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SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS

" BHAKTI CULT OF THE BHĀGAVATA PURĀNA "

CHAPTER I.

P R O L O G U E.

BHAKTI - Its origin and development.

India, the Celestial Land of the Āryans, is a home of spiritual life from ancient times. Spiritual life - whether in the form of disinterested action or devotion (Bhakti) or spiritual contemplation and concentration (Yoga) or divine wisdom (Ātma Jñāna) - is a true genius of India; and the Upanisads are a mystic lore of the seers of yore. Unitive life with God or the Saguna Brahman or oneness of the Ātman with the Parmātman or Nirguna Brahman or the Godhead in one form or another has been the eternal theme of Indian Philosophy and Religion right upto the modern times.

God is the Self-in-self and the substance of the Middle Apparent Universe; and as such He is the one and only Ultimate Reality behind the Universe,

as revealed in the Gītā and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. De facto there is a continuous flow of spiritual experience from the Vedas to the Upaniṣads, from the Upaniṣads to the Brahmasūtras and the Gītā and from the Gītā to the Bhāgavata. ?

God is the subtle and mysterious Power (that is Puruṣottama) that pervades and sustains the Universe in the form of Puruṣa and Prakṛti or Cit and Acit and the unification of the self with God (Ātma-Parmātma-yoga) is the summum bonum of life. Bhakti and Jñāna apparently differ in form; but in essence they are one at bottom in God-realization or Anubhava, as heat and light in the Sun. De facto, the origin of Bhakti may be traced to the Vedas; for the element of Bhakti is vividly seen in the utterances of the sacred seers of the East.

Karma, Upāsana and Jñāna are the three main aspects of the Vedic religion and the Bhakti aspect of the Vedic religion is revealed in terms of hymns, prayers and parables. A systematic discussion of the theory and practice of Bhakti was left out in the Vedic traditions, because Bhakti is concerned with the very nature of man's being as a whole. ? The devotional element in the Vedas and the Vedic

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scriptures has been all the time known, understood, experienced and lived by all, men and women alike. Therefore, Bhakti was only illustrated and - mentioned without any doctrinal paraphernalia in the early scriptures. According to Dr. Thoothi, Bhakti refers essentially to an attitude - a spiritual attitude. Like the fragrance of the - flower, it reveals the very inmost heart of man's self-surrender in the Yajñas of the Vedic ancestors.

THE VEDIC IDEAS ABOUT GOD.

In fact, Indian thought-record begins with the Vedas. At first the ideas about God and His nature were Polytheistic and then Heno-theistic. In due course, Heno-theism evolved into Mono-theism, which culminated in Monism (केवलज्ञान) or Brahmanism (ब्रह्मवाद - ॐ अनेकानन्ता-ज्ञान) in the Upanisads.

BHAKTI IN THE UPANISADS.

The Upanisadic ideas about Brahman could at best make their appeal to the intelligent, but fell flat on the average man. The nature of Bhakti, in the true sense of the term (Love and faith) is first seen in the Śvetāśvatara-Upanisad which identifies Brahman with God Rudra-Siva. Siva is

knowable by love and faith; and having known Siva, one attains eternal peace. The Brhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad says that God is $\text{ॐ त्रिसुखं त्रिदामं त्रिदामं}$ and the Taittirīya-Upaniṣad holds that God is the quintessence of Bliss and by drinking deep the flavour of Divine Bliss, man is maddened with joy. The Kathopanīṣad says that man is freed from the round of birth and death only by resorting to God. The Isopanīṣad and the Muṇḍakopanīṣad advise the aspirant to resort to Aum; for by constant repetition of Aum one attains to beatitude.

BHAKTI IN THE GĪTĀ AND THE PURĀNAS.

It will be seen from the above that Bhakti is in fact a genuine growth of the Indian soil and not a foreign graft from without, as believed and maintained by the Christian missionaries. The view and way of life of a true Bhakta are best recorded in the Gītā. The Gītā has presented to us non-sectarian theism of a most comprehensive type, based on the Upaniṣadic doctrine of Idealism. Gītā's Bhakti is broad-based on faith in God; for faith develops into love; and sincere love leads to union with God by virtue of Bhakti-yoga, as revealed in the Gītā. Bhakti in the Gītā is a means to the

end of God-realization; but it is not an end-in-itself, as believed by sage Nārada and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The Purāṇas believe that Bhakti is the highest form of the religious attitude; but there is an element of sectarianism in the Purāṇic Bhakti.

BHAKTI IN THE BHĀGAVATA SCHOOL.

There was an age of revolt (600 V.C. to 300 A.D.) against the vedic cult of sacrifice and the Upanisadic doctrine of Impersonal Godhead (Nirguṇa Brahman), led by Gautama, Mahāvīra and Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva in their systems of philosophy known as Buddhism, Jainism and Bhāgavatism respectively. In the Bhāgavata School, the Upanisadic doctrine of the Impersonal Godhead was fused with devotional worship of a Personal God (Saguṇa Brahman); and in course of time a theistic school of Vaiṣṇavism was evolved. The chief sources of Bhakti or devotion to a Personal God, according to the Bhāgavata system of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva are the Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Mahā-Bhārata, the Gītā, Nārada Bhakti-Sūtra, Śaṇḍilya Bhakti-Sūtra and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The Bhāgavata creed of Bhakti begins with self-surrender, culminates in self-knowledge and ends in union with God. By the advocacy of the Bhāgavata School, the masses

were emancipated in many ways from the inferiority complex inherited from Brahmanism; and the Brahmanas who claim superiority over the rest of humanity had to yield to the power of the new consciousness, awakened by Bhāgavatism. The Bhāgavata School believes that whoever adores God is God's own, irrespective of all considerations of birth, Parentage and social status. Only he realises God who lives in God i.e. who is a God-man in the true sense of the term. The Bhāgavata School believes in the worship of Vāsudeva in his four-fold form (चतुर्भुज), as advocated by the Nārada Pañcarātra (पञ्चरात्र) system.

BHAKTI IN THE BHĀGAVATA PURĀNA.

Gītā's Bhakti reaches its climax in the Bhāgavata Purāna, wherein Bhakti is believed to be an end-in-itself, for it is love for love's sake without any ulterior motive whatsoever, like that of Gopīs for Lord Kṛṣṇa, as revealed in the sequel. It is open to one and all, whether he be a saint or a sinner, irrespective of caste or sex.

BHAKTI AS UPĀSANĀ IN THE SMṚTI YUGA.

Bhakti as Upāsanā i.e. an emotional approach to God existed in the Vedic times. In the Brahma-Sūtras of Bādarāyana Vyās, God is said to be the

Origin, substanance and ultimate resort wherein the universe is finally resolved. In the Nyāya-Darśana of Gautama and the Vaiśeṣika-Darśana of Kaṇāda, He is called Īśvara and believed to be the efficient cause of this universe. The Sāṃkhya-Darśana of Kapila is atheistic, but the Yoga-Darśana of Patañjali believes in Īśvara as the Puruṣa Viśeṣa i.e. Puruṣa par excellence, untouched by the Act-force and its consequences. In the Pūrva-mīmāṃsā of Jaimini, Karman is believed to be the omnipotent force of this - universe. The Uttara-Mīmāṃsā or Vedanta regards Īśvara as Saguṇa-Brahman. The Gītā speaks of God as Puruṣottama or Paramātmā or Vāsudeva who is both - Personal and Impersonal, while the Bhāgavata Purāṇa calls Him Bhagavān or Śrī Kṛṣṇa; above the trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahēśa. It will thus be seen that God was originally named as ॐ in the Vedic scriptures, but with the development of Bhakti in course of time He is spoken of in various ways in the Hindu scriptures such as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa or Śiva.

BHAKTI IN THE ĀCĀRYA YUGA.

The great philosopher Śaṅkara (788-820 A.D.) initiated a movement which may be called New Hinduism. He was indifferent regarding the question of the Highest Deity that man should worship, whether it

be Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Gaṇapati or Śakti (Pañca-Devopāsanā); for worship of this sort was only a means to the end of self-realisation, and not an end-in-itself.

South India was, in fact, the original home of the cult of Bhakti, whether of Śiva or of Viṣṇu, as a mass religion, as is seen from the lives of the Southern Śaiva Saints and the Vaiṣṇava Alwārs. The Śaiva Saints sing of the impermanence of the things worldly and exhort all to wake up to a spiritual life. The Alwārs ignore caste distinctions and attach importance only to love of God as the means of salvation. They advocate the path of Self-surrender or Prapatti which is open to all. Besides, instead of the worship of the five-fold God (Pañca-Devopāsanā), advocated by Śrī Saṅkara, the Alwārs prescribed the worship of only one God i.e. mono-theism. The age of Alwārs was followed by the age of Ācāryas. The chief of whom were Śrī Rāmānuja (1017-1137 A.D.), Śrī Nimbārka (12th Century), Śrī Madhva (1199-1278 A.D.), Śrī Vallabha (1473-1533 A.D.) and Śrī Caitanya (1485-1533 A.D.). Śrī Rāmānuja advocated Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified monism), Śrī Nimbārka Dvaitādvaita, Śrī Madhva Dvaita, Śrī Vallabha - Śuddhādvaita and Śrī Caitanya - Acintyabhedābheda.

BHAKTI IN THE NĀTHA YUGA AND SANTA YUGA.

From the age of Ācāryas, we shall pass on to the age of Saints - South, North, West and East. Gorakha, the best exponent of Nāthism, flourished in the ninth and the tenth centuries, when Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were competing for Supremacy. Nāthism is a kind of Rāja Yoga of the Upaniṣads, open to all classes and requiring a mental and moral detachment from the "Middle Apparent". The influence of Gorakha's Ātmayoga on later Santism has been tremendous, as will be seen in the - writings of saints like Jñāndeva, Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānaka and Dādu. Both, the Nāthas and the saints were reformers; but as the saints had more to do with the lay-men, they added theism and devotionism in their precepts. It is true that the saints of the South, the North, the West and the East speak different languages, but the thoughts expressed by them are essentially the same; for God is their religion in one form or another and the attainment of the ego-less state or अहंकार विनाश is the burden of their songs.

