

THE WORLD GOSPEL SERIES, VOLUME 7

The Gospel of Narada

DUNCAN GREENLEES

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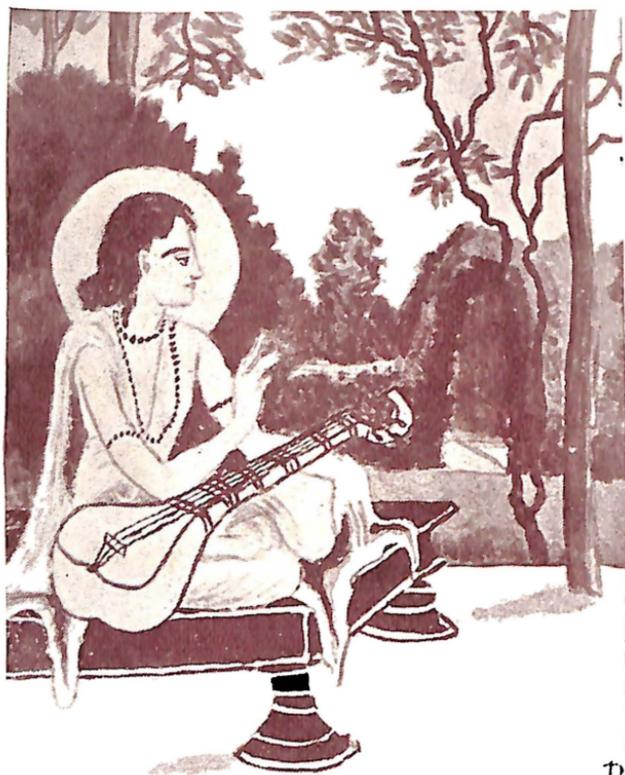


**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ADVANCED STUDY
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THE GOSPEL OF NARADA

TO
SRI L. GOPAL RAO
AND
SWAMI RAMDAS
IN
GRATEFUL HOMAGE



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NARADA MAHAMUNI

THE WORLD GOSPEL SERIES

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7.

THE
GOSPEL
OF
NARADA

—

“The Vaishnavas are My body”

—

Edited and Newly Translated from the
Sanskrit of Narada Pancaratra,
the Narada Bhakti Sutras and the Narada Gita,
with a
Running Commentary and Introduction

by

Duncan Greenlees, M.A. (Oxon.)

1951

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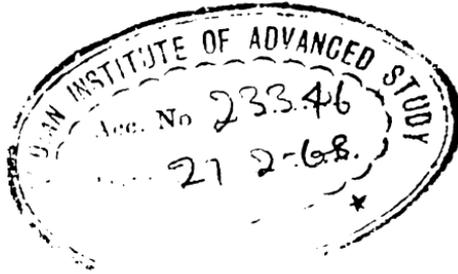


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THE WORLD GOSPEL SERIES

Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all,
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold,
Rend each man's temple-veil and let it fall
That we may know that Thou hast been of old.
Gather us in ; we worship only Thee :
In varied names we stretch a common hand ;
In diverse forms a common Soul we see,
In many ships we seek one spirit-land.
Each sees one colour of Thy rainbow light,
Each looks upon one tint and calls it heaven :
Thou art the Fullness of our partial sight—
We are not perfect till we find the seven.

G. MATHESON

APART from a few scholars and devotees, the modern public are unwilling to spend time on reading through the whole of the lengthy Scriptures of the world. This little Series is planned to offer them in a cheap handy and attractive form the essence of each of the world's great Scriptures, translated and edited by one who has a deep and living sympathy for each of them.¹

¹ Yet it is obvious that the writer does not thereby pronounce his own personal convictions.

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DUNCAN GREENLEES

उपदेशसारम्

आब्रह्मस्तम्बपर्यन्तं सर्वं मायामयं जगत् ।
सत्यं सत्यं पुनः सत्यं हरेर्नामैवकेवलम् ॥
मधुरं मधुरेभ्योऽपि मङ्गलेभ्योऽपि मङ्गलम् ।
पावनं पावनेभ्योऽपि हरेर्नामैवकेवलम् ॥
अव्यक्ताद् व्यक्तयः सर्वाः प्रभवन्त्यहरागमे ।
रात्र्यागमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैवा व्यक्तसंज्ञके ॥
अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्त्तते ।
विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥
धर्मानन्यान्परित्यज्य मामेकं भज विश्वसन् ।
यादृशी यादृशी श्रद्धा सिद्धिर्भवति तादृशी ॥
कुर्वन्निरन्तरं कर्म लोकोऽयमनुवर्त्तते ।
तेनैव कर्मणा ध्यायन् मां परां भक्तिमिच्छति ॥
मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥
सर्वं धर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥
निरपेक्षं मुनिं शान्तं निर्वैरं समदर्शनम् ।
अनुब्रजाम्यहं नित्यं पूयेत्येत्यङ्घ्रिरेणुभिः ॥

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वञ्च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥
नाहं वसामि वैकुण्ठे योगिनां हृदये न च ।
मद्भक्ता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥
साधवो हृदयं मह्यं साधूनां हृदयं त्वहम् ।
मदन्यत् ते न जानन्ति नाहं तेभ्यो मनागपि ॥
पूजितो वैष्णवो येन विश्वञ्च तेन पूजितम् ।
वैष्णवा मम देहञ्च सत्यं सत्यं च नारद ॥

THE GOSPEL OF NARADA

GOD is the only Reality in the universe; the essence of all religion, the best part of all knowledge, is devotion to Him. Dwelling in all, He yet stands beyond all; all come from Him, abide in Him, and at the last return to Him, for they are but reflections of His beauty called forth by Him in a spirit of play. To love and worship the Infinite is the greatest thing that anyone can do; it frees the soul from all evil and fills it with Divine power and bliss. This all-perfect God created all things with the help of His loving Spouse, whom He adores as His equal though She is in no way separate from Him. Himself truly formless, He may be seen through every form in this universe made by Him.

The knowledge of Him is alone worth knowing; the real teacher is the devotee who by passing on the Lord's Name awakens

devotion and the knowledge of God in his pupil, and such a teacher is really as God Himself. Even the very sight or touch of a devotee makes things holy; God Himself is in love with His lovers, so He drives far from them all fear and evil. United with Him mystically, the devotee becomes as mighty and as holy as He is Himself; the hater of God contaminates the air around him, but the presence of a devotee spreads in all around him the love of God he revels in himself. For such a soul nothing is so sweet as to serve his beloved Lord.

Devotion is the one-pointed selfless love for God which thinks of Him unceasingly with deep and quiet joy. It is inspired in the soul by the company of saints when it turns away from worldly things to seek for God. It is the easiest way to find Him and to lead others to His feet; it is also far more delightful than personal Liberation. The true devotee is silent and humble, always busy in pleasing God and trying to love Him more and more every day. There are stages of growing intimacy on the upward spiritual path that leads to final union with the Lord.

As mighty as God Himself is His holy Name ; the very sound of it from afar instantly purifies the hearer and destroys a million sins in the singer's heart. No matter how it may be sung, if love but prompt the singing ; all who take to it with faith and love attain to God, the highest Goal. The time or place which hears His Name becomes most holy, while those who utter it become the very Body of the Lord.

Having purified himself, the worshipper should go to God's Temple, acting there as in His very presence. All food and water must first be offered up to Him, so that it may be instinct with His very Being ; He should be seen in every stranger and guest. Knowing Devotion as life's richest treasure, the devotee thinks of God in any lovely form that thrills the heart and stirs a feeling of enthralling love.

THE GOSPEL OF NĀRADA

PREFACE

THE tremendous prestige of S'ri S'ankarāchārya's¹ name, and the sedulous propaganda which has artificially raised his Advaita doctrine above all other philosophies in India, have obscured the real teachings of Hindu Scripture. Thus it is only those who themselves have had a deeper experience of the Real than Advaita can give, who are able to remember it is but a partial expression of the Truth. Foreigners, misled by the noisy tub-thumping of self-styled Advaitins, have no chance to realise that the Hindu Scriptures are essentially monotheistic, and that they are in no way really represented by the pantheistic quasi-atheism of the lecturer or by the vulgar polytheism of the ignorant masses. Too many Hindus have themselves been deceived; they have taken Advaita at its own

¹ I must apologise to the reader for the confusion inevitable in such a work as this in transliterating from Sanskrit. As far as possible where texts are directly quoted, and in the case of technical terms, I have used the conventional system of Orientalists, but replaced this in parts of the book more likely to be read by the general public with phonetic or the more familiar spellings; this involves a certain inconsistency which will not, I trust, cause inconvenience to most readers.

valuation and come to be shy of putting it in its place as subordinate to true Religion.

The accepted definition of a Hindu is 'one who bases his religious thought and life upon the *Vedas*'. By a total ignoring of the Personal God taught everywhere in the *Vedas*, by a clever misinterpretation of the *Upaniṣads* and *Brahma Sūtras*—sometimes even going so far as to insert particles which wholly change the sense of crucial passages, as G. N. Mallick points out—and by affecting an easy but wholly unjustified contempt for the *Purāṇas*, such pseudo-philosophers have managed to corrupt the whole teaching of authentic Scripture. Thus they have misled the people and drawn them away from their greatest good, which can be found only in devotion to the One God of Love, both Immanent and Transcendent.

It is to add one tiny effort in the great struggle to undo this mischief in an age which is already far too willing to deny God, the only stable Rock on which we can build religion and morality, that this Volume has been added to the 'World Gospel Series' even before its inevitable companion on Advaita has been prepared.

Many will wonder at the choice of scriptural source, expecting rather the two great Fountains of Devotion—the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Srīmad Bhāgavatam*—to be drawn upon instead. Such may kindly extend their forgiveness and patience; the doctrines of these two great World Scriptures will form the basis of our later volume, *The Gospel of Sri Krishna*. Instead of these, for this volume the comparatively unknown *Nārada*

Pancharātra has been chosen. This is because it gives what we may take as an outline of the general doctrines of a devotional school of thought very near the Viśiṣṭ-ādvaita Philosophy as taught by Śrī Rāmānujachārya and his leading followers.

The arguments by which a certain European scholar has tried to prove this ancient and valuable book a worthless forgery cannot convince an adherent of Vaishnava religion or philosophy. Its teachings do not pretend to be exhaustive, it is true; for example, they say nothing for or against the doctrine of the *Vyūhas*, which tells us nothing whatever about its date. But they are nowhere heretical; they are in entire consonance with those of the greater Scriptures of Hindu Devotion. Considerations of the *date* at which this book was written down are quite irrelevant to the question of its authenticity and inspiration; God speaks to men as clearly today as in the most remote of ages, for He is not bound by Time.

The other great Scripture, which has been included *in extenso* as Chapter 5 of this 'Gospel', needs no such defence. The *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras* have long been regarded as the most authoritative summary of the Hindu teachings on Devotion which we possess. Even materialists, who always like to demean the world's scriptures, cannot but admit that here we have a very ancient book, whose doctrine is best attested by experience and intelligent observation.¹

¹ I have not traced a copy of the '*Rohtakamaṇḍala*', of which the *Nārada Gita* used in our Ch. 4 is a part.

Indeed, that is the only real test whereby a doctrine can be rightly judged. Does it work out that way in practice? If so, it is true. Those who have no experience of the actual modes of Devotion have obviously no right to assess the value of such a teaching; it is for them to study humbly and try to understand, and with God's grace time may lead them some day to a personal experience through which they can become its judges. Those who have been called by the All-loving God to know Him, to bathe in the delight of worshipping Him, to come to love Him 'daily more and more', can compare with their own experience what was here set down for their guidance in ancient times. The writers were sages and devotees themselves who, regarding themselves as inspired by Narada, the 'holy Sage' and 'Prince of Devotees', thought it only fair and honest to ascribe their books to him, to issue them in his glorious name.

Let us, then, sitting at their feet as pupils share their own uplifting contact with Narada, one of the greatest of God's lovers, and through that contact be drawn nearer to the One Source of all Love and Wisdom.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Rise of Devotion in India

DEVOTION may be communal or individual; it may be directed to a State deity and assume the form of temple rituals, or it may flow in a pure stream of personal love to the deity of one's own choice. In this little essay we have to consider both of these aspects in relation to religious life in India.

It is a little hard to understand those who demand proofs of temple worship in India at a date before the Christian era began. Excavation even on the lowest strata in Egypt, Babylonia, and everywhere else has revealed the existence of temples, with presumably organised temple rites, away back in the closing stages of the Neolithic period, almost before town-dwelling began at all. Would anyone suggest that the ancient Indian was less pious than the pleasure-loving Egyptian or the hard business men of Chaldea? It is surely a matter of common sense that India knew temples as soon as these other lands, whose climates have permitted the survival even of buildings in crude brick, roofed with cocoanut leaves or straw.

It is really a strange and baseless assumption on the part of certain Western students and their Indian imitators that the *Vedas*, because they are still in an archaic form of Sanskrit, are actually older than the *Purāṇas* and *Āgamas*, which have been re-written in the later classical form. The *Vedas* are mostly hymns and prayers to be chanted in worship, and need not therefore be exactly understood by the masses or adapted to passing time; but the *Purāṇas* are meant to teach the common people, and the *Āgamas* to guide their procedure in the temple, so these had to be in a language then understood by all. When few but learned pundits could still understand the Sanskrit of these books at all, they in turn were to some extent replaced by such books in the vernaculars as the *Andhra Bhāgavatamu* of Potana and the *Rāmācharitamānasa* of Tulasidas. This process of vernacularisation may well have begun in about the Buddha's time, say B.C. 450, when Prākṛit began very slowly to replace Sanskrit.

Let us frankly face the claim of such Vaishnavas as Nishikanta Sanyal that the original Brahmi *Purāṇas* were allowed to perish when replaced by versions in the later classical form of Sanskrit, and that as G. N. Mallick says, quoting the *Nāradiya Purana* on p. 18 of his book,¹ the *Puranas* contain the essence of the existing

¹ *vedārthādadhikam manye purānārtham varānane |
vedāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ sarve purāṇe nātra samsayaḥ ||
tām vām vāstūnyusmasi gamādhye yatra gāvo bhūriṣṅga
ayāsa atrāḥ tadurugāyasya vṛṣṇaḥ paramam padam-
vabhāti bhūriḥ
ya te dhāmanyusmasi viṣṇo paramam padamavabhāti
bhūri*

four *Vedas*, together with much other Vedic material now lost in the original 'dialect'.¹ The *Matsya Purana* asserts that the best of these is the 'Sattvic group', whereof the crown is the *Bhagavatam*,² which expounds devotion to Sri Krishna as the end and bliss of life. The *Padma Purana* (222 : 1) says clearly, "And of all the Puranas the Srimad Bhagavatam is the best."³ Presently we shall have to consider the possible age of this 'best of the *Puranas*', for it is really the 'Bible' of Indian devotion, the chief authority of Vaishnava doctrine.

Now Mallick, on pp. 131-2 of his book, quotes the *Rigveda* (reputed to be the oldest) as saying: "We desire to go to those places of the sports of You Two [*i.e.* Krishna and (Bala)rama], where there are auspicious cows with big horns," and the *Madhyandina Sākha* of the *Yajurveda* as saying: "We desire to go to that shining place, the dwelling-place of Vishnu." So also Sanyal tells us how the first *mantras* of the *Rigveda* refer to Vāmana, the Dwarf-Avatar whose date was at that time still quite recent, and the *Chhandogya Upanishad* (3 : 17 : 6) speaks of Krishna the Son of Devaki as a pupil of Ghora Angirasa, who opposed the Vedic cults (as in *Harivamsa*, 4004 ff) and taught the Sāttvatas to worship the Sun—which reminds us of Krishna's little fight with Indra on the occasion of His lifting the

¹ Cf. Chāṇḍogyaopaniṣad, 7 : 1 : 2, *itihāsapurānam pañcamam vedānām vedam*, and Bh. 1 : 4 : 20 : *itihāsapurānamca pañcamo veda ucyate*.

² *sṛimadbhāgavatam nāma purāṇam vedasammitam*.

³ *purāṇeṣu ca sarveṣu sṛimadbhāgavatam param*.

Govardhan Hill. On p. 28 of his Introduction to the *Bhagavadgita*, Sir S. Radhakrishnan decides: "There is ample evidence in favour of the historicity of Krishna," towards which he cites the following five points:

(i) The 4th century B.C. Buddhist, Niddesa, notes the worship of Vāsudeva (Krishna) and Bāladeva, as going on in his own day.

(ii) About B.C. 320, Megasthenes says that Herakles (= Bālarāma) was worshipped at Methora (Mathura) and Kleisobora (Krishnapur).

(iii) Patanjāli's *Mahābhāshya* on Panini (4 : 3 : 98) calls Vāsudeva the Bhāgavat, *i.e.* Lord.

(iv) Early Buddhist legends name Radha, Yasoda and Nanda (p. 29).

(v) In B.C. 180 Heliodorus the Vaishnava at Taxila calls Vāsudeva the 'God of Gods'.

To this evidence we may add the statement by Swami Vijnanananda that a sculptured pillar of perhaps the 4th century A.D. at Mandor in Jodhpur shows Krishna, and the fact that excavations at Pahārpur near Jamalganj in Bengal (Rajshahi Dt.) revealed many 5th century images, including one of Radhakrishna. The last rather disposes of the guess that perhaps Radha was unknown to the author of the *Bhagavatam* because she is not clearly named by him,—that is, if the great Purana is to be dragged down to a fairly late date. Finally, in the *Mahābhārata*, the latest redaction of which can hardly be later than B.C. 250, we find Narada in a vision of the White Continent (Svetadwipa)

learning that Vishnu is the only God, taking innumerable Avatars to aid creation, while the doctrine is here clearly stated that the religion of Devotion is "the primal and eternal religion" (*Sānti parva*, ch. 647).

Certainly the worship of Vishnu, Nārāyaṇa or Krishna is of remote age, far antedating the period of surviving books. A. Govindacarya Svamin boldly asserts that the Vaishnava *Āgamas* are in fact more or less of Vedic age, and there is no shred of published evidence which has come my way to refute him. The *Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad* (7 : 1 : 2) gives Narada as naming the 'Eka-yana' among the sciences he has acquired, and the *Iswara-samhitā* (1 : 18) explains this as devotion, the *only* path to Liberation. The same book (1 : 26) says : "This is the original Bhagavata dharma which in the Kṛta age worthy men always observed," and in 1 : 4 ff. tells us that Narada taught this Religion after adoring Narayana at Badari¹ (cf. *Sānti parva*, 644 ff). The *Bhāradvāja-samhitā* adds that Narada taught that it was on Sri's (=Radha's) request Narayana gave it to the world.

Even Bhandarkar, in the *Indian Antiquary* for June 1889, p. 190, calls the Vis'ishtadvaita religion "a somewhat modified and more methodical form of the ancient Bhāgavata, Pāncharātra, or Sāttvata religion, which is named and described in the *Sāntiparvan* of the Mahabharata . . . both Vaishnavism and Saivism . . . are coeval with even the earlier portions of the so-called

¹ *eteṣāṃ sāttvatam sūtram upadeṣṭum tvamarhasi.*

Vedic period", (quoted by A. Govindacarya Svamin). The *Brahma Sūtras* (2 : 2 : 42) give the typical Pancharatric teaching on Vyūhas and Avatāras ; Sanyal maintains that the Religion goes back through the Sattvatas and Vaikhanasas to Narayana Himself, being only renewed from time to time by the Avataras. In *Gita* 4 : 1-3 Sri Krishna Himself claims only to hand on the older teaching, and in *Gita* 10 : 26 He calls Narada the chief of the Divine Rishis, while 10 : 13 even seems to hint that Narada was the earlier teacher of the same doctrine now being restated by the Lord. This shows that when the *Gita* was being written, if not at the time of Kurukshetra itself, Narada's name was associated with some great scripture on the doctrines of love and yoga of Devotion (cf. *Gita* 10 : 8-11), as in the later Tantra and Pancharātra. There is no apparent reason for brusquely rejecting these suggestive hints of the great antiquity of the Bhagavata religion. Radhakrishnan admits that the *Gita* bases on the *Upaniṣads*, and so must be later than they, but insists that it is earlier than the *Sūtras* and is definitely pre-Christian, say of the 5th century B.C. It contains the doctrines of devotion and surrender fully developed.

In an article in *Kalyana Kalpataru*, Gita Number, on the age of the Gita, C. V. Vaidya points out that the *Satapatha Brahmana* declares the Krittika stars rise "exactly in the east", while "all other stars deviate from the east". This was astronomically true about B.C. 3000, at which time Parīkshit was still a recent King ; this confirms the date of B.C. 3102 for the start

of Kaliyuga, for the battle of Kurukshetra and the giving out of the *Gita*. He suggests that it was later written down by 'Vyasa', and afterwards twice expanded; it is often quoted by the present redacted *Mahabharata* as a scripture, and was probably included in the second draft of the great epic, that by Vaisampayana, of about B.C. 1400 (?), at a time when Sanskrit was still the spoken tongue—which it no longer was in the time of the Buddha (B.C. 500). It contains no reference to the Buddhist doctrines, though the present *Mahabharata* does. If any scholars are startled at this claim for the antiquity of a scripture sometimes rather foolishly ascribed to about A. D. 500, would they ask themselves: "When India was highly civilised by B.C. 3000, as now shown by excavations in Sind and the Punjab, what right have we to deny the antiquity of her religion—without evidence and in defiance of all the tradition of what is still a living cult?" It is totally impossible to refer to all the scriptural evidences of this antiquity: they would fill huge volumes of small print.

Meanwhile in the Tamil South of India, Bhandarkar admits that the Vaishnava Āḷwārs may go back to the 1st century A.D., and the Innilai verses, probably by a contemporary of Poygai, the first Āḷwār, resemble the *Tirukkural*, dated to the 2nd century by the most conservative. The *Silappadhikaram* of the same age speaks of temples of Krishna and Baladeva (5 : 11 : 171-172),¹ and the *Paripadal* of the same date gives

¹ வால்வளைமேனி வாலியோன்கோயிலும்—நீலமேனி நெடியோன் கோயிலும்.

the Pancharatra mode of temple worship and definitely says that the Tirumalirungolai temple had images of Krishna and Baladeva. It is clear that the cult of Krishna was well developed in the South by about A.D. 210, so that Dr. Schrader's date for the Pancharatra of 3rd to 8th centuries is now quite untenable, as S. Krishnaswami Ayyengar says.¹ Rama was identified with Vishnu already even by the earliest Alvars, and Kulas'ekara (A.D. 580-620 cir.) gives a summary of the *Ramayana*. P. N. Srinivasachari² summarises the teaching of the Alvars as: "Every man is the son of God and can attain salvation by seeking God and responding to His love,"—which is the creed of the *Bhagavatam* equally. Nammālvār (= Sadakopa, 5th-6th c.?) taught surrender to God's love in several glorious mystical scriptures, and Kulasekara taught Krishna's love. Perīālvār (Vishnuchitta) in glowing words adored the Child Krishna, and Andāl in her *Tiruppāvai* etc., sings the bliss of loving the Divine

¹ Bhandarkar is quoted by Dr. Schrader as saying: "In the southernmost province of Aryan India (the Marātha country) something like Pāncarātra worship seems to have existed as early as the first century before Christ."

² Prof. P. N. Srinivasachari did me the honour of reading through this MS. before it went to Press, and was good enough to say: "I read the 'Gospel of Narada' with pleasure and profit. It is a much neglected and much misunderstood subject. All honour to you, a non-Indian, that you should have taken so much pains in writing this work as No. 7 in the Gospel Series. It certainly deserves publication." I am indebted also to Sri. A. N. Krishna Aiyangar and Sri. G. K. Rangaswamy Aiyangar, who kindly went through the MS. and pointed out some small errors which I have been able to correct, to Sri. C. V. Somayajulu and another friend who prefers not to be named for certain help at various stages.

Spouse. By 900 A.D. Nathamuni had collected the 4000 hymns of the Alvars into the collection known as *Divya Prabandha*, and his grandson Yamunacharya defended the Pancharatra from Advaitin attacks. Disciples of the last became teachers of Ramanujacharya, who 'founded' the Visishtadvaita Philosophy upon the old bases of the *Samhitās*, the *Āgamas*, the Alvars' writings, and the *Vedas*. It was no new-fangled doctrine, but the ancient timeless Bhagavata religion that he taught—the religion given by God Himself to Narada¹ and thence through Vyasa to the world before history began.

Centuries before Christ, Asoka gave caves to the 'Ajivikas' to meditate in; now these 'Ajivikas' were really Bhagavatas or Vaishnavas, and the old Buddhist texts show that their origin was "in very remote times", says G. Buhler. Nishikanta Sanyal tells us that, born in Pandya in the 3rd century B.C., Vishnu-swami had seven hundred sannyasi disciples to preach against the Buddhist propaganda, and it is probable that many Vaishnavas sought refuge in the orthodox South from the enthusiasm of Asoka and his followers. The *Padma Purana* tells us how Narada found devotion prevailing in the South of India, whence it was the privilege of Ramanuja's disciples in later years to spread it back again over the Gangetic plain.

¹ In Bh. 1 : 3 : 8 we learn that Bhagavan Narada, the third Avatar of Vishnu, taught the Sātvata, (*i.e.* Pancarātra) doctrines (*tantram satvatamācaṣṭa naiṣkarmyam karmaṇān yataḥ*), just as Kapila Deva, the fifth Avatar, later taught the Sāmkhya Yoga.

Let us sum up in a few words. There are evidences, despite the damp climate which does not permit of the survival of early books or temples as in the Near East, which support the claim to great antiquity made by Hindu scriptures. Though some may have been interpolated at later times, I see no reason to reject these evidences. They are inherently probable, in the light of discoveries in Sind and elsewhere, compared with those of the 3rd and 4th millennia B.C. in other lands. The idea of a gradual evolution of religion from primitive, even savage, beginnings has no basis in known fact—it is pure speculation built on the actual evolution of physical bodies under the laws of ‘natural selection’. We have no evidence that genius is inherited; Shakespeare’s descendants, if any, have not shone as dramatists, nor are there any other famous poets in Byron’s or Tennyson’s families. Religions are founded by divine geniuses—shall we not rather say ‘by Avataras’?—and in the course of time decay and are corrupted by men who cannot attain the high ideal sketched by the Founder. The glorious religion of Devotion in India was founded by such a ‘genius’, by such an ‘Avatara’, long before written history began in this land. Its Founder is said to be Narada, acting as the mouthpiece of the Lord, Sri Krishna, Himself. This seems to be the actual fact, when we view evidences apart from prejudice.

2. The Age of the Pancharatra

1. Dr. Bhandarkar flattered himself that he had proved the Vaishnava Samhitās to be all late

compositions, dating after the beginning of the Christian era, and following on him Dr. Schrader tried to fix their date more closely as lying between the 3rd and 8th centuries. Let us glance at the sort of evidence on which this extraordinary conclusion was based, before we turn to evidences pointing to a much earlier date of origin.

The Samhitas are, many of them, named by Vedānta-desika in the 14th century in the South, and they were fully recognised as authoritative by Sri Ramanujacharya in the 10th century; their authenticity and authority were also defended by Yamunacharya nearly a century earlier. Some of the Samhitas actually *name* Ramanuja,¹ while several of them clearly refer to him as a Brahman who should do much to establish the old Sattvata Religion in the South. We find the oldest surviving quotation from them in the far north of India, in Kashmir, where at about A. D. 950 Utpalavaiṣṇava quotes several, including the *Ahirbudhnya Samhitā* in his book, *Spandapratiṣṭhika*. From this accidental fact they assume that the Pancharatra Samhitas originated in the North and were carried later to the South, that those which obviously refer more to South Indian conditions were therefore much later, and that as true *prophecy* of Ramanuja's work is inherently impossible (an extraordinary piece of crass materialistic

¹ e.g. the *Bṛhadbrahma Samhita* : 2 : 7 : 66 (quoted by Govindacarya Swamin : "According to the needs of the age I take many forms and act by means of my devotees, such as Vishvakṣena, Nammalvar (Saṭhāri), etc. and by Ramanuja in the Kali Age.")

incredulity in the light of what we now know of the psychic faculties!) books referring to him *must* have been written after his lifetime on earth. In some such way also an attempt is made to prove that *Bhagavatam* 11 : 5 : 40, with its reference to the devotion prevalent on the banks of Kaveri and Tamraparni, must be later than the Alvars of the (?) early centuries A. D.¹ Much is made also of the fact that in the *Santiparva*, and many other books, Narada learns the doctrines of the Pancharatra while in the Himalaya regions, in Svetadwipa, in order to show that these doctrines must have originated in the North—one even going so far as to claim that the ‘white men’ referred to in this story must have been Christian missionaries, and that the sublime teachings of Vaishnavism are a sort of corrupt Christianity! No refutation of such nonsense is necessary.

Schrader quotes the *Satapatha Brahmana* (13 : 6 : 1) as saying that the creative sacrifice of Narayana (teacher of Narada) was through a “pancarātra sattra . . . as a means of obtaining superiority over all beings and becoming all beings”. This he declares was in fact the central doctrine of the Pancharatra which we know—the fivefold revelation of God as Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmin and Archa. The age of the *Satapatha Brahmana*, cited in this way, has been astronomically pushed back to about B. C. 3000. The

¹ *Skt : Kāveri ca mahāpuṇyā prācī ca mahānadī |
ye pibanti jalam tāsām manuṣā manujesvara |
prāyo bhaktā bhagavati vāsudeveamalāsayāḥ |*

Īsvara-samhitā itself (1 : 38 : 41) says that Sāṅḍilya (author of certain Bhakti Sutras) brought the Pancharatra down from Heaven from Saṅkarshana before the Kali Age began, when Sri Krishna withdrew His physical form from men's view, *i.e.*, about B. C. 3000— which date tallies with the above. The same authoritative scripture says in 8 : 175-177 that Narada declared it as the teaching of various great sages of the past : Sathakopa, Sandilya, Sanaka, Prahlada, Sugriva, Hanuman and Vibhishana—“ who strictly observed the ‘five times’ ”.¹ I respectfully suggest that the Sathakopa here referred to may possibly be other than the famous Nammalvar—though the date of the latter mystic is by no means fixed, and the ‘orthodox’ dating may be in fact correct. Sanyal opines that the *Bhakti-Sutras* of Narada and Sandilya are both of the same age as the present Pancharatra scriptures.

The actual number of inspired Pancharatra Samhitas varies in different authorities. The *Nārada Pañcarātra* itself names only seven, the *Agni Purāṇa* names 25, the *Hayasirsha-samhita* names 34, the *Ahimbudhnya-samhita* only 10, the Kapinjala List gives us 106 names, the *Pādma Tantra* as many as 112, and the *Vishnu*

¹ *Skt* : ekāntino mahābhāgāḥ Saṭhakopa-purassarāḥ |
kṣonyām kṛt-ūvatāra ye lokojjivana hetunā |
Sāṅḍilyādyas ca ye cānye pañcarātra-pravartakāḥ |
Prahādas carva Sugrīvo Vāyusūnur Vibhīṣanaḥ |
ye cānye Sanakādyaśca pañcakūla-parūyaṇāḥ ||

The ‘five times’ are (as described in the *Padma Tantra*, 4 : 13) : *abhigamana* (morning duties), *upādāna* (earning for worship), *ījyā* (worship), *svādhyāya* (scriptural studies), and *yoga* (meditation) ; between these five duties the whole day from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. is to be divided.

Tantra totals 141. These names do not all agree, and Dr. Schrader with admirable patience compiled from the lists one of 215 different names, though he admits many of these may be duplicates. Tradition says there are 108 *Samhitas*, just as there are 108 authentic *Upanishads*.

These are not all held of equal authority or inspiration: The *Isvara-samhita* itself considers the best to be the *Sātvata*, the *Pauṣkara* and the *Jaya Samhitas*. The *Pādma Tantra* prefers the *Padma*, *Sanatkumara*, *Parama*, *Padmodbhava*, *Mahendra* and *Kāṇva Samhitas*; the Bengal Vaishnava, Nishikanta Sanyal, chooses the *Hayasirsha*, *Prahlada* and *Narada* as the three chief and best *Pancharatras*. Though Dr. Schrader does not give us the evidences on which he came to his conclusion, he suggests that the 'oldest' are the *Pauṣkara*, *Sātvata*, *Jaya*, *Ahimbudhnya*, *Paramesvara*, *Padma*, *Isvara*, with perhaps the *Vārāha*, *Brahmā*, *Sanatkumāra*, *Parama*, *Padmodhava*, *Mahendra* and *Kāṇva* of nearly equal age. He gives us a most valuable study of the *Ahimbudhnya-samhita*, while deploring that hardly any of these books have yet been made available for study in modern languages. He makes no attempt to conceal his dislike of the *Nārada Pancarātra*, which we have used in our present work.

2. The meaning of the word '*Pañcarātra*' is under dispute, several guesses being made by different authors:

On *five nights* Narayana taught Ananta, Garuda, Visvakshena, Brahma and Rudra;

The *Pancaratra* doctrines blackened, replaced, *five* older *teachings* or teachings later set up against them:

the Samkhya, the Yoga of Patanjali, etc., the Pasupata or Kapala, the Bauddha (Buddhist), and the Arahata (Jain).

They teach the *five Forms* of God: Para, Vyuha, Vibhava or Avatara, the Harda or Antaryamin, and the Archa (divine images).

They teach the *five Vaishnava duties*: *tāpa* (branding); *ṣundra* (marking the three lines on the brow), *Nāma* (using only names of Vishnu), *mantra* (keeping His Name always in the mind), *yaga* (worship of the image given by the Guru).

They treat of *five wisdoms*: *tattva*, *mukti*, *bhakti*, *yoga* and *viśaya*. The Sri Prasna-samhita (2 : 40) says that 'rātri' means 'ignorance' and *pañca* (from the root *pac*: cook) means 'destroy'—because these scriptures put an end to ignorance (*ajñāna*).

In fact, as Dr. Schrader tells us, these books treat of Philosophy, occult linguistics, magical figures (*yantra*), practical magic, yoga, the building of temples, the making and consecration of images, domestic observances, public festivals and the mode of worship both public and private. They give as high and noble an outline of Vaishnava Philosophy as the similar Saiva *Agamas* do of the Saiva doctrines. Few of them actually deal with all these topics; the *Bhāradwāja-samhita* deals only with Conduct (*caryā*) and surrender to God (*prapatti*); the *Padma Tantra* gives 45 pages to Philosophy, 11 to Yoga, 215 to Action and 376 to Conduct, and the *Ahīrbudhnyā-samhita* is mainly concerned with Philosophy.

The wide difference in viewpoint between those who regard these books as authoritative and inspired and those scholars who under Western guidance concern themselves with such points as when they were written down, where they first appeared, whether they are 'apocryphal', etc. may be realised when we read what Nishikanta Sanyal has to say on them: "The Panca-rātras are thus an authoritative expansion and supplement of the Veda (Truth or Absolute Knowledge) in the same way as the Puranas" (*op. cit.* p. 175). He goes on to explain that while the Four Vedas are *aparāvidya* (ordinary knowledge), the Sāttvata Sāstras are the *parāvidya* (supreme knowledge) because they teach the highest mystic truth about God and His creation in clear language. For example, the *Brahma-samhita* (book 5) gives a magnificent account of the greatness of Sri Krishna and Radha and of the infinite glories of the transcendent Goloka where They eternally reign; this book was most highly esteemed by Sri Krishna Chaitanya when he found it in *South* India while on tour. Sanyal goes on rightly to point out that it is a total fallacy to think, with most 'modern' Western scholars, that the 'oldest' Scripture (the Ṛgveda) is necessarily the most authoritative, for the Word of God is not limited by space or time, and the Puranas, the Agamas, the Sutras are all part of the eternal timeless *Sanatana Dharma* revelation. Of course, if a book can be 'inspired' from behind the veil by some great Person like Narada, Vyasa, or the Christ in B.C. 2000 or even earlier, another book may just as easily be inspired by the same

Person in A.D. 500 or even A.D. 1950. It is indeed a matter of very slight importance to the adherent of any Religion *when* his inspired Scriptures actually broke through that veil and took form on this physical plane ; it is a matter of supreme importance only to know that it teaches the truth in accordance with other revealed Scripture. And on that basis we can only agree that the Pancharatra *Samhitas* are authentic, eternal and true.

4. This is what Dr. Schrader says about the *Pancaratra* generally : (It) " must have originated in the North of India and subsequently spread to the South. . . . The story of Svetadwīpa seems even to point to the extreme North, and so do some *Samhitās*, among them *Ahīrbudhnyā*. . . . The thesis may therefore be advanced that all *Samhitās* betraying a South Indian (Dravidian) origin belong to the later stock of the literature. Of those South Indian *Samhitās* the oldest one now available seems to be the *Īśvara Samhitā*. It enjoined, among other things, the study of the so-called Tamil Veda (*drāmiḍi sruti*) and contains a *Mahātmya* of Melkote in Mysore. It is quoted thrice by Yāmunācārya, the teacher of Rāmānuja, who died in the first half of the eleventh century (cir. 1040). Yāmuna claiming for the Agamas the authority of a fifth Veda, the said *Samhitā* must have been in existence at his time for at least two centuries. This would bring us to about the time of Sankara (788-825) whom, then, we may provisionally regard as the landmark between the northern and the southern Pāncarātra *Samhitās*, bearing in mind, however, that the composition of

Samhitās did not necessarily cease in the North just when it began in the South, and remembering also that in the southernmost province of Āryan India (the Marātha country) something like Pāncarātra worship seems to have existed as early as the first century before Christ” (says Bhandarkar). “To the South Indian class of Samhitās, which is very much smaller than the northern one, belongs . . . further the voluminous Bṛhad Brahma Samhitā as it seems, which has made its way to the north-west and consequently met with a fate similar to that of the spurious Nāradiya in Bengal, in that it is now ‘popularly known in the Gujerat country as the Nārada Pāncarātra’” (says Govindācārya). . . . (The 8th century A.D. is the) “terminus ad quem of the original Pāncarātra Samhitās.” . . . (Among) “apocryphal or spurious Samhitās . . . must be assigned all Samhitās which are specially connected with some cult or teaching of modern growth such as the exclusive worship of Rāma, Rādhā, etc., and (or) which have given up some essential dogma of the Pāncarātra, such as that of the Vyūhas. (Both) is the case, for instance, with the spurious Nāradiya.”

An ingenious tissue of improbable guesses and pure dogmatism, based on the fallacious idea of an ‘evolution’ towards devotion in Indian religion—which is not apparently the fact. Certain Upanishads have been brusquely and unscientifically dubbed ‘later’ than others, apparently mainly because Sankara found it convenient for his own theory not to attempt commenting on them. There is not a shred of real evidence known to show that the *Gopālatāpanīyopaniṣad*, for

instance, is actually later than the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* or *Chāndogya*¹; it is pure assertion, which does not become true by frequent repetition, even by the best-known scholars. It also flies insolently in the face of the whole weight of tradition in a living religion—which no real lover of truth would do so lightly.²

3. The Narada Pancharatra

Dr. Schrader, as we have seen, regards this book as of no importance, late, spurious and apocryphal. Where almost every Scripture in the world is actually anonymous or pseudonymous, from the point of view of materialistic science, it is really hard to see just what he means by these sweeping terms. No one suggests, surely, that we are to believe Narada himself, the 'third Avatar of Vishnu', took a pen one day and wrote this book, any more than we are to imagine Solomon sitting

¹ The supposed evidence lies on two grounds: (1) the language is later in form—but it may easily have been a later redaction, and (2) references to or quotations from the 'classical' Upanishads are found in them—but who is to identify the *source* and the *quotation*?

² The *Srimad Bhagavatam* (5 : 19 : 10) has this to say on our topic: "There Narada, in order to teach the Muni Sāvarni the Pāncarātra doctrine which reveals the experience of the Lord, together with the Sāṅkhya and Yoga S'āstras which the Lord Himself uttered, worships Nara-Nārāyaṇa and repeats this mantra . . . with pious people who with extreme devotion observe the caste laws of India" (*from Hindī*).

In Bh. 1 : 4 : 20 we read "the Epics and Puranas are called the Fifth Veda" (*itihāsapurāṇam ca pañcamo veda ucyate*)

In Bh. 1 : 3 : 8 we learn that Bhagavan Narada, the third Avatar of Vishnu, taught the Sāttvata (*i.e.* Pāncarātra) doctrines (*tantram sātvatamaçaṣṭa naiṣkarmyam karmaṇām yataḥ*), just as Kapila Deva, the fifth Avatara, taught the Sāṅkhya Yoga.

down to dictate the exquisite mystical poem known by his name in the Jewish Scriptures. Yes, it is true, the Narada Pancharatra is indeed 'apocryphal', in that no one knows the name of the unimportant scribe who wrote it down; it is indeed 'spurious', in that we must consider it likely that Narada is not himself its author, by his own hand; and yet Nishikanta Sanyal, a strictly orthodox Vaishnava of the important Chaitanya school, regards it as one of the three chief books on the ancient Satvata or Pancharatra doctrines! Rather optimistically, Dr. Schrader tells us that because Sir R. G. Bhandarkar rejects its authority it has ever since his time been regarded as worthless in South India; but perhaps the great scholar's authority does not govern the selection of the Vaishnava canon. The Rev. A. Roussel is quoted as having called it 'below the mediocre' (au-dessous du médiocre), but after all most of us human beings may well be called the same, and we find such books of great value to us in our spiritual search for the Truth. It was found of sufficient value by the world-known saint, Sri Ramakrishna, to quote it with high approval (N. P. 1 : 2 : 6-7, our GN 5 : 4) as reported in the magnificent "Gospel of Ramakrishna", page 337, 1947 Ed.; it is also quoted by Sir S. Radhakrishnan in his Introduction to the *Bhagavadgita* (N. P. 2 : 1 : 22, our GN 1 : 3). I rather think most of our readers will prefer such opinion to that of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar.

Its rather scant consideration of the deeper elements of Vaishnava theology, such as the Vyuhās, cannot for a moment be taken to imply its rejection of so

longstanding and orthodox a dogma ; it was meant for the instruction of 'mediocre' people, who would gain little from such subtleties and who would profit from its great emphasis on the all-importance of the sacramental use of the Name and of *satsang*. To try to date it from such a character as just before Vallabhacharya, as Swami Vijnānānanda seems to try to do, because the latter philosopher also omitted the Vyūhas, is at the very least unwarranted ; we might even use a harsher word with full justification. He is on safer ground, really, when he suggests on another page that it may even be the oldest Sanskrit Vaishnava book. The fact that it lists only *six* modes of devotion, while the *Bhagavatam* lists nine, may not perhaps, however, prove it older than the *Bhagavatam*.

This Pancharatra, whose authenticity may be safely taken as equal to that of any other scriptural book in the world, teaches mainly the path of love and devotion as preferable to that of asceticism—which so often arises from egoism and leads to greater pride and passion. The goal it holds out to us is the loving service of God, quite without the least hope or desire of personal reward for ourselves ; but at the same time it shows that the result of such service is the intimate company of the Lord, in what is known as *sālokya*, even though no real devotee would think of this for a moment as an inducement for him to give his heart to the service of the Beloved Lord who is his very inmost Self.

It claims to do five things for us if we use it properly : to destroy death (for the love of God

certainly destroys the fear and consciousness of personal life and death alike), to give liberation (for "His service is perfect freedom"), to give joy in that service (*dāsyabhakti*), to give all spiritual and psychic powers (the sixteen *siddhis*, which enable the saint to work miracles almost unknown to himself), and to make us known to all the people in the world (for though he loves obscurity the great saint is almost inevitably thrust into fame).

It names six other Pancharatra books as existing when it was written : the Brahma, Siva, Kumara, Vasishta, Kapila and Gautama Pāncarātras, and it also refers to the *Vishnu Purāna* (2 : 7 : 32), the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāna* (2 : 7 : 30), and the *Kāpila Pāncarātra* (2 : 7 : 50) ; it names the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, uttered by Suka in 18,000 verses, as "the most holy thing". Its writer had great faith in the power of mantric words and sounds, in controlled breathing (*praṇāyāma*), in the control of the yogic 'nerves' and *kundalini*. Among the forms of the Name he has given us are the 'Sahasranāms' of Vishnu, Gopala and Radhika, the Hundred and Eight Names of Krishna, and the 'kavachas' of Radha, Krishna and Gopala. He gives us many mantras, explaining quite a number of them esoterically.

I have not been able to trace the relation between its five books, or 'Nights', and any of the meanings which we are given for that mysterious word 'rātra' ; they definitely do not seem to teach in turn *Tattva*, *Mukti*, *Bhakti*, *Yoga* and *Vishaya*, as the book claims. The

book has an alternative name ; it is also called the *Jñānāmṛtasāram*, the 'essence of the nectar of (spiritual) wisdom', a most suitable name ; it teaches us that the very essence of all wisdom is devoted service to and knowledge of the Lord. And surely that is a large part of the message so desperately needed by our confused and misled ignorant world of today, which seeks happiness where none can ever be found, in things of this fleeting and therefore essentially unreal world, instead of in Him who alone is infinite, eternal, good.

4. Its Own Story of the Origin

The story of the book is related by Vyasa to Suka, and repeats the teachings given by the Lord Sankara to Narada ; in the *Bhagavatam* and the *Santiparva*, Narada is taught by Narayana, but here greater honour is allowed to the great Ascetic who Himself points the immortal devotee to the Lord of Love.

First Night : Narada has studied the Vedas in great detail, eager to learn the whole Truth, but finds in them no real satisfaction. So he goes to Kedarnath in the Himalayas, and there does 'penance' for a thousand years until he hears a Voice warning him that such asceticism is useless and he should rather go at once to get devotion from Sankara as his Guru. At this moment Narada's divine father, Brahma, appears, together with his brother, Sanatkumara ; Brahma explains in full the vanity of mere loveless acts of 'penance', and then tells in full the story of how a Brahman boy

named Subhadra once ate a few grains of food offered to the Lord, thrown away and defiled on the road, and at once developed from this contact with Him a true devotion which led him in the next birth to become the great saint Markandeya. This story is like that of Narada's own experience in youth as the child of a maid-servant. Brahma then warns Narada that life is uncertain, death is sure at the time God has fixed for it, and life must not be wasted by passing it without devotion.

Narada then goes off towards Mount Kailasa, the great Home of Sankara. On the way he goes through the lovely woods of the Himalayan foothills, and comes to a peaceful Ashram. Here he finds a Rishi lost in joyful contemplation of the Lord Hari, Lomasha Muni¹ by name. He gives Narada a loving welcome as his guest; each begins to praise the other as a true Vaishnava whose very dust purifies the world. Then Lomasha also urges Narada to hurry on his way to meet Siva, or Sankara, who was also his own Guru and had taught him devotion to Vishnu.

Narada goes on his way; near the Pushpabhadra River he next meets Markandeya in deep meditation. He crosses the Himalaya and on the Mandākini River he enters the lovely Parvati Forest; through this he finds running a good road leading straight to Sankara's jewel-Ashram, where at last he arrives. It lies in the centre of seven concentric walls, each with a gateway adorned with pictures of various *līlās* of Sri Krishna and guarded by a fearsome warden. The guardian of

¹ who escorted the Pāndavas to the Himālayas.

the seventh and inmost gate proves to be Ganesa ; after worshipping this auspicious God, Narada enters the gorgeous Ashram proper, which he finds filled with every beauty. In its exact centre Sankara is seated on His throne, wearing His tiger-skin, with the moon on His brow, ashes from the River Ganga on His body, with five faces, and three eyes, absorbed in meditation on Sri Krishna, and smiling in bliss.

Sankara gives Narada a loving welcome in return for his worship, and offers him the choice of any boon. Narada of course demands nothing but full-hearted devotion to Hari (1 : 8 : 27), and this is at once granted. Sankara then makes Narada His guest for some days and at the end of that time again asks him what other boon he would like. In reply Narada puts Him many questions on how really to worship Krishna worthily, and most of the book is taken up with Sankara's answers to these questions.

He begins by initiating Narada into the Krishna-mantra ; God being infinite can only be worshipped worthily by an infinite worship, and as nothing is infinite save Himself and His Name the only worthy worship of God is the reverent use of His Name. The form this mantra takes at this time is " Srīm Hrim Klīm Krishnāya Swāhā ", which is explained as uniting the names of Maya, Karna, Krishna and Brahma's wife, together with Lakshmi (Sri). Sankara next gives Narada the *Kavacham*, fruit of all desires, which protects from every enemy. Narada at once hears the mystic " celestial drum sounded in Brahmaloaka " (1 : 9 : 37) ;

from N. P. 5 : 10 : 16-18 we learn that this "Anāhata sound is in the heart-lotus". Flowers fall on the devotee's head, and he begins to dance in joyous rapture.

Sankara then relates to Narada several of his past births. Long before this, his Father Brahma had bidden him marry and procreate for the newly created universe ; because of his own love for Krishna, Narada had then refused to act in this way and become subject to Vishnu's illusory play, mocking his Father as deluded by the Lord's *māyā*. Brahma had then cursed him to lie for ages under the spell of passion until he should be saved by eating food offered to the Lord ; he retorted with another curse that none should ever worship Brahma among the sons of men.

Narada had then fallen into birth as a Gandharva named Upavarhana and lived a life of deep sensuality and lust. One feast-day this Gandharva was called to Brahma's court and bidden sing of Krishna's *lilās*. As payment for his song he received devotion to Krishna, together with many other gifts. When he sang a second time his voice broke with emotion, and the gods glared at him fiercely in contempt and anger. In his terror at their rage, he remembered Krishna—who at once appeared there before them all as a Boy in a wonderful thousand-wheeled chariot which carried crores of temples (the universe). The whole court of Heaven then adored Him, and He reassured Upavarhana that no flames can touch him and He would always save him when in danger (1 : 13 : 8-9). Krishna told Narada that after twelve more years as a Gandharva he would be born as a

Sudra (labourer) ; at the age of five years in that birth he would receive the Krishna-mantra and die ten years later at fifteen. He would then be reborn as the Son of Brahma and get initiation from Sankara Himself.

Sankara explains that this promise of the Lord has now been fulfilled, and He ends His first instruction with the interesting statement : " Sri Krishna formerly gave Me the post of destroyer ; but I handed that over to Rudra, and am now engaged in asceticism in worshipping Hari " (1 : 14 : 13).

Second Night : Sankara now imparts to Narada the " highest dharma ", which is the Pancharatra itself, identical with *jnāna* and Parabrahm, God. After all this is done, in later years Narada passes this on to Vyasa, the compiler of the Epics, Puranas, Vedas, and urges him to add the glorious scripture of devotion, the *Bhagavatam*, to crown his labours. Vyasa passes on the doctrine to Suka, who is the narrator of the *Bhagavatam* itself.

Sankara explains how the ' first knowledge ' is that all are one in God and that the world we see is really ' unreal ', that is non-eternal. The ' second knowledge ', He explains, is that the highest wisdom is devotion to Krishna, the Supreme Lord and One God. In terms recalling those of several Puranas, He narrates the creation of the world, the universe, of Jambudwipa. He explains that India, the *puṇyabhūmi* (land of merit), is the most excellent for those who seek God ; He describes the six other *dwīpas*, or inner planes, whereof Plaks'adwīpa is, He says, a middle-world where men

enjoy or suffer the fruits of their actions and whence they proceed to Heaven or Hell according to their deserts. In the inmost plane of all, Upadwīpa or Svetadwīpa, which is a 'peninsula', Vishnu lives with His Spouse Lakshmi; it is a most glorious paradise (described in the *Brahma-samhita* also).

Next He goes on to tell how the One became Two; first Ardhanaris'war, Male-Female, was formed, the 'female' half being Radha (2 : 3 : 35), who broke the Cosmic Egg with a 'kick' so that Mahavishnu was 'born' therefrom. Explaining the greatness of Radha, Sankara proceeds to reveal many mantras of various lengths; the six-lettered, "Rām Om Ām yam swāhā," which confers all *siddhis* upon its user; the fourteen-lettered, "Om Hrīm Rām Srīm Aim Kṛṣṇa prānādhikāyai swāhā," which gives its user the fruit of all his desires; the eleven-lettered, "Om Rām Hrīm Aim Kṛṣṇa-priyāyai swāhā," which gives liberation and enables the user to travel freely anywhere in space just as thought can travel. Lastly He reveals the great ten-lettered, "Om Rām Srīm Aim sarvādyaī swāhā," and adds that when this is taken with devotion nine lakhs of times it infallibly confers the joy of becoming Krishna's loving servant.

Sankara then tells how offerings are to be made to Radha as worship, and reluctantly agrees to reveal the Radhika-Kavacham when Narada threatens Him to offer *satyagraha* against Him if He does not yield the secret. Narada promises to honour Krishna's condition that this magic protection will be kept very

secret if it is entrusted to him ; Sankara then yields, once again impressing Radha's greatness on His pupil. After referring to several Puranas by name, in 2 : 7 : 28-50, He goes on to name seventeen psychic powers (*siddhis*), but adds that compared with devotion, the supreme good, these are of little value. He then speaks a little of yoga, and traces the various psychic centres (*cakras*) in the human body, from the *mulādhāra*, where *kuṇḍalini* sleeps at the base of the spine, upwards.

Third Night : While Sankara is speaking of how to worship, take the sacred bath, etc., we suddenly find that Vyasa is speaking instead, and may almost wonder if his speech is not an interpolation, it seems so wholly out of place here. He continues the talk of bathing, the proper use of mantras, etc., and then goes on to speak of the "world powers", warning us that the mantras should not be used until the whole body and all its *vāyus*, psychic 'winds', have been purified. He then goes on to give out some more mantras ; the 'Mahamantra' of ten syllables, "Gopijana vallabhāya swāhā ;" another of eight syllables, "Klīm Kṛṣṇāya Govindāya," and the famous twelve-lettered, "Om namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya," which, so we learn in 3 : 4 : 11, "opens the door of the unapproachable city of Liberation".

The esoteric meaning of the holy Name Kṛṣṇa (Krishna) is thus explained in 3 : 3 : 20 : *kṛṣ* means reality, being (*sat*), while *ṇa* means bliss (*ānanda*) ; the syllable *Go* of the Names Gopala and Govinda is explained as meaning wisdom (*jnāna*).

In chapter 6, Sankara tells Narada how we may win nearness to God (*samīpya-mukti*) by worship, and He goes on to describe the results of different modes of worship and *nyāsas*. After this, He concludes the book by telling Narada how the mantras can remove every kind of trouble, cure diseases, heal enmities, remedy failures, and even put an end to storms or droughts. He adds that for each mantra there is a special Form of Sri Krishna to be meditated on while using it.

Fourth Night : Sankara proceeds to reveal the 108 Names of Sri Krishna to Narada (4 : 1 : 17-36), with a warning in 4 : 2 : 20 that “no amount of virtuous acts alone can attain Him who is beyond all emotions (*bhāvas*)” for He can be reached solely by His own grace. “The greatest of all sins is the ignorance of Him,” Sankara continues in 4 : 3 : 1, and He goes on by revealing the Thousand Names of Vishnu. When Narada asks what may be done when he has no time or memory to repeat all these Names, Sankara tells him that “Rāma Rāmeti Rāmeti Rāma Rām” may be taken as the equivalent of the whole Vishnu-Sahasranām.

Then He goes on to reveal the Krishna-Kavacham and the Gopāla-Kavacham; then follows the Gopāla-Sahasranām (1000 Names of Gopāla), after which Sankara describes the various articles to be used in worship and the twelve ways the worshipper may purify himself before approaching God.

Fifth Night. In this chapter, as also in the Third, Sankara gives us beautiful descriptions of the Holy Child, of Brindāvan, of the Gopi devotees, whereon the aspirant may meditate. He also gives us a series of important Krishna-mantras, whereof the shortest are " Klīm Kṛṣṇāya," and " Kṛṣṇāya namaḥ ". To Parvati Sankara then reveals, after due warnings of its great power and secrecy, the Rādhikā-Sahasranām most mighty and holy, and goes on to explain a few of the Names of Krishna, adding that they are really countless. In the Name KRṢṆA, so He tells us, K repels death, Ṛ repels sin, Ṣ repels evil spirits, Ṅ expels diseases, and A expels disturbances and gives deep peace; and in the Name KLĪM, K is the creation, L is preservation, Ī is destruction, and M is ' nirvāṇa ' or the blissful absorption of all in God.¹ This Name thus includes the Trimurti, and the Unmanifest eternally behind that Manifest Deity.

After some talk of ' squares ' whereon alone food may be eaten—and Guru Nanak in his criticism of contemporary Vaishnava practice seems to have had this or some similar book in mind—Sankara turns to the *nādis* (yogic ' streams ' or nerves) once more, outlining this psychic system in the body and giving some account of *kundalini*, which he calls an " elixir of life ". He tells us that the mystic sound, Anāhata, comes in the heart in four tones : (i) like the soft humming of bees, (ii) like a clear flute, (iii) like a great bell, and (iv) like the

¹ The *Gopālatāpinīyopaniṣad* (25) thus explains *Klīm* : K= water, L= earth, Ī= fire of love, M= moon, and so KLĪM=creation.

roaring of thunder, This may be compared with the account in "The Voice of the Silence". The book ends here, rather abruptly, and one might almost imagine that something has been deliberately cut off from the end of it because it was entering too openly into what it is not safe or desirable to publish broadcast.

The edition of text which I have used, that published by Rev. K. M. Banerjea in the *Bibliotheca Indica* of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1865, seems to be the only edition available, and even that has long been out of print. I was able to find a copy in the Adyar Library. The only English translation which I could trace was that prepared by Swami Vijnānānanda, which covers 256 plus 20 pages; published in 1921 as vol. 23 of the *Sacred Books of the Hindus*, Allahabad. It was not possible to use this without considerable discretion and revision; it is in places a mere paraphrase.

5. Narada the Holy Sage and Typical Devotee

We must not think of this Narada, source of the teachings in our present Gospel, as a common man, born in a certain year A.D. or B.C. labouring in God's vineyard among men, and then dying in a certain other year. Indeed, the Narada of whom we speak is one of the Immortals, described in the *Bhagavatam* as the Third Avatara of Sri Krishna Himself, mind-born Son of the Creator, free to enter and leave Heaven or Earth at will,

appearing in all the ages of human history, above age and death. Nor does he appear as a common man at his numerous advents; so bright and glorious is he that Puṇḍarika thought he must be either the Sun, or Agni God of Fire, or Indra the King of Gods, when he came to teach the great devotee the power of the Holy Name. The *Harivamsa* describes him thus: "His complexion is like a flaming fire, his eyes as the morning sun," and the *Mahabharata* (Vanaparvan) compares him to "a sacred fire into which libations (of oil) are poured".

In a beautiful description of him quoted by M. Jean Herbert, he is called "possessed of immeasurable calmness—his whole personality redolent with the sweetness of Divine Love, grave with the wisdom gained from leaving Maya as a bird leaves the nest, and mischievous in the mood of knowing all things to be but the play of the Creator". This writer goes on: "The great rishi wanders through creation playing his vina, the sound of which is sattvika and infinitely sweet, and he sings to its accompaniment the glories of God."

With God's holy Name always on his tongue and his vina always in his hand, Narada moves blissfully about the garden of his Lord's creation, ever ready to help those in need, ever ready to comfort those in trouble, to warn those in danger, to teach those in ignorance; always he does what he knows to be the Creator's will, even when he may be misjudged by the narrow views of men as 'meddlesome' and 'strife-producing'. To preserve the balance between Right and Wrong upon which alone this universe can stand, he seems sometimes to aid

the forces of evil—but if we look just a little below the surface we shall see how his aid was necessary to bring about the ultimate victory of Right.

But, great as this Nārada may be, a very Incarnation of the Lord, there was a time in immeasurably remote ages when he too was but a human being and had to seek the Lord as all of us must try to do in our own day; there was a time when he too was swept by storms of passion, obscured by clouds of ignorance, plunged in a sea of despondency.

1. The Beginnings.

Narada was one of the eight Mind-born Sons of Brahma the Creator, his divine Seer-brothers including Daksha, Atri and Marichi, and thus from the very first he was intimately concerned with the work of Creation. Yet from the beginning his heart worshipped Vishnu, and when his Father bade him help in peopling the new world he refused, saying it was his will rather to follow the path of undivided devotion to the Lord. When the Creator somewhat angrily insisted on his obedience, he replied that He was no true teacher who would come between the creature and his Lord. Brahma told him that he who refused to produce human beings on the earth should himself fall into human bodies and have to work his way back again into the state of glory lost through disobedience. In return, Narada declared that none should worship the Creator, who would Himself be entangled in the delusive snares of passion and desire.

