

to follow there is no meaning in merely uttering a formula which implies one's consent to practise obedience to the Guru.

The Guru understands the particular state of spiritual eligibility of the conditioned soul and is also aware of Krishna's intention in regard to him. He is the channel used by Krishna to convey His Mercy to the conditioned soul. The best of devotees are alone privileged to enjoy this supreme confidence of Krishna. It is the function of the Guru to raise the disciple to the level of the intimate confidence of Krishna, because Krishna is fully served only by the congregational method to be found in the perfectly spiritual community of His pure devotees. The unfortunate Brāhmana of Harinadi and the learned Pandits assembled there could not understand the necessity or propriety of chanting the Name of Hari with a loud voice because they were satisfied with their individual mental outlooks and speculative opinions regarding the teaching of the Scriptures, although the same Scriptures are never tired of warning their readers against committing the offence of confounding the spiritual with the physical or mental issue. Those learned Pandits had found the untruth which they were seeking in their lives by precept and example. No sincere seeker of the Truth should, however, allow himself to be deliberately committed to views regarding the worship of Godhead for the purpose of thereby ensuring his own superiority over his fellowmen. Those pseudo-Brāhmanas were too fond of the social superiority of their hereditary position to be inclined to pay heed to the real meaning of the Scriptures which is so utterly incompatible with the social privileges, which they so unworthily monopolised. It is seldom that the prosperous and confirmed thief is inclined to pay serious attention to the counsels of stainless honesty.

CHAPTER XXII

PILGRIMAGE TO GĀYA AND INITIATION.

NIMAI Pandit continued to teach His students in Nabadwip after His Marriage with Sree Vishnupriyā Devi. The Lord was leading the ideal life of the householder Brāhmana up to this point of our Narrative. It was the life that is enjoined by the Dharma-Shāstras for those who want to lead a life that is not opposed to spiritual well-being. But it is not itself the spiritual life. The life of the Brāhmana is the model for the other classes of the worldly people. It places before us the necessity of not putting one's trust exclusively in the so-called good things of this world. If one has to live in this world, as one must till he finds it really necessary to change his worldly life for one that is higher, he should constantly keep before him the purpose underlying the life of the Brāhmana as laid down in the Scriptures.

It does not mean that every one should embrace the calling of the teacher of religion nor that every one should marry. So long as a person feels any affinity for the activities of this world he should learn a calling that is to his taste and follow the same. Those, who feel a taste for the work of a teacher, have also to qualify themselves for the same by adopting a life that is in keeping with the proper discharge of the responsibilities of that particular worldly calling. The teacher of the people must in the first place lead a life that is in conformity with the interests of his pupils. The highest of all interests is knowledge of the Brahman. One, who is devoid of the knowledge of the Brahman is debarred by this radical disqualification from taking charge of the education of the people.

It is not the purpose of the Scriptures to prevent the proper cultivation of any branch of knowledge by thus making the

Brāhmana the sole custodian of the education of the people. The arrangement recommended by the Shāstras does not recognise the competence of any secular knowledge to free us from the fetters of ignorance, and is, therefore, unwilling to recognise the cultivation of such knowledge for its own sake, and is opposed to the purely secular education which they do not consider to be a beneficial or even harmless pastime. All persons, even those who are engaged in secular pursuits, must possess the spiritual outlook to be enabled to function properly even in those pursuits. The superiority and desideratum of spiritual living in its unadulterated purity must be recognised by being practically imposed on all social institutions.

It must, however, be borne in mind that it is not to a sacerdotal, hereditary caste that the Scriptures intend to bestow the lucrative privilege of the monopoly of a trade of educating the people. Any person, who possesses the genuine disposition to seek for the Truth and who prefers the quest of the Truth to every other consideration, to whatever class of the society he may belong by birth, is to be recognised as a Brāhmana who is fit for this purely spiritual purpose for its own sake. It does not appear that the Scriptures, by means of the *Varnāśrama* organisation, sought to prevent the free choice of secular occupation by individuals. As a matter of fact the object of the institution is just the opposite of this. It requires every individual to be put into the profession that best suits his natural aptitude and to do this at the proper early age. But it also recognised a natural graduation of classes. It considers the position of the spiritual teacher of society as superior to that of all the others. Next below the spiritual teachers it puts the spiritually guided ruling class. Those, who are the leaders of the economic pursuits under spiritual direction, come next below the political body. The fourth estate consists of those who are devoid of spiritual inclination but are prepared to earn a living by loyally serving others who are spiritually disposed.

The peculiarity of the arrangement is that it puts the spiritually enlightened teaching class, carefully recruited from all the classes, at the head of the society, not in the political, nor in the

economic, but in the purely-spiritual sense. If a Brāhmana meddles in politics or trade or service, he automatically loses his status as a teacher. As a teacher the Brāhmana is to be maintained by the free gifts of the community to be obtained, not by political pressure but, by begging by the teachers themselves, or their students on their behalf. It is incumbent on the Brāhmana not to amass any wealth but to devote all surplus wealth which may come into his hands in the way that is spiritually beneficial for the Society.

In other words the Brāhmana lives for the purpose of finding the Truth in order to serve Him when found. His life is the probationary stage of spiritual living. The practical result of this obligation, on the part of the teacher, of leading the theistic life enjoined by the Scriptures, would not be objectionable as long as the process of recruitment remains efficient. The Scriptures provide that an unworthy teacher should forfeit his position as a matter of course. The function of degrading such a person belongs to the body of the Brāhmanas. We find that the privilege was misunderstood and grossly abused in actual practice. But it would be difficult to suggest that the system itself is, therefore, a defective one. If any society wants to be guided by the instruction of unworthy persons it is always free to do so and to be ruined by choosing to do so. The *Varnāśrama* institution is a secular organisation and as such shares the unavoidable defects of all such institutions. It is claimed to be the only organisation that has been scientifically conceived for the promotion of spiritual living. Unless this is borne in mind it would be difficult to understand what follows.

