Chapter V

Aesthetics as Non-Cognitive
Participatory Religious Language

What is the justification for a study on the Neo-Vaiṣṇavism (Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism) of Bengal as a religio-philosophical tradition? Should it be done for its own sake by way of finding its place in the history of ideas? Whatever is the reason one may provide the fact is that, because of the pluralistic nature of the Indian society, it is quite natural for one to find in it diverse forms of religio-philosophical traditions. The so-called common characters that are discernible from among these variegated religious and philosophical traditions of India have so far failed to evolve a monolithic or a homogeneous religion in the country. There may be historical and sociological explanations for this. The beauty is that, diversity is the very hallmark of the Indian society. India’s weaknesses as well as strength lie in it.

Śaṅkara’s powerful reductionist and uncompromising non-dual thesis was and is still helplessly in effective in stopping the evolution of alternative non-Advaitic systems of Vedānta (theistic Vedānta) beginning from Rāmānuja down to the one inspired by Caitanya. It is quite natural and characteristic of the country that the perennial creative upsurge of its cultural mind found its new form in the rise of the medieval Bhakti Movement of Caitanya. In addition to its ontological heights of divine-love aesthetics of bhakti-rasa also constitutes its distinctive contribution to India religio-philosophical heritage. To begin with what are the distinctive features of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism? How does it possess any original idea to offer?

A proper comprehension of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism may not be fully accomplished unless we are aware of these dynamic historical forces that made it to assume its form. But this chapter shall focus itself only on those ideas, beliefs,
doctrines and practices as they are known to us today irrespective of the fact that these are the products of history. These were not merely the indifferent and helpless evolutes of history, but were symptomatic of a mode of reaction to the undesirable socio-religious condition prevailing during Caitanya’s own time on the one hand and the spiritually nihilistic and “regressive dedifferentiation of self and another...”¹. Similarly our own study itself is another contemporary response to our own problems.

As stated earlier, the relative originality of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism lies in its wholesome application of aesthetics or the Alāṅkāra-Śāstras or Classical Sāṁskṛt Aesthetics which in the hands of Rūpa Goswāmi came to be known as Vaiṣṇva-Rasa-Śāstra. As it has been already dealt with, the ontological issues relating to the conceiving of bhakti as the sādhyā or the pañcamapuruṣārtha as the summum bonum of existence which constitute in realising an ontologically real divine-amour resulted to its unprecedented aesthetic orientation of the sect. The highest level of devotional emotionalism or erotic-esthetic divine-love naturally finds aesthetics as the only viable medium of showing or communicating the dynamic and blissful transcendental love.

Aesthetics here is not merely a means or substitute for communication or revealing the divine emotion, but it is very much in the heart of the School’s theology and metaphysics. On the ethical plane of sādhana the process of imaginative contemplation (antara-sādhana) in the practice of rāgānugā-bhakti, the elements of imitation of art and art-communication are being employed for gradually realising the divine-love or prema-bhakti. Similar is the case of existentialist thinkers’ resorting to art and literature or aesthetics for communicating their concrete existential ideas which on account of their rejecting thought essences, cannot be conveyed through them. Perhaps, S.C. “Chakravarti’s Philosophical Foundations of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism” in which comparative examination

¹ Kakar, Sudhir, & Ross, John M., Tales of Love, Sex and Danger, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p. 29.
is done in relation to Bengal Vaiṣṇavism and Kierkegaard’s Existentialism is more or less related to this.²

The extremely passionate, uncommon and dynamic nature of the erotic-religious emotionalism and the aspect of mysticism³ of such a religious experience of Caitanya were giving his immediate disciples like Sanātana and Rūpa the most difficult task of providing a rational justification. They had to find an appropriate medium for communicating those underpinning beliefs, creeds ideas, and doctrines discernible from Caitanya’s highly charged and contagious mental landscape filled with an extra-ordinary divine love pathos. The ubiquitous aesthetics of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is a non-cognitive medium of constitutive religious language used for communicating an expressly erotic-religious love sentiment. This medium would cease to be mere medium that is dispensable after the purpose is served, but is being taken right into the sanctum-sanctorum of the highest religio- metaphysical truth. Though non-symbolic it comes very closer to Paul Tillich’s differentiation between sign and symbol in which he says that, a symbol participates in the thing which it symbolises where as a sign is not. We have seen that, sex may be either a means of inter-personal communication or a medium of self-expression (formal theory). In the same manner the divine-amour may be thought of as spontaneously expressing itself through the aesthetic structure brought out by Rūpa Goswāmi and others.

