THE RELIGION
OF
LOVE AND DEVOTION

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LAKSHMINATH BEZBAROA

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MAHESWAR NEOG

1968

ASAM SAHITYA SABHA

THE RELIGION OF LOVE AND DEVOTION

Four Lectures on the Bhakti Movement of India

LAKSHMINATH BEZBAROA

Edited by

DR MAHESWAR NEOG,

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU PROFESSOR, GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

1968

ASAM SAHITYA SABHA

JORHAT ASSAM INDIA

THE RELIGION OF LOVE AND DEVOTION, incorporating *History of Vaishnavism in India* and *Rāsalīlā of Shri Krishna*, published by Baroda State Press, 1934, and two other essays on the bhakti cult, by Laksminath Bezbaroa, edited by Dr Maheswar Neog, JawaharIal Nehru Professor of Assamese, Gauhati University, and published by Hariprasad Neog, General Seeretary, Asam Sahitya Sabha, Chandrakanta Handiqui Bhavan, Jorhat, 1968

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PUBLICATIONAL

Under the soft impression, for which Lakshminath Bezbaroa himself is responsible through his autobiography, *Mor Jɨvan-sōwaran*, that the Sāhitya-rathi, as litterateurs have loved to call him, was born in 1868, Asam Sāhitya Sabhā, the premier cultural and literary organisation of Assam, has undertaken to celebrate the centenary of his birth from 5 October 1968 for a year.

It is as a part of the centenary programme that Bezbaroa's works have been collected and are being published through the instrumentality of the Sabha. The *Bejbaruwā-granthāvalī*, presently to be published by the Sāhitya Prakash of Gauhati will cover almost all of Bezbaroa's works in Assamese. The present volume covers four lectures prepared by this great exponent of Assam Vaishnavism, the first two having already been published by the Department of Education of the Baroda State as early as 1934 after they had been delivered there in the State Durbar. Srimati Aruna Mukerjea, the eldest daughter of Bezbaroa, has been very kind to permit the Sabha to republish the two Baroda lectures and send typescript copies for the purpose. Srimati Ratna Baruah, the second daughter of the Sāhitya-rathi, was pleased to send us the original manuscripts of the two lectures on bhakti-mārga, which probably were prepared but were not actually delivered anywhere. The Centenary Celebration Committee requested Professor Maheswar Neog, himself a great and prolific writer on Vaishnava faith and philosophy, to edit the four lectures under one cover. We are glad that Dr Neog took up the work. He was helped in his task by Shri Karunakanta Gogoi, M.L.A., who sent him the two original publications of the Baroda State Education Department, by Professor Dr Jogiraj Basu of Gauhati University, who spotted a few obscure references, and by Dr Mukunda Madhava Sharma of Gauhati University, who corrected the proofs. Asam Sāhitya Sabhā is put under a debt of deep gratitude by these ladies and gentlemen. I must also say thanks to our printer, Shri Kalicharan Pal of Nabajiban Press, and Shri J. N. Goswami, who collected the autograph copy of the last two lectures from Srimati Baruah for Dr Neog.

Chandrakanta Handiqui Bhavan
5 October 1968

HARIPRASAD NEOG,
General Secretary,
Asam Sāhitya Sabhā

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INTRODUCTION

by

MAHESWAR NEOG

Lakshminath Bezbaroa is the most outstanding personality in modern Assamese literature. Almost all literary men during the last half-century (up to 1940) looked upon him as their master and considered him as a sort of guiding star. This overall influence of his, of course, began to diminish even towards the last few years of his life and has suffered much since after his death. No longer do the literary men of to-day say: 'Others abide our question, thou art free!'

Let me go here a little back into the early decades of modern Assamese literature. The Burmese wars at the beginning of the last century dealt a serious blow on Assam's man-power and, no less, on its glorious traditions and intellectual resources. These devastating invasions of the Burmese ended with the surreptitious annexation of Assam into British territories in India in 1828. It almost came like a veritable deluge. Primarily, Assam found herself in political bondage. But another setback of a much more vital nature followed in the form of the ousting of the native tongue from the schools and law courts of the State in the year 1836. Thirty-six years elapsed before the Assamese language could be restored to its rightful place, mainly through the efforts of the Baptists from America, who saw very clearly that they could not propagate their faith unless through Assamese, and of Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, who felt that much of the energy of teachers and young students was wasted upon an unequal fight with a foreign tongue, and in a small treatise proved that Assamese could serve as a powerful medium of expression for even scientific and philosophical thought.

The missionary zeal of the Baptists effected a rejuvenation of the Assamese language. They ran a periodical, published

grammars, compiled a dictionary, produced a whole gamut of Christian literature. To keep the trail blazing, Gunabhiram Barua and Hemchandra Barua started, beside their individual achievements in history, biography, travelogue, essay and lexicon, new journals, which really ushered in the modern period of Assamese language and literature. Lakshminath Bezbaroa drank deep at the fount of this modern pioneer literature, and cut out an individual stream of his own.

Lakshminath was born in 1868 (as he states in his autobiography, but really in 1864) on the Lakshmī-pūrṇimā day in a boat on the mighty Brahmaputra at a place called Āhatguri. And he seems to have inherited the very strength of this river. His father was a Munsiff, and was then moving under orders of transfer from Nowgong to Barpeta in the Kamrup district. Lakshminath enjoyed his childhood in several important towns of Assam. At Barpeta his heart reverberated with the prayer services chanted by the Vaiṣṇavas in the famous kirtan-ghar there, once set up by the great poet-saint Mādhavadeva in the sixteenth century. He took a childlike pleasure in loitering about the streets of Tezpur, said to have been the city of the puranic king, Bāṇāsura. He enjoyed the sylvan beauty of the small town of North Lakhimpur. It is there that his childlike curiosity sought delight in the mingling of pigments done by a local maker of earthen images, who presented him with a clay-made instrument of music. It is here, again, that the future dramatist in Lakshminath and exponent of Vaiṣṇava religion and literature took a very keen interest in attending *bhāonās*, dramatic performances of the monks from the Vaiṣṇava colleges in the Mājuli island on the Brahmaputra. The future story-teller's imagination took flight when as a child he listened with rapt attention to grandma's tales of tigers and foxes that could exchange thoughts like human beings, and of ghosts and spirits.

Lakshminath passed his high school days at Sibsagar, which had been the place of the Bezbaroas, the royal physicians of the old Āhom court. The precocious youth would often steal away from his playmates and pore over time-soiled folios of old religious manuscripts. As an Extra Assistant Commissioner, Dinanath Bezbaroa, Lakshminath's father, was looked upon with awe and admiration by all around him. As a deeply devout man, he was also a leader of society. He encouraged education,

and he and his sons established several schools at different places and he a Bālyāshrama at Sibsagar. He used to read out and explain to children passages from the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. Thus under the able guidance of his own father and the benign influence of a congenial atmosphere, Lakshminath was unconsciously preparing for his future career as the leading literary man of his age in general and as an effective exponent of Assam Vaiṣṇavism in particular.

Having passed the Entrance Examination in 1886 and securing a Government scholarship, he read in the Ripon, City and Assembly Colleges in Calcutta. His College career was rather indifferent. He, however, graduated in Arts in 1890, and was offered the post of an Extra Assistant Commissioner, which he was only too glad to decline.

When Bezbaroa was a student of the Third Year Class, he got the opportunity of reading English literature widely, and this influenced him a great deal. A new light, as it were, was focussed upon his crystal-like mind, and the light suffered total reflection. Some of his compatriots, then students like him in Calcutta, had the same experience. They all reacted in the same manner, and felt the need of doing something for their own language and literature, which were still very far away from the highways and byways of modern literary movements. This was a sort of insular patriotism, which boiled in these youthful hearts at the impact of foreign influence, and forged itself into a definite national programme in the field of literature. An Assamese Language Improvement Society, Asamīyā Bhāṣār Unnati-sādhinī Sabhā, was brought into being in Calcutta in August 1888, and the following year saw the birth of an Assamese journal, *Jonākī*, published from the same city. This year, 1888, goes down into the history of Assam's literature as 1798 did in the literary history of England. That year Bezbaroa took seriously to literature, and began exercising his pen in several typical forms of composition at a time. The pioneers of this new literary movement in Assamese, including Bezbaroa and his friends, Chandrakumar Agarwala and Hemchandra Goswami, sought inspiration especially in the romantic poetry of England's early 19th century. They enunciated their programmes at the very beginning, and kept close to them. And in no other person were the ideals of the movement better fulfilled, as Dr Banikanta

Kakati has rightly pointed it out, than in Lakshminath Bezbaroa.

When Bezbaroa came back to Calcutta to study Law and for the M.A. degree, he did not succeed in doing anything tangible in either direction. He, however, succeeded in opening two new fronts of his life's fight during that slack season of his student career. His friendship with two young men of the Jorāsānko Tagore family ultimately resulted in his marriage with Prajnasundari Devi, daughter of Hemendranath Tagore of that illustrious family, though against all opposition of people at home. Secondly, his acquaintance with Bholanath Barooah, the Assamese merchant in Calcutta, developed into a close tie, and produced in him a strong business craze. Bezbaroa entered into timber business, first in partnership with Bholanath Barooah, then with Bard & Co., and finally on an independent scale at Sambalpur in Orissa, where he stayed till the last days of his life. He picked up the axe in right earnest but never forgot to wield the pen. Though he could not grind the former very well at times, the other was all the more facile.

The *Jonākī* was now long dead, but it revived like the phoenix in another form, the *Bāhī*, in 1909. This new monthly journal, edited by Bezbaroa, continued the traditions of the defunct *Jonākī*, produced batches of young writers and poets, to whom he was the literary master. He has been variously called Sāhitya-rathī, Sāhitya-samrāṭ and Rasarāja. And he was literally the director of Assamese literature specially since the first publication of the *Bāhī*. Whenever doubtful points in matters of language or literature, culture or religion arose, people looked up to him for proper directives; and although some might not agree with his verdict, what he said almost always carried the day. This was true even to the last few years of his life, when writing was getting to be a rare habit with him. He was elected president of the seventh plenary session of the Asam Sāhitya Sabhā, and was presented with an address of honour by the literary men of the State in the Sabhā's Sibsāgar session in 1930—a rare honour. One of his songs, 'A' mor āponār deś', which was originally written in a lighter vein, was adopted for use as "national anthem" in Assam till after the attainment of India's independence in 1947 when the greater idea of Indian nationhood was forged. When he passed away

on the banks of the Brahmaputra at Dibrugarh in 1938, the Assamese people were in all tears to lose one of the mightest sons of the Brahmaputra.

Bezbaroa's contributions to Assamese literature are manifold. He was a poet, story-teller, novelist, critic and essayist, all rolled into one. I do not claim that Bezbaroa ranked very high as a poet. But he is one of the leaders of the modern literary movement starting in Assam in the last decades of the nineteenth century, which movement was essentially poetical. Secondly, if his poetical compositions with an artistic finish are few and far between, the few fine ones must be printed in letters of gold. Very often, as he makes the confession, he did not mean to become a poet, and scribbled verses with an indifferent mind. He was one of the creators, if not the creator, of the artificial or literary ballad style in Assamese. He was also quite successful as a parodist and satirist in verse, and wrote a number of what are known as 'conventional verses'.

He was a pioneer as a story-teller too, and belonged to that transitional period of our literary history when grandma's tales were being gradually transformed into the modern short story. All the same, he was an excellent and charming story-teller, and retells many old fairy-tales, and narrates new ones to reflect realistically the tempo of life in Assam's towns and villages. A German journalist, Joseph Kalmer, happened to write to me for help in getting the English rendering of a few Assamese short stories for a story anthology in German. He immensely appreciated the artistic perfection of Bezbaroa's story, 'Bhadarī', as read in Dr B. K. Barua's English translation in his P. E. N. monograph, *Assamese Literature*, whereas the German journalist expressed doubts about, and gave strong criticism of, some of our young short storyists. I do not know if Kalmer is an acknowledged authority in literary criticism, but I cite this only to show how the cameo-like picture of Assamese life as painted by Bezbaroa appealed to an educated person in a distant part of the globe.

Bezbaroa gave us only one novel, *Padum Kũwarī*, with its background of the uprising of the Kāmrūp people against Āhom sovereignty under the leadership of two nobles, Haradatta and Vīradatta. This piece of historical fiction does not, of course, present a broad canvas, and afford but little scope for the

cevelopment of the requisite elements of a novel. But one can scarcely forget the few pen-pictures, like that of Vīradatta, which are done with light strokes of humour.

Of his historical dramas, the best, *Jayamati Kūwarī*, has been reproduced on the screen ; the other two, *Chakradhvajasiṁha* and *Belimār*, are both histories as well as dramas. His farces possess fine wit, subtle humour and often light satire. Of these, *Litikāi*, his first serious literary production in particular is a superb extravaganza with rich nonsensical humour providing boisterous laughter.

His biographies of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva, along with his occasional discourses on the pages of the *Bāhī* and other journals, throw an immense flood of light upon Vaiṣṇavism and the Vaiṣṇava literature of Assam. In this conection Bezbaroa's services are really great in value. He has through this class of his writings opened up the path for scientific study of Assam Vaiṣṇavism and, for that matter, the central strains of Assam's culture.

One of the great qualities of Bezbaroa's writings is his humour. Under the pseudonym, Kripābar Barbaruwā, Bezbaroa laid bare the idiosyncrasies of society, and even of the Assamese people as a whole. Endowed with Swiftian virility, he provides us with a hearty laughter. Incisive and pungent, his criticism is large-hearted and never bitter. It is pure and, often, boisterous body-laughter, and is not the outward expression of intellectual disturbance within.

Another main characteristic of Bezbaroa's is his inimitable literary style. If the literary belief that style is the man is true we get Bezbaroa conspicuously before us in his style and language—healthy in body and mind, aggressive yet loveable in nature, standing before the world like an undaunted Hercules full of confidence and faith in life, and rendering a significance to things that he touches.

The most outstanding feature, perhaps, of Bezbaroa's literary career is his innate and sometimes even inordinate love for his language and his native land called Assam. It is to his great credit that he fought many single-handed battles against the onslaughts of people who attempted to set Assamese language and culture at naught. Much of his literary energy, in fact, was spent on this front, but he came out always victorious at the end.

It is for this reason that he was considered as a national hero by the Assamese. To-day we no longer have to labour for establishing our identity or war against petty-minded slighters of our culture. And we must be grateful to Bezbaroa for this quiet atmosphere in which we can march abreast with other linguistic and cultural units of India. To those who are innocent of any knowledge of the strategic situation in which Bezbaroa applied his literary missiles on other people, he may look like a chauvinist and provincialist. But no cultured persons with a pride in their glorious traditions can remain inanimate when the sacred name of their forefathers is called in question. India is culturally like a strong and variegated carpet, the very beauty and strength of which depends npon the variety of the composite differences of texture. You cannot try to beautify the earpet by taking away its multi-coloured yarn.

Lakshminath Bezbaroa is best known and honoured most as an exponent of the Vaiṣṇava faith and philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva and of that saint's great contribntions to the culture of Assam. He was very well equipped for this task. He was born tc a family of devout Mahapuruṣhīyās, as the Vaiṣṇavas attached to Śaṅkardeva's school are called, which family under the able leadership of Lakshminath's father, Dinanath Bezbaroa Dāṅgarīyā, performed the daily and occasional Mahapuruṣhīyā rites on a grand scale and with meticulous care. It was a continuous programme of religious mnsic and disconrses, of dramatic performances and festivals. Dinanath Bezbaroa was such a passionately religious man that when he saw his own end fast approaching, he had a big marchandise boat built for him, made his way in that boat to the Vaiṣṇava temple, Kamalābārī-sattra, and died there in untold bliss. He wrote the life of Śaṅkaradeva and his companion saints and copied the book with great care for the two sattras at Barpetā and Kamalābārī. He used to lie flat on the ground in obeisance as soon as the tips of the tall trees of those holy places were sighted as he was approaching them from a great distance. It would thus not require much imagination to envisage to oneself the atmosphere of life in the family of the Bezbaroas. Lakshminath dived into and swam in this intensely Vaiṣṇava atmosphere and learnt many things as naturally as learning to breathe. He passed some of his tender years in Barpetā with its famous Mahapuruṣhīyā temple ; and later in

North Lakhimpur and other places he had large opportunities of knowing at first hand the practices of monks and witnessing their dramatic shows. When he came to Calcutta for college education he saw how modern scholarship was applied to the study of ancient literature. It was, in fact, a part of the programme declared by Asamīyā Bhāṣār Unnati-sādhinī Sabhā, formed by Bezbaroa and others for the resusciation of Assamese language and literature. Bezbaroa came vigorously in touch with the literature of Bengal on the one hand and of England on the other. Altogether this impact of Calcutta upon his youthful mind became fruitful in more ways than one.

The *Jonākī*, the journal which was to carry the programme of Asamīyā Bhāṣār Unnati-sādhinī Sabhā, paid its due attention to the age of Śaṅkaradeva and its literature. But the sail caught the wind only when Bezbaroa started his monthly *Bāhī* in 1909. It is interesting to note how he came to put in more and more matter about Śaṅkaradeva, Vaiṣhṇavism and Vaiṣhṇava saints and writers by way of editorials and independent essays. One of the significant features of the journal in this direction was the serial publication of a redaction of an old prose biography of Śaṅkaradeva and other saints in Volumes II-V ; and this brought much food to the modern reader too. But the importance thus given to the Śaṅkaradeva movement could not be tolerated by a section of people ; and this gave way to bitter controversies. These controversies may be said to have centered around two points : it Śaṅkaradeva had anything to do with the Chaitanya movement of Bengal ; and if Assamese Brāhmaṇ saints like Damodaradeva were not in the following of Śaṅkaradeva, a Kāyastha, Volumes XI and XII of the *Bāhī* (1920-21) are full of such controversial matter, which were hurled against writers in another journal, *Asam-pradīpikā*. At the beginning Bezbaroa was fighting all alone against the aggression of these writers ; but he was soon joined by a brilliant young professor of English, Banikanta Kakati ; and the battle brought easy victory on to the *Bāhī* side.

Already in 1911 Bezbaroa published a small volume, *Śaṅkaradeva* (in Assamese), the avowed purpose of which was to give a life-sketch of the saint-poet and discuss a few controversial points centering around that account, and to acquaint the reader with the beauty and content of Śaṅkaradeva's writings. Later on he made the statement that this book was his reply to

a number of questions put before him by the Gauhati branch of Asamīyā Bhāṣār Unnati-sādhinī Sabhā. It deals with the Śaṅkaradeva-Chaitanyadeva controvery and shows clearly that the Śaṅkaradeva movement was not an offshoot of Chaitanya Vaiṣhṇavism. Some of Bezbaroa's comments here on the writings of Śaṅkaradeva touch a high level of literary judgement and mark the glorious beginning of literary criticism in the Assamese language. In 1914 came out his *Śrī-śaṅkaradeva āru Śrī-mādhavadeva* (in Assamese), which is based on the old biographical literature of the Vaiṣhṇavas, on the lore of the Masters coming down in a strong oral tradition in the sattras (Vaiṣhṇava colleges) and on what he gathered from his own father. It is a piece of inspired work of sustained beauty. Written with a view to meeting needs of modern readers with their English education, it does not neglect the religious people, who do still adore this work as of much spiritual significanee.

In Volume VIII of the *Bāhī* (1917) Bezbaroa started a series of essays under a general caption, *Śrī-kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Volume XIV saw the beginning of another series, *Tattva-kathā*. These two groups of his essays on the Vaiṣhṇava faith and philosophy should perhaps go down the pages of our literary history as giving us the best in Lakshminath Bezbaroa. In addition to the comments made by him occasionally on the subject in the editorials of his journal, these essays represent his mature and serious thought. They do not have the bitterness of controversy or betray any note of light-hearted witticism which breaks at unexpected points in other otherwise serious writings of his. They are a testimony to his deep and wide range of study in kindred works. True that he does not enter into any academic discussion on Śaṅkaradeva's vedāntic school—whether it is advaitavāda or dvaitavāda or some other channelised view. All the same, he takes note of the fact that the Vaiṣhṇava saint leaned on the side of advaitavāda and even māyāvāda ; but then to Śaṅkaradeva the world was not unreal like "the horn of a hare or the fantasy created by a magician"; he followed the *Bhagavadgītā* to believe in saguṇa Brahman ; and to him no advaita mukti but bhakti was the most sought for goal. In these essays Bezbaroa drinks deep in the fountain of upanishadic seers' spiritualism on the one hand and of the beautiful creations of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva on the other. There are some very marvellous passages marked by

a rich and real creative urge and an excellent literary style. In all this he chooses to remain a mystic and a poet like the upanishadic ṛishis, rather than a systematic thinker, a seeker of beauty and sublimity rather than a critic. His range of study is wide and extends from the upanihṣhads down to Sir Oliver Lodge and Sri Aurobindo ; and his sensibilities too are sharp and subtle.

I am not aware of any writings of Bezbaroa in English other than what come in the following pages.[1] I doubt if he at all wrote for any English journal or newspaper althought we know that he occasionally wrote for Bengali magazines like Khirodchandra Raychaudhuri's *Mṛiṇmayī* on controversial issues.

Bezbaroa's daughter, Arunā, and son-in-law, Rajyaratna Satyavarata Mukerjea lived in the state of Baroda, where the latter was an officer of the Gaekwad. In that connection he came to Baroda and came in close contact with the Mahārājā. The Mahārājā impressed greatly by Bezbaroa's scholarship behind the timber dealer, requested him to deliver a series of two lectures. He chose for his subject a general account of Vaiṣhṇavism in India with particular reference to Assam and an interpretation of rāsa or hallīṣha sports of Kṛiṣhṇa with the gopīs of Vṛndāvana. He had already published several essays on the latter subject, which was much to his liking. The two lectures were delivered in 1934 in the Baroda durbār and was attended and much appreciated by the Mahārājā among others.[2] They were later published

[1] I have just received from Srimati Ratna Baruah a skit entitled 'Farce', written in English by Bezbaroa. This gives the 'action' of two rustic friends, Rāmu and Nitāi, meant for drawing room entertainment at Sambalpur. We have also a number of letters written in English by L.N.B. and some notes with comments on Sir Charles Elliot's views on Assam Vaiṣhṇavism.

[2] During the 1933 rains Bezbaroa came to Baroda to see his daughter and son-in-law there. He was invited to an At Home in the Gaekwad's Lakshmivilas Palace. The party was joined by about a hundred people. The Maharaja called Bezbaroa aside from among the gathering, had a chat and was so much charmed by the conversation covering just a few minutes that he decided to request the litterateur from Assam to come in the ensuing winter to deliver lectures on some aspects of Vaiṣhṇavism after he (the Gaekwad) returned from a tour in Europe. It was a rare honour, for it is only great persons like Rabindranath Tagore, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, Sir C. V. Raman and Dr R. G. Bhandarkar who were invited to give talks in the palace. Early in September the Maharaja was back in Baroda and the Department of Education wrote

by the Department of Education in the form of two small books. The first lecture on the history of Vaiṣhṇavism was later rendered into Assamese by Karunakanta Gogoi and was published in the *Bāhī* (vol. XVII, 1862 Śaka), then edited by Bezbaroa's nephew, Madhavchandra Bezbaroa. The two essays on bhakti-mārga were prepared as lectures (as it is clear from the fact that word was used in the body of the writing) to be delivered somewhere ; but they do not actually were so delivered. The original copy of these two essays have been received from Bezbaroa's second daughter, Srimati Ratnā Baruah of Dibrugarh, with whom he passed his last few years.