We have seen that Sree Gaurāṅḍar had been leading the life of the ideal Brāhmana householder up till now. The actual mode of life that He led has already been described in different ways. The successful endeavour to live the life of a Brāhmana was now to be rewarded by the attainment of spiritual enlightenment which is the goal to which it is directed.

This is the secondary aspect of the event that we are now going to narrate. The Supreme Lord was induced to manifest His Appearance in this world by being moved to Pity by the

sufferings of His devotees. The Iron Age proved too bad to be redeemed by the exertions of His agents. Even Sree Advaita Āchāryya, Who is the cause of the Appearance of the Lord, had been set at naught by the stubborn atheists of Nabadwip, despite the universal respect in which he was personally held in all the learned circles and among those Brāhmanas who occupied the highest social position. In spite of the personal exertions of Advaita and all the devotees who were resident at Nabadwip there was perceptible no change for the better in the attitude of the people towards the Vaishnavas. On the contrary their hostility to the Vaishnavas continued to increase and at last became intolerable. The denunciation of the Vaishnavas by those bad people became the constant and fashionable pastime of the day. The devotees felt the greatest sorrow on beholding the prevalence of such universal preference for false worldly pleasures on the part of the people. The very name of devotion was banned from the category of topics worthy of their serious discussion. Vishnu and the Vaishnavas were, however, constantly reviled by one and all. All this was happening at Nabadwip under the eyes of the Lord Himself Who was all the time absorbed in scholastic pursuits. The grief of His devotees at last moved the Lord to compassion and made Him manifest His Activity of the Saviour.

But before the Supreme Lord openly ranged Himself on the side of His devotees He wished to visit the holy Tirtha of Gayā. For the ostensible purpose of performing the due funeral rites in honour of His departed father the Lord set out for Gayā with many of His disciples. With a mind full of great delight the Lord took leave of His mother and obtained her permission for the journey to Gayā. The Holy Feet of the Lord then began their triumphal progress towards Gayā, sanctifying all the country and the villages wherein the people dwelt, turning them into the holiest of *tirthas*.

The Lord journeyed in the company of His numerous followers in the pleasure of delightful talk on all manner of topics ranging from religion to gossip and hilarious laughter and jocoseness. Travelling for days in this fashion the Lord reached Mandāra and after beholding Sree Madhusudan, Who is

worshipped there, roamed over the Hill to please Himself. But in a few days after the resumption of His journey the Lord manifested the *Leelā* of falling ill by an attack of fever. The Lord was to all appearance smitten with fever, like ordinary men, on His way in the middle of the journey. This filled the hearts of His disciples with great anxiety. They halted on their way and made every effort for having Him cured of the distemper. But the fever obstinately refused to be healed, such being the Will of the Lord. At last the Lord prescribed the proper medicine for Himself, declaring that 'drinking the water that had been used in washing the feet of a Brāhmana relieves from all suffering.' In order to vindicate the greatness of the feet-wash of Brāhmanas the Supreme Lord drank the same Himself in the view of all the people. As soon as He had drunk the feet-wash of the Brāhmanas the Supreme Lord was instantly restored to the healthy state and the fever left for good.

Thākur Brindāvandās, commenting on the above, says that the Veda and the Purānas bear testimony to the fact that it is the Nature of Godhead to drink the feet-wash of Brāhmanas and quotes the following from the Geetā. 'I serve every one in the way that he submits to Me. Men, O Pārtha, follow in all cases the lead of My Service.'

The service of Krishna is performed by all the activities of men. All methods of activity come under the category of the service of the Indivisible Knowledge Who is identical with Krishna. If it be asked what constitutes the basic difference between the methods of fruitive activity, seeking to merge in the undifferentiated Brahman and the path of devotion—the only possible modes of activity open to the individual soul—the answer is that the last is the model for the rest. Every one seeks to follow his own inner conviction and light. In proportion as the light within is actually followed it also gives the proper guidance. To one, who chooses to follow the inner guidance only partially, the Light offers only a proportionately partial view of Himself. One, who chooses to neglect Him, is offered a correspondingly deluding view of the Truth and one which he finds more in accordance with his choice. But the Light, Whom all men

serve in different ways, is always the Same Indivisible Knowledge dealing with His votaries in the way that His votaries choose to deal by Him. The difference is, therefore, due to the degree of submission to the Indivisible Knowledge that is actually offered by the individual soul. The doctrine of rebellion against Godhead, to explain the origin of sin, is true only in the above sense.

Krishna is found and served only by those who offer their full submission to the Indivisible Truth. When one offers less than his full submission to Krishna he no longer sees Krishna as He is but in an eclipsed form of the Truth corresponding to his own imperfect homage to Him. Indra is also Krishna but only as viewed by the worshipper who covets the pleasure of paradise. Every object of worship to be found in the different creeds, which is offered less than the whole service, is also Krishna in His secondary, *i.e.*, deluding, forms. When the object of worship is not Krishna, or is an eclipsed view of Krishna, the Indivisible Knowledge does not show Himself to the worshipper who experiences in consequence all those difficulties that beset the path of those who do not worship Krishna as He is.

