

TOWARD A CONSTRUCTIVE AND COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY OF KRISHNA *BHAKTI* FOR CONTEMPORARY BENGAL VAISHNAVISM

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Introduction

In this study my intention is to bring out some important dimensions and essential features of thought found within the traditional early teachings of the Chaitanya school of Vaishnavism, also known as Bengal Vaishnavism, as well as its modern transmission by its most impactful modern exponent, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

The specific ideas brought out in this article are essential elements for inclusion in a constructive and comparative theology of Krishna *bhakti*.¹ Here I attempt to sketch the nature of sources and their relationship to one another, some of the elements of a matrix within which such a constructive and comparative theology may develop, and to build on profound themes that Prabhupāda has already transmitted, but ones that need to be brought out and further appreciated in light of the constructive and comparative theological enterprise. These ideas are presented precisely because they are seen as necessary for both constructive and comparative dimensions of a theology, as each dimension is necessarily synergistically dependent upon and informed by the other, with the aim of taking Krishna *bhakti* theology to new heights, required in today's world.

As David Tracy states, "A comparative theology in a particular tradition will insist on theological grounds that religious pluralism in the contemporary situation must receive explicit theological attention." He further states that "Any theology in any tradition that takes religious pluralism seriously must eventually become a comparative theology."² This article is a small attempt to contribute ideas to such an ongoing project for a constructive

and comparative theology of Krishna *bhakti*. I contend that such a constructive and comparative theology will ultimately contribute much to enlighten practitioners within Krishna *bhakti* practice and outside in other traditions, lifting all of them into newer experiences of a shared theological moment, ushering in a new sense of community, and a new level of revelation of the very heart of the divine.

Sources for a theology

It is important to acknowledge at the start that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder and paradigmatic teacher of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), was historically the singular person responsible for the global spread of the Vaishnava tradition, its practice, its thought, and its way of life, in the second half of the twentieth century. He would not have achieved what he did without a powerful and deeply compelling articulation of his faith that he himself gave a voice to, first in North America, then throughout Europe and the rest of the world. A theology, a distinctively Vaishnava theology of the Chaitanya school, has been received by Prabhupāda and then powerfully translated—literally and figuratively—and effectively transmitted by him to persons outside of India. This theology, no doubt, was a prerequisite for Vaishnavism to have taken new roots worldwide. Without Prabhupāda's achievement, it is unlikely that the Chaitanya school of Vaishnavism would have received the high level of theological attention that it has had and continues to have not just from Western scholars but also from Western practitioners who are also themselves scholars or theologians of the tradition.

How the word *theology* can be applied to a non-Christian tradition is perhaps something that must be considered. The intellectual task of “theology” and just the word itself generally have been associated with Christian thought. However, in modern times the word has been applied to traditions other than Christianity. In fact, the word originates in pre-Christian Greek culture, and the history of the theological discipline since its early Christian applications has shown that, as it develops throughout time, it takes on more types of intellectual tasks and becomes broader and broader in what its discipline incorporates.

Theology certainly has been and is being pursued by a tradition other than Christianity, and here I am speaking specifically about such pursuits among Indic traditions. Just in the past century the word “theology” has been applied to traditions outside Christianity by Christian thinkers.

Perhaps the first time that a Vaishnava tradition specifically was regarded in the Western world as a serious and sophisticated theological tradition can be observed in the work of the German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto, in his book *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted* (1930). And perhaps the first time the word was boldly applied by a Christian in the title of a serious scholarly work focusing on Vaishnava thought was when John B. Carman published his work *The Theology of Rāmānuja* (1974). Both these books focused upon the specific Śrī Vaishnava tradition that had originated with the South Indian religious thinker Rāmānuja in the twelfth century.³ According to Western Christian scholars, then, theology is a discipline that Vaishnava traditions have engaged in.

And now, currently, it can be said that serious and rigorous theological scholarship is being produced by contemporary Vaishnavas within ISKCON. Perhaps most noteworthy in this regard is the work of the late Tamal Krishna Goswami, who was not only academically trained and a practicing Vaishnava but a very close disciple of ISKCON's founder. Goswami wrote a doctoral dissertation for Cambridge University that sought to understand Prabhupāda's "theological contribution."⁴ Under the tutelage of Indologist Julius Lipner, Goswami researched Prabhupāda's engagement of Vaishnava sacred texts, to which Prabhupāda had contributed his own elaborate commentaries, drawn heavily from important traditional commentators, mostly from within his lineage, in order to identify the "theological Prabhupāda." This ingenious study looks at Prabhupāda as a theologian in his own right, which, Goswami claims, has been neglected because of the emphasis placed on either traditional Indic studies of the Bengali Chaitanya school out of which Prabhupāda came, or studies of new religious movements, a category in which ISKCON is often included. Goswami's project establishes the foundation for Prabhupāda's theological presentations and calls for further study of them.

The aim of this essay is to build a matrix within which the theological vision of Krishna *bhakti* could be formed. I attempt to create this matrix by building upon what Prabhupāda has so deliberately presented and transmitted of the traditional theology of the Bengali school of Vaishnavism to ISKCON. Thus in order to discover this theological matrix for Krishna *bhakti*, here one must appreciate not only the content of Prabhupāda's literary and theological contribution, but more importantly for this study the theological purpose behind the particular theological works that he

presented. I will consider this attempt to discover such a theological matrix successful if it can ultimately provide greater clarity of theological vision, both symbolic and applied, for those within the modern *bhakti* movement of ISKCON, and further, outside its movement, offering its gifts in ways that meaningfully contribute to the understanding and appreciation of any other living religious and theological traditions even beyond those of Krishna *bhakti*.

