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*Be Loved and Love:
The Nature of the Divine-Human Relationship*

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The focus of this essay is on the nature of the Divine-human relationship. I propose that this relationship is one of love. In order to demonstrate how this is true a working definition of love or aspects of love need to be established. Though not limited to this list, through my research I have identified several constituents of love, namely: acceptance, protection, respect, freedom, compassion, guidance, virtue, honesty, wholesomeness, pleasure, patience, sacrifice, and reciprocity. This paper will demonstrate how these aspects of love come from God and influence our world. This notion will be illuminated through the theology of the *Caitanya* School of *Kṛṣṇa bhakti*. Other epithets for the Divine will be taken from the *Bhagavad Gītā* (BG), one of the foundational texts of the bhakti school.¹ Supplementing this text will be the *Bhāgavata Purāna* (BhP), the *Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* (CC), the *Brahma-Saṁhitā* (BS), and related works by scholars, theologians, and saints of the tradition.² Following a demonstration of how love comes from God, or *Kṛṣṇa*, the name for the Divine in the *Caitanya* tradition and main character within the BG, this paper will exhibit a loving relationship can only exist with humanity's reciprocation of *Kṛṣṇa's* love.³ Thus, the end of the essay will establish how our most valued relationships, or *rasas*, are those based on love because love is inherent and most precious to us all. If the reader is able to see Divinity motivated by love and accepts love to be most valued and inherent to individuals of this world, the

¹ The primary translation of the BG will be that of Graham M. Schweig mainly for simplicity and consistency in understanding. He is also a modern theologian of the Caitanya spiritual lineage. Also, I will use the masculine pronoun for Divinity not to favor his masculine dimension, or to mask the sacred Divine Feminine aspect of the tradition, but because this pronoun is widely used in the texts utilized by the tradition.

² The translation of these other primary sources are those of *Vaiṣṇava* saint A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda who in ten years traveled the globe and authored volumes of works on *Caitanya* theology and philosophy. I chose the works of other scholars and theologians in accord with his writings and those of his predecessors for harmony and genuine representation of the tradition.

³ It must be noted that the Caitanya school sees the Supreme as caring and loving all beings no matter what bodily form they may have, from the ant, to the insect, to the zebra. Thus, in place of humanity will be living beings, souls, persons, etc.

nature of the Divine-human relationship will be proven to be one of love.⁴

Without elaborating heavily on the existence of God, one simple argument may shut the door on the nonexistence of God. Namely, if no one knows everything then no one can claim the absolute nonexistence of a Supreme Person. Until such a person is encountered atheism is thrown out the window, but when such a person is met, at least according to the *Bhagavad Gītā*, we will have found a person who knows and encompasses everyone and everything, even atheism. This is confirmed throughout the BG, and more specifically in BG 7.26 and BG 9.12. Here, *Kṛṣṇa* acknowledges he knows everyone including those who choose to deny Divinity and are falsely proud of their feats since from their point of view no one reigns supreme.

BG 7.26, “I know those beings who have passed on, those who are living, O Arjuna, And those who have yet to come— but none of them know me.”⁵

BG 9.12, “Those who are of vain hopes, of vain actions, of vain knowledge; who are thoughtless, Demonic, and godless— they indeed are enslaved by the bewildering primordial nature.”⁶

The Supreme Person, knowing everyone, understands that people of this world will become perplexed for various reasons, and develop assorted views distant from God, but such ideas are futile. The reason is that nothing exists outside of *Kṛṣṇa*, and the One of Incomparable Being is marked as the origin of everyone and everything; that would include every philosophy and every concept. This is verified by the *Gītā*,

⁴ Establishing the nature of the divine-human relationship has been a challenging task for the most astute and sincere theologians across all major world religions. It would be obnoxious to claim that I have succeeded in doing so here. However, for the westerner, or the curious person unfamiliar with the *Caitanya* tradition I hoped to compile concise elements that will intrigue such a person to further explore the school's theology and teachers in order to fill in any gaps or inquiries that may pursue. In the end, we all have to decide where we place our hearts.

⁵ Schweig, Graham M. (2007) *Bhagavad-Gita: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song* Harper Collins Publishers, New York. p. 114.

⁶ Schweig, BG 9.12, p.130.

BG 10.8, “I am, of everything, the coming forth into being; from me everything is set forth into motion. Mindful [of these words], they offer their love to me, the enlightened ones, being fully immersed in feelings of love.”⁷

BG 10.39, “And I am also that which is the seed of all beings, O Arjuna. There is nothing that can exist without me— no moving or nonmoving being.”⁸

If nothing exists outside of *Kṛṣṇa* then atheism is a concept that exists within *Kṛṣṇa*.

