

THE BHAGAVATA

ITS PHILOSOPHY, ITS ETHICS, AND ITS
THEOLOGY

By

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We love to read a book which we never read before. We are anxious to gather whatever information is contained in it and with such acquirement our curiosity stops. This mode of study prevails amongst a great number of readers, who are great men in their own estimation as well as in the estimation of those, who are of their own stamp. In fact, most readers are mere repositories of facts and statements made by other people. But this is not study. The student is to read the facts with a view to create, and not with the object of fruitless retention. Students like satellites should reflect whatever light they receive from authors and not imprison the facts and thoughts just as the Magistrates imprison the convicts in the jail! Thought is progressive. The author's thought must have progress in the reader in the shape of correction or development. He is the best critic, who can show the further development of an old thought; but a mere denouncer is the enemy of progress and consequently of Nature. "Begin anew," says the critic, because the old masonry does not answer at present. Let the old author be buried because his time is gone. These are shallow expressions. Progress certainly is the law of nature and there must be correction and developments with the progress of time. But progress means going further or rising higher. Now, if we are to follow our foolish critic, we are to go back to our former terminus

and make a new race, and when we have run half the race, another critic of his stamp will cry out: "Begin anew, because the wrong road has been taken!" In this way our stupid critics will never allow us to go over the whole road and see what is in the other terminus. Thus the shallow critic and the fruitless reader are the two great enemies of progress. We must shun them.

The true critic, on the other hand, advises us to preserve what we have already obtained, and to adjust our race from that point where we have arrived in the heat of our progress. He will never advise us to go back to the point whence we started, as he fully knows that in that case there will be a fruitless loss of our valuable time and labor. He will direct the adjustment of the angle of the race at the point where we are. This is also the characteristic of the useful student. He will read an old author and will find out his exact position in the progress of thought. He will never propose to burn the book on the grounds that it contains thoughts which are useless. No thought is useless. Thoughts are means by which we attain out objects. The reader who denounces a bad thought does not know that a bad road is even capable of improvement and conversion into a good one. One thought is a road leading to another. Thus the reader will find that one thought which is the object to-day will be the means of a further object to-morrow. Thoughts will necessarily continue to be an endless series of means and objects in the progresses of humanity. The great reformers will always assert that they have come out not to *destroy* the old law, but to *fulfill* it. Valmiki, Vyasa, Plato, Jesus, Mohammed, Confucius and Caitanya

Mahaprabhu assert the fact either expressly or by their conduct.

The *Bhagavata* like all religious works and philosophical performances and writings of great men has suffered from the imprudent conduct of useless readers and stupid critics. The former have done so much injury to the work that they have surpassed the latter in their evil consequence. Men of brilliant thought have passed by the work in quest of truth and philosophy, but the prejudice which they imbibed from its useless readers and their conduct, prevented them from making a candid investigation. Not to say of other people, the great genius of Raja Rammohun Roy, the founder of the sect of Brahmoism, did not think it worth his while to study this ornament of the religious library. He crossed the gate of the *Vedanta*, as set up by the *mayavada* construction of the designing Shankaracharya, the chosen enemy of the Jains, and chalked his way out to the Unitarian form of the Christian faith, converted into an Indian appearance. Rammohun Roy was an able man. He could not be satisfied with the theory of illusion contained in the *mayavada* philosophy of Shankar. His heart was full of love to Nature. He saw through the eye of his mind that he could not believe in his identity with God. He ran furious from the bounds of Sa.kara to those of the *Koran*. There even he was not satisfied. He then studied the pre-eminently beautiful precepts and history of Jesus, first in the English translation and at last in the original Greek, and took shelter under the holy banners of the Jewish Reformer. But Rammohun Roy was also a patriot. He wanted to reform his country in the same

way as he reformed himself. He knew it fully that truth does not belong exclusively to any individual man or to any nation of particular race. It belongs to God, and man whether in the poles or on the equator, has a right to claim it as the property of his Father. On these grounds he claimed the truths inculcated by the Western Savior as also the property of himself and his countrymen, and thus he established the *Samaja* of the Brahmos independently of what was in his own country in the beautiful *Bhagavata*.¹ His noble deeds will certainly procure him a high position in the history of reformers. But then, to speak the truth, he would have done more if he had commenced his work of reformation from the point where the last reformer in India left it. It is not our business to go further on this subject. Suffice it to say, that the *Bhagavata* did not attract the genius of Ram Mohan Roy. His thought, mighty though it was, unfortunately branched like the Ranigunj line of the Railway, from the barren station of Shankaracharya, and did not attempt to be an extension from the Delhi Terminus of the great *Bhagavata* expounder of Nadia. We do not doubt that the progress of time will correct the error, and by a further extension the branch line will lose itself somewhere in the main line of progress. We expect these attempts in a abler reformer of the followers of Ram Mohan Roy.

The *Bhagavata* has suffered alike from shallow critics both Indian and outlandish. That book has been accursed and denounced by a great number of our young countrymen, who have scarcely read its contents and pondered over the philosophy on which it is founded. It is

owing mostly to their imbibing an unfounded prejudice against it when they were in school. The *Bhagavata*, as a matter of course, has been held in derision by those teachers, who are generally of an inferior mind and intellect. This prejudice is not easily shaken when the student grows up unless he candidly studies the book and ruminates on the doctrines of Vaishnavism. We are ourselves witness of the fact. When we were in college, reading the philosophical works of the West and exchanging thoughts with the thinkers of the day, we had a real hatred towards the *Bhagavata*. That great work looked like a repository of wicked and stupid ideas, scarcely adapted to the nineteenth century, and we hated to hear any arguments in its favor. With us then a volume of Channing, Parker, Emerson or Newman had more weight than the whole lots of *Vaishnava* works. Greedily we poured over the various commentations of the Holy Bible and of the labors of the Tattwa Bodhini Sabha, containing extracts from the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta*, but no work of the Vaishnavas had any favor with us. But when we advanced in age and our religious sentiment received development, we turned out in a manner Unitarian in our belief and prayed as Jesus prayed in the Garden. Accidentally, we fell in with a work about the Great Caitanya, and on reading it with some attention in order to settle the historical position of that Mighty Genius of Nadia, we had the opportunity of gathering His explanations of *Bhagavata*, given to the wrangling Vedantist of the Benares School. The accidental study created in us a love for all the works which we find about our Eastern Savior. We gathered

with difficulties the famous *Kurcas* in Sanskrit, written by the disciples of Caitanya. The explanations that we got of the *Bhagavata* from these sources, were of such a charming character that we procured a copy of the *Bhagavata* complete and studied its texts (difficult of course to those who are not trained up in philosophical thoughts) with the assistance of the famous commentaries of Sridhara Svami. From such study it is that we have at least gathered the real doctrines of the Vaishnavas. Oh! What a trouble to get rid of prejudices gathered in unripe years!

As far as we can understand, no enemy of Vaishnavism will find any beauty in the *Bhagavata*. The true critic is a generous judge, void of prejudices and party-spirit. One, who is at heart the follower of Mohammed will certainly find the doctrines of the New Testament to be a forgery by the fallen angel. A Trinitarian Christian, on the other hand, will denounce the precepts of Mohammed as those of an ambitious reformer. The reason simply is, that the critic should be of the same disposition of mind as that of the author, whose merit he is required to judge. Thoughts have different ways. One, who is trained up in the thoughts of the Unitarian Society or of the *Vedanta* of the Benares School, will scarcely find piety in the faith the Vaishnavas. An ignorant Vaishnava, on the other hand, whose business it is to beg from door to door in the name of Nityananda will find no piety in the Christian. This is because, the Vaishnava does not think in the way which the Christian thinks of his own religion. It may be, that both the Christian and the Vaishnava will utter

the same sentiment, but they will never stop their fight with each other only because they have arrived at their common conclusion by different ways of thoughts. Thus it is, that a great deal of ungenerousness enters into the arguments of the pious Christians when they pass their imperfect opinion on the religion of the Vaishnavas.

Subjects of philosophy and theology are like the peaks of large towering and inaccessible mountains standing in the midst of our planet inviting attention and investigation. Thinkers and men of deep speculation take their observations through the instruments of reason and consciousness. But they take different points when they carry on their work. These points are positions chalked out by the circumstances of their social and philosophical life, different as they are in the different parts of the world. Plato looked at the peak of the Spiritual question from the West and Vyasa made the observation from the East; so Confucius did it from further East, and Schlegel, Spinoza, Kant, Goethe from further West. These observations were made at different times and by different means, but the conclusion is all the same in as much as the object of observation was one and the same. They all hunted after the Great Spirit, the unconditioned Soul of the Universe. They could not but get an insight into it. Their words and expressions are different, but their import is the same. They tried to find out the absolute religion and their labors were crowned with success, for God gives all that He has to His children if they want to have it. It requires a candid, generous, pious and holy heart to feel the beauties of their conclusions. Party-spirit – that great enemy of

truth – will always baffle the attempt of the inquirer, who tries to gather truth from religious works of their nations, and will make him believe that absolute truth is nowhere except in his old religious book. What better example could be adduced than the fact that the great philosopher of Benares will find no truth in the universal brotherhood of man and the common fatherhood of God? The philosopher, thinking in his own way of thought, can never see the beauty of the Christian faith. The way, in which Christ thought of his own father, was love absolute and so long as the philosopher will not adopt that way of thinking he will ever remain deprived of the absolute faith preached by the western Savior. In a similar manner the Christian needs adopt the way of thought which the Vedantist pursued, before he can love the conclusions of the philosopher. The critic, therefore, should have a comprehensive, good, generous, candid, impartial and a sympathetic soul.