³ Op. cit. Kakar and Ross, pp. 201-203. Both the secular erotic passion and divine-amour “...which blur(s) the difference between I and you, and subsequently male and female. The answer (to longing for union) resides in specifically heterosexual commingling which temporarily assuages the ache for release, rest and immersion”. In the previous page the authors say “This longing for union is not a fusion, with which it is often confused, which would recreate the original androgynous entity” (see Plato’s myth in the Symposium about the genesis of human life from spherical creatures with eight limbs and the ancient Persian story of the conjoined form of Mashyā and Mashoi, the male and female form who grew up together intertwined in the form a tree). For the purpose of the thesis, these male and female elements may be treated in the transfigured religious imageries to which no doubt the authors also refer. See Ch. 4: “The Cloistered Passion of Rādhā and Krishna” pp. 74-103.
Thus, in not limiting the scope of its application only to the sphere of a medium, it is not symbolic, but also dynamically continues to participate, just as language does in life, in the motif it seeks to facilitate, reveal as well as communicate. Even otherwise communication theory even in the modern times is never communication in a one way process but always a two-way or bilateral relationship. But without this form of aesthetics as a non-cognitive, non-symbolic and participatory religious language the erotic-devotional emotionalism of Caitanya would have been left as a disembodied or incommunicable religious experience. Hence, the newness of the system lies in its wholesome application of the orthodox Sanskrit poetics (the classical Indian Aesthetics or the Alarikāra Śastra) to the cult’s Bhakti Religion and its supporting metaphysics. This is more of the nature of a paradigmatic choice than being accidental or a consequence of one’s predilection. Thus, a new turning point was ushered in the pre existing theory of rasa as well as the concept of bhakti.

The exceptional religious motif of Caitanya was given a grand super structural design with an integrated aesthetico-religious and metaphysical form under the vision, able leadership and guidance of the famed brothers Sanātana Gosvāmi and Rūpa Gosvāmi. The metaphysical portion was Jīva Goswāmi’s philosophical reformulation of the Bhagavad-prema vividly portrayed in Rūpa’s exhaustive aesthetico-religious treatises (Vaiṣṇava-Rasa-Śastra) dealing with bhakti-rasa, viz: (1) The Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu and (2) the Ujjvalanilamaṇi. Even before Rūpa had met Caitanya, he had to his credit many works of art and literature including two dramas—Vidagdhamādhava and Lalitamādhava portraying the theme of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa dalliance. The significance of the cult’s aesthetic paradigm is evident from the fact that Jiva’s metaphysical rendering of it

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4 The non-symbolic nature of the theory of bhakti rasa as treated in Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu, Ujjvalanilamaṇi of Rūpa Goswāmi, and Bhakti- Sandarbha and Pṛiti-Sandarbha of Jīva Goswāmi. The former’s works are purely from the perspectives of aesthetics and the latter’s treatment are more philosophical in nature. Op. cit., De, “Vṛndāvana ilā is a mere symbol or divine-allegory, but a literal fact of religious history”, p. 223.

was only supplement to his uncle's works on the Vaiṣṇava-Rasa-Śāstras which he had closely followed in his own works.

The aesthetics of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as it is applied to its religious and philosophical planes goes beyond the usual scope of the theoretical issues concerning the nature of religious language in general. This may be further studied in the light of the problem of analogy, Paul Tillich's religious statements as symbolic and non-cognitive language. This issue was already discussed in the preceding chapter. Except the non-cognitive theory no other modal is suitable to our task in hand. The ontological considerations of the theology of the nitya-līla do not permit us to think in terms of any of other interpretations. The religious language of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is neither analogical nor symbolic, but is inherent in the divine histrionics of the nitya-līla.

Whatever is the type of language chosen, be it cognitive or non-cognitive, they will always fall short of communicating the claimed spiritual truth. The chosen language is more or less determined by the nature of the claimed spiritual truth. This will become evident when we analyse the nature of the language of mysticism. Mysticism is a common phenomenon present in all world religions. The very term implies a state of spiritual consciousness that transcends the rational and linguistic structure of mind. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan had stated elsewhere that the imageries employed by mystics in their post-experience attempts to put their spiritual encounter in the form of a suitable medium of communication are culture specific. This he did in order to make a distinction between religious traditions and spirituality. But a comparative study of the different mystical outpourings of the world would show that erotic metaphors (like bridal mysticism) are very often used in varying degree by the mystics themselves in their efforts to convey the over flowing abundance of their spontaneous, joyous and ecstatic spiritual experience.

