

is more than a man. And then the way he explained the sloka! That certainly was not a hallucination. Surely, that was a feat beyond human powers. There is no doubt, the young man is Sree Krishna. And I treated him as an inferior and made him an object of ridicule to my pupils!" And he again shuddered.

Thus he passed the night in despair and ecstasy alternately. He had just fallen asleep when a knock at the door announced to him that the young Swamee was seeking him!

It came about in this way. The Lord, having passed the night in his hut, proceeded to the Temple early in the morning, as usual with him. But, on that morning, he entered into the innermost apartment where Jagannath was sitting, which he had not done before. As he appeared before Jagannath, two of His servants presented themselves before him, one with a garland of flowers, which he put on the neck of the Lord; and the other carried some *prosad*, which he made also over to him (the Lord). *Prosad* is, as I said before, the offering made to God. In this case, it was cooked rice which had been offered to Jagannath.

The Lord accepted the garland by bending his head, and the *prosad* he tied up in a corner of his garment, and left the place. The bhaktas who had, as usual, accompanied the Lord, saw all these strange proceedings with wonder. The Lord came out, and, with that garland round his neck and

prosad in his cloth, ran—where? The bhaktas, of course, followed him to find out. He took the road towards the house of Sarvabhauma. There were guards in the outer house, but the Lord took no notice of them, and they, recognising him, did not dare interfere. He reached the sleeping apartment of the savant and called to the latter by name.

Now, a Brahmin boy was sleeping in the veranda. He rose, and seeing the Lord, knocked at the door of the sleeping room of Sarvabhauma, as I said above. The savant had just then closed his eyes. He rose with a start. "Who is it that calls?" he asked. And on learning that the Lord had come, he quickly opened the door, and seeing the Lord he fell at his feet, the Lord blessing, as usual with him, with the words, "May thy soul abide in Krishna!"

They both sat down, and the Lord took the handful of *prosad* (which is nothing more or less than cooked rice) and presented it to the sage with these words: "This is the *prosad* from Jagannath; take it."

Now, according to the bhaktas, the *prosad* is a holy thing which everyone ought to consider a most precious gift of Heaven. According to the ordinary usage of the Hindus however, cooked rice is an abomination, whose touch pollutes the hand, and which can be purified only by the washing. To put the matter shortly, for Sarvabhauma, who had just got out of bed, who had not washed his

face, bathed and performed his poojah,—for him to take cooked rice, at that hour of the morning, simply because it was *prosad*, would be a great social outrage. No Hindu would have done it; and Sarvabhauma, who gave laws to the Hindus, would not have certainly done it under ordinary circumstances.

But when the Lord presented him with the *prosad* smiling, and with the request "take it," he could not resist. He took the cooked rice in both hands with great reverence, and at once swallowed it, repeating two slokas in justification of his act, which said in effect that when the *prosad* of God comes to hand, let it be eaten at once, irrespective of any consideration of time, place, or other matters.

Here the sage, probably for the first time in his life, transgressed the precepts of ordinary Hinduism. Now, as also then, the Hindus were weighted with many formal ceremonies and outward observances, which took the life out of sweet religion itself. These rules the Brahmins had imposed on their flocks, in order to maintain their own absolute superiority over all the other castes. To accomplish this, they had themselves strictly to observe their own ordinances. And the result was that the Brahmins themselves came to be, like the others, the slaves of customs, artificially established, for the purpose of maintaining their own superiority. But the Lord taught the religion of the heart; he

had nothing to do with the many absurd ceremonies that enslaved and demoralised society. Hindu society, however, dominated by the Brahmins, was strong, and he had, therefore, to demolish the superstructure, raised by the practice of ages, by assailing it in an indirect manner. Thus, he did not say that this or that system ought to be destroyed; for, if he had done so, society would have risen against him at once. Thus, he did not say anything against caste. But, what he said was this: "The Chandal (the lowest of the castes) is superior to the Brahmin, if he is a bhakta of God, and the latter not." The Lord preached this doctrine which no rational man could find fault with, and also practised it himself. It was in this manner that the caste system was reformed. Thus Haridas was a Mussulman, but the Lord made his bhaktas do him the same honour as they would to the highest of Brahmins. A Brahmin would never take cooked rice in the morning without washing his face, bathing, and performing his usual poojah. If any one were to do so, he would be expelled from society. When the Lord, however, presented the sage with the *prosad*, he took it with due submission, rather with warmth. Here the sage gave evidence that he was ready, for the sake of Krishna, to give up society.

Let us now turn to the Krishna-leela. Says Radha to her attendant Gopees: "Listen! the flute of my Beloved is beckoning me. I must go. I can-

not remain. Those of you who wish to follow me, come. If you are afraid of scandal and of your relations, do not approach me. Such beings do not deserve to possess my Beloved. My Beloved cannot be won without sacrifice. If you will not forsake your relations, and brave society's wrath, for Krishna, why should Krishna be yours? If you desire to capture Him, you must, first of all, surrender everything to Him."

Now, my kind reader, do you understand the significance of the words put in the mouth of Radha? In the present instance the Radha is the Lord, and Sarvabhauma is a Gopee. This Gopee (Sarvabhauma) has a husband, *viz.*, his social obligations, superstitions, and so forth. The Lord subjects him to the test by putting *prosad* in his hands. Is Sarvabhauma desirous of possessing Krishna? If so, let him throw away his social shackles and follow him. The sage accepted the challenge, and showed his willingness to trample the obligations of society under foot, and to bear the consequences, in order to win Krishna. Thus he took the *prosad* and thereby proved that he was prepared to disobey one of the formal precepts of ordinary Hinduism for the purpose of attaining to His lotus feet. As soon as Sarvabhauma accepted the *prosad*, he gave up society for His sake.

Sarvabhauma accepted the *prosad* reverentially and—fell down in a swoon!

His condition is thus described in the book

Chaitanya Chandrodaya: "He fell down as if seized with an epileptic fit. He foamed at the mouth, and there was a gurgling sound in his throat. From his vacant eyes tears trickled down his cheeks, and the hair over his whole body stood on end."

Shortly after having recovered the use of his limbs, he began to roll on the ground.

His family, including his wife, son, daughter, sister and others, beheld the spectacle with alarm and anxiety, but did not dare interfere; indeed, there was no necessity for interference, for, the Lord, after a short interval, restored him to consciousness, by touching his body and gently shaking him.

The sage sat up and looked at the Lord in a half-conscious state. The Lord then, catching hold of his hand, and rising with him, addressed the sage thus (*vide* "Chaitanya Charitamrita"):

"To-day I have conquered the universe; to-day I feel I have acquired the kingdom of Heaven. To-day all my desires have been fulfilled. For, to-day you, the savant of savants, have cut the shackles which bind you to forms and society, for the sake of Krishna. To-day you have become a sincere servant of the Lord, to-day the Lord has taken you into His bosom, to-day you become a free-man to ascend high and higher every day. To-day your soul has been purified, and thereby rendered capable of communing with the most High."

Having delivered this address, he embraced the sage with a love which knows no bounds!

The address and embrace of the Lord filled the sage with the holy spirit. It permeated his body through its whole extent, as appeared from the *pulak* that sprung from it. As during the flood tide wave after wave mounts the Ganges, so he found his heart overtaken by wave after wave of ecstasy, till at length, in the excess of his joy, he began to dance!

Now the spectacle of a dance of a hippopotamus may be within the range of possibility, but that of the Hindu sage like Sarvabhauma seemed not to be so. Of course, his dance did not reveal much grace, but it accomplished its purpose by relieving his overcharged heart, and proving the extent of his joy.

Thus the Lord and the sage held each other's hands, and gazed tenderly at each other, while they danced. And there were present, the members of Sarvabhauma's family, his servants, and—his brother-in-law Gopeenath!

Tears of joy trickled down the cheeks of Gopeenath, while he looked at the Lord gratefully and his brother-in-law, the sage, approvingly. But then he addressed Sarvabhauma: "Fie! what are you doing? Are you not ashamed of yourself dancing with uplifted arms like a drunken man? Have you forgotten yourself? What will your pupils say? What will the world say? The great Sarvabhauma dancing!"

The sage looked at Gopeenath sweetly, and composed a sloka then and there. It means this: "Let evil-tongued people say whatever they like ;

what do we care? Let us, in the meantime, get intoxicated by drinking prem, and dance, and roll on the ground in the joy of our hearts!"

Now the followers of the Lord firmly believe that the Lord chose the only method possible, of converting Sarvabhauma. His vanity blinded him, which made him think that he was more intelligent and more learned than the rest of his fellows and, therefore, above instruction. His vanity made it possible for others to instil any idea into his mind ; for, he felt that his mind was already full. To be brought into the fold of the Lord, the first thing necessary, therefore, was to cure him of his vanity. When, therefore, Sarvabhauma had been made to feel that he was after all a very insignificant and ignorant creature, he was given the privilege of witnessing a vision, in the shape of a six-armed figure. This vision had a world of meaning in it which the sage understood, and which it was the object of the Lord to convey.

At the moment he beheld it, his heart having already been humbled, he had no difficulty in gleaning from there a definite idea of religion. At night he passed his time in alternate ecstasy and doubt. One other operation, however, remained in order to make him a bhakta. There are men who believe in everything, but yet do not entertain any tender feeling for God,—worldliness does not permit them to do so. The sight of the six-handed divinity and the intellectual capacity displayed by the Lord, made

Sarvabhauma a believer,—that is all. But the Lord wanted to make an active bhakta of him, therefore, he filled him with prem and bhakti. With the *prosād* he “imparted the holy influence”* to the sage.

The Lord left the sage and hurriedly returned to his hut. The sage, however, followed him soon after, accompanied by a servant. His first duty everyday had been, as soon as he left his house in the morning, to pay a visit to Jagannath ; but on this particular day, he neglected the “wooden God” and proceeded towards the “moving God,” who has now become accessible. The servant, who followed, had seen a few moments before the insane exhibitions of the sage, and he naturally thought that the sage was still under the same influence, in consequence of which he had forgotten the road to the Temple. So he reminded his master that that was not the way to the Temple. The sage replied that he was aware of the fact, and while he spoke, he smiled ; for, he could gauge the motives which had inspired his servants to warn him of his mistake. Gopeenath had preceded him.

In a very short time he was standing before the Lord with folded hands. Both he and the Lord were then in a sober state. The Lord had then recovered his normal condition completely ; indeed, he had almost forgotten all that he had done a short while

* The true Guru, or the master, when initiating a pupil, has “to impart the holy influence” to him.

before, namely, his going to the Temple for the *prosād*, his offering it to the sage, its effect upon the latter, his dancing with him, etc., etc. Possibly he had only a very faint remembrance of them.

The sage prostrated himself before the Lord,—this time, of course, with great willingness. And then, standing before him with folded hands, he uttered a sloka, composed then and there, which means this :—“The motives that guide God Almighty in His dealings with mankind, are unfathomable. How is it possible for us, puny mortals, to comprehend the fact that He is now in our midst, acting the part of a man? A touch-stone is externally a piece of stone only. Its worth cannot be recognised until it has been put to the test of converting iron into gold.”

Then he composed another sloka. Both of them he analysed in this manner. Said he : “My Lord, mine has been an intellectual life. I have misspent it in determining the ethics of fallacies and cause and effect. My mind has in this manner become like a piece of stone,—worthless, unbending and unmeltable. You have by your divine alchemy converted and melted, and thereafter, by your mercy, have cast it in a mould of your own making. It is an easier task by far to reclaim a simple mind, ignorant sinner, than a so-called sage like me. I tested you by my own art—Logic. I saw that in outward appearance you were just like other men, and I took you to be one like us. How was it

possible for me to know that you had put on the garb on a Sannyasee to save sinners and to humble the pride of the arrogant for the purpose of reclaiming them?"

And here the sage burst into tears. He began again:

"My Lord, forgive me for the discourtesy that I was led to show you. Light first dawned on me when I saw you analysing the Vedas. When I heard your eighteen different readings of a sloka, I was confirmed in my belief. Now, my Lord, accept what little of myself I have, for, Thou hast become the mightiest owner of everything I possessed, my heart included."

And Sarvabhauma wept like a child. But what was the Lord doing? He gazed at the sage as might a child to realise the purpose of his observations. It took him some time to understand the sage, for, as I said before, he had almost forgotten all the incidents, all the part he had taken in bringing them about but a short while before. He, however, at length understood that the sage was addressing him, just as he would have done if he had come face to face with God Almighty! If he had been able to understand this before, he would have stopped the mouth of the savant as soon as he had opened it. As soon as the Lord came to know what the sage was aiming at, he blushed, shuddered and closed his ears with his fingers. He said, "Forbear, Pundit, do not slay me in that manner. I am, as your child,

absolutely at your disposal. I have already surrendered myself to you entirely. If at length you have found bhakti, thank Jagannath for it, Who is the author of all good."

And his loving face was suffused with the lustre of bhakti at the mention of Jagannath!

The sage did not like these protestations, however. He said: "No longer am I a stranger to Thee. Treat me as Thou dost Thy dear servant Gopeenath! Accept me as a member of Thy family in this Avatar."

Now was Gopeenath's time for sweet revenge! He said: "Pundit! Is it not time that you should find out a Sannyasee, belonging to a higher class of ascetics, to re-initiate this young man, your *protege*? Who knows but he may fall a victim to his passion? And how far have you, Pundit, proceeded in teaching him the Vedas?"

Sarvabhauma laughed, and all the bhaktas of the Lord joined in the merriment. He, however, became grave almost immediately and looked at Gopeenath with grateful eyes, glistening with tears, and addressed him. "Gopeenath!" said he, "I owe all this to your intercession. The Lord took pity on me for no merit of my own, but simply because I am a relative of yours, and you are a servant of his."

As soon as the sage had said this, the Lord rose to embrace him, and they became at once locked in each other's arms.

Sarvabhauma from that day was an ardent follower of the Lord. With the consent of the king, he had the six-handed Figure, which he had seen, represented in the Temple of Jagannath, and the Figure can be seen there even now. He composed one hundred most beautiful slokas, describing the Lord, and these are extant. From them one can learn how the Lord had presented himself to his eyes, heart and intellect. They are so beautiful that I must ask those, who can, to read them in original Sanskrit. These slokas describe the Lord in such vivid colours as to lead one to fancy that he is present to his eyes. Here is the translation of three of these slokas :—

I salute Thee, the son of Shachee, whose golden-hued body is constantly covered with all the signs of prem and bhakti and who is the merciful saviour of mankind.

I salute Thee, the son of Shachee, whose lotus eyes are melting like clouds and who is constantly uttering his own name (that is Krishna) in a state of ecstasy.

I salute Thee, the son of Shachee, who is no other than the son of Nanda (Sree Krishna) and who has come down to this earth as an Avatar to establish true religion

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRIP TO THE SOUTH.

THE LORD wanted to remain concealed from the public gaze, and the sage Sarvabhauma tried his best to help him in the endeavour. But to his followers he preferred another request, namely, that they would permit him to proceed to South India!

Now, at the time when the Lord promised his mother to remain at Puri, his bhaktas obtained a pledge from him that he would pass his life in that holy shrine. When, therefore, the Lord expressed a wish to proceed south, Nitai reminded him of his promise.

The Lord.—I will go there only for a short time, and will then come back.

Nitai.—May I inquire the object of your intended visit?

The Lord.—To search for my elder brother, Vishwarup.

Nitai.—But you know he has quitted his body and secured his ascension.

The Lord.—So I have heard, but I must find it for myself. It is a sacred duty which I owe to my dear brother.

Nitai.—All right. When shall we start?

The Lord.—I must go alone. You have one and all contrived to make me your slave ; through the love you bear me, I have lost all my independence. You, Sreepad Nityananda, appear to imagine that I have no need to attempt to save myself by acquiring prem, and that my sole duty consists in pleasing my friends. Consequently you will not allow me to worship Krishna to my heart's content. You, Jagadananda, endeavour, day and night, to seduce me from my duties, and would fain have me live like a householder, feasting on the finest fare and sleeping on a bed of the finest cotton. You, Mukunda, by your mournful face,—mournful because of my hard life,—you impose a heavier burden upon me than the so-called hard life itself. Let me go alone. Allow me to enjoy a little independence for a few months, please.

Nitai, who understood how dangerous it would be to accede to this request, said : "My Lord ! Do not think of going alone ; that we can never permit. If nevertheless you go, it will be over our dead bodies. However, let us consult Sarvabhauma."

On the matter being referred to the sage, he came to the Lord, and endeavoured to dissuade him from going alone.

The Lord.—Pundit, pray, do not throw obstacles in my way. I must go in search of my brother.

Sarvabhauma.—Your real object, my Lord, is to bring the light of salvation to the south, which is immersed in the darkness of Atheism and Adwaita-

badism. Any way, you cannot be permitted to go unattended.

Nitai.—Who would carry your staff and cup ? You would throw them away in your first fit of prem. Who would take care of you when, in a fit, you remain unconscious for hours or even days ? Allow me to accompany you ; I know the south—I have travelled all through the country.

But the Lord was still unwilling to take Nitai or any other bhakta along with him. For, the devoted bhaktas sought his ease and comfort and keenly suffered when he was put to any discomfort. Eventually, however, he was persuaded to take Govindā. Seeing the sorrows of the bhaktas, the Lord wanted to console them. Said he : "Why make a fuss about such a trifling affair ? I will simply accomplish my object and then come back. You can wait here for my return. I will not tarry on the way." He was destined, however, to traverse a continent, and it actually took him full two years to accomplish this. Said the sage Sarvabhauma : "I would bear the loss of a hundred sons, rather than that of your company," and then he wept. When the Lord was taking leave of Sarvabhauma at Puri, the latter fainted away ; and the Lord, seeing this, mournfully hastened his departure. Having regained consciousness, the sage was led by his servants back to his residence. Nitai and others accompanied the Lord as far as Alalnath, about a day's journey from Puri, where there is a temple.

On their arrival at Alalnath, Nitai and the other bhaktas were surprised to find their party surrounded by thousands of men. "Who brought them there?" they pondered, and all came to the conclusion that it was the Lord who had attracted them! The great majority, by gazing upon the divine figure of the Lord, were filled with bhakti, and they passed the day and night in kirtan, in dancing and singing the holy name of Hari.

Then Nitai said to his companions: "Do you now understand why the Lord is going south? The plea of searching for Vishwarup, who has long since left the flesh,* is a mere pretence. The real object is the reformation of the south." Says the "Chaitanya Charitamrita": "The powers exhibited by the Lord in the south were far greater than those hitherto displayed by him." We shall revert to this subject presently.

The Lord took leave of his bhaktas at Alalnath. They fell down as if struck dead. They had left everything to follow him. They must now remain at Puri until his return! The moon-like face of the Lord was overcast with sorrow as he took leave of his bhaktas, whose grief, at losing him, was painful to his tender heart. He left them, however, and proceeded on his way mournfully. The bhaktas passed the day, almost unconscious. The following

* The followers of the Lord never say "dead" or "died," but "left his body" or "quitted his body" or "got Krishna," etc., etc.

day they came back to Puri slowly, to wait there till the return of the Lord.

When he had gone a little way, the Lord raised his hands towards Heaven and uttered a sloka to this effect: "Krishna, take care of me." With this sloka, constantly on his lips, he proceeded upon his long journey southward, followed by Govinda!

"Krishna, take care of me," this he repeated in a sonorous and sweet voice as he proceeded with uplifted arms.

What do we see now? A youth of twenty-five, with a lovely face, well-proportioned limbs, and Herculean frame; with his long arms turned upwards, and calling upon Krishna for protection, proceeding on his way, unconscious of his surroundings. Look at his face, and you are irresistibly attracted, not only by its beauty, but its spiritual grandeur. But you are not only attracted but moved to tears, by the softness of his look and the pathos of his voice, when uttering his prayers to his Krishna. He is proceeding on his way like a drunken man beside himself; yet conscious of one great idea, which is, that the world to him is Krishna and that the One Being in existence is his Beloved. The worldly man looks at him, and finds his heart as if broken at the sight the Lord presents. For, this young man, designed by nature to shine in society, to be loved and admired by thousands, and to enjoy all its legitimate pleasures, is now alone in the world with the shell of a coconut

for his cup, and a few pieces of rags round his loins for his only property! He is proceeding in rain and sun, through jungles and cities, with infinite toil, hungry and sleepless, to draw men to the lotus feet of God!

We can picture our beloved Lord passing through strange places, sparsely inhabited tracts, and dense forests, feeding now on fruits, and now on a handful of rice, and at night content with the meanest accommodation, a thatched shed, or the shed of some large tree. When darkness overtook himself and his companion in the jungle, he leant against some gigantic trunk, repeating the name of Krishna, and so continued till dawn, whilst Govinda slept almost at his feet, securely and in peace, though the tiger, the rhinoceros and the elephant passed to and fro close by.

For keeping notes of this journey, Govinda deserves the gratitude of mankind. With the exception of a few preliminary pages these notes are extant and have been published.

When passing through villages or towns, the Lord and his companion were hospitably entertained; but when their route lay through vast stretches of forests, they had to be content with wild fruits alone. Govinda remarks that such was the enthusiasm which he derived from the company of the Lord that hunger and thirst rarely troubled him much. Nevertheless the hardships and privations they endured, not only told upon Govinda, but also, though more slightly,

on the Herculean constitution of the Lord. It breaks the heart of the author to record how frequent fasts and sleepless nights actually made the Lord grow thinner, day by day!

The people of those parts became impressed with the idea that Sree Krishna himself, having appropriated the body of a Sannyasee, was travelling among them. Indeed, this rumour preceded the Lord. Govinda saw with astonishment, on their arrival at a village, that the rumour of the wandering of Sree Krishna, in the guise of a mendicant, had preceded them! And thus it happened, that wherever the Lord went, if the place was at all populous, he found a large number of men assembled, as if to welcome him.