Although there is not a promotion of atheism, there is a simultaneous conjunctive acceptance of all views by the *Caitanya* School. After all, how could there be rejection of anyone or anything when nothing exists outside of Divinity? This notion of acceptance is critical in the Divine-human relationship. Especially when such a relationship is claimed to be one of love, for to love someone is to fully accept them. Yet, if nothing is rejected, how does the *Caitanya* tradition handle our experience of hate and turmoil if the Supreme Person is loving and caring toward us?

In order to understand how a loving relationship between Divinity and the soul is possible, it is necessary to deal with the perennial problem of evil. I will work through this problem using the *Kṛṣṇa Bhakti School's* theology. Navigating through this problem enables other components of love expressed by Divinity to emerge. I will begin with a concept put forth by the *Vaiṣṇava* tradition relating to a spiritual domain and a material domain. This first idea will demonstrate a component of love such as protection.

After *Kṛṣṇa* listens attentively to *Arjuna* in the commencement of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the first teaching shared is the notion of an eternal soul and the impermanent

⁷ Schweig, BG, p.139.

⁸ Schweig, BG, p.149.

physical body. From verse BG 2.11 until 2.30, *Kṛṣṇa* ingrains this message into his student. A few excerpts from this section illustrate the point.

BG 2.16, “Of the impermanent one finds no being; one finds no nonbeing of the permanent,” BG 2.18, “these bodies, said to have an end, belong to the embodied, which is eternal,” BG 2.20, “it is unborn, eternal, everlasting, and primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain.”⁹

From these passages we can learn that “it” and “the embodied” refer to the soul that is declared to be eternal, while “the impermanent” can be referred to the material, or the physical, which in this case would include our body. It is important to note that the *Caitanya sampradāya* views eternity to be without beginning or end, and the physical body is always changing. Though someone, or something physical, due to its nature, can never verify the former; we can testify to the latter, or the fluctuating physical body by looking at old photographs of others and ourselves.¹⁰ Thus, what can be determined from these verses is that the soul is indestructible and not capable of being burned, wet, slain, or even slaying another soul because each soul is eternal while the body experiences youth, old age, and death.¹¹ This is a key element of the divine-human relationship since a lover, in this case Divinity, gives shelter from harm. I will elaborate in the proceeding paragraph.

⁹ Schweig, BG, p.38-43

¹⁰ This is also verified in BG 2.22, “When abandoning worn-out garments A person acquires different new ones; So abandoning worn-out bodily frames, The embodied comes together with new ones.” Schweig, BG, p. 41.

¹¹ Schweig, BG 2.17, 2.18, 2.20, 2.21, 2.23, 2.24 mention a few of these durable characteristics of the soul. Furthermore, the soul is confirmed as spiritual in the purport of BG 2.17 by A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, “This very small spiritual spark is the basic principle of the material body, and the influence of such a spiritual spark is spread all over the body as the influence of the active principle of some medicine spreads throughout the body. This current of the spirit soul is felt all over the body as consciousness, and that is the proof of the presence of the soul.” <https://www.vedabase.com/en/bg/2/17>

Witnessing, or experiencing the love of a child by an adult is exemplary of such love that offers protection. An adult may immediately stop a child from running into a busy street, or quickly rescue an infant from a descent down a flight of stairs. Such loving parents are sometimes accused of desiring a “bubble” around their children to protect them from harm at all times. Naturally, this is exactly what *Kṛṣṇa* does for each soul as they are given divine protection that shelters their eternal being. Although the physical body may be crushed, or burned, the soul is never destroyed. However, *Kṛṣṇa* gives freedom of action to each soul regardless how fraught with danger, or benevolent such action may be. Here we find another foundational aspect of love in the Divine-human relationship that is, freedom.

Though quite daunting, to truly love someone is to give them total freedom. One would be hard-pressed to show how enslavement, or manipulation is loving. Graham M. Schweig writes,

“Love cannot be threatened, it cannot be forced, it cannot be manipulated or controlled, and it cannot be bartered nor can it be judged—freedom is the precious soil that allows the heart to blossom. Therefore freedom necessitates the possibility of evil so as to not eclipse an uncompromised, total freedom that can give way to the highest love, the pure love of prema-bhakti most naturally. It must come freely, eventually, from a heart that can choose (as is represented by the liminal metaphysical position of living beings as *taṭastha-śakti*) to act either from dark places or to act out of the purity of heart. Evil, then, in a sense is an

expression of that freedom with which we are all ultimately endowed, a freedom that also paves the way for pure love.”¹²

Although we always exist, we can obviously exist in more nurturing environments especially when living in a prison of our own destruction having destroyed or attempting to wreck others. However, this has to come by our own volition if we are to truly experience love even with Divinity himself. Therefore, Divinity allows for complete freedom in our actions and this allows for evil in our world, yet we are always protected if viewed as spiritual beings rather than purely physical. Nevertheless, though one is free to act in any manner one so desires, another component of love is brought to the forefront since Divinity is sensitive to our misfortunate actions. This is a constituent of love called compassion. More specifically, the Supreme Person seeks to eliminate our suffering by giving a gift of education and guiding souls toward love.

