

The Private Life of Divinity

Gopakumar das

I believe Divinity has a private life of its own. This private life operates at very high levels of intimacy and exchanges of love. The intensity of these exchanges of love show it to be Divinity's most authentic self in the same way our own private lives, with the exchanges of love they facilitate, represent our most authentic self. If this were so, then the highest possibility of reciprocation of love would be found in this private life of Divinity. Love reaches its apex when directed towards individuals in which it can be completely assimilated, experienced and reciprocated. In Divinity all forms of love can find full expression and full satisfaction. Divinity is unlimited and unrestricted. Since love requires both a lover and a beloved we must assume that in exchanges of love with Divinity both must exist. The implication here being that if I can love Divinity and Divinity can love me, then Divinity must be a person. If Divinity is a person, or persons, then how would this person appear?



Popular academic opinion states that humanity projects self-images onto Divinity. This is how academia attempts to explain anthropomorphic images of Divinity often behaving similarly to human beings. An alternate opinion states the possibility that humanity is modeled after chosen expressions of Divinity. This would mean that this human form and our human identity could be a form of Divine self-expression. This belief is not uncommon. We find it in the Bible as well as many other spiritual traditions. In the Bible the famous albeit underdeveloped idea is that 'man was created in the image of God.' It is just as possible that rather than humanity asserting itself onto Divinity; Divinity is expressing itself in us. If this is so, then we can also speculate that the structures of our interpersonal relationships may be a reflection of relationships expressed in the life of Divinity. This may afford us some insight into the identities of Divinity as reflected in human identities.

Any given individual has many identities with which they operate in their lives. These identities are not completely distinct and separate selves. They often interact with

PH

one another and are understood as different facets of the same unified self. However, there are also clear boundaries between certain identities. Two prominent self-expressions exist in the human identity of the *Professional* and the human identity of the *Intimate*. Almost every person can relate to the differences between their personality when functioning in a professional context and their personality at home. The way we interact with people in a professional context may also be different from the way we interact with people in our private lives. If something of Divinity can be seen in our experiences and relationships then we can assume that in our identities there may also be some correlation. With this insight we may be able to distinguish between the *Professional* identity of Divinity and the *Intimate* identity of Divinity; the public life and private life of God.

In our own lives we find that the *Professional* identity is performing the duties of the world for which he is the best suited. He organizes things, creates things, completes projects and supervises people. This requires strict boundaries between the people with whom he works and himself. There are many rules that govern the workplace and a breach in these rules can create a lapse in the functioning of the *Professional*. A professional does not talk about the same kinds of things in a professional setting as he would with people at home. He must punch in, punch out, follow guidelines, establish procedures and conduct structured meetings. The exchanges of love involved in the life of the *Professional* are of a neutral quality and are often characterized as exchanges between supervisor and subordinate. At best they can be exchanges of friendship in a more sober mood of mutual respect. They can border on affectionate exchanges, but it is well known in the professional world that these affectionate exchanges have rules and boundaries. There is even terminology to define their transgression. Words like ‘inappropriate,’ ‘harassment’ and ‘unprofessional’ are symptoms of these rules and boundaries. The relationships of the *Professional* rarely mix with the relationships of the *Intimate*. If ever they do mix, there are new rules that will govern these relationships. Those interactions will sometimes feel forced and uncomfortable, as they tend to feel at company picnics and other professional social gatherings.

In the identity of the *Intimate* the exchanges are based on affection. In other words, these exchanges are based on a reciprocation of friendly love. The nature of such affectionate exchanges is that they are comfortable and loving. The object of one’s affection is accessible and reciprocal. The relationship develops a natural identity of its own. This identity manifests as a friendship, a caretaker (such as parent or other guardian) or a romantic lover. Although there are guidelines for the functioning of these relationships too, it is apparent that they are not bound by these guidelines. If a friend says something unkind or behaves cruelly it is generally understood that this



transgression will be forgiven out of love. If the romantic lover is taken for granted and becomes upset it only requires a smile and an embrace to return things to their natural state. The *Intimate* self is comfortable in these exchanges. They have developed naturally and they involve an intimacy that is not motivated by duty but rather by love. These relationships of the *Intimate* are spontaneous. Like all relationships based on love they are not bound by reason. They have a reason of their own. There is an inherent knowledge in such loving exchanges. As if saying, “in love one knows what to do”.

I have known many people who find more value in their identity as the *Professional*. Their sense of self is more closely related to what role they play in the functioning of the world. They also find great comfort in their relationships as the *Professional*. The boundaries and sober exchanges of emotion are what best suits them. Most people however, place more value on the comfortable and affectionate exchanges of the *Intimate* than on the respectful, duty-bound exchanges of the *Professional*. So when interacting with their close friends in a professional setting they may find themselves uncomfortable and preoccupied with rules and boundaries for which they are not inclined to conform. For this reason they become less interested in the professional life of their friend. They will recognize that professional facet of their friend’s life as important and authentic but will have no interest in entering there. They do not wish to develop their relationship based on duties, boundaries and rules. They wish to have exchanges that will facilitate intimacy and exchanges that are affection bound.