Sree Gaurisundar exhibited the Pastime of drinking the feet-wash of Brāhmanas and not of non-Brāhmanas to signify that Krishna fulfils all requirements of the soul who throws himself wholly on His protection, but He does not deal in the same way with those who are not disposed to serve Him. He is not disposed to accept the service of those who are not disposed to offer Him their whole-hearted service. But He keeps back nothing from His devotee; nay, He uses all His Power in vindicating the pre-eminence of His devotees over those who are not disposed to serve Him fully.

Thākura Brindāvandās goes so far as to assert that the Lord serves those who seek to serve Him in every way by their whole attitude and at all time. The Lord is the servant of His servant. He is subdued by His servant. This is in keeping with what has been stated above. In the battle of Kurukshetra Krishna was compelled by Bhishma to take up arms, thereby breaking His own promise to observe absolute neutrality during the conflict, which had led Duryodhana to prefer to accept the help of Krishna's

army to Krishna's own Person pledged not to fight by actually using His weapons against any party. Bhishma did not consider this policy of Duryodhana, on whose side he had to fight against his own better judgment, to be at all wise; and he told Duryodhana that Krishna was bound to break His promise if He found the Pandavas in real danger. Bhishma was confident of proving his contention as he knew that without the Active Help of Krishna no one could prevail against any one. Krishna could, of course, have easily made the Pandavas prevail over Bhishma without openly breaking His promise or neutrality; but He preferred to be vanquished on this point in order to glorify both Bhishma and Arjuna who were His devotees. Krishna is thus proved to be always ready to obey the wish of His devotee even when it seems to run counter to His Own. There are numerous instances of this kind of Conduct on the part of Godhead in the Purānas when He allows Himself to be vanquished by His devotee whenever He is seriously opposed by the latter.

I am perfectly aware that there are persons who have grossly misinterpreted the Shloka of the Geetā, quoted above by Thākura Brindāvandās, and also the conduct of Sree Gaurisundar on this occasion. There is a body of opinion among a section of the commentators of the scriptures who are inclined to exploit the passages in the Scriptures expressing the superiority of the Brāhmanas into an argument in favour of the unconditional predominance of the hereditary caste of Brāhmanas over everything including the Divinity Himself. Sree Gaurisundar as well as Sree Krishna are held by these commentators to be upholders of the social and spiritual superiority of the hereditary Brāhmana caste. The point is pushed to the promulgation of the view that those worshippers of Krishna, who are not born in the Brāhmana caste, are rendered inferior to the caste Brāhmanas by their not being born in Brāhmana families.

This ridiculous interpretation of the particular passages of the Scriptures, of which an instance is given above, is so obviously sectarian and so utterly opposed to the contexts in which they appear that there should remain at this point of the Narrative no ground for such silly misunderstanding on the part of

those readers who are not pledged to shut their eyes to the Truth out of deference to narrow individual or class prejudices. The true Brāhmana is certainly deserving of universal respect by reason of his disposition for the unconditional service of the Truth. But no one is a Brāhmana who does not serve the Truth in this unreserved manner. The Truth is identical with Vishnu. A Brāhmana, who does not serve Vishnu, is worse than a Chandāla whose very sight is to be avoided by all persons. Therefore, it is not the birth that makes the Brāhmana in the sense in which he is to be regarded as the servant of Vishnu. It is the test of complete submission to Vishnu that is the only consideration. The distinction between one person and another is due to the measure in which he is disposed to serve not a fancy of his erring mind under the name of Truth but the Truth Himself, Who is no other than Vishnu. If one does not serve Vishnu, *i.e.*, Godhead as He really is, he cannot claim the homage of society by reason of his birth in a Brāhmana family. The community of genuine Brāhmanas would also necessarily repudiate all claims of their own social superiority independently of the reference to the service of Vishnu which is the one thing needful and is admitted as such in practice by the Brāhmanas who follow this real interpretation of the Scriptures and who are recruited from among all classes of the people by this sole test.

The doctrine, that requires unconditional submission to the Feet of Godhead, does not entail any curtailment of our individual liberty to serve the Truth in the way we choose. There is no loss of scope or diversity on the plane of complete submission, but only an increase in the degree and outlook of the faculty of cognition. The very same act is viewed differently from different angles of vision even on the plane of the Absolute, but without causing any loss of Harmony. On the mundane plane there are also the same different angles of vision but they conflict with one another and produce only a temporary and unwholesome result by their diversity. The game is not worth the candle in the latter case.

A person, who is located on the mundane plane, commits the fatal error of looking at everything from a point of view

that is not really his own. This real abandonment of his individuality is wrongly supposed, by mere force of habit, as constituting his proper individual point of view. In this case there is not only a disadvantageous angle of vision, from which the Truth cannot be properly seen, but also a resolve not to see the Truth. Truth can be seen only by the serving disposition. If I choose to look at the Truth from the point of view of the master I am left by the process without any ground to stand upon. This is so because the Truth does not serve any one except Himself. If I choose to look at Truth from the point of view of the master and choose to call this as my individual angle of vision for viewing the Truth, I thereby commit the offence of *suppressio veri* inasmuch as my real intention, in taking up the impossible point of view, is not to see the Truth at all but only a particular hypothetical entity or non-Truth that is made to appear to my view by my own manipulation to miss the sight of the Truth.

The Protection of Godhead in all circumstances is realisable as the basic condition of all rational activity on the part of the individual soul. The devotee is, therefore, under no temptation of seeking to disown the Refuge of the Lotus Feet of Krishna, even if such ambition be permitted a seeming scope by the Absolute Master Himself. The devotee is spontaneously and exclusively attached to the Feet of Krishna not by the need of the preservation of his rational consistency of conduct but by the innate impulse of love. The devotee seeks the Protection of the Lord for the satisfaction of the causeless loving hankering of his pure nature for the service of the All-Beautiful Who is also All-Knowledge and All-Existence. There is, therefore, no plea which need be availed by him for seeking to disown the Protection of the Lord.