Kṛṣṇa guides souls toward love by teaching what is love. He points out in BG 2.47, “It is in action alone that you have claim, never at any time to the fruits of such action.”¹³ So, any righteous or unrighteous deed will be checked because we do not decide what comes from our action. Moreover, such freedom makes us responsible for our chosen actions, as the Ultimate Person does not assume responsibility for our actions. Even though complete freedom is given, the Supreme Person guides us lovingly to minimize malice and increase love by giving reprimands or rewarding bountiful behavior. These last two sentences are supported by BG 5.15 and BG 5.25 respectively,

¹² Schweig, Graham M. (2016) *Reflections on God and Evil in the Krishna Bhakti Theology of Caitanya*. Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies: Vol. 29, Article 4, p.6.

¹³ Schweig, BG, p. 48.

BG 5.15, “The Omnipresent certainly does not assume anyone’s misdeeds or virtuous deeds. Knowledge is covered by the absence of knowledge, by which living beings are bewildered.”¹⁴

BG 5.25, “The Nirvāna of Brahman is attained by those seers whose misdeeds have been destroyed, Whose conflict has been severed, whose self is disciplined, who delight in the welfare of all beings.”¹⁵

In order to promote more love Divinity offers compassionate discipline and education when we are doing something that leads us away from love and loving others. Similarly, a loving teacher teaches us what is wrong with what we did, penalizes us, and allows us another opportunity to redeem our nobility, or love more deeply. Being eternal, we are thereby given multiple opportunities to learn about true love. Be that as it may, we get to choose the direction in which we would like to advance because love allows freedom. However, just as a loving friend would urge us to be wholesome and act properly for our own sake, the Best of Divinities continues to make his presence known in order to encourage the feeling of love for us all, and ultimately for Divinity himself who paradoxically cannot get enough love.¹⁶ This is expanded upon in the following paragraph.

Kṛṣṇa reveals to his dear friend *Arjuna* in BG 4.8, “For protection of the virtuous and for the destruction of evil acts, For the purpose of establishing dharma, I become fully manifest age after age.”¹⁷ Not only does *Kṛṣṇa* come personally to encourage virtue and love for all, the One of Unlimited Form becomes various personages if it means we

¹⁴ Schweig, BG, p. 85.

¹⁵ Schweig, BG, p. 88.

¹⁶ *Kṛṣṇa* can be seen as a loving friend in BG 4.3 when Arjuna is referred to as someone who has “offered his love” and “become a friend,” Schweig, BG, p. 70. Schweig points out how *Kṛṣṇa* urges us to “come to him” twenty-two times in the BG thus encouraging our loving sentiments. Schweig, BG, p. 266.

¹⁷ Schweig, BG, p.71. Here it is further demonstrated that *Kṛṣṇa* does what it takes to promote more love and virtue.

will better relate to him in order to be uplifted to the highest values. This is illuminated by a verse found in the *Bhāgavata Purāna* 1.3.24 and from the *Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 5.132 respectively,

BhP 1.3.24, “Then, in the beginning of Kali-yuga, the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, the son of Añjanā, in the province of Gayā, just for the purpose of deluding those who are envious of the faithful theist.”¹⁸

CC *Ādi-līlā* 5.132, “In whatever form one knows the Lord, one speaks of Him in that way. In this there is no falsity, since everything is possible in Kṛṣṇa.”¹⁹

Thus, the Unlimited Lord, who so loves, does not limit anyone to any particular tradition. Divinity does not care for the robes of a Buddhist, or any other religious habit. What the Majestic One desires is our love. Thus, if one offers love to *Kṛṣṇa* or knows him by another name, or in another form, or through any other tradition this is appreciated by the *Caitanya* School. S.N. Dasgupta who wrote substantially on the *Caitanya* tradition in his book *Hindu Mysticism* writes,

“For if this love of God were not vital to us, all that the great prophets have been trying to preach would have been unreal and futile. If it were not a real experience which in some sense is shared by us all, an experience which ennobles us and raises us far above the selfish pettinesses of life, no prophet and no religious deed would be able to appeal to our higher natures and establish the claims of religion. Religion is by nature an other-worldly attitude of life--one which we have along with our worldly attitude.”²⁰

¹⁸ Prabhupada, <https://www.vedabase.com/en/sb/1/3/24>.

¹⁹ Prabhupada, <https://www.vedabase.com/en/cc/adi/5/132>.

²⁰ Dasgupta, S.N. (1927) *Hindu Mysticism*. Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York. p. 76.