In what manner did the Lord save people? The process is described in that great book, the "Chaitanya Charitamrita," which is "worshipped" by the Vaishnavas much more reverentially than the Bible is worshipped by the Christians:

"The Lord proceeded on his way repeating the sloka, 'Krishna, take care of me.' If the Lord happened to meet a man as he walked along, he addressed him saying, 'say Hari.' Though utterly absorbed in his Krishna, he is not forgetful of the claims of sinners upon him. 'Say Hari.' says the Lord to the sinner he comes across. Whereupon the man is immediately overtaken by bhakti and repeating the names, Hari and Krishna, follows the Lord. When he had thus followed him *for some time*, the

Lord suddenly turns back and embraces him. By this means the man is filled with holy influence *empowering him to save others*. The Lord then bids him return home and proclaim bhakti for Hari to the people."

Observe the process adopted by the Lord. When he induces a man to say Hari, the man gets sufficient strength to be able to do it with bhakti, but not to convert others. So the man utters the name of Hari and follows the Lord *for some time*.*

This process prepares him to receive the higher power of "imparting the influence" to others. And then the Lord imparts that power to him by an embrace. When that man has been embraced, he becomes competent to save others. And then what does he do? Let us continue the quotation from the Chaitanya Charitamrita, begun above:—

"The man returns to his village, dancing, laughing, weeping and uttering the name of Krishna, like a man possessed. He does more. He asks everyone to say 'Hari,' and everyone obeys, as if compelled by an irresistible force. Thus the entire village is saved. The rumour spreads that the village has gone mad, and neighbours come to see the sport! But

* The statement in that great book, *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, that the novice had, after he had been addressed by the Master, to wait for some time till finally blessed, is a proof positive that the author and his contemporaries knew very well that the Lord followed a well-defined natural process for the purposes of imparting the holy spirit.

they also catch the holy infection, which they carry home with them! It was thus that the holy spirit was communicated from man to man and village to village; and, in this manner, the inhabitants of every district through which the Lord passed, was saved. And he adopted this procedure in saving sinners throughout his travels, as far as Cape Comorin, and back again."

Says the same authority further: "Not that the men, who were saved by the Lord, were in all cases merely given a feeling of bhakti for Krishna: to the more capable amongst them, was also imparted a knowledge of *the philosophy of Vaishnavism*."* We are further assured that the Lord was constrained to adopt the summary method of conversion, because the time at his disposal was too short for the adoption of any slower process.

On his way the Lord embraced Basudeva, the leper. Basudeva was a good man; his loathsome disease had chastened his heart. He was obliged to live apart from his fellows, on account of the stench emitted by his body. Hearing that an ascetic, who

* The seed of a mango is left in a desert in a protected place. The man returns after a dozen years to find in the place a mango-tree and also many young plants of the tree. He finds fruits in the tree; they are just as mangoes are. The Lord thus, by his peculiar process, implanted the seed of prem and bhakti into the heart of those he saved, and the seed germinated, grew into a tree, bore fruits and produced many plants

was undoubtedly Sree Krishna himself, had appeared in the Temple of Kurma, near which he lived, he immediately took up his staff and proceeded thither. On his arrival at the Temple he learnt that the Lord had left the place half an hour before. Thereupon he fainted from disappointment and sorrow, exclaiming as he fell, "Krishna, hast thou forsaken me?"

The Lord, who had proceeded on his way about a couple of miles, heard the exclamation, and stopped for a moment as if to listen. Being assured of the state of affairs, he turned his back, and ran towards the Temple from which he had come. Arrived at the Temple he lifted the fainting leper in his arms, and embraced him, in spite of the foul sores which covered his body and the intolerable stench which they emitted.

Locked in each other's arms, they both sank to the floor, from which Basudeva rose, a perfectly sound man!

Said Basudeva: "What hast Thou done, Lord? I came not to be healed—I came to see Thy lotus feet. My loathsome disease taught me humility, and I had hopes of acquiring Thee. But a sound body and perfect health will again generate pride and vanity in my mind."

"No, my son," said the Lord, "Sree Krishna has absolutely accepted you on account of your unparalleled humility and your charity towards the meanest insect, and even to those worms which fed upon your body."

Basudeva used to pick up the maggots that fell down from his sores, to put them back there, and "this unparalleled charity," says the chronicler, "entitled him to the especial favour of the the Lord!" For, he believed that all living things being creatures of Krishna, everyone had an equal right to live, and that he had no right to deprive the worms, who feasted upon his body, of their natural food! This miracle of the Lord procured him a new name *viz.*, "The saviour of Basudeva."

The most important personage whom the Lord met in the south was Raja Ramananda Ray, the Governor of the Southern Provinces of the Empire of Pratap-rudra, the King of Orissa, who resided in his capital city called Bidyanagar. He was a profoundly learned man, so much so that he held frequent discussions with Sarvabhauma himself about the nature of God and other higher matters. Ramananda was a believer in a God of Love, that is to say, in Sree Krishna. Sarvabhauma was atheistical in his religious belief; he therefore always chaffed the Governor, as intellectual and learned men will do even now whenever they come across a pious man, for his superstition. But Sarvabhauma having been converted by the Lord, had now come to perceive the merits of his old friend and antagonist Ramananda. So when the Lord was leaving him for the south, the sage asked him to favour Ramananda with a visit, and allow the Governor an opportunity

of associating with him, and the Lord had agreed to this arrangement.

The Lord having crossed the Godavery, bathed, and sat at a little distance from the *ghat* (bathing-place), immersed in his own thought. That was the *ghat* where Ramananda occasionally bathed: and on this particular day, an irresistible impulse led him to come there for that purpose;—no doubt he was attracted by the Lord. He came in great state, accompanied by about a thousand men, with bands playing and banners flying. Having bathed, his eyes suddenly encountered the divine figure of the Lord, sitting at some distance from the *ghat*.

He himself was a bhakta of the first class; he had, therefore, no great veneration for Sannyasees, because they, generally speaking, believed in doctrines which are seemingly pantheistic. Holy, pure, austere and learned as these anchorites were, a bhakta yet did not much care for their company, on account of the seemingly atheistical atmosphere that surrounded them. But the Sannyasee that the Raja saw had a strange fascination, which enthralled his heart. His beauty and grace were super-human, and everything in him seemed to indicate that he was drunk with prem. The Raja hastened to the Lord and reverentially prostrated himself before him. It must be borne in mind that in India kings occupied only a subordinate position.

The Lord who was expecting the Raja, immediately rose, exclaiming, "say Krishna," and then

asked, "are you Ramananda?" The Raja replied that he was that mean sinner. The Lord uttered a *hunkar*, caught him by the arms and gave him an ardent embrace! The result was, as usual, they both fell down, locked in each other's arms, in a deep swoon! The Raja's people hastened to see what the matter was. And they saw that both the Lord and the Raja were in a state of unconsciousness. Their persons were covered with *pulak*; their breathing was seemingly suspended, and tears trickled down their half shut eyes. The sight softened them in an unaccountable manner, and they were profoundly moved by a feeling of bhakti, as their external behaviour showed.

After a while the Lord and the Raja regained consciousness, and arose. They gazed at each other tenderly and wistfully for some time, when the former broke silence. Said the Lord: "While coming this way from Puri, Pundit Sarvabhauma, who is exceedingly kind to me, bade me to see the great saint Ramananda, and so I am here. Lucky I am that I have been so successful in finding access to you."

The Raja replied: "To-day, no doubt, forms a turning-point in my life. You seem to bear a message from Heaven, for, the powers that you possess are more than human. Look, how the mere sight of you has deeply moved my followers,—about one thousand in number. The ignorant, the sinner, the sceptic amongst them have all been filled with

bhakti, as their behaviour shows. See how they are weeping, dancing and uttering the name of Krishna and Hari. Mere man does not possess such powers." The Lord wanted to interrupt the Raja, but his gentle nature would not permit him, and the Raja was allowed to continue: "Besides, your mercy to the sinner shows your divine character. What am I but a worldly man, a lump of dirt, while you are purity incarnate? And yet you took me to your pure and sacred bosom! You say Sarvabhauma asked you to come here; but the real reason is that you have sought me out to save me, for, the greater the sinner the greater your mercy towards him."

The Lord replied, smiling: "It is no wonder that the followers of a profound bhakta like you should themselves be bhaktas too. A bhakta purifies his surroundings by his atmosphere. See, though I am a Sannyasee, your contact has given me too a drop of that sacred feeling!"

Here the Lord alluded to the fact that Sannyasees generally were Adwaitabadees,—believers in anti-bhakti doctrines. A poor Brahmin here intervened and implored the Lord to come to his place for the purpose of breaking his fast. He made this request because Sannyasees are not permitted to accept hospitality from wealthy men, and Raja Ramananda Ray had no right to invite the Lord. Said the Lord, addressing Ramananda: "I would fain hear from your lips discourses about Sree Krishna." Ramananda said in reply: "Since you cannot go without

saving me, I give you a warning that I am only a piece of filth, and that it will take you a good many days' trouble to rescue me from the inextricable mire of worldliness in which I feel I am sunk."

Through Ramananda the Lord taught mankind that Krishna-prem is not incompatible with what is called worldly prosperity.

In the evening, Ramananda came to the Lord, dressed as an ordinary man, accompanied by one single servant. The Raja saluted, and the Lord blessed.

The Lord at once came to the point, and asked: "Now tell me, Ramananda, how are men to save themselves?" Now this was a strange question from a stranger, and for a Sannyasee to ask of a man of the world. Ramananda would have preferred listening to speaking; but the request of the Lord deprived him of the privilege of being the listener. Besides, he felt himself as it were compelled to obey. But what would he say, and how to begin? And what a strange question,—how men are to secure salvation! Who is this man? What is his religion? What does he aim at? Ramananda was a bhakta, the stranger was a Sannyasee, which means, generally speaking, a man opposed to bhakti. The Raja pondered, and then replied: "It is not meet that I should give any opinion on a subject like this, in the presence of a saint who can speak with authority."

The Lord repeated the request. He said: "The sole object of my coming to you is to hear from you

your views about the salvation of mankind and discourses about Krishna. Don't disappoint me, I implore you."

Ramananda again pondered. Not knowing what the mysterious being before him was aiming at, he thought it prudent to begin from the beginning of the subject. Now, bear the question of the Lord in mind, which was, how are men to secure salvation, *i.e.*, to attain to the supreme object of life. The Raja replied: "Our saints have left behind them definite directions on the subject. A blind man can follow them and reach his goal. Thus the *Vishnu Puran* (the name of a sacred book) says: "Let every one sincerely follow the religion of his fathers, and that will eventually lead him to God."

Here one can see the catholicity of the Hindu mind. "Leave him alone with the religion that he had been taught by his parents and country. But let him perform his religious duties with *sincerity*," says the Hindu. The fact is, the aggressiveness of Christians and Mussulmans follow from want of faith in the religions they profess to follow. A really pious Christian will always be meek and charitable.

The Lord.—Ramananda, please go deeper into the subject.

In the above, Ramananda had taken for granted two propositions, *viz.*, there is a God, and He is to be attained to by *bhakti*.

Ram.—If this does not please you, I will mention another method of salvation. Let man sincerely

follow the principle, "Thy will be done," and he is sure to be saved. It is absolute reliance on God that procures salvation for man. Saying this, he quoted a Shastric text in proof of this principle.

The Lord.—This is superficial please go deeper.

The manner in which the Lord said this staggered Ram Ray. What does this strange being aim at?

The Lord considered the principle, suggested by Ramananda, as superficial, because it did not presuppose any cordial relationship between God and man. To say that absolute reliance is necessary for the salvation of man, is to convert God, who is a loving partner of the soul, into a despotic and wilful sovereign, fond of exacting submission.

Ram Ray pondered. He said, the man, who, to attain to God, has the courage to forsake the religion of his fathers, is sure of salvation. And he quoted Shastric texts in support of this point also.

A sincere convert makes a very great sacrifice for the purpose of attaining to God. The purpose of the Shastric text is that the man whose desire to please God is sufficiently strong so as to lead him to undergo such great sacrifices to obtain Him, as the forsaking of kith and kin, is sure to gain his end, whatever may be the form of his worship.

The Lord again rejected the principle. He said: "Please go deeper; you refer only to a general principle."

Here we see that the Hindu mind is not only catholic, but more. A Brahmin without ardent piety

has, according to the Hindu, less chance of salvation than one who accepts Christianity from religious ardour! Let us understand the principle. A Brahmin whose love for a Christian woman seduces him to accept Christianity, does not improve his position by his conversion. • But suppose a man is convinced,—let it be erroneously,—that he will best please God if he accepts the new religion which is presented to him, and in his ardour for God, if he then forsakes the religion of his forefathers, God is sure to reward him. This man, even if he accepts an inferior religion, has a better chance of salvation than he who has a more cultured religious faith but no ardour for the attainment of God. It is the longing for God that saves him. This text does away with all forms and creeds.

Ram Ray was in the position of a teacher, detailing to the young Sannyasee the various ways by which men could attain to God. But, as a matter of fact, he felt himself in the position of a student, passing a severe examination, before an all-powerful, rigid and all-knowing master. Whatever principle he brought forward, was rejected by the Lord as superficial. He thought profoundly as to how to meet the requirements of his strange companion. Said he again:—

“The man who worships God with gyan and bhakti attains to Him,” and he again gave a shastric text to prove his principle.

The Lord rejected this also. He said: “Ram

Ray, I came to you to see if you could give my thirsty soul a clearer, more elevating and more refreshing drink than what you have hitherto supplied me with. Do please go a little deeper, and oblige me.”

Ram Ray thereupon said: “I presume that, though the ordinary principle is to worship God with gyan and bhakti, the higher principle is to destroy this gyan altogether and worship God with pure bhakti, uninfluenced by the former.” And again Ram Ray gave his text from the holy books, in support of his theory.

The Lord, when he heard this, expressed, for the first time, some satisfaction. He said, this seems good; but tell me, what is better.

Now the functions of this gyan (wisdom) and bhakti have been described and analysed by so many different saints, in so many different ways, that though the theories of worshipping by gyan and bhakti jointly, and by pure bhakti without gyan, are readily understood by the higher classes of people of this country, they would, I fear, be somewhat unintelligible to the world in general. I will devote one or two short paragraphs to explain them.

First, “to know” is quite different from “to have.” By gyan, we seek to know God; by bhakti we seek to have Him. To have Him is better than to know Him; for, those who have Him, also know Him, at least as far as that is possible for puny men. But even those who succeed in knowing Him partially or, say, fully, cannot by that means have Him. By

gyan we seek to analyse God, and are staggered by the process, and repelled from Him. By bhakti we create an attraction for Him. Ram Ray had said that God ought to be attained by both gyan and bhakti, and the Lord demurred because they are oftentimes contradictory. Gyan oftentimes destroys bhakti, while bhakti nourishes gyan. And when he advocated blind faith, *i.e.* bhakti minus wisdom in regard to God, the Lord approved of the idea partially.

Can the wife of a despot, possessed of indisputable power over her own life, and the lives of his subjects, love her husband with that ardour which a maiden, whose husband is an ordinary being like herself, can afford to feel for her lord? Thus a shepherdess marries a prince whose rank is not known to her, whom she loves devotedly. Suddenly she comes to know that her husband, whom she had come to regard as a part and parcel of her own body, was an irresistibly powerful monarch. Does the information enhance her love or chill it? The likelihood is that, the information, though it may satisfy her vanity or ambition, does no good to her loving heart. A maiden must be made to forget that her lord is an irresistible and wilful despot before she can feel for him what is true love. Thus the gyan (knowledge) which reveals to her the mightiness of her lord, takes away her tender feeling for her Lord. In place of bhakti and love for her husband, she acquires the feelings of awe, admiration and fear.

Take another instance. A subject is so devoted to his sovereign that he is ready to give up his life for him. He does not care to consider whether his master has any blemishes or not. He follows the prince blindly. The king, however, has another subject who is equally loyal. But he is loyal because he knows that it is his duty to be loyal. He is aware that his king has good qualities, and while he knows that he has also what seems to be his bad qualities, he considers it would be disloyal in him to notice the disagreeable features in the character of his master. He knows too that he serves himself by serving his master and endangers his interest by going against him. The former practises blind bhakti; the latter, gyan and bhakti. Considering the relative position of the two parties. God and the human king,—the former being incomprehensibly great in every respect and the latter actually a puny worm—the best course for the latter is to adopt the course of the blind bhakta. For, man is so puny and God is so great, beyond reach and so omniscient that the man of gyan gains very little by the help of his so-called wisdom.

A man of gyan, on the other hand, is disturbed by such thoughts as these: God created the universe, who created God? We are told He has no beginning, no end, but that is absurd. If He is, He must be too great to care whether men suffer or not. He has His good points, we see; He has given us thirst and drink, hunger and food. This shows him to be considerate. But why are there thunder, pestilence

and death? When he sees a tiger seizing a deer, he arrives at the conclusion that God could never be all-merciful. There is no doubt that while He has His good points, He is sometimes cruel too. And why should men live after death? Apparently they do not, for, they are, when dead, either burnt or buried, and eventually, nothing remains of them. Such are the thoughts of the man of wisdom. When man takes upon himself to try to solve problems which are insoluble, because of his own limited capacity, he either brings upon himself atheism, or madness, or at least, indifference. The blind bhakta is convinced that he has no business to meddle with such questions as, "who created God?" that is, questions which are insoluble; and that it is mere a hopeless task to endeavour to "know" Him.

The blind bhakta has other advantages; for, to him are revealed truths which the man of wisdom can never acquire by his own efforts. The bhakta knows intuitively that God is good, that He is loving, and that in Him he has a final resting-place.

The bhakta, when he thinks of his beloved Lord, is filled with ecstasy; he feels that he knows as much of the Lord as is necessary for him to know. But the man of wisdom, by seeking to know God, is lost in His immensity and only brings disaster upon himself.

The Lord said to Ram Ray: "Yes, blind bhakti is good, but can't you give me something better?" Having rejected all the other methods that Ram Ray

had mentioned, the Lord accepted the last, though with a proviso.

Now the religious beliefs of the people of India are contained in two Books—the Bhagavat Geeta and the Sreemat Bhagavat. The Geeta is universally accepted as the true guide; the Sreemat Bhagavat is accepted only by bhaktas. The latter (bhaktas) also revere the Geeta, but they consider the Geeta as only the seed from which the other book, the Sreemat Bhagavat, has sprung. Indeed, where the Geeta ends, the Bhagavat begins. The simple truths which are inculcated in the Bible are put on a philosophical basis in the Geeta, for, the Bible was meant for the general, and the Geeta for the more advanced, public. But the Sreemat Bhagavat is based upon a plane which is much higher. It deals with prem, the love of God.*

The Sreemat Bhagavat begins with what is called blind bhakti, or absolute reliance upon and surrender to God. When, therefore, Ram Ray, after leaving the boundaries of the Geeta, entered those of the Sreemat Bhagavat, the Lord, for the first time, ex-

* The Geeta calls God, "Almighty." The Sreemat Bhagavat says: "that is gyan, and you must avoid such thoughts as lead away from Him. For you can never associate with Him until you can come to entertain the feeling that He is like you, and this you will never be able to do, if you go on contemplating His inexpressible and immeasurable grandeur." The Bhagavat says, that those who desire communion with Him, accept only His sweetness and ignore His mightiness.

pressed some satisfaction. "Yes, blind bhakti is good, but please let me have something deeper, better and purer."

Ram Ray saw that the religion of the Geeta was not the thing to satisfy the cravings of the youthful mendicant before him. So he entered cautiously into the region of the Sreemat Bhagavat. The philosophy of the Bhagavat is that it is only through nature that we can discover the way to God. The sun is the centre of the physical world, and keeps in their appointed orbits its planets with their satellites, by the law of attraction. God is the centre of the spiritual world, to whom men with their dear ones are attracted by love. Men are domestic beings. They form family circles, composed of father, mother, husband, wife, brothers and children. They are enabled to do so because of certain instincts in them which bind them together. These instincts are conjugal love, fraternal love, paternal love and the love of the subordinate for the master. It is these four kinds of attraction which keep men together and bind them into families. Try to develop those four kinds of impulses of the heart, and then try to approach Sree Krishna by following in the wake of the people of Braja. This is worshipping God "domestically," that is to say, by making God Almighty, a member of your own household. But this is the lowest phase: we shall come to the higher phase presently.

When the Lord requested Ram Ray to go deeper, the latter said that the best means of attain-

ing to God was by prem and bhakti,³ and thus Ram Ray had at last to leave out wisdom (gyan) altogether as a means of attaining to Him.*

The Lord expressed his satisfaction. "But," said he, "do not please withhold anything from me. Is that the highest form of worship?"

Ram Ray had, by this time, completely lost control over his mind. He felt as if his tongue had been taken entire possession of by the Lord; so he said: "I do not understand all this. It is true. I am speaking and you are listening; but the fact is, you are making me speak only your own sentiments. For, they are all new to me. It seems to me that bhakti is a feeling which is not ethereal enough to lead one to the loving Krishna.. Bhakti creates a distant relationship between God and the worshipper; but, as a matter of fact, He is the Soul of our souls nearer and dearer to us than any other thing or being. He should be approached with prem, i.e., love alone.

Here Ram Ray entered into the heart of Brindaban, the region of love, where the central figure is Sree Krishna, the God of love, the Essence of all that is beautiful and good. Said he: "God

* Unless you attribute human faculties to God, a tender relationship between Him and man is impossible. The bhaktas knew that Gauranga was an incarnation of the Lord Almighty, but had they fully realized the fact they would never have associated with him. They could associate with him only when they forgot his divinity, which they often did.

ought to be attained by the love which a devoted servant bears to his master or a dutiful child to his parents."

"But is that the highest kind of love?" asked the Lord.

Ram Ray pondered. He said: "No. The higher kind of love is the fraternal,—the love that a brother bears to a brother, or that a friend feels for a friend. The higher form of worship is to approach God with fraternal love and regard Him as a friend, as Balaram regarded Sree Krishna."

The Lord expressed his delight. "But tell me," said he, "is there any feeling which influences the human heart more powerfully than fraternal love?"

Ram Ray said: "Yes. It is the feeling which a parent bears for his children. God should be worshipped with the love which Nanda and Yasada bore for Sree Krishna."

The Lord smiled and said: "Have you gone to the bottom of the matter or have you any deeper secret to reveal to me?"

Said Ram Ray: "I have no secrets to reveal. The secrets are your own, which you are revealing through me for the benefit of mankind, whose saviour you, no doubt, are. I think, however, conjugal love is the strongest feeling in the heart and God Almighty should be worshipped thus. The Lord God should be loved as Rukshminee and the other wives of Sree Krishna loved Him."