Whatsortofathingisthe*Bhagavata*, askstheEuropean gentlemen newly arrived in India. His companion tells him with a serene look, that the *Bhagavata* is a book, which his Oriya bearer daily reads in the evening to a number of hearers. It contains a jargon of unintelligible and savage literature of those men who paint their noses with some sort of earth or sandal, and wear beads all over their bodies in order to procure salvation for themselves. Another of his companions, who has traveled a little in the interior, would immediately contradict him and say that the *Bhagavata* is a Sanskrit work claimed by a sect of men, the Goswamis, who give *mantras*, like the Pope of Italy, to the common people of Bengal,

and pardon their sins on payment of gold enough to defray their social expenses. A third gentlemen will repeat a third explanation. Young Bengal, chained up in English thoughts and ideas, and wholly ignorant of the Pre-Mohammed history of his own country, will add one more explanation by saying that the *Bhagavata* is a book, containing an account of the life of Krishna, who was an ambitious and an immoral man! This is all that he could gather from his grandmother while yet he did not go to school! Thus the Great *Bhagavata* ever remains unknown to the foreigners like the elephant of the six blind who caught hold of the several parts of the body of the beast! But Truth is eternal and is never injured but for *a while* by ignorance.

The *Bhagavata* itself tells us what it is:

*nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam
suka-mukhad amrta-drava-samyutam/
pibata bhagavatam rasam alayam
muhur aho rasika bhuvi bhavukah//*

“It is the fruit of the tree of thought (*Vedas*) mixed with the nectar of the speech of Shukadeva. It is the temple of spiritual love! O! Men of Piety! Drink deep this nectar of *Bhagavata* repeatedly till *you* are taken from this mortal frame.”

The *Garuda-purana* says, again:

*granthoshtadasa-sahasra-srimad-bhagavatabhidha
sarva-vedetihasanam saram saram samuddhrtam/
sarva-vedanta-saram hi sri-bhagavatam isyate
tad rasamrta-triptasya nanyatra syad rati-kvacit//*

“The *Bhagavata* is composed of 18,000 slokas. It contains the best parts of the *Vedas* and the *Vedanta*. Whoever has tasted its sweet nectar, will never like to read any other religious book.”

Every thoughtful reader will certainly repeat this eulogy. The *Bhagavata* is preeminently the Book in India. Once enter into it, and you are transplanted, as it were, into the spiritual world where gross matter has no existence. The true follower of the *Bhagavata* is a spiritual man who has already cut his temporary connection with phenomenal nature, and has made himself the inhabitant of that region where God eternally exists and loves. This mighty work is founded upon inspiration and its superstructure is upon reflection. To the common reader it has no charms and is full of difficulty. We are, therefore, obliged to study it deeply through the assistance of such great commentators as Sridhara Svami and the divine Caitanya and His contemporary followers.

Now the great preacher of Nadia, who has been deified by His talented followers, tells us that the *Bhagavata* is founded upon the four *slokas* which Vyasa received from Narada, the most learned of the created beings. He tells us further that Brahm. pierced through the whole universe of matter for years and years in quest of the final cause of the world but when he failed to find it abroad, he looked into the construction of his own spiritual nature, and there he heard the Universal Spirit speaking unto him, the following words:

*jnanam parama-guhyam me yad vijñāna-samanvitam/
sarahasyam tad-angam ca grhāṇa gaditam mayā//
yavan aham yathā-bhavo yad-rūpa-guṇa-karmakāh/
tathāiva tattva-vijñānam astu te mad-anugrahaḥ//
aham evaśam evagre nanyat yat sad-asat param/
pascad aham yad etac ca yo 'vasisyeta so 'smy aham//
rte 'rtham yat pratiyeta na pratiyeta catmani/
tad vidyāt atmano mayam yathābhaśo yathā tamaḥ//
(Bhag. 2/9/31-34)*

“Take, O Brahma! I am giving you the knowledge of my own self and of my relations and phases which is in itself difficult of access. You are a created being, so it is not easy for you to accept what I give you, but then I kindly give you the power to accept, so you are at liberty to understand my essence, my ideas, my form, my property and my action together with their various relations with imperfect knowledge. I was in the beginning before all spiritual and temporal things were created, and after they have been created I am in them all in the shape of their existence and truthfulness, and when they will be all gone I shall remain full as I was and as I am. Whatever appears to be true without being a real fact itself, and whatever is not perceived though it is true in itself are subjects of my illusory energy of creation, such as, light and darkness in the material world.”

It is difficult to explain the above in a short compass. You must read the whole *Bhagavata* for its explanation. When the great Vyasa had effected the arrangements of the *Vedas* and the *Upanisads*, the completion of the

eighteen *Puranas* with facts gathered from the recorded and unrecorded tradition of ages, and the composition of the *Vedanta* and the large *Mahabharata*, an epic poem of great celebrity, he began to ruminate over his own theories and precepts, and found like Fauste of Goethe that he had up to that time gathered no real truth. He fell back into his own self and searched his own spiritual nature and then it was that the above truth was communicated to him for his own good and the good of the world. The sage immediately perceived that his former works required supercession in as much as they did not contain the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In his new idea he got the development of his former idea of religion. He commenced the *Bhagavata* in pursuance of this change. From this fact, our readers are expected to find out the position which the *Bhagavata* enjoys in the library of Hindu theological works.

The whole of this incomparable work teaches us, according to our Great Caitanya, the three great truths which compose the absolute religion of man. Our Nadia preacher calls them *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana*, i.e., the relation between the Creator and the created, the duty of man to God and the prospects of humanity. In these three words is summed up the whole ocean of human knowledge as far as it has been explored up to this era of human progress. These are the cardinal points of religion and the whole *Bhagavata* is, as we are taught by Caitanya, an explanation both by precepts and example, of these three great points.

In all its twelve *skandhas* or divisions the *Bhagavata* teaches us that there is only one God without a second,

Who was full in Himself and is and will remain the same. Time and space, which prescribe conditions to created objects are much below His Supreme Spiritual nature, which is unconditioned and absolute. Created objects are subject to the influence of time and space, which form the chief ingredients of that principle in creation which passes by the name of *maya*. *Maya* is a thing which is not easily understood by us who are subject to it, but God explains, as much as we can understand in our present constitution, this principle through our spiritual perception. The hasty critic starts like an unbroken horse at the name of *maya* and denounces it as a theory identical with that of Bishop Berkeley. "Be patient in your inquiry," is our immediate reply. In the mind of God there were ideas of all that we perceive in eternal existence with him, or else God loses the epithet of omniscient so learnedly applied to Him. The imperfect part of nature implying want proceeded also from certain of those ideas, and what, but a principle of *maya*, eternally existing in God subject to His Omnipotence, could have a hand in the creation of the world as it is? This is styled as the *maya-sakti* of the omnipresent God. Cavil as much as you can. This is a *truth* in relation to the created universe.

This *maya* intervenes between us and God as long as we are not spiritual, and when we are able to break off her bonds, we, even in this mortal frame, learn to commune in our spiritual nature with the unconditioned and the absolute. No, *maya* does not mean a false thing only, but it means concealment of eternal truth as well. The creation is not *maya* itself but is subject to that

principle. Certainly, the theory is idealistic but it has been degraded into foolishness by wrong explanations. The materialist laughs at the ideal theory saying, how could his body, water, air and earth be mere ideas without entity, and he laughs rightly when he takes Shankaracarya's book in his hand at the butt end of his ridicule. The true idealist must be a dualist also. He must believe all that he perceives as nature created by God full of spiritual essence and relations, but he must not believe that the outward appearance is the truth. The *Bhagavata* teaches that all that we healthily perceive is true, but its material appearance is transient and illusory. The scandal of the ideal theory consists in its tendency to falsify nature, but the theory as explained in the *Bhagavata* makes nature true, if not eternally true as God and His ideas. What harm there can be if man believes in nature as spiritually true and that the physical relations and phases of society are purely spiritual?

No, it is not merely changing a name but it is a change in nature also. Nature is eternally spiritual but the intervention of *maya* makes her gross and material. Man, in his progress attempts to shake off this gross idea, childish and foolish in its nature and by subduing the intervening principle of *maya*, lives in continual union with God in his spiritual nature. The shaking off this bond is salvation of the human nature. The man who has got salvation will freely tell his brother that "If you want to see God, see me, and if you want to be one with God, you must follow me." The *Bhagavata* teaches us this relation between man and God, and we must all attain this knowledge. This sublime truth is the

point where the materialist and the idealist must meet like brothers of the same school and this is the point to which all philosophy tends.

This is called *sambandha-jnana* of the *Bhagavata*, or, in other words, the knowledge of relations between the conditioned and the Absolute. We must now attempt to explain the second great principle inculcated by the *Bhagavata*, i.e., the principle of duty. Man must spiritually worship his God. There are three ways, in which the Creator is worshipped by the created.

*vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvam yaj jnanam advyayam/
brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti sabdyate//*

All theologists agree in maintaining that there is only one God without a second, but they disagree in giving a name to that God owing to the different modes of worship, which they adopt according to the constitution of their mind. Some call Him by the name of *brahman*, some by the name of *paramatma* and others by the name of *bhagavan*. Those who worship God as infinitely great in the principle of admiration call him by the name of *brahman*. This mode is called *jnana* or knowledge. Those who worship God as the Universal Soul in the principle of spiritual union with him give him the name of *paramatma*. This is *yoga*. Those who worship God as all in all with all their heart, body and strength style Him as *bhagavan*. This last principle is *bhakti*. The book that prescribes the relation and worship of *bhagavan*, procures for itself the name of *Bhagavata* and the worshipper is also called by the same name.

Such is *Bhagavata* which is decidedly *the* Book for all classes of theists. If we worship God spiritually as *all* in all with our heart, mind, body and strength, we are all *Bhagavatas* and we lead a life of spiritualism, which neither the worshipper of *brahman*, nor the *yoga* uniting his soul with (*paramatma*) the universal soul can obtain. The superiority of the *Bhagavata* consists in the uniting of all sorts of theistic worship into one excellent principle in human nature, which passes by the name of *bhakti*. This word has no equivalent in the English language. Piety, devotion, resignation and spiritual love unalloyed with any sort of petition except in the way of repentance, compose the highest principle of *bhakti*. The *Bhagavata* tells us to worship God in that great and invaluable principle, which is infinitely superior to human knowledge and the principle of *yoga*.