Dasgupta affirms that our attention given to teachers of religious traditions is valued because the development of love, in particular love of God is what is vital and real to us all. Notwithstanding, it cannot be overstated that the gift of one's heart is only a gift when given freely and not forced by persons, or people of a tradition. If we look at the world's traditions and their promotion of love, compassion, peacefulness, and other beautiful attributes, we would be hard-pressed to deny the direction Divinity desires for us.²¹ The practitioner of *Caitanya's Kṛṣṇa Bhakti* understands the Source of Beings would like for us to enter an unalloyed realm of love where he resides rather than delighting in a physical realm where he is more concealed by *māyā*, or divine illusion.²² Yet, that is our choice. The notion of *māyā* and the previous three components of a loving divine-human relationship namely protection, giving compassion through knowledge, and freedom are condensed in BG 18.61 through 18.63,

BG 18.61, “The supreme Lord of all beings, O Arjuna, is present within the inner region of the heart, Causing all beings to move about like riders upon a mystical machine, by the divine power of Māyā.”

BG 18.62, “In that one only, take shelter with all your heart, O Bhārata. Through his grace you shall attain supreme peace, the eternal dwelling.

BG 18.63, “Thus for you this knowledge, which is a greater secret than the [previous] secret, is made known by me. Having fully grasped this, with nothing overlooked, then act as you choose.”²³

²¹ If one were to examine the heart of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, or Taoism one would find similar components of love mentioned in this essay such as acceptance, protection, compassion, and freedom. Please refer to Huston Smith (1995) *The Illustrated World's Traditions: A Guide To Our Wisdom Traditions*. Harper Collins Publishers, San Francisco.

²² Schweig gives a brief definition of *māyā*, “*Māyā* is Krishna's divine illusive power, which either bewilders souls to facilitate their forgetfulness of divinity or facilitates the revelation of the intimate form of divinity,” BG, p.71.

²³ Schweig, BG, p. 236-237.

The idea of an eternal dwelling, or an eternal home, is pertinent in understanding another concept of the *Caitanya School's* supersession of love over evil. This is the concept of *Acintya-bhedābheda*.

If one has a broad enough conception of Divinity then it is not hard to imagine the Lord with a plenitude of manifestations. There is no limit to his capabilities within this phenomenal world and beyond, for himself, anyone, or anything else. This is what is meant by *acintya-śakti*, or inconceivable power.²⁴ The tradition posits that *Kṛṣṇa*, out of love, is all-pervading and embracing everything and everyone at all times in various ways. This would include our known world. Simultaneously, and inconceivably, *Kṛṣṇa* is completely transcendent to everything and everyone including our world. Thus, we have *acintya-bhedābheda*, or inconceivable difference and non-difference.²⁵ *Kṛṣṇa* explains this in BhP 2.9.35 and the *Brahma-Samhitā*, a text disclosed by the CC to have been discovered by *Śrī Caitanya* himself,

BhP 2.9.35, “I Myself also exist within everything created, and at the same time I am outside of everything.”

BS 5.35, “He is an undifferentiated entity as there is no distinction between potency and the possessor thereof. In His work of creation of millions of worlds, His potency remains inseparable. All the universes exist in Him and He is present in His fullness in every one of the atoms that are scattered throughout the universe, at one and the same time. Such is the primeval Lord whom I adore.”²⁶

²⁴ Kapoor, O.B.L. *The Philosophy and Religion of Śrī Caitanya: The Philosophical background of the Hare Krishna Movement*. Jhansi Road, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1977. P152

²⁵ This concept will reveal that **a realm of pure love exists, and that *Kṛṣṇa* wishes such a place for all living entities. Second, that love is promoted between all entities thereby increasing loving relationships, and ultimately culminating in a relationship with the Highest Supreme Lord because he can never get enough love.**

²⁶ The *Brahma-Samhitā* discovery by *Caitanya* is confirmed in CC Madhya 9.237, <https://www.vedabase.com/en/cc/madhya/9/237>. Translation of BS 5.35 by A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupada, <https://www.vedabase.com/en/bs/5/35>.

Though logic may challenge the theory pointing out an apparent contradiction; *Kṛṣṇa* is the source of reason, infinite, and therefore not bound by the finite logical thought of a material sphere.²⁷ Therefore, there is usage of the word “inconceivable.” Yet again, simultaneously and thus inconceivably, he is capable of adhering impeccably to such logic if he so chooses being the creator of logic. This concept is essential in comprehending a loving bond between souls and Divinity for it allows the Ultimate Person, who is pure love, to inhabit an abode exuding such pure loving character since he is capable of being fully apart from this mixed realm. The BhP 2.9.9 reads,

“The Personality of Godhead, being thus very much satisfied with the penance of Lord Brahmā, was pleased to manifest His personal abode, Vaikuṅṭha, the supreme planet above all others. This transcendental abode of the Lord is adored by all self-realized persons freed from all kinds of miseries and fear of illusory existence.”²⁸

Here it is established that portions of the cosmos are reserved for the Supreme Person and denizens who have reached the zenith of pure love in relation to others and Divinity. Yet, provinces within creation, such as our world, allow for our freedom of strident acts or bonds of love. Chapter eight, verse 22 of BG reads, “It is the supreme Person, moreover, O Pārtha, who is attainable by offering love to none other, Within whom beings exist, by whom all this [world] is pervaded.”²⁹ Thus, in order to join him in a pure loving abode *Kṛṣṇa* urges us to offer love to him, but not only to him, but to every living being and to the entire world since he is in the heart of all living entities and pervades the whole world. If *Kṛṣṇa* is asking for love, and *Kṛṣṇa* is in everything, then we would have to

²⁷ The scope of this paper does not allow for a thorough explanation of the theory's logic, so please refer to the *Bhagavata-saṁdarbha* by *Jīva Gosvāmin*.