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The poetic and literary mediums are best suited to communicate the subtle nuances of mystics’ esoteric spiritual journey. Only the power of suggestivity of art can effectively represent the living and dynamic spiritual experience a mystic personally encounters as an overwhelming divine presence in its most vivid joyousness\textsuperscript{7}. This is evident from the natural poetic outpourings of the Vedic seers and mystic saints like to Ālāwār, Nāyanmār and western mystics. This is also seen in the use of aesthetic root by the existential thinkers who are against a system building philosophy. This transition is due to the well known fact that, art experience and religious experience have some common ground.

The relation between art and religion may be looked at from four different perspectives: 1. firstly, art may use religious themes, 2. secondly, religion may employ art to sub-serve its own purpose either as a part of moksa-sadhana or merely as a symbolic religious language, 3. thirdly, art may take the form of a participatory and non-cognitive spiritual means as well as language by religion, 4. Fourth and firstly, their relation may also be seen not as a form of religious language but as a necessary manifestation of a particular metaphysical or religious truth claim. All these four models of relationships are based on certain similarities between art experience (rasānubhava) and religious experience\textsuperscript{8}. Another way in which art may relate to religion is seen in the idealist theories of art with reference to its meaning and communication. The special feature of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism lies in propounding the two relationships. The difference in the ways in which aesthetic techniques are used by religio-philosophical systems is observable in the respective purpose behind the specific ways in which aesthetic application is being made by them. This is precisely the difference

\textsuperscript{7} Op. cit., De, P. 116, “...the religious sentiment of Bhakti has been approximated to the supreme relish of literary enjoyment known as Rasa, of orthodox Sanskrit Poetics. A new turn was thus given not only to the old Rasa-theory of the conventional Poetics but also to the religious emotion underlying the old Vaiṣṇava faith”.

\textsuperscript{8} Op. cit., The works of Kakar and Ross, though it is from the perspective psychoanalysis, enough investigations are being carried out to bring out this as to infer the parallelism between art experience and religious experience. Also see Hegel, G.W.H., Phenomenology of Spirit, Tans. by A.V. Miller. Analysis of the Text & Forward by J.N. Findlay, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, First Indian Edition 1998. See especially The spiritual work of art and The revealed religion in “Religion in the form of Art”, pp. 439-378.
between the Vaiṣṇava-Rasa-Śāstras of Rūpa and the Bhagavad-Bhaktirasāyana of Madhusūdana Sarasvati a well known contemporary Advaitin of Caitanya. Though the later like Rūpa uses the techniques of orthodox Sanskrit poetics to prove that bhakti is rasa, and praises it, his treatment is from the standpoint of non-dualism. In his conception of bhakti he had also explained bhakti as a rasa as it was theorised by Bhārata (Vibhāvačaśvabhāva vyabh cāri sarhyogāt, rasanishpattī)⁹.

In the four Laharis of the Pūrva-Vibhāga of the Bhaktirasāmrta Sindhu, Rūpa gives a preliminary discussion of different types of bhakti by classifying them into Sāmānya-bhakti (bhakti in general first Lahari), Sādhanā-bhakti and its two types - Vaidhi and Rāgānugā-bhakti (bhakti as means second Lahari), Bhāva-bhakti (bhakti as spontaneous in ward emotional devotion, third Lahari), and Premabhakti (bhakti as ripened sentiment of love, fourth Lahari). The first three of these bhaktis are Uttama-bhakti whereas the last two comes under bhakti as an end in itself, i.e., Sādhyā-bhakti.¹⁰ It is the fifth and highest Purusārtha (Pañcamapurusārtha). We have seen that, Nārada in his Bhakti Sūtra prema-bhakti is described as Supreme Love and is it own end - Premarūpa-bhakti svayaṁ phalarūpatvāt. In recognition of this fact bhakti is conceived as the highest and the most satisfying function of the soul (Sa vai puāśām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje, Bhāg. 1.2.6.). Jīva Goswāmin in his Bhakti Sandarbha refers to bhakti as the natural function of the Jīva (sva citte svate even siddha or jīvanaim svabhaucita).