Our short compass will not admit of an explanation of the principle of *bhakti* beautifully rising from its first stage of application in the form of *Brahmic* worship in the shape of admiration which is styled the *santa-rasa*, to the fifth or the highest stage of absolute union in love with God, sweetly styled the *madhura-rasa* of *prema-bhakti*. A full explanation will take a big volume which is not our object here to compose. Suffice it to say that the principle of *bhakti* passes five distinct stages in the course of its development into its highest and purest form. Then again when it reaches the last form, it is susceptible of further progress from the stage of *prema* (love) to that of *maha-bhava* which is in fact a complete transition into the spiritual universe where God alone is the bride-groom of our soul.

The voluminous *Bhagavata* is nothing more than a full illustration of this principle of continual development and progress of the soul from gross matter to the all-perfect Universal Spirit who is distinguished as personal, eternal, absolutely free, all powerful and all intelligent. There is nothing gross or material in it. The whole affair is spiritual. In order to impress this spiritual picture upon the student who attempts to learn it, comparisons have been made with the material world, which cannot but convince the ignorant and the impractical. Material examples are absolutely necessary for the explanation of spiritual ideas. The *Bhagavata* believes that the spirit of nature is the truth in nature and is the only practical part of it.

The phenomenal appearance of nature is truly theoretical, although it has had the greatest claim upon our belief from the days of our infancy. The outward appearance of nature is nothing more than a sure index of its spiritual face. Comparisons are therefore necessary. Nature as it is before our eyes, must explain the spirit, or else the truth will ever remain concealed, and man will never rise from his boyhood though his whiskers and beard grow white as the snows of the Himalayas. The whole intellectual and moral philosophy is explained by matter itself. Emerson beautifully shows how all the words in moral philosophy originally came from the names of material objects. The words heart, head, spirit, thought, courage, bravery, were originally the common names of some corresponding objects in the material world. All spiritual ideas are similarly pictures from the material world, because matter is the dictionary of

spirit, and material pictures are but the shadows of the spiritual affairs which our material eye carries back to our spiritual perception. God in his infinite goodness and kindness has established this unfailing connection between the truth and the shadow in order to impress upon us the eternal truth which he has reserved for us. The clock explains the time, the alphabet points to the gathered store of knowledge, the beautiful song of a harmonium gives the idea of eternal harmony in the spirit world, to-day and to-morrow and dayafter-to-morrow thrust into us the ungrasped idea of eternity and similarly material pictures impress upon our spiritual nature the truly spiritual idea of religion. It is on these reasonable grounds that Vyasa adopted the mode of explaining our spiritual worship with some sorts of material phenomena, which correspond with the spiritual truth. Our object is not to go into details, so we are unable to quote some of the illustrations within this short compass.

We have also the practical part of the question in the 11th book of *Bhagavata*. All the modes by which a man can train himself up to *prema-bhakti* as explained above, have been described at great length. We have been advised first of all, to convert ourselves into most grateful servants of God as regards our relation to our fellow brethren. Our nature has been described as bearing three different phases in all our bearings of the world. Those phases are named *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. *Sattva-guna* is that property in our nature, which is purely good as far as it can be pure in our present state. *Rajo-guna* is neither good nor bad. *Tamo-guna* is evil.

Our *pravrttis* or tendencies and affections are described as the mainspring of all our actions, and it is our object to train up those affections and tendencies to the standard of *sattva-guna*, as decided by the moral principle. This is not easily done. All the springs of our actions should be carefully protected from *tamo-guna*, the evil principle, by adopting the *rajo-guna* at first, and when that is effected, man should subdue his *rajo-guna* by means of the natural *sattva-guna* which is the most powerful of them cultivated. Lust, idleness, wicked deeds and degradation of human nature by intoxicating principles are described as exclusively belonging to *tamo-guna*, the evil phase of nature. These are to be checked by marriage, useful work and abstinence from intoxication and trouble to our neighbors and inferior animals. Thus when *rajo-guna* has obtained supremacy in the heart, it is our duty to convert that *rajo-guna* into *sattva-guna* which is pre-eminently good. That married love, which is first cultivated, must now be sublimated into holy, good and spiritual love, i.e., love between soul and soul. Useful work will now be converted into work of love and not of disgust or obligation. Abstinence from wicked work will be made to lose its negative appearance and converted into positive good work. Then we are to look to all living beings in the same light in which we look to ourselves, i.e., we must convert our selfishness into all *possible disinterested* activity towards all around us. Love, charity, good deeds and devotion to God will be our only aim. We then become the servants of God by obeying his High and Holy wishes. Here we begin to be *bhaktas* and we are susceptible of further improvement

in our spiritual nature, as we have described above. All this is covered by the term *abhidheya*, the second cardinal point in the supreme religious work, the *Bhagavata*. We have now before us, the first two cardinal points in our religion, explained somehow or other in the terms and thoughts expressed by our savior who lived only four and a half centuries ago in the beautiful town of Nadia, situated on the banks of the Bhagirathi. We must now proceed to the last cardinal point termed by the great Re-establisher, *prayojana* or prospects.

What is the object of our spiritual development, our prayer, our devotion and our union with God? The *Bhagavata* tells that the object is not enjoyment or sorrow, but continual progress in spiritual holiness and harmony.

In the common-place books of the Hindu religion in which the *rajo* and *tamo-guna* have been described as the ways of religion, we have descriptions of a local heaven and a local hell; the Heaven as beautiful as anything on earth and the Hell as ghastly as any picture of evil. Besides this Heaven we have many more places, where good souls are sent up in the way of promotion! There are 84 divisions of the hell itself, some more dreadful than the one which Milton has described in his "Paradise Lost". These are certainly poetical and were originally created by the rulers of the country in order to check evil deeds of the ignorant people, who are not able to understand the conclusions of philosophy. The religion of the *Bhagavata* is free from such a poetry. Indeed, in some of the chapters we meet with descriptions of these hells and heavens, and accounts of curious tales,

but we have been warned somewhere in the book, not to accept them as real facts, but as inventions to overawe the wicked and to improve the simple and the ignorant. The *Bhagavata*, certainly tells us a state of reward and punishment in future according to deeds in our present situation. All poetic inventions, besides this spiritual fact, have been described as statements borrowed from other works in the way of preservation of old traditions in the book which superseded them and put an end to the necessity of their storage. If the whole stock of Hindu theological works which preceded the *Bhagavata* were burnt like the Alexandrian library and the sacred *Bhagavata* preserved as it is, not a part of the philosophy of the Hindus except that of the atheistic sects, would be lost. The *Bhagavata* therefore, may be styled both as a religious work and a compendium of all Hindu history and philosophy.

The *Bhagavata* does not allow its followers to ask anything from God except eternal love towards Him. The kingdom of the world, the beauties of the local heavens and the sovereignty over the material world are never the subjects of Vaishnava prayer. The Vaishnava meekly and humbly says, "Father, Master, God, Friend and Husband of my soul! Hallowed be Thy name! I do not approach You for anything which You have already given me. I have sinned against You and I now repent and solicit Your pardon. Let Thy holiness touch my soul and make me free from grossness. Let my spirit be devoted meekly to Your Holy service in absolute love towards Thee. I have called You my God, and let my soul be wrapped up in admiration at Your greatness!

I have addressed You as my Master and let my soul be strongly devoted to your service. I have called You my friend, and let my soul be in reverential love towards You and not in dread or fear! I have called you my husband and let my spiritual nature be in eternal union with You, for ever loving and never dreading, or feeling disgust. Father! let me have strength enough to go up to You as the consort of my soul, so that we may be one in eternal love! Peace to the world!”

Of such a nature is the prayer of the *Bhagavata*. One who can read the book will find the highest form of prayer in the expressions of Prahlada towards the universal and omnipresent Soul with powers to convert all unholy strength into meek submission or entire annihilation. This prayer will show what is the end and object of Vaishnavas life. He does not expect to be the king of a certain part of the universe after his death, nor does he dread a local fiery and turbulent hell, the idea of which would make the hairs of young Hamlet stand erect like the forks of a *porcupine*! His idea of salvation is not total annihilation of personal existence as the Buddhists and the twenty-four gods of the Jains procured for themselves! The Vaishnava the meekest of all creatures devoid of all ambition. He wants to serve God spiritually after death as he has served Him both in spirit and matter while here. His constitution is a spirit and his highest object of life is divine and holy love.

There may be a philosophical doubt. How the human soul could have a distinct existence from the universal Soul when the gross part of the human constitution will be, no more? The Vaishnava can't answer it, nor can

any man on earth explain it. The Vaishnava meekly answers, he feels the truth but he cannot understand it. The *Bhagavata* merely affirms that the Vaishnava soul when freed from the gross matter will distinctly exist not in time and space but spiritually in the eternal spiritual kingdom of God where love is life, and hope and charity and continual ecstasy without change are its various manifestations.

In considering about the essence of the Deity, two great errors stare before us and frighten us back to ignorance and its satisfaction. One of them is the idea that God is above all attributes both material and spiritual and is consequently above all conception. This is a noble idea but useless. If God is above conception and without any sympathy with the world, how is then this creation? This Universe composed of properties? the distinctions and phases of existence? the differences of value? Man, woman, beast, trees, magnetism, animal magnetism, electricity, landscape, water and fire. In that case Shankaracarya's *mayavada* theory would be absolute philosophy.

The other error is that God is all attribute, *i.e.* intelligence, truth, goodness and power. This is also a ludicrous idea. Scattered properties can never constitute a Being. It is more impossible in the case of belligerent principles, such as justice and mercy and fulness and creative power. Both ideas are imperfect. The truth, as stated in the *Bhagavata* is that properties, though many of them belligerent, are united in a spiritual Being where they have full sympathy and harmony. Certainly this is beyond our comprehension. It is so owing to our

nature being finite and God being infinite. Our ideas are constrained by the idea of space and time, but God is above that constraint. This is a glimpse of Truth and we must regard it as Truth itself: often, says Emerson, a glimpse of truth is better than an arranged system and he is *right*.

The *Bhagavata* has, therefore, a personal, all-intelligent, active, absolutely free, holy, good, all-powerful, omnipresent, just and merciful and supremely spiritual deity without a second, creating, preserving all that is in the universe. The highest object of the Vaishnava is to serve that Infinite Being for *ever spiritually* in the activity of *Absolute Love*.