The chief saints of North-India were Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānaka, Dādu, Tulsī and Sūrdās - the saints

of West-India i.e. Maharastra and Gujarat were Jñāndeva, Nāmadeva, Eknātha, Tukārāma and Rāmadāsa of Mahārāṣṭra; while Narsimha Mehta, Mīrābāī, Akhājī, Pritama, Chotama, Dhīro, Śrī Nṛsinhācārya and Śrī Sāgara of Gujarat. All of them preached love-devotion to God, based on Divine Wisdom. The saints of East India of whom Lord Gaurāṅg was the foremost, preached the pure love devotion of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa type but he warns that wealth and sex are the two rocks whereon many souls are ship-wrecked; and hence, Vaiṣṇavas must scrupulously guard themselves against these two pit-falls.

THE TWO CURRENTS OF BHAKTI SAGUNA AND NIRGUNA.

It will be evident from the above that the schools of saints popularised the Bhakti cult among the classes and the masses and raised the prestige of the Upaniṣadic wisdom. The Nirguna Bhakti cult was advocated by Swāmī Rāmānanda and his twelve disciples and supported by the noteworthy saints of North India (except Tulsīdāsa and Sūrdāsa), - Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarat; while the Saguna-Bhakti cult advocated by the Ācāryas like Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, Vallabha and Śrī Caitanya was supported by the Northern saints like Tulsīdāsa and Sūrdāsa and

to a certain extent by Tukārāma, Nāmdēva, Eknātha and Rāmdāsa of Mahārāṣṭra and by Narsimha Mehtā, Mīrābāī and Pritama of Gujarat. The aspirants of the Nirguṇa Bhakti cult seek to be united with the Godhead (Nirguṇa Brahman) by means of Parā-Bhakti, while the aspirants of the Saguna-Bhakti cult seek unitive life with God (Saguna Brahman) by means of Navadhā and Premlaxaṇā Bhakti.

A complete picture of the Bhakti cult is thus unfolded before our mind's eye from the Vedic times to the Medieval period.

INFLUENCE OF SŪFĪSM AND CHRISTIANITY.

With the advent of Muslims, who ruled India from the 13th to the 18th centuries, the advent of Christianity too, with its missionary zeal in the British Rule, has greatly stimulated modern religion and life in the 19th and the 20th centuries. Sūfīsm is a Mystic cult of Islam and the goal of the Sūfī is the realization of the unity of Jīva with Brahman through self-annihilation (فناء). Sūfīsm is akin to Saguna-Bhakti in its early stage and to Nirguṇa-Bhakti or Jñāna-Mārga in the last stage of unification with God. Sufism looks upon God as the Beloved

and the aspirant thinks himself to be the ardent lover of the Beloved. The Christians believe in Christ as the object of devotion, reverence and praise, as the personal God. Through Him and His service alone salvation can be secured, as He is believed to be the saviour of mankind.

TĀNTRISM AND BHAKTI.

During the Tāntric age i.e. from 700-1200 A.D. thousands of Tantras were written by the Buddhists and the Hindus. The Tantra prescribes a Sādhana of its own for a happy life on earth, heaven hereafter and at length Moksa or liberation. Tāntrism is akin to Jñāna-Mārga or Nirguṇa-Bhakti cult wherein the self is identified with the self-in-self or the self of the Universe (Svasvarūpa and Viśvasvarūpa).

THE LINGĀYATA CULT AND BHAKTI.

Besides, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism there was evolved in the Kārṇāṭaka the Lingāyata cult or Vīra Śaivism by Basava (1160-Twelfth century). It is called Lingāyata, because it is a religion with a Śivalinga as its guiding and central theme. It has a path, practice and philosophy of its own.

RĀDHĀSWĀMĪ PANTHA AND BHAKTI.

In addition to Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Lingāyatism, there has been evolved in modern times the Santa-Mata or the Rādhāswāmī Pantha wherein the Guru is looked upon as God-incarnate for the disciple. The teachings of the Santa-Mata are based on three essential beliefs viz. -

- (a) Belief in the existence of God;
- (b) Belief in the oneness of the essence of God and the spirit entity in man; and
- (c) Belief in the continuity of life after death.

It lays great stress on God-like Guru-Bhakti and on self-discipline. The triple Mystic way of the Santa-Mata for God-realisation consists of (i) Smarana, (ii) Dhyāna and (iii) Bhajana, the persian names where-of are (i) Zikr, (ii) Fikr and (iii) Sūrata Śabda Yoga.

CONCLUSION.

To conclude, no particular part of India can claim monopoly in spiritual speculation and revelation. Owing to the infinite diversity of individuals, there is no one fixed method of approach to God for all. Each has his path which, if sincerely followed, will procure for him the fruit of his Sādhana. In order

that one may have a complete and comprehensive view of the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata, I have also given in the Appendix a brief outline of the various trends of Bhakti abroad. To sum up, I have given here a bird's eye-view of the origin and development of Bhakti in India right from the Vedic times to the Modern times. The distinctive and novel features of each type of Bhakti will be discussed in detail in the sequel.

CHAPTER II.

TREATMENT OF BHAKTI IN BHĀGAVATA.

In order to have a comprehensive view of the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata, it is necessary to know in brief outline the contents of the Bhāgavata and to have an insight for the purpose. The Purāṇas are many, but the one that is most important is the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the chief basis of the philosophical school of the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas. The Bhāgavata is believed to be the inspired production of sage Vyāsa, an Avatāra of Lord Viṣṇu. It consists of twelve books, 335 cantos and 18,000 verses. It chiefly treats of the following ten topics viz. -

(1) God (आश्रयतत्त्व),

(2) Creation (सृष्टि),

- (3) Recreation (विराम),
- (4) Divine Regulation of the Cosmos (स्थिति),
- (5) Divine grace (मोक्ष),
- (6) Desires leading to metempsychosis (उक्ति), १
- (7) Manu Periods (मन्वन्तर),
- (8) Life stories of Divine Descents and
Devotees, saints, sages and saviours
of mankind (अवतार),
- (9) The way to God (निरोध), and
- (10) Redemption or beatitude (मुक्ति).

The chief and the all-embracing topic of the above mentioned ten topics is God or the Godhead (आत्म), for all the remaining nine topics are intended to serve as an aid to the realization or the attainment of the Divine, the Refuge of one and all, high or low. The Bhagavata equates Śrī Kṛṣṇa with Bhagwān. Bhagawān of the Bhāgavata is so called because it chiefly deals with and centres round " Bhakta, Bhagawān and Bhakti ". The dominant note of the Bhāgavata is not appeal to reason but to faith and love, for it believes that the way of Love (Bhakti) leads the devotee straight to the goal.

In the Bhāgavata, there are three types of languages viz. समाधिभाषा , परमलभाषा and लौकिकभाषा . The समाधिभाषा issues from the very depth of the soul and it is the main language of the Bhāgavata. By परमलभाषा is meant the quotations from the Śruti and other scriptures; while by लौकिकभाषा is meant the descriptions of persons, places, things and events etc., genuine and imaginary, as well as the life stories of Gods, demons, devouts, saints, sages, saviours and others. The chief aim of the story-portion (कथनक) is to illustrate most vividly the high and abstract truths of Philosophy, Religion and Ethics, in such language as would appeal to and touch the most common heart. It should, therefore, be mainly understood as Arthavāda (whether eulogistic or defamatory) and not as facts. The stories should not, therefore, be accepted by the thoughtful at their face-value.

In order to attain to Bhagawān i.e. for God-realization, Bhāgavata insists on "Bhakti", for the way of Love is open to all and the easiest and the safest way to approach God. The Bhāgavata Bhakti has been mainly influenced by Nārāyaṇīya Dharma (as related in the Nārāyaṇīya Parva of Mahābhārata)

wherein Brahman is named "Nārāyaṇa", by the Niṣkāma Karmayoga of the Gītā, by the Sūtras of Nārada and Śāṇḍilya, by Nārada Pañcrātra, Viṣṇu Purāṇa and other Viṣṇuite scriptures.

Bhakti is defined variously by the advocates of Bhakti, as shown below :-

- (1) Dr. Rādhākṛṣṇan holds that Bhakti is derived from the root भज् - to serve and means service of the Lord;
- (2) According to Narada, it is loving attachment to God;
- (3) Śāṇḍilya defines it as intense love for God, accompanied by Divine Wisdom;
- (4) According to Patañjali, it is स्मरनं प्रणिधानं^१ i.e. love for God and dedication of all works^१ to God;
- (5) Pārāśarya defines Bhakti as loving worship of the Divine;
- (6) Gargācārya defines Bhakti as love for listening to the stories of the exploits of God;
- (7) In his commentary कौटिल्य टीपिका^१, on Mukta-phala of Bopadeva, Hemadrideva defines Bhakti as the steadying and absorption of the mind in Bhagawān;

- (8) In his Bhakti Rasāyana, Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī defines Bhakti as the mind's assumption of the Divine Form in its state of liquidity;
- (9) The Pañcārātra Saṁhita believes Bhakti to be the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa in his fourfold form (चतुर्भुज);
- (10) According to Rūpa Goswāmī, Bhakti means loving and constant meditation on nothing but one Lord Kṛṣṇa;
- (11) Śrī Śaṅkerācārya believes that Bhakti is an emotional approach to God, distinct from knowledge and action, as revealed in Śaṅkarā-Bhāṣya;
- (12) However, for the purpose of widening the scope of Bhakti, the Bhāgavata has taken into account the attitudes such as relation (of the Vṛṣṇis), friendliness (of the Pāṇḍavas) and intimacy (of the Gopīs), fear (of Kāṁsa), hatred (of Śiśupala), besides the wellknown attitudes of Dāsyā, Vātsalya, Maitrī and Kāntābhāva. In order therefore, to accommodate hatred etc. in the general pattern of devotion the Bhāgavata redefines Bhakti as the application

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and absorption of the mind in Bhagawān
Kṛṣṇa, by any means whatsoever.

According to Dr. Rādhākṛṣṇan, there is a feminine element in all beings, for the true characteristic of a woman is to love and to be loved. And accordingly, Rādhā typifies the loving soul and the true state of Divine Love (Bhakti) is symbolised in the grand union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The Drāvidian saint Śaṭhakopaswāmī, one of the most famous twelve Alwārs looks upon God as the only Man and all others are like women. He preaches love-devotion of the Rādhā type and holds that Bhakti is the utmost love and regard for God, as the ignorant's love for the sense objects. ?

