

the latter and to cleave to the former. Thus, if the Advaitabadees have their yoge, so also have the bhaktas. The yoge of the former helps them to detach the soul from the body, but that of the latter enables them not only to do this, but also to lead it to Krishna. When the process of union between the human soul and the Great Soul has begun, the man thus affected attains to the state of *samadhi*. In this state all the external senses, one by one, refuse to perform their functions, and a new world opens to the senses of the mind.

The eyes of the Lord still retained their functions but his ears had become closed, so that the din and buzz of the world no longer entered them. He was impatient to go to Brindaban ; unfortunately he had not wings for the purpose. He had only a pair of stout legs, and these he utilized to the best of his ability. When the Lord ran, there was not a man in the world, capable of keeping up with him. So the crowd, including the Bharati and the bhaktas, had to fall back.

Of the latter, only four succeeded in keeping him in sight, which they did with great difficulty ; these were Nitai, Chandra Shekhar, Mukunda and Govinda. The Lord entered the jungles beyond the town, and the four devotees followed him. They implored the Lord to go a little slower to enable them to follow him, but their words did not enter his ears. Night came and still they followed the Lord ; but for all their mighty efforts they could retain only a glimpse

of the distant figure of the Lord flying before them. Nitai shouted after the Lord in a voice broken with emotion, saying : "Brother, my dear brother ! Thou hast honoured me by calling me thy elder brother ; stop for a few moments, and take us along with thee." But he literally cried in wilderness. And then Nitai muttered, "fool that I am to call him brother ! He is no longer my brother. He is now Master and Teacher. He is now a Sannyasee, having cut himself off from all tender ties. He is certainly not to be detained now by endearing terms. Let me address him properly." So he shouted again : "Lord, Saviour, Master, the Friend of the sinner, Oh thou Support of the fallen, Oh thou All-mercy to the afflicted, it is sinful Nitai who calls thee ! Wait a moment ; else we cannot follow thee." But the words did not enter the ears of the Lord.

They had all fasted the previous day and the day before that, the Lord included, and now they passed a whole night in following the Lord through the jungles. Morning appeared. The Lord was instinctively flying due west towards Brindaban. He knew not the way, neither did he inquire. He would have left the bhaktas behind if he had not met with frequent obstructions. In the beginning the crowd obstructed him, then the jungles, and then rivulets, canals and marshes. All these obstacles enabled the bhaktas to keep him in sight. But they were nevertheless far in the rear, and there was no chance of a talk with their Master. The whole of that day the Lord continued

still to run as fast as he was able. His difficulty was his body, which he had to carry with him. He was flying as if for life, and the bhaktas, who had not his holy feeling to sustain them, could not keep up with him.

In those days a four or five days' fast was not a rare affair. Many men and women could accomplish it. Even now the Jains and the Hindus have the power, though perhaps not to the same extent as they had formerly. The Lord had fasted absolutely for three days, but he had been all the while living in the love of God, which nourished every fibre of his body ; consequently he did not show any signs of exhaustion. On the other hand the bhaktas, who had shared his fast, not being buoyed up with a love comparable to his, hour by hour grew more and more exhausted. Evening approached and,—at length,—the Lord disappeared !

The bhaktas, in a state of despair and anguish, entered the village where the Lord seemed to have vanished. It was then night. They inquired of every one whether they had seen "a young Sannyasee of indescribable beauty running that way." No one could give any information. They felt themselves paralyzed and they could go no further. Hitherto the sight of the Lord had kept up their spirits, but now his disappearance made them lose heart and they wept in bitter anguish of soul. "Oh Lord," they cried, "do not forsake us. Thou art life, and we cannot live without thee. Didst thou not tell us that

thou wouldst never forsake thy devotees?" Though urged by the villagers to partake of their hospitality they refused. They would not take a drop of water, till they had seen their Master.

They passed the night in prayer. Night had almost ended when they heard a plaintive sound in the distance, as if some woman was weeping in distress. What is that?—they ask of one another. Is not that the voice of our Master? Who else could wail like that? Certainly no one in the world. There is no one besides him in the world who can infuse such pathos into his voice. They flew towards the spot. The sound carried them away from the village into the fields, and finally to a banyan tree. It was bitterly cold and the morning twilight disclosed the figure of the Lord sitting beneath the tree !

He had, on the previous day, dropt his staff and cup, but the bhaktas had picked them up. His body was naked, and exposed to the cold. But the cold had no visible effect upon him. He was sitting there with a piece of rag wrapped round his loins, his head resting on the palm of his left hand, and his back leaning against the trunk of the tree. And he was weeping in a voice which could be heard from a long distance. It has been repeatedly stated by his bhaktas that the pathos of his weeping would melt the hardest rock. Such a plaintive voice had never been heard in this world before ; it always proved irresistible. Indeed, man or beast, matter or spirit,

naught could withstand it. And it was in this pathetic voice that he was weeping.

And, dear reader, do you know, why? Not for wife or mother or society or for personal comforts. He was weeping as a devoted and bereaved wife who had just lost her husband would, in a paroxysm of grief, and in words like these: "My Krishna! don't forsake me. I cannot longer live without Thee. If I have offended Thee, yet considering that Thou art merciful and that I am Thy child, forgive me."*

Dear reader, picture to yourself the scene. This young man weeping for Krishna, forgetful of the fact that he had renounced everything that man holds dear on this earth; forgetful of the fact that for three days and nights he had not tasted a grain of rice or a drop of water; and forgetful of the fact that he was alone, almost nude, without food and drink for four days and nights, under the shelter of a tree, passing his night without protection in the bitter cold of January—picture all this to your mind, and you will then understand why this Being extorted divine honours from an intelligent race which value salvation above all.

It seems to me that this is a feat of devotion to God, performed by the Lord, which has not only no parallel, but which could never have been even conceived by man. One has to realize the scene, described above, to feel why I say that, it is a feat of devotion to God which has no parallel. Of course,

* Chaitanya Bhagabat.

the allegation is on record that men have given their lives for the sake of God. Vaishnavas, however, believe that martyrdom is not possible, and that the man who really gives his life for God is somehow or other protected by Him. They say that the so-called martyrs of the world were moved more by vanity and pride than by piety. Of course, Jesus was crucified; but he had to be bled to save mankind. Assuming, however, that there were men who actually gave up their lives purely from piety, yet, we think, it is more easy by far to sacrifice life for God than to accomplish the one performed by Lord Gauranga on this occasion. Only realize all the circumstances and then you will possibly agree with me, when I say that it is a feat which has no parallel.

The tree under which the Lord sat exists to this day. It is a sacred spot, and an Image of Gauranga has been set up there. The Image is in the charge of a Vaishnava, and the place is a shrine where pilgrims flock to purify themselves.

The bhaktas were overjoyed to find the Lord, but the scene before them almost broke their hearts. Said Nitai, addressing the Master, "Do you want to save mankind? The picture that you present will not save them but kill them." But the words did not enter the ears of the Lord. But being thus disturbed, he instinctively rose to proceed on his way. A difficulty confronted him. Step by step he was losing the service of his eyes, as he had long before lost that of his ears, and at last he ceased to see altogether!

I have spoken already of *samadhi* and *yoge*. The soul of the Lord had turned in upon itself, and consequently all his external senses were gradually losing their powers. He first lost the use of his ears, and now that of his eyes. The bhaktas saw that the pupils of the Lord's eyes had almost disappeared behind the upper lids, only leaving a portion of the white visible ; and so far as they still remained visible, they were lustreless and lifeless. The bhaktas were led to examine the eyes of the Lord because they found that he was feeling his way and subjected to frequent falls. The bhaktas were now enabled to follow him closely. The Chaitanya Chandroday describes the then condition of the Lord in these words : "He was just then in the state of complete *samadhi*. The external world was lost to him, though his soul was perfectly alive with the idea that he was going to Brindaban to worship Krishna. His pupils had disappeared behind the upper lids, and he had to feel his way. The result was that he had frequent falls." The sight lacerated the hearts of the bhaktas, and Nitai stood behind the Lord to prevent his falling ; but his efforts nevertheless were not always successful. By these falls his gold-hued body was besmeared with dust, but that was a small matter. It seemed to the bhaktas that the falls would hurt him, and they groaned at every such mishap which they failed to prevent. "Sometimes," said the Chandroday, "the Lord in this manner entered hollows filled with water," and then he was led back by his bhaktas.

This was a condition in which they had never seen the Lord before. In death like swoons he gave no indication of life ; indeed, he then even ceased to breathe. But now, though his ears and eyes and perhaps other senses had become paralysed, he was yet walking on his legs, and thinking in his mind !

The followers had one great difficulty which the reader must understand. Their Master was absolutely wilful, and they did not know what he would do if he regained his consciousness. The probability was that, if on regaining his consciousness he saw that the bhaktas were following him, he would take dire offence and bid them go home. And, moreover, he would then perhaps literally fly to Brindaban, and the bhaktas, would not be able to follow him. So his loss of consciousness was an advantage to them, and they feared to arouse him by too much attention. They had then no definite plan as to what they would do next. But they were with the Lord which was a pleasure ; and they had hopes that something favourable would turn up.

The bhaktas, of course, were now closely following the Lord. They heard the Lord speaking, reciting to himself, a sloka (couplet) from the Sreemat Bhagabat. A Brahmin, after leading a worldly life, resolved to spend his last days in Brindaban in the worship of Krishna. And in the couplet, which the Lord was reciting, the Brahmin is praised for his laudable resolve. The Lord repeated the sloka (which need not insert here), and then commented upon it

in these words: "Praised be the Brahmin; his resolve was wise. Everyone should follow it." The Lord stopped for a while, and then again repeated the sloka, and again commented upon it.

Let us explain the situation. The external world had disappeared to the Lord, and his soul was engrossed with the story of the Brahmin who had left society to pass his closing days at Brindaban, in the worship of Krishna. The incident possessed his soul for the moment, and he was thinking of the Brahmin, praising his resolve, and repeating the sloka, now and then. Yet such was the deep *samadhi* that had overtaken him, that the bhaktas doubted whether he would again come to his senses at all. When they saw that the Lord was proceeding like a blind man and sustaining injuries and receiving hurts through his frequent falls, they sought to rouse him, but without success. How glad they would have been if they had only been able to induce the Lord to drink a drop of water! Of course, they too were fasting, but they forgot their own sorrows in the supposed sufferings of the Lord.

There was one lucky circumstance. Though the Lord had run with all his might, he had not been able to proceed very far away from home. For while he started by advancing towards the west, such were the difficulties of the country that, even when he could see, he could not always maintain the desired direction, but sometimes went some distance to the left or the right, or even returned for a short distance

in the direction from which he had originally set forth. Whilst his sight remained intact, however, he always ultimately returned to the right tract. But being now blind he was utterly helpless, and had no notion in what direction he was proceeding. So that while his goal was towards the west, he was constantly changing his direction and in this manner failed to make any progress whatever. On the contrary, it was observed that he was rather coming nearer home than otherwise.

The Chaitanya Mangal here suggests an idea. It says that the Lord, irresistible as he was, found himself obstructed in his progress by—Vishnupriya. The author, Lochan Das, says, that while the Lord was roaming in the district of Burdwan on his way to Brindaban, Vishnupriya was praying to him. The bitter anguish of her soul, her tears, her prayers, her misery, all took material shape and fastened the Lord to the spot, so that he could not proceed on his way. For, says Lochan, is not love stronger than all besides, —love by which God Almighty could be made a serving friend? Is not the love of Vishnupriya as pure as a gem? The Lord, therefore, could not proceed, when restrained by the irresistible attraction of his wife.

Here I am suddenly remained of Shachee, Vishnupriya and the bhaktas, whom the Lord had left desolated in Nadia. We had forgotten them in following the Lord. But what is the good of describing how they succeeded in living in the absence of

any news of the Lord? Suffice it to mention here that they remained utterly ignorant of what had happened to the Lord. They all fasted, even Vishnupriya, and refused even to touch a drop of water. Vishnupriya lay on the bare ground under the couch in which she had passed her happiest nights and the last happy night in her life. Nay, she retained on her person evidences of the manner in which the Lord had dressed her on that memorable night. She and her mother were sighing and sobbing for the Lord, while the Lord was sighing and sobbing for Krishna. Their eyes were directed towards Katwa, where the Lord was supposed to have gone, while those of the Lord were directed towards Brindaban. They had no thought of any one besides him, whilst the Lord had no thought of them, but only of Krishna! He was running with all his might towards Brindaban, while they were attracting him with all their might back towards themselves. Hence the Lord's inability to make much progress. He had, however, by this time got to within ten or twelve miles of Nadia.

While the Lord was going about, another day and night passed, the Lord never accquiring consciousness and still engrossed with the tale of the Brahmin who had resolved to forsake society for Brindaban in order to worship Krishna. On the fifth day from the day the Lord had left home, he was passing through an open space where a good many cows were grazing, with a few boys tending them. They saw the Lord, and whether his presence inspired

them with the idea, or, as one author says, Nitai instructed them, they all raised a shout of Haribole. Uttered thus in the open plain, this exclamation, always irresistibly sweet to the Lord, broke down the barrier that had obstructed his hearing; and the Lord, startled by the strange sound, suddenly stopped and looked anxiously about him. He stopped for the first time deliberately, to learn from whence it had come. Seeing this, the boys, either encouraged by Nitai or of their own accord, repeated the Haribole one after the other.

The Lord, for the first time, after his complete *samadhi*, opened his eyes. They were directed towards the spot from which the sweet sounds came. The bhaktas were standing behind, but he had no knowledge of their presence. Indeed, they had then no intention of disclosing themselves to the Lord lest he, offended by their presence, should bid them return, while he himself ran on towards Brindaban. So they covered their heads with their clothes to conceal their faces. But these precautions were absolutely unnecessary, for, the Lord was as yet not in a condition to be able to recognize them.

He saw that a few cow-boys were uttering the Haribole, and not only uttering it, but in their childish joy, dancing! The sight was too much for him; and he proceeded towards them. As he proceeded, he beckoned them to come near. He and they met. He touched the forehead of the foremost, who was the leader, and said: "Where did you learn the sweet

name of Hari, pray? Who taught you? Do you belong to Brindaban?" These cow-boys could not understand him. He then suggested an answer to his question. He said to himself: "These cow-boys* must belong to Brindaban or its outskirts. Where is the wonder in cow-boys in or near Brindaban being familiar with the sweet name of Hari?" The idea then entered the mind of the Lord that he was nearing Brindaban, though the sacred place was about sixty days' journey from Nadia, and he was about, say, ten or twelve miles from that city!

He gently stroked the head of the first boy, and accosted them all in these words: "You are all nice boys, and no doubt beloved of Krishna. You know not my obligation to you. My ears were fasting, for, I had not heard the sweet name of the Lord (Hari) for many days, and you know not what good you have done me by repeating it. My good boys, to tell you the truth, I was dying; but the sweet name has brought me back to life. Do oblige me by repeating it once more."

Now ordinary men feel the pangs of death when they are obliged to fast, or when they are scorched to death under a blazing sun, or benumbed by the bitter cold of a wintry night. They feel that they are dying, if they do not get a drop of water to slake their burning thirst, or a morsel of food to appease their hunger. And if they do not get, say, a wink

* See cow-boys, Krishna-leela, Vol. I, page XXII.

of sleep for a night, do they not also feel that they are dying?

People also feel something like the pangs of death when they are overtaken by great misery. A man, suddenly deprived of all his property, finds himself a beggar in the street; a man who has suddenly lost all the dear ones that he possessed in this world, or a man who finds himself suddenly exiled not only from his home but from his country to live in a wilderness, may feel that he is dying. But Lord Gauranga was not a being to die of such trifling matters.

His exile, voluntary as it was, from his native place or home, was not killing him. The sudden loss of all his property and all his dear ones had not hurt him in the least. Five successive days and nights without food, without a drop of water or a wink of sleep; his ceaseless wandering had not only not hurt him but had not even disturbed his equanimity. We, ordinary men, might have thought, like the Lord, of the Brahmin who had taken the wise resolution, and have felt very much attracted by his example; but a sudden fall or knock would have disturbed our thoughts and led us to forget him and think only of our own suffering. But all the sufferings of the Lord, described above, had so little effect upon him that they had not been able to drive even the idea of the Brahmin from his mind. Indeed, if Shachee and Vishnupriya, his bhaktas and the world, were weeping for him, he himself had no sorrow except one, *viz.*, that he had

not heard the name of Hari for days—that was his expression! All his sufferings, the least of which would have maddened with grief the strongest of men, had no effect upon him whatever. Yet he was dying and dying fast, and why? Because he had not,—for days—heard the name of Hari!