These are the main principles of the religion inculcated by the work, called the *Bhagavata*, and Vyasa, in his great wisdom, tried his best to explain all these principles with the aid of pictures in the material world. The shallow critic summarily rejects this great philosopher as a man-worshipper. He would go so far as to scandalize him as a teacher of material love and lust and the injurious principles of exclusive asceticism. The critic should first read deeply the pages of the *Bhagavata* and train his mind up to the best eclectic philosophy which the world has ever obtained, and then we are sure he will pour panegyrics upon the principal of the College of Theology at Badrikashram which existed about 4,000 years ago. The shallow critic's mind will undoubtedly be changed, if he but reflects upon one great point, i.e., how is it possible that a spiritualist of the school of Vyasa teaching the best principles of theism in the whole of the *Bhagavata* and making the

four texts quoted in the beginning as the foundation of his mighty work, could have forced upon the belief of men that the sensual connection between men with certain females is the highest object of worship! This is impossible, dear critic! Vyasa could *not* have taught the common *vairaga* to set up an *Akhara* (a place worship) with a number of females! Vyasa, who could teach us repeatedly in the whole of *Bhagavata* that sensual pleasures are momentary like the pleasures of rubbing the itching hand and that man's highest duty is to have spiritual love with God, could never have prescribed the worship of sensual pleasures. His descriptions are spiritual and you must not connect matter with it. With this advice, dear critic, go through the *Bhagavata* and I doubt not you will, in three months, weep and repent to God for despising this revelation through the heart and brain of the great Badarayan.

Yes, you nobly tell us that such philosophical comparisons produced injury in the ignorant and the thoughtless. You nobly point to the immoral deeds of the common *vairagas*, who call themselves "The followers of the *Bhagavata* and the great Caitanya". You nobly tell us that Vyasa, unless purely explained, may lead thousands of men into great trouble in time to come. But dear critic! Study the history of ages and countries! Where have you found the philosopher and the reformer fully understood by the people? The popular religion is fear of God and not the pure spiritual love which Plato, Vyasa, Jesus, and Caitanya taught to their respective peoples! Whether you give the absolute religion in figures or simple expressions, or teach them

by means of books or oral speeches, the ignorant and the thoughtless must degrade it. It is indeed very easy to tell and swift to hear that absolute truth has such an affinity with the human soul that it comes through it as if intuitively. No exertion is necessary to teach the precepts of true religion. This is a deceptive idea. It may be true of ethics and of the alphabet of religion but not of the highest form of faith which requires an exalted soul to understand. It certainly requires previous training of the soul in the elements of religion just as the student of the fractions must have a previous attainment in the elemental numbers and figures in arithmetic and geometry. Truth is good, is an elemental truth, which is easily grasped by the common people. But if you tell a common patient, that God is infinitely intelligent and powerful in His spiritual nature, He will conceive a different idea from what you entertain of the expression. All higher truths, though intuitive, require previous education in the simpler ones. That religion is the purest, which gives you the purest idea of God, and the absolute religion requires an absolute conception by man of his own spiritual nature. How then is it possible that the ignorant will ever obtain the absolute religion as long as they are ignorant? When thought awakens, the thinker is no more ignorant and is capable of obtaining an absolute idea of religion. This is a truth and God has made it such in His infinite goodness, impartiality and mercy. Labor has its wages and the idle must never be rewarded. Higher is the work, greater is the reward is an useful truth. The thoughtless must be satisfied with superstition till he wakes and opens his eyes to the God

of love. The reformers, out of their universal love and anxiety for good endeavor by some means or other to make the thoughtless drink the cup of salvation, but the latter drink it with wine and fall into the ground under the influence of intoxication for the imagination has also the power of making a thing what it never was. Thus it is that the evils of nunneries and the corruptions of the *Akharas* proceeded. No, we are not to scandalize the Savior of Jerusalem or the Savior of Nadia for these subsequent evils. Luthers, instead of critics, are what we want for the correction of those evils by the true interpretation of the original precepts.

Two more principles characterize the *Bhagavata*, viz., liberty and progress of the soul throughout eternity. The *Bhagavata* teaches us that God gives us truth and He gave it to Vyasa, when we earnestly seek for it. Truth is eternal and unexhausted. The soul receives a revelation when it is anxious for it. The souls of the great thinkers of the by-gone ages, who now live spiritually, often approach our inquiring spirit and assist it in its development. Thus Vyasa was assisted by Narada and Brahma. Our *sastras*, or in other words, books of thought do not contain all that we could get from the infinite Father. No book is without its errors. God's revelation is absolute truth, but it is scarcely received and preserved in its natural purity. We have been advised in the 14th Chapter of 11th *skandha* of the *Bhagavata* to believe that truth when revealed is absolute, but it gets the tincture of the nature of the receiver in course of time and is converted into error by continual exchange of hands from age to age. New revelations, therefore, are continually necessary in

order to keep truth in its original purity. We are thus warned to be careful in our studies of old authors, however wise they are reputed to be. Here we have full liberty to reject the wrong idea, which is not sanctioned by the peace of conscience. Vyasa was not satisfied with what he collected in the *Vedas*, arranged in the *Puranas* and composed in the *Mahabharata*. The peace of his conscience did not sanction his labors. It told him from inside “ No, Vyasa! you can’t rest contented with the erroneous picture of truth which was necessarily presented to you by the sages of by-gone days! You must yourself knock at the door of the inexhaustible store of truth from which the former ages drew their wealth. Go, go up to the Fountain-head of truth where no pilgrim meets with disappointment of any kind. Vyasa did it and obtained what he wanted. We have been all advised to do so. Liberty then is the principle, which we must consider as the most valuable gift of God. We must not allow ourselves to be led by those who lived and thought before us. We must think for ourselves and try to get further truths which are still undiscovered. In the 23rd text 21st Chapter 11th *skandha* of the *Bhagavata* we have been advised to take the spirit of the *sastras* and not the words. The *Bhagavata* is therefore a religion of liberty, unmixed truth and absolute love.

The other characteristic is progress. Liberty certainly is the father of all progress. Holy liberty is the cause of progress upwards and upwards in eternity and endless activity of love. Liberty abused causes degradation and the Vaishnava must always carefully use this high and beautiful gift of God. The progress of the *Bhagavata*

described as the rise of the soul from Nature up to Nature's God, from *maya*, the absolute and the infinite. Hence the *Bhagavata* says of itself:

*nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam
suka-mukhad amrta-drava-samyutam/
pibata-bhagavatam rasam alayam
muhur aho rasika bhuvi bhavukah//*

“It is the fruit of the tree of thought, mixed with the nectar of the speech of Sukadeva. It is the temple of spiritual love! O! Men of piety! Drink deep this nectar of *Bhagavata* repeatedly till you are taken from this mortal frame!”

Then the *saragraha* or the progressive Vaishnava adds:

*surasa-sura-yutam phalam atra yat
virasat adi-viruddha-gunam ca tat/
tyaga-viragamito madhu-payinah
rasika-sara-rasam piba bhavukah//*

“That fruit of the tree of thought is a composition, as a matter of course of the sweet and the opposite principles. O! Men of piety, like the bee taking honey from the flower, drink the sweet principle and reject that which is not so.”

The *Bhagavata* is undoubtedly a difficult work and where it does not relate to picturesque description of traditional and poetical life, its literature is stiff and its branches are covered in the garb of an unusual form of Sanskrit poetry. Works on philosophy must necessarily be of this character. Commentaries and notes are

therefore required to assist us in our study of the book. The best commentator is Sridhara Svami and the truest interpreter is our great and noble Caitanyadeva. God bless the spirit of our noble guides.

These great souls were not like comets appearing in the firmament for a while and disappearing as soon as their mission is over. They are like so many suns shining all along to give light and heat to the succeeding generations. Long time yet they will be succeeded by others of their mind, beauty and caliber. The texts of Vyasa are still ringing in the ears of all theists as if some great spirit is singing them from a distance! Badrikashram! The seat of Vyasa and the selected religion of thought! What a powerful name! The pilgrim tells us that the land is cold! How mightily did the genius of Vyasa generate the heat of philosophy in such cold region! Not only did he heat the locality but sent its ray far to the shores of the sea! Like the great Napoleon in the political world, he knocked down empires and kingdoms of old and bygone philosophy the mighty stroke of his transcendental thoughts! This is real power! Atheist, philosophy of Shankha, Caravaka, the Jains and the Buddhists shuddered with fear at the approach of the spiritual sentiments and creations of the *Bhagavata* philosopher! The army of atheists was composed of gross and impotent creatures like the legions that stood under the banner of the fallen Lucifer; but the pure, holy and spiritual soldiers of Vyasa, sent by his Almighty Father were invincibly fierce to the enemy and destructive of the unholy and the unfounded. He that works in the light of God, sees the minutest things

in creation, he that works the power of God is invincible and great, and he that works with God's Holiness in his heart, finds no difficulty against unholy things and thoughts. God works through his agents and these agents are styled by Vyasa himself as the Incarnation of the power of God. All great souls were incarnations of this class and we have the authority of this fact in the *Bhagavata* itself:

*avatara hy asankhyeya hareh sattva-nidher dvijah/
yathavidasinah kulyah sarasah syuh sahasrasah//*

“O Brahmins! God is the soul of the principle of goodness! The incarnations of that principle are innumerable! As thousands of watercourses come out of one inexhaustible fountain of water, so these incarnations are but emanations of that infinitely good energy of God which is full at all times.”

The *Bhagavata*, therefore, allows us to call Vyasa and Narada, as *saktyavesavatars* of the infinite energy of God, and the spirit of this text goes far to honor all great reformers and teachers who lived and will live in other countries. The Vaishnava is ready to honor all great men without distinction of caste, because they are filled with the energy of God. See how universal is the religion of *Bhagavata*. It is not intended for a certain class of the Hindus alone but it is a gift to man at large in whatever country he is born and whatever society is bred. In short Vaishnavism is the Absolute Love binding all men together into the infinities unconditioned and absolute God. May it, peace reign for ever in the whole universe in the continual development of its purity by

the exertion of the future heroes, who will be blessed according to the promise of the *Bhagavata* with powers from the Almighty Father, the Creator, Preserver, and the Annihilator of all things in Heaven and Earth.