We should distinguish here between Bhakti and i.e. self-surrender. The difference between Bhakti and Prapatti, according to Sri Rāmānuja, is symbolised by the ape-way (i.e. Markaṭakīśoranyāya) and the cat-way (Mārjārakīśoranyāya). In Bhakti, Grace (Kṛpā) ? is earned to an extent; while in Prapatti, it is freely bestowed. However, Dr. Rādhākṛṣṇan remarks that man's effort is involved in the total surrender to the Supreme. It cannot be unintentional or effortless; for the Supreme is the same to all beings.

In brief, Bhakti is to believe in God, to love Him, to be devoted to Him and to enter into Him. It is its own reward, as remarked by sage Nārada (*फलरूपं स्वयं भक्तिः*).

The forms which Bhakti takes are contemplation of God's power, wisdom and goodness; conversing about His qualities with other persons, singing His praises with fellowmen and doing all acts as His service. Logical discussions are not of much avail. What matters most is the natural (*स्वाभाविक*), constant (*निरंतर*) and unmotivated (*निहेतुक*) God-love i.e. devotion.

The end of the devotee is not a merger in the Eternal Impersonal (Para Brahman), but the union with Bhagawān or Puruṣottama. However, the Bhāgavata, like the Gītā recognises both the types of Bhakti-Nirguna (Formless Divine) as well as the Saguna (the Divine with Form); but it believes that when devotion is perfected, Bhakta and Bhagawān reveal themselves as aspects of one-life. It is called Parābhakti like that of the Bhāgavatottamas (*भगवत्तोत्तमाः*). It is hence that the Bhāgavata is regarded as the Pāramhaṁsyā Saṁhitā.

In the glorification of the Bhāgavata, Bhakti is said to be superior to Jñāna, for Jñāna and -

Vairāgya are said to be the off-spring of Bhakti and besides Jñāna ultimately ends in Bhakti. Bhakti is said to be even superior to Mukti, for God gives Mukti (redemption) but not Bhakti-Yoga.

Bhakti is said to be superior to Karma. Karma may be broadly classified as Sakama and Niskama. Sākāma may be divided into अनुरोधकृत (as - ? prescribed in the scriptures) and अनुरोध विरुद्ध (as proscribed in the scriptures). According to Bhāgavata, Niskāma Karma means action done not for him or her, but for the Supreme i.e. dedication to God. Such disinterested action (Niskāma Karma) purifies the heart and evokes love for God i.e. Bhakti. Karma is thus a means to an end, while Bhakti is an end in itself. Hence, Bhakti is superior to Karma.

The Bhāgavata is par excellence the Bhakti-Purāṇa, as is revealed and beautifully illustrated in the dialogues between -

- (a) Kapila and Devahuti (3rd Skandha),
- (b) Nārada and Yudhiṣṭhira (7th Skandha),
- (c) King Nimi and the nine Yoges'varas (11th - Skandha), and
- (d) Kṛṣṇa and Uddhava (11th Skandha).

Bhakti is also glorified especially in the prayers (Stutis) of -

- (a) Bhīṣma and Kuntī (1st Skandha),
- (b) Dhruva (4th Skandha), and
- (c) Prahlāda (8th Skandha).

God is not attained by Yoga, Sāṃkhya, Dharma, Svādhyāya, Tapa and Tyāga as easily as by Bhakti. It would not be too much to say that God is fully realised only by devotion and grace; and by no other means. Bhakti purifies even the worst of the sinners and the outcast; and a true devotee (Bhāgavatottama) purifies the world, as fire purifies gold.

As regards the marks of a true devotee, the Bhagavata says that he is ever calm and quiet and has a tender regard for all life, for he is equi- visioned (समदर्शी) towards all. God ever follows the footsteps of such a true devotee to purify Himself by the dust of His true devotees. In the episode of Ambarīśa and Durvāsā, in response to Durvāsā's prayer, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says to Durvāsā, " I am as it were dependent on my true devotee (अहं भक्त पराधीनः), for the true devotee captures my heart by virtue

of his single-minded devotion (ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय).
He is ever rooted and centred in Me regardless of
everything else. Hence, they make me subservient to
their will, as a true beloved conquers her husband.
In a word, true Bhakti means ever to be united with
God, and never to be separated from Him. Here is seen
the glorification and the climax of the Bhakti cult
of the Bhāgavata.

Defacto, man is a complex of thinking, feeling
and willing. He can reach the end by a knowledge of
the Supreme Reality, or by love and adoration of the
Supreme Person or by the subjection of his will to
the Divine purpose. The several aspects reach their
fulfilment in the integral Divine Life; for God
Himself is Sat, Cit and Ānanda i.e. Reality, Truth
and Bliss. Life, light and love are the inseparable
three phases of the same Reality. This is why Karma,
Bhakti, Yoga and Jñāna Yoga - the three systems of
Yoga (Ātma-Parmātmayoga) are given due recognition
in the Bhāgavata, and all of them culminate in
Yogeswara Lord Kṛṣṇa, when the three merge in -
Ātmānubhava, man becomes one with God. Self-perfection
is the highest goal of human life and the three-fold
Yoga is a means to it. Bhakti may be compared to a

bird with two wings and a tail. The soul is endowed with Bhakti (Love) and Jñāna (Wisdom) to serve as two wings, and Karma Yoga serves as the tail that maintains the balance. However, Bhakti is the predominant element in the Bhāgavata, as shown before.

According to the Bhāgavata, there are three types of devotees -

- (1) the best devotee (भक्तवत्सल) is he who sees God in every being;
- (2) the second type (मत्प्रभु) of devotee is he who has love for God, friendliness towards the Godly ones, mercy towards the childish and indifference towards the enemies;
- (3) the third type (प्रकृत) of devotee is he who sees and worships God only in the idol, and nowhere else.

The devotees are most dear to God as will be seen from His visit to Vidura's home for dinner and to Mucukund's cave to favour him as His standing before Bhishma who was on the point of death.

In the Bhagavata, Bhakti is classified in various ways. It is spoken of as द्विधा , त्रिधा ,

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यत्तुर्धा , नवधा , दशधा i.e. Premlaksana Bhakti or Parā-Bhakti and अष्टादशधा . To sum up, the different types of Bhakti mentioned above will be described in detail in the sequel.

CHAPTER III.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF BHAKTI IN THE BHĀGAVATA.

Broadly speaking, the Bhāgavata classifies Bhakti into two main classes -

- (1) Secondary (गौणीभक्ति), and
- (2) Primary (मुख्य or पराभक्ति).

The secondary is again classified into the nine-fold Bhakti (Navadhā Bhakti) and the primary is classified into (a) Passionate love devotion of the Gopī type and (b) Transcendental love-devotion of Śukadeva type i.e. the love devotion of both types is regarded as primary.

The secondary nine-fold devotion and the main followers thereof are as under :-

- (1) Listening to the name of God (श्रवणम्)
e.g. Prthu, Uddhava, Janmejaya and
others;

- (2) Chanting His name and exploits (कीर्तनम्)
e.g. Nārada, Sarasvatī, Śaṅkara and Śeṣa
and Śukadeva;
- (3) Recollection of Him (स्मरणम्) e.g.
Dhruva, Prahlāda, Jatāyu, Vidura, Vāli
and others;
- (4) Serving His feet (पादसेवनम्) e.g. Laxmī,
Sītā, Niṣadrājā etc.
- (5) Worshipping His Form (अर्चनम्) e.g.
Akrura, Dhannā, Mīrā, Nāmdeva etc.
- (6) Saluting Him (नमस्कारम्) e.g. Akrura and
others;
- (7) His servitude (दास्यम्) e.g. Hanumāna,
Vidura, Bharata etc.
- (8) His friendship (मित्र्यम्) e.g. Arjuna,
Uddhava, Śugriva, Guhya etc..
- (9) Self-surrender to Him (अतत्पदनिवेदनम्) e.g.
Balirājā and Gopīs.

The social characteristics of each of the above
are as under :-

1). HEARING (श्रवणम्).

Sravaṇa literally means listening to the names
of God. It also includes hearing of God's manifold

virtues, exploits and stories connected with His divine name and form. When the devotee is absorbed in hearing divine stories, his mind is merged in thoughts of the Divine. It cannot then think of undivine things; for the mind is one. For the purpose of cultivating and perfecting Sravana devotion, the devotee should seek the company of God-men or saints. In fact, it is the company that matters most in the rise or fall of a man, as is beautifully illustrated in the case of king Parīkṣit. By hearing the glories of the Divine from the mystic master sage Śukadeva, king Parīkṣit's heart was purified, illumined and concentrated on God; and thus he attained to beautitude. The nectar of the hearing of God's stories (हरिकथामृत) is far superior to the nectar of the heavenly Gods; for the Gods' nectar can at best give long life (दीर्घायुष) but it cannot free a man from the round of birth and death (भवरोग).

2). KĪRTANA - Glorification of God.

Kīrtana literally means the singing of the glories of God. While doing Kīrtana, the devotee is thrilled with divine emotion which rises up to

ecstasy (मर-त्ती). Often-times the voice of the devotee becomes choked and gradually he flies into a state of divine bhāva (दिव्यभाव) as was seen in the cases of Narsīṃha Mehtā, Mīrābāī and others. By Kīrtana Bhakti, God is pleased and the devotee's heart is purified. According to Swāmī Bhagavadācāryajī and the Bengal school of Vaiśṇavism, Bhakti is an independent sentiment in itself, like the well-known nine sentiments (Nava Rasa). The Bhāgavata holds that Kīrtana alone is the best means to realise God in this iron age of materialistic outlook - (कल्पा केशव कीर्तनम्). Besides, Kīrtana Bhakti makes use of music and dance, and the magic effect of music on human heart is too well-known. If it is directed towards God instead of towards sensual enjoyments, it can change the heart of even a stony-hearted person.

3). SMARANA or the Remembrance of God.

Smarana is said to be the climax of the process of heart-purification (चित्त शुद्धि); for by constant remembrance, the whole stock of action (सञ्चिन्त) is burnt to ashes, as gold is purified in fire. The Smarana Bhakti is open to all, young or old. While doing Smarana Bhakti, one should -

mentally visualize the form of God. Just as a miser is ever mindful of his wealth, so should a devotee be ever mindful of God. To perfect Smarana Bhakti saint Sāgar advises the devotee to reflect over the interior of his own self, never to criticise others, to devote in Bhajana all the hours of - leisure, never to be talkative and to be always righteous in words and deeds, as shown in his "Bunch of Jewels".

