

service, cannot be really intelligible to bound *jīvas* unless they are prepared to undergo spiritual novitiate at the feet of real devotees in the manner prescribed by the Word of Godhead and exemplified in all its stages, from its first beginning to the highest development, in the life of Sree Krishna Chaitanya. This is the truth of the life of Sree Chaitanya. It is indispensable to the bound *jīva* to be properly acquainted with it if he is disposed to attain to and continue in the state of the pure service of Godhead. The one thing needful for us all is, therefore, to listen to the Divine history from the lips of *sādhus*, to chant the same and to act in strict conformity with its teaching after the manner taught by and exemplified in the life of Sree Krishna Chaitanya.

IX. HISTORY OF DIVINE DESCENTS (*AVATĀRAS*)

THE term '*Avatāra*' means 'coming down' of the Divinity, Whose Nature is purely spiritual, into this material world, retaining fully His own transcendental Nature. Therefore, the English word 'Incarnation,' which means putting on of the material coil, is wholly inapplicable to the process. When Godhead actually chooses to come down into this world He appears to the view of bound *jīvas* as an animate being possessed of a physical body not essentially different from that of other bound *jīvas*. But Godhead, although He appears to them to belong to this world, does not really belong to this world at all. The deluding Energy of Godhead, who is instrumental in the creation of this world of limitations as the dwelling-place of individual souls that are averse to Godhead and who stunts their vision, has no power over Godhead Himself. Godhead is the Lord of the deluding Energy who is different from His spiritual Power. The deluding Energy herself is subordinate to God's own spiritual Power. The Form and everything pertaining to the personality of Godhead, belong eternally to the category of the spirit and are located above and beyond the jurisdiction of His illusory power. But in spite of the existence of eternal demarcation between Him and the realm of His deluding power, Godhead chooses to come down occasionally into the realm of physical Nature in the plenitude of His spiritual Power with all His eternal Paraphernalia and becomes actually visible to bound *jīvas* in whose sight He seems to appear not as spirit, because the spiritual essence transcends their power of vision, but in the likeness of a mundane phenomenon. The eternal servitors of Godhead who also appear in this world in His company, may alone have the sight of Him and His Activities as They really are. These manifestations of the Absolute, as Absolute, in the domain of this relative existence, are designated by the term '*Avatāra*'.

In the *Geeta* Sree Krishna says to Arjuna that He comes down repeatedly into this world and in this respect resembles the

bound *jiva* who is caught in the cycle of physical birth and re-birth. But there is a very great difference between the two processes. Sree Krishna is the Lord of all, has no physical birth and as regards His proper Nature He is absolutely unchangeable. He appears in this world through the medium of His spiritual Power. But the *jivas* are born in this world being endowed with physical bodies for the purpose *by the power of the deluding Energy (māyā sakti)* as the result of their active aversion to Godhead. The Appearance of Godhead in this world in various forms, such as those of gods, reptiles, etc., is brought about by His Own Will. When He chooses to come down into this world His pure spiritual Body does not become enveloped in a double encasement of matter in the gross and subtle forms as in the case of the bound *jiva*. Godhead is simply pleased to make manifest in this world His own eternal spiritual Body that exists eternally in the Absolute Realm of Vaikuntha. If this appear incomprehensible to the limited reason of the bound *jiva* it is so for the reason that the Power of the Divinity is inconceivable and above all controversy. Therefore, the real nature of the Activities of Godhead are not at all ascertainable by the reason of the *jiva*. What the *jiva* can understand, if he chooses not to be perversely inclined, is that Godhead, Who is possessed of inconceivable Power, never becomes subject to the laws of physical Nature. The deluding power by which the bound *jiva* is controlled is also Divine. But the Divine power that belongs to Godhead is nevertheless always spiritual and is categorically different from material Energy. The Power of Godhead is one. As spiritual Power alone She is eligible to directly serve Godhead. As material Energy She has no access to the presence of Her Lord. The material Energy is subordinate to the spiritual Power, as shadow is subordinate to substance or as darkness to light. It is the function of the non-substantial deluding material energy to provide souls that are averse to Godhead with a shadowy world for their deluded existence.

The only law that governs the Descent (*Avatāra*) of Godhead into this world is the Divine Will. Godhead appears in this world when He wills. He chooses to appear in this world whenever there is any unbearable decline of religion leading to the prevalence of irreligion. The laws that govern the course of this material

world, as they proceed from the Will of Godhead, are irresistible. But in course of time when for some undefinable reason those laws suffer a change for the worse, due to defects bred by time, irreligion waxes strong. No one except Godhead Himself is able to set right those defects. Therefore, appearing in this world with His spiritual paraphernalia, the Supreme Lord puts down all such abnormal deterioration in religion.

