

TENETS OF VAIṢNAVISM

The literary sources confirmed by the epigraphical evidences, which have been cited in the previous chapters, lead to the conclusion that Vaiṣṇavism is a faith of the hoary past the origin of which could be traced to the *Vedic* texts. It is also found from these evidences that before the period of the Ālvārs, there grew up certain tenets which were peculiarly Vaiṣṇavite in character, preached and practised by many a pious soul. These doctrines do not get a systematic treatment in these source books but they have left an indelible and deep impression on the Ālvārs. The Ālvārs attached greater importance to the path of devotion than to the other doctrines. It is only after the period of Nāthamuni that these tenets got formulated into a coordinated whole and were given a systematic exposition.

The earliest dogmatic exposition of the religion characterized by devotion centres on the worship of Viṣṇu and so it takes the name of Vaiṣṇavism. The cult has had a long history, going back to very remote times. The deity of this cult bears also the sectarian names Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa Gopāla. These names indicate the four main streams which mingled into one through a period of several centuries to form the so-called religion Vaiṣṇavism.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* represents Vāsudeva as identical with Kṛṣṇa. Vāsudeva is identified with the God Viṣṇu as well as the Supreme Spirit, as a scion of Vṛṣṇi family. The *Mahābhāṣya* (on Pāṇini)¹ gives the forms Vāsudeva, Baladeva and Aniruddha as derivatives from Vṛṣṇi names, meaning the sons of Vasudeva, Baladeva and Aniruddha respectively. The names of the five Vṛṣṇi heroes referred to

1. *Aṣṭādhyayī*, 4. 1: 114.

in the Mora (near Mathura) inscription of the first century A.D. are given in the *Vāyu-purāṇa* as Saṅkarṣaṇa (son of Vāsudeva by Rohiṇī), Vāsudeva (son of Vasudeva by Devakī), Pradyumna (son of Vāsudeva by Rukmiṇī), Sāmba (son of Vāsudeva by Jāmbavatī (of non-Aryan origin) and Aniruddha (son of Pradyumna) all of whom are known to have been apotheosized and worshipped.² Again Patañjali (on Pāṇini)³ distinctly states that the word 'vāsudeva' contained in the *Sūtra* is the name of the "worshipful" i.e., one who is pre-eminently worshipful i.e., God. Therefore the worship of Vāsudeva must be regarded as old as Pāṇini's grammar (800 B.C.).⁴

The *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* usually identify Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Sāttvata family with the highest god, and represent him as the founder of the religion characterized by devotion. This religion is called the Bhāgavata, Sāttvata or Vaiṣṇava Dharma. In the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*,⁵ the highest is stated to have been called Bhagavat and Vāsudeva by the Sāttvata people; and the *Sāntiparvan*⁶ of the *Mahābhārata* states, apparently in reference to the *Gītā* that Sāttvata or Bhāgavata Dharma was taught first by Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna.

That Kṛṣṇa with the name Vāsudeva was held in special veneration is evident from the records of Megasthenes and Mathura inscription. There is a reference regarding the worshippers of Vāsudeva and Baladeva (Saṅkarṣaṇa) in a passage of the Buddhistic canonical literature called *Mahāniddeśa* and *Cullaniddeśa* (first century) which mentions, among others, the worshippers of certain deities including elephant, horse, cow, dog, crow etc.⁷ These evidences make clear that

2. cf. Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 1944, pp. 82 ff.

3. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, 4. 3 : 98.

4. cf. Hopkins, E.W : *Great Epic of India*, p. 391; Macdonell, A.A : *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 17.

5. Bhāg P. 11. 6 : 2, 6.

6. MBh. Sānti. 358 : 48.

7. *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 5.

the worship of Kṛṣṇa as Vasudeva was in vogue many centuries before the birth of Christ. The worship of Baladeva or Balarāma who is mentioned with Kṛṣṇa was also prevalent then and it appears that it went out of practice or lost its hold on people after the beginning of the Christian era. His worship⁸ is understandable and is justified on account of His place in the list of divine descents of Viṣṇu.