Hitherto nothing had been able to distress him, even to rouse him from his reverie. But the sound of Haribole brought him back to consciousness, and he approached those who had uttered it with deep gratitude and a heart filled with joy. And he said—“I was dying, but you have brought me back to life.”

And thus Lord Gauranga is considered not a man like ourselves, even by those who do not admit his divinity. The world it seems to me, cannot offer a parallel to this incident of the Lord, whom nothing else had been able to rouse from his abstraction—not even the greatest of sufferings,—running to the cow-boys to express his gratitude, on hearing them pronounce the name of Hari.*

The boys repeated the Haribole, for, cow-boys though they were, they too were powerfully moved

* Here is another incident which we would request our readers to realize in their minds. It will give one some faint idea of the feeling of prem for the Lord God which exercised the minds of Sree Gauranga. Who cannot help feeling violently affected at the spectacle of a Being, in spite of all his sufferings, gently stroking the head of a cow-boy in gratitude as he had uttered the name of Hari which he had not heard for so many days! While other Messiahs taught love of God by precept Lord Gauranga did it by practising.

by all that they saw. The Lord was not yet satisfied, and he requested them to repeat the name once more. And they did so.

The Lord had then regained consciousness to some extent. Indeed, the state of the Lord, according to the bhaktas, was divided into three stages, *viz.*, the conscious, the half-conscious, and the unconscious. The Lord now returned to what is called his half-conscious state. When the cow-boys had finished, the Lord blessed them, and then asked them the way to Brindaban.

Here was an opportunity for Nitai. He and the others were standing behind—it was morning, or rather the forenoon,—quite sure that the Lord would take no notice of them. When the Lord asked the boys to point out to him the road to Brindaban, Nitai, from behind the Lord, made a sign to them, to point out the Santipur road. The cow-boys understood the sign, and they showed the path leading to the town of Santipur. Thus directed by the boys, the Lord took that road and followed it with open eyes and bent head.

Nitai here took counsel with Chandra Shekhar. He proposed that Chandra Shekhar should at once proceed to Santipur, and ask Advaita to wait with a boat on this side of the river. “Some how or other, I shall,” continued Nitai, “lead the Lord to that place. If you do not find Advaita at Santipur, go on at once to Nadia and ask him to carry out the request.” Santipur was on the eastern bank of the

Bhagirathee, and the Lord was on the other or western bank.

The Lord took the Santipur road and the remaining bhaktas followed Nitai closely, Chandra Shekhar leaving them for Santipur by a side-path. It was noticeable that the Lord had not forgotten the Brahmin ; for, left to himself, he again repeated the sloka to comment on it. Nitai had studied the Lord as a mother does her child or a wife her husband. He understood the different moods of the Lord and the states through which he passed. He felt that the Lord was gradually, though slowly, recovering his consciousness. So, as he followed the Lord, he began to manifest his presence to him by various means, such as coughing, etc., in order to draw his attention to himself. But the Lord as yet took no notice of the particular person who was behind him. He only perceived that a man was following him, and he also felt, perhaps, that this man was desirous of being spoken to by him. So without turning his head, he asked a question. "Can you tell me," he said, "how far is Brindaban from here?"

Nitai perceived that the Lord had come to feel his presence, and had asked a question expecting to receive an answer. The question brought to Nitai's mind an idea with the speed of lightning. He perceived from the question of the Lord that the notion had taken possession of his mind that he had come very near Brindaban. And so to keep up the delusion, he answered from behind, as a stranger would

do, "Brindaban is not very far from here ; we have come very near it."

The Lord was satisfied with the answer, but he did not think it worth his while to look behind to see who had spoken to him. The fact is, he was "swimming in an ocean of joy" at the idea of following in the wake of the Brahmin, that is to say, of passing his days in Brindaban, in the worship of Krishna. So he had no place for curiosity in his mind. The Lord, without taking any notice of the man who had replied to his question, proceeded on his way.

Nitai now thought that the Lord had probably acquired so much consciousness as to be able to recognise him. Thinking thus, he suddenly confronted the Lord and saluted him !

The Lord thus confronted, raised his head, for, he had been walking with his head down, and fixed his lovely and lustrous eyes upon the face of Nitai.

Their eyes met. Nitai would have burst into tears, but with great effort he conquered his feelings. This was the first time that he and the Lord had met since the renunciation. His heart had been lacerated by divers feelings, and these all now appeared with renewed vigour to lacerate it once more. But he had to carry out an idea and was compelled, therefore, to check the outburst. The Lord examined the face of Nitai in doubt and curiosity. He at last stammered out—"It seems—it seems, I—I have seen you somewhere, your face seems familiar to me."

Nitai with a forced smile of recognition, interrupted the Lord, saying—Do you not recognise your slave, the sinful and fallen Nitai?

The Lord.—“Can it be possible that you are Sreepad? But how can that be? I left you in Bengal, now I am nearing Brindaban. How came you to be here?

Nitai.—Knowing that you were going to Brindaban, I followed you, my lord.

The Lord.—Can that be possible? You have done well. Would it not be supreme happiness for us to worship Sree Krishna together in Brindaban?

And the idea gave the Lord inexpressible joy. “But,” continued the Lord, “you know the way, for you have been there already; please lead me thither.”

And thus Nitai obtained what he wanted. He now led the Lord towards Santipur. His idea was to lead the Lord to the river where he expected Advaita to be waiting for them. He believed that he and Advaita would be able to lead the Lord back to Santipur, so that at least he might break his fast. And Nitai led the way and the Lord followed.

Said the Lord after a time: Will it not be supreme happiness for both of us to spend our days in the jungles of Brindaban, worshipping Krishna?

Nitai.—Certainly.

The Lord.—And we shall tread on the identical spot sanctified by the touch of the lotus feet of Radha and Krishna. And when hungry we shall live upon

Madhukaree.* And with a piece of rag tied round our loins, the garb of a beggar, we shall ask of the denizens of Brindaban,—men, women, animals, trees, shrubs and creepers,—to tell us where Radha-Krishna once sported: Will not that be supreme happiness?

Nitai nodded assent. He did not like all this talk. He thought that the transcendental fancies of the Lord would perhaps lead him to enter into his ecstatic state again, when he would be as unmanageable as he was before. The Lord, not much encouraged by Nitai in his talk about Brindaban, stopped. But his heart was full of the subject, and though he promised to himself to remain quiet, he could not. So again he broke out—“Dear Sreepad! Do you think that Sree Krishna will show Himself to me?”

As I said before, Nitai apprehended danger from such talk, and he wanted to stop it. So he replied, this time rather angrily. He said—“My Lord! You live upon Krishna-prem and you have no physical wants. But we, poor mortals, have to satisfy our hunger and thirst. I am both hungry and thirsty. Let me first satisfy my physical wants and then we shall have a talk about Krishna.” Nitai’s idea was that by reminding the Lord of his own physical wants, he

* From *Madhukar*, a bee. A man who lives upon *Madhukaree* has the privilege of gathering food like a bee, but from only five householders. He must be satisfied with what is voluntarily given to him by these five householders.

might possibly rouse the like feelings in the Lord. And if the Lord could be made to feel a little for his physical wants, the probability was that his spiritual wants would cease to exercise the same influence over him that they were doing just then. Seeing Nitai a little out of humour, the Lord stopped. He however, broke out again with the remark, though afraid lest he should again offend his companion. He asked: "How far is Brindaban from here?"

Nitai.—"We are nearing it." And the conversation again stopped, Nitai leading the way and the Lord following. Just then the broad bosom of the Bhagirathee became faintly visible. At every step, Nitai was gaining heart. He felt almost sure of finding Advaita there, and was confident that he and Advaita together would be able to control the movements of the Lord.

The Lord again interrupted the silence by a question. For, was he not very impatient to get to Brindaban, and had he not heard that he was nearing the sacred place? He asked: "You said, we are nearing Brindaban, but you did not give me an accurate idea as to how far it is from here."

Nitai was almost sure of success. So he turned towards the Lord and asked him to look before him and see the bosom of a river.

"Do you see it?" asked Nitai.

The Lord with a little effort saw it looming in the distance; and asked Nitai what the river was called.

Nitai answered that it was Jamuna. Of course, our readers know that the Jamuna flows past Brindaban.

The Lord heard the news with incredulity and wonder mixed with pleasure. "That is the Jamuna! Are you joking? Is that the Jamuna?"

"Yes, that is the Jamuna as sure as I am Nitai," replied Nitai with great emphasis!

The Lord only took a moment to consider. And then he ran towards the river, exclaiming, "Thou Jamuna! Thou Bhakti-giving Jamuna! bless me." The five days' successive fast, toil and want of sleep had told upon his system; and so he had been walking slowly. But on hearing that the Jamuna was before him, he regained all his strength and ran with the speed of lightning. Nitai tried his best to follow him, but could not keep up with the Lord, who ran and ran till he reached the Bhagirathee into which he threw himself headlong. After the plunge he returned to the bank and stood there with his eyes shut and both hands over his head, shedding tears of joy. That Advaita was waiting for him on that bathing-place with a boat, he did not notice. Nor could Advaita at first recognise that it was the Lord who had taken the plunge. This was because the Lord had shaved his head and put the cloth of the anchorite round his loins.

But while he was considering who the Sannyasee might be who was there, Nitai appeared on the scene. And then Advaita knew that it was the Lord who was standing before him. He then approached the

Lord slowly, but his legs refused to move and his heart failed. He burst out into loud lamentations!

And is this our Lord, thought he, that beautiful youth who soothed the eyes of men and women by his charms? And is this the being who only the other day was more tenderly nursed than a prince? The sudden appearance of the Lord in the garb of a poor anchorite affected him so powerfully that he could not contain himself, and was obliged to give way to his feelings in loud bewailings.

The Lord was in the happiest mood, tears of joy were trickling down his cheeks, for he had at last reached, as he thought, Brindaban. The cry of distress from Advaita, therefore, jarred on his ears, and he opened his eyes to see what the matter was.

He opened his eyes and saw Advaita before him, and Nitai standing by the latter. "Is it you Acharjya?" asked the Lord of Advaita, and the latter suppressed his tears as he answered, "yes." The reply gave the Lord infinite pleasure. So both his principal companions were there, and he exclaimed in gladness: "It is exceedingly fortunate. Now we three shall pass our days in Brindaban in worshipping Krishna."

Now this language, Advaita did not understand; he had no notion of the trick that Nitai had played upon the Lord. So while he was thinking of the true import of the language of the Lord, he was again startled by a question from him. "But how did you come here? How did you come to Brindaban before

me?" The question still mystified Advaita. He hesitated in giving his reply and looked to Nitai for explanation. This attitude on the part of Advaita led the Lord to think and look around him, and he regained his full consciousness at once!

In short, the whole trick played upon him was suddenly disclosed to the Lord. He saw that the river before him was the Bhagirathee and not the Jamuna, and the town on the other bank was Santipur.

The knowledge gave a great shock to the Lord. He had left everything behind to proceed to Brindaban, where he expected to find his Krishna. After much toil, he thought he had obtained the highest desire of his life. At the last moment he came to know that he had been deceived and brought back.

Deeply mortified as he was, yet he expressed himself in gentle language. Neither anger nor rude words had any place in his heart.

He said, addressing both Nitai and Advaita: "This is not the Jamuna, but the Bhagirathee, and the town that I see on the other bank is Santipur. So, Sreepad, my dear brother, you have played a trick upon me! Is it a proper act? And is this the way you treat a younger brother? Alas! Alas! I became a Sannyasee to obtain my Krishna, but you, brother, have stood in my way. Is it acting like a brother to do as you have done?"

Nitai hung down his head in shame, and did not venture a reply.

But Advaita took his side. He now clearly understood the situation, namely, that Nitai had led the Lord towards Santipur by a stratagem. Advaita said: "There was no trick, my Lord. No human being can play any trick upon you. It is said in our sacred books that the Jamuna passes by the western bank of the Bhagirathee, so if the Shastras are to be believed you have bathed in the Jamuna."

"But I was led to believe also that this was Brindaban," said the Lord somewhat angrily. "That was at least deception."

Advaita replied: "And is it not Brindaban? Wherever you are, is Brindaban. Who can deny that?" And he uttered two texts from the sacred book, showing that the Jamuna flows by the western bank of the river Bhagirathee and that wherever Sree Krishna happens to be present, it is Brindaban. "But, my Lord," continued Advaita, "everything is ordained by you; no man can do anything without your sanction. You have come back to save our lives. All your people are dying and you yourself have been fasting these five days." This he had heard from Chandra Shekhar. Saying this, Advaita caught hold of the right hand of the Lord to lead him to the boat.

The Lord offered resistance and refused to go. He said, "you all have made me a tool; I cannot do anything that I wish. See the fun! I was going to Brindaban and now I am at Santipur." And the Lord again looked angrily at Nitai.

Nitai now mustered courage. He replied to the complaint of the Lord: "My Lord," said he, "these five days we have not slept a wink, tasted a morsel of food or touched a drop of water. You who can live only upon Krishna-prem can do without any of these, but we are men of flesh and blood. So let us go and have a good dinner at Advaita's. But that is not it. They are all dying, only let them have a look at you. Yes, I have deceived you and I am prepared to receive cheerfully my due share of punishment for this from Krishna." Advaita repeated his invitation and then the Lord yielded, and was safely conducted to the boat.

When the boat had left the bank, Nitai felt relieved of the serious responsibilities with which he had felt himself weighted. He then found an opportunity of giving play to his natural love of humour. He looked at Advaita and said: "These five days we all have been fasting and weeping. Of course, the Lord does not care, but we do. You are inviting me to your house. But you must be prepared to satisfy my appetite which, if I may trust my feelings, will be a serious matter with you; for I will need a large quantity of rice."

Advaita was not in a gay humour. He looked gratefully at Nitai and said, "the service that you have done us is more valuable than anything I can offer you." Says Nitai: "Here we are on the sacred bosom of the river Ganga. Swear that you will give me as much as I want. I remember that to dine at

your house is to fast." Well, while engaged in this agreeable conversation, they reached Santipur. The Lord and Nitai were immediately treated with *prasada*, as also the others who followed them. Both the Lord and Nitai were led by Advaita to the sleeping-room, and Advaita wanted to shampoo the feet of the former. Now, this was menial service, which disciples are permitted to perform for their Guru and every householder for a Sannyasee. The Lord had now become a Sannyasee, and, therefore, an object of veneration to Advaita who was merely a householder. But when Advaita expressed a desire to shampoo his feet, the Lord expressed his disapproval, and replied a little angrily: "I have become a dancing doll in your hands. Pray excuse me from this service, and remember that I do not wish to be treated as if I were an imbecile." The fact was, the trick that Nitai had played upon him was yet rankling in his mind.

Evening approached and then the Arati, or worship by light, was performed. During the ceremony the followers of Advaita flocked to his house with *kholes* and cymbals. Advaita wanted to show the Lord how he had taught Kirtan to his followers. The Lord and Nitai sat in his verandah to watch, while Advaita led the kirtan. He began with a famous song of the illustrious Bidyapati, in which Radha is made to address her maid thus:—

"My beloved Krishna is come at last ;
And my joy knows no bounds.

I will never more allow my beloved to leave me.
Now is the time for the moon to rise,
Now is the time for the birds to sing, etc."

Of course, the allusion is to the lost Lord, who had been found. The Lord heard the song, but it did not touch his heart. At this moment Mukunda sang:—

"Friend! the pangs of separation from Krishna are acting like a poison which has permeated my system and is killing me. Where shall I go to obtain my Krishna? Who will furnish me with wings to reach Krishna? etc. etc. etc."

This song met with a response in the heart of the Lord, who fell down in a swoon, whereupon they all flocked round him to restore him to consciousness. This was accomplished after a while, and the Lord, drunk with joy, then got up to dance. Thereupon Nitai also rose for the purpose of supporting the Lord, if he should again threaten to fall down in a swoon. Advaita, however, did not like this. The Lord had taken his meal after five days of fasting, and Advaita's wish was that he (the Lord) should retire to rest. So he stopped the kirtan, and the Lord was persuaded to retire. And he and Nitai lay down to sleep in the same room.

Said Nitai:—Forgive me, but I have a request to make.

The Lord.—What is it?

Nitai.—They are all dying by inches at Nadia.

I would like to bring your mother and the bhaktas here for an interview with you.

The Lord took to thinking ; he said, "yes, I see, my sudden departure gave them pain. Bring them that I may take leave of them, and go with their permission. Do you know why I have not been able to go on to Brindaban? It is because I gave them all pain by leaving them without notice."

Nitai was overjoyed at the permission given. He again asked, "whom am I to bring?"

The Lord.—Whoever wished to come?

Nitai.—Is that settled?

The Lord.—Of course.

Nitai.—Whoever wished to come,—is it so?