Godhead manifests Himself in a twofold way. The creation of the spiritual and non-spiritual worlds and the regulation of them by inviolable laws, is one of these. The Activities of Godhead, as distinct from His creations, in these created worlds, constitute the second kind of His manifestations. Individual souls (*jivas*) are associates of the activities of Godhead. The successive manifestations of Godhead that appear to the view of the *jiva* in the material world, correspond respectively to those states that he happens to be in as the result of his meddling with matter, such activity itself being due to his falling away from his own proper spiritual nature by the prevalence of his desire for selfish enjoyment. His Infinite Kindness towards the fallen soul, is the only cause of the manifestations of Godhead in this world. These manifestations are called Divine Descents (*Avatāras*). From the stage that is anterior to the appearance of the spine in organisms to the appearance of the fully-developed man several great Rishis have recorded their observation of eight successive Descents of the Divinity, others have noticed eighteen, and a third group have observed twenty-four, Divine *Avatāras*. The well-known view of the Ten *Avatāras* is the one that is held by most Rishis who were versed in Divine science. Those Rishis postulate ten particular states through which the soul passes successively from the beginning to the end of each stage of his bondage. These are indicated by (1) absence of the spinal column, (2) appearance of the circular spine, (3) the elongated spine, (4) the vertical spine or the man-animal state, (5) the man of dwarfish stature, (6) man in the savage state, (7) civilised man, (8) intellectual man, (9) ultra-intellectual state, and (10) complete destruction of the unspiritual state. In accordance with these successively appearing historical states in the evolution of the bound state of the *jiva*, the ten *Avatāras*, *viz.*, Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Man-Lion,

Dwarf, Parasu Rāma, Rāma, Balarāma, Buddha and Kalki are observed as the corresponding Forms of the Divine Appearance. The narrative of Their Supernatural Activities is recorded in the Purānas and specially in Sreemad *Bhāgavatam*. Those specialists of the science of devotion, who have understood the nature of these Divine manifestations by means of intensive concentrated investigation, have, by the grace of Sree Krishna Chaitanya, been enabled to realise the Truth regarding Krishna and specially the unique exquisiteness of His *Braja*-pastimes. 'Of all the pastimes of Krishna His human activities are the highest and His proper nature and His proper Form is the Human.'

The Descent of Divine Spiritual Power into the realm of the material energy, or, in other words, the manifestation of Godhead's own spiritual Power in the apparent form of the manifestation of material Energy, is known as Divine Descent (*Avatāra*). By means of such Descent the association of the novice, on the path of spiritual life in this world, with the realm of the spirit, is effected and such association is the only way by which the person practising spiritual endeavour (*sādhaka*) is enabled to attain spiritual realisation.

It will be observed that the account of the ten *Avatāras* that correspond to the respective stages of the human mind in the course of the development of its spiritual consciousness, has been explained by means of terms that have recently been employed in the domain of physical science in connection with the evolution of the human physique from the first beginning of animal life in the *amæba*. From this apparent analogy the modern reader may scent, in the explanation recorded in the Scriptures, an unacknowledged and crude misapplication, to an irrelevant subject, of the truly scientific theory of the evolution of the physical form of animal life. Or, if he is at all inclined to recognise the priority of the Scriptures, he may be also led by a foregone conclusion to suppose that the *Myth* of the *Avatāras* might be connected with those periods that correspond to the respective stages in the evolution of the animal form, and are of value as a piece of antiquarian curiosity as a vague anticipation of the modern theory, that might have served its purpose in the past. Or, again, the doctrine of the tenfold Descent may lead the reader to suppose that it refers in some way to the progress of

material civilization culminating in the elimination of all unspiritual elements in an ideal future ensured by the progress of physical scientific knowledge.

In reply to such speculations we refer to the principles that have already been discussed at some length, *viz.*, that the Descents (*Avatāras*) of Vishnu are neither physical phenomena nor have They any reference to the progress of material civilization. But although the spiritual is eternally and categorically different from the material it can be described to those who are totally unacquainted with its nature only by analogy with, and by means of terms that actually refer exclusively to, the mundane. This analogy is however not wholly inapplicable only if it be clearly and constantly remembered as an analogy and not as the spiritual entity itself that is analogically described. The individual soul in the bound state has to pass through forms of deluded existence that correspond analogically to the physical bodies with which he is successively endowed for the purpose. Those forms themselves are, however, material, and signify a progressive development of the functions of the incipient principle of the adventitious life of the false-ego of the bound *jīva*. There is a regular chain of physical and mental progress (?) on the mundane plane for the bound *jīva*. This progress, however, derives what deceptive appearance of reality it seems to possess, from its being really the *perverted reflection* of the Absolute. But in as much as it happens to be a *deluding* reflection of the Reality it reproduces in an unwholesome and distorted form the features of its corresponding spiritual condition, which latter is the subject-matter of the history of the ten *Avatāras*. Godhead exists in all the forms in the realm of the Absolute that are reproduced in the distorted material phenomena of this universe. In the region of the Absolute there really exist eternally all varieties of *jīvas*; and Godhead Himself is there eternally manifest in all those Forms. The adventitious physical form of the *jīva* in this world is material and limited; but the corresponding spiritual forms of the transcendental world, are eternal, unlimited, self-conscious and free from all defects. The varieties of the forms of this world owe their relative existence, being related as shadow to substance or as darkness to light, to the real entities of the transcendental plane. The ordinary fish of the

