

The *Bhāgavata*

PART II

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

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

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

Transcendental epistemology

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

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

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

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

† Bhag. 1/3/28; C.C. *Adi*. 5/142.

‡ Bhag. 1/18/19.

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

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

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

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

Those methods that are adopted for the practice of active hostility to the Absolute are termed *pratyaksha* (direct individual perception) and *paroksha* (associated collective perception by many persons past and present) respectively. The *aparoksha* method (the method of cessation from individual and collective perception) leads to the position of neutrality. The *pratyaksha* and *paroksha* methods are diametrically opposed to the methods approved by the Bhagavat for the search of the Truth. The *aproksha* method also tends to an unwholesome and negative result if it seeks to stand on the mere rejection of the *pratyaksha* and *paroksha* methods without trying to progress towards the positive transcendence. Such inactive policy would indeed be tantamount to the practice of passive hostility to the Absolute and as such is even more condemnable than open hostility. No method can be recognised as suitable for the quest of the Truth that is actuated more or less by the purpose of opposing the Absolute Supremacy of Sri Krishna. In other words, individual souls cannot realise the subjective nature of the

* Bhag. 1/2/11.

Absolute except by the exercise of their fullest subserviency to Sri Krishna and His inner power.

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

The methods that are adopted for practising active and complete subserviency to the Absolute are termed respectively as *adhokshoja* (external or reverential method of serving the Transcendental Object of worship) and *aprakrita* (internal or confidential method of service of the Absolute). Srimad Bhagavata inculcates and divulges the search of the Absolute by the *adhokshaja* and *aprakrita* methods. It condemns the *pratyaksha* and *paroksha* methods, but recognises the proper use of the *aparoksha* method.

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

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

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

The theistic methods alone thus apply to the proper Entity of the Absolute. Those, who are in rebellion against the supremacy of Sri Krishna by the adoption of sensuous activity, are prevented from all access to His presence by the operation of deluding power of Krishna. The individual soul is always susceptible to being thus deluded by

* Bhag. 1/2/6.

maya (the limiting or measuring potency). The conditions of the practice of sensuous activities in this realm of finite existence are provided by *Maya* for the correction of the suicidal perversity of rebellious souls.

It is in this manner that a person, who is averse to the service of Sri Krishna, is made to proceed along the tracks of *Karma* and *Jnana* by the ascending process for gaining the bitter experience of the practice of perverse hostility to Sri Krishna and his own self. This world is inhabited by persons who are deliberately addicted to this suicidal course. They are unconditionally committed to the ascending process for sojourning in this realm of nescience. The method is further characterised by the hypocritical assumption of the validity of experience derived through the senses for providing progressive guidance in the quest of a state of perfect felicity.

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

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

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

The pursuit of this right method of quest leads to a growing perfection of *Bhakti* and progressive realisation of the Subjective Nature of the object of worship. Srimad Bhagavata uses the pregnant phrase "really real thing" (*Bastava Bastu*)^{*} to denote the Entity Whose service is realisable by and in the right method of quest. Srimad Bhagavata accordingly distinguishes between apparent and real truth that is experienced respectively by the followers of the ascending and descending methods of quest.[†] It admits the existence of apparent truth and the followers of apparent truth alongside real truth and the servitors of the real truth.[‡]

The true conception of the Absolute is realised by following the right method of quest. The Ultimate Reality is termed in the *shattvata shastras* as *Brahman*, *Paramatma* and *Bhagavan*.[§] The *Brahman* conception stress the necessity of excluding the deluded, concrete, limited experience of the followers of apparent truth. The conception of *Paramatma* seeks to establish a tangible connection between this temporal world and the Ultimate Reality. Both these conceptions present not only an imperfect, but also grossly misleading, view

of the Absolute. The conception of *Bhagavan* as Transcendental Personality. Who is approachable by *Suddhā-bhakti* or unalloyed devotion of the soul, corresponds to the

* Bhag. 1/1/2.

† Bhag. 2/9/33.

‡ Bhag. 10/30/24.

§ Bhag. 1/2/11.

complete realisation of the Absolute, which, necessarily also accommodates and supplements the rival conceptions of *Brahman* and *Paramatma*. The comparative view of the three conceptions is clearly stated in a passage of the 'Karcha' of Damodara Swarupa quoted in Ch. Ch. 1.1.30. It is also stated by Sri Jiva Goswami in 'Tattvasandarbhā' 8.

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

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

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

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

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

Sambandha or Relationship

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

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

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

The power of Sri Krishna stands to Him in the attributive reference. The personality of *shakti* is, therefore, that of the counter whole of the Absolute in her three aspects and their transformations. The relationship of service subsists between Sri Krishna and His power in all her aspects and transformations. The infinite Aspects of the Divine Personality Himself, emanating from the Figure-in-Himself (Swayamrupa), are related to Sri Krishna as Servitor Divinities Who are possessors of power.