Three foundational sacred texts

The many volumes of written works produced by Prabhupāda powerfully and compellingly establish an ISKCON theology, a theology that seeks to articulate the content of its faith in clear and intelligible language, based on experience of that faith and the revelation of it through its most important sacred texts. Each major work that Prabhupāda presented formed a kind of theological anchor for ISKCON, and thus it is important here to identify first the three key works and discuss their essential value in building the theology that Prabhupāda delivered. Furthermore, it is important to grasp how they contributed essential revelational messages for Prabhupāda's theology and served other theological functions. Any theology of ISKCON must begin with Prabhupāda's literary presentation of the sacred texts coming from the earlier Bengali Vaishnava tradition, the very tradition he was transmitting anew outside of India, first to the Western world.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and the *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta*—these three are the essential sacred texts that build a powerful theological edifice for ISKCON. They function as ISKCON's *prasthāna-trayī*, “the three foundational [theological writings].”⁵ Prabhupāda made great sacrifices to produce translations and elaborate commentaries for each of these works.⁶ Although Prabhupāda produced many other smaller works, none has the theological presence and foundational authority that we find in any one of these three. Indeed, around these three sacred texts, all other writings revolve, either by supporting them or by drawing from them in a vital way, or both.⁷ Furthermore, these three specific works represent and contain the tradition's core theology. When taken collectively, they build the tradition's exoteric and esoteric visions, they contribute different but overlapping and complementary revelations of the divine, and they express, at the core of each sacred text as well as collectively, what is at the very heart of the tradition's practice and way of life.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, despite the fact that many dozens of translations

had already come into the English-speaking world, was one of the very first sacred texts to be presented by Prabhupāda, in 1968, only a few years after he arrived in America. This well known sacred text, which often is presented by non-Vaishnava schools of thought, was in effect reclaimed by Prabhupāda as a Vaishnava text when he presented it with his extensive commentary drawn from previous Vaishnava teachers. The practice and perfection of *bhakti* is most boldly presented in Prabhupāda's commentary.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, a text that was little known in the West (except by some scholars who specialized in Hindu traditions), was presented by Prabhupāda because it is deemed the ultimate sacred revelation of Krishna's divinity. This work, comprising twelve books, was almost completed by Prabhupāda, up to the fourteenth chapter of the large tenth book, and his disciples completed his effort. In this work of many thousands of pages, as he did with the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Prabhupāda brought together important theological information that he drew heavily from key traditional commentaries, and he added his own insights and vision.

Prabhupāda's theology is grounded within and generated from a very developed theological tradition going back to the sixteenth century, with the appearance of the ecstatic mystic Śrī Krishna Chaitanya (1486–1533 CE). Chaitanya wrote very little. Rather, his role was to provide the ultimate experience or paradigmatic example, life, and vision of the devotion for Krishna and his feminine counterpart, Rādhā. It was Chaitanya's immediate disciples, known as the Six Goswāmīs, and their disciples, who provided the theological foundations for his lineage. Thus the most important biography on Chaitanya becomes itself the most critical work for forming the very theological basis on which the tradition was to be ultimately grounded, the specific tradition out of which ISKCON came. This biography is the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, written by Krishnadasa Kavirāja Goswāmī in the first part of the seventeenth century. It was the second major multivolume work that Prabhupāda presented in translation with elaborate commentary. It is important to note that the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* presents, along with the significant life events of the person Chaitanya, a synthesis of the original key theological works of Chaitanya's immediate disciples, particularly those essential works of The Six Goswāmīs. It is considered the comprehensive theological work for the Chaitanya school of *bhakti*. It is therefore no wonder that in the mid-1970s Prabhupāda interrupted his translation and commentary of the tradition's most important revelational text, the *Bhāgavata*, in order to present Krishnadasa's work for the ISKCON movement he was establishing worldwide.

The *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* provides a theological lens for ISKCON, a lens through which ISKCON can look in order to understand, interpret, and apply the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. It constitutes the ultimate theological statement of the school, and it is from this very text that we can gain the greatest theological insight. And thus we might make the following critical inquiry: What is most sought, what is most ardently desired by practitioners in this tradition? How does this sacred text express these things? What is the highest experience for the Chaitanya school? What is it on which practitioners ultimately meditate? Among all the primary terms within this rich and sophisticated theological tradition, among all the phrases and key concepts within the Chaitanya school, what few words can possibly convey or express the ultimate focal point of the tradition?

Such a phrase or expression should be drawn directly from the tradition's theological textual resources. Thus to find such a representative key phrase, it would be to the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* that we must turn to search for such expressions, because this text, as expressed above, synthesizes the original theological teachings and vision for the school. If this core purpose of the tradition is articulated, then the very focal point of Prabhupāda's or ISKCON's theology is revealed. If this theological focal point can be identified and illuminated, then a more profound understanding of the very rich and complex literary and theological expression found within the tradition can be most clearly seen. This kind of theological work could impact the ways in which practitioners can most powerfully focus on the true essence of their practice, to deepen their vision of the gifts their tradition offers them, while it also better prepares the tradition to enter into deeper levels of dialogue with other traditions within the enterprise of a genuine comparative theology.

The ultimate theological focal point

Let it be most boldly declared here about this theological focal point: the Chaitanya school of Vaishnavism celebrates a theology of the heart. Its practice cultivates the human heart for living a life oriented around pure love. One loves all beings and all humans, one has a special love for and fellowship with lovers of the divine, and one experiences a most ardent love for Divinity and the world of the divine. At the very center of this divine world dwell the imagery of the supreme masculine divinity, Krishna, and

the supreme feminine divinity, Rādhā, whose exchanges of divine affection in *rasa* represent the supreme vision of love. And at the center of virtually every temple of worship that Prabhupāda and his disciples established within ISKCON worldwide are the three-dimensional figures of Rādhā and Krishna, standing very close together, both facing toward and gazing at their worshippers, as Krishna holds a flute to his mouth.⁸ Theologically expressed here in the concrete context of worship is the intimacy within the divine and the divine call for all humans to offer their love to all souls and to the supreme soul precipitated by the sounding of Krishna's flute and the divine couple's ever-beckoning forward gaze.