transcendental plane is not merely superior to the Darwins of this world but His nature is realisable by a process that is only obscured by those very notions with which the physical form of the fish has been endowed by the mental speculations of the Darwinian science, however applicable these speculations may appear to us to be in respect of the evolution of the principle of life of this world. Man as fully evolved animal in the Darwinian sense, is too perverted a creature to be reclaimable by the Form of Vishnu as Fish and hence the necessity of progressively fuller manifestation of the Divinity for curing the evils of a progressively retrograding world.

These Descents, or manifestations of the Divinity in this world, take place in all Ages in accordance with the spiritual aptitude of the particular forms of material animation to whom They choose to appear. India has been the chosen land where in all the Ages the Descents (*Avatāras*) of the Divinity have taken place. Indians have been fitted by the Will of Godhead, by their spiritual *varnāśrama* institution to deserve this special favour.

Sree Krishna is the Own Self of the Absolute Reality, Godhead Himself. If Godhead simultaneously manifests Himself in many places and if those manifested Forms happen to be equal to their source in respect of their Qualities, Activities, etc., those Forms are designated as *prakāsha* (manifest) *murtis* (Forms) of Godhead. There is usually no qualitative difference as between these manifest Forms and the Form That is their Source. As for example, on the occasion of His marriage Sree Krishna at one and the same time married, in qualitatively same but numerically different manifest forms, sixteen thousand consorts; and, on the occasion of the *Rāsa*-pastime, He appeared simultaneously in the company of every one of the *gopees* as His partner in the dance. On the *Rāsa* Site of Braja the manifest Forms of the fullest Source-Form made their appearance and in the city of Dwārakā, on the occasion of His marriage with His Consorts, the Forms that manifested themselves were Those identical with the full Source-Form. No difference was observed to exist between those manifest Forms and the Source-Form. But we also hear of particular Forms of direct manifestation for special purposes and in those manifestations there are also observed differences as regards the Form. As

for instance, in the Son of Devaki we find the four-armed Form. In this instance in spite of this difference in the Form the principle of direct manifestation is admitted. This also holds true in other similar instances. All these are *Prakāsa-Murtis* of Sree Krishna or Godhead Himself.

Next to the above are *Tadekātmarūpas*. These are Divine Forms that are essentially identical with that of Godhead Himself. These may accordingly be called Forms that are included in the *nucleus* of the Divine Form but are slightly different as regards Their figures from Godhead's Own Form. These constituent Forms are of two kinds according as They happen to be either (1) Forms for expanded Activity (*bilāsa*), or (2) constituent fractional Forms (*svāṅsa*). Of These He Who possesses powers that are nearly equal to those of Godhead Himself, is called Form for extended Activity (*bilāsa*), e.g., Sree *Baladeva* and Sree *Vaikunṭha-Nārāyana*. He Whose powers are less than those of the form for extended Activity, is called the constituent fractional Form of the Divinity, e.g., the Forms of Fish, Tortoise, etc.

Next comes the manifestation of Divine Descent in the form of *inspiration*. He is called Divinely inspired into whom any one of the powers of the Divinity is transfused. Such inspiration occurs only in the case of the highest individual souls (*jīvas*). Divine inspiration is of two kinds according as the inspiration proceeds from Godhead Himself or from the Power of Godhead. The individual soul (*jīva*) who is inspired by Godhead regards himself as the Divinity. He who is inspired by Divine Power considers himself as the servant of Godhead. Vyāsadeva and Rishabhadeva, etc., are inspired *Avatāras*.

Next come those *Avatāras* who are mainly of three kinds, *viz.*, (1) *Purushāvatāra*, *i.e.*, Descent of Godhead as Master, (2) *Guṇāvatāra*, *i.e.*, Descent of Godhead as the Manifestation of any Divine Quality, and (3) *Leelāvatāra*, *i.e.*, Descent for the manifestation of Transcendental Activities. Of these the *Avatāra* of Godhead in exercise of His Supremacy is of three kinds, *viz.*, (1) the Person who watches and guides the inmost purpose of primordial physical Nature, creates the material principle itself and reposes in the liquid of the Causal Ocean without directly interfering in any phenomenal occurrences. Samkarsana and

Mahā-Vishnu are other Names of this *first* of the *Purushāvātāras*. He is a constituent Plenary Subjective Portion of Samkarsana Who is the second of the constituent enveloping Forms of Sree Nārāyana, Lord of Vaikuntha. (2) The *second Purushāvātāra* controls from within the aggregate universe in its subtle stage, is the Creator of Brahmā and reposes in the spiritual liquid in the womb of physical Nature. He is subjective plenary Portion of Pradyumna, the third constituent enveloping Form of the Lord of Vaikuntha. (3) The *third Purusha* guides the material universe in its constituent parts, that is to say, is the Controller from inside of individual *jīvas*, as the Supreme Soul and reposes in the Ocean of Milk. He is the Plenary Subjective Portion of Aniruddha, the fourth of the constituent enveloping Forms of Sree Nārāyana.