Nitai was thinking of Vishnupriya. The Lord perceived this, and then corrected himself saying, "bring all those who wish to come, except one."

Nitai understood that the *one* was no other than Vishnupriya.

Nitai was deeply mortified, but he did not venture a remonstrance.

He left Santipur for Nadia early next morning.

CHAPTER X.

NITAI TO NADIA.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR left the Lord with Nitai, delivered the message to Advaita, and proceeded to Nadia. He had not the courage or the heart to call upon Shachee or Vishnupriya. The citizens had come to know by rumour that the Great Avatar had renounced society ; but as yet no authenticated information had reached them. As for Shachee and Vishnupriya, they were in the same state as they were, when the Lord left them. They, of course, very much feared that the Lord had left them for good, though hope deceived them with the promise that he would yet come back. Elderly ladies kept guard over Shachee and tended her. But in one thing she was firm : she would not break her fast, nor even touch a drop of water till she should hear from her son.

In the same manner younger ladies gave their company to Vishnupriya. She too refrained from food and drink ; and lay all night on the bare ground beside the couch where she had passed the happiest and what was destined to be the last happy night in her life with her beloved husband. She tossed about on her hard bed, moaning and muttering : "Heaven has so willed it." Is it, however, necessary to describe the sufferings of the two excellent ladies? I

omit this portion, though the bhaktas have left in record ample materials for a description.

It was yet early when Nitai reached the house of the Lord. He knocked at the door and called out to Shachee. He said: "Mother, I am come." Shachee recognized the voice, and immediately got up to inquire whether he had brought her son as he had promised.

"Yes, mother, but he is not here," said Nitai. Shachee came to the veranda, and Vishnupriya stood behind the folds of the door to hear particulars. Nitai with a great effort discharged his mission. He said: "It is too true the Lord has become a Sannyasee, but he is waiting at Advaita's hermitage in Santipur to see yourself and the bhaktas." Shachee certainly heard the first part of the message, but it is doubtful whether she heard the second; for, uttering the name of her son, she fell down in a swoon. Vishnupriya would have run to the help of her mother, but Nitai anticipated her with others who had assembled, and consequently she refrained from the attempt. She sat down dazed, stupefied, forlorn, and desolate.

Word flew from mouth to mouth that precise news about the Lord had reached the town, that he had become a Sannyasee and left society for ever. The citizens then rushed to the house of Shach in deep sympathy, believers and non-believers, friends and enemies, and those who were indifferent but inquisitive.

Nadia was surprised at the news. The astounding sacrifice of the Lord took away their breath, removed their hostility to him, and robbed them of a portion of their own worldliness. Was ever such sacrifice seen? Was he not more than a prince? And what prince would thus sacrifice his comforts and pleasures without hope of worldly recompense? Was he not more beautiful than Kandarpa (the God of love), more learned than Saraswati (the goddess of wisdom)? Nevertheless he has voluntarily relinquished everything; and for what? A mendicant's cup and rags, and the society of wild beasts! He has left behind him bed as soft as swan's down and as white as the froth of milk, to lie on bare ground!

And therefore it came to pass that former enemies of his wept at the thought of his tremendous sacrifice. Foes and friends alike repaired to the home of Shachee to obtain accurate information regarding the Lord and to console his bereaved family with the result that, in a short time, the house of the Lord and the quarter in which it was situated were thronged with all classes of people.

Shachee on awaking from her swoon, was startled to find that almost the whole population of Nadia had come to sympathise with her. "Glory to the mother of Nimai Pundit," said even the former opponents of the Lord. And added: "A Sannyasee in a family saves all his relations even to the fourteenth generation, and Nimai Pundit is a Sannyasee and something more; for, is he not the greatest bhakta

that the world has ever seen?" Thus the hearts of those who had derided him, were moved. So the Lord, by entering the order of Keshava Bharati, compelled his bitterest revilers to acknowledge that he had attained to a sublimity of bhakti or devotion to Krishna of which previously no one had been able to form any conception.

"Glory to the mother of the Lord, the fair Krishna, and the friend of the aggrieved and fallen," cried the bhaktas. "Glory to his wife, who will be blessed through the salvation of millions of her fellow-beings," said others.

In the midst of this tumult, Nitai was urging upon Shachee the necessity of her journeying with all haste to Santipur. "But mother," said Nitai, "you must first break your fast ; you and the lady within." Shachee would fain have refused ; but thinking that unless she broke her fast, her daughter would not do so, she agreed. Some rice was cooked hastily, which Shachee persuaded her daughter to share with her. Thus they partook of food, though only a few mouthfuls, after a complete fast of five successive days.

A litter arrived to carry Shachee. It was placed in the courtyard in the midst of a vast crowd of people who were giving vent to their feelings by peal after peal of Horibole. As Shachee, escorted by some elderly ladies, proceeded towards the litter, a passage was made for her, through which she walked, and

having reached the conveyance, she stood beside and leant upon it for a moment.

But though unpercieved by her, she was being followed by another, a lady who seemed to be young from the sound of the musical anklets which she wore. Who she was nobody could, at first, tell ; for, she had covered herself entirely with a veil. Her sudden appearance on the scene created a feeling of curiosity and wonder accompanied by little commotion ; for, every one present began to surmise who the figure might be. Their doubts were, however, soon dispelled, when the veiled lady, who followed Shachee, having caught hold of the skirts of her *sharee*, stood closely by her.

Thereupon all became aware that it was Vishnu-priya !

When the crowd came to know that the well-dressed and completely-veiled young lady was the wife of the Lord, they were overpowered by a feeling which I will not attempt to describe. But there was no demonstration,—the feeling was too deep and sacred for that. Shachee broke the silence. In her hurry to proceed, she had, for a moment, forgotten her daughter. Nay, even Sreebas and other prominent bhaktas of the Lord, who were leading the old lady to Santipur, had also forgotten, for the time being, the existence of the young wife. Shachee saw her daughter by her side, and that was an intimation that she was anxious to accompany her. Her move-

ments showed that she too claimed her right to go to Santipur to see her husband.

As I have just said, Shachee broke the silence. She said, "I forgot you, daughter. If I must go, you must go too."

Here Nitai intervened. He said: "Mother, Vishnupriya has not the permission of the Lord to go."

This announcement produced another sensation, though again a silent one. Shachee said: "Then I must not go either."*

The young lady, when she heard what the wishes of her husband were, pondered for a moment; then, having formed her resolution, let go hold of the *sharee* of her mother, and leaning on the arms of her attendant maid, turned her face towards her home, amidst breathless silence. At every step she produced a sweet jingling sound, due to the musical *Panjar* that she wore on her ankles. Sweet as these sounds usually are, on this occasion they lacerated the hearts of those present.

Let not our readers think for a moment, that it was owing to a mere whim that the Lord had refused to allow her to visit him at Santipur, for the sake of a parting interview. He had taken the vow of renunciation for a grand object. To see Vishnupriya would have caused him, as a Sannyasee, to fall from his high state,—a contemptible creature, forsaken of

* Chandrodaya.

men and of God. The Lord could not have seen her without sacrificing his mission.

Neither think you, dear reader, that the permission, denied to the wife, was regarded by her as a misfortune. The announcement first gave her a shock. She felt that if any one had suffered by the renouncement it was she, and she had, thus, the first right to go. And could it, therefore, be just that she should be refused permission to go, while almost the whole population of Nadia was running to see her lord?

But a little reflection on her part showed her that her husband had only honoured her by making her the exception. She naturally thought she must be the most important factor in this mission of her lord, more important even than his mother herself. When this idea rushed into her mind, she not only felt consoled, but gratified, nay, filled by a holy joy which more than adequately protected her from the misery which sought to overtake her. She knew that the Lord loved her, and what more could a pure and devoted woman desire? She knew that her husband had a mission and that he was the greatest of all beings that had been seen on earth.

Her husband is Sree Krishna, an Avatar, a saviour of mankind, and she suffers for her fellows, and her loving husband refuses her an interview not from any want of affection but from a sense of supreme duty.

She was filled with joy at the thought. Indeed, a celestial joy follows every noble sacrifice, to prove

that there is divinity in men, and that there is a good God Who loves sacrifice.

Vishnupriya sent notice to Shachee that she should go without her to Santipur to see her son, as that was his wish. Shachee agreed ; for, she realized the fact that, considering all the circumstances, it would not be proper to take Vishnupriya with her. Shachee entered the litter, and it was lifted up by bearers. Till then there was silence, but now it was broken by continued peals of Horibole by which the crowd gave vent to their pent-up feelings.

It flew from mouth to mouth that the Lord had given permission to every one to go to see him ; and, as a matter of fact, the whole town, as it were, followed the litter of Shachee.

What a jewel is Bashu Ghose ! His descendants flourish to this day in Dinajpur, and are all Vaishnavas, celebrated for their unparalleled piety and devotion to Lord Gauranga.* Bashu Ghose, in one of his songs, declares : "I followed Shachee to Santipur, weeping all the way." From this saintly chronicler, we get a most clear and thorough account of this part of the leela of the Lord.

As the litter proceeded towards Santipur, thousands accompanied it,—bhaktas, friends and even former scoffers of the Lord. The latter had at last

* Rai Saheb Radha Govinda, the present representative, is a wealthy landlord of Dinajpur and, in every way, worthy of the saint from whom he is descended.

come to realize that they had been unjust to the son of Shachee. His self-sacrifice created a wave of pathetic feeling throughout the country, which swept away all ill-feeling towards him. This was in places where he had not been seen and personally known. But at Nadia the citizens still more thoroughly realized the sacrifice which he had made. They had seen him, like a bride-groom, a prince, walking through the city, dressed in the richest apparel, and they now knew that he had forsaken everything to serve God. His enemies were overcome by repentance, and some of them resolved to go to Santipur and beg pardon of him for having misjudged and misrepresented him.

With peal after peal of Haribole, uttered from thousands of throats, the citizens of Nadia, with Shachee in their midst, reached Santipur. When they neared the town, they found the place thronged with tens of thousands of human beings.

The Lord had appeared in the previous afternoon. His arrival had created a stir in the town. The news passed from mouth to mouth that Pundit Nimai, after entering the order of Sannyasees, had come to Santipur. The result was that people ran to see him from all parts of the country. Early in the morning Advaita saw, to his dismay, that there was a chance of his house being thrown down by the pressure of an ever-increasing crowd, and so he hastily engaged a number of stalwart men to keep guard at his door.

The strangest part of the matter was that all these

men had come there not to satisfy an idle curiosity, but had been attracted by an irresistible force to the place, for the purpose of being saved. They came, in thousands, under the influence of a strange feeling, which led them towards the Lord, with the cries of "Save us, Oh, Thou Saviour of mankind." They had, on hearing of the arrival of the Lord in their midst, been suddenly awakened to the knowledge that they had hitherto been living a very worldly, purposeless, and sinful life. They had, so they felt, been all along deliberately paving for themselves paths to perdition. Luckily they had not died with the load of their evil karma on their heads. "Let us run to him and fall at his feet," said they; and they came, thousands and hundreds of thousands, with the cry of "Save us, Saviour of mankind," on their lips.

A song of that period will describe the feeling that pervaded the crowd—it is addressed to Lord Nimai.

"I have heard from saints that Thou art merciful,
O Lord!

"I am helplessly struggling in a boundless ocean
(of worldliness). Wilt Thou catch me by the hair,
and lifting me into Thy boat-like foot, save me?

"For I rely on Thee alone.

"Once more, to save the fallen and the sinner,
Thou hast appeared among mankind, and where wilt
Thou find a greater sinner than I?

"I am a loathsome and hateful creature.

"But since Thou art an ocean of mercy.

"Rescue me, Lord, for I am sinking."

Possibly the above lines will fall flat on the ears of some of my readers. Let me try to photograph the influences that moved them. What they felt—not only felt but realized—was that they had led a worthless life, and thereby had endangered their chance of enjoying the future immortal life; that death was possible at any moment; and that, on the other hand, the means of salvation were near at hand. All the above they realized, and they ran to the Lord like mad men, or as terrified men, bitten by a deadly serpent, would run to a serpent-doctor. If, my dear reader, you can persuade yourself to feel as they did, and as they were led to do, you will like them feel a strange unrest, for having so long dissipated your energies in the pursuit of transient and worthless things. Wise, clever, intelligent and favoured as you may be in many respects, yet these men possessed this advantage over you, namely, that they were aware of their wretched condition, whereas you are not.

As every one was ambitious to see the Lord, he was led out upon the terrace of the outer house of Advaita, so that the assembled people could have a good view of him from outside. Thus the Lord was persuaded to go upstairs, show himself, and thereby satisfy the desires of the thousands that had come to be saved. He went up and stood on the terrace.

Dressed in the rude robe of a Sannyasee, the

Lord looked like the personification of Bhakti. His tall stature, his finely-wrought limbs, his golden colour, his chiselled features, his soft lotus-like eyes, his mild but majestic grace, the benign expression of his noble countenance,—all betokened that he was no mere mortal denizen of this world, but a spirit descended from above for the salvation of fallen humanity.

The crowd saw his form and their eyes were rivetted on his divine face. And the wonder of wonders was that the Lord also looked every one in the face. Every one fancied that the Lord was looking at him. Every one uttered his own prayers, and every one felt that his prayers had been heard and that he had been saved. The crowd stood spell-bound, gazing at the Lord with fixed, tender, and supplicating eyes. The Lord himself broke the silence. He raised his right arm towards Heaven, and said: "Say Hari." No sooner was this done than thousands and hundreds of thousands of throats followed his bidding, and they rent the skies by peal after peal of Haribole.

Just then the citizens of Nadia appeared with Shachee in their midst. If they, at Santipur, were celebrating the occasion by peal after peal of Haribole, those of Nadia were also approaching them with the same sacred words in their mouths, and thus the Haribole of Santipur was echoed by the Haribole of Nadia.

When it came to be known that Shachee and

the citizens of Nadia were coming, a passage was made for them. The Lord saw from upstairs the litter which contained his mother, and he came down hurriedly to meet her. The guards at the outer door opened a passage for the litter and the leading bhaktas to enter, and the litter was laid down in the yard.

Shachee peeped out of the conveyance. By the door of the litter stood the tall form of the Lord, with folded hands and penitent expression, as if he were an offender who had need of the forgiveness of his mother. Sreebas assisted Shachee to come out of the litter.

As the old lady came out, the Lord fell prostrate and caught her feet and touched them with his head. Now this was a thing never permitted to a Sannyasee, who is above all, and is bound by his vows not to bow down to anybody, nor to betray any tender feeling.

The first thing, therefore, that struck the old lady was that her son was doing wrong by saluting her. The garbs of a holy man, and the strong magnetism exercised by her son, took away from her, for the moment, the idea that the being before her was her own son, and therefore an inferior. She felt such a profound feeling of awe for her son that she gently uttered a word of protest and said: "Nimai, is it proper that you should salute me? You are now a holy man while I remain a worldly woman. If you salute me, you do injury. But I am

a fool to speak thus. You know better what is good for me. If you knew that it would injure me by saluting me, you would never have done it."

In the midst of this rambling speech she was gradually overtaken by her maternal feelings, which had been temporarily displaced by bhakti for her son. She sat, and asked the Lord to rise.

Shachee.—Nimai, get up please, you pain me ; let me see your face.

Shachee dragged her son towards her and smelt his head. She looked her son full in the face, touched his head with her hand, and said : "And Nimai, how could the cruel barber cut your hair, the pride of Nadia? And how could that cruel man, Keshava Bharati, permit a youth like you to enter his order?"

The Lord sat with folded hands before his mother. He remained silent, as if he were the most guilty man in the world, and before him, was his accuser and judge. The old lady found herself overpowered by divers feelings.

"And was it for this, Nimai" continued she, "that woman as I am and a widow, I strained my resources to give you a first-class education? How can I, your mother, bear the sight that you now present to me, wearing a rag round your loins? You are the life of my life, you whose absence I could never bear even for a moment, you that were nursed so tenderly, to think that you are now a Sannyasee, destined to seek shelter in caves and under trees, a

mendicant, dependent upon charity for your daily bread?" Here the old lady stopped, choked by her emotion. After having recovered herself, she again looked reproachfully at her son, and continued : "Have you reflected upon the legacy you leave to me—that of the young girl, your wife? Tell me how am I to console her? Can a mother bear all this, and live? If your intention was to quit society, why did you not wait until I was dead?"

The Lord still sat before her like a criminal with hands folded, in token of submission. When the lady had unburthened her heart, the Lord replied slowly. He said : "Mother, I took this step in a state of frenzy. Now that you have overtaken me on my pilgrimage, have no fear that I will henceforth do anything without your permission. My body is yours, it is absolutely at your disposal. I have no right to go anywhere without your permission. It matters not that I have entered the order of Sannyasee. If you wish it, I will return to society, nay, to Nadia." And with tearful eyes he implored the old lady to forgive him. He said that he now understood how much he had pained her by his sudden departure, and would do so no more, but would henceforth abide absolutely by her advice.