The *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* usually explain the name Vāsudeva as the 'son of Vasudeva.'⁹ Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar draws attention¹⁰ to the commentaries on the *Āṣṭādhyāyī* and the *Ghaṭa Jātaka* and suggests that Vāsudeva is not a patronymic, but the proper name of the person, whose name Kṛṣṇa shows that he belonged to *Kārṣṇāyana gotra* which sprang from an ancient sage named Kṛṣṇa with whom Vāsudeva of a Kṣatriya family of the *Kārṣṇāyana gotra* was identified at a later date. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* mentions the sage Kṛṣṇa-Devakīputra (i.e. Kṛṣṇa son of Devakī) as a disciple of the ṛṣi Ghora of the Āngirasa family.¹¹ Kṛṣṇa is not called Vāsudeva in this work. Vāsudeva's association with Sankarṣaṇa (Baladeva, son of Vasudeva by Rohiṇī) in pre-Christian epigraphs as well as in certain passages of the *Mahābhārata* seems to support the epic and purāṇic tradition that Kṛṣṇa was connected with the Yādavas and Pāṇḍavas. It has also to be noted that the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* mentions Kṛṣṇa's mother as Devakī which was rather an uncommon name. Again the Āngirasa family to which Upaniṣadic Kṛṣṇa's teacher Ghora belonged, was intimately related to the Bhojas who were like Viṣṇis, a sect of the Yādava clan. Some of the doctrines enunciated in the *Gīṭā* can be traced in the lessons received by Kṛṣṇa-Devakīputra from Ghora Āngirasa according to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.¹² Consequently it is believed that what he learnt from Ghora was what Kṛṣṇa also taught. His teaching was

8. It is treated in the *Kṛiyādhikāra* 11 : 99 to 107.

9. MBh. *Uddyoga* 70 : 3; *ibid.*, *Śānti* 341 : 41.

10. *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 10. ff.

11. Ch. Up. 3. 17 : 6.

12. *ibid.*, 3. 17 : 4, 6, 7. cf. Bh. G. 9 : 27, 16 : 1 to 3, 8 : 5 and 10; 4 : 1 f.

singularly successful, for he became the centre of a theistic movement, which in the course of time began to worship him along with his friend Arjuna.

In the *Mahābhārata*¹³ the Supreme Spirit is addressed by Brahmā as Nārāyaṇa¹⁴ and Viṣṇu¹⁵ and is identified with Vāsudeva.¹⁶ The purport seems to be that in a former age the Supreme Spirit Vāsudeva created Sankarṣaṇa, procreated his son Pradyumna and through him Aniruddha who himself is Viṣṇu and also created Brahmā in the former age and in the present occasion to request him again to be born in the Yadu race as Vāsudeva dividing himself into four parts as on the previous occasion. Thus Vāsudeva was the name of the teacher of the religion of *bhakti* and there appears to be an implication here that he existed with the other three in a previous age. In the *Anugītā* portion of the *Āśvamedhika-parva*¹⁷ an accidental meeting of Kṛṣṇa and a sage of the name Uttanka of Bhṛgu race takes place on the former's return from Dvārakā. The result of the war is given in detail by Kṛṣṇa to the sage. At the request of Uttanka Kṛṣṇa shows him His universal form. The form was the same as, or similar to, that which was shown to Arjuna according to the *Bhagavad-gītā*; but it is here called the Vaiṣṇava form which name does not occur in the *Gītā*. The identity of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu is proved by this to have become an established fact. In the *Sāntiparva*¹⁸ again, it is seen that Yudhiṣṭhira while addressing Kṛṣṇa identifies Him with Viṣṇu. In the epic period, Viṣṇu is regarded as the Supreme Spirit, but the names of Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa apparently occur in greater frequency and are more prominent.

The facts which are known from literary sources are supported by epigraphical evidences such as the Besnagar (old

13. MBh. *Bhīṣma* 65 : 54, 56.

14. *ibid.*, *ibid.*, 65 : 50.

15. *ibid.*, *ibid.*, 65 : 63.

16. *ibid.*, *ibid.*, 65 : 47, 69.

17. MBh. *Āśvamedhika*, ch. 53 to 55.

18. *ibid.*, *Sānti*, ch. 43.

Gwalior state) inscription (180 B C)¹⁹ and another inscription of the same place referring to the erection of Garuḍa column for the temple of the Bhagavat. The previous inscription is significant for the fact that Garuḍa, a bird sacred to Viṣṇu, is here associated with Vāsudeva and the inscription adds that "three immortal steps...when practised lead to heaven...self-control, charity and diligence"²⁰ – which seem very much like an effort to moralise the three strides associated with Viṣṇu. At any rate, this inscription clearly shows that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was fully identified with Viṣṇu. A reference has come to notice recently in a Mathura inscription (first quarter of the first century) recording the erection of a gateway, a terrace and a *devakula* at the *mahāsthāna* of Vāsudeva proving worship of Vāsudeva in that locality.²¹ Vāsudeva is not called Kṛṣṇa in the early Indian inscriptions; but the use of Kṛṣṇa, as another name of Vāsudeva, in works like the *Mahābhārata*, especially in the *Gītā* belonging to its early stratum, Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, and the *Ghaṭa Jātaka* is probably pre-Christian.²² Again the Chinna (Kṛṣṇa District, Andhra) inscription²³ of Yajña-Śātakarṇi (last quarter of the second century) begins with an adoration to Vāsudeva alone and indicates the progress of Bhāgavatism in the South.

The identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu leads to the second current which flowed into the making of Vaiṣṇavism. Viṣṇu is a *Vedic* god and therefore He is much more ancient than Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. In the *Brāhmaṇas*²⁴ He is spoken of as the highest god and came to be considered by the worshippers of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa to be the same as their "God of gods" especially because of some winsome qualities in Viṣṇu's character, such as the quality of helpfulness which was extended to Indra and came to be treated as admitting

19. *Epigraphia Indica*. Vol. X. Inscription No. 669.

20. Dr. Barnett's translation, *Hindu Gods and Heroes*, p. 88.

21. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 116.

22. cf. Bhāg. P. 9. 9: 49.

23. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 118.

24. cf. Ait. Br. 1, 1; Śat. Br. 14. 1:1.

extention to mankind. He is accordingly said to have thrice traversed the earthly spaces for man in distress²⁵ and in order to bestow it on man for a dwelling.²⁶ He is also spoken of a protector of embryos.²⁷ In the *Brahmaṇas*²⁸ he is said to have assumed the form of a dwarf in order to gain dominion over the earth for the gods. In the *Mahābhārata* numerous stories are told of Viṣṇu's acts of grace and helpfulness, his assuming various descents in order to aid gods and men in distress! It is not surprising therefore that this God of helpfulness was gradually appropriated by the followers of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.

In the period of Brāhmaṇas,²⁹ if not earlier, Viṣṇu was regarded by some as the Spirit of the Sun, and he has that characteristic in the *Gītā*.³⁰ When Viṣṇu was regarded as the Sun, it would be natural for the spiritual descendants of Ghora Āngirasa, a priest of the Sun, to worship him as their god. Consequently that Vasudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult was a sect which grew up within Viṣṇu-Worship, and when it drifted its leader Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa identified him with the god whose worship he had preached. Again in the same period Viṣṇu was very definitely identified with the sacrifice,³¹ thus again showing the close affinity between the Viṣṇu-cult and the Vāsudeva-cult. If they were two, it is not surprising, therefore, that before long they became one. In the *Anugītā* the identification of Vāsudeva³² with Viṣṇu is complete, for the name most often used in the *Anugītā* for the Deity is Viṣṇu.

25. RV. 6. 49 : 13.

26. *ibid.*, 7. 100 : 4; 6. 69 : 5 and 6.

27. *ibid.*, 7. 36 : 9.

28. Śat. Br. 1. 2 : 5.

29. cf. the story about Āditya (sun) being Viṣṇu's head. Śat. Br. 14. 1 : 1 and 10. Viṣṇu is mentioned along with the Ādityas (Vide A.V. 11. 6 : 2) but never in the *Rg. Veda*.

30. Bh. G. 10 : 21; 11 : 30.

31. Śat. Br. 14. 1 : 1 and 1 ff; also 1. 2 : 5 and ff. cf. Bh. G. 8 : 4.

32. cf. MBh. *Bhīṣma* 65 : 47, 63, 69; and *ibid.*, *Āśva*. 16 : 2 to 13.

The third element which contributed to the development of Vaiṣṇavism is the worship of Nārāyaṇa. The word 'nārāyaṇa' means 'the resting place or goal of *Nāra* or a collection of *Nāras*'.³³ There is a tradition which connects Nārāyaṇa with primeval waters.³⁴ According to another tradition, Brahmā sprang from the lotus in the navel of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu.³⁵ There is a reference in the *Vāyupurāṇa*³⁶ to Nārāyaṇa being represented as prior to matter in an undeveloped form (*avyakta*) and from this form sprang the mundane egg, from which arose Brahmā. All these traditions seem to have been based on the account to be found in the *Vedas*.³⁷ So Nārāyaṇa, is the resting place or goal to men and gods. He is therefore a different person prior to Brahmā and to the Svayambhu of Manu; he is not a historical or mythological individual. He is another person with cosmic character.