There are three *Gunāvātāras*, *viz.*, Vishnu, Brahmā and Siva. The third of the *purushas* mentioned above is the same as Vishnu Who is the Maintainer of this world by exercise of the quality of cognitive manifestation (*sattva*). Brahmā, sprung from the navel-lotus of Vishnu, is the creator by means of the active (*rajas*) quality and is only another aspect of Vishnu. In certain *Kalpas* (*i.e.*, regime of Brahmā) *jīvas*, as the result of their previous performance of pious deeds that make them fit for such distinction, may hold the high office of Brahmā, the creator. Brahmā of this type, by reason of the fact that the Divine Power is infused into a *jīva*, is also called *inspired* Descent (*Avatāra*). Such a Brahmā should not be regarded as the equal of Vishnu. In those *Kalpas* in which, due to the absence of *jīvas* of requisite fitness, Vishnu Himself plays the role of Brahmā, it is only then that Brahmā should be viewed as the equal of Vishnu. This principle holds in the case of all the gods who exercise any authority over Nature, such as Indra, etc. They are sometimes *jīvas*, possessed of special fitness, invested with the Divine power, and sometimes they are Vishnu Himself. From the lowest to the highest region of the universe the aggregate of all material objects forms the gross body of Brahmā. This also is called Brahmā. The second Purusha who guides the inner workings of this aggregate is their Lord or *Ishvara*. Siva is the destroyer by means of the *tamas* (stupefying) quality. Brahmā, who is sprung from the navel-lotus of Vishnu, effects the destruction of the world by assuming the form of Siva.

In certain *Kalpas* pious *jīvas* also hold the office of Siva, the destroyer. In certain *Kalpas* again Vishnu Himself performs the act of destruction in the Form of Siva. These destroyers are all called *Gunāvātāras*. But He Who exists in the realm of Siva (*Sivaloka*) inside Vaikuntha as Sadāsiva, is not *Gunāvātāra*. He is devoid of worldly qualities and, like Nārāyana, is a Manifestation, constituent Form, or Plenary Subjective Portion of Sree Krishna Himself. Sadāsiva stands to Siva in the relation of the whole to the derivative portion, is higher than Brahmā and is equal to Vishnu. He is differentiated from *jīva* by the fact that the latter is engrossed in worldly qualities.

Next in order are the *Leelāvātāras*. These are twenty-five, *viz.*, Chatuhsana, Nārada, Varāha, Matsya, Yajna, Nara-Nārāyana, Kapila, Datta, Hayasirsha, Hamsa, Prisni-garbha, Rishabha, Prithu, Nrisingha, Kurma, Dhanwantari, Mohini, Vāmana, Parasurāma, Raghunātha, Vyāsa, Balabhadra, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. These appear in every successive *Kalpa*.

The *Manvantārāvātāras* are all of them also *Leelāvātāras* but are so called as they rule over their respective *manvantaras*, *i.e.*, intervals between the appearance of one Manu and his next successor. There are fourteen such *Avatāras*, *e.g.*, Yajna, Bibhu, Satyasena, Habi, Vaikuntha, Ajita, Vāmana, Sārabhauma, Rishabha, Bisvaksena, Dharmasetu, Sudāma, Yogeswara, and Brihadbhānu.

The *Manvantārāvātāra* becomes the *Yugāvātāra* in a particular *Yuga* (constituent Age) of his *Manvantara* for the promulgation of particular forms of worship. There are four *Yugāvātāras* corresponding to the four *Yugas*. The *Avatāra* of *Satya Yuga* is white, of *Tretā* red, of *Dvāpara* green, and of *Kali* usually dark colour. In the *Kali Yuga* there is also mentioned, rarely, a *yellow Yugāvātāra*. Of these *Yugāvātāras* some are inspired, some are *prābhava* (master), some *baibhava* (expansion) and some *parabastha*. Among these He Who possesses the full power of the Divinity is *parabastha*. In *baibhava* the power is less than in *parabastha* and in *prābhava* the power is less than in *baibhava*. In *ābesha* or inspired *Avatāra* there is manifestation of only a single potency. Chatuhsana, Nārada and Prithu, etc., are inspired *Avatāras*. Matsya (Fish), Kurma (Tortoise),