FOOTNOTES

¹ This is gathered from what Ram Mohan Roy told the public in the prefaces to the three dissertations, which he wrote about the precepts of Jesus as compiled by him from the Gospels and in answer to Dr. Marshman the Serampore Missionary.

THE BHĀGAVATA

PART II

The teaching of Srimad Bhagavata falls into three distinct parts according as it treats of (1) *Sambandha* or Relationship, (2) *Abhidheya* or the Function or Activity that pertains to the Relationship, and (3) *Prayojana* or Object or Fruit of such Activity.

The aphorisms of the Upanishads, which contain the highest teaching of the Vedic literature, are presented in the form of a systematic body of knowledge under the heads of *Sambandha*, *Abhidheya* and *Prayojana* in the compilation of the Brahmasutra. In his ‘Satsandarbha’ Sri Jiva Goswami has applied the same method of treatment to the contents of the Srimad Bhagavata which is admitted to be the only authentic *Bhasya* or exposition of the Brahmasutra.

But the first of the ‘six Sandarbhas,’ viz., the ‘Tattvasandarbha,’ applies itself to the elucidation of the epistemology of transcendental knowledge and discusses incidentally the purpose, definition and scope of the principles of classification of the Brahma-sutra. It supplies as it were the key to the knowledge that is detailed in the following five ‘Sandarbhas.’ It has made possible the comparative study of religion on the only admissible and scientific basis. Its main conclusions are summarised below.¹

TRANSCENDENTAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Sri Krishna, the Ultimate Reality, is One without a second.² Sri Krishna, the Absolute Integer, is distinct from His *Shakti*³ or counter whole including her integrated, and dissociable fractional parts in their synthetic and analytic manifestations. Sri Krishna is the Predominating Absolute. His *Shakti* is the predominated Absolute in the three positions of *antaranges*, *tatastha* and *bahiranga* respectively.⁴

Anteranga is that which pertains to the proper Entity of the Absolute Person. It is also called *Swarupa Shakti* for this reason. The literal meaning of the word *antaranga* is “that which belongs to the inner body.” *Shakti* is rendered as “power.” *Tatastha* means literally ‘that which is on the border-line as between land and water.’ This intermediate power does not belong to any definable region of the Person of Sri Krishna. It manifests itself on the border-line between the inner and the outer body of the Absolute. The power that manifests itself on the outer body is *bahiranga-shakti*. As there is no quality between the Body and Entity of the Absolute Person the distinctions as between the inner, outer and marginal positions of His Body are in terms of the realisation of the individual soul.

Although Sri Krishna is One without a second, He has His Own multiple Forms corresponding to the degree and variety of His Subjective Manifestations. The Subjective Entity of Sri Krishna is not liable to any transformation. His different Forms are, therefore,

aspects of the One Form manifesting Themselves to the different aptitudes of His servitors.

But the power of Sri Krishna is transformable by the will of Sri Krishna. These transformations of power in the cases of the *antaranga* and *tatastha shaktis* are eternal processes. In the case of the *bahiranga-shakti* the transformations of power are temporary manifestations. The phenomenal world is the product of the external power of Sri Krishna. The Absolute Realm is the transformation of the inner power. Individual souls are the transformations of the marginal power. The conception of the parinati or substantive change is not applied to the transformations of the inner and marginal powers. It is applied only to the transformations of the outer power. The eternal transformations of the inner power are called “*Tadrupabaibhava*” or the display of the connotation of the Visible Figure of the Divinity. Individual souls or jeevas are the eternal infinitesimal emanations of the marginal power, capable of subserviency to the inner power but also susceptible to dissociation from the working of the inner power.

The conception of *shakti* or the predominated Absolute and the transformations and products of the same is developed by Sri Ramanuja for the negtive purpose of refuting the claims of the impersonalist school of *keval-advaitavad* to Vedic (or more properly Upanisadic) sanction of undifferentiated monism. The system of Sri Ramanuja is called *Vishistadvaita*. He shows that the Unity of the Absolute is not tampered by the intitutive existence of His attributive connotation and its subservient activities. The teaching of Sri Krishna

Chaitanya, which is identical with that of Srimad Bhagavat, supplements and develops the conception of *Shakti* of Sri Ramanuja in most important respects.

Sri Krishna is termed *Advaya-Jnana* in Srimad Bhagavat.⁵ It may be rendered as Absolute Knowledge. Absolute Knowledge can not be challenged. He can only be approached by the method of complete self-surrender by the reciprocal, otherwise ineligible, cognition of individual souls. Transcendental epistemology is differentiated from empiric epistemology in respect of relationship, function and object for the reason that it refers to entities that are located beyond the range of assertive cognitive endeavour normally practised by the deluded people of this world for their temporary purposes. By the peculiarities of their infinitesimality, essentially spiritual nature and marginal position all individual souls have the constitutional option of choice between complete subserviency and active or passive hostility to Sri Krishna. These opposed aptitudes lead them to the adoption of correspondingly different methods for the realisation of the respective ends.

Those methods that are adopted for the practice of active hostility to the Absolute are termed *pratyaksha* (direct individual perception) and *paroksha* (associated collective perception by many persons past and present) respectively. The *aparoksha* method (the method of cessation from individual and collective perception) leads to the position of neutrality. The *pratyaksha* and *paroksha* methods are diametrically opposed to the methods approved by the Bhagavat for the search of the Truth. The *aproksha* method also tends to an

unwholesome and negative result if it seeks to stand on the mere rejection of the *pratyaksha* and *paroksha* methods without trying to progress towards the positive transcendence. Such inactive policy would indeed be tantamount to the practice of passive hostility to the Absolute and as such is even more condemnable than open hostility. No method can be recognised as suitable for the quest of the Truth that is actuated more or less by the purpose of opposing the Absolute Supremacy of Sri Krishna. In other words, individual souls cannot realise the subjective nature of the Absolute except by the exercise of their fullest subserviency to Sri Krishna and His inner power.

The failure of individual souls to find the Truth is brought about by their own innate perversity. They possess perfect freedom of choice as between complete subserviency to Sri Krishna and the practice of active or passive hostility to Him. There is no other alternative open to them. If they chose to refuse to serve they have to practise hostility or indifference towards the Absolute. The perverse individual soul is not obstructed in the active exercise of his freedom of choice. He is enabled to exercise the functions of hostility and indifference, within consistent deterring limits, by the wonderful contrivance of the deluding power of Sri Krishna. The continued deliberate exercise of such hostility and indifference towards the Absolute by the perverse individual soul results necessarily in the suicidal abdication of all activities by the deliberate offender.

The methods that are adopted for practising active and complete subserviency to the Absolute are termed

respectively as *adhokshoja* (external or reverential method of serving the Transcendental Object of worship) and *aprakrita* (internal or confidential method of service of the Absolute). Srimad Bhagavata inculcates and divulges the search of the Absolute by the *adhokshaja* and *aprakrita* methods. It condemns the *pratyaksha* and *paroksha* methods, but recognises the proper use of the *aparoksha* method.

The *pratyaksha*, *paroksha* and the passive *aparoksha* methods are collectively called the *āroha* or ascending process. The proper *aparoksha*, *adhokshaju* and *aprakrita* methods constitute the *avaroha* or descending process. By the adoption of the ascending process the perverse individual soul strives to realise his suicidal end by the positive and negative perverse manipulation of mundane experience gained through direct and indirect sense-perception. By the descending process the soul is enabled to strive for the realisation of the unalloyed service of the Absolute by the honest exercise of his unreserved receptive aptitude to the Initiative of the Absolute when He is pleased to come down to the plane of his tiny perverse cognition.

The fruits that are realisable by the different methods of endeavour correspond to the particular method that is followed. The *pratyaksha* and *paroksha* methods aim at *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (utility) and *kama* (sensuous gratification). The wrong *aparoksha* method aims at pseudo-*moksha* (annihilation). The right *aparoksha* method aims at positive transcendence. The *adhokshaja* method aims, at *Bhakti* or reverential transcendental

service of the Absolute. The *aprākṛita* method has in view the realisation of *prema* or Divine Love.

Pure theism begins with the first appearance of the positive desire for the service of the Absolute Who is located beyond the range of our sensuous activity⁶. It involves the clear perception of the fact that all empiric activity is the deliberate practice of perverse hostility against the Absolute supremacy of Sri Krishna. The world *adhokshaja* which is applied in Srimad Bhagavata to the Object of worship refers to the fact that Sri Krishna has reserved the right of not being exposed to human senses.

The theistic methods alone thus apply to the proper Entity of the Absolute. Those, who are in rebellion against the supremacy of Sri Krishna by the adoption of sensuous activity, are prevented from all access to His presence by the operation of deluding power of Krishna. The individual soul is always susceptible to being thus deluded by *maya* (the limiting or measuring potency). The conditions of the practice of sensuous activities in this realm of finite existence are provided by *Maya* for the correction of the suicidal perversity of rebellious souls.

It is in this manner that a person, who is averse to the service of Sri Krishna, is made to proceed along the tracks of *Karma* and *Jnana* by the ascending process for gaining the bitter experience of the practice of perverse hostility to Sri Krishna and his own self. This world is inhabited by persons who are deliberately addicted to this suicidal course. They are unconditionally committed to the ascending process for sojourning in this realm of

nescience. The method is further characterised by the hypocritical assumption of the validity of experience derived through the senses for providing progressive guidance in the quest of a state of perfect felicity.

The method of quest in which the Truth Himself takes the Initiative is termed the *avaroha* or descending process. The individual soul can have no access to the Absolute by reason of his infinitesimality, dissociable marginal position and his own nature as emanation of power. He can, however, have the view of the Truth if the Absolute is pleased to manifest His descent to the plane of his tiny cognition.

Real theism cannot begin till the individual soul is enabled by the manifestation of the Descent of the Absolute to have the opportunity for His service. The Absolute manifests His descent in the Form of the Name or the Transcendental Divine Sound on the lips of His pure devotees. *Diksha* or the communication of the Knowledge of the Transcendental in the Form of the Sound to the submissive receptive cognition of the individual soul by Authorised Agents of the Absolute is the Vedic mode of initiation into Transcendental Knowledge.