These four essays, done by no academician but by one who passed his life in the woods, felling trees and hewing logs for railways, are remarkable for their easy grasp of the subject, and a form of expression characterised by sincerity and self-confidence. Not used to writing widely in English, he had sometimes to struggle with words, but what he had to say comes out clear for the reader. I think I need not put my comments on these

to Bezbaroa reminding him of the Maharaja's expressed desire. Bezbaroa agreed to come, and set to writing out the two lectures he intended to deliver. The Department sent the formal invitation to lecture on 22 November 1933. Bezbaroa left Sambalpur on 2 December and delivered the first lecture on the history of Vaiṣhṇavism on 7 December. The lecture was attended besides His Highness Shrimant Maharaji Sayajirao Gaekwad, Sir V. T. Krishnamachari (Dewan), Bhate (Educational Commissioner), Mane Patil (Chief Secretary and Huzur Kamdar), Nadkarni (Dharmadhikari), Major Parab (Palace Officer) and other prominent State officials and the Professors of Baroda College. The Sar Suba and Bezbaroa's son-in-law, Mukerjea, introduced the speaking guest to the learned gathering. The first lecture was followed by the second on rāsalīlā. The Maharaja and others were all praise for the learned discourses.

Being invited by the Gujarat Division of All India Oratorial Association he delivered another lecture, The Cowherd of Vṛindāvana, on 10 January 1934 at Allahabad. This time it was his second son-in-law, Rohini Kumar Baruah, who introduced him to the audience. It is not known if the lecture was in written form or if it was put to writing later on.

Bezbaroa delivered an ex-tempore lecture on the Vaiṣhṇava faith in February 1937 when Sambalpur celebrated Ramakrishna Centenary and invited learned speakers to speak on different religions of the world. The lecture was in Bengali and covered nearly one hour.

pieces of writing as they themselves are presently being presented to the reader.[3]

I would try to give below a little guidance to the reader in finding out the original sources of the textual authorities cited by Bezbaroa in the following lectures. Of course, my attempt is bound to be perfunctory—considering the hurried time in my hand.

HISTORY OF VAISHNAVISM IN INDIA

Pages 18-19 Sāstras say that Dhyāna..... *Nāma-ghoṣā*, 399 ; *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, XII. 3. 52

19 Hari-nāma is sufficient..... *Kīrtana-ghoṣā*, Ajāmilopākhyāna, 37

ten kinds of nāmāparādha, *Kīrtana-ghoṣā*, Nāma-aparādha, Kīrtana 2 ; *Padmā-purāṇa*, *Svarga*-khaṇḍa, ch. 48

People interpret the *Vedas* ....., *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, XI, as rendered by Śaṅkaradeva. [See my *Śaṅkaradeva* (National Book Trust), p. 111.]

The indwelling Hari moves..... *Nāmaghoṣā*, 5 ; *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 84. 47

For a bhakta not fully detached ....., *Nāmaghoṣā*, 598 ; *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, XI. 20. 9

19-20 Unmanifested is the Supreme Deity ....., *Nāmaghosā*, 8 ;

21 He who seeks spiritual purgation ....., *Kīrtana-ghoṣā*, Pāṣaṇḍa-mardana, 61 ; *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 84. 13

Recite the name ....., *Kīrtana-ghoṣā*, Syamantakaharaṇa, refrain 1

Thou guidest me ....., *Nāmaghoṣā*, 60-61, 79, etc.

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[3] On receiving a copy of Bezbaroa's first lecture, Professor Banikanta Kakati wrote to him : "It is so beautiful and penetrating in its simplicity. Nowhere is there a rush of redundant matter or any vague confusion of conceptions ; — it showed as if everything comes from the intuitions of the soul like the simple and deeply significant writings in the Bible. Had it not been so, would the Raja of a Native State of Western India risen to greet you like what he did ? You have rendered bright by dint of the glistening lustre of your feelings whatever was unclear or hazy in my tiny book. My feeble voice is certainly there in the echoes of praises that reverberate in our papers." (Translated)

Bezbaroa wrote an artiele on Baroda and published it in the *Āwāhan*, Volume VIII.

22 I do not belong ....., *Nāmaghoṣā*, 670, based on an anonymous verse, cited in Rūpa's *Padyāvalī* and other anthologies, and sometimes attributed to Chaitanyadeva of Bengal

24 In other prevailing forms ....., *Nāmaghoṣā*, 130

RĀSA-LĪLĀ OF SRI-KRISHNA

25 bhagavān api ..... *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 29. 1

O Pārtha ! every man ....., *Bhagavadgītā*, 4. 11

26 nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ ....., op. cit., 7. 25

Brahman is a marvel ....., *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 1. 2. 7

brahmādijayasaṁrūḍha- ....., *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, X. 29. 1

27 ānandāt hi eva ....., *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, 3. 6

28 śṛṅgārarasopadeśena ....., *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, X. 29. 1

29 sarvadharmān parityajya ....., *Bhagavadgītā*, 18. 66

I am object of all the Vedas ....., *Bhagavadgītā*, 15. 15

What the Vedas say ....., *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, XI

31 To him whom Paramātman favours ....., *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 12. 23 ; cinmayasya advitiyasya ....., *Muṇḍako-paniṣad*, 3. 2. 3

31-32 Your mother, father ....., *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 29. 20

32 Perhaps you have all ....., op. cit., X. 29. 21

Go back to Vraja ....., X. 29. 22

O gopīs, to serve faithfully ....., X. 29. 24-25

33 Look here, O gopīs ....., X. 29. 26-27

33-34 O all-powerful, X. 29. 31

34 You are learned in the lore ....., X. 29. 32

ānandam brahmano vidvān ....., *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, 2. 4. 2. 9

35 na vā are ..... *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, 2. 4. 5

īśwaras sarvabhūtānām ..... *Bhagavadgītā*, 18. 61

36 O dharmavid !, *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 29. 32

You are ātman ..... X. 29. 33

aham ātmā guḍākeśa ....., *Bhagavadgītā*, 10. 20

brahmā-viṣṇu-maṇḍitam ....., *Maitryupaniṣad*

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ ....., *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*

37 Since the day ....., *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*

bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiḥ ....., *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 2. 2. 8

38 yadādityagataṁ tejo . . . . *Bhagavadgītā*, 15. 12

yāvat saṁjāyate . . . , op. cit., 13. 26

39 taddūre tad antike . . . , *Īśopaniṣad*

40 śāstra-dṛṣṭyā tu upadeśe . . . , *Brahma-sūtra*, 1. 1. 30

41 śrī-kṛṣṇa-viceṣṭā jagṛhuḥ, *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 30. 2

yasyāmatam tasya matam . . . , *Kenopaniṣad*, 2. 3

42 yo devo'gnau . . . , *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*, 217

43 samavetā jaguḥ kṛṣṇam, *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 30. 45
maccitā madgataprāṇā bodhayantaḥ . . . , *Bhagavadgītā*, 10. 9

44 upasthur yugapat . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 32. 3
prāṇasya prāṇas cakṣuṣāṁśeakṣhuḥ, —*upaniṣad*
tad ejati tan naijati tad dūre tad . . . . *Iśopaniṣad*, 5

45 sarvāa tāh keśava . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 32. 9
taddarśanāhlāda- . . . , X. 32. 13
O Krishna, in this world . . . , X. 32. 16
Those who love . . . , X. 32. 17

46 dhanaṁ dehi yaso dehi . . . , *Chaṇḍī-stava*
ye yathā māṁ prapadyante . . . , *Bhagavadgītā*, 4. 11
The love of one, *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 32. 18

46-47 But I am not . . . , X. 32. 20

47 samo'haṁ sarvabhūteṣu . . . , *Bhagavadgītā*, 9. 29

48 Listen, O friends . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 32. 20
O gopis, I know . . ., X. 32. 21

49 Do not be offended . . . , X. 32. 21
You have come . . . , X. 32. 22

50 rāso nāma . . . , *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, X. 33. 1
tasmād rāsakrīḍāviḍambanam . . . , X. 29. I

51 raso vai saḥ . . . , *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, 2. 7
tad yathā priyayā striyā . . . , *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, 4. 3. 21

52 Persons with divine power . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X.33, 30-34
na me pārthāsti . . . , *Bhagavadgītā*, 3. 22

53 sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi . . . , 15. 15
mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat . . . . , 7. 7
reme rameśo . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 33. 17
nāsūyan khalu kṛṣṇāya . . . , X. 33. 38
anugrahāya bhūtānām . . . , X. 33. 37

54 tad yathā priyayā striyayā . . , *Bṛhadarāṇyaka-upaniṣad*, 43. 21
kāmam krodhaṁ bhayam . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X.29.15
madhuraṁ madhuram etat . . . . . , *Skanda-purāṇa*, rendered in *Nāmaghoṣa*
dīpaprabhā-maṇibhrāntir . . . , *Pañcadaśī*

55 jvarenāptaṁ sannipātam . . . , *Pañcadaśī*
saccidānandamayam paraṁ brahma, ... *-upanishad*

56 kṛṣṇaḥ saccidānandavijayaḥ īśvaraḥ, *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*
vikrīḍitaṁ vrajavadhubhir idaṁśca . . . , X. 33. 40

59 akhilaśrutisāram, cf. sarvavedāntasāraṁ hi bhāgavatam iṣyate, XII. 13. 15
harer nāma harer nāma harer nāma . . , *Bṛhannāradīya-purāṇa*

BHAKTI-MĀRGA I

62 ye muktāvapi . . . , Viṣṇupurī Saṁnyāsī, *Bhakti-ratnāvalī*, Kāntimālā com., i. 1

63 tā manmanaskā . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 46. 4-6
(Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava)

64 tatrāpi na māhātmyajñānavismṛtyapavādaḥ Nārada, *Bhakti-sūtra*, 22
tadvihīnaṁ jārāṇām iva, op. cit., 23
maivaṁ vibho'rhati . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, X. 29. 31
na khalu gopikānandano . . . , op. cit. (?)
sā tu karamajñānayogebhyo'pyadhikatarā, Nārada, *Bhakti-sūtra*, 25

65 tapasvibhyo'dhiko yogi . . . , *Bhagavadgītā*, 6. 46-47
samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu, etc., probably meaning op. cit., 13. 27
phalarūpatvāt, Nārada, *Bhakti-sūtra*, 26

66 The first step a bhakta . . . , *Kīrtana-ghoṣā*, Prahlāda-caritra, 160-62
antar eko bahir nānā . . . , *Yogavāsistha* (?), rendered in *Nāmaghoṣā*, 597 (Vasistha's advice to Rāma)

66-67 O mother, bhakti is differentiated . . . . *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, III. 29. 7

67 O Lord, one who . . . , VII. 10. 2-6
O Durvāsā, a bhakta . . . , IX.

68 O Rahugaṇa, . . . , V. 12. 12, et seq.
tasmiṁstajjane bhedābhāvāt, Nārada, *Bhakti-sūtra*, 41
nāhaṁ tiṣthāmi . . . . . , *Bṛhannāradīya-purāṇa*, 11. 4; *Nārada-saṁhitā*, 1. 7, rendered in *Nāmaghoṣā*, 4
haribhaktirājamārge . . . , rendered in *Nāmaghoṣā*, 624

BHAKTI-MĀRGA II

71 manmanā bhava . . . , *Bhagavadgītā*, 18. 65-66, cf. 9. 34

72 yoginām api sarveṣām . . . , 6. 47
anugrahāya bhaktānām . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāna* (?)
mukhyaṁ tasya kāruṇyam, Śāṇḍilya, *Bhakti-sūtra*

73 yasmāt kṣaram atīto . . . , *Bhagavadgītā*, 15. 18
ye mām evam asammūḍho 15. 19
śravaṇam kīrtanam . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, VII. 5. 23
harer nāma harer nāma . . . , *Bṛhannāradīya-purāṇa*
dhyānam tapaḥ . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* (?), rendered in *Nāmaghoṣā*, 399
rāgārthaprakīrtisāhacaryāccetareṣām, Śaṇḍilya, *Bhakti-sūtra*

74 satataṁ kīrtayanto . . . , *Bhagavadgītā*, 9.24, rendered in *Nāmaghoṣā*, 617
caṇḍālo'pi dvijaśreṣṭhaḥ . . . . , *Bṛhannāradīya-purāṇa* (?)
kirātahūṇāndhra- . . . . , *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 11. 4. 18

75 nāmaikaṁ yasya vāci . . . , *Padma-purāṇa*, Svarga-khaṇḍa 48. 56, rendered in *Nāmaghoṣā*, 655 (There are variants of vāci and -janatā- as jihmaṁ and -vaṇitā-. Śaṅkaradeva interprets vyavahitarahitam as nāmāparādharahitam.)
nāhaṁ vipro . . . , See ante.

76 yānīha viśvavilayodbhava- . . . , rendered in *Nāmaghoṣā*, 651

We do to-day recall the name of Lakshminath Bezbaroa in affectionate and grateful remembrance of his life-long labour and devotion to the cause of Assam's literature and culture, which have greatly enriched our heritage.

HISTORY OF VAISHNAVISM IN INDIA

The three great commentators of the Vedantic school of thought in India are Sankarāchārya, Rāmanujāchārya and Madhvāchārya. All of them acknowledged the infallibility of the Upanishads, but differed in the interpretation of the same. Gaudapāda preceded Sankara, and there were earlier teachers too of the Adwaitic School who preceded Gaudapāda. But it is snpposed that they did not give prominence to Māyāvāda as Sankara did. Rāmānuja came after Sankara. His school of thought called Vishishtādvaitavāda can also be traced to remote antiquity, commencing from Bodhāyana, not removed far from the days of Vyāsa, the author of the Vedānta Sūtras. It owed its origin from the ancient Bhāgavata School that was in existence even some centuries before the Christian era. *Pāncharātra Tantra* by Nārada, and *Bhagavadgītā* are the foundation of the Bhāgavata school.

The seed of Vaishnavism in South India was sown by the Alwars, who were the earliest Brahmin messengers to the South. They gave prominence to the emotional side of Vaishnavism and used the language of the people in their songs and hymns. From the 9th century down to the end of the 15th century an unbroken line of Vaishnavite reformers existed in Southern India. This cult flourished there from the early years of the Christian era under the impetus given by the Alwars, who preached Bhakti and devotion to Krishna in the local Tamil, and songs composed in that language were very well understood by the mass. Vishnu with all his Avatārs, and particularly the Krishna Avatār, was the object of their deep veneration. They used to adore idols of Vishnu of different forms, although the mode of worship was

the fold of practical Hinduism and extended to them the right and privilege of knowing God and attaining mukti (salvation).

Yāmunāchārya was born in the city of Viranarayanapura, the modern Mannargudi in the South Arcot district, a few years after the beginning of the tenth century. Even in his boyhood his intelligence and retentive memory attracted the attention of his teachers, and he easily topped the list of his school-mates. While he was a student he gained the favour of the Chola king by defeating his court pandit in Vedantic disputation. The king granted him lands and emoluments, and he lived a life of luxury for some time. During this period he married and had four sons. He forgot the higher spiritual life lived by his grandfather, Nāthamuni. At last through the intervention of Rāma Misra, the pupil of Pundarikāksha, the awakening came, and discarding the life of a householder Yamunā became samnyāsi, and devoted himself entirely to spiritual life. The Upanishads, the *Gitā* and the *Vedānta Sutra* attracted his attention and like Sankara he devoted himself to the task of their textual interpretation. He was deeply learned in the lore of philosophy and wrote several books dealing with the niceties of the faith he upheld. In his time the oral interpretations were mainly proceeded with. The formal embodiment of those interpretations was not reduced to written text until the time of Rāmānuja later on.

Rāmānujāchārya, the practical founder of the Visishtādvaita school, on whom the mantle of Yāmunāchārya fell, was born about the year 1017 A.D. Under Yāmunāchārya the Visishtādvaitism had greatly developed and took a strong footing in Srirangapattam and other places. But Rāmānuja, by composing philosophical works and committing to writing the special views that were being developed orally by Yāmunāchārya and his predecessors, gave the system a solid foundation and made it more prominent. He attacked the interpretations of Sankara of the very first famous passage of the *Chāndogya Upanishad*, namely, *tat tvam asi*, "That thou art", the corner-stone of the Advaitavādis and also attacked the Māyāvāda of Sankara as well as the Bhedābhedavāda doctrines of the Bhāskara and the Mādhva schools of thought. After this he took up the question whether the Supreme Deity is to be styled Vishnu or Siva, or to be identified with the other Gods known to the Upanishads, and concluded that Vishnu or Nārāyana is alone and the only one who can be so named and

so identified. After this he wrote the *Srī-bhāsya* on the *Vedānta-Sūtra*, the great work on which the great school of the Visishtādvaitavāda stands. There were various incidents in his life and some of them are quite thrilling, which the space at my disposal to-day forbids me to mention.

Rāmānuja was remarkable for his broad-mindedness, burning sympathy for mankind in general, unselfishness, resourcefulness and absolute devotion to God. In recognising merit in people, inferior in caste, he went farther than any other religious teacher of his time. His writings bear testimony to the fact of his having a keen intellect and a wide expanse of learning, and above all his sincerity and high moral character. He had no harsh word even for his opponent in controversy and was always noted for his moderation. He is rightly held to be the founder of the Visishtādvaita school, which is a qualified non-dualism. According to him, God alone exists. All else that is seen are his manifestations, attributes or Sakti. The Advaitism also maintains that God alone exists, and all else is His manifestations. But Advaitism regards the manifestations as unreal and as results of Avidyā or Māyā. So practically ekamevādvitiya Brahman is reduced to a Being without any attributes. Rāmānuja regards the attributes as real and permanent, but they are subject to the control of the One Supreme Brahman in their modifications. According to his school of thought, the Oneness of God is compatible with the existence of His attributes.

I do not propose to go into the details of the niceties of discussions on thoughts of these two schools of philosophy to-day, as it is not possible within the limited compass of my speech, and as it will tire your patience. In short I would point out that the Visishtādvaita school would call Brahman sat and the rest asat, which undergoes change in its essence unlike Brahman. It can, however, be safely concluded that Rāmānuja's philosophical conceptions, if studied carefully, would lead one to think that it is entitled to a high place among the world's philosophical thought and his system is a sound one, not incompatible with the conception of the attributes and the nature of the Supreme Brahman.

It is to be regretted, however, that after Rāmānuja's death and within the course of a century or two, sectarianism and exclusiveness became the characteristic of the class. As Sir R. G. Bhandarkar says, the tendency of his system seemed to give an

exclusive Brahmanic form to the traditional method of Bhakti or devotion to God. This may account for the greater predominance of the Brahmanic element in the sect. Dogmas and one-sidedness got the better of the true religiousness and moral progress of the community as a whole; and the divergence of views created a divergence of sub-sects among the followers, although the doctrinal differences between them are trivial. Visishtādvaitavāda of Rāmānuja has also in course of time shared the fate of the other few practical religions in not being able to preserve itself unsullied by unseemly disputes and schisms that overtake the pristine purity of the teachings and mode of life enjoined to be led under the aegis and inspiration of the original founder.

I now come to Northern India and try to give a brief account of Vaishnavism current there. It cannot be correct to state that all the Vaishnavism found in Northern India was imported from the South, and that they were the legacy of Rāmānuja and his predecessors and successors. The birth place of Krishna and his cult were by no means lying dormant all along since the early centuries of the Christian era, that sent forth votaries and preachers such as those early Alwars to the South to preach the cult. But it cannot be denied that Vaishnavism in the North received a fresh impetus from the South from the great Āchārya Rāmānuja and his successor's teachings and powerful propaganda.

In Northern India Rāmānanda, Vallabhāchārya, Nimbāditya, Sri-Sankaradeva and Sri-Chaitanyadeva were the Vaishnava reformers of great repute. Rāmānanda is said to have been the fifth in apostolic succession from Rāmānuja, and he lived towards the end of the fourteenth century A.D. It is generally said that there are four main sampradāyas or sects of Vaishnavism, viz., Rāmānuja, Vishnuswāmi, Madhvāchārya and Nimbāditya. All other current minor sects are said to have been included in these four main sampradāyas. It is also said that Lakshmi acknowledged Rāmānuja; Brahmā Madhvāchārya; Rudra Vishnuswāmi; and Sanak, Sananda, Sanātan and Sanatkumāra Nimbāditya respectively. Rāmānanda had twelve disciples from various lower classes. Ruidās was a cobbler; Pipā a Rajput; Dhannā a Jāth; Kabir a Mahomedan; and Sen a barber. Some of these disciples founded separate sects of great celebrity; and as regards the mode of religious worship divergence of views with the main

system of Rāmānanda is very marked. Rāmānanda worshipped Rāma and asserted the supreme efficacy of the chanting and meditating of Rāma-nāma, and practically discarded social distinctions. The *Bhaktamālā*, a book written by Nābhāji, a pupil of Rāmānanda or one of his successors, is practically the scripture of the Rāmānandis. Nābhāji belonged to the Dom caste. The famous Tulsidās who was seventh in descent from Rāmānanda wrote the Hindi Rāmāyana, which is a book looked upon with great veneration by, and the only text-book on religion for, millions of people in Upper India. Rāmānuja wrote his books in Sanskrit, and Brahmins as a rule got the upper hand in expounding his cult; whereas Rāmānanda and his followers wrote their books in the current language of the people and these books, therefore, became accessible to everyone,—a fact that made easy for even the people of other castes to aspire for the status of a guru.

Jayadeva, the renowned author of the *Gītagovinda* flourished in the 12th century. Rādhā and Krishna were his objects of worship. His *Gītāgovinda* gave a great impetus to Chaitanya during his life and cult in the beginning of the 16th century, about which I will speak briefly later on. Kabir made spiritual protests against the current Hinduism and Mahomedanism, and wanted to reconcile both the religions like Nanak, the founder of Sikhism in the Panjab, later on. Kabirpanthis do not give much importance to following the forms and modes of current Hinduism. The chanting of religious hymns is their chief method of upāsanā or worship of God.

Minor sub-sects like Khāki, Molukdāsi, Dādupanthi, also owed their origin to Rāmānandis. They worshipped Rāma and Sitā, and the method is to contemplate and chant Rāma-nāma. There are many sub-sects belonging to Dādupanthis, and the Nāgas are one of them. Nāgas fight as soldiers also when they are employed on remuneration. Sometime past the Maharaja of Jaipur had about 10,000 Nāga soldiers.

Ruidās, one of the 12 disciples of Rāmānanda, had also founded a separate sect. From Sen, the barber disciple of Rāmānanda, another sect came into existence.

In 1776 Sambat a man called Rāmsaran founded a sect of Vaishnavas called Rāmsnehi after his name.

I have mentioned before the four main sampradāyas of

Vaishnavism. Brahma-sampradāya is the second. Madhvāchārya was the founder of this sect and the sampradāya is called Mādhvi after his name. This sect is of a later dater than the Sri-sampradāya of Rāmānuja. Madhvāchārya was born in 1121 Sakābda in Tulab in Deccan. Except Samnyāsis and Brahmins no other people have any right to become a dikshā-guru in this sampradāya. Dikshā-gurus even do not give dikshā to the people of the lowest class. Every guru inherits his sishyas or disciples as if they were paternal property, and can sell or mortgage the right of guruship if he so desires. Madhvāchāris are Dvaitavādis. They acknowledge the separate entities of jiva and Brahma. They, therefore, differ from the philosophical conceptions of both Sankara and Rāmānuja.