Nārāyana, Varāha (Boar), Hayasirsha (Horse-headed), Prisni-garbha, Balabhadra, Yajna, etc., are *baibhava*, and Nrisingha (Man-Lion), Rāmachandra and Sree Krishna are *parabastha*, in the inverse order of superiority. Of These again Sree Krishna is Godhead Himself. There is no one greater than He. Sree Krishna has four Abodes, *viz.*, Braja, Madhupur, Dwārakā and Goloka, each superior to the next in the order of enumeration. Sree Krishna is Fullest, sporting in Braja with His own and with Baladeva. The same Krishna is Fuller in Mathura and Full in Dwārakā with His family and with Pradyumna and Aniruddha. In Goloka although Sree Krishna is conceived as Full, His Goloka Activities being the same as those of Brindābana, belong to the same category as the Fullest. In these Abodes (*dhāmas*), on account of the difference of the degree of predominance of the mellow quality there is corresponding difference in the extent of the abeyance of the intensity of Divine Power as controlling Force. That is to say in proportion to the prevalence of mellowness there is corresponding obscuration of Power as compelling Force. In the nether worlds, due to lesser degree of mellowness, the aspect of Authority becomes more and more manifest.

Prithivi is the first envelope of the universe constituted of the fourteen worlds beginning with *Pātāla* at one end and extending to *Satyaloka* on the other. This *Prithivi* as cause is the ingredient and support of the phenomenal universe as effect. The phenomenal universe is successively encased by the six outer envelopes of water, heat, air, sky, the ego and *mahat*. Outside these seven the eighth case is Nature (*prakriti*). This last is full of profound darkness and is the support of the whole universe. Time in the form of the power of activity of the Divinity is, in turn, the support of Nature. Time is upheld by the Will of Godhead. Beyond this is the stream of the Birajā so named from the fact that its water washes off all mundane qualities. This stream is situated between the *chit* (spiritual) and the *achit* (material) worlds. The Ocean of Cause (*kāranārṇava*) is the alternative name of Birajā. In the liquid causal current of the Birajā billions of worlds adorn the cavities of hair of Mahā-Vishnu. Birajā is like the moat of Mahā-Vaikuntha and the boundary of the luminous region of *Brahman* which forms the outer limit of Sree Vaikuntha. Sree

Golokadhāma is in the upper region of Sree Vaikuntha. The holy realm of Goloka is located in the centre of all mundane and spiritual manifestations of the Divine Power. In Goloka Sree Krishna abides with all His Family as Lord of Goloka, acting as a god. Dwārakā, Mathura and Braja are the successive inner tracts of Goloka. In the Abodes of Krishna bearing the names of Dwārakā, Mathura and Brindābana there is progressive increase in the proportion of mellowness due to the increasing preponderance of human activity. This *leelā* is of two kinds according as it happens to be, (1) manifest, or (2) non-manifest. The non-manifest *leelā* is the name of that eternal pastime in which Krishna engages simultaneously as Boy, Adolescent and approaching Youth, in the company of His own mother, father, servants, friends, sweethearts, etc., in the infinite manifestation unperceivable by this world. The successive *leelās* as Boy, Adolescent and dawning Youth that He performs in the company of His kin and entourage in this world, in course of one and the same manifestation, are called His manifest *leelā*. The manifest *leela* visible to this world has as its sole object the free bestowal of His mercy on the *jivas*. It is eternal. No sooner does it end in one universe than it rises in another like the rays of the sun lighting up the successive points of the zodiac in its progress; so that the manifest *leelā* is always enacted simultaneously in different worlds but in its due order of successive appearance. All the manifest *leelās* of Sree Krishna in their perennial flow, are eternal and are all-existence, all-consciousness and all-bliss, with the exception of the *mausala leelā* and the *leelā* of the abduction of His consorts, which are illusory and intended to mask the eternal nature of the series of His transcendental pastimes.

The devotees appear next in the order of Descent. The Vaishnavas, as Mārkaṇḍeya, Ambarish, Vasu, Vyāsa, Bivishana, Pundarik, Bali, Sambhu, Prahlāda, Bidur, Uddhaba, Daliya, Parāsara, Bhishma, Nārada, etc., are the devotees of Godhead. It is our duty to serve all these devotees in the same way as we serve Sree Hari. Otherwise offence is committed. Among the devotees the order of superiority is as follows: Prahlāda; the Pāṇḍavas who are superior to Prahlāda; the Yādavas of whom Uddhava is

superior to the rest; the Braja-devis superior to Uddhava; Sree Rādhika is the highest among the damsels of Braja.