There is a reference in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*³⁸ to a Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa who is stated to have thrice offered sacrifice at the instance of Prajāpati. Nārāyaṇa is, however, not identified here with Viṣṇu or any of the Ādityas. In another place of the same work³⁹ Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa is mentioned to have performed the *Pāñcarātra* sacrifice and attained a supreme position above all beings. The earliest evidence in favour of the identification of Nārāyaṇa with Viṣṇu is probably to be traced in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (fifth century B.C.).⁴⁰ The *Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka* contains a passage⁴¹ in which Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu are regarded as one and the same deity. Here Nārāyaṇa is also called Hari and 'the eternal Deity, the Supreme and Lord' and He is described

33. MBh. *Anuśāsana* 186 : 7; *ibid.*, *Uddyoga* 69 : 10.

34. *Manu*. 1. 10; cf. *Samūrtarcanādhikāra* 1 : 7.

35. M.Bh, *Vana* 3. 12 : 34 and *ibid.*, *Śanti*. 349 : 18.

36. *Vay. P.* 6. 78.

37. R.V. 10. 82 : 5 and 6.

38. *Sat. Br.* 12. 3 : 4.

39. *ibid.*, 13 : 6 : 1.

40. B.D.S. 2. 9 : 10.

41. *Titt. Ār.* 10 : 11.

with all the attributes of the Supreme soul, which are usually found mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*. Several passages of the *Mahābhārata* support the identification of Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa as found in the above passage.

In the *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*, Nārāyaṇa figures as the Supreme God, especially in connection with creation. He is represented, mythologically, as lying on the body of a huge serpent in the ocean of milk. Here it is seen that the original conception of his connection with primeval waters is still being kept to Nārāyaṇa thus making Him a worshipping deity. The same epic describes the heaven of this Nārāyaṇa as the Śvetādvīpa or White Island.⁴² Certain gods are said to have gone there and seen Hari in the abode made of great gems, lying on the serpent couch with Lakṣmī sitting at His feet and attended by the sage Nārada and other devotees.⁴³ It is also stated that *yogins* and *Kapilasāṃkhyas* who desire final deliverance (*mokṣa*) go to the White Island by reciting the prayer and praise composed by Bali. It is therefore evident that the island is the heavenly abode in which Nārāyaṇa, sometimes spoken of as Hari, dwells. The place corresponds in a way to the Vaikuṅṭha of Viṣṇu. It was to this place of Nārāyaṇa that Nārada went and learnt from Him the mono-theistic religion of Vāsudeva. There is, therefore, no need as Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar does to suppose that the White Island was a Christian country peopled by white races.⁴⁴

In the epic period when the worship of Vāsudeva sprang, he was identified with Nārāyaṇa. In the *Vanaparva*⁴⁵ there is a description of the conditions of things at the time of dissolution of the universe wherein it is stated that there was water every where and there was a body lying on couch on a branch of a banyan tree. The boy opened his mouth

42. MBh. Śānt. ch. 335.

43. *Kathāsaritsāgara* 54: 25 to 27. The prayer which is offered by Naravāhanadatta mentions the six qualities of Viṣṇu. *ibid.*, 54: 31.

44. *Vaisnavism, Salvism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 45.

45. MBh. *Vana*. ch. 188, 189.

and swallowed Mārkaṇḍeya who roamed in the inside of his stomach and saw the whole universe and was struck with wonder. The boy then vomited him out, when he saw again the waters alone. When Mārkaṇḍeya questioned the boy about his identity, he replied: "Formerly I gave to the waters the name of *Nāra*, and those were my resting place (*ayaṇa*), and therefore I am Nārāyaṇa" and in this strain he goes on to describe his greatness. The whole story is told by Mārkaṇḍeya to Yudhiṣṭhira. It appears that the burden of the whole *Nārāyaṇīya* section is to establish this identity between Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva.

According to another tradition⁴⁶ there was another person, besides this Nārāyaṇa, who was always associated with Nara. They both went from the world of men to the world of Brahman and, being worshipped by the gods and the Gandharvas, existed only for the destruction of the demons. Indra was helped by Nara and Nārāyaṇa in his struggle with the *asuras*. The concept of companionship between Nara and Nārāyaṇa seems to be traceable to the Upaniṣadic idea of two birds dwelling in a tree, friends and associates of each other⁴⁷ That one of those who is called the lord and the onlooker is in the present tradition Nārāyaṇa and the other, who is engaged in eating the fruit of the tree, is Nara. The old idea was transferred to the new conception of Nārāyaṇa as the abode of all men. Again in the opening section of the *Nārāyaṇīya*, it is stated that Nārāyaṇa, the eternal and Universal Soul was born as the son of Dharma in the quadruple form of Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and Kṛṣṇa.⁴⁸ The first two of these are stated to have practised austerities at Badarikāśrama in the Himālayas.⁴⁹ These four are represented as the sons of Dharma and had Ahimsā as their mother. This is perhaps to signify and support righteousness and non-slaughter of animals as against the old Ceremonial of sacrificial rites and Killing of animals. According to certain passages of the

46. *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 45.