The core experience for which practitioners strive in this theology of love, what is envisioned and what is at the very heart of ISKCON's *prasthāna-trayī* sacred texts, I am claiming here, is most potently expressed by the singular appearance of a three-word phrase found in the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*: *prema-bhakti-rasa*.⁹ In the briefest fashion, the meaning of these words taken together in this phrase may be understood as the following: With "purest love," *prema*, it is "the offering of the heart," *bhakti*, within "the most intimate dance of love between two hearts within the divine," *rasa*.¹⁰

The meaning of each of these essential terms for the Chaitanya school should be briefly considered. The word *bhakti* may be translated as that practice and natural disposition of the self that involves most essentially "the offering of the whole heart to the Divine." It is significant, however, that *bhakti* first becomes a more external practice and discipline (*vaidhi-sādhana*), which then naturally develops and moves into the more internal life of the heart (*rāgānuga-sādhana*). This movement from the external to the internal is that process in which one is moved from the outer world to discover the innermost world of love, which is filled with *prema* and *rasa*.¹¹

While there is much that has been—and can be—said about *bhakti*, we will now only briefly present those ideas that might specifically further this discussion. To begin, certain philosophical schools of Hinduism contrast *bhakti* with other paths, or *dharmas*, particularly those of "action" (*karma*), "knowledge" (*jñāna*), and "yoga." For this school, however, *bhakti* is not merely a path, or a means to attain union with the Divine, but it is also the ultimate end or perfection. Furthermore, *bhakti*, unlike the other paths, is not centered upon the self. Rather, it is the loving dedication of the individual self (*bhakta*) to the supreme self (*bhagavat*) in which one becomes "selfless," in the sense that the heart of the individual self is wholly centered upon the divine (*bhakti*). Additionally, the word *bhakti* is related to Bhagavān (or Bhagavat), the Lord who "possesses the parts [*bhaktas*]

(of all reality)," conveying the sense that souls are his eternal constituent parts, but they experience themselves apart, as broken parts conditioned by this temporary world, and they ultimately long to become a reattached part within the whole of the Divine. This longing of the soul begins when it realizes that the Divine passionately desires such souls to come to him. The process of *bhakti* leads to a state of ecstatic self-forgetfulness in the process of offering the heart utterly and totally to the Divine in *prema* and *rasa*. Finally, *bhakti* denotes the soul's offering of the heart as a response to the divinity's longing for souls, as will be explored further below.

For the Chaitanya school, the word *prema* is reserved to indicate the attainment of the highest and most purely cultivated love for God.¹² However, in the *Bhāgavata*, the word *prema* takes on a broad range of applications, expressing the ubiquity of love in its purest form.¹³ Words derivative of the same Sanskrit verb root indicate that residing within the hearts of beings is a pure love, yet it is a love that can be easily tainted by selfishness and conditioned life.¹⁴ It is a natural love that lies dormant, but has the potential to issue forth from the core of one's very being, when a person is selflessly loving with one's whole heart, especially when a person is absorbed in a life steeped in devotion, or *bhakti*. Furthermore, the purest love of *prema* is not only *for* the divine but also *from* the divine. The divinity himself also experiences *prema* for souls, and thus the supreme love that divinity holds for souls is also described as *prema*. Thus love manifests its purest form as *prema* in both humans and the Divine.

The word *rasa* indicates the experience of connecting with the Divine in the most intimate exchanges of purest love. The dance of love between two hearts, that of the soul with the supreme Soul, is *rasa*. There are five principle types of eternal relationships in which divine love subsumes with its power both the soul and the divinity: (1) reverential love (*sānta*), (2) subservient love (*dāsy*), (3) mutual love (*sākhy*), (4) nurturing love (*vātsalya*), and (5) passionate love (*śringāra*). The attainment of any one of these relationships constitutes the soul's greatest good fortune and incites pleasure in the divinity. It is born of *bhakti*, it is saturated with ever-increasing *prema*, and it is that divine activity in which supreme love displays its magnificence and sweetness.

The ultimate display of the highest *rasa*, the *śringāra-rasa*, occurs when *rasa* becomes the *rāsa*.¹⁵ This ultimate expression of *rasa* manifests itself as the highest *līlā*, or "the play of divine love," in the Rāsa Līlā. It is in the climactic portion of this *līlā* that Krishna duplicates himself multiple times to

attend each one of the Vraja Gopikās, who are themselves the very embodiments of Rādhikā's emotions, in the great circular dance of divine love, the *rāsa*. This ultimate display of *rasa* is also found in the play of the divine figures of Rādhikā, the supreme Goddess consort, and Krishna, her Beloved Lord, constituting the innermost realm of the divine. In Rādhā-Krishna *līlā*, or the Rāsa *Lilā*, divine love plays the players. Divine love ultimately dances within our hearts causing us to become dancers, and between such dancers and the supreme dancer is the dance of love that dances through our hearts to one another. This is expressed no better than in the person of Chaitanya himself who is seen as the divine descent of Love. He is the very embodiment of Krishna's love for Rādhā and the Vraja Gopikās, or the embodiment of the Gopīs' and Rādhā's love for Krishna, or the embodiment of the divine love itself that eternally flows so intensely between them, or all three of these at once.¹⁶

Thus, the importance of each of these words, individually, in the phrase *prema-bhakti-rasa*, has been reviewed only briefly. It is important to note that each word separately and independently of the other two can be found in hundreds of instances throughout the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, indicating the vital ways that each word is employed, perhaps with greater frequency than most other terms in the text. Moreover, each word as it is coupled with one of the other words from this phrase form three important compound terms: *prema-bhakti*, *bhakti-rasa*, and *prema-rasa*. While this full three-word phrase, *prema-bhakti-rasa*, amazingly, can be found only in a single instance within the text of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, its power derives in part from the vitally important, individual terms themselves, and from the importance and pervasiveness of the compounding of those words as well. These words together, then, and these combinations of compounds embedded within this phrase as well as the weightiness of the individual words that comprise this phrase, make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

This phrase expresses the ultimate theological focal point for the Chaitanya school, and the words collectively and individually express dimensions of divine love as the tradition's ultimate value against which everything else can be measured, and around which everything of greater or lesser significance must revolve. It would be against this theological formula of *prema-bhakti-rasa* that all narratives, conceptions, visions, experiences, discourses, and so on would be measured. Within the total theological picture, as with any good art, there is within its composition a singular focal point, the very center of its composition, an ultimate place within such a picture

on which the eyes may focus while seeing all the other contributing parts. Nothing distracts or detracts from the focal point of a good picture and the rest of its constituent compositional elements, and if it should, then such contrary elements should be eliminated. So it is with the theological picture of Krishna *bhakti*. The focal point for this theology, then, is *prema-bhakti-rasa*. To the extent that something said or something written within the tradition, whether it be revelational or commentarial, moves closer to this formula, it would be to this extent that anything would be imputed with importance and value. Something that is further away from it, then, would be considered not as important or central. If something detracts or takes away or distracts from this ultimate focal point, then this would be considered antithetical and would be rejected. Knowing what is at the very heart of the tradition's theology provides a kind of hermeneutic principle by which a practitioner or viewer of the tradition can develop a keen level of devotional discernment, a capacity that allows one to see and deeply appreciate the value and relevance of any revelational or personal vision. There is no other phrase that can better deliver the theological axiology of the Chaitanya school, the ultimate gift that this school has to offer.