Japa too comes under the category of Smarana Bhakti; for it is an aid to remembrance. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā " among चत्स I am अपयसः ". There are three kinds of Japa viz. verbal or loud Japa (वरवरी), semi-verbal Japa (उपशु) or humming and mental Japa (मानसिक) or silent repetition through mind. Practice of Japa removes the impurities of mind, just as soap cleanses the cloth of its impurities. The glory of the name of God cannot be established through reasoning and intellect. It can be experienced or realised only through devotion, faith and constant repetition of the Name. It is enough if one has reverence for and faith in the name of God. In fact name (नाम)

and the named (नामी) are inseparable. And so in this iron age a devotee should take refuge in the Name. In brief, the mind possessed by the remembrance of God under-goes complete orientation, as seen in the prayers of Uttarā, Kuntī, Bhīṣma, Prahlāda and Dhruva. To sum up, the nine-fold devotion may be distributed into three trinities of (a) Śravaṇa, Kīrtana and Smaraṇa, like the Vedic three श्रवण , मेनन , and निदिध्यासन ; (b) Pāda sevā, Arcana and Vandana like the Tāntric three which centre round the idol-worship; and - (c) Dāśya, Sakhya and Ātma Nivedana which are more achievements than means. We have described here the first trinity of Śravaṇa, Kīrtana and Smaraṇa of the Navadhā Bhakti. The other two trinities of the Navadhā Bhakti are described in the sequel.

CHAPTER IV.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF BHAKTI (Continued).

(Dāśya, Sakhya and Ātma-Nivedana).

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The Bhagavata extols Padasevana above everything else and maintains that he who resorts to the lotus feet of the Lord is beyond fear and attains to ever-lasting bliss.

1). PĀDASEVAN or serving the feet of the Lord.

Pādasevā literally means serving the feet of the Lord as is done by the Goddesses Laxmī and Pārvatī. No mortal being is so blessed as to have the good fortune to practise this type of Bhakti; for the Lord is not visible to the physical eyes. In the context of personal God, Pādasevā may plausibly mean clinging to the lotus feet of the Lord, and it is possible to serve the feet of the Lord in the image of God or the God in the form of this Universe; for at bottom service of the world is service of the Lord. If one cannot serve human beings, one must serve animals and plants to lighten the burden of Karma and to realise the divine presence in all beings. Pādasevā from the metaphysical standpoint is the service of the cosmic Purūṣa, as revealed in the Purūṣa Sūkta of the Vedas. It has four Padas of which the entire universe is one. Hence, selfless service of the universe and tender regard for all life is but the first step towards realising the goal of Pādasevā, as revealed in the universal religion of the Bhāgavata. The service of the universe is its own reward, for through it

the votary enjoys the pulsating presence of God. The Pādasevā alone is able to grant all the four-fold desires of man viz. Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa, as shown in the Bhāgavata. The lotus feet of the Lord are ~~infact~~ the boat to cross the ocean of pragmatism and the perennial source of peace and pleasure. The devotees clinging to the lotus feet of the Lord attain ever-lasting peace and beatitude and become detached from all the fleeting objects of this world.

In the Bhakti Anka of " Kalyāṇa ", Pandit Śrī Govinda equates Guru with God and insists on serving the lotus feet of the Guru who gives the saving-word (लारक-मंत्र) with a spiritual insight. He holds that a Sad-Guru is a necessity for freeing the soul from the round of birth and death. God is beyond the ken of mind and the senses and hence, He is realisable through the embodied God in the form of the Guru. In fact, Pādasevā metaphysically consists in the enjoyment of all the four Padas and so the votary cannot stop at one or the other Pada but has to move forward until he reaches the fourth and the last Pāda i.e. the Absolute.

2). ARCANA or worship of the Lord.

Once the love for the lotus feet of the Lord has been created in the interior of man, worship begins. The Bhāgavata recognises three types of worship purely Vedic, purely Tāntric and the mixture of the two. The Bhāgavata is in favour of the third kind in so far as the best of each may be brought to bear upon its whole process. Worship purifies and ennobles the interior of the worshipper and fulfills all his desires. Worship may be done with body, speech and mind, as well as with all the available materials, with a pure and sincere heart. It may be five-fold (पञ्चोपचार) or sixteen-fold (षोडशोपचार) or sixtyfour-fold (षष्ट्युपचार) or infinite-fold (अनन्त उपचार). It should however be done methodically, as prescribed in the scriptures. It should not be reduced to the exhibition of one's pomp. Arcana is thus the worship of God whether through an image or a picture or a mental form, either with external materials or merely - through interior sentiment. The latter (मानसी) is specially meant for advanced souls whose mind and intellect are purified and illumined. In essence

the whole universe is the Viśva-Rūpa of God and hence, selfless service of the world is the service of God, provided the devotee has the subjective - attitude of seeing God in all beings, as revealed in the Upaniṣads. Worship can be done either in a temple or in one's own house or at any other place. During worship, the mind of the devotee should always be concentrated on the divine form of God. What counts in worship is the spiritual insight and the feeling of love for God, and not the materials that are offered to Him; for God is perfect and needs nothing but love. The Bhāgavata approves of the idol-worship only in so far as it is employed as a stepping stone to God-realization. That is why the Bhāgavata in its three-fold classification (Uttama, Madhyama or Adhama) of devotees considers the image-worshippers as of the third category (Adhama or Prākṛta).

3). VANDANA or Bowing to God.

Vandana literally means humble prostration touching the earth with the eight limbs of the body before the form of God with an attitude of reverence and love. In fact, Vandana-Bhakti means salutations to God, His form, one's Guru and saints methodically

as prescribed in the Sāstras. It leads to humility, dissolves doubts, steadies faith and purifies the heart. Even the fallen rise by virtue of Vandana-Bhakti. It is the very best means to please God among the four-fold means viz. Vandana, Vinaya, Viveka and Sevā.

4). DĀSYA (दास्य) or servitude of the Lord.

Once the sense of service dawns upon the votary, the higher stages of devotion are bound to follow. Dāsyā Bhakti literally means devotional love for God through servant sentiment (दास्योद्देशम्). It is dominated by the master-servant relation. It includes service and worship of the images of God in temples, sweeping the temples, serving the saints and sages, the poor and the sick with Ātma-bhāva and acting according to the injunctions of the Veda. Hanumāna, Bharata, Āṅgada, Lakṣmaṇa and Vidura who embraced the servant-attitude are the towering examples of Dāsyā Bhakti. In course of time, the attitude of दास्योद्देशम् ultimately leads to शोभम् , and then in the last analysis the attitude of leads to the state of नाहम् i.e. the ego-less

state. Saint Tulsīdāsa, Jīvagoswāmī and Lord Gaurāṅga speak very highly of Dāśya Bhakti. Lord Gaurāṅga believes that loving devotion of master-servant relation is the only way to attain to beatitude, and the true utility of human life lies in the reverential service of God, as revealed in the Bhāgavata.

5). SAKHYA - Friendship of the Lord.

Once God is sure of man's humility, He allows Himself to be handled freely; for God is for ever the friend of all. He gives himself up to the votary. The votary is thus introduced to the privilege of His chosen friend. Indeed, blessed were Nanda, the Gopās and the residents of Vraja who had as their friend Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. The devotee of the friendly grade always does that which pleases God in all respects. With the development of universal vision, he considers all as God, and treats every being of the world as his own friend and thus becomes a Cosmic Friend (जगत्सुहृद्).

6). ĀTMANIVEDANA - Self-surrender to God.

Last of all comes Ātmanivedana i.e. the giving up of "I, Me and Mine" (अहम् and मम). It is the culmination of the nine-fold devotion - referred to above. In Ātmanivedana-Bhakti, the devotee offers everything to God including his body, mind and soul, as is seen in the case of Bali. De facto, after self-surrender the devotee has no personal and independent existence of his own. He has become part and parcel of God, the inner - controller and doer of all actions. The devotee believes himself to be an instrument in the hands of God (निमित्तकर्ता). His constant prayer is " let thy will be done, not mine ". He does not feel egoistic, for he has no ego. He is beyond fear (अभय); for God is there to help him at all times and places. He is " Mr. Carenot " who cares not even for his salvation. He merely wants God and nothing but God. God is all in all to Him. This very doctrine of self-surrender is preached by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna at the end of the teaching of the Gītā. The Gopīs and the emperor Bali practised this type of Bhakti and attained the Supreme.

In the Bhagavata, the above mentioned nine-fold Bhakti is also spoken of as त्रिगुणी भक्ति in accordance with the predominance of the quality of Sattva, Rajas or Tamas in the mode of worshipping God. If the motive behind Bhakti be malevolence or ill will, it is termed Tamas. If the motive behind Bhakti be the desire of fame, wealth, sex or any other worldly object of enjoyment, it is termed Rajas, and if the motive behind Bhakti be to do one's duty or to please God, it is termed Sātvika.

As distinguished from the above mentioned nine-fold (नवधा) or the three-fold (त्रिगुणात्मिका) Bhakti which is secondary (माणी), the tenth kind of Bhakti (दार्या भक्ति or the निर्गुण or गुणातीत i.e. beyond the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) is the unmotivated (अहङ्गुकी) Bhakti. It is designated as the primary or the highest devotion (Premlakṣaṇā or Parā-Bhakti) described in the sequel.

CHAPTER V.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF BHAKTI.

(Love devotion and Parā-Bhakti)

The Bhakti par excellence (गूढात्मीय or Parā-Bhakti or Premlakṣaṇa Bhakti) is dominated by God-love, either of Saguna Brahmana as seen in the Love-devotion of Rādhā or Rukmiṇī for Kṛṣṇa or of Nirguna Brahman, as seen in the case of Paramahamsas like Sukadeva. It is, in fact, love for love's sake without any ulterior motive of profit or gain or reward or recognition or even of Mokṣa. It is the spontaneous (स्वाभाविक), uninterrupted (अविच्छिन्न) and unmotivated (अवहेतुक) flow of the purified and concentrated heart towards God, whether with Form or without Form. It commences after the dedication of the earthly self to God (Ātma-Nivedana). With the annihilation of the ego, the sense of agency disappears and rights and duties, do's and don'ts (विधि and निषेध) have no meaning for the devotee of the highest grade, for he does only that which pleases God. The centre of his activity and the standard of his morality have changed from the little self to God. He lives on

until all his matured actions (प्रारब्ध) are entirely exhausted. His devotion to God is, - therefore, a spontaneous affair. He goes all alone on his pilgrimage into the realm of the spiritual, having torn himself from all the ties and trifles of worldly existence. It is the flight of the alone to the All-one (i.e. God). He is desireless and so he travels light and free and refuses to be burdened again with varied pleasures of life. God is his religion and so he wants nothing but God (अनन्यता). He leaves aside toying with the world and the world is transfigured into something other than what it was so long, because of his spiritual insight. The divine rapture over-takes him in spite of himself. It is, in fact, the descent of God in man.