The Lord said: "This is, no doubt, the highest

form of worship of those mentioned so far, but can you tell me of a higher still?"

Ram Ray said: "Yes, there is a higher. Let Sree Krishna be approached with a love which a woman, infatuated by love for a gallant, feels." He quoted a sloka from the Sreemat Bhagavat in proof of this statement. And then he explained himself thus: "The feeling which a woman feels for her husband is not love; for, her feeling is based upon self. She loves her husband because he is her property. But the feelings of a woman for her lover are much more strong. For him she forsakes everything, though she is not sure of him, and undergoes the risk, of being cast off any day. She knows that she has no claims upon her lover; she does not care to see whether her lover is worthy or not; she follows him because she cannot help it. To worship Sree Krishna with such ardent love is to attain to the highest condition which a devotee can reach."

The Lord was so delighted that he had no words to express his obligation. "But"—here the Lord hesitated to add any further protests. He, however, finished the sentence he had begun, though with some effort. "But, Ram Ray, excuse me, have you anything higher to explain to me? You see your words are like nectar, and they intoxicate me with delight."

Ram Ray smiled. He said he was not aware that there was any being in the world who would ask for mysteries deeper than those already revealed.

to her attendant, "if He has forgotten it. At first we saw each other, and the result was immediate love. This love began to increase and is increasing still, and I do not know where it will end. People say that men and women fall in love with each other. But my condition was different. For, I had no knowledge that he was a man and I a woman; indeed, I had no knowledge that there was such a thing as difference of sex. I, therefore, cannot account for my love to Krishna, etc., etc."

But the reader may ask, is such a love possible at all for man, and more especially for man to feel towards God? That question occurred to the hard and atheistical thinker Sarvabhauma. He had read and heard of Radha's love for Krishna. He had frequent discussions with Ram Ray about it. The result was that the aggressive intellectual giant non-plussed his unaggressive antagonist by his sallies. Sarvabhauma always silenced Ramananda by the observation that Radha's love for Krishna was a fiction, created by poets, and that it was altogether impossible for men to feel any love for God, much less anything like the love which Radha was supposed to have felt for Krishna. But he saw the Lord and also his great love for Krishna. And though the first sight of the Lord in his ecstatic fit almost paralysed the savant, he could not help recollecting what he had so often said to Ramananda. He muttered the admission to himself with wonder, that it was after all true that not only could a man love God,

but that he could love Him in the manner Radha was alleged to have loved Him. And the philosopher arrived at the conclusion that, since it was possible for man to feel so much love for God, there was no doubt that there was a God, and that He deserved to be loved!

The love which Lord Gauranga showed for God has no parallel either amongst human beings, or saints, or Messiahs. No man or woman had ever loved his or her lover in the way Lord Gauranga loved God. Messiahs have preached love to God, but Lord Gauranga alone preached it, not only by words, but in practice.

The highest form of worship is thus to love God as Radha did. But man cannot do it, and, therefore, the devotee has to follow in the *wake* of Radha. Let him contemplate the love that Radha felt for Krishna, and by that he will be able to acquire the feeling step by step. The sceptical may say that he has no faith in the existence of Radha. But it was to bear witness to Radha and her love for Krishna that Gauranga came down upon this earth. Those who have no faith in Radha will get all they need by substituting Gauranga for Radha, *i.e.*, by contemplating Gauranga's love for Krishna.

Ram Ray gazed at the Lord intently, until he felt that he had at last divined who the Lord was. So he fell at his feet, and with great earnestness inquired whether or not it was the fact that He was the Krishna and Radha, of whom he had been made

to talk like a parrot? The Lord would have entered a protest, but Ram Ray intervened. He said: "My Lord, you came of your own accord to seek me out, and it is not meet that you should now conceal yourself from me." Ram Ray got no reply, but on raising his head he discovered that the Lord had disappeared and that Radha and Krishna were standing in his place!

Ram Ray fainted away!

The Lord remained several days in the town of Vidyanagar. He told Ram Ray that he was proceeding to the south, that he would meet him when coming back, and that he should prepare himself to accompany him to Puri. "What a pleasure it will be for us," said the Lord, "to pass our days in converse about God."

So Ram Ray was asked to give up his kingdom for the pleasure of talking about God with the Lord! Was not this a strange request? But Ram Ray did not think it so, neither did the Lord, when he proposed it! And I hope my readers do not take a different view. Sarvabhauma saw a six-handed divinity, because he wanted faith. Ram Ray saw Radha-Krishna, because he had faith already.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOUTH UNMOLESTED.

MY original intention was to stop here. But I am irresistibly impelled to lead the Lord back to Nadia to meet his friends once more. In accordance with his vows as a Sannyasee he was bound to pay a last visit to his native town. This the Lord could not do until five years after the date of his renunciation. It would probably take two big volumes to relate the leelas that he performed during these five years. I will, however, give a running account, noticing only a few salient features of his labours during this period.

For two years the Lord travelled in the south. The south had not been molested by Mussulman conquerors; so the provinces in that part of India enjoyed prosperity and peace. The inhabitants lived there, as the Hindus have been accustomed to do from time immemorial, in the culture of their intellect and religion. The people had very little idea of war, much less of politics. The higher classes studied and cultivated their spiritual nature, the merchants were engaged in trade and commerce, and the lower class tilled the land.

In the south the Lord travelled rapidly, as a rule, though sometimes he halted in places where he had particular objects to serve. He came across leading

Buddhists and Adwaitabadees, and also leaders of innumerable other faiths. Whenever he came across such a leader, he invariably appropriated him. Tyrants oppressing their subjects, or robber-chiefs making themselves disagreeable to their neighbours, were awakened by him to their fallen condition and made useful members of society, and sometimes converted even into saints.

There is variety everywhere in this universe—there is variety in the modes of conversions too, at least there was in those adopted by the Lord. The Kazi was converted in one way, Saravabhauma was subjugated in another way, and the washerman in still another way.

I have already referred to the wonderful spiritual energy displayed by the Lord in saving the south.

The Lord displayed a still more wonderful power in selecting his instruments for the spread of the faith. Sometimes he sought them out, though he had never seen them before. Sometimes he went out of his way for this purpose; sometimes these appointed men were irresistibly impelled to come to him to be blessed.

From Vidyanagar the Lord proceeded to Trimand, where he converted the learned Buddhist leader and Bhikhuram Giri. At Tungabhadra he converted the proud savant Dhundiram, on whom he conferred the name of Haridas, or 'servant of God.' From there the Lord proceeded to Akshaya-bat, and there a wealthy merchant, Thirtharam,

attempted to test his credentials, by setting upon him two women of bad character. All the three, together with the wife of the merchant, Kamal-kumaree, were in return mercifully saved by the Lord!

The Lord then entered and crossed a jungle, twenty miles in extent, and arrived at the town of Moonna. In this town, he danced in a wonderful manner in the midst of thousands, and deluged the crowd with the holy spirit. From there he proceeded to Venkat. Here the Lord converted a terrible robber-chief of Boogla with all his followers.

The Lord had to fast for three days and nights and had some milk on the fourth day.

In the sacred shrine of Siva at Girishwar, he came across a sannyasee who had vowed eternal silence and who was in a state of *Samadhi*. The Lord awakened him from this state of trance and conferred prem on him. We then find the Lord in the town of Tripadi. There a savant, by name Mathura, came to the Lord to hold a polemical discussion with him, but the sight of Gauranga threw him into a convulsion and converted him.

From there the Lord reached the sacred shrine of Pana-Narasinha, and from there he proceeded to Bishnu-Kanchi. The Lord, after visiting several sacred shrines on the way, at last arrived at the shrine of Sandi. There he converted a celebrated Adwaitabadee Sannyasee, by name Sadananda Puri.

The Lord from there proceeded to the town of Chaipalli, and from there to Tanjore. On the hills of Chandalu he found a congregation of Sannyasees who resided there. He converted the leader, by name Sureshwar. The Lord next arrived at the shrine of Puddacot, and there he danced with little boys and girls. He always loved little boys and girls, and he attracted them to him in an unaccountable manner. At this unique dance there was a shower of flowers, which all the spectators saw, and of course, were filled with delight and wonder. Here an old blind Brahmin fell at the feet of the Lord. The Lord blessed him, whereupon his eyesight was immediately restored to him. The Brahmin gazed at the Lord with infinite tenderness and then fell down—dead! The Lord himself helped in his interment.

The Lord then came to the town of Tripatra, and there he conferred prem upon the celebrated philosopher Bharga Deva. Here he remained for seven days in the company of this fortunate man. After this, the Lord entered a jungle, and it took him fifteen days to cross it.

Our Master at last reached Cape Comorin, after having conferred prem upon several celebrated Sannyasees on the way.

From the Cape, the Lord returning entered the State of Travancore. The fame of the Lord always preceded him. In deed, his follower Govinda, to whom we are indebted for much of the present

account, says that in many places they found the rumour, that Sree Krishna had appeared on earth and was roaming about as a Sannyasee, had reached before them. Of course, most people, when they saw the Lord, came to recognise that he was more than human; but a large number went further than that. The very sight of the Lord convinced them that he was no other than Sree Krishna Himself.

The then Rajah of Travancore, hearing that a wonderful Sannyasee had arrived, felt a great desire to see him. He sent men to fetch the Lord, but to no purpose. The king, therefore, went forth to see the Lord, and found him sitting, leaning against a tree with eyes shut, while torrents of tears of joy were trickling down his cheeks. The Lord blessed the Rajah and left the place, though his Majesty tried his best to persuade him to live within his dominion.

The hill of Ramgiri, where the Lord proceeded after leaving Travancore, was also a place where Sannyasees congregated and lived. The Lord proceeded there with the object of blessing these pantheistical saints. He conferred prem on them, and give them a new birth.

The Lord then passed through the shrine of Matsya Nag Panchapadi, Chitol, and arrived at the bank of the river Toongabhadra. In the town of Chandapur the Lord converted another celebrated Sannyasee, named Ishwar Bharati. Then the Lord entered a jungle, full of ferocious beasts. Govinda

in his book frankly confesses that, though in the company of the Lord himself, yet fear overcame him now and then when he saw tigers, lions, elephants, rhinos trooping, most of them at night, often approaching them as if to smell their bodies. Says Govinda: "As the animals approached me, I approached the Lord nearer and nearer." Possibly the animals had an eye upon Govinda, but certainly they had no unworthy feeling against the Lord, who loved them so dearly,—elephants and ants alike.

In this manner, the Lord at last reached the town of Gurjari. In that town, the Lord danced and distributed prem to thousands. The Lord at last entered the celebrated town of Poona. That Brahminical place, undisturbed by Mussulman invasion, resembled Nadia very much. The town was full of educational institutions.

The Lord was sitting on the bank of a lake called Tacchar, weeping, as usual, for Krishna, in these words: "Where art Thou gone, my Krishna, leaving my heart desolate? Oh! my Lord, I cannot live without Thee. Without Thee all is dreary around me." The Lord wept in this way and thousands watched him, profoundly affected by his pathetic voice and undoubted misery. One mischievous man, either from fun or pure thoughtlessness, suggested that Krishna, for whom he was weeping, was to be found in the lake. The Lord heard this and threw himself headlong into the vast reservoir of water, and, as he had swooned away

before he had taken the jump, he did not rise! There was the utmost consternation,² and hundreds jumped after him to bring him back to life.

From there the Lord proceeded to the shrine of Bholeswar, and from there to Devaleswar. The Lord then proceeded to the shrine of Khandwa. Here girls, who could not be married, were dedicated to the deity and called "Murarees." These girls, espoused to God and maintained by the Temple, lived an extremely loose life. In the Lord, a young man of twenty-six, they found a fit object of attention. But the Lord expressed such profound pity and concern for their state, that their hearts were at once softened. They had been falsely assured by those who had led them to their fall, that as brides of Heaven, they were privileged to abandon virtue. Externally they lived a gay life, but, at heart they were the most miserable of women. At the beginning they repented of their fall, but, day by day, became hardened, till, at length, they resolved themselves into vicious creatures, almost without souls. The Lord saw them and wept, and wept so sincerely for their fallen condition, that they were awakened to a sense of their shame. They now recovered the faculty they had lost, as they thought, for ever, of shedding tears! And they fell in a body at the feet of the Lord with the bitter cry of "Save us, Father, Saviour of mankind!"

The Lord told them that they were fortunate in having the Lord God for their husband, but they

faithful than to their earthly husbands had they ought to be faithful to Him, even more scrupulously married such. These "Murarees," in a body, became so saintly in their character that they purified the quarter in which they lived. The Lord then entered the jungle of Choranandee, with a view to pay a visit to the celebrated Bhil robber-chief, Naoroji.

When the Lord was seen proceeding to the hunt of the robber-chief, people besought him to forbear. They assured the Lord that though he had no property with him, yet the chief was cruel, and oftentimes committed murder from pure love of bloodshed. But the Lord did not pay any heed to their counsel, and actually entered the stronghold of the chief, where he sat leaning against a tree. The robber-chief heard of his arrival, and sent some of his men to fetch the stranger before him ; but they failed. They tried to make the Lord listen to their request to accompany them to their chief : but the Lord was engrossed with his Krishna, and had no ears for either their threats or their entreaties. The robbers would have used force under ordinary circumstance ; but the magnetism of the Lord restrained them, and they dared not touch his person. The robber-chief, thereupon, appeared on the scene, not in the best of tempers. He came with his sword drawn. But the sight of the Lord staggered him. Still he angrily wanted to know what business might a so-called holy man have in a retreat of robbers?

The Lord raised his head and looked at him

tenderly, with eyes full of love,—a love which is boundless. The gaze, the like of which he had never seen before, made the chief yet more uneasy. After gazing at the robber-chief for sometime in this manner, the Lord replied : "You call yourself a robber, but I see in you great bhakti for the Lord."

Now such a remark ought naturally to have been taken by the robber-chief as a piece of sarcasm. But the look of the Lord confounded him. It betokened such simplicity, gentleness and love, that his rising anger subsided, and he was led to reply in a more gentle way. He said : "You tell me I have bhakti for the Lord, but I am a robber. Pray, explain yourself." The Lord in reply said : "You may be robber by profession, but I see in your heart a lump of bhakti which any man might covet."

The robber.—Are you sincere in what you say?

The Lord.—Quite sincere.

The robber had no idea that there was any good in him. The idea that he had yet in him a particle of what is good, created a sudden revolution in his mind.

The robber.—Do you mean to say that if I now give up my evil practices and surrender unconditionally at the feet of the Lord, He will accept me?

The Lord.—Certainly.

The robber had had no hope, but he could not doubt what he was now told. The words of the Lord carried conviction.

The robber (more to himself than to the Lord).

—I am already sixty, and have neither children, nor wife, nor relative to provide for. Day by day death's appointed hour is approaching. What a fool I have been!

Tears came down his cheek. It then seemed to him that the holy man, sitting before him, was attracting to him his very soul. A little while after, he threw away his sword and addressed his followers in these words: "I can no longer lead you; you must choose another chief or break up the band; for, I have resolved to follow this holy man."

The Lord rose to depart, and Naoroji followed him. The Lord objected to this, and Naoroji stopped. "Yes, I see, I have my chieftain's garb on," said Naoroji. And saying this he tore his clothes into shreds, and, in their stead, wrapped a rag round his loins.

"Now, my Lord, will you permit me to follow you?" said he. The Lord said nothing. And Naoroji became his constant companion.

The Lord paid a visit to the celebrated shrine of Pandupur or Pandharpur. Here he heard of the disappearance of his elder brother Bishwarup, at the age of eighteen, an account of which has already been given. Here, moreover, Tukaram, who had convulsed the Mahratta country, was converted either by the Lord himself or one of his instruments whom he left behind.

The Lord then proceeded to pay a visit to the shrine of Khandwa on the bank of the Mula. From

there the Lord proceeded to the city of Nassick, and from Nassick to Panchabati.

From Panchabati he reached the town of Daman, and from Daman to Surat. Here he stopped the practice of animal sacrifice to the goddess Ashtabhuja. From Surat the Lord proceeded to Broach, and from Broach to Baroda. The king, as a matter of course, came to pay him a visit. Here Naoroji, the lucky robber-chief, died in the lap of the Lord, the Master breathing sweet words of comfort and consolation in his ears. The Lord himself assisted in his interment. The last moments of the robber-chief were inexpressively pathetic and soul-ennobling.

From Baroda the Lord proceeded to Ahmedabad, and from Ahmedabad to Ghoga. In the last place he encountered a celebrated dancing-girl and wealthy prostitute, by name Baromukhee. Still in the prime of youth, her beauty was something supernatural. The Lord sat before her window, and as might be expected, an ever-increasing crowd surrounded him, and the Master, in the excess of his joy, was at length led to dance in their midst. The fallen woman observed everything from her window, and the sight awakened her to a sense of her condition. She made over all her property to her favourite maid, and surrendered herself unconditionally at the feet of the Lord. He blessed her, and she was seized by an over-powering penitence for the sins of her ill-used life. The Lord advised her to pass

the rest of her days in devotion. She then disfigured herself by cutting her magnificent hair short, and wearing a piece of coarse cloth. She entered a hut and lived there in prayer ; in short, the Lord left her a saint.

The Lord passed through Jafferabad and entered Somnath. This wealthy shrine had been looted by the Mussulmans.* From Somnath the Lord entered Junagarh, and in its vicinity came in contact with a celebrated Sannyasee, Bharga Deva, who was suffering from an incurable disease. The Lord healed him at once and then conferred upon him prem and bhakti. This man and all his disciples clung to the Lord and refused to part from him. The Lord was then followed by sixteen persons. With all these he entered a deep jungle, which took him seven days to cross, living entirely upon wild fruits, and then reached the celebrated shrine of Pravas.

From Pravas the Lord arrived at Dwarka, where he remained a fortnight. From there he turned to Baroda, and thence proceeded direct towards Vidyanagar, the town where Ramananda Ray ruled.

The rumour, as I said before, that Sree Krishna was coming, always preceded the Lord, during his travels in the south.

Govinda says that in many places he saw, with

* The gate of this celebrated Temple was carried to Afghanistan by the conquering hordes. It was subsequently brought back to India by the British Government.

astonishment, that the people were expecting them —himself and Sree Krishna! Whenever the Lord stopped, he was surrounded by crowds, and whenever he left a place, the people clung to him, refusing to go home. But the Master, somehow or other, succeeded in evading their company.

I said before that the Lord knew his men and selected his instruments. Of course, the Lord never told his plans to anybody ; but, it seemed, the Lord had a definite object in selecting particular men for his favours. There are men who are not only worthy of receiving bhakti and prem, but also of imparting them to others. Such men the Lord selected, in his travels, for special favours. He knew of the existence of those men beforehand, and sometimes he sought them out, while, at other times, they came, of their own accord, to the Lord to be blessed. A man who had thus been blessed, remained on the spot to distribute prem and bhakti all around him. It was thus, prem and bhakti were distributed in the south, in such a thorough and speedy manner.

Now, it must be borne in mind, that the Lord never proclaimed himself. His object was not only to teach, but also impart prem and bhakti for Sree Krishna, to mankind. What he aimed at was to make people love Sree Krishna, and not himself. That was the faith he preached to, and instilled in the minds of, men. Thus, in the south, even some of his intimate disciples failed to know what name he had assumed, where he came from, and where

he was going to. Of course, where the Lord happened to stop for some little time, the people learnt many things about him from his follower Govinda.

In many places in the south the tradition still exists that several hundred years ago Sree Krishna had wandered there in the guise of a beautiful and charming youth. Shades wherein he had sat, ghats at which he had bathed, are even now considered sacred and are pointed out to the inquirer, as places which were sanctified by the presence of Sree Krishna in human form.

Whether Tukaram, the saint of Poona, was a direct disciple of the Lord, or was the disciple of a disciple of his, it were needless to determine. The Lord passed through Pandharpur, the place of Tukaram. The religion which Tukaram preached was the religion of the Lord Gauranga in every particular, that which his disciples preached to the masses. The followers of that saint call themselves "belonging to Chaitanya." And Tukaram himself gives on account of his conversion in this manner. He says that he was going to the river to bathe, where he was accosted by a holy man who touched his head. Tuka fancied that he called himself Keshava Chaitanya. "I then," he writes, "sank into an unconscious state, and, therefore, cannot give an exact account of what happened. On coming back to consciousness I found that he who had blessed me, had disappeared."

Now this was just the manner in which the Lord often-times made his conversions. A look or a touch from him throws the man into a trance, and, on his coming to consciousness, he finds himself alone, having only a faint remembrance of having come across a celestial being or a holy man, who had caused the revolution in his mind, viz., an irresistible attraction for God or Sree Krishna. This touch, from the Lord, not only filled the fortunate individual with prem and bhakti, but the main principles of Vaishnava philosophy! Tukaram converted a large number of men in the Deccan, and he has a large following there.

In the same manner, following the advent of the Lord in the province, a saint arose in Guzerat, to whom the highest regard is paid by people of that region and others conversant with his life and labour. This was Swamee Narayan. He taught both by precept and example the cardinal doctrine preached by Lord Gauranga, namely, that, "in order to be fit to utter the name of Krishna, one must be meaner than grass, and honour those who insult him," and carried the doctrine to such lengths, that when his opponents flung their shoes at him, he handed the shoes back to their owners! Ballavacharya whose name and fame are so unpopular in the Bombay Presidency, had always been a man of saintly character. It was his disciples that prostituted Vaishnavism, not he. In his old age he proceeded to Neelachal to have an encounter with the Lord.

The usual result happened. He fell at the feet of the Lord, and was eventually initiated by Gadadhar, the beloved disciple of the Lord.

The Lord always loved children. Men or women were awe-struck in his presence, and doubted lest by coming too near him they should commit an offence; but children had no such feelings to restrain them. They found a pleasure in flocking round him. Never was the Lord more happy than when in the company of children. Govinda describes how at one place in the south, a boy induced his play-fellows to approach the Lord and promised them some fun for their pains. A Sannyasee has come here, he assured them, who is a mad man, and who can be made to perform strange antics by merely uttering in his hearing the name of Hari. Quite a crowd of boys surrounded the Lord. "Say Hari," cried the leader, "and you will see the fun." And they all said, "Hari," "Hari," and clapped their hands. The Lord, on hearing the sweet Hari-nam, turned round, saw the boys, and smiled. "See! already the man is moved, let us repeat it," said the leader. And again they utter the sacred name accompanied by the clapping of hands.