The third main sampradāya is the Rudra-sampradāya, of which Vallabhāchārya was the founder. He was born about 1749 A.D. in Telangana and settled at Muttra. Bālagopāla or the child Krishna is the object of worship for the devotees of this sect. The practical indulgence in the rhapsodies of the *Bhāgavata* and the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva tended to increase luxury in the high priests of this sect and its followers to such an extent that a case that went up to the Supreme Court of Bombay in 1862 brought out to the public notice certain practices of this sect that do not do credit to them.

The sampradāya of Vallabhāchārya traces its origin from Vishnuswāmi, the commentator of Veda. Vishnuswāmi made disciples from Samnyāsāshramis and Brahmins only. It is said that Vallabhāchārya, stepping into the shoes of the successors of Vishnuswāmi, devoted himself to the expounding of his cult. *Bārtā* is the name of the chief grantha or scripture of the Vāllabhāchāryas. Expositions in the *Bārtā* go to estabilsh a kind of oneness of jīva and Brahman. Vallabhāchārya's teachings contain certain unique doctrines quite unusual in the Hindu religion. He says, in God's upāsanā no fasting, no tiresome methods, no tapasyā are necessary. Without discarding delicacies of food, luxuries of the world such as riches and raiments and other amenities of life, worship of God is possible. This led the Vaishnavas of this sect to extreme luxury and the hankering after worldly pleasures. The Goswāmis or spiritual heads of this sect are married men. The devotees or their disciples pamper them with various kinds of rich food and clothing, and

offer their gurus their tan, man and dhana, i.e., body, soul and wealth. It is evident, therefore, that the gurus wield a vast influence over their disciples. Like the disciples, the gurus also go on doing business in trade and commerce. Gopāla Krishna with Rādhā and images of his different incarnations are worshipped in their temples. The commentary which Vallabha wrote on the *Bhāgavata* is their chief book for the conduct of their life and faith. He wrote several other books also in Sanskrit, and also one or two in the current language of the people.

In several parts of India, particularly in Gujarat and Malwa great many rich and very well-to-do people are followers of the Vallabhāchārya Vaishnavism. In Muttra and Vrindavana as well as in Puri, Dvārakā and Ajmere they have got several maths or temples.

A small sect of Vaishnavism originated with Mirā Bāi. She was married to the Rānā of Udaipur, but as she was a staunch Vaishnava, she could not agree with her husband and his relations, who were Sāktas, and had to leave their protection. After roaming over many places she passed the rest of her life, meditating and chanting the name of her Ista Devatā, Ranchhod, an image of Sri-Krishna.

The founder of the fourth main sampradāya was Nimbāditya. He lived near Vrindavan. His original name was Bhāskarāchārya. He was called Nimbāditya later on, and people belonging to his sect is called Nimāt. Krishna with Rādhā is their God of worship, and the *Srimat Bhāgavata* is their main scripture. Nimbāditya had two distinguished disciples, named Kesav Bhatta and Harivyāsa. Two separate sub-sects own their origin from these two. There are many Nimāts in Western India and, particularly, in places near Muttra.

In Maharashtra there is a sect called Vithal-bhaktas. In Gujarat, Karnat and Central India also disciples of this sect are to be seen. Their another name is Vaishnava-vir. Their God of worship is Pāndurang, Vithal or Vithobā. They consider him as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, i.e., Buddhadeva. They may, therefore, be called Bauddha-Vaishnavas. They have got a celebrated temple on the northern bank of the Bhima river in Deccan. They have got a large mass of sectarian literature, such as *Bhakta-vijaya, Pāndurang-māhātmya, Hari-vijaya,* etc. A saint, called Pundalik, is said to have been the founder of this

sect. Probably he flourished in the fourteenth century of the Christian era.

This sect gives prominence to the love between the upāsya and the upāsaka, i.e., the object of worship and the worshipper. Although they do not place much stress on leading a life of seclusion or giving up the worldly life, yet there are many devotees of this sect who renounce worldly life and pleasure. According to them Pandharpur is the chief place for pilgrimage. While the Goswāmis or gurus of other sects exercise sole and strict authority over their disciples, the gurus of this sect do not do that. They do not regard the Vedas and Brahmins as much supreme as the followers of other sects do. They do not place great stress on the caste distinctions, and on festive occasions take meals from the hands of everyone. There is much similarity to be seen between the Jagannātha-kshetra temple and the Pāndurang temple with regard to mahāprasāda or anna offered to the deity and taken by the devotees afterwards. This sect may be taken as an attempt at reconciliation between Buddhism and Hindu Vaishnavism.

I will say something now briefly about the Chaitanya sampradāya in Bengal. Chaitanya is generally regarded as the founder of the sampradāya. He was born in 1486 A.D. in the city of Nadia or Navadwipa on the bank of the Ganges. His father was Jagannātha Misra, and his mother's name was Sachi. Chaitanya, whose real name was Visvambhara, renounced the world and turned out a Samnyāsi and preacher at the age of 24. He died or disappeared in about 1533 A.D. at Puri or Jagannātha-kshetra. Advaitāchārya and Nityānanda were his chief helpers in propagating his creed. His followers not only regard him as the founder of the faith but also as an incarnation of Krishna and the main object of worship. There had been a bitter controversy between the Brahmin pandits of Bengal and his followers as to his being an incarnation. They quoted Vedas, Smritis and Purānas to refute the claim sought to be established by his followers, depending mainly on the slokas said to be from an *Ananta-Samhitā*. Chaitanya or, more properly, Visvambhara's early life was frolicsome, mischievous and annoying to his parents. At his ninth year he was invested with the sacred thread and after that attended the tol of a pundit and studied grammar. After that he studied Nyāya under Sārvabhauma

Bhattāchārya. He married twice—the second one, named Vishnupriyā, after the demise of his first wife Lakshmi. At about the age of twenty he was initiated into the Vaishnava faith by Iswarapuri a disciple of Mādhavendrapuri, whose descent as a spiritual guru is traced from the great Madhvāchārya. After his return from Gaya whereto he had undertaken a trip, he became subject to trances and visions and indulging in talking of and thinking of Sri-Krishna and his Vrindāvana līlā with the gopis. He imagined himself to be Rādhā and acted her part to perfection. When he was overpowered by the extreme āvesa or the idea of Krishna he used to do strange things such as taking Krishna's image's seat on the āsana or dais reserved for the idol and imagine himself as the object of worship and proclaim likewise. Advaitāchārya, an elderly Vaishnava pandit and scholar, who became Visvambhara's follower afterwards, had doubted Visvambhara's claim. He was one day literally beaten by Visvambhara and forced to accept the truth of his divine nature. After this Visvambhara renounced his worldly life and took to samnyāsa having been initiated under the name of Krishna-Chaitanya by one Kesava Bhārati, who lived in a village about 18 miles distant from Nuddea. Hunter in his *Orissa* says, "The adoration of Chaitanya has become a sort of family worship throughout Orissa. In Puri there is a temple specially dedicated to his name, and many little shrines are scattered over the country."

After taking samnyāsa at his 24th year, Chaitanya roamed over different places in India, such as Muttra, Puri, etc., and preached the doctrines of Krishna worship. The latter part of his life, i.e., for 18 years he lived in Puri and devoted to the worship of Jagannāthadeva, and preached prema-bhakti. The span of his life was altogether 48 years. The people of his sampradāya regard Advaita and Nityānanda also as amsa-avatāra, i.e., part-incarnation of Vishnu.

Although the Chaitanya sampradāya traces its origin to Madhvāchārya, the sect of Vallabhāchārya has great affinity with this sect. Both Chaitanya and Vallabha flourished about the same time. Chaitanya adopted the worship of Rādhā-Krishna and there can be little doubt that Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* and the Maithili poet Vidyāpati's songs played an important part in moulding his thoughts. The attitude of the soul to God was

represented in his cult by the attitude of the beloved towards her lover. The love towards the gallant was considered the highest kind that the soul could entertain towards God. The ardent longing of the gopis for Krishna was considered typical of the soul's longing for the God. In the case of the devotees, who are morally strong, this mode of madhura rasa worship could not lead them to abuse. But human nature is human nature all the same. Those who are not strong in nature that way could hardly restrain themselves from being led to pitfalls, and that was the main reason why after Chaitanya's death the sampradāya gave birth to numerous sub-sects, that fell into reprehensible practices and moral degradation.

Chaitanya had a few converts from among Mahomedans amongst his followers. He did not preach any Mahomedan doctrine, nor llke Kabir or Guru Nanak did try to bring a rapproachment between these two religions essentially so different. It appears that within the pale of Hindu religion he recognised no caste distinctions when the devotee becomes a Vaishnava or a worshipper of Krishna. But the cult of bhakti giving prominence to madhura rasa soon after him degenerated into such a pass that the excesses and objectionable practices committed by the lower orders among his followers under its aegies naturally evoked criticism and condemnation that cannot be called unjust. As in Orissa and Vrindāvana, in his native district in Nuddea and other neighbouring places, maths or temples have since been established, where Chaitanya's image came to be actually worshipped as the image of God. Even before his death and so on after, it became the vogue to instal his image in temples for worshipping him as a divinity, and the incidents in his life were magnified and given a shape so as to establish him as being of divine nature. The deification of great saints and bhaktas is inherrent in human nature and particularly in Hinduism and the latest instance is the humble saint, Ramakrishna Paramhansa of Bengal.

I now come to Sankaradeva of Assam, my province which has fallen from its ancient greatness and is not very well known nowadays to the people of other parts of India. In ancient times it was called Prāgjyotishapura. About one thousand years before the Christian era the greater part of lower Bengal was probably under the sea, while a considerable portion of Northern Bengal

was included in Prāgjyotisha, which was then a powerful kingdom and was often mentioned in the great epics, the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata and the purānas. The Aryan wave extended to Kāmārupā—the name by which Prāgjyotisha came to be known afterwards—directly from Videha and Magadha long before the lower Bengal became habitable. Mr Pargiter in his book named *Ancient Countries in Eastern India* writes that the kingdom known as Prāgjyotisha included, at the time of the Mahābhārata war, a greater part of modern Assam together with the Bengal districts of Jalpaiguri, Cooch-Bihar, Rangpur, Bogra, Mymensing, Dacca, Tippera, part of Pabna and probably a part of East Nepal. In the Rāmāyana it is mentioned that Amurtaraja was the son of Kusa and grandfather of the famous rishi Visvāmitra. Visvāmitra performed his austerities on the banks of the Kausika, the modern Kosi river. To go into the details about the Prāgjyotisha kingdom that came to be known as Kāmarupa during the pauranic period would be out of plaee in to-day's lecture. In any case it is clear that Prāgjyotisha or the ancient kingdom of Kāmarupa—the central portion of whieh is now called Assam—was a much larger kingdom than most of the other kingdoms mentioned in the Mahābhārata : and it was larger than most of the other sixteen Mahājanapadas existing during the time of Gautama, the Buddha. The poet Kālidāsa, who, according to Vincent Smith, flourished in the first part of the fifth century, also mentions Kāmarupa and Prāgjyotisha as names of the same kingdom. Prāgjyotisha was the seat of learning in Astrology or Astronomy in ancient India. It is generally recognised that the cult of the yoni and lingam is of pre-Aryan origin. The shrine of Kāmākhyā in modern Gauhati in Assam, which represents yoni, is associated with the pre-Aryan king, Naraka, who is reputed to have been the guardian of the shrine. In the seventh century the great Chinese pilgrim Yuan-Chang during his travels over various places of India, visited Kāmarupa also. He did not find Buddhism to have taken root there. Some centuries after his visit Kāmākhyā became the reputed centre of the Vajrayāna system of Buddhism, known as the Sahajiya cult, along with the Udayana, Srihatta and Purnagiri. The debased practices enjoined by this system of tantric Buddhism earned for Kāmarupa-Kāmāklıyā the reputation of its being a land of magic or sorcery, or as the original centre of tantric

Hinduism. It was to extirpate this system of debased religion the great Vaishnava religious reformer of Assam, Mahāpurusha Sri-Sankaradeva began his preachings towards the end of the 15th century. During the next century he and his disciple and associate, Mādhavadeva, a Kāyastha, and Dāmodaradeva, a Brahmin, succeeded in suppressing the "Bauddha" rites, and spreading the new Vaishnava tenet far and wide.

Sankaradeva was born in 1449 A.D. He was the descendant of the Siromani Bhuyā Chandivara, a Kāyastha by caste whom Durlabhanārāyana, the king of Kamatā, settled in Kāmarupa about the middle of the 14th century. Kusumavara, the great-grandson of Chandivara and father of Sankaradeva migrated to Bardoā within the Ahom kingdom, when Visvasimha, the king and founder of Cooch-Bihar kingdom, in order to establish his undisputed supremacy in Kāmarupa was engaged in suppressing the powerful Bhuya chiefs. Kusumavara was a devotee of Siva, and he named his son Sankara, as the gift of his Ista Devatā. Sankara's mother died three days after his birth, and he was brought up by his paternal grandmother. Sometime after this, Sankara's father also breathed his last. Being endowed with natural gifts, Sankara soon developed a strong physique and quick brain. He outclassed all the Brahmin and Kāyastha boys of his age in study as well as in sports. On attaining manhood Sankara married and settled down to domestic life. A daughter was born to him, and he gave her in marriage to a Kāyastha youth when she attained the proper age. Sankara's wife died after this.

After the death of his wife Sankara set out on a pilgrimage to the holy places of India. During his long pilgrimage of twelve years he visited different parts of India such as Puri, Muttrā, Vrindāvana, Badarikāshrama and met Kabir, with whom he contracted friendship. At the end of his travels he returned home and re-married, having been convinced that in order to elevate oneself spiritually and to be of service to humanity at the same time, one need not renounce the world. He then began to preach his tenets of neo-Vaishnavism with full vigour far and wide.

Writers ignorant of historical facts have often represented that Sankaradeva's school of neo-Vaishnavism in Assam is an off-shoot of the Chaitanya movement in Bengal. This is misconstruction and misrepresentation of real historical facts.

Sankaradeva was born in 1449 A.D., whereas Chaitanya was born in 1486 A.D. Chaitanya was not born when Sankara set out on his pilgrimage. When Chaitanya turned an ascetic in 1510 A.D., Sankara's Vaishnavism was in its full swing. Sankara could not have met Chaitanya during his first pilgrimage. But during his seeond pilgrimage from Barpetā he met Chaitanya about 1530 A.D. at Puri. There was no conversation between them as Chaitanya was then observing silence, and therefore by pouring water from his kamandalu Chaitanya indicated that devotion to God is continuous and directed to one channel only like the flow of running water, was his creed. Sankara did not long survive after his return from the second pilgrimage. He died in Cooch-Bihar in the year 1568 A.D. after having attained a very long life of 119 years.

The idolisation of the female element which formed the marked feature of Northern Vaishnavism and of the Chaitanya movement in Bengal, is conspicuous only by its total absence from Sankara's Vaishnavism. Chaitanya's conceptions of madhura rasa or love relations between the lover and the beloved as the mode of worship of God by His devotee, to which he gave prominence, does not find favour in Sankaradeva's school of thought. There is neither the combined worship of Rādhā and Krishna of Chaitanya, nor of Gopi-Krishna of Vallabhāchārya, nor of Rukmini-Krishna of Nāmdev, nor of the Sitā-Rāma of Rāmānanda. The eka-sarana of the *Gītā* superimposed upon the idealism of dāsya-bhakti with sat-sanga or companionship with bhaktas of the *Srimadbhāgavata* and the Hanumanti kāsthā, i.e., the unwavering and firm devotion and allegiance to one and the only one God as of Hanūmān to Rāmachandra, is the main plank of Sankara's creed. Self-surrender to the supreme God, Sri-Krishna, who is the creator, supported and destroyer, and who is the lord and master of Kāla (Time) and Māyā (manifestations), and to Him alone—and not to any other minor god and goddess; the chanting of the names of that great God, and the meditating on Him are the instructions on which Sankara's Vaishnavism stands. Though essentially based upon the *Srimadbhāgavata*, it has nothing of doctrinaire about it. It gives prominence to the chanting of Rāma's and Krishna's names as well as the other thousand names of the Creator and recognises in so many names only so many symbols of that one state of

supreme bliss of the liberated soul. That is why the Vaishnavism preached by Sankaradeva is called eka-sarana nāma-dharma —the religion of supreme devotional surrender to one, i.e., Krishna, whose name is Rāma, Hari, Vāsudeva, Janārdana and a thousand more. The conception of relationship between God and his devotee is like that between an all powerful and all merciful master and his servant whose humility and self-surrender to his master is extreme. Vaishnavism of Sankaradeva is uncompromising in its attitude against the worship of other gods and goddesses. Bhakti or devotion of a devotee to the One becomes vyabhichārī, i.e., vitiated, even by going to the place of worship of others gods or goddesses, or bowing his head with reverence before them, or by eating the prasāda or offerings there. The Upanishad says, *ekam eva advitiyam*, 'He is the One without a second.' *tam īśvarānāṁ paramaṁ maheśvaram, taṁ devatānāṁ paramañ ca daivatam, patiṁ patīnāṁ paramaṁ parastāt, vidāma devaṁ bhuvaneśam idyam* (?), 'One who is the Lord of the lords, One who is God of the gods, One who is the Protector of the protectors I only know Him the greatest of all, the resplendent, worshipful and the Master of the Universe.' It seems as if the ancient voice of the Upanishads with its stern gaze at the One, broke into an ejaculation in the teachings of this great religious reformer of ancient Kāmarupa-Assam, where Sākta worship with all the admixtures of tantric Buddhism and tribal ceremonial customs prevailed.

Sankara's ancestors were all Sāktas. Mādhavadeva, his renowned disciple, a man of almost unmatched scholarship, was a Sākta before his conversion into the new creed of Sankara's Vaishnavism. Sankara's Krishna is the One God above all gods without a complimentary second. K. L. Barua, Deputy Commissioner, Assam (retired), President, Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti, writes in his book *Early History of Kamarupa* (published lately), 'The special feature of the new tenet (of Sankara) was its uncompromising hostility to the worship of minor gods and goddesses and the animal sacrifices. It was explained, on the basis of the Upanishads, that God was the only eternal, changeless spirit, the individual soul or Ātman was a part of it, but all the rest was matter and, therefore, subject to change and decay. People, who worshipped matter, being oblivious of the everlasting spirit, were fools. Sankaradeva was so

particular in this respect that he spurned his own faithful follower Byaskalāi as soon as he came to know that the latter in order to save his son from the clutches of small-pox had offered pujā to the goddess, Sitalā. On the other hand, Chaitanya, it appears, did not ban worship of the numerous deities and is said to have himself worshipped Siva though he was a Vaishnava.'

The political situation of the country at the time was not very favourable for Sankaradeva freely to preach the doctrines of his creed. Several rival powers professing divergent religious views were creating ferment in the country, and Sankaradeva had to proceed carefully in his mission, even at the risk of his life. Although he did not set much value on the caste system, he did not throw society into confusion by entirely demolishing it. He declared spiritual equality for all men and loudly proclaimed that even a Chandāla is superior to a Brahmin if that Chandāla becomes Hari-bhakti-parayana, i.e., if he becomes devoted to Hari. He rejected caste superiority as a ground of respect among men, otherwise equally venerable, as lovers of God. Although the giddy levelling of caste orders was not discernible in him he had among his disciples people from the Mahomedan community, from aboriginal races of Assam, as well as from high class learned Brahmins. The most pious amongst them held the forefront position in his system irrespective of his caste, and founded religious orders of their own.

In Assam as in other parts of India the neo-Vaishnavism of Sankara met with strong opposition from the Brahmin priesthood, as it was a crusade against the excesses of the priestcraft.

The Bhāgvata cult of Sankara by cutting at the very root of the false Brahminical ceremonials roused their anger. They managed to gain the ears of the Āhom king of Assam, who were but new-comers and did not understand much of real Hindu traditions. They prosecuted Sankara at the instigation of the Brahmins as tampering with the popular Hindu faith and a trial in the court was arranged. Sankara however got off free, with credit, from the trial. Although the Brahmins were foiled in their attempt at the time, further hostility did not cease. After this Sankara had to undergo a lot of troubles, which culminated in the beheading of his son-in-law at the order of the Āhom king. In great disgust Sankara left the jurisdiction of the Āhom

kings, and sought refuge in the lower Assam which was then within the boundary of the Koch king of Cooch-Bihar.

Although he took his shelter in the kingdom of Naranārāyana, the great king of Cooch-Bihar who was a Hindu, the hostilities of the Brahmins followed him up there too, and he had to face a big trial in the court once again, out of which also he came out victorious in resplendent glory. The king was greatly impressed with his piety and learning, and expressed a desire to become his disciple. But Sankara refused, as it would not be possible for kings to observe strictly in its entirety the eka-sarana dharma, i.e., the religion of love with its undeviating devotion to the One, and also the absolute prohibition of animal sacrifices. He tried his utmost to dissuade the king from his expressed desire, as by virtue of his position, a king would have to worship other gods and goddesses. To keep his creed in its pristine purity, no deviation could be allowed. But the king persisted, and Sankara was in a dilemma. Being helpless, he asked the king to observe fasting and in prayer next day to perform the initiatory rites. Next morning when the king's messengers came to take Sankara to the king for performing the initiation, they only found Sankara washing his hands and feet, then putting on new clothings, then sitting in a devotional mood under a peepul tree and chanting beautiful hymns composed by himself, and finally surrendering himself to the Supreme Being of his love and devotion by yogic communion, and thus passing away. Sankara's eldest son was with him at the time ; but Sankara left the word nominating Mādhavadeva, his favourite disciple, to suceed him to his apostolic seat.

As I have already mentioned, Sankara built his system upon the ethics of the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata*. He evolved a creed to wipe off the prevailing social and other evils that were current in the name of religion, and at the same time to be an expression of the deepest philosophy. Krishna was the all-supreme god of adoration for him ; and he rejected the feminine element of the Rādhā cult. He composed many books in his country's vernacular for the propagation of his creed ; the *Kirtana-ghoshā* was the chief amongst them. In the *Kirtana-ghoshā* he lays down :

> Sāstras say that Dhyāna or supreme communion by concentration was for the Satya-yuga, that worship by yajna or rituals was for Treta, that various forms of worship were for Dvāpara but that for Kali-yuga devout recitation of the name of Hari is the only religion.
>
> Hari-nāma is sufficient to destroy a hundred sins, and in fact a sinner cannot commit enough sins for a single utterance of Hari-nāma to destroy.

But the name of Hari should be taken not like a parrot, but by the application of kāya, manas and vākya, body, heart and soul and voice all put together. Another condition is that the name of Hari should be taken while steering clear of ten kinds of the nāmāparādha, i.e., offences to Hari's name, such as those of

> (1) one speaking ill of Hari-bhaktas ; (2) one who neglects Hari-nāma and speaks ill of the Vedas, knowing them fully well ; (3) one who in order to slight the glory of Hari-nāma gives different interpretations to it ; (4) one who deliberately commits sins thinking that by dint of the power of Hari-nāma he shall be purged of those sins ; (5) one who places Hari-nāma on the same level with yajna, homa, vrata, dāna and pilgrimage to tirthas or sacred places ; (6) one who does not listen or pays attention to Hari-nāma when others chant it ; (7) one who offers Hari-nāma to another with no regard for it ; (8) one who does not love Hari-nāma, although its mahimā or glory is dinned into his ears everyday ; etc.