The critic would be eager to summarily reject these as sectarian views, but we are more concerned with the phenomenology and existential nature of such a supreme state of spiritual love and its theoretical implications. To begin with, if we take faith as the first premise, as it has been implicitly or explicitly

presupposed by the above assertions of the scriptural texts, based on it, it may be asked as to how such a form of love is possible, and what bearings it has on human life or the reality at large? The usual and predominantly cognitive method as it is used by Śaṅkara through making a tight balance between śruti (it may also be read as faith in the Thomian sense) and yuktī (reason) is out of question for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Because, to cite one example, Rūpa in his Laghu Bhāgavatāmṛtam refers to the fact that Veda-Vyāsa in his Brahma Sūtra, 1.1.3 (Śāstra yonitvā) takes the authority of the Vedas as it is, that he made slight of tarka (tarkasyānādarah)\textsuperscript{11} or the critical and rigorous ratiocinative arguments as Śaṅkara did. S. K. De says that the usual scholastic tendency for reasoning is almost absent in the works of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Perhaps, this is more or less to do with the nature of the ultimate reality in which they believed. This may also be one of the reasons why they broke the established Vedāntic tradition of commenting on the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtra or Vedānta Sūtra and the Bhagavad-Gītā which are collectively called as the prābhāṇatraya (the three great treatises or canons). Their intention was to establish a religion exclusively based on bhakti as it was never done by any other Indian philosophical tradition. Therefore, the ideas of “Bhakti Theory” and “Bhakti Religion” are applicable only to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and not to any other school of Indian philosophy or religion.

Hence, the techniques of the orthodox Saṅskṛt poetics is the only method left for the Gauḍīya thinkers to show as to how the amorous divine love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa which was conceptualised as the highest state of bhakti would be possible. This love which is conceived on the model of secular love idealised in its most passionate form in art and literature, and the nagging insistence, that, such a form of love that was thriving in the sacred grove of Madhuvana of Braja is literally or ontologically real could hardly be explained via the cognitive method. Thus, it is quite consistent that the Gauḍīya thinkers had adapted aesthetics to their ethics (sādhana), theology and metaphysics. They had to show as to how

\textsuperscript{11} Laghubhāgavatāmṛtam of Rūpa Goswāmi, text 9.
such a love is possible? That is how such a form of love conceived in terms of the highest relish of bhakti-rasa in all its five varieties is experienced by or communicated to the bhakta who is the replacement of the samājika or sahrdaya or the spectator of the ordinary aesthetics? This is the basic question asked in the rasadhvani theories of Saṃskṛti poetics which was finally settled by Abhinavagupta.\(^{12}\)

Similarly, we may ask how, the rasa which is originally belonging to the parikaras (associates of Kṛṣṇa) in the nitya-lilā of Vraja is communicated to the sahrdaya in the form of bhakta. This is significant, because the bhakta during the stage of sādhanas-bhakti and its last stage of rāgānugā-bhakti is still on the mundane plane, and as such even during this stage, though the experience of imaginative-cum-imitative rasa, there is some form of communication between human and the divine. Plato’s principle of imitation (mimesis) is discernible in this process. Rūpa had utilised Bhārata’s theory of rasa according to which the aesthetic delight called rasa is the result of the conjunctive functions of vibhāva (excitants), anubhāva (ensuants) and vybhicāribhāvas (auxiliary emotions). Similarly, Rūpa had explained the communication of the love of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa rati) to a bhakta. The love of Kṛṣṇa is manifested in its five varieties of dominant feelings (Sthāyibhāva), namely, Sānta (quiescent devotion), Preta (devotion as faithfulness), Preyas (devotion as friendship), Vatsalya (devotion as parental-sentiment) and Madhura-rasa (devotion as the erotic sentiment). Through their appropriate excitants (vibhāva), as well as eusuants (anubhāva), external signs of interval emotion (sattvikabhāva) and auxiliary feelings (vyabhicaribhāva) these prominent emotions were raised to their respective supremely relishable bhakti-rasas in the spiritually susceptible minds of the bhaktas. These are discussed in the five Laharies of the Dakṣināvibhāga of the Bhakti-Rasāmrta-Sindhu.\(^{13}\)

Since, for the Gauḍiya Vaishnavas Kṛṣṇa-rati or priti is the supreme goal of life, only the fifth and the last of the rasas, madhura-rasa will be taken up for the