47. *Mun. Up.* 3. 1 : 1; *Sv. Up.* 4 : 6. (Quoted from R.V. 1.164 : 20).

48. *MBh. Śānti* 333 : 16, 17.

49. *ibid.*, 334. 8. cf. *Vām. P.* ch. 6.

Mahābhārata, Nara and Nārāyaṇa are called ṛṣis,⁵⁰ and this might have led to the conception of Nārāyaṇa as the ṛṣi or the composer of the *Puruṣa-sūkita*. These gods must have been very famous at the time when the epic was composed, since in the opening verse of its different parts obeisance is made to these two gods. Nara is identified with Arjuna and Nārāyaṇa with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.⁵¹ And thus the old tradition about the two ṛṣis who were warriors at the same time was brought into a beautiful connection with the interlocutors of the *Bhagavad-gītā* by the fertile imagination and genius of the poet.

While ideas connected with Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa thus mingled together to form the religion of the Vaiṣṇavites, there developed, before the beginning of the Christian era, an entirely new element which speaks of Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd, and dwells with great devotion on his birth, childhood, youth and sports and feats of great strength. There is no reference to this cowherd Kṛṣṇa in the authorities so far cited. In the *Harivaṃśa*⁵² which is a supplement of *Mahābhārata* and in the *Purāṇas* such as *Vāyu-purāṇa*⁵³ and *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*,⁵⁴ there are stories about Kṛṣṇa's tender babyhood and wanton childhood. When these works were written, the legend about the cowherd Kṛṣṇa must have already become current and his identification with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa been effected. It may be presumed that stories regarding the early life of pastoral Kṛṣṇa probably developed partly out of the *Vedic* legends about Viṣṇu, called 'gopa'⁵⁵ in the *Rg-Veda* and 'govinda' and 'dāmodara' in the *Baudhāyaṇa Dharma-sūtra*⁵⁶. But there are other factors which appear to have contributed to the development of the mythology of the cowherd Kṛṣṇa. The Yamunā region was possibly conspicuous

50. *ibid.*, *vana*. 12. 46, 47; 30. 1; *ibid.*, *Udyog*. 49 : 19.

51. *ibid.*, *Sabha*. 66 : 11.

52. *Harivamsa* 2 : 20.

53. *Vay.* P. 98 : 100 to 102.

54. *Bhag.* P. 10 : ch. 29.

55. *R.V.* 1. 22 : 18; 10. 19 : 4.

56. *B.D.S.* 2.9 : 10.

for its cows as early as the age of *Rg-Veda* and a Vṛṣṇa (i.e., a member of the Vṛṣṇi clan) named Gobala (lit. 'one strong in the wealth of the cows') is known from the *Taittiriya Saṃhitā*⁵⁷ and *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*⁵⁸. It is thus probable that the Yādava-Sāttvata-Vṛṣṇis of Mathurā possessed large herds of cattle as did their western neighbours, the Matsyas. Most of the stories about Kṛṣṇa's early life appear, however, to have been principally due to his identification with certain gods worshipped by Ābhīras and other allied peoples.

The *Mahābhārata* refers to Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd⁵⁹. The *Gītā* contains the address of 'Govinda' to Kṛṣṇa⁶⁰ made by Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa is referred to as Govinda as He found the earth (go) in the waters which He stirred.⁶¹ But Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar says that the word 'govinda' is a later form of 'govid' which in the *Rg-Veda*⁶² is used as an epithet of Indra in the sense of 'the finder of the cows'; this epithet as another one Keśiniṣūdāna⁶³ which is also applicable to Indra, must have been transferred to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa when he came to be looked upon as the chief god. The word 'go' in Sanskrit conveys more than one meaning.⁶⁴ Hence it is not improper to find the use of this word in some other sense as well.