The Name is the Object of worship of all pure souls. The Transcendental Service of the Name, or *Bhakti*, is the proper function of all souls and the only mode of quest of the Truth.

The pursuit of this right method of quest leads to a growing perfection of *Bhakti* and progressive realisation of the Subjective Nature of the object of worship. Srimad Bhagavata uses the pregnant phrase “really real thing”

(*Bastava Bastu*)⁷ to denote the Entity Whose service is realisable by and in the right method of quest. *Srimad Bhagavata* accordingly distinguishes between apparent and real truth that is experienced respectively by the followers of the ascending and descending methods of quest.⁸ It admits the existence of apparent truth and the followers of apparent truth alongside real truth and the servitors of the real truth.⁹

The true conception of the Absolute is realised by following the right method of quest. The Ultimate Reality is termed in the *shattvata shastras* as *Brahman*, *Paramatma* and *Bhagavan*.¹⁰ The *Brahman* conception stress the necessity of excluding the deluded, concrete, limited experience of the followers of apparent truth. The conception of *Paramatma* seeks to establish a tangible connection between this temporal world and the Ultimate Reality. Both these conceptions present not only an imperfect, but also grossly misleading, view of the Absolute. The conception of *Bhagavan* as Transcendental Personality. Who is approachable by *Suddhā-bhakti* or unalloyed devotion of the soul, corresponds to the complete realisation of the Absolute, which, necessarily also accommodates and supplements the rival conceptions of *Brahman* and *Paramatma*. The comparative view of the three conceptions is clearly stated in a passage of the 'Karcha' of Damodara Swarupa quoted in Ch. Ch. 1.1.30. It is also stated by Sri Jiva Goswami in 'Tattvasandarbhā' 8.

The *Brahman* conception is misunderstood by exclusive monists (*Kevaladvaita* of Shankara school) who quite disingeniously assume that the conception

denied the Transcendental Personality and Figure of the Absolute. The root of the error lies in the apprehension of the impersonalist school that any admission of concreteness in the Absolute will tantamount to the importation of the undesirable features of apparent truth, experienced by the methods of sensuous perception into the transcendental conception of the Absolute Reality favoured by the scriptures. The method of *Suddhā-bhakti*, while recognising fully the necessity of admitting the Transcendental Nature of the Ultimate Reality, does not deny the immanent transcendent connection of the Absolute with manifest mundane existence that is sought to be recognised in the wrong offensive way in their conception of *Paramatma*, by the Yogins. The conception of *Bhagavan* realised by the process of *Suddhā-bhakti* harmonises these respective requirements as secondary features of the Proper Transcendental Personality of the Absolute. The *adhokshaja* and *aprākṛita* methods of quest alone tend to such realisation.

Sambandha or relationship implies a numerical reference. The Ultimate Reality is One without a second, though the Aspects of the Absolute may prove different in different eyes. The Unity of the Ultimate Reality carries a similarity to the integer of mathematical conception, denoting Himself as the Object of worship (Sri Krishna), and connoting His *Shakti* in her three aspects and her transformations and products. Under relationship, therefore, come all those parts of the teaching of the Bhagavata that reveal the knowledge of the subjective nature of Sri Krishna, the subjective

nature of His *Shakti* or power, in all her three aspects, and the subjective nature of the activities of the different aspects of power.

Under *abhidheya* or function are included all those parts of the teaching of Srimad Bhagavata, which reveal the nature of transcendental worship, and, negatively, of the activity of aversion to Sri Krishna.

Under *proyojana* or fruit are included those portions of the teaching of Srimad Bhagavata, that deal with *prema* or spiritual love and negatively with *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (material utility), *kāma* (lust) and *moksha* (merging in the Absolute).

These definitions of relationship, function and fruit are supplied by Sri Jiva Goswami in his 'Tattvasandarbhā' as a preliminary to his comparative treatment of the theme of the Srimad Bhagavata, under those respective heads. The conception of relationship, function and fruit differs in the case of the followers of the different methods of search of the truth.

SAMBANDHA OR RELATIONSHIP

The epistemological considerations detailed above on the lines of the study of Sri Jiva Goswami, can alone enable us to understand in any rational form, the genesis, of the misconceptions that have been engendered by empiric thinking about the Nature of the Divine Personality (*Purushottama*) that is revealed in the Upanisads, and, in an unambiguous form, in Srimad Bhagavata. Srimad Bhagavata targets the Acme of Personality (*Purushottama*) in Sri Krishna.¹¹ The Worship of Sri

Krishna is the only full-fledged, unadulterated function of all souls, the only complete theistic worship. All other forms of worship represent the infinity of gradations of approach towards this complete worship. Pure theism, involving active reciprocal relationship of the soul with the Divinity, does not begin till there is actual realisation of the Transcendental Personality of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. The degree of this realisation corresponds to that of the loving aptitude of His worship. The Proper Figure of Sri Krishna (Swayamrupa) is identical with the Entity of Krishna, and is One without a second. There is an infinity of Aspects of the Divine Figure that emanate from the Figure-in-Himself (Swayamrupa). These plural Aspects of the Divine Figure are of the nature of Identities, Manifestations, Expansions,. Plenary Parts, Plenary Parts of Parts, Descending Divinities (*Avataras*). These Divine Aspects, Who are part and parcel of the Divinity in His fulness, are worshipped by the corresponding aptitudes of love of Their respective worshippers.

Sri Krishna is possessed of infinite power (*shakti*). Three aspects of His *shakti* are distinguishable by the individual soul.¹² These three aspects are *Swarupa-shakti*, *jīva-shakti* and *māyā-shakti*.

The power of Sri Krishna stands to Him in the attributive reference. The personality of *shakti* is, therefore, that of the counter whole of the Absolute in her three aspects and their transformations. The relationship of service subsists between Sri Krishna and His power in all her aspects and transformations.

The infinite Aspects of the Divine Personality Himself, emanating from the Figure-in-Himself (*Swayamrupa*), are related to Sri Krishna as Servitor Divinities Who are possessors of power.

These Divine Persons show an order of classification into the categories of *Swayamprakāsha* (Manifestation-in-Himself), *Tadekatmarupa* (Essentially Identical Figure) and *Abesharupa* (The Figure of Divine Superimposition). Of these, *Swayamprakāsha* is, as it were, the other self of *Swayamrupa*, and is also One without a second. *Tadekātmarupa* and *Abesharupa* are multifarious. The account of the Divine Personality in all His Aspects is detailed in ‘Vrihad-Bhagavatamrita’ of Sri Sanatana Goswami summarised in Ch. Ch. *Madhya*, chapter 20, verses 165-374. Each of these Divine Persons possesses His own absolute realm (*Vaikuntha*) where He is served by the infinity of His servitors. These *Vaikunthas* transcend the countless worlds of finite existence constituting the realm of the deluding power (*māyā*).

Sri Krishna is possessed of 64 Divine Excellences (*Aprākṛita-gunas*). Sri Narayana, the Supreme Object of reverential worship, possesses 60 of the full perfections of Divine Excellence. Brahmā and Rudra, who wield the delegated powers of mundane creation and destruction, possess 55 Excellences, but not in their full divine measure. Individual souls (*jivas*) possess 50 of the Excellences of Krishna in an infinitesimal measure.¹³ These concrete details are revealed by the *Puranas* and elaborated in the works of the Goswamis.

The clue to the Supreme Excellence of the Personality of Sri Krishna is supplied by the principle of *Rasa* which is defined by Sri Rupa as “that ecstatic principle of concentrated deliciousness that is tasted by Sri Krishna and in sequel reciprocated by the serving individual soul, on the plane that transcends mundane thought.”¹⁴ Sri Krishna is the Figure-in-Himself of the whole compass of the nectarine principle of *Rasa* (*Akhilaras āmritamurti*).¹⁵ The Figure of Krishna excels all other Aspects of the Divine Personality by being the Supreme Repository of all the *Rasas*.¹⁶

The Supreme Posseor of power, Sri Krishna is inseparably coupled with His *antaranga-shakti* or power inhering in His Own proper Figure. Srimad Bhagavata refers to the service of a particular Gopee (lit, one who is fully eligible for the service of Sri Krishna) being preferred by Sri Krishna to those of all the other Gopees.¹⁷ In other words *Swarupa* or *antaranga-shakti* is one and all-perfect. She is the “predominated Absolute.” She has her own specific figure, viz., that of Sri Rādhikā. The two aspects of *Swarupa-shakti*, namely, *tatasthā-shakti* and *māyā* or *bahirangā-shakti*, reveal themselves in the intermediate and outer regions of the Divine Figure. Jivas or individual souls are detachable infinitesimal emanations of the *tatasthā-shakti*, sharing the essence of the plenary spiritual power. Individual souls appear on the border-line between the inner and outer zones of divine power. They have no *locus standi* in their nascent or *tatastha* state. They are eternally exposed to the opposite attractions of *Swarupa-shakti* and *māyā-shakti* at the two poles. Their proper affinity

is with *Swarupa-shakti*, but they are susceptible to be overpowered by *māyā-shakti*, at their option. If they choose to be the subservients of *māyā-shakti*, they are subjected to ignorance of their proper nature which results in confirmed aversion to the service of Sri Krishna. In this manner is brought about the deluded condition of individual souls who sojourn in the realm of *māyā*. The constitutions of individual souls in their nascent state and the realm of *māyā* are comparable to the outer penumbral and shadowy zones respectively of the sun, while the position of *antarangā-shakti* is like the inner ball of light which is the proper abode of the Sun-God who corresponds to Sri Krishna.

Individual souls are detachable infinitesimal emanations of the marginal power located on the border-line and exposed to the opposite pulls of *Swayupa* and *māyā-shaktis*. They are distinct from the plenary emanations, manifestations and multiples of *Swarupa-shakti* on the one hand and from the products of *māyā shakli* on the other.