After displaying the Pastime of getting cured of the manifestation of fever, the Lord made His way to the holy Tirtha of Poonapooa. Having bathed and worshipped the Pitris (Manes), the Son of Sree Shachi entered Gayā. The Lord, joining His Beautiful Hands, made obeisance to holy Gayā on entering the sacred tirtha, being overcome with spiritual fervour. He then

proceeded to Brahmakunda and, after bathing in its holy water, duly honoured the Pitris. Thence He came to Chakraberā and made haste to have the sight of the Lotus Feet of Sree Gadādhara.

The Lord found that the Holy Site of the Lotus Feet was surrounded by the Brāhmanas. The garlands, offered to the Lotus Feet, had accumulated to the height of a Temple. The offering made of perfume, flower, incense, lighted lamp, clothing, ornament, was beyond all calculation. The Brāhmanas, wearing the beauty of celestials and attending on all sides, were engaged in reciting the Power of the Lotus Feet. "Ye most fortunate people, behold Those Feet That are clasped to his bosom by the lord of Kāshi, That are ever the Life of Lakshmi, That make Themselves manifest on the head of Bali. Behold all ye those Feet by Whose momentary meditation one ceases to be subject to the god of death (Yama). Behold, all ye fortunate people, the Self-same Feet That are so rarely attainable to the highest Yogis, Those Feet in Whom the sanctifying Bhāgirathy makes her appearance Whom the devotee never parts from his heart. Fortunate people, behold Those dearly beloved Feet That repose on the couch of Sree Ananta."

On hearing of the Power of Those Feet from the lips of the Brāhmanas the Lord was overwhelmed by transcendental bliss. His Two Lotus Eyes overflowed with tears. At the sight of the Divine Feet His Person was decked with horripilation and shivering. So did Lord Gaurachandra, for the good fortune of all the worlds, begin the manifestation of loving devotion. The never-ceasing Ganges flowed in the Eyes of the Lord. All the Brāhmanas beheld the wonderful sight.

I have tried to preserve the actual words of Thākur Brindāvandās in describing the incident that first excited the manifestation of loving devotion by Sree Gaurasundar.

This is the turning point in the Career of the Lord. From this point onwards the Lord Appears as the Ideal Devotee of Godhead. The change to spiritual life when it does come to the Brāhmana householder, comes in the form of the *undeserved* causeless Mercy of Godhead. The Mercy of Godhead is indescribable

to one who has not been the recipient of the same. Had it been describable in terms of worldly experience it would have been more or less deserved.

Those, who seek to understand the spiritual life in terms of mundane values, contradict themselves when they assert with the same breath that Godhead is the judge of right and wrong and is the Dispenser of reward for righteous conduct. If the spiritual enlightenment is a gift for righteous living preceding the gift, can it also be described as causeless or undeserved? Those, who insist that the value of the spiritual life should be intelligible to a person before he accepts it, in order that he may make his choice in the rational way, only commit the mistake of begging the question. If, on the other hand, the value of the spiritual life be admitted on trust without any previous knowledge of its nature, it would be liable to be justly condemned as 'blind faith' that has proved the fruitful source of all the patent corruptions to be found in all parts of the world and which are cherished by their victims under the terrible self-delusion that they only appear to be bad by reason of their very transcendental nature.

The sight of Vishnu's Feet at Gayā gave Sree Gaurasundar His first spiritual experience as devotee. The sight of the Feet of the Lord is not available to any one except by the Mercy of the Lord. Why the Lord is Merciful to a person, can never be known. The Supreme Lord is full of Mercy and makes no distinction in bestowing His Favour in boundless measure on all persons. But there is also a process of receiving His Favour which depends on the free choice of the recipient of the Divine Favour. As soon as this condition is fulfilled by the recipient, he is rewarded with the sight of the Feet of the Lord.

If it be contended that a gift, which is conditional on the recipient fulfilling any requirement, cannot be described as either causeless or undeserved, the answer would be that the particular gift fulfils all these contradictory conditions. The gift remains causeless although it is bestowed only on those who fulfil the conditions necessary for qualifying for receiving it. The sole condition is the desire, which is also causeless, of serving the Truth when found. This attitude may be called blind faith so long as

the Truth is yet unfound. But the Truth reveals Himself only to His sincere seeker. There is no cause why He should do so; but, as a matter of fact, He does so. It is the Nature of Truth to do so.

If hydrogen and oxygen combine to form water we are satisfied that we understand how water is formed. If it be asked *why* the two gases should be transformed into water at all, which is altogether a different substance, we are only offered further information on the process itself by way of explanation. We are also not dissatisfied when we get such explanation. This is so because we understand that it is our business not to question the truth of the operations of Nature because they are of the nature of *facts* which exist independently of our speculations regarding them. We are naturally enough only anxious to know more about the actual process of the working of the different forces of Nature. The question of '*Why*' this should be so, *i.e.*, the ethical issue, does not arise at all, in regard to these 'blind' operations of Nature.

But when we are asked to accept the spiritual 'fact' that the sight of the Feet of Hari is capable of producing the disposition for serving the Lord, we are at once impelled to bring up the ethical question *why* this should be so. In regard to such attitude, however, it is important to bear in mind that the ethical question itself is always relative to a standard. That standard is the unknown quantity. The empiricists have been trying in vain to discover the real standard of the ethical instinct. All speculative standards, as yet discovered in terms of mundane values, have proved more or less unsatisfactory and wide of the mark. The only useful purpose, that those speculations have served, is to expose the utter futility of finding the ethical standard by the method of such speculation.