The divine love call

The particular deity of Krishna, among the many manifestations of the divine known to Hindu traditions, is revered as the ultimate personal aspect of the godhead by certain Vaishnava schools. The early Vaishnava theologians of the Chaitanya school, following a key verse from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, establish three primary manifestations of the divine, of which Krishna is the highest, the ultimate, and the most intimate. These three primary manifestations are Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān. Brahman is difficult to define or to describe. It may be understood as supreme spirit, the ultimate reality, the Everything, the ALL. There is not anything that is not contained within the Divine, and thus there is nothing that exists outside of the Divine.

At the core of Brahman, in which everything is contained by the Divine, at the core of all existences and all beings, is the personal presence of the Divine, identified by the word Paramātman, "the supreme self." This manifestation is the personal presence of the divine at the very core of every atom and all hearts, of all existences and all beings. Bhagavān is the singular, ultimate manifestation of divinity, its most loving and most intimate manifestation. At the heart of the very core of everything, the very essence

and source of the ALL, is the very point from which everything originates and comes, and is constantly being sustained, including Brahman and Paramātman manifestations of the Divine—this is Bhagavān Śrī Krishna. Śrī Krishna has numerous names and epithets, and is known especially as a deity of supreme beauty, supreme playfulness, and supreme love. Especially important for our discussion here is Krishna's distinguishing characteristic: he plays the flute, sounding divine music, lovingly attracting souls to come to him—it is Krishna's love call, for which he is so well known.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, within the *prasthāna-trayī*, functions as the very foundation of the tradition's foundational texts and expresses a divine call to love most passionately, but subtly. It expresses *prema-bhakti-rasa* most prominently in Krishna's "song," or *gītā*, as a divine call to love, and expresses, mostly in Krishna's words, how *bhakti* is the most direct and personal response to this call.¹⁷ The given title of the work begins to disclose the text's very purpose: it is a song (*gītā*) coming from the Beloved Lord (*bhagavat*). I have attempted to show that here "song" is not intended to indicate a literary genre; "song" here is meant to express what is issued forth from the heart of the divine. The *Gītā* presents a divine love-call that ever beckons souls to become united with the divine. The divine desires us and loves us, and desires to attract us to himself.

This ultimate divine person within the godhead, although the source of all divine manifestations—from whom all existences emanate and originate, on whom everything ultimately depends, and in whom everything is contained—most amazingly desires the love from human souls in this world. Bhagavān Śrī Krishna desires and loves humans, and desires souls to come to him. This is most passionately expressed in the philosophically dramatic conclusion and climactic portion of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, as I have claimed elsewhere, in the following simple words of Krishna to Arjuna: "You are so much loved by me!"¹⁸ The verse in which this ultimate expression of Krishna's appears, and verses leading up to it, become the subtle but ultimately most boldly presented divine love call of the *Gītā*.

Krishna represents that most central point of the godhead from which all manifestations of the divine come, the point from which all existences are constantly being sustained. And yet Krishna simultaneously draws to himself the hearts of those within his highest heaven, the supreme world in which he eternally dwells, and also draws to himself the hearts of those in this mixed and unhappy world by ever beckoning souls to turn toward him, to know him, and to love him. In both realms he does so through a most

enticing, divine love call. This divine call to love is one of the most powerful and distinguishing features of this theology: that in everything, that through everything, and in every event and in every part of existence, the divine is trying to reach us, to call us, to beckon us, if we will just hear it.

The divine love call also becomes the sounding of Krishna's flute in the most sacred revelational text for the Chaitanya school. At the very heart of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*'s largest (tenth) book—that part of the text to which the other eleven books point—are the *līlās* of Krishna, of which those taking place in the paradisial, pastoral setting of Vraja are considered by the tradition to be the most intimate and most sacred. Among these, it is the "five-chapter *līlā* of the Rāsa dance," the *rāsa-pañcādhyāyi*, that is considered the ultimate of all divine acts. It is the tradition's consummate vision of supreme love. Krishna draws the cowherd maidens, the Gopīs, to the forest at night to enter into the divine *līlā* of the Rāsa by the sounding of his flute. This call of the flute represents Krishna's call to all souls to come to him, to join him in his eternal dance of love. Indeed, one whole chapter appears several chapters prior to the five chapters of the Rāsa Līlā in which the cosmically alluring power of Krishna's flute music on all beings, animate and inanimate, is described.¹⁹

The recitation of the *mahāmantra* is the soul calling back to the divinity in response to the love call of the feminine and masculine forms of divinity: *hare-kṛṣṇa*, *hare-kṛṣṇa*, *kṛṣṇa-kṛṣṇa*, *hare-hare*; *hare-rāma*, *hare-rāma*, *rāma-rāma*, *hare-hare*. The name *hare* is the vocative of the feminine Harā, meaning "O Goddess, whose power of Divine Love inspires me (in the *sevā* of the attractive Lord, Krishna, and the delighted Lord, Rāma)"; the name *kṛṣṇa* is the vocative of the masculine Krishna, meaning "O Divinity, whose supreme beauty attracts my heart," along with the other masculine vocative, *rāma*, meaning "O Divinity, whose supreme pleasure delights in my love." This mantra, the return call, the central practice within *bhakti* for the Chaitanya school, increases the purest love, *prema*, which is lived and enacted eternally in *rasa*. Built into the response call of the soul's recitation of the *mahāmantra* is the divine's return response to the soul's recitation response: When the soul meditates upon the vocatively inflected names of the divine within the *mahāmantra*, the soul is effectively calling out to the divine while sonically recreating the Rāsa Mandala, or the Rāsa dance of divine love within the heart.²⁰

