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A Living Theology of Krishna Bhakti: Essential Teachings of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

By Tamal Krishna Goswami



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A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977), founder of the Hare Krishna Movement, traced his lineage to the fifteenth-century Indian saint Sri Chaitanya. He authored more than fifty volumes of English translation and commentaries on Sanskrit and Bengali texts, serving as a medium between these distant authorities and his modern Western readership and using his writings as blueprints for spiritual change and a revolution in consciousness. He had to speak the language of a people vastly disparate from the original recipients of his tradition's scriptures without compromising fidelity to the tradition.

Tamal Krishna Goswami claims that the social scientific, philosophical, and 'insider' forms of investigation previously applied have failed to explain the presence of a powerful interpretative device—a *mahavakya* or 'great utterance'—that governs and pervades Prabhupada's 'living theology' of devotion on bhakti. For Prabhupada, the wide range of 'vedic' subject matter is governed by the axiomatic truth: Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Goswami's academic training at the University of Cambridge, his thirty years' experience as a practitioner and teacher, and his extensive interactions with Prabhupada as both personal secretary and managerial representative, afforded him a unique opportunity to understand and illuminate the theological contribution of Prabhupada. In this work, Goswami proves that the voice of the scholar-practitioner can be intimately connected with his tradition while sustaining a mature critical stance relative to his subject. *A Living Theology of Krishna Bhakti* includes a critical introduction and conclusion by Graham M. Schweig.



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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a labor of love-by Julius Lipner and Graham Schweig in preparing an unfinished manuscript for publication, and by Goswami in bringing specifically the theological work of his guru, Prabhupada, into mainstream academic discourse. I remember discussing this project with Goswami; he worried that his treatment of Prabhupada might discomfit ISKCON devotees and yet delighted in highlighting Prabhupada's brilliant Vaishnava theologizing. I can see Goswami's sweet smile as he ponders this book-a book that now embodies his creative, amazing life."--Rachel Fell McDermott, Professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures, Barnard College

"*A Living Theology of Krishna Bhakti* is a poignant testimony to the erudition and creativity of Tamal Krishna Goswami and to his dedication to drawing forth fresh insights from the traditions of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Swami Prabhupada's ISKCON. We learn a great deal about the Vaishnava theological tradition and about how to think theologically about Krishna with attention to history and circumstances, and with sensitivity to the age in which we live. Goswami's work is valuable even in its incompleteness, making the case for a living Hindu theology that speaks to today's world. It is also a tribute to Graham M. Schweig-Tamal Krishna's friend, compatriot, posthumous editor-who brought the work into print and also offers concluding insights that humbly round out Goswami's bold plan."

--Francis X. Clooney, SJ, Harvard University

"Tamal Krishna Goswami's *A Living Theology of Krishna Bhakti* is an illuminating theological analysis of the life and teachings of his own guru, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Through this work Goswami, as a master mediator between religious and academic worlds, helps open the Hindu studies guild to new voices and alternative discourses and challenges us in the academy to provide hermeneutical and institutional space for the contributions of scholar-practitioners. Graham Schweig is to be commended for all of his efforts in completing Goswami's work and bringing out this valuable study."

--Barbara A. Holdrege, Professor of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

About the Author

Tamal Krishna Goswami was one of the closest and most influential disciples of the founder of the Hare Krishna Movement. Before his untimely death in 2002 at the age of 56, he became a student of religion and theology at the University of Cambridge. This volume comprises the five chapters of Goswami's near-complete doctoral thesis.

Graham M. Schweig is Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Asian Studies Program at Christopher Newport University of Virginia. He received his doctorate in comparative religion from Harvard

University. Among his publications are *Dance of Divine Love: The Rasa Lila of Krishna from the Bhagavata Purana* and *Bhagavad Gita: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song*.

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