²⁸ Prabhupada, <https://www.vedabase.com/en/sb/2/9/9>.

²⁹ Schweig, BG, p.124.

conclude that *Kṛṣṇa* paradoxically cannot get enough love since he would be the receptacle of everything including everyone's love.³⁰ Yet, keeping in mind the concept of *acintya bhedābheda* he is also different from everything and so we are able to give, or not give our love to him because he is different from us, and our world. Therefore, our planet is imperfect because not all living beings have chosen to act out of love, while there is simultaneously an area of the universe that is completely loving and full of persons who love others and Govinda most genuinely.³¹ In both cases, however, *Kṛṣṇa* is present either to inspire more love when given a sincere call, or to delight in a loving relationship with those who have already responded to his summons.³² Therefore, while love between souls and Divinity in the phenomenal realm continues to oscillate, the love between souls and Divinity in the spiritual realm expands exponentially.

The question may arise of what becomes of those who are struggling, or unready to give love in our mixed world. According to the *Caitanya School of Kṛṣṇa Bhakti*, the Best of Divinities, knowing everything, understands our tussles in the various domains of existence and gives us support just as a mother cradles her child and a friend would lend loving support to someone in conflict.³³ Thus, accordingly, *Kṛṣṇa* is continuously present and sustaining all of existence in the form known as *Brahman*, and always takes every

³⁰ In Schweig's BG 13.22, *Kṛṣṇa* is called the "beloved recipient," p. 181.

³¹ "Govinda: Name of Krishna meaning "the one who herds the cows. Considered to be an especially endearing and intimate name for Krishna." Schweig, p.30.

³² Since the nature of love is circular, or reciprocal *Kṛṣṇa* responds to a call from his beloveds, or calls out to his beloveds. The damsels of Vraja are held to be the epitome of a pure loving relationship by the tradition. An example of a call and response is given here in the BP 10.21.6, "Thus hearing, O king, the sound of the flute that captivates the hearts of all beings, The young women of Vraja began describing that alluring sound yet again, embracing him within their minds." Schweig, Graham M. (2007) *Dance of Divine Love: India's Classic Sacred Love Story. The Rāsa Lilā of Krishna*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Bungalow Road, p.80.

³³ This is supported throughout BG and exemplified by BG 4.5, "Though many births have I passed, as have you, O Arjuna. I know all of them—you know them not, O Subduer of the enemy." Schweig, p. 70.

step with all beings in the form of *Paramātmā*.³⁴ A few characteristics of *Brahman* and *Paramātmā* are described in BG 13.13-14 and 13.22 respectively,

BG 13.13-14, “Having hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads, and faces everywhere, Hearing everywhere in the world, surrounding everything, it remains constant. Having the appearance of the ‘qualities’ of all the senses, though devoid of all the senses; Unattached yet supporting everything; free of the ‘qualities’ though the experiencer of the ‘qualities.’”³⁵

BG 13.22, “The observer and consenter, the supporter, the beloved recipient, the exalted supreme Lord, Or even the “supreme Self” is declared to be the highest Person in this body.”³⁶

Nevertheless, these various forms are non-different from Kṛṣṇa as authenticated by the BhP,

BhP 1.2.11, “Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this nondual substance Brahman, Paramātmā or Bhagavān.”

BhP 5.7.7, “Lord Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva, is the original Personality of Godhead manifest as the Supersoul [Paramātmā] as well as the impersonal Brahman.”

Thus *Kṛṣṇa*, out of love, is in all ways with us. The Unlimited Lord is all around us, and even within us. Despite the most dire of situations and even when we have mocked or denounced him, Divinity never leaves our side. Just as a loving parent never wishes for their offspring to leave home despite the troubles they have caused. Yet when the time arrives, such a parent yearns for them to stay close. *Kṛṣṇa* is closer to us than anyone can

³⁴ Schweig, BG 13.22, “The observer and consenter, the supporter, the beloved recipient, the exalted supreme Lord, Or even the “supreme Self” is declared to be the highest Person in this body,” p.181.

³⁵ Schweig, BG, p.179.