The four *Yugas*, viz., *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali* are called *divya-yugas*. A thousand four-*yugas* form one *kalpa*. There are fourteen *manvantaras* in each *kalpa*. One day of Brahmā is equivalent to one *kalpa*. The *pralaya* or complete absorption that takes place at the end of every *kalpa* is known as the night of Brahmā. This is the daily *pralaya*. Thirty *kalpas* make one month of Brahmā, twelve months of Brahmā make one year; and fifty years of Brahmā make one *parārdha*. The duration of the life of Brahmā is that of two *parārdhas*. At the end of the period of two *parārdhas* there is dissolution of phenomenal Nature and the attainment of the highest state by Brahmā. Thereupon the phenomenal world is re-absorbed into the primordial principle (*prakṛiti*). The first of the series of the thirty *Kalpas* bears the name of *Sveta Varāha* or *Brahma Kalpa* and the last of the series as *Pitri* or *Padma Kalpa*. Thousands of the series of *Kalpas* from *Brahma* to *Padma* have passed away thousands of times.

Theism has a long history which may be summed up in one word as the Descent of Godhead into this mundane world. Such Descent accomplishes two Divine Purposes, viz., (1) it is intended to gladden those devotees who may happen to be at the time in this world, and (2) to destroy Godhead's opponents who oppress His devotees and obstruct their devotional activities. These opponents of Godhead are also deputed by Godhead Himself to serve Him by the method of opposition. There is and can be no real independent rival of Godhead, such as a so-called Satan, to be the captain-general of the sinners. The *asuras*, who disturb the devotees and are in consequence destroyed by Vishnu, appear to sinful *jīvas* to undergo chastisement that they deserve by reason of their un-godliness. But those who are privileged to be chastised by Godhead are no sinners. Such chastisement is the appropriate reward of their real service of Godhead, although of an indirect nature. They are servitors of Godhead who appear in the world being deputed by Him for serving Him, in that way. By their opposition they serve to bring out most brilliantly the glory of Godhead. Ordinary *jīvas* are not to follow their example; and, if they do so, they are not so easily delivered by direct Divine inter-

vention. The fallen *jīvas* are only delivered when their aversion to Godhead is eliminated. Their aversion to Godhead is due to ignorance of their own proper nature as eternal servants of Godhead. The Descent of Godhead into this world serves also to destroy the root of this ignorance of fallen *jīvas*. This is His causeless mercy towards wilful offenders. But all this is still only His secondary purpose. The main purpose of Divine Descent is to make the devotees happy. The secondary purposes are accomplished periodically by the various secondary *Avatāras* who are endowed with the requisite measure of the Divine Power for that purpose. But the main purpose, viz., that of making His devotees happy, is effected only by the Descent of Godhead Himself. Sree Baladeva is the ultimate Source of all the secondary *Avatāras*. He may be regarded as occupying the position of Viceroy for the performance of all official work of the Sovereign. Sree Baladeva destroys the *asuras* and protects the devotees and re-establishes the rule of righteousness.

Krishna Himself comes into this world in the *Sveta Varāha Kalpa* (the cycle of the White Boar) of the *Vaivasvata manvantara* of the twenty-eighth aggregate of four-*Yugas*, appearing as Son of Yasodā in His own eternal human Form in His fullest charm and power. The Son of Yasodā, is Godhead Himself, in His private, domestic, informal role, enjoying Himself unreservedly in the company of His own most beloved ones.

The process of the Advent of Sree Krishna is thus described in the Scriptures. As the different gods prepare to descend into this world through the medium of the series of their respective subjective portions (*amsas*), the heavenly plenary portions of Vasudeva, etc., such as Kasyapa, etc., merging with their original sources (*amsis*), viz., Vasudeva, etc., who belong to the eternal Divine *Leelā*, appear in Mathurā as Sura, etc. The Highest Personality of the Divine *Leelā*, viz., Sree Krishna, Whose manifest Form is Sree Nārāyana, Lord of Mahā-Lakshmi, desiring to appear in Mathurā, causes, first of all, the manifestation of His constituent Form, Samkarsana. Thereupon the Lord, having decided to make visible two other Forms that are Plenary Facsimiles of Himself and Who bear the Names of Pradyumna and Aniruddha, manifests Himself in the heart of Ānakadundubhi. After this,