In Sankara's system Vedic rituals such as homas, yajnas and animal sacrifices find no place. In his renderings of the *Srimad-bhāgavata* Sankara quotes the sayings of Sri-Krishna to Uddhava as under :

> People interpret the *Vedas* according to their own whims. Their interpretations are coloured by the dominant attributes of their mind. I am not accessible through knowledge, neither through penance, nor through renunciation, nor through gifts. I am not accessible to Yoga, not to knowledge. I am tied down by Bhakti alone.

Sankara's renowned disciple, Mādhavadeva's *Nāma-ghosha*, which gives the profoundest philosophical exposition to the entire creed of his Master, contains the following :

> The indwelling Hari moves far far away from him who places faith in rituals. But one who makes it his religion to hear and recite Hari's name attains Krishna even if he is not freed from the ego.

Although Sankara's system of Vaishnavism does not encourage karma or the Vedic rites, provision has been left for

karma mainly for chitta-suddhi, in the early stages of a devotee. The *Nāma-ghoshā* says, "For a bhakta not fully detached from the world, it would be a fault to transcend Vedic rites. But for one undeviatingly attached to Krishna and totally indifferent to worldly matters, there is no prescription." The real bhakta does not seek mukti or salvation, although it is within his grasp. He wants to remain in a state of eternal enjoyment of the bliss of bhakti, even when he attains mukti or salvation. This is the summum bonum that a bhakta of the Sankara school of thought would fain seek.

In his *Kirtana-ghoshā*, the first of the four books regarded as the text of his creed, he gives the process how a devotee can attain to bhakti: The first thing he should do is to be an associate of a Vaishnava and to serve him sincerely as his guide, and worship god Krishna under his instructions. The second step is to do pious acts and offer the consequences of those acts to Krishna. His mind will be steady and purified by the continuous hearing of the name of Krishna and his doing (lilā), and he himself should also recite Krishna's name and meditate Krishna in his heart, and see Krishna in every living being of the world. He must, therefore, show his regard to each and every one not excluding even the lower orders of creation such as dogs, jackals and asses, because Krishna resides in the hearts of every one. This will lead the devotee to love and regard Krishna with deep veneration. Then the great Krishna who is supreme in the universe is sure to dwell in his heart permanently. To offer bhakti to the Supreme a man need not be a deva, or a dvija (Brahmin) or a rishi. It is not necessary that he should be learned in the lore of many sastras. Tapa, japa, yajna, dāna are not essential for him in order to get Krishna; they are rather obstacles on the way. Krishna is pleased and is attainable simply through bhakti. Sankara enjoins the bhakta to see God Vishnu in every being in the universe and says that teachings of any other religion are only an illusion and sham. A bhakta should view an enemy or a friend with an equal eye, serve humanity specially, as mankind is superior to all other orders of life being a special manifestation of Vishnu. The bhakta must surrender his body, mind and soul to Krishna and ever recite his name. The society of such bhaktas has been placed higher in point of sanctity by Sankara than the worship of idols and pilgrimages. He says that these

might acquire the power of purification after a long and laborious process, whereas the bhakta purifies people by his very sight. In the society of bhaktas, regard and love for Krishna is poured in through the eyes, ears, and the mind, and then the sole attachment to the name of Krishna is a natural process.

No idol was ever worshipped in any sattra, that is, place for religious worship established by Sankara, particularly during the life-time of Sankaradeva and his great successor Mādhavadeva, who has the following in his famous book, *Nāma-ghoshā*, to show the futility of idol worship:

> Unmanifested is the Supreme Deity, Hari. How could you then worship Him? How could you make visarjana or dismiss Him after worship who is all pervading? How could you meditate on Him who is formless? So purge your mind by the reciting of the name of Rāma.

Sankara in his *Kirtana-ghoshā* says,

> He who seeks spiritual purgation in holy waters, believes in divinity as dwelling in idols, but never entertains the same ideas in regard to Vaishnavas, is worse than a cow,—so says Krishna.

But for the purpose of concentration the construction of the mental image is advised by Sankara. He says,

> Recite the name of Rāma on your lips and contemplate his image in your heart to get mukti.

Srimadbhāgavata enjoins nine kinds of bhakti for a Vaishnava devotee, viz., sravana, kirtana, smarana, archana, pada-sevana, dāsya, sakhitva, vandana and deha-samarpana. For the Kali-yuga sravana, i.e., the hearing of Rāma Krishna's nāma and kirtana, i.e., the chanting of it is prescribed as the only dharma; and in Sankara's system of Vaishnavism these two kinds of bhakti are mainly enjoined. Sankara preached the dāsya-bhakti as the relation between Sri-Krishna and his devotee. The devotee must conceive of God as a servant does of his master. The madhura conception may be lofty as a personal ideal; but Sankara discarded it, as he clearly saw that it could not be worked out practically in this world, particularly when it would fall into less enlightened minds. It is bound to get degraded, and corrupt and immortal practices are bound to creep in course of time when the master-mind of the founder is removed. The

extreme humility and self-surrender of a devotee giving vent to his dāsya bhakti in Sankara's system is :

> Thou guidest me, O Lord ! outwardly and in inner workings of my heart. In thee I am possessed of a Lord. Remove my delusion. I take up a straw between my teeth and bow unto Thee. Show me how I may remain in Thy service. Buy me, O Lord ! as thy slave. The price I want is not any filthy lucre, but only the supreme treasure of Thy nāma. I am the last in the list of the sinners in this world. There is none who purgest sins like Thee, O Lord ! Do unto me as thou thinkest best. This is my humblest supplication at Thy feet.

Such is the prayer in Sankara's system of Vaishnavism.

Sankara did not start with any Vedantic thesis on the nature of Godhead as the basis of his teachings. The Deity of the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata* was sufficient for him. God is supreme intelligence, without limitation, all pervading, without form, without attributes. .He expressess Himself, taking recourse to Māyā, to favour His bhaktas. He is the beginning, the middle and the end of the Universe. He is the controller of Purusa and Prakriti. No other gods or goddesses can give salvation or mukti ; He only can. To the bhakta He reveals Himself. Such are Sankaradeva's teachings. He adores Mādhava as adorable even to Lakshmi, Brahmā and Mahādeva. He chants Rāma's and Krishna's names as both are incarnations of Mādhava, the Parama-Brahman, and are indistinguishable from each other. His practical application of the sastric saying, *chaṇḍālo'pi dvija-śreṣthaḥ Hari-bhakti-parāyaṇaḥ,* was visible when he received disciples from all classes and castes of people, not excluding Mahomedans, and the tribes such as the Gāro, Miri, Nāgā, etc. He recognised only a social signification in the caste system, and had nothing to say against varnāsrama-dharma, where people would follow their own traditional duties. But in religious congregation all are equal. Sankara's Neo-Vaishnavism threw open the doors of the temple of god to all classes of people. People flocked in thousands under the banner of his new faith.

I give below the rendering of a hymn from the *Nāma-ghoshā.*

> I do not belong to the four castes, nor do I belong to the four āśramas. I have no business in offering gifts, observing vratas, and going on pilgrimages. But I aspire to be a slave of the slave of the slaves of Him, whose lotus-feet shine in the ocean of full bliss and who is the Lord of the gopis.

Sankaradeva was a prolific writer of Assamese verses and a poet of very high order. In order to popularise his tenets he and his great disciple Mādhavadeva turned out a vast religious literature in the current language of the people. Sankara also wrote a Sanskrit work named *Bhakti-ratnākara.* Sankara translated the *Bhāgavata,* and composed a unique book called *Kirtana-ghoshā* to be read and chanted by the devotees of all classes. The *Kirtana-ghoshā* contains the quintessence of his creed. He composed popular religious songs upon the life and doings of Sri-Krishna. He introduced a new feature in his movement by composing dramas inculcating the cult and depicting life-story of Sri-Krishna, to attract people by dramatic performances, and thus popularise his teachings. No Vaishnavite reformers of his time seemed to have done this. The entire life-story of Sri-Krishna was rendered into music, poetry and drama by him, and Mādhavadeva contributed his share to all these literary performances.

Immediately after Sankaradeva's death, there was a cleavage between his apostolic successor, Mādhavadeva, and Dāmodaradeva, a Brahmin follower and associate of Sankaradeva. Since then the sect has been divided into two ; one came to be known as Mahāpurushiyā and the other Dāmodariyā. The followers of Mādhavadeva are called Mahāpurushiyās and of Dāmodaradeva Dāmodariyās.

In coming to the end of my speech, I trust it may safely be concluded that there cannot be any doubt as to Vaishnavism remaining always a living religion. It may lose its nomenclature in course of time here and there, and become indistinguishable in its separate entity having been merged in this or that great religion of the world. But the ground on which it stands and its all-pervading vitality will remain all the same ; because it is based on eternal truths, such as love, ahimsā, humility, and at the same time unbending rigidity in principles, devotion to one and the only God who is sat, chit and ānanda. To what the ancient seers of the Upanishads had evolved after ceaseless contemplation as an abstract conception of God, Vaishnavism gave a concrete form to be easily understood and be accessible to all

and sundry, so that even the humblest of the humble could come to Him, irrespective of caste and creed. The fountain-heads of Vaishnavism, the *Gitā* and the *Bhāgavata*, simply worked out the abstract propositions of *Vedānta-Sutra* and gave them a concrete shape and made them accessible to all. Winnow the chaff and dirt that have crept into the different systems of Vaishnavism prevailing in India, and you are sure to find the real solid grain that is the solace and sustenance of life. Our duty is to break the artificial barriers of the different sampradāyas and sects, and blow away the froth and foam of hair-splitting controversy, and dive into, and gather the pearls from, the bottom. That will give everlasting peace and happiness to all, and it will then be found that there is no room for untouchability, or higher caste or lower caste which is purely intended for the maintenance of the social fabric and not for generating class hatred. This is the true significance of Vaishnavism. Vaishnavism has opened wide the portals of the temple of God for everyone from the highest to lowest, and binds them with the sacred tie of brotherhood.

The *Nāma-ghoshā* of Mādhavadeva says :

> In other prevailing forms of religion, different people are entitled only to rites variously prescribed for different castes ; but in reciting the name of Hari all are equal. Therefore, this is the best of all religions.

RĀSA-LILĀ OF SRI-KRISHNA

The opening sloka.—The first sloka of the first chapter out of the five, dealing with the rasa-lilā of Sri-Krishna, in the *Srimadbhāgavata* opens out thus :

भगवानपि ता रात्रीः शारदोत्फुल्लमल्लिकाः ।
विह्तुं मनश्चक्रे योगमायामुपाश्रितः ॥

> Even Bhagavān, who possesses the six aisvaryas, i.e., who is self-sufficient, seeing that autumn night lustrous with mallikā flowers in bloom, desired to play by taking recourse to yoga-māyā.

God gives what a man really prays Him for.—In the *Gitā* Bhagavān says : 'O Pārtha ! every man in some form or other worships me and me only. I fulfil his desire in accordance with the way he worships me.' God gives what a man really prays Him for. He knows everybody's heart. He knows what one really wants from Him with his whole heart and soul. Most people in their heart of hearts long for worldly gains, although they apparently delude themselves by thinking that they want God. The all-knowing Bhagavān grants him only that what he desires from the bottom of his heart. Earnest and sincere supplication is sure to be responded to by God. God has no necessities of His own, as He is ātmārāma ; but His nature is to grant what a devotee, with all the earnestness he could command, prays for at His door. The maidens of Vraja, observing vrata for one full month, worshipped the goddess Kātyāyani on the bank of the Yamunā ; and their prayer was that they might get Sri-Krishna as their husband and protector. Sri-Krishna, the satisfier of the desires of the bhakta, knew this and promised to fulfil their desire.

Summum bonum of a man's existence.—Some sāstras say that the summum bonum of man's existence is to be merged at last in Brahman. Some say that to attain sārupya mukti, i.e., to be able to be like Paramātman is the end of one's life. Some

say that to remain as His servant after salvation and to serve Him is the best of all. But what is the natural longing of a man? Is it not to exist always without losing his identity? It is, therefore, natural to think that what a man naturally desires with all his heart and soul, the All-merciful Providence is sure to grant him. The gopīs of Vraja wanted this; and the kind Providence, the Lover of bhaktas, granted that to them. Bhagavān desired to रम्. God is supreme bliss. He is the pati of the patis, i.e., the Protector of all protectors. To be united with Him is the supreme bliss of jivas or Prakriti. To fulfil the desire of the supplicating soul is the *ramana* or the tasting of ānanda for God. God is ātmārāma. He has no want and no desire to be fulfilled. His will is ceaseless. The desire of the jiva acts on Him and brings out His response. Therefore, the fruit of the consequence naturally follows the course of the desire of jivas.

Bhagavān took recourse to yoga-māyā.—In the sloka quoted above it is said that Bhagavān took recourse to yoga-māya. Yoga-māyā is a mysterious power of God, by which the impossible is made possible. Bhagavān, who is the master of Māyā made the action appear something like an ordinary love affair. In the *Gitā* Bhagavān Himself says, **नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमाया-समावृतः,** 'I am clouded by yoga-māyā; that is why everyone cannot see me.'

Rāsa-lilā is not indecent.—Those who think that rāsa-lilā smacks of indecency ought to bear in mind that Krishna's age at the time was between eight and nine. In the *Kathopanishad* it is said that 'Brahman is a marvel of marvels; and the knower of Brahman, the hearer of Him, and the speaker about Him are also wonderful, i.e., few and far between.'

The Vrindāvana-lilā is a wonderful lilā of the wonder of wonders, Brahman.—That wonder of wonders Brahman in order to fulfil the desire of His bhaktas played the Vrindāvana-lilā. So, there is no wonder that in the eyes of the common people His lilās would appear as wonderful or impossible. It is for this reason, the foremost amongst the commentators of *Srimad-bhāgavata,* Sridhara Swāmi, just in the beginning of his commentary on rāsa-lilā, salutes to Bhagavān thus :

ब्रह्मादिजयसंरूढदर्पकन्दर्पदर्पहा ।

जयति श्रीपतिर्गोपीरासमण्डलमण्डितः ॥

'Kandarpa, the god of love, is proud of getting victory over even gods including Brahmā. Hail unto thee, O Bhagavān Kamalāpati! who conquering such a Kandarpa is shining within the rāsa-mandala." Sridhara hints broadly by this that in Bhagavān's Rāsa-lilā there is nothing of kāma.

Difference between kāma and prema.—There is a great difference between kāma and prema. Kāma is mind's carnal desire; whereas prema is not. Kāma's nature is to roam from one thing to another for the satisfaction of its cravings; prema is undeviating and true to one. Both are seekers of ānanda. But kāma hunts for pleasures, taking the aid of mundane things; whereas prema seeks unalloyed ānanda even without caring for such things. Longing for ānanda is the characteristic of life. The Upanishad says, **आनन्दात् हि एव खलु इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति ॥**

Two egoes in a man.—There are two egoes in everyone of us. One is real, and the other is an unreal copy of it. Everybody having been blinded by Māyā, is striving to do homage to the copy; because the original remains buried deep underneath. Our efforts to give satisfaction to the copy cannot satify the real ego, although we strive hard to do so. The satisfaction of the real ego is the only true happiness and real satisfaction. Kāma goes to serve the unreal ego; whereas Prema is real and eternal. Just as an actor in a drama goes to play the part of a dramatis persona and, after the play is over, goes home and comes back to his real self, so also the unreal part of the real ego is at last shaken off, the false mantle is cast away, and the real one becomes unveiled. Just as the actor, even during his play, cannot wholly shake off the lingering trace of his latent thought about his real self and home, so also the people while following the Will-o'-the-wisp of kāma, cannot wipe off the real hankering of his heart for prema, the immortal. When old age creeps in and blood in the system gets considerably cooled down, the natural longing for returning to his own hearth and home, discarding the false ones of the stage, is bound to follow.

Kāma's and prema's influence on our bodies.—Both kāma and prema are excercising their influence simultaneously on our bodies. The material body with the mind is always longing for similar bodies and minds, to satisfy its cravings. It roams from

one to another; but no real satisfaction worth the name ever comes to it. It cannot come; because the real self wants real ānanda. The carnal mind is anxiously running from place to place, for the superficial something. It cannot have his thirst quenched, because his soul's real thirst for ānanda or real pleasure has not been quenched. The ānanda, which is his eternal joy, which gave birth to him, and which he had tasted when he was in his real home from which he has come, still leaves a lingering trace in his consciousness that he has not been able to forget; and the longing for it still continues. Therefore, man, who came from Brahman, the ānanda, is at heart longing for tasting that ānanda again; but the perfidious Satan of a kāma lures him away and leads him to diverse glittering articles not of real gold. Therefore, his real thirst remains unquenched. At the root of man's desire the hankering for ānanda or pleasure is common, although some seek it in this, and some in that of the mundane world. The object of desire changes, but the object of prema or love does not. The desire for changeable objects is kāma; and the desire for the changeless and continuous bliss is prema. As we have mixed up the real ego with the worldly self, so we have mixed up and confused the real prema (love) with kāma (the carnal desire). When the consciousness in a man awakens, he comes to know that he is a particle of ānanda of that great ocean of sat-chit-ānanda, and then he longs to go back to it. In man's heart the incessant but mute and irrepressible longing for returning to that great ocean of perfect bliss is prema. To reveal before the gaze of mankind that divine prema perfectly purged of kāma, Bhagavān Sri-krishna has enacted this rāsa-lilā. In this world men are generally steeped in worldly matters. They do not practically proceed towards Paramātmā. The merciful God out of His infinite kindness, to attract them towards Him and free them from worldly ailments, has enacted this play in Vrindāvana. Maharshi Veda-Vyāsa in order to make it more attractive has mingled the description with the sweetest poetical Rasa. Sridhara-Swāmi in his commentary says, **शृंगाररसोपदेशेन विशेषतो निवृत्तिपरेयं पञ्चाध्यायी।** 'Sringāra-Rasa is a pretence only. In reality it gives mukti.' It is a medicine for bhava-roga. Sringāra-rasa is only a sugar-coating.

The Vraja maidens' prayer.—As alluded to before, the maidens of Vraja by strictly observing vrata had worshipped the goddess Kātyāyani on the bank of the Yamunā for a month and prayed to the goddess that they might get Krishna as their pati, i.e., husband or protector. The all-knowing Krishna promised them that he would fulfil their earnest desire after the end of the year from that date with a view to having their hearts more purified during the period intervening and ready to him. At the end of the prescribed period by playing on his flute he called them to come to him. The Upanishad says that Paramātman is not available through the help of the preceptor, nor by intelligence, nor by the studying of sāstras and that one gets Him only when Paramātman Himself calls the one. God calls to Him one whose heart becomes purified and fit to receive Him. He invited the Vraja gopis to Him only when He saw them cleansed of all impurities and fit for receiving Him. Krishna wanted the gopis to come to him leaving everything, their dearest and nearest. They did respond fully to his call. In the *Gitā* Sri-Krishna tells Arjuna,

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज।

अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः॥

Sri-Krishna's flute.—Sri-Krishna's flute is calling all and sundry, in sweet but lisping voice, to come to him, leaving everything mundane. Those whose hearts are purged of sins, whose ears have become keen to listen to the call, they and they only hear it, like the gopis of Vraja, and come to him.

In the *Gitā* Bhagavān says, 'I am the object of all the Vedas. I am the author of the Vedānta; and I only know the real meaning of the Vedas.'

In the *Srimadbhāgavata* Krishna says to Uddhava, 'What the Vedas say and what they prescribe, and saying one thing in one place, what they say quite different from what they said in another place, it is very difficult to ascertain. No one knows the real meaning of the Vedas but I do.'

Bhagavān, therefore, spoke out the essence of all the Vedas through his vamsi (flute): 'Come ye !. Come all ! Leave everything and come over to me ! You will get peace. And by embracing me with all thy heart, sincere and sublime, you will get eternal bliss.'

Meaning of the word, Krishna.—The meaning of the word

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'krishna', is :-krish (कृष्) means भू (bhū), i.e., existence ; and the cerebral ण means ānanda. When both the component parts combine, the word 'krishna' is formed. Therefore, Krishna means Paramānanda or eternal bliss. Krishna is the Parama Brahman of the Vedas. Krishna or Parama Brahman in order to draw his bhakta gopis towards him, called them by playing upon his sweet divine flute. His vamsi or flute possesses all the powers of attraction towards everlasting ānanda, i.e., Brahman ; and Krishna is a consolidated image of Parama Brahman. Krishna's flute attracts all as the magnet does the iron. Only iron, that is free from mud and dirt, is attracted. The gopis by a long and steady process of contemplation and chanting of his name had purged themselves of the resisting dirt and mud of their mind and, therefore, they of all others in Vraja, were easily attracted.

A mind cannot hold two things at the same time.—As I have already, said, kāma is not prema. Bhagavān has himself told the gopis that "those whose mind and soul are devoted to me, their kāma is not kāma. As fried paddy does not germinate, in the mind or chitta that has been entirely devoted to me, no kāmanā or other desires can germinate." This is the reason why Uddhava and other aikāntika bhaktas of Krishna aspired after kāma like that of the Vraja gopis. The minds of the gopis were entirely taken possession of by Krishna. That was why they were free from the ordinary vidhi and nisheda, i.e., injunctions and interdictions, prescribed by the dharma-sāstras. A mind cannot hold or contain two things at the same time. The mind, that has been entirely taken possession of by the thought of Krishna, cannot think of anything else. All-merciful God is so kind to man that He is ever ready to come and take possession of the heart of man. But when He comes, and finds that the seat in the heart of man is occupied by other worldly things, such as riches, wife, children, etc., He goes away in disgust. God found his seat in the heart of the gopis ready to receive Him ; so he gladly occupied it. As the minds of gopis had gone beyond the attraction of the law of gravitation to the earth, and left its sphere, and had entered into the sphere of God, Lord Krishna drew them to Him.

God incarnates.—In passing, and without entering into any philosophical discussion I will speak a word to those who do not believe that God incarnates, and that Krishna is an incarnation of

God. In the 13th sloka of the rāsa-panchādhyāya it is said that for the good of mankind God, who is attributeless, limitless, unfathomable and dispenser of sattva, rajas and tamas, incarnatets. God is Bhagavān because he possesses the six bhagas in full. He is all-powerful and all-merciful. The thick-headed man, whose mind is under the control of the rajas and tamas gunas, particularly in this Kali-yuga, cannot have a proper conception of Him. That is why God, who dwells in the heart of everyone and remains clouded with avidyā, incarnated as a man and lived as one of us out of His infinite kindness to lead us onto the path of salvation, The *Kathopanishad* says : 'To him whom Paramātman favours, He reveals Himself in His nija-tanu, i.e., chinmaya vigraha.' In other sastras it is said,

चिन्मयस्य अद्वितीयस्य निष्कलस्य अशरीरिणः ।

उपासकानां कार्यार्थं ब्रह्मणो रूपकल्पना ॥

'For the devotee's benefit Parama Brahman manifests Himself by assuming form.' This is also an echo of the saying of the *Kathopanishad* given above. The Vedānta and that class of sāstras are for God's tattva-jijnāsā (तत्त्वजिज्ञासा). *Srimadbhāgavata* and other Bhakti sāstras are worshippers of God. Faith is the main element in worship.