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\(^{13}\) Ibid., De, pp. 181-182.
propose of considering the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava aesthetics as a non-cognitive and participatory religious language. Spiritual emotion taking the form of sentiment of divine amour is styled in terms of secular love idealised in world famous classic love novels. All the psycho-pathological conceits associated with cloistered passions of sexual love are necessarily used as the characteristics of the said divine amour not as some allegory or symbol, but as some sort of self-actualising divine “process” in some trans-empirical realm without any implications of ordinary sex.\(^\text{14}\)

Just like the secular love, the above supra-empirical love is also of two varieties namely saṁbhoga (love-in-union) and vipralambha or virah (love-in-separation). In between the two the later is taken to be far superior to the former. The reasons are not far to seek due to the fact that, love secular or divine is necessarily to do with cloistered passions, attachments, longing, and intense and unwavering focus of the mind on the object of love, perpetually living in the memory of the beloved.\(^\text{15}\) The ethical barrier or any other barrier imagery or otherwise is necessary for the expression of these psycho-spiritual conceits. The frequent absence of the lover, his perceived infidelity and broken promises are some the aesthetic-literary conditions associated with socially unacceptable love between a lover paramour and his beloved (parakīyā-rasa). The said aesthetic value of virah lies in the fact that, even during love-in union, the beloved undergoes extreme forms of sadness and agony of the heart because of the anticipated impending separation from the lover who is about to go to some distant place. Hence, it is no wonder that, it is famously said elsewhere that, love has no known happy history and the entire world famous love stories end with death or tragedy.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{14}\) Op. cit., Bhāg., Bhaktivedānta, 1.1.1, p. 3. The commentator speaks about divine-amour or madhura or śrīgāra-rati as pure sex devoid of ordinary lust.

\(^{15}\) All these traits of divine-love were already discussed in the chapter dealing with the Gītā, Bhāgavata and the two Bhakti Sūtras.

Though, the pious and optimistic bhaktas are always eager to believe that, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are never separated from each other (apракat or the unmanifested state), their separation is only designed to heighten the passion of longing, the earthly Vraja līlā did end with Kṛṣṇa’s returning to Mathura and His Kingly conjugal life while in the process leaving Rādhā and other Gopīs soaked in the pang of separation from their divine paramour (упапатि) who is dearer than their own souls (this is termed as prakat or the manifested play). At the end of their legendary love tail there is no indication of Kṛṣṇa’s returning to them as before. Rādhā therefore, is an eternal state of intense passion of longing for Kṛṣṇa and in that tragic pathos of divine-love; She forever remains in the imaginative contemplation of Her beloved. The truism of this aesthetic pathos can hardly be found in the socially accepted conjugal love between married couples (svakīyā-rasa).

All the aforesaid psycho-aesthetic elements are manifested in the immortal love which the Gopīs have for their divine lover. The ingenuity of Rūpa Goswāmi consists in providing aesthetic embodiment of them in and through its complicated structure. In the Ujjvalanīlāmani madhura-rasa is styled as Bkaktirasarāj - the king of relish, the highest and dynamic relish of the erotic devotional sentiment by the non-human characters (bhūmika), known as parikaras or eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa in the transcendental drama called nitya-līlā. Among the Gopīs, Rādhā is the heroine. Just as every drama has a theme the meaning of which is conveyed or communicated through a complex aesthetic form designed by the creative imagination (pratibhā) and artistic skill of the dramatist, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself is the original dramatist who had not only created the theologic-histrionics of nitya-līlā,¹⁷ but also played His own male role in it as

¹⁷ Dictionary of Oriental Philosophy by Ruth Reyna, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., First Published 1984. This Edition 1993, p. 109. "Līlā: ‘sport’, the motive of creation according to the Vedānta School; the all comprehensive Divine being in its cosmic aspect of ‘play’ in the forms of the world; the idea that creation is a play of the Divine consciousness existing for no other reason than for the sheer joy of it, the idea of play of the Godhead in its ecstatic creative bliss is fundamental to the Tāntric view; and is the Hindu counterpart of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Mahāsukha".
the sole lover as well as the beloved Rādhā, His “Counter-Whole” or Moiety  
His female principle and Her associates, the remaining Gopis who are believed to be her manifestations.

In Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism the dynamic powers of the personal Absolute are bound to manifest as spontaneous Self-expression of the Supreme Being. Aesthetics of bhakti-rasa is its joyous Self-expression – an unconditional expression of its Infinite Freedom. Both the causation of the physical universe embodying the sentient world out of māyā-śakti and jīva or tatāstho-śakti and the spontaneous manifestation of the nitya-līlā are the functions of the said process of Self-actualisation of the personal Absolute. For Śaṅkara the causation of the world is illusory appearance but not for the Caitanya school. Against these outward metaphysical settings the inner aesthetic expression of the divine amour is to be understood as the core spiritual principle.

The metaphysical truth of acintyabhedabhedavāda permeates throughout the ontologically different grades of the Self-expression of the Personal Reality. The highest actualisation of this truth is in the form of its embodiment in the inscrutable (acintya) relation of difference (bheda) and non-difference (abheda) between the divine lover and His beloveds manifested through the aesthetic and psycho-spiritual divine amour (śrīgāra-rati). The alternating moods of “love-in-union” (sarṇābhoja) and “love-in-separation” (vīraḥ) due to their built in elements of “self-transcendence” implied by the object-centric nature of such a love observable in the love pathos of the Gopis, the mutual or reciprocal transfer or infusion of blissful energy between the lover and beloved (parasparaśaktyānveṣa or anyonyaśaktyāveṣa) and the resulting dynamic process of subject-object-interchangeability or mutual indwelling between the divine lover and beloveds in the play of the divine rasa of the Vraja līlā reveals the oneness and difference between them in their intersubjective experience of bhakti-rasa.

18 Jaiva Dharma by Thakur Bhakti Vinod, Sree Gaudiya Math, Madras, Trans into English by Bhakti Vilas Tirtha, 1975, pp. 500-514. Rādhā is being referred as Moiety—“one of two parts or divisions”.
Rūpa Goswāmi gives the ingredients of the aesthetic structure of such a spiritual drama as follows:

Madhura-rati is the Sthayibhāva (permanent emotion), Vibhāva (excitants): (a) Ālambana- Kṛṣṇa and His beloved Gopīs, of whom Rādhā is the chief. (b) Uddipana - the sound of His flute etc. Its Anubhāvas (ensuants): side long glances, smile etc. Its Sattvikabhāvas (transitory emotion): the usual eight in number. Its Vyabhicāribhāvas: all (except Ugrato and ēlasya).

Rūpa in his later work the Ujjvalanīlamanī further deals with this form of love as Ujjvala - madhura or ērṇgāra-bhakti-rama, the divine amour of Kṛṣṇa which shines like the crest jewel in the ocean of devotional sentiments. Among the five rasas it has been baptised into transcendence. S. K. De states that ‘...the entire theme is planned and modeled upon that of the ērṇgāra-rama of Sanskrit poetics, and the general aesthetic terminologies employed belong to its stock-in-trade’. As such, Kṛṣṇa and Gopīs of whom Rādhā is the chief are treated as the ālambana-vibhāva appearing as the material ground and object of the madhurarama are either pati (husband) or upapati (lover). Corresponding to these two types of heroes, we have two varieties of heroines, namely, svakīyā (one’s own wife) and parakīyā (belonging to another) Gopīs.

The controversies about parakīyā-rama will be discussed in the next chapter. Within the classical Saṁskṛta poetics and among the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas there were disagreements with regard to the questions of merits or the demerits of svakīyā and parakīyā concepts. Some of the later followers of Caitanya himself were uncomfortable with the concept of the parakīyā and they tried to explain it away or reduce it to svakīyā on the basis of metaphysics. But the general opinion including that of Rūpa was in favour of parakīyā-bhāva. It could better reveal the truth which Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism seeks to convey. That is, in the manifest īlā (prakāṭa-īlā) on the earth it is parakīyā-rama alone which can

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21 Ibid., p. 203.
dramatically represent the sentiment of transcendental love with all its rhetorical dynamics such as passionate longing etc. as the functional expression of the bliss potency of Kṛṣṇa (hlādinī-sakti). The avatāra of Kṛṣṇa in the prakāta Vṛndāvana on earth is believed to be for the purpose of tasting His own sweetness (mādhurya) as the essence of rasa (rasanirṛṣa–svārtha avatāraḥ). The aesthetic techniques of upapati and parakiyā can only suggestively communicate the cloistered passions and unending longing of the amorous devotional sentiment. They are also the theologico-histrionic enactment of the metaphysical necessity of freedom of the Supreme Self.