³⁶ Schweig, BG, p.181.

possibly imagine. Yet, we can stray so far away from him, and end up in our own abyss, or places where love is blinded by our own ignorance as described in the twenty-sixth chapter of the fifth canto of the BhP. Though misdeeds are corrected in order to move a person toward the delightful for their own welfare, and that of others; in the same way, a kind teacher disciplines a student for the pupil's sake, and that of the class, even then, *Kṛṣṇa* remains with us patiently awaiting our decision to groom a loving heart that will yield our own happiness and the contentment of others.

In the face of our poor choices no one is eternally condemned because never-ending punishment, even for intentional unsound behavior would hardly be loving. Fittingly, no matter how grave our situation may be, we can all love more deeply and move closer to *Kṛṣṇa*, and we all eventually do. The Supreme Person states in BG 4.11, “As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛthā.”³⁷ A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada who exported *Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism* from India throughout the globe, reiterates the meaning of *Kṛṣṇa* to be “all-attractive.”³⁸ Therefore, just as no one can resist the charm and beauty of someone full of opulence, we cannot resist the Ultimate Person who is the source and embodiment of all magnificence. His splendor is depicted throughout *Kṛṣṇa Bhakti* literature where he is most admired in the form of *Bhagavān*. This feature of *Kṛṣṇa* is the most precious to the *Caitanya* tradition because in this form one can experience the highest levels of loving relationships, or rasas.

“Bhagavān is identified with the supreme personality of Kṛṣṇa, Who is the source of all incarnations, the ultimate ground of all that exists, and in Whom are centred

³⁷ Prabhupada, <https://www.vedabase.com/en/bg/4/11>.

³⁸ Prabhupada, <https://www.vedabase.com/en/sb/10/8/31>, purport.

infinite grandeur, infinite powers and infinite rasas or modes of Divine Bliss. CC Madhya, VIII, 106-8).”³⁹

This last section of the essay will focus specifically on relationships with the Divine as viewed by the *Caitanya* tradition. It is worth noting that everything in this composition up to this point denotes Divinity offering his love toward all souls while an actual loving relationship cannot be confirmed unless we return such love.

Rasa is a term used by the *Caitanya* tradition that suggests to humanity that the divine-human relationship is indeed a loving one. Graham M. Schweig gives the school’s usage of the term and assorted definitions of the word in his book *Dance of Divine Love*. He writes,

“The teachers of the Caitanya school, specifically, Rūpa, and following him, Jīva Gosvāmin and Krishnadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmin, broadly define and describe the relationship with God as *rasa*. The word *rasa* has several meanings worth mentioning here because, collectively, they give us a feel for the word’s power and depth in its religious context. It has the sense of “essence” or “taste.” It can also mean “the sap of a plant,” “the juice of fruit,” or more broadly, “the best or finest or prime part of anything,” or the “vital essence” of a thing. The word can mean connotatively and more generally “spiritual experience,” or more specifically a particular relationship with God.”⁴⁰

It must be noted that the *bhakti* tradition confirms a relationship with the Supreme Person. Moreover, it must be understood that *rasa*, or a relationship, by definition, includes two people. Therefore, even if the evidence outlining *Kṛṣṇa*’s love, his pure

³⁹ Kapoor, *The Philosophy and Religion of Śrī Caitanya*, p. 91.

⁴⁰ Schweig, *DoDL*, p. 99.

loving realm, and his ultimate desire for love are convincing, a loving relationship with Divinity cannot be vindicated unless a person reciprocates that love with the Supreme Person.⁴¹ Understandably, Schweig further refines the *Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas*' meaning of *rasa*, "their general connotative meaning is the directly experienced intimate relationship with the divinity."⁴² Thus, although a few points previously outlined touch on Divinity's love for all souls, the soul is eventually able to experience a direct relationship with Divinity having made such choice. Furthermore, the theologian deepens the student's comprehension of the school's vision, "according to the bhakti school, God is *rasa*, God supremely enjoys *rasa*, and God is the ultimate object of *rasa*."⁴³ If *Kṛṣṇa* is spiritual experience, or relationship, and he supremely enjoys this *rasa* with the fractions of himself, since everything comes from him, then it must be concluded that this experience is beneficial or indeed pleasurable.⁴⁴ Although Divinity does delight in anger, or displeasure, the BhP acknowledges such emotions are meant to fuel a loving purpose. Thus, in the 10th canto of the BhP, motivated by love, *Kṛṣṇa* is depicted killing demons who are then released of their hardship and sent to an all-loving realm.⁴⁵ Therefore, what is ultimately pleasurable for Divinity are relationships of pure love.

According to the *Caitanya* School, there are five principal relationships, or *rasas*, shared with *Kṛṣṇa* and each one of them is a perfect loving relationship. Still, Divinity cannot be limited to these relationships as he embodies all relationships.⁴⁶ The remainder

⁴¹ This is further supported in Edwin Bryant's book *Bhakti Yoga: Tales and Teachings from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, "true love, one can suggest, is nothing other than the experience of complete satisfaction attained from fully dedicating oneself to pleasing one's beloved through acts of devotion and service. And, of course, for love to be true, this devotion and service must be fully reciprocal," p. 5.