Saluting his Father, Narada departed and became a Gandharva—celestial being devoted to music and harmony, but alas, also the victim of sensual desire. For ages he wandered through the universe in perpetual youth and beauty, devoted to the soul of music and plunging time and again into the infatuations of sense and dissoluteness. With great diligence he perfected his music under Divine instruction until at last “his music filled all creation with Divine ecstasy and joy”. It is said that he himself invented the vina, that wonderful Indian instrument of subtle melody and harmony which is always in his hand.

It is said that once he was so carried away by passion on watching Rambhā the celestial dancing before the Gods that the Creator ordered him at once to depart and be born as a human being in the lowest of the four great castes. Fallen through desire into our human kingdom, he became well qualified to sympathise, encourage and advise other men and women when they were in trouble.

2. The Human Birth

We learn that his father was either Kaśyapa, the son of Marichi, (*Vishnu Purana*) or Kānva, the sage who brought up Sakuntala in the forest (*Ṛg-Veda*), and his mother was a daughter of Daksha; though the usual story represents his mother as a Sudra—she may have fallen from a higher caste before his birth.

His mother was a servant girl and was fortunate to be employed in the house of a Brahman, where she

had the chance to wait upon Seers as the guests of her master. The little boy, when still too young to understand what these Seers said, used to sit and listen to their talk and songs about God and the life of the spirit during the four rainy months; he was also privileged to eat their holy leavings and so to share something of their pure physical life. Even as a child of under five he came to love this holy society, and the Seers themselves admired the silent reverence of the little boy and let him listen to their hymns. So in time Narada's mind was purified and he longed to live in the same holy way as these great Seers and like them to realise his oneness with the Lord. They encouraged him in this good desire and taught him something of the inmost secrets of the spiritual way.

His mother loved him dearly and took great care of him, so that it was not possible for him to follow the Seers to the forest when the rains came to an end. But his time was very near. One night she went out to milk her master's cows and trod upon a snake; she died of its bite, and Narada was left free to follow the inner vocation of his soul, "to depart in search of God", as he himself said afterwards. In perfect calmness of mind the little boy of five set out alone for the northern forests, and there like a later Dhruva sat under a big tree to meditate on God.

He had only partial success. At times great light dawned upon him, but it was swiftly followed by a darkness the more intense by contrast. The brief bliss gave place to wretchedness, and he was soon in despair.

At this hour of need the Lord came to him, and he heard a Voice: "Narada, you will not see Me again in this birth, but in your next you will come to Me. The way to fix your devotion in Me is not by such ascetic practices but by the humble service of the saints; in their company you will draw very near to Me."

Narada arose and followed this Word. The rest of that brief life he spent wandering from place to place singing the Lord's glory and enjoying the sweet company of His lovers. When death met him, he was merged for long ages in the mystical Person of his Lord, and then when creation woke again to a new day the Creator once again brought him forth, along with Marichi and many other Seers.

3. Narada as the Pupil of Others

The wise man learns from many teachers, and Narada himself had many Gurus. In very ancient days we learn that he went to Badarikāshram in the Himalayas to worship the Twin-Avatar of Vishnu, Nara-Nārāyaṇa. He was surprised to find Them at worship, and They told him of the Supreme Self, Paramātma, who is to be adored by *all*, even the Avatars. He went flying to the 'White Island' over the primeval Sea of Milk; there he found 'white men' who all worshipped the One God. He took to the use of a mantra there and after singing a hymn saw Narayana Himself in the universal form, as Sri Krishna later showed Himself to Arjuna (*Gita* 11) and from Him learned His identity with Vishnu, Krishna—the Source,

Maintainer and Goal of all ; to him also He revealed the history of past and future Avataras. And this story of his visit is called the ' Pancharatra ' by some. Another visit he once made to the ashram of Narayana led to his being taught by Sanandan how it is possible that Krishna, who is beyond all qualities, yet has qualities that human minds can conceive.

When Vishnu came to earth in the form of Hamsa the Swan, Narada went to Him for instruction and was by Him initiated into yoga ; in the Chhandogyopanishad we hear how he was progressively taught the nature of the Real Self by Sanatkumāra.

From his own Father Brahma he also learned much of the science of the Self (*ātmā-tattva*) and of the way creation was ; He acknowledged that Vishnu, Narada's own favourite deity, was far superior to Himself. Brahma then related the story of Vishnu's Avataras, and taught the whole of the *Bhagavatam* to him, which he was later to pass on to Vyasa, its great author. At the end of the Dwapara age, when disheartened by the disappearance of Krishna from earth, he went to Brahma, and by Him was given the great sixteen-letter mantra as the best way to cross over the ills of the new (Kali) age. It was to Brahma also he took the other Seers when they asked him about true *sannyāsa*, and received from Him the laws in our *Nāradaṣarivṛājakoṣanishad*.

Once when he saw the miseries of Hell, Narada went to Sankara to get an explanation of that horror ; from Him he learned also to worship Vishnu and so get the *paramasiddhi* which frees from all fear and

danger. Another time when he went to Sankara on the Mandarachal Mountain, he learned of the greatness of many holy places, many mantras, etc., and indeed was taught the whole of the ancient religion once again.

From Vasudeva Himself (Krishna) he learned how to prepare and apply the Vaishnava mark, the *Urdhva-pundra*. Once also he was taught by the same God a severe lesson in humility and had to learn how even the greatest may fall unawares. It happened in this way. The God of Love tempted Narada in vain with his wiles, and Narada rather boasted of this to Sankara, who at once warned him not to speak in that way before Vishnu (Hari). But in his pride of chastity Narada could not control his tongue; he brought out the story before Hari, who at once decided to humiliate that pride. Then Hari created a wonderful palace, with a King Silanidhi and his exquisitely beautiful daughter Vis'vamohani, who was about to be married by her own choice of a spouse (*svayamvara*). Narada saw the girl and fell madly in love with her; he went off and asked Hari for such beauty as would infallibly make her choose him beyond all others. Hari promised to do His best for Narada, and so made him as absolutely hideous as a monkey, while the poor Sage imagined himself endowed with matchless beauty. He went to the *svayamvara*; so did Hari Himself. The girl did not even once look at Narada, and chose Hari as her husband. Narada went off furious and puzzled; when he saw his own reflection in water he was deeply humiliated and enraged at what he thought Hari's treachery to him. He told

the Deity that He in turn would lose a bride some day—and that is how He, as Rama, lost Sita in the forest. Learning how the whole court was but a play of Hari and had no existence outside Him, Narada came to his senses and begged Him to cancel his foolish angry words; but Hari would not do that, and only told Narada to find consolation in the repeating of Sankara's Names.

4. Narada as the Teacher of Others

Vyasa had written the Vedas, the Sutras, the Puranas, and yet felt a certain lack, a certain dissatisfaction with his work, as though it were defective in some way. He sat in despondency on the banks of the River Saraswati, and there Narada, the Divine Seer, visited him. Hearing his complaint, Narada said it was because Vyasa had so far written only of *karma* (sacrifice and activity) and *jnāna* (knowledge and wisdom), and had not yet sung of the glorious plays and of the love of God and devotion to Him, which alone can give true happiness. He then bade Vyasa write the *Bhagavatam* to be the crown of all the Scriptures; and for his own happiness to sing incessantly the Name and glories of the Lord as he himself was ever doing. He then related his earlier lives and explained how the Lord was always in front of his eyes as a Friend and Companion, while his vina was always in tune with the primeval *Om*, the mystic word of the Universe. On his advice Vyasa related the story of the *Bhagavatam* to Suka, and he to Parikshit, and so it came into its present form from the first

narration by Brahma to Narada. While the recital was going forward Narada himself visited the death-devoted King Parikshit, personally to see that the *Bhagavatam* was being recited to him.

When the little boy Dhruva went off in dudgeon to the forest to do *tapas* against his father's partiality, Narada went there and advised him to give up this hard effort in which even strong men could not succeed, and so he strengthened the child's determination. He then gave him the great mantra "*Om namo Vāsudevāya*", and sent him off to repeat that at Madhuban, near Brindavan on the River Yamuna. Then Narada went off to reassure the sorrowing father of the boy that Dhruva was safe and would bring great glory to the royal house. Long afterwards Narada sang three verses in Dhruva's honour to the descendants of King Prithu, another Avatara of Vishnu.

When King Chitraketu was inconsolable at the loss of his long-desired only son, Narada went there with Rishi Angiras; they made the dead boy sit up and explain to his astonished father that the relationship was essentially false, merely the 'accident' of one out of many lives. This convinced Chitraketu, who worshipped both Rishis as his Gurus. Narada gave him a hymn to Vishnu which he should meditate upon; by use of this, Chitraketu saw the Deity Sesha and gained Liberation. To exhaust the effect of his rudeness once to Sankara, the former King was sent to earth as the great demon Vritra, who was with great difficulty killed by

Indra and even in death was a firm devotee of the Lord.

Once Narada met the 10,000 sons of Daksha, whom their father had sent to do *tapas* and produce children ; Narada sent them off as *sannyasis* to acquire divine wisdom instead, and he did the same with a second batch of 1000 sons. Then he went straight to the outraged father, and calmly received his furious curses. On this, or another, occasion Daksha condemned him to perpetual restless wandering on earth with his vina always in hand, which was no sorrow to Narada !

With Parvata Rishi he was once the guest of King Sringaya ; both fell in love with the King's beautiful daughter, but as Narada asked her first she rather naturally accepted him. In his jealous rage Parvata swore that Narada should no longer be able to enter Heaven freely, but he replied that Parvata himself would never be able to go save in his company. Later some brigands murdered this King's son because gold continually came from his body, and they cut him up to get at the supply. Narada restored the boy to life, at the same time pointing out the folly of the father's avarice in desiring such a dangerous gift for his son.

Another time, Narada went to King Prithu's great sacrifice, and there pointed out the great folly of sacrifices, warning those who take pride in such displays that the slain beasts await them after death to punish them for their cruelty ; he then told a long story of a hunter king and what happened to him when he

died. He taught the greatness of vows to King Prithu.

It was the arrogance of wealth he punished in Nalākūbara and Manigriva, sons of Kuvera, God of Wealth, when he found them bathing naked with women one day in a river and turned them into trees ; thus they should remain until the Baby Krishna should liberate them by the dragging of the mortar. As trees they learned to be humble and of service to all.

It was Narada who taught the great demon Vrika to worship Siva ; this Deity then gave the demon the boon that he should destroy anyone by putting his palm on the head. This caused great trouble among the gods, until Vishnu freed them by cunningly leading Vrika to put his palm on his own head.

In a cave on the Gandhamadana Mountain Narada taught Priyavrata, son of Manu, the divine wisdom. Manu himself came there with Brahma, eager to lead the boy back home to rule mankind, and on Brahma's advice Priyavrata agreed to put to such a use that divine wisdom which Narada had given him.

Indra in the war of Heaven against Hiranyakasipu, the great demon king, captured the demon's wife and was dragging her off to Heaven as a prisoner. Narada rescued her and courteously put her up in his Ashram ; there he gave her daily instruction in spiritual truths, and though we learn she took very little of this to herself, her unborn son Prahlada listened with whole heart and mind, and thus even before his birth became a firm devotee of God.

Sar Narada as the Friend of Rama

Narada plays quite a prominent part in the great *Rāmāyana*. We have already seen how his angry words to Hari led to the loss of Sita, which is the great theme of the Epic. Now during the Tretayuga (second age), just before the *swyamvara* of Sita, Narada went to Janaka's capital and there met the young princess on the road. He blessed her and promised that she would see her future lord, who was eternally her Lord, in the garden ; there she saw Rama, and she at once loved him, and was delighted when the choice could fall on him in public.

After his great victory over Rāvana, who had stolen Sita away, Narada followed Vasishtha to the court to greet Rama at his coronation. Later on it was he who gave the summary of the whole story to Valmiki to tell him of one who was blessed with all the virtues like the Gods. When a certain Brahman boy died at the untimely age of 14, the father came and complained to Rama that some injustice prevailed in his kingdom. Narada explained that the tragedy was due to the sin of a Sudra doing *tapas*, and Rama went at once, found and killed the presumptuous ascetic—thus upholding the Law, even though his act seems repulsive to our ideas today. When Sita herself was arraigned in public before Rama for having lived in the custody of another, her demon captor Ravana, Narada was present there along with other Seers and approved of the drastic step Sita took to prove her chastity.

Long before these events, when Ravana was still threatening the Gods in high Heaven and extending his

power far and wide, once he mocked at Narada for always wandering about and singing like a beggar. Narada watched the demon harrying the Underworld, and waited his time. One day he was seated with Rishi Agastya on the top of Mount Meru; his companion told him how he had met Ravana and told him of the White Island as a place worth harrying instead. Ravana went there, taking Narada as a guide; but Narada slipped off and went ahead, so when Ravana arrived he was able to watch the maidens there making fun of the demon, contemptuously throwing him up in the air and bullying him beyond endurance. Narada, we are told, used to enjoy watching such incidents and to take pleasure in strife (*Mahabharata* 9 : 54).

6. Narada as a Friend of Krishna and the Pandavas

The *Kṛṣṇopaniṣad* (24) tells us that when the Supreme Lord came down to earth to remove its burden of demon rulers many of the greatest souls in His Heaven came with Him to share the glory of His work, and that Narada (at least in part) became incarnate as Sudāma, one of Krishna's boy playmates. But in addition to this incarnate form of him, Narada played an important role in the great story through his own proper divine form as the eternal Singer, urging on the powers of evil to their destruction and encouraging the powers of good in their hours of trial.

Thus when the demon king Kamsa fancied he had destroyed Krishna as a tiny Infant, Narada disillusioned him, telling him that not only the Lord Himself but

many of the Gods were incarnated among the Vrishni family to destroy demons like himself. After His playful humiliation of Indra, Narada was among the celestial beings who went to greet Sri Krishna, and when He slew the demon Aristhāsura he went to report to Kamsa that the doomed eighth Child of Devaki was there in Brindavan and it was He who was slaying the demon messengers one by one. But when Kamsa, in his rage at the broken word of Devaki and her husband Vasudeva, was about to slay them both, Narada stopped the wicked act, and His parents were kept safe in prison till Krishna came to free them. When He had slain the demon Kesi (whence His Name of Kes'ava), Narada hastened again to meet the Divine Child and to foretell even greater deeds than He would do on earth.

Narada was active also in helping Krishna's cousins, the Pāṇḍavas wrongfully driven from their kingdom by the Kuru brothers. When all five had married one wife, Draupadi, it was he who taught them how to live with her without jealousy or quarrelling. When Maya's spirits built a palace for the five Pandavas, he admired it heartily, and yet in later years told Yudhisthira that the glories of his court, wherein he took such pride, were nothing at all compared to the splendours of the inner worlds. It was Narada again who advised the Pandavas to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, and they sent him to consult Krishna if it were advisable and to invite Him for it if He were in favour.

Meanwhile he reported to Mayavati the story of how Krishna's son, Pradyumna, had been swallowed by a

fish, and repeated the tale to Krishna Himself on meeting Him after the boy returned to Dwarka.

Krishna was in favour of the great sacrifice, and Narada then advised them to honour Him as the most distinguished Guest among all the Kings to be invited there. This led to Sisupāla becoming furiously jealous of Him, and so He was stirred to slay that unrighteous body and set the wicked King free.

When he went once to Dwarka to see Krishna he was amazed to find in each of the 16000 palaces a separate Krishna busily occupied with the duties and pleasures of that palace, enjoying its luxuries, labouring in the family, delighting its mistress with His sweet company—and so he realised the full Divinity manifested in that gracious Form which everywhere rose to receive him with the utmost reverence and courtesy.

When in their avarice and lust for power the Kuru brothers, led by the wicked Duryodhana, publicly insulted Draupadi and reduced the Pandavas to homeless wanderers, Narada foretold their total ruin within thirteen years. Perhaps it was then he made his great tour of India's holy places, including Naimisha, where Saunaka and other Seers consulted him about the rules of *sannyasa* and he led them for instruction to Brahma. For when he next went to visit the Pandavas in the forest he was full of the greatness of these holy sites and persuaded them to utilise their forced time in the forest in making such a pilgrimage themselves. Noting a certain rashness in Bhima and Arjuna, he suspected that they might use their divinely given weapons without

essential need, so he pointed out that such a careless use of them would set the three worlds ablaze. He rightly feared the danger, and it was only just in time he was able to come with Vyasa to save the universe from the terrible fire a reckless use of these ghastly weapons was precipitating.

When the exile of the Pandavas was at last at an end, Narada was present at the great Council of three thousand Kings before war broke out with the Kauravas, and there he encouraged the righteous cause by telling several stories of the inevitable humbling of the proud and unjust. After the dreadful slaughter of the war, Yudhisthira was overwhelmed with remorse and felt he had committed great sins for the sake of an earthly kingdom; he wanted to go to the forest as a penance, but Narada was able to persuade him—as earlier Krishna had persuaded Arjuna—that for a warrior a righteous war is no sin but the highest duty, and that his duty as a king was to rule his subjects justly and not evade his responsibility by selfish retreats into spiritual asceticism. When the old king Dhritarāshtra was in exile in the forest, Narada visited him there to console him with the promise of a high place in Heaven, and when the blind old King died, he went to tell the news to the Pandavas that they might do him rightful honour.

Later on, he showed Yudhisthira how Duryodhana, cleansed of his sins by a brave death on the battlefield, had attained to Heaven, and when Yudhisthira, rather humanly, was indignant at this favour to the unrighteous

enemy of their family he pacified the King by pointing out that in the other world such personal animosities die away, and that he should not hold malice against the dead.

Once he visited Krishna again in Dwarka, in order to meet there the other members of His family, Vasudeva, Devaki and the rest ; and in Radha he perceived by his spiritual vision the eternal Goddess Lakshmi Herself. With Krishna and with several other Seers he went to Mithila to meet Śrītadeva and the King of that city, both of whom were devotees of the Lord. Then for some time he made his home in Dwaraka itself ; when Vasudeva visited him there once he told him the story of Nimi's sacrifice.

On another occasion he explained to Yudhisthira how even enemies of the Lord can reach Him through that very hatred which keeps their minds always fixed on Him ; to illustrate this he told the long stories of the two celestial doorkeepers who fell from grace, and through lives as demon kings until slain by the Lord as Varāha, Rāma and Krishna won back their place in His high Heaven. Thus it was he who narrated the story of Hiranyakaśipu and of the child devotee Prahlada, with whom he had been closely connected in those remote days. In the seventh book of the *Bhagavatam* he also gives King Yudhisthira a fine summary of the whole of the eternal (*sanātana*) Religion, sketching the laws of various castes and stages in life.

He was with the Seers Kānva and Viśvāmitra one day when the frivolous young princes of Krishna's family,

the Yādavas, came to mock them. They had dressed up Krishna's young son Sāmba as a girl, and they asked them if she would give birth to a boy or a girl. The Seers foretold that the boy would give birth next day to an iron bar which would cause the destruction of the whole Yadava clan, and so indeed it turned out; in a drunken brawl all the Yadavas killed each other, Balarama (Krishna's great brother) went into the sea, and Krishna sat in the forest waiting for His destined death through the careless arrow of a hunter.

In distress at the departure of the visible Form of the Lord from earth which ushered in the dark Kali age, Narada went once more to all the holy places of India: on the way he met a woman named Devotion in great distress at the growing infidelity of men, and was able to comfort her by the *sādhana* of Bhakti praised by Sanaka and other Seers.

7. A Few Other Incidents

Among countless other incidents of Narada's unending life which we have neither space nor time to narrate here, I may just mention a few of some interest. Narada was the author of three hymns in our present *R̥g-Veda*, two in honour of Soma and one to Indra. When at the beginning of all things earthly the gods and demons strove for mastery, it was Narada who reported the death of Jambā to his kindred and so heightened the tempo of the war. It was he again who sent Hiranyāksha on the road to doom by telling him where Varāha was to be found; it was he who induced the Gods to compete

with Nala for the hand of his beloved Damayanti, for the *Mahābhārata* tells us (9 : 54) that he is always fond of strife. In Indra's court he so praised Purūrava that Urvasi fell in love with the hero thus described, and thereby precipitated his destiny. He warned Savitri that her beloved Satyavān would die within the year if she married him, and so increased the heroine's love and unselfishness that she faced this sorrow and overcame it by winning back her husband even from the very hands of Death himself. At the churning of the primal Ocean of Milk by gods and demons, when the former were able to destroy the latter and were willing to do so at once, it was Narada who held their hand, for without preserving the balance between Good and Evil there could be no continuing world and the Play of God would come to a sudden end. It was he also who advised the true and just King Haris'chandra to ask Varuna for a son, whose birth led him and his wife to so much sorrow testing his goodness to the utmost. Last of all, when Jara (Old Age) drew near to him and asked him to be her Spouse, he refused and got her to marry the King of Yavanas instead. This because Old Age and Decrepitude can never approach or overcome the spirit of eternal Youth devoted to the Lord of all.

What more can we say ? The greatness of Narada is sung by the Lord Himself in the very highest terms when, in the *Gīta* (10 : 26), He declared Narada the greatest of all the Divine Seers, not hesitating to call him the same as Himself in the words, "Among the Divine Seers (I am) Narada" (*devarṣiṇām ca Nāradaḥ*). Nor

dare we think of him as a mythical figure of the remote or fancied past ; like his Lord with whom he is thus declared to be *one*, Narada is here and now, everywhere, accessible to those who seek him as a Guru, ready even now as of yore to sing to them too the glories of the Universal Lord, ready to inspire their tongues and pens with the same divine message which sang itself through his lips and the thrilling wires of his vina long ago.¹

6. Some Main Doctrines of Vaishnavism

The reader will at once agree that to attempt a complete survey of a profound and extensive philosophy within the brief space we can allot to it in such a volume as this, were to attempt the impossible. We cannot do more than just outline its compass, to provide the student with a bare skeleton, from which he will be able to gather its general trends rather than its dogmas in detail, and from which he will be able to derive hints which may make his further study more fruitful and interesting.

(a) GOD

1. **God in Himself:** Vaishnavism, like every other true Religion, is essentially monotheistic. It teaches

¹ This brief sketch of some of the incidents in the timeless life of the great Sage and Devotee is based upon what we learn of him from the *Bhāgavata*, *Vishnu*, *Padma* and *Narasimha Purānas*, the two great Epics, the *Rāmācharitamānasa* of Tulasidas, and several other lesser works. It makes no pretence at being complete even from references in these works. I also acknowledge a certain debt to the excellent little booklet by Jean Herbert, "*Devarshī Nārada*" (Madras, 1950).

One God, nay, as Radhakrishnan warns us, we dare not even say *One* lest that imply a possible Two, so we prefer to say 'Non-dual' (*advaita*) to guard the conception from any possible pluralist heresy. The existence of this Unique God cannot be proved by argument, though the intelligent student will be forced to postulate Him as a First Cause required for all complete philosophy; but it can be proved by experience, and the field of Religion is to make such experience possible. It is also clearly taught by Revelation (*sruti*) which exists to point man to his sole real Good, his final End and Fulfilment.

God, though *One*, is in a sense also Twofold; He is both Transcendent, supreme above creation, and Immanent therein. His Transcendence can be known only through the intimacy of true devotion—to all else it is invisible, inconceivable, unmanifest; His Immanence can be perceived in the blissful state of ecstasy (*samādhi*) attainable also through deep meditation which merges into trance. This immediate, direct, experience of Him is then possible, but it must be checked and controlled by Revelation if it is not to fly off into wild speculation and dream.

He is Immanent in all His creatures, in all that exists, and yet, as Rūmi says (*Shams Tabriz*, Ode 19): "Thy light is at once joined to all things and apart from all." He is infinite, so He cannot be limited to any form He may assume in this created universe: "Out of one fragment of Myself I created all this, and I remain," He says Himself in the sublime *Gita*. So His *real* Being is beyond our comprehension; Radhakrishnan

quotes (p. 22) a striking sentence from St. John of Damascus: "It is impossible to say what He is in Himself, and it is more exact to speak of Him by excluding everything. Indeed He is nothing of that which is." Thus the *sruti* reverently veils the mystery in the words "*Neti neti*" (not thus, not thus); for us the Infinite can be expressed only by the negative.

So we say He is Infinite, Ineffable, Invisible, Impersonal, Immortal, Formless, Immovable, Changeless, and so on. He is all these, and more—and yet, just because He is infinite He cannot be limited to these but embraces likewise their opposites—He is supremely Personal, Visible, and with a Form of wondrous beauty. He has Form, the vast Form of His universe, the subtle Form He assumes for the delight of those who love Him; He is *in* everything created, even more than the poet is in his poem, the sculptor in the statue he has carved from the living stone; and yet He is beyond all things, which owe their existence to His generous love. He is not remote, unmoved by happenings in His universe; He dwells at its very heart, the intimate self of each living being—and all is alive—as its cause and maintaining power. He Himself says (*Mahābhārata* 13 : 341 : 41): "Being like the sun, I cover the whole world with rays, and I am also the sustainer of all beings; and hence I am called Vāsudeva." But let us not err towards pantheism, which as Sanyal rightly says is only a form of atheism; "the Absolute is not God and the finite beings, but is God in the finite beings as their sustaining ground," and again:

“Brahman (God) is in the world but (is) not the world.” (Srinivasachari, pp. 41, 115).

He is the only absolute Reality; all else is real only because of Him as its sustaining ground. He is the Creator, the Preserver, the Absorber of all this universe, and as the Father of each being within it He “sows the seed of the self into the womb of matter and makes it into His own image. . . . Every *Jiva* (soul)¹ is, as it were, the son of God, and is the heir to immortal life and joy” (*op. cit.*, p. 189). God is Father, but He is also King, Omnipotent. The reign of Law found everywhere in His universe is itself the expression of God’s Will, so it does not bind Him—it is His will. “The Lord rules by law, and Sri . . . the very heart of the divine nature . . . rules by love, and the love of law and the law of love . . . are vitally intertwined in the divine nature. (In) this interdependence lie the stability of the moral order and the guarantee of universal salvation” (*op. cit.* p. 106). It is He who working through the law gives the fruits of pain and pleasure as the inevitable results of acts contrary to or in obedience to the law. He rules by the Law, but He is ruled by Love, which is His own very nature.

Love craves to be known. So God reveals Himself to His creation. The manifestation of Himself in the Four Divine Forms is implied by the very essential nature of Love which is His own.

¹ In certain places in passages quoted from various works by authorities I have taken the liberty of inserting an explanatory word here and there in brackets, to assist those who may not be familiar with the common Sanskrit terms.

2. **The Absolute:** Among His infinite qualities, if they may be so called, three are first outstanding. He is *Advaya*, unequalled, the self-existent Fount and Source of all, with endless subtle senses, and a 'body' of pure blissful being. He is also *Jnāna*, the '*Cid-ekarūpam*', pure and self-luminous Consciousness, expressing itself most easily where there is most of bliss. Lastly He is the *Tattva*, the most essential Thing which draws the mind of all, unending and unbounded bliss. These are otherwise viewed as *Sandhini*, *Samvit* and *Hlādini*, the eternal Trinity of *Ṣaṭ-cid-ānanda*; all three of which are twofold in that they may be Potential or unmanifest, and Kinetic or manifest.

God acts in three modes. He is *Parabrahman*, the ultimate Reality, and as Lord of all is *Bhagavān*, the 'Blessed One', with threefold powers; the *Svarūp* (own Form) or *Parāśakti* (sublime Power); the *Taṭasthā* (the indifferent) or *Jīvasakti* (soul-Power); and the *Bahiranga* (external) or *Māyāsakti* (power of creation, which is illusory). These are compared to the sun in itself, to its rays falling upon earth, and to their reflection in water; the universe is in fact a reflection, an image, of God. But God Himself is above, untouched by earth's clouds, dwelling ever in His own transcendent Abode. Yet at the same time as *Brahman*, the 'latent state' of *Bhagavān*, He can be reached by the higher stages of meditation, and as *Paramātman* He reveals Himself through the universe wherein He is all-pervading. The Real can be found only through the real that is in us; we cannot, as Sanyal well says, find the sun

by lamps at night, but only by following up the rays coming from itself. So we can come to God only through the soul and not through the illusory world-objects that surround and distract our gaze.

3. **The Divine Gunas**: God is qualityless (*nirguṇa*) only in so far as He is not bound by or limited in the three qualities of Matter (*tamas, rajās, sattva*). He has six main gunas which describe for us His Divinity. These are: 1. *Jñāna*, omniscience, His consciousness being at every point of the universe, and beyond; 2. *Aisvarya*, independence of will and action, having all in His absolute control; 3. *Sakti*, omnipotence, the power of infinite creation; 4. *Bala*, Indefatigability, having all things within Himself; 5. *Vīrya*, Changelessness, though He is the basis of an ever-changing, evolving universe; and 6. *Tejas*, Splendour and Self-sufficiency; He is above all and has no lack of anything. His minor Divine Gunas are often listed as six also: *Kṣama*, all-forgiveness; *Kṛpā*, grace; *Vātsalya*, paternal feeling; *Sīla*, goodness; *Arjava*, sincerity; and *Sauhārdam*, kindness.

We may view Him also in six other ways: He is *Satyam*, the 'absolute unconditioned Reality', Truth in its highest perfection; He is *Jñānam*, the infinite self-luminous wisdom; He is *Anantam*, the simple experience of cosmic consciousness; He is *Amalam*, infinite Purity and Holiness; He is *Sundaram* perfection of all Beauty; and He is *Ānandamaya*, the essence of joy.

The eight 'Powers' of the Godhead are listed thus: *Kīrti*, glory; *Srī*, splendour; *Vijaya*, victory; *Sraddhā*,

faith ; *Smṛti*, infinite unfailing memory ; *Medhā*, intelligence ; *Dhṛti*, Firmness : and *Kṣamā*, forgiveness—justice and mercy.

4. The **Vyūhas** : Being infinite good, the very essence of Love, it is impossible for God to withhold Himself, and it is His very nature to give Himself out to 'others'. Thus come creation, evolution, sanctification and deification. He pours out His whole Being that it may form itself into infinite numbers of beings like Himself, divine, eternal. This He does by means of four separate Manifestations—Vyūha, Avatār, Arca and Antaryāmin. We shall deal with these in turn.

The *Vyūhas* are the Four Infinite Manifestations of God adored by the gods and by liberated souls. Through these He produces the evolving universe and soul of man, and gradually leads them towards perfection. Their work is mainly in two great fields, Creative and Moral, and each Vyūha manifests by uniting two of the six great Divine Gunas of God : Jnāna, Bala, Aiśvarya, Vīrya, Śakti and Tejas.

Samkarshana manifests from the union of Jnana and Bala, and corresponds in the individual or microcosm to the personal soul (*Jivātma*). His *creative* function is the production of an embryonic 'chaotic mass without internal distinctions', a sort of formless nebular 'star dust', which holds the universe in a latent germ-state. Thus Samkarshana is often called Baladeva, the world-support ; He is believed to have manifested on earth in Balarama, the brother of Sri Krishna and incarnation of Sesha, the myriad-headed. His *moral* work is

the production of the eternal Veda, the Scriptures which try to unfold descriptions of the Infinite and to guide man towards Him; He gives the universe, then, the theory of Monotheism, true Religion. He expresses His Divinity through six 'Sub-Vyuhas': Govinda, Vishnu, Madhusudana, Samkarshana II, Adhokshaja and Upendra.

Pradyumna manifests from the union of Ais'varya and Virya, and corresponds in the individual or microcosm to the mind (*manasa*). His *creative* role is the evolving of the Duality Purusha-Prakriti (Spirit-Matter); thus He forms the vast Group-Soul and Primordial Matter, together with Subtle Time (*akhaṇḍa-kāla*), the "cause of all changes, eternal, universal and unconditioned", as Bhāshachārya says (p. 26), evidently the same as is eloquently described in S. E. White's "The Unobstructed Universe". From Him derives, then, the Bhoktṛ-Kūṭastha, a sort of H. C. F. of souls, and the Māyā-sakti, through which this universe evolves. His *moral* function is the translation of true Religion into practice and so the evolution of rites and prayers. His 'Sub-Vyuhas' are also six: Trivikrama, Vāmana, Sridhara, Pradyumna II, Narasimha, and Hari.

Aniruddha manifests from the union and interplay of Sakti and Tejas, and He corresponds in the individual to selfhood (*ahamkāra*). His *creative* work is the evolving of manifest Matter (*avyakta*), of Gross Time (*khaṇḍa-kāla*) which can be measured by the rotation of planets, etc., and of the mixed creation of Souls: *Nityas*, *Muktas* and *Baddhas*. His *moral*

function is the unveiling of the Path to Perfection and so the leading of souls to Liberation. It is He who gives the fruit of all actions, both good and ill. His 'Sub-Vyuhās' are the following: Hrīshīkeśa, Padmānābha, Dāmōdara, Aniruddha II, Achyuta and Krishna.

Vāsudeva is the manifesting of all the Six Divine Gunas and reveals Himself in the one perfect and total Form of Sri Krishna in Brindavan. His Source is God in the 'Supreme Form' (*Para*); His six 'Sub-Vyuhās' are Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Vāsudeva II, Puruṣhottama and Janārdana. We sum up this chapter by speaking of Him again, as the Infinite Krishna.

- 5. **The Avatars:** Literally 'descents', the Avatars are, as Radhakrishnan says, not so much God restricted into man as man uplifted to union with God. Yet they are in very truth 'descents' of the Infinite into our universe of limitation, God taking birth or appearing in visible form for us in an hour of crisis to help us towards Him. But the 'body' in which He thus appears is not composed of the same gross elements as ours; He becomes visible in His real 'spiritual body' through an exercise of His own power. His body is not physical but, as the Docetics used to say of Christ's, a sort of apparition, a 'play'-form.¹ The Avatars vary in their degree of manifestation, some revealing far more of God than others, hiding one facet or another according to the needs of time and place. Their numbers vary in different

¹ *na deho janma eva ca . . .
na cāsya karma vā loke sada sanmisra yoniṣu
kriḍārthaḥ so'api sādḥūnām paritrāṇāya kalpate.*

(Bh. 10 : 46 : 38-39)

lists, and we are sometimes told that they are numberless. Perhaps the best list is the 39 of the *Ahīrbudhnyā-samhitā*, derived from the 'older' *Sāttvata-samhitā*, while the *Bhagavatam* lists the 25 '*Lilāvātāras*', marked here with an asterisk. No significance seems to attach to the order; it is not chronological in any Western sense of that word.

1. *Padmanābha*, the lotus-navel whence came the Creator ;
2. *Dhruva*, the little boy of five who attained to God ;
3. **Ananta* or *S'essa*, manifest in Balarāma ;
4. *Sāktyātman*, Vishnu Iccharūpadhara ;
5. *Madhusūdhana*, slayer of the demon Madhu ;
6. *Vidyūdhideva*, the four-faced Brahma ;
7. **Kapila*, the great Sage ;
8. *Visvarūpa* as manifested to Arjuna in Gita 11 ;
9. **Vihangama*, or Hamsa, the 'Swan' or perfect Sage ;
10. **Krodātman* or *Yajnā*, the form appearing in the great Sacrifice ;
11. *Baḍabavaktra* or *Aurva* ;
12. *Dharma*, 13. *Vagṛiswara*, Hayagriva or Hayasirsha, the 'horse-headed' ;
14. *Ekārnavasāyin*, seated on the 'one sea' or 'wave' ;
15. **Kāmatheswara* or *Kūrma*, in tortoise form ;
16. **Varāha*, the 'boar' who rescued earth from the underworld ;
17. **Narasimha*, the 'man-lion' who saved Prahlāda from the demon Hiranyakas'ipu ;
18. **Piyūshakaraṇa*, or Mohani, the beauty who saved the elixir of immortality from the demons and restored it to the gods ;
19. *Srīpati*, the Spouse of Lakshmi ;
20. **Kāntātman* or *Dhanvantari*, a form of Kāma or Pradyumna, who rose from the churned sea of milk and gave sciences to the world ;
21. *Rāhujit*, who saves the sun from eclipse ;
- 22.

Kālanemighna, the slayer of the demon Kālanemi ; 23. *Pārijātahara*, who took the Kalpa-tree from Indra's paradise and gave it to Krishna's wife ; 24. *Lokanātha*, the Manu, or ruler of men ; 25. * *Sāntātman* or Nārada taught by Sanatkumāra, known here as 'the peaceful soul' ; 26. * *Dattātreyā*, the great Sage of Western India ; 27. *Nyagrodhasāyin*, Vishnu sitting on a banyan leaf through *pralaya* ; 28. * *Ekāsriṇatanu* or Matsya, in the form of a great Fish, who saved the Manu from the floods of *pralaya*. 29. * *Vāmanadeha*, in a dwarf body, who came to the Emperor Bali ; 30. *Trivikrama*, the Form which in 'three steps' took possession of the universe from Bali and of himself also ; 31-32. * *Nara* and *Nārāyaṇa*, the twin ascetic sages of the Himālaya who instructed Narada ; 33. * *Hari*, perhaps the same as *Chatuhsana* of Sanyal, the *Chaturbhujā* (four-armed) Form which appeared to many devotees ; 34. * *Krishna*, the all-attracting Loveliness of Brindavan, the mighty Hero of Mathura, the great King of Dwarka ; 35. * *Parasurāma*, the terrible Brahman who slew the Kshatriyas again and again till the earth was freed from their violence ; 36. * *Rāma Dhanvidhara*, or Raghunātha, the great Hero of the Ramayana ; 37. * *Vedavid* or Vyāsa, author of so many scriptures ; 38. * *Kalkin*, the future Avatara who on a white horse slays the wicked and brings in the golden era again : and 39. *Pātālāsayana*.

Over and above this list we have *Prishnigarbha*, 'born from the earth', *Rishabha*, the great forest saint and ascetic, King *Prithu*, who 'milked the

earth', and the *Buddha*, who ended animal sacrifices among the upper castes; the Samhitās also tell us of a crooked Mango-tree in the Daṇḍaka Forest which was really an Avatara of the Lord. The so-called *Gunā-vataras* are Brahma the Creator, Siva the Destroyer and Vishnu the Maintainer; the so-called *Purush-āvatāras* are Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha; and the list of *Manvantārāvatāras* runs: Yajna, Vibhu, Satyashena, Habi, Vaikuntha, Ajita, Vāmana, Sarvabhauma, Rishabha, Viśwakshena, Dharmasetu, Sudama, Yogeśwara and Vrihadbhanu.

The *Viśvakṣena-samhitā* (says Dr. Schrader, p. 47) declares Avataras of two types: Primary, to be worshipped for Liberation; and Secondary, to be worshipped for worldly ends. The former are said to be "like a flame springing from a flame, that is to say Vishnu Himself with a transcendent (*aprākṛta*) body, while a Secondary Avatar is a soul in bondage with a natural body which, however, is possessed (*āviṣṭa*) or pervaded, for some particular mission or function, by the power (*śakti*) of Vishnu". Dr. Besant, in her interesting booklet "Avatars", points out this difference clearly.

As Srinivasachari says, the Avatara "satisfies the mystic yearning of the jñāni who hungers for God and pines for the soul-sight of His enchanting beauty. The Ravisher of souls is also a self-suffering God who cannot bear separation from His 'other', and His captivating beauty is even physically enjoyable . . . in the bliss of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*". The Western mystics too have much to say of this *physical* enjoyment of God.

6. **The Archa.** The work of Vyuhās goes on behind the veil of things and can be seen only by dark faith; the work of Avatars is rarely seen on the stage of earth; and yet God wills to be seen and known by men. Therefore in His infinite kindness He deigns to assume a lowly form for his delight, that through this form man may be drawn to Him. He descends and takes up His abode in divine images made, carved and painted by man himself. Srinivasachari tells us that "the Lord may, when He pleases, assume a bodily shape formed of *māyā* in order to gratify thereby His devout worshippers. The contemplation of God in the form of the sacred *sāligram* is not therefore contrary to reason". For in very truth indeed God "is the image and not in the image", which is indeed "a miracle of mercy" from His hands (*op. cit.* pp. 161-2). In this Archa-form, God invisibly dwells in a consecrated and regularly worshipped image, and from time to time may make His presence there known and seen by His devotees.

There is a certain parallel in this doctrine to the Catholic dogma of Transubstantiation, whereby the Lord Himself in very true physical form is there behind, within, the particles of consecrated Bread and Wine. To adore the Sacred Species, the 'Image', is not idolatry as the unthinking assume; it is to adore the Lord Himself in real presence there. In the consecrated Image *is* the Lord; it is no longer merely stone or metal, for within each atom of the physical substance is His very Body, to be seen only through the eyes of love and faith.

The *Padma Tantra* (3 : 26 : 2-7), quoted by A. Govindaswāmin, says : " Though Hari is the soul of all existing things. He condescends to dwell in symbols by the power of mantras and the power of the invoker. Creatures entreat the Lord in *this* form for their desires. Hence this Installation is full of meaning. So does Vishnu, the All-Pervader, invisible to worldly men, become visible in the counterpart to the invoker by the strength of the mantra." God is everywhere, that is true ; yet He is *especially* in the Image that is duly consecrated and is used as a channel for the love of man to go to Him. And this Form is, more or less, permanent in the world.

N. Bhāshāchārya (p. 71) gives us four qualifications for the Image to be thus used : (a) *Ruchijanakatva* ; it must arouse in the minds of devotees a spiritual desire to worship Him therein ; (b) *Subhāsryatva* : the very sight of the image must awake a sense of satisfaction in their minds ; (c) *Aseshalokasaraṇyatva* : it must draw all who see it towards devotion and worship ; (d) *Anubhāvyatva* : it must be easy to concentrate the mind upon ; that is, its form should be simple and its appeal direct.

7. **The Antaryamin** : But God's generosity is not satisfied even with these manifold revelations of Himself. To see the Archa-image, man may have to travel many miles, spend many days ; so He gives Himself in a form which is always at hand and can be contacted at every moment in any place. He deigns to dwell within the heart of every soul as an ' indistinct or smokeless flame ', the ' immanent self in all beings '. Here He is the

immanent Inner Ruler, who appears to the self-meditator, not distinct from that self, for "the cosmic Self which thinks in all beings is identical with the inmost self of the *jiva* (human soul), and this truth ensures spiritual intimacy between God and the soul", says Srinivasa-chari (p. 88). And thus the mind-body becomes the living temple of God, while it leaves the finite self, the conscious soul, free to act by its own moral choice between good and evil, subject only to the tendencies arising from previous choices.

The self of each personal soul is to God much as the body is to that soul; it derives its being from Him, exists to satisfy Him, and depends on His grace. God is the Self whose body is the universe and all its constituent souls. Thus "the finite is real because it is rooted in the infinite and pulsates with its life" (*op. cit.* p. 226), and "by knowing Brahman as the *saririn* of all beings, everything is known" (p. 235). This is the essential truth of all knowledge, the last secret Nature has for the enquirer. Yet is it no doctrine of pantheism, for God is not the universe, being in no way limited to its bounds and laws. He is infinitely beyond, above, all that can be seen or known.

8. **Sri Krishna**: The One Reality of which all else is a perverted reflection, the First Person who controls all within Himself while aloof from all, who carries the universe in Himself and is not Himself entangled in it (*Gita* 9 : 6, 10), the Absolute, Supreme God in human form and no mere Avatara, the all-attracting Sat-chid-ananda, full of endless charm in a body composed

of bliss alone, disguised as a cowherd boy and yet able to show Himself as the All (*Viśvarūpa*) to Yaśōdā, His earthly foster-mother, who can be seen as the Truth in real *samādhī*—is Sri Krishna, whose very name derives from the root *kṛṣ* and signifies both 'He who scrapes sin from the devotees' and 'He who attracts all to Him'.

The true Vaishnava attitude to the 'historicity' of that sublime and infinite manifestation of God is given by Sanyal in these words: "Our contention is not that the Pastimes of Sree Krishna are historical events but they are a revelation of the truth in the form of historical events. The Pastimes of Sri Krishna are not, therefore, less true than any historic events whatsoever. They are much more" (*op. cit.* p. 33). "The joyous activities of Braja form the highest platform of the spiritual realisation of the individual soul" (p. 45). To this Mallick adds: "Krishna is eternally manifesting His ecstatic sports in the divine region called Goloka" (p. 120), which is Brindavan, an infinite stage for the Infinite Lord's play, which is interwoven with the physical Brindavan down here, the Ideal world which is truly Real. Never let this transcendent meaning of the Play be forgotten by any reader of this or other books upon Sri Krishna. The *Atharvanopaniṣad* says clearly: "Vishnu is indeed the Supreme God" (*para-brahmaiva Viṣṇu*), and Narayan the Advaitin adds: "Vishnu is Sri Krishna" (*Viṣṇuḥ Sri Kṛṣṇu eva*); the syllogism is completed by the *Gopālatāpinyopaniṣad* with its "Krishna is certainly the Supreme God"

(*Kṛṣṇo vai paramam daivatam*). This is the constant refrain of the *Bhāgavatam* and other authoritative scriptures.

(b) CREATION

1. **Radha-Mahalakshmi** : As heat is to fire, as cold to ice, as sweetness to honey—so are God's qualities to Himself, so is Radha to Krishna. As we cannot separate that heat from fire, for a cold fire would not be fire at all in our sense, so we cannot separate Her from Him, for God without His creative powers, His very nature, would not be God at all. These Two, Radha and Krishna, cannot therefore be thought of as apart from one another even for a moment; They are together always in the One Being Radha-Krishna, as Mallick rightly insists. He quotes the *Vṛhadgautamiya Tantra* : “Radhika, too my dearest devotee, is of the three-fold nature: I am above Prakṛti and so is She, My Potency” (*tritattvarūpiṇī sāpi rādhikā mama vallabhā | prakṛteḥ parā evāham sāpi macchaktirūpiṇī ||*). Radha, or Radhika, is Krishna's Power brought into play so that He may have a partner in His Game, who may supersensuously share His love. Her love is the highest possible, and it is when identified with Her as the Supreme Lover of God that the soul attains perfection.

The *Ahīrbudhnyā Samhitā* (3) tells us that Lakshmi is the Lord's “vibration in the form of the world”, and differs from Him only in so far as existence differs from the Exister. The great “*Sudarsana-wheel*”, which is

as it were God's will embodied in wisdom and resulting in action, says Schrader, is the perpetual support and thread of the universe, upholding millions and millions of 'Cosmic Eggs' like our galactic universe. Acting through the Eternal Word (*śabda*) during periods of creative evolution, it is the Regulator (*pramāṇa*) of forces even in the highest heavens, and is the instrument of God's Will personified as '*Māyā-śakti*'.

2. **Maya, the Creative Power:** The word '*māyā*' is from the root '*mā*', to form; and '*māyā*' is the power enabling the Changeless Eternal God to become a perpetually changing Nature. (cf. *Gīta* 4 : 6 and 18 : 61). It is further the Divine Power (*śakti*) by which the Lord effects changes in the universe through the three Qualities (*guṇas*) (cf. Bhag. 11 : 3 : 16). In relation to Krishna Himself it may be compared with the solar corona seen during eclipse, outside and yet inseparable. At no time is He caught up therein, as Advaitins say; in the *Gīta* He Himself speaks of it as "My *māyā*" (*mama māyā*) to signify His complete control of it.

Maya functions in two 'forms', as both the efficient and the material cause of the universe. As (1) the Efficient Cause (*nimitta*), it comprises (a) *Kāla*, the power of God to disturb equilibrium among the qualities of Nature and so bring about changes; (b) *Karma*, the acts performed by conscious living beings which have their own effects; (c) *Daiva*: the tendency of those acts to bring about further changes in Nature; (d) *Swābhāva*, their impressions left on the acting selves. As (2) the Material Cause (*upādāna*) it comprises (a) *Dravya*, the

subtle state of the five elements (earth, water, air, fire and *akāśa*); (b) *Prāṇa*, the vital principle, or nervous sensitivity; (c) *Ātmā*, the personal ego acted upon by the senses; (d) *Vikāra*, the gross state of the five elements, and the eleven senses (five of cognition, five of conation, and mind); and (e) *Deha*, the conglomerate of these sixteen evolutes.

3. **The Four Planes of Creation:** Creation is not, according to the Vaishnava, a simple manual creation out of nothing of all the species just as we find them now on earth—as pictured by the primitive Hebrews of “*Genesis*”. It proceeded in four stages, on four separate planes, the inhabitants of the lower of which have no direct means of functioning on or perceiving the higher, while those on the higher can, to some extent, contact the lower.

(a) *Pure Creation, the Transcendental Plane:* This is the supernal *Vaikunṭha*, the ‘*parampada*’ of Sri Vishnu, apart from, above, all the Heavens and reached only by breaking through the ‘shell’ of the Cosmic Egg, thus piercing the veil or curtain which God has interposed between the ‘fallen’ soul and Himself. Schrader (on whose clear account of Creations this brief summary is based) tells us (p. 50) that it is “infinite above, limited below”, and that it exists until all the ‘Cosmic Eggs’ disappear, when the ‘curtain’ is rung down on the drama, and the ‘actors’ go home. This is the ‘*Nitya-vibhūti*’; it is composed of pure (*suddha*) transcendental matter made of percipient bliss (*cidānanda*) only, like the body of the Avataras, for the

perfect enjoyment of its blessed inhabitants who find therein all their "wishes materialised".

God Himself is there in His Supreme Form (*Para*) for the infinite satisfaction and delight of His people, adorned with His nine great Symbols: the *Kaustubha*-jewel (*jiva*), the *śrīvatsa*-mark (*prakṛti*), the mace (*mahat*), the conch (*sāttvika ahamkāra*), the bow (*tāmasika ahamkāra*), the sword (*jnāna*), its sheath (*avidyā*), the disc (*manas*), the arrows (the *indriyas* or senses), and the garland of forest flowers (the elements) —in fact, all the 'stage-props' required for the great Play.

There are three great classes of inhabitants in this realm: (i) the *Nityas*, those eternally free from illusion and birth, (ii) the *Sūris* or gods, these two being like Christian Angels, ever-pure co-workers and servants of the Lord, such as Ananta, Garuda, Subhadra, Kumuda and Prachanda; they can like their Lord incarnate at will; and (iii) the *Muktas*, the Blessed Ones who have won their way to salvation along the narrow path from the world to God. They see Him in the form most loved by them and, being intent solely upon His service, have no desire to intervene on earth. They are described as normally bodiless, "intensely radiating spiritual atoms of the size of a mote in a sunbeam, having lost even their subtle bodies", but they are able to assume a body at will when needed for the service of the Lord.

(b) *Non-Pure, Intermediate Creation*: This is the plane of the two great Compound Beings, *Māyā-sakti* and the *Kūṭastha-puruṣa*. The latter is described as

the source and goal of all unliberated souls, a sort of Group-Soul; the *Lakṣmi Tantra* (7 : 1-2) says : " As his parts go forth from him all the eternal souls (*jīva*) and likewise at dissolution (*pralaya*) the work (bound) souls go back to him, the highest soul (*nara*). " Thus each soul brings into his being its own experiences of incarnation and contaminates him with its own defects. This ' Highest Person ' arises from the Vyūha Pradyumna in the form of the Four Caste Manus spoken of in *Gita* 10 : 6. What he is to souls, origin and re-absorber (like the ocean to all waters), so is *Māyā-sakti* to all Matter ; it comes from and returns to her after the play is played. She is also known as Vidya, Mūlaprakṛti and Bhadrakālī, and she manifests on the impulse of the Vyūha Aniruddha these three great forces : (i) *Kāla*, Time, which urges on everything to maturity and ' death ', time subtle and unchanging determining the *tattvas* ; (ii) *Niyati*, Destiny, which subtly regulates the form, work and nature of everything ; and (iii) the *Guna*-body ruled by the triad : *Sattva*, lightness, brightness, pleasure, healthiness ; *Rajas*, motion, passion, pain, restlessness ; and *Tamas*, heaviness, inertia, stupefaction. These three become a uniform mass known as the *Avyakta* (indeterminate, invisible). Through these stages the Manus of humanity descend.

(c) *Lower Primary Plane* : From this *Avyakta* arises the *Mahat* (great being), which is also called Go (cow), Avani (earth), Vadhu (woman), Madhu (honey), Vridhhi (growth), Mati (intellect), Prajnā (wisdom) and Buddhi (intelligence). This too is threefold ; it comprises

Khāṇḍa-Kāla (gross time), *Buddhi* in the sattvic form, and *Prāṇa*, the World-Breath of *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 3 : 7 ; cf. *Lakṣmi Tantra* 16 : 2-4. It is also called the 'reconnection consciousness' or the 'bundle of memories', which is the reincarnating element of the Southern (Hināyāna) Buddhism, the '*pratisandhi skandha*', into which we all return in deep sleep and on the death of the body.

From this *Mahat* arises the *Abhimāna*, or Cosmic Egoism (*Boddhṛ*), in its three forms according to the qualities dominant therein: *Vaikārika* when sattva dominates, *Taijasa* under the sway of rajas, and *Bhūtādi* when tamas rules. It manifests in life in two forms: Egotism (*samrambha*) and Imagination or Will (*sankalpa*); from this arises in its turn the Mind (*manas*); and from the self-sense (*ahamkāra*) derive the five Elements and the ten Senses of Action and Knowledge.

(d) *The Gross Secondary Plane*: The *Pādma Tantra* (1 : 5 : 19-21) says: "The created principles . . . could not create beings without coalescing into a mass. From Mahat down to the gross elements they then became massed together under the influence of the Foremost Person (*Ādipurusa*) Then an Egg was produced from the navel of Padmanābha (a form of Vishnu), who is a portion (*amsa*) of Myself, and thou, O Lotus-born (Creator) becamest the womb of the world. It is thus that at the beginning of creation this whole world came to arise from Prakṛti (Nature)" (*op. cit.* p. 80). The *Viśvakṣena-samhitā* continues the story: "Of such

Eggs there are thousands of thousands, or even myriads of them." Each of these has fourteen spheres (*loka*) surrounded by seven courts or 'veils' (*āvaraṇa*), and all arise like bubbles at the same time; it is clear that we speak here of the 'planes' of the Spiritualists (cf. GH 29 : 3-8). Each of these countless universes is ruled by its own '*Brahma*', a manifestation (*amsa*) of Narayana (God), but all are under the common Law of the One Supreme Lord of all. And this is the 'stage' for God's marvellous Drama!

4. **Pralaya, the Indrawn Breath:** Now we have traced the wave of creation from the beginning; as Bhāshāchārya reminds us, creation is the evolution of pre-existent Matter from the latent subtle state wherein it was before. For never can the non-existent come into existence; all was from the beginning, and all will be eternally. He goes on: "Before evolution set in Nature (*Prakṛti*) was without form and unknowable. It may however be said to have been atomic," that is, potentially there. Thus in a sense the pot is already existing potentially in the clay of which it will later be made, the statue is there in the uncut marble; so was the universe before creation. The *Triṣṭvīṅśatīmahānārāyaṇopaniṣad* tells us that it is the opening and closing of the 'eyes' of Narayana (God) at His own desire, which causes the latent and potential to become patent and kinetic, and then again to return into latency. This return to the subtle and unperceived state is called *Pralaya*; in it only the forms perish, while the real substance remains latent until it is

reawakened at the dawn of the next creation. Stage by stage all the vast universes are reabsorbed in Narayana until "all becomes void" once more (*op. cit.* 4). It is much as the world vanishes when we close our own eyes, so when God withdraws His protective gaze from the world it lapses into latency and ceases to manifest; this is the way to reach Him—to close the eyes of the soul to the worlds of sense and so pierce through the veils of the inner worlds one by one until the Real, the Unmanifest, is attained.

Pralaya is like the intervals in a long drama; it gives a rest to the weary actors and allows the producer to arrange the stage for a new scene. So, in the moral evolution of Man, it is an enforced rest on souls who are plunging deep into ways of sin, Srinivasachāri tells us, so that they may try again in a new creation to play their part more worthily. Both Creation and Withdrawal are the results of God's redeeming love and grace.

5. **The Reality of the Universe:** The word '*māyā*' has been so consistently misunderstood as 'illusion' that under the influence of pseudo-Advaitins an idea has been spread abroad that Hinduism teaches the non-reality of our living experience of the world, the non-existence of all the senses bring before us. That this is not true even in Advaita will be shown in a later Volume of this Series; it is wholly contrary to the philosophy we are now giving our mind to study.

First let us remember that the world and all its phenomena have no existence apart from the Creator; they could not have evolved themselves out of nothing,

nor could the Creator so violate His own laws as to make them out of nothing, as certain ill-informed theologians assert. *Sat*, the Real Being, is pre-existent, and from that all creation was unfolded by a process well described by Srinivasachari as "the self-differentiation of the absolute into the pluralistic universe of *nāma-rūpa*" (name and form) . . . "The world is non-different from Brahman (God) in so far as it is the effect or *upādeya* of Brahman. The essential nature of Brahman is, however, pure and perfect, and is not affected by these changes" (pp. 82-3). Again, "the universe is not Brahman enveloped by *māyā* and *avidyā* (ignorance), but is *Brahmamaya*, or pervaded by Brahman, . . . the real of all reals, the true of the true, or *Vāsudeva*" (p. 46); "the world is *Brahmamaya* and not *bhramamaya* (fanciful) (p. 248).

The world is real because it is rooted in, pervaded by, God, its very Self; it is no dreamlike subjective imagining but an objective order, which is the same to all the innumerable individuals experiencing it. Had it been 'unreal', as the Advaitins often say, like 'the snake imagined in a rope at night', it could produce no effect upon the enlightened, as Mallick points out, yet we find even the greatest jñāni's body suffers from cold, is attacked by cancer, and so on. Even the ancient *Chhāndogyopaniṣad* (6 : 2 : 1) says: "It was real in the beginning" (*sadeva idamagra āsīt*). And as Nature, the world, is the effect of God's action, it cannot be less real in one sense than its Cause: the Truth cannot create a lie. No, this world of ours is no illusion,

though, as Radhakrishnan says, it becomes a "misapprehension when it is not correctly related to God wherein it alone exists". It is "real not by itself but because it is the manifestation of the Absolute Idea", says Mallick (p. 220). We are accustomed to speak of dreams as essentially unreal, yet even the dream world like that experienced after the body's death is, as Srinivasachari says on p. 293 of his excellent work, also created by the Lord and is therefore as real as the objective world revealed to us by the bodily senses.

There is only *one* God, both unmanifest and revealed as *Iṣvara* the Lord; to invent a duality positing a 'free' Brahman and a Brahman 'entangled in *māya*' is to reduce philosophy to chaos. God is eternally free within the infinite bounds of His own nature: He controls and is not 'caught up in' *māya*. "*Māyā* has its meaning only in the *māyin* (user of *māyā*) whose alluring Beauty and *lila* (play) transform the ugly self into the shining forms in *Sri Vaikuntha*," says Srinivasachari (p. 248). Indeed it is this transformation or final liberation of every individual self or soul in the universe which is its very purpose, as we shall see presently.

Some have held that the changing can never be *real*; what is true is for all time and eternity unvarying. In this there is an element of verity and yet it is not wholly true. *Prakṛti*, or Nature, "is eternally real, but its primal unity is in constant change and it never stands still. It is the perpetual that changes," says Srinivasachari again (p. 104). Creation and dissolution perpetually follow one another; these changes, evolutions, are no

contradiction of essential reality ; they are the fleeting nature of Matter itself (which is Spirit gradually manifesting), a process of endless becoming as the result of the interaction of forces and things upon each other—all within the eternal Being of the Lord.

Everything is real, for God is in all things as their inmost Self. If the world had been unreal, then even God Himself who is the Self of the world must also have been unreal and an illusion. Now the unreal can never be *known*, and if God be unreal there is no possibility of knowing Him, or the world, or any other thing. Life would then be a meaningless madness without purpose or aim. But experience shows that God *can* be known, and His universe can be known too ; and this restores sanity to philosophic thought.

God is the eternal Self 'behind', 'within' the universe, using it as His body, just as the human soul uses the body of man. Every particle of Nature, every atom of Matter, contains the Soul as it is the body of that portion (*amsa*) of soul which it contains ; and every separate soul has the Supreme Spirit, God, as its Indweller (*Sariri*) (Bhāshācharya, p. 31). As God can be found in every form of the universe, the devotee may even dare to hold that the whole universe is He, and so indeed it is—in so far as a man may look at his son's body and say, "This is my son." And by an act of will, drawn by the infinite attraction of God's loveliness, man can turn away from the outer forms of that universe revealed to him by his senses and into the 'within' where God, the One Self of all, resides. Thus

he breaks the world of forms, pierces the veil (*āvaraṇa*) wherewith God has hidden Himself to awaken longing for the Unseen in each human soul, he steps behind the curtain on to the eternal Stage where God, the One Director of the Play, produces for the delectation of His children so enchanting a drama of life! And that is 'Liberation', the purpose of all creation; it is to whet our appetites for His love that God in the beginning drew around Himself the veils of *Avyakta*, *Māyā*, *Mūlaprakṛti*, *Mahat* and *Ahamkāra*, just as the children's eagerness for the drama is whetted by the very curtain that hides it from their eyes till the bell is rung. When the 'bell' of the mystic sound rings in the *Anāhata* or heart, that curtain rises and the reality of the drama is revealed. Yet this is not a matter of time, as some will tell us, for the self of Man, like the Eternal Self of which it is an image, contains Past, Present and Future in one unending Now. "Behold now is the day of salvation! This is the accepted time!"