When the mother and son met, the bhaktas wanted to leave them alone ; but they were so deeply interested in the scene before them that they could not. They saw the spectacle of mother and son meeting under such extraordinary circumstances, and

the picture melted them. There was Advaita's wife, Seeta, waiting to lead Shachee into the apartments of the ladies. Seeta, after a time, earnestly requested the lady to accompany her. Shachee agreed, and leaning on the arm of Seeta, the mother of our Lord, in the midst of repeated exclamations of Haribole, entered the inner apartment. On seeing that Advaita's wife had made preparations for cooking the Lord's meal, she implored her hostess to allow her to cook for her son. "Let me do this service, probably the last, for my son," and Shachee set herself to prepare the necessary dishes.

As soon as Shachee had retired, the Lord found himself face to face with the bhaktas. Their appearance showed how intensely they had suffered during his absence, and the Lord embraced every one of them. Said Sreebas: "Lord! so long we have been dead and now have come to life again." Advaita was busy providing for his numerous guests. He was a wealthy man, that is to say, he had many disciples who were wealthy. He provided separate lodging and food for all the bhaktas who had accompanied Shachee from Nadia.

Evening appeared and kirtan began. Advaita wanted to make it a grand affair. Shachee sat with Seeta on the veranda to take part in the ceremony. She sat with a heavy heart, because Vishnupriya was not by her side! The wave of feeling that was created, carried away every one present, man and woman. The Lord as a mendicant, looked "a

million times more beautiful" than when he was a householder. The fact was, the garb of a holy man in him heightened, if possible, the celestial lustre that always surrounded him. To look at him was to revere him and to be filled with a feeling of bhakti for God. This celestial being was in their presence, in the garb of a holy man,—a being whom they had lost and found. In their joy people forgot the renunciation of the Lord and fancied that they were in the close embrace of Sree Krishna himself.

The Lord was hitherto sitting apart and watching the proceedings. But he could no longer control himself and had to join in. The feeling that had kept him unconscious for about six days, when, having left society and entered his order, he travelled in the district of Burdwan, had now completely left him. He was now in his normal state of consciousness. On his joining the kirtan, in his garb of a holy man, there was an outburst of joy from thousands of throats, both of men and women. He entered the kirtan, but as soon as he began to dance, he fell down in a swoon!

Nitai's duty was to follow behind the Lord during his dances and to prevent his falling, but he was not always successful. When the Lord fell down with a thud, Shachee shuddered. It seemed to her that the accident had fractured some of the bones of her son. She closed her eyes and began to pray to Krishna in this fashion: "Krishna, my Lord! grant me this, that when my Nimai falls down

in a swoon, he may not receive any hurt by the fall ; and at the same time deprive me of my senses in order that I may not witness it." Now Shachee never liked these kirtans, that is to say, the kirtans in which her son joined. For, she knew that they meant frequent and dangerous falls for her son. But, nevertheless, she was compelled to witness them for various reasons. They were often held at her own house, and as other ladies were used to join in them, she had to keep them company. She had, however, one remedy for this trouble of hers, *viz.*, prayer to Krishna. Her custom was to close her ears with her fingers, and shut her eyes whenever Nimai fell down in a swoon, and to pray to Krishna for His protection. Shortly afterwards she would open her eyes to see whether her son had regained consciousness or not. If she found that he had not, she would again close her ears and eyes and pray. Shachee was watching at Advaita's in company with Seeta and other ladies of Santipur. But she was only praying to Krishna to protect her son from his falls. Shachee felt very desolate, as I said before, for, she was not only in the midst of strangers, but Vishnu-priya was not with her. Murari, the chronicle of the early life of the Lord, was standing beside her. He had not heart enough to join in the kirtan, for, he loved the Lord with as much fervour as Shachee herself, and the renunciation of the Lord had been a terrible blow to him. He had suffered in consequence both in mind and body, and had not the

strength for a dance. He was by the side of Shachee and watching the kirtan from there. In a song he thus describes the condition of Shachee on that occasion :

The mother could bear it no longer, says Murari ; she thought that the bhaktas were carrying the thing too far. She thought that as the night was advancing, her son should be allowed to retire to rest. But as she saw there was no chance of the kirtan stopping soon, she rose and began to call upon Nitai. "Nitai," says Shachee, "do hold my Nimai carefully so that he may not fall down." But where was Nitai? He was in the midst of the kirtan and certainly not in a position to hear a word of what the lady was saying. Then she began loudly to call upon Advaita, and then upon the crowd in these words : "Stop your kirtan, please, it is getting late. Have you no mercy upon my child? He is too young for all this. And do you not see that he is likely to break his bones by these falls?" But no one listened to what she said, for, they were all drunk with joy. And Murari concludes the song with these pathetic words, addressed to the Lord by himself : "Come hither, my Lord, and see the condition of your mother!"

In this manner passed two or three days, Shachee always herself cooking his meals for her son. The Lord had told his mother that he would no longer do any thing without her permission. Of course, every one thought that the Lord had meant

nothing particular by what he had said, but the Lord himself thought otherwise. So he beckoned all the bhaktas to sit by him, and to listen to him. Said he:

"I did wrong by suddenly disappearing from you, and it was for that reason that I could not go right on to Brindaban. The grief of my mother weighed heavily on my heart, from the moment of my departure, and overcome by her sudden arrival here, I, in a moment of thoughtlessness, have made her a promise to abide by her instructions. I want now her precise order as to what I should do under the circumstances. I was never more serious in my life than when I told her that I would strictly follow her advice. Indeed, if she now advises me to give up my vow and re-enter society and return home, I am prepared to do so. I myself would have gone to her to receive my orders from her lips, but she is so devoted to me that in my presence she loses her independence. I will not, therefore, go, but will ask you to learn from her what is to be my fate. Tell her that my body is absolutely hers, and she has the freest permission to do whatever she likes with it. Nay, I repeat, if she wishes it, I will re-enter society and go back with her to Nadia."

The strange words of the Lord very much surprised the bhaktas. What does the Lord mean?—thought they. Only a week ago he became a Sannyasee, and to-day he absolutely surrenders himself to his mother. And who is this mother? A simple old lady of sixty-seven, who has no one else

in the world except her world-worshipped son. If she is given the freest permission to decide the fate of the Lord, what can she do but ask him to accompany her to Nadia?

Now this would be wrong on the part of the Lord. To return to society, after taking the vows of the order of Sannyas, is not only to court ridicule and contempt and social death in this world, but almost everlasting perdition in the other. But the bhaktas were aware of the divinity of the Lord, and recognised that he was above all human laws. They had been dying in his absence, and could not live without him; for, they had absolutely sold themselves to him. They would not object to the Lord re-entering society, nay, they would consider such an arrangement as the best that could be made for the convenience of all. It was thus they argued amongst themselves: Our master is Sree Krishna in disguise. He has become a beggar simply to be able to soften the hearts of his creatures and sow the seed of bhakti in their hearts. And why has he become a beggar? It is to soften the hard hearts of his wretched creatures called human beings. The garb of mendicant on the person of the Lord is therefore a libel on humanity. It is the wickedness of humanity that has compelled the Lord God to appear before them in the character of a poor mendicant to beg of them to give their love to Him. Is this not scandalous? The sooner the Lord ceases to be a Sannyasee the better for the reputation of

mankind. It is for his wicked children that he has put on the garb of a mendicant. Our duty is to place our Lord on a throne of gold and worship him, instead of compelling him to beg from door to door, that his creatures may not fling Him away as a thing without worth. The proposal of the Lord, therefore, delighted them. They reflected that if Shachee is the arbitrix of the destiny of the Lord, she will surely take him back with her to Nadia. In high spirits, therefore, the leading bhaktas, followed by others, surrounded the good mother Shachee.

They all saluted her, and Nitai impatient to deliver the message, said at once: "Mother! we bring good news. It was not a mere compliment paid to you by the Lord when he promised that he would henceforth abide by your wishes. He was perfectly serious. Now he has sent us to know what your wishes are. What can your wishes be but that he should return to Nadia? Let us hear your decision at once, so that having come weeping to Santipur, we may go back dancing to Nadia."

Advaita looked disapprovingly at Nitai with the remark that it was not proper to exceed the instructions of the Lord. "We have no right to influence the opinion of his mother by any remark of our own. He sent us lest his own presence should, in any way, influence her against her inclination. Let us, therefore, deliver our message honestly, and allow the good lady to form her own opinion." So saying, he began:

"It is quite true," said he, addressing Shachee, "the Lord is prepared to abide by your wishes. He said that he disappeared without your permission, and, therefore, Sree Krishna punished him by bringing him back. His body belongs to you absolutely, and he has no right to dispose of it without your free permission. He now wants to know your wishes. He will abide absolutely by your instructions. Nay, if you wish it, he will give up his Sannyas, go back to Nadia, and live as a householder. So careful is he to take your unbiased opinion that lest his presence should influence your judgment, he has sent us as his representatives, so that you can form it without any disturbing influence."

The message led the old lady to hang down her head in thought! Every one expected to see evidence of happiness in her face, but they saw none there, but rather deep anxiety. This attitude of the mother surprised them all and even annoyed them. They said: "Why do you hesitate, mother? Surely you are not going to permit him to leave home?"

Shachee smiled sadly. She said: "Do you mean to say that I should now take my son home? That is simply impossible. I am only thinking what place he should go to, which will be agreeable to him and convenient for me."

The bhaktas were surprised and rather annoyed at the remark of Shachee. "And so, mother, you will cast away your son although he is willing to come

back if you only desire it," said some bhaktas in deep disappointment. Shachee heard this expression of discontent on the part of the bhaktas, and smiled again.

After a while, she said: "If I now take back my son, it will, no doubt, please me and thousand and thousands of men; but then, people will laugh at him. And that it will be impossible for both you and me to bear. But even that is a small matter. My son took a solemn and sacred vow only a week ago. He will fall spiritually by breaking it. Now, it is quite true the departure of my son may eventually kill me, but I would rather die a hundred deaths every day than stand in the way of his spiritual progress. Of course, if I had been at the hermitage of Keshava Bharati when he was initiated, I would have tried to dissuade him; but now it is too late. As a disinterested well-wisher I cannot ask him now to live with us. Tell him not to mourn for me or to feel any compunction for having left me. You all know I gave him free leave to go. My dutiful son would never have left me without my free permission." And then she looked reproachfully at the bhaktas, and said: "You blame me for not wishing him to come home. But did he not trust me? Why did he put this absolute trust in me? It is because he knew that his mother would never, for her own happiness, jeopardise his spiritual progress. I know my son well, as he knows me. He has trusted me because he knows he can trust me. I for my part will not betray the trust.

Tell my son that since he has entered the order, he must keep his vow at all hazard!"

The old lady looked so grand and beautiful, when she delivered her message, that the bhaktas raised a chorus of admiration. Their feelings had binded them: the words of Shachee removed the film from their eyes at once. They realized that Shachee had taken a right and sensible view of the question. They began to discuss the situation amongst themselves. They said: "Yes, we now see why the Lord selected the old lady for the decision of this delicate matter. Considering all the circumstances, no mother in the world could, for the sake of a mother's love, sacrifice her own son, so worthy in every respect. But the Lord knew his mother. He knew the stuff the lady was made of, or he would have never selected her for his mother. The mother must be worthy to have such a son."

But Shachee did not pay any attention to what the bhaktas said amongst themselves. She was communing with herself, and she broke silence, after a while, in these words: "What do you say if Nimai were to go to live in the Temple of Jagannath? It is not as far off as Brindaban. It is a place where Sannyasees live and congregate. People go there from here on pilgrimage. So if my Nimai settles there, I shall be able to get news from him now and then, and, at the same time, his vow of renunciation will be thoroughly maintained?"

Now, this Temple of Jagannath, which exists to

this day, is about three weeks' journey on foot from Santipur. Shachee continued: "Yes, he could remain nearer home, but then I, you, and others would be tempted to annoy him by our presence. And, who knows, but if I found him nearer home, I might myself be tempted to annoy him by importuning him to return home? Malicious people would raise the scandal that his renunciation was a myth. He should be always above suspicion; for, he has a mission, a mission to save mankind, and I am not going, for my own happiness and convenience, to throw any obstacle in the way of that great work."

Here Shachee stopped, for tears choked her. "Go, tell my son my wishes," said she amidst sobs, and fell down flat on her back in the anguish of her sorrow. "So it is I that send my son away! Oh, how unlucky!" cried she and rolled on the ground. The bhaktas reminded Shachee that such sorrow was unworthy of the mother of Sree Krishna, which she was. Seeta, the wife of Advaita, tried to console her as best as she could, and the bhaktas left her to convey her message to the Lord with a heavy heart, though full of the wildest admiration for the old lady.

The Lord heard the message and smiled with pleasure. He said, "her will is my law, and you should take a lesson from her." He said this, and looking Advaita in the face, rose. "May Krishna bless you," he said, "I am now going to Jagannath." Said Advaita: "Going! What do you say?" They

all groaned in the bitterness of sorrow. The word flew from mouth to mouth that the Lord was going. Indeed, the Lord would have fled then and there but for the ardent importunities of the bhaktas, at whose instance he consented to wait to take leave of Shachee. Every one ran towards him. He was in a standing posture with his staff in one hand and his cup in the other. Seeing Shachee was coming towards him, he advanced to meet her and fell at her feet. Then son and mother sat down. The bhaktas raised an objection. They said that the Hindu king of Orissa and the Mussulman king of Bengal were fighting, and no one was allowed to go from here to that country.*

The Lord in reply said that Krishna would safeguard him on his way thither, and that he must go to see Neelachal-Chandra† (Chandra means moon)

* The then only independent Hindu Prince, on this side of India, was Pratap-rudra, the King of Orissa, where the Temple of Jagannath is situated. The Temple of Jagannath is situated. The Temple of Jagannath's is on the shores of the Bay of Bengal in the city called Puri or Neelachal.

† In the Puri Temple there is an Image called Jagannath or the "Lord of the Universe" meaning God. It is stated that the Temple and Image are Buddhistic in origin and that the Hindus appropriated them. The Image is "hideous" to look at, but to the bhakta, who has got the "inner-sight," the Image is said to be the most lovely thing imaginable. When the Hindus appropriated the Temple, the Image was consecrated to a Hindu God. People worshipped the Image simply as Jagannath or the Lord

that it was of no moment whether he started then or a few hours later, since go he must. Shachee did not reply ; for, she had given her permission. Advaita, however, intervened, and he, with folded hands, implored the Lord to stay a few days more.

"Very well," replied the Lord, and there was again joy in Santipur.

Thus the Lord remained five days more in Santipur. The bhaktas arranged who should accompany the Lord. He was not willing to take any of them ; but willing or not, he could not be allowed to go alone. Some bhaktas must follow him with or without permission. From among thousands five were selected, for every one was a candidate for the honour, *viz.*, Nityananda, Mukunda, Jagadananda, Govinda and Damodar. Gadadhar was not permitted to go on account of his extreme youth, as also Nara-hari for the same reason. Those who were householders had also no permission to accompany him ; and thus Murari, Sreebash and others were refused the privilege of following him. Haridas could have gone, but he was originally a Mussulman, and, as such, he could not be permitted to go to Orissa. Any Mussulman found in Orissa, would be punished as a spy. Haridas fell at the feet of the Lord and wept. He said : "My Lord, you ignore none except this poor worm. For, I have no permission to go to

of the Universe. It was Lord Gauranga who gave the image a distinctive character as that of the Lord Sree Krishna.

that country." The Lord promised that he would take him there, which he did afterwards.

The five days elapsed and the Lord rose to depart. The Lord fell at the feet of Shachee and said : "At a moment of frenzy I renounced society. Mother, forgive the follies of a way-ward child. I am yours, for ever and ever. I shall come to you again, and you shall get news of me often. I solemnly declare that I take charge of your body and soul. I know, you and others will pine for me, but such feelings ought to be trampled under foot. Let us serve Krishna and we shall get whatever we desire. Besides, as I told you then, and repeat it now, whether it be yourself, or Vishnupriya, or any other that loves me and wants to see me ardently, I shall be visible in his or her heart."*

Saying this, he rose with a Haribole and rapidly proceeded towards the south. The old lady gazed at the receding figure of her son, and sat silent as a statue. The litter was ready for her to go home, the bhaktas were also ready to accompany her. When the Lord disappeared from sight, the lady fainted on the ground. But why describe all these things? The litter reached Nadia, accompanied by

* This promise of the Lord was not confined to his mother, his wife, or his companions, but was meant for all humanity. And thus, even now, the true bhakta, with his mind's eye opened, does see, as a matter of fact, the Lord in his heart.

thousands of men weeping. But from the sound of the wailing Vishnupriya knew that her lord had left society and—herself!