The individual soul in his nascent marginal position, is confronted with the alternative of choice between subserviency to the plenary power on the one hand and apparent domination over the deluding power on the other. When he chooses the latter alternative, he forgets his relationship of subserviency to the inner power and his subserviency to Sri Krishna through such subserviency. It is never possible for the conditioned soul to understand the nature of the service of Sri Krishna that is rendered by His inner power. There is, therefore, categorical distinction between the function

of individual souls and of the inner power even on the plane of service. Superficial readers of the commentary of Sridharaswami on the Bhagavata are liable to miss the importance of this distinction which has not been explicitly stated by the commentator. If any person is led to suppose the function of individual souls to be identical with that of the inner power, on the strength of the brevity of Sridhara, he is liable to fall into the error of *philanthropism*.

Neither should Sridhara Swami be regarded as belonging to the school of exclusive monism, which is the contention of certain scholars of the impersonalistic school. Sridharaswami has described with true esoteric insight the functions of Rama and other extensions of the figure Sri Rādhikā, the plenary inner power, in his commentary on the Bhagavata. He is the authoritative commentator of the Eternal Leela of the Divine Personality in His different Aspects and *Avotaras*.¹⁸ Sridharaswami belongs historically to the school of Vishnuswami, the pro-pounder of the school of *Suddhādwaita*, and professes unalloyed devotion to Nrisingha Vishnu.

The reticence of Sridharaswami has been supplied by the *Achintyabhedābheda* system propounded by Mahaprabhu Sri Krishna Chaitanya. In the works of Sri Rupa, Sanatana, Jiva and Krishnadasa Kaviraja and the commentaries of Sri Viswanatha Chakravarty, the subject of the working of the inner power and individual souls has been treated in all its details in pursuance of the *Achintyabhedābheda* doctrine. This constitutes the most distinctive contribution of Gaudiya *Vaishnavism*

to the cause of pure theism. The clue to the comparative study of the working of power on the transcendental plane is supplied by the account of the *Rāsa* dance in Srimad Bhagavata. The system of *Suddhādwaita* is not incompatible with Gaudiya *Vaishnavism* in spite of its reticence on this particular aspect. Neither Ramanuja nor Madhwa has treated the subject of the functioning of power in such elaborate manner.

When the individual soul chooses the alternative of unreserved subserviency to the inner power, he has access to the service of the untampered Personality of the Absolute. The *kaivalya* state,¹⁹ mentioned in Srimad Bhagavata, is the state of unalloyed devotion to the untampered Personality of the Absolute. This is also explained in that sense in Sridharaswami's commentary. This unalloyed service, which was promulgated by the school of Vishnuswami, to which Sridharaswami belongs, forms the basis of the teaching of Srimad Bhagavata.

Exclusive monists imagine that the figure of the object of worship exists only in the mundane world and that in the final position there is also no activity of worship. In other words, they deny the possibility of the *Leelā* or the Eternal Transcendental Activities of Sri Krishna. Srimad Bhagavata flatly denies this groundless contention in the most explicit terms.²⁰ There is total absence of all mundane reference in the transcendental activity of *Suddhā-bhakti*. Exclusive monists deny the possibility of the total absence of all mundane reference in transcendental manifestation. It is absurd to class Sridharaswami, who is the standard commentator of

transcendental *Leelā* described in Srimad Bhagavata, with the exclusive monists who deny the very possibility of transcendental activity.

The word activity is not expressive of *Leelā*. It corresponds to *kriyā* or mundane activity. Transcendental activity has neither beginning nor end. There is, of course, relativity in *Leelā* but it is not the unwholesome relativity of mundane activity or *kriyā*. The notion that *Leelā* can have, an end or termination is due to ignorant confusion between the conceptions of *Leelā* and *kriyā*. *Suddhā-bhakti* belongs to the category of *Leelā*. In Vrindavana the gopees serve Sri Krishna by unconventional amorous love. The super-excellence of this service cannot be admitted if the absolutely wholesome nature of all unalloyed activity on the plane of Vraja is disbelieved on principle by one's ignorant perverse judgment.

The function of conditioned souls is of two kinds. The function that is provided by the '*Varnāshrama*' system for conditioned souls, is not opposed to *Suddhā-bhakti*. Srimad Bhagavata has treated the '*Varnāshrama*' system from the point of view of unalloyed devotion. Thereby it has provided an intelligent way of viewing the situation of conditioned souls during their sojourn to the mundane world. The spiritual value of the '*Varnāshrama*' system is due to the fact that it admits the possibility of the activity of conditioned souls being endowed with reflected spiritual quality by being directed towards the unalloyed service of the Absolute on the transcendental plane. It is the purpose of the '*Varnāshrama*' regulation to impart this direction to the activity of conditioned

souls. The crucial nature of this theistic purpose of the ‘*Varanashrama*’ arrangement, is fully treated in *Srimad Bhagavata*,²¹ It is not explicitly treated in any other *Shastric* work.

Mahaprabhu Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the great exponent of the unalloyed spiritual function of all souls in its highest developed state. His teaching is identical with that of *Srimad Bhagavata*. It is in agreement with the principle of *kaivalya* of *Suddhādwaita* school to which Sridharaswami belongs. But the *kaivalya* (exclusivism) of the *Bhagavata* is wholly different from the conception of merging in the Brahman of impersonalistic *kevalādwaitawada*.

ABHIDHEYA OR FUNCTION

The nature of the eternal function of all unalloyed individual souls has been indicated above. Bhag. 1-2-6 declares *Bhakti* or service of the *Adhokshaja* (transcendental) *Bhagavan* (Absolute Person possessed of all attributes) as the function of all individual souls in their pure spiritual state. ‘*Bhaktirasamritasindhu*’ states that function of *Suddhā-bhakti* is uncontaminated with mundane intellectual, utilitarian, ethical or unethical activity²² *Suddhā- bhakti* is the only proper function of all unalloyed individual souls and is located on the plane of transcendence. But all animation is potentially eligible for the transcendental service of the Absolute. ‘*Vishnu Purna*’ states that conduct, enjoined by ‘*Varnāshrama*’ system, derives all its value from the fact that its only object is the spiritual service of Vishnu.²³

Bhagavata 11-17 & 18 distinguishes between the function the *Paramahansa* and the activities of conditioned souls enjoined by the '*Varnāshrama*' system, '*Varnāshrama*' life is not the unalloyed spiritual life that is led by fully liberated souls. It is the stage preparatory to such life. Neither is it on a par with the life of unmixed sensuousness that is led by people outside the '*Varnāshrama*' society. Every form of activity of conditioned souls outside the '*Varnāshrama*' system is inspired by meaningless malicious hostility to the Absolute. All such activity is necessarily atheistical. This mundane world is the congenial sphere for the practice of the deluded dominating activity that is coveted by conditioned souls for practising active aversion towards the Absolute. The conditions for such activity are supplied by the deluding power. They constitute the realm of nescience, spiritual ignorance or *achit*. But as soon as the activity of *chit*, or uneclipsed cognition, is aroused in the spiritual essence of the misguided soul, it dissipates by its appearance such wrong addiction to the ignorant activities of this world and also the susceptibility of being tempted by the deluding power.

There is no common ground between unalloyed spiritual function and the activity of conditioned souls in the grip of nescience. The one does not dove-tail into the other. It is for this reason that the unalloyed spiritual function can never be understood by the resources of the archaeologists, historians, allegorists, philosophers, etc., of this world. Such empiric speculations tamper the transcendental Personality of the Absolute. They belong to the realm of nescience and constitute the

active denial of the Entity of the Absolute. By indulging in such speculations our spiritual nature, is deprived of its proper function.

Conduct enjoined by the *Varnāshrama* system is calculated to counteract the inherent atheistical trend of all worldly activities which are unavoidable in the conditioned state. The distinction between the deliberate atheistical activity of misguided souls, the guided activity of persons belonging to *Varnāshrama* society and the unalloyed spiritual function of fully liberated souls or *paramahansas*, is hinted in such texts as ‘*Mundaka*’ 3-1-2, ‘*Svet.*’ 4/6/7, ‘*Bhāgavata*’ 11/11/6.

Activities that are prompted by the urge for sensuous enjoyment create the discordant diversity of this world. One who is addicted to worldly enjoyment has a deluded way of looking at everything. When such a person is established in the proper activity of his unalloyed spiritual nature towards his Transcendental Master, the only Recipient of all willing service in the eternal world, the true view of everything is revealed to his serving vision. There can be no ignorance and misery if the world is viewed aright.

The urge for sensuous enjoyment expresses itself in the institutions of family and society of worldly-minded persons. They are the traps of the deluding energy. But these very traps are used as instruments of service of the Absolute by the awakened soul. The hymns of the Bhagavata always reveal the eternal service of the Absolute on the highest plane, identical with the Personality of Sri Gaursundara, to the enlightened soul. I may refer in this connection to the interpretation of the

Bhagavata that has been supplied by the commentaries of the Gaudiya Vaishnava School. We read in those commentaries that the hymns of Bhagavata 11/5/33-34, which seem to be in praise of Sri Ramachandra as the ideal monogamous husband, are in praise of Sri Krishna Chaitanya. This is not an instance of twisting the meaning of a text to suit the whim of the commentator. The language of Srīmad Bhagavata reveals its true meaning only to the enlightened soul. That meaning is very different from what even the most renowned linguists may suppose it to be in their blind empiric vanity.

The Bhagavata gives the highest position to the service of Sri Krishna by the gopees (spiritual milkmaids of Vrindavana). In its account of the *Rāsa* dance (circular amorous dance), it gives the clue to the distinctive nature of the services of Sri Rādhikā and other milkmaids.²⁴

Sri Krishna is served by Sri Rādhikā by herself and simultaneously by her multiple bodily forms in the shapes of the residents of Vraja. The services of the other milkmaids, of Nanda and Yasoda, —of Sridam and Sudam, —of all the associates and servitors of Krishna in Vraja, are part and parcel of the service of Sri Rādhikā. Sri Gurudeva belongs to this inner group of the servitors. He is the Divine Manifested Entity for disclosing the forms and activities of all eternal servitors of Sri Krishna. The function of Sri Gurudeva is a fundamental fact in the *Leelā* of Vraja where Sri Krishna is served as the emporium of all the *Rasas*. The servitors of Vraja minister to the gratification of

the senses of Krishna in every way. Sri Gurudeva is the Divine exciting Agent of the serving activity of Vraja.