⁴² Schweig, DoDL, p. 99.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Schweig, BG 15.7 reads, "A part of me alone in the world of the living is the living being which is eternal," p 195.

⁴⁵ One such example is the story of Pūtanā in 10.6 of the BhP. <https://www.vedabase.com/en/sb/10/6>

⁴⁶ In Kapoor's book, *The Philosophy and Religion of Śrī Caitanya*, he cites the Chāndogya Upanishad 1.1.3, "sa eṣa rasānātaṁ rasatamaḥ paramaḥ" when he writes, "Para-brahman Śrī Kṛṣṇa is new every moment. He is full of infinite variety both as

of this essay will utilize these five principle *rasas* because these *rasas* are quite relatable to persons of this world since we have experienced these relationships in some capacity.⁴⁷ Therefore, regardless if someone is atheist, or enjoys the teachings of another tradition, they too can appreciate these relationships because they are experienced in this sphere. This is also indicative of the Divine-human relationship being a loving one because these worldly relationships allow us to discover new bounds of love whether we have a chosen to have a personal relationship with the Ultimate Person or not. If everything comes from the Divine, then our relationships are a gift of love coming from the source of love as we learn to love through them. As expected, I will explain the *rasas* through the lens of our worldly experience depicting how love is inherent to our nature as exemplified by these relationships. Thus showing we are continually cradled by Divinity who loves us even through these relationships as he is in everyone and everything. The upcoming point will not be to demonstrate how *all* relationships in this world are loving relationships and therefore Divinity urges a loving relationship with himself, but simply to show how loving relationships in this world exist based on the components of love already discussed, namely, acceptance, protection, freedom, compassion, and others.⁴⁸ Indeed, due to our choices there is an existence of relationships with little or no signs of love, but this essay will briefly focus on relationships that we value and not those that have less appreciation. If our most valued relationships of this world are based on love, and we come from Divinity, why would our relationship with Divinity be anything less?

object of relish and as the enjoyer of relish. Therefore, He is called akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti or the embodiment of all Rasas,” p. 118. One could also study the *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu* by *Rūpa Gosvāmin*, in particular the nature of mixed rasas.

⁴⁷ Schweig not only confirms this notion in *DofDL*, p.100, but also adds, “It has even been suggested that the types of experiences within the various rasas with Krishna parallel those experiences that Christians can have in particular relationships with Christ. See Sudhindra Chandra Cakravarti’s discussion on “Christianity and Bengal Vaiṣṇavism” (ch.14) in his work *Philosophical Foundation of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism* (Dehli: Academic Publishers, 1969), especially p.382. I will use Schweig’s translation of these *rasas*.

⁴⁸ Other components of love mentioned in this essay are: respect, guidance, virtue, honesty, wholesomeness, pleasure, happiness, patience, trust, care, loyalty, friendliness, equality, sacrifice, solace, kindness, devotion, giving, reciprocity, etc.

The first *rasa* is *śānta-rasa* translated as reverential love. The tradition will often give the example of adoring, or being in awe of a great king, president, or other distant charismatic leader. Though one may not have a direct personal relationship with the chief executive, one offers great love and respect from a distance in the way a citizen may speak highly of their president's policies and attend their rallies. Second is *dāsyā-rasa*, or subservient love. Here, a person may be in position to honor and worship their king directly. Such a person may be a bodyguard offering protection to a famous personality, or even a faithful soldier serving his captain.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the person loving in this way is in a submissive position to the beloved. The next *rasa* is one that moves the beloved to a position of equality, thus being called mutual love, or *sākhya-rasa*. The example most relatable is our friendships. Though we may or may not hold positions of power, outside of our posts we engage in congenial and loving bonds that are invigorating to our health. We may enjoy a game of chess together, or exchange ideas knowing we will get an honest opinion from friends whom we love and trust. The next *rasa* moves the individual to a place of superiority with the beloved. Consequently, we have the relationship of a parent with a child, or nurturing love, or *vātsalya-rasa*. We may notice the continual concern and acceptance by our own caregivers despite our grand, or insignificant achievements. We may even be those parents ourselves. Shades of these four *rasas* previously mentioned are all found within the fifth and final *rasa* called passionate love, or *śṛṅgāra-rasa*. This is the most intimate relationship to be shared with a person, and the most dynamic since all aspects of the other *rasas* are included, along with an amorous relationship that is not found in the other *rasas*. This relationship is exemplified in the

⁴⁹ One could examine the devotion and honor given to a captain in Walt Whitman's poem *O Captain! My Captain!*. *Śānta-rasa* can be seen in Walt Whitman's adoration of President Abraham Lincoln whom he never met, and *dāsyā-rasa* can be represented by the soldier in the poem who directly mourns the loss of his beloved leader.

many romantic expressions of love found in our songs, literature, and other art forms carrying stories of our love lives. So, we can plainly observe loving relationships exist in this world though in various shades, and if these relationships exist, and everything exists in the Supreme Person, then a loving relationship is also present between souls and Divinity. Although other forms of relationships may exist including ones that do not exude love, what the *Caitanya* tradition proposes is that Divinity desires loving relationships the most, and it might be safe to say that so do we.