Kālidāsa mentions Viṣṇu as appearing in the garb of cowherd (*gopa*).⁶⁵ The exact date of this poet is yet to be

57. Taitt. S. 3. 11. 9 : 3.

58. Jaim. Up. Br. 1. 6 : 1.

59. MBh. *Sabhā*, ch. 41.

60. Bh. G. 1 : 32; 2 : 9. Here the word may be taken as Madhusūdana (on 2 : 9), taken as one who knows the speech.

61. MBh. Ādi. 21 : 22; 69 : 13. cf. *ibid.*, *Śānti*. 342 : 70; 352 : 5; Mats. P. 248 : 43, 44.

62. R.V. 10. 103 : 5 and 6 (Indra). cf. R.V. 9.55 : 3 where this is addressed to Soma.

63. Bh. G. 18 : 1.

64. The word 'go' has several meanings such as heaven, bull, ray, thunderbolt, cow, sight, arrow, direction, speech, earth and water. cf. *Nirukta*. 2 : 6; 6 : 2; 6 : 20.

65. *Meghadūta* 1 : 15.

settled. However, among the Indian scholars, the view has been gaining ground in fixing him in the first century B.C., a date which would prove that identification of Kṛṣṇ with Viṣṇu was an admitted fact. Even a few centuries earlier to Kālidāsa, the epithets 'Viṣṇu', 'Nārāyaṇa' and 'Vāsudeva' were used by Bhāsa⁶⁶ in his dramas *Dūtavākya*⁶⁷ and *Bālācarita*⁶⁸ who is no other than Viṣṇu in the garb of cowherd (*gopāla*).⁶⁹ Kṛṣṇa is identified with Vāmana also,⁷⁰ having the appellations Keśava, Hari, Bhagavān and Puruṣottama, all of which occur in the two dramas of Bhāsa cited above. Bhāsa refers to the Hallīśa dance in which Kṛṣṇa took part with the *gopīs*.⁷¹ *Harivaṃśa*⁷² refers to this dance without mentioning the name.⁷³ The *gopīs* sang and initiated the actions of Kṛṣṇa who is referred to as a boy of ten years old.⁷⁴ Kṛṣṇa is stated in the *Bhāgavata* to have taken part in the *rāsakridā* Himself taking as many bodies of Kṛṣṇa as there were *gopīs*.⁷⁵

The foregoing pages show that long before the beginning of the Christian era, Kṛṣṇa was identified with Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva. All these names came to denote Brahman represented by Viṣṇu with Śrī.⁷⁶ Viṣṇu possesses countless auspicious qualities and under the influence of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, six among these qualities were taken prominent note of as characterizing the Supreme Being. He

66. Bhāsa is referred to by Kālidāsa in the Prologue to his *Mālavikāgnimitra*.

67. *Bhāsanātakacakra*. pp. 441 to 458.

68. *ibid.*, pp. 511 to 560.

69. *ibid.*, p. 523.

70. *ibid.*, p. 441.

71. *vide*: *Abhīnavabhāratī* on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Vol. I, p. 183.

72. *Harivaṃśa*. 2. ch. 20.

73. The commentator Nīlakaṇṭha calls this as Hallīśa.

74. *Harivaṃśa* 2. 20: 18.

75. *Bhāg.* P. 10. ch. 33.

76. V.P. 1. 8: 17.

is the creator, preserver and destroyer. From Him arose Brahmā, the creator of the world. He descended down to the world to rescue His devotees from sufferings. Special actions of consecrations make God take His presence in idols and sālagrāmas in order that His devotees would be delighted by His presence.

The self owes its existence in the world to the will of God. It must realise its limitations and become aware of its abject dependence on His will which alone would save it from bondage. This requires the self to observe the rules of good conduct in order to please God. The self has to acquire the knowledge of its own nature and that of God. Duties which it has to discharge in accordance with the established rules of conduct are considered as *Karma-yoga* which includes the acts of service which it has to render to God.

Devotion is the best course which the self could adopt to win God's grace. The yogic practices of meditation could be adopted. Those who find this course difficult for adoption could simply surrender themselves together with their belongings to God. This does not imply a reference to the path of self-surrender which gets casual reference in these works. It is devotion to God that receives much attention as the means even for knowing the *tattva* and for doing one's duties. The self is asked to surrender to Him its relatedness to the fruits of the deeds done by it.