The Lord who was in his ordinary state, understood the motive of the children, namely, that he might be driven to display his madness. So, to humour them, he sat there and began to besmear his body with dust, all the while by his sweet smile encouraging the children to go on repeating the

name. "Now," says the leader triumphantly: "He has gone stark mad! See how he is besmearing his body with dust," and they laughed and danced.

When the Lord arrived at the town of Ramananda, he was received with royal honours. "We will now return to Puri," said the Lord to Rajah Ramananda, "where we shall live happily together, and pass our days discoursing about Krishna." Ram Ray said: "Immediately after you left me, I wrote to the king to relieve me of my duties. He refused. I again and again wrote to him, and, at last, confessed to him that you had called me and I must obey. The king has heard of you from Sarvabhauma, and he is anxiously expecting you back to Neelachal. When the king heard your name, he gave me leave to resign my duties. But you and I must not go together, as I must take with me an escort of soldiers, etc. I will wait, my Lord, till you have gone, and soon afterwards follow you."

CHAPTER XV.

THE KING.

THE Lord arrived at Neelachal (Puri) after an absence of two years. The bhaktas, who had been all the while anxiously waiting there, advanced in a body, and met him while he was yet about a day's journey from the Temple of Jagannath. They met, and the Lord embraced them. Sarvabhauma followed them with a numerous retinue and fell at the feet of the Lord, who raised him to give a warm embrace.

The Lord then settled in the Town of Puri and lived in a hut near the Temple. All the important servants of Jagannath came to meet him for the first time. Bhaktas from all parts of the country flocked to him, for, his fame had then spread throughout India. Thus came Puri, Bharati, Swarup-Damodar and other celebrated Sannyasees to cling to him for ever. Ramananda also came to pass all his days in the company of the Lord.

The king of Orissa had come to believe that the Lord was Sree Krishna: the conversion of Sarvabhauma and Ramananda had convinced him of this fact. Both these devoted followers besought the Lord to grant the king an interview. But the Lord refused!

He had excellent grounds for this refusal, however. A Sannyasee is not only prohibited from willingly coming across a female, but also a king. The Lord, therefore, could not, under the rules, allow the king an interview. The Lord had, no doubt, other excellent motives to take that step. He had forsaken society and become a poor mendicant, with a view to lead mankind to accept Harinam. If a king now comes to acknowledge him as master,—the king in whose town he lives,—the pathos that his resignation evoked, would then evaporate partially. The Lord wanted to remain the poorest of the poor, so as to touch the heart of mankind by his own mode of living.

Both Sarvabhauma and Ramananda then urged that the king would not come as a sovereign prince, but as one of the servants of Jagannath; for, as I said before, he was a regular servant of God, his duty being to sweep the streets before the Temple with a golden broom. But the Lord refused. Sarvabhauma and Ramananda next tried to move the Lord in other ways. They told him that the king had given up everything; that he was day and night weeping for a sight of his lotus feet; and that if he was not allowed the privilege of a sight of his feet, the probabilities were that he would die of grief. The king, Pratap, had also composed a sloka in which he addressed the Lord in these words: "When, my Lord God, Thou tookest the resolution of coming down to save sinners, didst Thou make

an exception only in the case of the greatest of them, Pratap-rudra?"

The Lord was, no doubt, moved; and though extremely kind in his refusal, he yet refused an audience to the king. It seems, this refusal of the Lord had an excellent effect upon the heart of the king. As a despotic ruler, he had, no doubt, some idea in his mind that he had his special privileges. But the attitude of the Lord humbled him to the dust; at the same time, it whetted his appetite for his lotus feet. And thus the king complained to Sarvabhauma: "The Lord is merciful, he has already taught me one great truth. A man, whom I would not allow to sit before me or approach me, is the constant companion of the Lord. But, I, the king of kings, have not the privilege of even seeing his lotus feet! This shows how unfortunate we kings are, and really how low we are."

Just see how the king was humiliated, purged out of his impurities, and chastened. He had the lives of Sarvabhauma and Ramananda at his absolute disposal. They were his servants, and them he had to employ to plead for him to their friend, the Lord! And thus the Lord, the friend of his servants, refused to see him, their master, the king!

The fact, however, is that nothing is impossible for a sincere devotee; if he is persistent in his knocking, the door is sure to be opened unto him. The king knocked and knocked, and got his reward at last. One day, while the Lord was in a state of

trance, the king, following the advice of Ramananda, approached him in the dress of an ordinary man. He sat, took the lotus feet of the Lord in his lap and began to rub them gently, all the while repeating some beautiful slokas from the Srimat Bhagavat, describing Sree Krishna. The Lord was in his half-conscious state, so as to be able to understand the slokas. Their recitation threw him into raptures, and at last he was led, by his ecstasy, to rise with a *hunkar* and clasp the king in his breast. As he embraced the king, he said: "Who art thou, kind stranger, pouring nectar into my ears? As a Sannyasee, I have nothing to give; so accept my embrace."

The Lord and the king fell down in a death-like swoon, clasped in each other's arms!

The king regained his consciousness before the Lord had done it, and left the place, tottering in his gait like a drunken man. Before he left, he humbly saluted the bhaktas that surrounded the Lord, who, all of them, blessed him, and congratulated him on his good luck.

The king proclaimed to his friends after this that though the Lord was known by different names, he should know him by one name, only, which is "The saviour of Pratap-rudra."

The bhaktas lost no time in sending to Nadia the news of the arrival of the Lord back from his travels in the south. They in Nadia had heard that

he had proceeded, almost alone, to the south, leaving Nitai and others in Neelachal. I will not attempt a description as to how Shachee, Vishnupriya and the bhaktas of the Lord passed this dreary couple of years, when they had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the dearest object of their lives. Says Bashu Ghose, describing the state of Nadia during this period of universal sorrow and despair: "The heart weeps, because of the absence of the Lord. What are we to do, where are we to go, to have him again? Who will now shower his mercy upon the fallen? Who will now cry outright at the sight of a fallen man? Nadia has become dark and dreary, and sinful Bashu Ghose has to suffer all this."

It is on record that Shachee, Vishnupriya and the most ardent bhaktas of the Lord lived, because he appeared to them in their heart, and consoled them by his spiritual presence. When they were, however, in a state of utter despair, tidings came, to restore them to life, of the arrival of the Lord.

In a short time, the house of Shachee was filled with bhaktas from all parts of the country, who assembled there for the purpose of a deliberation. "To Neelachal," "to Neelachal," they all cried; and they all, after taking permission of Shachee, prepared to proceed to that Town to see the Lord. Hundreds, thus led by Adwaita and Sreebas, proceeded on foot, and in three or four weeks' time, after suffering indescribable hardships, at last reach-

ed Neelachal. The Lord and bhaktas met after an absence of more than two years.

I wish I had the power and space of describing this beautiful scene,—the meeting of the Lord with his hundreds of bhaktas, who loved him more than their lives. Haridas, originally a Mussulman, had no permission to enter the province of Orissa; but now the king was a slave of the Lord, and Haridas, a bhakta, had no fear to go to his master.

The Lord and bhaktas sat, gazing at each other tenderly. "Where is Murari?" says the Lord; and some one ran to fetch him. He had fallen down in a swoon close by the hut of the Lord, from excess of his emotion, and, therefore, was left behind by his companions, who were beside themselves with joy. The Lord rose to embrace Murari, and he drew back, imploring the master not to touch him. "I am only dirt," said he, "don't touch a poor sinner like me. I am not worthy of that blessing." But the Lord embraced him by force, exclaiming that he touched Murari only to purify himself.

The bhaktas stayed four months with the Lord. I have no space to describe how they passed these days in ecstasy. The Lord persuaded the bhaktas to go back home, as they were not ascetics, but householders. "You must perform the duties of householders and maintain those who are dependent on you," said the Lord; and they had to come back with great reluctance. They had forgotten

wife, children, nay, the external world, in the company of the Lord.

Nitai and many other ascetic bhaktas remained with the Lord. The whole of Orissa had then been converted, and it was the lot of Puri to enjoy the ecstasy which Nadia had enjoyed two years before. The Lord sat with Nitai for a private conference.

The Lord.—You must go to Bengal.

Nitai.—I go to Bengal? I to leave you? Never! The body cannot live without the soul, and you are my soul.

The Lord.—Bengal must be saved. You alone are capable of accomplishing the difficult feat. You love me and therefore don't choose to leave this place. But we are not in this world to please ourselves. The people are groaning under misery, because of their unbelief. Our hardest work lies in Bengal, where the leaders are learned and profoundly intellectual. Only a powerful man like you can succeed in a place like that.*

Nitai began to weep. "It breaks my heart to leave you," said he. The Lord embraced him and said with inexpressible tenderness: "When you suffer in my absence, remember that I too am suffering for you." The Lord continued: "Learned men as they are in Bengal, they are not so easily conquered by any display of intellectual powers as

* It must be borne in mind that the Lord subsequently, in this manner, apportioned Northern India to his disciples, for the spread of the faith.

by the display of the higher emotions. You are all joy; show them what a delight it is to serve Krishna. Appeal to their heart and show that there is something else in man besides his intellect. I have the profoundest pity for these learned and intellectual men; kindly take the most particular care of them. In short, oblige me, dear brother, by making no exception between high and low, wise and ignorant, pious and infidel, good and bad, in dispensing your blessings,—save them all without discrimination. Greater the sinner, the greater are his claims upon you. You will encounter much opposition, but you will have to overcome it,—by love."

Nitai was thus sent to Bengal with a dozen followers. The Lord, when dismissing this "expedition," filled the members composing it, with so much of holy spirit as to lead them utterly to forget themselves. They came all the way to Nadia in a state of unconsciousness, not remembering anything what they had done all the three or four weeks.

In Bengal, Nitai raised the Flag of Lord Gauranga again. Nitai's method of conversion was unique. He never preached or argued, neither distributed pamphlets nor letters. But he roamed from place to place, proclaiming the advent of the Lord, with hundreds of followers, showing himself and his companions to be men who were constantly intoxicated with joy. He proceeded with his followers, dancing and doing kirtan.

As a specimen, we give here one of his songs :
 "He is come, He is come. He, the Being, who
 sits in our heart. He has come to take you to
 Goloke (highest heaven). Come to the port of my
 Lord Gauranga ; and I shall have you ferried over
 the ocean of worldliness without any payment."

Of course, he looked and talked like a mad
 man. But his joy was unmistakable. That joy
 overflowed his heart and overtook and drowned
 others ; and thus while Nitai proceeded on his tour
 of conquests, he found himself followed by ever-
 increasing crowd of believers.

There were men who confronted Nitai, who
 wanted proofs, who voted him and his followers
 mad men. And there were others who actually
 acted towards him in a spirit of bitter hostility. But
 the ardour of Nitai was not to be damped by these
 trifles. He would fall at the feet of his deadliest
 opponent and implore him, with such earnestness,
 weeping all the while, expressing the deep anguish
 of his soul, that his unfortunate victim would find
 himself moved in spite of himself and acknowledge
 defeat. Thus the greatest opponents of Nitai
 became subsequently his most ardent followers.
 Here is a description of Nitai from one of his most
 favoured disciples, the author of "Chaitanya
 Bhagabat."

"Nitai, whose temper is never ruffled by anger,
 and who is always under the influence of a never-
 failing ecstasy, roams about in the town without a

drop of pride in him. Whoever comes across him,
 he accosts him earnestly to accept Gauranga. If
 the man refuses, he takes a bit of grass between his
 lips (a sign of abject submission), and says, 'purchase
 me for ever by accepting the Lord.' Nitai never
 selects his men ; on the other hand, the greater the
 sinner, the greater is his compassion for him.
 Whenever he sees a sinner, he rolls on the ground
 in the anguish of his soul."

Nitai's advent was followed by a convulsion in
 Bengal. A strange frenzy seized the people. Many
 of them acquired something like supernatural powers,
 —children were found to talk like wise men, men
 to speak in strange tongues, to fast for weeks, to
 show extraordinary physical strength. A full des-
 cription of this religious frenzy is to be found in
 "Chaitanya Bhagabat."

The following year the bhaktas again proceeded
 to see the Lord at Puri. This time the ladies insisted
 that they should go also. And thus husbands led
 their wives, sons their mothers, and brothers their
 sisters ; and Sivananda Sen, the ardent follower of
 the Lord, undertook to bear all the passage expenses
 of the bhaktas. This pious duty the saint Sivananda
 performed for more than twenty years, always bear-
 ing the passage expenses of those who wanted to
 go to Puri to visit the Lord during the car ceremony.
 One of Sivananda's sons was the author of several
 books in Sanskrit, two of which dealt with the leelas
 of the Lord. One is "Chaitanya Charit," the other

the drama "Chandrodaya Natak," to both of which we are vastly indebted for many of our facts related in this book.

When the bhaktas reached Puri, the Lord, with his Puri-followers, advanced to receive his guests. There were, of course, loud shouts of "the Lord," "the Lord," when they met. Sivananda had his eldest son, aged about 9, in his arms. The lad had never seen the Lord. He was going to see him for the first time, and the shouts proclaimed that the Lord had appeared on the scene. So he asked of his parent, "Father, who amongst the crowd, is the Lord?" Sivananda said in reply to the query of his child, "Does my Lord need to be pointed out? Does not he carry his credentials always with him? See there, my son, before you he stands, the tallest and fairest of all, surrounded by a celestial light which betokens his divinity. See, his lovely eyes, moist with unutterable love, indicate that he is the Beloved of all."

Well, the bhaktas again passed four months in Puri and were then sent back home by the Lord.

The four months that the bhaktas passed in Puri, were spent in daily, nay, hourly, festivities; —not the festivities of the world, but of the inhabitants of that celestial abode of love and peace, called Brindaban. They rose in the morning to meet, and then sang together the glories of God; they bathed in thousands amidst peal after peal of Haribole; they all sat together, these hundreds, to

dine and pass the time in discourses about Krishna, interrupted by frequent peals of Haribole. In the afternoon, they listened to the Holy Sreemat Bhagabat, and the night they passed in singing the glory of God. Every moment of their time was utilized in the service of God. They spent their days and nights in ecstasy.

The dreaded day of separation, however, at last arrived, and the Lord sat surrounded by his hundreds of Nadia bhaktas. He embraced every one of them, when giving leave. The turn of Basudeva came. He fell at the feet of the Lord and prayed for a *bar* (gift). He was the elder brother of Mukunda, and had only recently taken the shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord, long after his younger had done it. Basudeva was the meekest of the meek, holiest of the holy. His heart ceaselessly wept for the miseries of his fellows. Said Basudeva: "My Lord, O Thou Ocean of Mercy! grant me one prayer. I am very miserable; remove the misery of Thy servant. Thy people suffer for their sins, and the thought rends my heart. Grant me this, merciful God. Transfer the sins of all mankind on my shoulders, and let me go to hell and suffer. Let your other children be saved and made happy."

Now Basudeva was not playing a part. He was only urging a request to one, whom he knew in his heart to be the Lord God Himself. Having a heart which was as tender as butter, it melted at the sight of misery. He thought that the contemplation of

this misery of mankind is more dreadful than the suffering of the misery itself. And thus he made his ever-memorable prayer.

This prayer was so extraordinary that its purport was not at first understood by those present. But when they realized what Basudeva was aiming at, they were overcome by an indescribable feeling. The Lord himself showed his emotion by such signs as *pulak*, tears, etc. The Lord was deeply moved.

"Like Master, like bhakta," said they all, when they had been able to recover from their stupefaction. "The prayer is only worthy of a bhakta of Lord Gauranga," said they. "It is sacrifice alone which pleases God, and one like this has no parallel," said another.

The prayer of Basudeva shows how great man can make himself by bhakti. It shows how the loving Father has bound His children in indissoluble ties of love and is ever attracting them towards Him. Dear reader! contemplate this prayer of Basudeva,—it will do good to your soul. The pious and loving saint prays for the forgiveness of the sins of his fellows. But Basudeva went a little further: he undertook to bear the burden of the sins of the world on his own shoulders!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONVERSION OF THE LEADERS.

LORD GOURANGA preached the equality of man. He preached that a pious Chandal (one of low caste) was superior to even a Brahmin who was an infidel. Naturally, the religion preached by the Lord and his followers, created enemies in Nadia. But strange it was that, whoever sought to oppose the Lord, had at last to succumb to him. Thus the leaders, one by one, were brought under the fold of the Lord. Adwaita, as the head of the Vaishnavas, had to yield his place to the Lord. Jagai and Madhai, the Rajas of Nadia, had to fall at the feet of the Lord, as the Kazi, the representative of the sovereign, was subsequently obliged to do. The king of Orissa, in whose territory the Lord had to live, acknowledged him as Avatar. There remained yet two brothers to subdue, *viz.*, the ministers of the king of Gaur, to remove all obstacles that stood against the spread of the faith. They were Brahmins, but they had to live like Mussulmans (for the king belonged to that faith), for the maintenance of their position, which was supreme in the province of Bengal. Of course, the king of Gaur was the sovereign, but all real power lay in the hands of the two brothers, the ministers. The two brothers had at last to come to

the Lord, whom he named Rup and Sanatan, and sent to Brindaban to spread the faith in the North-West.

If Basudeva Sarvabhauma, the foremost intellectual man in India, had been converted, there yet remained another, a rival of Sarvabhauma, and a superior too in some respects, to be brought into the fold. This was Prakasananda Saraswatee, the leading Sannyasee and Adwaitabadee in India.

Prakasananda was a deadly enemy of the religion of prem and bhakti. As the leader of the Sannyasees and a profoundly learned man, he was held in universal esteem. He had ten thousand disciples. As a spiritual leader, he ruled Benares with despotic sway. The Veda is the basis of Hinduism; and, Prakasananda was their professor and expounder. The Lord himself, during one of his revelations in Nadia, had declared that Prakasananda was preaching anti-bhakti doctrines, and he would some time hereafter teach him a lesson!

Prakasananda, as I said, reigned supreme in Benares. He came to hear that a young Sannyasee, who had taken his initiation from Keshava Bharati, was being worshipped as Sree Krishna by a good many people, even by learned men in Nadia. The fame of the Lord had then spread throughout India. Prakasananda at first heard the rumour with indifference, but he was a little staggered when he heard that even Sarvabhauma had acknowledged him as Sree Krishna. Now these two foremost

savants in India knew each other, and the conversion of Sarvabhauma naturally led the Benares Pundit to treat the new Avatar with more consideration. In the beginning he was only used to smile when he was told of the pretensions of a Nadia Pundit, who called himself Krishna. But when he heard that Sarvabhauma had accepted him as such without reserve, he condescended to take notice of the Avatar. He said that the so-called Avatar is not to be treated lightly, since he has been able to befool even that intellectual giant, Sarvabhauma. "The fact is," said he, "he is an occultist of gigantic powers, and has, therefore, been able to hypnotise my poor friend Sarvabhauma. If the humbug could be induced to come to Benares, I have not the least doubt, his tricks would be exposed." The Benares savant thought absolutely sure in his mind that if "the great occultist" had been able to befool Sarvabhauma, he would surely not be able to befool himself, the great Sarâswatee of Benares. Indeed, the idea of a man calling himself Krishna, and of others accepting him as such, appeared to him so funny, that he felt a deep curiosity to have a sight of the man himself, and the tricks he employed in befooling his victims. With this view he condescended so far as to write a letter to the Lord which contained two couplets, meaning in effect that "he is only a brute, who ignores Benares and lives in any other place." It was an indirect command to the Lord to come to Benares.

Strange as it may appear, the Lord actually sent a reply to that silly letter. His reply was exceedingly courteous, not rude like the communication of the Saraswatee. He, however, declined to go, on the simple ground that Sree Krishna in Neelachal was enough for him. The Saraswatee then formed the plan of discrediting the Lord by circulating libels against him. And with that view he wrote in reply a most scurrilous and abusive letter to the Lord. Now, as these were open letters, and were likely to be read all over India, the two combatants, the Lord and the Saraswatee, being the two most distinguished men in the country, the Benares savant, by this means of epistolary correspondence, sought to create scandals against the Lord. Indeed, the more he thought of it, the more incumbent a duty he thought it to be his, as the foremost religious teacher in India, to discredit and expose the humbug who was actually extorting honours due to God Almighty, from not only the ignorant, but also the learned.

To the latter communication the Lord gave, however, no reply. These letters are extant.

The Lord, while proceeding to Brindaban, which he was pleased to do six years after his renunciation, passed through Benares. Eleven years before this, he had bid Tapan Misra to proceed to Benares and live there where he (the Lord) promised he would meet the exile. (*Vide* Vol. I, page 45). In pursuance of that promise, the Lord, when he

arrived at Benares, agreed to be the guest of that saint in that city.

Prakasananda had before desired the presence of the Lord in his city ; but now we see the Master actually there on his way to Brindaban. We may as well give here, therefore, a very short account of the Lord with Prakasananda, though it is beyond the scope of my original programme. The Lord stayed in the city for some time, but declined to pay a visit to the savant. The appearance of the Lord in the town created a sensation, and Prakasananda heard of his arrival ; but he felt it a condescension to come and see the Lord. The Lord, on the other hand, though he stayed in the city for some days, yet declined to pay a visit to Prakasananda. And thus there was no meeting between them on that occasion. The Lord from there proceeded to Brindaban.

This was an opportunity for the savant to display his spite against the Lord. "Did I not tell you," said he to his followers, "that in this city the Avatar would find a hard place to show his tricks? He dared not come to us, nay, you see he has already fled." But the Lord again returned to Benares from Brindaban on his way back to Neelachal!