Gradually the excitement settles and he takes to silence. His love deepens into sublime tranquility from its spiritual expressions. He beholds the - world in an entirely new perspective, as is seen in the case of a भगवत्सेव like Prahlāda and Rantideva. He sees the oneness of all life; and if everything is God, whom can he injure without offending God ? So, the devotee is marked at this

stage by serenity (उपशान्ति) and non-violence (अहिंसा). Once the devotee is endowed with the integral vision (एकात्मभाव), his devotion attains a new dignity. Devotion, with the surrender of his limited self, was so far self-less but now it is marked by the sense of non-differentiation as well. Unitary and self-less, it is described by the Bhāgavata as devotion par excellence (Parā-Bhakti), transcending the three Guṇas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). It is the Nirguṇa or Guṇatīta-Bhakti. With the attainment of the status of Brahman, he now feels with all poignancy, all worldly afflictions as his own. Yet this new bondage becomes in his hand a new apparatus of emancipation, because of his spiritual powers. He not only wails with the world, but also knows the secret of removing tears from it. He is a citizen of the world or a Cosmic person charged with the divine mission. Like - Rantideva and Prahlāda he would exclaim " I do not crave for the supreme goal, the high majesty or release from rebirth, I should rather work among men and take upon myself the burden of their sorrow, so that they may be relieved of it. " The dust of such a भागवतचित्तम् evokes Kṛṣṇa-mindedness.

The physical sun dispells physical darkness, but a ?
भगवत्प्रेम removes the mental gloom, because he
is a God-filled soul. He is as it were a counter-
part of God; for he lives in God, as God lives in
him. In fact, God-live is the central virtue in ?
which are focussed all other virtues, as revealed
by Dr. Rānade. In brief, Parā-Bhakti is the stage
when the devotee and his Bhagavān unite or merge
into the single Reality. It is the highest fulfilment
of Life Divine, the Summum Bonum, the destination
of all spiritual aspirations.

As distinguished from Parā-Bhakti, discussed
above, the Love-Devotion is in fact the supreme
love for God. God-love (ईशके लकीकी) should be
distinguished from ordinary human love (ईशके मीक्षाशी).
In the ordinary lower love, the lower expects a
return, while God-love is exclusive love for God
demanding nothing but God. Moreover, God-love is
above all sectarianism for the concept of God
includes both the immanent and transcendent i.e.
God with form and without form. De facto, love is
a link that connects, a force that attracts, a -
fascination that seizes and a clasp that grasps.
In our ordinary human life, we live in the midst
of this ever-changing world. The equipment of -

experiences (viz. Body, mind and intellect) and the objects, emotions and thoughts that constitute the fields of experiences are both finite and in their constant flux the individuality in us (viz. the perceiver, the feeler and the thinker) as the experiencer of this change is itself constantly changing. These disturbances constitute the real pain of mortality, the source of all sorrows and agony in life. In God-love all sense of mortality vanishes. This is why the supreme love for the Lord called Devotion Divine is of the nature of immortality. Through the divinely passionate love for the Lord (प्रेमलक्षणा भक्ति) the devotee comes to experience the immortal nature of the Lord. This reminds us of the Upaniṣadic declaration that "the knower of the Brahman becomes Brahman." Here the knowing is the state of fully awakening to the divine nature of pure consciousness, the Ātman (the Para-Bhakti described above).

The essential difference between the Para-Bhakti and Premlaksanā Bhakti lies in the द्वैत and अद्वैत attitude and the consequent goal of the devotee. In Para-Bhakti, the devotee like Śukadeva believes in the oneness of all life and hence aims at merger

in the Eternal Infinite (∞); whereas in Premlakṣaṇā Bhakti (Love devotion i.e. conjugal or married love like that of Rukminī or passionate or romantic love like that of Rādhā and other Gopīs) the devotee believes himself or herself to be distinct from the Lord, the Saguna Brahman (God with form) and consequently aims at the everlasting union with God. It will be evident from the above that the devotee of the Parā-Bhakti type aims at identity with the Godhead; whereas the devotee of the Premlakṣaṇā type aims at union with God, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Things may come and things may go, joys may visit him or sorrows be deep in his heart, but he ever lives in the maddening joy of Hari-Bhakti. Like the Gopīs, his mind never goes anywhere. It has no place to go. Whenever it goes, he has no other - experience other than that of the beloved of his heart. The Gopīs are devotees of this type.

Lord is truly the nature of a Gopi-like devotee and so his activities in the world outside and his attachment to things and being of the world drop off by themselves from him. His attention and his entire life come to exist only to play and serve around the Lord of his heart. He comes to depend

upon none but the Lord of His heart and he sees the whole universe as a very form of His beloved as revealed by Saint Akhājī. A Gopī-like heart thus ablase with God-love even while experiencing the world of objects, emotions, thoughts through the vehicles of one's own body, mind, intellect can never be away from joyous love divine. This is the nature of Premlakṣanā Bhakti. To such a devotee his Lord is never far away. The eternal hide and seek which He plays with His devotees in their love hearts is the world of experience that they live in all their day-to-day life. Such a Gopi-like Lover will not undertake any activity which is detrimental to his Love Divine. Even if such an act was prescribed by the Vedas or by the secular laws of the country, he will not obey them, if it is contrary to his Premlakṣanā-Bhakti. Such acts of a devotee cannot be classified as disobedience, because there is no such intention in his heart. Thus, Prahlāda rejected the strict command of his father हिरण्यकशिपु , विभीषण discarded his brother Rāvaṇa, Bharata slighted his mother and the Gopīs of Vṛndāvana ignored the vigorous objections of their husbands. And yet none of them have been accused in the world for any of their

such Bhakti-prompted trespasses. According to the Gītā and the Bhāgavata, to act without ego and ego-centric desires, in a spirit of dedication (Ātma-nivedana) unto the Lord of one's own heart is the royal road to develop devotion. A gopī-like devotee is not in the least perturbed by hardships and disappointments, but he understands it to be the lack of Prārabdha (प्राबद्ध) of his body, as revealed in the भिक्षुगीता of the Bhagavata. The Lord in his infinite mercy arranges everything for a truly dedicated and whole-hearted devotee.

In the eye of the Lord, love rules supreme; for God is all love. He does not bother about other qualities or qualifications, as is seen in the cases of Dhruva, Gajendra, Vidura, Ugrasena, Kubjā, Sudāmā and others. This is why Lord Kṛṣṇa says "I abide not in the heaven, nor in the hearts of Yogis; I dwell and dance and rejoice where my devotees sing my glory." Love-devotion (Premlakṣaṇā Bhakti) like that of the Gopīs to Lord Kṛṣṇa, described in the tenth Skandha of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is, therefore, held to be the ideal Bhakti or Bhakti par-excellence, far superior to the nine-fold Bhakti which is described in the Bhāgavata to suit the different

temperaments of the devotees. In fact, the nine-fold (Navadhā) devotion is only a means to the end of Love-devotion (Premlakṣaṇā or Parā-Bhakti). The chief objective before the Bhāgavatakar seems to be the propagation of love-devotion (Premlakṣaṇā or Parā-Bhakti i.e. transcendental love devotion). The distinction between Premlakṣaṇā-Bhakti and Parā-bhakti is in essence a distinction without a difference; for God is the religion of both of them and God is one - whether he be with Form or without Form, like ice and water. The Bhāgavata begins with Parā-Bhakti, as revealed in its very opening verse and culminates in the Gopī-like Love devotion (i.e. Premlakṣaṇā-Bhakti) as vividly revealed in the Rāsalīlā. In between the two i.e. Premlakṣaṇā and Parā-bhakti, there is the description of the nine-fold (Navadhā-Bhakti) devotion which serves as a means to the achievement of devotion par excellence (Parā-Bhakti or Love devotion of the Gopī type - Premlakṣaṇā Bhakti).

Lastly, the Bhāgavata through Rāsalīlā preaches the royal road of God's grace (*पुण्यमार्ग* or *अनुग्रहमार्ग*) for the spiritual welfare of Gopī-like resourceless (*निःसाधिन*) devotees who have nothing to offer to God but their little-selves. The Gopī-like

Bhakti is also termed as শ্রীগোপাল ভক্তি or পুণ্ডিত ভক্তি by Śrī Vallabhācārya and it is called মধুর ভক্তি by the Caitanya Bhakti cult of Bengal. Love was the one bond which united Gopās and Gopīs to Lord Kṛṣṇa. By love devotion they cast off their Jīva-bhāva and were united for ever with Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The true spirit of Rāsālīlā of Lord Kṛṣṇa with the Gopīs is often ignored and misunderstood by the critics. The learned scholars like Śrī Nilkantha, Dr. Bhagavadkumar Goswāmī and many others have in different ways confirmed the view that the Rāsālīlā is pure beyond comparison and Divine in the superlative degree. As the God with Form or without Form is one and the same, as viewed from the different angles of vision; so Parā-Bhakti and Premlakṣṇā-Bhakti are at bottom one in essence. In the language of Yoga, the Premlakṣṇā Bhakti may be said to be সাদিকল্প ব্রহ্মসমাধি and the Parā-Bhakti may be said to be নির্যিকল্প-ব্রহ্মসমাধি. Love and wisdom (Bhakti and Jñāna) are the two aspects of one and the same God, as heat and light are of the sun. Both merge in one - আত্মানুভব , as revealed by saint Akhājī.

To sum up, we have described here in brief outline the main features of Parā-Bhakti and Prem-lakṣaṇā Bhakti and the pit falls to be guarded against in the path of Love divine. We shall now describe in brief the sovereignty of the path of devotion, as revealed in the Rāsalīlā in the sequel.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PATH OF LOVE DEVOTION.