6. **God's Eternal Play:** And why all this inconceivably vast universe, with its unspeakably all-but infinite number of evolving living beings? If we ask ourselves such a question, what answer can we expect? How can an infinitesimal mote of being hope to comprehend the plan and aim of Infinity? Can the butterfly flitting from flower to flower in the sunshine understand the inferential calculus of the mathematician in his study? Can the sparkle of moonlight on the sea comprehend the majesty of the ocean?

God is infinite and perfect—that is sure, or He were not God. So being perfect what more could He have by creating all this? No obvious or easy answer is possible, nor has any final answer been given by any philosophy or religion; each offers what to it has seemed the nearest to the truth which words can compass.

We see the small boy collecting matchbox covers and wonder why. He cannot hope to sell them or enrich himself with them, they have no specific *value* in themselves. We call it his hobby, his play. So too with God, who being already perfect in Himself cannot possibly gain anything from creation; we can only call it His play, His hobby, His divine will, as the *Rādho-paniṣad* says (4 : 3): “The One God is ever devoted to play,” (*eko devo nityalīlānuraakta*: quoted by Radha, krishnan). The real reason of the world is, must ever be, a mystery; we can only say with Mallick: “It is the play of God, though God as the perfect one can have no desire for playing,” or indeed any other desire soever. There is no *need* or ulterior motive in God; nothing could have compelled Him to create save His own perfect Will. We say, then, that the Absolute is Sri Krishna “eternally realising Himself in the midst of ecstatic sports” (Mallick, p. 151).

Before creation He had nothing to play with, so He created and revealed Himself as both *Puruṣa* (Spirit) and *Pradhāna* (Matter), as Krishna and Radha. Then, as the *Ahīrbudhnyā Samhitā* puts it (38): “He began to enjoy Himself with Nature or *Māyā*,” the Radha-Krishna play of love, manifest to us here in our life through

devotion as portrayed by Jayadeva in his "*Gita-Govinda*", but still unmanifest in its true form in the Supreme Goloka, Vaikuṅṭha. And what is the nature of that play? Thākore Haranāth once called it a 'game of hide-and-peek', devised to awaken in each soul love and longing for the One God in whom alone is all its real joy.

And so we come to the second 'aim' in creation. God is the Self of each separate individual soul, and His purpose in the play is to 'Brahmanise' each soul, to make the 'within' as the 'without' (cf. GJ 103 : 2), one perfect Substance of divine clarity and purity. Thus "the inner purpose of cosmic creation is the making of *muktas*", liberated souls able to share the infinite bliss of Vaikuṅṭha with the Lord, the perfecting of the *jīva* (soul) as an *amsā* or part of Brahman", (Srinivasachari, p. 261).

All beauty comes from God's transcendental beauty; the world is indeed "a poem of beauty . . . and the divine Artist pours beauty into Nature with a view to removing the fleshly feeling and other blemishes of the finite self, beautifying it, and playing the game of love with it", as Srinivasachari says (p. 204). He goes on: "Creation is then intuited as the play or sport of the divine Artist, and is regarded as His recreation or *līlā*. *Sṛṣṭi* (creation) is the creative joy of self-expression and self-division, and the evolution of infinite forms of beauty from the infinite Beauty that has formless form." It is His play to enjoy the fun of watching the One become Many, and then to enjoy the bliss when the Many become One again at the close of 'Day'.

1. **The Nature of the Individual:** "The individual self is a portion of the Lord" (cf. *Sutras* II, 3 : 43), "a real, not an imaginary form of the Supreme, a limited manifestation of God," and it expresses one of His infinite creative urges (R. 45). "The *jiva* is not fictitious or formal, but is a real modal expression or feature of reality, and is both finite and infinite" (S. 69). "The finite self is an inseparable attribute of the infinite, . . . but is, at the same time, a separate self persevering in its own being," distinct in a certain sense from God (S. 42). "*Īsvara* (the Lord) and the *jiva* (soul) do not suffer from inner contradiction, but are correlative factors in the totality of being. The infinite evolves into the finite, and remains as itself in spite of its modal manifestations" (S. 69). It is important to remember that though the soul is indeed a 'part', a 'manifestation' of God, it is not God, for He stretches away into infinity beyond anything the soul can reach. To forget this is to plunge into the dark waters of pantheism, which is indeed a mere form of atheism, the blackest ignorance and impiety.

God and the soul are not identical, but they are both different and non-different. They are non-different because the soul has no substance, no being, apart from God ;

¹ As the doctrine of this Section derives almost wholly from certain books by well-known Vaishnava writers, including many direct quotations from them, they are indicated here by the following initials, followed by page numbers in their books as listed in the Appendix: S., Srinivasachari; R., Radhakrishnan, B., Bhashacharya; Sn., Sanyal; M., Mallick.

they are different because the soul is infinitesimal while God is infinite. They share certain attributes in common, for both are eternal, self-shining, etc., while other attributes are different, for God alone is infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent. Their relation has been compared with that of Fire to a single spark in a single flame, or with Water to a single molecule of water in a drop from the ocean. The soul is ruled by the delusive powers of creation, while God is the wielder of those powers and the Inner Ruler in each soul, the Goal of her meditations and her aspirations. Essentially the soul is a 'part' of God, and at the last it may either merge back in Him or elect to remain eternally separate as His devotee to serve Him (cf. *Mundakoṣaṇiṣad* 3 : 1 : 1-2). In spite of all her acts which have tended through sinfulness to separate her from God, the soul has a certain tendency towards God which must ultimately guide her home to Him. For "love for God and a desire to serve Him are functions of the soul" (Sn. 95).

As the soul is distinct from God, so is it also distinct from each other soul. All drops of rain are water, yet surface tension holds each separate drop to its own distinct ovoidal shape. "The Jivatman in each individual is different from that in another" (B. 31), and "the theory of the plurality of *jīvas* must therefore be upheld" (M. 164). And the reader is reminded that the word '*jīva*' means a 'living being', and is in no way confined to the human kingdom; Hindu thought, now confirmed by biological discoveries through Sir J. C. Bose, has always held that *all* creation is instinct

with life, even what we call the vegetable and mineral.

Though limited in space and time so long as it lies in bondage to *māyā*, the soul is "beyond space", as Schrader says, in so far as it is spiritual essentially and therefore has a latent power of omnipresence. It also has as an essential quality *caitanya*, a clear mind which "can mirror the whole universe" save when it is limited in its view by the effects of its own past acts. The power of thought to cover, include, this unbounded cosmos is indeed one of the divinest things we know. And the self uses that mind and reason to perceive God's universe, the field of its own action, together with its senses and its gross body as instruments of action and knowledge in His world; yet the self remains distinct from all these as their user, the person behind them all, stable (*sāsvat*), imperishable (*avināsi*), infinitesimally vast, and able to mirror the whole universe (S).

Besides this gross physical body which we can all see, the soul uses also an inner subtle body, the *sūkṣma-sarīra*; "the spiritual body is indivisible and perfectly self-conscious, and is identical with the owner of the body" (Sn. 88). Being indivisible, it is not subject to physical death; it is the vehicle of the life of the soul which continues when the outer gross physical body drops away and begins to decay. And in this body "the soul has an infinity of senses of which the physical senses are a perverted reflection" (Sn. 588). This is a truth which psychic science and occultism have begun to reveal even in the West; we speak of clairvoyance,

telepathy, supersentience, etc. as some of those inner senses, and the Catholic mystics have also added much to our knowledge among these lines.

We have said that the souls are eternal ; they are, “ and joined to *acit* (a subtle form of matter) they persist even in *pralaya* (universal dissolution) in a subtle state destitute of names and forms, and therefore incapable of being designated as something apart from Brahman ” (God) (S. 264). The soul or *jīva* is ever clad in ‘ matter ’, yet it is not itself material, for it is eternal, not produced by anything else than God, and so different from matter just as it is different from the Lord (B). It is distinct also from Nature (*prakṛti*), and it persists in all states of consciousness, in the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states, as well as in those beyond ; thus it persists through death and even in liberation, the final dissolution of separate egoistic selfhood. While its states of consciousness are ever changing, the self in its own being remains changeless, unchanged in all bodies and in all births into material conditions ; itself it is ever unborn and undying while the bodies form and disappear, it is ever-pure while the ego is stained by sin and delusion, it is self-shining and needs no human guide to lead it on the Path ; subtle, ‘ egoic ’ in that it never ceases to be able to say “ I am I ” ; its consciousness is its attribute, thought its way of revealing itself to others and to itself, and its inmost nature is bliss untold (M).

Sri Rāmānujachāri, the greatest of South Indian Vaishnava philosophers, in his book “ *S’ri Bhāṣya* ” is quoted as saying, “ All imperfection and suffering and

all change belong not to Brahman (God), but only to the sentient and non-sentient beings which are Its modes" (S. 81). It is important to remember this, for God is all-perfect, even though by the freely willed acts of His creatures creation has been, in some degree, marred by pain, transiency and other defects.

God made His universe perfect; "the beauties of nature and the fair forms of human and celestial beings are but partial revelations of the unsurpassed beauty of Brahman" (S. 196). "Each self is like a note in the musical scale and marks a rhythm in the dance of divine beauty" (S. 204) that is creation; each individual has his own 'note' to sound forth in the universal harmony, and it is his duty and his joy to sound it truly and well. When we see in the universe disharmony, cruelty, ugliness, we know they are the pitiful results of sin, the 'self' having deliberately turned from God and its own nature to wallow in low desires. "Ugliness is the result of the finite self being soiled by sensuality; but when the self is released from its dross, it realises itself as the embodiment of divine beauty" (S. 201), and thenceforth sings its own sweet note in perfect harmony with the choir of all creation to the glory of the God that made it.

2. The "Fall" of Man: God creates Nature that He may enjoy its beauty and share it with other conscious beings. The soul sees God in this Play and desirous of emulating His action embraces Nature (cf. GH 3 : 3). "She however, possessing a *s'akti* for each

of the creatures and giving them pleasure, made them eager to enjoy her, and so becomes the cause of the obscuration of the individual and the Highest Soul " (i.e. the *Kūṭastha-puruṣa*) (Schrader). He who turns away from the light sees darkness and his own eyes are for the time as if blinded; when the soul turns from God to gaze on creation instead, her eyes are dimmed, obscured. The Lord's power of *nigraha* binds and obscures the soul as a result of her own act. He darkens her three qualities thus: Form is obscured by atomicity (*aṇutva*), Power is darkened by impotence, and clear-sighted Intelligence is obscured by ignorance (*ajñatva*).

Thus from "beginningless time the soul or *jīva* deviates away from its natural and proper function of contiguity to Bhagavān, and for this act of transgression the soul comes under the influence of the *Māyā-s'akti* of Bhagavān, and thereby identifies itself with the mind, the senses, and the body, which are but the effects of the same *Māyā-s'akti*. From this identification it receives pleasure or pain. Hence there arises in the soul a desire for pleasure and an aversion to pain. And by reason of such desires and aversions it engages in various good and bad acts from which accrue to it merit and demerit" (M. 8).

This is the process by which the eternal, self-shining soul falls into the humiliating delusive realm of *māyā* which we call the world. Man identifies himself with his body and its experiences, develops egoism, cultivates love for one thing and hate for another, so that he can no longer see things as they are but only as he thinks

they affect him pleurably or the reverse. So he treads the path of action. But it is really ignorance of his true nature and function, with the false "belief in the individual's self-sufficiency" which leads to actions impelled by desire, and so to a state of ever-becoming through restless changes in time, which we call *samsāra*. All desire-impelled actions leave an impress (*vāsanā*) on the mind-body which constantly tends to their repetition in order to avoid pain and enjoy pleasure. Thus the soul chases pleasure from life to life, falling constantly into a new body under the compulsion of her past actions and the tendencies they have caused. Even good desires, good acts, bind the soul as much as bad; *samsāra* arises from the tendencies to both good and evil which its own circumstances awaken in the soul; these impress on her her separateness from God and create in her a false idea that she can stand alone, apart from Him.

This unhappy folly rules her until by God's grace she is brought into touch with one of His saints, who frees her from this dependence on action (*karma*) by the 'Third Birth', initiation into the Pāncharātra. Her error was due to her intelligence being narrowed down by action arising from ignorance and so ceasing to be all-pervasive. This ignorance was in fact a real blindness of soul, which could never be cured by human means; we cannot come to the Eternal through temporal means, nor to the Real through the unreal. God alone is the means by which the soul can come to Him; His grace must fall on her to rouse her from the darkness of her misery. Once freed from the 'original sin', her

ignorance of her own nature and function—which is to be with and to serve God—she turns away from sense objects which once deluded, blinded her, turns back to God. Then indeed the soul sees God in very truth ; after that, even when she looks at His creation she sees only God there, God in all, and all in God.

3. **Sin and the Soul's Free Choice :** “ God is good, and therefore the existence of evil and other imperfections has to be traced to the freedom of the finite self ” (S. 170). This finite self has been separated from God by sin, and it can by the necessary effort escape from that sin ; so as it is between the two alternatives of freedom and slavery it is called *Tatastha* (that which is on the river-bank, neither in the water nor on the fields). The choice rests in its own hands ; “ the moral self has the freedom to grow into the goodness and perfection of God or lapse into demoniac malignity by choosing the way of evil ” (S. 148). “ The *jiva* is responsible for the choice of evil, and *Īswara* . . . for the pleasures and pains that follow the deed.” (S. 170), for “ the finite self with its free will is the doer of the deed and is the subject of moral experience ” (S. 144). “ Thus it is the finite self that is accountable for the existence of evil and the experience of pain, and not the Supreme Self, which is . . . ever pure and perfect ” (S. 170). All imperfections are due to the moral freedom of the finite self, never to God, who “ dispenses justice according to merit ”.

Sin is the cause of all misery, and “ moral evil is intensified into sin when it is a deliberate transgression

of a moral law regarded as a divine command, and is a revolt against the law of God" (S. 169). "Duty is the voice of God in the will of man, and it is a sin to omit what is commanded and commit what is prohibited, as it is an offence against *Īswara*. The sinfulness of sin is so deep that it cannot be exhausted by expiation" undertaken by the finite self which has incurred the guilt; it can only be removed by a direct act of God's grace in His function of the Deliverer, Hari (S. 153). But we must always remember that the real self, the true *jīva*, is unstained by sin, it is only the ego produced by *māyā* which, deluded by the lures of the world and the flesh, plunges into crime and is covered with its filth.

It is true that "*ātman* (the self) is essentially free, but it cannot escape the determinism of *karma* (the results of its own acts and thoughts) and the endless perils of *samsāra* (enticing it further into illusion and sin) unless it realises its spiritual nature and attunes its will to the will of *Īswara* who is its inner ruler" (S. 140). It is slavery to the three qualities (*guṇas*) of Nature which causes it to choose evil, and the soul is freed from that slavery the moment it realises itself as apart from Nature and essentially divine, a child of God and heir to His glory. The finite self can be free to make a right choice only by a moral effort to attain self-mastery, or else it remains a slave to its own desires and the results of its own past actions, centred wholly on the interests of the false ego which dominates its life (S). Each soul has to make his own spiritual effort to break away from this false ego, and the "end of moral

endeavour is the realisation of Brahman and the attainment of eternal bliss" (S. 135). This "attainment of God is the supreme and complete good, which includes the moral and spiritual effort to realise it" (S. 305).

Man is free, but that "freedom is the gift of God in order that it may be turned into the gift of the self to God, who is its inner self" (S. 174). "The highest freedom of life lies in the selfless service to the Supreme who is the only self without a second. We cannot live except when we die to live" (S. 184). And when the soul can make that sublime choice and surrender his whole being to the Lord whose it really is, he 'dies' to all the slavery of world and flesh, the endless chain of cause and effect; then he is free indeed, and the laws of Karma cease to act on him. Everything that comes to him is simply God's gift, the source of infinite bliss to him because it comes from Him "whose service is perfect freedom".

4. The Moral Law of Karma: In this 'ocean of *samsāra*', as Indian poets love to style our whirl of life and death, the soul "falsely identifies itself with the body" of natural matter of manifestation; so it becomes subject to the moral law of *Karma*, cause and effect. It is only by the steady practice of good deeds it earns under this law the divine help whereby it can slowly free itself from this wrong self-identification. The soul, or finite self (*jīva*), is freed when it regains the lost religious consciousness and realises itself as a manifestation, a property (*prakāra*), of God. It is only the

'fallen' *jiva*, which has preferred the natural to the divine, that is ever subject to the moral law of Karma ; God Himself, and those perfect beings (the 'Nityas') who never forsake Him for a moment, are ever eternally free. The bound soul can regain its freedom therefore by resuming its rightful place as a 'citizen' of Heaven, as an eternal servant of the Universal Lord.

Karma "is the result of the conscious action of *Jivātman* (the soul-self) whether good or bad. Good *karma* is that which results in pleasing, and bad *karma* is that which results in displeasing *Is'wara*" (B. 41). The former results in happiness, to be enjoyed both in this lower world and in the 'summerland' of *Swarga*; the latter results in pain, to be reaped both in this world and in the miserable state of Hell. Both *Swarga* and Hell are defined as "a state in a certain locality", where the soul functions in a subtle body suited to his condition. As Mallick tells us, our experiences in the physical body and environment vary with our past acts, while our spiritual experiences independent of the physical body vary with the nature of our devotional experiences; ecstasy and *samādhi* are the fruit of faith and love and strenuous yearning for the Lord.

Now the law of Karma acts only in this phenomenal creation, and not within the Self; it comes into play when the self by its own choice degrades itself into a creature of this world, and it is overcome when the self affirms and establishes its freedom as a divine being manifesting only the perfect free Will of God. At no time can Karma compel the choice of the individual self,

but by conditioning its likes and dislikes, by fashioning its environment, education, friendships it so cabins in that choice that it is only by a supernatural effort—enabled by grace—that the soul subject to Karma can break free into its proper liberty. Karma cannot compel; no power in earth or Heaven compels the human spirit. As Radhakrishnan most beautifully says, “Even God acts with a peculiar delicacy in regard to human beings. He woos our consent, but never compels” (p. 48). The Christians point out how the whole scheme of Redemption depended on the free choice of the country maiden Mary; it became possible only with her “So be it!”

Man is not free so long as he merely follows the words and examples of others, unthinkingly, but only when he consciously aligns himself with God. He has free choice so long as he acts from the higher self, but remains a slave to Nature so long as he identifies himself with the body, mind, and other elements of the ‘Not-Self’. This change, this realignment, calls for a definite effort at self-control, which when achieved gives him a mental clarity that enables him to see clearly what he is choosing and so makes him a free and conscious agent. Only then can he realise his nature as God’s servant and deliberately ‘affirm’ the divine purpose of his life.

He does not live alone in this world. God has arranged that each soul should work out the fruits of its own actions together with its fellows in society. Society is “a spiritual community of *jivas* providing an opportunity for the gradual realisation of self as an *ātman* (spirit) and not as a thing” of physical matter (S. 342-3).

Each self reacts upon his fellows for good or evil, strengthening his latent tendencies towards the one or the other, helping or hindering his onward march to the Real. Thus each is the instrument of Karma for his neighbour ; each plays the role of a guardian angel or of a tempting demon. And this is the responsibility each must bear for his own acts—they cannot affect themselves alone. The mad ambitions of one man may plunge millions into misery, squalor and crime.

It is often asked, " If God is all-powerful, why does He not at once lift man out of this wretched state ? " But we have seen that His ' Play ' is designed for the training of morally responsible, self-conscious, eternal beings who may enjoy eternal bliss with Him. Such a being cannot be formed by mollycoddling in cottonwool. Man can never learn what is good without experiencing the results of both good and bad ; and if God protected him from the unpleasant results of his folly and wrongdoing, he would remain a mere automaton in His hands—the ' Play ' would be a failure. So God's omnipotence is limited by the need for Him to be just to the soul's free will by enabling it to experience unchecked the results of those actions which have led it astray into ignorance of Him. " The omnipotence of *Isvara* is self-limited by His redemptive love, working through the moral law of *karma* in the history of humanity " and of each individual therein (S. 222). It is quite true that He, the All-merciful, forgives sin when truly repented of, yet He allows the righteous consequences of that sin to fall upon, to teach, the sinner. Even the unknowing

drinker of poison dies in agony, however much he may repent his carelessness. "Forgiveness does not cancel *karma*, but transforms it by the organic blending of goodness and mercy. . . . The law of *karma* finds its fulfilment in the redemptive grace of God" (S. 153), whereby ultimately "evil is destroyed, and the evil-doer saved" (S. 166).

5. **God's Plan of Salvation** : All souls in this world may be divided into two great and simple classes : those continually inclined to God and trying to know, love and serve Him ; and those who are ever averse to Him and to His laws, and so are more and more deeply ensnared in *samsāra*. Those who do not love God fall into two classes : *Atheists*, proud of themselves and devoted to worldly desires and pleasures ; and *Pluralists*, attached to the lesser 'gods' for the sake of gain, until they are at last sated therewith and seek a higher end. Those who do love God fall into four classes, says R. S. Taki, thus : *Dualists*, faithful to Him only so long as He answers their prayers and gives them all they want ; at last they weary of this selfish worship and are blessed with holy contacts which lift them to the next higher class ; the *Jijnāsus*, who in pure faith offer their work to God and live continually seeking Him for Himself ; the *Aspirants*, who give all their effort to that search ; the *True Devotees (jnāni-bhaktas)*, who see Him and serve Him in all, remembering that "the service of the servant of the Lord is higher than the direct service of the Lord Himself" (Sn. 447).

But this calls for a complete reorientation of life, away from the 'world' and its aims, towards the unseen will of God. "Krishna is never to be found in this world. It is also necessarily impossible to serve One who cannot be found" (Sn. 692). "There is no place for the service of Krishna in the scheme of the selfish people of this world. . . . We want to be ourselves masters of everything, including Krishna Himself if possible" (Sn. 300). A worldly-minded person can have *nothing* to do with Krishna. It is never possible to worship Krishna in the intervals of worldliness. . . . As long as the least inclination for worldliness persists in our minds there can be no love for Krishna" (Sn. 607). There may be apparent serving of Him, but it is wholly vitiated by a hidden desire for some selfish return or reward. "That we shall serve God because He has been merciful to us, is a mean conception because it implies that we would not have served Him if He had not been kind to us. We also cherish the immoral hope of future favours" if we cling to Him by such pretended service (Sn. 121). "All so-called *service* that is so loudly advertised in this world is only a method of procuring the good, *i.e.* enjoyable, things of this world for oneself and other ungodly persons, for pleasing oneself" (Sn. 300).

But God does not leave the sinner in his selfishness. He is Judge indeed and administers a perfect justice to all as the *karmaphala-dātā*, but His justice is ruled by Love in the form of that Sri, Rādhā or Lakshmi who resides in His heart. "By her beauty Lakṣmi lures the Lord and turns Him into the Saviour ; she draws the

sinner by her sweetness, and the sinner is saved by entire submission to His will" (S. 191). God is not indifferent to any one of His children, however recalcitrant they may be in their childish naughtiness. "He is full of mercy even for those who do not want to serve Him. He does not show Himself to them, lest they are forced to serve Him through fear. He wants their willing service, which alone can satisfy also themselves" (Sn. 299). It would be very easy for Him to appear in His omnipotence and *compel* all souls to surrender at His feet, but that is not His way, and would defeat the purpose of the Play. "God's purpose for the world, or the cosmic destiny for man is", we have already seen, "the achievement of the Divine life in and through this physical frame and intellectual consciousness" (R. 43), which is possible when the inner light transforms the soul into a full harmony after the experiences of many births.

"No circumstance of this deluding world, however formidable or adverse it may seem, . . . can offer any real obstruction to the spiritual service of the Lord" (Sn. 403), which alone can effect that transformation. So perfectly is the law adjusted that every circumstance of his life is marvellously adapted to lead every soul to God, if he but follow that leading to the total dropping of sin and ignorance. "A person in whom this pure impulse" (to love and serve Krishna) "manifests itself is thereby rendered perfectly pure in every detail of his conduct. Such a person is naturally disinclined to ungodly conduct, all his affinities having undergone a

complete change of objective from the mundane to the Absolute" (Sn. 61). It is only the devotee who can show forth to all creatures and not to man alone the virtues listed in *Bhāgavatam* 8 : 20 : 43 : humility, sympathy, tolerance, forgiveness, generosity, frugality and truthfulness; and this devotion is the fruit of long and strenuous effort.

At present most of us are interiorly the scene of strife and disharmony between opposite tendencies towards God and righteousness, and towards the world and selfish pleasure. Man is master of himself only on integrating the sub-conscious and the conscious selves in the creative stillness once called by Krishnaji 'the poise between mind and heart'. To find the Real Self we must "strip ourselves naked, escape from the apparent ego, and get at the abyss of pure subjectivity" (R. 58). Our false ego is a distortion caused by the fouling of our inner nature, which should like a clean mirror reflect the universe and God; this initial error can be cured only by the cessation of mental storms and passions which foul that mirror, disturb the quiet surface of the pool; when it is still again it allows of a new vision of the reality. "Utter silence of the mind and will, an emptying of the ego, produces illumination. . . . life eternal" (R). Freed from the restriction imposed by the karmic effects of its past thoughts, feelings and actions, the soul attains "cosmic consciousness and sees everything with the eye of Brahman", as God Himself sees it, "free from all limitations of space, time and causality" (S. 116-7).

This new vision which liberates is possible only with the harmonising of the human with the Divine, the lower with the Higher. It is in this way "the finite will is enriched by donation to the supreme will, and its value is conserved and consummated in the Absolute." There is no loss in this surrender; for his petty little human will the devotee receives in exchange the infinite Divine will, and all else besides. "The two wills then coexist as one will, when the finite will is in tune with the infinite" (S. 140, 149). Man does not then cease to be Man, he becomes God-Man, embracing the Deity in himself.

Such a surrender is possible only with the dawn of real love for God in the human heart. Weary of his slavery to sin and ignorance, disgusted with the temptations constantly put before him by the body, man first becomes an ascetic, rigorously fighting against its demands as the cause of sin which leads to repeated agonies. Then "the great Alchemist transmutes the ascetic that shuns the body as a house of sin into a hedonist¹ allured by the beauty of God and entranced by it" (S. 206). His will united to the will of that delightful God, the 'hedonist' becomes a mystic; "when the worldling turns into a mystic, his vision is transformed and he communes with Beauty, and is lost in the ecstasy of that communion" (S. 196). He is 'lost in God', for his inmost being is 'at-oned' with God, and yet the eternal self remains a self, for "the mystic who has a soul-sight of God assures us that, in the state of

¹ The word 'hedonist' is a little unfortunate here; the writer clearly means one who is devoted to the beautiful, the blissful.

communion, his separate consciousness is swallowed up and not his separate being" (S. 301). He still *is*, but he does not find himself apart. And in this deification of the finite self, its 'Brahmanisation', the universe has achieved its purpose; the union of these eternal separatenesses is the glorious consummation of God's eternal Play.

(d) THE PATH OF DEVOTION

The *Tripādvibhūtimahānārāyaṇopaniṣad* (ch. 5) gives us a brief outline of the Path to God as taught among Vaishnavas. We shall sketch this view of it before undertaking a more detailed study later.

A man's good deeds earn merit, as the result of which he is brought in touch with saintly people and in their company learns clearly to discriminate Right and Wrong; his conscience becomes more sensitive so that he makes a constant choice of Righteousness. Gradually sin, deliberate violation of God's will, becomes almost impossible for him; his senses are purified and cease to tempt him to wrong. Then awakens a great yearning for the true Guru, who appears, and by his grace all virtues dawn in the heart and all obstacles to meditation disappear. The man then gains faith in the stories of the Lord, and by often listening to them cuts off the old impure tendencies and desires; as the result of this he finds a vision of God in his own heart. His faith and devotion now grow strong, while he becomes more detached from earthly things and acquires wisdom and an insight into the Real. When this is often practised it becomes mature; the disciple now becomes a

jīvanmukta, and all results of his past actions fade away. Through his devotion he comes to see God always in all things, and so is ever-blissful in “a ceaseless series of ecstasies” (5 : 11), lit occasionally by a sight of God face to face. When the body dies, he keeps God clearly in his mind and withdraws calmly from the body, standing for worship afterwards in the subtle body. He is then escorted by angels through world after world of increasing glory till he “sacrifices the self to the Self”, and becomes one with the All, an ocean of eternal and infinite omniscience and bliss (*cidānanda*).

This onward progress to the Lord has been divided by R. S. Taki and many others into four stages : (1) The path of Action (*karma*), wherein true faith and the Service aspect (*dāsya*) are acquired by practice of the Nine Modes of Devotion ; (2) the path of Wisdom (*jñāna*), wherein the soul gains full resignation and finds God to be a Friend (*sakhya*) by the practice of devotional love ; (3) the path of Devotion (*bhakti*), wherein he acquires universal charity and the vision of God as the Child (*vātsalya*) in every neighbour through the practice of pure and unattached love ; and (4) the path of Surrender (*puṣṭi*), wherein the devotee gains the full sweetness of perfect love (*mādhurya*) and infinite grace by the practice of that form of devotion which runs in a ceaseless irresistible stream towards the Divine Ocean (*gangāsāgarasangama bhakti*).

1. **The Path of Action (Karma)** : This stage corresponds to the Christian stage of ‘Purification,’ or ‘Purgation’ ;

it is the stage of self-purification, wherein the soul learns to perform disinterested duty as a sacrifice to the Lord and so lays the foundation for the qualifications needed later on his road to Him. It is impossible to cease from action in thought, word and deed, so long as life remains. Actions may be of two kinds, those directed to obtain some fruit for oneself (*sakāma*), and those performed without any idea of getting results from them, out of pure duty (*niṣkāma*). Actions performed with desire leave an impress on the mind-body which calls ceaselessly for their repetition, until God saves the soul from this restlessness and leads it into the 'still waters' of sattvic serenity. Actions performed without personal desire leave no trace on the mind but gather merit which in time leads to liberation.

Action is better than attempted withdrawal into inactivity, but the act should be performed while "keeping the inner life anchored in the Eternal Spirit" (cf. *Sāntiparvan* 237, 347, *Isa. Up.* 2, *Viṣṇu Purāna* 6 : 6 : 12). It is desire that is to be transcended, not action as such. The truly wise sees no action any more which he has to do,¹ yet he continues to act spontaneously as under God's impulsion purely for the good of the world; thus he can incur no sin. It is true that no merely temporal act can *win* an eternal fruit, yet such disinterested work prepares the way for true Wisdom, for when he is fully established in such activity the yogi comes to self-realisation.

¹ cf. *Bhag.* 10 : 46 : 33.

The *Stages* of his progress are four : (1) *Yatamāna-samjñā*, wherein the mind is gradually turned inwards to see its duty ; (2) *Vyatireka*, wherein it gradually becomes always calm and still ; (3) *Ekendriya*, wherein it wipes off the impresses of old acts and becomes pure ; and (4) *Vasīkara*, the stage in which the soul comes to know and delight in itself—a stage which comes only from revelation and not through reason, being led up to by austerity, charity, sacrifice and good citizenship. Even a single life on earth is long enough to bring one who learns to act without desire to the threshold of full realisation.

True Faith is needed to raise a worldly man into this first stage of the Path to God ; he has first to know that God is the Cause and Source of all, to obey Him is his sole duty on earth, the soul is in His image, and He can be worshipped by hearing, repeating or dramatising His *līlās* and by the joyful dedication of everything to Him. This he gains from the company of a saint or devotee, for the very presence of such invisibly tends a soul towards dispassion, knowledge, love and liberation. He is now an aspirant (*jijñāsu*). And in this stage he has four main duties : (1) with the *body* to pray to God and to maintain it clean and pure ; (2) with the *mind* to purify it with the constant thought of God ; (3) to purify the *reason* by relying on Him alone for liberation from sin and sorrow ; and (4) to purify the *senses* by continual use of the Holy Name.

To him God is Perfect Righteousness, the pattern which he ceaselessly tries to copy in his life. He offers

to God the sacrifice of all his desireless actions in the company of saints, careless whether they succeed or fail, dropping all pride in them and all anxiety about them, concerned only that he should do his best in God's name. This is the highest worship man can offer God, and Sri Hanuman, the perfect Servant of Sri Ramachandra, is taken as its great Exemplar.

Practising the Nine Modes of Devotion, the aspirant aims his love towards self-realisation, knowing that perfect devotion can arise only after that has been acquired and that it will gradually merge into a pure love which desires nothing but God Himself. The very day he surrenders all his actions to God as a sacrifice and becomes simply His instrument in the world, that day he is freed from the bondage of the past, and every action thereafter tends only to make him more and more pure. He may indeed still do wrong acts at times without his will, swept away by traces of old tendencies ; but the constant use of the Name purifies his heart from such, and his faith draws down more and more of sanctifying grace.

2. **The Path of Wisdom (Jnana):** to which the former stage naturally leads up in time. This corresponds to the Christian stage of 'Illumination', wherein the soul learns its own nature, the nature of God and His universe by direct experience instead of books, and realises who is the real Actor, thus rationalising all activity. To him God is now the Light.

Even worldly science has its part in preparing for this illumination, for it trains the mind to perceive 'bigness'

and, if inspired by a passionate disinterested longing for knowledge in itself, swiftly leads to wisdom. And by this the aspirant comes to realise the undifferentiated Brahman diffused in all, whereby he comes to be merged in That. It is thought and desire which cause folly and mental blindness in the soul; by suppressing these in some yogic practices a clear vision of Truth is beheld, and it is the true knower who can later become the perfect lover (*Gita* 7 : 17). But if it be sought for worldly reasons apart from devotion, this path is full of danger, for it leads to pride and on to a heavy fall. Some ignore God in their studies, some seek Him only for liberation, from ignorance and not for love; such find only a transitory fruit, for their work is compared to the pounding of dry husks.

The *Full Resignation* to be now acquired is what pours the mind and heart into God and teaches that the whole universe is nought but He. This personal resignation to God steadies the heart even better than the Eight Points of Yoga, which depend on the soul's own strength in overcoming the body-sense. This Yoga is defined as "the temporal attainment during life of a feeling of perfect oneness with the Lord" (Schrader, p. 123) by the perfect control of lower vehicles till the Light within shines forth. The Eight Points are: (1) ten parts of *Yama*, (2) ten parts of *Niyama*, (3) eleven chief postures for stillness (*āsana*), (4) breath-control (*prāṇāyama*), to purify the psychic nerves (*nādis*) in three months, (5) withdrawal (*pratyāhara*), bringing the senses back from the outer world and

mentally entering into God, (6) keeping the mind steady on the Highest (*dhāraṇā*), (7) meditating on the Supreme Person (*dhyāna*), and (8) the contemplative quiet of *samādhi*, which is to be practised until the inner power develops. This path of the Eight Points, stopping changes in the mind until it sees itself as a part of the Infinite Bliss, is really that of the *Sānta-bhakta* based on faith in Him, so its fruit is eternal and the individual self when liberated thus remains as a blissful devotee of the Lord. There are three stages which he has to pass through; in the first he is initiated as the *Yogāruruksu*, in the second his mind is separated from the world and turned to God as the *Yogārūḍha*, and in the third, as the *Prāptasiddhi*, the Lord appears to him as the differentiated Brahman (God), and he enjoys for evermore the blissful state of *samatva*, a calm detached endurance which is not the quietistic passivity of a stone but keenly active and alive.

But all this elaborate path is unneeded by the devotee, who can attain to *samādhi* direct by the simple use of the Name and thus see the Self in all and all in the Self, before which state of *jivanmukti* desires perish and the very essence of things shines out. Such a devotee is upheld by God Himself, and can never fall away from the Path through pride or egoism. This is the path trodden by Arjuna and Sudāma, the path of eternal Friends, on which the soul is personally taught by the Lord Himself and enjoys a sweet intimacy with Him as the Constant Companion. If the soul cannot at once obtain this state of enjoying the Personal, he is advised

to go back to the lower practice of the Nine Modes, offering to God all he does and says and thinks and suffers, acquiring gradually the strong faith that all is He, and so dropping all desire for worldly happiness and activity. Plunging thus into the Self, he is freed from the bonds of merit and sin alike.

He needs a teacher in the earlier stages, and the highest teacher is the one who can convey to his heart a true love for God and the sense that all is full of the Lord. Only the lover can impart love, and by so imparting it he increases the greatness of his own store of love, if he but give it to those who are ready and willing to receive. To see God, Faith and Self-Surrender (which mean Sacrifice and the ceaseless memory of Him) are the two essential qualifications; and these can be gained only in the company of His saints and lovers. But even then meditation on Him remains necessary, because even for the highest yogi the world remains, with its lure (*prārabdha*). When the world can be seen without desire, perfect peace follows in the heart's depths.

The yoga of Wisdom is to realise the self as a real entity, not an illusion but the inner self (*pratyagātman*), and it frees the soul from both ignorance (*avidyā*) and the actions born therefrom (*karma*). It is generally held to be the path that aims at *kaivalyam*, 'supreme bliss in the Self', for the seeker of this withdraws into his inner self to escape from the chain of birth and death and the slavery of Nature. Attaining this, he reaches a quiet which is half way to Divine Union, on the outskirts of the Heaven of Vishnu (*Paramapada*),

and there he "is stranded in solid singleness without the glow of godliness" (S. 348) until he "is transformed into the *jñāni* that hungers for God and attains the bliss of immortal communion with Him" (S. 349). It is only when the 'I' which has held him so far is changed by God's grace of devotion into 'Thou' that such a soul can taste the real sweetness of His Being, for "the satisfaction of *ātmajñāna* has little or no value when it is contrasted with the bliss of Brahman" (God), (*idem*). *Jñāna* gives the inner self, but *Bhakti* gives God Himself, the Whole.

3. The Path of Devotion (Bhakti): There is an enormous literature on this in India, as in most other lands, and it is impossible here to do more than give a very brief suggestive outline of the scheme most books follow in its study.

What is Bhakti? It is "doing whatever is pleasing to Krishna" (*ānukūlyena Kṛṣṇānusīlanam* : M. 273); "Bhakti is meditation on Brahman touched with love . . . for love's sake" (S. 370-1), with no ulterior motive whatever in the heart; thus it is as Swami Vivekananda called it a "real search after the Lord in Love". It "is not aware of the barriers of distance and the fear arising from the sinfulness of sin contrasted with the holiness of the Holy", but goes straight to the Lord with the absolute trustfulness of a tiny child to its mother's arms. By a total self-surrender it learns to seek absolute oneness with the Beloved, and is indifferent to all else, being by nature His servant and so finding the doing of

His will the highest bliss. The devotee would view any liberation not based on such selfless personal love for God all but worthless and would reject it with contempt. Such a path (*upāsana*) is "a ceaseless remembrance of the Lord in . . . a proper environment" (S. 363), and it becomes true Devotion when by practice the Lord comes to be seen directly as residing in the heart. Then all actions become consecrated service to Him (*kainkarya*) and all knowledges tend only to lead the soul towards Him. Such devotion without any ulterior motive is quite irresistible to God, who at once hastens to embrace His lover. Thus Bhakti is a direct road to God or Liberation with Love; it presupposes a long discipline to sublimate the emotions, to train the will and intellect, for Bhakti is really the turning to God of the love usually directed to the sense objects of the world. What one contemplates, that one becomes; so Madhusudāna "defines bhakti as a mental state in which the mind, moved by an ecstasy of love, assumes the shape of God. When the emotional attachment to God becomes highly ecstatic, the devout lover forgets himself in God" (R. 64), and yet his state in this ecstasy is not identical with that known in the Advaita.

Its Glory: Māyā led the soul astray, so it is countered by another attribute of God, the steady remembrance of Him (*upāsana-dhyāna*), which is real wisdom (*jñāna*) (*Gita* 8 : 22 and 11 : 53-54) and man's highest duty. There must be *no* motive other than just pleasing God, not even the desire for bliss or the outer

signs of devotion, but only pure service (*ahaituki*); it is of such devotees He speaks in Bh. 9 : 4 : 64 : " I am under the control of the devotee and as it were no longer independent " (*aham bhaktaṣparādhīno hyaswatantra iva*). Devotion is the " Bliss-Potency of Bhagavan " (M. 268); when done for Him all virtuous acts acquire infinite merit. Through it the soul comes to the direct perception of Him which destroys all *māyā* and the lures of *samsāra*.

God is Love and Beauty; He is not infinitely remote from the soul but ever within and ready to save those who believe in and call to Him. Their worship of Him fills the heart with love and cancels their desires; adoration is indeed the essence of religion, which cannot exist where the sense of the Immanent Lord is allowed to destroy the sense of the Transcendentally Holy.

Devotion is really the best path to follow because (1) it is natural to the soul, and every human being has the instinct to adore and serve some supreme Ideal hidden deep in his heart; (2) other paths may liberate the soul from creation's bondage, but devotion alone allows her to join in the play of the Lord and thus to add to His delight; (3) it is open to all: to foreigners, members of all creeds and castes, of all standards of education, of all degrees of attachment to the world, rich and poor alike; whatever be their motive, all may tread some way along this road to God; (4) it makes final success certain even in the world; and (5) it destroys all the diseases of past

activity and all sin in the heart and presents it pure to God.

Two Stages: The Path of Devotion falls naturally into two great divisions: the Lower (*gauṇī*) or Formal (*vaidhī*) Bhakti, and the Higher (*para*) or Supreme (*mukhya*) Bhakti. These may be described respectively as stages of Practice with effort, and a spontaneous steady Flow of devotion, between which comes a 'dark night' of apparent separation from God (*virāham*) which throws the soul for a time into unbearable anguish. But the Lord in Bh. 10 : 47 : 29 assures us that "You are never wholly absent from Me", and that is the consolation in that hour.

Gauṇī Bhakti: In this stage the aspirant is guided by the scriptures and has to make continuous efforts to keep his mind on God; as there is in his mind the fear of violating scriptural rules there is no real spontaneity in his worship or service. At this stage he concerns himself very largely with the Nine (Eleven) Modes of adoration, and has a need for art, poetry, ritual, etc. to avoid materialism, as Vivekananda warns us. He may use an 'idol' or image to focus his mind in prayer, but must be careful to fill the image mentally with God rather than projecting that image upon God, who is beyond every form that can be imagined; such an 'idol' is of real use to him so long as he looks upon it as the Lord Himself (*arca*), which it is indeed by virtue of his love. He must not rely upon fleeting emotions, which are a hindrance to real spiritual life, nor should he let himself

approach God as a beggar asking for heavenly or earthly joys.

Para Bhakti: Slowly his personal efforts give place to Faith, and then grace flows in and carries him further on its tide. This is the stage of Universal Charity and of Infinite Grace. United increasingly with God, the devotee is now always happy at seeing Him everywhere, and is anxious for nothing, not even for Him. He has now become a Perfect One (*siddha*), easily and always enjoying the bliss of the One Self, speaking only about God to a few fellow-saints or aspirants, and holding no thoughts of the sense-objects experienced in the past. He hardly seems to see the world as he acts ever in the Self which others cannot see (*Gita. 2 : 69*); his love for God is like that of the Impersonal for the Personal born of him, so it is *Vātsalya*, the ceaseless love of a widow for her only son. As he sees the Beloved in all around him he is naturally full of compassion to all, for "universal kindness is never possible in those who do not serve Krishna" (Sn. 386). As he is himself a mere channel for God's things to the needy, wanting nothing for himself, they flow in unasked, and he has always something to give the poor and distressed. He views everything as his Beloved's gifts, and in this view grows in dispassion, love and knowledge. He should not think of his own sins or merits, or he will again be entangled in the body-sense and forced once again to reap the *karma* of the body; he knows that joy and pain *must* come as the fruit of a tree he

planted long ago and even *prārabdha* is for him full of God.

The Name purifies his heart and establishes it in true wisdom, while his faith enables all acts to be offered to God as His servant; thus even the physical body is ever in His company. The very sight of his Master's face in a fleeting glimpse through the mind thrills him with joy, the touch of His feet quietens the mind and heart at once with bliss. Such a soul tries to give others as much happiness as possible, but if he would answer their difficulties he must study the scriptures also. He seeks the Self always within and without, in trouble he sits quiet remembering God, but performs no vows or penances, knowing that troubles come only to the shadow-image of the body and not to the self. He sees the Beloved in all, and this state of blissfulness is compared to the flow of the flooded Ganga to the sea. At death one thus absorbed in Him can only go to Him at once.

Parabhakti is a purifying fire which follows naturally on the detachment caused by one sight of God's loveliness—just as a child discards his toys on growing up. The soul then turns all its love on God, the highest Object, Love Himself, which it has unconsciously sought so long in vain lower things of the world. This love shows itself as (1) reverence, (2) taking pleasure in Him, (3) being miserable at His 'absence', and (4) 'His-ness' (*tadīyatā*), wherein all becomes dear because all are His, as a lover reveres a tiny piece of the beloved's cloth; then the devotee can naturally help

the world, seeing in it only his Beloved. Now "love leads to a continuous and deep longing for God and unquenchable thirst" (S. 376), which seeks Himself alone and none of His gifts. As God Himself seeks such a longing soul they soon meet. Love flies to Him as a moth to the flame; how often has she vainly projected her own inner ideal on one object after another until at last she has turned to Love itself; now she has found Him in everything and returns to help the world through her love for Him.

No longer does she exist apart, she has given herself all to Him. In this is perfect surrender (*aprātikūlya*), for she knows nothing can ever be against Him in His universe, or against His true lover. Death loses all its terrors and the body is but lightly held. She asks herself: "Among so many of His bodies, this is but one; of what concern is it to me?" The total surrender and offering of herself at His feet breaks every bondage of the heart and opens it to all the highest wisdom also.

In this stage the soul finds every devotional practice easy and spontaneous; no longer can she wilfully violate the Lord's commands by sin, yet she no longer waits to ask what the scriptures have prescribed. Though gross sins are now impossible for her, slight transgressions still take place; but they are swallowed up by her love for God, which slowly evolves through the lower modes to the highest, that of supersensual conjugal love (*mādhurya* or *kāntā*), a selfless desire to please the Lord alone. In this mode, the soul may even blend

with her Beloved in a mystical way. " There is a very close approximation to the Divinity in the highest stage of devotion when the devotee is apt to be persuaded that he is Krishna Himself and in that mood sets himself to imitating the Activities of Krishna. . . . When the true devotee exhibits the moods and activities of his Master he does so as a loyal servant rendered completely oblivious by the contemplation of his Beloved, of his own separate existence and interests. But he knows, specially at such moments more fully than ever, that he himself is *not* the Master " (Sn. 395-6).

The Guru : This Path can only be adopted through contact with a saint as the spiritual Guide, for God cannot be found through reason : " This highest Self is not to be gained by reasoning howsoever forcible, nor by any amount of memory or scholastic study ; He is to be gained only by one whom He favours, and to him He sells off His own body,"¹ (*Katha Up.* : 1 : 2 : 22, q., by M. 300). So also : " Having a spiritual guide, one knows the highest Self,"² (*Chāṇḍogyopaniṣad*, 6 : 14 : 2), and " These teachings about the High-souled are only realised by him who has devotion alike to the Self-luminous God and to the spiritual Guide " (Svet. : 6 : 23).³ The first thing is to *want* God most of all, and then the awakener will come. The Guru loosens the soil and protects

¹ *nāyamātma pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā srutena, yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ tasyaiṣa vṛṇute tanūm svām.*

² *ācāryavān puruṣo veda.*

³ *yasya deve parā bhaktiryathā deve tathā gurau | tasyaite kathitā hyarthaḥ prakāśante mahātmanah ||*

with a hedge the tender plant of devotion till it grows strong in the soul and can resist the storms. When both are ready, disciple and teacher, he gives the quickening touch, which as it were sets fire to the soul and fills it with burning love for God. The pupil must come to his teacher ready with purity, a passion for learning and perseverance; the teacher must meet him with penetration of heart, perfect sinlessness, and a purity of motive, which must be only love. The Guru is really an Avatar of God to his pupil, the highest image for our worship as a channel to God (*pratikā*); woe indeed to him if he betray the trust! When his words agree with other saints, the scriptures and conscience, they are to be strictly followed to the letter. The work of the devotee is at this stage easy to understand: "The devotee has a sense of utter humility. In the presence of the Ideal he feels that he is nothing. God loves meekness, the utter prostration of the self" (R. 61). "When we are emptied of our self, God takes possession of us. The obstacles to this God-possession are our own virtues, pride, knowledge, our subtle demands and our unconscious assumptions and prejudices" (R. 62). This is indeed a 'feminine' giving of the self, but before God we are all 'women', as Mira declared to the proud. Each disciple will see God in the form most beloved of him, and the multiplicity of Divine forms, of religions, is a blessing, for thus every type has its own need met by Him. The Guru suggests several paths, of which the disciple chooses one, which had better be kept a secret between the two, lest

by exposing holy things to the crowd they be cheapened by their sneers and faith be thereby weakened.

Qualifications: Ramanuja laid down seven great qualifications for the aspirant to tread this path: (1) *Viveka*, the choice of pure food, pure thoughts and feelings, pure sights and sounds, all that enters the body through the the gateways of sense, avoiding jealousy, attachment, etc.; (2) *Vimoka*, the dropping of all desires, lust and anger, keeping only the one desire for God, accepting friends, relatives, possessions only when they help us towards Him, realising this transitory life can never be our goal; for "Devotion to the Lord does not make her appearance in the heart so long as the worldly egotistic attitude persists" (Sn. 30); (3) *Abhyāsa*, the steady practice of the Inner Presence, ceaselessly contemplating God until the thought of Him becomes one unbroken stream, for God is not partial and gives His grace to those who fulfil the conditions; there is no 'special election' by Him; (4) *Kriyā*, unselfish work for others, fulfilling the fivefold duties to animals, humans, the Guru, the forefathers, and the gods, giving due time also to study and worship, doing as well as possible all the prescribed duty of the state; (5) *Kalyāṇa*, the practice of the five virtues: truthfulness (*satya*), sincerity and integrity (*arjava*), kindness to all (*dayā*), charity (*dāna*) and gentleness (*ahimsā*); the devotee is in the world with an 'active love for God, eager to redeem it, to draw it to Him, for devotion is no merely negative or detaching love; (6) *Anāvasāda*, cheerfulness even in the midst of pain and trouble, ever

free from gloom and despair ; and (7) *Anuddharsa*, freedom from frivolity, realising that life is not for sense-enjoyment or to be frittered away, but that we may know, love and enjoy God, the utmost bliss.

The Three Meditations : The aspirant turns to thought of God as often as he can, and this thought gradually grows deeper and more continuous in three stages : (1) *Dhruvānusmṛti*, a firm search for the Source of one's own being, which is the same as *Upāsana*, the steady remembrance of God. Then follows a tedious and lengthy stage of (2) *Asakṛdāvṛtti*, the constant repeating of this meditation, until at last the fruit of this comes in (3) *Darsanasamānākāratā*, wherein the Lord appears to His devotee and spiritual union takes place.

The Five Modes of Devotion : These begin to develop only in the stage of the higher devotion, (*rāganugā*), and advance towards the climax of conjugal love for the Lord. They are : (1) *S'āntā*, a state of calm peacefulness and unchanging attachment to God as the Inner Ruler Impersonal, which state can be reached even by the eightfold path of Yoga ; (2) *Dāsyā*, devoted to the Master by a personal link of intense faithfulness and affection ; (3) *Sakhya*, the free and informal, delightfully confidential friendship with the Lord as a playmate in His great Game, equal in a sense with Him ; (4) *Vātsalyā*, the love one feels for a child, pure and quite free from awe or fear, deeply affectionate ; and (5) *Mādhuryā*, a passionately loving relationship, sweet as that between perfect husband and wife, free to chide one another,

without any sort of barrier, the source of constant ecstasy, wherein "the kiss of the Divine Beloved makes His lover mad with joy".

The Seven Means of Liberation : Bhashacharya gives these as : (1) a true knowledge of God, Man and the Universe and their proper relationship, to be obtained only from the real Teacher (*Sadguru*), (2) sincere love for the Guru, together with faith in his ability to teach truly, (3) implicit faith in the scriptures and in their revelation, (4) an intense desire for Liberation from the sin and sorrow of worldly life, (5) the dropping of all worldly desires, ambitions and loves, (6) attachment to the performance of duty for its own sake, and (7) the study of spiritual books, with aversion for bad company and all self-interests.

The Nine Stages : According to Mallick's book, devotion passes through nine stages on its way to maturity ; these are : (1) *Sraddhā*, a certain degree of faith in God and the possibility of reaching Him through these means ; (2) *Sādhusanga*, which leads the aspirant into the company of saintly men from whom he gains a deeper faith and takes to (3) *Bhajanakriyā*, the singing of hymns to God's glory and the taking of His Name ; as this does not cohere with evil practices, it naturally leads to (4) *Anarthanivṛtti*, the shunning of all impropriety and unrighteousness, whereby the soul becomes established in (5) *Niṣṭha*, the firm foundation in goodness. Gradually there develops a delight in virtue for its own sake because it leads towards God, and the soul is in the stage of (6) *Ruci*, where it enjoys the 'savour'

of God; (7) *Āsakti*, firm attachment to Him is the natural sequel of this, and it grows into (8) *Bhāva*, a felt and conscious affection, which slowly deepens into (9) *Prema*, real love for God. None of this can come without His grace, for "He alone can make Himself known to us" (Sn. 549).

The Eleven Elements : These are the means employed by the devotee in growth towards maturity in love : (1) *Saraṇāpatti*, the thought, "God alone can help me, so I turn to Him, breaking from all that does not lead to Him and cleaving to all that does, trusting to His aid, resigning myself to Him, and realising my own 'misery' (*karpaṇya*)"; (2) *Santaseva*, the selfless service of and seeking the company of a holy man, for this surrender to God can grow strong only in such company ; (3) *Sravaṇa*, basking as it were in the sweet Name and stories about the Lord, together with vocal prayers and worship in saintly company and places ; (4) *Kīrtana*, joining in the singing of the Name and of songs to God's glory together with other devotees, the main road to devotion in this age ; (5) *Smaraṇa*, is the fixing of the mind on God, which proceeds in five stages ; (a) *smaraṇamātra*, a casual and vague fleeting thought of God now and then, (b) *dhāranā*, deliberate intense thought of Him, (c) *dhyāna*, prolonged definite contemplation of His love, beauty, goodness, might, etc., (d) *dhruvānusmṛti*, uninterrupted smooth flow of thought on Him and (e) *sanādhi*, wherein the mind is wholly and solely merged in Him and can no longer be distracted by other thoughts—"only God and

I"; (6) *Pādasevana*, as *pāda* means "quarter" as well as "feet", this includes also bathing and living in holy places; (7) *Arcana* (worship) and (8) *Vandana*, (prostration)—both of which are to be offered to the Lord alone and in person, for "performance by proxy is nothing but a mockery in religion" (M. 307); (9) *Dāsyā*, service of God, of the utmost importance, for only thus can the devotee gain true humility towards men, which God so loves to see; (10) *Sakhya* intimate association with God, and (11) *Ātmanivedana*, whereby in a full surrender of the self to Him man realises that all functions of his nature are meant solely to serve and worship God.

But in all these the dominant note is a passion for selfless service of the Lord, for devotion aims at knowing and loving God, and "we do not really want to know Him so long as we do not want to serve Him. The Supreme Lord may be known only by the method of complete submission" to His will (Sn. 549); "one who really serves Him does so in his *every* act and thought . . . and . . . he does nothing else. He neither eats nor sleeps but only serves" (Sn. 403).

This is devotion. The Vaishnava is one devoted to Krishna; how many of us then can claim to be devotees? If we study these categories and analyse our own hearts, where must most of us place ourselves on this path, if indeed we have entered it at all? Is it not only too often true that "one who fancies himself to be a Vaishnava is a hypocrite" (Sn)? Devotion is no easy path to tread; it has been called a "bridge of hair

across a precipice of fire ”; for it requires great preparation, great discipline, an iron firmness of will to seek and serve the Lord *alone*—qualifications by no means held by every human soul.

(e) FULL SURRENDER

And that is why the all-merciful Lord, who is ever so much more eager to draw us to Him, the Source of all our good, than we poor mortals could ever be to be drawn, has opened for us yet another way, a path that all can tread, a path that demands no qualifications save what can be won in a flash, a path which has no stages, no disciplines, no philosophic terms to confuse the simple. It is a path which runs straight from the lowest depths of our human life to the closest communion with our loving Lord, a path which even the illiterate, the fool, can tread in safety and with swiftly growing joy in His sweet presence.

This higher path is indeed the crown and consummation of the lower, for the very word ‘*bhakti*’ derives from the root BHAJA, to adore or serve, and as Radhakrishnan points out devotion is itself really *Īśvarapranidhāna*, or full surrender.

God-consciousness arises from the knowledge of the self-experienced on the path of *jnāna* and develops into steady remembrance of God (*dhruvānusmṛti*), which in due time gives the *upāsaka* a vision (*darsan*) of the Lord in His own proper Person. When his devotion is pure, that is when he has absolutely no ulterior motive,

no desire for or expectation of *any* return for his love beyond the pleasure of the Beloved, the devotee becomes *paramaikāntin*, totally united, and his supreme love is then irresistible to God, whose sweetest and truest name is Love. The path of *Prapatti*, simple surrender, avoids the difficulties inherent in the harder path of devotion, which calls for unceasing practice, an initial knowledge and experience of the self, etc. There are only two essential requirements for the path of *Prapatti*: a sincere admission of the soul's own wretched spiritual state and repentance thereof, and a full faith in the power and will of the Lord to save, which expresses itself naturally in an act of loving surrender to Him.

It is the "Little Way" of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, wherein the soul goes to its Lord as a little child to its loving mother in the hour of need; the Lord Christ Himself spoke to the simple child-hearted peasant woman, Marie-Marthe Chambon, and said: "When a soul is in such a state of infancy she can come straight to Me. There is no obstacle. . . . If you come to Me with love I do not see your faults. I see only your love; love wipes out everything" (*Life*, pp. 115, 68). This is true. As Srinivasachari puts it (p. 407): "Sin is ultimately self-alienation from God, and it stultifies itself by contact with *Kṛpā* or grace," for how can the lover alienate himself from God? Where is he to go to be apart from Him? The same authority writes (p. 599): "There is no sinner as such in the religion of love, ar sin destroys itself by contacting divine love;" if

creed talks of the 'eternally lost', know that that creed is man-made, the ugly product of a heart that never knew God. The sight of human need at once calls forth His help; the intercession of Sri or Lakshmi (Radha) changes the Holy Lord into the Saviour of one who cries to Him, and He hastens with His protective disc to save from every evil. Nor is there any fear that the *s'aranāgata* may cry when Sri is not there to intercede for him, for She is as inseparable from Him as scent from flower, as wetness from the dew.

Indeed, His grace has already been at work, for "even the will to serve the Lord is only the gift of His grace" (S. 389), nor could any soul call on Him save by His 'prevenient grace' impelling him. The relationship between the two is simple and complete: "The sinner seeks God and is saved, and God seeks the sinner and is satisfied" (S. 390 : cf. *Gita* 18 : 66).

Yet the categoriser has managed to work out a scheme for this path too, and we learn it is in six stages : (1) *Ānukūlya-sankalpa*, when the human will is emptied of egotism and attuned to God with a readiness to be used by Him in the service of all souls, His creatures ; (2) *Prātikūlya-varjana*, when the soul deliberately turns away from and renounces whatever is repugnant to God ; the true *sannyāsa* is the dropping of all egotistic motives and not the abandonment of duty, which is often caused by pride and egoism ; (3) *Mahāvisvāsa*, or a firm faith in God's redeeming grace ; (4) *Kārṇya*, the inability to follow any one of the three other paths, much as such an inability is noted by Catholic mystics as the sign

of a vocation to the "Inner Way"; (5) *Gopītvavarāṇa*, when the soul seeks as its only hope the kindness of the Lord and throws itself on His feet; and (6) *Ātmanikṣepa*, when the soul gives itself wholly up to Him, realising that "no sin is so sinful as to exhaust the redemptive grace of God" (S. 391). This act of total surrender implies of course the giving up of all expectation of personal happiness, all sense that the soul itself is responsible for its own salvation,¹ and all sense of separate selfhood—all is yielded to its real Owner with the glad cry of "*Sarvam Śrī Kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu!*" (May all be offered up to Sri Krishna !)