"He is come back, is it?" said he, when he heard of the return of the Lord. "Rest assured, he will not venture to approach us." The Lord, who resided concealed in a hut, had been yet seen by a good many people, and they had surrendered

themselves to him. These men naturally ran to the first man in Benares, the savant, to impart the glad tidings that a young Sannyasee had come, who is, there was no doubt, Sree Krishna Himself. And whenever he heard this, the savant laughed in derision, and warned them not to approach that occultist whose company itself would be damnation. "Those who announce themselves as God Almighty," said the savant to these new converts of the Lord, "and those who accept such Avatars, are both damned." These frequent conversions in the city only increased the spite of the savant against the Lord.

But the converts remained unmoved. They were sure of their Avatar, and they felt that if the savant had but an opportunity of coming across the Lord he would be instantly converted. But neither does he come, nor does the Lord condescend to go to him. How is this meeting to be brought about? Thus the converts counselled amongst themselves.

Of course, they teased the Lord with relations of their sorrow. They told him how the savant hated him, reviled him, and had already created a strong party in the town against him. He was an unfortunate man, that savant and Sannyase. Was it not the duty of the Lord, they added, the Saviour of mankind, to save him too, who exercised such a baneful influence over his fellows?

But whenever these complaints were brought

to the notice of the Lord, he made no reply, but only sweetly smiled.

One of these new converts, a Maharatta Brahmin, thought of a plan. He invited all the Sannyasees of the town, thousands of them, to break fast at his place. He then, with other converts, came to the Lord to beseech him to accept the invitation.

The Lord, understanding their real motives for this invitation, smiled, but said nothing.

Upon this, all the leading converts who were in this conspiracy, fell at his feet, and implored him to accept the invitation. They then frankly confessed that the invitation of the savant and his followers was only a plan to bring them face to face with the Lord. They said: "My Lord, they revile you because they have never seen you. A sight of your divine person will convert them. Kindly come only to save us from life long persecutions. You are indifferent to praise and blame, but when you are gone, the whole town will persecute us by reviling you. How will it be possible for us to bear abuses levelled at the Soul of our souls? Grant unto us this prayer, our good Lord, and accept the invitation."

The Lord again smiled, and this time agreed to come!

The Sannyasees, many thousands of them, sat under big canopies. They had heard that the Lord was coming. Now, in spite of the apparent con-

tempt of Prakāṣananda for the Lord, which he never let slip an opportunity of showing, he had come to feel some respect for the being who had succeeded in making even Sarvabhauma bow to him as God Himself. He had, however, a firm conviction that "the pretender" would never dare approach him. But when he heard that the great party had been organized by the Maharatta Brahmin—one who had, in spite of his strict injunction, accepted the Lord,—solely with the object of bringing him and the so-called occultist, i.e., the Lord, together, he felt something like a flutter in his heart. "What does this mean?" thought the sage. "He is coming to me; he knows that I have the utmost contempt for him, and that I have never concealed this fact either from himself or from the public. Yet he comes to me, and in the midst of thousands of my disciples! What does he mean?"

Now Prakāṣananda was master there in that city; he had besides never known an equal, except perhaps Sarvabhauma. He was there in the midst of thousands of his own men. Yet the stranger, whom he had persistently reviled, was coming to him, as it were, in his own stronghold. That was, no doubt, a challenge. And the sage felt, imperceptibly within himself, not only a curiosity for a sight of the Lord, but some trepidation at the approaching encounter. "Would he also hypnotize me, as he had done Sarvabhauma?" thought the

sage, and tried to smile away the indefinite dread that sought to seize him.

The Lord came to the party, accompanied by four of his disciples. He was in a perfectly conscious state. He came slowly with bent head, as if engrossed with himself. The word flew from mouth to mouth that Krishna-Chaitanya was coming, and every Sannyasee sought to have a peep at him, as his gigantic figure loomed in the distance. Prakāṣananda tried to seem indifferent, but yet he could not help taking his full share of the sight of the approaching figure.

The presence of the Lord at once confounded the sage. "Here is no doubt a *Mahapurush* (grand man)," thought Prakāṣananda, "What majesty in the man!" The Lord, however, slowly approached. There was, outside the cover of the canopies, water for the guests to wash their feet. The custom is for the guests to wash their feet and then to sit in the bedding spread for them. The Lord came with bent head, saluted all the congregated Sannyasees, washed his feet, and then, without entering within, sat there!

Ordinarily Prakāṣananda would have never permitted an invited guest to sit outside, as a beggar, as the Lord had done. When, therefore, he saw the Lord taking his seat outside, he felt a compunction in his heart. He thought that he had given the stranger every right to avoid him by his unjust treatment of him. Then, if he was the leader in

that company, the stranger was an invited guest of his host. And thus he required consideration at his hand. There was another thought which entered his mind. He knew that his host, the Maharatta Brahmin, had sold himself to the stranger; and would it be proper for him, thought he, that simply because he was there strong in followers, he would permit such a man to be submitted to the disgrace of sitting outside?

But Prakasananda was moved for other serious reasons. He had now a closer view of the Lord. And the sight, as it were, paralyzed him with astonishment. Is this the humbug who hypnotises men like Sarvabhauma? Apparently that can never be. For, he seems innocence, modesty, meekness incarnate. And how intelligent he looks! There can possibly be no guile in the man. Perhaps I have wronged him. All the above ideas passed rapidly through his mind. He felt deep compunction for having sought to injure such a good soul, as the stranger seemed to be.

He rose to address the Lord, and when he stood up the thousands rose with him. He said, "Swamee! I can never permit this. You must come within and give us the pleasure and benefit of your company." The Lord in reply said with folded hands that he implored to be left where he was. He belonged to a lower order, (he being a Bharati, and Prakasananda a Saraswatee) and not fit to sit in the midst of such august company.

Prakasananda said, "this can never be," and then he came forward, took the Lord by the hand, and made him sit by himself. His conscience continued to prick him. He had treated the stranger with injustice and meanness for which he had no excuse to console himself. His object of persecution had never given him offence, nor even resented the treatment that he had accorded to him. The man had come to him as the humblest of the humble, bearing in his face and attitude no trace of any ill-feeling towards him. He wanted to make up for his past injustice, and so he addressed the Lord in the gentlest language possible. "Swamee," said he, "you belong to our order. You have been staying in this city. Yet you do not associate with us."

In reply the Lord muttered some half-audible excuse. But the sage felt within himself that he had no right to blame the stranger for his unwillingness to come to him. For, was it not he who had made it impossible for the Lord to seek his company? So, not getting a reply to his question and not wishing to get one, lest the Lord alluded to the sage's treatment of himself, he changed the subject of talk and said again: "Besides, I have a complaint to make. You are not only a Sannyasee like us, but you seem to be a celestial being in disguise. Yet, how is it, you do not perform one of the chief duties of our order, that is, the reading of the Vedas? Then, it is no secret, for the world

knows it, that you indulge in singing and dancing, which are abominations to us ascetics. If you, who are born to be a leader, indulge in such practices, a bad example will be set and ascetics as a class are likely to be demoralized. Will you kindly explain your motives for such conduct, for they must be excellent?"

In the above, the sage naturally assumed the position of a superior, and the Lord as naturally replied as an inferior. Said he: "Sreepad, I shall frankly confess to you my condition. My Guru, seeing that I was a dunce and not an overintelligent disciple, suggested to me, that any of the intricate methods followed by our order would not suit me, and that for a man in my position, the only possible course was to pursue a straight and simple path, which was to utter the name of Sree Krishna. 'Do it, my son,' said he, 'and you will obtain the highest blessings that are open to mankind.' Following the above command, I took shelter under the lotus feet of Sree Krishna, and continued diligently and faithfully to utter His name. Ignorant as I was, this mode of worship suited me very well. But a strange thing happened. The name had a power which enthralled me, and I began to dance and sing in the joy of my heart. One thought, however, checked the flow of this ecstasy. Was I getting mad? And in terror, I ran to my Guru and told him my condition. I told him, 'Master, what sort of name have you given me to repeat? It has already

done a good deal of mischief. I am led by it, to sing and dance like a mad man." Tell me now what am I to do, and how to extricate myself from this strange disease?' "*"

"My Guru," continued the Lord, "smiled at my apprehension and told me that it was no disease that had overtaken me. 'The name of the beloved God Krishna,' said my Guru, 'is like Himself irresistibly powerful. You have got your reward. That is the way every one is affected, who sincerely sticks to uttering His name. In short, my son, you have got a touch of Krishna-prem which gods hanker after. You are a lucky individual; you have got the blessings of Sree Krishna, and I am lucky in having such a disciple.' "

"Well," continued the Lord, addressing the sage, "so, you see, Sreepad, I have told you all. It is true, I dance and sing. I do not do it willingly. It is the power, possessed by the name of the Great and Beloved Being, Krishna, which makes me do it."

When the Lord alluded to this Great Being, a thrill passed, not only through the frame of the sage but his followers as well. The Lord spoke amidst breathless silence. His sweet and sonorous voice, the pathos in his tone, the holy light that played about his person joyously, affected all those who saw

* *Vide* the talk of the Lord with Sreebas, Vol. I, pages 87 & 88.

and heard him. The sage was himself powerfully moved. Yet he tried to maintain the superiority of his position, which he had assumed before, and said: "Your explanation is exceedingly satisfactory and soothing. It is quite true that the Shastras say that Krishna-prem is the most coveted of all blessings, but yet you have not kindly explained why you don't read the Vedas."

The Lord replied, "the original Vedas are good and ennobling, but Shankara makes them support pantheistic doctrines which, however, they do not. By the Vedas you mean their interpretations by Shankara. They make no difference between man and God. Now, as a humble worshipper of the Deity, I cannot read Shankara's versions without giving a very great shock to my feelings."

Prakasananda was startled. He was a follower of Shankara, like other Sannyasees. He had very little faith in God, but an unalterable one in Shankara. He, however, did not lose temper at what the Lord said. Yet he wanted to know what grounds had the Swamee to speak so disparagingly of a master whom the world worshipped.

The Lord said: "The Vedas are attributed to God Himself. That being the case the Vedas themselves ought to extort greater respect than the interpretations, by whomsoever made. The Vedas are simple enough. I think it is not difficult to show that Shankara's versions are faulty."

"Let us then hear how you interpret them,"

said the sage with great curiosity. He was the first man in Vedas in India. He was, therefore, quite confident that there was no chance of the young stranger saying anything which he did not know, and which, if objectionable, he would not be able to refute. The Lord began to criticise the interpretations of Shankara. He had once to do this before Sarvabhauma.

The sage and his followers were amazed. They had all followed the renderings of Shankara blindly, never giving a thought that there could be any mistake in them. But the Lord made it clear to the meanest apprehension that the interpretations were unfair and far-fetched.

The sage found himself lost in thought. He then addressed the Lord: "I have followed you, Swamee, with great attention. You have done your task in a thorough manner. You have shown super-human powers in criticizing so successfully the works of a master of masters like Shankara. None hitherto had ventured it. Neither do I feel any inclination to find fault with your criticisms, for, apparently they seem to be just. But let us now hear how you explain the original Vedas."

This the Lord did. He showed from the Vedas that God has a spiritual form for the worshipper, and that he is to be attained only by prem and bhakti.

The discourse of the Lord produced the same effect upon the ascetics as a similar one had pro-

duced upon Sarvabhauma. The learning of the Lord at first amazed them. His expositions made it clear to them all that what they had hitherto believed was a mistake, and that they had been misled by Shankara. The admiration for the Lord was, however, supplanted by another higher feeling, when he began to talk to them of God, and prem and bhakti. Discourses about God, in the mouths of pious men, are always sweet. In the mouth of the Lord they maddened the ascetics with pleasure. They had never before tasted the ecstasy that proceeds from bhakti. Its taste intoxicated them, and they felt all irresistibly attracted towards the Lord. All the Sannyasees wanted to speak, but the presence of the leader restrained them. Prakasananda, however, broke the silence.

He addressed the Lord. "Swamee," said he, "you know I have been reviling you. The reason is, I was arrogant from pride and vanity. I felt I had no equal, and therefore I had a right to give the law to others. I ought to ask forgiveness of you for my unjust behaviour to you. I see, however, there is no need of doing it. Indeed, to ask forgiveness of you is to do you injustice. You don't need to be asked for forgiveness. My eyes are opened to-day. I thought I understood the Vedas, but the fact is that it is only to-day that I begin to understand it. I consider my new birth to commence from this day. Yes, you are my Guru, lead me to Krishna-prem."

All the above Prakasananda said with inexpressible

sible pathos, like one, not only humbled and chastened, but saturated with bhakti. The others followed in the same strain.

It became known in the town immediately that Prakasananda, with all his followers, have been defeated by the young Sannyasee from Nadia, known as the Avatar of Krishna, and that they have also renounced their faith and accepted prem and bhakti. There was, of course, the other rumour that Sree Krishna Himself had come. And thus the hut, where the Lord had concealed himself, was besieged day and night by vast crowds. The Lord had agreed to stop in this big city for a short time, provided his bhaktas could give him a solitary hut to live in, undisturbed by the presence of crowds. But vast crowds came, in spite of the endeavours of the devotees of the Lord to prevent them. These men, however, had only three opportunities of seeing the Lord, viz., on the three occasions when he proceeded to bathe in the river Ganges.

On the following day there was a talk in the company of the Sannyasees about the stranger. Said the ascetic, the next in importance to Prakasananda: "It is lucky the young stranger came. We have hitherto dissipated our energies. Nothing like bhakti to God. The sweet words of the stranger are yet ringing in my ears. Let us worship Krishna." And, as a matter of fact, he uttered a short prayer to Krishna, which was repeated by many others.

Prakasananda said: "Yes, you are quite right.

The stranger has opened our eyes. Let us worship Krishna." And there was again a short prayer to Krishna from his lips. The sage was in a thoughtful mood. He was a leader, a man most positive and aggressive in his nature. He found himself suddenly deprived of all that he possessed. All his ideas and notions, acquired after an amount of toil and sufferings which are indescribable, have been proved worthless by the young man. And did I fast and sleep on bare grounds for forty years for this?—thought he, and, of course, sighed. He had, however, another cause of sorrow. He felt that he had been annihilated. Was he not the first man in India? Had he not reviled the young man? Had he not spoken to everyone who came to talk to him of the Lord, levelling the foulest epithets upon Krishna-Chaitanya, the humbug and the cheat? Has he not been persecuting the Lord before the world these four years? To be crushed, in this manner, by the same man before all his disciples and a large concourse of people who regarded him as one next to the Deity in importance, was a great blow to him.

But there was still another greater difficulty which beset him. He found that though the youngster had annihilated him before the world, he could not yet entertain in his heart any feeling of vindictiveness towards him. He found that the young man had taken entire possession of his heart. He had been trained to subdue, nay eradicate, all tender sentiments from the heart, but the young stranger

had softened it and made his impress upon it. He found the picture of the Lord in his heart indelibly impressed, and he could not divest himself of it by all his efforts. The musical voice of the Lord rang in his ears incessantly, and he fancied as if the picture was yet talking to him. The lovely gaze of the Lord to him, when he was explaining the Vedas, penetrated deep in his heart. It seemed to him that the picture was gazing at him still in the same lovely manner.

The picture did not prove disagreeable in the least. On the contrary, it soothed his soul and gave him infinite pleasure. The fact was, the sage, in spite of his asceticism, had been seized by *purvarag*, and felt an irresistible attraction towards the Lord. He would have run to the Lord, and he could have easily bartered all that he possessed, even his soul, to secure the privilege of securing his company, but pride, which oftentimes proves an all-controlling passion, and a trace of which yet remained in his heart, restrained him. How could he now run to the Lord, without making himself the laughing-stock of the whole town?

He himself thus describes his own condition in a sloka of his: "A stronger being than myself,—a fair-coloured thief,—has forcibly stolen from me my religious faith founded upon the Vedas, the rules that I strictly followed, my prejudice against kirtan, poetry and drama, nay, even the ordinary laws of nature (eating, sleeping, etc.) that I have hitherto

followed."* The sage felt that he was getting mad, and in this manner, he passed about a couple of days, talking to none but himself, thinking of nothing but the Lord, forgetting food and sleep.

Just then he heard a noise in the town. A moment later he heard from a messenger that the noise was due to the presence of a crowd, which had gathered to see the young stranger Sannyasee dancing! It came about in this way. The Lord, on that morning, on his way home from his bath in the river, paid, as usual, a visit to the Temple of Bindu-Madhav, where there is a beautiful Image of Krishna. He saw the Image and was at once entranced, and began to dance in his ecstasy. Of course, an ever-increasing crowd was following him from his bath, but seeing the dance of the Lord, the vast assemblage raised the shout of "Hari, Hari," and that was the cause of the noise that the sage had heard.

Now the sage has seen the Lord and his sinless and celestial face, as also his lovely eyes. He has heard him talk,—his sweet and sonorous voice has entered his ears; he has watched the wave of pleasure that passed through his face and whole frame when speaking of Krishna, but he had never seen this same lovely being in a state of trance. Here is a lucky opportunity, thought the sage, and

* Prakasananda, after his conversion, wrote a book called "Chaitanya Chandramrita," from which the above and the slokas subsequently noticed are quoted. It is one of the most powerful of Sanskrit works that the advent of the Lord created.

he announced his intentions to his followers, as he ran, almost in a state of frenzy, to see the Lord in his ecstatic dance. Of course, his disciples followed. Seeing Prakasananda and his followers, the crowd gave way, and thus he found himself face to face with the Lord.

What he saw let Prakasananda himself describe :

"I salute to the Prince of Masters, Sree Chaitanya, who is saturated with incomparable holy spirit; who is dancing, and giving graceful motion to his feet, uplifted gold-like arms, and to his waving body; who is uttering that joy-giving name Hari Hari in a state of ecstasy, and thus withdrawing all evils from the world."

The Lord himself, of course, was unaware, not only of the presence of the crowd, but also of Prakasananda. The dance of Lord Gauranga was always irresistible, and Prakasananda could not resist it. Hitherto he had voted the Lord merely as Prince of Masters, but now he came to suspect that he was somebody higher. Here is another sloka of his. He says:—

प्रवाहैरश्रूणां नवजलदकोटौ इव दृशौ

दधानं प्रेमद्वर्गा परमपदकोटौः प्रहसनम् ।

वमन्तं माधुर्यैरमृतनिधिकोटोरिव तनु-

च्छटाभिस्तं वन्दे हरि महच्च सन्न्यासकपटम् ॥

"The Being, whose couple of eyes are like

clouds raining incessant tears ; who, by his display of love, is creating a disgust in the minds of men for Heaven (where gods reside) itself ; and who is emitting an ocean of nectar and grace, is no other than the Lord God Himself in the guise of a Sannyasee, and Him I salute."

Thus, in the first stage, the sage was purged out of his vanity and other passions which sullied his soul. When this was done, he was entitled to discern truth. In the second stage, there was struggle between the truth and vanity in his mind, and the former triumphantly entered and expelled the other. His third stage was to feel veneration and attraction for the Lord, as a devoted disciple does for his master. His fourth stage was to be entitled to the knowledge that that Being, whom he had fancied to be a mere master, was even higher than that, being God Almighty Himself, though concealed in the guise of a Sannyasee. His fifth stage yet to be attained was,—to fall in love with God!

Now, pure love is a quite different thing from what a wife, generally speaking, feels for her husband, or a mother feels for her child. When love appears in the heart, it subordinates every other feeling. It is something like what an infatuated woman feels for her lover. Yet her feeling for her lover can never be true ; for, the object is impure.*

* A good many people express a surprise that the pure love of Radha should be likened to that of an abandoned

The sage felt that it was the Lord God that was dancing before him, but yet he had not then actually fallen in love with Him.

The Lord was dancing before him in infinite joy, and torrents of tears were trickling down his cheeks. Step by step the sage found himself drawn into the current created by the scene. From his heart he had all his life tried to exterminate all tender sentiments, yet they remained there, in spite of himself, not dead but undeveloped. All these now became vivified and gained an ascendancy over him. The result was, the sage found tears in his eyes, tears which he had not shed for the last forty years. In short, he found himself weeping,—weeping with joy!

"Oh joy, oh joy," cried he. He had no notion that there was joy in this earth, and joy from sources which he had tried to shut up with such mighty efforts. Overpowered, he began to imitate the Lord in his dance. Not that he actually danced, but it seemed to those who watched him that the Lord had taken possession of every nerve of his body, and that the sage was, as it were, helplessly following all the movements of the dancing figure before him. The tears that flowed from his eyes gradually cleared his sight, and then he saw that the

woman, who has fallen in love with one who is not her husband. The reason is that it is the love of the abandoned woman alone that can give some definite idea of what is called Krishna-prem.

dancing figure was no longer a Sannyasee, but a gold-bodied youth of exquisite beauty and indescribable grace. The sage then fell in love with the Lord!

The noise of the vast crowd jarred in the ears of the Lord, and he gradually came to consciousness.

And what did he see? He saw that the sage himself, with his followers, was standing just before him, his face suffused with tears. Seeing this, the Lord, now a bashful and meek youth, fell at the feet of the sage for his blessing. But the sage expressed his horror at this movement of the Lord. He said: "Don't endanger my after-life by your meekness, it has already been jeopardised. There is a Shastric text that he who reviles God is for ever damned. But there is another text which says that, the touch of the lotus feet of God cures all evil. I reviled you, so I have destroyed my future prospects. Now, let me have a touch of your feet and save myself!" Saying this he fell at the feet of the Lord before the vast crowd.

The Lord, however, could not allow this. He was then in his normal or rather human state. He, therefore, reminded the sage that to call a man God is blasphemy, and he, whose function is to give law to his followers, should avoid committing it. The sage in reply said: "I have known Thee in my heart which Thou hast now completely occupied. But if you choose to remain incognito for

purposes of your own, which must be inscrutable to us poor mortals, yet, as a bhakta of God, you are worthy of my reverence, who is an infidel."

The Lord restrained his feelings, because the conversation between him and the sage was being heard by a large number of people, and let the sage understand that the talk ought to be deferred for a more convenient occasion. The Lord came back to his hut. There was, after this, indescribable commotion in the town. But I am anticipating—the Prakasananda incident happened at a period, which is beyond the limit I had assigned for this book. At night Prakasananda Saraswatee came to pay the Lord a visit. They met in private; the Lord took him in his bosom and they both fell in a swoon, clasped in each other's arm. After a while, they rose. Said the Lord: "You better go to Brindaban, that is the place for you."