A devotee seeks to have personal experience of God. He is not in the least interested in the problems about the existence of God and the methods of approach to prove His existence. The experience that he gets is of mystical nature. It has full certitude and is ineffable. It is God that chooses the person to whom He reveals Himself. Study, intelligence and other attainments which the self could have to its credit are of no avail.⁷⁷ Mystic experience, being of the nature of ravishing emotional intensity and of vivid intellectual illumination⁷⁸ must be taken, when applied to Vaiṣṇavism, to have

77. Kath Up. 2: 23.

78. *Types of Religious Philosophy*, p. 8.

been aroused by a clear awareness of God's possessing specific qualities and features which attract the selves to Him. These qualities create in the self astonishment which changes into admiration that becomes transformed into love. The self is won over by them to the side of God. Its self-abnegation is revealed in its denying everything for itself and its preparedness to lose individuality by surrendering unreservedly to God. 'Mysticism is the religion of feminine natures. Enthusiastic surrender, a delicate capacity for feeling, soft passiveness are its characteristics'.⁷⁹ This explains why the *nāyaka-nāyaki bhāva* or bridal mysticism represents an aspect of religious experience.

In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the word '*bhakti*' is interpreted in two ways. Primarily, it means doing service. Pāṇini⁸⁰ has two aphorisms, the first of which refers to doing service through devotion and the other implying mere attachment. Evidently, the latter is a reference to the attachment for the material objects. The word '*kāma*' which means love also admits of two-fold application. It connotes *viṣaya kāma* or hedonistic pleasure in psychology, *ātma kāma* or the desire for the self-realisation or *ātmā* spiritually and *Bhagavat kāma* or love of God in the religious sense or *śreyas*. The classical exposition of *kāma* in the *Upaniṣad* is given by saint Yājñavalkya to his wife Maitreyī.⁸¹ The bodily self or *dehātmā* has only perishable value, but *ātma* has intrinsic value; while lust is *viṣaya kāma*, love is divine or *Bhagavat kāma*, and the two are opposed as darkness and light, and there is no real middle term between the two. It is this *Bhagavat kāma*, that is emphasised in Sanskrit literature. Wherever *śṛṅgāra rasa* is portrayed, the joy of seeking the beauty of sex and revelling in love as in the *Śākuntala* is described and emphasised. It is more or less a way of preparation for the *Bhagavat kāma* or the divine love. The attainment of bliss and the removal of sorrow are thus ulti-

79. *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, p. 65.

80. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, 4. 3: 95, 96.

81. Br. Up. 4. 5: 6.

mate objective and aim. The author of the *Bhāgavata* refers to the *gopīs* as having become rid of their inauspiciousness by the severe pangs of separation from the most dear person, that is, Kṛṣṇa.⁸² The moment the *gopīs* got into the presence of Kṛṣṇa, they did not have then their physical frames which are made up of the qualities of matter,⁸³ that is, they were not then aware of their physical passion. They left off their children, husbands, parents-in-law and came to Kṛṣṇa. They admitted that their duty was to look after these persons, but they said that for all embodied beings, Kṛṣṇa is the most dear person, relation and self.⁸⁴ They declared that they were the servants of Him whose face was bewitching them,⁸⁵ the like of which they could never have occasion to visualize and which face was capable of conferring auspiciousness to the three worlds.⁸⁶

Devotion to God has much significance when it is directed towards the Lord in *arcā* and in descents (*avatāras*). It is not as if other forms are left out, but in these two forms, the act of devotion is easily practised. In the case of divine descents, those of Varāha, Vāmana, Narasiṃha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa have been arousing much more interest and attraction to the devotees. However, Kṛṣṇa alone seems to have been the object of bridal mysticism. Secondly, the sternness and majesty of Rāma did not arouse, in the minds of devotees, the longing which a woman feels for the company of her husband. The Lord's readiness to come to the side of His devotees who yearn for His vision and His preeminence demonstrated through incidents like measuring the entire universe, making Śiva holy by the latter's receiving the waters of Gaṅgā which sprung from His feet are frequently applauded.⁸⁷

82. *Bhāg.* P. 10. 29 : 10.

83. *ibid.*, 10. 29 : 11.

84. *ibid.*, 10. 29 : 32.

85. *ibid.*, 10. 29 : 39.

86. *ibid.*, 10. 29 : 40.

87. *ibid.*, 3. 28 : 21, 22.

The doctrine of the path of devotion and the practice of it by the devout persons have appreciably influenced the society and their principles have permeated into the core of the society resulting in the development of faith in God as an absolute feature of the life of the people. The thoughts and outlook have become saturated with the principles of Vaiṣṇavism. Any occurrence in the life of an individual or society came to be looked upon as designed by God for the welfare of the society. A true Vaiṣṇavite listens to the singing of God's names with rapturous attention and sings them without any delicacy. He laughs, sheds tears, sings and dances with joy.⁸⁸ Such people join together and participate in congregational prayers. They seek each other's company with avidity.⁸⁹ Devotion, experience of God and detachment from worldly affairs become the nourishment and food for them.⁹⁰ Whatever they do in the religious or secular aspect of their life, they offer it to God.⁹¹ As a general principle, this is done mentally or to the *arcā* form of Viṣṇu. Neither the practice of penances nor the study of the *Vedas*, neither the acquirement of the sound knowledge of the *tattvas* nor the understanding of doing one's duty brings God near the self. Devotion is the surer mode for communion with God as it is evidenced in the case of *gopikās*.⁹²