Severe tests of examination of the gopis.—At the sweet vamsi call of Sri-Krishna, when the gopis came to him, he put them to severe tests of examination. After greeting them with the usual complimentary expressions, he asked them first the reason of their coming. The next questions were put to fathom the depth of their love for him. He reminded them that it was night, and that wild animals were roaming all over the forest. They ought not, he added, remain there, as they were of the weaker sex. This was to see if they had got deha-bandhana, i.e., fear of life. Bhagavān wanted to find out if the gopis much estimated their life and set any value on it more than on God to whom they have come, i.e., whom did they consider to be greater—God or their own selves. The meaning, when a person is prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of God, then and then alone would God accept him.

The second question : Your mother, father, sons, brothers and husbands, not finding you at home, must have been anxiously

looking for you. You should not excite their fear and anxiety. So better return home.

The significance of this question is to see if the gopis have been able to cut off sneha-bandhana i.e., the tie of affection for the nearest and dearest ones. If they have not done so, then they are not acceptable to God. Bhagavān wants to know whether according to them their relations are greater or God is greater.

The next question : Perhaps you all have come to see this beautiful scenery of Vrindāvana with flowers in full blossom and the Yamunā flowing by the side, beautifully undulating with ripples in this light of the full moon. If so, you have done so already ; so better return home.

The significance of this is to find, whether the vision of the gopis is bahir-mukhi or antar-mukhi, i.e., external or introspective.

The next : Go back to Vraja, your home, where your children are crying for your milk. Go and serve your husbands. Go back and milk the cows and give milk to your crying children and the calves.

The signification of this is to see if the gopis have become free from karma-bandhana. He reminds them of their household duties. Anyone having that sort of tie cannot come to God.

The next : O gopis, if you have come to see me having been overpowered by affection for me, well and good. Because everyone in this world is so attracted and loves me. You have now seen me, and the business is over. So better go home.

The next : O gopis, to serve faithfully one's husband and relations and to rear up children is the parama-dharma, i.e., the chief duty of a woman. Those wives, who are not blind to the merits of earning happiness in this world as well as in the next, should not leave their husbands even if he be of a bad character, or ill-lucked, or old, or invalid, or sickly or poor ; but, of course, if he is not a sinner.

The significance of this is to point out to the gopis the fear of adharma, i.e., if the gopis are prepared to sacrifice their dharma and social sastric injunctions. The dharma-sāstras say that there is no other dharma for a wife excepting pati-sevā.

The esoteric significance of this sloka is to show how a similar struggle takes place in the heart of a bhakta before he attains the object of his bhakti.

In the next sloka Sri-Krishna says again, "Look here, O gopis, for a kula-nāri to come to a lover is reprehensible. Thereby she loses reputation and earns opprobrium everywhere in this world and also loses heaven hereafter. Living at a distance one can easily worship me with greater devotion and merit than living near me, because 'familiarity breeds contempt.'

The first part of the sloka is to put before them all the phases of fear. The second part giving a subtle hint of his real self to the gopis. He says that if you want to resign yourself to me knowing me to be Paramātman, then better go home and think of me there day and night with your whole heart. That will give you more happiness than my companionship with you.

This process is similar to the process of a bhakta in the early stages.—This is the process similar to the process of a bhakta in early stages of his bhakti. The first stage is sravana, i.e., the hearing of God's name and all about Him. The second stage is kirtana, i.e., the reciting of God's name. The third stage is meditation ; and the last stage is everlasting communion with God.

Vyāsa depicts the trial of a devotee making it attractive with poetry.—It is remarkable how Maharshi Veda-Vyāsa, with these slokas depicted the trial of a true devotee of God, and at the same time made it greatly attractive for all, with doses of poetry. In every department of learning (शिक्षा) a beginner has got to begin his sikshā with the copy of the real, mixed with charming poetical fictions to make it attractive for him. But to take the charming copy as real will lead him to great error. The copy should only serve the temporary purpose as a ladder to reach the goal. Vyāsadeva, to make the abstruse subject easy and accessible, has put a charmingly attractive coating of poetry over the surface of the divine rāsa-lilā.

Dejection of the gopis.—The gopis became greatly depressed and dejected at hearing Krishna's unpleasant words. Tears trickled down their cheeks, and they remained speechless for some time. After restoring their equanimity they replied with great petulance :

Gopis' reply :—'Accept us as Nārāyana accepts His bhaktas.—"O all-powerful (विभो), you should not have given utterance to such cruel words. We have taken shelter at your feet, after leaving aside all desires for enjoyment in worldly

relationships. Take us unto you, like Nārāyana taking His bhaktas under His aegis." The gopis' addressing Krishna as 'vibho' and saying 'We have taken shelter at your feet' is not the expression of an ordinary lover to her beloved. This indicates that the gopis supplicated for shelter thinking Krishna as Bhagavān. That is why they remained firm in their attitude and did not care to pay any heed to Krishna's frightening words. They expressly said, 'Accept us, as Nārāyana accepts His bhaktas.' This is not the language of a fallen woman soliciting love at the hands of her lover.

You are Ishwara and, therefore, you are the object of your advice.—Then they said, "You are learned in the lore of dharma-sāstras. We do not deny that to serve husbands, sons, friends and relations is the dharma of womenfolk in this world. But we do know that you are Iswara and, therefore, you are the object of your advice; because you are the ātman of all lives in creation; and in your service let our required services to our husband and relations be fructified."

God is master, husband, protector and friend.—What more higher level of sādhanā or devotion or prema could be uttered than this? 'God is my master, husband, protector, friend and an intimate relation. I have none else except God; if this idea takes possession of a person, what more remains for him to be done?'—When this ideal mood takes firm root in a person, his or her life becomes perfect bliss. He comes to the fountain head of all the ānanda in the world; nothing else remains for him to be attained. The Upanishad says, आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान्, 'God is ānanda.'

Except God everyone else is upapati.—Gopis' expressions lead us to the final conclusion that God is the real husband, and everyone else is only upapati. Gopis were not thinking of the popular worldly dharma-sāstras' injunctions, but of the **परमतत्त्व**, i.e., the final truth. Who does not see daily the futility of worldly relationships? They are wiped off at the twinkling of an eye, when the great God so wills. The gopis fully realised this truth, and their vision was not clouded like ours.

Derivation and meaning of pati, puttra and suhrit.—From the root *pā* the word *pati* is derived. *Pā* means to protect. One who can give protection is pati. But if a person cannot protect himself, how could he be a protector of another? The word

puttra means one who can save his father from the *pun-nāma Naraka.* But how could he, who cannot rescue himself from sin, give deliverance to another? Who is suhrit or real friend? One who unselfishly does good to another is a suhrit. How can he, who is blinded by his own selfishness day and night, be another's suhrit or real friend? So, God is the only real pati, putra and suhrit, and none else. Therefore, the gopis have come to Him, their Krishna, and have taken his sarana or shelter. The gopis address Krishna as priyatama, i.e., the most beloved. Who can be the most beloved than Bhagavān? One's life becomes dear to one, because a part and parcel of Paramātman is there.

Husband, wife, sons, etc., become dear only for Paramātman.—The Brihadāranayaka Upanishad says,

न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति आत्मनस्तुकामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति। न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति आत्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति। न वा अरे पुत्राणां कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति आत्मनस्तु कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति।

One's husband, wife, sons, etc., become dear to one only for Paramātman. Ātman's ātman Paramātman is Krishna. **तस्मिन् तुष्टे जगत् तुष्टम्।** So the gopis have rightly said to Krishna, "By serving you, our services to husband, children and friends become complete."

Sāstras' injunction are not for those whose minds are illuminated with the light of God.—The dharma-sāstras' injunctions and interdictions (vidhi, nishedha) are only for those whose minds are clouded by avidyā and who, therefore, consider worldly relations as real relations, worldly happiness as true happiness. These injunctions and interdictions are not for those whose minds are illuminated with the light of paramānanda of God. Those who understand the great Protector of this Universe as their only Protector, and believe in Him, sincerely with heart and soul, are beyond the pale of the secular injunctions and interdictions of the dharma-sāstras. Those who in all sincerity can say and feel the significance of sloka in the *Gitā:*

ईश्वरस्सर्वभूतानां हृदि तिष्ठति अर्जुन।
भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया॥

have got nothing to do with the customary duties enjoined by the sāstras. No sin touches them if they do not follow them. The gopis have come to ānanda Brahman, Sri-Krishna, leaving aside everything else, as of no consequence; therefore, they have got no obligations and duties to tie them down with the injunctions of the secular dharma-sāstras. Therefore, when they heard Sri-Krishna giving them advice to serve their husbands, sons, etc., they give him the reply with a tinge of sneer in the very form of address: O dharmavid!

The pith of teachings of the Upanishads.—This sloka, embodying the reply of the gopis, contains the pith of all the Upanishads, and the final conclusion of the Vedānta.

God is ātman of everyone.—In the next sloka the gopis say, "You are ātman of everyone, so you are always dear to all. We have got no need for husband, son and relations, etc. They are sources of anxiety and trouble. So be propitiated on our account. Do not disappoint us. We have been anxiously waiting to get you for a long time."

Ātman is dear to everyone. So is Sri-Krishna.—The significance of this sloka is: O Krishna, we are women; you, therefore, think that we are deviating from the path of dharma and going astray. But think of the fact that those who understand the real meaning of the sāstras, be they women or men, cannot but be devoted to you; because they know you to be ātman and you are, therefore, always dear. Ātman is the object of love for everyone from his very birth; and the image of ātman is you. In the *Gitā* Krishna himself says, **अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः**, 'O Arjuna, I am living in the heart of everyone as ātman. Srutis say, Brahman is **सच्चिदानंदरूप**. In *Maitryupanishad*, Brahman is styled as **ब्रह्मा-विष्णु-मंडितं सर्व्वात्मपदं धाम**। Vishnu means all-pervading; **विविष्टि इति विष्णुः**। The *Bhāgavata* says, **ईश्वरः परमः कृष्णः सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः**. So, when Paramātman is **सच्चिदानन्दविग्रह** Sri-krishna, he is bound to be loved by, and be the dearest to, all. Nothing of this world can always remain the dearest. Ānanda is always dearest to everyone. Man is in searcher after ānanda. He does not want to die, because he does not want to lose ātman. What does it mean? It means Paramātman is joy and happiness. Why do other things become dear to us? Because Paramātman or Brahman is there. Paramātman pervades everything

in this world. Bhagavān Sri-Krishna is an incarnation of ānanda, i.e., the great Paramātman; therefore, he is always dearest to everyone.

The gopis are prepared to die if they cannot get Krishna in this life.—In the next sloka the gopis say that if they cannot get Krishna in this life, they would die meditating on him, for then they are sure to come to Him. This is the nature of real prema or love.

Since the gopis have touched Krishna's feet, it is impossible for them to leave him.—In the next sloka the gopis say, among other things, "Since the day we have touched your feet, it is impossible for us to go elsewhere and get ourselves engaged in anything of this world. The Upanishad also says **भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थि छिद्यते सर्वसंशयः**, 'If one comes to paramapurusha Paramātman, his heart becomes clear and all doubts disappear.'

The gopis soliciting Krishna for dāsya-bhakti.—In the next two slokas the gopis are soliciting Krishna for dāsya bhakti mixed with sānta or madhura. Dāsya bhakti, strictly speaking, is not what we understand by the relation between a mercenary servant and his master. This dāsya is mixed with sānta and madhura aspect. That is why Kapila, the incarnation of Vishnu, says (in the third Skandha of the *Bhāgavata*), 'My bhaktas do not accept the five kinds of mukti or salvation even if given; they only want my dāsya, i.e., sevā or service.'

The gopis are charmed with Krishna's unparallelled beauty.—In the next sloka the gopis say, "O Krishna, you are finding fault with us for coming to you; and taunting us as coming to a upapati. But we ask you, 'Will you tell us who is there in the world who would not do the same thing having been charmed with your exquisite beauty, unparallelled in the three worlds; and having heard your songs like the flow of nectar emanating from your heavenly flute? Even the cows, deer, birds and trees are charmed." There is an esoteric significance mixed with poetry in this. By the attraction of ānanda or supreme joy even the animal and vegetable worlds are thrilled with joy;—what to speak of man?

All the forces are modifications of one force.—Modern sciece has said that 'all the forces we know are modifications of One Force and are identical in their essential nature; that the heat and light and all the various forces around us—electricity, mag-

netism and the rest—that all these are but vibrations of varying lengths and activities in a subtle medium, and that they may be transmuted, the one into the other. They are not fundamentally different, but are one and the same in their root.'

The western philosophers have now come to admit that sakti, i.e., force, or more properly speaking, power that plays in what is called जड i.e. matter, is transmutation of power that is in the animal life. The *Bhagavadgitā* clearly speaks :

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद् भासयतेऽखिलं ।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ तत्तेजो विद्धि मामकम् ॥

Herbert Spencer in his book, *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, says, "The power which manifests throughout the Universe distinguished as material is the same power which iu ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness." The *Gitā* says—

यावत् संजायते किञ्चित् सत्त्वं स्थावरजंगमम् ।
क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञसंयोगात् तद् विद्धि भरतर्षभ ॥

In mineral, animal, vegetable and human, the same power pervades. Mineral is जड़ (inert), but, in fact, the all-pervading Power exists in it ; or else the power of attraction, repulsion, etc., would never have been visible there. Our great scientist, Sir Jagadis Chandra Bose, has proved scientifically that minerals also feel the fag and get tired when hit in the same way as the animal does. He has demonstrated the similarity that exists between the response to electrical and mechanical stimulus on the part of living nerve and muscle, and the response of metals. The reason is nothing else, but that even in mineral God exists, as in the vegetable and animal kingdoms.

Krishna grants the prayer of the gopis.—At last Krishna, hearing these piteous lamentations of the Gopis, became kind and granted their prayer, although he is ātmārāma, i.e., nijānanda-purna. God is the ocean of kindness. But who really prays for having His kindness ? Those who apparently do, their prayers are not from the depth of their heart. God is all-knowing. He knows what is working in the mind of him who prays. God does not become kind to him who is conscious in the heart of hearts that he has got earthly ties. God will give Himself only to him who has discarded every tie of this world, like the gopis

of Vraja. The gopis with tears rolling down their eyes told Krishna that they had nothing in this world, and the all-knowing Bhagavān saw through it. Therefore, he gave them shelter under his lotus-like feet. A sineere little drop of tear in a man is more valuable than all the riches of the world he could possess. God gives Himself to the possessor of that tiny drop of tears. The Upanishad says of God : तद्दूरे तदन्तिके, i.e., He is quite near, and at the same time far away. He is as easily available as it is extremely difficult to get Him. A particle of deceit (कपटता) is enough to drive Him far away from you. But if you can with a heart like the Vraja gopis shed a drop of tear, He is easily within your reach.

Krishna commences Rāsa-lilā.—After this Bhagavān Krishna, although he is ātmārāma, i.e., having no desire of his own to fulfil, in order to fulfil the earnest desire of his bhakta gopis, and knowing fully well that their mind has beeome purged of all worldly desires, commenced rasa-lilā with them. He knew that in the mind of the gopis the jnāna or the thought for anything else has been destroyed.

Pride of the gopis and disappearance of Krishna.—But after some time it appeared that yet a slight and subtle trace of ego that was lurking dormant in the mind of the gopis grew into pride ; and they thought that none in this world was so fortunate as they, because they have captivated even the Madana-mohana, i.e., the charmer of Cupid or Kāma. Bhagavān knowing this growing sense of pride in their mind, immediately disappeared from their midst. He did it with the purpose of cleansing their mind of the last vestige of thought of that nature that proves a barrier between the bhakta and Bhagavān.

Mind cannot hold two things simultaneously. God disappears when the gopis' mind slips into their own self.—The esoteric significance of this is : A mind cannot hold two things simultaneously. The mind cannot remain floating even for a second without catching hold of something. When the mind is deeply buried in the thought of God, it cannot think of anything else. When the gopis' mind slipped into the thought of their ego or self, Bhagavān disappeared. In fact Bhagavān did not leave them and go away. As soon as their thought went to the second thing, i.e., their own selves, their vision of God naturally become clouded. Such a thing happens in the first stage of a sādhaka

or devotee. I am quoting a passage here from that remarkable book, *Imitation,* in order to make my statement clear :

> My son, when the fire of devotion is kindled in thy heart, let not the favour exalt thee into pride ; boast not of it to others as a distinction due to thy superior merit, nor ponder it in thy own mind with self approbation and complaisance.
>
> Neither exalt thyself in thy own esteem as the peculiar favourite of Heaven because thy heart felt the raptures of devotion and tasted the ineffable sweetness of the spiritual fervour ; for by those marks the lover of perfection is not known.

There is another reason for Krishna's disappearance. He wanted to see that the love of the gopis for him becomes perfectly matured. A good doctor or kavirāja prescribes medicine for the patient even after he is cured of the disease, so that there may not be any relapse. Likewise a follower of jnāna-mārga as well as a follower of the bhakti-mārga are enjoined to follow their courses strictly for some time, so that there may uot be any relapse.

The gopis' premonmāda.—Thus, the separation made the gopis think, think and think of Krishna and nothing else ; and the result was that they came to a state of unmāda (उन्माद), i.e., madness, and tanmayatā (तन्मयता), i.e., a heart quite lost in the thought of Krishna. They took to considering themselves as Krishna and imitating his acts. There is nothing unusual in this. When a man's mind is completely absorbed in one object, and the concentration becomes deeper and deeper, he becomes a part and parcel of the object of concentration. This is called samādhi of the jnānins and bhaktas. When the thought on the subject becomes long-standing or stationary, it is called samādhi. This happened to Sri-Chaitanyadeva, when his thought on Rādhā and Krishna became stationary. He at last came to take himself as Rādhā in its very perfection and he lost all the separate identity of his own self. This state is called also āvesa or tadākāratā in the sāstras. In the first chapter of the *Brahma-sutra* it is written शास्त्रदृष्ट्या तूपदेशः वामदेववत् ॥. In the *Sankara-bhāshya* it has been thus explained :

> Once upon a time Indra after seeing Paramātman thought and said, 'I am the Paramātman', as Vāmadeva Rishi after having the knowledge of Paramātman said, 'I am the Sun.' When the bhedajnāna(भेदज्ञान), i.e., the knowledge of differences between God and self is obliterated, the votary comes to think, there is no difference between him and God ; because he thinks he has merged entirely in God. In the state of samādhi of a yogi he becomes completely merged in Paramātman, and no difference exists.

The gopis also became like Krishna in their thought and they commenced acting like him. They became tadātmika ; therefore, they श्रीकृष्णविचेष्टा जगृहुः, i.e., took to acting like Krishna. I will not tire your patience by going into detail as to their acting.

A gopi's pride and Krishna's disappearance from her.—An incident happened in the meantime. Krishna had taken a gopi with him at the time of his disappearance from the group. That gopi after some time felt very much elated and became proud of herself ; because she thought that Krishna, of all gopis, had chosen her to show special favour by taking her with him, leaving the rest. So being very much puffed up, she asked Krishna to carry her on his shoulders, as she was tired of walking. Krishna sat and bent down to let her ride on his shoulders. As soon as she became ready to do so, lo and behold ! Krishna vanished into thin air. Then she realised her folly and commenced weeping.

God does not condone pride even in His devotees.—The significance of this is : God does not condone *darpa* or pride even in His devotees. His bhaktas should be entirely free from any sort of pride, even the pride of exaltation as His bhakta. The lines quoted above from the book *Imitation* clearly indicate this, viz., "Neither exalt thyself in thy own esteem as the particular favourite of Heaven." The Upanishad says :

यस्यामतं तस्य मतं मतं यस्य न वेद सः ।
अविज्ञातः विजानतां विज्ञातमविजानताम् ॥

'One who thinks that he does not know Brahman, he knows Him. One who thinks he knows Him does not know Him.'

The gopis thought they completely knew Bhagavān Sri-Krishna and brought him under their control. The result was that they completely failed.

The gopis search for Krishna.—The group of the deserted gopis commenced a search for Krishna. They asked trees and

creepers, and grass and deer, if they could give them information of Krishna, who has gone away leaving them. The Upanishad says :

यो देवोऽग्नौ यो अप्सु यो विश्वं भुवनमाविवेश ।
यः औषधिषु यो वनस्पतिषु तस्मै देवाय नमो नमः ॥

'I bow down to that god who is in the fire, water, plants and trees, and who remains pervading throughout the Universe.'

The gopis like jnānins saw Brahman in everything and realised His presence there. But they could not be satisfied as they were premika bhaktas. They wanted to get Brahman to their heart in the shape of Madana-mohana Sri-Krishna, and embrace him ; or else they would ever remain disconsolate.

In their search for Sri-Krishna, following his foot-steps, they met the particular gopi on the way, weeping bitterly. They heard the story from her desertion and then pursued the search all together taking her also along with them.

The gopis see pitch dark ahead in their search and return to the bank of Yamunā.—After a trying search they sighted deep darkness ahead, and could not proceed further. At last they returned to the sandy banks of the Yamunā and commenced wailing and crying for Krishna reciting his name, and made an abject surrender to Him. Sometime after this, Krishna suddenly appeared before them with a smiling face.

Why the gopis saw pitch darkness before them in the search at Vrindāvana ?—Because darkness had already crept into the Vrindābana of their mind. The tamoguna, i.e., darkness of the mind, had promoted their ego to think that they would find out Krishna in the outside Vrindāvana. That pride was humbled. They, therefore, returned to the bank of the Yamunā, i.e., the place wherefrom they had started, and took to chanting his name and uttering fervent prayers. One thing must be noted here that the idea of their returning to their own home did not occur in their minds, because they had come to Krishna leaving altogether their hearth and home and had become Krishna-mayā and tadātmikā, i.e., completely absorbed in Krishna.

The relationship between God and the jivas.—The eternal relationship between God and the jivas is that of sevya and sevaka. When jiva separates from God, he roams far and wide,

contracting various relationships in his worldly life. When at last he comes to recognise his own self, then discarding completely the false and illusory relationships, with which he has so long been entangled, he returns to his old relationship with God. This is called svarupāvasthāna of the jiva. So long as the gopis' thoughts were on their own selves and had relied on their own strength for seeking and finding out Bhagavān Sri-Krishna, they were unsuccessful. When realising their mistake, they returned to their svasthāna, i.e., own place, and commenced crying and praying, Krishna appeared before them again. I give below a parallel passage of prayer from that remarkable book *Imitation.*

> Dearest Lord, most beloved and spouse of my soul, supreme source of light and love and sovereign lord of Universal Nature ! When will it be granted me to taste and see how good thou art ! O Lord my God, when shall I lie wholly absorbed in thy fulness ! When shall I lose in the love of thee all perception of myself, and have no sense of any being but thine ?
>
> How long will my Lord delay His coming ! Oh, may he come to me and turn my sorrow into joy! Come O Lord, come quickly ! In thy absence no day nor hour is joyful, for thou art my joy.