The fun is that this admitted failure notwithstanding the exponents of the so-called Science of ethics do not hesitate to lay down detailed instructions for the guidance of those who are desirous of leading the ethical life. The disciples of this imperfect Science are also in their turn never tired of bragging their

superiority (?) over those who are not acquainted with the conclusions (not errors) of their favourite Science of moral (?) conduct. A certain type of admirers of Christianity are specially fond of trying to prove this kind of moral (?) superiority of the Christian religion over other creeds of the world. But if they are held tightly to the meaning of their words they can escape only under the cover of transparent prevarications and by dint of the dense understanding or contemptuous indifference of their opponents.

It is not our purpose to deny the value of the ethical instinct; but we are sworn foes of the hollow pretensions of the so-called empiric Science of ethics which has such a disastrous effect on the morals of some of its votaries. It makes them insuperably self-conceited 'without rhyme or reason'. Godhead is no doubt the Source of all righteousness but certainly not of the brand that is manufactured by the Science of empiric ethics. That Science will be found on examination to be opposed to the real ethical issue by its presumption of being able to explain all ethical value by the superficial analysis of the external activities in which the ethical principle seeks to express itself. The method is that of shunting off the real issue to the side track and getting up a case in favour of its unworthy proxy on the evidence of non-essential adventitious circumstances.

We appeal to the experience of all that no person had ever been helped to become more ethical by the mere study of the empiric ethical Science, nor has any person been ever really satisfied that the Science has been able to throw *any* light on the nature of the principle that really matters. It has, on the contrary, only offered destructive criticism of the only really ethical conduct on the irrelevant ground of the defective circumstances under which it manifests itself in this world.

It is really the immaculate soul who expresses his dissatisfaction of meaningless unnatural sensuous existence, in the form of the ethical protest. The soul cannot be satisfied by any values offered by our mundane experience or hopes of mundane improvement. He believes instinctively in an existence which is

wholly free from all these defects and is impelled by his innate nature to seek to realise the conditions of such existence. It is the question of function and plane, about which the empiricist is so unduly sceptical. The function of the soul on the mundane plane is directed, is bound unaccountably to be directed, towards only mundane objects. The mundane objective is also, in its turn the cause of the degeneration of the function. The organs, through which the soul functions towards the mundane objective, share in the defects of the objective and are as unavoidable causes of degeneracy as the objective itself. This is the only ethical problem.

The ethical instinct is thus correlated with the quest for the Truth, not the speculative truth which sets its heart on a radically glorified sensuous existence but the Absolute Truth to Whom the present muddy understanding, with its natural preference for the dirt, has no access and which is not even privileged to suspect that it is itself so far away from the direction of the Truth. This introduces the all-important factor of the plane. The ethical life is capable of being substantively realised, in a form that is perfectly unintelligible to our present understanding, only on the plane of the Absolute, to which our present faculties have no access.

This brings us to the necessity of Divine Grace for being relieved of our mundane equipments. Until this point of view has been reached by the discontented soul by the force of his earthly disillusionments, he is not in a position to lend his ear to the message regarding the proper nature of the spiritual function and the only method of its attainment. A person, who has arrived at this stage, should be in a position to recognise the manifestation of Divine Mercy in aid of the seeker of the Truth. The *Archā* is such Divine Manifestation. The Feet of the Lord, worshipped at Gayā, are *really* the Feet of the Lord Himself and may be seen as such only by the most fortunate people who have been convinced of the utter worthlessness of the promised improvement of this temporary worldly existence by speculative methods and have been thereby led to put their trust, not blindly but in all true rational humility, in Divine Aid Appearing in a

form that is also accessible to our present defective equipments. To such a person the *Archā* of the Feet of the Lord at Gayā manifests His Divine Nature.

The actual service of Godhead is barred to empiricists by reason of their stubborn disbelief in the Divinity of the *Archā*. An aspect of the Protestant movement in Christianity and the religion of Mohammad as expounded by certain schools of his followers, inculcate doctrines akin to those of the school of the worshippers (?) of the undifferentiated Brahman in this country. The element of error in such attitude consists in the fact that it seems to imply the wrong assumption that it is possible to rise to the conception of the Nature of Godhead in a way that is also explicable to mundane judgment. The Descent of Godhead is not, therefore, fully admitted. Once the empiric ambition of our capacity to work up to Godhead is properly discarded the deluded form of iconoclastic fury should appear to be itself subject to the delusion which it claims to condemn with such otherwise laudable vehemence. The iconoclasm of the rabid iconoclast must be carefully avoided by the cultivation of the true patience of judgment if one is to earn the privilege of recognising the Descent of Godhead in the *Archā*. Those, who are unfit to worship the *Archā*, are still less qualified for the higher form of confidential worship of the Holy Name by the methods of Kirtana and recollection.

The Mercy of Godhead is recognisable by His influence on the disposition of His recipient. As soon as Godhead wills to show Himself to the fettered soul, He does so by directing the latter to seek the guidance of His devotee. This involves two things. The person favoured by Godhead is enabled to recognise the devotee and is also enabled to be convinced of the necessity of submitting to his unconditional guidance. If this result is not produced we should suppose that the person has not really received the Divine Favour but has only been deceived by his own disloyal imagination.

As Sree Gaurāṅḍara was in the act of exhibiting those spiritual perturbations that were produced by hearing the praise of the Holy Feet of Sree Gadādhara from the lips of the Brāhmanas,

Sree Iswara Puri appeared on the spot, apparently by mere accident, but really by the Will of Godhead. On catching sight of Sree Iswara Puri Sree Gaurasundar made obeisance to him with an exhibition of His most cordial regard. Iswara Puri also on his part, on seeing Gaurachandra, embraced Him with great delight. The Holy Forms of Both were drenched with the tears of Both by the force of the experience of spiritual joy.