It is my proposition that Divinity also operates through different identities. These identities are necessary in order to facilitate as many exchanges of love as possible with humanity. It is these Divine expressions of identity that define the way our relationship with Divinity will naturally develop. They are all valuable and authentic Divine expressions; whether they be *Professional* or *Intimate* in appearance. Divinity, understood as absolute and unlimited, will be able to express itself in these variegated and natural ways. In any expression of identity Divinity will inherently possess the other identities as well. Their presence however may not be so overt. Therefore, one might wonder, “In the life of Divinity, who lives the life of the *Professional* and who lives the life of the *Intimate*?” There may be many answers to this question depending on which worldview we are approaching from. From the Christian worldview we can say that the God of Abraham is the *Professional* who functions as creator and for whom exchanges of love are bound by rules and boundaries. From this worldview the Divine life of the *Intimate* would then be expressed through the person Jesus Christ who entered into the life of the people, taking a tangible form in order to facilitate intimate exchanges. This is no doubt true from this perspective. Other examples of these identities can be found in different theistic traditions and cultures.



From the Vaisnava Hindu perspective one can say that the *Professional* identity of Divinity is expressed through the person Visnu-Narayana. His exchanges are characterized by the qualities described in the life of the *Professional*. He performs the same Universal functions as the God of Abraham does in the Bible. He is the God of the Cosmos and presides over it. Relationships with him are bound by rules and boundaries. They develop between the superior and the subordinate. He is God being God. There are many people who are undoubtedly motivated to serve and worship Divinity in its manifestation as the *Professional*. His overt Godliness, awe-inspiring and powerful as it is, is naturally attractive.

For a smaller portion of people in the world this has proven undesirable. They tend towards a different exchange of love with Divinity. For these individuals there is pastoral Krishna. Krishna, who is often viewed as an expression of Visnu-Narayana, can also be seen as the source of Visnu-Narayana. This pastoral Krishna is characterized by his diverse expressions of love. In the Divine play of his life he facilitates all expressions of love seen in the world of our experience. For this reason one can say that in the life of Divinity pastoral Krishna is the identity of the *Intimate*. In the life of pastoral Krishna he takes the role of a cowherder. He is surrounded by loving parents, friends and girlfriends. His life is completely a life of playfulness as are the lives of those around him. His pleasure is distributed to and experienced by all those who he loves. If there is any work to be done it is work for his pleasure and hence your own pleasure vicariously. Being ‘God at play’ every moment with him is complete ecstasy and utter bliss. Every word in his play is a song and every movement a dance. Furthermore, being an expression of Divinity, Krishna can fully reciprocate the affection directed towards him. This distinguishes a relationship with pastoral Krishna from the relationships experienced in this world. In this world we find that sometimes our affections cannot be reciprocated properly by others or at least not to our satisfaction. We may love a person with all our heart as our lover and friend only to find, to our dismay, that these affections are not reciprocated. Krishna is not subject to such affectionate shortcomings. He is the perfect reservoir for our affections. However he is approached, he will reciprocate. If you take the trouble to cultivate affection for him it will be assimilated, experienced and reciprocated. In other words, he will love you back; such a love that one has never known. He can grant you a natural relationship with him. If love for him is cultivated then this relationship will naturally and spontaneously develop. You may find yourself simultaneously participating in your own life and the life of Divinity.

For the spiritual seeker this may be of interest. Finding a form and expression of Divinity with whom they can cultivate exchanges of love and find these expressions of love reciprocated is a goldmine. Whether this expression of Divinity is the highest form



or the source of Divinity is subjective. However, if we rank expressions of Divinity from the perspective of *feeling* or intimacy and expressions of love, pastoral Krishna ranks at the very top as the supreme personality of Divinity. If feeling, intimacy, and expressions of love are subordinate to the awe-inspiring and powerful expression of the professional Godhood, then worshipping God in more traditional forms may be one's subjective preference. What matters most is to recognize the reality and authenticity of diverse expressions of Divinity. Which expressions we choose to value most in our lives, cultivate affection for, and regard as supreme depends on what qualities we find most valuable in our lives. For some there are good reasons to believe that their chosen form of Divinity is the source of others. What has been described here is how Krishna can be seen as the source of and supreme expression of Divinity according to some. This position is based on the value of intimacy and affection. This may be difficult to prove objectively, but most people will agree that subjective experience reigns king in our lives. Many people will admit that our private life, filled with the joy and pain its intimate relationships afford us, is the closest we come to our authentic identity. In the private life of Divinity one can presume it is the same. If we cultivate the feelings of love facilitated in pastoral Krishna we may find a relationship with God we never thought was possible.

Gopakumar das lives in California. B.V. Tripurari Swami is his guru and Sridhara Maharaja is his param guru.