The gopis chant Krishna-nāma together.—In the text it is said that the gopis **समवेता जगुः कृष्णं,** They chanted Krishna-nāma together.' The mode of bhaktas' prayer is different from the mode of jnānis and yogis. The jnānis and yogis meditate on God sitting alone in seclusion, whereas bhaktas pray chanting God's name in company with other bhaktas. Bhagavān says in the *Gitā,*

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयंतः परस्परं ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥

The tears and earnest prayers of the gopis and their humiliation and contrition brought back Krishna and he appeared before them. I will again quote a parallel passage from the *Imitation* :—

> Behold I am here ! Behold I am come to help thee, because thou has called upon me in sincerity and truth. Thy tears and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition have inclined me and brought me to thee.

Krishna reappears before the gopis.—As soon as Krishna appeared before them, they stood up together and felt as if life

had returned to a dead body—उत्तस्थुर्युगपत् सर्वास्तन्वः प्राणम् इवागतम्। The Upanishad says, Brahman is प्राणस्य प्राणश्चक्षुषश्चक्षुः। Sukadeva, following this saying of Sruti, brings in this simile. He compared the gopis with dead bodies and Krishna with prāna, i.e., life-breath. तदेजति तन्नैजति तद्दूरे तदन्तिके तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः।—So says the Upanishad : 'Brahman moves about, and at the same time does not move at all. He is far away, and at the same time quite near. He is in the heart of everyone, and at the same time outside everyone.

When the gopis' belief in their own power to find out Krishna is gone, Krishna reappears.—This saying of the Upanishad was practically demonstrated by Krishna in his lilā. As long as there was a lingering trace of āsakti or attraction for the gopis for outside things, Krishna was far away from them. They could not find him, ferreting out the whole Vrindāvana. As long as the gopis depending upon their own ability, thought that they would find out Krishna, they failed in their attempt. When their belief in their own power was gone, and with all their heart and soul they resigned to Krishna, and offered heart-felt prayers to him, Krishna of his own accord appeared before them. Life returned to the body, and the body became enlivened with all the faculties.

Meaning of Vedas' injunction of karma-kānda first, then jnāna-kānda, and then Brahma-jijnāsā.—Now all the worldly desires of the gopis became fully extinct and they got Paramātman, their hearts' sole desire. The Vedas at the beginning enjoined karma-kānda as the means of attaining God. They could not halt there and had to enjoin yāga, yajna, etc., to propitiate the gods, Indra, Chandra, Vayu and Varuna, and upheld the happiness of Svarga. But the honest sruti could not stop there. It saw that the aim and object of all karma-kānda is permanent happiness. But karma-kānda could not promise that. That is why jnāna-kānda followed karma-kānda. After that the Upanishads' Brahma-jijnāsā came and its discussions and conclusions, The gopis after undergoing an elaborate pujā of the goddess, Kātyāyani to begin with and roaming over the length and breadth of Vrindāvana, could not get Parama-Brahman, the giver of the real and unalloyed bliss (परम सुख). So at last coming to realise the futility of their own efforts, when they came back to the bank of the Yamunā, the place from where they began their search, and commenced

crying for Krishna, chanting his name with their whole heart and soul, and also completely resigned themselves to him, then and then only could they attain Krishna. There is no other way. This is the final teaching of the Upanishads ; and this teaching is amplified in the Rāsa-lilā of Sri-Krishna.

सर्वास्ताः केशवालोकपरमोत्सवनिर्वृत्ताः।
जह्युर्विरहजं तापं प्रज्ञा प्रप्य यथा जनाः॥

'Just as the mumukshu getting prajnā, i.e., God leaves the world, so also the gopis getting Krishna shook off the pangs of separation and became quite happy.'

तद्दर्शनाह्लादविधूतहृद्रुजो मनोरथान्तं श्रुतयो यथ ययुः।

The gopis are purged of hrid-roga.—'The gopis seeing Bhagavān became purged of worldly desires of the heart, they became totally purged of kāma ; just like the Srutis not being able to find the great God in karma-kānda came to jnāna-kānda that gave the vision of God the Everlasting Bliss.'

Even after getting salvation a bhakta finds pleasure in the service of God.—There may be a question as to why the gopis even after attaining Parama Brahman, devoted themselves to His service. The answer is this : The bhaktas of Bhagavān even after attaining the much-coveted salvation, find pleasure in the service of God. Generally this is not the case with the yogis and jnānis who have attained salvation.

The gopis' questions to Krishna.—When Krishna took his seat in the midst of the gopis, the gopis asked him certain questions in pranaya-kopa, i.e., in anger mixed with love : "O Krishna, in this world there is a class of men who love only when they are loved. There is another class who love even if they are not loved. There is a third class who do not love even if they are loved or if they are not loved. Will you kindly tell us how is this" (meaning, to which of these classes do you belong)? The gopis cleverly put these questions in order to bring Krishna to task for his past conduct in treating them like that. Krishna's reply to the first question is : "Those who love when they are loved is like a barterer. He is guided by selfishness. There is no real friendship nor merit in that. It is like a sale-purchase business."

Ahaituki bhakti is the only way to realise God Krishna.—The significance of this reply is that ahaituki bhakti is the only way to get Krishna. The religion that is tinged with phalā-kāmkshā, i.e., the desire for result, is a hypocritical religion. It is not a dharma at all. Upāsanā with phalākāmkshā is a deceitful upāsanā (कपट उपासना). It cannot be called an upāsanā proper. If the worship or prayer is based on the desire for gain, such as riches, issues, etc., Krishna remains far away from it. We see in the worship of the current deities that the worshipper prays; धनं देहि यशो देहि मानं देहि, etc., 'Give me riches; give me name and fame; give me assurance of safety, and destroy my enemies,' etc. We find nothing of the sort in the worship of Krishna's image. Krishna's image stands in a graceful pose with smiling face, playing on the flute. Krishna is available only when he is worshipped with sincere love, without कामना. There is no lasting ānanda in the things of this transitory world. It is only in the everlasting Brahman, whose image is Sri-Krishna, the concentrated essence of ānanda or bliss. If the worshipper forsakes the relationship with the things of this mundane world entirely with all the sincerity he could command, paramānanda Krishna will be within his reach. Of course, Bhagavān says in the *Gitā* that ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहं, 'I grant the prayer of my worshipper according to his heart's desire.' Those, whose aim is just to get worldly gains, their prayer may be fulfilled. The aim of the gopis is to attain God. The real worshippers of Bhagavān Sri-Krishna do not desire for anything except his services. Bhagavān reflects Himself on bhaktas' heart like the reflection of the image of a China-rose on a clean mirror. The mind, that is not free from dirt and dust, i.e., desires for worldly gains, no image of sat-chit-ānanda can be reflected there.

The love of one who does not care for a return is pure love and is of real friendship.—Here is Krishna's reply to the second question: "The love of one who does not care for any return is pure love, and is of merit, as well of real friendship. It is just like the love of parents for their children. Even if the son does not love his parents, they cannot but love their son. There are people also who out of great kindness in their heart love others without caring for response.

Krishna is not among this class of people.—"But I am not within this class also. My affection and kindness is different from this class of people. The kindness of a kind person is a kind of transmutation of sattva-guna of his heart. When he sees the sufferings of certain people, his heart melts, and he cannot help it. But I am above all the three gunas; I am perfect ceaseless bliss. I, therefore, do not become affected with others' sorrow; but my kindness flows towards the sufferers all the same. Father's and mother's affection flows in a particular channel towards their children; but my affection pervades the whole Universe. It is not dependant on any particular cause or reason. I am full of kindness and affection. They are for every one in the Universe. That is why I call myself समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः। "O gopis, I am, therefore, not within the category of your second question."

Krishna's answer of the third question of the gopis is:

Krishna is not within the category of the indifferent.—The gopis wanted to know if Krishna is within the category of those who are quite indifferent, and do not love even when loved or when not loved at all. The gopis thought they would find Krishna in this class. Krishna understood this and said, No. He said that there are four sub-classes of people within this category: (1) The minds of those, who are brahma-jnāni or ātmārāma are concentrated on the joy of their own self, they are antarmukhi, i.e., introspective, and devoid of bahirdrishti, i.e., outward vision. I am also ātmārāma, but notwithstanding that, I have got to look to the welfare of the whole Universe. I see through the outside and inside of the endless lives habitating this endless brahmāndas. So I cannot be compared with this class of men. (2) Although those, who are āptakāma, have their eyes directed outside, they have got no desire of their own to be fulfilled. Therefore, they do not love any one. I am also āptakāma, but my bhaktas' wish forcibly leads me to volition. So I have got no similarity also with this class of people. (3) I am not to be counted amongst the ungrateful wretches, because I am Jagannātha; I dispense the fruits, i.e., consequences to the people in accordance with their karma and to bhaktas in accordance with their devotion. (4) I cannot, of course, have a place amongst the gurudrohi, i.e., those who do not return good for good but do injury to the benefactor in return. I am rather their Chastiser.

Krishna reveals his true nature.—Krishna now explains his conduct and reveals his true nature and real self before the gopis : "Listen O friends, listen ! When a poor man after getting some money loses it, he does not think of anything else except the lost money day and night. In order to place my bhaktas in a similar situation so that they can think of nothing else but me, I disappear from their sight after being visible to them for once."

Any one wanting God must think of Him and Him alone.—If anyone wants God at all times, one must think of Him and Him alone, leaving aside all one's worldly thoughts. God, therefore, says, "Ye worldly people, you are so fond of wealth ; you will have to love me likewise, and then will you get me. When you lose your wealth you have got, you think of it day and night. you will have to think of me likewise and then you will get me for ever, and otherwise not. I, therefore, out of kindness place my bhaktas in such a situation."

No obscenity in rāsa-lilā.—I would, in passing, draw the attention of those superficial critics who scent obscenity in rāsa-lilā to the above slokas where God reveals Himself.

Krishna had disappeared only to strengthen the love for Him in the gopis' hearts.—In the following slokas Krishna says, "O gopis, I know you have left lokāchāra and vedāchāra and your dearest and nearest for me. I too did not go away anywhere having left you. In order to strengthen your love for me I was remaining invisible ; but I had seen you and heard you all along. You are dearest to me ; and I am also your great well-wisher. So you ought not to blame me."

I quote another passage from the book *Imitation* here :

> And he that loves with purity considers not the gift of the lover but the love of the giver ; he values the affection more than the tokens of it ; esteems his beloved infinitely beyond the benefits he confers ; and with a noble generosity divesting his mind of all desire of personal advantage reposes himself not upon my gifts but upon me.

Krishna even remaining invisible heard all what the gopis said.—Bhagavān told the gopis, "Remaining invisible I have seen you and heard all that you have said." This is a saying for everybody in this world. God is all-knowing and all-pervading. He sees and hears everything done and said by everyone in this world everyday. None can do anything or even think of anything without His knowledge. He saw the gopis and heard their sincere prayer and understood their deepest longing for Him. So He appeared before them. He does not appear before us because He sees through our insincere behaviour and hears our insincere talk and understands the existence of impure thoughts in our hearts that are engrossed in matters worldly. In the bhakti-mārga the bhakta sees Bhagavān. But in jnāna-mārga and yoga-mārga this does not happen, because there the upāsaka merges in the upāsya, and loses his separate identity. That is why jnāni's ānanda is called jnānānanda and the yogi's ānanda is called ātmānanda. The bhakta's ānanda likewise is called premānanda or Bhagavadānanda. In jnāna-mārga as well as in yoga-mārga the process is similar. The jnāni in his earlier stage feels Brahman as a flash of lightning that disappears immediately. That whets his desire to feel like that again and again. The yogi also in his state of samādhi, in course of tasting ātmānanda, finds his sight at times drawn towards outside world. That makes him more eager to return to his former state of samādhi. This process leads the mind gradually to the stable state of mukti. In bhakti-mārga also in the earlier stages the bhakta loses sight of Bhagavān after catching a glimpse of him. In course of his sādhanā when his eagerness becomes deeper and deeper to see Bhagavān again and again, he comes to attain Bhagavān at last and for ever. This was the reason why Krishna told the gopis, "Do not be offended with me. I gave you the temporary pain, with a view to give myself to you for eternity."

The gopis' love for Krishna is niskāma ; it cannot, therefore, be repaid.—In the next sloka Krishna says, "You have come to me leaving behind everything and discarding all the ties, and your love for me is niravadya, i.e., niskāma. I shall not be able to repay your debt even if I get the long life of the devas. So you, by your own liberality, get it repaid."

The bhakta does not want to destroy his separate existence even after mukti and wants to serve God eternally. So God cannot get rid of him and repay his services.—The estoric significance of this is that Krishna is the image of the concentrated essence of ānanda. The gopis are devotees of prema-bhakti. Ānanda can give satisfaction to a jnāni and a yogi in full ; but not to a premika bhakta. Jnāni seeks merging in God as the ripples or

particles of water do in the limitless ocean ; the yogi seeks to be identified with the Paramātman. When they attain these states, they are satisfied. But the premika bhakta does not want to destroy his separate existence. He wants to serve God for ever and enjoy the bliss of his services eternally. Therefore, Bhagavān is unable to repay the debt of his premika bhakta. His bhakta has nobody else except his Bhagavān. Krishna cannot throw him off, and cannot get rid of him, because he is tied up with the tie of prema-bhakti, because his name is Dāmodara. He ran away as far as he could from mother Yasodā, but at last he was caught and he had to accept the tie at her hands.

Krishna commences rāsa-lilā, a circular dance, with the gopis. The conquering of kāma, i.e., carnal desires, is the object of rāsa-lilā.—After this Krishna commenced his rāsa-lilā with the gopis. Rāsa means a kind of dance where several dancers, both male and female, dance in a circle. The male dancers put their hands on the necks of the female dancers and females catch hold of the hands of the male dancers, and all of them dance in a circle. Sridhara-Svāmi, the chief commentator of the *Bhāgavata*, says—**रासो नाम बहुनर्तकीयुक्तो नृत्यविशेषः,** 'It is a dance of many dancers dancing together.' At the beginning of the rāsa-panchādhyāya Sridhara-Svāmi says, **तस्माद्रासक्रीडाविडम्बनं कामविजयाख्यपनायेत्येव तत्त्वम्।** 'Bhagavān Krishna with a view to show Kāma-jaya, i.e., the conquering of Kāma or Cupid or carnal desires, played this rāsa-lilā.'

By copying the ordinary rāsa dance, Krishna played the rāsa-lilā.—Sridhara means here to say that the copying of the ordinary rāsa dance Krishna played the rāsa-lilā in order to show the victory over Kāma. Following the worldly dance of worldly dancers, Krishna played this divine lilā. To make the divine truth easily comprehensible to the people of this earth, it is necessary to express it in the terms of the world. By taking recourse to the inscrutable Yogic power Krishna commenced the dance, becoming as many Krishnas as there were gopis. This is quite in keeping with the appearance of Paramātman in the heart of a group of sādhakas or devotees who, sitting together, pray to God. It is just like the shadow of the sun reflecting separately on the waters of many pitchers kept together. God appears in the heart of everyone simultaneously, and each devotee think that God is

only with him, as each and every one of the gopis in the rāsa-mandala thought that Krishna was only with her.

The Upanishads says : **रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वानन्दी-भवति। आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान्। आनन्दादेव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते। आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति।**

'Paramātman is rasa ; and the root of satisfaction of the creatures. All the creatures emanate from Paramātman, the fountain-head of ānanda, and live by ānanda.

Krishna's dance and play with the jivas is rāsa-lilā in imitation of the rāsa dance.—The basis of the Brahmānanda is Sri-Krishna, the image of concentrated ānanda. His dance and play with the jivas, who are prema-prakritis is called rāsa-lilā in imitation of the rāsa dance. In the pure heart—Vrindāvana of his bhaktas the union of Paramātman and jivātman takes place. In this mundane world the pleasure of the union of male and female is considered to be the highest. Krishna, taking recourse to Yoga-māyā, acted like that in order to attract people to the real divine communion, the only way to taste the divine ānanda that leads men to God. The Upanishad says, **तद्यथा प्रियया स्त्रिया सम्परिष्वक्तो न बाह्यं किञ्चन वेद नान्तरमेवमेवायं पुरुषः,** etc., likewise the jiva in communion with Paramātman finds himself in a similar state. In that state of holy communion the devotee forgets the existence of father and mother, Chandāla and non-Chandāla, tapasvi and non-tapasvi. He goes beyond the pale of pāpa and punya, i.e., sin or merit. His heart becomes purged of all sorrows. This is the reason why the gopis had forgotten everything including their hearth and home, husband and children.

Paramātman's dance with jivātmā is ananta.—In rāsa-lilā Krishna danced in a circle. A circle has neither beginning nor end. This is to show that Paramātman's dance with the jivas is ananta, i.e., endless and continuous.

The meaning of Sukadeva's coupling Krishna's name with adjectives such as ātmārāma, etc., in rāsa-lilā.—One thing must be taken note of, that in the rāsa-panchādhyāya, where there is a mention of vihāra, Sukadeva has conpled Krishna with such adjectives as ātmārāma, ātmarata and Bhagavān, to guard against the conclusions as to his acting like ordinary human beings. These adjectives indicate clearly that Krishna is self-sufficient and has

got no desire of his own to be fulfilled. He acted that way taking recourse to yoga-māyā. His intention was to lead men through transient happiness, that results from worldly endeavours, to nityānanda, i.e., the everlasting joy, and thus create distaste for the transitory so-called joy. Mahāmuni Sukadeva has later on, in reply to Parikshita's question, cleared all the doubts that might linger in the minds of people as to Bhagavān Krishna's propriety of acting rāsa-lilā.

Sukadeva's first reply to clear King Parikshita's doubt.—Sukadeva's first reply to clear Parikshita's doubt is :

"Persons with divine power are seen to break the rules of dharma and exhibit courage. In such a person it is not considered to be a sin. The fire consumes everything. Those who are tejīyān, i.e., Isvara or masters, having full control over the organs of senses, are not liable to breaking the injunctions of the dharma-sāstras. They are free from ego ; so they are not responsible for such things. But those who are not Isvaras not only should not do such things, but should not even think of it. Ordinary people should not take the example of Rudra who swallowed poison easily. A man ought to follow the advice given by mahāpurushas, but not to act like them, except those actions of theirs that conform to their advice. Mahāpurushas are free from ego ; so they do not earn merit by good works, nor sin by acting badly. That which is detrimental to body and soul and is blameable in the context of society is sin. Those mahāpurushas who have got no connection with their bodies and society have no good and evil to account for ; so they are not considered to have commited any sin. The great God who is the master of these Isvaras or mahāpurushas, and of the whole world, and also of all pāpa and punya (merit and sin), it is needless to say that He is beyond the pale of pāpa and punya as prescribed by the dharma-sāstras." In the *Gitā* Bhagavān says :

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।

न मा कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ॥

'O Pārtha, I have got no duty to perform in the three worlds ; nor have I got any desire for the fruit of karma ; nor do I get entangled in karma ; therefore, I have no karma-bandhana.'

Sukadeva's proper reply.—Sukadeva first, according to kaumutika nyāya, replied this way to the question of Parikshita. Now

he comes to the proper reply : 'O Mahārāja, now hear the real thing. Nārāyana Sri-Krishna is all-pervading. He is inside and outside of everything in this world including the gopis. Then who could be His paradāra (परदार)? In the *Gitā* Krishna says **सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो** 'I am in the heart of everyone.' Again he repeats, **मत्तः परतरं नान्यत् किञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय ।** 'O Dhananjaya, there exists nothing but me.' The Vedānta says, Parama Brahman created the Universe with his māyā and then entered into it. Therefore, it is evident that Bhagavān Krishna played with his own self. He had no paradāra. Sukadeva says, **रेमे रमेशो व्रजसुन्दरीभिः यथार्भकः स्वप्रतिबिम्बविभ्रमः**, 'Krishna was playing with the Vraja gopis just as a boy plays with his own shadow upon a mirror.' Sukadeva again says,

नासूयन् खलु कृष्णाय मोहिताः तस्य मायया ।

मन्यमानाः स्वपार्श्वस्थान् स्वान् स्वान् दारान् व्रजौकसः ॥

'The wives, who were playing with Krishna in the rāsa-mandala at Vrindāvana, were all along seen by their husbands lying by their sides at home having been overpowered by the māyā of Krishna ; so they did not become jealous of Krishna.' Sukadeva says :

अनुग्रहाय भूतानां मानुषं देहमास्थितः ।

भजते तादृशीः क्रीडा याः श्रुत्वा तत्परो भवेत् ॥

'God incarnates as man to favour His bhaktas ; so that by hearing His lilā, they may be attracted towards Him.'

Evolution of the world out of kāmamaya and gunamaya ādirasa.—This world has evolved out of kāmamaya and gunamaya ādirasa. The ananta ādirasa that is free from kāma and guna is the eternal rest for jiva. This worldly ādirasa is the evolution of that sweet and pure ādirasa. When jiva frees itself from this impure worldly ādirasa, with the help of prema-bhakti and tastes that Divine Ādirasa, then it becomes fit for communion with Paramātman. The name of that soul-exalting nitya-lilā is rāsa-lilā. In that lilā there is result without action, there is satisfaction without the hankerings of desire. There is only pure bliss. It is not possible to give an inkling of that pure rāsa-lilā between jivātmā and Paramātman without taking recourse to, to a certain extent, the model of ordinary rāsa dance of worldly ādirasa. The Upanishad has also, therefore, taken this course

and given the example, such as **तद् यथा प्रियया स्त्रिया सम्परिष्वक्तो न बाह्यं किञ्चन वेद न भान्तरं तथा एवायं पुरुषः**। That is why Bhagavān played this rāsa-lilā in Vrindāvana, taking umbrage under sringāra-rasa, which is only a chalanā, i.e., pretence. Sridhara-Svāmi, therefore, says this in the beginning of his commentary on the rāsa-panchādhyāya. The Tattvajna bhaktas, who are able to discriminate between the water and the milk will take the portion that is milk, i.e., the divine premānanda. The lovers of worldly pleasnre, even if they fail to take real substance, will be gradually drawn to it, being tempted by the attraction of worldly sringāra rasa. Such is God's kindness for everyone. God wishes that everyone should come to Him. Anyone who thinks of Him incessantly in any form such as through sakhya, dāsya, madhura, vātsalya and even enmity, the all-merciful Bhagavān will draw him towards Him and will give him shelter under His wing. He gave a salvation even to Sisupāla, his great enemy. Kamsa attained Sārupya salvation by constantly thinking of Him out of great fear for his life. Sukadeva in reply to Rājā Parikshita says in the first chapter of the rāsa-panchādhyāya :

कामं क्रोधं भयं स्नेहमैक्यं सौहृदमेव च ।
नित्यं हरौ विदधतो यान्ति तन्मयतां हि ते ॥

Let any person think of Him in any way, day and night ; he is sure to be absorbed in Him. Because the properties or qualities of a thing do not await anybody's desire to produce their effect. If a man takes nectar thinking it to be poison he would not die. If a man takes Krishnanāma even carelessly, the kind God gives him salvation. So says the *Skandapurāna :*

मधुरं मधुरमेतन्मङ्गलं मङ्गलानाम् ।
सकलनिगमवल्लीसत्फलं चित्स्वरूपं ॥
सकृदपि परिगीतं श्रद्धया हेलया वा ।
भृगुवर नरमात्रं तारयेत् कृष्णनाम ॥

Two kinds of error mentioned in the Vedānta.—In the Vedānta mention is made of two kinds of error : one samvādi and the other visamvādi. The author of *Panchadasi* says :

दीपप्रभा मणिभ्रान्तिर्बिसंवादिभ्रमः स्मृतः ।
मणिप्रभामणिभ्रान्तिः संवादिभ्रम उच्यते ॥

'By seeing the glow or light of a mani or jewel from a distance if any person thinks that glow or light to be jewel, he makes a samvādi mistake. If likewise seeing the light of a lamp he thinks that light to be a jewel he commits a visamvādi mistake.' Both these are mistakes no doubt. But the result is different. If he goes to take the light of the lamp as jewel he would not get any jewel. But if he stretches his hand towards the light of the jewel, he will ultimately catch at the jewel. Therefore, if anyone goes towards Bhagavān being led by samvādi bhrama he is sure to get Him after some time. A person who, being attracted by the outside glow of sringāra rasa, peruses rāsa-lilā and hears it, in course of time will be led to Bhagavān ; because his bhrama or error is samvādi. Being attracted by the outward glow of the jewel, he is sure to place his hand on the jewel at last. The Vedas, the Vedānta and the purānas all admit clearly God's power of attraction. If a man utters the name of God only just before his death or even in his delirium, he is promised salvation or mukti. Who does not know the story of the sinner Ajāmila ? Even the advaitavādi *Panchadasi* says,

ज्वरेणातः सन्निपातं भ्रान्त्या नारायणं वदन् ।
मृतः स्वर्गमवाप्नोति तं संवादी भ्रमो मतः ॥

The *Vedānta-sutra* says, **लोकवत्तु लीलाकैवल्यं**, 'The creation of the Universe by the Parama Brahman is His lilā ; that is play only.'