The Lord said, 'My pilgrimage to Gayā has borne fruit only now inasmuch as I have obtained the sight of your feet. By offering the *pinda* at Gayā only the *pitris* are saved from their sufferings. Even so it is only the particular person, to whom the *pinda* is offered that is saved thereby. By the sight of you crores of the groups of the *pitris* are instantly set free from all their fetters. Therefore, the *tirtha* itself is not the equal of you, You are the highest of *tirthas* and the best of all blessings. Vouchsafe to deliver Me from the ocean of this worldly sojourn. I surrender My Person to you, now and here. May you be pleased to make Me drink of the nectarine juice of the Lotus Feet of Krishna. This is the gift that I pray for'. Iswara Puri replied, 'Listen, Pandit, I now know as certain that Thou art Divine Portion of the Iswara Himself. Are scholarship and goodness, that are Thine, possible in one who is not the Portion of the Divinity? I have had an auspicious dream of this truth this very day. I have now obtained the fruit of it in this tangible form. I tell Thee truly, Pandit. At the sight of Thee I experience the transcendental bliss at all time. Ever since I beheld Thee at Nadiā nothing else has had any attraction for my heart. This is the bare truth I am telling Thee. There is nothing else in it but the truth. I obtain the bliss of beholding Krishna by seeing Thee.'

On hearing the true words of His beloved Iswara Puri the Lord said laughingly, 'I am, indeed, most fortunate.' This was followed by a good deal of mutual talk in which both joined with alacrity. Thākur Brindāvandās does not attempt to record the same, remarking that the task will be performed in future by Sree Vedavyasa. Having greeted Sree Iswara Puri in this manner the Lord, after begging and obtaining his permission, applied

Himself to the performance of the funeral rites that are enjoined by the Scriptures on the pious pilgrim on his arrival at the *tirtha*.

The Lord now performed the rite of offering the *pinda* on the sand and went to the hill-top of Preta-Gayā. Having performed the rite of loyal homage (*Srāddha*) at Preta-Gayā the Son of Sree Shachi gratified the Brāhmanas by gifts and sweet words. Having thus delivered and pleased the *pitris* the Lord proceeded to Dakshina Mānasa with a glad Heart. The Lord next visited Sree Rāma-Gayā where He had performed the *srāddha* when He Appeared in this world as Sree Rāmachandra. After performing the same ceremony at the place in this Avatāra also, Sree Gaur-Hari went from there to Judhisthira-Gayā where Judhisthira had offered the *pinda* in old times. Lord Gaurarāi now exhibited the *Leelā* of performing the same ceremony at this place in loving remembrance of that event. The Brāhmanas, attending on all sides of the Lord, made Him perform the *srāddha* and made the Lord repeat their words. As the Lord threw the *pinda* into the water on the conclusion of the ceremony, the priestly Brāhmanas of Gayā caught up and swallowed the same. The Lord laughed as He saw this performance. All the worldly fetters of those Brāhmanas were cancelled. After offering the *pinda* at Uttara Mānasa Gaurānga Sree Hari performed the rites of Bhima Gayā. The Lord duly performed all the customary ceremonies at Siva-Gayā, Brahma-Gayā and all the other places and at last went up to Shorasha-Gayā. Having performed the *Shorashi* at Shorasha-Gayā, the Lord offered the *pinda* to all, with all due regard. Then, after bathing in the Brahma Kunda, the Supreme Lord came up to the Head of Gaya and offered the *pinda* there. Taking up the excellent garlands and sandal-paste with His Own Beautiful Hands, the Lord worshipped the Print of the Feet of Vishnu with great joy. Having thus performed the *srāddha* at all the different places, the Lord returned to His lodgings after satisfying the Brāhmanas with gifts.

After refreshing Himself by a short rest, the Lord began to cook His meal. Just as He had finished cooking the great Sree Iswara Puri arrived there. In the act of reciting the Name of Krishna by the process of loving devotion Puri came

with tottering steps to where the Lord was preparing His meal. The Lord desisted from cooking as soon as He caught sight of Puri and, with the greatest reverence, after making His obeisance, offered him the best seat and made him seated.

Puri said laughingly, 'Listen, Pandit, I find that it is in very good time, indeed, that I chance to arrive!' The Lord replied, 'As the good fortune has manifested itself, may your reverence accept the alms of this cooked food to-day.' As this request was pressed by the Lord Puri laughed as he said, 'What wilt Thou have?' The Lord replied, 'I will cook again, just now'. Puri demurred, 'What is the use of cooking again? Divide the cooked food into two halves.' The Lord could not help smiling as He said, 'If, indeed, you want to have Me at all, accept all the food that has been cooked. I will cook afresh, in a very short time. Be pleased not to hesitate, but do accept this alms.'

Thereupon the Lord, making over His own food to Puri, applied to cook for Himself once again with a joyful Heart. Great, indeed, is the Mercy of the Lord to Sree Iswara Puri. Puri also on his part had no other inclination save towards Krishna. The Lord served the meal with His Own Beautiful Hands. Puri ate in the state of transcendent bliss. At that very moment Ramādevi Herself, unobserved by any one, with the greatest secrecy, cooked the food for the Lord in no time. After having made Puri accept the alms of food, the Lord ate His meal with a glad Heart. Those, concludes Thākur Brindāvandās, who listen to this Narrative of the dining of the Lord in the company of Iswara Puri, gain the treasure of the love of Krishna.