CHAPTER XI.

NEELACHAL-CHANDRA.

The Krishna of Brindaban now disappeared clear out of the heart of the Lord. It was now "Neelachal-Chandra" Who ruled his heart. To him, however, there was no difference between Krishna and the latter. His mind was under the complete control of his will. He could make his mind do one thing at a time and forget everything else. When he, therefore, handled any subject, he gave it a tangible shape. With him nothing was ethereal, nor even prem. When he attended to a man his whole soul was absorbed by him and the latter felt that there was no being on earth who loved him so dearly as the Lord did. After leaving Shachee and Santipore the Lord directed his mind to the Lord Jagannath, and the latter occupied his whole soul, so that he forgot mother, wife, friends, nay, his surroundings. He ran with the exclamation of "Jagannath, I come."

At Santipur he had passed a quiet life, undisturbed by his transcendental feelings. Besides, there, in the midst of his bhaktas and in the society of his mother, he was not allowed to follow all the rigorous rules of a Sannyasee. Thus he had to eat his dinner in a regular manner and sleep on a bed. But as soon as he left Santipur, he at once adopted all the rigid

rules which were hitherto thought to be impossible for a man to follow. He continued to live upon a handful of rice and sleep on the bare ground!

The fact was, he did not care for external comforts, and his mind gave him no opportunity to think of them. How can the necessities of the body affect a being who is running with the exclamation of—"Jagannath! Thou hast called me. I am coming." His path lay by the bank of the Ganges, and he ran along it in a state which can be likened somewhat to that which overtook him when he first joined the order and renounced society. As a man follows a truant paper-kite, the Lord ran with up-lifted head and staring eyes towards the south in pursuit of the Lord of his heart!

He passed Calcutta which was then a jungle, and at last reached Chhatrabhogé, where the Ganges, with innumerable mouths, enters the ocean. Human habitations do not exist further than that, and there the country of Bengal ends. The bhaktas saw that the Lord must wait there till he should find an opportunity of proceeding.

They, however, found that the being before them was not actually a helpless man, that they had in their human forgetfulness taken him for. For, just then, the Governor of the place, Ramchandra Khan, arrived at the town. He ruled that part of Bengal under the Mussulman sovereign of Gaur. His descendants are now distinguished members of Bengal society, the family being represented by Babus Rakhal

Chandra Ray, Pyari Lal Ray and Bihari Lal Ray. He had to defend that part of Bengal from the aggressive people of Orissa, then ruled by the Hindu sovereign, Pratap-rudra. Well, Ramchandra arrived in that frontier town and heard that a wonderful mendicant had just then arrived there, who seemed to be a god in disguise.

Ramchandra was so impressed by this news that he was led to proceed thither at once. He saw that five ascetics, three of them being quite young, were keeping guard over another, the youngest of all, who was weeping with his head hidden beneath his knees. And whilst weeping, he was unburthening his heart in this fashion: "My Lord Krishna," said he, "my Beloved! Wilt Thou not permit me to see Thee? Dost Thou not know that my heart is thirsting for Thy sight? Oh my Krishna, Oh my Jagannath, give me wings that I may fly to Thee," etc. etc.

Ramchandra came and saw, and having saluted the Lord, stood transfixed with astonishment. He had never before seen a spectacle like that. The sight of the bhaktas indicated to him that their leader was something more than a man. Besides, the heart-rending tones, in which the Lord was weeping, utterly forgetful of the vast crowd which had collected round him, melted his heart. He became so restless that, unasked, he wanted to afford help. He addressed the Lord and said, with folded hands, "Swamee! Why do you weep? Can I be of any use to you?" But the Lord did not give any reply, because he was

then within himself and did not hear external sounds. Ramchandra then addressed Nitai, and Nitai told him in reply, that the young man was their leader, and he was weeping for Jagannath.

"But can I be of any use, can I help him?" asked Ramchandra.

Nitai.—Certainly, you can ferry him across to the opposite country, Orissa.

Ramchandra pondered. He had no permission to allow any one either to go from Bengal to Orissa, or to enter Bengal from that country. But he would risk everything to send the holy men before him. So he said, again addressing Nitai: "Will you please let the young Gossain know that, come what may, this very night I shall send him over the border into Orissa? Will he now stop weeping?" Nitai was overjoyed; he remembered that this was all the doing of the Lord, and not a mere coincidence.

Well, the boat arrived, and the Lord found himself with his followers in the Province of Orissa.

Govinda, who accompanied the Lord, wrote a note of the principal events he witnessed while he was with the Lord. The following amusing, though wonderful, conversion of a poor washerman, is related in Govinda's book. They were proceeding, when they suddenly came across a washerman beating clothes upon a piece of plank as was his habit. He was deeply engaged in his work and had no eye for the holy men that were passing by him. But wonder of wonders, the Lord who was almost uncon-

scious of the external world, stopped, approached him, nay, at length, accosted him. Said the Lord, "Washerman! say Haribole."

The poor man thought that the mendicants had come to beg alms of him; so, without even looking at the intruders, he replied that he was so poor that he had absolutely nothing to give them. "We want nothing else from you, except that you say Haribole," repeated the Lord. The washerman refused. He could not understand the motive of the request. He feared that if he listened to the request, perhaps he would be required to pay something. Suddenly an idea struck him how to get rid of these troublesome intruders. He said: "I am a poor man and have to work to provide for my family; I can't now afford to give up beating this piece of cloth, in order to utter the name you suggest to me."

"Is that all?" asked the Lord, smiling. "Let me have that piece of cloth. I shall do the beating for you, while you say Haribole."

The washerman, in despair, agreed to say Haribole, though he declined to hand over the piece of cloth to the Lord. "You are very persistent, I see," said he, in tones of almost unnoticeable resentment. "Well, tell me what I am to do."

The Lord.—Say Haribole.

The washerman.—Haribole.

The Lord.—Repeat that again.

The washerman.—Haribole.

The Lord.—Once again, please.

The washerman.—Haribole, Haribole, Haribole ; and he then began to repeat the name, unasked. Indeed, the name "stuck to his tongue," and he could not help uttering it. While he was uttering the name, in spite of himself, he was losing consciousness. In the end he succeeded in entering into a complete state of ecstasy, and then, raising both his hands high, began to dance, while uttering the holy name !

If the spectacle was awe-inspiring, it was also laughter-producing ; and the bhaktas, including the Lord, enjoyed the scene before them immensely. Indeed, they sat at a distance to see how all this would end. The wife of this bhakti-stricken washerman came soon after to the spot with a plate of rice in hand. To avoid losing time, according to arrangement, the wife always brought his dinner to him in this manner, when he was washing. On her arrival, she saw her husband dancing with up-lifted arms and uttering the name of God Hari. She was a little amused at the sight, and accosted her husband. "I did not know," said she, "that you were a dancing man." But the husband made no reply. On approaching nearer she found that there was no lustre in her husband's eyes, and that he had no knowledge of the external world.

She sought to rouse him by calling him loudly, but to no purpose. She took alarm, and ran to her village for help. "Help, help," she cried as she proceeded towards her neighbours. "My husband

has been taken possession of by a ghost!" The villagers were very much astonished to hear this, and ran to see what the matter was. Accompanying the wife of the washerman, they came to see that the latter was still dancing in the same manner as we have described. The sight at first gave them amusement ; but, seeing that the matter was a little serious, they sought to awake him to consciousness—from a distance. For, though it was broad day, they were afraid to come too close to one who, they believed, was under the control of a ghost. A bold spirit, however, clasped him by the arm to force him to stop, and the result was what he and the others could not have expected ! He too was immediately imbued with the holy spirit ! The touch affected him in a similar manner. The name of Hari danced on the tongue of the new-comer, while he, in turn, danced with the washerman. But he did not lose his senses completely ; he beckoned the others to come nearer. They came, and he embraced them. And then they too caught the contagion !

In this manner the entire village was brought under the control of the holy influence. The Lord and the bhaktas, after enjoying the scene for some time, left the place.

The above incident is described in the "Notes of Govinda" who followed the Lord on the occasion. Of course, it is likely to be deemed incredible ; but the power, as described in the above incident, possessed by the Lord, is testified to in innumerable ways

and instances by a large number of writers. The Lord could throw a man into a trance by a touch or look ; that sometimes people were affected even by a look at him, or a touch of his person, or even his garments, is testified to by innumerable eye-witnesses. Nay, what is more strange is that the man, thus affected, imbibed the influence for life. A single case is not known of a man who, having fallen under the influence of Lord Gauranga, was able to effect his escape.*

In those days the Hindus had almost more temples than dwelling-houses ; every village was crowded with sacred shrines and everywhere there was provision for the maintenance of holy men, pilgrims, and way-farers. Even now hospitality is universal ; inn-keepers have very little business here. When the Mussulmans came, they, in their zeal, destroyed everything they could lay their hands on. But into Orissa they had not been able to penetrate, and everything remained intact there. The Lord and his followers thus had no difficulty whatever in procuring a place of rest or a handful of rice. The Lord spoke very little ; he was always in a state of ecstasy, and,

* The Lord in a fit of ecstasy had fallen into the sea, and was lost to the bhaktas. His body was caught in the net of a fisherman, who dragged him up. The fisherman was at once possessed by the holy spirit, inasmuch as he began to dance and utter the name of Hari. This incident led the bhaktas to the recovery of the Lord, whom they soon brought round to consciousness.

if he regained his semi-consciousness, the only conversation that he had with Nitai was as to whether Jagannath would allow him to obtain a sight of His face !

One day Nitai told him the story of Madhavendra Puri, the Guru of Iswar Puri, who, in his turn, was the Guru of the Lord himself. The reader may remember that from Iswar Puri, at Gaya, the Lord first received his initiation. Nitai told the Lord how Madhavendra Puri died under a tree, while being tended by his disciple Iswar. Madhavendra was so pleased with the service of his disciple Iswar that he made over to him all the "Krishna-prem" that he had himself acquired by a life-long and ardent devotion to Krishna. I have already said that to these holy men, love and bhakti were not ethereal somethings, but stern realities like any other tangible substance. Nitai then related how Madhavendra Puri, as he left his body, uttered a prayer to Krishna, composed at that interesting moment. He was lying prostrate beneath a tree ; his disciple Iswar was by his side, tending him. Madhavendra's last moment arrived. He folded his hands in token of the deepest veneration and uttered the following prayer, in the form of a sloka (couplet) :

"Oh my Lord Krishna, O Thou, whose heart melteth at the sight of the misery of the low ; I have been seeking Thee ; when wilt Thou appear before me ?"

Nitai said that Madhavendra Puri's soul quitted his body while he uttered this sloka.

But Nitai could not finish his sentence ; for, the Lord fell down in a swoon on hearing the sloka, which had been uttered from the bottom of his soul by a dying man. He rose after a while to dance, while uttering the first two words of the sloka. We mention this incident here to offer a remark which is that the religion, which Lord Gauranga taught, is so simple that its principles are contained only in the two couplets composed by Madhavendra Puri, while leaving his body.

At last the bhaktas pointed out to the Lord the top of the very high Temple of Jagannath. That Temple was his destination ; there he had been directed by his mother to remain for the rest of his life ; there he was to find Jagannath, his Sree Krishna, the thought of Whom solely occupied his mind. The sight maddened him !

He wanted to run there ; but by running he could make only slow progress,—he really wanted to fly. He ran with all his might towards the Temple and fell down in a swoon. He rose to run again, only to fall down as before. These fits were not pleasing to him, for, they were retarding his progress ; but there was no help,—he was overpowered by his excess of joy. Not being able to make any progress, he stood gazing at the top. He beckoned the bhaktas to come nearer, and pointed out to them, with his finger, the top of the Temple and told them, in a

sloka, half of which he uttered but failed to utter the other half ; for, he was overpowered by his feelings. The meaning of this sloka was this : "Behold, on the summit of the Temple, Sree Krishna, with a smiling face, beckoning me towards Him."

The bhaktas gazed in the direction indicated by the Lord ; but they saw nothing. The Lord, however could not wait any longer ; for, was not Sree Krishna calling him? He ran towards the Temple with the exclamation of—"I come ! I come !" A little before, the Lord had told his companions that he had no desire to see Jagannath in company, and that either they should go first or allow him to do so. They, of course, agreed that he should go first. So when the Lord ran, they lagged behind ; not that had they tried, they could have kept up with him.

Yet they were seized with one apprehension. The "hideous material figure" of the Lord Jagannath was seated on a Throne in an inner apartment of the Temple. He was the absolute King of Puri, and was treated as such. He was bathed, fed, and at night laid in bed. He was fanned in the hot season, and covered with a quilt in the cold. He had, of course, innumerable servants ; the king Pratap-rudra himself being one of them, whose functions was to sweep the street before the Temple with a broom, made of gold !

The Person of the Lord Jagannath, as in the case of ordinary sovereigns, was protected by innumerable guards. He was inaccessible and

unapproachable as the Czar of Russia. To be able to secure an audience, pilgrims had to apply to those who attended upon Him.

The effect of the above arrangements was, at least in some respects, excellent. The Lord God, by means of an Image, is, as it were, brought face to face with His creatures. Of course, everyone has the privilege of seeking Him in his heart, and those, who can do so successfully, have no need of going to a Temple in order to see this Image. But as few men are so happily constituted, a Temple with His Image serves a very good purpose. Now, this we know from experience. Many years ago, influenced by the literature and religion of the West, we personally acquired a distaste for material Temples and Images, and thought that we had no need for "idols," and we were doing very well with the Temple of our heart and the Image that we could set up there. But, step by step, we came to see that the material accessories have their advantages, nay, they are essential for most men. Men, who fancy that they can do very well without these Images, derive, as a matter of fact, very little advantage from their so-called communion with Him, though they know it not.

In the worship of God, as in many other things, the first thing necessary is realization. The more a man can realize the presence of God in his heart, the more successful is he in his worship. Possibly there are men who can effect this realization without

the help of material accessories. But, as in our own case, most men will find them of immense service.

Where is God? The answer is, everywhere, which come to the same thing as nowhere. The votary seeks Him in his heart, but does not find Him there, and after an unsuccessful attempt, give up the search. He thinks moreover that such is the fate of everyone. The more persistent man does not give Him up so easily. He goes a step further, makes an effort to realize His presence, and mutters some prayers which had been composed for him by other holy men. He utters them like a parrot, and he thinks that his duty has been very well done. He is satisfied with this, because he knows no better.

A bhakta hears a sermon, is moved by it, and he considers that he is worshipping God. But real worship of God, *viz.*, communion with Him, is a quite different thing. That communion, when it is successful, is followed by bliss, (a bliss which has no parallel in the world) with the visible symptoms thereof, such as tears of joy, and at last a swoon. The man whose so-called communion with God does not bring him, bliss *may rest assured that he has gained very little by his efforts*, and that the communion, for which he has striven, has not been brought about. An idolater seeks his God in his heart and does not find Him there. He runs to a Temple to see God. He sees the Image before him, and he pours out the treasure of his innermost thoughts to

the Image. Subsequently, he finds that he can recall in his heart the same Image that he had seen in the Temple. This is the second stage. And the third stage is, when this Image, in his heart, becomes a living Being.

Jagannath, or "the Lord of the Universe," is holding court within. The pilgrim comes to see Him after days and months of toil. On arrival he finds his passage blocked by guards. The pilgrim is made to feel that the Lord God is not easily to be seen. This only increases what is called the "thirst" of the pilgrim for Him, and his estimate of the magnificence of the Lord of the universe. Would the people of Russia feel so much awe for the Czar, if he was always visible? So, if the doors of Jagannath were open to all, His awe-inspiring presence would lose much of its influence. Hence guards keep watch over Him, and pilgrims, after much toil and sacrifice, at last find an opportunity of having a look at the Divine face.

And what is the result? The "hideous figure" is converted into a bewitching, lovely Thing! The pilgrim feels that he has at last seen God, and that he has been graciously received by Him. He feels that the Presence has drawn him away from the world and lifted him up to a higher sphere; that it has destroyed the cart-load of his sin; and that it has made sin hateful to him. Sincere penitents proceed to the shrines, and come back, changed

men with a celestial beauty about them and a sweetness of temper which prove that they had not gone in vain.

CHAPTER XII.

THE OFFENDED GUARDS.

WHEN the Lord hastened forward to see Jagannath, his bhaktas began to feel a good deal of anxiety on his account. How will the Lord manage with the guards? They were quite sure that the Lord would never wait for their permission and that he would run, in his present state of ecstasy, to the Image within. And that being the case, how would the guards, who could never forgive such an offence, deal with him? So they followed the Lord with anxiety in their minds.