Prakasananda.—No, that cannot be. I eradicated every tender feeling from my heart. The result is re-action. I am now in violent love. I cannot live without you.

The Lord.—No, you must go to Brindaban, go and spread the faith there and save people. As for me when you feel my separation sorely, you shall have a sight of me in your heart.

The sage was deeply disappointed, but there was no help, there was the divine command. He then again observed slowly: "If I can see your figure in my heart when it hankers after you, I think

I shall be able to manage it somehow or other. This assurance, my Lord, reconciles me to my fate. Your assurance gives me joy."

The Lord.—Henceforth let, therefore, your name be Prabodhananda. ["Prabodh" means assurance and "ananda" means joy.] Thenceforth he was called Prabodhananda Saraswatee.

Thus Prabodhananda, early the following day, left Benares for Brindaban, as the Lord left Benares for Puri. There Prabodhananda wrote several books, a couple of which is extant, one of which is "Chaitanya Chandramrita." In this book he, in a series of slokas, gives an idea of the beauty, the goodness and power of the Lord, and of his own feelings towards him,—how He entered into his heart and occupied it. That book is a source of delight to all bhaktas of our Lord. From some of these slokas put together, the following song is prepared which is an address of Prabodhananda to the Lord. When the latter refused to take Prabodhananda with him, the sage expressed his disappointment in a series of slokas. The following song is founded upon them:

"What have you done? (my Lord). You stole my heart, maddened me, and then left me!

"I was dignified, deep, firm and strong, nothing could move or shake me from my resolve. But what hast Thou done? Thou hast driven from my mind my fear of public opinion, and the respect that I

felt for the dignity of my position, and made me as silly as a boy.

"I rent asunder the ties that kept me chained to the world. But what a mishap? You have again chained me by the ties of love (to Thee)."

The slokas from this book of his, "Chaitanya Chandramrita" would give the world an idea how the Lord appeared to him. The slokas, quoted before, were from this book: here is another:

धर्मासूयः सतत परमाविष्ट एवात्यधर्मे
दृष्टिं प्राप्नो नहि खलु सतां दृष्टिषु ज्ञापिनोसन् ।
यद्वत् श्रीहरिरसमुधाखादुमत्तः प्रनृत्य-
त्युच्चैर्गायत्यथ विलुठति स्तौमि तं किञ्चिदौशम् ॥

"I salute that Sree Gauranga who made such people maddened with a taste of Krishna-prem so as to lead them to dance, sing and roll on the ground in ecstasy, as had before never done one meritorious act; on the other hand who had spent their lives in sinful acts, and had never come across a saint or a saintly place."

And how did he convert such "iron" into "gold," that is, made absolutely a pious man of an absolutely sinful man? Prabodhananda describes the process, in another sloka, thus:

दृष्टः स्यूयः कीर्तितः संस्पृष्टो वा दूरस्थैरप्यागतो
वादतो वा ।
प्रेम्नः सारं दातुमीशो य एकः श्रीचैतन्यं नौमि
देवं दयालुम् ॥

"I salute that all-merciful Master, Gauranga, whose mere touch or sight or grace is enough for a man to get prem, and who confers the secrets of prem even upon those who are far away from him, only if they revere him in their hearts."

Such was the power possessed by the Lord, and thus he was worshipped as the Lord Almighty by men, even by his most intellectual and learned contemporaries!

The Lord had promised to his mother that he would come to pay her a visit. Besides, under the rules, as I said before, he was bound to take a final leave of his native village. The Lord, therefore, started for Nadia five years after his renunciation. But his Puri followers would not permit it, that is to say, they clung to him,—men, women and children. They must follow him wherever he goes. It was explained to them that the Lord would come back in a short time, but they could not be persuaded to stay. It was with great difficulty that the Lord succeeded in eluding their pursuit to proceed on his way.

The ascetics, however, all followed him. Sarva-bhauma was allowed to accompany him for a day or two, and then he was persuaded to return. He returned weeping. Ramananda followed in a conveyance, not having the strength to proceed on foot. In all, more than a hundred followed him. They had to pass through the capital town Katak, where the king lived. The Lord, after breaking his fast,

was taking his rest under a banian tree, when the king approached. On this occasion he came with his kingly garb on, supported by his ministers and followed by his troops. He came and prostrated before the Lord, the golden crown on his head touching the lotus feet of the Lord. The Lord raised him and embraced him.

On reaching Bengal, the Lord found himself surrounded by a sea of faces. He landed at Panihati, which is near Calcutta, at Pundit Raghava's. From there, till he reached Nadia, he found himself constantly in the midst of crowds which were so vast as to be beyond computation. The chroniclers say that to count the number that surrounded the Lord, when he came back to Bengal, is as impossible as to count the sand on the sea-shore.

For seven days he was in the town of Kulia, which was on the opposite bank of the river which passes by Nadia, to meet all his early friends.

He then crossed the river and landed at his own bathing ghat. An immense concourse of people followed him,—silently. They all remembered the days when he sported as a restless youth and flourished as a young savant: they now saw him a saint of serious aspect with the garb of a mendicant on.

He stood before his own door. His mother Shachee came out in the street and he prostrated himself before her, though it was against law. Vishnupriya was within; she had no right to come,

and no one expected to see her there. But sure enough, a veiled lady came before the Lord, and fell prostrate before him. Seeing that the figure was that of a woman, the Lord retreated a step or two. The prostrate lady said: "Thou hast, my Lord, saved the world. And is Thy servant alone to remain a forsaken being?"

The Lord, as also others, then came to know that she was Vishnupriya. A shade of sorrow passed through the divine face of the Lord. He said: "Serve Krishna."

Vishnupriya.—Leave me some token that I may soothe my heart by it.

The Lord pondered. He said: "You see, I have nothing."

Vishnupriya.—Leave me Thy sandals.

And the Lord left them. The lady took them reverentially, and placed them on her head. That was their last meeting.

The sandals are now worshipped.

APPENDIX.

CHAPTER A.

So much of God, as is within the capacity of man to comprehend, can be known by observation and meditation; devotion and inspiration; and direct messages from Heaven. The last come to man either in the shape of inspiration to certain individuals fit to receive them, or are brought down by beings who are called Messiahs or Avators, who announce themselves as such, and are accepted as such by, not only many of their contemporaries, but many of succeeding generations.

God is believed to be unknowable and inaccessible, but Prophets have assured us that the door is opened to him who persistently knocks at it. God is worth the trouble of a search. God is not found, not because He is unknowable and inaccessible, but because He is never seriously sought. Let an honest and persistent inquirer observe all that he sees around him and within himself, and he will find that many of the mysteries regarding God and creation, that surround him, will be explained to him.

He first comes to acknowledge the existence of an intelligent and all-powerful Creator. This he is.

forced to do because he cannot conceive of a well-arranged creation without an intelligent cause, nay, he cannot conceive of his own existence without his Creator. Of course, there are men who profess atheism, but they deceive themselves. It is simply impossible for a man, constituted as he is, to divest his mind of the notion of a Supreme Lord, the Master and Creator of all.* The so-called atheist who professes an unbelief in the existence of God, will be obliged to admit Him at a moment of imminent peril, though he may not continue to acknowledge it, from foolish pride, when the danger is over.

The inquirer feels that the Creator is one and is as vast as the universe ; that, as the Creator of intelligent beings, He must be also Himself intelligent ; and that as man and nature are evolved out of Him, something at least of Him can be known by studying nature and the human mind. He feels also that God is also like a man *plus* something, which something marks Him out from the latter.

It is this "something," which, however, bewilders him. That "something" is beyond the reach of the human intellect. A man can only conceive of a man, but he can never go beyond that. He may try to conceive God as something different

* As God is worth the trouble of a search, let an unbeliever who is sincere, seek the company of pious men, dead or living. That is, besides the grace of God, the only remedy that I know for the cure of scepticism.

from himself ; he can furnish Him with more hands and heads, but still the God of his most extravagant fancies will practically remain a man. He can describe Him in such language as "One who has no beginning or end," but he will never be able to conceive of the Being agreeing with such a description. The words 'all-pervading,' 'all-powerful,' &c., can never convey any definite meaning to the human mind, for, it can never go beyond a certain limit. It is easy to declare that the sun is ninety-five millions of miles from here, but difficult to realize the fact. The sun, however, is only a speck in this great universe of God, and God is at least as big as His creation.

Staggered by his attempt to realize this something† of God which marks Him out from man, the

† People, generally speaking, seek to worship this 'something' and thus fail to realize their expectations. They feel that in comparison to God man is only a puny creature, and they would thus consider it a sacrilege to give God any human attribute at all. Those who call themselves iconoclasts, *i.e.* consider it a sacrilege to give God a human form, however, practically do it by giving to him human attributes, not only the finer ones, *viz.*, love, mercy, justice, but also of wrathfulness, vengefulness, vanity and so forth. According to popular notion, God is only like a human tyrant. It was Vaishnavism alone, as a creed, which rejected without reserve this 'something' in God as beyond the reach of human capacity, and worshipped Him as a Grand Man. If realization of God,—His companionship,—is the aim of life, it is a futile attempt to seek a God of light, an all-pervading God, and an Almighty God. The

inquirer has to come down to the reach of his own capacity to have a conception of his Creator. And, as I said before, since he cannot conceive of a sentient being different from himself, he realizes the stern fact that the God realizable to man can, at the most, be a grand man, withal, being at the same time, Infinite and Eternal. Says the Seer Swedenberg, a thorough Christian and an avowed worshipper of the Almighty God of the Bible, that God is only a "Grand Man." That must be the conclusion of every sincere and persistent seeker of God.

To the true man of religion God, is, not only what marks Him out from man, but is also what makes Him common with man. The first part of God is useless to him, and he sticks to that which is common to both. As he develops himself, he appropriates to himself, little by little, this something which, in the beginning, is beyond his reach, and becomes gradually more divine in nature in his progress. And thus the Advaita doctrine "He and I are the same" is justified.

If He is a man, has He all the base passions which lead humanity to temptations? Or is He simply perfect being, without a blemish?

Vaishnavas sought as much of God as the human mind could conceive, and thus succeeded in "entrapping" Him. To ask the companionship of God as light, is to make a ridiculous mistake, since we cannot bear the companionship of even the sun, which is only His creation.

A superficial survey of nature, does not show that He is all-good. Of course, there is delightful shower after a hot day, but we have, on the other hand, tornadoes and thunder-storms. If we see mothers supplied with milk for their forthcoming offspring, we see, on the other hand, dear objects snatched away by death, which lead wives to weep for their husbands and mothers for their children. Indeed, what we see around us, is evil; but "evil" from an all-merciful and all-powerful God is impossible.

A closer examination shows, however, that there are evils which are more seeming than real. If fire is a destroyer, it is also an useful agent. It comes to this then that, oftentimes blessings are converted into evils by our own folly. Indeed, man can, by the exercise of judgment and care, bring many evils under control. Realizing this, some bhaktas consider that they have a right to declare that there is no evil at all in the world; and, that being the case, it is unjust to blame God. But the inquirer says in reply that, men are utterly helpless and their capacities are limited, nay, it is impossible for them to avert dangers, even when they discern their presence. When this is the case, it is unjust to hold them responsible for acts, over which they have not been empowered, by their Creator, to exercise any control. Is it good of God, says the excellent inquirer, to surround man with dangers without giving him the power of discerning and averting

them, nay, sometimes with temptations to lead his helpless creatures into them?

It is said, man has a free will. But, says the sceptic, what is the good of a free will when he cannot discern the dangers that surround him, and avert them when he has discerned them? And if God is good, why is there so much misery in the world? These are the problems which are exercising the minds of men from time immemorial.

But can the critic of God's creation suggest a better one? Let us create our man. Let us give him eternal youth and health; and let him be placed in this world for ever. Let us put him in the Garden of Eden, where he has only to pluck the fruits to satisfy his hunger,—where there is no disease and no accident.

Such a man will not, however, bless but curse his Creator; for, he will find everything insipid after a short experience. Do we not see men, apparently favoured in every respect, detesting the so-called pleasures, that surround them? How can one see the same thing, and enjoy the same thing, every day of his life? Can a man live a thousand years in the world without cursing his fate, though all the while enjoying health and plenty?

Let us now examine the man as created by God. His destiny is progress. When man has grown as much as it is possible for him to do on this earth, he is taken away to another world. So what He ordained is eternal progress, and in this

manner is secured everlasting growth and joy for man. If we assume that there is an after-existence, the poignancy of much of the evils in the world, is reduced; some are altogether conquered; and some converted into actual blessings. Thus death, which is considered the greatest of evils, would then be voted as the greatest of boons, if it leads men to a better world. A man, who is assured of an after-existence and a re-union with friends, will find that more than three-fourths of the miseries of this world are delusions.

The question, which exercises the minds of men is,—if God is good, why men are made to suffer at all? It is true, man apparently is free to choose good from evil, but really he is not so independent. Disease strikes him down in spite of himself, and it kills him in spite of himself. And this means not only his own misery, but the misery of those who love him or depend upon him for support.

Let us, following the example of the great book, the Geeta, reduce the questions and answers into the form of a dialogue between man and his Creator, to make the points as clear as possible. The devotee asks God to explain why there is evil in His creation, and Krishna replies:—

“You are a child, with limited capacity. You cannot possibly know all that move Me,—is it not? You will thus have to know for ever and ever; you cannot begin life with full knowledge of everything. That privilege belongs to *Me alone*, and none else.

The attempts that you will make to know, will be a source of joy to you, and help you in your growth and development. This ought to be a satisfactory reply to all the doubts that trouble you. So do not be impatient."

The devotee said in reply that he was impatient, and wanted to know more.

Krishna.—"Is it? Then listen. It entered into My mind to create rational beings. I had either to create perfect Beings like Myself, or imperfect beings like yourself. It will not be difficult for you to understand that it is not perhaps possible for Me to create Beings like Myself. That being the case, I had to create imperfect beings. And what does that mean? It means that man has to grow so as to be like Me day by day. It is only a perfect Being who is entitled to unalloyed joy. As man is not yet perfect, so he is not entitled to it, which means that he is beset by imperfections and has to overcome them. But his ultimate destination is perfection and unalloyed joy. Now can you suggest a better way than what I adopted in creating man?"

"There is nothing absolutely evil, for, I gave nothing which has not its use. All that I gave are blessings. It is only abuse that converts blessings into evils. Men, having a free will, go against nature, and thus bring misery upon their heads."

But why do men, Oh my Creator, go against nature? Why didst Thou not give them power to

discern all the dangers that surround them, and power to avoid and avert evils?

The Creator replied: "In short, you ask why I did not create men and put them in a Garden of Eden and reduce them into the condition of animals? Or why I did not make them perfect?"

"That is what you ask Me. But I have already given the reply, and I have to repeat it again, namely, that I cannot create Beings like Myself. To be able to discern all dangers means to be all-knowing like Me. Yes, I could have given men a fruitful garden and an inexhaustible fountain, where there is no danger, no exertion necessary to discern dangers and overcome them. But then man would have found his life without any occupation, dreary, and insupportable. He would have then, besides, never grown; on the other hand, he would have found himself reduced to a worse condition than that of an animal. An animal has its intuitions, which means that it does not grow. To put man forever in a Garden of Eden, would have been felt by him as a great curse. It is these unseen dangers and efforts to combat them that mark out man from brute creation, give constant occupation and zest to his immortal life, and enable him to grow day by day and be like Me.

"Man has some powers of discerning and averting his dangers now; he has the privilege of developing this capacity. And his exertions to develop them add to his joys and growth."*

"But, my Lord," asks the inquirer, "there is yet much misery in the world, and misery which a man cannot avoid even if he tries to do it."

"Yes," says Krishna, "there is much misery in this world, but all-joy means a state of perfection. Take a closer view of what you consider misery. First of all, every evil is the seed of a blessing†. Thus a man may blame Me for having ordained that the moon should be kept hidden from him two weeks in a month. It is, however, the new moon which enables men to enjoy the beauties of the full moon. Suppose, I had given you a full moon every night, you would then have never enjoyed the beauties of a full moon. In the same manner, separation between two loving hearts is considered a great evil, but separation has its uses. It fosters love. Loving hearts, by constant companionship, fail to enjoy the

* To give man intuitions enabling him to discern dangers and avert them, would have converted him to the condition of animals. To give man all knowledge and all-power, that is, the capacity of discerning all dangers and providing against them, would be to create him a perfect Being like God Himself. And such an arrangement would have gone against the original plan of making a man a being who is to progress eternally, and by that means approach God. Men voluntarily seek danger to make life enjoyable.

† Thus, suppose a slave and his master die. The slave finds himself at once the freest of the free, and enjoys his freedom infinite times better than his master. Thus, his slavery in the seed of a pleasure to which he alone is entitled, and which is denied to his master.

joys that proceed from union. A separation kindles the dying flame. If separation is an evil, union is a blessing. But without separation the blessing of union can never be fully enjoyed. In this manner whenever you see what you consider to be an evil, a little thinking will shew you that it is necessary for the purpose of making life pleasant. You see I don't take My stand on the ground, that being of limited capacities, you have no right to judge Me. I, on the other hand, give you the freest liberty to criticise My work.

"You will find, however, that you will not be able to devise a better arrangement than what I have ordained. Man having been blessed with the privilege of choosing for himself, has to exert himself to make his choice. This, as I said before, gives a relish to life and develops his faculties. But his capacities being limited, he is oftentimes led to commit the mistake of choosing an evil which is, however, as I said before, only the seed of a blessing. Yet men with all their perversities cannot hurt themselves seriously, for, they have immortal life. Choosing evil is not, however, always altogether a misfortune. An evil oftentimes proves a very great blessing. Take the case of two men: one struggling with difficulties and the other living in ease. The latter—the man without a difficulty—is not necessarily the more blessed. For, difficulties mean exertion, which makes life enjoyable and causes the development of the man. A man with

difficulties, has thus better opportunities of developing his powers, and approaching Me than one with none.

"So, you see, it is not so easy to distinguish what you call a blessing from what you call an evil. If the supposed Eve had not tasted the forbidden fruit, men would have at this time remained in a state of barbarism."

"My Creator," says the inquirer, "in spite of all you say, disease is dreadful, so is death, and so is poverty, imprisonment, disgrace, etc."

"Yes, disease," replies the Creator, "is considered an evil, though it carries with it the seed of health. First, you have the choice of rejecting a poison and avoiding disease altogether. You, however, commit a mistake, and allow a poison to enter your system. Disease is only an effort of nature to expel it. Sin, in the same manner, is a poison of the soul; and repentance is an effort to overcome it. If you are surrounded by poison, you have also the antidotes at hand. So, you see, if nature has given you poisons, she has also given you antidotes. Do not commit the mistake of allowing the poison to enter your system, and you will get no disease. If you make a mistake, select the antidote and the poison will be neutralised. You will say that you have to make the mistakes in spite of yourself, and you cannot select the proper antidote with all your efforts. But, as you develop, you will learn to overcome the difficulties more and

more. In case you fail to discover the antidote, nature herself will relieve you of the poison. And if the poison is too strong, death, which is an incalculable blessing, puts an end to your sufferings and takes you to a better world.

"As I said, think and you will find that you will not be able to devise a better and a more harmonious arrangement than what exists. As for these temporary sufferings, men in dreams suffer from them, but in the morning they laugh over the supposed dangers. A man suffers when he is ill, and forgets all about it when he is right again. If a man takes into consideration that he has to live for ever, and that never-ending joy is his destiny, he can easily treat the temporary sufferings of this world with absolute contempt as only disagreeable dreams. A man, besides, who has the knowledge that he is under the protection of an all-powerful and all-loving Father, can trample every misery under foot.

"Death means the transplantation of the man from an inferior to a better world. And it therefore follows that bereavement is a delusion.* Poverty, imprisonment, and other evils ought to be like

* Says the atheistical preacher Ingersoll, referring to the Lisbon earthquake of 1775: "What was God doing? Why did the universal Father crush to shapelessness thousands of his poor children, even at the moment when they were upon their knees, returning thanks to him?" What He did was this that though their bodies were crushed, He carried their souls to a better place.

disagreeable dreams to those who have realised their destiny. Do you not know that men bring all these evils upon themselves because they forget that they are all brethren? It is not exactly My fault that men fight amongst themselves like wild beasts."

It must be borne in mind that there are some truths which seem self-evident. Thus, for instance, the belief that nature can never commit a mistake. There are men who allege they have no faith in God ; but there is no intelligent man who has no faith in nature. Nature, which is said never to commit a mistake, solves many of the mysteries of the creation. If nature has given the sexual instinct, so it has divided human beings into sexes. Since nature has given bhakti, that proves that there is an object of bhakti, that is, God. Of course, this very high sentiment is not to be found in equal force in every heart. But all men have it, either partially or more fully developed. Is it possible that when the human heart hankers after God, nature would have given that hankering if there had been no object? A man may profess himself to be an atheist, but yet he finds it impossible to annihilate the spirituality of his nature. His spirituality proves the existence of the Great Spirit.

In the same manner, one can, by judging the human heart, get a glimpse of the nature of God. Man has a natural liking for all that is good, and a natural dislike for all that is bad. That shows that there is God Who loves what is good and hates what

is bad. Man has an aversion for annihilation, and that proves that man is immortal. He has an ardent desire for a union with the object of his love, and that proves there will be a re-union. Says Guizot : "Belief in the supernatural is a fact natural, primitive, universal and constant, in the life and history of the human race. Unbelief in the supernatural begets materialism, materialistic sensuality, social convulsions, amid whose storms man again learns to believe and pray." During the French Revolution God was dethroned ; but the mad citizens at last had to acknowledge that they could not do without Him.

CHAPTER B.

A CLOSER OBSERVATION.

Yet something more of God, than has been discussed before, can be known by observation. By a close study of creation one can at once ascertain that God has His human amiabilities ; that He is a Being of taste, a lover of beauty and order, nay, that He has also His light moods.

One day in a hilly station we suddenly found a small, beautiful blue flower, hidden in the grass. The soil was hard and stony, and certainly not a fit place to nourish any vegetation. The beautiful flower in such a place, as if purposely hidden from the public view, attracted our attention. The thing looked more lovely because of its uncongenial position, and still more so because of the attempts of the grass to hide it.