The Bhagavata claims its special privilege over other works of celebrity to imprison the Almighty in the heart of hearts, by the unique excellence of the supreme religion (Parā-Bhakti or Premlakṣaṇā Bhakti) which it is out to expound. The Bhāgavata is unique in so far as it expounds the supreme religion on the basis of the Supreme Truth. As the Bhāgavata affirms, the supreme religion was propounded by Lord Kṛṣṇa who was steeped in the Upaniṣadic tradition. It is old as well as new; for the supreme religion is the regeneration of the Upaniṣadic truth. The Bhāgavata has defined it as the means to selfless and -

uninterrupted devotion to the Lord of the senses. Elsewhere the Bhāgavata has defined Religion as that which conduces to the devotion to the - Bhagavān.

But this claim by the Bhāgavata in favour of Devotion amounts to the denial of the traditional views on the connotation of the term Dharma. In the ऋग्वेदे , Dharma emerged as sacrifice (यज्ञ) to the Gods. Later on it was superseded by the Upaniṣadic highest knowledge of unity between Jīva and Brahman. But the Bhāgavata seems to have dislodged both rituals (Karma) and knowledge (jñāna) from their status of Dharma and appropriated it instead in favour of Love Devotion.

According to the Bhāgavata, whatever might have been the ultimate aim of sacrifice - pleasure of the God or acquisition of religious merit - in either case God could not be dispensed with. The Bhāgavata argues in the light of the Gītā that if, action is indispensably linked up with God, the inner controller (अंतर्बलम्), let the doer realise that he is not the real doer but only an instrument in the hands of God (नाहं कर्ता हरिः कर्ता). Let him act accordingly and the ordinary act is then transformed into a spiritual discipline

(Karma Yoga). Just as action takes a new colour with the touch of devotion, so knowledge too will put on a new significance, when tinctured with the element of devotion. If the goal of Upanisadic knowledge is the dissolution of the individual to Brahman, then the rigour of knowledge seems to dry up the sap of life. Śrī सिद्धेश्वरभट्टाचार्य argues that self-extinction can hardly be a cherishable goal. So, if spiritual life is a continuity of ordinary life, it must have before it, the same goal, pursued through all ordinary endeavour viz. happiness. The spiritual journey ends when fragmentary pleasure finds its consummation in Eternal Bliss. Participation in Bliss is not the extinction of the individual but its highest fulfilment. This is why a true devotee does not wish for Mokṣa even, but wishes to be always in loving service of the Lord of his heart, whether it be the attitude of दास्य , शरय , वात्सल्य , उक्त्य or मधुर . It is generally believed that devotion is merely love of Sri Kṛṣṇa, with no understanding of His real nature as the सर्वोत्तमन् , the self in all. This is not true. The Gopīs had a very clear and vivid knowledge of the glory and majesty of Sri Kṛṣṇa's true nature. They realised

that the Flute Player of the Jamuna Bank was the Supreme Puruṣa of the Upaniṣads. The more they realise His glories, the more their love for Him expands. The Lord Himself says in the Gītā that - of the four types of devotees the Jñāni is the best; for his devotion is based upon and flowing forth from the true wisdom (Jñāna). It is firm, deep and constant.

In his commentary on the aphorisms of sage Nārada (नारद ऋषि-वचन), Swāmī Śrī Cinmayānandjī vividly distinguishes between Prema and Kāma (Love and Lust). He says that today in the world lust is glorified as love. The counterfeit is being circulated as the legal tender. Lust is lustily parading in human affairs as love. This is a - pernicious condition. Love cannot be lust. In Love, there is an expansion in Being, while in lust, there is the suffocating squeeze of death, a gasping sleep into the dungeons of tragic life. True love ennobles, enlivens and enthralls. In the love of the Gopīs for the Gopālkṛṣṇa, there was nothing base, ignoble or fleshy. It was the expression of a total merger of their personality in the Supreme Truth, the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. That there is nothing sensual about it is already seen from the very fact that it was given out by the great sage Śukadeva

to King Parīkṣit when the royal king was facing imminent death. Hearing and enjoying the Bhāgavata ultimately saved him from the sad death. Every devotee is the king of his life, waiting for his death in the house of the body, standing in an island of the society, surrounded by the waters of the world. This is why Devarṣi Nārada believes that the love without the knowledge of His true nature is like the illicit love for the paramour. There is thus an essential difference between love and lust as well as between worldly love and Godly devotion.

It is here that the Bhāgavata believes in the organic unity of devotion, detachment and knowledge and designates it as *पारमहंस्य धर्मः* (i.e. the religion of the recluses). Supposing devotion is emotion at its core, it has to be a sort of attachment (*अनुरागः*) to God. Now, attachment presupposes on the one hand detachment from other objects, and the knowledge of the object of attachment, on the other. Attachment in order to be what it is, has to be associated with detachment and knowledge. Indeed, of the three fibres of the discipline of devotion viz. devotion, detachment and knowledge,

detachment is a necessary concomitant to attachment, but knowledge is the vital spring to devotion-knowledge is the crux of devotion.

The Bhāgavata has thus built up its structure of devotional discipline on the Upaniṣadic knowledge. This is why the supreme devotion (Parā-Bhakti) or love devotion (i.e. Love for love's sake) is superior to the path of disciplined contemplation (Yoga). According to देवर्षि नारद , God-love is superior to all other methods of Sādhana known to us from the sacred scriptures.

In all the above mentioned four methods of self-unfoldment, the great ऋषिः insist on certain minimum qualifications in the निधिकः in order that they may harvest maximum from those paths. But in the case of God-love there is no such condition at all. In short, while all other paths can help us only from a given stage of perfection, devotion can help us to evolve from whatever level we are at any given moment. It is open to all.

Again, in all other paths one can have the fear of a fall, but in Bhakti there is no such fear and in fact this alone is sufficient to consider Bhakti as greater and more beneficial a path than all others.

Besides, the pursuers of other paths may perhaps lose sight of the goal, the Lord. They may get over-attached with the means and come to forget the noble end. But an ardent lover of the Lord cannot remain even for a moment forgetful of the Lord and His grace. Moreover, in Devotion there is very little difference in essence between the means and the goal, between the path and the designation. In Bhakti, love is love's own end.

Furthermore, a man of devotion invokes God's grace upon himself more readily, more naturally than the followers of the paths of Karma, Jñāna and Yoga.

Lastly, in the paths of Karma, Jñāna and Yoga, there is an inherent conscious self-effort constantly involved. But a devotee has less chance of developing such a vanity; in-as-much as he is constantly conscious that all his spiritual progress is all due to the blessings of the Lord of heart. In fact, the lover of the Gopīs has infinite compassion on the meek and the subdued. The Bhāgavata thus proves the sovereignty of the path of Love-Devotion (i.e. / Sukadeva - like Love based on Divine Wisdom - parābhakti or the Gopī-like Love for love's sake -

Premlakṣaṇā Bhakti)). It is the supreme religion of the Bhāgavata viz. Devotion coupled with detachment and knowledge.

One may now ask - what is the nature of the supreme religion of the Bhāgavata ? To this the Bhāgavata answers that the supreme religion is the worship (आराधन of the Supreme Person (परमपुरुष). Divine play has undergone three successive strata of development - परमपुरुष, आदिपुरुष and पुरुष ; and the supreme religion of the Bhagavata is the worship of परमपुरुष , the fundamental source of life, the Bhagavān, the all-bliss.

In what consists the worship of the supreme Purūṣa ? Dedication of the self is the answer of the Bhāgavata. The Bhāgavata looks upon self-dedication as the quint-essence of the teachings of the entire Vedic literature, by "self" the Bhāgavata means the wife, the son, wealth, the body - in short whatever the votary considers to be his including his own self. Worship (आराधन), therefore, is the act of consercretion of "I" and "Mine" to the Divine. Once the barriers of the ego are broken, the infinite possibilities of the

pinning soul are realised in the deepest embrace of all bliss, described as the Rāsalīlā of Kṛṣṇa with the Gopīs.

De facto, it is our impurities viz. the mammoth store of action that veil God from the Jiva according to the Bhāgavata. The vicious circle of Vāsanā, Karma and birth (Kāmanā, Karma and Sansāra) goes on ad-infinitum till God realization. Hence, God-realization is the only medicine for the soul to be freed from the round of birth and death. The nine-fold (नवधा) devotion described above purifies the heart and God is freely allowed to dwell in and play upon the heart of the votary. It culminates in अर्पणप्रतिवेक्षण i.e. the completely willing surrender of the personal ego to God. After the total evacuation of the ego the heart is filled to the brim with God. Such stage is marked by the destruction of the huge stock of accumulated action (सञ्चय) with the only exception of matured action (प्रारब्ध); and it heralds the dawning of a new life, the regeneration of the soul from the material to the spiritual, as revealed in Rāsalīlā.

After evacuation comes the stage of filling the interior with God. Gradually, Hari is visualized as the fundamental unity behind all diversity of external elements. The world of matter is then transformed into the splendour of the spirit. The votary then gains control over Māyā, the "principle of differences" with the aid of divine wisdom. For the first time he feels his identification with the universe. He then considers the happiness and sorrow of the universe as his own.

This is why Prahlāda's aching heart gives vent to the following :-

" Oh Lord. I am worried about those who have turned away from you in the indulging of trifling pleasures. Oh friend of the fallen, you are their only hope. Excepting in their company, I shall not cherish alone the benefit of liberation. "

The milk of human kindness thus surges in the heart of every भगवन्तोत्तम whose only mission at that stage is to travel all over the world to alleviate the troubles of all, to remove tears of the oppressed and to establish on earth the kingdom of God instead. They are possessed by universal pity and

being masters of powers, both material and spiritual, they themselves can cure the world of its malady. This is termed as the Pādasevā of the Lord.

From the metaphysical stand-point, the cosmic Purūsa is said to have four Pādas of which the entire universe is one. Hence the service of the Universe is really the first step towards realizing the goal of Pādasevā that the Bhāgavata has held out as the target of its universal religion. This is just the beginning of the spiritual pilgrimage. The votary soars still higher and enters the realm of the transcendental to enjoy the pleasure of the three other Pādas, indicated in the पुरुष सूक्त of the ऋग्वेद .

All the four types of salvation viz. मोक्षोक्त, सात्त्विक, रसात्मक and श्रद्धात्मक are but the higher hierarchical degrees of the enjoyment of the second Pāda i.e. परमात्मन् . So, the votary dives deeper into the core of परमात्मन् - Bhagavān of the Bhāgavata.

