The sixteenth-century Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition proposes a unique model of grace that decenters the paradigm of atonement and forgiveness and instead centers on forgetting and remembrance. In this Kṛṣṇa bhakti tradition, jīvas, embodied beings, occupy a unique intermediary position that identifies them both in relationship to Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Godhead, and to the material world of prakṛti. Jīvas can therefore choose to either turn towards or away from Kṛṣṇa. A person turns away from or forgets Kṛṣṇa by committing aparādhas, “offenses,” such as criticizing one’s guru. However, aparādhas should not be conceptualized as “sins” that require atonement and forgiveness. Instead, aparādhas reflect an orientation of forgetfulness, which can best be remedied through remembrance. Remembering Kṛṣṇa occurs primarily through sādhana-bhakti practices such as chanting and meditation and culminates in a devotee’s recognition of their eternal identity in relationship to Kṛṣṇa. Such perfected devotional selves embody the principle of sevā, selfless service, in which the devotee’s realm of concern has shifted entirely away from the ego-bound self towards Kṛṣṇa. It is therefore through the process of becoming perfectly selfless that perfected devotional selves are formed.

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