After finishing His meal, the Lord, with His Own Holy Hands, applied excellent perfumes to all parts of the person of Sree Iswara Puri. The tenderness of the love of the Lord for Iswara Puri passes the power of description of all persons. Lord Sree Chaitanya, Who is Godhead Himself, undertook a pilgrimage to the birth place of Sree Iswara Puri. Arrived at the place, the Lord greeted it with His fervent Affection. 'I make My obeisance', said He, 'to Sree Kumārahatta, the blessed village in which Sree Iswara Puri made his appearance in this

world'. Chaitanya wept long at the sight of the place, and could not articulate any other sound except 'Iswara Puri'. The Lord took the earth from the spot and, tying it in His Own outer-cloth, brought it with Him. 'This is the birth-place of Iswara Puri,' said the Lord. 'This earth is My Heart's Love, My Treasure, My Life.' With such intensity does the Lord love Sree Iswara Puri. The Supreme Lord, indeed, wields all His Power to glorify His devotee. The Lord said, 'That I came to Gayā on pilgrimage, has been proved to be true, as I have obtained the sight of Iswara Puri.'

On the following day the Lord went to Sree Iswara Puri alone by Himself and implored from him, with sweet words, the favour of initiation (*dikshā*) by the *mantra*. Puri said, It is a small matter to bestow the *mantra*. I can by all means give Thee my life.' Thereupon, Nārāyana, Teacher-Guru of the world, accepted the ten-lettered *mantra* from him. Then the Lord after circumambulating Puri said to him, 'I surrender My Person to you. May you bend your auspicious glance on Me that I may float in the ocean of the love of Krishna'. On hearing these words of the Lord Sree Iswara Puri bestowed his embrace on Sree Gaursundar by clasping Him to his bosom. The Forms of Both were drenched with the tears of Both by love, and Neither could remain unmoved.

The question of unconditional submission to the spiritual guide has a close connection with that of ritual in general. Those, who are on principle averse to ritualistic observance in any form, are also necessarily disinclined to express in any formal way their decision to submit to the direction of the spiritual guide. They are disposed to make a distinction between the external act and the internal motive prompting the same and to hold the former as superfluous and unnecessary. This will appear to be an untenable attitude inasmuch as just to the extent that one's own differing judgment is asserted in the method and motive of offering one's submission, the submission, that is so offered, is rendered conditional and imperfect. Such protest is, therefore, really made against the principle of unconditional submission itself.

The point, that has to be borne in mind, is that the submission in this case is offered to the Supreme Lord Himself. If the Guru is supposed to be less than Divine, less than the Truth Himself, the disposition, that holds back the offer of unconditional submission from such an entity, is both rational and perfectly justifiable. No one is under any obligation to offer his submission to the non-Truth. From this point of view the offer of partial submission to anything or to any person can be only a hypocritical show of submission against one's own conviction. The Truth is Truth. Adulterated Truth is contradiction in terms. Adulterated truth is untruth that tries to pass itself off as truth on this mundane plane of self-deceived delusions.

In this world no one is anxious to serve, but every one is anxious to be served. Service is, therefore, rendered in the expectation of a return in service greater than what is offered, by the estimation of the recipient of service. He who renders service is actuated by this deliberate desire to deceive the recipient of such service. This is the principle of hypocrisy. Expectation of greater service from others, is the antithesis of the *bona fide* impulse of service. One, who really offers service, does so without expectation of return, in any form, in exchange of the service that is offered. If the servant is critical, he is critical only to be on his guard against any reservation on his part. He is only anxious to render the complete service. He is anxious to be satisfied that there is no lurking reservation in this matter in any obscure corner of his heart. He is anxious to study the nature of the demand that is made upon him by his master. He is not disposed to criticise the motive or method of the master making the demand. The servant must not suppose himself to be a better judge of the requirement of his master than the Master Himself. If he thinks he should be allowed to judge as to how the master should be served, he steps into the place of the master and makes his real Master serve the pleasure of His hypocritical servant. This would be the reversion of the natural process.

The show of opposition, that is made by the really loyal servant to the Master's wishes, should not be confounded with the

desire of the disloyal servant to thwart the master for reasons of his own convenience. The demarcating line is, no doubt, an extremely fine one and is likely to be missed by those who have not a very clean heart. But there is all the difference between the seeming opposition of the loyal servant and the disloyal attempts of the mercenary self-seeker, that distinguishes the genuine gold from the treacherous counterfeit. The latter of course tries to mask his disloyal motive under the profession of an over-strained solicitude for the Master's interest. This only makes his conduct more hideous and ungrateful. The objectionable principle, underlying the latter form of conduct, is called hypocrisy. The loyal servant is free from all taint of hypocrisy. He may commit mistakes in judging the Master's wishes, but he is always and fully anxious to understand and serve the wishes of his Master. Any seeming opposition of his to his Master's wishes, even when his judgment is wrong, also expresses his single-hearted devotion to his Master's interests.

The mischief is that the conditioned soul has got also other interests besides the service of the Truth. The conditioned soul is prepared, in every case, to offer this mixed form of service to Godhead. The disloyal servant also is prepared to serve his Master to a varying extent. It is seldom that the disloyal servant is prepared to openly defy his Master in every act. But even when the disloyal servant happens to agree to serve his Master, he does so for the ultimate purpose of serving only himself thereby. The hypocrite throws off the mask as soon as he is safe to disobey his Master without the risk of jeopardizing his interests, or when his own interests are best promoted by open disobedience. In the case of the loyal servant the Master's difficulties only serve to vindicate the genuineness of his loyal disposition by making him still more submissive to his Master.