"The self seeks God's grace and strives to deserve it, and the grace of God lifts him up" (S. 394); the soul which once could only see himself stained by a thousand sins, helpless, miserable, sees nothing now but the Lord as his Saviour; soon the pure Flower of Devotion blossoms in his heart, with its eight petals: the virtues of gentleness, universal kindness, forgiving patience, truthfulness, perfect sense-control, austerity, inwardness, with the power for ceaseless meditation on the Lord, and true knowledge which is the wisdom derived from Him alone. A single switch may illuminate a whole city in a moment, so even a trace of contrition and surrender in the heart can destroy all sins and their effects (*karma*), "an infinitesimal effort may lead to infinite mercy" (S. 395), if it be truly there and not a mere hypocritical show.

¹ This is the "total abandonment of *dharmas*" referred to in Gita 18 : 66 (*sarva dharmān parityajya*).

Now it is just on this question of effort that the teachers of *Prapatti* in the South have been divided for many years. This doctrine was taught about two thousand years ago by the great Aḷwārs and by Nāthamuni, who collected their hymns into the “*Divya Prabandham*” about a thousand years and more ago. In the tenth century Alavandār Yāmunāchārya taught it, and his follower, the great Ramanujachari, who was the apostle of the creed (1300-1411), spread it in the North. But in the South a division in the Church arose, and it was broken into two sects, the Tenkalais and the Vadakalais, whose doctrines we must now consider.

The Tenkalai school was founded by Pillai Lokācharya (1264-1327); it teaches that the surrendered soul has nothing to do but to depend wholly upon God’s grace, which does all. It quotes the example of the tiny kitten, which mews once for the mother cat, is picked up and carried by her where she wills, and has no anxiety whatever because it feels safe in the mother’s mouth. It points out that the mother’s milk is free for the child, who has not to go to the shop to pay for it, nor is there any price the soul can pay to God to *earn* His grace, which “comes as the leaves come to a tree”, naturally and with perfect spontaneity; grace is absolutely unconditioned. It loves to quote *Kāthoṇiṣad* 1 : 2 : 22 : “Whom the Self chooses, by him is He attained”, and to refer to the mystic experiences of the great Namāḷwār as proof of its favourite doctrine. Thus the school tends to give greater value to the “Tamil Scriptures” than to the Sanskrit Vedas and Upanishads.

It insists that there are no moral obligations for the surrendered one (*prapanna*) to fulfil, and that God pervades his soul and keeps it free from sin. So great is His love for the soul relying on Him that He sympathises with and even delights in its frailties and defects. Finally the Tenkalais teach that Sri (Radha) is Herself a soul, created by the Lord, but that her grace is essential for Liberation, so dear is She to the Lord.

The Vadakalai school may be said to have been founded by the great scholar and saintly writer, Venkata Vedāntades'ikāchārya (1218-1319), who succeeded in reconciling 'faith' and 'works' by showing how both '*karma*' and '*krpā*' play a part in salvation. He taught, and most Southern Vaishnavas follow him in this, that salvation does to some extent depend also upon human effort, quoting as the example the baby monkey, which its mother picks up and runs with to safety, while at the same time the baby clings tightly to its mother's neck. So too grace, though it cannot be *bought*, can be to some extent won by efforts to 'correspond' with it, as the tiny babe receives milk freely from its mother's breast, it is true, but has also to put forth the effort of sucking the pap, which itself causes the breast to secrete more milk for its use. God and the soul co-operate in the work of salvation : God enters the soul, and the soul merges in God. Yet at the same time the soul retains fully its own separate existence, so that God's entry within it is rather a state of co-existence than a mergence. The Vadakalais also

use the Tamil scriptures, but give slightly greater weight to the older books in Sanskrit as foundation for doctrine. Thus they insist that even after surrender to the Lord the need for righteous action according to the duties of the state (*swadharmā*) does continue and that a soul abandoning such duties will certainly not receive God's grace any further : God's grace must be ' earned ' by humble obedience to His will as shown by the duties of environment and time. God cannot tolerate sin or defect in His child ; His first concern is to cleanse away all such from the soul. The strongest point in their doctrine is that what the Tengalais teach imputes partiality to God and 'destroys' the whole ethical base of religion ; a dogma of predestination does not cohere with one who is " the same to all beings " (*Gita* 9 : 29). As for Sri (Radha) She is no mere ' soul ' created by the Lord, but His eternal Equal and Consort, inseparable from Him, One in Two and Two in One, Radha-Krishna, Sita-Rama, Gauri-Sankara. The *Kevala*, who treads the *advaita* path to *Kaivalyam*, is on the path to perfection, which he has not yet attained, knowing only the bliss of the *ātmā*, not the bliss of *Brahman* (God), while the Tengalais teach that such has reached a state of perfection isolated from the Lord's Highest Realm, as it were on the threshold of Heaven. Devotion and Surrender are really causes of God's grace flowing into the soul, and not as the Tengalais hold rather its effects upon the soul.

The openminded reader will see that this division which has so unhappily split the Vaishnavas and at times

has caused so much bitterness is one of minor importance compared with the great area of thought whereon the two sects are one. Throwing entire faith upon the glorious '*Carama-sloka*' (*Gita* 18 : 66), which is almost the motto of all Vaishnavas, they all teach that man's salvation comes through an act of total surrender to the Lord, who then takes the whole burden on Himself. This calls for no self-conscious effort—for the self is submerged in Him—but it does demand full trust, real humility, and the capacity to 'let go' all things hitherto valued as the soul's very own. Indeed, as Bhashacharya assures us (p. 55), *prapatti* is for all who can offer these simple qualities to the Lord, "without distinction of caste or creed", for there is but *one* Lord, and one who surrenders to Him through one Name surrenders to Him through every Name which is loved and honoured as the Lord's.

(f) THE FINAL GOAL

Not the egoistic bliss of eternal self-contemplation in a sublime ignoring of all beyond that narrow limit, not the doubtful pleasure of an unending banquet or an uneasy perch on damp clouds playing perpetual psalms on golden harps—but the fulfilment of God's plan for His universe when He first 'sent it forth' at the dawn of all creation. What was that plan once more? To 'Brahmanise the souls', to evolve an infinite number of perfected human wills that choose to align themselves with His Divine Will, an infinite

number of lovers who find all their bliss in His Infinite Love and the perfection of every noble quality, an infinite number of enjoyers who can share with Him for all eternity the untold delight of the unfolding Play of universes through unending ages. And to attain this, the soul has to win its way to freedom from the illusions of that universal Play, to realise that its disguises hide a blissful truth, its dresses are but stage 'props', its tragedies designed for greater enjoyment of the joyful close.

"Thy service is perfect freedom." This is the sum and substance of the Vaishnava concept of Heaven and Liberation. The freed soul may be in a body in this or any other world, or it may be discarnate in the Lord's inner realms—everywhere it delights to be His servant, whose only wages are a greater love, a fuller opportunity to serve the soul's Beloved. As Swami Vivekananda says with overflowing heart (Works, Vol. 3): "Who will then desire to become one with God? . . . Love for love's sake is his highest enjoyment. . . . No Bhakta cares for anything except love, except to love and to be loved. His unworldly love is like the tide rushing up the river. . . . The world calls him mad. . . . The true Bhakta's love is this burning madness before which everything else vanishes for him. The whole universe is to him full of love and love alone; that is how to seems to the lover. So when a man has this love in him, he becomes eternally blessed, eternally happy; this blessed madness of divine love alone can cure for ever the disease of the world that is in us. . . . He has become absolutely

merged in the object of his worship." Nor is this a stagnant state, unchanging ; it grows and grows for all eternity. As Pramatha Nath Tarkabhushan says in an article in "*Kalyāṇa Kalpataru*", vol. 7 : " Love knows no end : infinite thirst for more and more of love is the nature of love." This then is the goal.

True *Mukti*, according to Ramanuja, is " the integral experience of Brahman that has infinite wisdom (*jnāna*) and bliss (*ānanda*) and other perfections " (S. 479). It is that sight of the Lord possible only when devotion has torn away the veil caused by His *māyā*, a sight which may be in the mind alone (*antaḥ sākṣātkāra*) or even perceived also by the senses (*bahiḥ sākṣātkāra*) when grace has filled the body as well as the mind with perfect calm in Īm. " It is only in the state of self-realisedness that the Self shines in its own effulgence like the cloudless sun " (S. 479-480). "*Mukti* is not the isolation of *kaivalya*, nor the abolition of consciousness, but is the consummation of moral endeavour, in which the divinised self realises the eternal values of life " (S. 486), as the result of the Lord's redemptive will —for the *ātman* can do nothing, has nothing, is nothing by itself.

Mukti may take five forms : (1) *Sālokya*, wherein the soul lives in the same world with the Lord ; it may be down here, it may be in the highest Heaven of Vaikuntha ; (2) *Sārṣṭi*, wherein it gains a share in His lordship and mighty powers ; (3) *Sārūpya*, it obtains a form and complexion like His so that it may do His work better ; thus His messengers who come to fetch

the righteous soul at death are in His form ; (4) *Sāmīpya*, it has the right to great intimacy with Him ; and (5) *Sāyujya*, it merges in the supreme halo of His glory, a state “ in which the unitive experience of bliss is present without the loss of self-existence ”, which is “ the positive experience of *ānanda* which is ineffable and incommunicable ” (S. 490).

Mukti is (1) a direct perception of Him which is infinite bliss, the beatific vision, (2) freedom from the qualities of *māyā* and *karma*, for the *mukta* is “ freed from worldliness and attains the realm of ethical values . . . perfected and brahmanised ” (S. 493), (3) the total and permanent extinction of all karmic effects and pains, which are lost in the bliss of Divine vision as the stars in the sunlit sky, (4) a permanent state (*Chāṇḍogya Up.* 8 : 15 : 1, *Gīta* 15 : 6), (5) wherein both gross and subtle bodies disappear and the glorified soul functions in a ‘ body ’ of ‘ pure matter ’ like that of the ‘ gods ’. Yet let us not forget that the soul continues a separate entity as before ; “ the freed self is not a vanishing illusion, nor does it merge in the whole like the dewdrop slipping into the shining sea. Its content is no doubt transmuted ; but it is not true to say that it contributes to the whole ” (S. 493), as Shelley imagined of Keats. “ Freed from the shackles of *prakṛti* (nature) and the limitations of time, it lives in spaceless space and timeless time, and it is suprapersonal, but not impersonal ” (S. 494).

Mukti is the regaining of the latent natural bliss of the self and the extinction of all miseries caused by the

loss of that beatific vision of the Lord ; but that bliss is incidental and not to be separately sought ; not even this ecstasy of mutual love with God is the real conscious aim of the Vaishnava, but simply the service of the Lord (*Bhagavatseva*), an end to which only devotion and surrender can possibly lead and wherein they attain the highest level of selfless love which can alone make prisoner the heart of the Adorable. This devotion "overwhelms the mind with unparalleled ecstatic effusion of love" (M. 345). The *mukta* enjoys in that eternal Now of 'timeless time' an infinite diving into God in all His qualities and aspects ; knowing Him as the very Self of himself, he plays with Him in an infinite blissfulness of spaceless communion of perfect love and endless selfless service in any one of His countless worlds.

Mukti is thus a union with God which preserves the essential dual relationship of love. It therefore assumes the form of that blissful mystic relationship sung so beautifully by Jayadeva in his "*Gita Govinda*" and by St. John of the Cross in his "*Spiritual Canticle*". This state of '*Premānanda*' surpasses all language, but let us see how far Srinivasachari has succeeded in suggesting it for us in his excellent book.

He says : "The true mystic . . . seeks God and only God. Visions and voices, photisms (lights), auditions and automatisms may simulate spiritual experience, but they do not lead to God ; rather they lead away from Him" (437). The lover wants God, not a mere escape from the 'world' into heaven or phenomena of revelation.

“The intuitive insight of the mystic is immediate and ineffable. God is intuited and not inferred” (438), for He is not seen by reason but through His own grace in direct vision. In the real path to Him *bhakti* and *jnāna* “are fused together as *prema*” (selfless love), which is “the intense yearning, or *avā*, hunger for the Absolute”, expressed by Mysticism—“the experience of God-intoxication” through love, longing and communion which becomes a “deluge of ecstasy”, (440) neither sensual nor intellectual alone, but uniting and transcending both.

“The mystic hungers and thirsts for God, feels the life of God in the depths of his being, and is absorbed in ecstasy. He shakes off the ego-centric standpoint and self-centredness, and surrenders himself to the Absolute. Mystic life is enriched by self-surrender as it enhances personal worth by partaking in the riches of the divine life. The self dies to live, and it is deified by contacting God and entering into eternity. . . . The mystic realises that he is only an instrument of the divine will, and the basis of all his activity is shifted to God. . . . By attuning himself to the will of God and thus becoming one with Him, the mystic transcends the individualistic standpoint and the moral distinctions of good and bad. . . . His life is supra-moral in the sense that it is the crown and completion of the moral life (443). . . . The mystic reaches the heights of moral and spiritual consciousness, partakes of the riches of divine experience, and sees all beings in God and God in all beings. . . . Spirituality is perfected in service, and

mystics like Nammāḷwār and Prahlāda work ceaselessly for the welfare of all beings till they attain a direct realisation of Brahman " (444).

Love itself is a colourless mood ; it is of three kinds, and its value depends on the object served by it. It may turn to worldly objects (*viśaya-kāma*), to the personal self (*ātma-kāma*), or to the Lord (*Bhagavat-kāma*) ; " as *Bhagavat-kāma*, it is a craving for spiritual marriage with the Beloved " (S. 445). But marriage is between two, and cannot be a part of the *advaita* view of reality. " Though love is a unitive experience, it pre-supposes the duality of the experiencing subjects. . . . Love involves otherness, and even in the highest states of bliss, when the self-feeling is effaced, love is a dual relation and a double fruition. . . . The one Self that is without a second sports as two, as the lover and the beloved, without losing His wholeness. . . . The Absolute itself assumes a bewitching form of beauty in order to attract its other to Itself " (S. 447).

" Absence makes the heart grow fonder ", and true love is a coming together and a parting that the reunion may be ever sweeter than before. This makes the play of love ; the pain of separation (*virāham*) intensifies the bliss of meeting (*abhisāraṇa*). " In *visleṣa*, each moment stretches into eternity, but in *samsleṣa* (embrace), eternity is crowded into a moment. In the former case the mystic pines away owing to the feeling of unrequited love and becomes pale and passive. In the latter, the soul is caught up to God and has a momentary joy of union or ecstasy. . . . Like gold in the refiner's

fire, the self is purified and deified by alternate depressions and exaltations. At one time it is thrilled by His touches; at another, it is torn away from Him and languishes" (S. 448).

In this *visṛeṣa* the memory of sin and self-centredness is the cause of separation from the Lord—a dark night of agony and despair, until He is glimpsed again in the heart. When this new joy again disappears, there may even be a thought of suicide, the pain of His absence is so intolerable. But at last the play comes to an end.

Intense love makes the two really one; like the Gopis, Nammālvār puts on the Lord's very form and *līlā*, and so experiences omnidentity¹ in Him. The permanent *samsṛeṣa* follows, with its "soul-sight of His bewitching beauty followed by God-intoxication . . . and the invasion of its love into every phase of one's life. . . . When Beauty rushes to the embrace of the beloved, the beloved expires in the arms of ecstasy" (S. 452-3). Then, as Kaviraja Krishnadas Goswami sang, "She is lost in Krishna within, without; wherever her glance falls there shines Krishna forth."² (q. by P. N. Tarkabushan, *op. cit.*) And this is an ever-repeating bliss for all eternity, for He and His bliss alike are infinite, while the Giver, gift and receiver are one. Such love transforms the vilest of men into gods, for "even the lowliest of the low is adorable if he is touched with divine love" (S. 454). As a touch of the magnet

¹ Dr. Bucke's word for the realisation of the identity of individual and universe.

² *Kṛṣṇamayī Kṛṣṇa tāra antare bāhire |
yāhān yāhān arṣṭi paḷe tāhān Kṛṣṇa sphure ||*

magnetises any piece of steel, however impure, so the contact with the loving Lord divinises the humblest of souls in a moment. Thus Nammālvār, the pattern of mystic lovers, entered into the Beloved at last, or rather He entered into him. "The Lord of Love seized with soul-madness enters into the whole being of the Ālvār, communicates His joy to it and makes it pulsate with joy. The joy of love's embrace is inescapable and irresistible, and the Ālvār is immersed in divine deliciousness, and the thirst of ages is satisfied" (S. 453-454).

Thus, as we have seen, Mukti is the coming home of the long-lost lover to the arms of the eternal Beloved; it is the "return from the becoming of *samsāra* to the being of Brahman" (God) (S. 461), and so reverses the primal 'fall' through *avidyā-kāma-karma*. Thereafter the soul is free—to serve, free—to love, free—to know all the secret intimacies of the Beloved's loving heart. And this is real Liberation, infinitely more desirable than all the external heavens of lower religious ideals. In this state which Radhakrishnan has called *sādharmya*, the soul becomes one with God's law and power, and being free to co-operate with Him in every plane "the freed one is a harmonised being for whom God is ever present, transfigured by the light of His wisdom, and joyously active till the end of the world. When he assumes this *ānandamayakośa* (blissful body), he has thenceforth to advance only into another kind of life, still unmanifest and inconceivable as yet to our human minds". The *Tripādvibhūtimahānārāyaṇopaniṣad*

tries indeed in glowing words to follow the soul through curtain after curtain, veil after veil, until it is lost in the blinding glory of Infinite Light, but it is impossible for the embodied to follow there. And the real bliss of Liberation, the real Goal of the soul's long evolution, is the loving service of the Lord wherever He may choose to send us, knowing that if we see Him the bliss is infinite, if we see Him not it is only that He may increase our bliss by restoring to us some day the vanished vision. Here or elsewhere, in body or without, rich or poor, in celestial or hellish worlds—to be evermore His devotee keeping one hand on His lily foot while doing with the other His work for the blessing of all creation !

7. On the Use of the Name

The careless and uninstructed may dismiss as a childish superstition the practice herein recommended to the aspirant for the path of Devotion which leads to such glorious heights of spiritual realisation. There is after all little to be said to justify it, in theory. The scientific lecturer describes the result of putting certain chemicals together in a test-tube and heating them ; but he cannot prove what he says without an actual demonstration before the class, or by inducing the pupil to perform the experiment himself. Essentially it is the same with religion ; the proof of a *sādhana* or method can be had only by trying it out, faithfully and for a long time, under the prescribed conditions.

But there is this to be said. It has been the belief of millions of people all over the world since humanity began, so far as we can trace back into the twilight of prehistory, that there is some subtle relation between an object and its name, so that knowledge and repeating of the Name brings the object or person into control. Adam became lord of animal creation by naming all creatures (*Gen. 2 : 19*), and none but the High Priest once a year in utmost secrecy might dare to name the Holy One among the Israelites, while the Egyptian religious scriptures are filled with the notion that he who knows the name of any being on earth or in the unseen has power over it and can wield that power as he will. The same concept is found in ancient Irān, in Irāq, China, and wherever else we find literary documents of early thought at all.

In India, Tulasidas in his *Rāmācharitamānasa* gives us a glowing eulogy on the greatness and glory of the Name of Rāma, the Supreme Lord. Beginning with the clear definition: "The Name and the Named may be taken as equal" (Bk. 1, Ch. 21 : 1 : *samujhata sarisa nāma aru nāmī*), he then goes on to show that the Name is actually greater than either the Manifest or the Unmanifest, for both come when summoned by the Name: "The Name is greater than Brahman and Rama" (Bk. 1, Doha 25 : *brahma rāma teṅ nāmu baḷa*); whereas in His lifetime on earth Sri Rama could save only Śabari and a few others and overthrow only Rāvaṇa and a few other demons, His Name has ever since then been active saving

millions of sinners and destroying all the sins of the world.

The great Saint of Maharashtra, Samartha Rāmadās, writes in his *Dāsabodha*: “The easiest way to God is to remember Him always by repeating His sweet and powerful Name,” and the *Bhāgavatam*, supreme book for the devotee, tells us that the one path in this fallen age is through the chanting of God’s Name in chorus (Bh. 12 : 3 : 52 : *kalau tadharikīrttanāt*). Tulasidas has also in his ‘Bible of India’ already quoted : “Tulasi says, If you want light both inside and outside, then keep on the threshold-tongue of the door of the mouth the jewelled lamp of Rama’s Name” (Bk. 1 Dohā 21)¹

Swāmi Rāmdās of Rāmnagar, in South Kanara, writes (*The Divine Life*, p. 88): “Of all the disciplines for controlling the restless mind, there is none so easy and efficacious as the taking of the Divine Name. But there is a way in the repetition of it, and that is, it must be uttered with full faith and love for it; then only you will feel that the Lord’s Name is very, very sweet.” For, as he says in his *Letters* (vol. 2, No. 136): “In the repetition of the Name all sadhanas are included.” This is so because God Himself is in the Name, and one who takes His Name with love and faith is at the same time taking, embracing God Himself—which is the aim of every real *sādhana*, or spiritual practice. He adds that “Wherever His Name

¹ *rāmanāma manidīpa dharu jāha deharī dwāra |
tulasī bhītara bhīherahuñ jauñ cāhasi ujiāra ||*

is sung, there He reveals Himself " (*op. cit.* No. 113) ; and this is possible because, as Samartha Rāmadās says : " The God of Love manifests in our heart when it is filled with compassion, forgiveness and peace. Where His remembrance is, there all these virtues reside." Sanyal goes so far as to say : " The only way of getting rid of the lust of the flesh is by chanting the Name of Krishna *by avoiding the ten offences against the Name* " (p. 594). As the Name is as holy as the Named, it can appear on the tongue of none but the true devotee or aspirant to devotion, and it can enter the ear only of a surrendered soul ; for others it is but a word, without real spiritual power. The right use of the Name by one qualified with faith and some degree of love for God is all-powerful—" by such service love for Krishna is obtained " (Sn. p. 601), while " love for Krishna cannot co-exist with any form of worldliness ", and " a worldly minded person can have *nothing* to do with Krishna " (*op. cit.* pp. 606-7). At the same time one who loves Krishna cannot but chant His Name, both silently and with the tongue aloud, for " the Kir-tana or loud chant of the Name is the only function of the soul in the state of Divine grace " (p. 638), and as Rūpa Gosain says, " liking for the chanting of the Name is the conclusive sign of the first appearance of spiritual amour " (*op. cit.* p. 593, and cf. Bh. 11 : 2 : 40). Indeed, without some love for God in the heart the Name cannot cling to the tongue—which may be seen from experience.

As Swāmi Rāmdās writes in *The Divine Life* : " If we love God beyond everything else in the world,

this love will automatically maintain in our mind a constant flow of God-remembrance. The Name of God will start on our tongue spontaneously and will run on it continuously. Further, the sweet sound issuing from the utterance of the Name will prove to be a veritable nectar to the attentive ear. When thus the mind is inebriated as it were with the love of God and filled with the music of His Name, all its desires will be transmuted into Divine waves of ecstasy, and all the movements of the senses will be saturated with the same joy. In this state, vision of God will flash out through our eyes, raising us to the supreme status of universal vision. This is the ineffable summit of Divine union and revelation" (p. 89). So, he goes on, "Sing on His Name with all love and devotion and embrace the Beloved in the recesses of your heart" (p. 96).

Here he tells us *how* the Name is to be taken. Realising first that it is God's Name, to be taken with reverence and attention, we are to keep in the mind the thought of our incipient love for Him. It is not necessary to imagine any special form which corresponds to the particular *mantram* we are using—each form of the Divine Name has its own corresponding Form of God associated with it—it is quite sufficient to concentrate upon the sound of the Name itself, which is "Nāda-Brahman", as Rāmdas tells us elsewhere, and by entering the sweetness of that sound we enter the very Being of Him whom it names for us. It does not matter whether we sing the names of Krishna, Siva, Ahuramazdā, Dūrga, Allāh, Jesus—or any other who to us is GOD, for all

these, and an infinity of others like them, are His Name and an open pathway to the inmost recesses of His heart.

But we cannot expect the Lord to cheapen Himself for our sakes ; He may well test our love by seeing how it inspires us to perseverance and patience in the *sādhana* we have chosen. The *Yoga Sūtras* of Patanjali (1 : 14) tells us : “ Practice becomes deep-rooted only when it is continued ceaselessly and in right earnest for a long time ” (*sa tu dīrghakālanairantaryasātkār-āsevito dṛḍhabhūmiḥ*). It is true, as the same Sutras tell us (2 : 44), that “ intense meditation on the Chosen Deity induces Him to appear ” (*svādhyāyādiṣṭadevatā-samprayogaḥ*), or as Swāmi Rāmdās says (*op. cit.* p. 97) : “ You have only to take His Name and He runs to you,” but he does not say how many times the Name has to be taken before the Lord runs ! Of course once may be enough as in the famous case of Ajāmila : but He may take such pleasure in hearing His own Name upon our lips with love and longing He may keep us waiting for many years.

As we have said, there must be faith in the *sādhana* if it is to succeed ; otherwise we shall grow weary after a short effort and abandon it, perhaps just as we are on the verge of success. The following brief conversation with Swāmi Rāmdās contains a depth of meaning for those who read within the words ; I am grateful to the Swāmi for allowing it to be used here :

Ramdas : Ramdas’s Guru told him . . . to take this mantram always. He underlined that word *always*,

and was taken to be a mad fellow for repeating the mantram from morning till night, trying never to forget Him for a single moment.

Pupil : Ramdas, is it the Name itself, or the obedience to the Guru which brings the fruit ?

Ramdas : Both. The two are inseparable. His Guru told him to take the Name and he would find eternal bliss. Ramdas did so, and he found it was right ; he found eternal happiness.

Pupil : When Ramdas says " always " we take it to mean five minutes a day every day, and so we get nowhere.

Ramdas : That is so. Ramdas took it to mean *all* the time, and through the Name he came to Sri Ram. . . .

Pupil : If the Name is taken by ourselves without a Guru—?

Ramdas : Ramdas found in his own case that taking the Name had little effect until it was given by the Guru.

Pupil : Ramdas was ready for the Guru ; he had already practised with great zeal on his own.

Ramdas : That is true. But when Gurudev gave him this mantra Ramdas found bliss ; he found it led him straight to the Beloved Lord.

Pupil : I have heard of a case that took the Name for forty years with no effect at all. Why was that ?

Ramdas : Ramdas knew one who tried to practise the Name for thirty years but seemed to get no fruit. The Name by itself is not certainly devoid of power even though it is not given by a Guru. But that innate power is intensified and works more quickly if it is received

from a Guru. In the former case there will be steady though slow progress, which may remain hidden like an underground stream. The Guru's influence will help what is hidden to break out into the open. Then when it breaks out into the open, it is taken by man to be a miracle. It may suddenly come to fruition if there has been real and adequate effort, but we may not ignore the fact that it has been all the time growing unseen.

The advice of Swami Rāmdās is to "do all sadhanas in a spirit of play—let cheerfulness be their keynote" (*Letters*, vol. 1. No. 183); then there will be no tedium during the long apparently fruitless period of effort. If distractions come to the mind during the repetition, they may be driven off effectively, he says, by tracing back each thought to the same Lord whose Name we are taking, for all are His forms; we shall then find that whatever thought comes to the mind becomes a reminder of Him, and the taking of His Name will become truly ceaseless and full of rapture. He says: "The mere repetition of the Name is of little value unless it is taken with love. But that is easy when you remember it is the very Name of your Beloved. How can you utter the Beloved's Name without a thrill of love? . . . How sweet it is to repeat His very Name! Ramdas cannot describe that sweetness to you. He would not let anything come between it and him in those days. His sadhana was solely directed to that. . . . Ramdas found so much bliss in the Name he wanted to repeat it always day and night. . . . Ramdas was so

that he could not stand still, he was all the time moving his legs and hands to rhythm, he was like a mad fellow."

The experience of living saints bears out the teachings of the scriptures and may thus be taken with assurance, that through this divine practice the human soul can be lifted out of its mortality and sinfulness into a sublime state of communion with God. If by some misfortune the soul fall into sin through frailty or its evil habits of the past, it is enough to cry once on the Name of the Lord with sincere love and faith as the Saviour of the fallen—and at once the sin, its guilt, its power, its stain are all washed away by His downpouring love; the soul is pure again as baptised in the Spirit of God. Of course, the lover will not dare abuse this sacramental grace by sinning in the confidence of such easy amends; the sense of His wonderful love and ready forgiveness will rather check it on the very verge of sin and with the Name in heart and on the tongue the soul will tread life's ways hereafter with very rare tumbles in the mud.

Swami Ramdas says (*The Divine Life*, p. 83): "To be in tune with the Name is to be in tune with the infinite Truth, and thus to transmute the lower stumbling and ignorant human nature into the glorious self-illuminated nature. To be in communion with God through the music of His Name is to earn the very bliss of immortality." And Samartha Ramdas adds: "God's Name is sweeter than nectar. To repeat it means to set the fountain of immortal joy working within you.

What a wonderful Name ! It makes you merge in a Being who is eternal love and bliss and power.”¹

8. On the Mystical Significance of the Play in the Scriptures

In a valuable article in the *Kalyāna Kalpataru* (vol. 2 Pt. 2). Sri Jayadayal Goendka warns us that when God takes birth among us as Man His birth and His body are not like ours. We are born in bondage

¹ For a Christian eulogy of the Holy Name the following by Richard Rolle, an English mystic of the 14th century, will suffice :

“Wheresoever I am, wheresoever I sit, whatsoever I do, the remembrance of the Name of Jesus departs not from my mind, (and) I in this feeble flesh cannot suffice to bear so glowing a sweetness of so great Majesty. There wanders into my mind deliciousness, and often it falls into inebriation. (Indeed, now) my flesh has failed and my heart has melted into love in yearning after Jesus.

“If you would stand and not fall, remember busily to hold the Name of Jesus in your mind, . . . for no wicked spirit can trouble when Jesus is much in mind and named by the mouth. . . . Whosoever loves this Name Jesus, without forgetting, dies in wonderful melody and is taken by Angels and brought before Him whom he loved. (But) he who cannot love this blessed Name Jesus, nor find nor feel in it spiritual joy and delectability with wonderful sweetness here in this life, he shall be alien from the sovereign joy and spiritual sweetness in the bliss of Heaven, and never shall he come thereto.

“Wash your thoughts clear with love-tears and burning longing, so that He may find no foul thing in you ; for His joy is that you should be beautiful and lovesome in His eyes. (Remember His Name), think of it in your heart night and day as your special and your dear treasure. Love it more than your life, and root it in your mind ; no evil thing can have dwelling in that heart where Jesus is truly kept in memory.”

The Sikh “Guru Granth Sahebji” is full of such adoration of the Name (cf. GGG., Volume 8 in this Series).

to *māyā* and, under the sway of our own past *karma*, our bodies are of gross matter subject to the physical laws of such matter and doomed to death and decay ; God is eternally free, His birth is Divine and super-physical, His body of perfect and immortal 'matter' subject solely to the laws of His own Will ; these facts may be proved only by one who has the requisite faith and love and devotion (cf. *Gita* 11 : 54). He says, "The Lord does not take His birth in an ordinary way", in fact it was really no 'birth' at all but an appearance, as is shown by Bh. 10 : 14 : 55 : "looks like an embodied soul by His *māyā*" (*dehīvābhāti māyayā*), and Bh. 10 : 3 : 36 : "He immediately appeared to His watching parents as an ordinary child" (*pitrauḥ samphaṣyatoḥ sadyo babhūva prakṛtaḥ sisuḥ*). His body was subject to His will and could change form entirely so as to reveal His real nature as the Omnipresent and All-pervading ; thus He showed that Divine form to Yasoda as a Child and to Arjuna as a man, and on both occasions reappeared in the usual form on their request. Even now to devotees in the ready state of soul and mind He shows that same blue body which He wore during His incarnation—it never perished but was 'assumed' into Heaven when the hour came for its withdrawal from our midst. That body of His "is divine and nothing but divine" ; it is above nature and is not the fruit of action, so it is immortal (cf. Bh. 10 : 14 : 2). Only out of His goodness He assumes from time to time a form which all our senses can contact ; we can hear His voice, see His

beauty, touch His hands and hair, smell the sweet fragrance of His person, taste His kindness.

But if we have no faith in Him, no love for Him, we cannot see Him as He is (*Gita* 9 : 11), for "there can be no actual touch between material thought and the transcendental Absolute" (Sn. 79), and "no one can recognise the Lord unless He makes Himself known" (Sn. 533). "Persons who are free from all worldly vanities are alone eligible for being attracted by Krishna" (Sn. 57), and "no sinful person can really see, understand, participate in His activities" (Sn. 308); "the spiritual issue can never be approached by mental speculation" (Sn. 79). It is only through His grace He gives those who truly long for Him one glance at His beauty, and when that grace increases He may draw the happy soul into His intimacy for evermore, whereby alone the Real, the eternally True is known. "There is such a thing as real understanding, which can only be a gift from the living Truth and identical with Him. . . . It is, therefore, only necessary to reject all untruth and to await the coming of the Truth. . . . When one wishes to render such unconditional homage to the Truth his wish is fulfilled by the Truth Himself" (Sn. 88-89). God appears before the enraptured eyes of His longing devotee and gives Himself into His waiting arms. No earthly *means*, no mere efforts alone, can ever win that grace of His; it is a gift of His sheer mercy to the restless and yearning soul; "the relative can never lead, not even as a means, to the Absolute. . . . By the means of the Truth

alone can the Truth be realised" (Sn. 396). God is received only when He wills to give Himself, and He alone is the only means for attaining Him. As He and His Name are one, this is the reason why we preach the Name as the one way for all.

He lifts us out of this relative, unreal sphere, into the glorious beauty and immortal wondrousness of the real and eternal where He ever abides in bliss, *Vai-kunṭha* the celestial Brindavan. "All truly pure souls are the denizens of the Eternal Realm of the Divinity" (Sn. 217), and the "joyous activities of Braja form the highest platform of the spiritual realisation of the individual soul" (Sn. 45). The real Brindavan and its environment of Braja are in the recesses of the heart, in the inner world of the Real; it is there the soul shares in the eternal *Rāsa-kriḍā* when called in by the Lord Himself; it is there she becomes a Gopi eternally intertwined with His loving arms; the marvelous beauties of our Chapter Nine have nothing to do with the mere physical plane of gross matter but are wholly spiritual.

The Scriptures tell us again and again that the Krishna of whom they speak is not really the Cowboy He appears to be, but is the eternal Self in every heart. The Gopis who hastened to join Him through the dark night when they heard the first sweet notes of His divine Flute were but enraptured in the bliss of the Self of all, and were in no sense disloyal to their husbands and fathers in thus flying to the Self. "Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear; for the sake

of the Self is the husband dear" (*Bṛhadāraṇyakoṇiṣad*, 2 : 11 : 5). This mystery was well known in the golden age of Truth when, as the *Ahīrbudhnyā Samhitā* tells us, the original perfect Sastra came down from Samkarshana "like a thunderclap . . . dispelling all inner darkness"; this eternal Veda when first revealed was in a million chapters which were perfectly understood and followed by men; it was only when evil crept in and men no longer understood its true mystical sense that the Rishis had to divide it into sections: Trayī, Sāmkhya, Yoga, Pāśupata and the Pāncharātra. Now, so low has man fallen that he persists in reflecting his own lowness on to the eternal Veda from God, either interpreting it with slavish literalism or rejecting it wholly as something beneath the dignity of his own conceited brain. This degeneracy in man, in the whole world, in the course of ages is what really necessitates the Avatars of God, who come to re-state the eternal Veda in ways which will once again command reverence and awaken understanding (*Ahīrbudhnyā Samhitā*, 11 : 1-8).

So we must remember that the whole story of the *Līlās* of Vishnu in His various Avatars is mythically and mystically true, whatever this sceptical age may like to imagine of their historical probability. Sanyal gives us interesting hints of the significance of certain actors in the Brindavan-lila, as understood by the Vaishnavas of Bengal: the eighteen obstacles to spirituality which have to be overcome in turn are: (1) *Pūtana*, the false Guru who teaches without real knowledge guided by empiric

rationalism, so that her milk is poison to the baby ; (2) *Trināvarta*, the whirlwind demon of philosophic speculation and controversy ; (3) *Sakaṭa*, the empty cart of literalism in Scripture and mechanical pedantry ; (4) *Vatsāsura*, the demon calf of boyish offences and childish frailty arising from indifference to the real Guru ; (5) *Bakāsura*, the giant crane of religious hypocrisy, persisting in a show of devotion, which is an offence against the Name ; (6) *Aghāsura*, cruelty and violence, for unkindness to creatures swallows up the love of God ; (7) *Brahmā*, the arrogance of scholasticism and argumentation over the Scriptures ; (8) *Dhenukā-sura*, the demon ass of sectarianism, trying to make a monopoly of the Truth for one's own narrow sect ; (9) *Vrishabha*, sensualism, making use of Vaishnava forms of worship as a disguise ; (10) *Kāliya*, the terrible river-serpent of malice and crookedness which pours the poison of brutal treachery into the stream of 'melted' souls ; (11) *Forest Fire*, the flames of communal discord arising from narrow sectarianism : (12) *Pralambāsura*, the demon in boy-disguise of innocence, is the snare of Advaita which steals away the real self and leads to doubt of all religion and scripture texts, together with the coining of new philosophies ; (13) *Indra-worship*, the misuse of religion for worldly or social ends ; (14) *Vyomāsura*, disguised as a playful boy, so lying and dishonesty ; (15) *Intoxicants* which lead to the imprisonment of Nanda, the bliss of freedom in forgetfulness ; (16) *Sankhachuda*, the conch-demon, eagerness for fame, honour and enjoyment disguising itself as devotion ;

(17) The *Serpent-demon*, pleasure of worship, which swallows Nanda through self-merging with God, thus the joy of *Mukti* ; (18) *Kesri*, the demon horse of political ambition, together with a sense of personal excellence which destroys humility and leads to offences against God. All these are to be killed or avoided by the incarnate Child if he would attain to the goal that is set before him.

Other characters are thus explained : *Rādhā*, God's sweetness ; *Rukmini*, His supreme majesty ; *Satyabhāma*, extreme loving sensitiveness ; the *Gopis*, the *bhāvas* or spiritual moods ; *Nanda*, spiritual bliss ; the *Yamuna River*, the stream of cognition or pure *jnāna* ; *Kamsa*, atheism ; *Jarāsandha*, bad fruitive activity ; *Mahādeva*, barren asceticism ; *Vāsudeva* the King of *Kāśi*, is Advaita, the counterfeit of Truth ; *Bhauma*, idolatry ; *Dantavakra*, barbarism ; *Dwivida*, the demon monkey, ungodly carnival and frivolity ; and *Muchukunda*, fitness for the path to Liberation. Adopting these and like explanations of all the many characters of that immortal Tenth Skandha of the *Bhāgavatam*, read the story again, as an epic of spiritual life, and a new most vivid realisation of the ineffable glory of Scripture will dawn on the mind.

A BRIEF VAISHNAVA CATECHISM

1. *How did this Universe come into existence ?*

It arose through a gradual unfoldment at God's will.

2. *What is God ?*

He is the eternal and infinite Reality both veiled and revealed by the forms of this created universe.

3. *How did God create the Universe ?*

His power of creative activity functioning through the 'Vyūhas' brought it into being out of the latent matter of previous universes.

4. *Why did He create ?*

God unfolds His infinite beauty and goodness to beings able to enjoy them, and thus expresses His own innate blissfulness in 'play'.

5. *Does He seek anything for Himself thereby ?*

He has nothing to gain for Himself save the delight of sharing His own Being with those whom His power has evolved and so making them eternally blissful through the love of Himself.

6. *Has this Universe any real existence ?*

As it is the expression of Reality it is also real, but its existence depends upon God's will and so is relative to His and not absolute.

7. *Is the Universe good ?*

Everything in His universe is good in that it comes from and exists in Him ; pain and sin arise from its misuse by the conscious souls who live therein and evolve through experience of pain and pleasure.

8. *What is Man ?*

On this world Man is the crown of conscious life, with the capacity to choose between 'good' and 'bad' ; turning away from God's glorious light, he fell under the dark sway of 'illusion' and lost his inheritance.

9. *What is Sin ?*

Sin is an act of wilful disobedience of what is known to be the will of God, an intolerable revolt which always leads to misery, pain and death until it is taken away by the Divine Saviour.

10. *How did Sin come into existence ?*

Evil is the necessary alternative to Good, so that a reasonable being might learn to make a deliberate choice, rejecting this so as to cling to God and His righteousness.

11. *Why did God allow Evil to remain ?*

So that the effort of rejecting it, and the pain resulting from every surrender to it might teach the human soul that all its good is in Him alone, and thus drive it to seek His love.

12. *What does He do if Evil seems about to triumph ?*

He assumes some visible form in order to destroy its excess as incarnated in some great demon or tyrant force.

13. *Can He not prevent Evil from ever arising in His world ?*

It is not His will to interfere with His own laws ; evil spontaneously arises in the course of time through the gradual degeneration and decay inevitable to a changing and perishable world. ,

14. *Is Matter eternal ?*

Matter, in some form gross or subtle, is universal and eternal, for when withdrawn by *pralaya* from manifestation it remains latent in God until the dawn of a new creation calls it out again from latency.

15. *What is the origin of the individual Soul ?*

It differentiates itself from the Universal Soul, Paramātman, because infatuated by the beauties of creation ; so it gains a false idea of its actual separateness through self-identification with the 'body' through which it works on Matter.

16. *How did Man get imprisoned in flesh ?*

Delighted by the beauty of material existence, his apparent identity with his 'body' attracted his imagination until he was unable to break himself away from it.

17. *How can he become free ?*

By turning away from the delights of sense-objects to the spiritual love of God, realising his true nature as spiritual and super-natural, and so identifying himself with the Unseen rather than with the Seen.

18. *Can he do this unaided ?*

No, he can be roused from the sleep of sense-life only by a touch of God's grace and held in the new life by a continual exercise of His Divine power.

19. *How does God help him to be free ?*

The frequent preference of 'good' and a strong effort to identify the self with Spirit causes God to reveal Himself to the soul through a Guru, who awakens the spiritual life and helps the soul to draw steadily nearer God.

20. *Why did God create Man ?*

To be His servant and His lover, and to enjoy endless bliss with Him.

21. *What is Man's duty here on earth ?*

To serve, worship and love God, and so to draw others to follow this same path of devotion and uplift the whole world.

22. *What is the reward of righteousness ?*

The intimate friendship and love of God, who is infinite Bliss-Beauty-Wisdom-Power, a life spent in the ineffable joy of that intimacy, followed by the eternal blissfulness of loving service to the Lord according to His will, here or elsewhere. But it is enough to know that our righteousness gives satisfaction to Him whom we love.

23. *What happens to wicked men ?*

They suffer the agonies of passion and darkness during life after life in many bodies on this world or in hell, until at last God's grace saves them and restores them to His friendship.

24. *Is there any protection from this danger ?*

A fall can be avoided only by devotion to God as His servant, friend or lover ; He always saves those who rely on Him and try to do His will and give their hearts to Him.

25. *Has Man the real power to choose aright ?*

Man can choose freely so long as he lives in harmony with God's will ; otherwise he is enslaved by past choice and action, swept by his own *karma* from one birth to another.

26. *Why does not God at once save all ?*

Because then the ' Play ' would come to a premature close, and His creatures would lose the chance to win Him through their own experience of what it means to be without His love. The sweetness of heaven is tasted by one who knows the bitterness of hell.

27. *Are Man's thoughts his own ?*

His separateness from other souls is really illusory, for Mind is a sort of continuum throughout the universe ; yet each soul can as a distinct focal point choose which thoughts to cultivate and which to reject.

28. *Is Vaishnavism a dualist religion ?*

Yes, and no. In reality all is but *one* Substance and there is nought but He. Yet He has mysteriously chosen to ' separate off ' from His own consciousness, like sparks from a flame, distinct foci of consciousness which are the souls, with intent that the limited powers of each should at last be able to mirror perfectly the infinite power of the Whole.

29. *Is there a Devil in Vaishnava religion ?*

There is no place for a rival to an Infinite God, nor has Evil any real existence in itself save as the reverse to Good ; there are evil souls, there are demons, but these too play their part in God's Plan and come at last to His salvation through His grace.

30. *Do Vaishnavas teach Reincarnation ?*

Yes. Man is tied to physical bodies so long as he finds such attraction in physical experiences as can hold him back for a while from the infinite attraction of the Lord. When he sees, even for a moment, the beauty, love and kindness of God, all lure of earthly things with the possibility of 'bounden' incarnation falls away from him. Thereafter if he takes a body it is solely at his own desire in order to do God's will.

31. *How does Man find God ?*

God shows Himself to Man as the real Self within all things, including his own heart, and so attractive is He that Man at once clings to Him for evermore.

32. *Where is God ?*

He is everywhere and in all, and at the same time He is the infinite ocean wherein all have their being.

33. *Is there any real Temple of God ?*

God shows Himself in the created universe, in Scripture, in incarnate Deity, in consecrated images and shrines, and in the silent depths of the human spirit. His 'temple', then, may be any one of these; the building where He resides in some image (*arca*) is in the fullest sense His temple, a 'holy of holies'.

34. *Can true Knowledge be given by another ?*

The Guru can awaken a sleeping soul to the dawn of Truth when the hour for its awakening has come, and not before. But only God's grace can give the signal for that dawn.

35. *Can you sum up this Religion in a few words ?*

It is the path to loving service and union with the One God which leads through worship, surrender and self-identification with His will and culminates in ecstatic companionship with the Beloved.

SYNOPSIS

Chapter One : THE SUPREME LORD. 1. Devotion to God is the heart of all religion and the essence of all real knowledge, for He alone is Truth, changeless and eternal, the Source of every form while Himself apart from all. 2. All save the devotees alone are finally merged in Him ; He dwells in every heart to play His eternal Divine Game. 3. In loveliest form the Divine Krishna is still the Formless One ; all forms are but reflections that fade in His ineffable light. 4. None can truly describe or praise this Infinite Lord. 5. And yet man's highest duty is His adoration ; it is a thinker's only worthy occupation, for other practices are superfluous for God's lover and vain for others. 6. The only useful prayer or spiritual practice is that aimed at winning real love for Him. 7. The Omnipresent can be found anywhere, but is most easily discovered in lovely places where His loving devotees are gathered.

Chapter Two : SRI RADHIKA. 8. Radha, the Grace and Creative Power of God, is in every way His Equal ; He may be reached most easily through Her. 9. She is His adorable Beloved, whom He serves most tenderly and unites with Himself ; without Her to supply the material, creation could not be. 10. Her Divine Eternal Lover is the Universal Lord, to whom all adoration is for ever due.

Chapter Three : TEACHER AND DISCIPLE. 11. The real Teacher is he who can give devotion to the Lord, for this is the only knowledge which destroys all sin and sorrow. 12. Such a Teacher is really God Himself immanent in the mind, and he

should be revered as the Highest Deity. 13. With his aid and obeying the rites of religion, the pupil can find and unite himself with Krishna through steady contemplation. 14. The real pupil is indeed the devotee of God ; the family in which such a one is born is indeed most richly blessed.

Chapter Four : THE DEVOTEE. 15. Only a lover of God can teach another devotion, the one worthy knowledge, through imparting His Name. 16. Such a devotee purifies every place he visits, and because wholly absorbed in God Himself is as adorable as He. 17. From him God takes away all fear and evil ; He loves him above all things and holds him always in His mind. 18. The very thought of God destroys all sin and gives Liberation, though His devotee prefers the service of God to his own escape from evil.

Chapter Five : DEVOTION. 19. Devotion is whole-hearted and selfless love for God, dedicating every act to Him, so that it is agony to think of anything apart from Him for a moment ; this gives a quiet steady joy in Him. 20. When you turn from the world to worship Him, remembering His glories, God gives His grace through the touch of one of His saints, and so Devotion arises in the soul ; so bad company is to be shunned as its enemy. 21. Devotion is the easiest way to God, so the selfless devotee finds Him and also helps others to find Him. The devotee's love is calm and steady, fixed on his Lord with one-pointed and peaceful joyous gaze. 22. Pure and meek, the real devotee seeks only love and his every act is inspired by the God of Love ; he talks little, but is ever busy in God's service, cultivating all noble qualities. 25. Eleven modes of Devotion lead to the final ecstasy of union with God ; this is indeed the greatest power in the universe.

Chapter Six : THE SPIRITUAL PATH. 24. Life is uncertain, and birth in even the holiest environment is vain if it

lead not to Devotion. 25. Devotional Scripture is earth's most precious thing because it bestows devotion. 26. For the same reason the company of a devotee is to be sought while the scoffer is to be shunned, or his sins will prove contagious. 27. The company of devotees leads unfailingly to devotion, and so to God—and this is far sweeter and dearer than Liberation. 28. The very Names of God have all His power in them ; they purify their taker in a flash, freeing him from every sin and evil. 29. By taking God's Name scholar and illiterate alike find bliss and glory ; all His worshippers attain equally to Him. 30. His Name hallows any day and place where it is sung in chorus by devotees ; from such a party of His lovers all evil flees away.

Chapter Seven : HOLY THINGS. 31. In the temples set apart for God's worship all due reverence and decency must be shown as in His very Presence. 32. Food is a poison unless first offered up to God, and a born Brahman who does not love and worship God is lower than an outcaste and a pig. 33. Even taken unawares, the food and water offered first to God can purify the sinner and take him straight to Heaven. 34. God dwells in all in need and must be welcomed in the guest with all the loving courtesy due to Him, for thus man can earn His blessing.

Chapter Eight : DIVINE WORSHIP. 35. The devotee may purify himself for worshipping God in twelve different ways, and 36. in six modes he can adore the Lord, in the heart or bodily before some outer image ; it is the sweetest joy in life to be always absorbed in such adoration,

Chapter Nine : VISION OF THE LORD. 37. You can think of God in any form you choose. Picture Him as the Baby Krishna or as the perfect Child or as a playful Boy among His friends ; 38. think of His loveliness as He plays the flute in Brindavan's gardens, worshipped by cows and devotees, adored by Narada the holy sage ; 39. think of His beauty decked with

jewels and seated below the eternal trees. 40. Recall the mystic Dance on the shady banks beside the Yamuna, where the Divine Child gives joy to all His enraptured lovers and to the very waves and creepers of that blessed place. 41. Then feel in yourself the thrills of ecstasy which pulse through His loving devotees as they play around Him, and gaze upon His wonderful beauty lit by the heart's inmost radiance. 42. Adore Him in Narada's burning words as the Supreme present in every heart, who has now taken perfect form only to delight those who love Him well. 43. Then visualise Him as the Ideal King in Dwarka amid earthly splendours and giving joy and satisfaction to all His loving subjects. 44. Carried upon waves of love, then enter His heart in an ecstasy of union, knowing Him as the Eternal Saviour in every lovely form, who pours His blessings on the world and reveals Himself to all who love Him truly and give themselves to Him.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SUPREME LORD

As Sri Jayadeva begins his immortal mystic poem *Gita Govinda* with a brief hymn on the various forms assumed by Vishnu, the Supreme Lord, for the sake of His creation, so Narada begins his outline of Vaishnava teaching with a chapter to warn us that the Krishna of whom he speaks is no sectarian Hindu deity but the ONE worshipped in all faiths under many different names according to man's various languages. Far beyond the reach of human understanding is His glory, above the highest flights of thought and vision, and yet because His very nature is Love He gives Himself freely to those who give themselves to Him. From Him came all at the dawn of things ; by Him are all sustained and guided ; in Him at last all find their full perfection and their utmost bliss. Our creeds, inspired by Him indeed, yet fall far short of His infinity ; no words can compass what in Himself He is. Yet it is man's highest duty, as it is his sweetest joy, to pour out his heart and soul in adoration to that all-lovely Lord on whom this endless universe depends, in whom alone lies perfect holiness and all delight.

1. God Alone is Real

1. The core of all spiritual knowledge is the delightful essence of the Vedas¹, hard to

¹ The four great Aryan scriptures : R̥k, Sāma, Yajuh and Atharva ; the word later comes to mean the whole of revelation about God and His universe.

obtain and in various forms . . . , whose most essential part is the service¹ of Sri Krishna's feet—the immaculate knowledge² admitted by all (as the means of release) from worldly bondage. Long ago Sri Krishna wrote on this a scripture³ in a lakh of verses ; how shall I tell you (all of it)? . . . Listen, then, to a brief summary. (2 : 1 : 18-20)

2. From (beings) like Brahma⁴ down to a blade of grass all is really false, O Narada, (2 : 2 : 100) whether moving or unmoving, . . . like bubbles in water, (2 : 8 : 25) (or) like dreams at dawn. . . . (So) joyfully worship the lotus feet of Hari,^b (2 : 1 : 49) the Reality, the Supreme God, (2 : 2 : 100) Lord of Radha⁶, . . . the Sri Krishna beyond Nature. (2 : 8 : 26) Moving and unmoving, all is Krishna, at one time merging in Him and

¹ *or* : following, enjoying.

² *or* : wisdom.

³ Nothing today is known of such a book ; it may well be among the many 'lost' Vedas, withdrawn from circulation during our degenerate Kali age.

⁴ the Creator.

⁵ *lit* : He who *takes away* sin and misery ; the Saviour, therefore, a favourite Name of God in many creeds. Humility leads the Indian devotee to contemplate the *feet* of God rather than daring to look on His all-glorious face.

⁶ See Note to §8.

then again coming into (separate) existence.
(2 : 1 : 21)

3. In all the entire universe there is but One Eternal Lord ; all things (arise) from the power of His action under the influence of His creative Will¹. Endless indeed is the adorable nature of the Infinite Krishna, endless the fame of (His) beauty, and endless also (His) wisdom! Infinite are His Names purifying holy places, O Narada, and endless are the universes of wondrous workmanship!
(2 : 1 : 22-24)

4. Everywhere (He becomes) the various systems² and all living forms, medium, small and also great, in every place—each and every single living thing that can be seen. Those who are Gods and Saints know well that He is the Eternal, that the Blessed Lord of Radhika is Himself the Oversoul³ who watches unattached⁴ the doings of those who

¹ *lit* : Māyā. To translate this as 'illusion' with many foreigners is fundamentally to misunderstand the whole conception. Māyā is the creative power of God which produces the infinite forms of this universe and so confuses those who look to the trees instead of seeing the wood, *i.e.* God Himself.

² *or* : rules, arrangements, orders.

³ *lit* : Paramatma, the Supreme Self.

⁴ *or* : unstained. God is not involved in His universe but eternally free and perfectly blissful—the witness.

act. The soul is but a reflection of Him and experiences pleasure and pain, though some hold it eternal because of the nature of its Cause; it disappears from manifestation and comes into being (again) from the Unseen; it passes from one body to another, but never dies at all. (2 : 1 : 25-29)

The essence of all Vedas is found in the *sattvic* Puranas, of which the chief is the *Bhāgavatam*, written by the sage Vyasa, pupil of Narada, to complete the revelation of Truth. And the whole *Bhagavatam* is summed up in the words: "Love Krishna, and pour out at His feet your devoted service and adoration." This is the heart of all true Religion.

This world is real, in a sense, being created by Him who is all Truth, the One Reality; but its reality is only relative, the world is real to us while we live and play in it. The only real Reality is He who gave it being, who maintains it in perfect poise and order, and from time to time enfolds it in Himself. On Him alone can man rely, to Him alone can he turn for help, from Him alone receive all good; for on Him all things depend. He is not the world, which He has spun out of His own being, but in and at the same time beyond the world: "Out of a fragment of Myself I created all this . . . and I remain." The Immanence is true, but in our joyous thrill to find the Lord of All present in our hearts let us not forget His Transcendence also. All things exist because He is in them, behind them as it were, and moves them on His stage like puppets for His play; so all is He, expressed in form. Yet He is not they; for He is infinitely beyond all that He has made and He wields Omnipotence in spheres no created thing can ever know.

In that Sphere where He dwells He is eternally alone, for there can be no rival to the One. No petty deity is this Krishna, but the INFINITE BELOVED of all ages, to whom every living thing inevitably aspires by its very inmost nature. Saints and the wisest of men, like the pure celestial beings, know Him in Himself; they see He is both in and beyond the all, the Eternal Witness of His own Divine Play of creation, the unmoved and unstained ever-flowing stream of loving-kindness.

We who down here play His play, and fancy ourselves playwright as well as actor. are but poor reflections of His thought of us before He drew us out of nothingness in the dawn of things. We are truly nothing before His infinite Majesty—and yet we are His children, offspring of His thought, and may dare to claim some tiny share in our Divine Parent's nature. Like Him we are, in essence, immortal; like Him we naturally tend to good; like Him we cannot finally turn to evil. The soul indeed puts on bodies like garments, and throws them off again when they are soiled and worn (*Gita 2 : 22*), but in her real nature remains immaculate and deathless.

2. He is All in All

1. Thus at the very creation of all there was One secondless Lord; (1 : 14 : 24) and then in (Him), the Supreme Abode of all Abodes,¹ (all) dissolves at the dissolution. (2 : 1 : 30) Most certainly Krishna is the Real, and all goddesses, all persons, are merged into

¹ or : Goal of all goals.

that ever-eternal Truth ;¹ (1 : 14 : 22) yet His devotees do not perish when Nature's qualities are dissolved. (1 : 14 : 24) So God² is eternal, and the soul is likewise eternal : (2 : 1 : 34) the soul, (being) eternal in nature, remains unchanged. (2 : 1 : 30)

2. In all souls the blessed Inner Self of all is visible,³ (2 : 1 : 34) and it is Hari Himself who resides in the thousand-petalled lotus of the heart,⁴ in all living beings is the Immaculate Oversoul. (2 : 8 : 27-28) And this is why the Saints serve Sri Krishna's lotus feet—the Eternal and True, who gives fearlessness and takes away birth, death and old age. (2 : 1 : 48).

God, whom our writers call Krishna, *is* from before all time ; all evolved from Him as the expression of His

¹ According to all Indian, and Hermetic, thought, that alone is *true* which has eternal being (*Sat*) ; as God alone is eternal, He alone is true or real. The soul shares with Him that *reality* of being only in so far as it is assimilated to, united with Him. In that timeless state—for eternity is not time extended—the soul devoted to God is with Him.

² *lit* : Parambrahma, the Supreme Creator.

³ The Tamil name for God, Kadavūl, is one of the most expressive in human language ; it is explained as ' the Transcendent Immanent ', and thus preserves the necessary balance between the two ideas of Him.

⁴ This is the *anāhata-cakra*, described in Leadbeater's book *The Chakras*, and in various works on the Tantra, etc. That God is said to be ' in the heart ' need not confuse us ; the physiological organ is not in question, as Sri Ramana Maharshi carefully explains.

perfect will, and into Him at His will all dissolves again (cf. GI 8 : 3). Gods, angels, men, beasts, plants, minerals, elements—all the countless varieties of living things, for all has life that draws its being from the Source of Life, —arise from Him, and return to Him when the long tale of Time is told. Nothing exists in its own right, nothing is independent, save He alone; and all that comes from Him exists in Him and must return to Him at last.

He is One; yet because He is Love there must be a Beloved for Him to love. And that Beloved of His cannot merge or disappear—or the perfect infinite nature of God would know a want, which can never be. So while universes fade away, while stars grow dark or turn to dust scattered through the inconceivable vastness of Space, while Gods hand over charge to their successors and sink back into the nothingness from which they came—the devotee dwells on at the feet of His beloved Lord. Nothing can ever separate the Lover from the Beloved; Bhagavan and Bhakta are ever inseparable, eternally together, ecstatic in the blissful enjoyment of each other's dear company, serving one another, playing together in the sweet groves of the transcendental Brindavan.

He who abides hidden in the silent shrine of every heart and there inspires and guides each Godward trend, how could He reveal Himself to His passionate lover and then withdraw again into hiddenness? The Beloved Krishna is the eternal Companion of the heart that loves and trusts in Him. It is He who shows Himself to man through Advaita as the 'Inner Self', the Oversoul of his being who preceded birth and remains beyond death; and in that form as the Antaryamin He has given Himself richly to the thirsty aspiring soul—a Gift that He can never take away again.