The idea then struck us that the Creator must be Himself very lovable, for having created such a lovely thing for us, and also having hidden it from the public gaze. We then remembered to have seen shells beautifully painted, which were fished out of the bosom of the sea. He painted the shells and threw them into the sea as if with a view to enhance its beauty ! And when such a beautiful

thing is fished out, is not he, who looks at it with attention, disposed to think that the Painter must be a practical Joker, who paints a thing so beautifully and then hides it in the bottom of the sea ?

A close observation of nature will show that the Creator is a lover of beauty, a Being of infinite and consummate taste, withal witty and fond of humour. And how He beautifies the head of a fly ! To one who studies the beauties of nature patiently, God will seem to be a tireless Painter, engaged incessantly in painting flowers and beautifying His creation.

We had the privilege of witnessing another scene, perhaps the following morning. It was then early dawn and yet a little dark. We saw a couple of owls making love. Now, the owl has a comic appearance. It has besides a serious look. But we saw the grave owl, in spite of its supposed seriousness, playing mad pranks with his lady to prove his love for her. The comic antics indulged in by the love-stricken bird, vastly amused us. The witness to this scene was alone, and he felt a natural regret that there was none with him to enjoy such a fine sight. Immediately the idea rushed into his mind that he was not actually alone, for, there was at least One who was also enjoying the scene with him —the Creator of the universe !

What a Comedian this Creator must be ! thought we. And we then remembered that the world is full of such comic sights. And what disgusting and comic scenes the creatures present when under the

influence of their passions! Picture to yourself the scene of two cats fighting. The bellicose attitude that they present; the bend that they give to their bodies; the ridiculous note of defiance that they hurl at each other, are irresistibly provocative of laughter, both to the child and the sage. The bull challenges his antagonist by raising a cloud of dust with his hoof, and rolling himself over and over on the ground. And why does he thus roll himself, if not to provide amusement for the spectators, God and His children? In this manner, fights of goats, of all living things, have a comic side which one cannot see without losing his gravity. Is it not a wonder that though mankind sees how ridiculous even the animals make themselves under the influence of their passions, they are not ashamed of acting precisely in the same manner under similar circumstances? But this is preaching a sermon.

And have you ever seen how the weaker dog shows his submission to his stronger antagonist? He hides his tail behind his legs, and approaches the stronger with such ridiculous gestures of humility that one is amazed at the delightful fancies of the Being Who had taken the trouble to create such comic scenes! The ears of the ass, the beard of the goat, the frisking tail of the waterfowl, and the face of the monkey, all give an indication of the inexhaustible fund of humour that the First cause carries within His heart.

But it is in love making that the creatures,

whether they be two-legged or four-legged, winged or footed, carry the antics to extravagant length. Only observe how the goats, the bulls, the cocks, the pigeons, nay, every living creature, including man, make love, and you are amazed at the comedy which is being incessantly enacted around us. In short, an observer of nature can see for himself that almost every living creature has a comic peculiarity, which indicates that the Being Who created them, though inconceivably great, powerful, serious and dignified, has also His lightest moods, and that if He has supplied food and drink for His creatures, He has also supplied them with comic scenes for their amusement and instruction.

Now picture to yourself a lovely Being, Who,—living by Himself and not at all visible,—is incessantly engaged in painting and hiding His works of beauty in the most unlikely of places, for the purpose of giving a surprise to His admirers. And picture to yourself a Being Who is fond of wit and humour,—Who is fond of comic scenes so that He may enjoy His quiet laugh along with His children, and you will find that He appears to you in a very amiable light, and as a very lovable Being.

If we see a cock, which, after defeating its antagonist, plants itself on a dunghill to give vent to its shrill cry of triumph, we find the scene very amusing. We laugh at the vanity and folly of the puny bird which knows not its own insignificance. And is it possible that when Bismarcks defeat their

Mac Mahons and fire cannons in celebration of their victories, the Creator Himself laughs at them, as we laugh at the folly of the victorious cock, referred to above? Who knows that one of the amusements of that Being, Who is said to be in the enjoyment of continuous ecstasy, is partly derived from the contemplation of the comic of His own creation?

So, by a close observation of nature, a man can see that God Almighty, after all, is a good Soul. This notion about God is followed by another, which is a feeling of reliance upon Him. And what is this reliance? It is this, that the Creator who is so amiable, ought not to be judged hastily for the seeming defects in the creation, the probabilities being that they are no defects at all, and that they seem so because of our own limited capacities.

Above all, life is a blessing in spite of the sufferings that surround it; for, people do not like to part with it on any consideration whatever. They will sacrifice everything for life. The sufferer will prefer suffering to death; he will yet feel obliged to the Creator for life in spite of its sufferings. If life is a blessing, God must be a friend and not a foe. You have got life and you love it. You cannot get an ever-progressive and ever-enjoyable life without some temporary suffering. That is His law,—even God Almighty cannot make two and two five.

Let us assume the case of one in the spirit-land. George Pelham finds himself in the other world, and

an opportunity of communicating with men below.* He says he is quite happy; he has no longer the sufferings that he had to go through on earth. He has met his friends who had gone before, and expects to meet those who are to come hereafter. He has no disease, no fear of death, no fear of separation from his dear ones. He has no tyrant to fear and no master to obey. What he has to do is to pursue his own path, develop his own faculties, and proceed on the path of progress for ever and ever, and secure ever-increasing happiness.

George Pelham is convinced that God is good,

* I have not, as it is beyond the scope of this book, tried to prove the immortality of the soul, and the fact of union of friends in the other world. A greater proof of the future existence cannot be conceived than that of the universal testimony given in its favour by all nations, in all parts and ages of the world. G. Pelham is a spirit to whose existence Dr. R. Hodgson, President of the American Psychical Society, an unbeliever before, bears testimony. Professor Sidgwick has proved by close investigation that, nine out of every ten men have witnessed supernatural incidents, that is to say, in a population of ten millions, nine millions do come across facts proving the existence of a spiritual world. But yet the greatest proof of the existence of this after-world is to be found, to my thinking, in the human mind. Nature would never have given this abhorrence against extinction, and a desire for union, if there was no future existence. If there was no future existence, the memory of the beloved would have disappeared from the heart after his death. But the memory remains, and that shows that the desire of union is to be fulfilled.

and that He is to be thanked profoundly for having given him life. He has forgotten all that he suffered on earth and regards them as mere dreams. Just admit a future and better world, and you will see that almost all the evils that beset men are conquered. If one, who has suffered much in this world, finds himself, after death, in a better world in the company of his departed friends, he will not be disposed to feel sorry for having got life, even a life of sorrow. If there be no future life, the Creator is not worthy of the love of men.

If any one, after this, continues to grumble that yet some misery remains to be accounted for, we can refer him to the advice given by Lord Gauranga to his followers. He said that man has no need to be overcome by misery, with the knowledge that he is under the protection of an All-loving and All-powerful Friend in Krishna! At one time when the bhaktas complained of very great heat, the Lord suggested Krishna-kirtan (hymns about Krishna) as a remedy! One may question the efficacy of Krishna-kirtan as a remedy for the heat of June. The reply, however, is this. When a man is under an affliction, he takes spirituous liquors to drown his sorrows and sufferings. To a servant of God, Harinam is much more a powerful agent than a strong drink to an ordinary man. It gives rise to ecstasy in the heart, and overcomes sorrows and sufferings, even sufferings from heat. Besides, it reminds one of that Loving and All-powerful Friend

Who is ceaselessly looking after the welfare of His creatures. The remembrance gives him joy and strength, and neutralises the poignancy of his sufferings.*

*Rup and Sanatan, though enjoying royal powers, leave their sovereignty at the bidding of Lord Gauranga, and pass the rest of their days under trees, relying on food that came to them unsought. They had all the sufferings which people would consider unbearable; yet they were, according to their own testimony, happier by far when they were under trees than when they could sleep in palaces. The bhakta has his celestial joys, unknown to the man of the world.

CHAPTER C.

INSPIRATION.

We said that God is also known by inspiration. As meditation follows observation, so inspiration follows meditation. Meditation, carried to its utmost limit, is yoge. To be able to bring the mind to a focus for the purpose of yoge, or union with the great Soul, it is necessary to go through certain processes, which are known to the Indian Yogees. Inspiration, popularly, is a state of mind, which enables it to receive truths from the other world. When a man is engrossed with a deep problem he may suddenly find the solution before him. Sometimes these are the results of his own efforts, but there is no doubt of it that sometimes they are put into his mind by others outside himself.

Sceptics have no faith in inspiration ; but such men are illogical and self-sufficient. Those who have no experience have no right to deny the existence of inspiration, testified to by others having experience. Let them try, and the door will be opened unto them. If they have not the energy or opportunity for such an attempt, the only honest course open to them is to accept the testimony of others, of such beings as Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mahomet

and Gauranga—beings whom the world have ever considered higher than ordinary men. Indeed, all organised religious faiths in the world are founded upon these inspirational influences of the other world.

I am sorry my impression is, that meditation has not flourished in the West. Is it due to the proverbial restlessness of the people? This is what Mr. Stead was inspired to write by Julia, supposed to be a disembodied spirit :

“The worst evil of the present day is not its love of money nor its selfishness. No, but its loss of the soul. You forget the soul is the thing. And that all that concerns the body, except so far as it affects the soul, is of no importance. But what you have to realise is that men and women of this generation have lost their souls. * * * Your soul is lost now. And you have to find it. * * * You have lost it as you might lose a person in a crowd. It is severed from you. You are immersed in matter and you have lost your soul. And the first and the most pressing of all things is to find your soul. * * * You say you have no time. But you have time to make money, to amuse yourself, to make love, to do anything you really want to do. But your soul that is a thing you do not care about. So you have no time for the soul. * * * And you have materialised yourself.”

It seems to me, this state of affairs is due, among others, to two causes, *viz.*, one is misconception as

to the nature of God, and the other is misconception as to the nature of Christianity, a religion which has given the training to the minds of the Westerns. Jesus Christ taught a religious life and a moral life. The religious life taught by him being too high, has been only partially accepted by his followers. The ordinary Christian says his grace over his dinner, repeats a prayer when going to bed or rising from it,—a prayer which has lost all life by frequent repetition,—hears a sermon in a week, and gives his alms. Meditation thus forms no part of the duties of an ordinary Christian.

Jesus Christ recommended prayerfulness, bhakti and love of God. This is the religious side of Christ's teaching. But the Christians accepted the sermon on the mount, which is only a discourse on morality, quite outside religion. To give alms, or to forgive an enemy, is, no doubt, an act of merit, but it is an act of morality and not of religion. The duty that man owes to man is not religion but morality. Religion deals with communion with God. An atheist who is charitable, just, good, forgiving and so forth, is not yet a religious man. Indeed, an atheist, who obeys all the precepts preached on the mount by Jesus, is yet only a good man and not a man of religion. A man who holds communion with God, alone in a wilderness, and has no opportunity of performing a moral duty, is yet a religious man. The performance of moral duties is, of course, essential,

but it comes, naturally to a man who tries to be *en rapport* with God.*

Meditation means self-effort ; it is a duty which one must perform himself. There is no royal road to it. In the West, science, politics, fighting, novel-reading, amusement, money-making, ambitious projects take away the time of the highest. The man, blessed with the powers of meditation, apply them, not for the purpose of elucidating the problems of life, but the mysteries of natural science. A man of the West, with indomitable courage and perseverance, tries to find the North pole or gold in Klondyke. That is the way the best energies of the West are utilised.

Now, it must be borne in mind that God is more worth a search than even the North pole. There is more gold in Him than in Klondyke. If every gift in this world requires a good deal of exertion to secure it, God, the best gift of all, needs at least that amount of energy which is required in mastering

* Lord Gauranga never posed as a teacher, but only one among his follows, seeking Krishna. He never rebuked his followers, indeed, he had very little occasion. What he did was to grant bhakti, which so thoroughly purified the blessed being that it became hateful to him to break a moral law. His followers never preached moral doctrines to their fellows, knowing full well that moral life must follow a religious life. Besides, they had to address a more advanced audience ; and if they had repeated what Jesus told to the Jews in his 'sermon on the mount, the Brahmins would have found nothing new in their teachings, and never listened to them.

science, and carrying out ambitious projects. And, therefore, prophets advise that it is necessary to knock and knock to make the door open. What is the value of the testimony of those who deny inspiration, but have never knocked?

There are many processes to develop the practice of meditation. The ordinary way is to sit down and think of yourself and God. Think of such problems as these: Does God exist? If so what He is like? What are your duties to Him? etc. Try to think out these problems, excluding all worldly thoughts as far as that is possible. If the mind wavers, try to bring it to a point. Make supreme efforts for the purpose. The result will be that light will surely dawn on you gradually, if you are an honest seeker after truth.

The best course for a seeker is to begin as a believer, and apply to God direct for the solution of the mysteries that pester him. The seeker may be a sceptic, but a little search will show him the traces of His existence in his own heart. The self-sufficient atheist, who knows nothing, will get nothing, for, he is not a truth-seeker and wants nothing. But the honest and sincere sceptic will find an immediate response to his prayer, if he earnestly submits it to His lotus feet. Those who have no objection to give the Almighty any form, may ensconce Sree Krishna, or any other form which delights him, in his heart, and such men will find the process of meditation easier than those who seek to contemplate Him as light or *akāś*, i.e., practically nothing. Let him

continue this process persistently. As God is not to be had lightly, let him be not disappointed, if he fails to get any response at once. Mind, ascetics pass their whole lives in the wilderness to find Him. Continue the process, trusting in the words of the saints, who have preceded you, and the result is likely to be marvellous.

You may ask, if it is so easy why do not people generally follow the method? But do you know the stern fact that scarcely one in a million ever seeks to find God, or cares to find him? Even those who seek Him, do it for gifts, and not for Himself.

Let us take the case of a seeker after the Lord. Let us follow him step by step. The account given below may or may not be based upon fact. It is not necessary for any one to believe in the truth of the account, to profit by it. This seeker after truth cuts himself off from society, makes supreme efforts to know God, and, if possible, to associate with Him. By incessant efforts he succeeds somewhat in turning his mind towards God.

The first response that he gets is the sight of a mass of light which dazzles him. He feels at the moment that he has at last seen something of God. He contemplates the light, awe-stricken. He at last ventures to address it. But a mass of light never speaks and he addresses in vain.

The ascetic* tries to open communication in

* Purity and bhakti are essential for success in a seeker.

various ways. He addresses the light ; he addresses it in endearing terms ; but light is only light and can never speak. "Speak, speak, my Lord," he implores the light, but to no purpose. He then comes to doubt whether the light is God at all. "But are you God or mere a work of His creation?" and he is pestered by doubts. He prays : "Let me know, kind Creator, by unmistakable signs that the light that I see is something of Thyself." The light increases in intensity, and the ascetic has to open his eyes to avoid the sight. This is the *teza* or *aḱas* which the Yogees see.

In his second stage, he finds that the light is but the cover of a human figure within it. He is now made sure that he has at last seen God,—a Being Who has created himself and the universe.

The figure is that of a man, but a giant in stature and provided with more heads than one, and more hands than two.* The Figure is awe-inspiring and frightful to look at. The ascetic is overtaken by awe and fear ; he kneels and prays for protection. Here, to realise the scene, recall to mind the first meeting between Friday and Robinson Crusoe. The ascetic dares not speak out his mind to the Figure before him.

But the process itself will secure to him both. A contemplation of high things has the likely effect of purifying the soul, and a comparatively pure man will feel a natural impulse of bhakti for God.

* This is the Vishwarup of the Geeta. Nitai and Adwaita both saw such a sight.—See Vol. I, pages 132 & 140.

The Figure, however, smiles, and encourages, by his friendly attitude, to regard him without fear. "What would'st thou have of me? Here am I," says the Figure. "Ask of me any *bar* (gift) and thou shalt have it," repeats the Figure.

The ascetic is over-joyed at the request ; for, all his wishes are, at last, to be gratified, and he thinks profoundly to select his gift. He prays for powers,—large powers !

"For how long?" asks the Figure.

The ascetic.—For ever and ever.

The Figure.—You want power, but despotic rulers find their lives very miserable, for the very short time that they have to live on earth. And you would adopt such a life for ever and ever ! I give you warning. The more you are provided with power, the less disposed you will be to use it. Immortal life, without pleasant occupation, would be inexpressible misery.* Better take care what you ask. Besides, illimitable power includes authority over your fellows. But your fellows are likewise my children, and they have claims upon me. You want me to favour you at their cost. If I give illimitable

* The author in another book describes the condition of one who is blessed (cursed?) with absolute powers. The result of all this was that he became inert and he lost all desire, nay, even of the company of Lord Himself. A man, provided with large powers, would, no doubt, in the beginning, find some pleasures, but he would get tired of the privilege and finally consider himself the most miserable of men.

power to all, the arrangement will mean nothing to any one of you^e. Bear also in mind that, possession of authority and exercise of power, over fellow-beings, debase the soul.

The ascetic.—Grant me immortal life, with pleasant occupation?

“What is that occupation? Immortal life you have already,” asks the Figure.

“My Creator,” says the ascetic, “I know not what to ask for, since I see there is no happiness in power. I always thought that supreme happiness consists in power. Select the *bar* for me.”

The Figure smiled. “My selection,” says He, “may not meet with your approval. In this matter, you ought to be able to decide for yourself. I am here prepared to give you whatever you ask for.”

The ascetic.—Yes, I tried to find one, but I could not. Whatever I select, whatever I have been taught to consider a blessing, is found, on examination, to be something like a curse, at least a blessing with curse accompanying it. I don’t know what will be good for me.

The Figure.—There is unmixed pleasure in the exercise of the higher faculties. If there is some pleasure in the exercise of the baser ones, there is misery too. But eke out unalloyed joy by being good and doing good. Serve and be happy. What will you say to My companionship? Would you consider that a blessing?

The ascetic pondered. He hesitated to give a

rude answer; for, the companionship of God, that he was enjoying then, was not giving him much happiness. But he had to be farnk with One Who could see through him. He said: “My Creator, I had a notion before that if I had ever access to Thee, I would secure power which I thought was the choicest of all blessings. But now I have got Thee, and I see I have nothing to ask for. So I have no motive any longer to seek Thy companionship for any service to me. And as for any pleasure from your company, Thou art so high that I feel myself paralysed before Thee. In fact, I am a frail insect. Thy presence is already taxing all my strength, and I feel a faintness coming over me.* In Thy company, I feel practically a dead man.

The Figure.—Forget that I am so high as you now choose to think me.

The ascetic.—That is impossible. Are you not incomparably greater than I?

The Figure.—I will help you. I will be just like you, only a man, and then you will forget most part of the awe you feel for me now.

The ascetic.—Yes, if you can be just like me, I may tolerate you. But yet even then I will prefer the company of my wife, children, and friends.

The Figure.—That is because you love them. If

* In the great Revelation Day (See Vol. I, page 159), the bhaktas had to pray to God to leave them; for, they said, His presence was proving unsupportable to them!

you can but love me, you will find joy in my company. If you only know how I love you, you will give a portion of your love to me.

The Figure said this and vanished.

Now the principle must be borne in mind that fear repels, and love attracts. Men, as a rule, do not seek God ; for, they have been taught to fear him. Those who profess to seek God, are moved by selfish purposes. One serves Him to avoid being thrown into hell, and the other to secure gifts or a place in Heaven. But God Himself is never sought, and no one wishes to establish any disinterested relationship with Him.

The fact is, God is depicted, though indirectly, as a monster of cruelty by most religious faiths, that prevail in the world. Jesus taught that God is the Father of all, and men should love Him. But popular Christianity teaches that God is wrathful and vindictive ; and that He inflicts tortures upon the vast majority of His children for ever and ever, and only saves a few. The idea about Him, among average Christians, is that He is like a Magistrate with irresistible powers, engaged with His Police Angels in detecting the failings of humanity, and exacting fearful vengeance for their shortcomings.* Of course,

* As the interests and person of the sovereign are protected by sedition laws, so is God protected from so-called "insults" by the provision of "blasphemy." It is "blasphemy" to talk lightly of God, say they. But God is so incomparably high that the difficulty consists, not in revering, but in belittling

God is called merciful and good, but that only to secure His good will. For God, according to popular notions, is a tyrant, and, as such, a fool and is easily deceived by a few flattering addresses.

The aunt of Lord Tennyson was a rigid Christian. Her greatest pleasure consisted in the contemplation of, not only her own joys in Heaven, but the sorrows of the damned. The following lines from the life of Tennyson, by his son, will clearly show the feelings of an ordinary pious Christian :—

This aunt was a rigid Christian, who would weep for hours because God was so infinitely good. "Has he not damned," she cried, "most of my friends! But *me, me*, He has picked out for eternal salvation; *me*, who am no better than my neighbours." One day she said to her nephew: "Alfred, Alfred, when I look at you I think of the words of the Holy Scripture: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.'"

Compare the above with the prayer of Basu Datta who prayed to take the sins of all mankind on himself. (See Vol. II, page 365).

The ordinary * Buddhistic theory is, that there is

Him. No one can belittle the Creator of the universe in his heart; he can only do it in a spirit of bravado.

* I say "ordinary" Buddhism with a purpose; for, I think that there is no difference of opinion between real Buddhism and Vaishnavism, as regards the future of man. There is no doubt that man is born again though not on this earth, but in the spiritual world. The Geeta says that the soul takes another body immediately after it has lost its cover, and this is emphatically true. That he dies again in the spiritual, to be born again in another still better, world, is also probably true.

a ceaseless struggle between man and the Creator, and that if the one object of the Creator is to keep man alive for the purpose of torturing him, the one object of man is to escape from His clutches by extinguishing himself! Unfortunately, a considerable body of the Hindus have imperceptibly imbibed this horrible doctrine of birth and re-birth, which, if it be true, proves God to be a most inhuman monster of cruelty.

It is also quite true that sometimes men, after their death, quite unfit to live in a spiritual world, take a new body on this earth. The man who has no spirituality in him is, by a kind Providence, given a chance again on this earth to acquire the necessary qualifications, so as to fit him for the spiritual world. As a child comes out of the womb to find new surroundings, so a soul is born in the other world with surroundings fitted for its existence. If the surroundings of a man in the spiritual world do not suit him, indeed if he is too gross for that world, he has to come down by a benevolent provision of nature. As sometimes there is abortion in this earth, so there is sometimes abortion in the other world, as for instance, in the case of idiots and savages without sentiment, etc.

