together they set in motion a tidal wave of love of God that makes the earth quiver in the ecstasy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa *sankirtana*. May this *sankirtana* be victorious throughout the multiverse—*param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-sankirtanam*.

NOTES

1. ŚB 11.5.34
2. In ŚB 1.5 Nārada is depicted as *vaidhi-bhakti-sādhana-siddha*.
3. See ŚB 1.5–6.
4. Vs. 4.4. See the commentaries of both Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Śri Nimbārkācārya.
5. Satyanarayana Dasa and Jonathan B. Edelmann, “Agency in the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Tradition,” in *Free Will, Agency, and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*, ed. Matthew R. Dasti and Edwin F. Bryant (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), Kindle edition.
6. Cc. 1.4.124
7. Here the Advaitin notions of *nirvikalpa/savikalpa* are reversed with *savikalpa-samādhi*, in which Kṛṣṇa’s qualities and so on are realized, taking a higher position than *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, in which only the quality-less expression of the Godhead is realized.
8. In Cc. 2.14.229, acting out the part of Madhumāṅgala in Vraja, Śrīvāsa makes boyish sounds by clasping his hands under his armpits while loudly laughing.
9. *Gopāla-campū* 1.3.71–72
10. Cc. 1.7.17
11. *prabhura nija-śakti* (Cc. 1.1.41), *śakti-avatāra, antaraṅga-bhakta* (Cc. 1.7.17), and *teñho lakṣmi-rūpā, tāñra sama keha nāi* (Cc. 1.10.15).
12. *Gaura-ganoddesa-dipikā* 147–50
13. In his *Sādhana-dipikā*, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Goswāmī makes the case that the Goswāmis did identify Gadādhara Paṇḍita with Rādhā. However, his scholarly efforts are not conclusive and his attribution of verses to Rūpa Goswāmī identifying Gadādhara with Rādhā cannot be objectively confirmed. He makes a good case, but his work aside, the entire Gauḍiya tradition acknowledges this identification.
14. Cc. 3.6.203
15. Cc. 3.20.145. Here Raghunātha dāsa is singled out from a list including Svarūpa Dāmodara, Rūpa Goswāmī, Sanātana Goswāmī, and Jīva Goswāmī by referring to him as “śri guru.”
16. *Gadādhara-aṣṭakam* 6

17. Cb. 1.15.29–31
18. Cc. 1.17.278
19. *Śrī Caitanya-carita-mahā-kāvya* 2.3.15–17
20. Cc. 3.7.144

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