in response to the prayer of the gods for the purpose of relieving the hard-pressed mundane world, towards the close of the Dvāpara Age of the twenty-eighth aggregate of four-*Yugas* of the *Vaivasvata manvantara*, Aniruddha, the Same Who lies in Kshiroda, merging with the Form of Sree Krishna in the heart of Vasudeva, becomes manifest in the heart of Devaki moving thither from the heart of Ānakadundubhi. Being nourished in the heart of Devaki by the nectar of loving bliss in the form of motherly affection Sree Krishna, like the waxing Moon, manifests the gradual development of His Form in the heart of Devaki. Thereafter in the great night of the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādra Sree Krishna, disappearing from the heart of Devaki, appears in her couch in the lying-in chamber in the prison of Kamsa. The mother and the other people think that the Baby is born by the ordinary worldly process with the greatest ease. Thereupon Vasudeva entering the apartment of Yasodā in the Great Forest and leaving there his own Son Sree Krishna and taking away the daughter of Yasodā, hurries back to his prison. Some ancient Bhāgavatas also hold that the first of Sree Krishna's own Facsimiles, Who bears the Name of Vāsudeva, appears in the apartment of Vasudeva and that in Gokula Sree Krishna, the Highest Personality of the Divine *Leelā*, makes His Appearance in company of Yoga-māyā. But Vasudeva sees only a daughter in the lying-in chamber of Yasodā. On Vasudeva's return to Mathurā with Yasodā's baby-daughter Vāsudeva merges into Sree Krishna. This is corroborated by such statements as the following, 'Krishna born in the Yādava family is different.' 'He Who is full Divinity is higher than He, that is to say, is His original Source.' 'Divinity in His Plenitude, or Godhead Himself, never leaves Brindābana, nor goes elsewhere.' 'He is always two-armed and is never four-armed.' 'He always sports in Brindābana in the company of only one of the *Gopees*.' In the *Padma Purāna* it is stated that the cowherds of Brindābana, such as Nanda, etc., with all families and birds, beasts, deer, etc., all of them, by the grace of Vāsudeva assuming the heavenly form and mounted in chariots, attained the region of the highest *Vaikuntha*. This is explained as follows. Those constituent parts of the Lord of Braja, etc., *viz.*, Drona, etc., who had come down into this world, were sent

by Sree Krishna to *Vaikuntha*. But Sree Krishna is always sporting in Brindābana in the company of His most beloved devotees, *viz.*, the denizens of Braja.

The subject of the *Avatāras* of Vishnu is vast and intricate and we have attempted merely to touch its outermost fringe in the above short account. But before we leave the subject it will be useful to deal briefly with a few of the controversial issues that are ordinarily associated with this subject.

A distinction has been made between different *Avatāras* of Vishnu on the basis of partial and complete manifestation, and the partial manifestations have also been graded one under another in different groups, so that we have also part of a part, and so on. These distinctions do not mean that Godhead is a divisible entity. In fact in all these manifestations it is the indivisible and undivided Divinity Who appears. The difference is due either to the degree of manifestation or the greater or lesser presentation or reservation of any particular face or faces of the Divinity. Godhead is One but His powers are many and various and He can exercise all those powers in the way that He likes. This distinction between the Will of Godhead and the Power of Godhead, should be clearly grasped. The Will of Godhead constitutes His distinctive and specific personality. It is not delegated. But the Power Who is subordinate to the Will, is capable of delegation by the Will of Godhead. Godhead alone possesses an absolutely independent Will to Whom everything is subordinate. The wills with which other beings are endowed, are more or less limited in their effectiveness; that is to say, they are controlled, as regards their effective exercise in the shape of exerting power, by the Will of Godhead. The freedom of will of the *jīva* does not mean that the *jīva* can actually act as he likes, but that he is free to like or not like to act. The *jīva* has freedom to choose his course of action but such choice can result in effective action only by the Will of Godhead. The tendency is free but its issue is strictly controlled. There is no such gap between the Will and the Power to act, in Godhead. In Him alone the two are identical but yet not the same. The Power of Godhead is capable of delegation but the Will is not. Therefore it is the Will that constitutes the specific character of Divinity.

The Divine Power is manifold although she is one in essence being the expression of the one and indivisible Divine Will. The gradation, that is noticed in the case of the different *Avatāras*, is in respect of distinction of power. Godhead chooses to manifest His powers partially or fully, directly or indirectly. This is what is meant by the *gradation* of the *Avatāras* of Vishnu. The partial manifestation is regarded as the plenary subjective portion, or *amsa*, of His proximate whole to Whom He is immediately integrated.

The relation between will and power is this that the latter always acts under the direction of the former. Power does not regulate herself. Will is the active principle of Whom power is the actively obedient associate. Power has no initiative of her own. But Will is not effective unless He is associated with power. Such dissociation is never possible in the Absolute in Whom the two are eternally associated and in this sense they may be regarded as being only complementary aspects of one and the same entity. Godhead's Power is, therefore, not external or separable from Godhead Himself although she is always subordinate to His Will.

Godhead is the Possessor of infinite powers. Of these, according to the Scriptures, three only are realisable by the *jīva*, *viz.*, (1) the *chit* (cognitive energy), (2) *jīva* (differentiated souls), and (3) *māyā* (limiting energy). There are also three functions that belong to each one of these three powers, *viz.*, (1) *sandhini* (uniting), (2) *sambit* (enlightening), and (3) *hlā-dini* (harmonising). These three functions are eternally operative in their pure and unmodifiable fullness in *chit* power. In differentiated souls they are also manifest but in an infinitesimally small measure. In *māyā* the presence of only their dim reflection in a perverted form, is noticeable. To the individual soul the functions of the limiting energy are unwholesome. The functions of the individual soul himself, due to littleness of power, are inadequate although salutary. The *jīva* cannot attain perfect happiness except in conjunction with the *Hlādini* Function of the Power of Enlightenment. This conjunction is possible only through the mercy of Krishna and His devotees.