Ānanda is support of jivas. Jiva gets a minute particle of this eternal ānanda and that is enough for him.—Ānanda is the peace, rest and support of jivas. The Upanishad says, **सच्चिदानन्दमयं परं ब्रह्म**। The jiva is a part of Brahman according to the Upanishad. Therefore jiva is also a lover of ānanda, but at heart, not the transient worldly ānanda. The worldly pleasures that go by the name of ānanda is not the real ānanda, which is eternal. The eternal ānandam is **आनन्दं आनन्दनातीतं** Brahman, who is Brahmānanda. The jiva gets only a minute particle of that ānanda, and that is quite enough for him. Without sat there cannot be chit. Without chit there cannot be ānanda. Brahman is sat-chit-ānanda. Paramātman, which is other name for Brahman, is also sat-chit-ānanda. Bhagavān, which is another name for Brahman, is also sat-chit-ānanda. Brahman, Paramātman and Bhagavān are one, and the one is three. The name Brahman gives prominence to

sat, Paramātman to chit and Bhagavān to ānanda. Sri-Krishna is the satchidānanda incarnate. That is why the *Srimad-bhāgavata* says, **कृष्णः सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः ईश्वरः**। Sri-Krishna is the support of jivas and particularly of bhaktas. The Vedānta says, **आनन्दमयोऽभ्यसात्**। This is Sri-Krishna, no doubt.

The effect of hearing rāsa-lilā.—The concluding sloka of rāsa-lilā has it : **विक्रीडितं व्रजवधूभिरिदंश्च विष्णोः**, etc. I will give below the **अन्वय** (analysis) of it, i.e., **अन्वय** in easy Sanskrit, instead of quoting the whole sloka : **यः श्रद्धान्वितः व्रजवधूभिः सह विष्णोः इदं विक्रीडितं शृणुयात् अथ वर्णयेत् अचिरेण धीरः जितेन्द्रियः भवति परां भक्तिं प्रतिलभ्य आशु कामं नाम हृद्रोगं परित्यजति**।

'One who with respectful regard hears this rāsa-lilā of Bhagavān Vishnu with the Vraja gopis or recites it, within a very short time attains prema-bhakti for Bhagavān and becomes able to discard kāma the disease of the heart.'

The author, the narrator and the hearer of rāsa-lilā.—At the first place, we shall have to see who is the author of the description of rāsa-lilā, who is the narrator and to whom it is narrated. Krishna Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, the author of the 18 purānas and of the *Vedānta-sūtra,* and the apportionmentor of the Vedas, is the author. Vyāsa's son, Sukadeva, the confirmed Brahmachāri and bhakta yogi is the narrator. Rājā Parikshita who is in prāyopavesana under the curse of a Brahmin and, therefore, is most penitent, and is eagerly seeking mukti, awaiting his doom is the listener.

The conclusion is unavoidable that rāsa-lilā is not something indecent.—If these things are taken seriously into consideration, the conclusion is unavoidable that Parikshita could not be a victim of deception by Vyāsa and Sukadeva with something indecent like the putrid worldly sringāra rasa, the delight of pleasure-hunting worldly people. It is, therefore, clear that in Krishna's rāsa-lilā there is something divine under the cloak of worldly sringāra rasa. Let us not throw away the substantial grain seeing the outward skin of husk, with which it is covered. Those, who are steady-miuded and have got regard for the sayings of the rishis, are sure to ponder over the matter, and find the desired substance underneath—I mean the essential path of mukti. In Krishna's rāsa-lilā Kāma or Cupid, casting off his carnal coil of fickle nature, has transformed himself into divine

prema. Kāma has got no separate existence of his own. Man's body is his sole habitation. When man will be attracted towards Krishna, the Paramātman, kāma will be nowhere. Jiva's union with Sri-Krishna is his lasting peace and bliss. Sukadeva truly says that when a person with steady regard listens to the description of Vishnu's rāsa-lilā, he will soon get rid of kāma and attain salvation. The bhaktas of Bhagavān aspire for that kind of mukti that makes them taste eternally the bliss of Brahman. Our earthly language is not powerful enough to express that bliss. We have got to take recourse to it all the same so as to indicate something like that bliss.

Rāsa-lilā is the play of the embrace of jiva and Brahman.—The gopis forgot the whole world by embraeing the image of ānanda. So Krishna's rāsa-lilā is the play of the embrace of jiva and Brahman and nothing else. To forget the world is to drive away kāma and kāmanā, i.e., desires. The way for the divine embrace is prema that makes the lover extremely disconsolate at the separation from the beloved. This is the teaching of rāsa-lilā.

Sukadev used the expression **व्रजवधूभिः विष्णोः इदं विक्रीडितं**। Vishnu's play, and not Krishna's. Why? The expressive word 'Vishnu' is used here to show that Vishnu who is all-pervading, and is playing day and night inside and outside the Universe with his own sakti, is Krishna and none else. He is sacchidānanda Krishna.

Summary of the five chapters of Rāsa-lilā.—In the first chapter of the rāsa-panchādhyāya Krishna, calling the gopis to his side, with a view to testing the sincerity of their love for him, at first wanted to frighten them away showing dharma-bhaya, loka-bhaya and prāna-bhaya. But the gopis were not frightened, and they persisted. Is it usual for women, who are in a company or group, to go together to their single lover? Certainly not. It is, therefore, nothing else than a congregation of bhaktas of the same mind and thought, seeking shelter under God's feet.

It has already been seen how sometime after rāsa-lilā had commenced, the gopis felt proud of their position due to their thoughts having been diverted to their own selves and Bhagavān disappeared immediately. Is it not similar to what the

Upanishads say about the vanishing of God from the mind of a devotee as soon as it is diverted to a second thought?

In the second chapter, the gopis are found roaming over Vrindāvana in search of Krishna, and being tanmaya, i.e., quite absorbed in Krishna's thought, asked the trees, plants, bushes and beasts about the whereabout of Krishna. Is it not like the samādhi of a sādhaka in early stage? Has it been noticed anywhere in this world that hundreds of women join in a group to search for a single lover of theirs, who has left them?

In the third chapter, the gopis sitting on the bank of the Yamunā were loudly crying for Krishna, addressing him in words expressive of God's names and attributes. Was it a cry and lamentation of the fallen women uttered at the separation from their treacherous lover who had left and gone away? Certainly not.

In the fourth chapter, Krishna appear in their midst. The talk of the gopis with Krishna was simply ennobling. Could such talk take place between ordinary lovers?

In the fifth and last chapter the gopis are in the final embrace of Sri-Krishna. That was an exhibition of the jivas' only aim, i.e., coming to the lap of God, and tasting the coveted eternal joy and bliss.

This is the rāsa-lilā of Sri-Krishna.

Krishna played nitya-lilā in Vrindāvana and samsāra-lilā in Dvārakā.—Krishna played his nitya-lilā in Vrindāvana and samsāra-lilā in Dvārakā. By playing these two kinds of lilās he showed the difference between them vividly. In the union of Krishna and gopis in Vrindāvana there was no intermediary. The gopis' sincere prema was the only intermediary. The chanting of Krishna-nāma was the mantra. Their own pure chitta was the maker of sampradāna. Their entire self-resignation was the marriage. Whereas in Dvārakā in Krishna's marriage with Rukmini and others, there was ghatak or intermediary such as the Brahmin, Vedanidhi. There was the full play of niskāma prema in Vrindāvana, unlike at Dvārakā. The result was no sorrow, no pain there; and even not a small bird was destroyed at Vrindāvana. In Dvārakā, Rukmini's sorrow when her son Pradyumna was stolen, and Satyabhāma's sorrow when her father Satrājita was killed, etc., were many. Krishna destroyed his vast and powerful Yadu-vamsa before his ascension. But he did not

cause the destruction of even a small bird at Vrindāvana when he left it.

Purānas constitute the panchama Veda and the Bhāgavata is the chiefest and the best.—This is why the *Bhāgavata* is called **अखिलश्रुतिसारं**. A purāna is called the panchama Veda. Of all the purānas the *Bhāgavata* is the chiefest and the best.

Krishna is the last word.—Krishna is the last word in yajna, yoga, vrata, jnāna-yoga, karma-yoga and bhakti-yoga. There is no difference between Krishna and Krishna-nāma. Nāma-dharma is the dharma of the Kali-yuga. Sāstras, therefore, say,

हरेर्नाम हरेर्नाम हरेर्नामैव केवलं।
कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यथा।

So, let us sing God's name with all our heart and soul, and devote ourselves unselfishly to the service of God and of humanity, which is His greatest manifestation in this earth of ours.

BHAKTI-MĀRGA, THE PATH OF DEVOTION AND LOVE

PART I

Hindu sāstras indicate four principal mārgas or paths leading to union with God. A man may attain salvation by following any one of these paths. They are Karma Mārga or the path of action, Yoga Mārga or the path of psychic concentration, Jnana Mārga or the path of knowledge, and Bhakti Mārga or the path of devotion and love. The aim of all these mārgas is the same, though their methods are different. Karma Mārga, as I have just said, is the path of action. At the beginning a man does Karma or action, being guided by worldly desires. The second stage is: instead of desiring to enjoy the fruits of his actions in this world a man desires the fruit in the world to come, i.e., Heaven. In the third stage, he renounces all fruits of his action and dedicates them to God, and looks forward to the eternal bliss of union with the Supreme Maker. This is called Karma Yoga. There is yet a fourth (the highest) stage. In this stage the devotee does Karma pertaining to God and God only. Without thinking for a moment anything about the consequence, because his love and devotion to God become a part and parcel of him, and he merges his self completely in Him. His love of God becomes entirely free from any consideration whatsoever and becomes his svabhāva i.e., nature, as it happened in the case of the milkmaids of Vrindāvana.

The knowledge of the essential nature of God or Brahman is the path followed by the votaries of Jnāna Mārga. It may be called also the path of wisdom. The great Sankarāchārya represents this second school of thought. Pātanjali is the exponent of the school of thought called Yoga Mārga, which may be translated into English as 'the path of psychic concentration.'

In to-day's article instead of dilating upon the above three Mārgas or paths, I will come straight to Bhakti Mārga or the path of devotion and love, the subject-matter of my discourse.

The great Rāmānuja Āchārya, and after him a host of followers of his school and others, including Sri-Sankaradeva of Assam, and Sri-Chaitanyadeva of Bengal, who is reputed to be a follower of Madhvāchārya and to belong to the Mādhava Sampradāya or sect, expounded the philosophy and merit of this path, and propounded the cult throughout the length and breadth of India.

The inimitable *Bhagavadgītā*, a book that has no equal throughout the world, has dealt with, and harmonized, all these different schools of thought in a remarkable manner. Although the votaries of each school of thought have variously interpreted the teachings of the *Gītā* to suit their own paths, the *summum bonum* of the teachings of the *Gītā* is Bhakti, which it says is guhyatama, i.e., the "Greatest Secret". Of all the paths, Sri-Krishna gives prominence to bhakti-yoga without the least doubt. The mahāpurāna *Srimad-bhāgavata* is replete with words giving prominence to bhakti throughout the twelve cantos it is composed of. In fact, Krishna reconciles the conflicting views of the different schools of thought, and teaches the religion of devotion and love, of viewing all creatures as one's own self, and of dedication of every action to the service of God. Bhakti is the only way to attain mukti or salvation or eternal bliss which is, and ought to be, the main endeavour of mankind.

What is bhakti? Bhakti means intense love of God. According to Veda-Vyāsa unswerving attachment to the worship of God is bhakti. This will lead to love or prema. When prema ripens into maturity, the outward worship will drop down as the flower of a fruit.

According to Garga the hearing and reciting of God's name and His lilā is bhakti.

According to Sāndilya, to be immersed completely in Paramātman and thus to enjoy full bliss is bhakti.

Nārada says: When after dedicating all actions to God and resigning one's self entirely to Him, one happens to lose sight of Him and, in consequence thereof, becomes disconsolate and almost distracted, then the real bhakti creeps in. When a man in all sincerity and from the very bottom of his heart can say, 'O God, I am doing everything, having been guided by you; I am a mere machine, and you are the only mechanic; and all my thoughts and deeds are only for your adoration and wor-

ship', then nothing remains to be said or done. But in the midst of this, if his ego comes in and says, 'I am the doer', or even the slightest feeling of egoism creeps in, then God disappears from his mind, and until by totally discarding that feeling, the original feeling of selflessness is restored, the true state of real bhakti, with which God is inseparable, does not come in. Mother Yasodā with all her resources could not tie up Krishna to the husking machine until her feeling of egoism, viz., that 'I am the mother of Krishna, and I will tie him up to the husking machine', vanished away from her mind. Every time the ropes she had brought to tie up Krishna were found short by the breadth of two fingers. She ransacked her whole house and brought all the ropes she could lay her hands upon and joined them together; yet at the time of tying, they were found likewise short. After the failure of all her endeavours, when the feeling of resignation came into her mind and the egoism vanished, Krishna of his own accord accepted the tie, and the length of the rope sufficed. Similarly, when the Vraja gopīs search for Krishna with a view to be able to find him out became fruitless, and they returned to their original place, viz., the bank of the Yamunā, where they were with Krishna before his disappearance, and commenced praying and crying for Him with all the earnestness they could command, Krishna reappeared before them. That is why Mahāpurusha Mādhavadeva, the great disciple of the Vaishnaba reformer Sri-Sankaradeva of Assam, did put the following sloka at the beginning of his renowned book of psalms, called *Nāmaghosā* :

ये मुक्तावपि निस्पृहाः प्रतिपदप्रोन्मीलदानन्ददां
यामाख्याय समस्तमस्तकमणि कुर्वन्ति स्वे वशे ।
तान् भक्तानपि ताञ्च भक्तिमपि तं भक्तप्रियं श्रीहरिं
वन्दे सन्तमर्थयेऽनुदिवसं नित्यं शरण्यं भजे ॥

'To those Bhaktas, who have no longing even for mukti or salvation, and whose sole aim is the love of God, I bow down my head with all reverence. I beg of God to grant me rasamayi bhakti and nothing else. I devote my whole existence to Him, Who is attached to His bhakta.'

In short, the least trace of egoism, such as 'I am' and 'This is mine', is a great bar between God and the devotee. Of course, it is very difficult to shake off the ego, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it has been found impossible. Ramkrishna Paramhansa, the saint of Dakshineswar, has, therefore, said, "Since it does not go, let it remain as dāsa-āmi, i.e., a slave ego of God".

Sri-Krishna at the time of sending Uddhava to Vrindāvana, carrying his message of consolation to the gopis, spoke to him thus :

ता मन्मनस्का मत्प्राणा मदर्थे त्यक्तदैहिकाः ।
मामेव दयितं प्रेष्ठमात्मानं मनसा गताः ।
ये त्यक्तलोकधर्माश्च मदर्थे तान् बिभर्म्यहम् ॥
मयि ताः प्रेयसां प्रेष्ठे दूरस्थे गोकुलस्त्रियः ।
स्मरन्त्योंऽग ! विमुह्यन्ति विरहौत्कण्ठ्यविह्वलाः ॥
धारयन्त्यतिकृच्छ्रेण प्रायः प्राणान् कथञ्चन ।
प्रत्यागमनसन्देशैर्बल्लव्यो मे मदात्मिकाः ॥

'O Uddhava, the gopis have entirely dedicated their mind to me. I am their life and soul. For me only they have completely discarded their personal and social usages, and have ignored the injunctions of dharma-sāstras. One who acts like this, I always protect him. The gopis know me to be their dearest of the dear. I am away from them, but they feel my separation so intensely that they have lost self-consciousness. Their life still continue only because of their expectation of my return to Vrindāvana. I am their soul, and they are mine.

Bhakti is nirodha. The full renunciation of social and Vedic actions is nirodha. It is Samnyāsa. When a bhakta takes shelter in God, the social and Vedic actions drop off of their own accord. That class of bhakta is free from the jnāna of dharma and adharma. His complete devotion to God frees him from any desire except the love and service of God. But up to the time when a novice bhakta does not come up to this standard, he ought to follow the injunctions of the Vedas and smritis of course do those actions that are not inimical to bhakti. The sāstric actions naturally drop off of themselves from the life of a matured devotee without any effort.

Even in such a state the gopis did not forget that Krishna is the Paramātman God ; so says the *Bhakti-sutra* of Nārada :

तत्रापि न माहात्म्यज्ञानविस्मृत्यपवादः ।
तद्विहीनं जाराणामिव ।

'Love generated from want of māhātmya-jnāna, i.e., the knowledge of the divine nature of the person who is the object of love, is like the tainted love of a dissolute.' In their excursion to Vrindāvana in the night of the full-moon, to meet their beloved Sri-Krishna, when the gopis heard Krishna speaking to them unpleasantly about the impropriety of meeting him there, they were mortified. And after recovering from the shock, they replied to him as under :—

मैवं विभोऽर्हति भवान् गदितुं नृशंसं
सन्त्यज्य सर्वविषयांस्तव पादमूलम् ।
भक्ता भजस्व दुरवग्रह मा त्यजास्मान्
देवो यथादिपुरुषो भजते मुमुक्षून् ॥
न खलु गोपिकानन्दनो भवानखिलदेहिनामन्तरात्मदृक् ॥

again :

'O Krishna, thou shouldst not have spoken to us cruelly like this. We have come to thee, leaving everything of ours, knowing that thou art the friend and the soul of universe and the basis of all religious duties. We are certainly conscious that, as the Supreme Being assumed form only to save and protect the gods of suraloka, thou hast taken birth to save and protect the people of Vraja.' 'We know for certain, O Govinda, that thou art not the son of Yashodā, but you have come to Yadukula as the protector of the world at the request of Brahmā.'

Nanda and Yasodā also loved Krishna extremely; yet in their love the idea of Krishna as a divine being was not absent, althoug the excessive love for Krishna as their darling son used to cloud their mind every now and then. The Pāndavas in their sakhya love were also conscious of the divine nature of Sri-Krishna. Kunti, the mother of the Pāndavas, had that consciousness or knowledge always in her mind with regard to Krishna more than anybody else amongst the Kauravas.

Nārada says in his *Bhakti-sutra*, सा तु कर्मज्ञानयोगेभ्योऽप्यधिकतरा 'Bhakti is superior to karma, jnāna and yoga.' In the *Bhāgvad-gītā*, Krishna himself says,

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिकः ।
कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद् योगी भवार्जुन ॥
योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान् भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥

also :

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु, etc.

Without God's grace bhakti is not attainable. Gajendra, the king of the elephants, got mukti without the help of jnāna. Bhakti is not dependent on jnāna or any other method. It does not depend upon learning, the offering of gifts, sacrifices, or austerities. Absolute resignation to God is the main way, jnāna or knowledge alone cannot give salvation to a man without the help of bhakti. For example, you know all about your king, such as that he is kind, handsome, learned, brave, popular, so on and so forth. But is this knowledge of any avail? Suppose, you know that sweets are prepared with sugar, ghee and other tasteful ingredients. Does that knowledge give you satiety? Or does it drive away your hunger? That is why Paramhansa Ramkrishnadev used to tell his disciple, "You have entered into a mango garden full of ripe and luscious mangoes. Why waste time in trying to count the number of the mango trees, or discussing about the status or position and other qualities of the owner of the garden. These discussions will not satisfy your hunger."

Nārada says, फलरूपत्वात् 'Bhakti is the fruit of knowledge.' The followers of jnāna-mārga, of course, disputes this.

As I have already said, bhaktas of the highest plane do not care for salvation. They care for bhakti and bhakti alone, i.e., the service of God. But as a matter of course, salvation or mukti follows them.

God is sama, i.e., even and just to everyone. He has got no partiality for any one. Yet He is like a kalpa-vriksha. He gives what one sincerely prays for. He is bhakta-vatsala, i.e., attached to His devotees. He cannot give up His bhakta, as His bhakta is unable to give Him up, because He is the life and soul of His bhakta, and he cannot live without Him. God follows His bhakta, having His name in his mouth, like a cow following a man carrying her calf with him.

"The first step for a bhakta is to associate with a bhakta and, with due respect and earnestness, to listen to his advice and please him with personal services, to avoid the company of people plunged in the worldly affairs, and also to avoid people who indulge in grāmya kathā, i.e., vulgar talk. Then, following the directions of the bhakta, whom you should regard as your preceptor, you are to worship God, dedicating the fruits of all your actions to God. Recite God's name, and pray to Him with all the earnestness you can command. Think of Him and Him alone in your heart, and do not get yourself implicated in the affairs of the world, which are fleeting and transitory. Show regard to every form of life as the seat of God in it."—Such was the advice given by the great Prahlāda to the children of the Daityas, who were his school-mates.

To attain bhakti a man should be extremely eager, and his mind should be concentrated in it, otherwise it will flag. For house-holders and rulers and kings the method prescribed by Vasistha, the preceptor of Ramachandra, is the best. He said:

अन्तरेको बहिर्नाना ह्यन्तर्बोधो बहिर्जड़म् ।
अन्तस्त्यागी बहिःसंगी लोके विचर राघव ॥

'In your heart, view only One God without a second, but in the outside world see Him as many, i.e., in His multifarious manifestations. You have jnāna or knowledge in your heart, but remain as jada or inert or stupid in your behaviour with the outside world. Be tyāgī or relinquishing in your mind, but show samga or attachment in society.'