Making use of the sacred mud⁹³ and the red powder for the ornamental decoration on the fore-head and in the specified parts of the body have become part of the daily practices of the Vaiṣṇavites. This mark which is known as *ūrdhva-puṇḍra* on account of the vertical form which it takes is to resemble the feet of Viṣṇu,⁹⁴ thereby creating the chastening the feeling on the part of the wearer that he is decorated with the feet of God on his person. Others who wear such marks are

88. *ibid.*, 11. 2 : 39, 40.

89. *Sātt.* S. 21 : 677.

90. *Bhāg.* P. 11. 2 : 42.

91. *ibid.*, 11. 2 : 36.

92. *Pad. P.* 2. 2 : 18.

93. *Pārameś.* S. 3 : 11.

94. *Is.* S. 21 : 296 to 317 ; *Kriyādhikāra*, ch. 38 ; *Bhār.* S. 3 : 66.

to be held in greater veneration. Any work, religious or secular, does not bear any result, if this mark is not worn by its performer.⁹⁵ Branding the upper portions of the arms with the heated Śaṅkha and Cakra came to be treated as the indispensable act which every Vaiṣṇavite has to undergo to qualify himself for recognition of having become a Vaiṣṇavite.⁹⁶ No Vaiṣṇavite shall take anything, food or drink, without offering it to the deity.⁹⁷ A devotee, or as a matter of fact, any Vaiṣṇavite, shall undertake his personal worship of the deity in the form of sālag āma.⁹⁸ Constant utterance of the names of Viṣṇu is enjoined for practice⁹⁹ and the enumeration of the thousand names of Viṣṇu,¹⁰⁰ in a way, enables the person to set apart a particular part of the day, preferably the morning or evening, for this purpose and attend at other times to his usual routine work. *Aṣṭākṣara* is the holiest of *mantras* which a devout Vaiṣṇavite shall meditate upon everyday.¹⁰¹ The water, which becomes sacred, by washing the feet of the image of Viṣṇu, as also those of the devotees, and with which the sālagrāma¹⁰² is worshipped, is very holy and a devotee shall take this and purify himself. Sprinkling with this water over the head also leads to the removal of sins.¹⁰³ The flowers used for God's worship are sacred and are received by the devotees after the worship is over.¹⁰⁴

The region, which a devotee of Viṣṇu, aspires to go to, is described to be distinct from the material world. It is a place which provides the devotees with unalloyed bliss, where is present every factor which is conducive to the arousing of enlightenment and delectable enjoyment of God-

95. *Pārameś*, S. 3: 20, 21.

96. *Bhār*, S. 3: 60.

97. *Satt*, S. ch. 7.

98. *Pārameś*, S. 11: 359, 364, 365.

99. *Bhāg*, P. 11. 2: 39.

100. MBh. *Ānūsāsana*, 254.

101. *Nāradya Smṛti*, 1: 32.

102. cf. *Gar*, P. 45: 1 and 33.

103. *Smṛtimuktōphala*, *Āṅika kāṇḍa* part II, pp. 309-91.

104. *Bhag*, P. 11. 3: 54.

realization in the concourse of fellow-devotees who had reached that region through devotion to Viṣṇu. It is a place from which there is no return for the released self to this mortal mundane world.¹⁰⁵ Though there are possibilities for the selves to be near God (*samīpya*), to have a form similar to His (*sārūpya*), to have similarity to Him (*sādṛśya*), the devotee shall yearn to have communion (*sāyujya*).¹⁰⁶ It is called *Paramapada*,¹⁰⁷ a shining spiritual world, a noumenal realm, which can neither be perceived by the senses nor conceived by the spatialising intellect. Its supreme beauty cannot be adequately portrayed by the divine faculty of the poet, the painter or the musician, but can be intuited and described only by the blissfull *mukta*.

105. *Ahī*, S. 37: 26. cf. V.P. 1. 6: 40.

106. *Bhāg*, P. 3. 29: 13; cf. *Jitāntū* 36.

107. R.V, 1. 154: 5,6; *Bhāg*, P. 11. 20: 37; *Ahī*, S. 37; 26.