After citing the intra school debate, Edward and Dimock refer to the decided view of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in his Caitanya Caritāmrta about the superior position of parakiyā-rasa to svakiyā-rasa: “...he gave the arguments of Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmin” and says that even Caitanya himself had believed in it. “The greater enjoyment of rasa is in the parakiyā-bhāva, and its place is in Vraja”\(^{23}\).

The traditional roles of a dutiful and faithful husband and wife are hardly sufficient for the aesthetic medium to portray through its power of suggestivity and the freedom of spirit which today’s contemporary society is beginning to cherish on the individual plane. These are the favourable arguments offered by some modern scholars. The pains, anguish, passionate attachments and longings and the joyous experience of love are revealed through the deliberate technique of showing the difference and tensions existing between “Love-in-union” and “love-in-separation”. They exhibit the inexplicable (acintya) simultaneous presence of the truths of difference (bheda) and non-difference (abheda) existing within the svarūpa of the Supreme Lord. The passionate nature of virāh, and the intense nature of mutual longing between the lover and beloved go on ever unfulfilled. This makes the divine to indulge in his own dynamic inner-movements, which would ever remain inexhaustible. Perhaps, the psycho-theo-centric desire

(Bhagavad kāma) or human’s innate lurking desire for transcendence from its limited encagament. And thus it is possible that, in the language of Aristotle longing or desire is the psychic shadow of dynamic eternity or “pure duration”. This love dynamics which is styled in its highest state as the mahābhāva is only experienced by Rādhā who is the only “Counter-Whole” or Moiety or the Co-Equal partner of Kṛṣṇa the Purusottama.

Apart from the eternally ongoing Vraja-lilā unmanifested (aprākṛta) to the uninitiated, on the manifested world (prākṛta), at least from the human perspective, the rāgānugā-bhakti requires constant meditation on the original devotional attachment (rāgātmikā-bhakti) of the parikaras (eternal divine associates) who are the various personifications (similar to characterisation of drama) of the Svarūpa Śakti of Kṛṣṇa. Though still on the inward mental plane, rāgānugā-bhakti is only imitation of rāgātmikā-bhakti. The Gauḍīya rhetoricians have introduced and adapted the concept of the “imaginary transcendental body” of the Bhāgavata24 – antascintīta siddha deha, as the medium through which the bhakta enters into an indirect and contemplative and personal relationship with the Bhagavat. ‘It is the mental reflection of the transcendental body (Suddhadeha)’. Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravarti in support of this view interprets the Bhāgavata text: ‘yadyad dheyata urugāya vibhāvayanti tattatvapuḥ praṇayase sadanugrahaya’ (3.9.11) to mean that Bhagavān imparts to the devotee a transcendental body exactly like the one which he imagines for the particular made of Bhakti practiced by him . . . 25

This theory has theoretico-philosophical implications when it is seen in the light of our proposal for a reconstructed theory of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava aesthetics as a participatory-religious language which does not end up as a symbolic or allegorical medium but is believed in their transfigured sense to be still continued in the divine theatre of the nitya-lilā. Through this imaginary body a bhakta lives in the ecstasy of the enjoyment of madhura-rasa till he is eligible

for the actual one. It touches the issue of the representation of bhakti-rasa in the bhakta who is the replacement of the sahrdaya of the Alamkārika tradition. This is because, a work of art is interpreted as the “literature of power” in contrast to the “literature of knowledge” and as Mammata speaks of art as having the inherent power to communicate the aesthetic delight embodies in it (hilādaikamayi) to the spectator.26

The metaphysical justification of the aesthetico-devotional sentiment of priti is provided by stating that, priti as the function of the Svarūpa-Śakti is originated from the Lord and something that is placed (kśipta) in the heart of the bhakta by the Svarūpa-Śakti. It is manifested as bhakti sentiment in the bhakta’s heart. Bhagavān realises through it His own intrinsic nature (svabhāva) as blissful divine love (śaktyananda which is even superior to His own svarūpānanda). This is one way of interpreting love from the angle of the ultimate analysis as the self-love of the Supreme Brahman experiencing its own self-same blissful nature.