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

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

The clue to the Supreme Excellence of the Personality of Sri Krishna is supplied by the principle of Rasa which is defined by Sri Rupa as "that ecstatic principle of concentrated deliciousness that is tasted by Sri Krishna and in sequel reciprocated by the serving individual soul, on the plane that transcends mundane thought."§ Sri Krishna

* Bhag. 1/3/28.

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

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

§ Bh. R. S. D. L. 5/79.

is the Figure-in- Himself of the whole compass of the nectarine principle of *Rasa* (*Akhilarasāmritamurti*).^{*} The Figure of Krishna excels all other Aspects of the Divine Personality by being the Supreme Repository of all the *Rasas*.[†]

The Supreme Possessor of power, Sri Krishna is inseparably coupled with His *antaranga-shakti* or power inhering in His Own proper Figure. Srimad Bhagavata refers to the service of a particular Gopee (lit, one who is fully eligible for the service of Sri Krishna) being preferred by Sri Krishna to those of all the other Gopees.[‡] In other words *Swarupa* or *antaranga-shakti* is one and all-perfect. She is the "predominated Absolute." She has her own specific figure, viz., that of Sri Rādhikā. The two aspects of *Swarupa-shakti*, namely, *tatasthā-shakti* and *māyā* or *bahirangā-shakti*, reveal themselves in the intermediate and outer regions of the Divine Figure. Jivas or individual souls are detachable infinitesimal emanations of the *tatasthā-shakti*, sharing the essence of the plenary spiritual power. Individual souls appear on the border-line between the inner and outer zones of divine power. They have no *locus standi* in their nascent or *tatastha* state. They are eternally exposed to the opposite attractions of *Swarupa-shakti* and *māyā-shakti* at the two poles. Their proper affinity is with *Swarupa-shakti*, but they are susceptible to be overpowered by *māyā-shakti*, at their option. If they choose to be the subservients of *māyā-shakti*, they are subjected to ignorance of their proper nature which results in confirmed aversion to the service of Sri Krishna. In this manner is brought about the deluded condition of individual souls who sojourn in the realm of *māyā*. The constitutions of individual souls in their nascent state and the realm of *māyā* are comparable to the outer penumbral and shadowy zones respectively of the sun, while the position of *antarangā-shakti* is like the inner ball of light which is the proper abode of the Sun-God who corresponds to Sri Krishna.

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

The individual soul in his nascent marginal position, is confronted with the alternative of choice between subserviency to the plenary power on the one hand and apparent domination over the deluding power on the other. When he chooses the latter alternative, he forgets his relationship of subserviency to the inner power and his subserviency to Sri Krishna through such subserviency. It is never possible for the conditioned soul to understand the nature of the service of Sri Krishna that is rendered by His inner power. There is, therefore, categorical distinction between the function of individual souls and of the inner power even on the plane of service. Superficial readers of the commentary of Sridharaswami on the Bhagavata are liable to miss the importance of this distinction which has not been explicitly stated by the commentator. If any person is led to suppose the function of individual souls to be identical with that of the inner power, on the strength of the brevity of Sridhara, he is liable to fall into the error of *philanthropism*.

Neither should Sridharaswami be regarded as belonging to the school of exclusive monism, which is the contention of certain scholars of the impersonalistic school. Sridharaswami has described with true esoteric insight the functions of Rama and other extensions of the figure Sri Rādhikā, the plenary inner power, in his commentary on the

* Bhag.10/43/17.

† Bh. R. S. P. B. 2/32.

‡ Bhag. 10/30/24.

Bhagavata. He is the authoritative commentator of the Eternal Leela of the Divine Personality in His different Aspects and *Avotaras*.^{*} Sridharaswami belongs historically to the school of Vishnuswami, the pro-pounder of the school of *Suddhādwaita*, and professes unalloyed devotion to Nrisingha Vishnu.

The reticence of Sridharaswami has been supplied by the *Achintyabhedābheda* system propounded by Mahaprabhu Sri Krishna Chaitanya. In the works of Sri Rupa, Sanatana, Jiva and Krishnadasa Kaviraja and the commentaries of Sri Viswanatha Chakravarty, the subject of the working of the inner power and individual souls has been treated in all its details in pursuance of the *Achintyabhedābheda* doctrine. This constitutes the most distinctive contribution of Gaudiya *Vaishnavism* to the cause of pure theism. The clue to the comparative study of the working of power on the transcendental plane is supplied by the account of the *Rāsa* dance in Srimad Bhagavata. The system of *Suddhādwaita* is not incompatible with Gaudiya *Vaishnavism* in spite of its reticence on this particular aspect. Neither Ramanuja nor Madhwa has treated the subject of the functioning of power in such elaborate manner.