3. The Greatness of Sri Krishna

1. (I adore) that First Being of Creation,¹ the Seed of all,² the Most High,³ who is realised by yogis⁴ (as) the blessed Eternal Lord; the Seed of the various Incarnations,⁵ the Cause of all causes,⁶ the Seed of the Vedas and First Cause of the Vedas, whom the Vedas do not know—Him do the yogis realise (as) the blessed Eternal Lord. (1 : 12 : 74-76)

2. Dark as a fresh raincloud,⁷ wearing a yellow silken robe, the whole body smeared

¹ *Sṛṣṭerādibhūtam.*

² He is "the Seed of all" because everything *grew* out of His gradually unfolding, manifesting Being, grew as a flower grows towards the light and rain.

³ *Parātparam.*

⁴ *lit* : those who *unite* themselves with God along any path.

⁵ *lit* : *Avatars*. God reveals Himself chiefly in four ways : as the Inner Self (*Antaryāmin*) : as an *Avatar*, a Divine Being manifesting to perform some sublime mission, such as Narasimha, Matsya, Vyasa ; as a *Vyuha*, acting in the transcendent worlds as Deity in the forms of Pradyumna, Aniruddha, and Sankarshana, as described in the Tantric works ; and as an *Arca*, whereby He dwells permanently in a consecrated Image before the eyes of men. His *real* Form, the *Para*, remains ever unperceived, unimagined by our mind. There are two kinds of Avatar : a total incarnation of the Lord as in Sri Rama, and an overshadowing by Him, such as we have in Parasurama and Narada himself. Sri Krishna's case is different ; he is not a mere Avatar but is Himself God in all His fullness.

⁶ *i.e.* : the Great First Cause.

⁷ The indigo-blue colour of Krishna is variously understood. It suggests both the infinite majesty and mystery of the night sky, and the down-pouring grace of monsoon clouds giving the thirsty ground of summer the lifegiving showers of rain.

with sandal-paste, the smiling Dark Beauty¹ decked with jasmine garland and adorned with jewel ornaments, praised by the Chief of Sages,² the Chief of good Adepts,³ by the Creator, Īs'wara and S'esha—the very Essence of all and Universal Lord, the Eternal Seed of all, the very First of all, the Omniscient Person beyond Nature, without defects⁴ or desires—(that) Immaculate Lord I worship. (1 : 5 : 3-6)

3. (Everything) merges again in Him like a reflection into the sun; even as the reflection of every living thing is seen in golden vessels and in clear waters and vanishes again when the sun or pot departs,⁵ and as the moon

¹ *lit* : Syāmasundara.

² *lit* : Munis, those who observe vows of silence and obtain inner wisdom by deep meditation (*manana*).

³ *lit* : Siddhas, those who have become perfect and attained the goal, possessing the inner or psychic powers.

⁴ Nirguna. The Vaishnava does not understand this word 'without the qualities' quite as the Advaitin does. We cannot imagine a God without such qualities as Goodness, Love, Power, Wisdom, but He is certainly free from the three '*gunas*' of our lower Nature: rajas, tamas, sattva; and it is in the sense of 'free from deficiencies and the influences of created nature' that we must understand this word. Or we should be blasphemers.

⁵ This is a favourite image in Indian literature; the sun corresponds to the real Self, its image in the water of a pot is the limited self, the human soul; when the pot is broken this image vanishes; so vanishes the petty ego when its cramping limitations are destroyed.

may be perceived in the mirror of souls. (2 : 1 : 31-33) (Yet) by the ceaseless remembering (of Him) the lives of the best of His devotees cannot be cut short ; how could there be death (for them) ? (1 : 14 : 25)

4. Alas, what a great misfortune ! Everything which gives happiness (is) in Hari, yet fools even though aware of the Lord of all suffer in the world ! (4 : 3 : 195) Who can ever be equal to Vishnu,¹ the God of Gods, in whom all is merged save (what are) parts of Himself ? (4 : 3 : 208)

From Him came forth the various plays of great Avatars. The Rama of Ayodhya, the Narasimha rescuing Prahlada, the Vamana of Bali, the Krishna of Dwarka, were but partial expressions of His Infinity. But the Krishna whom we adore, the Krishna who is visible Love and Grace, the Holy Child of Brindavan, is more than these, infinitely more than all expressions of the Divine. *Krishnastu Bhagavān swayam*, says the glorious *Bhagavatam* (1 : 3 : 29) ; He is Himself the Lord, no mere Avatar or Descent of Divine Power and Goodness to rectify the world's evil when it grew intolerable,—but GOD HIMSELF in all His glory of simplicity and perfect majesty of humility, GOD HIMSELF come forth in Divine form as in the cave at Bethlehem to teach men love for Him. From Him came all the Vedas, the Divine Words uttered before timeless time began,

¹ *lit* : the Pervading, the Name of God special to the Vaishnavas and regarded by some as the Maintaining Aspect of the One Triune God.

the Heavenly LOGOS, PRANAVA or AHUNA-VAIRYA, whose utterance is Creation ; He alone is all Wisdom, Love and Power.

But no more than Arjun (*Gita* 11) could we bear to see Him in that Omnipotence. So His Goodness veils Him in the lovely Form of a human Child, adored with tears of ecstasy by those who have ever seen Him playing His mystic Flute under shady trees, picnicking on river banks with boy-friends, frolicking with the little calves, or crawling in the dust of His seeming-mother's courtyard. Who that has seen Him thus, as pictured by the loving hearts of His saints and devotees in India for thousands of years, can help but love Him and offer at His feet tiny flowers of adoring homage ? And that Child, who seems so innocent and helpless, that Child who cries for milk from Yasoda's breast, who runs from her angry words, who sleeps sweetly on her warm lap—is HE from whom the universes came, is HE who even now rules unnumbered stars and guides each motion of every living thing, the very Self of all !

He is Life Himself, the Source of Life. Dwelling in Him, bathed in that holy Source, how could one taste of Death ? His lover never knows what it is to die ; she only swoons to ecstasy in His arms, and then opens wondering eyes to find Him there, His arms around her, His hand supporting her head, His smile playing over her, His soft words thrilling in her ears. Such is death for the devotee ; who would not long to die, to pass into the presence of such a Lord ? But what a misery fills the whole world of those who do not know Him, or even turn away in ignorant dislike from the thought of Him ! Not realising that HE alone is the Fountain of all that is good, they run madly here and there to seek what they fancy is good, apart from Him ; and like squirrels in a cage they only bruise their heads against the bars and remain captives to their own delusion. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," said Jesus ; how much

more blessed it is to give the knowledge of Him in whom is all that is good, to spread the love of Him in every heart !

4. He is Infinite, Ineffable

1. Krishna is (both) eternal and incarnate ;¹ His Light exists, and within that very Light is Krishna's eternal Form.² All yogis contemplate that Light with devotion, and in time the yogi can become a Vaishnava by perfected devotion. (2 : 8 : 34-35) Saints, yogis and Vaishnavas³ always ceaselessly contemplate the peerless Form within the Light, the Dark Beauty.⁴ (1 : 1 : 3)

2. On this God, the Oversoul and Lord, do I meditate without desire and wholly unattached, without (limited) qualities⁵ and

¹ *lit* : *Sariri*, the possessor of a body. God is to the soul almost what the soul itself is to the body : its life, intelligence, guide, etc.

² So too the *Gopālottaratāpinīyopaniṣad* (32) speaks of " the all-Form of Supreme Light, the real Form excluding form " ; cf. also GI 3 and GMC *Proem*.

³ *Vaishnava* : *lit* : belonging to Vishnu. Every Vaishnava holds that devotion (*bhakti*) is higher than gnosis (*jñāna*), though really of course they are interdependent ; neither can exist alone. Through *dhyāna* and *samādhi* (contemplation and ecstasy) the yogi realises God only as the Antaryāmin, or inner self ; while the *bhakta*, or devotee, comes to know and love Him also in the far higher forms of Arca, Avatār and Vyūha. In these ' forms ' He abides as perfect Beauty, the Light beyond all light.

⁴ *Syāmasundara*, one of the favourite Names of Sri Krishna.

⁵ *lit* : *guṇas*.

beyond Nature, the Lord of all and Form of all, the Cause of all causes, the True and Eternal, the supremely immortal Ancient Person, worthy of blessing and able (Himself) to bless, blessed and the home of blessedness, wholly independent,¹ the Highest Abode, the Eternal Bhagavan whom the Vedas continually praise but whose end they do not know. (1 : 1 : 4-7) (Even) with a thousand mouths how can I praise (Thee), O Lord, . . . or who could praise even with crores and crores of mouths? (1 : 12 : 35) Whom the Vedas cannot express and whom the Vedas are unable to describe, can scholars taught by the Vedas praise Him (worthily)?² (1 : 12 : 38)

3. If the Oversoul can be seen, so also (can) the limits of the sky; if the mind is visible together with mental wisdom and thought (?), then also can all Krishna's qualities be known, O Narada. And yet the wise speak of that

¹ *lit*: 'full of His own will', (*svacchāmaya*), that is, with power to do absolutely as He likes. We all are bound by environment, personal limitations, the results of past actions etc. God alone is truly free, and His will is immediately fulfilled (cf. GH 16 : 7).

² A favourite theme of the Sikh Gurus, almost a refrain of Guru Nanak's wonderful *Japji* (cf. GGG, a forthcoming volume of this series).

wisdom by means of the Agama¹. Those saints and yogis who are parts, or even parts of parts, of Him become very great and worshipful, but who can describe even a part (of Him)? (2 : 3 : 5-7)

4. O Sage, in each and every one of the hairs of Mahavishnu there are crores and crores of Gods like the Creator;² the universes are as numberless as the dust, O Narada, and of all these there is but one Lord—Radha's Lord (who is) beyond Nature; the universes are just like dust, and so are Krishna's qualities past finding out!³ (2 : 3 : 15-17)

5. No God is greater than Krishna, no Person is greater than Krishna, no Jnani is greater than Krishna, nor is any Yogi greater than He. No Adept⁴ is greater than Krishna,

¹ The Scriptures guiding the worship of God in temples and in private shrines. There is no evidence whatever that these Samhitas, etc. are in any way later in date than the Vedas; they were probably often rewritten in more modern language, and there is evidence that in South India at least temple worship was modelled on them long before the Christian era began. Yāmuna-cārya claimed for the Āgamas the authority of a Fifth Veda, and Utpalavaiṣṇava quoted them in Kashmir about A.D. 950.

² *Tripādvibhūtimāhanārāyaṇopaniṣad*, 16, says: "From out of each one of His hair-follicles are born endless crores of universes veiling Himself; in every one of these universes an Avatar of Narayana (= Krishna) is born."

³ *anirūpya*.

⁴ *lit*: Siddha, possessor of inner powers.

nor is there any Lord greater than He, no Father is greater than He who is Protector of all ; none is mightier, wiser or more glorious than He, nor more truthful, kind or gracious to devotees than He. (2 : 3 : 8-10)

6. I praise that Supreme Bliss, Nanda's¹ blissful Child, the Lord of devotees, the very Image of Grace to devotees, Sri Krishna, the Lord of Splendour² who gives splendour² and dwells in splendour,² the Lord of Radhika. (1 : 1 : 7-8) Glory to the all-pervading Most Highest whom the great ones glorify, delighting in Himself³ and fulfilling (each) desire, eager to give grace to devotees and beloved by devotees, the Lord of devotees who gives (them) supreme loving-service to Himself, the One who grants His own Abode, bestowing all good things ! (1 : 12 : 33-34)

God eternally remains beyond all universes, and yet He is within each one of us. It is He who is our real Self ; the soul we know as our 'self' is but His veil behind which He ever plays in the supreme Light—

¹ Krishna's foster-father during His play in Brindavan. He is taken by Gauḍa Vaiṣṇavas as an emblem of spiritual bliss.

² *lit* : Śrī, *i.e.*, Lakshmi, who is described in the *Ahīrbudhnyu Samhitā*, 3, as the Lord's 'vibration in the form of the world', differing from Him as existence from the Existant (cf. Dr. Schrader's book, p. 102).

³ *svātmārāman*.

which is so bright it must seem to us like Darkness, so that we cannot see Him as He really is. When we think we worship His Form, we really see and worship only that veiling Light; it is only after ages of yearning search within that our inner gaze can penetrate that veil. When we see, we love; and he who loves Vishnu is the Vaishnava. This is no sectarian term, only the name of one who loves the all-lovable God of all, whose beauty dazzles our eyes till we can see only darkness like that which veiled the Glory on Mount Sinai.

This is the Lord whom all Scriptures exist to proclaim, yet none can do Him justice. For they must use our poor human languages to reach our ears and minds, and how can the finite contain, express the Infinite? And when the Scriptures must fall back from that unimagined Glory dazed, wordless, how can our poor mortal minds, which rely on them for teaching, step in to describe what they have found ineffable? God can be truly worshipped only by the silence of perfect adoration, or by Himself as expressed through His own holy Name.

Infinite as the sky, boundless as the reach of thought—yes, and more than these!—is His Divinity; and yet in part this infinite Glory can be known through Its true worshipper, the saint who loves devotedly this all-pervading, all-transcending Krishna. Untold is the glory of a real Saint; yet even that is but a dim shadow of the reflection of His glory from whom he draws all the good that is in him. What, then, can we say of the ineffable Glory of that Krishna who is the Source?

To him universes are like cells of the hairs of His Body, countless millions of millions of millions of them there are, and all know Him as Lord, all obey His laws, all aspire to know and enjoy His love! All Nature adores Him, before Him her Mistress is lost in rapture, His graces are unnumbered as the grains of dust in this vast universe. Greater than all that can be conceived

is He, greater than all gods and saints, all fathers, guardians, sages, mighty men of wisdom. Yes, but more than all His greatness is the goodness of His heart, His kindness to all who rely on Him, who come to Him alone for shelter (*Gita* 18 : 66).

He is ever more eager to give His grace than we to receive; He runs to aid the devotee almost before the cry for help is formed in the mind; He anticipates every need and lavishes His gifts on His dependent. But best of all His gifts—seeing which one can look at nothing else—is the matchless Gift of Himself. This Gift He deigns to confer on the simple and altogether selfless lover who surrenders herself to the One who alone is worthy of all the heart's love. Higher than all gifts is that perfect Gift of pure devotion, of selfless surrender to the Lord of Love; this Gift too He gives to one who truly seeks it at His hands as the dear desire, the sweetest of all boons.

5. Asceticism is Vain

1. The cult of Krishna is the heart of the Vedas, and (that) is not at all my fancy; (1 : 2 : 31) neither religious duty¹ nor even asceticism² is greater than the service of Sri Krishna, so the Vaishnava's efforts and ascetic

¹ *lit* : dharma, a word with far wider implications than the English word 'duty'. It implies religious sanctions and worship, social obligations, the duties of one's profession and state of life, etc.

² *lit* : burning (*tapasya*). As Fr. Doyle tells us, there are times when the longing of the soul for God becomes a raging fire which can be appeased only by actual affliction of the body, so that it may not stand between the soul and its Beloved. Those who actually see, love and possess God can have no need for such practices, which are deprecated by Vaishnavas.

practices are fruitless, (1 : 2 : 18) because asceticism brings no fruit to those great-souled persons for whom Hari is within and without both in dream and when awake. (1 : 2 : 31) Those who in all moods have fully obtained the Lord Hari in dream and (waking) consciousness have no knowledge of the vain labour of asceticism. (1 : 2 : 59) Cease from asceticism, (for) asceticism is clearly useless to a devotee. (1 : 2 : 46)

2. Asceticism is vain for the one who has worshipped Hari, and asceticism is equally vain for the one who has not worshipped Hari; it is unsuitable for both of these, so where is the place for asceticism? (1 : 2 : 51) If a person worship Hari with loving devotion, what is the use of asceticism for such a saint,¹ O Narada? In India for a Jivanmukta² devoted to the Krishna-*mantra*³ to practise

¹ *lit* : shrine-purifier.

² *lit* : free while still alive (in the body)—one who has attained the sublime state of a fully conscious union with the All even while awake and acting in the world, beautifully described by St. Teresa and in the *Ashtāvakra Gita* and *Viveka Chudāmani*.

³ *lit* : spell, or charm, *i.e.*, a holy word or words entrusted by the spiritual teacher to his pupil, by use of which the inner self may be awakened. Narada almost always uses the word as equivalent to the Name of God; most *mantras* consist of several Names strung together to be incessantly repeated with love and faith : e.g. *Om Sri Krishnāya namah, Rāma Krishna Hare*.

asceticism is as ridiculous as to chew what has already been well chewed; (1 : 2 : 15-16) laborious efforts at asceticism are out of place¹ for one who has fully obtained Hari. (1 : 2 : 58)

3. If by some wretched fellow Hari be not worshipped, what is the good of his asceticism? His effort is vain and fruitless; the non-devotee can no more be purified by his vows and alms, his ascetic fasting, Vedic sacrifices and noble deeds than a wine-bottle by the Ganga.² (1 : 2 : 27-28) A holy place, alms, asceticism, virtue, even a vow can never purify that twice-born fool who turns away from Sri Krishna; (1 : 2 : 60) (indeed), the miserable fool who has turned away his mind from Sri Krishna towards things of the world³ has thrown away nectar for poison. (1 : 10 : 11) Holy places tremble at the very touch of a non-devotee; this earth (itself) quivers under the painful burden of one without devotion. (1 : 2 : 29) O Narada, unless Hari be within and without those persons, their very asceticism

¹ or : vain.

² As the smell of wine clings to a bottle, so the effects of sin to a soul in spite of all its labours; God's grace alone can cleanse the soul and wash away even the memory of impurity.

³ *lit* : sense-objects (*viṣaye*).

is empty, sinful and misguided! ¹ What (can) the foolish and misled non-devotee (get) from spiritual knowledge, ascetic practices, a vow and self-control, from bathing at holy places, or even from virtue ² (itself)? (1 : 2 ; 38-39)

4. If Hari be worshipped, why then asceticism? If Hari be not worshipped, why then asceticism? If Hari be within and without, why then asceticism? If Hari be not within and without, why then asceticism? Cease O cease, Brahmana! ³ What is there in ascetic practices, my child? (1 : 2 : 6-7)

Loving surrender to God is the heart of all wisdom, the essence of every real Scripture, the very keynote of the divine *Bhagavatam*. Nothing is greater than this; no duty, no knowledge or realisation, no world-service can for a tiny instant compare with its overflowing merit. Without this total self-surrender ('*Islām*') all spiritual exercises, oral prayers, sacrifices, mortifications are but empty show, vain self-delusion. He who knows God loves God; and what can he gain more than that? To what end, then, his fastings, vigils, pilgrimages, self-flagellations? Having Him who is the All, what can spiritual efforts towards self-conquest win for him that he has not already in its fullness? Those who know

¹ Spiritual practices undertaken because of love for God and in order to increase that love are of value; no others.

² or: merits.

³ *lit*: knower of God, *i.e.*, in some degree made one with Him. This term is parallel to 'Gnostic' and in Upanishadic times at least had no hereditary sense as member of a certain caste by physical birth.

Him everywhere and can everywhere enjoy His sweet presence, why should they fast? "Do the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" (cf. GJ 18). Having reached the destination, will they now buy a ticket for the train to take them there?

Such self-conscious practices are useless for those who do not do them for the love of God; and they are equally useless for those who love Him already. They are meant to stir up love for Him in the heart, to draw the soul to His feet; when the soul already dwells immovably at His feet, when the heart is already aflame with love, so that tears of joy flow at the very sound of His sweet Name—what has *tapas* more to do? Such vanities drop away unnoticed from the real devotee.

The smell of wine defiles a bottle even if the purest Ganges water be poured in it; no matter how fierce the self-mortifications of the aspirant may be, if his soul be still contaminated by the world it will still give out a stench of worldliness. Pilgrimages to holy places like Banaras, Rome, Jerusalem, Lourdes or Rameswaram, vows faithfully fulfilled, the giving away of all one has to the deserving poor, the performance of every kind of ritual—all are vain if a heart filled with love for God is not the source of them. And when the heart is filled with love for Him, where will it find room for such practices as these? They drop away unseen from one who knows and loves the Adorable. Who can tell the folly of one who would turn away from the conscious delight of His presence to wallow in such things? It were like the madness of one who turned from a beloved friend in the room to ring him up on the telephone.

Devotion, love, self-dedication to the Lord, these alone give holy places sanctity. A shrine is pure because a Saint has lived there, because one who loves God has there installed something of himself. How can even the

holiest place remain holy when inhabited by sinners who do not care for God, whose tongue delights in evil and in blasphemy, whose hands hasten to wicked deeds? Who can find holiness in the company of such, even if they live at Puri, Mecca or Bodhagaya? Vain indeed would be a pilgrimage even in the holiest of years to holy cities if taken in the company of worldly selfish folk, of non-devotees. He who finds God in the inmost shrine of his own heart, who can see Him also in His creation all around, has in himself the fruit of every possible spiritual practice and ceremony, of every kind of yoga, all types of prayer and fasting. Dwelling always in the Lord of his heart, he knows and tastes the eternal sweetness of His infinity.

6. Unless Devoted to Him

Now in the world these two types are happy: the ignorant fool, and the one who has come to the highest devotion; those who are in between (may well) practise asceticism. The middle person worships other Gods but believes rather in Hari and eagerly performs ascetic acts in order to win Him. Blessed is the housekeeper busy in the world who because of (his) past yearningly practises asceticism for the sake of (winning) Sri Krishna's lotus feet! (1 : 2 : 61-63)

The fool who knows and cares nothing about God, the real Lover of his neglected soul, may long delude himself with the idea that he is happy; the lover who

has reached his Beloved's feet is truly happy. Neither of these has anything to gain from spiritual exercises. They are intended for those between the two extremes, who live an ordinary life in the world seeking worldly ends, and yet feel some longing also for the Lord of Love who saves us from the vanity and misery of this whirlpool of worldliness. Such may gain from asceticism. Urged on to such efforts by some unfulfilled past longing, the householder may now devote more and more of his time to spiritual exercises in order to awaken love for God in his own heart, and to inflame that yearning for Him who alone can satisfy his every need. Blessed indeed is such a man! It is truly possible to reach God even while living in the world, but those who have tried it for themselves know how very hard it is!

7. Where is Krishna to be Found?

1. In shimmering clear waters wide and deep, haunted by swans and cranes, by ruddy geese and birds¹ thirsting for the honey of red and blue lotuses, (where) the black bee is eager for the fragrant flowers (growing) on *kutaj-trees*² which stir loving feelings in one's own body absorbed in various human delights, (where) a sweet soft breeze is ever flowing through a jewelled hall equal in splendour to a thousand suns, (5 : 3 : 12-13)

¹ *rathānganāmabhi*.

² or: Arjuna-trees (*wrightia antidysenterica*), with scented cream-coloured blossoms.

2. Sparkling with jewels, His bright form at times plays about lovingly on a dais covered with a broad canopy suspended by wondrous cords and sprinkled with water scented with sweet perfume. With lovely roaming gazelle-like eyes He follows hundreds of girls languishing for love, with long hair and trembling sweet words and all youthful beauty. He prefers the exquisite bliss and immortal delight of (their) praises to appearing on the broad Throne¹ with (its) lion-headed legs or the former jewelled footstool of the Gods, and can think (His) happiness firmly established when (His) soft beauty assumes (the hue of) new dark-blue water.² (5 : 3 : 14-16)

All beauty in this His universe is but a reflection of the perfect Beauty in its Source, Sri Krishna, who is Himself the Essence of Beauty. Thus He has the sweet Name of Bhuvanasundara, as S tells us in his splendid book (p. 196): "The beauties of nature and the fair forms of human and celestial beings are but partial revelations of the unsurpassed beauty of Brahman." By following its ray to the source we may reach the Sun ;

¹ To all the glories of His Heaven God prefers His lover's humble devotion ; rather than the palaces of Herod and Kamsa, He chooses Bethlehem's lowly manger or covers Himself with the dust of cows, which He humbly follows as servant and attendant.

² A hard passage, translated also very freely by Swami Vijnānānanda.

by following beauty to its Source we shall certainly find Krishna, the Lord and Fount of Beauty. As S tells us again (*idem*): "When the worldling turns into a mystic, his vision is transformed and he communes with Beauty, and is lost in the ecstasy of that communion." It is the artist's and the poet's yoga! Nature's beauty, the beauty of the seasons, of a lovely climate, of human courage, of the loving heart of a good woman—all are open roads to God. But perhaps the way to Him most clear to view, easiest to tread, is that which leads through the simple surrender of a loving woman. Herself forgotten, she gives her whole heart to her Lord, she languishes in His absence, delights to ecstasy when He is at her side. Such perfect self-gift infallibly wins His heart; never for a moment can He withhold Himself from one who, like the Gopis, gives all for Him.

CHAPTER TWO

SRI RADHIKA

It is God who, as Karmaphaladātā, judges and rewards the soul with pain and happiness according to its choice of evil or good among the many things of life; it is Lakshmi, or Radha, who, dwelling ever in the bosom and heart of the Lord, fills Him with kindness and mercy. It is She who draws the sinner by Her sweetness until he is ready to make complete surrender of his own petty will to the all-perfect Will of God, as Ś tells us (p. 191), while by Her grace and beauty She “lures the Lord and turns Him into the Saviour”. Yet is She not other than the Lord, nor can She act apart from Him, any more than a man can act apart from his own heart; She is to Him “like the fragrance of the flower, the luminosity of light”. So it is wrong to say Radha *and* Krishna, right to say Radha-Krishna, as one should always say Sita-Rama.

8. The Eternal Virgin

1. Just as Sri Krishna is essentially God¹ and beyond Nature, so too is (Radha)²

¹ *lit* : of the very form of Brahm (*Brahmaswarūpam*).

² Krishna's eternal Consort, the Lakshmi to her Vishnu, the *śakti* by which God creates, is Herself beyond what He creates through Her. Nor can She for a moment be separated from Him; without His Power God were no God at all. Nor can She be stained or affected in any way by creation's activities, but remains ever immaculate even while manifesting through Nature's three 'modes' or qualities; She cannot be bound by the laws of their interaction, for She is the source of their activity.

essentially God, immaculate and beyond Nature ; as He assumes limitations¹ in time obedient to (the laws of) Action, so also She through Action in Time (becomes) Nature comprising the three Modes,² (2 : 3 : 51-52) but (is) not made. (For) like Hari She is eternal and true-formed ;³ (2 : 3 : 54) She most certainly has no births, nor binding actions, (but is) the Great Mistress, (5 : 5 : 5) (and) the Goddess controlling life⁴ is indeed that very form of Radha, O Sage. (2 : 3 : 55)

2. When for some glorious work Hari incarnates Himself, then She assumes a lovely form to honour Hari and to preserve the abode (of life). (5 : 5 : 6) The Goddess of Love-Delight⁵ is Herself the highest Mistress of Love-Delight, and that chaste Goddess was perfected in Brindavan ;⁶ (2 : 3 : 65) it is

¹ i.e. *Saguṇa*, with (limited) qualities.

² *lit* : *guṇas*.

³ *sā nityā satyarūpā yathā Hariḥ*.

⁴ *lit* : *prāṇa*, the life-breath or stream.

⁵ i.e. *rāsādhiṣṭhātrī-devī*, the goddess in charge of *rāsa*.

⁶ The forest of tulasi-plants, holy scene of Krishna's loving play near Mathura on Yamuna's banks. But this geographical site is only the reflection of the eternal 'Brindavan' in the heart of the universe and of every soul, as explained in the *Gopālottara-tāpiniyopaniṣad*. God's Love can only be revealed in association with His Power, His mercy with His justice ; thus Radha plays a leading role in the *Brindāvana-līlā*, though barely referred to in the *Bhāgavatam*.

indeed through Her grace that Krishna is the Lord of Goloka¹ and the Highest Master. (5 : 5 : 10)

3. Radha's thousand names are a river that makes the three worlds pure ; (5 : 6 : 14) by uttering the sound RA a devotee is given devotion and liberation, and on uttering the sound DHA (he receives) the very Abode and State of Hari. (2 : 3 : 38)

God's Creative Power, *Māyā Śakti*, who like Him is a supernal Person eternally inseparable from Him, the very Fount of His Grace—is Radha the beloved Queen of Gopis. She is His supreme Playmate in the Game of Life, His perfect Partner, who transmutes His Glory into pure blissful Love and is Herself the very Form of that *Premānanda*, the highest peak of devoted selfless Love. It is when the loving soul attains this eminence that he becomes himself, as it were, Radha ; then he can see nothing any more anywhere but Krishna's blissful Play. Never can Krishna be separated from Radha, God from His Grace and Love ; together They form the One Perfect Being, Radha-Krishna, both manifest and unmanifest.

The silence of the *Bhāgavatam* on Radha has often been remarked ; in fact She is hinted at in 10 : 30 : 28, and often elsewhere under the veil of ' the Beloved ' (*prīya*) as the Lord's special ideal devotee. In the *Vṛhat Gautamīya Tantra* Sri Krishna says to

¹ The world of souls (= cows), where they find ineffable bliss in the loving service of the Lord eternally in their midst. Though this corresponds to what is rightly called ' Heaven ', it must never be confused with ' *Swarga* ', the abode of temporary pleasure, where the soul enjoys the fruits of good acts.

His brother Balarama: "Radhika, too, My dearest devotee, is of the threefold nature; I am above Nature, and so is She, My Potency." But through Her, from Her, Nature comes into being in its three 'modes' (*guṇa*): active, passive and rhythmic; and it is She who rules all Nature as its Queen. It is She, then, who makes Krishna its King, and Her sweet Names are as full of power and grace as His own, for these Two are not apart but One; even one uttering with love and faith of Her chief Name Radha can give a devotee the highest state.

9. The Glory of God's Beloved

1. Fair¹ in hue as a champak-flower and shining like a crore of moons, whose long hair is adorned with a jasmine² garland, who wears a silken cloth as pure as fire and decked with jewelled ornaments, the Beloved smiles gently in (Her) eagerness to bestow (Her) grace on devotees. (2 : 4 : 3-4)

2. Essentially the Absolute God;³ Krishna's entrancing supreme Delight, the Goddess dearer than Krishna's (very) life and dwelling in Krishna's bosom, praised by Krishna, Krishna's peaceful Consort who bestows

¹ *lit*; white (*śvetacampakavarṇābhām*) (*michelia campaka*). The champak is an extremely fragrant flower which grows on a tree with broad leaves.

² *lit*: *mālati*, one of several varieties of jasmine-flowers, white with a lovely scent.

³ *i.e.*, *Brahmaswarūpām*, of the very form of Brahm.

everything, chaste, immaculate, without limitations,¹ eternal, true, pure and everlasting, dwelling in Goloka—She is the Protectress and Creatrix even of the Creator; in the form of Tulasi She roams about Brindavan² delighting all Brindavan. (2 : 4 : 5-7)

3. I adore Krishna's supreme Beloved, the Goddess of the Tulasi whose lotus feet are adored by Ganga, who grants all powers,³ (being) full of powers and, as Mistress of the Powers, united to all the Perfect, who presides over (every) worthy Sacrifice; . . . both fulfilling vows and granting requests, the Chaste One who bestows all glory,⁴ served with white chowrie-fans⁵ by the Gopis⁶ who are very dear (to Her), while (She is) seated on

¹ *i.e.*, nirguṇa.

² Brindavana literally means 'the wood of tulasī',

³ *lit*: siddhis. As the Power of God, Radha is naturally the One who can confer these psychic powers on Her devotees who please Her. Indeed, they grow of themselves unasked in most of the saints, around whom spontaneous miracles occur almost without their knowledge. The *Siddha* is the perfected Adept, Master of all Nature's powers.

⁴ *or*: wealth.

⁵ *lit*: fly-whisks, (*svetacāmaraiḥ*)

⁶ These womenfolk of Brindavan's herdsmen were Radha's followers in selfless devotion to Krishna, the Supreme Self of all. In fact, they were really the Vedas (*i.e.*, revelations of God's Nature as Love), as we are told in *Gopālottarāṭṭhīpinīyopaniṣad*, 44 and *Kṛṣṇopaniṣad*, 8.

a jewelled throne and playfully holds a gem-inlaid mirror and a lotus in Her hands. (2 : 4 : 8-11)

4. Saints have always worshipped¹ Radha who purifies the three worlds, and even Krishna in (great) devotion daily pours water on Her lotus feet, and lays well-moistened *lak*² with devoted love upon Her flower-toenails in the holy forest of Brindavan. (Long ago) Madhusudana once ate the betel-nut Radha had (already) chewed,³ for the Two are One, nor is there any difference (between Them), like milk and its whiteness. (2 : 6 : 11-13)

5. "RADHA" is to be spoken first, and "KRISHNA" or "MADHAVA" afterwards; one who utters otherwise certainly incurs (the guilt of) murdering God.⁴ Sri Krishna is the Father

¹ *asevanta*, the imperfect tense; they still worship Her.

² The red dye with which the nails are stained, to beautify them.

³ By this act of total union, Krishna shows His reverence for His own Divine Power, His homage for the Goddess who is not other than Himself. And the devotee must imitate that reverence, for one who gives Krishna precedence over Radha deeply offends Him; how could God exist before or without His creative Power? (cf. GH 21 : 4) To deprive Him in that way of His Power would be an act of Deicide, a mortal sin; God can act as God only through Radha, His *Sakti*, and the material She lays before Him to mould into creation. Thus it is She who really makes, creates, the Creator.

⁴ *lit* : *Brahmahatya*, the slaying of Brahm.

of the worlds, while the World-Mother is Radhika ; it is a hundred times more important to honour and worship the mother than the father. (2 : 6 : 6-7) Without clay a potter cannot make a pot, nor can the goldsmith make an earring without gold. (2 : 6 : 29)

6. People get the result of worshipping Krishna for a good (long) time, but that of worshipping Radha comes in a short time ; the whole universe is made up¹ through Her creative will, O great Sage, and Vishnu's creative will (is controlled by) anyone on whom Bhagavati confers (Her) grace ; being absorbed in devoted service to Krishna he obtains Him. (2 : 6 : 31-32)

Here we have a brief eulogy of the greatness of Radha, of Her beauty, goodness, grace, purity and might. Personified in the holy Tulasi (basil) plant, She is found everywhere in the sacred groves of Brindavan where Krishna plays in His lover's heart ; none can draw near to Him save through Her grace and good will. Even He delights in lowly service to Her showing how completely They are One, as the sun and its light are one, the water and its wetness. Can a carpenter make a door without wood, a potter a vessel without clay, a goldsmith a necklace without gold ? Nor can God make a universe without Radha, His own creative Power, from whom comes the root-material of all universes. So it is right to honour Her by first uttering Her Name and then that

¹ or : compiled.

of Her Spouse, Sri Krishna. So sweet and gracious is She that She grants Her devotees' prayers almost at once, caring nothing for their merits. Win Her heart; and then it is easy to draw very near to Her Beloved.

10. Glory to Radha's Lord •

1. Hail to Sri Krishna, dark as a new raincloud and clad in yellow¹ silk, blissful, beautiful and pure, above Nature, (1 : 12 : 67) whom the Saints, (together with) the Creator, the Lord, Sesa and the Gayatris continually serve; they serve the Limitless Absolute, the everlasting Lord, without attachment or desire, the Oversoul and Master eternal and true, the supreme Everlasting Lord.² (1 : 12 : 72-73)

2. I continuously meditate on that pure Everlasting Lord who dwells ever-beautiful in the centre of Radha's lotus heart, Radha's perpetual Companion who carries out Radha's will, on whom perfected yogis who

¹ Not here the colour of renunciation or *sannyāsa*, but the auspicious colour of rejoicing still associated with marriage invitations and the like in India. Krishna is the 'Lord of Bliss'.

² The text of this passage runs :
sevante santatam santo brahmesesaṣaṅjñakāḥ
sevante nirguṇam brahma bhagavāntam sanātanam
nirliptaṅca nirīhaṅca paramātmānamisvaram
nityam satyaṅca paramam bhagavāntam sanātanam
 The literal meaning of *Bhagavān* is something like 'the Blessed One', but the word is very commonly used simply for 'God'.

possess spiritual powers meditate in sacrifice.
(1 : 12 : 70-71)

3. I prostrate to that Lord of Radha, the Darling of Radha's life, the Son of Vallavi, whose lotus feet are served by Radha, who rests on Radha's bosom, Radha's Follower, the favourite Deity of Radhika whose mind Radha has stolen away—Radha's Support, the world's Support, the Support of everything! (1 : 12 : 68-69)

That same Sri Krishna, whom Radha eternally loves as the playful Child of Brindavan, is the centre of adoration for all Gods, all Saints, all rites. He is the Supreme, the One, the Everlasting God beyond all phenomena, who rests in the immaculate heart of Radhika—of the devotee who truly loves Him with absolutely perfect selflessness. The devotee, Sri Radhika, can do anything with Him, for 'Bhagavan is the slave of His bhakta', and the Lord delights to serve those perfectly given up to Him. Did He not do housework for Sakku Bai that she might go to Pandharpur? How can we speak of the wonder of His condescending love? He came as a low-caste servant to save Damaji Pant from the results of imprudent benevolence, and even became a fish to win the heart of a fisherman! It is the deep mystery of ages how He can stoop so low as to rest in our poor frail and oft-stained heart.

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHER AND DISCIPLE

Unlike Islām and most of the Protestant sects of Christendom, Vaishnavism shares with Catholic Religion the faith that a spiritual guide is absolutely necessary and that the human soul cannot tread unaided the path to absolute Truth. So, having spoken of the Lord who is the Source and also the Goal of that path, Narada goes on to speak of the Guide who leads the soul upon it.

The aim of creation, so far as we can deduce it, is the perfecting of the individual souls : in Hindu language, *Jiva* is to become *Mukta* in full union with *Siva* (i.e., for the Vaishnava, Krishna). Now *Siva* is the 'Beneficent, the Gracious One', and *Krishna* is the 'Attractive One'; so the very essence of the Goal is LOVE, union with LOVE. Therefore the Guide must be one who lives upon that LOVE and can awaken it in the pilgrim's heart ; those who lead to other goals—such as worldly wealth or fame, psychic powers, fleshly pleasures, mere ethical virtues, or self-centred 'liberation' from desire and illusion—mislead the soul ; no true Guides are they, but deceivers to be avoided like a plague. The real Guru is he who step by step assimilates his pupil to the Lord through surrender and loving service and aspiring contemplation ; indeed, the real Guru is himself an incarnation of that Love and Wisdom which is the Lord.

11. Who is the Real Guru ?

1. O twice-born one,¹ go, go swiftly to Sankara,² the ocean of wisdom, (1 : 2 : 7) Guru of the gurus of the Wise,³ (1 : 2 : 55) and make Sankara (your) Guru. (1 : 2 : 46) Get, O get the mature devotion to Hari of which the Vaishnavas speak, the axe that severs the world's tough bonds; (1 : 2 : 7) for mature devotion to Hari is the means for overcoming the world.⁴ (1 : 2 : 47)

2. He who would know (God) through devotion must at all costs resort to a spiritual Guide intent on refining the mind, a God-knower whose body ever since the time of total ruin has been cleansed from the band of foes, (one) most excellent and full of devotion to Krishna's two lotus feet, . . . acquainted

¹ Those born from the womb, physically, are the 'once-born'; those who have received the 'sacred thread' and so been initiated into Hindu society as fit for teaching are the 'twice-born'; those who have received instruction from the Guru and so have come to God are the 'thrice-born'. Narada is here being sent to the Guru for initiation into the true *ināna*, which leads to devotion (*bhakti*).

² The deity Siva, Vishnu's greatest devotee, who resides in a Himalayan ashram, where He ever meditates on His Lord. As the great Ascetic, Siva often appears in the role of Guru in Hindu scriptures. Here, of course, there is no reference to the great philosopher of the 8th century, Sri Sankaracharya.

³ or : Gnostic (*jnāni*).

⁴ *lit* : the boat for crossing over (the ocean of) the world.

with the clear paths of Vedic scripture and the Agama, and generally approved by those who are truly learned. (3 : 7 : 2)

3. He is the Guru, he the honoured father, he the mother, he the husband (and) son, who imparts that devotion to Hari which cuts away the very root of *karma*.¹ (1 : 10 : 12) He is the father who gives wisdom, that wisdom which leads to devotion to Krishna, and the supremely pure (form of) devotion is that which brings (the mood of) loving service to Krishna. (1 : 1 : 18) It is the worship of Sri Krishna, most blessed of blessed things, which cures the disease of having to experience the results of action,² (totally) eliminating it. (1 : 10 : 13)

4. Now devotion is the way instantly to win Achyuta's³ gracious glance; it is only

¹ The soul is held bound by the results of its own past actions in this and earlier births, which it must reap in joy and sorrow until all are worn out and experienced to the 'utmost farthing'. But Vaishnavas teach that once the soul, even by a single act, surrenders totally to God, all its personal responsibilities cease and God undertakes the whole responsibility for that soul (cf. *Gītā* 9 : 22). Hereafter the events of life are no longer (regarded as) the effects of one's own past actions but (as) the loving guidance of an all-wise Teacher and Friend. In this way the very root of *karma* is destroyed; the soul goes free by becoming the servant of God, whose 'service is perfect freedom'.

² *karmopabhogarogānām-austadham*.

³ *lit*: un-falling, imperishable; a name of Vishnu, that is, Krishna.

he who is devoted to the Guru for the sake of the four aims of life¹ who can (really) serve Hari. (3 : 1 : 16) So in simple faith and contentment the wise should look upon his own Guru (as) Padmanabha and serve him for three years with his possessions and bodily voice. Then the Guru may impart the *mantra*, (3 : 7 : 3) for the Guru is to give this *mantra* (only) to a sincere disciple gifted with devotion. (5 : 1 : 3) Even a host of *mantras* constantly repeated cannot bring success unless properly imparted (by a Guru),² (3 : 7 : 4) and by the (real) Guru's imparting of wisdom (a disciple) learns both *mantra* and *tantra*.³ Now that is *mantra* and *tantra* through which arises devotion to Krishna. (2 : 8 : 23-24)

5. That Guru who points out the wrong road is the greatest enemy; he destroys a

¹ The four aims of life (*puruṣārtha*) are wealth and fame (*artha*), pleasure (*kāma*), the sense of duty and righteousness (*dharma*), and the realisation of truth (*mokṣa*). To these Vaiṣṇavas add a fifth: devotion and surrender to the Lord (*bhakti-prapatti*).

² The Sikh Gurus also insist on the vital need for the Name to be passed on to the disciple by the proper Guru, if it is to fructify and change the life (cf. GGG).

³ The ritual and doctrine governing certain secret knowledge which is conveyed by the proper Guru to a qualified disciple. Sir John Woodroffe ('Arthur Avalon') has written several valuable books in English on this topic, but most of the Tantric Scriptures remain untranslated.

birth and certainly becomes the slayer of (his) disciple, (2 : 8 : 26-27) while the wise¹ Guru who is strong (enough) rescues the disciple (drowning) in the ocean of the world. How can a Guru who is himself imperfect and weak save (another)? It is proper to forsake a Guru who is proud and yet does not know what to do or not to do and (so) strays on the wrong path. That Guru who imparts faulty knowledge is the greatest foe; the true disciple salutes him and departs to a Guru who (can) give (true) wisdom. (1 : 10 : 19-21)

6. He who points out the road to Krishna is indeed the relative, he the father, the friend and mother, he is the brother, husband, son. (2 : 8 : 24-25) Devotees do not care for anything that holds them back from devotion to Krishna; (such a one), O sage, desires only to enjoy the wages of Krishna.² (2 : 8 : 5) O give me devotion to Hari and the love of repeating³

¹ *lit* : Gnostic (*jnāni*).

² The only reward for his service of the Lord which a real devotee will look at is the possession of the Lord Himself. The Beloved is the only possible reward for love. "Desire God for Himself, and not for anything that He can give," as H. P. B. wrote in her *Practical Occultism*. The Gods readily offer "boons", but the devotee rejects all boons save increase of love and inseparability from the Lord.

³ *lit* : serving, enjoying.

His Name; my Lord, let there be always an intense thirst for telling of (His glory)!¹
(1 : 8 : 27)

When the seeker is ready, God Himself takes form as the Guru to guide him to His feet. In the true God-given teacher the seeker perceives God Himself; he can make no progress on the spiritual path if unready to follow that teacher to the very letter, honouring him as the vehicle, the very self, of the Beloved whom he longs to know and love.

And what does the true Guru always give as his teaching? There can be only one path to the Lord of Love, and that is the path of love itself. His apostle always has the power to awaken, to fan the flame of, that love in the heart until it becomes a roaring fire to burn away all dross and so purify the heart's metal to finest gold. Only love for God, devotion to Him, can ever really break the chains of worldliness and set man free to enter the higher plane of God-Life. In all religions this is the first commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." For it is only this true love for the True which can overcome the false glamour and attraction of the world.

Love cannot be taught from books alone; it kindles from the touch of a loving heart, from the sweet talk and manly devotion of a Saint, one who himself burns with the holy fire and in its flame has destroyed the chains of sin and ungodliness. Such a Guru must be sought, then, one who is earnest and pure, devoted to God, well acquainted with Scripture and the rules of worship, and of good personal reputation. Only such a one can be God's apostle, the real Guru; he is more than father or mother, because he leads us to the eternal Father-Mother of the whole universe, the All in all. The only knowledge

¹ *i.e.*, *gunas*, *lit* : the qualities, or nature of God.

fit to be acquired is that which makes us love God and long to serve Him ; this frees us from anxiety about the lower world's pains and sorrows and fleeting joys.

Devotion to such a teacher goes straight to God Himself, for "he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me"; how can one honour God by dishonouring His messenger and representative? Humble service and obedience, then, to the chosen teacher, and after due probation the teacher imparts the holy Name of God to his worthy disciple. For God's Name has power to mould the life only when thus received from a real Guru, a true devotee and saint of the Lord whose Name it is. And then it avails to awaken fiery devotion for Him in the disciple's heart.

What can we say of the false 'Guru', who struts on the arrogant stage of Advaita, deceiving the 'little child' who blindly trusts him by his lying words about his own perfect divinity: "*Aham Brahmāsmi!*" indeed! Such is the greatest foe of the aspirant, to be fled like a snake filled with venom which sows certain death in the soul. It is only the strong can save the weak; unless the Guru be himself strong in love and humility, how can he guide the disciple to the humble Lord of Love? The earnest seeker must at once leave such a weak or false Guru, who rejects the Lord's strength to stand on his own fancied power; he will then look elsewhere for one who knows how to lead him to humble love and service, not to this satanic pride of egotism.

This devotion to God's holy feet is life's only worthy goal; it is attained through passionate, unswerving, unforgetting, loving memory of the Beloved from whom we come, to whom we go, in whom we live. Nothing else but this is of any value at all. Heaven itself were a mere distraction, a hell, if it were not the service of God in His delicious presence. All the powers of soul and mind and body belong to hell if they be not surrendered to Him and dedicated to His service. All

the delights the mind and heart could conceive are snares and poisons unless they lead to the total giving of the self to Him. Life's only real joy is the agony of longing for Him, the burning pain of His seeming absence, the crying out to Him to be the Saviour.

12. The Real Guru is God Himself

1. O Sage, on the head of all there is a thousand-petalled lotus,¹ and there indeed in a subtle form the Guru ever dwells; the image of that Guru is everywhere (seen) in human shape. Krishna Himself is in the form of the Guru in order to do good to the disciples, (2 : 8 : 19-20) the best of Gurus, the Universal Lord, the Infinite dwelling in the body. (4 : 4 : 8)

2. (His) fascination is but a fragment of the Form that puts an end to Hell; charming (all) with the sweet notes of (His) Flute, He enters the heart and disturbs the three worlds, the Darling of the Gopis enters in. (3 : 1 : 11) Nothing has He . . . to be gained at

¹ The *sahasrāra-cakra*, where is centred the Divine Intuition which is in fact the Real Guru, that is, the Lord Himself, who takes outer form as teacher only to convey His grace to the loving disciple who needs to see as well as hear. But we must never forget that the Guru is the Self within our self, the *Sarvīn*, as St. Augustine also taught: "As the soul is the life of the body, so God is the life of the soul." (quoted in Tanquerey: *The Spiritual Life*, p. 60).

all,¹ and yet He works righteousness in order to protect the good.² (4 : 3 : 209-210) As the One Guru in the heart of moving and unmoving (creatures) He saves people from the great delusion. (5 : 2 : 35)

3. The 'Gurudeva' is God, the Guru is worshipful and higher than the highest; if Hari be vexed but the Guru pleased, the Guru **will be** the protecting lord; but if all (else) be pleased and the Guru vexed, no one is able to protect. (2 : 8 : 22-23) When the Guru is pleased, Hari is pleased, and Hari being pleased, (so are) the three worlds. "The Guru is Creator, the Guru is Pervader, the Guru is God the great Lord."³ (2 : 8 : 21)

No book can teach what is not already latent in the reader's mind; no Guru can teach what the disciple does not realise as true.¹ This is because really the touchstone of all teaching is within; unconsciously the hearer refers what he hears to that inner knowledge, that instinct, of what is true. In every human soul there is that Divine standard of truth which one who looks carefully and in the right way can see for himself. And that standard is the real Guru, whatever outward form He may assume for the delight of minds obsessed by the

¹ Being already infinite, all-embracing, omnipresent, what else can He gain? (cf. GH 11 : 1 and GZ 7 : 8)

² Cf. *Gita* 4 : 8 and GGG. 1 : 1

³ This verse is quoted also in the *Guruvandanam*; it originates in the *Sarvasāra Tantra*.

reality of form. Essentially, that standard is the one real Truth, Krishna Himself, who dwells ever in the centre of the *sahasrāra-cakra* to illumine the soul. It is when out of sheer goodness this Divine Teacher enters the heart and there takes His seat, to guide and rule the life, that He wins it from darkness and all 'evil' and consecrates it to life's supreme end, which is the loving service of Himself (*dāsya-bhakti*).

Seeing the outer Guru, then, as a mere reflection of the Real Guru who ever abides within, the disciple will see in him none but God Himself. Then he knows that as he serves this God-given teacher, so he serves and delights God Himself, and thus fulfils the essential duty of all the worlds that God has made. In the Guru who leads his soul to love God—and every other is a *false* Guru, to be abandoned at once—he recognises the whole Mājesty of the Divine Trinity, creating, preserving and destroying; and in his own heart the Guru performs these three Divine functions.

13. The Path of Yoga

1. Yoga is the name (given) to the feeling¹ of the very Self of one's own body : (4 : 10 : 22) Vishnu² is always to be remembered, never to be forgotten at any time, (4 : 2 : 23) nor is there any liberation for a non-Vaishnava. (4 : 3 : 190) As in the Kali Age³ there are no

¹ or : experience; it is a direct personal consciousness of the Real.

² The 'all-pervading', and thus the immanent or Inner Self.

³ The last of the Four Ages: *Satya*, *Trcta*, *Dwāpara* and *Kali*; it began with the 'death' or withdrawal of Sri Krishna about B.C. 2500, and in it abound evil and growing weakness; man is

such rites as the (Vedic) Sacrifices—only the Name of Hari alone—there is (now) no other means for the liberation of men. (4 : 8 : 9) That man who in the Kali Age constantly sings and dances before Kesava¹ earns the fruit of a horse-sacrifice² at every step; he who continues to bow before Sri Sadhi and clings to the company of Hari's people (escapes from) sin. (4 : 11 : 22-23) As Hari continually takes away the sins which give rise to sorrow, . . . He is known as HARI. . . . (But) in fact there is really no end to His Names, even if it were possible to count the dust of the earth. (5 : 8 : 25, 30)

2. Receive initiation from the Spiritual Guide in the dark half of the month of Chaitra³ and in a holy place. . . . Having

'fallen', his life is shortened, his powers curtailed. No longer can he truly meditate, nor can he properly perform the ancient Sacrifices; the only ways he can now approach God are through devotion to His Name and offering to Him all he does and says and feels. The *Kaivalyāshṭakam*, printed in Swāmi Sivānanda's *Stotra Ratnamūla*, bases on this theme: "In this fallen age only God's Name avails."

¹ *lit*: the 'hairy one', alluding to Sri Krishna's beautiful long dark hair.

² One of the most difficult and costly of sacrifices prescribed by the Vedas, and therefore among the most meritorious.

³ The first month of the season Vasanta (spring) and of the Hindu solar year, corresponding to March-April, so an auspicious time for the starting of a new life.

taken (your) bath and so on, and finished (your) bodily worship, . . . (being) pure, silent and chaste,¹ eating (only) at night, and repeating the Name with a quiet mind on a string of pure lotus seeds, giving kindly attention to cows and grazing them, and with sincere compassion being gentle to (all) creatures, worshipping Durga² the Goddess of the *mantra*, and the Guru (who is) the Sun (driving away) the shadow of foolishness, having fulfilled the duties laid down by (your) state of life³ and repeated the *mantra*, **you** should wet the body in the act of bathing. (3 : 10 : 1-4) After daily making the body shine⁴ at daybreak, . . . having turned in a solitary house⁵ to Krishna cling devotedly⁶ (to Him). (3 : 10 : 9)

¹ *lit* : *Brahmacāri*, i.e., one treading the path to God by perfect purity of body and mind.

² The Goddess in Her rather terrible aspect as Destroyer ; also known as Kālī, loved and worshipped by Sri Rāmakrishna as " the Mother " .

³ *lit* : *Varnāśram*, the the duties of the ' caste ' ; Brahman, Kṣātrīya, Vāis'ya or S'ūdra. Without fulfilling worldly duties no man has a right to turn away to seek his own personal ' salvation ' .

⁴ *Or* : worship : the very act of worshipping a body causes it to glow with a certain *tejus* or glory due to the faith of the worshipper.

⁵ The need for being alone in all spiritual practice, if it is to be *real*, has been found by all sincere seekers after God, of every creed.

⁶ The word used here is *prayajet*.

3. Transcending the limits of space and time and fixing the mind on Krishna, the soul is swiftly¹ merged in Him by becoming one with God ;² or if the unclean mind does not succeed at once, the yogi should repeat his efforts at union by uniting with His 'limbs'³, . . . persevering⁴ in self-concentration until the mind loses itself⁵ in Krishna, (5 : 10 : 32-33, 38) who is held to His own beauty by a pair of large and eagerly roving eyes. (5 : 2 : 51)

4. Having said that He is dancing . . . once again, bow down to the sound of the dancing of Devaki's Son⁶ **you** seem to hear.

¹ or : immediately ; there is some idea of the directness of this action, no mediate means being necessary for it.

² On merging into the Impersonal God, Brahm, the soul finds beyond Him as it were the Supreme Divine Person, Purushottama Krishna Vasudeva. The realisation of Advaita truth is in fact the mere preliminary to real *jnāna*, or Gnosis, which is the knowledge and love of God. This is made clear by an unbiased study of the *Gita* and of the *Sāṅdilya Bhakti Sūtras*.

³ *lit* : *amsas*, partial manifestations of God, such as the Avataras, *arca*, saints, etc. But the word may also refer to parts of His image or living Form, as Lucie Christine gradually saw one limb after another of the Christ until His glory could be fully revealed to her (cf. Fr. Poulain's book and Bh. 2 : 2 : 13-14).

⁴ cf. *Gita* 12 : 9, and innumerable other passages to the same effect.

⁵ or : dissolves.

⁶ Devaki, wife of Vasudeva, was the real mother of Krishna in His visible form at Mathura and Brindavan.

(3 : 14 : 37) Let the wise one in this way drink the sweet juice of the Supreme God,¹ (for) having drunk this nectar even if death comes there will be no (more) birth (for him).
 (5 : 11 : 29) Once the highest Truth is known there is no longer (any) need for rules ; what work is there for a fan when you have obtained the North Wind ? (5 : 10 : 40)

Yoga is nothing mysterious or esoteric ; it is simply the direct personal experience of self-realisation which cannot be gained from any book. That self which is to be realised is in fact the One Omnipresent Deity Vishnu, who is equally in all, to be served, obeyed and loved by all, to be ceaselessly remembered by all who would live a truly human life. None can attain the goal of humanity save after realising this all-pervading Self and devoting himself to fulfil its ends. In this degenerate age man can no longer achieve the deep contemplation, the sacrifices and rituals of earlier ages ; his only way to realise the Self is through at-one-ment by the Name—in loving and reverent repetition. This gives results a thousand ceremonies or holocausts cannot attain, as anyone may find for himself by experiment under the prescribed conditions. In the presence of a saint or devotee, continually bathed in God-remembrance by hallowing His holy Name, it is impossible to sin or to fall away from the light. Even with the best will and heroic efforts the mere self-conscious practice of virtues can never reach this end ; saints on other lines have been tortured for years by dark desires born in the flesh. The very Name HARI means 'the Saviour', who takes away the sin and sorrow of the devotee who relies

¹ or : path of the love of the Supreme God : (*Parambrahmarasāyanam*).

on Him; the Name KRISHNA means 'Attractive', because His love draws to Him all hearts that are not stone (cf. GMC 30 : 4). But there is no end to God's Names (cf. GH 9 : 4 and GGG 13 : 3); in various cults various Names are rightly honoured, and the lover of God finds all noble beautiful Names are His (cf. GI 97 : 2), and uses each or all as channels for His realisation (cf. *Gita* 9 : 23).

At the proper place and time according to the ancient laws the aspirant should approach his chosen Guru after discharging his duties to society and purified himself so far as he can by washing and by noble acts. The sacred Word for contemplation then bestowed on him he should retire with to some lonely place and by that means cling closely to the Lord. Swiftly passing beyond all limits of this lower world (cf. GH 42 : 3), the soul plunges into the Impersonal Self beyond itself and becomes one with that (the *Pratyagātma*); thereby it is merged for a while into the ineffable bliss which is Krishna's Life. If impurities in the mind forbid so swift an atoning with the Divine, it may yet be attained by constant practice (cf. *Gita* 12 : 9)—using as a help to concentration some actual image or picture of the Beloved and trying to *melt* as it were into the feet of that, or to become the Flute set musically to His lips and perfectly obedient to His lightest will, thus charming the whole world with His sweet melody. If there be difficulty in these methods, a mere glance at the soft expression in His eyes, or the sweet curves of His ruby lips, will certainly captivate the mind and plunge it deep into all-absorption. Thus the Tamil Saint Tiruppānālvār in his immortal *Amalanādirān* meditates in turn on Sri Ranga's feet, robe, navel, waist, breast, neck, mouth, eyes, and only then on the body as a whole.

In that deep trance of bliss the inner sense awakes, and the devotee actually *sees* the Lord dancing on the grass before his very eyes and *hears* the tinkling bells

upon His graceful dancing feet. Such intense bliss does the *sākṣātkāra-darsan* confer on him that he can never again fancy himself as the embodied one with pains to undergo, troubles to endure, death to face at last. Whatever may appear to others, to him at least the whole of life beomes an unbroken bliss in the realised ecstasy of his Beloved's eternal presence. All Scriptures, rules and moral codes then fall away from him (cf. *Gīta* 2 : 46); how could one who always dwells with the Perfect Lord do anything to offend Him, how for a moment be so far separate from Him as to act for a moment other than in perfect consonance with His will?

14. The Best of Sons

1. It is the son devoted to Krishna who wins a good name in India and easily purifies a hundred generations by his very birth;¹ (1 : 1 : 25) a father is happy on account of a true son devoted to Vishnu and steady in righteousness. (With) you . . . (as my) son, my birth and life are certainly (made) fruitful. (1 : 2 : 55-56)

2. Now worship² the Highest Bliss, Nanda's blissful Child; you will certainly go to Goloka, the supreme bliss for which you yearn.

¹ This seems an exaggeration until one remembers how the birth of a saint glorifies the whole family. Who would have thought of Sārada Devi but for Rāmakrishna, or of Joseph but for Jesus?

² *lit* : sing hymns to, (*bhaja*).

That family is holy,¹ blessed, glorious and free from danger wherein is born a virtuous² man absorbed in Krishna ; (1 : 4 : 9-10) you are happy, and a learned devotee of Hari, my son ! (1 : 2 : 26)

This perfect alignment of the human soul with the infinitely perfect Will of the all-beloved God is the only real purpose of creation ; he who has attained to this has reached life's goal, has fulfilled the long pilgrimage of ages, 'come home' to the loving patiently waiting Father. The earthly father of such a son has indeed been blessed, his life has been made worth while, together with all the generations which went before to prepare his way and to form a body through which he would love his God.

Narada is now assured by his own Guru that he himself is such a son, that his future is certain—in the blissful Lord's intimate companionship, so that his whole family are blessed by his being born among them, and in their turn will certainly attain to God through the grace of his wondrous merit. Indeed, a Saint in a family transforms its whole atmosphere.