The Lord flew like lightning, passed through different guard-rooms, and approached Jagannath. His idea was to hold the Figure in his bosom. The Figure was set on a Throne, which was again set on a high platform. The Lord jumped up to get hold of the Figure, but in the attempt fell flat on the floor in a deep swoon!

The guards saw that a man had, disregarding their presence, passed by them. And they were awfully offended. Suppose a man gives a slip to the guards and runs to the Czar,—what do the guards think? They think that they have been eternally disgraced. Thus felt the soliders, who kept guard over the Lord Jagannath. Hundreds of them ran in

pursuit of the offending pilgrim. They would not have killed the intruder, but they would have given him blows and dragged him forth, which would practically have been almost death to an offender. Of course, Sree Gauranga was a Sannyasee, and one of his order cannot be meddled with by a laymen. But, in Puri, they were accustomed to see thousands of such ascetics. Besides, if Sannyasees were the object of veneration of every class of men, the servants of Jagannath fancied, that they, being direct servants of God Almighty, were superior to all, even to Sannyasees.

And thus many of them were ready to assault the golden figure which lay before them in a death-like swoon.

But here an incident, which seems more like a page from a romance than from a real history, happened. While the guards crowded round the Lord for the purpose of assaulting him, a stranger stepped forward to protect him. A tall and elderly Brahmin of majestic appearance was there, when the Lord first appeared on the scene. He had seen something in the new comer which irresistibly led him to his protection. He saw the guards had, in their fury, lost all control over themselves, and he feared that they would, in their that state of mind, listen to no remonstrance. So, to protect him from the assault of the infuriated mob, he covered the body of the Lord with his person, exclaiming,

‘Forbear, you fools! . Do you not see that he is a holy man, if not the great God Himself?’

The guards in their anger would have disregarded the injunctions of the intruder, but then he was not a person to be slighted; he was the second man in the Empire, being only next in importance to king Pratap-rudra.

For, he was the great Basudeva Sarvabhauma himself, the great savant of Nadia!

He was the founder of the Nyaya Philosophy in Nadia, the subtleties of which made “the European head dizzy.” Though his fame was eclipsed by his great pupil Raghunath Siromani, yet it is very doubtful whether the latter was really a greater philosopher than the former. He performed the apparently impossible feat of committing the whole text of the Nyaya Philosophy to heart, an account of which will be found in Vol. I, page XII. If Mithila was the seat of Nyaya, Benares was the seat of the Vedic learning. People had to go there to study the Vedas. Basudeva, having mastered Nyaya, had gone there for that purpose and mastered the Vedas also. And he was so successful that he was considered one of the two foremost Vedic scholars of the period, he himself and Prakasananda Saraswatee, the Sannyasee of Benares. The fame of Vasudeva having spread far and wide, Pratap-rudra, king of Orissa, the only remaining Hindu king on that side of India, had induced him to settle in the holy city of Puri, and open a tole there. The tole was

established and thousands and tens of thousands of students, both of the Vedas and Nyaya, (nay, also of other branches of study, for the great Pundit was versed in almost all), flocked to it. Such was his repute that thousands of ascetics,—learned Sannyasees,—took lessons at his feet. It was he who gave the law to those who managed the Temple, and the king respected him as he respected his own spiritual Guru.

Basudeva Sarvabhauma was, however, not a spiritual man. He had only cultivated his intellect, and derived therefrom all his importance and pleasure. His chief happiness consisted in what he derived from the cultivation of his keen intellect and the satisfaction of his vanity. He lived to earn respect and demolish rivals. He was a man of large heart, and was kind and courteous to all, but yet he could not brook a rival. To secure his patronage, the first thing necessary for a man was to humble himself before the savant.

He did not care to dissipate his energies by any thought of the future life. But a logical fallacy would occupy his days and nights of earnest thought. Having no firm faith, in fact, no faith in religion, he yet had to go through all the forms with the greatest care and nicety. This, not that he had any belief in them, but firstly because he had to obey popular prejudices, and secondly because habit had made him a slave to them. While he was at Nadia, Nimai had, as a young student, read Nyaya for some time

in his tole ; but that was long ago, and school-masters rarely recognize, in after years, the pupils whom they had taught in their younger days. Sarvabhauma had, therefore, no knowledge as to who it was that he had been led to protect from the anger of the soldiers guarding the Temple of Jagannath.

He did not know what to do with the fainting figure before him. Surely he could not leave him there to the anger of the guards. The idea had crossed his mind that the being, whose body he was guarding, was not an ordinary person, and that he deserved all his care. His pupils flocked everywhere ; so many of them were there, and he directed some of them to convey the fainting figure to his own house.

His pupils, therefore, carried the body of the Lord on their shoulders. No sooner had they touched his sacred person than they were led to utter the name of Hari. And thus, in the midst of loud peals of Haribole, our dear master entered the house of Sarvabhauma !

Sarvabhauma laid him on a sacred spot, and dismissed his pupils. Seeing that the body before him exhibited no signs of life, he held cotton before his nostrils. By this means he perceived that he was breathing, though almost imperceptibly, and the savant, was relieved. He found in the body of the Lord many things to amaze him. The perfectly-formed body, the chiseled face, the golden hue, the divine eyes, then half shut, first attracted his atten-

tion. Gazing at the face he could see that the owner was not only innocent of all guile, but had never committed an unworthy act in his life. But he felt more. The idea possessed his mind that the young man had a large heart, and that its capacity for love had no bounds. The fragrance of the body next attracted him by its sweetness.

But what impressed him most was the condition in which he found the Lord. He had read in the sacred books that there was such a thing as love of God, or Krishna-prem, and that this love of God was manifested by certain symptoms which he also knew. Now, for the first time, he learnt that what the shastras said was all true. Indeed, when the Lord was entering the Temple, his body being enveloped in a holy light, which was always visible on his person in his ecstatic state. Sarvabhauma, had taken him for a celestial being in disguise, perhaps Jagannath Himself. And although a closer inspection removed that idea, he still felt that the being before him was much higher than himself, that he was, as the shastras say, "a man who had Radha's love for Krishna in him."

So Krishna-prem is a fact, thought Sarvabhauma. And it is possible for a man to feel such an ardent love for God as to fall down in an ecstatic swoon at sight of His Image ! He had heard of such holy men, but never seen one in his life. And what does this prove ? "It proves," argued that Naiyayic Pundit, "that there is a God, that He is good, and

that He wants love. For, Nature cannot commit a mistake. If there had been no good God who wanted the love of His creatures, Nature would have never given so much love to the lucky being before me. And even if God is no better than a man, He must be an ardent friend to those who love Him so well. And since he has acquired this love, it must be possible for others also to acquire it. Lucky indeed is this young man ; and a fool am I, to fritter away my time in worthless pursuits. Therefore I will utilize the present fortunate occasion, to acquire, if I may, some small portion of the faith which this happy Sannyasee carries in his heart."

Sarvabhauma's sister was married to Pundit Gopeenath, and the latter had come to visit his wife who was staying with her brother. This distinguished Pundit had the inestimable good fortune of being an ardent believer in the Lord. He, however, did not know that the Lord had come to Puri, much less that he had been carried in a state of swoon from the Temple to the house of his brother-in-law, though he was at that time in the neighbourhood of the Temple.

Nitai and other followers of the Lord followed their master to the Temple, when they learned that a young Sannyasee of Herculean frame, having fainted at the sight of Jagannath, had been carried to the house of Sarvabhauma. Nitai desired to go there, but despaired of being able to gain access to the residence of that great man. Of course, Nitai

and others were all dressed in the garb worn by holy men, but thousands of their sort daily learnt at the feet of the great savant Savabhauma. Whilst they were considering by what means they might approach the Lord, they came across Gopeenath !

Gopeenath at once recognized Nitai and the others, and heard what they had to say, *viz.*, that the Lord, now a Sannyasee, had arrived at Puri that very day on a visit to Jagannath, and having fainted in the Temple, had a short while ago been carried to Sarvabhauma's house, he conducted them to the house of his host and brother-in-law, Sarvabhauma. The presence of Sarvabhauma at the time the Lord entered the Temple, and the presence of Gopeenath, when Nitai and his companions required some one to introduce them to the house of the savant, are considered wonderful coincidences.

They saw the Lord lying in an unconscious state, and Sarvabhauma sitting by him. The bhaktas surrounded the Lord and sought to rouse him by a kirtan. They uttered loudly the name of Hari in his ears, one after the other. This had the desired effect, and the Lord arose after a *hunkar* had been sounded, followed by the ejaculation, "Hari," "Hari."

Sarvabhauma then fell prostrate at the feet of the Lord. This he was compelled to do, because he was a householder and the Lord an ascetic. The Lord blessed him with the words: "May thy soul abide in Krishna!"

Said Sarvabhauma : "It is getting late, Swamee. Will you please go to the sea-side for your bath, and having bathed, come back to honour your slave by breaking your fast here?"

The Lord agreed. He and his followers then all went off to bathe in the sea, and on the way the Lord heard everything about himself,—how, in going to embrace the Image of Jagannath, he had fallen down in a swoon, and how Sarvabhauma, having protected him by his person from the fury of the guards, had him carried on the shoulders of his disciples to his own house.

Though Gopeenath tried to conceal the fact, yet Sarvabhauma could see that he not only knew the youth intimately, but also bore a tender feeling for him. "Who is this young Swamee, brother?" asked Sarvabhauma of Gopeenath. The latter had then to tell all.

The Lord and others returned after having a bath in the sea. Sarvabhauma again prostrated himself before the Lord, and the Lord again blessed him in the terms noted above. Said Sarvabhauma : "Swamee, I have learnt all about you. Your grandfather Nilambar and my father Maheshwar Bisharad were fellow-students. Your father Jagannath was a fellow-student of mine. So you see, you are dear to me in every respect. And then you are an ascetic and, as such, you are an object for my worship, and I am your slave."

The Lord, thereupon, in a state of perfect

consciousness, replied : "My obligations to you are endless. But for your kind protection I don't know what would have become of me to-day. In a fit of frenzy I left society, but I hope I have not thereby lost my claims upon you. Kindly deal with me as you would with a backward child of yours. I place myself absolutely at your disposal."

Now, minute by minute, the famous savant was recovering from the great awe which had come over him, when he first looked upon the Lord. He then thought that the being before him was Jagannath Himself, or, at the least, some celestial being. When the Lord was lying in his house in an unconscious state, he beheld in him a perfect specimen of humanity, and, at the same instant, began to feel that there was such a thing as Krishna-prem, and that one drop of the prem, which the young man before him seemed to possess, was superior to all the cart-loads of learning which he himself had acquired. Then he felt himself truly humbled, in the sorrowful assurance that he had only dissipated his energies.

But now, having learnt that the being who had so dazzled him, was neither Jagannath nor even a celestial spirit of a lesser order, but only a man like himself, nay, the son of an indifferent Pundit of Nadia, his awe for the Lord evaporated quickly. When, therefore, he had to salute the Lord a second time, he felt it a humiliation to be compelled to bow his head to a young man, who was, as he thought,

in spite of his being in holy orders, so inferior to him in every way. But the attitude of the Lord disarmed the ill-feeling that was rising in his mind. His humble attitude, his trust in him, and his sweet and submissive voice, led the great Pundit to feel a great attraction for the Lord.

When the Lord and his followers had broken their fast, Sarvabhauma arranged a hut for them to reside in. It belonged to his mother's sister. And thither the Lord, Nitai and the others proceeded.

The Pundit, as host, waited upon the Lord and his followers while they ate, and when this pious duty of hospitality to holy men had been performed, he and his friend Gopeenath sat down to their meal together. When they had finished, they proceeded to the savant's tole where the students were assembled.

Said Sarvabhauma to Gopeenath: "I don't like this arrangement. Whoever enters the order of Sannyasees, is entitled to be saluted by others, however high. The result is that they are led to indulge their pride, which it is one of the first duties of an ascetic to subdue. However, this young man, Sree Krishna-Chaitanya, is an amiable and lovable creature. I don't know why it is that he so irresistibly enthralls me by his sweetness. I am glad he has not as yet learnt to be haughty. He is too young for an ascetic. I very much fear lest his youth tempts him to fall a victim to his passions. But, since he has come to me, it will be my duty

to see that he is not permitted to fall. I will teach him the Vedas ; for, as an ascetic, to learn the scriptures is his first duty. I regret he took his initiation from a Bharati. He must change all that. He must be made to go through the ceremony again, and receive his credentials, on this occasion, from a Sannyasee of a superior class."* He was speaking in this rambling fashion to his brother-in-law, Gopeenath, unaware of the fact that every sentence he uttered was giving deep pain to his listener.

Gopeenath here suggested in a seemingly careless tone, that Swamee Krishna-Chaitanya probably did not care much at whose hands he received his initiation. He never cared for forms. His object was simply to renounce society, and he was, therefore, probably utterly indifferent what the class was, inferior or superior, which could claim his membership. Sarvabhauma replied with some warmth: "What do you say, Pundit? Is it a mere matter of form to choose the better?"

To which, Gopeenath.—It is pure vanity that leads one to give importance to such trifling matters.

Sarvabhauma.—Vanity! what do you call vanity?

Gopeenath.—What need one care what people think of him, if he is sure of his own ground?

Sarvabhauma.—And is not the opinion of one's

* These Sannyasees are divided into nine classes, the lowest being the Bharati, and the higher the Puri, the Saraswati, etc.

fellows of any value? Is it not for the good opinion of our fellows that we do most things? Why am I a student? Is it not mainly for the good opinion of my fellow-beings? I must say, Krishna-Chaitanya has done a foolish act in taking his vows from a Bharati.

Gopeenath could tolerate the savant's arrogance no longer. He had promised to keep his relationship with the Lord a secret ; but, goaded by the remark of the savant, he was led to reveal all. Boiling over with indignation, which he vainly endeavoured to conceal, he replied, as if half in jest and half in earnest : "Pundit," said he, "a great savant as you are, I would respectfully recommend you to spare the young ascetic your patronage. He does not need your help. This you will learn soon ; for, he is no other than an Incarnation of the Almighty Himself."

Sarvabhauma saw, as did his pupils, with great surprise, nay, consternation, that Gopeenath was serious. Now these pupils were not young boys ; indeed, some of them were full-grown men. Trained under an intellectual and aggressive man, they had all learnt to be aggressive, and were fond of discussion. When it was perceived that Pundit Gopeenath had seriously asserted the young ascetic to be an Incarnation of the Lord God Himself, they all gazed at him with a scornful and defiant expression. One of the foremost cried out,—“Proof? Where is your proof? What is your first premise and what is your

second? Here is an extraordinary proposition, indeed!" And hundreds of them volunteered, metaphorically, to annihilate Gopeenath then and there.

Gopeenath saw that he had committed a technical blunder. He ought then to have apologised and said nothing further. But he could not ; the patronising tone of Sarvabhauma and the contemptuous manner in which the savant had spoken of the Lord, had destroyed his equanimity. So he replied, in spite of himself, to the demands of "proof," though not to the students whose action in thus addressing him he thought impertinent, but to Sarvabhauma. He said : "Pundit! I simply bade you beware of how you treated that so-called young ascetic. He is neither young nor a man ; for, he is as old as the universe and as old as the Father of all created things. I know it, but you as yet know it not, though you will learn it in a short time. If you want proofs, I can tell you this much that I know him to have credentials which it would be utterly impossible for a human being to possess."*

* It will benefit humanity incalculably if the divinity of Gauranga is proved. It may hurt the vanity of those who profess to worship other Avatars, to acknowledge Gauranga as one ; but men possessed with such bigotry, are not to be imitated but avoided. It is the duty of every man, who is sceptical, to satisfy himself as to the nature and justice of the claim to divinity of every "pretender" put forward by his followers. In the case of Sree Gauranga, we believe, : that an

Sarvabhauma found himself in a delicate position. He had only a faint faith in God, in a Personal God scarcely any, in the possibility of an Incarnation none whatsoever; while, as to the scholarship and intelligence of Gopeenath, his opinion of them was not so high as the opinion he had of his own. When Gopeenath seriously claimed divinity for Lord Gauranga, Sarvabhauma felt an impulse to laugh outright, but he checked himself. Such conduct, he felt, would not become a savant; besides, Gopeenath was both his brother-in-law and his guest. But more especially, because he was by training the politest man in the universe. Indeed, when his students assailed Gopeenath, he sternly rebuked them, and took up the gauntlet of discussion with his own hands.