Although there is no way to fully substantiate what each person in this world ultimately craves, it would hardly be unthinkable to say that we all crave love. We value the tender loving care that comes from our parents and family. We find solace in a loving friend who lifts us up when we are down. Our motivation to be more caring individuals comes through the lives and actions of others both far and near. Our quest extends far and wide for a partner to share our life and be the object of our devotion. We search for a beauty to adore in order to display our own affection. We seek a person who will listen, cradle our fragile heart, and speak sweet nothings in our ear. A kind and faithful being that will stand by us during our greatest errors, and urge us toward our most rewarding triumphs. A being that will be the recipient of our most precious gifts, and bestow us with the most flattering loyalty. Such affirmations allow us to see that not only do we seek to be loved, but we also have a simultaneous aim to love. What is revealed to be the greatest secret of all by the *Bhagavad Gītā* is not only that *Kṛṣṇa* loves us, but also in addition *Kṛṣṇa* longs for our love. In other words, he would like to enter this circle of loving exchanges with us personally. The Supreme Person says,

BG 18.64, “The greatest secret of all, once more please hear—it is my supreme message: ‘You are so much loved by me!’ Thereupon I shall continue declaring this message for you, which I have set forth into motion.”

BG 18.65, “Be mindful of me with love offered to me; sacrificing for me, act out of reverence for me. Truly you shall come to me—this I promise you for you are dearly loved by me.”

BG 18.66, “Completely relinquishing all forms of dharma, come to me as your only shelter. I shall grant you freedom from all misfortune— do not despair!”⁵⁰

Here Divinity asks for love because he continually gives love. He asks for sacrifices because he has sacrificed himself for our own pursuit of happiness and continually respects our choices, hence the plea for reverence. Exchanging sacrifices, respect, and love yields the promise of a loving bond. *Kṛṣṇa* exclaims that he will continue to seek us and declare this message because he loves us so and wants to fulfill our desire to be loved, while patiently waiting for us to understand our desire to also love. We need only to seek his shelter for true freedom. People all too often miss this wondrous secret, yet we are reminded of it in all the relationships that emanate across this phenomenal land. Though we may not have always experience such loving relationships, or possibly we are not experiencing one right now, nevertheless, being eternal it is only a matter of time before we do receive such exposure and Divinity confirms this in BG 18.64.⁵¹ Such experience will allow us another opportunity to deepen our love for others and ultimately for Divinity. Patience is another aspect of love and if we are patient, love will present

⁵⁰ Schweig, BG 18.64-65, p.237-238.

⁵¹ Kṛṣṇa says, “‘You are so much loved by me!’ Thereupon, I shall continue declaring this message for you” in BG 18.64. If we feel we have missed the experience of love, we must not forget we are supremely loved, and we can easily learn to return it.

itself if this is what we crave. Similarly, *Kṛṣṇa* waits patiently for us to choose love and also him.

If it is accepted that love exists here in this world although not to the highest, or to the lowest degrees, but simply that it exists, then there are shades of love existing within our *rasas*. These relationships pinpointed can be full of love, minimal love, or even exploitation. A world, or heart of pure love claimed by the *Caitanya* School cannot be proven. Yet, because there are shades of a metaphysical quality such as love in a physical realm, we can only discover our own pure loving heart, or uncover a transcendent place of pure love by making the endeavor of becoming more loving. Whether one discovers such a realm, or finds this effort in vain, either way will improve one's life in a land where love is ultimately what is valued. If love is what is most valued between persons of this world, then what else would we value with Divinity? Thus, the nature of the Divine-human relationship is indeed a loving one and perhaps much more.

This essay demonstrates love, and various components of love, extending from Divinity through concepts and scripture coming from the *Caitanya* School. Various examples of loving relationships within our sphere reflect the *rasas* presented by the *bhakti* school further showing the value we place on love. Combining love coming from the Supreme Person and the unlimited value we place on love links the Divine-human relationship to be one of love. Though the nature of our relationship with Divinity may vary from person to person, and from tradition to tradition, it is difficult to deny our thirst for love and its components delivered in this essay. Consequently, this essay may stimulate questions relating to one's own viewpoint, or one may feel inspired to dig deeper into the *Caitanya* perspective if they have not come to the same conclusion but

have such desire. Lovers of love, and a world that craves love would be much obliged.

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