¹ or : pure (*pāvanam*).

² or : holy (*bunyaḥ*).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DÉVOTÉE

The rich man may give gifts, but the pauper cannot even if he will. Only the true lover of God can by his words and example and very atmosphere kindle that fire of love in another's heart, so unless the Guru is himself God's sincere devotee he cannot but be a deceiver and lead his unhappy pupil into the mire of worldliness and pride. The real devotee is, even if he never open his mouth or do anything towards the 'service' of his neighbours, a continuous blessing to the world; his very presence uplifts it towards holiness and peace. He may seem to suffer in the world, but his sufferings only draw him nearer to the source of eternal bliss (cf. *Wisd.* 3 : 1-8); his beloved Master always keeps him under His loving eye and works out everything for his good until he is ready for perfect union with Him. Nor does he care for anything but this; the tempting tinsel of heaven cannot attract his gaze for a moment away from his adored Saviour, no boon can make him abate his thirst for the Infinite Beloved of his heart. The very sight of such a one inspires, leads and strengthens others on the path.

15. The Teacher Must be God's Lover

1. In devotion to the Guru the body obtains all knowledges, the body (obtains) all

Gods, the body (obtains) all holy places.¹ Until a Guru is chosen one cannot win Liberation; therefore a Guru must be chosen, (for) there is no success without a Guru. Like a house without a light, so (is it) if there be no Guru; a Guru must necessarily be chosen if a man is to gain right² vision; like a moonless night, like a sunless day, like a kingless army, so is a man without a Guru.³ (NG 2.5) A wandering yogi, a *sannyasi*, or a Brahmana—none of these (is to be taken); true, true is my word: the initiating Guru (must be) a Vaishnava.⁴ (NG 7) Speech without Grammar, food without salt, such is initiation without a Vaishnava! (This is) doubly true, O Narada! (NG 13)

¹ All that is really needed for the spiritual life comes spontaneously to the one devoted to the Guru. This was amply proved in the lives of several of the great Sikh Gurus.

² or: beatific. The meaning is like that of the 'divine eye' of *Gita* 11 : 8 and the 'bodiless eye' of *GH* 41 : 3.

³ In our 'democratic age' we like to flatter ourselves that one is as good as another and that the Path needs no Guide. This is the fallacy of the 'Protestant'; the Catholics have more truly held to the ancient teaching which experience proves, that to avoid disaster a spiritual director is absolutely essential.

⁴ Again, a warning that this is no sectarian insistence on one special Name for God; the word is to be taken as simply equal to 'devotee'. The only safe path to God is devotion to Him, so unless the teacher be himself a devotee he cannot possibly guide rightly. It is 'the blind leading the blind': both will fall into the most utter ruin.

2. Those who know ancient things call him a supremely pure Vaishnava into whose ear the Krishna-*mantra* has entered as¹ the Guru's *mantra*, (2 : 2 : 15) and (whose) ear the Krishna-*mantra* approaches from the mouth of the twice-born. (1 : 9 : 21) With devotion (can) the devotee receive the Krishna-*mantra* from a Vaishnava, for no devotion to Hari grows when it has been received from a non-Vaishnava.² The man who is against Sri Krishna is a sinner even worse than the out-caste ;³ his religion and action are fruitless, he is unfit to do (anything). (2 : 2 : 12-13) Without (receiving) initiation from a Vaishnava, a man is without instruction ; (in such a case) both Guru and disciple go to the deepest hell. (NG 10)

Yes, for how can one indifferent to the real Good possibly teach another to be devoted thereto? Would that some such qualification were still insisted on from every teacher in the secular schools of our poor godless age! As the student must seek all divine influences in his teacher, how essential it is that the latter be himself a man of God, filled with the holy spirit of devotion and self-surrender! Without a reliable guide how can man

¹ *lit* : from.

² This is why many complain that even after * taking the Name, assiduously for years they have found no fruit.

³ The word used is *cāṇḍal*.

safely thread his way along the silent lonely path that leads to God, the 'alone to the Alone'? That way is hard as treading a razor-edge over a windy gorge through a blizzard in the darkest midnight. Un-led, a man easily falls into the vagaries of self-deception, flatters himself he can stand alone, arrogates all wisdom to himself—and pride soon leads him to a heavy fall!

What sort of guide, then, is a man to seek? A clever man, a man who makes an outer show of renunciation, a learned man of high caste and education? Not necessarily. What is essential is only that he be a real lover of God, the God within each living soul; for the teaching of all who do not love God can only be a snare and a delusion.

One taught rightly by such a true Teacher, afire with love's holy flames, and duly initiated into that intimate communion with God which comes from the right use of His Name, without 'Offence'—becomes himself a true Vaishnava, or devotee. For this devotion is highly contagious; it is conveyed from man to man by a touch, a word, a look, by their mere silent physical contiguity, or even by the very handling of the relic of some old time saint, or the reading of his book. The Name, which is God Himself manifested through Sound (the *Nāda-Brahman*), can only be conveyed by one who knows and loves God; the unhappy pupil of an egoist or atheist may learn the very noblest ethic and theology but can never come in real touch with God until he leaves that false teacher for a real Guru qualified to give the touch of Divine Grace. One who loves not God may have all the outer virtues, all spiritual powers, all worldly knowledge from books, great skill in pedagogy; but he is no Teacher, nothing but the vilest pretender and blackest sinner. For there is no sin so terrible as the deliberate ignorance of God (cf. GH 29 : 12-13), and that is the sin characteristic of our own day. In the spiritual life such a sinner can achieve *nothing*; his birth as a man

is vain, and he cannot but fall at last into the most awful hell, dragging with him all who have been so unfortunate as to come under his pernicious influence.

16. The Greatness of a Vaishnava

1. The best of the twice-born who can receive the Vishnu-*mantra* from a Vaishnava is freed from the unconquered sins of a crore of births;¹ this is not to be doubted. By the very sight of those who adore² the Krishna-*mantra* he is immediately freed from the unconquered sins of a hundred births;³ there is no doubt of this. (1 : 9 : 27-28)

2. (O Narada), by the touch, even by the sight of a Vaishnava water, fire, earth are at once made pure and the air⁴ is purified. The Gods continuously long for the sight of Vaishnavas, for nothing in the whole universe is

¹ Note that it is not only the results of past actions which are destroyed by a true initiation and surrender to God, but the very tendency to fall again into the old sins of the past.

² The word used here and in such places is *upāsakānam*, which implies a delighted adherence to, a reverence for, a steady practice of.

³ No matter how many bad *karmas* and *vāsanās* may have accumulated on life's long road, the acceptance with faith from a qualified Guru of the Name of God is like baptism in that it destroys all trace of sin and restores the soul to that pristine purity wherewith it first came from God (cf. GZ 31 : 1 and 46 : 4).

⁴ or ; wind.

purier than a Vaishnava. (1 : 9 : 29-30) Fire is extremely pure, pure is clean water, the land of India¹ is pure, (so are) the holy place (and) this Tulasi plant; but a holy man absorbed in Krishna² easily purifies (them all), and even these reverently yearn even for the lightest touch of a devotee. The dust of a devotee's foot at once purifies the earth; indeed there is nothing in the three worlds greater than Sri Krishna's servant. (1 : 2 : 21-23)

3. Flowing waters, holy places, lifeless images³ of the Gods—these do not purify even in a long time, but a Vaishnava (does so) by a glance; by the touch of a foot he at once sanctifies holy places, pure oceans, together with stony ground, forests, islands, and the earth (itself). (1 : 6 : 33-34) Even the holy places, nay the (whole) earth, intensely yearn for the talk, bodily contact and longed-for dust of (their) feet, so that they may themselves be holy. (1 : 9 : 19) Yes, the dust of the feet of such at once purifies the earth, it sanctifies

¹ *i.e.* *Bhārata-varṣa*.

² Skt; *śuddhaḥ Kṛṣṇaparāyanaḥ*.

³ *i.e.* not consecrated so as to become *arca* of the Lord.

all holy places even by a distant sight.¹
(1 : 13 : 16)

4. O Singer, holy indeed is the wind, the fire, water, the Tulasi plant ; holy also are indeed holy (waters) like Ganga ; holy is the modest,² pious and faithful woman devoted to (her) husband ; yet compared with (all these things) those who are absorbed in My *mantra* are always far more pure. (1 : 13 : 17-11) Holy places are sanctified by devotion, but the Vaishnava is pure in himself, so his *tantras* and alms and *s'rāddha*-ceremonies³ are unneeded.⁴ (1 : 13 : 20)

5. That man who worships Krishna in the form of the S'ālagrām-stone⁵ who daily takes the water from His feet and food offered (first to Him), (1 : 2 : 24) (who) repeats His Names, listens to His Story, and daily remembers His Forms, . . . he becomes humble

¹ or : vision (*darsan*).

² or : gentle.

³ The ceremonies performed for the sake of departed souls, generally by the eldest surviving son. Having God in himself, the devotee no longer needs rites ; for him they become a mere waste of time.

⁴ *lit* : fruitless.

⁵ A rounded smooth stone sacred to Vishnu and regarded as a natural Image for Him to manifest through to man.

through (his) devotion and is fit to be always honoured by the wise. (5 : 2 : 22)

6. As soon as he is born he purifies hundreds and hundreds of paternal ancestors —(each of them) goes at once to Goloka and is freed from the results of his actions. By his very birth he can uplift seven maternal generations, and with the greatest of ease (seven) of the girl whom he marries; the devotee of Krishna uplifts his mother and grandmother, wife, seven generations of descendants, brothers, sisters (and) daughters. He has earned the fruit of bathing in all holy places, of being initiated in all sacrifices and worships, of being admitted into every vow. (1 : 9 : 23-26)

7. O how infinite is the supremely wonderful greatness of (His) loving servants who practise selfless¹ devotion and ever control (their) emotions, who day and night meditate on Padmanābha's² lotus feet adored by Lakshmi³ and the Creator⁴ and praised by

¹ *lit* : uncaused (*ahaituki*), *i.e.*, without expectation of return.

² A name of Vishnu, from whose navel grew a lotus out of which came Brahmā the Creator.

³ Vishnu's Divine Consort, the goddess of wealth, success and family happiness. Incarnated as Rādhā in Brindāvan.

⁴ *lit* : Lord of the Lotus, *i.e.*, Brahmā, who rose from the lotus-navel of Vishnu.

such Gods as S'esha!¹ (1 : 9 : 17-18) My son, the water from the feet of those who are absorbed in the Krishna-*mantra* is pure, it purifies all holy places and the very earth itself. (1 : 9 : 20) The (whole) universe has been worshipped by him who has worshipped a Vaishnava ; (1 : 6 : 26) for such a one is indeed Vishnu's equal, nay, a part² of Him. (1 : 2 : 32) For the Vaishnavas are My body, and (this is) really true, O Narada ! (NG 16)

But who can over-praise the real lover of God ? The very sight of him walking down the street puts holy thoughts into the minds of passers-by, so that they feel a cool and refreshing breeze, as it were, of God's nectar sweeping through the dark corners of their own souls, making them all clean and sweet again. It is only the presence of such a saint that makes holy places holy, converts ordinary towns like Assisi or Navadwip, Dehu or Vadalur, into mighty dynamos of spiritual force that ray out holy influences on pilgrim streams for thousands of years on end. Where such a saint has lived, or died, becomes a shrine for future ages, and without the actual presence of a saint or some relic of his no place on earth can gain such holy power. And this is why the earth itself is ever longing for saints to glorify it ; and yet that longing earth is still unworthy of the saint, unable to bear his living presence and preferring to worship his dead relics !

The lives of saints in all lands are full of instances where a mere brief contact has been enough to change

¹ The Serpent whereon Vishnu slept, who praises Him ceaselessly with a thousand mouths. Incarnated as Balarāma, brother of Krishna.

² *lit* : *amsa*, a minor incarnation.

the whole nature of a criminal; so Jagai and Madhai were converted in a moment by Chaitanya, and the terrible brigand 'Brother Wolf' by St. Francis. The very beasts and birds seem to enjoy, to long for, their company, as the larks swarmed round St. Francis and wild beasts danced to the Name on Chaitanya's lips. Far holier is the saint than the holiest things on earth, for his holiness has had to be won by long and brave efforts against the constant retrogressions of the fickle mind and ever-restless flesh. None who have even touched the path to holiness can believe it passes over rose-petals and has no thorns. But it is by constant dwelling on the Beloved Lord, constant taking refuge in Him, constant worship of Him in various dear forms, constant reading and talking and hearing of Him and of His blissful doings—that the devotee becomes at last a saint, whose very birth into the world uplifts his family, town, native land, nay, the earth itself. Dyed with the love of God's Name, saturated in His Divine Essence, the saint becomes spontaneously an ocean of all the virtues, the receptacle of all merits, the very incarnation of the Lord Himself. For "there is no difference between the Lord and His saints", nor even for a moment can the Supreme Lover be separated from His beloved.

17. God's Infinite Love for His Devotee

1. Never can misfortune come to Vasudeva's¹ devotees . . . because of (their) ceaseless remembering (of God).² (1 : 14 : 26) (The

¹ The Supreme Lord, Krishna, who includes in Himself the three other Vyuhās.

² What the world regards as misfortune will certainly come to the devotee, but he regards it as a blessing because it helps to draw the heart from this unsatisfactory world to rest more fully in the Lord of Love. As his joys and sorrows equally come from God, they are equally welcome to him who is entirely surrendered to His dear will (cf. GGG. 16 : 1)

Lord Sri Krishna Himself says :) “ Be calm and shed all fear. What fear has the devotee, abode of blessedness, who is firm in Me? On the contrary, there is no fear at all for My devotees, who have nothing (more) to do ;¹ such have no fear of birth and death, old age and disease. (1 : 13 : 8-9) I Myself appear and cut the root of their *karmas* ; it is others who do (not) love My *mantra* who must² suffer the effects of action. Now it was I Myself who gave My own *mantra* to the ‘ Person ’³ ; and it is I who give Liberation to the devotee who has received (the *mantra*) from another.”⁴ (1 : 13 : 24-25)

2. To Krishna the Oversoul⁵ nothing at all is dearer than the devotee ;⁶ not even the Self is greater than he, nor life, nor bodies, nor

¹ Henceforth the *devotee* does nothing ; all his apparent actions are really performed by the Lord through him, and they cannot bind him to their results (cf. *Gita* 5 : 8, 10, 11 ; 33 and 18 : 12).

² or : can, may.

³ Before all Time the Supreme gave His *mantra* to the Creator Himself, who used it to create the universe (cf. *Gopālatūpinīyopaniṣad*, 25).

⁴ Though the Guru who gives the *mantra* seems to be a man, it is really Krishna, the Self, who appears in that form to satisfy His devotee's need.

⁵ *lit* : Paramātmā, the Supreme Self.

⁶ cf. *Gita* 18 : 69.

Lakshmi, Radhika, Saraswathi,¹ the Self-Existing,² nor even the Giver of Happiness.³ (1 : 2 : 35) The fiery disc⁴ ever watches on guard to protect him ; (made) sinless through his very meditation, he purifies the three worlds. (1 : 2 : 33)

3. But even after giving the disc to protect (him) Janardana⁵ is not free from anxiety ; He Himself goes up to him to see that he is safe : (1 : 2 : 34) even although he is happy, He cannot leave the beloved for a moment. Such an ocean of kindness (is He) and ever eager to shower grace upon the devotee ! This is why the saints never leave Him to serve another deity. (2 : 2 : 73-74) Krishna is the devotee's very life, and the Vaishnavas are the very life of Krishna ! The Vaishnavas meditate on Krishna, and so also Krishna on the Vaishnavas.⁶ (1 : 2 : 36)

¹ *lit* : Vāni, the Goddess of learning and the arts.

² *lit* : Swayambhu, *i.e.* Brahmā. .

³ *lit* : Sambhu, another name of Siva.

⁴ Krishna's *Sudarsana-cakra*, the whirling disc which protects His devotees and destroys His foes. It is the creative force (*kriyā-sakti*) of the Lord, described in the *Ahīrbudhnyu Samhitā*, 3 : 30, as " will (*icchā*) embodied in wisdom (*prekṣā*) and resulting in action (*kriyā*) " the perpetual support and thread of the whole universe, and the " Wheel of Motion " .

⁵ *lit* : ' slayer of people ' , or ' prayed to for prosperity by people ' , a Name of Krishna.

⁶ cf. Bh. 7 : 14 : 42.

It is impossible to exhaust the assurances given in every religion that God loves His devotee with an endless and eternal love (cf. *Jer.* 31 : 3). The Gita, St. John's Gospel, the Guru Granth are full of this, and every other Scripture in the world supports their testimony. How could He who Himself is perfect Love let a mere mortal excel Him in love? He becomes an absolute protection of one who takes refuge in Him, an inexhaustible fountain of blessing, a fathomless abyss of kindness. No more anxiety, nor fear of life or death, nor irksome duties to be performed! Existence then becomes a blissful stream of calm contemplation of the Beloved and a ceaseless activity of joyous service to the One who is all in all and more than all. No longer need the devotee worry about the results of what he does in the world: his mistakes will be made good, changed into blessings, by God's hand; in all good faith he can act fearlessly as the spirit within him seems to prompt him, for in every action he sees only the activity of his beloved Lord. No act of his can bind him any more, for he is no longer the real actor—only a tool in the real Doer's hand—"not I but Christ who lives in me". And as the Guru of such a blessed pupil is really the Lord Himself, it remains His responsibility to guide every little act and thought and feeling, to uphold him in all difficulties, to carry him over the rough waves to the smooth harbour of life's goal.

God, who is LOVE, who is the real Self within each human self, cannot but love such a lover of His with supreme passionate attachment; to Him nothing on earth, nothing in Heaven, could be more dear than the human soul which in dark faith has given all for Him, has staked its all on Him, has sold itself into sweet slavery for Him. Indeed, He becomes the slave of such a soul, protects him day and night with all loving assiduity, and helps him through his contemplation of Himself towards perfect purity of heart and mind.

But even this is not enough. Unsatisfied by 'giving His angels charge concerning' such a lover, this loving God of ours follows them up Himself, personally seeing that all is well with him and that all his seeming sorrows work out for his good. Never for a moment can He leave him alone, even when the swirling clouds of *māyā* around the poor soul deceive him into the thought that he has been forsaken (cf. *Mt.* 27 : 46). No, Krishna runs after him, ever more eager to give His grace than he can possibly be to receive it, and pours on him the richest blessings of His love. What wonder then that His Name is so beloved to the Vaishnava that even for a moment he cannot think of turning away to any other! Absorbed in one another, blended in a perfect duality of inner unity, Bhakta and Bhagavan, devotee and Lord, bathe in each other's love and grow intoxicated in the sweetness of that communion. As the *Bhāgavatam* puts it (9 : 4 : 68) : "The devotees are My heart, and I am the heart of devotees; they know nobody but Me, and I know none but them."

18. Liberation and Bliss

1. If the mind abandons life while consciously remembering Krishna, then Liberation (follows).¹ (2 : 7 : 7) Even shaving the head in Prayag² is a great cause of Nirvana; (and) the

¹ cf. *Gita* 8 : 10, 13,

² The gift of one's personal beauty by sacrificing the hair to a certain deity has often been held as a most purifying act; even today it is the usual custom among pilgrims to Tirupati and many other places. Prayag, very near the modern Allahabad, is situated where the two holy rivers Ganga and Yamuna meet; it has always been regarded therefore as a very holy place to bathe at, and pilgrims swarm there throughout the year.

swaying of Govinda's cradle in the holy¹ forest of Brindavan. From the very sight of a king of Brahmans² (comes) a great cause of Nirvana ;³ Nirvana (also comes) through one glimpse of Madhusudana⁴ seated on (His) bed ; Nirvana (comes) also through a mere glimpse of Vamana⁵ standing on (His) chariot ; also (it is enough) to adore, see or worship Radha on the full moon (night) of Karttika.⁶ (2 : 7 : 14-16)

2. My child, wherever it be and on (any) day the singing together of Hari's Name while worshipping Sri Krishna by a vow is the supreme seed of Nirvana ; any deed by which good men surrender with devotion to Krishna (the fruits of) that action⁷ uproots *karma*, and that remembering of Him is the cause of Liberation. (2 : 7 : 33-34) The giving of fearlessness

¹ *lit* : virtuous (*puṇye*).

² *lit* : Viprendra.

³ Nirvāṇa, *lit* the 'blowing out' ; the cessation of the stormy and restless separate self, merged in the eternal Peace of the Real Self.

⁴ A name of Sri Krishna : *lit* : the slayer of the (demon) Madhu.

⁵ *lit* : the dwarf, one of the Avatars of Vishnu, who came to humble a great Emperor Bali and to enable him to surrender to Him and so obtain His grace.

⁶ The eighth Hindu month, October-November, ever-holy for the celebration at its full moon of the *Rāsa-kriḍā*, mystic dance, by Krishna and the Gopis (Bh. 10 : 29).

⁷ cf. *Gita* 3 : 19, 30.

to souls and of protection to those who seek for help, and the bestowing of wisdom on the ignorant—(all this) is a supreme cause of Nirvana . . . ; gentleness is the highest religious duty,¹ the supreme cause of Nirvana. (2 : 7 : 49, 42)

3. Liberation is thus defined: "merging into Hari's lotus feet"; but Vaishnavas do not approve of even this Nirvana. In the order of enjoyment of beauty and giving of happiness, there are the four (kinds of) Liberation: sharing (His) world (with Him),² having the same powers,³ being near (to Him),⁴ and sharing (His) form.⁵ But, O Sage, better than all Liberation is Devotion and loving service to Sri Hari, (which is) approved by Vaishnavas as the very essence of essences, higher than the highest. (2 : 7 : 2-4)

¹ The oft-quoted saying: "*Ahimsā paramo dharmah*" appears here.

² *i.e.* *Sālokya* the usual aim of other religions: to go to Heaven to be with God.

³ *i.e.* *Sārṣṭi*, the finite soul becomes infinite and assumes Divine powers, such as omnipresence, eternity of being, etc.

⁴ *i.e.* *Sāmīpya*, the soul enjoys His blissful presence eternally as His friend and lover.

⁵ *i.e.* *Sārūpya*, equally beautiful with Him, sharing His infinite attractiveness. "We shall be like Him", says St. John (1 *Jn.* 3 : 2) when "this mortal shall have put on immortality", adds St. Paul (1 *Cor.* 15 : 54). In our *Nārada Pāncarātra* (4 : 10 : 25) is named in this place *Sāyūjya*, communion with and merging in Him.

Those who worship other deities may seek an impersonal 'liberation' from the ensnaring chain of birth and death; but devotees of the God of Love cannot for a moment long to be freed from His world. For they are never for an instant separate from Him in that world; nor can they ever feel burdensome a life shared by so all-infatuating a sweet Companion. The 'blowing-out' or 'extinction' (*nirvāṇa*) of passion, narrowing desires, and selfhood may be good enough for others to aim at; but the devotees have but one aim in life—the eternal blissful service of their Beloved Lord. Is it to this world He sends them, to labour and suffer in the flesh? Every moment of that suffering is a thrill of intoxicating joy because they are God's messengers, His playmates, His servants doing His will. The very sight of His picture, the very thought of Him releases them at once from any possible weariness or sorrow in worldly things and plunges them into ecstasy. And this is the only 'Nirvana' they long for, this is for them the highest 'Mukti', Liberation—to be free from all entanglements that might hold them back from His sweet service.

Nothing so quickly frees His lover from worldly anxiety or grief as to sing the holy Name together with others of His lovers. When those who love God come together to share their love for Him, as the Gopis met to talk of their 'absent' Krishna, His Divine Presence manifests and lifts them into the aura that surrounds Himself. The life of action as a pure sacrifice to Him, offering all to Him and doing it only for His sake as *kainkaryam*, equally releases from worldliness; and those who help others, who teach them to love Him who alone is worthy of all our love, the Beloved Krishna, those who protect and help those who are in need—these too are swiftly carried by the Lover of all His creatures into that eternal Bliss which is freedom from every evil. And those who cannot teach, who have no wealth or influence to help others, if they are kind and gentle—

that too is enough; His grace comes to them also and He takes them to Himself.

Sweet indeed it is to merge into union with the Beloved, the trance of delight in Brindavan's love-arbour, when, wearied with excess of love, the soul sinks into a mystic sleep in the Beloved's arms. Yet the best of Krishna's lovers do not seek this idle repose but prefer the joy of conscious sharing in His life and labour, playing with Him among the children of men, in whose company is His delight (cf. Prov. 8 : 31). To share His world with Him, to use His powers to serve His children and so to gladden His dear heart, to enjoy always His sweet intimacy in that common work, and best of all to take on His Divine image, to grow more and more like Him from day to day—these are 'Liberation' indeed for the Lord's lovers. But better than all these, which give the personal self of the devotee some satisfaction, is that simple unrewarded, hidden service such as Hanuman gave to Rama; in this the servant no longer has anything his own, not even his own personality, and he becomes simply a slave of the Lord. This is the highest goal, the devotee's desire, the essential teaching of all the noblest Vaishnava Scriptures, the very nectar of the Vedas. Before this aim, how petty, how tawdry, how selfish and mean the longing to enter Heaven, the delights of God's visible Presence for all eternity, must appear! The real devotee, Sri Krishna's Gopi lover, wants nothing whatever for herself and longs only to give delight to her Divine Beloved.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEVOTION

This, the middle chapter of our 'Gospel', is composed of the famous *Nārada Bhakti-Sūtras*, a work which has long been the standard of Hindu thought on Devotion. A *Sūtra* contains the maximum of content in the minimum of language; so the original of this chapter is extremely terse, even to the point of obscurity at times, and each line could be commented on by several volumes of the size of our 'Gospel.' It will be convenient therefore to treat each paragraph as a separate unit, so that the comments may be kept close to the text they mean to elucidate and expand.

After explaining what is Devotion, Narada tells how it may arise in the human soul and how it expresses itself in the outer life; he speaks a little of its immense value as the supreme path to God, and of the various forms in which it may manifest itself. We shall find the teachings of this valuable and oft commented tractate very close to those of the *Pañcharatra*, which is the source for most of our own 'Gospel of Narada'.

19. What is True Devotion?

1. So now we shall explain Devotion. Its form is an intense love for Him, and (its)

essential nature is immortal; ¹ having gained this, a person becomes perfect, he becomes imperishable, he becomes satisfied; ² when he attains to this he has no more desires, he neither mourns ³ nor does he hate, he neither exults nor does he get excited ⁴ (about anything). When he has come to know this he becomes ecstatic, he becomes still ⁵, he finds delight in the Self. ⁶ (BS 1-6)

By 'Devotion' the Vaishnava means an undying passionate deep love for God, the very possession of which makes a human soul perfect, immortal, blissful, free from all changing moods, ever calm and restful in Him. This blessed mystic state of ecstasy brings him to that 'peace which passes all understanding', wherein he abides in the Eternal Being, God Himself.

The devotee has only one desire: to taste love's sweetness more and more so that he may share in God's great Game. He cares nothing for the psychic powers that may crowd upon him, for a "loving devotee of Mine who has dedicated himself to Me seeks nothing else but Me" (Bh. 11 : 14 : 14), finding in God Himself all he wants. If he lives it is bliss to serve Him; if he dies it is also bliss to sleep in Him; it is bliss always, everywhere. His Beloved is everywhere; where then can

¹ or : nectar-sweet, (*amṛtasvarūpā*).

² i.e., his whole nature is fulfilled by the attainment of life's real goal.

³ or : grieves (at the loss of something).

⁴ or : eager.

⁵ lit : astonished, (*stabdhaḥ*), (cf. GH. 41 : 5).

⁶ Skt : *Atmārāmo bhavati*.

hatred be, or enmity, or fear? Nothing but his Lord smiling from every face, whispering in every sound. He spends whole days and nights in rapture, praising God, or absorbed in wordless union with his Beloved.

2. **Devotion** is desireless,¹ being essentially surrender. Now (this) surrender is the giving up of worldly and religious effort,² together with a total reliance³ on Him and a distaste⁴ for all that is opposed to Him. 'Total reliance' (means) the giving up of other supports, while 'distaste for what is opposed to Him' (means) walking in religious and worldly matters in accordance with His will.⁵ The Scriptures should be obeyed even after⁶ faith has grown, otherwise there is the fear of a fall; and for the same reason also worldly duties (go on). But such business as eating (will continue) so long as the body is retained. (BS 7-14)

The devotee is one who has wholly devoted, given up and surrendered, himself to God; he no longer asks anything for himself, only that God's will

¹ or: selfless.

² or: business, (cf. *Gita* 18 : 66).

³ Skt: *ananyatā i c.*, looking to no other.

⁴ Skt: *udāsinatā*, indifference to, displeasure at.

⁵ *i.e.*, conforming the whole conduct to agreement with His.

⁶ or: until. Different commentators understand it in the different ways, but that used in the text is more probable.

be done, His Kingdom come. He does not even ask for Heaven, for any return for his love; that is wholly selfless and seeks only God. With this 'surrender' goes an unconscious dropping of all anxiety about what is right for him to do—he will do or say as God within him prompts. How can he act, who sees nothing but God in everything? What ceremonies can he perform when the world itself fades from his mind and he knows nought but God? What he can do is only what the Lord does through him; how then can he possibly do wrong or evil? His sole concern is to cling always to God and thus to turn away from all but Him. Looking to Him alone for help, guidance, strength, reward, he is no longer in conflict with other souls, no longer rebellious against events in the world. All is under God's sublime will, and nothing can happen to him save as the Lord has decreed. There is no room in his heart for fear or anger, there is room for nothing but his Beloved. When this love-madness supervenes, even righteous deeds drop away from him unnoticed, and he simply rests in God, silent, merged. Yet he still acts, unthinking, according to the guidance of the Scriptures which were for so long his only way of knowing what God would have him do; he now seeks in them through his own obedience a way to help others to the more perfect path. So too he fulfils the normal duties of his worldly state, though no longer bound by them or anxious how to fulfil them; the fulfilment is now almost automatic, unconscious. In time they too drop off when his discontinuing of them can no longer give scandal to other souls. But wilfully to abandon duties while they can still be performed would be in him a sin, a sign of deluded pride (*Gita* 16 : 23); they must go on until burned away in love's fire. To the outward seeming the highest devotee looks like an ordinary man or woman; he acts apparently much as do his neighbours, save that he can no longer violate the will of God (*1 Jn.* 3 : 6).

3. Various schools express its indications differently: According to Parāśara's son¹ it is (shown by) a delight in worship and the like, while Garga² says 'in stories (about Him)'; 'unhindered loving union'³ with the Self', says Sāṅdilya.⁴ But Narada (calls it) 'the offering of all activities to Him'⁵ and an extreme restlessness on forgetting Him'. It is exactly this, as (shown) in the case of the Gopis of Braja,⁶ even though in this state (of theirs) there was no forgetting a sense of (His) greatness, without which (it would be) a paramour's (love) wherein there is no joy in His happiness.⁷ (BS 15-24)

How can we know the true devotees, then? There are various replies to this question. It is by their

¹ *i.e.*, Veda-Vyasa, the great Ṛṣi, who wrote most of the Hindu Scriptures, culminating in the *Bhāgavatam* and the *Brahma-Sūtras*.

² A teacher of devotion who wrote his own *Samhitā*, perhaps the same as the saint who performed Sri Krishna's naming ceremony (Bh. 10 : 8).

³ *or*: delight in.

⁴ The Mahārṣi who wrote his own *Bhakti-Sūtras* worthy to be compared with those of Narada; as they are referred to here, we may assume them to be of earlier date.

⁵ *cf.* *Gīta* 18 : 57.

⁶ Braja is the locality wherein Brindavan is situated.

⁷ The paramour seeks her own happiness rather than that of her consort; the memory that Krishna the Beloved is God Himself holds the devotee back from such a selfish aim. He can give all for God.

delight in the worship of God and a faithfulness in prayer, even when it yields no apparent 'consolation' or joy, ('fervent in the work of God', as St. Benedict called it in his Rule, 56). It is by the pleasure they take in hearing about God, in reading Scripture, listening to *Hari-kathas* or to hymns about Him, talking of Him with other lovers of His. It is the steady abidance in the Poise, as Confucius might have called it, 'dwelling in Him, and He in her'. It is the total consecration to Him of every thought and act and experience throughout the day and night, never letting Him escape from the mind for a moment and being miserable when worldly duties hide Him for a while from the consciousness (cf. Bh. 11 : 14 : 15-17). Surdas says somewhere : "What are we to do when the body is full to the brim with Love? The jar cannot contain the ocean. The eyes are dying of thirst for a sight of this Form (of His)." This was the state of the Gopis, highest of all Krishna's devotees; even when in this state some sense of awe towards the Divine Lord survives it is a lofty form, excelled only by the absolute *love* of Radha, who has no thought of His greatness but only of His excessive grace and sweetness. Even Uddhava was swept away by wonder at the supreme love of the Gopis (Bh. 10 : 47 : 61), who overflowed with passionate love even while they knew Krishna as God Himself and gave themselves to Him as such (Bh. 10 : 29 : 31-32. 36-37). Total self-surrender, to any save God were dishonourable, idolatry, prostitution; but it is our highest bliss and righteousness to abandon ourselves to Him as our one Lover and our All. Wholly selfless is such a Gopi-love, which abandons all to serve Him, the Universal Soul, with His happiness as its only motive; all merely human love has selfishness hidden underneath.

4. Now it is superior to action and wisdom and even to yoga, being its own

fruit ;¹ the Lord has also an aversion to pride and a love for meekness.² (BS, 25-27)

Devotion is the highest path, superior to *karma*, which is very slow and leads us to seek God only because of our disgust at its own bitter fruits, superior to *juāna*, which gives only a transitory fruit with the danger of a great fall into egoism and pride if it be not tempered, sweetened by devotion (*bhakti*). It is higher even than the path of *yoga*, the three stages of which lead only to the lowest phase of devotion (*śānti-bhāva*) wherein the devotee rests in blissful contemplation of her Beloved. Cf. *Gita* 11 : 53 54, and the *Rāmācharita-mānasa* : "The practice of *yoga* and *jaṭa* . . . evolve not the Divine as surely and fully as does unalloyed Love." Also : "Devotion to Sri Hari is the end of all disciplines described at length in the Vedas." Other means often generate pride, and the Lord very graciously removes pride from His devotee's heart through humiliations and caresses till he knows that God alone is and does all, while he himself is nothing but His unworthy servant. True humility lies in the enjoyment of contempt from inferiors and in the one-pointed adoration of and longing for God. In reply God gives Himself to His humble devotee ; the reward of love is a greater, a deeper love. God loves the devotee better than all else, because he is a very incarnation of selfless surrender, humility, gentleness and grace (cf. *Lk.* 1 : 48, 52, *Ps.* 113 : 7).

20. How it Arises

1. Some hold that wisdom is its only source,³ and others that they depend on each

¹ or : an end in itself. Devotion seeks no other return but the right to give the self to the Beloved. Action looks for some reward, wisdom for realisation, *yoga* for spiritual powers and blissfulness.

² or : humility.

³ or : means (of acquiring).

other ; Brahma's son ¹ says it is its own fruit.² It is just as is shown by meals etc., in a royal palace ; by this neither is the King pleased, nor is hunger satisfied.³ Therefore it alone is to be obtained by aspirants.⁴ (BS 28-33)

To know God is to love God and to give oneself to Him ; how could a soul created solely for Him look on the Fount of all good without love arising in its little heart ? So Wisdom and Love have kissed each other ; *Jñāna* and *Bhakti* are merged in indissoluble unity of *Prema*. Some claim that devotion is a preliminary to knowledge or wisdom, some that wisdom is a preliminary to devotion. But Narada insists that devotion arises only from devotion itself, that love is its own reward and grows from more to more in the blessed soul possessing it. So the aspirant for God, who is Love, has nothing to acquire but love, trying ever to perfect that love from hour to hour until it is lost in His ocean of infinite Love. In his grand *Rāmāyana*, Tulasidas says : " Bhakti is self-sufficient and depends on no other *sādhana* (spiritual practice) ; knowledge and wisdom are subordinate to it." It is not enough to know the way into a palace, or what kind of man the King is ; nor is it enough to know the names of ingredients in a delicious dish—that knowledge leaves us still hungry, or in need of royal aid. Our needs can be satisfied only by intimacy ; we must *eat* the dish, or *meet* the King. We can be intimate with God only through the practice of such little intimacy as we already have ; we can love Him

¹ *i.e.*, Narada himself.

² He holds that devotion arises from devotion itself, and not from mere knowledge, which may well lead to pride instead.

³ The mere contact with outer things cannot give intimacy or love.

⁴ *lit* : seekers for Liberation.

truly only by cultivating such little love as we already have—constantly fanning the flame with little outbreathings, ejaculations of love to Him. It is only through such intimacy with the King, such love for Him, that we can win His pleasure and our own satisfaction. Tulasidas says: "The supreme state of the Alone (*kaivalya*) is very hard to win; . . . that very satisfaction thrusts itself unasked on Rama's devotee." Yet the real devotee rejects this isolative bliss, seeking nothing but unrewarded love for God.

2. Spiritual teachers¹ have sung the ways of its attainment. Well, it (arises) through the giving up of worldly things and the dropping of company by means of ceaseless adoration² (of God); and (it comes) even in the world through hearing and singing God's glory, but most of all through the grace of a great man or a light touch of God's grace. But the company of a great man is hard to get and (all but) unattainable, though it cannot fail (if obtained);³ and even this is obtained only by His grace. There is no feeling of difference

¹ *i. e.*, Acāryas, a word specially used for the great Vaishnava philosophers like Ramanuja, Vedantadesika, Yamuna, Vallabha, etc.

² The word used here is *bhajana*, which includes the singing of hymns and especially those constructed of the names and attributes of God.

³ The immediate effect of the grace of a real Mahārṣi is testified to on his own experience by Swami Rmdts in narrating in his book *In Quest of God* the result of a single look from Sri Ramana Mahārṣi.

between Him and His people ; He alone is to be sought, He alone is to be sought.¹ (BS 34-42)

How then can we most easily enter this path to eternal bliss? Turn from the distractions of the world and of society, and plunge, into a continual mood of worship—seeing, thanking, loving God in everything. Let us not deceive ourselves with facile claims that we are 'unattached to the worldly things we merely use'; as the *Sānti-parva* truly says (192 : 17): "True renunciation means the giving up of objects of enjoyment as well as the attachment to them." Only a detached mind can become the chalice of divine love; and when this love dawns all other desires fade away. Can we desire poison while drinking nectar? Tulasi says: "The fortunate soul whose heart is attached to Rama gives up the wealth and glory of the world like vomit" (cf. Bh. 11 : 14 : 12). When compelled to enter worldly activity, the devotee does so only with God's Name filling the heart and mind and dancing on the tongue. He seeks every opportunity of *satsang* (saintly company), or of meeting with a holy man, a real devotee of the Lord in any religion, a saint; through him, or direct from the Source, he receives a little of God's grace, which indeed alone can bring us in touch with a saint. To be with a saint is to be with God—as Guru Nanak often tells us: "There is no difference between God and His saints." Let us then seek God in the saint, rather than the saint himself, lest we fall into delusion, idolatry or pride.

The worship of God (*bhajana*) is both discipline and goal, for one who has come to love it will not let it go again; God Himself is in the Name, and He dwells in the heart that sings His Name with love. Patanjali

¹ or : This alone is to be practised.

(*Yoga-Sutras*, 1 : 14) says: "Practice takes root when ceaselessly carried on for a long time with reverence,"—not by fits and starts or with inattention. So God is found (*Gita* 8 : 14) by taking His Name with every breath, like a stream of flowing oil. The presence and grace of a real saint helps the Name to be fixed in heart and mouth (Bh. 1 : 18 : 13), and as Tulasi says: "All the pleasure of Heaven and Liberation combined cannot equal in weight the bliss of a moment's *satsang*." In his presence we can easily win God (Bh. 11 : 12 : 1-2), which can otherwise be only by His direct grace—which again comes to us through saints. Even an unknown contact with a love-mad devotee, who may hide his greatness even from himself, bears secret fruit, and this too comes from God's grace. Tulasi makes his *Vibhīshana* say: "Without Hari's grace there can be no meeting with a saint."

3. Bad company is to be totally given up, for it is the cause of lust¹ and anger, confusion and forgetfulness, the loss of understanding, the ruin of everything. (At first) these appear like ripples, but (when) put together they form an ocean. (BS 43-45)

At all costs one who seeks intimacy with an all-Pure God must absolutely shun all evil company, from which arises every kind of evil, leading at last to total ruin. At first the bad influences may seem trivial and innocuous, a 'harmless' film or dance, an 'amusing' book; but these little evils accumulate till they become a mountain that crushes all spiritual life in the betrayed.

¹ or: desire: the word *kāma*, followed here as usually by *krodha*, *moha*, etc. need not necessarily have the worse significance. All personal desire, if unchecked, leads in time to destruction.

soul. Cf. what *Bhagavatam* has to say, by the mouth of the great philosopher Kapila in 3 : 31 : 32-34. Remember that 'bad company' may take the form of books, conversation, family, food, environment, etc. (*Gita* 2 : 62-63 and 3 : 37 tells how it works).

21. True Self-Dedication

1. Who overcomes, who overcomes Maya? ¹
 He who gives up attachment, he who serves ²
 the noble (soul), becomes selfless; he who
 remains in ² a lonely place, who uproots worldly
 ties, becomes free from the three *gunas* ³ (and)
 drops the (idea of) getting and holding; he
 who (first) gives up the fruits of action and
 (then) abandons actions (themselves) becomes
 indifferent to the pairs of opposites; he even
 (comes to) lay aside the Vedas and gains a
 whole ⁴ and continuous yearning for (God). ⁵

¹ *Māyā* here stands for the limitation upon the essentially Divine soul while immersed in matter, the false impression created in the mind while looking at the universe—which is no illusion, but as real as its Creator in at least a relative sense. It is the world-delusion, the ocean of *samsāra*, which can only be crossed by the 'boat' of the Saviour's aid.

² or : clings to, enjoys ; (*sevate*).

³ or : limiting qualities which rule life in matter : action, inertia, and rhythm (*rajas-tamas-sattva*).

⁴ or : simple, unique, one-pointed.

⁵ or : undivided, uninterrupted (*kevalamavicchinānurāgam labhate*). This word *anurāga* connotes an intense attachment which nothing can divert.

He overcomes, he overcomes, (and) he helps the world to overcome ! (BS 46-50)

The sense of 'my-ness', of egoism, grows through attachment to objects and fades in solitude (*Gita* 13 : 10) ; the link with God can only be made more strong by 'breaking the link with earthly things'. One who drops all his personal attachments to the world and, through unselfish service of and clinging to a saintly soul, becomes free of the world-illusion and gains lordship over Nature herself. God Himself then sees to the further progress of one thus wholly merged in love of Him, and provides all he needs (*Gita* 9 : 22). To such a devotee action is simply doing God's will, for which he is certainly not entitled to any sort of return ; he acts for God and leaves results entirely to Him. Later on, he is no longer conscious of acting at all ; it is God who acts through him, and he cares no more for joy or pain, success or failure. He acts, or remains inactive, as inspired by the Inner Being. Devoted to the God within himself, he transcends the need for all dependence on Scriptures, Church or Guru ; he becomes nothing but a living flame of love and aspiring longing for God. Rites drop away from one merged in Love's unbroken ocean ; he does not *cease* from them, but they cease from him, become impossible without his becoming aware even of their disappearance. He has now reached their aim, and further practice of them would be for him absurd. He has become Love, and contact with him inspires others in turn to dive deep into Love's unfathomed depths. Such a one is he who overcomes the world, both for himself and for all who come in touch with him.

2. Love's real nature cannot be expressed ; (it is) like a taste to the dumb ; in some rare fit person it shines out without defects¹ and

¹ Skt : *gunarahitam*.

without desires, continually growing more and more (with) every moment, very subtle, to be known (only) by experience.¹ Having once obtained it, **the devotee** looks at Him² alone, speaks only of Him,² and thinks of Him² alone. (BS 51-55)

How can we describe such a love? When the heart is lost in the Beloved, how can the lover speak of love? It is known to the lover, but he can no more describe it to another than the dumb can describe a mango's taste to the deaf. Experience teaches, but it also silences the heart and tongue. When his face goes under, the drowning man can no longer speak; silence comes and the very body disappears. The salt doll goes to the sea to find out what it is and tell her friends; who is left to tell? Words of love come from the surface. "The merged speak not, the speaker knows not; Love's sea is deep, some clever Knower is drowned therein," sings a Hindi poet. As Poddar says, "There is self-forgetfulness in love. A lover, therefore, does not know what he is and what he knows" (p. 181). Even Radha did not know she loved; the touch of Krishna in her heart made her swoon. The deep wound of love is called by St. Teresa a 'delicious death'; and Mira knew it could be healed only by the One that gave it. Yet love-intoxication shines out spontaneously from every pore of the body and glorifies the lover.

Rare, alas! is such a love for God in its full perfection down here, though often found in the form of a tiny seedling. Watered by God's grace and constant tender dwelling on Him, this will grow into a mighty tree and

¹ Skt: *sūksmatarānubhāvarūpam*; i.e. in the form of a very subtle experience.

² or: that: the word may mean equally God, or Devotion.

give shelter for scores of birds, shade for weary travelers at noon. What, then, is love? It is present when the lover can think of nothing, speak of nothing, hear of nothing but the Beloved. Lost in Him, unaware of anything but Him, rapt in Him—seeming to the world a fool or madman—such a soul is no longer other than God Himself. That is true devotion.

A Hindi poet sings: "Wherever I look I see nought but Syama; this love of Syama cannot be expressed in words. . . all appear painted in the colour of Syama. . . Even one's own Self has been forgotten; what remains is Nanda's Darling. There is no one left to confide the secret of the heart; as a matter of fact, no such secret is left—to whom and how can it be confided? While gazing on Hari, the heart got stolen; now it is Hari and Hari alone who is seen on every side." In this mood all sounds are heard as love-notes sung on the Beloved Krishna's Flute, every word is fragrant with the sweetness of the Holy Name; the memory can hold no other thought, the very heart is transformed into the Beloved's Form, and all the senses speak of Him alone as the all-pervading one (cf. GH 41 : 5 and 42 : 5). The whole universe is full of Him, full of Love and Bliss; "the very dust on this earth is full of sweetness", sings the *Chāṇḍogyopaniṣad*, and all the Western poets sing the same sweet tune.

3. There are three kinds of the lower (devotion), distinguished by the varieties of *guṇa*¹ or by the types (of devotees), such as the sorrowful,² and so on, whereof each type is better than that which follows (it). (BS 56-57)

¹ The three varieties of *guṇa* are listed as : brightening, evolving, and involving.

² The other types are the curious and desirous.

We need not concern ourselves much with these ways of classifying the forms of devotion here. Some are drawn to God through sorrow or disappointment in the world, some through curiosity, or disgust at the instability of earthly joys (cf. *Gita* 7 : 16); but the highest of these is that which has its only motive the service of the Beloved, the lover thinking not of herself at all. The *Sattvic* devotion arises from distress in the world; it offers the fruits of action to God and worships Him as the Creator. A *Rajasic* devotee desires pleasure and reward, and adores images; the *Tamasic* devotee is inspired by jealousy, anger or hypocrisy to seek fame or wealth (*Gita* 17 : 11-13 etc.).

4. He is more easily won through Devotion than in other ways; **Devotion** is itself the proof of this, nor does it need further proof, for its very nature is peace and utmost bliss. (BS 58-60)

Yes, such selfless love, wherein all self-centred thoughts disappear, is the highest possible bliss we can know on earth, or elsewhere. How can we prove this? Only by experience. He who tastes and sees how good the Lord is knows that to love Him is the very extreme of joy and peace. Its very sweetness makes Devotion the best and easiest of paths, for it needs only the loving memory of God, a childlike faith in Him, and a sense of our need for Him to cultivate the highest surrender (*prapatti*). When we realise how good God really is, we are filled with peace at once, no matter how many storms may rage outside. Knowing that all is full of His grace, we are freed at once from sin and weakness, made ripe for Devotion. The very bliss that then surges up in us is itself the proof of God's grace in us, for it comes only to those who have dropped all

desires but the one vast desire for Him. In His *Hlāḍini* aspect, God reveals Himself to us as Lover and Beloved, as Radha-Krishna, whose every beauty and ornament enraptures even liberated souls, so that they are well content to spend eternity in gazing lovingly on Him.

5. There should be no anxiety about worldly loss, because the self, together with (all its) worldly and religious (affairs), has been surrendered (to God); yet worldly efforts are to go on until this (surrender) is perfected, though this practice is to be carried on while giving up the fruit (of all such efforts). (BS 60-62)

The devotee has no anxieties about anything in the world; his Beloved arranges for him everything He knows is best, and how can the lover want more than Perfect Wisdom has assigned to him? His sole care is to brood on his Beloved God; if all else goes from him, it matters not at all, for he has already given everything to God—who has stolen away his very mind itself and will never give it back. Yet without being attached thereto or anxious about its success or failure, the devotee goes on with his work in the world—the teacher with his classes, the painter with his canvas, the singer with his songs, the peasant with his crops, the clerk with his accounts. Only labours wicked in themselves naturally become impossible to him and drop away. When devotion is perfected, mature, the devotee is so lost in the Lord that it may become impossible for him to do any more work in the world; overwhelmed by the swelling tides of Love, work quietly falls away from him and leaves him free for eternal 'sleep' in his Lord's

enfolding arms; the Beloved will then soon come to call him away to His eternal Home.

22. The Life of a Devotee

1. The lives of women and the rich, of atheists and foes are not to be listened to,¹ while such (qualities as) pride and deceit² are to be abandoned. (The devotee) having offered up his whole life-conduct (to God), such feelings as desire, anger (and) pride are to be directed to Him alone. Having broken³ the three forms (of being), by adoring Him (either) as an eternal servant or (as) an eternal spouse,⁴ he is to cultivate Love alone—yes, Love alone is to be cultivated! (BS 63-66)

The devotee concerns himself solely with his Lord; if he turns his mind to women or wealth (*kāma-kāñcana*) it will reawaken to worldly desires, if to personal enemies or enemies of God it will drag him back to anger and hatred (*krodha-dvesa*)—while all such vicious thoughts are to be shunned like the plague. No, anger, desire and pride may be retained, but solely with God as their object; the passions may have full vent towards Him, for they will then intensify the

¹ Skt; *Stri-dhani-nāstika-vairi caritram na sravaṇīyam.*

² or: egoism and arrogance.

³ or: transcended.

⁴ Skt: *nitya-kāntā.*

loving intimacy which is sought. What can the lover desire before the Beloved? Who can be his enemy when he sees the Beloved in all around? Where is the ground for pride when he knows that all he has is the unearned gift of the Beloved? Yet he can be proud of Him, he can even dare to quarrel with Him when He withholds His grace, he can pour out his heart in passionate burning desire for Him. The *Bhagavatam* (10 : 29 : 15) says: "He who directs towards God passion, anger, fear, affection, self-hood and friendship is bound to obtain absorption in Him." This is how the child too is concentrated in its mother, scolding her if it falls, running away from her and threatening never to kiss her again unless she gives the longed-for sweets or toys. The very sense of his separateness falls away in time, and the devotee identifies himself wholly with the Beloved's interests. Dadu asks pathetically: "I would fain send a message to my Beloved if He were outside: what message can I send to Him who dwells in my body, mind and eyes?" This is the total loyalty of a true servant who exists solely to be of use to his Master, of a true wife who lives only to give her Husband pleasure. Yet, as S tells us (p. 447): "Though love is a unitive experience, it presupposes the duality of the experiencing subjects. . . . Love involves otherness, and even in the highest states of bliss, when the self-feeling is effaced, love is a dual relation and a double fruition. . . . The one Self that is without a second sports as two, as the lover and the beloved, without losing His wholeness." However close her union with the Beloved, the soul (*jīva*) eternally remains distinct from Him, even when unconscious of the difference; otherwise love would cease, and union come to an end with it.

2. One-pointed devotees are the best. With faltering voice,¹ thrills of ecstasy, and tears as

¹ *lit*: blocked throat (*kaṅṭhāvarodha*).

they talk together, they purify their (own) families and the world (itself), they make holy places holier, they add merit to (all) actions, and, being full of Him, they make the Scriptures (more) truly Scripture.¹ (Their) ancestors rejoice, the Gods dance, and this world gains a protector.² Among such (devotees) there are no differences of caste or education, of appearance³ or birth,⁴ of wealth or occupation or the like—for they all are His. (BS 67-73)

When true lovers meet they can talk only of their Beloved, and their talk stimulates their love for Him until it overflows in tears of yearning joy. The very sight of such a lover drives all thought of unworthy things from other hearts and fills them also with a fleeting desire for the Lord, which purifies them utterly (Bh. 11 : 14 : 24). It is the presence of such souls makes holy places into real shrines, while they are defiled by the entry of those who love not God and serve only the petty self. The lover's words are filled with his love, with God, and they become the Scriptures of other men, while what they do becomes the standard for society to copy, their very huts or houses become temples of the Lord. A mere sight of them arouses faith in others and delights even the spirits, as the *Padma-purāṇa* tells

¹ Skt : *saccāstri kurvanti sāstrāṇi tanmayah* : they are themselves inspired by God within them, so every word they utter becomes a *sāstra*.

² or : lord ; Skt : *sanāthā ceyam bhūrbhavati*.

³ or : beauty (*rūpa*).

⁴ or : family (*kula*).

us: "When a devotee appears among their descendants the spirits begin to dance." Because He cannot stay away from His lover, as Narasimha came for the child Prahlāda, the need of a devotee brings about the Incarnation of Divinity—we are told Advaitāchārya's prayer brought forth Chaitanya in Bengal. As the devotee becomes simply an image of the Lord (*arava* or *amsa*), all personal distinctions fade away from him; no longer is he of this caste or race or that, fair or dark, wise or foolish, handsome or ugly, teacher or labourer, rich or poor—he is simply God's child who loves the Desire of all the world. As Sri Rama told Sabari, God recognises the kinship only of His lovers; all men are either lovers or non-lovers of the Lord and may best be classified thus. All devotees are His images and therefore equal to one another; it is gross folly therefore to praise one above another, to say one is holier, wiser, greater than another. Such a thought indeed undermines Devotion itself.

3. Argument is not to be entered on, because it wastes time¹ and settles nothing. Devotional Scriptures are to be brooded over and acts to increase devotion² performed; not even half a moment is to be wasted vainly in looking out for the time when happiness and sorrow, desire and gain (will disappear). (BS 74-77)

Useless speculation and controversy waste the time God gives the devotee solely to love Him in. As the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* (1 : 2 : 9) says: "Truth cannot be

¹ or : gives room for excess.

² or : precepts prescribed in them.

realised by intellectual reasoning" (cf. GH 18 : 4), for such arguments lead only to mental quibbling, darkness and angry words, and thus strengthen pride and egoism—the greatest enemies of devotion. The devotee thus quietly avoids those who love wordy warfare, which raises doubts against faith and against the path he has chosen. He prefers to give his time to quiet browsing on devotional books—like *The Imitation of Christ*, the *Bhagavatam*, the *Gita*, *St. John's Gospel*, *Gita Govindā*, *Sri Krishnakarnamritam*, Tulasidas's *Ramayana*, the *Tiruvāimoli* or *Tiruppāvai*, the *Spiritual Canticle* or *The Living Flame of Love*, the *Autobiographies* of St. Teresa and the Little Flower, Tukaram's *Abhangas*, the *Jñaneswari*, the *Tarangas*, *Mukundamala*, *Sukhmani* or the hymns of Guru Arjan, etc., etc. Or he gives it to doing whatever he finds by experience actually increases his devotion, such as offering all he does to the Lord, giving nights to singing His Name etc. He reads the lives and books of Saints, but avoids all writings of those who love the world more than God or who seek fame, all pictures and films save those which foster and develop the devotional 'mood'.

The *Bhagavatam* (11 : 19 : 20-24) gives us ten ways of arousing the love of God : performing the duties of your state of life, the practice of good conduct, the company of God's lovers, repeating God's Names and singing hymns to Him, worship and prayer, the service of a saint for His sake, living in holy places (and books, etc.), doing kindly service to the distressed, offering to God all acts, and seeing Him in all around—to which others may add : suffering willingly embraced for love of Him, the sacrifice of sleep or comforts like food for His sake, etc., etc. It is foolish to put off such love-producing acts in the hope that God will freely give Himself without our doing anything. The mother's milk flows freely, but the baby must put its lips to her breast. God gives himself to His lover only, and who knows how long he has to live? Not a moment of this

precious life is to be lost ; we must seek God that very instant when we first realise the need for Him, or the world's lure will return and the golden opportunity pass away. A stone thrown in a pool clears away the slime and weeds on its surface, but they soon resume their place and hide the pure water underneath.

4. Gentleness, truth, purity, kindness, faith in God, and all such virtues¹ are to be carefully cultivated ; always and in every mood² the Lord alone is to be adored without anxious thoughts ; when glorified He indeed swiftly appears and lets the devotees experience (Him). (BS 78-80)

Those who in all their beauty fully practise these five noble virtues will indeed be channels of the Divine grace, finding the Beloved everywhere, even in what seems outwardly to be harmful or even vicious. And one who has once attained that vision of the Omnipresent can never again forget Him even for a second, can never turn to other things, knowing that in Him alone is all that can delight and fulfil our every need and yearning with His perfect love and friendliness. As the child in its mother's lap thinks of nothing but her, so is he lost in his Beloved, rapt in blissful contentment in the arms of One he calls " My God and my All " with St. Francis of Assisi. From time to time He will appear to such a lover in all His beauty and sweetness, tasting which, His child forgets all else besides in

¹ Skt : *Ahimsā satya s'auca dayāstikyādi cāritryāṇi*.

² Note that the worship of God is *not* to depend on the accident that we may at that moment feel in the mood for it. Skt : *sarvadā sarvabhāvena*. When we put away all other things from the mind, the ' mood ' automatically arises.

overflowing rapture. As S says: "The Absolute Itself assumes a bewitching form of beauty in order to attract Its other to Itself" (p. 447), and "The Ravisher of souls . . . cannot bear separation for His 'other', and His captivating beauty is even physically enjoyable . . . in the bliss of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*." This recalls numberless passages in the Western Mystics on how God is physically experienced by His lover. Each such vision of the Lord becomes more rapturous, more ecstatic in its loveliness, until the lover can bear no more and swoons away into a momentary total union with Him.

23. The Glory of Devotion

1. Of the three (ways to) Truth, Devotion alone is the best,¹ Devotion alone is the best. Although essentially one, it becomes eleven-fold (when analysed): the love of (God's) nature and greatness, the love of beauty, the love of worship, the love of remembrance, the love of service, the love of friendship, the love of a spouse, the love of parenthood, the love of self-surrender, the love of merging in Him,² and the love of extreme (agony in) separation (from Him). (BS 81-82)

Here we are given eleven modes of Devotion, eleven ways in which it acts in various types of soul. Being wholly selfless, the Gopis, who represent the highest type

¹ Skt : *trisatyasya bhaktir eva garīyasī*.

² or : final self-effacement (*tanmayatāsakti*).

of devotee, possess in themselves all eleven modes, as may be seen from the *Bhagavatam* (10); but every human soul can find one mode which corresponds to his own path and so tread this way of Devotion, while few indeed can honestly perform selfless action or attain to perfect *jnāna*.

The last seven modes are often illustrated by the lives of certain famous bhaktas in Hindu Scripture and life; Hanuman, Arjuna, Mira, Yaś'oda, Vibhīṣana, Sāṅḍilya and Sri Krishna Chaitanya may be taken as representative of these seven modes, which are all of equal value.

The *Triṣṭvīṅśatīmahānārāyaṇopaniṣad*, 8 : 12, says: "The knowledge of Brahma (God) can never arise without devotion, therefore, giving up all other methods, you should also resort to devotion. Be firm in devotion, be firm in devotion; through devotion all perfections are attained, there is nothing that cannot be attained by devotion."

2. Indifferent to public chatter¹ and with one voice thus alone declare (Sanat)kumara, Vyasa, Suka(deva), Sandilya, Garga, Vishnu-(swami), Kaundinya, Sesha, Uddhava, Aruni, Bali, Hanuman, Vibhishana, and other teachers² of devotion. He who believes in and trusts to this teaching of Siva³ proclaimed by

¹ or : public opinion (*janajalpa*). Cf. GGG 42 : 3.

² Skt : *acārya*.