So the *Gītā* presents Krishna's love call through his teachings as a deeply felt passion for the love of humans, and he describes the human response

to his love in *bhakti*. In the *Bhāgavata*, Krishna's love call is narrated and described as the sound of his flute, and the response of souls, namely the cowherd maidens of Vraja, as an irrepressible and intensive attraction to Krishna. Here in the *Bhāgavata*, the emphasis is on the experience of *bhakti* on the part of the *bhakta*. In the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, there is the greatest emphasis on the soul's response to the love call of the divine in *bhakti*, as it is paradigmatically demonstrated by Chaitanya's life and teachings. Indeed, Chaitanya is considered the embodiment of the very love between Krishna and the Vraja Gopikās, or his most beloved Gopī consort, Rādhā. Chaitanya is the divine descent of Krishna, who himself desires to experience the love of his *bhakta*, and thus the ways the *bhakta* responds to his divine love call.

A theology of divine secrecy

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, one finds a secret love song issuing forth from the heart of the divine. Through a secret love call, through a secret song of love, or *gītā*, issuing forth from the heart of divinity, he sends his love to all souls. He is “secretly” or quietly loving souls, displays manifestations of himself in order to love and embrace souls, and he softly beckons souls to know him, to love him, to come to him. His love is quiet or secret, because we are unready to receive love from the divine, and he does not want souls to be pressured or forced to return his love. Indeed, Krishna's love is quiet to the point of his impartiality toward humans until they turn to him with their hearts (BG 9.29). Yet Krishna is fully ready to reciprocate the love of souls at any level in whatever way they turn to him:

In the way they offer
themselves to me,
in just that way
I offer my love
to them reciprocally.

Human beings
follow my path
universally,
O Pārtha.²¹

This verse expresses well that Krishna's love waits patiently for the attention of humans. Significantly, Krishna states that all humans are on his “path” of divine love, but they are unaware of it until they submit themselves to him.

Moreover, Krishna identifies himself as the *suhṛt*, “the innermost heart” or “one so dear to the heart” of all beings (BG 5.29) and proclaims that humans are already “dearly loved” by him, and thus he asks that they love him as well (BG 18.65).

In the intimate arena of *rasa* with the divinity, Krishna would not urge souls to love him if he did not already love souls. Indeed, in the dramatic anticlimactic event of Krishna’s manifestation of his overwhelming and overpowering universal form in the Eleventh Chapter, Arjuna pleads for the “grace” of the intimate or *mādhurya* realm of *rasa* with Krishna in the following words:

As a father is to a son,
as a friend to a friend,
As a dearly loved one
to a dearly beloved—
be pleased to show your
loving kindness, O Divinity.²²

The message here in this portion of the *Gītā* is that Krishna wishes to inspire in Arjuna an appreciation for the ways in which he as the supreme divinity is so intimately present to receive such an intimate love. Krishna speaks of his human-like form in the words, “Very rarely seen is this form of mine . . . (BG 11.52)” And further states that it is “Only by the offering of one’s love to none other . . . am I able, in such a form, to be known and to be truly seen, and to be attained . . . (BG 11.54)” The tacit expression here is that divinity desires the love of humans who will love him in his most intimate human-like form as Krishna precisely because the heart of the divine holds a love for humans with which he is desirous of reciprocating, as we have noted above.

Finally, throughout the *Gītā*, Krishna so lovingly acknowledges the many ways, the many paths, the many forms of worship, the many yogas, etc., but nevertheless gently and quietly exhorts souls to know that he is the ultimate goal of all of these—an exhortation that can easily be overlooked or missed due to Krishna’s generosity of spirit in his acceptance of all the various indirect or even distracting processes that humans may take to eventually come to him. It is the soul’s eternal nature to love divinity, but souls can become distracted or overwhelmed by what is temporary in the self and in the world and then act selfishly, thus turning away from divinity. He accepts all the

various ways and practices in which souls can approach him, but ultimately desires for souls to give up all these ways and to love him fully. Throughout his teachings, therefore, Krishna weaves expressions of his desire for souls to know him, to love him, and to come to him, the most poignant and powerful themes in the text.²³

Divinity secretly longs for souls to come to him. This yearning of divinity in the *Gītā* is expressed in various ways: The reader is privy to a private conversation, a personal dialogue, between the narrator, Sanjaya, and Dhristarāshtra, the king to whom Sanjaya narrates the private conversation between Arjuna and Krishna. In this inner dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna, a gradual disclosure throughout the text of what is the highest and most secret is presented. The gradual disclosure takes several forms. One finds that expressions of the divinity's heart are gradually introduced throughout the text and in less prominent ways. One learns that the visions and descriptions of divinity's various manifestations are themselves ways in which divinity lovingly embraces all creation, all beings. Krishna's various divine identities become more and more personal and intimate as the dialogue progresses. In the *Gītā* there is an acceptance of any process or practice that gradually brings souls to divinity to love him; this gradual disclosure of divinity's love and his yearning for souls can be observed, subtly woven throughout all of Krishna's teachings, and it is often expressed more boldly in the last verse or last several verses of most chapters. The purpose of this gradual disclosure is that divinity desires the unconditional love of souls. The love of Krishna must not arise out of fear of divine judgment and condemnation, or out of guilt or obligation. Krishna's eternally patient and divinely generous nature draws souls to his heart with an unconditioned love and purely out of their own natural affection and attraction to him.