Seeing that Gopeenath felt offended, he tried to soothe him by gentle words. "You see, brother,"

honest examination of his claims will convince most minds of his divinity. Of course, it is impossible to deal with those who will neither believe nor investigate. There are men who consider Sree Gauranga as a disagreeable rival of the Avatar they worship. But these men have no love for God, humanity, or, for the matter of that, the Avatar they profess to worship. What they practically mean is that they would prefer to have no Avatars than a rival to the one they worship! They want others to follow their Avatar, and this means that self is their predominant idea. Those who have a drop of love for humanity, ought to rejoice if the divinity of Sree Gauranga is proved.

said he, "we followers of Nyaya cannot accept anything on trust. We want proofs for everything; and you must forgive us for not accepting the young man as God Almighty Himself until we had got conclusive reasons to that effect. Of course, if you had been able to point out any shastric text, promising the advent of an Avatar in this *Kali-yug* (Iron Age), I could have commanded the necessary patience to examine the antecedents of the young man, your God. Unfortunately there is even no such authority to help you."

Gopeenath sought to argue the matter with the sage, but he saw that he had no chance of defeating Sarvabhauma in a discussion. He further saw that the savant was dealing gently with him, simply because he was a relation and his guest, and this his proud spirit could not brook. He ought to have stopped there and apologised, but he could not for, he had partially lost his temper. He said: "In a discussion I have no chance against you. But let me remind you of the sloka which says that it is not possible to know God by the mere exercise of the reason, and that He is known only by him to whom He mercifully manifests Himself. When He showers His grace upon you, then you also will recognise Him. This I know which you, though a savant, fail to discern, namely, that he, the young ascetic, is the Incarnation of Sree Krishna!"

Sarvabhauma.—I see you have begun a regular fight with me. Of course, you perceive that there

is a fallacy in your argument. I quite admit that the grace of God is not in me. You have, however, to prove that it is in you, Gopeenath.

Gopeenath was non-plussed. He, however, replied in tones which showed that the savant's caustic replies were ranking in his heart. "I was foolish," said he, "to open a discussion with the greatest master of logic in the world. But yet, know this, thou man of learning, brimful of the pride of intellect! the time is sure to come when, Pundit as you are, you will have to bow your haughty head and follow the young Krishna-Chaitanya even as I do now, and accept him as the God of the universe in a human body."

Sarvabhauma smiled and the students tittered. Gopeenath felt that he was "casting pearls among weeds." He ceased, deeply mortified, the more so that before such an intellectually proud and critical audience he had betrayed the fact that he worshipped a young apchorite as the Lord God of the universe!

Sarvabhauma had also lost his temper, but he checked himself, though his words yet betrayed him. For, he said: "Excuse me, brother; we shall discuss this matter hereafter if necessary. Will you please, in the meantime, do me the favour of inviting your Lord God and his followers to accept my hospitality to-morrow?"

Of course, every one understood the sarcasm of inviting "your Lord God" to a dinner. But Gopee-

nath kept quiet, though the words of the savant burnt like living fire in his heart.

On the other hand, the words of Gopeenath had a disastrous effect on the minds of Sarvabhauma as also of his pupils in regard to the Lord. The savant had come to feel a great affection for the Lord, which Gopeenath's false tactics threatened to eradicate from his heart. We shall explain briefly how the advent of the Lord had affected the mind of the savant.

As previously stated, at the first glance he took the Lord to be either Jagannath Himself or some inferior celestial being. A few moments after, he considered that the young ascetic must be the luckiest man in the world with his unparalleled Krishna-prem, and confessed to himself his folly in having frittered away his energies in worthless pursuits. His highest desire, at that moment, was to acquire, if possible, some prem at the feet of the young ascetic. When he subsequently learnt that the ascetic was neither Jagannath, nor an inhabitant of heaven, but a man, and, more, a young man of his own town and the son of a poor Pundit, his respect for his host almost disappeared, though not his attraction for him. His beauty, his look of innocence, his renunciation, and, above all, his meekness and absolute reliance on him, irresistibly attracted the savant to the young ascetic. The attraction for him remained, though his previous idea

of acquiring prem from him slowly vanished from his mind.

At this juncture Gopeenath intervened. His blunders served to irritate Sarvabhauma by appealing to his baser feelings. Indeed, Gopeenath's claim on behalf of the Lord,—he saw no reason why the savant should offer his patronage to the young ascetic—tended to instill into the mind of the latter a feeling of jealousy for his young guest. The more Gopeenath tried to exalt the Lord, the more determined the savant became to depreciate the latter. For, this is human nature, at least, the nature of those worldly men who have, all the days of their lives, indulged their vanity, their selfishness, and so forth.

What the savant felt most persons would have felt under the same circumstances. There was, however, no breach, either open or secret, between him and the Lord. For, though Gopeenath proclaimed him to be the Lord God, the Lord himself posed as the humblest servant of the savant. And Sarvabhauma thus opened his heart to his disciples secretly: "The young ascetic," said he, "is an admirable man and bids fair to be a great one. His followers are doing their best to spoil him by making a God of him. But the youth himself is more intelligent than that. They have not as yet succeeded in spoiling him, and now that he is here and under my protection, he is safe. I will no longer permit his foolish companions to flatter him. I will not only

have him initiated over again, but will teach him the Vedas, the study of which is the chief business of those who enter the order of Sannyasees."

But where is your resolve gone, dear savant, of acquiring prem at the feet of the young ascetic? Where have you left your newly-acquired knowledge that there is a loving God, that He desires to be loved, and the most valuable acquisition for men is love for God? His life-long training, which had made his vanity the moving force of all his actions, banished all these excellent ideas from his heart.

And this is the way our greatest men behave. They will always teach and never learn. They will always command, but never obey. A wife, with an uxorious husband, fancies that she is lucky; for, she has a husband who is obedient. On the other hand, a wife who is loving and unselfish, prefers a husband of strong mind, and faithfully and cheerfully obeys the behests of her lord. If the wife of the hen-pecked husband enjoys the satisfaction of being obeyed, the unselfish wife derives a still greater pleasure from her obedience. Little does the former know that the latter is the happier of the two. For, while there is some fictitious enjoyment to be derived from a position of command, the real enjoyment comes from a position of service. It is better for man to obey than to command, since the pleasure derived from the former is real and that derived from the latter unreal and debasing. Learn to obey and thereby your spirit will be chastened, and you will

make yourself more acceptable to God. Indeed our master commands us to be "humbler than the grass" we tread upon.

Now the whole world is anxious to teach, and no one wishes to learn. If you want teachers, hundreds will come to your call ; but, if you want to teach, your fellows will not approach you. For, vanity rules most minds. To teach is to arrogate to oneself superiority, and such an attitude pleases one's vanity. To learn is to be humble, and that hurts vanity ; therefore, people prefer to teach than to learn.

But is not the student more fortunate than the professor? The professor gains nothing by teaching, while the student by learning not only retains what he had, but acquires more ! Thus the savant Sarvabhauma saw that though he had mastered Nyaya, the Vedas, and most other branches of knowledge, he had not yet obtained a single drop of prem. He, for the moment, realized vividly that his many acquirements, although they satisfied his vanity, would be of no use to him in the after-life. He, therefore, resolved to acquire prem from the young ascetic whom God had luckily placed at his disposal. But his vanity stood in the way. He forgot all his wise resolutions ; he checked all his higher aspirations, and trembled with apprehension when he saw that the young ascetic threatened to dispute his superiority ! So he struggled to maintain

his position ; luckily, however, the Lord was not disposed to dispute it.

He had a talk with the Lord after his conversation with Gopeenath. Said Sarvabhuma : "I see in you everything that is good, but I fear you are too young to be an ascetic. The shastras declare it to be improper to initiate a man who is below the age of fifty."

The Lord (humbly and with folded hands).—When I entered the order, I was in a state of frenzy. Besides, I am only an ignorant young man. But what I have done cannot be undone now.

The savant.—Again, why did not you select a man of better class than a Bharati for your Guru? The Saraswati, (a class of Sannyasees), is better. You must be initiated again.

The Lord.—You know I am at your absolute disposal. It was not Jagannath alone who attracted me here. It is a privilege to be taught by you and here I am at your feet.

The savant was mightily pleased. He said : "This humility on your part suits you very well. Besides, to tell you frankly, I feel a father's affection for you."

What the savant wanted was, not only to re-initiate the Lord, but also to reprove him before his pupils so as to show his superiority over the Lord before them, and thus to reduce him to the position of an inferior.

"Krishna-Chaitanya," said he, "the passions are

dreadful things, and you are only a lad. How will you conquer them? To this end, I will read the Vedas to you everyday. Mind, as a Sannyasee, to listen to them, being read, is your most sacred duty." The Lord repeated humbly that he was absolutely at the disposal of the savant.

The savant again observed: "I have not myself seen it, but I have heard that though an ascetic, you indulge in the habit of singing and dancing. Give up, I entreat of you, such foolish extravagances. They do not become one who has entered your order." It was thus that the savant treated the Lord.

The followers of the Lord, however, could endure it no longer. Gopeenath had come to see his wife, a sister of the savant, and was putting up at his house. He now made a vow, in his own mind, that he would never again taste a morsel of food until he had extorted a pledge from the Lord to convert his brother-in-law, the savant. And so he fasted!

Said Gopeenath, addressing the Lord, who was sitting in his hut, made over to him by the savant: "My Lord, I am happy to inform you that the savant has promised to look after you."

Now this was said in a tone of sarcasm. But the Lord had not the least idea of it. He said, in grateful tones, "yes, I have to thank you, Gopeenath, for it. For, I owe all this attention from him, to his being your relation."

The reply did not commend itself to Gopeenath, whose object was to inflame the mind of the Lord

against the savant. So he continued: "The savant is afraid lest you should fail to keep your vows, you being so young. But he has promised to take care of you; he will see that you don't fall a victim to your passions."

The Lord.—Yes this is very, very good of him. He is a true and sincere well-wisher.

Gopeenath.—Besides, he has promised to re-initiate you, and also to teach you the Vedas. He does not like your kirtan and your dances.

The Lord, who was the incarnation of simplicity, not having the least idea of what Gopeenath was aiming at, looked in a puzzled manner at him. But here Mukunda intervened. He said, "to make the matter short, my Lord, Gopeenath is fasting."

The Lord.—Gopeenath fasting! why?

Mukunda.—Sarvabhauma is a near relation of his. By him insults, as he thinks, have been levelled at you, and this he cannot bear. He has confided to me that the words of Sarvabhauma have penetrated deep into his heart, and are rankling there like poisoned shafts.

Here the Lord interrupted Mukunda. He said: "I don't see the reason for all this. We may not agree with all that he says, but his motives are excellent. It is quite true that I am young, and he shows a paternal affection for me when he reminds me of the fact. Believe me, my friends, you misjudge him."

Mukunda.—My Lord! You are indifferent alike to praise and blame. But, to us, who are frail men, his patronising and even contemptuous attitude to-

wards you is almost intolerable. It is, therefore, well, perhaps that you should know that Gopeenath has made a vow never to take another morsel of food until you have promised to take pity upon Sarvabhauma and save him.

The Lord.—I must say, I think, you are all very unreasonable, and that the savant's conduct has been all that it should be. He is the natural Guru of us all ; he holds the first position here and everywhere ; he has no equal ; nevertheless, you would fain confront him with a rival, nay, a suprior, in me. Knowing this, he was justified in humiliating you by deprecating me.

Here Gopeenath burst into tears. He said : "My Lord, do not try to deceive me by such words as these. My brother-in-law, in spite of his great learning, is devoid of the grace of God ; for, he is an unbeliever. He has spoken disrespectfully of you, and that has endangered his after-life. Save him, or, I promise you, I will never more partake of food." Saying this he fell at the feet of the Lord.

The Lord smiled. He said : "You are a bhakta of Krishna. He never forsakes a servant. You are determined to have your brother-in-law saved. That being the case, it comes to this that he is saved—surely Krishna is bound to save him."

When this was said, all the bhaktas, including Gopeenath, raised a shout of Haribole. They had no longer any doubt the savant would be saved !

This indirect promise of the Lord made matters smooth, otherwise, it would have been impossible

for them all to live together in peace as the guests of Sarvabhauma. Gopeenath being now assured that his brother-in-law would, within a short time, be saved, no longer permitted the latter's contemptuous treatment of the Lord to vex his soul. The unbending attitude of Gopeenath, on the other hand, induced the savant to assail his relative still further by caustic and depreciatory remarks upon the Lord, addressed sometimes to him, and at other times directly to the Lord himself.

The next time Sarvabhauma saw the Lord, he addressed him in a more familiar and more pronouncedly patronizing tone. He said : "You must give up your antics ; dancing and singing do not become an ascetic ; and you must study the Vedas. I shall consider it a duty incumbent on me daily to read to you a portion of the sacred book." The more the savant raised himself, the more the Lord humbled himself.

The Lord, with great submission, acknowledged his obligations. He said, he placed himself at the absolute disposal of the savant. This humble attitude of the Lord again disarmed the savant.

The savant said : "You are a well-disposed young man, and therefore God will confer on you the choicest blessings. From to-morrow we shall commence to read the Vedas together. We shall read every afternoon in the Temple."

The following day the Lord and the savant met for the purpose in the Temple. The latter opened

the Vedas and began to read. The Lord listened. This continued for about an hour, when the savant closed the book. The sage read and the Lord seemed to hear, but said nothing. In this manner passed the first day.

The second day arrived ; the savant read and the Lord listened. There was no comment or remark from the Lord. The sage read a couplet and explained it, as he understood it. And then he read another and explained. In this manner an hour passed. And the second day's proceedings ended in the same manner as the first.

And thus six days passed !

Now the savant did not know what to make of his new pupil. Did he understand what was read to him? Probably he did, for he looked so very intelligent! But why then did he not offer any remark? Or, was it possible he did not understand anything at all of what was read to him? Or, was it that he did not like the sentiments?

Now, the last suggestion the savant thought, in his heart of hearts, to be the true one. "Is it possible that the youngster has an opinion of his own?" thought he. "Yes, it must be so, and that is probably the reason of his silence ; for, I have observed shades of disapproval now and then passing across his face during my discourses. This state of things cannot be allowed to proceed any longer. We must come to a definite understanding to-morrow." Thus the savant thought on the night of the sixth day.

On the seventh day they again met. The savant opened his book ; but before proceeding with the usual discourse, he began conversation with his pupil, thus. Said he : "Krishna-Chaitanya, I have been reading the Vedas to you these six days. How is it that you offer no comments?"

The Lord.—Your command to me was that I should listen, and that I have obeyed.

The savant.—That is quite true. But how can one go on reading without some sort of relief? I expected to hear you offer some comments. You should, while I explain, let me know whether you understand me or not.

The Lord.—Any comment from me is impossible; for, I do not understand a syllable of your explanations.

The savant.—What! You don't understand a syllable? Yet you don't ask me to explain to you? What am I to understand from this? You are a strange creature indeed! When people do not understand they ask for an explanation. How am I to know whether you are following me or not in my explanations? I took you to be a very intelligent young man, but your act belies that supposition.

The Lord replied humbly. He said : "The context is very clear. It is only your explanation that mystifies me."

Now, it must be borne in mind that the Vedas are the sacred writings of the Hindus. To be a Hindu, everyone must believe in those writings. To

make any religious theory acceptable, it is, first of all, necessary to show that the Vedas support it. Shankaracharya had to show that his creed of Advaitabadism was supported by the Vedas. With that view he wrote a commentary on the Vedas, which he succeeded in making acceptable to all the learned men of the country. Indeed, this commentary almost supplanted the text. In this commentary, he, by his profound learning, twisted the meanings of the words so as to make the Vedas seem to teach, what they actually do not, the doctrine of Advaitabadism.

What the savant, who was, of course, a strict believer in the doctrines of Shankara, had been doing, was this. He would read a couplet from the text, and then read Shankara's commentary upon it. He would meddle no further with the text, but would explain the commentary of Shankara, which established the doctrine of the Advaitabadees.

On the other hand, the doctrine which the Lord help up for the acceptance of mankind, was quite opposed to that of Shankara. The Lord taught that He and I are *not* the same ; and that the ego in man can hold communion with Him only by the cultivation of prem and bhakti. To be able to establish his teachings without committing any outrage upon Hinduism, the Lord was bound to prove that the Vedas supported his view.

The Lord in reply to the question of the savant repeated with deference that, the meaning of the

context appeared to him to be pretty clear, but that he could not understand the savant's explanations.

This was a challenge thrown out to the savant,—a move for which the savant was in no wise prepared. In the first place, because he could not have believed it possible that there was any man in the universe who would dare throw down the gauntlet to him in regard to the interpretation of the Vedas ; and, in the second place, because he had formed the notion that a challenge of any sort was unlikely from the meek, guileless and unaggressive youth of twenty-four, who was sitting before him. So that for the moment he could not really apprehend what the Lord actually meant.