³ Siva was Narada's Guru (cf. GN 11 : 1) in the name of Śankara. He was the greatest of Vishnu's devotees, so his teaching to Narada will certainly prove a safe guide; one who follows it will indeed win God as his Spouse, if he adds to his practice a lively and affectionate faith.

Narada, he wins the Beloved, he wins the Beloved! (It is) so! (BS 83-84)

Narada supports his own view by referring to other great teachers of devotion; Sanatkumara's word was: "*Hari s'araṇam*", Vyasa wrote the *Bhāgavatam*, textbook of the highest devotion, Sandilya wrote *Bhakti-sūtras* of his own, Garga wrote a Samhita on the subject, Maharshi Vishnuswami wrote a famous Vaishnava scripture, Kaundinya attained God by meditating on Him, Lord Sesha became the great devotee Lakshman, and also sings unceasingly on a thousand tongues the Names of Hari, Uddhava was Krishna's friend who taught and so greatly admired the Gopis, Aruni or Nimbarka was the great Telugu philosopher of the Dvaitādvaita school, teaching the Radhakrishna cult, Bali was a very incarnation of self-surrender, while Hanuman knew nothing in the world but Rama and so drew Vibhishana the demon to His feet. Sukadeva 'heard' the *Bhāgavatam* from Narada and passed it on to Vyasa.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SPIRITUAL PATH

This chapter outlines the various needs of the aspirant in search of God. First: a good environment, then an inspired Scripture to urge the real need of the search, then good friends and comrades whose presence may keep him steady in it. And so devotion will arise in his heart and he will find for himself how the simple taking of God's Name fans that flame and purifies his mind and body, whether he be wise or foolish, educated or illiterate, and he realises the glorious power of the practice to make him one with the Lord.

24. The Value of an Indian Birth

1. The Brindavan forest is the very place where Krishna appeared ; even a happy birth in any other place is (mere) fruitless coming and going. A birth (that lasts) even (only) for a moment in India ¹ has value and is brought

¹ India, as the ' land of merit ' (*punya-bhūmi*), is the land where one is born to reap the fruits of his past good deeds. Of course, the richest fruit anyone can reap is the knowledge and love of God, which is the aim and characteristic of every really good man.

about by good deeds ; by the (accumulated) merit of many births are good men ¹ born in India, and it is by Krishna's grace ² that the scholar ³ has won a birth in India ; if he fails to worship Krishna's lotus feet he is extremely ridiculous—his birth is meaningless ⁴ and his sufferings in the womb (are) vain ; fruitless is his body, and empty (is his) life. (2 : 2 : 63-66)

2. Until the time has come (one) does not die even when pierced by hundreds of arrows, but when the time has come he ceases to live even when (only) touched with the tip of a straw.⁵ (1 : 3 : 20) At the moment for one's death, birth and good deed, there is no quickening or postponing—by whom can death be averted ? ⁶ Even Vishnu Himself and Sankara cannot frustrate the hand at which

¹ *lit* : *sādhus*, that is, those who perform some definite spiritual practice (*sādhana*) to obtain the realisation and grace of God. The word is often used nowadays for mendicants, some of whom are really only beggars and have no spiritual character whatever.

² *or* : kindness.

³ *or* : learned (*vidvān*).

⁴ *or* : has no value (*asārthakam*).

⁵ Nothing can change the destiny of man, his hour for birth, good acts, or death ; everything is fixed by the Creator at his creation. This looks like 'fatalism' ; it is the same doctrine as in the Islāmic and Sikh religions, and also appears in various forms in Christian idea.

⁶ *or* : turned aside, avoided.

someone's death was ordained by the Creator at the beginning. (1 : 3 : 12-13)

Our life on earth is so uncertain, so fleeting, and so vast an attainment is it meant to procure—the Infinite Himself—that we dare not neglect any opportunity or help that circumstance or environment may yield. Those born in a holy place, among lovers of the Lord and amid scenes for ever sweetened by memory of the ancient eternal plays of the Beloved—places like Brindavan, Navadwipa, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Gaya, Mecca—must surely find it easy to turn their hearts straight to Him alone. If even they—and we have often seen that unholy men live in holy places—fail to acquire devotion to the Lord, how foolish indeed are they, how vain the life they lead on earth! Born in India, the land of Saints and of Incarnations, the very *puṇyabhūmi* hallowed by countless holy footsteps, a man so fortunate should certainly attain full perfection even in this very life.

Death may come at any time God wills; it cannot come before that hour, nor can it be delayed even for a moment. So the wise man or woman will lose no instant of this precious human life but dedicate it all to the loving search for God, in whom alone is all peace and joy. Then when death comes, at the time and in the way God has decreed, there will be no regret in the heart for a life vainly thrown away.

25. The Holy Pancharatra

This pure Pancharatra is the lamp to destroy error. Now '*rātra*' means 'wisdom', and **this** wisdom comprises five kinds, and for this reason the intelligent call this (book) the

'Pancarātra'. (1 : 1 : 43-44) **This** Pancharatra of Narada is the rarest (thing) in the Puranas and the supremely wonderful¹ very essence of all the Vedas, and the virtue which removes sin-obstacles and bestows devotion and loving service to Hari ; (it is) the all-in-all of Vaishnavas and dearer than (their very) lives, my child. (1 : 1 : 61, 60) Just as one who has drunk nectar wants nothing else, so one who has come to know the Pancharatra desires no other good thing. (1 : 1 : 82)

There are seven "Pancaratras" : those of Brahma, Siva, Kumara, Vasishta, Kapila, Gautama and Narada —the last of which deals mainly with devotion, the Name, and various *mantras* and *tantras*. The five 'kinds of wisdom' here referred to are said to be : what destroys death (*Tattva*), what gives liberation (*Mukti*), what gives loving service to Krishna (*dāsyā-Bhakti*), what gives all psychic powers (*Yoga*), and what brings fame and prominence (*Viśaya*).

The word *pancarātra*, is sometimes otherwise explained ; e.g. that this wisdom 'obscures' five systems : the Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pāsūpata, Bauddha (Buddhism) and Arahata (Jainism) ; also that Narayana on 'five nights' gave teaching in turn to Ananta, Garuda, Viśvakṣena, Brahmā and Rudra. Evidently the word '*rātra*' had become archaic and of unknown significance by the time our book was written.

The essence of the Vedas is said to be contained in the Sattvic *Purāṇas*, the best of which is the

¹ or : transcendental.

Bhāgavatam : the essence of the *Bhāgavatam* is the love of Krishna, which is given by this *Nārada Pañcarātra*—which is therefore the essence of the Vedas. As it gives us Krishna, in whose presence all other desires fade away, it is clear that its knower can desire nothing else, finding in it the full satisfaction of all his needs.

26. Choose Good Friends

1. The mind of living beings is indeed the sole cause of all actions, and the mind blossoms out¹ in the expression of words suited to **itself**. (1 : 7 : 8) The ever-impure confirmed sinner makes fun in uttering criticism²; he neither honours³ the Lord, nor the saint, nor even himself. (2 : 2 : 14) (The Vaishnava) indeed moves away from contact with a non-devotee just as a man (flees) from an evil serpent, (flees) from (his) talk and the touch of his body, from the bed and from eating together (with him). (2 : 2 : 6)

2. Sins spread⁴ like drops of oil in water; this is how the virtues and vices of souls arise

¹ or: expands. So Jesus said, " Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks " (Mt. 12 : 34, cf. GJ 97 : 2).

² or: blaming. A saint never criticises others for whose moral upbringing he has no responsibility, but the bogus saint usually does this in order to make himself appear better than those he criticises.

³ or: regards (*manyate*).

⁴ or: are transferred (*sancaranti*).

from contact (with others). O Sage, in this world objects may acquire defects through contact; a defect in gold arises from being mixed with base metals, and that is why the instructed¹ do not care for low company. (2 : 2 : 7-9)

3. So, therefore, saints always desire the company of good men . . . and that is why Vaishnavas keep company with Vaishnavas. (2 : 2 : 8, 10) There is none greater than a Vaishnava . . . so (they say), "Let my fellowship always be with Vaishnavas." In any family where by chance a passionless² Vaishnava is born, then every single ancestor of that family, remote or near, becomes pure, and they (all) go indeed to the Nirvana of Hari. What more can I say? By the (very) sight of Vaishnavas sinners become pure and sinless, an undoubted (fact). (4 : 8 : 172-175)

The careless mocking talk of unbelievers will certainly in time weaken the faith of beginners, so they should shun like poisonous snakes such would-be clever critics of religious life and aspiration if they really seek to love the all-loving Lord. The slightest contact with such is contamination, whether with their persons, their books, their houses, food, talk, or anything that is theirs,

¹ or: learned (*manīṣinaḥ*).

² Skt : *rāgavarjjitaḥ*.

just as the slightest touch of a saint or devotee calls down grace upon the lucky recipient. That is why devotees avoid the company of those who do not love God and eagerly seek a meeting with a saint, finding in his talk and very presence the keenest of delight. When we see one such going along the road, silently repeating in his heart the Holy Name or ejaculatory prayers, our heart too is instantly purified and turned towards the Blessed One. Happy is he who lives in a street of devotees, whose dwelling is in a holy town like Dehu or Brindavan, where the Name is day and night chanted thunderously in many houses, where the lanes are full of God's lovers silently merged in Him !

27. This Leads to Devotion

1. Now out of the five kinds of wisdom (the third)¹ is the wisdom which gives devotion to Hari. The learned always yearn for Liberation, (and so do even) the highest saints, but that is not worth one sixteenth part² of devotion to Sri Krishna. (2 : 2 : 1-2) There is no Liberation nobler than devotion to Hari, (which is) dearer to me than my very life. (4 : 8 : 172)

2. From the company of Sri Krishna's devotee arises a steady devotion, spontaneous and joy-giving,³ leading to the loving service

¹ See note to GN 25 ; the *third* branch of Pancharatric knowledge is *Bhakti*, which gives ' loving service ' to God.

² In modern India we should say ' one anna in the rupee '.

³ Skt : *naiṣṭhikī anamitā ca sukhadā*.

of Hari, and befitting.¹ Just as the creeping (roots) and new tender shoots of trees increase in the pouring rain and shrivel up in the sun's (hot) rays, so too the new shoots of the tree of devotion grow through the talk of a devotee and wither up from even a little of a non-devotee's conversation. Therefore the wise² always talks (only) with a devotee. (2 : 2 : 2-5)

The devotee who has even once tasted the sweetness of a contact with the Personal Lord can never for a moment dream of desiring mere 'Liberation'; his one all-absorbing desire is to serve God, to enjoy His sweet company and friendship, to surrender to Him all the heart and life. Such all-absorbing devotion to God comes also from the company of a saint, 'for God is not other than His saints'; in this is found all joy, all beauty, all delight; and for this reason God's lover always seeks the company of His saints, so that from their talk, example, very atmosphere, he may imbibe a little more of the Divine Fire. So precious is this 'satsang' that the wise devotee may even sacrifice his invaluable time for prayer in order to spend that time in the company of God's loving children, knowing that this will draw him nearer to God more quickly than any mere isolated worship in his own room.

28. The Power of God's Name

1. As soon as he takes the Mantra a man (becomes) like Narayana³ (and) effortlessly

¹ or : beautiful (*subhā*).

² Skt : *pañḍitaḥ*.

³ Narayana is one of the favourite Names of God, for it recalls His 'human' personality (*nara* = man).

purifies hundreds and hundreds of persons, (1 : 9 : 22) together with his own self; (2 : 2 : 16) my son, he purifies a hundred generations by the mere taking of the Mantra, as well as his own devotees and relations, as if it were all in play. (1 : 2 : 17) And that sin which a Vaishnava's former deeds has incurred is destroyed like straw in a fire by once taking the Mantra. (1 : 2 : 20)

2. My son, to the one (already) absorbed in and purified in the holy waters of the Krishna-Mantra, bathing in a holy shrine, fasting, and (study) of the Vedas are (all) a mockery.¹ . . . That very pure Vaishnava who is attached to reverent use of His Mantra² is (himself) holy, and by (his) very birth purifies hundreds of persons and relatives. (1 : 2 : 19, 25)

3. Sri Bhagavan (Himself) says : . . . "He who is devoted to My Mantra is independent and everlasting ; after he has once taken the Mantra there is no more birth (for him), he has no fear of Time or even of the Creator's laws ;³ by simply taking the Mantra he is

¹ or : vexation (*viḍambanam*).

² Skt : *tan-mantropāsakaḥ*.

³ Skt : *nāsti kālādbhayam tasya na niṣekūdividheraṇi*.

freed from all *karmas*. My Mantra can burn up the sins committed in a crore of births just as a roaring furnace can consume a heap of straw. Through taking My Mantra with zeal, the sins committed by those who take My Name (even) during a crore of births begin to tremble, while Death¹ makes the writing of the name of such a distant matter. Finally he attains loving service (to Me), having gone to the highest Goloka. As long as he lives he can roam about freely like a wild elephant; sins flee away from him as snakes (flee) from Garuda.”² (1 : 13 : 8, 10-15)

In many religions which stretch back into the night of prehistoric time it has been taught that the *name* is a mystic reality, the very *being* of that to which it truly belongs. He who knows the name has power over its owner; he who holds the Name of God in his heart and mind, who keeps it dancing on his tongue, is in closest union with the Divine. Narada too teaches thus.

Once properly initiated into the Name by a ‘Vaishnava’, a lover of the One God, man at once becomes like God, and his relations and neighbours reap the harvest of a very Incarnation of the Divine in their midst. No longer is any laborious effort consciously to acquire the virtues needed; immediately and without labour on his part God takes birth in his heart and shines

¹ *lit*: *Yama*, the god of death.

² *lit*: Vainateya, the son of Vinata, another name for the kite-vehicle of Vishnu, which lives on and destroys snakes (of passion, etc.), usually called Garuda.

forth from his body to all around him. When such a devotee utters the Name, realising it to body forth the Self of God, Hari, Jesus, Krishna, Ahuramazda—it matters not at all which form that Name may take according to the choice or *dharma* of the taker—all his past sins vanish away, he becomes wholly pure, an Incarnation of God to uplift the world.

So supremely pure a soul needs no outer purifications; the immaculate cannot be further cleansed even by all the waters of Ganga or the streams of Jordan baptism; a bathe in holy waters (*tirthasnānam*) has no meaning for him who bathes in the Name, in the Being, of God Himself. Nor does he have to read in books who carries Him ever in his living heart as a constant counsellor and friend, nor should he fast who dwells ever in the joyous presence of his Beloved (cf. GJ 18). He is himself the source of purity for a book he reads, it is his touch that consecrates the water which is to be used for sacramental grace.

We take birth in order to find God in His creation, to love and serve Him there; once this aim is attained there can be no further need for an earthly body; nor can time work any changes on him who is based on the rock of the Eternal; nor do laws bind him who is made eternally *free* in the Infinite Godhead by His free grace (cf. *Gal.* 3 : 23-29; 5 : 1, 4). All his actions become pure and motiveless, spontaneous, inspired solely by the Divine Spirit within; nothing of them can bind him any more; nor can he be held responsible for what God does through him. Death can have no hold on or part in one who thus lives in the Immortal God; even when the body drops away he barely notices its passing, being always absorbed in the blissful union with his Love. So long as the body endures on earth, he wanders freely here and there, purifying by his very sight all who come in contact with him; when he 'dies', he passes straight into that blissful state of loving service of the

present Lord, which he has already known and loved on earth.

29. All Can Use It

1. The ignorant says “*Vishnāya (namaha)*” (while) the educated says “*Vishnave namaha*”,¹ but really the substance² of both has the same fruit.³ (1 : 13 : 39) The labourer⁴ who uses that form which seems right to him in repeating the Name⁵ certainly does it correctly⁶ if (he does it) humbly with faith and devotion. (3 : 10 : 13)

2. By the very same knowledge which Hari Himself, the Giver of wisdom, has granted anyone he praises (Him), and Janardana accepts the loving feeling. (To be) with one mouth (or) many mouths, ignorant (or) learned is through one’s own actions,⁷ whether poor or

¹ A mistake in Sanskrit grammar does not in any way invalidate the repeating of God’s Name, though it may ruin a *mantra* intended to achieve psychic or worldly ends.

² *or* : meaning, purpose (*artham*).

³ *or* : result (*phalam*).

⁴ *or* : S’ūdra, a member of the fourth caste.

⁵ *lit* : *japam*.

⁶ *or* : successfully.

⁷ *or* : *karmas* : the results of actions done in the past.

even rich, with a son or even without (a son) ; for who indeed (can worthily) praise the most glorious supreme Lord of *Karma*? The praising, worshipping, adoration and remembering of Hari are (done) according to (one's own) power; the chanting together, hymning, and repeating of His Name are valued according to the intention,¹ and (both) saints and sinners alike are always doing these to the Oversoul.² . . . Some hymn the supremely pure³ Oversoul, the Lord; some a 'part'⁴ of Him, (or) a part of a 'part'; and gradually they (all) attain to Him. (1 : 12 : 40-43, 47)

3. Bhagavan,⁵ the Inner Self of all and the Wisdom of all souls, is praised according to (each one's) knowledge; good men do not laugh at one for that. In the world there are three grades of people: the best, the average,

¹ Skt : *uddhyanukramam*.

² It is a glorious truth that all God's creatures, with or without their own conscious will, do worship God by acting as His agents in the events He has decreed. Those who will to co-operate with Him are in harmony with Nature's laws and so experience true and unending happiness; those who withhold their consent fly in the face of nature and suffer. Even those who do not love Him repeat His Names, and reach Him through what is called *virodha-bhakti*, the devotion of opposition, like that of S'is'upala and Kamsa.

³ or : Most Holy (*suddhāntam*).

⁴ Skt : *ams'a*; the sense here may be 'Avatara' (Cf. *Gita* 9 : 23).

⁵ *lit* : the 'Blessed One', a term used for God and the deified soul.

and the dull ; all is decided by their own (past) actions ; by whom can the Law be avoided ?¹ On seeing the Universal Lord all say “ My Lord ! ”, and my Lord looks equally on all the selfless servants. (1 : 12 : 44-46)

4. (Long ago) the Gods said, “ How can we praise Him whom the Creator Himself and Sambhu² the God of Wisdom, has no power to praise, even in a thousand lifetimes ? ” The Vedas asked : “ How can we know what are the glories of the Infinite Lord—we the Vedas (know) of Thee the very Creator of our cause ? ” The Sages added : “ If the Vedas do not know the greatness of the Over-soul, how can we know Thy nature who (only) follow the Vedas ? ”³ (1 : 12 : 49-51)

Nor for those who would tread this path to the highest Goal is there any restriction of caste or education, of sex or colour. It matters very little whether God's Name be correctly uttered or not, for the *real* utterance is silent, in the heart, and it is heard by God according to the real intention of the taker. Not the knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, but humility, faith and love are the

¹ Skt : *niṣekāḥ kena varyyate?* (by whom can the downpour be turned aside ?)

² One of the names of Śiva or Śankara ; *lit* : the giver of happiness.

³ The constant theme of the Sikh Gurus in pointing out the inevitable limitations of any Scripture on earth.

qualifications. The illiterate who thinks because '*Krishnāya namaha*' is correct, '*Vishnāya namaha*' will also be correct—not knowing that the *-u* of *Viṣṇu* changes into *-ve* in the appropriate case—takes the Name as correctly as the best of pundits if only he has faith and love for God and approaches Him humbly as a sinner in need.

God accepts every humble offering of praise, even if it be only a drop of water offered with love (*Gita* 9 : 26), a widow's pice given out of her poverty in humble devotion (GJ 99), a handful of beaten rice like Sudama's, a few forest berries like Sabari's. He cares not at all for the splendour of man's wealth, for the showy pomp of loudly mouthed *Gita* verses; one who weeps at the very thought of Him is far nearer to His loving heart than the scholar who knows all the Vedas off by heart but never learned to prostrate before the Lord in deep contrition. The degree of learning one may have is the fruit of one's own effort in the past, just as his wealth and family are the result of his past desires. None can truly worship the Infinite; if each with the few powers he may have does his best, God our tender Father is delighted and pours out His love upon His devotee (cf. GH 38 : 6). By serving Him according to our own ability, great or small, we fulfil our highest *dharma* and at last attain to Him.

Wise people do not mock or criticise others for their ignorant and awkward ways of worship. When they see the the poor savages dancing and singing, without tune or rhythm, before some crude image fashioned for their Divinity out of their own minds, they do not sneer about 'the heathen in his blindness', but rather try to guide him gently, lovingly, and with utmost reverence towards some nobler, worthier adoration. They remember how Siva accepted with all love the bloody pieces of meat laid upon His *lingam* by the forest hunter Kannappa Nayanar, because his love was

such that he could later offer his own eyes in the belief that Siva needed them. God loves all His children equally, the wise and learned no more than the fool and ignorant; what He seeks is only a loving heart and a surrendered mind.

How can the wisest, the most learned, with all their degrees and titles, truly praise the Infinite? They too are but tiny creatures, *nothing* before His endless glory, boundless wisdom; He can be fully known and rightly praised only by Himself.

30. The Infinite Glory of Sankirtan

1. I do not look on a day of riven clouds as a bad day, but that day is a bad day which is deprived of sweet converse and stories about Krishna, and that moment I consider fruitless which is without a song to Sri Krishna. The destined life-time¹ of men passes away (happily) in songs to Him, so I call that moment blessed and most delightful of all. (2 : 2 : 25-27)

2. Even to hear a little of a chorus of praise to Krishna immediately purifies (both) the hearer² and the one who utters (it), together with seven generations. My son, it is where His Name and glory³ are sung that all holy places, all merits and blessings are (found).

¹ Skt: *āyuh*,

² Skt: *Kṛṣṇasaṅkīrtanam tūrṇam ḥunāti sṛutimātrataḥ*.

³ or: nature, qualities (*guṇa*).

On hearing the sound of a song to Him, all sins flee far away just like snakes from Garuda.¹ (1 : 10 : 68-70) Where a hymn to that Krishna the Oversoul arises, that place becomes a shrine for the dying and a giver of liberation. No sins can remain there, but virtues become very firm; (it becomes) a resort for the vows and religious exercises of ascetics and the devout. (1 : 10 : 73-74)

3. Fruitful and happy, glorious and most blessed is that day; where Sri Krishna is sung, there indeed longevity does not decay and those Vaishnavas who have heard the sound of the chorus of praise begin to dance; the earth is purified at once by the touch of the dust of their feet. . . . Oh, by contemplating a chorus of praise to Krishna and by taking His Mantra the memories of sin in even the worst of the three kinds of sinners are taken away.² (1 : 10 : 71-72, 79)

If one devotee bathing with faith and love in the Name can purify the whole world from its sins, what

¹ *lit*: Vainateya.

² Skt: *mucyate pāpakaistaiste pāpinastrividhāḥ smṛtaḥ*; the 'three kinds of sinners' may be taken as those who sin against God, men and themselves, or those who sin against the body, the mind or feelings, and the spirit.

must be the effect of many devotees' meeting together to sing His Name in tuneful chorus with overflowing hearts? This practice of *Sankirtan*, taught to the world again by Sri Krishna Chaitanya, gave Hinduism what it might otherwise have almost lacked—the tremendous force of united prayer, of congregational worship. Those who have enjoyed a whole day and night lost to the outer world amid such devotees, uplifted on the blessed Name sung to many sweet tunes, those who have come again and again through a thrilling *saptāham*, seven continuous days of ceaseless song—these alone can try to say how sweet, how powerful it is. All troubles sink into the abyss whence they came, all separation from the Beloved vanishes for the time, heart and mind are united with the Lord in ecstasy, and the echo, with its power, holds the soul in deep peace for weeks after the outer sounds have died away and the singers have dispersed.

It is not only those who take part, but even those who casually pass by and hear the sweet Sankirtan, who are cleansed from all impurities and given a chance to stay pure from that moment. All Divine holiness gathers round the spot where God's holy Name is thus chanted by those who love Him; such people need no pilgrimage, no absolution, no sacraments; they are wholly pure with God's own holiness. Others coming to that place are themselves sanctified by its vast vibrations, uplifted to Divine nobility, thrilled to a fleeting sense of the Eternal Presence—a thrill which, if cultivated thereafter, swiftly divinises even the very sinner. To such a place men go in their last hours of life, as pilgrims go to die at Banaras on the banks of holy Ganga; such a place becomes the scene of spiritual efforts that attain great things, those dying there achieve Liberation.

Such a place as this, such a time as that when the holy and life-giving vibrations of God's Name fill the

air with God Himself in form all but tangible and visible to men—is alone to be called a holy day, a holy place or shrine, for men. Even a single visit there gives new life, an overflowing joy, and boundless purity of heart and mind; even the worst of men are ennobled by the distant sound of a Sankirtan and lifted to new heights of spiritual life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOLY THINGS

Man as a soul has direct and personal communion with God, wherein his relationship with others, with public worship, with Society has little to do. But man as a member of Society on earth has also to consider his relationship with others. Narada therefore now turns to his behaviour in the temple, his attitude to food, his courtesy and hospitality to others, and reminds us that in all things the Lord is to be held in mind: His presence sanctifies the temple, so that the utmost respect must be shown there; all that we eat or drink is His gift, to be received at His hands and taken thankfully and with acknowledgment; all who come as guests to us are to be viewed as Himself, to serve whom is to serve the Lord.

31. In the Temple¹

1. Moving² in the House of Bhagavan in shoes or wooden sandals, . . . or even doing

¹ In the text no recognisable order is maintained for this list of offences; I have attempted to group them roughly.

² or: entering.

such (things) as worshipping the Lord in torn¹ or soiled (clothes)², (4 : 11 : 10-11) hiding (one-self) with a blanket³, . . . and even marking out a special seat (for individuals)⁴; (4 : 11 : 14, 17) not prostrating, or being excited⁵, saluting (Him) with one hand and turning round in front of Him, even stretching out the legs, squatting (or) lying down (in His presence). (4 : 11 : 11-13)

2. Loud talk, falsehood, quarrelling and tears, fighting, . . . rebuking and favouring (others), and talking rudely to women, scolding⁶ others (or) praising⁷ others, coarse language, and even causing⁸ bad smells,⁸ . . . keeping silence about the Guru, praising oneself and blaming the Gods. (4 : 11 : 13-16)

3. (Drawing) a bow in the Divine festival . . . and eating (before the Deity), (4 : 11 : 11-12) and not offering to Him seasonable

¹ or : left over.

² or : in times of ritual uncleanness ?

³ or : (others). The idea of purdah is quite un-sāstraic.

⁴ or : (wearing) distinguished clothes ?

⁵ or : drunk.

⁶ or : blaming, criticising.

⁷ or : flattering.

⁸ Skt : *adhovāyuvimokṣaṇam*, which can best be translated by paraphrase.

fruits, giving away (to Him) a portion of the surplus savoury food,¹ . . . serving little (when much is) available,² eating what has not been shown³ (to Him): (4 : 11 : 16, 15) —such are the thirty-two offences which may be alleged before Vishnu. (4 : 11 : 17)

4. He who without having (first) drunk (of) the water from a Sālagram stone throws it on his head is held to be the killer of a Brahman. The sins of a crore of lives are destroyed on drinking the water from Vishnu's feet, but eight times their sinfulness (is incurred) by the throwing down (even) of one drop on the ground. (4 : 11 : 18-19)

It is true that God looks in the heart and judges His child by the love, faith, surrender He finds there, but that does not mean he may ignore decency and reverence in approaching Him. A temple or shrine set apart for His worship, for silent prayer to Him, is not a private place for the use of one alone, who may afford to do as he likes there without considering whether he give scandal to others or not. The worshipper in a temple—and the pious worshipper of God will regard his private shrine in the same way—should observe these restrictions in his behaviour.

Before God all are equal, and it is objectionable to mark off special places for some as though they were

¹ or : cooked vegetables.

² i.e. giving little respect, selfishly keeping back something.

³ i.e. consecrated by offering.

superior to others ; nor should contempt for the Divine Presence be shown by stretching out the legs or lying down at ease before His august Majesty, or wearing dirty clothes when one has clean ones at home. Nor should the worshipper think of others there, blame, honour, quarrel with, or speak ill of them, or show disrespect to women—whom God so highly honours for their loving self-surrender and humble service—or boast of oneself or dishonour one's superiors. Nor is he to give to God any but the best he has—the spotless lamb, the first'fruits of the harvest—nor eat anything secretly, as it were, and without first accepting all food from His hand as His unearned gift. He is to show great reverence for the holy water used in washing the feet of (an image of) the Lord ; if this be dishonoured it becomes a curse rather than a blessing, for a sacrament misused becomes a sacrilege.

Likewise, there are ten 'offences' against the Name : Speaking ill of saints, who are as God Himself, whose Name it is ; preferring one Name of God, such as Jesus, to others, such as Krishna ; insulting the Guru, who initiated us in the Name ; criticising the holy Scriptures, which teach Him whose Name it is ; disbelief in the praises and power of the Name, as taught by holy men ; using the Name as a hypocritical shelter for sinning ; comparing the merits of the Name with those derived from other practices ; teaching persons to use it who are unready to use it with proper reverence and love ; deliberately rejecting its influence even while mechanically repeating it ; and clinging wilfully to pride and worldly things even while chanting the Name with lips and tongue.

In his *The Philosophy of Love*, H. P. Poddar lists 64 offences, which include those named by Narada in other words, and the following : Grouping of devotees in the mind according to their caste, etc. ; thinking meanly of the Supreme, the Scriptures, the Guru, picturés or

images of God, *prasād* and *charanāmrita*, the tulasi plant and the cow, the Lord's activities ; being slothful and doubtful in religious matters ; wearing a garland, carrying a stick, saluting others, attending to women, making undesirable gestures, entering without bathing, etc., laughing loudly, before His image ; thinking highly of oneself as a devotee, or putting on a show of spiritual knowledge before others ; neglecting works of charity or wronging others ; selling religion and initiation ; mixing with evil men, etc., etc.

32. Consecrate All Food to God

1. Alas, dead even while alive¹ is that sinner viler and more impure than an out-caste² who daily eats what is uneatable³ because not first offered up to Hari ! A pig daily eats uneatable³ urine and faeces ; that one viler than a pig does not indeed eat uneatable³ faeces but, alas ! that which has not been offered to Hari, which Brahmans cannot eat. (2 : 2 : 67-69) Yet is that rice which has not been given to Hari equal to faeces if a vile twice-born eats it, and the (unconsecrated) water is equal to urine—(so say) the wise-minded.⁴ (1 : 2 : 43)

¹ cf. Bh. 2 : 3 : 23.

² Skt : *cāṇḍāla*.

³ Skt : *abhakṣyam*.

⁴ Skt : *vidurbudhaḥ*.

2. Better than the twice-born without devotion to Krishna are the fallen outcaste,¹ the pig, the barbarian² horde, because they (only) follow their own nature,³ . . . (for) the hog, the barbarian and the vile outcaste eats what is eatable for him, while **that** Brahman daily eats what he should not eat,⁴ and thereby falls. (1 : 2 : 40-44) Yes, the Brahmans, deserting their own code⁵ by eating what they should not eat, fall day by day lower than the outcaste because of (their) irreligion ; the natural duty⁵ of Brahmans is the ceaseless serving⁵ of Krishna, (and) they (become) saints by daily taking food dedicated to Him and the water from His feet.⁶ (1 : 2 : 41-42)

All we have comes from God ; if we use it without thanking Him for it we become like swine grubbing for our food amid the filth of worldliness. What we have not first offered up to God and received at His hands, if only by an unspoken thought of Him, becomes filth for us to eat or drink ; one who knows God and yet takes food without thanking Him is indeed lower than the

¹ Skt : *svapaca*, one who cooks dogs.—son of a chandala and a Brahman woman.

² Skt : *mlecchah*, the word often used for foreigners, Europeans, etc.

³ Skt : *swadharmā*.

⁴ Skt : *abhakṣyam*.

⁵ or : following, enjoying.

⁶ Skt : *pādodakam*, another word for *caranāmṛtam*.

beast who acts according to his nature—as Tennyson reminds us in his *Passing of Arthur*. The God-knower, the 'Brahman' is bound by his very nature to acknowledge Him; a so-called Brahman empty of devotion is really lower than a pig, because he deserts his own *swadharna* and insults the God whom he exists only to serve and honour. Food first offered with a short thanksgiving to God becomes imbued with His Name and consecrated by His very Presence. It becomes a sacrament, the 'Living Bread from Heaven' which whosoever eats becomes immortal. All we eat and drink may thus, as the sect of Cathari also taught, become the 'Body of God' if truly consecrated in His Name.

33. The Power of Prasad

1. Supremely desirable for all is the adoring and contemplation of Sri Krishna, the singing of His Name, (and) the taking of water from His feet and consecrated food.¹ (1 : 2 : 64) In India the twice-born who daily takes water from (His) feet and food dedicated to Hari becomes a *Jivanmukta* when he receives His Mantra; the earth is at once purified by the very dust of his feet, while all holy places, Narada, also become more pure. That holy man is at once set free from all earthly things, (and) wins at every step the certain fruit of a horse-sacrifice. (2 : 2 : 70-72)

¹ Skt : *naivedya*.

2. Suppose a Brahman, (being) very much confused by some act of a previous life or by the Guru's fault,¹ through ignorance does not even know of a Sri Krishna beyond the three qualities ; unknowingly, or knowingly on account of (his) good company or even (through) some former act (of his own) he eats food consecrated to the Lord Krishna, the Oversoul. Then, my son, he becomes free, he is liberated from every sin,² and he goes in a divine car to Goloka, the best of worlds. (1 : 2 : 65-67)

3. My dear boy, because you yourself are virtuous and absorbed in Krishna,³ and have eaten consecrated food fallen on the road, stale and (even) licked by wild beasts, your longing and understanding have become devotion to Krishna. Son, who can tell the greatness of food offered to Krishna, to speak of which even the Vedas have no power?⁴ (1 : 4 : 10-12)

To worship God in heart and tongue, to dwell in Him even while at food or walking on the road, is life's real goal. One who lives thus in a holy land is set free from all worldly bondage the very moment of his initiation

¹ Skt : *atīva mūḍho viprasca prāktanādgurudoṣataḥ*,

² or : fall, degradation.

³ Skt . *Kṛṣṇa-parāyanah*, interested in Krishna and choosing to spend time on reading, thinking, talking of Him.

in the Name; for this sacramental food makes him ready to repeat the Name with all its inherent power and grace. The presence anywhere of such a one turns that spot into a place of pilgrimage where others may light their spiritual flame, 'recharge their spiritual batteries'. At every moment the human source of so much blessedness himself gains great merits; who can measure the outspreading influences that run from man to man from such a fiery centre of spirituality, even as circles spread out indefinitely round the whole universe from a little stone dropped in the silent pool?

So great is the sacramental power of the Name, that food over which it has been uttered with love and faith becomes imbued with God Himself (cf. *GI 87* and *1 Cor. 8 : 4-10, 10 : 16-28*). Even he who eats such food unknowingly is inspired with a measure of grace and uplifted to the Lord. No matter its physical condition—dirty, ill-cooked, defiled even by fallen insects, dust or impure hands—such food is always most holy, to be eaten at once with utmost reverence, even before a bath, as Chaitanya taught: where is the need of an outer bath in water for one who bathes in the Holy Name of God?

And how can we obtain this precious food which can do so much for us? When once asked for a morsel of his *prasād* as Guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi replied: "Think of Bhagavan while you eat, and then what you eat becomes His *prasād*." Yes, it is as easy as that. There is no need of a priest to consecrate the bread with muttered words. Think of God at all times; then God is ever with you and you yourself become instinct with God and His *prasād*.

34. The Guest is God Himself

Even Hari Himself is pleased with the one who satisfies a guest; when Hari is pleased the Guru is satisfied, and when the Guru is

satisfied, (then so are) the three worlds. All the Gods (reside) in the house where a guest is always staying; (but) all these other holy things: both merits and vows, religious practices, sacrifices, together with truth, character, righteousness and good deeds¹—these all depart together with unhonoured guests. (1 : 6 : 40-42)

Those who with loving welcome entertain the stranger and uninvited guest have often found they entertained God's angels unawares. The rude and churlish householder, who eats his meal in solitary selfishness, can never be God's host. The Lord Himself often comes in disguise to test the charity and selflessness of His supposed 'devotee'; Hindu literature is full of examples of this, and he who comes through this test with flying colours is received at once into the heavenly places to be for ever with his Lord.

In this respect East and West are one, for the Christian is also taught to see Christ in each one of His 'members' (*amsa*), little ones in need (*Mt.* 25 : 34-40), and this is the cause of the loving charity of Catholic nursing sisters and such priests as Fr. Damien and St. Camillus. So too St. Benedict in his famous 'Rule' (6th cent.), which is the pattern for so many Orders of Christian monks and nuns, says: "At the arrival or departure of all guests let Christ—who indeed is received in their persons—be adored in them by bowing the head or even prostrating on the ground."²

¹ Skt : *tīrthānyetāni sarvvāṇi puṇyāni ca vratāni ca tapāṅsi yajñāḥ satyaṁca śīlam dharmāḥ sukarma ca.*

² Latin : omnibus venientibus sive discedentibus hospitibus inclinato capite, vel prostrato omni corpore in terra, Christus in his adoretur qui et suscipetur (*The Via Vitae of St. Benedict.* by Dom Bernard Hayes, 1908, p. 268, Rule 53).

CHAPTER EIGHT

DIVINE WORSHIP

The highest work of man is the adoration of his God. Narada now turns to this great work and tells us in two short sections how we are to prepare ourselves, purify ourselves, to perform it, and then suggests one way in which we can worthily offer to the Infinite our praise—though we poor finite creatures can never really worthily adore the Supreme.

35. Preparation for Worship

1. Having bathed and put on a clean and pure silk cloth,¹ and washed the feet and hands, and the mouth with a sip of water, (3 : 1 : 17) making the head really pure again by prostrating to Hari, and the nose with the fragrance of such (things) as flowers from a garland worn by Him—the devotee may even undergo the purification of an infinite sweet odour. That leaf and flowers which have been

¹ *lit* : fine cloth : Skt. *nirmalasūkṣmaruddhavasano*.

offered to Krishna's two feet is the one really pure thing in the world and can sanctify a man's whole mind. (4 : 11 : 6-8)

2. And then the mace-(mark)¹ is to be made on the brow, (and) the bow² and arrows³ on the head, (4 : 11 : 8) while the arm is marked with the pure white shining Urdhvapundra,⁴ (3 : 1 : 17) and Krishna's sword⁵ also in the centre of the bosom, (His) conch⁶ and

¹ Skt: *gadū*, one of the nine symbols of Vishnu listed in *Vishnu-purana*, 1 : 22, representing *mahat*, an early stage of creation.

² Skt: *capam*: this symbol represents *tamasic ahankāra* (egoism).

³ Skt: *śarām*: another of the symbols, representing the senses.

⁴ This is the upright mark on the brow, etc., sign of a Vaishnava, the true 'Brahman' eligible to study the Veda. The *Vāsudevopaniṣad* explains how this mark is to be made, and its significance. The sandal which has been smeared on Vishnu's Image is named *Gopicandana*, as purifier of the Gopis. This is put on brow, heart, throat and over armpits while reciting the *Vishnu Gayatri*: *Narāyaṇāya vidmahe Vāsudevāya dhīmahi tanno Viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt*, or the names of Keśava, etc. and with certain prayers,—in twelve places. The three upright marks stand for the *Praṇava*, A,U,M, the three times, states, metres, selves (*ātmā*, *antarātmā*, *Paramātmā*), etc. the central line representing the One in the centre of the heart-lotus (*hṛdayakamalamadhye*), (12), where the Supreme Self is established like the tiniest speck of a grain of wild paddy, (*nivārasūkavattanvī paramātmā vya vasthitah*) (13). On this central line (*i.e.* Being) he is to meditate, realising himself to be that "Supreme Hari" (*param Hariṁ*), by treading the 'four upward courses'. If the Gopicandana be not available, earth from the root of a tulasi plant, sprinkled with ashes from a sacred fire, should be used instead, (23-24). One who then contemplates Vishnu is absorbed in Him and will not return to birth, so the Upanishad assures us (27).

⁵ Krishna's sword symbolises knowledge or *jñāna*; its sheath is ignorance.

⁶ The conch is symbol of *sāttvic ahankāra*, the purer self-hood.

disc¹ on the two arms. (4 : 11 : 9) Facing east with folded hands in the Lotus² or Swastika³ posture, let the **worshipper** salute . . . his own Gurus. (3 : 1 : 17)

3. So I speak now of the twelve purifyings of Vaishnavas: Approaching the House behind Hari (in procession), devotional walking round (Him), and afterwards washing (His) two feet, devotionally plucking leaves and flowers for the worship of Hari—of all the purifyings of the hands this purification is considered best⁴—singing His Name, and chanting His glories,⁵ through devoting (it) to the God Sri Krishna gradually purifying speech, together with listening to talk about Him,⁶ and attending⁷ His festivals; here too is to be mentioned the thorough purifying of

¹ The disc symbolises the creative power of the mind, which destroys evil and protects good.

² Usually known as *padmāsana*, with each instep on the opposite thigh, body upright, hands on knees.

³ In this pose, each sole is placed between the thigh and calf of the opposite leg, body upright, hands on knees.

⁴ *or*: specially indicated (*visiṣyate*).

⁵ *or*: qualities. The six Divine 'gunas' are: omniscience (*jnāna*), independence of will (*aisvarya*), power to create (*śakti*), strength and freedom from fatigue (*bala*), changelessness (*vīrya*) and mighty splendour (*tejas*). These combine in pairs to form the three *Vyūhas*.

⁶ *or*: the story of His incarnations (*tatkathāsravaṇam*).

⁷ *or*: eagerly awaiting, taking part in (*nirīkṣaṇam*).

ears and eyes, and also the (use of) water from (His) feet, and the wearing of garlands first worn (by Him) ¹. (4 : 11 : 1-5)

We must bathe before worshipping God ; yes, but that does not purify us so much as even one prostration before Him or once inhaling the sweet scent of flowers which have first been offered to Him. The lightest contact with such flowers, or with *any* thing in any way associated by the mind with God, is itself a potent purification and sweeps away all uncleanness from the mind. The use of *kumkum* or *bukka*, powders brought from the tombs of great saints like Tukaram or Jnaneswar, or the ash from the hand of a saint like Sai Baba, has immediate effect upon the mind and body of one who uses it with faith.

After thus purifying mind and body, the devotee about to worship God is directed to put on his forehead the sign of Vishnu's Club, Bow and Arrows, as a reminder that God protects His worshipper from all evil, while on the arms he paints Vishnu's Conch-shell and whirling Disc, His Sword over the heart, and the holy Upright Line on the (brow and) fore-arms. Then he may take his seat in some respectful posture and with humble gestures mentally salute his Gurus—that is, the Guru who initiated him, the Guru who teaches him about devotion to Krishna, the family Guru, etc.

Narada is then taught the twelve ways in which God's devotees can purify themselves : (1) by going in public procession through the streets behind His Image ; (2) by treating Him as Guru, walking clockwise round His Image, and then (3) washing its feet and drinking the water thus used ; (4) gathering flowers, etc., to offer up to Him—which is the holiest thing the hands can do ; (5) singing His Name and chanting songs in His glory,

¹ Skt : *nirmālya mālanāmaṣi dhāraṇam*.

whether alone or with other devotees ; (7) using the voice solely in glorifying Krishna, and so purifying all outer expression of thought ; (8) listening to the story of His life on earth and talking about Him with other devotees—remembering too that His life is continued, renewed, in that of every one of His saints, for “ God is not other than His saints ” ; (9) taking part with delight in celebrating His feasts, especially the Nativity Feast on Sri Krishna Jayanti day, and especially where it involves a long pilgrimage on foot, as by the *Varkaris*, who go thrice, or at least once, every year to Sri Vitthalji's temple at Pandharpur from all over India ; (10) then the purification of the senses, specially eye and ear, by using them almost solely for looking at the Lord or His saints and hearing, or hearing about, them only—for one who thus controls the outward channels by which so much mischief usually enters the unwary becomes most saintly and holy in his life ; (11) drinking and putting on the head the water which has been poured over His holy feet or those of His Image—which is a sacramental way of becoming His pupil through a ‘ baptism ’ in holy water ; and (12) the donning of a flower garland taken from His Image, which is a form (*arca*) of Himself—for that too instils a peculiar union with Him in heart and life and lifts the soul to great heights of peaceful joy.

36. The Adoration of the Lord

1. Therefore Vaishnavas always keep in (close) contact with Vishnu, (and) the Vaishnavas continuously adore Hari in six ways : Remembering (Him), and also singing (His praises), prostrating (to Him), serving (His) feet,¹ ceaseless worshipping (of Him), and total

¹ *i. e.* humble service.

self-surrender (to Him) with devotion. (2 : 2 : 10-11)

2. Oh, it is right daily to worship thus the Hero ;¹ or placing in (His) mouth a sweetened food-offering together with waters, and thinking that it is (indeed) laid reverently in the holy mouth (of the Lord) let **the devotee** repeat (the Name) a thousand and eight times with loving reverence. (3 : 11 : 2) This is how your Krishna is to be remembered at worship early in the morning by means of Indravajrā verses² with humble devotion. He should be delighted with candy, fresh butter, curds and sugared milk.³ (3 : 10 : 22) The Self having been caused to dwell in the pool of the heart, it is to be offered up (to God) ; (after) the offering⁴ has become merged in Him, the Self may again be adored.⁵ (3 : 11 : 27)

¹ Skt : S'auri, a name given to both Krishna and His brother Balarama.

² Indravajra is the name of one kind of Sanskrit metre, expressed by ta-ta-ja-ga-ga : *i.e.* It is called a *Samvṛtta* ; that is, all its quarters are similar, and its feet are regulated by the number of syllables.

³ Skt : *sitābhe ca haiyaṅgavānais'ca dadhrū vimisreṇa daughena samprīṇayettam.*

⁴ *or* : establishing, depositing.

⁵ This important couplet runs thus :

*samarpyātīmānamudvāsya tam suhr̥tsarasīruhe
vinyasya tanmayo bhūtvā punarātīmānamarcayet.*

3. That loving service which attends upon the visible feet (of an Image) is indeed the best; singing hymns before Hari is eternal dwelling in Goloka and ever gazing at His lotus feet without (even) blinking,¹ continual talking with Him and impelled (by Him) to works of service, the supremely beautiful place without any separation from His company²—(which is) the object desired by devotees and the very essence of Scripture, as I have heard.³ (1 : 1 : 19-21)

Indeed, all these twelve 'purifications' really amount to contact with Krishna; how can one be purified save by the touch of Him who is Himself all Purity? That is why, then, the devotee loves to spend his whole time in the temple or his little cottage shrine-room—coming out from these only to mix with other devotees in whom he can see the Lord, until he comes to find Him in all he looks upon. And then he comes out to spread his Darling's glory all around him, ever dancing in the heart because of the pure bliss of His eternal presence there.

Narada gives us only *six* modes of adoration, while the *Bhagavatam* gives *nine*—which would almost suggest our *Pancharatra* is really older than the great Purana, if European critical methods are to be used, for addition

¹ *i. e.* for not even the time it takes to blink the eyes will He be hidden from the sight.

² *or*: the place of uninterrupted company with Him.

³ Skt: *bhaktānām vāñcītam vastu sārabhūtam śrutau śrutam*. The closing word recalls the familiar Buddhist formula: "Thus have I heard."

is far more common than subtraction in such matters. But this need not surprise us, for the *Bhagavatam* is ascribed to Vyasa, while the *Pancharatra* is ascribed to his Guru, Narada. It is most unlikely a later book should omit three of the modes already accepted by Vaishnavas.

Self-conceited egoists mock at the 'idolater' for imagining a mere image or picture of the Lord to be a real incarnation of His grace and power, as Protestants reject the Catholic teaching of transubstantiation. But such foolish laughter arises only from ignorance and lack of experience. Those who with faith have approached a duly installed Image which has been rightly and reverently adored by the love of multitudes have seen and felt and known God Himself manifesting through that Image. Feeding it with such humble human offerings as they can afford, they have been from time to time delighted with direct manifestations of His acceptance. This is in no way mere imagination, but a real communion with that Lord who abides in all and who can never stay away from the loving call of one who is altogether surrendered up to Him. Those sympathetically interested in such facts may gather for themselves thousands of such experiences from the blessed souls who through such an Image have found God.

Withdrawing the self from all outer things, diving deep into the silence of the heart, the devotee then surrenders that 'heart' with all its longings, joys and sorrows, to the Lord; and then through that very act of self-abnegation lovingly sinks down into the Divine Being; the personal self then disappears; and that Self which remains is God. There is no sacrilege in any worship of *that* Self. Here Narada comes his closest, as do the Christian mystics like St. John of the Cross, to the Advaita—but with the caution that for the personal self to utter "*Aham Brahmāsmi*" (I am God), etc., is an offence against the Real, a blasphemy. The

real Self, which alone could use those words, is beyond all words and dwells only in the eternal Silence of the Divine. He affirms nothing of Himself ; He *IS*.

Narada concludes by declaring that the reverent service of an Image of the Lord is the highest act of worship a man can do. Intimacy with His Image soon leads to a loving intimacy with Himself, so that the devotee comes in time to be always with his Lord, in an unbroken ecstasy of spiritual adoration—which is the very purpose of our human life : to divinise this world by dwelling therein always in perfect union with God.

CHAPTER NINE

VISION OF THE LORD

In this last chapter Narada gives little new teaching, but rather suggestive hints on how to meditate on Krishna—and the method is equally good for other ‘forms’ of God—in such a way as to increase familiarity with Him and to stimulate love for Him. Those interested in doctrine may therefore pay less attention to this chapter than to the others; its style in the original is more literary, its diction more flowery, and it contains little not already to be found in the *Bhāgavatam*, *Sri Krishna Karnāmrītam*, *Gītā Govindā*, and other books devoted to the love of Krishna.

37. The Divine Child

1. (Think that) the Child is lying weeping on a cradle, being rocked by the Gopi girls and urged to take milk. (3 : 14 : 12) (And now) the blue-skinned Child has taken curds and *payasam*¹ in (His) two hands, (3 : 14 : 22) (or) in joyful excitement has taken up . . .

¹ A sweet pudding usually made of sugar and milk or cream boiled with rice, though other grains may also be used.

payasam in the right hand, and in the left (hand) cream-butter¹ like the full autumn moon. (5 : 1 : 10)

2. The divinely naked God wears on the throat a sparking nail-like chain made of lotus-buds—may Yasoda's Son grant us happiness! (5 : 1 : 11)—while the neck is adorned with a net of tiger's claws and little bells. . . . Remember the Child is blue and radiant, laid in His mother's lap, (His) body containing the fully concentrated essence of Divinity.² (3 : 14 : 22, 8)

3. Adore the five year old Gopa Boy who in great excitement runs about in the courtyard with extremely restless eyes, and beautified with bells and bangles, necklaces and anklets.

¹ Note the honour given to this rich food, as in GZ 44 : 3. Krishna, the Divine Child, is true child in His love of sweet things; the *Bhāgavatam* revels in stories of His playful ways of getting at the dainties in His Gopi-neighbours' houses, giving them the wonderful joy of involuntarily playing host to Him.

² That Body of Krishna, seemingly human, really held in it the nature of all the Gods, for Krishna is Himself the Supreme in whom all else subsists (cf. GN 41 : 2). The *Kṛṣṇoṇiṣad*, 10, says: "It is Hari who has assumed a visible illusory form as a Gopa," and 18: "Becoming a Child He plays as aforetime in the great milk-(ocean)." The *Gopālatāpiniyōṇiṣad*, 2, clearly declares: *kṛṣṇo vai paramam daivatam*: "Krishna is truly the Supreme Deity", and in 19 adds: "The One Krishna controls all, pervading all, worthy of praise, who being one reveals Himself in many forms." The *Bhāgavatam* and all other Vaishnava scriptures insist on the same fact

. . . This is the Child Mukunda,¹ lovely as a blue lotus and shining like the rising sun, with red-lotus eyes held in the (middle of the blue) lotus, and with tinkling bells on thighs and waist. In two hands He takes cream-butter and pure *payasam*, and is adored by all and beloved of cows, Gopis and Gopas; for a long time He plays with the deer's hoof that adorns His throat. (5 : 1 : 60, 78)

4. At other times He may keep dancing on the crest of Kaliya's² hood, a nectar-(like) sight, cleverly splashing its body with rain-drops (from His eyes). . . . If anyone repeats His Mantra even once with recollection, he will never at any time meet defeat, . . . having been led to brood (on Him) with great and loving reverence, or mentally placing (His) feet together in his heart. (3 : 14 : 73, 78)

5. In the pleasure-garden there is a swing of real gold that hangs suspended from a russet *kalpa*-tree,³ and it is rocked by two Gopis of

¹ *lit*: 'Giver of liberation', a name of Krishna, who alone frees the world from darkness and sin.

² The monstrous serpent whose presence poisoned the waters of River Yamuna, upon whom Krishna playfully danced until he pleaded to be allowed to leave the place in peace.

³ A magic tree which fulfils every wish of one standing beneath it. The modern cocoanut palm, which supplies so many needs of men, is often so called today.

noble family; the reddish light shines out (from it) like a newly blossomed *bandhuka*.¹ Hail to Mukunda, the gracious dark-blue Child, who plays with a number of tiny bells upon His loins and plays with the tiger-claws flashing on His throat! (5 : 1 : 89)

6. When the moon uplifts her golden light beneath the *tamāla*² trees, with thoughtful smiles He embraces with His own slender fore-arm the lovely arms of the beloved ones; . . . with playful violence fascinating the Gopi maids and divine beauties,³ . . . the smiling Hari, clad in yellow and variously adorned, . . . for a long time plays lovingly with the one embraced. (5 : 1 : 23, 29, 23)

Among all the forms assumed by Divinity to delight His worshippers perhaps that of the Holy Child most easily arouses loving thoughts and surrender in the heart. What St. Francis of Assisi felt for the Child of Bethlehem, Līlāsuka and countless other Hindu saints have felt for the Child of Brindavan, pouring out at His

¹ *Pentapetes phoenicea*, a lovely dark red flower, opening at noon.

² *Xanthochymus pictorius*, the yellow mangosteen, a fruit-tree with dark bark, shady foliage, white flowers bunched together at the ends of branchlets.

³ The Gopis were themselves deities who took birth to share in the joy of the Lord's Incarnation; sometimes also said to be the *Vedas*, because of their exalted love for God in that lovely form. *Kṛṣṇopaniṣad*, 27, says: "Incarnate on earth is the whole Vairakuntha of Heaven's dwellers."

little feet rich vials of their fragrant adoration. Even today the reader of the lovely poem *Sri Krishna Karnāmrītam* or the *Tirumōḷi* of Perialwar is swept away on tides of love that bring him very near to tears.

Like every other child, the Child Krishna loved sweets and all things rich to eat; so He is pictured as holding sweet pudding or fresh butter in His little hands as He crawls about the courtyard of the house, decorated with the jewels given by the love of His putative parents. "Our God in cradle lies," sings the Christian devotee, and Narada repeats the sweet refrain: This tiny Child, so weak, so human, in *Him* abides eternally the whole Fullness of the Divine! No ordinary child is this, for all the seeming, but the God of all—in every pore of whose body revolve a million worlds with all their infinity of living things—all upheld and fed and taught by this little Child! Yet our eyes, blinded by the vanities of personality, can see in Him only the dusty little body, wandering about with fickle attention until captivated by a sweetmeat! (*Gita* 9:11) If we could only see the Divine Spirit animating, inspiring *every* child, our poor world were much nearer to its goal of real peace!

In childlike grace dancing upon the demon snake of malicious treachery, Krishna sprinkles His redeeming love even on those that follow such an evil path; the very thought of Him saves from wickedness, and the soul embracing His feet with love and submitting to His royal majesty can never be vanquished by sin; like another Magdalene she rises to new life and joy. Seeing Him at play in the lovely garden of our world and heart, rejoicing His devotees with sweet converse, devotees who are pictured as women because of the great feminine quality of whole surrender and unselfish love—which alone can win God's Sacred Heart—we find all sorrow is charmed away, and our soul is bathed in ineffable bliss.

38. The Adored Protector

1. While protecting the Gopas and grazing the cattle, Gopala ¹ plays the flute, and having put on (His) disguise again talks playfully (with them). (3 : 14 : 31) That Achyuta is to be remembered who, placed in the middle of brown cows . . . and calves, . . . plays the flute with His right hand to call (them). (Wearing) a yellow silken cloth, . . . His head decked with a peacock-feather crown, (5 : 1 : 34, 39, 34) He holds in His right hand a cattle-goad, (3 : 11 : 6) and a conch adorns the (left) lotus hand, (5 : 1 : 39) (which is) ready to grant the best of worthy desires. (3 : 11 : 6)

2. (His) head adorned with a diadem of peacock-feathers, . . . like a sapphire, (5 : 1 : 39) Vāsudeva ² lights up the whole of the three worlds with His own golden glory. (5 : 1 : 85) (Then) Murari ³ goes to the foot

¹ *lit*: the 'protector of cows', *i.e.*, of souls. One of the favourite Names of Sri Krishna.

² *i.e.* Krishna, as the Son of Vasudeva; also commonly used for the Supreme God who is the Fourth Vyūha, as the God pervading all.

³ *lit*: the 'Foe of Mura', a demon. Another Name of Krishna the All-Named.

of the paradisaical *kalpa*-tree,¹ and sits upon the jewelled lion-throne.² (5 : 1 : 39) He there resembles the pericarp of a flowering lotus that rises from the root of the *kalpa*-tree, while His drooping flowerlike bosom sprinkled with countless jewels is like the lotus stem. (5 : 1 : 85)

3. While repeating His Names at noon, the distinctive Form, to be adored by gods and seers³ and by hosts of leading sages, is a noble and charming Body of the hue of clustered rainclouds, surrounded by cows and beloved Gopis. His lovely hair is decked with a peacock-feather diadem, His sportive lotus eye sparkles, His face is like the orb of a full moon, cheeks bright with jewelled earrings, a noble nose, a most lovely gentle smile, yellow robe, rows of dainty anklets, a jingling girdle, and a body shining with armlets and various kinds of bangles ; (His) divine limbs anointed with sandal-paste are shining and

¹ cf. *Gopālatūpiniyopaniṣad*, 33 : " That one Govinda, the Image of Sachchidananda, aim of the Five Words, resorting to the foot of the *kalpaka*-tree in the forest of Brindavan. . . . "

² A royal throne supported by lions, as emblem of royal majesty and dignity, which Krishna likes less than the simple bliss of His Gopi-lovers.

³ *lit* : rishis, inspired poets who saw the scriptural *mantras* of the eternal Veda and so were able to convey them to mankind.

illuminated by garlands of various unfading forest flowers—the very body of Love himself! ¹ (3 : 11 : 3-5)

4. Thinking that fresh butter, together with *payasam*, is being held reverently to His mouth by adorers, the Mantra-taker should repeat (His Name) a thousand times, or at least a hundred and eight. Oh, to that best of men who thus daily with full devotion worships that Darling Hero ² in the midst of Gopis, all the gods continually bow, and all the worlds most certainly remain in his control! He enjoys intelligence and length of days, prosperity, beauty and good fortune, with happy sons, with cattle, lands, jewels, offspring, and many other pleasures, . . . and at the last he goes to the abode of his Achyuta! (3 : 11 : 9-11)

Pasturing His cows as the Good Cowherd, like the Good Shepherd of Hermetic and Christian imagery, Krishna plays His Divine Flute of the universal melody, robed in the auspicious yellow dress of silk, and crowned with the beauty of a peacock's feather diadem, and decked with all symbolic lovely jewellery. As guide and

¹ *i.e.* Madana or Kāmadeva, the Indian Cupid, whose body possesses all infinite charms and beauties but is burned to ashes by one glance from the pure ascetic eye of Siva.

² Skt : Śauri.

teacher of His devotees, the 'cows', He leads them with the protecting and urging goad, and calls them on the holy sound of the eternal Conch, which the *Kṛṣṇo-paniṣad*, 21, says is the *Siddhi* (*i.e. nirvikalpa*), while the Flute (*idem* 8) is the God Rudra. His beauty shines through all the universes; as 'Bhuvanasundara', He fascinates every heart and allures it to His feet. Seated under the Tree of Plenty, which like all trees pours its gifts unthanked at the feet of all in need, upon the lion-seat of royal majesty—so beautiful is He that one thinks of a tender lily sheltered by some mighty tree.