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

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

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

The function of conditioned souls is of two kinds. The function that is provided by the '*Varnāshrama*' system for conditioned souls, is not opposed to *Suddhā-bhakti*. Srimad Bhagavata has treated the '*Varnāshrama*' system from the point of view of unalloyed devotion. Thereby it has provided an intelligent way of viewing the situation

^{*} Bhag. 1/7/10, and Sridhara's commentary on the same.

[†] Bhag. 1/7/23.

[‡] Bhag. 1/7/10; *Ibid*.

of conditioned souls during their sojourn to the mundane world. The spiritual value of the ‘*Varnāshrama*’ system is due to the fact that it admits the possibility of the activity of conditioned souls being endowed with reflected spiritual quality by being directed towards the unalloyed service of the Absolute on the transcendental plane. It is the purpose of the ‘*Varnāshrama*’ regulation to impart this direction to the activity of conditioned souls. The crucial nature of this theistic purpose of the ‘*Varanashrama*’ arrangement, is fully treated in Srimad Bhagavata,* It is not explicitly treated in any other *Shastric* work.

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

Abhidheya or Function

The nature of the eternal function of all unalloyed individual souls has been indicated above. Bhag. 1-2-6 declares *Bhakti* or service of the *Adhokshaja* (transcendental) *Bhagavan* (Absolute Person possessed of all attributes) as the function of all individual souls in their pure spiritual state. ‘*Bhaktirasamritasindhu*’ states that function of *Suddhā-bhakti* is uncontaminated with mundane intellectual, utilitarian, ethical or unethical activity† *Suddhā- bhakti* is the only proper function of all unalloyed individual souls and is located on the plane of transcendence. But all animation is potentially eligible for the transcendental service of the Absolute.t ‘*Vishnu Purna*’ states that conduct, enjoined by ‘*Varnāshrama*’ system, derives all its value from the fact that its only object is the spiritual service of Vishnu.‡

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

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

* Bhag. 12/13/18.

† Bh. R. S. P. B. 1/9.

‡ Vish. P. 3/8/9.

belong to the realm of nescience and constitute the active denial of the Entity of the Absolute. By indulging in such speculations our spiritual nature, is deprived of its proper function.

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

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

The urge for sensuous enjoyment expresses itself in the institutions of family and society of worldly-minded persons. They are the traps of the deluding energy. But these very traps are used as instruments of service of the Absolute by the awakened soul. The hymns of the Bhagavata always reveal the eternal service of the Absolute on the highest plane, identical with the Personality of Sri Gaursundara, to the enlightened soul. I may refer in this connection to the interpretation of the Bhagavata that has been supplied by the commentaries of the Gaudiya Vaishnava School. We read in those commentaries that the hymns of Bhagavata 11/5/33-34, which seem to be in praise of Sri Ramachandra as the ideal monogamous husband, are in praise of Sri Krishna Chaitanya. This is not an instance of twisting the meaning of a text to suit the whim of the commentator. The language of Srimad Bhagavata reveals its true meaning only to the enlightened soul. That meaning is very different from what even the most renowned linguists may suppose it to be in their blind empiric vanity.

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

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

The nature of Transcendental Vraja *Leelā* is liable to be misunderstood by the empiric study of the Bhagavata. The limit of empiric inference is reached by the

* Bhag. 10/30/24.

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Bhag. 10/29.

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

The sole object of all spiritual activity is gratification of the senses of Sri Krishna. When Sri Krishna is pleased, His servitors experience unmixed joy. This is the reverse of what happens in this world. Activity, that yields enjoyment to the person indulging in the same, alone possesses attraction on the mundane plane. But such selfish pleasure is never coveted on the plane of spiritual service. The plane of mundane sensuous enjoyment is thereby sharply differentiated from that of spiritual service in respect of the quality and orientation of their respective activities. Desire for mundane enjoyment is potentially, but uncongenially, inherent in the soul, and it can be cultivated at his option. The practice of it, however, leads to the abeyance of his truly natural serving function. Modern civilisation does not suspect its own degradation in seeking exclusively for mundane enjoyment. The mind and body of man have a natural aptitude for sensuous gratification, and all his ordinary mundane activities are practised for its realisation.

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

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

PRAYOJANA OR FRUIT

In the position of complete realisation of the activity of the uncovered soul a person becomes eligible for participation in the Transcendental Pastime or *Leelā* of Sri Krishna (Bhag. 1/7/10 and Sridhara's commentary on the same). The realisation of this all-absorbing love for Sri Krishna is the FRUIT or *Prayojana* of the eternal spiritual activities of all pure souls.

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

Individual souls who are not part and parcel of the inner plenary power have no automatic access to the plane of Vraja. They are also lacking in spontaneous love for Sri

Krishna. It is possible for them to attain to the love of Sri Krishna only as accepted subservients of the inhabitants of Vraja.

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

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

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

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

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

THE END.

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

(Srimad Bhagavatam, 12/13/18)