The savant.—I do not understand you, Krishna-Chaitanya ; you understand the text, but you do not understand my explanations. Do you mean that ?

The Lord did not give a direct reply. He said : "The text is as simple as anything can possibly be. But Shankara had certain pre-conceived theories of his own, and was obliged to twist the meaning of the text in order to support them."

The savant stared at the Lord with infinite astonishment. This was the first time that a human being had dared, in his presence, to find fault with the rendering of the Vedas by Shankara, the universally-respected ascetic and the leader of all the ascetics in India. This was the first time that a man had spoken in this defiant manner to the savant, who believed that he had then no equal in India, except

perhaps Prakashananda of Benares. And from whom did this challenge come? From a young man of twenty-four, the son of an indifferent Pundit of Nadia, who had never gone to Benares to study the Vedas, and one whom he had fancied the meekest and most helpless of men! After staring for a time, the savant thus delivered himself: "Do I understand you aright? Do you mean to assert that you understand the Vedas, but not the commentary of the great Shankara? Humph! There is a good deal of conceit within that submissive exterior. Let us then change places. Let me listen while you explain. Let me have a glimpse of your knowledge of the Vedas."

The Lord was not moved in the least. He replied, without noticing that the savant had lost his temper; "Pundit, it is not at all a matter of opinion. The Vedas are simple enough, and any child can understand them. Shankara wanted the sanction of the sacred writings to establish his own peculiar doctrines; but they, as a matter of fact, support the opposite one, Shankara had therefore to discard the simple meaning as not suiting his purpose, and replace it by fanciful interpretations of his own. You are explaining these fanciful renderings of his. But why should we have to consult them at all, when the text is before us? It is the simplest thing to understand the text. Just see." And the Lord began to repeat the Vedas, starting at the beginning. He

repeated the first couplet, and then commenced to explain it, in his own way.

Sarvabhauma would have prevented the Lord from proceeding in this authoritative manner. He would have liked to browbeat him into silence; but the calm and confident manner in which the Lord began, compelled him to command a moment's patience to hear him. The Lord had not spoken many words before he succeeded in arousing the savant's curiosity. The savant was a man of culture; the only pleasure that he knew was what proceeded from the play of the intellect. When the Lord began his exposition, he heard something which he had never before heard, and this induced him to continue his attention.

As I said before, the sanction of the Vedas is necessary for a Hindu who would establish a religious doctrine. The Adwaitabadees refer to the renderings of Shankara to show that the Vedas support their creed. Now, the Dwaitabadees, that is to say, those who believed in a separate God, and in prem and in bhakti as the best means of attaining to Him, were no less bound, if they would make their doctrines acceptable to the Hindus, to bring them in conformity or seeming conformity with the same sacred writings. The Dwaitabadees had either to confess their doctrines as heretical, or to prove that they were supported by the teaching of the Vedas. Of course, the Lord might have rejected the Vedas altogether; but that would have outraged the feel-

ings of the Hindus, and he was averse from creating any sort of social disturbance. Jesus said that he came to fulfil and not to destroy, and that was also the path which the Lord followed. The Lord was thus the first to prove, in a systematic manner, that the Vedas did not sanction the doctrine of Adwaita-badees, but the very opposite. How, it may be asked, could two contending parties claim to refer to the same sacred writings for sanction for their respective creeds? But is not the Bible cited to justify slavery and war? The Sanskrit language is probably the richest in the world: its capacity is truly wonderful, almost unlimited.

The Lord repeated the first couplet and explained it in his own way. He said: "You see, Pundit, how easy it is if we will only accept the explanation which comes to us most naturally." He then repeated the rendering of Shankara and showed that it could not be obtained in the natural way. Sharvabhauma, of course, was prepared with objections, but found no opportunity of raising them, because the Lord anticipated him, and raised them himself to refute them.

In this manner the Lord proceeded step by step and proved that the teaching of the Vedas was quite different from that attributed to them by Shankara, and that, among other truths, they supported the idea of a personal God, and the absolute necessity of prem and bhakti to attain Him.

Thus, for the first time, in a systematic manner, the Lord demonstrated that the Vedas really supported

the doctrine of prem and bhakti in opposition to the seeming pantheism attributed to them. These wonderful researches of his were followed and extended by his great follower Baladeva Bidyabhusana of Bengal.

The savant continued to listen in a somewhat unamiable mood; but his feelings of resentment became gradually weakened, and finally evaporated altogether. It soothed his soul to listen to the highly intellectual exposition of the Lord. "A nice, intellectual person of great culture, this young man is," thought he. But his wonder increased step by step. He soon discovered that the young man was not a mere learned man, but a savant. "No," he thought again, "he is more than a savant, he is a master." "So the young man is undoubtedly a greater man than I," thought the savant at length, with amazement.

The savant's tongue, as it were, clung to his palate; indeed, surprise took away his power of speech. For, here was a young man of only twenty-four summers, who knew the Vedas more thoroughly than he did, nay, not only more than himself, but than all other interpreters of the sacred writings, who had preceded him. As the Lord proceeded, his natural bashfulness vanished; and his eloquent tongue began to deal with facts, ideas, imageries and arguments, as if they were mere play-things with him. Wonder dazed the savant at that moment. "Hari, Hari," he exclaimed, thereby to give relief to his surcharged heart.

The Lord stopped at this interruption. "Go on, go on. I am all attention," urged the savant. And the Lord, interrupted for a moment by the ejaculation of the savant, proceeded.

"What powers, what wonderful powers," thought the savant. "No wonder Gopeenath thinks him God. If he is not the Lord God, he is no doubt Brihaspati."*

The fact was, the savant found himself affected in divers ways. His jealousy of the Lord disappeared, as admiration for him filled his heart. Nay, the discourse of the Lord was then giving him infinite pleasure, and he urged him to go on with his expositions. What can be more pleasing to a man of intellect than the display of intellectual feats seemingly impossible? The Lord repeated a couplet, analysed, and finally explained it in a thorough manner. His second step was to show that the lines could not have the meaning given to them by Shankara. The Lord proved his point by citing parallel passages; he also helped to prove it by showing that unless his rendering was accepted, the subsequent couplets would appear altogether purposeless and meaningless.

The ideas set forth by the Lord took, as it were, visible shape, and seemed to the savant in every respect faultless. When they were not really so, the Lord showed their weak points which had not occurred to the savant. The Lord exposed them only to show that the defects were more seeming than real.

* The most learned Pundit among the dwellers in Heaven.

The savant thought that enough had been done by the Lord to prove his point. But no! The idea had only been moulded and shaped; it had now to be dressed in gorgeous language sparkling with imagery, similes and metaphors and beautified in innumerable other ways. Thus the Lord proceeded.

The savant was over-awed; he had not a word to say. His head, which he had hitherto been able to hold so high, came slowly down, as if in token of submission. His two hands met, unknown to himself, to express the submissive state of his mind. But yet he could not help now and then muttering expressions like these: "What wonderful learning!" "What powers!" "What a gigantic and cultured intellect!"

Said the savant at last: "I was not aware that you are Vedamaya, i.e., (literally) all-Vedas, and that the Vedas were play-things to you. You have to-day performed a wonderful feat; you have, to my mind, altogether changed the meaning and purport of the Vedas." The Lord interrupted the savant's words of praise and said: "Pundit, do not be surprised to find that the Vedas teach prem and bhakti. For, do you not know that the great saints, through whom the Vedas were revealed, hankered after bhakti?" And saying this the Lord repeated a sloka from the Sreemat Bhagavat, supporting this statement. The plain meaning of that sloka is that even those great saints, who have worshipped an impersonal God, have hankered after bhakti.

Here the savant asked the Lord to explain that

particular sloka. The attitude of the savant was humble. "Yes," said the Lord, smiling. "I will do so, but let me first hear you explain it."

This was a request which rather pleased the savant. He had been, as it were, utterly routed, and here was an opportunity given to him of regaining as much of his position as was possible. So he began to explain the sloka with great pleasure, and with all the powers he possessed.

Now, as I said, the capacity of the Sanskrit language is unlimited. One word has various meanings, and there are various words to express one idea. And the language possesses advantages, which need not be enumerated here, that enable one to give different renderings of any given couplet. Indeed, attempts have been made to interpret big books like the Ramayana and Mahabharata throughout in a way not generally accepted. So Sarvabhauma took that opportunity of showing his profound intellect and learning by explaining the couplet in different ways. Thus he first gave one explanation of the couplet, and then observed that it could be made to express something totally different, and explained it in another way. And in this manner he actually gave nine different renderings to that one sloka!

Sarvabhauma thought that he had been able to redeem his position, at least partially. For, had he not been able to explain one couplet in nine different ways? And who but the profoundest of Pundits could do that? He fancied that he had at length

been able to show his superiority over the young ascetic in one branch of knowledge at least.

The Lord, as a matter of fact, expressed his admiration of the ingenuity with which the Pundit had explained the couplet. He said, "you have displayed powers only worthy of the greatest Pundit in the world." "But," continued he, "you have explained it from a learned man's point of view. The saint, who composed them, had perhaps other objects in view. Let me see if I can find them out." Saying this he began to explain the matter in his own way.

The attempt caused the sage some apprehension, as the expression of his pale face clearly revealed. He had, in fact, by this time, lost all confidence in himself, and, indeed, was thoroughly demoralised. He had learnt to regard the young ascetic, who sat before him, with dread, as a scholar capable of any feat. He, the greatest Pundit in India, had explained a couplet in nine different ways, and here is a young man who says that the couplet in question has yet other possible meanings! As a matter of fact, the feats already performed by the Lord in his presence showed the sage that there were good grounds for his apprehension.

Of the nine renderings of the savant, the Lord took no-notice. He rejected them *in toto*. He first showed that there were so many words in the first and so many in the second line. He then took each of these words for analysis to show how many meanings each of them had. Thus,

for instance, the first word in the sloka was "atma." He said that this word had seven meanings. The second word was "aram." He showed that it had also several meanings. After he had shown that all the words in the couplet had more meanings than one, he began to explain the sloka in different ways. When the first rendering was done, Sarvabhauma looked at the Lord with infinite wonder. He found that the Lord had not meddled with any one of his nine renderings. But his wonder increased when he saw that the rendering of the Lord went to prove his view of religion, viz., the superiority of prem and bhakti. The sage remarked: "Swamee, you are not only thoroughly versed in the Vedas, but also, I perceive, are a thorough master of language."

But the Lord took no notice of his remark, and began to explain the couplet in another way. The second rendering of the Lord was quite different from the first. Yet it supported the grand idea of the superiority of bhakti to all other means of salvation.

When the second rendering had been thoroughly explained, the Lord began with the third!

The sage felt that the power that the Lord was displaying was more than human.

It would be a little difficult for a foreigner to realize the difficult nature of the feat accomplished by the Lord. Of course, it is quite possible for a Sanskrit Pundit, profoundly learned in the language, to explain a couplet in different ways. But mind

the fact that the most learned man of the period had already done it and explained it in nine different ways, and left no other opening for one who followed him to chalk out a new path for himself.

Then take into consideration that to render a sloka in different ways, is a feat which requires not only learning but profound thought. One cannot do it in a moment. The Lord had uttered the sloka in course of conversation. He had no idea that Sarvabhauma would ask him to explain this particular sloka to him. So, he had not come prepared with the different renderings to dazzle the sage by his learning. He had incidentally repeated the sloka, and the sage had subjected it to his powerful intellect and crushed out of it nine different renderings. When this was done, it was made over to the Lord for fresh attempts upon it in the same direction.

Besides, the most wonderful part of the feat perhaps was, that though the Lord explained the sloka in different ways, each rendering, though separate from all the others, established the doctrine of the superiority of bhakti over all other means of salvation!

Thus, the Lord continued to furnish different renderings of the same sloka to the savant, who was step by step losing his senses in wonderment. After each such rendering the sage uttered something to express his infinite wonder, though this he did more to himself than to the Lord, who was then engrossed with his own thoughts and work. Said the sage:

"Hari, Hari! Such powers are beyond the capacity of men." He said again: "If he, the Lord, had been simply Brihaspati, I would have still ventured to challenge him; but he seems something more." And again: "Only the Goddess of learning, Saraswattee, is capable of such a feat. Is this young ascetic Saraswattee in disguise? Or, perhaps, her husband Krishna himself?"

Indeed, the sage was more fitted to appreciate the powers displayed by the Lord than any outside public possibly could be. Almost at the outset he had come to admit that he himself was no match for the Lord in learning, and that his power was more than human. But, at last, he came to suspect that perhaps he might be no less a Being than Sree Krishna. Who had come there to humble his (the savant's) pride,—that pride by which he had crushed in his day the pride of an infinite number of the profoundest sages of the age. Each new rendering seemed a fresh blow aimed at him and his scholarship, and at length he found it impossible to bear the position any longer. So, when the Lord had actually furnished eighteen such renderings, he fell at the feet of the Lord, utterly helpless, surrendering himself absolutely.*

* The Lord, if he had not been interrupted by the sage, would have furnished other renderings. Indeed, at a later period, he gave sixty different readings to that one couplet. The couplet is extant, as I said before, as also his sixty different renderings, and continue to elicit infinite admiration from the profoundest of Sanskrit scholars.

He thus addressed the Lord: "Pardon me for having offended you. I treated you as an inferior, unaware that you had no equal among the sons of men." He then expressed his submission, by catching hold of the Lord's feet, and waited for some words of consolation from the Lord. He expected to hear from him some words of consolation, but hearing none he gazed at the Lord,—to find a wonderful sight!

The young ascetic had disappeared, and in his place was standing a six-armed divinity. With two of his arms he carried a bow and arrows; with two he played on a flute, and with the remaining two he carried a staff and a mendicant's cup!

Sarvabhauma fainted away.

When he rose, he found the young ascetic tending him and trying to arouse him. "Where is He gone?" cried the sage, as he vacantly looked around him, but the Lord took no notice of his query and only said in reply,—"It is time to go home, let us go." The sage rose, and he and the Lord both left the Temple in silence. The Lord rapidly proceeded to his hut, while Sarvabhauma entered his own apartments in a semi-conscious state.

What did he see? thought the sage. Was it an hallucination or a vision revealed to him by the most High? What did the vision mean? In the significance of the vision he had not the least doubt. In India two Avatars were worshipped, Rama and Krishna, before the advent of Lord

Gauranga. Rama flourished as a warrior-king, with the object of destroying wicked kings who oppressed human beings. He is, therefore, represented with a bow and arrow. Sree Krishna came to show men that the Lord God had tender human qualities, and is represented in the act of playing a flute. The vision then meant that the Being, who is worshipped as Rama and Krishna, had appeared again with a staff and mendicant's cup, to beg love of his creatures.* It meant that Personal God is a fact.

So He is come! thought the sage. So, what the saints assert is all true, and what we learned men are disposed to consider as mere hallucination is real, *viz.*, that man is not an animal, and has a bright destiny! Oh happy Sarvabhauma! happy man! Sarvabhauma wept with joy.

It comes to this then, thought the sage, that the Lord God is a most considerate and kind-hearted Being. He has created men for their own happiness. Where is misery then? Oh Misery! I

* As I said before, Messiahs, for very good reasons, don't come to break, but to establish and develop ancient faiths. At a subsequent period, another great man, Ramananda, saw the Lord as Krishna in the act of playing His flute. He was permitted to see the beautiful Krishna because he was a believer. But the sage was in need of proof for, he was not a believer, and, therefore he had to see the Lord as a six-handed divinity. Ramananda wanted an object of love, and he saw Sree Krishna; the sage wanted proofs, and he had them.

defy thee. Don't now approach me. I now know that I am in the lap of my loving Father, Who is strong enough to be able to protect me, and good enough to provide me with all that I require to make me happy. What is it to man, if the universe disappears by a cataclysm? What does he gain if he earns the sovereignty of the whole world, since man is destined for other things than the pleasures derived from the exercise of the baser feelings?

And again, thought the sage: Oh the trouble that I took to acquire learning! But what is my learning worth? The one knowledge that I have acquired to-day that there is a God,—a loving God Who does not forget His creatures below,—is infinite times worth more than all the learning that I acquired with such infinite troubles.

In the midst of these celestial joys, the poor human being, Sarvabhauma, was now and then disturbed by the appearance of doubts.

But may not all that be hallucination? And he shuddered as the doubt threatened to destroy the ecstasy which hope had awakened in his mind.

And then he wept in sorrow. But other thoughts soon relieved him. "The vision may be a hallucination," thought he; "but I have yet something more substantial to base my faith on. Have I not found a greater savant than Shankara? It may be all a vision, but the new rendering of the Vedas is not a vision, and this in itself is proof enough to establish the fact that the young ascetic