Finally, in the eighteenth and last chapter of the *Gītā*, the “great secret,” the “greater secret,” and the “greatest secret of all” are disclosed. As presented above, Krishna's simple words, “You are so much loved by me!” are *sarva-guhyatama*, the greatest secret of all, and moreover, *paramām vaca*, his “supreme message.” The purpose of Krishna's secretiveness is to preserve his own love for souls until they are ready to receive *his* love. He waits an eternity for us to turn toward him. He states that he is impartial to all, while residing in the hearts of all, but he especially loves his *bhakta* (BG 9.29). His divine yearning is kept secret so that unqualified souls are excluded (BG 18.67). Divinity especially loves the souls who reveal this divine secret; he

claims that there is no soul who loves him more than the one who reveals his divine secret, the greatest of all secrets (BG 18.68-69).

Secrecy is also connected to deeper levels of intimacy within *rasa* in several ways. The connection between two souls is something unique, something that belongs to the two personages within *rasa*. No matter how much we may observe persons in a relationship, it is always from the outside. The closeness and intimacy between two persons is closed and private to all and anyone else. When the Vraja Gopikās rushed off from their homes in the village to be with Krishna in the forest, they were secretly called to love (BhP 10.29.4-9). They were the ones drawn to Krishna upon hearing his flute and no one else. Their families could not understand their attraction. Moreover, even the Vraja Gopikās, while among themselves in the great *mandala* of the Rāsa dance, each one of them felt Krishna's exclusive attention; each was utterly unaware of Krishna's attention to any other in the circle of Gopīs (BhP 10.33.3). Yogamāyā, as Love's most powerful force in the divine world and in this world, has a key role of deciding what is revealed to souls and what is concealed from them and thus that which remains secret.

A theology of the Chaitanya school must take into account the undis-
closable dimensions of divinity that are too profound and too intimate to verbalize. The school, on the one hand, delights, but with caution, in disclosing intimate and more secretive dimensions of the godhead, and yet on the other, always preserves a certain level of confidentiality and mystery about elements or realms that are too intimate for any kind of disclosure. An instance of the former is when the author of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* deliberates as to whether to disclose esoteric visions of Chaitanya's personality to his reader. Krishnadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī at first hesitates to disclose intimate knowledge of Chaitanya, but then says that if this theological knowledge is not revealed, his worthy readers will not understand what is so critically important. He then decides to relate this esoteric knowledge in a disguised form, so that authentic devotees will receive it and foolish persons will not recognize it. He depends on the latter's ignorance to keep secret what is intended only for those who are qualified.²⁴ Thus ignorance and illusion have the positive element of keeping secret or confidential what is undisclosable in the theology of divine intimacy.

Even so, no matter how qualified one may be, the importance of preserving and respecting the secrecy and confidentiality of the most intimate aspects of the theology of Krishna is established. Moreover, such secrecy is itself both a tacit expression of a deep appreciation of the very depth and

profundity of knowledge and an understanding of the most intimate and deepest aspects of the mystery of the divine. The utter necessity of divine secrecy can be observed in the dialogue between Rāmānanda Rāya and Chaitanya in a kind of Vaishnava catechism, as presented in the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*. After responding to many probing questions from Chaitanya, each time urging Rāmānanda to go deeper and deeper into the theological dimensions of Krishna and his beloved Rādhā, Chaitanya himself, in a dramatic moment unexpectedly covers the mouth of Rāmānanda with his hand, not allowing him to go any further into the depths of the theology of divine intimacy.²⁵ Thus there are some aspects of intimacy within the divine that should not be expressed, even within the most personal and confidential settings, even within the exchanges between the most exalted beings, in word or in public. One loses the secret love song if one disrespects or ignores the necessity of divine secrecy in the theology of the Chaitanya school.

Concluding words: The gifts of theology

There is indeed a theology for the Krishna movement, and it is to be found embedded in the powerful and compelling writings of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, which allowed him to spread the theology and practice of the Vaishnava way of life to all parts of the world. His spoken and written words transmitted a powerful theological vision that was established several hundred years earlier by the original teachers coming in the lineage of Śrī Krishna Chaitanya from the sixteenth century. The most important theological work produced by the early teachers of the school was and remains the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* by Krishnadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī. This work recognizes the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the most important sacred text on the life of devotion to Krishna as displayed in the lives of exemplary *bhaktas* and also recognized as the most profound source of Krishna's various divine acts, or *līlās*. And the *Bhagavad Gītā* is recognized by the early school as foundational for its teachings. These three works provide a wellspring of theological information, inspiration, and revelation. They each reveal aspects of *prema-bhakti-rasa* as the school's theological focal point. They each transmit dimensions of the divine love call uniquely and synergistically. And they each express the profundity and depth of knowledge to which this school's theology points by revealing secret or esoteric aspects of its theology.

What gifts does such a Krishna *bhakti* theology have to offer the world? This theology suggests that there is a secret love call issuing forth from the

very heart of every tradition, from the heart of the divine, and that each tradition must search ceaselessly for it. At the very core and depths of every tradition are the resources for those inside a tradition to create the bonds of affection with others outside a tradition. And what flows to the practitioners from the very core of any tradition is an exclusively unique and sweet revelation of the most profound dimensions of love. Yet there are depths of this divine love that will always remain secret, mysterious, and inexpressible, such depths to which the human heart is endlessly attracted and forever discovering. A genuine theology is fueled by this attraction and unquenchable thirst for knowing these depths.

The sincere, genuine pursuit of and singular focus on this divine love, which is so grand, so broad, and so deep, will necessitate that each and every tradition cannot help themselves from embracing and being embraced by other traditions for the ways in which they can reveal exclusive dimensions of divine love that would otherwise remain hidden from it. No longer are other traditions seen as truth-conflicting, or monopolizing, or threatening in any way of the integrity of the other. On the contrary, the theologies of Love become invaluable and necessary partners in the quest for supreme Love—just as the various Vraja Gopikās found it necessary to link arms to form the great circle around Krishna to create the magnificent arena of the Rāsa dance—in the relentless search for all its infinite sweetness and greatness. In this way, a comparative theology fosters an inclusivism in as much as it engages the unique and exclusive experiences of the divine found within diverse religious traditions. Boundless love is then necessarily realized deeply within and reciprocally between traditions, and Prabhupāda's theology celebrates how this Love (*prema*) forever dances between the hearts of divinity and souls (*rasa*), and how the practice of offering of one's whole heart to the divine (*bhakti*) constitutes the essential practice of religion. ISKCON's practitioners now only have to celebrate in practice and in life what is celebrated already in its own theology.