The coming down of the Absolute into this limited world, effects the deliverance of fallen *jīvas* by bringing about this con-

junction between the bound-*jīva* and the higher world. The difference of degree in the manifestation of the Divine Power represented by the different *Avatāras*, is in accordance with the spiritual condition of the *jīva* at the time of such manifestation. The manifestation by way of Descent attains its perfection in Krishna. The other *Avatāras* dispel the ignorance of the fallen *jīva* and arouse in him, in varying degrees, the desire to worship Godhead with awe and reverence. Krishna, Who is the Source of all the *Avatāras*, reserves to Himself the right of bestowing love for Godhead. This constitutes the supreme excellence of the Activities of Krishna when They appear in this world. In no *Avatāra*, except in a small measure in those of Nrisingha and Rāmachandra, is to be found the extreme deliciousness of the relationship of *jīva* with Godhead characterised by confidence and intimacy, that attains to freedom from all restraint in the case of the Braja-*gopees*, that is to be found in the Krishna *Leclā*. Therefore, the mercy of Godhead reaches its climax in Krishna Who appears before the bound-*jīva* in the most intimate relationship, free from all reservation. The mercy of Krishna, in as much as He happens to be Godhead Himself, is thus superior to that of all other *Avatāras*. This fact is at the root of the broad differences that constitute the dividing line between the various religions. Such difference is due to the degree of intimacy of relationship that it offers between the *jīva* and Godhead.

But the mercy of Godhead, which is so continuously, copiously and causelessly manifested, cannot be realised by the bound *jīva* due to his ignorance of its real nature. Sree Chaitanya came into this world to supply the knowledge of our natural relationship with Godhead which alone can enable us to realise the greatness of Divine mercy. Sree Chaitanya taught us that the highest service of Godhead, *viz.*, that of unreserved loving devotion embodied in the Braja-*devis*, is spontaneously attainable to all of us as soon as we fully realise our true relationship with Godhead. That relationship may be briefly described as that of serving Sree Krishna under the lead of the *Hlādini* Function of the Divine Power. This is not an abstraction of the human brain. On the highest spiritual plane such service is realised as a part and parcel of the amorous pastimes of the damsels of Braja under the lead of Sree Rādhika

with the youthful Son of the Lord of Braja. This is the highest significance of Krishna *Leelā* and is exemplified in the Career and Teaching of Sree Chaitanya.

With these insufficient preliminary observations of a general character towards the elucidation of a number of current misconceptions on the subject of Religion, I shall venture to proceed to narrate the Transcendental Career of the Supreme Lord Sree Krishna-Chaitanya in course of the following chapters.

The Narrative seeks to present the Absolute as He is in His Supreme Magnanimity. The Career of Sree Krishna-Chaitanya is *identical* with the Divine Personality in the Form of His Own Loving Service. It is not possible for individual souls, who are detached infinitesimal particles of the Marginal Potency of the Divinity, to realise the Nature of the Loving Service of the Divinity by His Own Integrated Power and his own proper function within the same, except by the Eternal Support of Divine Love Himself. The Magnanimous Activity of Sree Krishna-Chaitanya is *identical* with His Co-ordinate Absolute Activity as the Āmorous Lover of Sree Rādhikā in Sree Brindāvana. The individual soul has, therefore, no access to the Realm of the Āmorous Pastimes of Sree Sree Rādhā-Govinda except by the realisation of this identity of relationship between the Two distinct *Leelās*.

SREE KRISHNA-CHAITANYA

CHAPTER I

COUNTRY AND SOCIETY

THE historical significance of the term Gauḍa, the name that is borne by the country of Sree Chaitanya's Nativity, is obscure. It occurs in the works of the famous Grammarian Pāṇini as the name of a well-known city 'of the East'. The geographical location of the regions bearing the name, referred to in ancient literature, presents a bewildering variety, being applied to tracts and towns scattered in all directions and attaining an extent that is sometimes equivalent to the greater part of Northern India. It supplies the designation to a wide division of the Brāhmanas, a well-known style of the Sanskrit rhetoricians and a technical term, connected with the metal 'silver', to the industrialists, of Old India. The name of the spiritual preceptor of Sree Sankarāchārya is Gauḍapāda, while Sreeman Madhvāchārya, an inhabitant of the extreme south of the country, bears the interesting name of "Gauḍapurnānanda". No theory regarding the historical origin or application of the word is yet forthcoming that offers any satisfactory clue to the copious use of the word by the ancients in such diverse connections.

There is evidence to prove that there were similar grades in the geographical denotation of the word 'Gauḍa' also at the period of the Advent of Sree Chaitanya. It was then applied to (1) the country under the rule of the Muhammedan King of Bengal, (2) to his Capital situated in the modern district of Māldā, (3) to