It is necessary for every one, who is really anxious to find and serve the Truth, to realise that the Truth is not to be found by the present physical and mental equipments. It is further necessary to realise that it is nevertheless possible to find and serve the Truth by the present defective equipments by the Grace of Truth Himself. One is then prepared to wait patiently till the

initiative of the Truth is properly realised. The person, who is in this genuine expectant mood, is on the lookout for the Appearance of the Truth in any form that Truth likes. He is prepared to understand that, as Truth is All Powerful, He is likely to appear to his own defective understanding in a form that is least likely to conform to his natural misjudgment. He knows that all these difficulties notwithstanding the Grace of Truth is sufficiently powerful to prevail over all obstacles and to manifest Himself to His servant in a manner that is perfectly inconceivable to our defective judgment.

This is the Theistic disposition proper. It is credulous in the sense that, although it is never prepared to remain satisfied with seeming Truth or half truth, it is always fully ready to make its unconditional, that is to say, loving submission to the Real Truth the moment He makes His Appearance. The Theistic disposition is prepared to wait patiently, even inactively, as far as this is at all practicable, till the actual Appearance of the Master of his heart. He does not believe in pragmatic loyalty. He abhors to serve any thing but the Absolute Truth. To such a disposition the Truth is bound to manifest Himself.

The worship of the Feet of Sree Gadādhara or the offering of the *pinda* to the Manes by Sree Gaurāṅṅāra, is not performed for any other purpose than for serving the pleasure of the Lord. An analysis of the forms of the rituals, enjoined by the Scriptures, should make it abundantly clear to every impartial person that making the service of the Lord the only duty of all persons is their only object. There is, therefore, no falling away from Theism by such activity even on the part of those who are not in a position to explain their motive to the satisfaction of those logicians who are illogically opposed to the Theistic disposition. It is the atheistic attitude that makes the ritualistic worship a form of idolatry. But the atheistic iconoclast is the worst of idolaters as he is actuated by the resolve not to recognise the Omnipotence of the Supreme Lord and the consequent necessity of His Grace for being enabled to distinguish between the idol and the Divinity. The iconoclast launches his fury against the Lord, Whom he mistakes to be stone or earth by the deluding evidence

of his senses, whose slave he is by his nature. The truly serving disposition is always really humbler than the blade of grass, being aware that nothing is impossible with the Lord and that it is never possible to find Him by venting one's malice against His creatures or by the assertion of one's superior claim to self-conceited righteousness.

The conditioned soul stands in absolute need of Grace. This Grace can only descend to him when he is in the attitude of absolute humility. This Grace is bestowed directly by the Supreme Lord on the sincere seeker of His Grace. In the recipient the Grace of Godhead expresses His presence in the form of the rational inclination of seeking perpetual enlightenment from the devotee of Godhead. He, who is disposed to serve the Lord but not His devotee, is really disposed to serve nobody except the deluded self. One, who is disposed to serve the Lord, is disposed to serve His servant, if possible, with even greater loyalty. The loyal subject of the King is not, therefore, less loyal to one who is commissioned by the King to carry out his commands in regard to himself. The Guru is no other than the Servant of the Lord, commissioned to effect the deliverance of those who are really anxious to serve the Lord. The *Archā* is the Lord making Himself accessible to the worship of conditioned souls by means of all their defective equipments. The *Archā* is not an image made by the hand of man. Neither is the Guru a mortal like ourselves. It is only the delivered soul who can help the conditioned soul to gain his deliverance. It is the eternally pure souls, who are themselves infallible by their nature, who are sent into this world in the form of the Guru to impart spiritual enlightenment to the individual soul liable to be fettered by the flesh. The Guru seems to the senses and the sensuous judgment to be an ordinary mortal. But he is not really any part of this plane at all, no more than the *Archā*. Both are equally manifestations of the eternal saving Potency of the All-merciful Supreme Lord to deliver the conditioned soul from his self-elected bondage of the deluding energy.

By an empiric analysis of the wording of the *mantra* or the composition of the *Archā* or the eternal conduct of the spiritual

guide one cannot hope to gain any idea of the substantive plane of the Absolute. Because it happens to be really the attitude of refusal to recognise the imperative and moral necessity of loyally seeking for the Divine Grace for the attainment of spiritual enlightenment.

CHAPTER XXIII

HIS INITIATION—(Contd.)

RITUAL may be defined as worship by means of the objects of this world, which function alone is available to the conditioned soul, rendered possible by the Grace of Godhead as revealed by the Scriptures and the spiritual Guide to the community of the servants of the Lord.

The empiric theory, which seeks to derive the form and significance of ritual from the worldly activities of the ancient peoples, is based on the assumption of the impossibility and superfluity of revelation as the source of worship. But as a matter of fact it is never possible for man, by progress in material civilization, to attain either to the form or significance of spiritual worship. The form of worship can derive its spiritual value, if it has any, only from revelation. As it does not possess any mundane significance it is, therefore, independent of all mundane reference. It may satisfy the spirit of antiquarian curiosity to discover how the superficial aspect of the eternal process of worship varies from country to country and from Age to Age. But will any number of such 'discoveries' add to our knowledge of the real meaning of either the form or the spirit of true worship?

If the mind can be supposed to be fit to worship Godhead by means of concepts or percepts referring to objects of phenomenal Nature, why should such worship be impossible by means of the objects themselves? But mental worship in itself is no nearer to Godhead than the show of worship by means of material substances, both being made of non-spiritual stuff. The one is as much in need of the Divine Sanction as the other, if it is to reach the Divinity at all. The one is as much capable of being turned into worship as the other by virtue of such Sanction. The contro-