The nature of Transcendental Vraja *Leelā* is liable to be misunderstood by the empiric study of the Bhagavata. The limit of empiric inference is reached by the speculations of the *paroksha* method. By the abandonment of empiricism, represented by the *aparoksha* method, the Brahman and Paramatmā conceptions are realised. But these also are not objects of worship. We have already seen that the activity of service is possible only on the plane of the *adhokshaja*, which yields the realisation of the Majestic Personality of the Absolute as Sri Narayana. *Aprakrita-Vraja-Leelā*, the central topic of the Bhagavata is the highest form of *adhokshaja* realisation.

The dalliances of Sri Krishna in Vraja have a close resemblance to unconventional mundane amour. Sexuality, in all its forms, is an essentially repulsive affair on the mundane plane. It is, therefore, impossible to understand how the corresponding transcendental activity can be the most exquisitely wholesome service of the Absolute. It is, however, possible to be reconciled, to some extent, to the truth of the narrative of the Bhagavata if we are prepared to admit the reasonableness of the doctrine that the mundane world is the unwholesome reflection of the realm of the Absolute, and that this world appears in a scale of values that is the reverse of that which obtains in the reality of which it happens to be the shadow.

In the form of the narrative of the Bhagavata, the Transcendental Vraja *Leelā* manifests its descent to the

plane of our mundane vision in the symbolic shapes resembling those of the corresponding mundane events. If we are disposed, for any reason, to underestimate the transcendental symbolism of the narrative of the Bhagavata, we are unable to avoid unfavourable and hasty conclusions regarding the nature of the highest, the most perfect and the most charming form of the loving service of the Divinity to which all other forms of his service are as the avenues of approach.

Sexuality symbolises the highest attraction and the acme of deliciousness of transcendental service. In the amorous performances of Vraja, the secrets of the eternal life are exhibited in their uncovered perfection in the activity of the love of unalloyed souls.

We may notice, in passing, certain significant differences, that should prevent any hasty conclusions, between Sri Krishna's amorous dalliances and mundane sex activity. In Vraja *Leelā* Sri Krishna is under the age of eleven years. The spiritual milkmaids never conceive and bear children to Sri Krishna.²⁵ The children born of Sri Krishna belong to the less perfect *Leelā* of Dwaraka. To suppose it to be the product of anthropomorphic speculation is the greatest offence against the, Divine *Leelā*. The Bhagavata declares the realisation of the true nature of the Vraja *Leelā*, in pursuance of the *shrāuta* method, as the only remedy of all conditioned souls afflicted with the disease of mundane sexuality.

The conventions of civilised society for the regulation of sexual relationship attain their ethical perfection in the *Varnāshrama* arrangement. A person belonging to the *Varnāshrama* society can readily appreciate the

transparent moral purity of life on the plane of Vaikuntha and Ayodhya, although he cannot understand their esoteric nature. In those realms, Godhead poses as the ideal monogamous husband. Ethical restrictions of sex relationship, that are imposed at Ayodhya by the form of the monogamous marriage are relaxed at Dwarka where the Absolute manifests His fuller Personality and appears in the guise of the polygamous husband. The conventions of marriage are abrogated, in Vrindavana where the sanctity of wedlock becomes secondary and a foil to the amorous exploits of Sri Krishna in His Fullest Manifestation.

The spiritual function in its unalloyed form has a real correspondence to mundane activity, with the distinction that its objective, mode of activity and instrumental are unalloyed spirit. This makes the inconceivable difference between spiritual function and mundane activity. It also supplies a kind of explanation of the fact that the activities in Vraja corresponding to the most wholesome performances on the mundane plane are, comparatively speaking, the least pleasing in the sight of Sri Krishna.

The sole object of all spiritual activity is gratification of the senses of Sri Krishna. When Sri Krishna is pleased, His servitors experience unmixed joy. This is the reverse of what happens in this world. Activity, that yields enjoyment to the person indulging in the same, alone possesses attraction on the mundane plane. But such selfish pleasure is never coveted on the plane of spiritual service. The plane of mundane sensuous enjoyment is thereby sharply differentiated from that of spiritual

service in respect of the quality and orientation of their respective activities. Desire for mundane enjoyment is potentially, but uncongenially, inherent in the soul, and it can be cultivated at his option. The practice of it, however, leads to the abeyance of his truly natural serving function. Modern civilisation does not suspect its own degradation in seeking exclusively for mundane enjoyment. The mind and body of man have a natural aptitude for sensuous gratification, and all his ordinary mundane activities are practised for its realisation.

For this reason very few people in this world can grasp the significance of the statement of the Bhagavata, and other spiritual scriptures that the unalloyed essence of the soul has a natural aptitude for the exclusive service of the Absolute which is utterly incompatible with mundane sensuous living.

In the transcendental service of the Absolute the aptitude, form, as well as ingredients, are uncovered absolutely wholesome living reality. In this complete uncovering of the proper nature of a person by the perfection of his serving function, he is enabled to realise fully the abiding interests of his real entity. Such unconditional submissive activity towards the Absolute is also necessarily identical with the realisation of the perfect freedom of the soul expressing itself in the highest forms of his serving activity.

PRAYOJANA OR FRUIT

In the position of complete realisation of the activity of the uncovered soul a person becomes eligible for participation in the Transcendental Pastime or *Leelā* of

Sri Krishna (Bhag. 1/7/10 and Sridhara's commentary on the same). The realisation of this all-absorbing love for Sri Krishna is the FRUIT or *Prayojana* of the eternal spiritual activities of all pure souls.

Sri Krishna is directly served by His plenary inner power as His only consort. The residents of Vraja, the plane of this inner service, are extensions of the figure of the plenary Divine Power. They are the Divine Participants in the Divine Pastime, as all those entities display the nature of the full servitorship of the Divinity. Not so the souls of men, all of whom are susceptible to the temptations offered by the deluding face of the plenary power for preventing the access of the nonresidents of Vraja to the *Arena* of the Divine Pastime. We, the sojourners of this mundane plane, have been, thus kept out of the plane of Vraja by the deluding face of the Divine Power.

Individual souls who are not part and parcel of the inner plenary power have no automatic access to the plane of Vraja. They are also lacking in spontaneous love for Sri Krishna. It is possible for them to attain to the love of Sri Krishna only as accepted subservients of the inhabitants of Vraja.

The first appearance of the spontaneous loving aptitude for Sri Krishna in an individual soul elevates him to the condition of the *madhyam-bhagavata* (mediocre servant of Sri Krishna) as distinct from the condition of the *mahā-bhaguvata* who possesses love for Sri Krishna in the plenary measure which makes him eligible for participating, as a subservient of the

servitors of Vraja, in the loving activities of the highest sphere of service.

In proportion as the hesitant, reverential, serving disposition of the *madhyam-bhagavata* is gradually developed, by the practice of pure service, into one of subserviency to the inhabitants of Vraja in their unconventional performances of the highest loving services of Sri Krishna, such hesitation and distance are superseded by growing confidence and proximity to the Object of one's highest love. Thereby the spiritual vision is perfected, in conformity with the natural capacity of an individual, and he is enabled to realise the full function of his specific spiritual self.

Goloka-Vrindavana is realisable in the symbolic Vrindavana that is open to our view in this world by all persons whose love has been perfected by the mercy of the inhabitants of Transcendental Vraja, and not otherwise. The grossest misunderstanding of the subject of the *Vraja-Leelā*, of Sri Krishna is inevitable if these considerations are not kept in view. All persons, under the sinister influence of the deluding power of Nescience, are subject to such misunderstanding in one form or another. They are fated to see nothing but a mundane tract of country in the terrestrial (*Bhauma*) Vrindavana, and the practice of the grossest forms of debauchery in the Vraja Pastimes of Sri Krishna.

But the true esoteric vision of the *mahā-bhagavata* is very different from realisation of deluded humanity. It is described in Bhagavata 10/35/9 and sequel, and also in '*Chaitanyacharitamrita Mudhya-Leelā*,' 17-55

PART II

“When He (Sri Krishna-Chaitanya) catches sight of a wood, it appears to Him in the likeness of Vrindavana; when He looks at a hill, He mistakes it for Govardhana.’

THE END.

“A man may do well to rid himself of the shackles of the world, by listening to, reading well and deliberation of the Srimad Bhagavatam, the stainless Purana, which is so dear to the Vaishnavas, in which there is sung the only true and flawless knowledge of the first rate devotees of God, known as Paramahangsas, and in which there has been discovered the complete cessation of fruit-bearing activities, attended with Divine wisdom, apathy to the world and devotion to God”.

(Srimad Bhagavatam, 12/13/18)

FOOTNOTES

¹ Bhag. 10/14/3, 10/14/29, 10/2/32, 10/14/4, 11/20/31, 1/2/6; Bh. R.S.P.B. 1/9, 1/10.

² Bhag. 1/3/28; C.C. Adi. 5/142.

³ Bhag. 1/18/19.

⁴ Svet. 1/3, 1/16, 4/5; Geeta 4/6, 7/4-5, 9/8-10 Bhag. 2/9/33, 2/5/13; Vish. P. 1/12/69 6/7/61; C.C. M. 20/252-257.

⁵ Bhag. 1/2/11.

⁶ Bhag. 1/2/6.

⁷ Bhag. 1/1/2.

⁸ Bhag. 2/9/33.

⁹ Bhag. 10/30/24.

¹⁰ Bhag. 1/2/11.

¹¹ Bhag. 1/3/28.

¹² Svet. 1/3, 1/16, 4/5, Vish. P. 6/7/61.

¹³ Ch. Ch. M. 23/65-80 (Bh. R. S. D. B. 11-25).

¹⁴ Bh. R. S. D. L. 5/79.

¹⁵ Bhag. 10/43/17.

¹⁶ Bh. R. S. P. B. 2/32.

¹⁷ Bhag. 10/30/24.

¹⁸ Bhag. 1/7/10, and Sridhara's commentary on the same.

¹⁹ Bhag. 1/7/23.

²⁰ Bhag. 1/7/10; Ibid.

²¹ Bhag. 12/13/18.

²² Bh. R. S. P. B. 1/9.

²³ Vish. P. 3/8/9.

²⁴ Bhag. 10/30/24.

²⁵ Bhag. 10/29.