Bhagavān of the Bhāgavata is all bliss and the votary enters the land of life to participate in the perpetual and integral ovation described as Rasa. The supreme religion of the Bhāgavata is

the Ārādhana of the Parama-Purūṣa (परमपुरुष). He who undertakes Ārādhana is Ārādhikā, for the Votary plays the role of the female seeking the union with her dearest. When the votary makes bliss her own, her incompleteness (A) (अ-त) disappears and, as Rādhikā, her being coalesces with that of all bliss. This is described as the divine union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and makes the Sevā of the third Pada complete. What remains after the divine union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa ? (Premlakṣaṇā Bhakti). The Absolute or non-dual consciousness (Parā-Bhakti) according to the Bhāgavata. Herein then lies the sovereignty of the path of love devotion i.e. love for love's sake, as revealed in the Rāsa-līlā.

As distinguished from the शङ्खिरति of भीष्म and उद्धव , the दार-चरति of दारक , the मख्य of सुदामा or अर्जुन , the वात्सल्य of यशोदा and the मधुररति of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's consorts - the love of the Gopīs of Vṛndāvana was the sweetest of the sweet, noblest of the noble and the purest of the pure forms of love, according to Dr. Bhagabat Kumār Goswāmī. It had all the glories of शङ्ख , दारक , मख्य , वात्सल्य and मधुररति without their essential weaknesses. The Gopīs thought of none

but Lord Kṛṣṇa. They followed Him slavishly, they associated with Him as comrades, they nursed Him with care and solicitude, they loved Him passionately and all this voluntarily, without any impulse from without, without any hope of reward and in complete disregard of the ban of the society. What impelled them to love Him was nothing but innate and irresistible love for Him. It conquered all opposition, it carried them away from everything else but kept steadily to the path of love for Him. That was their sole ambition, that was their glory, that was their joy, that was their single-minded devotion, that was their one aim, one pursuit. For that love they lived, in that love they lived, call it impure from the worldly or social point of view, if you like, but it was purity itself as love. It was love in its inception, love in its sequel, love in essence, love in growth. It was life's True-Love; for life, love and knowledge go hand in hand and the Gopīs were fully aware of the fact. To them Kṛṣṇa was the dearest of the dear, life of the life and soul of the soul. This is why the love devotion of the Gopīs is set up as the model of devotional perfection.

However, it has been subjected to much criticism, but the criticism has been very much misdirected. No question of moral perversion comes in when the whole thing is placed above the region of cosmic life, and the "massive voice" of society. The foundation of cosmic morality does not extend beyond the confines of the cosmos. The founder of the Bhāgavata doctrine made it as clear as language could make the thing clear. The Gopīs disregarded social ban, because they placed themselves above social life. Cosmic society can take cognisance of acts of commission and omission only of cosmic life and not of any act done beyond cosmic life by transcendental life that stands behind mortal life. In the Rasa, on the one hand, the fullest play of their intense love-devotion was assured, and on the other hand purity of society was quite safeguarded. The whole thing therefore need give no shock even to the most scrupulous moralist.

Granting that the Gopī-like love devotion represented the high water mark of Bhakti, the question naturally arises, how is it that these Gopīs of Vṛndāvana (वृन्दावन) of all came to

choose this highest mode of self-fulfilment ? Why were they alone so qualified, and not the meditative Yogins and the practised ritualists or the self-sacrificing ascetics? The question has been answered from two different stand-points. From the view point of Karmavāda, it is said that the ascetics and sages of अउडकालरुवा , the women of Ayodhyāṣa and several other groups of purified and properly inspired souls, were so charmed by the beauty of Rāma, that they craved for partnership with His life. And that craving was satisfied when Rāma afterwards was born as Kṛṣṇa and they were born as Gopīs. Fully qualified for salvation they attained salvation through this path of sweet devotion as they had bargained for by their Karma.

The Bhakti view-point explains it by a close examination of the avowed object of Kṛṣṇa incarnation. The glorious mission of the Kṛṣṇa incarnation was to draw living beings close towards Himself in love and joy, the sweetest of the bonds of attraction. Hence, he was Kṛṣṇa (from कृष् = to draw). He must love and be loved. The lover and the loved in one must for the propagation of the cult of devotional

love divide Himself on earth. The Gopīs were the incarnations of Love for Him, and He, the incarnate, object of their love. Thus the Gopīs loved love and nothing else. Thus, the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata aims at nothing less than the realization of Bhagavān, the Supreme Person, the highest - fulfilment of the individual. To sum up, the supreme religion of the Bhāgavata is a self-growth or a synthesis of all the three faculties - willing, knowing and feeling (Sat, Cit and Ānanda) - phasing them out into their natural order of hierarchy. The Bhāgavata has knit the Puruṣa-Kaivalya of the Sāṅkhya Yoga, the Brahma Kaivalya of the Upaniṣads, the Parmatma Kaivalya of earlier Vaisnavism into a grand hierarchy with Bhagavad-Kaivalya at its crest. This state is symbolised in the grand union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, wherein the duality of the worshipper and the worshipped is transcended in the Absolute. This is the contribution of Bhāgavata-Bhakti to the philosophical thought, as shown in the sequel.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PLACE OF BHAKTI IN PHILOSOPHY
AND RELIGION.

Broadly speaking, philosophy is the study of the Ultimate Reality of all things (viz. Jīva, Jagata, Ī'svara, Bandha and Mokṣa). Śrī Śaṅkerācārya uses the term in this sense, as will be seen from his well-known aphorism (viz. *ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो भ्रमश्च नापरः*). According to Mrs. Annie Besant, to understand is the deepest instinct in the mind of man, and it can never rest satisfied until this understanding is obtained. She holds that man has striven to understand the mysteries of existence by approaching them from three mutually opposed view-points :-

(1) All comes forth from matter, the one existence and this, from its own inherent energy produces all forms, and gives birth through them to life. All materialistic philosophies are built upon this basis.

(2) All comes forth from spirit, pure mind, the one existence and matter is merely a creation of the spirit engaged in thought. There is really

no matter; it is an illusion. Let man sink into himself and all the universe will fade away as a dream. All idealistic philosophies are built upon this basis.

(3) Spirit and matter are two aspects of one existence, united as inseparably during manifestation as the back and the front of the same object, merging into Oneness again at the close of a period of manifestation. In the All exist simultaneously all that has been, all that is, all that can be in one eternal present.

According to Prof. M.N. Dwivedī, philosophy is the search of the One in the many; and philosophy and religion are in fact the theoretical and the practical aspects of the one truth. It is the view and way of life leading to right understanding and right living.

The Bhāgavata philosophy in general appears to be a powerful attempt at reconciling Vedic idealism and Sāṅkhya realism with the emphasis on the former. The opening verse of the Bhāgavata is an adoration of the Ultimate Truth (श्रुत्यै परं धीमहि).

The word "Parā" is explained by Sridhara as meaning God; and Satya (truth) is used here in the sense of Reality (Trikaśābādhitva - त्रिकाशाबाधित्वम्). It is held that by virtue of this supreme Underlying Reality of God, the world appears as real.

The fact that the world is produced from God, is sustained in Him, and is ultimately dissolved in Him (Janmādyasya Yataḥ - जन्माद्यस्य यतः) is but an inessential description (Tatāstha Lakṣaṇā - तदास्था लक्षणा) of God. His pure essence (Swarūp-lakṣaṇa - स्वरूप लक्षण) consists of pure formless consciousness. It presides over all changes as the one constant factor as pure consciousness. This reality is called Bhagavān by the Vaiṣṇavas, Brahman by the Vedantis and Paramātmān by others. De facto, there is no distinction or difference among Bhagavān, Brahman and Parmātmān. There is only one Reality which manifests itself as power and possessor of power.

The Bhāgavata-Sāṅkhya philosophy is theistic and as such it radically differs from the classical atheistic Sāṅkhya, as expounded by Īśvar Kṛṣṇa.

The fundamental difference of the Bhāgavata school of Sāṅkhya from that of classical Sāṅkhya is that it admits one Purūsa as the real, all-pervading soul, which is the real seer of all our experiences and the basic, universal being that underlies all things of this universe. In the eleventh Skandha, it is held that the Ultimate Reality is one and that all differences are mere differences of names and forms, as beautifully explained by Saint Akhājī in his Sākhīs. To conclude, the philosophy of the Bhāgavata seems to be a synthetic view (Samanvayātmaka Darśana - समन्वयत्मक दर्शन) of the various dwaita and adwaita philosophies of the time.

Bhakti and Jñāna are not diametrically opposed to each other but they are beneficial to each other; for due to knowledge devotion increases and due to devotion knowledge expands. Some hold that Bhakti and Jñāna are not two different things; but they appear to be different due to the difference in the seat of their manifestation. Bhakti is the attitude of the heart, while Jñāna is the attitude of the intellect of the creature towards his Creator. The goal of both is practically the same

viz. God-realization. In truth, Jnana Yoga is Abhedha (अवेद) Bhakti and Bhakti-Yoga is Bheda-Bhakti.

In the initial stages the devotee believes himself to be distinct from God; but after passing through three stages viz. -

- (1) I am His (अहं-सर्वम्).
- (2) I am Thine (त्वं-सर्वम्).
- (3) I am Thyself (अहं-मेवम्).

He believes himself to be one with God. The last of the above three stages is called Para-Bhakti or Abhedha Bhakti.

In Bhakti Yoga i.e. Bheda-Bhakti (भेद भक्ति), the true devotee believes that the universe in its manifold names and forms is nothing but one God. It is all the play of the Lord. Thus, the devotee who sees the oneness of all life, feels the divine presence everywhere and thus attains to beatitude. In both the Sādhana (i.e. Jñāna Yoga and Bhakti Yoga) heart purify and concentration are of vital importance.

It will be seen from the above that the view and way of life preached by Bhakti Yoga involve Divine Wisdom. Unless a man comes to possess the

highest devotion, he will not have a vision of God and unless he has a vision of God, true Bhakti will not spring in him. Only a Sarvavid (i.e. a true philosopher) is a true devotee of Sarvabhāva (i.e. God Vision). The Gītā too speaks of the Jñāni as the best of the four types of devotees - (Bhāgavatottama - भागवतोत्तम). The Bhāgavata also says that one can attain Mokṣa only by taking refuge in God and by Divine Grace, consequent upon perfect detachment from all God.

First, God is revealed only into the pure at heart and that too according to the gradation of purity, sanctity and piety of the soul. Citta-Suddhi (चित्तशुद्धि) is thus the condition precedent to God-realization.