The above facts will become clearer when we examine the rasahood of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is not only the embodiment of bliss but is Himself the inexhaustible reservoir of rasa27. The word ‘rasa’ is usually translated as “relish”. It implies both the object that is relished (asvādyavastu) and the person who relishes (asvādaka). Kṛṣṇa is both the object that is relished and the person who relishes, in other words. He is both Rasa and Rasika28. As rasa He is the thing to be relished (paramasvādyā, the supreme object of love); as Rasika He is the greatest enjoyer of relish. His state of enjoyership is also declared in the Gītā itself: “bhoktāram yajña tapasāṁ sarva loka maheśvaram”29. In contrast to this statement of the Gītā, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas do not leave the world of enjoyment of relish (rasa) only to God. His monopoly is broken by the sect, by enabling the bhakta to taste

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27 Taittirīyā Upaniṣad, Ānanda Valli, 7. “Rasa vai sāt rasam hyevādyam labdhvānādi bhavati”. This text can also be given monistic interpretation. But this is a frequently quoted text in Gauḍīya tradition.
29 Gītā, 5.29.
Kṛṣṇa’s blissful nature as *rasa*. This has been already ontologically predetermined by the fact that, as a reservoir of *rasa* not only that He enjoys His own rasahood, He also makes His devotees relish it. This is how His supreme essential and highest blissful nature is Self-actualised on His own terms as Absolute Freedom.30

The traditional scholar may argue by saying that the enjoyment which the Gitā is referring to is the worldly enjoyment and not the selfless relish of *bhakti-rasa*. From the human perspective it is egoless but theo-centric, whereas from that of God, it is the spontaneous free play of the fullness of His own dynamic blissful nature described as *rasa*. But how can we understand the spiritual fact that *bhakti-rasa* is relished, and at the same time it is not self-centric? Love-divine from the human standpoint as a self-giving or other-regarding passion is a self-transcending emotive act. This further leads to the rapturous end called as mystic experience.

As already stated earlier, one aesthetic merit of the above rasa theory is the underlying notion of subject-object-interchangeability. This is depicted in the extreme mystical nature of love pathos of immortalised classic love stories. There is a paralleled between such a fact of the Gaudiya theory of *bhakti-rasa* and the ones depicted in the secular love literature. To cite an example, because of the strong passions of intense love there is a confusion of identity between the lover and the beloved. Say for example, sometime Romeo thinks he is Juliet as vice versa.

Such a confusion of identity is also seen when Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had their scarves mixed up as symbolically suggestive of their blissful union in the sacred grove of Madhuvana, and each returns to their respective homes, completely oblivious of the mixed up of each other’s cloth. The suggestivity of such an act is to be reckoned with.

Such an aesthetic and psycho-pathological symptom arise because of the self-transcending nature of every strong and cloistered passions of love, be it of human or divine (sometimes it is very difficult to say whether love is human or divine) in which the lover becomes absorbed in the beloved. This object centricity is also found in the tradition of Christian Mysticism. For, John of cross is reported to love said that when Christ is in him he no longer exists. The ecstatic and rapturous nature of religious experience is replete many such examples.

Hence, the dynamic divine love in its highest ontology is the inner movement of God a spiritual undercurrent that which is originated from and leads to God’s own inner essence. This will be better explained by Hegel’s ideas in his “Phenomenology of Spirit”. Though he is not speaking about those ideas in explicit theological sense as it is done in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, his views, perhaps provides us some model explanation about the inner movement of God in the school. He speaks about the “movements of the pure essences” (of the spirit) which moves out of itself and returns to itself. It is somewhat like a self-reflexive movement or a process of self-actualisation. Accordingly “Spirit becomes object; it is just this movement of becoming an other to itself that is becoming an object to itself, and for suspending this otherness. And experience is the name we give to just this movement...in which (it) ...becomes alienated from itself and returns to itself from this alienation, and is only then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth, just as it (experience) then has become a property of consciousness also”.\textsuperscript{31} Kṛṣṇa as Rasa and Rasika comes very nearer to this truth.

It is not being claimed here that, there is one to one correspondence between what Hegel says and allegedly similar model in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Consciousness or cit is taken to its highest metaphysical abstraction in Indian Philosophy and the entire variegated existence is taken to be the manifestation of this supreme spirit. The entire nitya-līlā is the divine-play of this personal Spirit bearing in it both Its outward as well as the inward journeys as its own inner

\textsuperscript{31} ibid.
movements. Through the two way-aesthetic-processes divine-love seems to have achieved some kind of objectivity in the intersubjective experience of the human-divine communion.