In the third canto of the *Bhāgavata*, Kapila advises his mother, Devahuti, "O Mother, bhakti is differentiated in accordance with the nature of man. A man naturally given to anger, enmity, pride, and boasting can give me bhakti that is called tāmasa bhakti. One who worships me in a pratimā, i.e., idol, being actuated by a motive of gain of wealth and fame, does rājasa bhakti. The bhakti of one trying to be free from sin, and desiring to please God through yajna, yāga and other actions of merit by dedicating the fruits of his actions to God is sāttvika bhakti. But the bhakti of one, whose heart and soul naturally flows towards me, i.e., God, as the water of rivers flows towards the ocean, and one, whose mind without the slightest tinge of self is devoted to me and who listens to, and recites my name,

and thinks of me incessantly, is called nirguna bhakti-yoga. This class of bhakta does not care for the five different kinds of mukti or salvation, such as sālokya, sārupya, etc., even when offered. He wants to devote his life wholly to my service and to nothing else. This kind of bhakti is also called aikāntika and ātyantika bhakti, i.e., bhakti or love with a singleness of purpose. A bhakta of this class considers all creatures of the world as his kin shows respects to the superior, kindness to the poor, and genuine friendship to equals. He subdues his passion and desires, takes recourse to straightforwardness in his actions and dealings with others without an exception, associates with good and pious people, and discards pride and prejudice altogether. These bhaktas attain me easily.

"There are some people who, neglecting all these, tries to please me by worshipping pratimā or idols. Their efforts bear no real fruit. I pervade the whole universe. To worship only idols with a view to getting me is like pouring clarified butter on ashes. He is boastful and no better than an enemy to me. He cannot have peace in his mind. Although he worships me in my idols with innumerable offerings, I am never pleased with him. He can of course worship me in my idols until he realises and sees me seated in his own heart. I do not consider anybody superior to the aikāntika and ātyantika bhakta."

The best example of such a bhakta is Prahlāda. Narasimha offered to give him boons. Prahlāda refused to have any, saying, "O Lord, one who, after seeing you, prays for worldly welfare, cannot be called your servant. He must be demented. I am your niskāma bhritya, and not a baniā to ask for a price of my services to you."

Mahāmuni Durvāsā gave offence to king Ambarisha, the great bhakta of Vishnu. The Sudarsanachakra of Vishnu was always near Ambarisha to guard him. Seeing Durbāsā very rudely insulting Ambarisha, the Sudarsana got angry and began to chase Durbāsā. Durbāsā ran for his life. He roamed throughout the world, but none could dare save him from the wrath of the Sudarsana. At last Durbāsā, followed by the Sudarsana, came to Vaikuntha and implored Vishnu to save his life. Vishnu spoke to Durbāsā (as narrated in the ninth book of the *Bhāgavata*), "O Durbāsā, a bhakta is my heart, and I am the heart of the bhakta. He does not think of anything

else but me. I too do likewise. So go back to Ambarisha and ask for his pardon. I cannot save you if he does not."

So Durbāsā had to return to Ambarisha, still followed by the Sudarsana, and the bhakta king not only pardoned him, but behaved so ideally as a true bhakta does that Durbāsā and all others were greatly surprised.

That is why in differentiating between jnāna and bhakti the great saint of Dakshineswar, I mean Ramkrishna Paramhansa Deva, compared bhakti to a lady having free access to the andar-mahal of a zamindar or a great man, likened jnāna to a male visitor who had to wait outside for permission to enter.

God's mercy, as well as the kindness of a bhakta-preceptor, is the only way to bhakti that eventually leads to salvation. In the fifth book of the *Bhāgavata,* Jada-Bharata speaks to King Rahugana. "O Rahugana, bhakti cannot be attained to by tapasyā, nor by yāga or other karmas, nor by the renouncing of the world by taking recourse to yoga, nor by the studying of the Vedas and the Vedānta nor by the performing of sandhyā, nor by ablutions in the holy waters and by the offering of tarpana to the manes, nor by agnihotra and other yajnas, nor by austerities such as suryopasthāpana or grismatāpasevana, but it comes by the grace of God and God's bhaktas." That is why the *Bhāgavata* has repeatedly asserted that satsanga, the association with bhaktas, is the surest way to bhakti. Nārada says in his *Bhakti-sutra,* तस्मिंस्तज्जने भेदाभावात्, 'There is no difference between God and His bhakta,' because God is attached to bhakta. The Lord thus said to Nārada :

नाहं तिष्ठामि वैकुण्ठे योगिनां हृदये न च।
मद्भक्ता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥

'O Nārada, I do not stay in Vaikuntha, nor in the hearts of yogis. I stay where my bhaktas recite my name and pray.'

Friends, bhakti is the unparalled royal road to God, illumined by the instructions of the gnru. So let us follow the path, following the footsteps of the mother Sruti so that there cannot be any slip.

हरिभक्तिराजमार्गे गुरुपदनखचन्द्रिकाधौते।
श्रुतिजननीपदपद्धतिमनुसरतां न कुतोऽपि स्खलनम् ॥

BHAKTI-MĀRGA, THE PATH OF DEVOTION AND LOVE

PART II

In all the great religions current in the world and worth the name the pith and marrow is bhakti. Christianity may also be considered as based on bhakti like Vaishnavism in India. Jesus Christ's tetaching—love of God and love of humanity—is akin to the teachings of Vaishnavism. If, however, the Acquarian Gospel of the Jesus the Christ could be taken as authority, then the idea of Krishna and Christ as regards salvation would amount to very much the same, for Jesus is reported therein to have declared, "Man is saved, when he has reached Deific Life, when he and God are one."

But the Biblical idea of creation is contrary to the Hindu idea as stated in the purānas and the *Bhagavadgītā.* According to the Bible, God finished the creation in six days and took rest on the seventh. The *Gitā* teaches that the creation is the result of evolution from Prakriti, or Nature, which represents the primal elements and forces forming the material for the creation of the Universe. It consists of three gunas or qualities, viz., sattwa, rajas, and tamas. Sattwa means reality and goodness. Rajas implies motion, activity and also a mixture of knowledge and ignorance. Tamas is darkness, ignorance and inertia. Light and clearness, activity and attachment, and ignorance and delusion are the nature of the three gunas respectively, viz., sattwa, rajas and tamas. According to the *Gitā,* the creation is the permutation and combination of these three gunas in various proportions. A man, in whom sattwa guna preponderates, is characterized by self-control, reverence and other godly attributes. Lust, anger, greed, arrogance and envy are the distinguishing traits of a man who is dominated by rajas guna. Laziness, ignorance, delusion and the like are the characteristics of tāmasic nature. Unlike the theory of the Bible with regard to creation the theory or idea of creation according to the Hindu sāstras—particularly of the *Gitā* is more akin to the modern

sciences. The world, without doubt, has arrived at the present form by a process of gradual evolution. Geology and Biology bear testimony to the formation of the crust of the earth, mountains, and the hardened layers of mud and sands forming into rocks containing prints and marks of plants and vegetation and putrified fossils of animal species that lived upon the earth for ages gone by, and were supplanted by other more developed species that also gradually died out. The uppermost layers have revealed species allied more closely to those that are in existence. They clearly show that man appeared latest among the living beings on earth. These clearly prove a gradual evolution, and not the instantaneous creation as the Bible would say, according to which the man was created on the sixth day of the creation, and fishes, beasts and birds preceeded them. Astronomy has lent its support to Geology and Biology, showing that the heavenly bodies have passed and are still passing through the process of birth, growth and decay. They all prove that millions and millions of years have passed before the earth and its inhabitants have come to the present stage.

According to the purānas the first incarnation of God on earth was in the form of a fish, the water-animal. Then comes the tortoise, the land-and-water-animal. Then appears the boar, i.e., the animal that likes to live on muddy soil. Then comes Nara-simha, half-man and half-beast. After that comes Vāmana, a dwarf-man. Then Parasurāma, an angry hunter. Then comes the tiller of the soil, Haladhara. Then comes Rāma, the ideally perfect man made after God. Everyone of us may not aceept this theory as true, but it cannot be denied that man is the evolution of ages, and not the creation after within two days of the ereation of the beasts and birds.

The Sānkhya and the Yoga systems inculcate the theory of evolution. The theory of illusion as the theory of creation originated with Sankarāchārya, the propounder of the absolute non-dualist school of the Vedānta philosophy. He says, the world is an illusion, and it has got no reality. Brahman, through His māyā or illusion, is seen as the world, just like a rope is mistaken for a snake. When true jnāna dawns, the illusion vanishes and Brahman alone exists. It is through ignorance only that we see ourselves as entities separated from God. When the illusion is cast off, the realisation of unity comes in.

That is true salvation, Sankara's school of thought is based on the Vedānta philosophy founded on the Upanishads.

There is another school of thought based also on the Vedānta led by Rāmānujāchārya. This school is called Visistādvaitavād, or qualified monism. Vaishnavism, speaking very generally, follows this path, and among others, Nimbāditya, Vishnusvāmi, Madhvāchārya, Vallabhāchārya, Sankaradeva, and Chaitanyadeva are the most prominent. They hold that the world is a true evolution of ekamevādvitiya Brahman and not an illusion, and it is His various manifestations. They hold that the universe evolves under Divine will. Bhakti, they say, is the principal means to come to God. Jivātmā, the individual self, has been separated from Paramātman or Brahman by His will, and it cannot be united with God without His mercy. Bhakti is the stepping-stone to mukti, the highest stage of bliss, after which there is no rebirth.

The *Gitā* follows the view of Vedānta that God is the only reality and that the universe is a veil thrown over Him. The Supreme Spirit pervades and sustains the universe, and He is the cause of creation, existence and extinction. The *Gitā* takes the world as a real, and points out the way to be free from it, and return to the Supreme Maker. It inculcates the doctrine of karma, and says that there is no escape from reincarnation, and to suffer pain and pleasure in accordance with his karma unless he leads the life of a bhakta and prays to God for escape. Bhakti, says the *Gitā*, is the easiest way to accomplish this object.

The Biblical idea of salvation is almost the same as what we find in our scriptures called Vedas, viz., happiness and pleasure to be enjoyed in Paradise earned by good deeds in this world. The *Gitā* does not hold it as the highest ideal.

Sri-Krishna towards the latter part of his discourse in the *Gitā* gives out the "Greatest Secret" to Arjuna, and says:

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥
सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

'O Arjuna, you fix your mind on me, love me, worship me and

salute to me. Leaving all the dharmas, take shelter in me. I will free you from all sins. I tell you all this because I love you.'

Bhakti is anurāgātmikā, i.e., of the nature of attachment. Attachment gives pain when separation comes in. This is applicable only to worldly attachment and not to the attachment or ardour of love for God, because there is no separation in this case and, therefore, no pain. It is the source of eternal happiness. Therefore, bhakti is superior to Jnāna and Yoga. The *Gitā* says :

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान् भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥

The signs of prema are regard (prema), great respect (bahumāna), love and affection (priti), separation (viraha), non-dependence on others with eagerness or doubt (itaravicikitsā), uttering the glory (mahimākirtana), and living only for the beloved and the act of belonging to him or her (tadīyatā), single-minded devotion, and having the heart solely set on the object of love, etc. As for example, the regard and respect of the Pāndavas and their mother, Kunti, for Krishna. Prahlāda only on seeing the character, क (k), remembered Krishna. This is bahumāna. Vidura's love of Krishna is an example of priti. The gopis' are the well-known pangs of separation. Bhisma and Veda-Vyāsa's narrating and uttering the glories of Krishna is an example of mahimākirtana. The gopis' living only for Krishna, Hanumān's living only for Rāmachandra, Bāli's single-minded devotion are other great examples.

God is aja, i.e., self-existent, without birth. Yet out of His kindness for people He takes birth and assumes form. His birth and actions are supernatural. One who keeping this in mind loves and worships Him, gets salvation. The *Bhāgavata* says, अनुग्रहाय भक्तानां मानुषं देहमाश्रितः. 'To favour His bhaktas He takes recourse to a body as that of a man.' Sāndilya says in his *Bhakti-sutra* : मुख्यं तस्य कारुण्यं । But in reality, Krishna Vāsudeva's body is unlike the body of a mortal man. It is sat-chit-ānanda-vigraha. It is like a material (sthula) expression to enact his supernatural lilā. All the principal sāstras declare this with one voice. In the *Gitā* Krishna says :

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।
अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥

'Because I am beyond kshara, i.e., perishable, and also superior to akshara, i.e., imperishable, I am called Purushottoma.' Again :

यो मामेवमसम्मूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स सर्वविद्भजति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ॥

'One who knows me like this, i.e., as Purushottama, he knows all, and he loves me leaving out everything else.' There are nine kinds of bhakti mentioned in the *Bhāgavata*, viz.,

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

Sravana is listening to God's names and actions called lilā. Kritana is the reciting of them. Smarana is the thinking and remembering of them. Pāda-sevana is the act of offering Him service. Archanā is the worship of his idols. Vandana is salutation to Him. Dāsya is the servitude to Him as of a servant. Sakhya is the loving of Him as of a real friend. Ātma-nivedana is self-resignation to Him. These are the nine types of bhakti. Out of these sravana and kirtana have been given prominence and prescribed for the Kali-yuga, because people in this yuga are incapable of undergoing the austerities and penances prescribed for the three preceding yugas. Therefore, sāstras loudly proclaim :

हरेर्नाम हरेर्नाम हरेर्नामैव केवलम् ।
कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यथा ॥

God's name alone can give salvation in the Kali-yuga.

ध्यानं तपः सत्ययुगे त्रेतायां यज्ञकर्म च ।
द्वापरे पूजनं दानं हरेर्नाम कलौ युगे ॥

'Tapasyā is for the Satya-yuga, yajna and yāga is for the Treta, puja or worship is for the Dvāpara, and God's name is for the Kali-yuga.'

Sāndilya says रागार्थप्रकीर्तिसाहचर्याच्चेतरेषाम्. 'The reciting of the name of God with regard and earnestness induces bhakti that leads to God. Krishna says in the *Gitā:*

सततं कीर्तयन्तो मां यतन्तश्च दृढ़व्रताः।

नमस्यन्तश्च मां भक्त्वा नित्ययुक्त उपासते ॥

'Bhaktas recite my name with unwavering rigidity, and always salutes and worships me.'

Sukadeva tells Raja Parikshita that Sravana and Kirtana are the chief dharma in the Kali-yuga. Without any distinction of caste, creed or colour, everyone can come to God by the reciting and hearing of God's name. It is within the reach of all, and is so easy that even gods of Svargas long for being born as men in the Kali-yuga so that they could practise it and thus attain moksha. Even an evil-minded person can be free from sins by taking to Hari-nāma, because its nature is to destroy sin, as the fire by its nature burns things.

Nārada says, "Hari-nāma is my life, and it is the only thing to give salvation in Kali-yuga. I say this not only once, but thrice do I assert it with absolute certainty.' चण्डालोऽपि द्विजश्रेष्ठः हरिभक्तिपरायणः, 'Even a Hari-bhakta Chandāla is superior to a Brāhman who is not a Hari-bhakta.' Hari-nāma is the last word to sanctify the rites and ceremonies performed in accordance with the injunctions of Vedas and Vedāngas. The *Bhāgavata* says,

किरातहूणान्ध्रपुलिन्दपुक्कसाः

आभीरशुम्भा यवनाः खशादयः

येऽन्ये च पापा यदुपाश्रयाश्रयाः

शुध्यन्ति तस्मै प्रभविष्णवे नमः ॥

'Kirātas, Hūnas, Āndhras, Pulindas, Pukkasas, Ābhiras, Kankas, Yavanas, Sakas and other like them even, become purified by Krishna-nāma and I bow down to such a Krishna, the Lord of the Universe.'

In the first book of the *Bhāgavata* it is said by Nārada that Brahmā, the creator, had gone through the four Vedas thrice, and gathered the substance, viz., that nothing else but Hari-kirtana could bring salvation to people. For the hour of death,

Hari-nāma only is prescribed, and not yāga, yajna, dāna, homa and tapasyā. In the grantha, called *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa,* it is similarly said :

नामैकं यस्य वाचि स्मरणपथगतं श्रोत्रमूलं गतं वा

शुद्धं वाशुद्धवर्णं व्यवहितरहितं तारयत्येव सत्यम्।

तच्चेद्देहद्रविणजनतालाभपाषण्डमध्ये

निक्षिप्तं स्यान्न फलजनकं शीघ्रमेवात्र विप्र ॥

The meaning of this sloka is almost similar to that given above. Rāmkrishna Paramhamsa, also speaks about the effectiveness of God's name in the same strain (Vide *Rāmkrishna-kathāmrita,* Vol. II, Chap. V)

When the King Parikshita was cursed by the son of Sringi Muni for insulting his father that Parikshita would be bitten by the snake Takshaka within seven days from that date, Parikshita sat down on the bank of the Ganges fasting, and all the noted saints and sages assembled there. He asked their advice as to what is to be done within that short period so as to be able to attain salvation. From amongst them, some advised jajna, some dāna, some tapasyā, some homa. The result was a heated debate among them. Then all on a sudden the great Sukadeva, the son of Bādarāyana Vyāsa turned up there. The king with all the rishis and munis rose up from their seats in great veneration and welcomed him. The rājā informed him all about the critical situation and asked his advice. Sukadeva advised him to do nothing but chant Hari-nāma and listen to the narration of God's acts (lilā), which is the only boat in which to cross the ocean of bhava-sāgara, and at the earnest request of the rājā and by the unanimous consent of all the sages and saints assembled there, he commenced narrating the *Bhāgavata.* At the conclusion of the narration, Parikshita had a sense of great solace, and left his mortal coil peacefully before the fatal bite of the serpent could touch him.

That is why nāma-dharma bhakti is called the prince among all the religions, particularly in this Kali-yuga. Everyone, irrespective of caste, creed and colour and in spite of the bars of adhikari and unadhikari distinction that are incumbant on one in the practice of other religious methods can easily and

with full right practise it and secure salvation. Therefore, a bhakta's humble submission is :

नाहं विप्रो न च नरपतिर्नापि वैश्यो न शूद्रो
नो वा वर्णी न च गृहपतिर्नो वनस्थो यतिर्वा ।
किन्तु प्रोद्यन्निखिलपरमानन्दपूर्णामृताब्धे-
र्गोपीभर्तुः पदकमलयोर्दासदासानुदासः ॥

'I do not care to belong to any one of the four varnas or castes ; nor do I like to be included in the four āsramas ; nor I do want to pass for a pious man or a gift-giver or a pilgrim to sacred tirthas ; but I do want to become a slave of the slaves of God, the great ocean of full bliss.'

यानीह विश्वविलयोद्भववृत्तिहेतुकर्माण्यनन्तविचित्राणि हरिश्चकार ।
यस्त्वंग गायति शृणोत्यनुमोदते वा भक्तिर्भवेद्भगवति ह्यपवर्गमार्गे ॥

God does wonderful, endless and various deeds for creation, maintenance and destruction of the world. One who recites, one who hears, and one who admires them,—they all attain the best bhakti that leads to the lotus-feet of the great God, that is, salvation.

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APPENDIX

SOME COMMENTS ON SIR CHARLES ELLIOT'S ARTICLE ON HINDUISM IN ASSAM

Page 1158] Tradition points to ancient Kāmarūpa as the [centre] of the tantras and a land of sorcery. [The] Kāmākhyā [temple known as a] shrine of phallic worship is also in [Kāmarūpa]. There seems to be no doubt, therefore, [that many] Brāhmans gathered round the shrine of Kāmākhyā formed at one time an important school of tantric Hinduism, which sanctioned hideous religious rites, of which human sacrifice was a part.

Sankaradeva was born in 1449 A.D. and Chaitanya was his jnnior by 36 years. Chaitanya was not probably born when Sankaradeva went out on his first pilgrimage from Bardowā when he was about 30 years old. He returned after 12 years and then remarried. His three sons were born after that. Chaitanya did not renounce home to become a religious man before he was 24 years old. Sankaradeva, therefore, could not have met Chaitanya during his first pilgrimage and before he preached his creed. [During] his second pilgrimage from Barpetā long after his creed was widely preached and when he was [above] 80 years old he met Chaitanya three or four [years] before the latter died, for Chaitanya at [the] age of 48 years. Sankaradeva, therefore, could [not have] got his creed from Chaitanya. The fundamental [differences] between the two creeds cannot be reconciled. [The] Chaitanya-panthi sattras of Assam belong to the school of Chaitanya, and according to . . . . . the separate existence of these sattras . . . . . a proof that Sankara's creed is not an offshoot of the creed of Chaitanya as [some people] imagine.

Re : Mowāmariyās] The Gossain of the Dinjay-sattra will not admit [the correctness] of [the] statement made in this article. It (would have been) better to obtain their version as to the origin of the Mowāmariyā sattra. As a matter of fact, Aniruddha, who belonged to the Bhuyān family, was originally a disciple of Gopāl Ātā (Bhavānipuriyā), who was a disciple of Mādhavadeva. Consequently, Aniruddha could not have been a contemporary of Sankaradeva. None of the biographies of Sankaradeva mention Aniruddha. The inscriptions on the magical copper plate are supposed to be formulæ for yoga practice, which, though not opposed to Vaishnavism, are not sanctioned by the Vaishnava scriptures of Sankaradeva and Mādhavadeva. I think in order successfully to convert the aboriginal Muttack tribes Aniruddha modified his Mahapurushiyā creed, originally taught to him by Gopāl Ātā, and added either

tantric or semi-aboriginal rites and he [and] his sect came to be repudiated by all other Vaishnavas.

Pages 1170-71] It is not true that Sankaradeva denounced caste although the religious [movement] set on foot by him was essentially [one meant] to uplift the depressed classes long neglected by the sacerdotal classs.

Dāmodaradeva and Harideva were not disciples of [Chaitanyadeva] as wrongly stated here.

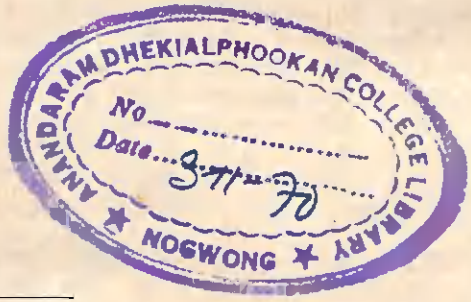
The original creed of Sankara was subsequently modified to some extent by different preachers. The creed has, however, been preserved almost unmodified by the Mahāpurushiyās.

Page 1174] Compare the interdiction of women in [the Assamese] sattras with the large preponderance of [Vaishnava] women in the ākhrās of the Chaitanya school in Bengal and Sylhet.

The Bāmuniyā and Dāmodariyā sattras no doubt represent the brahmanized Vaishnavism of the present day and Sir Charles Elliot's remarks in this respect are only too true.

Pages 1178-79] Re : connection between Chaitanya and Dāmodaradeva it may be said that Chaitanya never visited the Assam valley. The story that Dāmodara met Chaitanya at Hājo and became his disciple there seems to be unfounded.

Page 1184][1] [*Unconcluded*



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[1] Two sheets of worm-eaten paper containing these notes have happily been reclaimed through the kind courtesy of Srimati Ratna Baruah. We doubt if Bezbaroa ever developed these very significant points into a regular piece of writing. Sankaradeva's meeting Chaitanya at any time may be purely a figment of what Dr S. K. De calls 'pious imagination'. In Bezbaroa's own copy of his *Śrī-Śaṅkaradeva āru Mādhavadeva* he penned through the passage describing the event. A lot of confusion has been created by the story of a book of incantations kept in the family of Aniruddhadeva. The repudiation of his branch (by no means a schism) by other Vaishnavas may be supremely due to the political ostracism clamped on the Māyāmarīyas, who do not even keep an image of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa in sattras.— *M. N.*