The founder and exemplary teacher of ISKCON, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, was himself a theological thinker who claimed that *bhakti* could be found present in any authentic religious tradition.²⁶ If *bhakti* can be found in other religious traditions, then surely something of *prema* as well as *rasa* would also be present in some form. Prabhupāda exemplifies the serious practitioner who both delved within his or her own tradition to find that which most deeply moves the human heart toward the divine, and also sought to contribute that as a gift to humanity by recognizing this dynamic of *bhakti* when it occurs in other traditions as well. Is this not what

we all must strive to do? Traditions of *prema-bhakti-rasa* must be allowed to speak for themselves, and a comparative theology does not compare for the purpose of judging and evaluating these traditions, nor does it compare them in the sense of a competition as Rudolf Otto attempted to do, but rather to establish and inspire a sharing and deepening of these ultimate elements within and between traditions. Each tradition has something unique and very special to disclose from the divine love that has been revealed to it that will only enhance the experiences of divine love for those in other traditions, those who also contribute what gifts their traditions offer. I can think of no greater need and nothing more exhilarating for the world today: that very gift containing something of the experience and knowledge of the heart of the divine, most lovingly offered, received, and reciprocated, from one tradition to another, building a new world order with the divine treasures excavated from the hidden depths of various theological discoveries.

Endnotes

1. By “constructive theology” I mean the ongoing structuring of a coherent system of thought and a further probing into the definition and understanding of the concepts of the divine, the world, human being, and the relationships among these. And by “comparative theology” I mean such a coherent system of thought that not only serves the internal theological needs or the greater articulation of the faith for a particular religious community, but a system that deliberately builds such a system taking into account its vital and mutually nourishing connection to other traditions in a religiously diverse world.

2. David Tracy, “THEOLOGY: Comparative Theology,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 14, Edited by Mircea Eliade (Macmillan and Free Press, 1989), p. 454.

3. Over the past few decades, the word *theology*, either in its forms as a noun or adjective, has found its way in various studies on Hindu traditions in general and in studies on the Vaishnava traditions specifically. For example, Jose Pereira wrote a book entitled *Hindu Theology* (1991), applying the word *theology* to Hindu traditions in general, and Guy Beck has done the same as well as focused upon Vaishnava traditions in particular in his work entitled *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound* (1993). The works of two other scholars from a Christian background who have engaged the word *theology* specifically in regard to Chaitanya Vaishnavism come to mind. Norvin J. Hein wrote “Caitanya’s Ecstasies and the Theology of the Name,”

for *Hinduism: New Essays in the History of Religions*, edited by Bardwell L. Smith (E.J. Brill, 1976); and Klaus K. Klostermaier wrote an innovative article, “*Hṛdayavidyā*: A Sketch of a Hindu-Christian Theology of Love,” in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (1972).

4. Goswami’s work has been peer-reviewed for publication with Columbia University Press, and its title is likely to be *Krishnology: The Theological Contribution of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda*. There are also other significant theological works produced by scholar-Vaishnavas, such as, for example, Kenneth Valpey’s *Attending Krishna’s Image: Chaitanya Vaishnava Murti-seva as Devotional Truth* (Routledge, 2006); William Deadwyler’s “The Contribution of Bhagavata Dharma Toward a ‘Scientific Religion’ and a ‘Religious Science,’” in ed., T. D. Singh, *Synthesis of Science and Religion: Critical Essays and Dialogues* (Bhaktivedanta Institute, 1987), among others.

5. This phrase *prasthāna-trayī*, meaning “the three foundational [texts],” is originally found in Vedānta, where the three groups of foundational writings are the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Vedānta Sūtra*. I borrow the term here and apply it specifically to ISKCON’s three foundational writings to convey the authoritative weight these texts have for the tradition.

6. It is interesting to note that very shortly after Prabhupāda established ISKCON, he first produced short versions of these three texts: a much-shortened version of the *Bhagavad Gītā*; then a two-volume set summarizing and paraphrasing the tenth book of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, entitled *Kṛṣṇa: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*; and a volume summarizing the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, entitled *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. His interest in expeditiously producing ISKCON abridgements or a collection of the most important selections from these foundational texts before he could provide the complete versions of these works expresses both an urgency that Prabhupāda felt in transmitting these works as essential sacred texts and the weightiness that each of these three foundational texts possessed within the tradition that Prabhupāda represented.

7. There are other books that Prabhupāda himself wrote, and other books that have been compiled posthumously in his name, often transcriptions of his lectures, talks, and interviews. Additionally, there are books that comprise the massive collection of his letters written mostly to his disciples, mostly individually and at times collectively. While there is so much valuable material in these works in the ways that they can shed further light on theological subjects, none, I would claim, can match the level of authority and ultimacy as the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and the

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, all published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

8. More work, I believe, needs to be done to appreciate this central focal point of worship in ISKCON temples, viz., the divine figures of Rādhā and Krishna. We know from the various *līlās* of Krishna that the purpose of Krishna's flute playing is to call souls toward him, to attract souls, and indeed this he does in the famous *Venu Gīta* chapter (*Bhāgavata* 10.21) and at the start of the Rāsa Līlā Pañcādhyāya (*Bhāgavata* 10.29). The question is, how should the closely placed figures of Rādhā and Krishna standing side-by-side, facing forward toward worshippers with outward gazes, and with flute to Krishna's mouth, be understood and appreciated? When Krishna is in the presence of Rādhā, or the Vraja Gopikās, the flute is not engaged. So it is curious that here Krishna is always playing the flute. Here I am suggesting that this flute call is now meant for Krishna's worshippers.