At noon, the devotee may think of Him thus as Gopala, protector of His devotees, surrounded by His beloved 'cows' and human playmates, with all beauties adorning His delicious Form and enchanting the beholder to a trance of wondering love. Then, with the thought of offering Him all the heart's affection, His Name should be taken for as long a time as possible—and why not incessantly as by Haridas?—while He is conceived as the Centre of the adoration, even when unconscious, of all the infinite millions and millions of created things. Blessed indeed is one who thus worships Him, blessed with the real happiness of this life, blessed too with eternal companionship with the Beloved in His glorious Heaven!

39. Radiant Boyhood

1. And now, in a noble garden, there is a splendid pavilion of gold, glittering with heaps of assembled jewels. Mounted on a lotus pedestal in **that** place of jewels flooded with brilliance like a *kalpa*-tree, dark blue as a sapphire, stands the tiny Child (still) fond of treacle, with very curly dishevelled hair, a

most lovely face like an opened lotus in a windless place, and a beautiful blue-lotus 'eye . . . smiling just like a bunch of *bandhuka* buds. (3 : 10 : 16-17, 20)

2. His rounded cheeks are made delightful with trembling pendants; (He has) a good nose, fine carmine lips and a pleasant smiling mouth, while His neck sparkles with a string adorned with many precious stones, and His lily toes shine with the ornaments they bear, and His bosom throbs with the Flute's sweet melodies, and His dear little limbs (are) lit up with golden pins of various designs. A net of little chiming bells is tied on His waist with a fillet and (on His) dainty pair of thighs; His hands and little feet are delicious in their loveliness. (3 : 10 : 18-20)

3. (He) has come come forth to destroy the foes of the Immortals, Yuthānana,¹ Pūtana,² and the rest (of them)—the burden of the earth; the Lord is surrounded by hosts of

¹ Yuthānana. I have been unable to identify this 'Elephant-headed' (?) demon.

² Pūtana was a female demon sent by the evil king Kamsa to destroy the Infant Krishna. She took the form of a lovely lady and began to nurse the Child, but He knew her wickedness and brought about her death—whereupon she was freed from that vile body and attained eternal bliss.

Gopis and Gopa boys, and worshipped by multitudes of gods like Indra.¹ (3 : 10 : 21)

The Child's loveliness is here described in words of tropic warmth such as those delighted in by Eastern poets of every age. And what value is there in such fervid imaginations? They awaken a thirst for perfect and undecaying beauty, a restless longing for a loveliness that will never pass away but will exercise eternal charm and infinite delight. Such beauty in rare moments comes to our world, to chase away the ugliness of evil, to set free the righteous from fear and misery in the darkest hour of night. To uphold *dharma* and protect the devotees, God Himself comes forth from age to age (*Gita* 4 : 8). Blessed indeed are they who live in such fearful epochs when evil seems to triumph, for they are destined to enjoy His Incarnation in their very midst! The gods envy the good fortune of such; they crowd around Him, even in the lowest forms, in order to share a little of His overflowing grace.

Such vivid descriptions of the appearance of the Lord also help the devotee in his meditation to form a concrete 'image' of his Beloved in the mind—an 'image' which He may pervade with His own life and through it give Himself to the seeker of His grace.

40. The Idyll of Universal Loveliness

1. And now let (the devotee) clearly recall Brindavan, its flowering jasmines² giving out

¹ Indra was the King of Gods, a deity of rather doubtful character, fond of pleasure and luxury. Annoyed by Krishna's stopping his worship, he tried to destroy the Gopis and their cattle by torrential rains, but Krishna protected them by holding the hill Govardhan over them as an umbrella, and Indra had to submit humbly to Krishna.

² *lit* : *mādhavi*, the *gaertnera racemosa*, a creeper with lovely fragrant white flowers in the rains and winter months; also called 'hiptage' and 'spring creeper'.

(their) fragrance, the branches of trees bending under (the weight of) blossoms and clustered buds, the newly blooming lotus roots twined round with lovely creepers made cool and happy by drops of dew—the whole (scene) well displayed by the very charming bumble-bees circling round with soft hummings to taste the sweet nectar and beautified by the doves and parrots, singing-birds,¹ koils, and other such feathered ones, while peacocks are dancing to and fro.
'(3 : 5 : 1-2)

2. (Let him brood upon) Kalinda's daughter² and her playful waves, and the spray swept along by whirling winds that stir the pollen in the heart of awakened lotuses and kindle love in the women of Braj continuously disturbed . . . by the winds. Let him think next of the soaring *kalpa*-tree, (which is) indeed the greatest in every season and constantly enjoyed, fulfilling (all) desires, adorned with twigs and new leaves (like) transparent³ emeralds, with blossoms and buds

¹ Skt: *sārikā*.

² *i.e.*, the river Yamuna, often so called. It flows past Brindavan.

³ *lit*: crystal (*marakatacchadam*).

(like) diamonds and pearls, and with various lotus-red fruits. (3 : 5 : 3-4)

3. Again let the wise one, alert and freed from the six waves,¹ recall the jewelled pavements lit with gems (like) shining heaps of flower-pollen like the bright sun joyfully rising with gold upon the delightful summits,² spraying the golden soil with the waters of Immortality.³ Seated on the greatest seat of yoga in the eight-petalled red lotus, that jewelled pavement is to be contemplated. And then, for a while immersed in the lake of the (light of the) rising sun, let him reflect upon Mukunda the Controller of Happiness.⁴ (3 : 5 : 5-6)

4. The very soft dark and thick curly hairs of His head are as radiant as⁵ the edges of a massive cloud like a blue lotus, studded with a beautiful string of cut jewels; and near the black top-knot shines a charming plume-crest and a diadem made of blossoms from the tree of gods caressed by bees and pendants of

¹ *i.e.*, the mind and five senses, or the emotions aroused by them, the six 'foes'.

² of the holy mountain Meru (?)

³ *or*: the golden land with nectar-like showers of water which shine like the sun rising over the lands on the top (of Meru).

⁴ because He gives Liberation to the soul.

⁵ *lit*: equal to the radiance of.

newly opened blue lotuses. The surface of (His) brow is lit by shaken flowing curls and a yellow *tilak*,¹ (His breast) by a lovely swaying garland. (3 ; 5 : 7-8)

5. (His) beloved face is the spotless orb of a waning autumnal moon, the eye a broad lotus petal, the cheeks are brightened by twinkling jewels (on) a cord of golden earrings, the high and dainty nose is a bud; more beautiful than vermilion is the lower lip, the beauty of (His) gentle smile (is lovelier) than an opening lotus, frail white jasmine² and thorn-apple flower.³ New leaves and flowers gathered wild are made into necklets and (now) shine on the charming conch-like throat. (3 : 5 : 9-10)

6. The shoulders are decked with a string of *santānak*⁴ buds hanging down, visited by wandering intoxicated black bees, His beauty being enhanced by a gleaming string of big pearls, and the lovely *kaustubha*⁵ (shining)

¹ the round mark on the centre of the forehead, usually held to be auspicious.

² Skt : *kunda*, a variety of this favourite scented white flower, (*nerium odorum*).

³ Skt : *dhātura*, a very poisonous plant, (*datura alba*).

⁴ a tree of Paradise, not identifiable by botanists.

⁵ the precious gem which hangs on the breast of Vishnu, and so of Krishna; "through it Sun, Fire, Voice, Moon reveal their own form", says the *Gopālottaratāpinīyopaniṣad*, 54.

like all the constellations upon the wide earth. . . . (His) armlets (are) inlaid with various gems, (there is) a necklace with little bells, (there are) fine jingling anklets, and a fillet round the waist; the divine limbs (are) all tinged with joyous yellow, and (His) slender body (is) draped round the loins in a yellow silken cloth. (3 : 5 : 11, 13)

7. His two high shoulders are neatly marked with *Srivatsa*¹ signs, His arms reach down to the rounded knees, His belly and noble deep navel are decorated with an alluring line of hairs like big female black bees. . . The bosom is shapely, and the sweep of the thighs charming; beautiful and high (are His) knees. . . Like ruby mirrors shine the rows of nails, and the pretty lotus feet covered with pinkish toes; on the delicious crimson soles of His feet are marked the fish and goad; the banner of victory, the lotus and the thunderbolt.² The beauty of His body, formed from the very essence of a host

¹ The little curl of hair on the bosom, a mark of beauty regarded much as was the dimple in England.

² the auspicious marks of Divinity on the soles of the feet, shown by certain lines, etc.

of charms, cannot be surpassed by the loveliness of the body of Love himself. (3 : 5 : 12, 14-15)

8. (As His) finger moves to and fro over the holes, the Flute filled with (air from His) lotus mouth breathes out divine melodies, ever melting (the hearts of) all living beings and drawing them on to the vast expanse of an infinite ocean of bliss. Their udders heavy with excess of milk, the eyes of the cows are absorbed in His lotus face as they browse along, slowly chewing the remaining blades of grass ;¹ tied with slender² tendrils, they are a splendid sight. At milking time they yield a fine frothy rain from the tips of the full udders, being enchanted by the charming soft music continually coming³ from the Flute (and) listening to it with both ears, indeed with rapt attention. They shake their fresh horns and lofty brows and stamp their rounded hoofs as if eager for battle, with tails lifted (to see) their steers and heifers while

¹ *i.e.*, chewing the cud, what is left of the grass they have eaten.

² *vāladhi*, hair-like (?) ; *vāla-sīpha* is the hair of a horse's tail, and the word probably means therefore 'tenuous' or the like. *Vāla* is also the name of a jasmine (*pavonia odorata*).

³ *lit* : given (out).

they lick their sturdy dewlaps and bodies.
(3 : 5 : 16-19)

9. Not disturbed even by the loud cries emitted by each (of the Gopa boys) which on every side rend the air, wearied by their labour, . . . they drink in the sweet immortal¹ melody drawn from the bamboo flute . . . by their Gopa friends of equal nature, age and grace and dress, swooning in the sweet notes of flute and *vina*² (combining) low and high³ tones into skilful songs in time with other expert women dancers, who have creepers swaying on their shoulders, little shaking bells tied round their ankles and rounded hips, . . . their ears decked with artless hyena-claws full of separate indistinct and pleasing sounds.
(3 : 5 : 20-22)

10. Then drenched with the immortal¹ sweetness of the Flute's most sweet and lovely music, all the sprouting twigs and shoots and branches of trees formed (in the) mud, and (all) the creepers, thrust out their growing points with delicious thrills. Then very bright is the

¹ or : nectar-like.

² the subtly beautiful melody-giving Indian lute.

³ or : soft and loud (*mandroccatala*).

soft smile of the wide canopy of moonlight on the lovely ocean-river, as stray drops thrown up from the sparkling waves are gathered into mist. (3 : 5 : 24-25)

11. And then drinking in the undying¹ sweetness of the beauty of His all-blessed lovely Form, as the means of (satisfying) their yearnings, the love (of the Gopis) flows in streams of water from their shining languid eyes. . . . Then like a bright bow their lovely eyebrows shoot Love's sharp arrows, eager to remove all the unbearable tremors of agony which burn in the heart's recesses and to throw them into oblivion. (3 : 5 : 27, 26)

12. From their loosened hair falls the fillet of blossoming flowers that drip a honeyed juice sought after and again and again enjoyed by a bevy of big black bees. Mad with love and tottering in the drunkenness of their desire, their soft speech all trembles. . . . As their dear flower feet stumble along, overcome by the longing to see Him, there is a soft chiming sound from their jewelled anklets. The lips of the noble ones move, and their two half-opened long-lashed eyes, wet with passion

¹ or : nectar-like.

like the lake-born lotus, are lit up by (their) earrings. (3 : 5 : 28-29)

13. Their long-drawn burning breaths wither even the plants which grow tall in the hot sun, while their lily hands glittering with various gifts are continually haunted on every side by bees.¹ Their wide² and eager dark eyes and whole bodies altogether covered with wreaths of flowering blue lotus are the scene of various plays by those who taste the jasmine nectar of fallen lotuses in their lovely breath. (3 : 5 : 30-31)

He who is Himself all Divine Beauty, the infinite perfection of loveliness, reflects His beauty on all around wherever He may be. The trees of Brindavan in whose shade He plays become radiant with unearthly glory, and Yamuna's waters sparkle with an unseen light as they gambol past His dancing feet. Flowers and insects vie with one another to reflect His beauty, to enjoy His sweetness, to do Him honour with their tiny gifts of homage; birds sing around Him as they sang around the Assisi saint. The whole of Nature thrills with joy at the holy touch of His tender limbs as He sits there in His boyish beauty, poised in yogic splendour in the lotus of the devotee's meditating heart and filling it with bliss untold.

Gaze joyfully on each limb of that lovely Form; see the feet and soft hands, the strong waist wrapped in gay garments, the warm breast sparkling with a

¹ *i.e.*, girl-friends.

² *or*: long.

thousand gems, the graceful shapely neck, the sweet face, the moist crimson lips soft as a newly opened flower washed with morning dews, the bright laughing eyes, the long waving hair dark as thunderclouds in summer. Any one of these, meditated on with love and faith, will free your soul from all earth's painful bondage. How then can we poor mortal lovers of His be satisfied with any other thing than His embrace ?

How foolish, how unhappy are those ignorant folk who see in Him but a human trifler with human loves ! He is no mortal youth, but the immortal eternal SELF in every heart in all this vast unlimited universe that He Himself has made and filled with one great longing for His love. Drawn to Him by that timeless essential need, which calls in our hearts like the memory of songs heard long ago, thrilling them to a sweet yearning to hear them once again, to be folded to that loving Heart where we all belong and out of which we can find no rest or satisfaction—drawn by the notes of that eternal Flute upon His childlike rosebud mouth—how can we think of worldly duties, of relatives, of reputation ? (*Gītā* 18 : 66)

Away, away with all that holds us far from Him ! Let us run, sisters, run after the sweetness of His fragrance (*Cant.* 1 : 4), run stumbling through the dark forests of this life, tripping on the stones that beset our way, heedless of all but that insistent summons of the One Beloved of our heart ! (*Bh.* 10 : 29 : 1-11) Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear ; for the sake of the SELF is the husband dear (*Bṛhad.* 2 : 4 : 5). And this is our very SELF who calls. Run, run, faster yet, till we can fall breathless and enraptured on His feet and lose ourselves for ever in His love ! This is our life, for this alone we draw our breath, to die in Him !

Blessed indeed are those holy devotees of His, those Gopi-sweethearts who in their hearts have found Him

the only sweetness and have sold everything for His love! They alone know life's reality and attain the height of human glory.

41. The Dance of Divine Love in the Heart

1. In the night let him worship in the mind Devaki's Son¹ overcome by the consciousness of Love (and) wearied by the mystic dance² in the centre of the Gopi circle ; so draw His image clearly (in the mind), plump, gracious, tenderly beautiful, and a span-measure in height.³ This is the dance-assembly certainly to be approached by some with (circling) feet and by others with hands awhirl. The winds that carry lovely pollen-dust from the place of lotuses are greatly heated and fiery, (but they) are cooled on Yamuna's wide shore by carrying a mist of spray from the waves. (3 : 12 : 2-4)

¹ *i.e.*, Krishna, Son of Vasudeva and Devaki, born in the prison.

² Skt : *rāsapaṅkajāntam*. The Rāsa is the dance of spiritual love wherein Sri Krishna, the Inner Self and Foundation of everyone, delights the personal self devoted to Him (cf. Bh, 10 : 33).

³ Cf. the image of the *Puruṣa* in the heart, the 'little man' of the size of a span, in the *Upaniṣads*.

2. Smitten by Love's sharp arrows,¹ overcome by the enjoyment of crores of delights, (and) whitened by the moon's rays, the girls freely wander about in a group, while Vidyā-dharas,² Kinnaras³ Siddhas,⁴ gods, Gandharvas,⁵ Serpents⁶ and heavenly Singers, doorkeepers, and those who travel safely in celestial cars, pour down an excessive rain of flowers. Drawn more closely together by rapture,⁷ they perform the merry Dance, even causing suspicion that He is a jewel (because) His own divine body is composed of many deities. (3 : 12 : 5-7)

3. Coming in turn to the beautiful-eyed (maidens), two of whom are held close in the

¹ So St. Francis de Sales (*Divine Love*, 6 : 13) says : " Love wounds the hearts. . . . The point of the dart wounds, all that follows does but increase the wound and the smart." St. Teresa of Avila has much to say upon this mystic 'wound of Love', which is a favourite topic of many others of the great mystics of East and West. Though painful to the lower self, it is an exquisite bliss to the real soul. Mira warns us that none can heal it save Krishna who Himself inflicted it.

² *lit* : those who possess knowledge, celestial musicians.

³ horse-headed celestial beings, who also belong to the heavenly choirs.

⁴ perfected beings in the heavenly spheres, who possess the inner soul powers, sixteen in number.

⁵ celestial singers who teach melody to inspired souls on earth.

⁶ semi-divine beings who are said to inhabit the Underworld, *Nāgas*.

⁷ Union through Joy.

Beloved's pair of arms ; shining (like) pairs of golden bees, their bodies burn in the fire¹ of the love kindled by the very contact with Him. Entranced by various different tunes with sevenfold divine melodies and many scales, rhythms and times, a very charming train of thought seems to arise in them. (3 : 12 : 8-9)

4. Thus their body is as it were changed and made of pure gold studded with emerald gems, shining like the jewel set in the middle of a necklace, or like a big red lotus in the midst (of other blooms) ;² the little body (becomes) youthful (like) a flaxen flower, the eye (becomes) the tender petal of a red lotus, the hair gleams like a wonderful cluster³ of new buds, the hands tied with a number of peacock-tail feathers, the face equal to a moon, with quivering eyebrows, both cheeks adorned with jewelled ear-rings, (while) the moonlike face is hidden by a veil supporting many kinds of silver jewels. The ground where they are is

¹ This fire, in the case of St. Gemma Galgani, actually raised the temperature of her body to amazing heights. See her life by Fr. Germanus. It is vividly described, among others, by St. Teresa from personal experience, and by Sri Ramakrishna.

² The body even of a saint in frequent union with God is glorified with the inner light called *tejas*.

³ Skt : *gulanca*.

covered with a carpet of lovely scattered blossoms and (is) the abode of loving games ; their dear hands, (soft) as tender seedlings, (drive off) a line of enraptured black bees from the soles of their feet and their lovely arms. (3 : 12 : 10-13)

5. As it touches in embrace the bosoms of the maidens, the soft breast of the Ocean of Bliss¹ blushes red, and the best of Gopas, the only Teacher of the World, is swept along overwhelmed by loving thoughts. (3 : 12 : 14)

And as the fevered day of worldly life wears on towards its close and life's sun sinks slowly to its setting, when the evening comes on and the heart is stilled before the ancient loveliness and starlit night, we may think of Krishna, that ineffable Beauty, wearied of His play and long dancing within the hearts of His beloved Gopi-devotees. Now He is resting in their loving presence, while the celestials crowd around to enjoy the glorious sight of God Incarnate among His saints, of Bhagavan among His *bhaktas*, and to manifest their joy in the old old way by raining flowers from the sky.

Blended there together in sweet union and intimate embrace, they take on the gem-like radiance of their Lord, they shine in His beauty, and Nature pays them her homage with the same humble adoration that she yields to the Eternal Lord Himself. In that hush of bliss, instinct with perfect uniting love, Krishna and Gopi, Christ and His human spouse, they enter the

¹ Krishna is by His very nature *Paramānanda*, Supreme Bliss, for He contains the all within Himself and lacks nothing.

Kingdom of Ecstasy together, rapt in that mystic bliss of which Jayadeva sang so exquisitely in his *Gita Govinda*, Nammālvar in his *Tiruvāimolī*, and St. John of the Cross in his *Spiritual Canticle*.

42. The Hymn of Narada

1. Hail to Krishna in the form of Gopala, the Gopis' Darling, whose (complexion) is dark as a freshly gathered raincloud, whose eyes are as dark as the blue lotus flower ! His black wavy hair is tied with a bunch of gleaming peacock feathers, and He is adorned with a garland of forest flowers mingled with *kadamba*¹ blossoms. His curly hair dances about on His rounded cheeks, a splendid necklace of great pearls graces His bosom, like a golden bracelet the edge of His crown brightens up His form as His raiment sways to and fro, shaken by the gentle breeze. (4 : 6 : 1-4)

2. Through the Flute the dainty curve of His lower lip emits sweet sounds, which again and again captivate with their brightness the

¹ *Nauclea cadamba*, known as 'Parvati's Tree', which grows to about twenty feet high and gives a fine deep shade. Its leaves are long and downy, its flowers trumpet-shaped, solitary and orange in colour with white stamens, and blossom in May. Seated on this tree one day, Krishna taught the Gopis how to surrender all to Him (Bh. 10 : 22 : 7-23).

hearts of the Gopis ; (He is) a Bee¹ that drinks the sweetness of the flower-like mouths of the Gopis, stirred to the heart by (His) smiling sidelong looks of love ; and (He is) surrounded by Gopis in bodies of blooming youthfulness and in love with one another, wearing pretty robes and ornaments. (4 : 6 : 5-7)

3. Fond of sweet games in the waters of Yamuna changed to (the dark colour of) collyrium,² He now meets the Gopa-boys in fight and bears them off into the byres ; then seated in the shade of a *kadamba* tree in Brindavan He enjoys the breeze cooled by passing over Yamuna's water. (4 : 6 : 8-9)

4. He takes the jewelled seat firmly planted upon the Jewel Mountain, going to the golden pavilion situated among the leaves at the foot of a *kalpa* tree. On every side spring flowers breathe out sweet fragrance when He sits on the charming hill of Govardhana, eager for the delights of the mystic Dance. Once He lifted **that** hill on the palm of His left hand

¹ As the bee constantly hovers round the honey-flowers, so God (Krishna) ever remains near His lovers, finding delight in their company (Cf. *Prov.* 8 : 31).

² The black salve placed round the eyes to beautify them and protect them from flies, etc., also as a preventative of certain diseases.

like an umbrella, thwarting the bad effects of the dense cloudbank Indra vainly sent.
(4 : 6 : 10-12)

5. Joyfully the music of the Flute rings out clear in ecstatic melodies, and with loving gaze the herds of cattle are always looking up at Him. Krishna is made more lovely, (it seems), by the cowherds who accompany Him alone in song, while imitating His gestures with sticks and cords raised in their hands.
(4 : 6 : 13-14)

6. (This is) the loving and tender hymn in praise of the Most High (sung) by Narada and other most excellent sages, masters like him of the Vedas and the Vedic sciences.¹
(4 : 6 : 15)

Once again Narada tries to sketch that immortal loveliness of the Divine Child in His setting of forest beauties amid His loving friends. He recalls several of the wondrous plays of Krishna in that Brindavan drama : how He drew the Gopis to His side through the mystic night by the soft music of His Flute in their hearts, how He played and fought with their brothers and enjoyed the soft evening breezes on the river bank, how He lifted the holy hill of Govardhan over the entire village to shield its people from the downpour a wrathful

¹ The six 'Vedangas' are thus listed : Phonetics, Grammar, Prosody, Philology, Astrology, and the laws of Ritual; without such additional knowledge the Vedic scriptures cannot be properly studied.

sky-god brought upon them on His account (Bh. 10 : 25), how He wandered to the pastures behind the herds of cows and frisking calves.

Those whose spiritual food is derived from that matchless *Bhāgavatam*, every line of which is instinct with love and adoration, will know and love every one of these old tales, and many more like them; they delight in visualising each of them in fullest detail, as though they themselves were watching those wonderful events unfolding before their very eyes. And through such meditations they leap across the bounds of time and space; they themselves live in that very Brindavan in the presence of the playful Lord, and grow to know and love Him with the same sweet intimacy as the cowboys and their sisters did so long ago. For that Play is an eternal play, not over and done with once for all long ago; it goes on and on for ever in each human heart that cries to the Lord of Love to free it from the oppression of sin and cruel desire and take His dwelling there—as Earth once cried to the Gods for aid.

43. The Divine King of Men

1. In the evening, let them worship (Sri Krishna) in a Dwarka¹ beautified with splendid parks and full of palaces sixteen thousand² in

¹ Krishna's new capital city on the coast of Cutch in Gujerat, to which He retired from Mathura. When His people fell into sin and disorder, this city was overwhelmed by the waves.

² Krishna's 16000 'wives' (Bh. 10 : 59 : 42), married at one time and each one given a palace at Dwarka, besides another 108 wives of the same kind, signify only the very large number of God's 'spiritual brides' in the world—a conception familiar also to all students of Christian mysticism. In vain do silly people and blasphemers pretend that it denotes a 'profligate'. The 'marriage of the soul' is beyond the understanding and experience of superficial bigots who imagine filth in the shrine of their neighbours and neglect to remove the dirt in their own. The relationship of God with the devoted soul can only be described in terms of conjugal love—as all who know anything about it at all will testify.

number, in the noblest of buildings surrounded by rooms and by lakes and pure waters filled with lotus plants, (where) swans and cranes are playing together.¹ There, as radiant as the rising sun, Hari sits smiling in the jewelled hall cross-legged² on a golden lotus upon the soft carpet, surrounded by Narada and others in full certainty of the Truth about the SELF, and showing to these Sages His own most imperishable Abode.³ (3 : 11 : 14-17)

2. Soft as the petals of a blue lotus are His wide eyes, and smooth His flowing hair illumined by a crown and peacock-feather crest ; His face is beautiful and pleasant, long fish-shaped pendants sparkle on the ears ; the *Srivatsa*-curl is on His breast, while the *kaustubha* and a forest garland are gleaming on a bosom tinted golden red with saffron. (He wears) a robe of yellow silk, and is adorned with necklaces and bangles, a girdle (fastened) with cords and the like ; He takes away the

¹ In *Gopālatūpiniyopaniṣad*, 37, Krishna is called the " Royal Swan playing in the mind-lake " of the Gopis' hearts.

² Skt : *mukhāsīnam*.

³ Even as King, Krishna is World Teacher, imparting secrets about the nature of the Self. This Abode is described as at the centre of centres in the universe, by the *Tripādvibhūtimāhā-nārāyaṇopaniṣad*, 5-7, also by the *Brahma-samhitā*, 5.

heavy burden of the universe and delights the mind, (as) His four arms shine with Conch and Disc, with Mace and Lotus.¹ (3 : 11 : 18-21)

3. At Dwarka,² in a jewelled hall surrounded by the finest palaces brilliant as a thousand suns and by countless *kalpa*-trees, its pillars and the doors and arches in its walls are all ablaze with inset jewels and garlanded with various bright flowers upon a canopy of mighty pearls. Now between two ever-flowing rivers in the Ruby land there shines a jewel fallen down right in the middle of (their) point of union ; in another direction, lit by rows of jewelled lamps like the rising sun there is the bejewelled lion-throne upon a lotus.³ (3 : 15 : 2-5)

¹ The account of Krishna here agrees closely with that in the *Gopālottarāpinīyopaniṣad*, 46-48. The Mace is in that Upanishad said to be the 'original Knowledge', the Conch is 'activity of the five elements', the Disc is the mind 'shaped like a newborn child', the Lotus is 'the Universe', the four Arms are Rhythm, Motion, Rest and Selfhood, the bangles are 'Righteousness, Wealth and (Right) Desire' (i.e. *dharma-artha-kāma*) of Divine origin (55-57).

² Krishna's new capital city on the coast of Cutch in Gujerat, to which He retired from Mathura. When His people fell into sin and disorder, this city was overwhelmed by the waves.

³ Cf. the *Gopālatāpinīyopaniṣad*, 8-10, which quotes: "Eyes like a pure white lotus, body dark as a raincloud, and clad in (yellow) silk bright as lightning ; His two hands placed in the Cinmudra (gesture of knowledge), wearing a forest garland—such is the Lord, surrounded by Gopas (*īvas*), Gopis (*bhaktas*) and Cows (the *Vedas*) on all sides, who resorts to the foot of the (*kalpa*)-tree, possessing Divine ornaments (virtues), seated in the middle of a ruby lotus, fanned by the soft, mild and gentle breezes from Yamuna's water. . ."

4. Achyuta, seated there(on), is to be contemplated as like molten gold, with the radiance of a crore of rising moons and suns and lightning flashes—all His body beautiful and gracious and adorned with every ornament, robed in yellow, (with) His hands brilliant with Disc and Conch, with Mace and Lotus. Let Him be touched on the toes of the left lotus foot with a jar ever-radiant with a flood of jewels beautiful as a granary in summertime, while Rukmini¹ and Satyabhāma² stand on His left to serve Him and carefully sprinkle on His head the stream of jewels that issues from the jar. (3 : 15 : 6-9)

5. Outside are the beloved women, sixteen thousand in number,³ who meditate on the golden jar which sparkles with (its) streaming heaps of jewels; and outside (these) the

¹ Rukmini was the royal wife of Krishna, whom He saved from an unwanted marriage with a worldly prince when she was already heart-devoted to Him alone; she is sometimes said to be 'the maker of the world' in her capacity as consort (*śakti*) of its Source, Vishnu, but she is generally held to be an incarnation of the goddess Lakshmi.

² The daughter of Satrajit and wife of Krishna, who obtained for her the wonderful Parijāta tree from Heaven and adorned her garden with it. The *Kṛṣṇopaniṣad* declares that she personified the Earth (15).

³ See note on p. 161.

Vrishnis¹ have eight full treasuries (with them) and coming forward give to those who ask for wealth. (3 : 15 : 12-13)

Turn now from that pastoral play of His to the Lord of Men, seated in royal splendour on His throne amid the glorious palaces of Dwarka, ruling and protecting even while He still scatters His rich love on every side. His immortal and fadeless beauty still shines as ever; to that boyish loveliness is now added a kingly grandeur which calls for reverence and a worship that pours liquid tears of the heart upon His feet. What does it signify if, in order to pour on Him the fragrant nard of our hearts' love, we have to break the vase that holds it (cf. *Mk.* 14 : 3), crucify ourselves and shatter the form we have built around ourselves to make us real to our own thought? By our passionate sacrifice and self-offering we fill the world with a treasury of spiritual wealth, which can be spread abroad to all in need; we thus show our love for the Beloved, and what can we desire more than that?

44. The Giver of Every Blessing

1. On His curly (and) plentiful hair there shines a diadem, while smiling jewel-flowers are hung as earrings, and His fine forehead and charming brow are decorated (therewith); wide and long are His restless lovely eyes, while a gemmed ring scintillates with rays of light upon His cheeks and (His) lip is red as

¹ *Vṛṣṇis* : the word signifies 'heretics' but is used to name the family of Krishna, whose paternal grandfather was called *Vṛṣṇi* (Vrishni).

a freshly opened *bandhujiva*¹ blossom. Smiling moonlight sparkles brilliantly on every side on His face, which is adorned by perspiration drops from the strain of ecstatic thrills. (5 : 3 : 17-18)

2. (Hung) upon the breast by cords there is a noble garland, an ornament flaming with gems that scintillate with lustrous rays, and His (whole) form is thickly smeared with saffron essence. His arms are beautified with blazing embellishments, His eyes (are) like red lotus², the hair of His body quivers, His hands are two lotuses that beautify the lap. (5 : 3 : 19)

3. On that very lap He seated till the end of the age that daughter of Bhishmaka³, with His own two lotus hands as beautiful as molten gold, clasping her in close embraces in two long lissom arms which shine for very excess of bliss. His blue lotus eyes half close in lovely smiles, and (both) their bodies are adorned with pearly perspiration drops coming from the violent thrills of ecstasy; their actions within and without immersed in the

¹ the same as the *bandhuka* of GN 37 : 5.

² or : like the lotus at dawn.

³ Rukmini's father, who was King of Vidarbha (Behar).

SELF,¹ intense waves (shaking) their bodies to the core, their hearts in various ways trembling in a mighty ocean of supreme unequalled bliss. The lotus face and quivering eyes of these two maiden lovers, made pure by divine silk and ointment, and swept away by two winds of passionate love, clinging with a pair of arms and soft brown lovely pliant bodies, they embrace Him on right side and left with shining lotus hands. (5 : 3 : 20-23)

4. Sprinkled by the Yamuna and closely embraced in two (pairs of) lotus hands, anointed with desire and shaken by love, (Sri Krishna) appears with Lotus and Mace, with Disc and Moon held in (His) two pairs of arms, while two (more) hands² hold to the flower-like mouth a bamboo Flute which He is playing.³ (5 : 3 : 24)

In everchanging words Narada still dwells on the unchanging beauty of the Lord, trying to awaken in each reader's heart a little of that latent longing which can

¹ A gentle but definite hint that a mystic state is being described, and not one erotic in nature.

² So the divine Sri Krishna Chaitanya has *six* arms, the extra pair holding Sri Rama's bows and arrows.

³ The music He plays is the eternal tune of melodious harmony, the love which binds this whole universe in one (Cf. GH 36 : 6, 38 : 3). It is a *reed*, or *bamboo*, flute because that song always arises from the world of Nature and comes most easily from a simple and natural instrument, rather than from the proud and showy instruments of gold or brass.

alone give meaning to life's sorrows, and joy amid its darkness. The words he uses are hackneyed; we find them in all the books, with only trivial changes over detail—but they do not weary the lover's ear, for the timeless Beauty they recall is ever new.

Narada reminds us that on that very lap we now see before us in the eye of the mind Krishna once placed that Rukmini who dared to love Him, to lose a kingdom and a father for His sake, to forget a world of earthly happiness in order to welcome exile at His side. Those very arms which once folded her to His gracious heart, which never refused the love of anyone, now wait ready to embrace us too, if we but call for love from Him and sell ourselves into His service. There awaits us that ecstasy of Divine Union—lost to the world in 'self-forgetful bliss'—which held Tristan and Isolde in the sweet solitude of Love's dark Night.¹ Enraptured in that fulfilment of the highest human souls can ever know, we shall find in Him every love that we have ever dreamed about, see in His sweet face as He looks in ours, the features of all that we have ever loved and lost in all the endless ages of our exile in the worlds of form.

Like Clifford Bax's Nesihathor, in his play, *The Marriage of the Soul*, we shall then cry:

“ My pilgrimage is ended: all desires
 Are shattered but the vast desire for Thee! . . .
 O, I have reached the boundaries of my soul! . . .
 I am becoming one with all things! . . .
 O, I am nothing, nothing! Thou art all! ”

And this is the last word, the final secret which life has for each of us when we can bear it, the utmost joy and the fullest initiation into the Eternal Reality behind the veil of things.

¹ O sink hernieder, Nacht der Liebe,
 Gieb vergessen dass ich lebe;
 Nimm mich auf in deinen Schoss,
 Löse von der Welt mich los!

SRI KRISHNA-STOTRAM¹

वंशीधरं सुन्दर मन्दहासं बर्हावतंस बलबालयुक्तम् ।
वृन्दावनस्थं नवनीरदाभं नमामि कृष्णं यदुवंशनाथम् ॥ १ ॥

1. I bow to Krishna, Lord of the Yadus, who carries the Flute and is beautiful with soft smile and curly hair decked with a feather crest, looking like a new raincloud in Brindavan.

वंशी विभूषित करान्नवनीरदाभात्
पीतांबरदारुण बिम्बफलाधरोष्ठात् ।
पूर्णेन्दु सुन्दरमुखादरविन्दनेत्रात्
कृष्णात्परं किमपि तत्त्वमहं न जाने ॥ २ ॥

2. I know no truth higher than this Krishna with hands flute-adorned, (blue) like a fresh raincloud and wearing yellow silk, with lower lip as red as a bimba fruit, with face lovely (as) the full moon, and lotus eyes.

¹ Text taken from *Stotra Ratnamala*, by Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh.

ध्यानाभ्यास वशीकृतेन मनसा तन्निर्गुणं निष्क्रियं-
 ज्योतिः किञ्चन योगिनो यदि परं पश्यन्ति पश्यन्तु ते ।
 अस्माकं तु तदेव लोचन चमत्काराय भूयाल्विरा
 कालिन्दी पुलिनेषु किमपि तन्नीलमहो धावति ॥ ३ ॥

3. If the Yogis, (whose) minds are brought under control by the practice of meditation, see something of that unqualified and actionless supreme Light, let them see it; but as for us, only that charming bluish Image haunting the banks of Yamuna ever comes before the eye.

A MODERN VAISHNAVA

To enable those who do not live in contact with Hindu devotees to realise how such doctrines as we have been studying work out in the thought of modern men, I append extracts from the teachings of Thakore Haranath, a most saintly Vaishnava who died as recently as 1927, and who is regarded by his own followers as a veritable Incarnation of the Lord Sri Krishna. Indeed, as the true Vaishnava is in fact the 'body' of the Lord (*Vaiṣṇavāḥ mamadeham* : GN 16 : 7) they do not err in this.

These extracts have been chosen and arranged from an unpublished manuscript of Sri A. Ramakrishna Sastry of Bhimunipatnam, wherein he has compiled with great industry and skill under various topic-heads extracts from a very large number of the saint's letters. It is by his courtesy I am enabled to make use in this way of his materials, rearranging them according to my own scheme. As the original letters were all in English, there can be no question of mistranslation.

1. The Need for a Pure Mind

He who considers the Object of his own adoration is the only real Deity and spites all other deities worshipped by other people commits sin. . . . Those who

commit a sinful act knowingly may obtain Sri Krishna's forgiveness, but (one) who commits sins under the cover of the Name of the Lord or religion cannot look for deliverance. . . . Deeds done unconsciously are not counted as deeds and should not therefore cause any anxiety.

Repentance is the true atonement for bad deeds done. . . . It is necessary to give up for ever the deed along with repentance. . . . As soon as you repent for your past actions and take shelter under the Lord, great bliss will undoubtedly be yours. . . . You must approach Him with a sincere heart, acquaint Him of all your actions and beg for forgiveness. He is sure to take pity on you. . . . Your sins will be washed away, and you shall become immaculate. Take refuge in Him with your body, mind and soul.

The first step to worship the Lord is this: Strive always to make your thoughts pure. . . . Thoughts have greater force than deeds: . . . it is better to harm in actual deeds than to think of doing it. . . . Always engage yourself in good thoughts; . . . by so doing our heart becomes purified and then Krishnaji¹ takes it for His abode. . . . Do not make the Lord suffer by keeping it unclean; . . . keep your heart always clean, and you will be happy.

2. The Choice of Friends

Shun evil company and evil actions. Those who thirst for eternal peace leave off the company of those who are

¹ Krishnaji, an honorific form of the Name Krishna,

not for it. Do not have any attachment to the world. . . . Consider them to be really evil company who do not find pleasure in the topic of Krishna ; . . . frequent those places where you can hear of the blessed Krishna, and seek the company of those persons who talk about Him. . . . He should be regarded as a true friend whose presence stimulates conversation concerning Sri Krishna. . . . Know him to be the greatest of Vaishnavas, the sight of whom brings Krishna's Name to your mouth.

If we talk of *Prema*,¹ we can have pleasure only in the company of those who love God. . . . Speak of your innermost thoughts only to those who are after your heart. . . . Simply by constant repetition of the Name one can have the company of bhaktas ! Therefore always remain drowned in Name.

3. Gentleness to Others

Imperative it is to make the heart tender, otherwise the tenderest feet of Sri Krishna will not be found therein. Hence it is well that attempt should be made to cast out from the heart anything hard therein. . . . The chief symptom of love is meekness, or realisation of one's own short-comings. . . . You have embraced Vaishnavism. Its first and foremost lesson is to be lower than the lowliest grass.² . . . May the thought that you are lowly be ever present in your mind. The lowlier a

¹ *Prema*, the Latin *caritas* almost, Divine Love.

² A reference to the well-known *Sikṣāmṛtam* of Sri Krishna Chaitanya.

thing is, the higher it is in the Lord's eyes. The Lord loves the lowly to a greater extent.

The distressed and sinners of the world are all very dear to Him, and in them He takes a great interest. . . . For the holy He employs others to take care of them and to show them the way, but for sinners and the fallen He Himself does the needful. . . . Bearing this in mind, do not entertain contempt for the fallen. . . . Despise sin, but pity the sinner.¹

Nurse the deepest sympathy for the sinner and pray to the Lord for the strength to try to lead him back to the right path. . . . Pray to the Lord with an anxious mind for his salvation; . . . pray for the welfare of others in your heart of hearts, and the Lord will certainly fulfil your desire. . . . Do not forget to say your prayer constantly.¹ . . . Kindly remember that you are the salvation of a fallen being.

Never treat anyone with severity, nor cause pain to anyone with harsh words; . . . should anyone ill-treat you in return for good treatment received, do not feel aggrieved, but forgive him and earnestly pray for his welfare. Thus you will gradually find that, captivated by your love, even the wildest animals will love you in return. . . . Forbearance is the entire import of Vaishnava religion; it is its final instruction.

Devote your life to the service of others, weep constantly for those who are in your eyes sinners, and plead for them before the only help of sinners, the Deity

¹ The same as the Christian teaching, but in no way derived thence.

of Love, Nitai,¹ and always pray for love to the Lord of Love, Hari. . . . Heartily call Him to your aid, for He alone is able to remove pain. . . . When you happen to be in trouble, make your trouble known to Him. He will hear you, for He alone hears words of sorrow, and He hears everybody. He being constantly with you, He will hear you whenever you tell Him. Words uttered even mentally are heard by Him.² He has a special liking for such inarticulate words. He may or may not hear words uttered loudly, but prayers offered to Him never go in vain.

The tears we shed for our own grief are like the waters of the flood which instead of benefiting the crops destroys them, but the tears shed for others are like the gentle rain which moistens and fertilises the soil of the heart so that the Love of Krishna may germinate and grow there, conferring on us perfect bliss.

4. The Life of Charity

Let us therefore live for the poor and thus please Krishna, who wants nothing more. . . . See that the poor and destitute cherish your memory in their hearts for all times to come. . . . Try to be endeared to all ; . . . know it for certain that the more persons one can satisfy, the more is he dear to the Lord. He who is beloved of many must surely be the Lord's favourite.

¹ *Nitai*, the familiar name of Sri Nityananda, foster-brother as it were of Chaitanya, whom He sent to spread the Name in East Bengal. As the giver of the Name is to be regarded as God (cf. GN 15-16), Nitai is also regarded as an Incarnation of the Lord.

² The same as the Christian teaching, but in no way derived thence.

. . . Above all, keep in your view your resolution to do good to others.

Learn to look with the eye of love at your enemies ; . . . learn to love man as man ; do not be deceived by doing more. . . . Love all like your own and treat them as such, and everyone will then be your friend. . . . Try to love others as your own self. You will then feel one with everything.

5. Universal Love

Everything you see around you in the world is the ordered treasure of the Lord. Say then, what can you or I dare denote evil ? When this world is His, nothing can possibly exist that can be called evil. But when a thing is not to my liking I call it evil. In reality everything is good. What is good for me may also be evil for someone else. . . . If you would love Krishna, you must love the entire universe, for it is His. Love this world and all its objects for Krishna's sake and for their own. . . . Consider the universe your own. It is Sri Krishna's, and as Sri Krishna is dear to you, things belonging to Him must necessarily be all dear to you. Do not be attracted to the earth for its own sake ; like it as belonging to Sri Krishna ;¹ then malice and hatred will have no place in your heart.

Learn to love our Lord, and then you will be loved by all. . . . If you can love the original and only Cause of this universe, you will have loved all beings and things. By pouring water at the root of the tree the

¹The same as the Christian teaching, but in no way derived thence.

whole system is watered. By loving Sri Krishna the whole universe is loved. When He is the friend of any person, all animate and inanimate objects are his friends. . . . Learn to love Krishna, and you will get all and everything you want, and something more. . . . Love Krishna with all your heart and expect love from Him alone. You cannot do so of others, nor is it of any use to do so. . . . To have Krishna is to have the entire world. The whole universe will be your own. The very people whom you have to forget in order to reach Krishna will again be yours when you have made Krishna your own.

Love all, and the more you extend your circle of love, the more will be your joy. . . . Living in this way, if you engage yourself in doing good to others, pride will never enter your mind. . . . Once bereft of pride, you will find the selfless Nityananda's mercy, and then the attainment of the grace of Sri Krishna Chaitanya. You will then be quite still. You will then not only enjoy the highest bliss yourself, but make others float in joy and drown others in joy. . . . So long as you do not entirely offer up yourself for others, you will not understand what this love is and what sweetness lies therein. . . . He who seeks *Prema*¹ should first learn to love indiscriminately.

6. 'Sharing in the Lord's Play

All the actions in this world are mere play-acting. . . . We cannot leave the stage unless we play our parts

¹ *Prema*, the Latin *caritas* almost, Divine Love.

in full. . . . Join whatever play you like, but always bear Him in mind . . . and the fetters of Maya will not touch you and you will be in peace. . . . This play is for joy only, and it must be taken that those who find no joy in it are not in their senses. There is nothing but joy here.

None should wish to be a thorn in His everlasting happiness for the sake of his own trivial joy. . . . Become the dearest of Him who is the root of all plays. Endear yourself to Him somehow or other, and you shall then be considered as an adept without taking part in a single play.

7. All Things are His Sweet Will

Let us wait and gladly embrace anything that might come, either good or bad. . . . There is nothing bad. . . . Both pleasure and pain result from Krishna's will; why take fright, then? Do not be sorry in the least; . . . do not be anxious for anything. God will surely give you what is most befitting for you, . . . Krishna gives to everybody what is suitable for him. . . . Keep full confidence on Him, and He will surely give you your desire. . . . Pleasure and pain will be equally welcome because both of them are the commands of our Master, Krishna.

If the Lord will it, it will exist; if it does not, do not be sorry for it. Why should we have any useless worries when it is He who performs all actions? . . . Leave the work to Him whose work it is. But you must be determined to do every behest of His even like a cooly;

. . . the lowlier a thing is, the higher it is in the Lord's eyes.¹

8. The Lord of Grace

The mercy of the All-merciful Lord is unbounded. As there is no limit to our sins, so there is no limit to Nitai's mercy; my Nitai does not discriminate in His mercy. Whoever approaches Him Nitai gives him love. . . . Moved by the sight of the misery of men generally, the All-merciful appeared on earth as Sri Gaurāṅga² and converted it into a paradise by inducing everyone, from the meanest to the highest, to take the Lord's Name. . . . Wherever He is, it is Brindaban.³ . . . He is in a beggar's rags⁴ and down His eyes flow two streams of tears; . . . He demonstrated how one should weep for Him by Himself weeping. . . . If you want to move Krishna to tears, first shed tears of love for Him. If you want to make Him mad, be mad yourself at the very mention of His Name.

I pray you therefore to shut your eyes and take a blind man to seek Nitai's protection. If you do so, you will be able to reach His holy feet at no distant date. When you feel the delicious coolness of His lotus feet, you may open your eyes. You will then enjoy the beatific vision of merciful Nitai ready to introduce you

¹ The same as the Christian teaching, but in no way derived thence.

² *Gaurāṅga*, another Name of Chaitanya, meaning the 'fair-bodied'.

³ *Brindaban*: the Bengali spelling of Brindavan.

⁴ Chaitanya took *sannyāsa* and moved about asking all to love Krishna.

to the care and protection of Shyam Natabara.¹ You will find that He, to get whom you are trying so hard, is in search of you. If you do not feel your way like a blind man,² you cannot get easily at Nitai.

9. The Purpose of Life

Take shelter with a simple mind at the feet of Nitai, the Master of the Simple; you shall ever be in peace. . . . Consider the Lord as your guru and take shelter unto Him; . . . withdrawing your affection from all other objects, fix it upon your Lord and remain firmly attached to Him. . . . Take hold of Nitai's feet like a chaste damsel; . . . become simple in mind and heart, and contemplate constantly and joyously on that abode of abiding joy. . . . Grope on,² and the Lord will take you by the hand into His kingdom of light and joy.

Man comes here to worship Krishna. If he strays away from the path of everlasting joy he comes by sorrow and flounders on it. . . . Can there be anything more distressing than to live oblivious of Him? . . . Forgetting Hari, even a god's person is like hell; . . . so do not forget the everlasting love of Krishna in consequence of your infatuation for hollow love of a very short duration. . . . Let us forget everything else and let us only take the Name of Hari. Nitai will then bring us love. . . . If we get lost, He will find us out; if we forget He will remind us. If we weep He will wipe our eyes; if we smile He will enhance our joy.

¹ *Shyam Natabara, i.e., the Dark Dancer (or Actor), Krishna.*

² *i. e. in dark faith, trusting in Him for guidance.*

With Him in heart, the infinite pleasures of Vaikuntha¹ can be enjoyed even in hell. . . . He hates reserve. Be open to Him always and you will see Him always playing with you. . . . The tie that never loosens is a tie between myself and Krishnaji ; . . . I shall be able to realise His true nature only when I practise simplicity.

10. Always Take His Name

The Lord's Name should be taken in privacy and with great caution ; . . . please keep it confined in you, . . . do not expose it to others lest it be stolen. . . . If one would attain everlasting peace, let him love with his whole heart Krishna's Name as hidden treasure. . . . Do not fail to earn this treasure from day to day. . . . Whenever you get time, go on taking the Name ; . . . do not consider if the time is suitable or not when you are taking Name. Take it always and under all circumstances. . . . But when you have acquired much of this wealth, you can without the least fear keep it exposed to public view, like royal treasury. . . . Whenever you get leisure, go to a solitary place and say loudly the sweet Name that will make the tears trickle down and ease your heart of all its distressing burdens.

All the holy places rest in Krishna, and so these congregate together wherever Krishna's Name be taken. Those who take Krishna's Name bathe in all the holy places every moment. . . . All unholiness flies at a

¹ *Vaikuntha, i. e.* Krishna's Heaven.

distance from him who takes His Name ; . . . no impurity can ever approach Krishna's Name. . . . Even if I am impure, the very touch of Holy Name will render me pure. . . . Only by repetition of Name you will be free from all your misdoings, . . . and you will not only be saved but will find peace and happiness. . . . To the sinner, Krishna's Name is far more dear than Krishna Himself, for Krishna never approaches the sinner, but the latter is at liberty to take His Name, and taking His Name he can reach (Him).

Name, taken constantly, culminates in love for Him, which in time leads to the beloved Krishna. . . . Go on repeating His Name, and the owner of the Name will come to you of Himself. . . . However far Krishna may be from us, His Name is with us. Make it your very own, and Krishna will not be able to hide Himself. . . . Do not impair your vitality by useless work and needless talk. Utilise in *Hari-nām*¹ all the time you can spare from your work ; . . . go on taking the Name, and a day will come when you will enjoy His presence.

The Lord is One. He only considers the mental attitude and bestows love and affection accordingly. Call Him Father or Mother ; it matters little. If the Name of Krishna seems sweet to you, take that Name. . . . Call Him by any other Name your heart dictates ; it matters not in the least. . . . What you have to do is to call Him and take His Name irrespective of His Form ; . . . the first stage is Name, next comes the visualisation of His beauty. Then you see Him in your dreams, and

¹ *Hari-nām*, i. e. God's Name.

finally you behold Him in person. . . . Take the Name of all Love with all the love you command ; . . . bear in mind that it is His Name.

As one cannot haul a catch of fish leaving the net behind on land, even if one remains in water all along, so no one is able to attain Krishna, however much one may practise yoga or austerities, unless one has faith in Name. . . . The best net to trap Him is the trap of His own Name, so I tell you that the stronger and more closely knit you can make this net the greater will be the chance to trap Him. There must not be any gap in the taking of Name. For in that case He will slip out through that gap and laugh at you from outside the gap. So my behest to you is not to give your lips any rest. . . . With all your heart and determination make the exquisitely sweet Name of Sri Krishna your necklace.

11. The Sweetness of the Name

The sweetness of Name is like its own sweetness ; it cannot be compared to anything else. . . . Sweet things become more sweet when they are tasted in company of the dear and near ones. . . . You ought not alone to take such a sweet Name. Tell all others to take it, so that they may be equally gratified with you. . . . If you want that others should take it, take Name yourself day and night. . . . Nothing is of avail without Krishna, and if they want Him, they must take His Name. . . . He can be tied only by the string of His Name ; nothing else can ever bind Him.

There is nothing higher than Sri Krishna's Name, there is no living force like it. . . . When Krishna's Name is only once taken, the discus of Vishnu guards him on all sides, and Krishna Himself keeps him from harm. Sin dreads to approach those who have taken Sri Krishna's Name; . . . when taking Name no unholiness can approach you. . . . Such is the charm of the Name that at the very sound of it transient worldly happiness flies at a distance and, being deprived of earthly pleasure, individuals are submerged in eternal spiritual happiness. . . . The Name of Krishna is . . . the essence of eternal bliss and consciousness. . . . Name generates Love, and Love leads to the Lord of Love.

The treasure of Name is more valuable than the Lord, for He can be bought only at the price of Name. . . . If the treasure of Name be gradually stored up, it can be employed for buying Sri Krishna Himself when there is great hankering after Him. . . . Forsake not the Name of the Lord even after you have acquired the Lord; . . . there is danger in giving up of Name.

Do not aspire to buy anything but Krishna at the price of His Name; . . . do not exchange the priceless jewel for a piece of glass. . . . Desires forge fetters, but desires regarding Krishna bring liberation. . . . Do not ask anything save love and devotion from Him. . . . Whether you have or have not a thing, do not solicit, go on taking the Lord's Name with carefree mind, . . . being oblivious of everything else. . . . It is only to get confidence that you should ask one or two things from Him, but after that . . . do not desire to have His

blessings on the basis of hire . . . in this way : " Get this done for me, and I shall offer puja to You."

12. Drawing the Mind into Control

At first Name should be taken as a sick man takes the physic. After that, when the patient regains some senses he himself asks for it. Likewise, when the faintest sweetness of Name is reached, one does not wait to be asked. One feels intense unhappiness if some impediments supervene when Name is being repeated. . . . Afterwards it cannot be given up. Take Name, and you shall desire to take it with a million mouths.

His mercy comes a little if you forget Him at heart and take the Name by mere words of mouth. So those who want His grace soon should invoke Him not by words of mouth alone but with their heart also. . . . Intruding thoughts at the time of reciting the Name cannot diminish the value of recitation of the Name, if a man sits to do so with good mind and pure thoughts. Try to keep the mind free from all thoughts and disturbing anxieties at the time of beginning, and never mind what comes afterwards.¹

When one starts taking the Name of the Lord, the mind like the horse will try to wander about. . . . Be not concerned in the least if your mind wanders about. Let it go where it likes ; it will come back at last tired of its own wanderings. When your mind has begun to run do not hold (it) down. Mind is like a naughty child ; if you call it back it goes farther from you. So sit tight

¹ This is also the teaching of Catholic mystics.

and do not bother yourself whether it comes or goes. . . . Pay no attention to it, just cling together on the Name of the Lord; . . . go on taking the Name of the Lord unmindful of circumstances. . . . Name is necessary just to concentrate the mind. The object of all worship and adoration is just to bring the mind under control. . . . You will find that your mind and speech will have come under your control in a short time.

The mind is subservient to happiness. It hankers after happiness and runs after it in all directions. When a person tastes the sweetness of the Name and the happiness derived as a result of taking it, his mind does not stray away from that happiness and remains constantly engaged in it. The mind of a devotee of Hari can never stray from the thought of Hari.

True happiness is the beloved offspring of Religion. Anyone wishing to be happy should take his steady stand on Religion. . . . There is no resting-ground except at the feet of Krishna; . . . never discard the feet of the Lord when once you have taken shelter there. Remain enthralled in His Name and in His Love day and night, and ignore all happiness and unhappiness. . . . Surrendering your entire heart and soul to Krishna, rest peacefully in the ocean of bliss; . . . be drunk with Krishna's Name.

Ever adhere to Him to whom you have offered up your heart. Two days sufferings will somehow end and thereafter you will spend your life in great bliss as the dear object of His affection. . . . Serve God with body, mind and words; . . . go ahead with unshakeable

faith. Don't delay any longer. The Lord eagerly scans your path in the expectation of the arrival of you all. March forward with your retinue singing praise to the Lord.

13. Bliss is in Him Alone

Krishna alone is real, and everything else is unreal, and . . . Krishna alone is our own and the rest strangers. Leaving Krishna, if you choose to love anyone he is sure to inflict pain on you. If you desire for any object besides Krishna, nothing but anguish will be your lot. . . . Love Him and forget all others: . . . you will be deceived if you desire any other object save Krishna and His Name. . . . For two days self-interest one should not sacrifice his everlasting gain under the influence of delusion. If anyone wishes to be happy he must with eyes closed practise self-denial.¹ So long as there is self-interest one cannot enter the service of Sri Hari.

Approach nearer and nearer to Him from the farthest manifestation, and you will float in complete bliss. You will then no longer be afraid of the stupendous immensity of His Form and will think of Him as your own, and serve Him with the greatest pleasure. The further you are from Him the greater will be your fear. . . . Real happiness always resides near Krishna, and you cannot find it in any other place. . . . Those who are not patient can never hope to bring Krishna within reach. He is

¹ The same as the Christian teaching, but in no way derived thence.

more still than the perfectly still. Be quite placid and you will be able to see Him.

When by constant meditation the heart is purified the All-benevolent Krishna will find for ever a habitation there.¹ He will come even when not called for, and will not leave even when asked to go. The joy which that state will afford is beyond description. Attain it by practice and you will understand it. . . . If that naughty Cowboy² can once be made one's own, the chance of losing Him again becomes nil. He now and again plays at hide and seek simply because you play such games. . . . That loving Hari hides Himself off and on, just to heighten the sweet delight.³ That is why it is His custom to play hide and seek.

Contemplation on the object of love in solitude gives immense pleasure; to think of love from a distance is exceedingly sweet and greatly touching. . . . For this reason the object of love must at first be kept at a distance. . . . To convert *Kāma*⁴ into *Prema* the burning fire of separation is necessary; nothing else is able to do it. . . . The greater the love, the greater is the yearning for the beloved, and the more keenly does one feel the separation. . . . Daily intensify your desire for *Prema*, for the only price with which that gem can be purchased is ardent desire.

¹ The same as the Christian teaching, but in no way derived thence.

² *i. e.* playful Gopa, Krishna who was brought up among the Cowboys.

³ "Absence makes the heart grow fonder", so "Our God hides Himself".

⁴ Passion.

Krishna, however, is so very merciful that He loves him the more who does not love Him at all. He is ever kind to him who has malice for Him; . . . He is so merciful that He desires to enter such a heart by force. . . . He alone resembles Himself. Likewise Krishna's likeness is Krishna Himself; . . . love Him with all your heart and be fascinated with Him. He will make you His own. With Him there is no separation, and every thing will appear new and fresh in His company.

14. The True Love of Krishna

Love devoid of all consciousness of self is *Prema*. Love behind the scene is *Prema*. . . . Forget yourself if you would really love Krishna. . . . There cannot be love unless one forgets oneself; . . . no happiness is to be derived from loving others unless one forgets oneself, . . . none can feel the delights of love unless one loves so as to forget oneself. . . . Unless the entire heart is given up, *Prema* does not come; . . . *Prema* demands absolute surrender of the soul. . . . The thing which is capable of rendering Hari mad is called *Prema*, . . . In order to taste this *Prema*, Krishna, the soul of the universe, wandered from door to door in town after town with tears in His eyes.

By gradually becoming selfless, one's own property, Krishna, can be brought within reach. . . . If you love Him He will never leave your heart and will make it His habitation; . . . if you love Him, He will love you a hundred times better; . . . if you run

mad for Krishna He will also run mad for you. . . . He knows so well how to love that with love in His face and tears in His eyes He wanders from door to door to repay man's love with His own. . . . Krishna surrenders Himself only to persons having such deep affection. Krishna Himself teaches us how to love Him, otherwise it is utterly impossible for anyone to do so. . . . Krishna is our only Guru in this world, none else.

Nurture carefully the roots of love that have sprouted in youth. . . . A little secrecy is indicated, . . . (for) Krishna-*Prema* when kept secret matures quicker . . . (and) love works silently in the heart.

Let us become entranced with His love and let us betake ourselves hand in hand to the Husband of our heart, singing His praise. What have we to do here, leaving Him alone? We belong to Him, and He belongs to us. Whom else have we but Him? . . . In this lovely kingdom the play is of love, the gatherings are of love, nothing else but love; . . . unless a person has attained the fullest measure of *Prema* he is not permitted to enter it. . . . Anything besides love has no footing there; . . . nothing but *Prema* is obtainable there. . . . The loving . . . remain absorbed in their own happiness.¹

¹ It is very striking how close the thought and expressions of Haranath come to those of the Sikh Gurus (cf. GGG.).

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16. The Gospel of the Light
17. The Gospel of the Buddha
18. The Gospel of Egypt

Vol.

19. The Gospel of the Tirthankaras
20. The Gospel of the Stoics
21. The Gospel of the Sufis
22. The Gospel of the Behais
23. The Gospel of the R̥shis
24. The Gospel of Sri Krishna

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