Secondly, the true devotee must develop the attitude of having nothing but the one (एकमेव उन्नतिम्), the Bhagavan of the Bhagavata. A man is freed from his sins, as soon as God reveals Himself to his vision, as a lit-up fire reduces the entire firewood to ashes.

Thirdly, it is only as a result of God-vision that one is able to solve the riddle of this universe, as revealed to Arjuna in the Gītā.

He alone becomes one with Brahman, who sees the multiplicity of all being inherent in the One and their evolution from that One alone.

Fourthly, a true Bhakta (i.e. a Bhakta-Jñāni) attains to a vision of absolute equality. It is this equal vision that distinguishes a true devotee from every body else. Dr. Rānade holds that the Bhakta-Jñāni must see the form of God continuously, immanently in the universe and transcendently above it.

Lastly, like a full-blown Lotus flower, the realiser of God must proclaim God to the whole world and spread God's gospel. It would be evident from the above that for attaining Parā-Bhakti -

- (1) a man must have a disgust for worldly things and -
- (2) he must be sinless i.e. quite pure at heart; for only the pure-hearted see God for ever more.

The after effects of God vision are as under :-

- (1) Warding off of all perils by Divine Grace,
- (2) Solution of the world riddle,
- (3) Vision of equality,
- (4) Origin of Parā-Bhakti,

- (5) Responsibility to spread God's gospel,
and
- (6) Joy and peace for ever more.

In truth, the above are the marks of a true Jñāni too.

This is why in the last analysis, Parā-Bhakti and Brahma-Jñāna or Divine Love and Divine Wisdom are said to be the two aspects of one and the same Ultimate Reality, the Bhagavān of the Bhāgavata. In the words of Swāmī Śivānanda, concentration is done either on a point in space (Bhakti Marga) or on the entire existence (Jñāna Mārga). Mind has to be concentrated on one substance, be it this or that. Thus, Bhakti has an essential place in the scheme of religion and in the realm of philosophy. The God of the Bhakta is the self-in-self (Svasvarūpa - स्वस्वरूप), while the God of the Jñāni is selfless self-Divine (स्वरूपातीतस्वम्). This is the truth supreme revealed in the Bhagavata (सत्यं परं धीमहि).

Vedānta Sāksātkāra (वेदा-लगाक्षात्कार) and Parā-Bhakti are only two names of one and the same thing. The effect of both is the annihilation of the ego or the destruction of the mind.

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The essential unity of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom is revealed by Śrī Raman Maharṣi as follows :-

" The self is the only reality. There are no others, for one self or only one life is vibrant in every atom. The self-knower or the realised one therefore, does not see the world as different from himself. "

As we are, so is the world. Therefore, we should reform ourselves rather than reform the world. The pure-hearted, wise ever visualise God. Śrī Raman Maharṣi says that in fact " I - I " is the self; but when it flies off at a tangent and says, "I am this or that, I am such and such, it is the ego. The ego-sense is the basis of the individuality. And it is only the individual ego which passes from life to life; and so all that is required to realise the self is "to be still". "

Discrimination and dispassion are the two wings of the soul bird flying to its Home. The obstacle is the mind. It must be got over or transcended whether in the home or in the forest.

Moksa can be attained even while one lives here and now; for we are one with Brahman. Self-realization is the climax of Divine Wisdom and Divine Love. Self-surrender (as in Parā-Bhakti) is the same as self-knowledge (as in Brahma-Jñāna).

For self-realization, we have to attempt to get in from without i.e. to turn inwards towards the self (Ātman). The attempt is Vicāra (विचार) and the inner movement is Grace (Kṛpā). Grace is ever present, but the seeker must earnestly strive to qualify himself for the grace. Both Vicāra and Kṛpā are necessary, for each has to endeavour for self-realization.

Self-perfection is the highest aim of life. In reality, the egoless state is the natural, the real state, while the ego state is the unnatural and the false state. Our ultimate freedom (Mokṣa) lies in our becoming aware of our selfhood and nonduality.

In brief, the goal of philosophy and religion or of Jñāna and Bhakti is God-realization (i.e. Saguna Brahman in Bhakti and Nirguṇa Brahman in Jñāna). In fact Jñāna, Bhakti and Vairāgya are the three different aspects of one and the same experience,

of the Ultimate Reality, as revealed by Saint Akhājī. No religion or philosophy can, therefore, afford to ignore the three factors of Bhakti, Jñāna and Vairāgya in any scheme of religion and philosophy.

To conclude, according to Siddheswar Bhaṭṭācārya, man is the architect of his own destiny. Both the paths (Bhakti and Jñāna) aim at the supreme excellence of man, but their difference of approach is not less emphatic. The path of knowledge is a hard task-master; for it demands strict inhibition of the instinctive life of man. But the path of devotion is for the sublimation of man's inherent tendencies. It turns natural life to higher spiritual values and transfigures the animal into the God. The Bhāgavata has united the Upaniṣadic approach with the Yoga techniques of Patañjali. This is why it is called the Supreme Religion or the पारमहंस धर्म . The central note of philosophy and religion is nowhere so emphatically borne out, as in the Bhāgavata Dharma. It aims at nothing less than the realization of Bhagavān, the Supreme Person. It is a self-complete religious system that

takes due cognisance of the harmonious growth of all the three faculties - willing, knowing and feeling - phasing them out into their natural order of hierarchy. Thus, Bhakti has an honoured place in the scheme of religion and philosophy.

CHAPTER VIII.

E P I L O G U E.

Here ends our present enquiry into the subject "Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa".

It is now proposed to take a bird's eye-view of the whole subject so as to arrive at certain definite conclusions.

We began with Bhakti, its origin and development and traced and critically examined the current of Bhakti in India right from the Vedic times to the modern times. From the historical and critical study of the various schools of Bhakti, a complete picture of the Bhakti cult in India is unfolded before our mind's eye. We have also traced the influence of Sūfism and Christianity on Bhakti like the advent of the Muslims and the British. Two main currents of the Bhakti are visible viz. Saguṇa Bhakti and Nirguṇa Bhakti. In order that

one may have a complete and comprehensive view of the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata, we have also given in the Appendix a brief outline of the various trends of Bhakti abroad.

We have then given in brief outline the contents of the ten topics of the Bhāgavata which centres round "Bhakta, Bhagavān and Bhakti". The Bhāgavata Bhakti is mainly influenced by the Nārāyaṇīya Dharma, the Gītā, the Sūtras of Nārada and Śāṇḍilya, Nārada-pañcarātra and Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Broadly speaking, the Bhāgavata Bhakti is a mosaic of devotion, detachment and knowledge.

We have then discussed the main characteristics of the different types of Bhakti in the Bhāgavata in three chapters (i.e. the III, the IV and the V). It is seen that the ninefold devotion is distributed into three trinities of -

- (a) Śravaṇa, Kīrtana and Smaraṇa;
- (b) Pādasevā, Arcana and Vandana, and
- (c) Dāśya, Sakhya and Ātmanivedana

which are more achievements than means.

It is seen that the Bhāgavata is pre-eminently the Bhakti Purāṇa. According to the Bhāgavata, the supreme religion consists in the worship (Ārādhanā)

of the Supreme Person (Parama Purusa) - the Pādasevā of the Parama-Purūṣa, as revealed in the Purūṣa Sūkta of the Rg.Veda.

The Bhāgavata looks upon self-dedication as the quint-essence of the teaching of the entire Vedic literature. Once the barriers of the ego are broken, there is the dawning of a new life or the regeneration of the soul from the material to the spiritual (मार्गः शिवायाम्) as revealed in the Rāsālīlā.

As distinguished from the Santa, Dāsyā, Sakhya, Vātsalya and Madhura Rati, the love of the Gopīs of Brindābana was the sweetest of the sweet, noblest of the noble and the purest of the pure forms of love, according to Śrī Bhagavat Kumār Goswāmī. It had all the glories of Śānta, Dāsyā, Sakhya, Vātsalya and Madhura-Rati without their essential weaknesses.

According to the Bhāgavata, Bhakti and Jñāna are not opposed to each other but they are the two different aspects of one and the same Reality.

From the critical examination and evaluation of the different trends of the Bhakti, we now

arrive at the following conclusions :-

First, the complete and comprehensive view of the Bhakti cult in India and abroad right from the Vedic times upto the modern times and the critical exposition and evaluation thereof is quite original.

Secondly, we have proved that the Bhakti of the Bhāgavata is non-sectarian and most catholic, as distinguished from the sectarian views of the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas.

Thirdly, the Bhāgavata proves the sovereignty of the path of devotion.

Fourthly, it is proved that the Bhagavata is the Pāramahansa-Samhitā (पारम हंस-संहिता).

Fifthly, we have shown that the Bhāgavata believes in the doctrine of the oneness of all life, as revealed in its aphorism :-

Sixthly, we have proved that the Bhāgavata Bhakti is not pure emotionalism but a grand synthesis of both Divine Love and Divine Wisdom.

Seventhly, it is shown that purity of the heart or morality or straightforwardness (Ārjava) is the condition precedent to God-realization.

Eighthly, we have shown that the Bhāgavata is an authoritative work on Bhakti and as such it is worthy to be regarded as one of the प्रस्थान-तन्त्र

Ninthly, it is proved that the Bhagavata has illustrated and proved the truths of the Upaniṣads, as is evident from its Upakrama and Upasamhāra (beginning and end).

Tenthly, it is shown that the current of Bhakti in the Bhāgavata starts with Parābhakti, passes through Navadhā Bhakti and culminates in Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti.

Eleventhly, it is shown that the Bhāgavata has a universal appeal to all seekers of truth, as beautifully revealed by Līlāsuka

पुंजीभूतं प्रेमगोपाङ्गा नानां
मुस्लिंभूतं भागधैर्यं यद्वृत्ताम् ।
उत्कीर्णं गुणवित्तं शुक्लिनाम्
श्यामीभूतं ब्रह्म मे सन्निधत्ताम् ॥

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Twelfthly, it is proved that the Bhāgavata is the amplification of the doctrine of the Gītā for the easy comprehension of all men and women.

The Gītā is a Siddhānta Grantha (सिद्धान्तग्रंथ) while the Bhāgavata is a Dr̥ṣṭānta Grantha (दृष्टान्तग्रंथ). The Lord's song or speech (भगवद्वाणी) is the Gītā, while the life history of the Lord is the Bhāgavata.

To conclude, the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata cleanses, elevates, divinises and transforms man into a God-like being or God. ?

A U M.