9. *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 1.17.75. *jñāna-karma-yoga-dharme nahe kṛṣṇa vaśa | kṛṣṇa-vaśa-hetu eka—prema-bhakti-rasa |* “Knowledge, action, and yoga—in these *dharmas* there is no pleasure for Krishna. Krishna's pleasure has one cause—*prema-bhakti-rasa*.” It may be interesting to note that in this verse *jñāna*, *karma*, and *yoga* perhaps have some parallel relationship to *prema*, *bhakti*, and *rasa*, respectively. The ultimate realm of “knowing” or *jñāna* is that found in “purest love,” or *prema*; the greatest way of “acting” is that of “offering of one's heart to the divine,” or *bhakti*; and the highest form of union in *yoga* is that of the intimate relation between devotee and divinity in *rasa*. Krishna is not pleased by the “*dharma*” of each of these, implying that there is the *parodharma* (see *Bhāgavata* 1.2.6) in *prema-bhakti-rasa* by which souls are pleased as well as Krishna. This complete phrase appears only once in the whole text, and is found in the last chapter of the first of three books that comprise this text.

10. This rendition of the three word phrase, *prema-bhakti-rasa*, engaging the powerful connotations that these words carry individually and collectively, is offered here specifically as it can be understood in the context of a *bhakti* theology. The word *prema* means literally “love” or “affection”; the word *bhakti* means “devotion” or “worship”; and the word *rasa* means “taste” or “a prevailing feeling.”

11. What I refer to as the “movement” from the external practice of *vaidhi* to the internal practice of *rāgānuga* is not saying that the external practice is given up or is no longer important. To the contrary, the external practice grows and evolves and is infused with importance precisely because it

supports the developments of the internal states found within *rāgānuga*. Indeed, the two must work in conjunction with one another as constituents within *sādhana*, or the practice and discipline of *bhakti*.

12. In *CC Madhya Līlā* 23.14-15, *prema* is the eighth and last on a list of steps to the attainment of *bhāva*.

13. It is not possible to explore here a comparison of the specific application of the word *prema* by the Chaitanya school and its various applications in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. While the theologians of the early Chaitanya school reserve the word *prema* for a love so pure that is attained after rigorous *sādhana* in *bhakti*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* applies the word in an extraordinary range of loving relationships, divine and non-divine, even between animals and also between humans and animals, as well as objects of nature.

14. See discussion on *prema* in my *Dance of Divine Love: India's Classic Sacred Love Story: The Rāsa Līlā of Krishna from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Princeton 2005), in the section entitled "The Vision of Devotional Love," especially pages 168-69. Many of the ideas in this article are drawn from this book, and the five chapters of the Rāsa Līlā found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.29-33, that I present there in translation. I also present a translation of the *Veṇu Gīta*.

15. The word *rāsa*, which is a specific dance form performed by village cowherds in celebration of the harvest season, is technically not derivative of the word *rasa*. However, teachers in the lineage of Chaitanya relate the two words, in how *rasa* between the Vraja Gopikās and Krishna in the *rāsa* dance represents the highest attainable level of intimacy possible. Thus the early theologians take *rāsa* to be a *vriddhi* form of *rasa* to express a theological vision that is important for the school. I have cited elsewhere that this deeper significance of the word *rāsa* is recognized by Viśvanātha, in his commentary to the Rāsa Līlā chapters, specifically in his comment to the verse BhP 10.33.2, where he points out that Rāsa refers to the sum of all *rasas* or intimate experiences with the supreme. Moreover, Jīva states, in his *Prīti Sandarbha*, that Rāsa is an aspect of *sambhoga*, or union in *śrīgāra-rasa* (PrS 425-427). (See *Dance of Divine Love*, p. 265.)

16. See Chapter Four of the *Ādi Līlā* of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* for the theology of Chaitanya's identity in relation to Rādhā and Krishna.

17. It is significant that in the formulation *prema-bhakti-rasa* the word *prema* appears as the first of the three terms. Indeed, the priority of *prema* in a Krishna theology must be brought out. It is often the case that in *bhakti-sādhanā* emphasis is given to the love and devotion that the devotee or *bhakta*

offers to the divinity in *bhakti*, even to the point of discounting or possibly to the exclusion of recognizing the most powerful and compelling love-call of Krishna. However, the sacred texts of *bhakti*, perhaps more subtly but certainly no less dramatically, indicate that without Krishna's *prema* for humans, there is no possibility for humans to develop *prema* for Krishna. It is *prema* coming from the divinity that is prior to *bhakti* itself, and the text of the *Gitā* most dramatically expresses this.

18. *Bhagavad Gitā* 18.64. Translation from my *Bhagavad Gitā: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song* (Harper, 2007). The words *iṣṭo'si me dṛḍham iti* literally translate as, "Desired you are by me so much!"

19. See *Dance of Divine Love* (Princeton, 2005), pages 78–85, for a translation of the chapter known as *Venu Gitā* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.21).

20. A discussion of the *mahāmantra* as the sonic representation of the Rāsa Mandala can be found in my *Dance of Divine Love*, pages 178–79.

21. My translation of *Bhagavad Gitā: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song* Chapter 4, Verse 11.

22. My translation of *Bhagavad Gitā: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song* Chapter 11, Verse 44.

23. The following are references to some verses expressing Krishna's desire for souls to know him: BG 5.13, 5.29, 7.3, 7.10, 7.12, 7.30, 9.13, 10.24, 10.27, 15.19, 18.55. The following are verses in which Krishna speaks about the soul's love for him: BG 4.3, 4.11, 6.31, 6.47, 7.21, 7.23, 7.28, 8.10, 8.22, 9.13, 9.29, 9.30, 9.31, 9.33, 9.34, 10.8, 10.9, 11.54, 11.55, 12.1, 12.14, 12.16, 12.17, 12.19, 12.10, 13.10, 13.18, 14.26, 15.19, 18.54, 18.55, 18.65, 18.68, 18.69. The following are verses in which Krishna speaks about souls coming to him: BG 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 6.47, 7.14, 7.15, 7.19, 7.23, 8.7, 8.15, 8.16, 9.11, 9.25, 9.28, 9.34, 10.10, 11.55, 13.18, 14.2, 18.55, 18.65, 18.66, 18.68.

24. *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 1.4.231–37.

25. *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* 2.8.193.

26. See my article, "Universal and Confidential Love of God: Two Essential Themes in the Bhakti Theology of Bhaktivedanta Swami" *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* | Vol. 6, No. 2 / Spring.