Is then a new soul created on every occasion a man is born?—asks the philosopher. But is that a difficult feat for the All-powerful Almighty? Evolution and eternal progress, as the Hindus and Buddhists truly say, are the laws of nature. Animals grow out of the vegetable kingdom, and the chimpanzee out of the animal creation. From the chimpanzee is evolved the savage or the idiot without higher sentiments or spirituality. And when the man is so developed as to be able to suit himself to the necessities of a spiritual life, he is transferred into the world of spirits. It would be against our conception of nature to

It is the Vaishnavas alone who are taught to seek God not for His favours, but for His own loveliness, and Lord Gouranga's advent on this earth was mainly due to impress this truth upon mankind, that God is an object of love and not of fear.

People complain that God is not seen. But how can one see God who does not seek Him? People complain that God is never sought. But why should one seek God, who entertains the notion, in his heart of hearts, that He is a monster of cruelty?

think that it would hurl down a man again to this earth, where he had already gone through the experience necessary to individualise him. An experience of this earth is necessary for the purpose of individualising a soul. It is his impressions here that make him a distinct entity, distinguishing him from others. When he has been individualised, he is born again in the spiritual world. Why should such a man come again on this earth? It is possible that nature, like a bad workman, has the failings of an uncertain experimentalist? It creates a man, but the creation proves a failure. It then destroys its creation and with the substance creates another. It goes on this manner, till, at last, after hundreds of attempts, it succeeds in creating one who is not required to go through the same process once again. Thus Robinson Crusoe wanted to make earthen pots, but he failed. With the clay he tried again and again. But nature, as I said, must be unerring in its instincts. The tenets of Buddhism, as it prevails in Thibet, its most important seat, are the same as those of Vaishnavism in regard to the future of man. The doctrine of re-birth, as popularly understood, practically means that God has given the highest sentiment of love in the human heart, only for the sake of torturing him! This is outrageous.

So you see, a misconception of the nature of God is at the root of all this mischief, why there is no desire and attempt to see God.

The truth, that God is a loveable and not a frightful Being, is not the exclusive property of the Vaishnavas : no truth is the exclusive property of any class or sect. The ancient Vedas advocated prem, Jesus Christ did it, so did the Sufis amongst the Mussulmans. The truth, that God was an object of love and not of fear, is known to all, but realised scarcely by one in a million. The Sufis called God "the Beloved," and the holy spirit the "wine that gladdens the heart." Christian divines, here and there, overcame the popular superstitions that bound them hand and foot, and reached the lotus feet of God. St. Theresa of Spain found the spirit of inspiration in her heart, and she consulted the priests. They told her that the Devil was upon her, and she should struggle to avoid the Evil One. She struggled hard to extricate herself from the clutches of the so-called Devil, but she could not. And at last she came to realise that God was not the wrathful and revengeful monster that He had been described to be, but the Partner of her soul. She learnt to feel that "she was His and He was hers." Now this is exactly the secret doctrine upon which Vaishnavism is based, *viz.*, "I am His and He is mine."

The genius of modern civilization consists in supplanting self-exertion by machine power. Inspiration itself has thus been sought to be brought under

the control of every man, by means of spiritual circles. By this method, inspiration is drawn from above. When the sitters are good and intellectual men, they sometimes succeed in eliciting truth of the highest importance. I have already quoted some high thoughts which Mr. Stead succeeded in getting from a good spirit in the other world. Here is another passage which Mr. Stead was inspired, by the same spirit, Julia, to write (*See Borderland*, October, 1897):—

Oh, my friend, you know not nor can I ever pretend to begin to explain the exceeding wonder and glory and infinitude of the sense of realized Love of God for us in which we live and move and have our being. I wish that I could make you feel more. I wish I could explain it better. But I cannot say more than that—it is more than I ever dreamt of. All that you know of earthly love—the love of mother for her child, the love of bridegroom for bride, the love of husband and wife,—all earthly love and ecstasies of affection are but the alphabet of the language of Heaven. And the more ideally and unselfishly you love, the more you understand God and have God in you, the hope of glory.

The above are the parting and last words of Julia to Mr. Stead. Yes, the love of God for man is beyond the reach of even the dream of puny humanity, and the loves displayed on the earth are but "the alphabet of the language of Heaven." I know of nowhere where the love of Heaven has been *described* in more powerful language. But Lord Gouranga distributed it "to every householder, jar after jar, from the inexhaustible fountain of love

contained in the treasury of Radha at Golok (the highest heaven) what he brought down with him on this earth." The meaning of the metaphor is that, Radha's treasury in the highest heaven is an inexhaustible fountain of prem from which Lord Gauranga drew for distribution here, and he did it as freely as one does with water, taken from an inexhaustible well or river. The above noble words give a glimpse of Vaishnavism, the religion which the Lord taught.

Here one may ask that, if the highest truths could be obtained with so great ease by spiritual circles there is no need of the toils of yoge and inspiration, and neither is there any necessity of Avatars. Inspiration drawn in this artificial manner, however, is much inferior to that acquired by natural means. It is one thing to know a truth, and another thing to realise it. To know intellectually what love is, is quite different from feeling the emotion in the heart. The pious Yogee does not only know the truth, but can assimilate it. The noble words quoted above have been read by thousands, but very few, if any, have been able to utilise the sentiments to their advantage. Lord Gauranga not only preached love, but showed what it was by practising it, nay, also by imparting it to those who had made themselves deserving of receiving the precious gift.

The highest Yogee is, however, powerless in moving millions. The utmost that he can do is to preach the truth or impart the holy spirit in an

indirect manner to a few. But a being of authority, whose power is irresistible, is needed to move millions. Such a Messiah is Lord Gauranga, the last and the highest. He was ever irresistible. He showed practically Radha's love for Krishna, a feat which it is impossible for mere men to accomplish. Men knew before the advent of the Lord, that the highest form of worship was prem ; but it was Lord Gauranga who first exhibited it, almost as one does a material substance, to the wondering gaze of his followers. The last twelve years of his life he devoted in enjoying the ecstasies that flow from the exercise of Radha's love for Krishna. The nectar that he dug out for the benefit of mankind, during these years of his trance, is too ethereal for expression by language. Though every one is free to enjoy it, one has to be a Gopee to be able to do it. A description of the doings of the Lord, during the last twelve years of his existence on this earth, is certainly beyond my powers. I have no doubt they will be described hereafter by saints who have attained to the highest position, which one is able to do in this material world.

CHAPTER D.

SCENES IN BRINDABAN.

THOSE who have been able to *realise* that God is an object of love, and that indissoluble ties of love bind them and Sree Krishna together, are inhabitants of Brindaban. These blessed beings have been able to secure the companionship of Sree Krishna, whom they see whenever they feel an earnest desire for His company. Those who have attained to Him by conjugal love are Gopees and are, of course, females (spiritually), and those who have won him by fraternal love may be either females or males. Each has his or her own Krishna, though they know that there is but one such Being. Yet every one of them has a fond belief in her or his mind that, if Krishna is the beloved of all, and if Krishna loves all equally, yet there is greater intimacy between her or him and Krishna than between Krishna and others.*

They sometimes meet Krishna alone, and then they are engrossed with each other, forgetting the presence or even the existence of others. Sometimes they find Krishna amongst themselves, and sometimes they meet together, without Krishna.

* Every companion of Lord Gouranga fancied that there was a greater intimacy between him and the Lord than between him and others.

Radha is the chief of the Gopees, a part and parcel of God. God is man plus something, Radha is the human part of God. God is perfect in all His parts ; His human part is perfect too. Radha, therefore, is a perfect being.

A bereaved Gopee is seeking Sree Krishna in Brindaban. Sometimes she looks up and prays fervently in her heart for a sight of His face. Sometimes she sits with her head between her knees, and she weeps. Sometimes she seeks Krishna in every grove of Brindaban, utterly unconscious of her surroundings. Sometimes she calls out Krishna by name. "Where hast Thou gone, my Beloved Krishna, leaving me alone," says she ; "show Thyself to me, my legs refuse to carry me further." Sometimes she fancies she sees a Foot-print of Krishna, and with rapture sits down to examine it. She kisses the Foot-print, and fancies that she has found Krishna in His Foot-print. She runs to pluck flowers to worship it, but in the process the prints are washed away by her tears. Disconsolate, she again proceeds on her search. She inquires of every shrub, every tree, every peacock, every deer, whether they had seen Krishna ; for, to her it seemed that every one of them, nay the vegetable kingdom even, was engaged in singing His praise. Why does that peacock dance? It must have seen Krishna, or else it cannot dance with such joy ! She thinks so, and she runs to the bird to see if Krishna is there. She sees a tree in full blossom. Krishna must have

passed that way, thinks she, or else why is the tree in blossom? And she runs to it to find some trace of her Beloved.

In the midst of her search when she finds herself exhausted, she suddenly finds Him. She runs up to Him with raptures and catches His hand. When the joy of the meeting is over, she is overcome by the feeling of *man*; for, she thinks that she has cause to be angry. She says: "Is it proper of you, my Beloved, to leave me so suddenly as you were pleased to do the last time? And is it kind of you to give me this trouble of a search? I am seeking and pining for you; you can easily come if you choose; you saw my sufferings, yet you did not come."

Sree Krishna.—Yes, I left you when you found no enjoyment in my company. I did not come because you did not want me. When you really wanted me, I came.

Gopee.—Now, here you talk mystery. I don't understand you.

Sree Krishna.—You always receive me with raptures. When I am with you for some time, you are satiated with me. I then become dull to you, and necessarily you become dull to me. I then fly. My absence whets your appetite for me, as it whets my appetite for you. And when the desire for union becomes insupportable to us both, we meet again.

Gopee.—You are quite right. How is it that I cannot enjoy your company, continually with equal relish?

Sree Krishna.—Because you have to grow yet.

Gopee.—But you say, when I feel dull, you feel dull too. How is that? You have not to grow?

Sree Krishna.—Certainly, I have. For, if I am your beloved, and you are my beloved, we must, for the purpose of undivided love, suit each other. You have to grow up a little, and I have to accommodate myself to your tastes.*

Gopee.—It was not quite correct to say that my sufferings, due to your absence, had no joy in them. Indeed, it often occurs to me that separation has some advantages over union. For, in union I see but you, but in separation I saw the whole world full of you. When you are not with me, I see Sree Krishna all around me! How inconceivably good you are, even separation from you is ecstasy!

Sree Krishna.—It is not I that am good, but you are ever partial to me. Yes, separation is ecstasy, when there is love.

While the Gopee and Sree Krishna were thus holding sweet converse, there was another Gopee close who too was engaged, in the same manner, with her Sree Krishna. Though they were close to

* God is man plus something. As man goes on growing, he appropriates little by little that something of Him, which was before unattainable to him, and in this manner he becomes more and more like the great Being Himself. It is thus the essential principle of Advaitabhidism that "He and I are the same" is justified.

the other couple, the couples took no notice of each other. This second Gopee was also passing her time in bliss with her Sree Krishna. She was passionately fond of mathematics ; so, of course, was her Sree Krishna.

Second Gopee to her Sree Krishna.—My beloved, I have solved the problem in quite a different manner from that indicated by you.

Second Sree Krishna.—Is it? Let me see.

The second Gopee explained the problem, but Sree Krishna smiled and shook his head. "My dear," said He, "here is a fallacy." And Sree Krishna pointed out the mistakes in her calculation.

Second Gopee.—Well, I must then give up. Kindly solve the problem for me.

Sree Krishna then solved the problem, and took infinite pains to explain its intricacies to the Gopee.

Second Gopee.—I love mathematics,—to me nothing is like it. I don't know what I would have done without it. How I tire you by my ignorance!

Sree Krishna.—You tire me! If you love mathematics, so do I. Our tastes are the same, and hence I have been able to secure your undivided love.

But there were other Gopees with their Partners. A Sree Krishna and His beloved Gopee were engaged in painting. Another Gopee and her Sree Krishna found the greatest pleasure in music. While another couple were engaged in enjoying the beauties of the creation. A Gopee was reciting a poem that she had composed, to the delighted ears of Sree Krishna.

A philosophical Gopee found the greatest pleasure in the solution of the problems that surrounded her. She said: "My Beloved! Why do you not explain to me the mysteries?"

Sree Krishna.—Because I prefer that you should find them for yourself. The effort will secure to you both pleasure and profit.

Gopee.—I mean mysteries referring to yourself. They are beyond my capacity. Well, tell me, first of all, who created you?

Sree Krishna.—Really I don't know. And if you pester me with such silly questions, you will compel me to fly from you.

Gopee.—Well, then tell me why you created us.

Sree Krishna.—Who told you that I created you? It is you who created me? Was I not pervading all space, a shapeless mass of nothing? You wanted to associate with me, and by the supreme effort of your will I was evolved out of that mass of light or *akāś* or whatever you choose to call it, to meet your requirements. Your heart yearned after me. In whatever shape I appeared to you, I failed to give satisfaction to that yearning. I had thus to take the form which delights you the most. So it is you who created me, a man out of that all-pervading *akāś*.

Gopee.—And what a Man! The most beautiful, the most perfect, the most delectable and bewitching beyond all comparison.

Sree Krishna blushed. He said: "Yes, I might

have appeared to you as an ill-formed, ill-dressed, dirty man. But that would have been an ill-requitement to your devotion. If I were to associate with you as a man, I thought that I should do my best to appear before you so as to please your fancies.

Gopee.—But tell me why you created us ; you evaded my question by raising a side issue.

Sree Krishna.—Has not every one of you a desire to create? A man with a lump of clay will create, say, figures of animals, or of any other thing his fancy dictates. An idle man with a pen will write poems. I had a desire in my mind to create, and having time and opportunities, gave play to my fancies.

Gopee.—I believe you had some deeper motives, pray let me know all.

Sree Krishna.—If the above explanation does not satisfy you, here is another. There is joy in love and I had none to love. I was alone. And now I have got you for an object, and we shall spend our immortal lives in the felicities that proceed from love.

Gopee.—You talk of immortal life, the idea seems inconceivable to me. What has one to do these innumerable number of years?

Sree Krishna.—When a child is born, he is provided with the occupation that is necessary for him for his happiness. When he is a little boy, he finds his occupation also, he is day and night engrossed with his playthings. In this manner, man, as he

grows up finds his occupations supplied, suited to his tastes. Why should the thing appear inconceivable to you? If immortal life is possible for me without ennui, I ought to be able to make it possible for you too. For, you grow every moment more and more like me. In the same manner, if an ever-increasing joy is possible for me, an ever-increasing joy ought to be possible for you.

Gopee.—There is one idea which always troubled me. It is impossible for us to do you any service, indeed, you need none ; on the other hand, we are utterly helpless in your hands. You have no master ; you are irresponsible. You can annihilate us by your will and there is none to hold you responsible for your acts. Why don't you annihilate us?

Sree Krishna.—Because I am not a fool. Why should I annihilate my own creation?

Gopee.—That is not it, you are very kind to us.

Sree Krishna.—If I am kind, I get a good deal of service from you. Whenever you tend the sick, console the aggrieved, and help the fallen, you serve me. Do you not know that?

Gopee.—Of course, it was you who gave it. that binds you to us? What is it that leads you to be so good to us? And what is the assurance that, if you are kind now, your kindness will continue for ever and ever?

Sree Krishna.—Keep this principle in mind that it is not possible for me to give you what I do not possess. In other words, you can take it for granted

that since you are evolved out of me, what you have, I must have too. You have in your heart a sentiment which urges you to sympathise with misery and to remove it. You call it mercy. Well, if you have it, who gave it to you?

Gopee.—Of course, it was you who gave it. But, my Beloved, your mercy is not always visible to us, poor creatures.

Sree Krishna.—Here you differ from my poor creatures, for, they all call me, all-mercy, etc., etc.

Gopee.—My dear Lord, of course, they call you so, but you know better than all, that though they say all that with apparent enthusiasm, in the heart of their hearts they only regard you as a monster of cruelty.

A shade of sorrow *seemed* to pass through the moon-like face of Sree Krishna. The Gopee was deeply affected by the sight. She said: "What is this? Sorrow in your face! Sorrow in the face of the Being from whom proceeds all joy? My Beloved, you alarm me!"

Sree Krishna checked his feelings and smiled. He said: "My beloved, do not forget that I have to be like you to be able to enjoy your company, and love, in the fullest degree. Why should I not, therefore, have my sorrows as you have? You want to hear what ails me? But do you know I have to listen to grumblings, every moment of my existence, and am not in the habit of enumerating my sorrows to others? Well, is it not strange that my creatures,

endowed by me with the power of judgment, should exercise their ingenuity in judging me? Undeveloped as they are, they yet subject me to their limited powers of criticism. They think me cruel. But who gave them the power of distinguishing between the two sentiments, cruelty and mercy? They know that their capacities are limited; yet they will attribute the seeming shortcomings of my creation to my perversity, and not to their ignorance!"

Gopee.—Oh, Joy of my heart, kindly talk to me about such matters. They delight me. Talk to me about your love for your creatures.

Sree Krishna.—Well, you see, mothers are so disinterestedly devoted to their children that they would not care to sacrifice everything for the welfare of their offsprings. Who is it that gave that drop of love in the heart of mothers?

Gopee.—Certainly yourself.

Sree Krishna.—And who is it that gave the wife's love for her husband? You know wives oftentimes give their lives for their husbands.

Gopee.—Certainly yourself.

Sree Krishna.—If I gave that sentiment, you must admit I have it also. You will now see why I love you, and why, though I have no master, and is not in need of your help for anything, I am so attached to you. Since disinterested love is sometimes seen in this creation of mine, you must admit, I am the source of it, and have it in my heart.

Gopee.—Yes, we forget all that when we see a

child snatched away from the loving bosom of a mother, and a husband from that of a wife.

Sree Krishna.—There is not one being in the universe, cruel enough, to be able to deprive a mother of her child or a wife of her husband. Yet, they do not hesitate to attribute such monstrous acts to me! Whenever they see such seeming acts of cruelty they arrive, in the heart of their hearts, at the conclusion that I am a monster of cruelty; that I am capable of acting in a manner which the meanest of them would abhor to do. They see that I have given them objects of love, and why should they think that I gave them only for the purpose of torturing them, and not increasing the portion of their happiness?

Here the Gopee, overpowered by bhakti, knelt before Sree Krishna, and, with folded hands, declared: "Oh! my good Lord, glory be to Thee for ever and ever. Grant me a million of tongues that I may proclaim Thy glory for ever and ever. Let that be my sole happiness!"

Sree Krishna.—You see, my Beloved, you all are very good to me. You have given the finest attributes to me; so, you see, I have to be good, at least, for your sake. It is my ambition to maintain the standard of excellence that you have set up for me.

Gopee.—A communion with you is pleasure; to be separated from you is pleasure; for, it enhances your sweetness. To talk of you is pleasure; to think of you is pleasure.

Sree Krishna.—That is because you love me.

Gopee.—But have you also the same pleasure from us that we, your creatures, derive from you?

Sree Krishna.—Yes, from love of you.

Gopee.—Explain what is love.

Sree Krishna.—Love is a sentiment which can be only felt and not described. That is a sentiment which even I covet. I can, however, describe some of its results upon the mind. It appears in the heart usually after toil and earnest efforts, and, sometimes, unaccountably, and it is then immediately given the foremost place in the heart, and permitted to subordinate every other sentiment. Its appearance is followed by ecstasy. It may be made to go on increasing for ever and ever. Every obstacle only increases the vigour of its growth. Its deadly enemy is selfishness, and its chief food is separation.

Here Sree Krishna disappears, and the Gopee finds herself alone like one bereaved. "Let me find Him in His creation or let me find Him in His dear ones," says she to herself, and she sought other Gopees. She found a few, and they all sat on the grassy bank of the Jamuna under a *Kaminee* tree covered with its sweet-scented flowers. If Krishna was not there, yet in everything they felt His presence. In each other's delightful company, the Gopees derived almost the same amount of happiness as they did from a communion with Sree Krishna Himself. Were they not, these Gopees, exceedingly beautiful? But their beauty proceeded from their spiritual grandeur. They were guileless as children, they

loved, and, therefore, were in the constant enjoyment of ecstasy.

"Let us talk of our Beloved," said one of them, and others clapped their hands in delight. As they all felt disinterested love for Krishna, there was no jealousy among them. Their love for Him was such as to throw them into ecstasy by the very mention of His name. Said one: "My dear sister, what a wonderful being Beloved is. Even His name is wonderful like Himself. My tongue dances with pleasure when uttering His name!"

Second Gopee.—Do you not know what He ordained? He thought that as the poor creatures on earth find it difficult to reach Him, He would make His name as powerful in giving delight as He Himself is, so that they could yet enjoy celestial delight by uttering His name only.

Third Gopee.—I oftentimes feel that I can spend my immortal life in ecstasy simply by uttering his name.*

Now when a Gopee speaks of Krishna, her heart is overflowed with joy. And why? Because that is His ordination. Has He not made discourses about Him sweet? Her sentiments throw her listeners into ecstasy; the joy that she betrays when expressing

* As a matter of fact thousands of Vaishnavas spend their lives in the wilderness in this manner. And if you ask them what sustain them, they will tell you that the sweet Name does it "the Name is an ever-flowing fountain of ecstasy."

them, enhances their ecstasy. The ecstasy of the listeners, on the other hand, increases the ecstasy of the speaker. And this is "discourse about Krishna." It enables the speaker and listener to enhance each other's enjoyments. Those who speak about Him, derive ecstasy from the delightful talk, and bestow ecstasy upon their listeners; and those who listen, enhance the ecstasy of the speakers by their sympathy, and this is the way everyone is blessed by Krishna, and everyone, blessed by Krishna, blesses others!

Another Gopee sang a song in the excess of her joy. It was to this effect:

"The hue of blush on the cheek of a modest maiden;
the sweet smiles of a child;
the embrace of lovers; the tears in the eyes;
the sacrifices of the mothers;
the fidelity of the wife, and the mercy of the philanthropist are Thy conceptions.

They lay bare Thy heart to the delighted gaze of Thy servants."