

## INTRODUCTORY

### I. OBJECT AND METHOD

THE present work is an attempt to offer a theistic account in the English language of the career and teachings of Sree Chaitanya. The number of existing English books on the subject is very small. "The life and precepts of Sree Chaitanya Mahāprabhu" by Thākur Bhaktivinode,<sup>1</sup> the pioneer of the movement of pure devotion in our Age, although it gives a true account of His life, is a comparatively short work. Other English works on the subject are from the pens of self-sufficient misguided amateurs who have had no practical experience of the teaching they have professed to expound. This is opposed to the dictum of Sree Chaitanya that "no one is fit to be a teacher of religion who does not practise the same in his own life". None of these works, with the solitary exception of that by Thākur Bhaktivinode, deals properly with the spiritual side of the teachings of Sree Chaitanya. The available authoritative sources of information are quite exhaustive regarding the spiritual aspect and offer a narrative of His doings and teachings that is both consistent and free from contradictions. To these was added later another body of works of a different character by pedantic pseudo-Vaishnava and faithless foreign writers, that offer the concoctions of their own respective lines of thought. Insincere writers have adopted without apology the point of view and garbled accounts of the pseudo-Vaishnava authors as the basis of their narratives.

The existing English works although they sometimes profess to be historical in reality offer a superficial, extremely crude and misleading view of the subject. They confine themselves almost

exclusively to the exoteric issues. This at least is not the method of the source-books, but a departure from the *bona fide* position of the theme itself. The historical method proper should aim at presenting the religion as it is really found in the genuine original sources and in the spirit of its first propounders. But many of these writers, due to their empirical training, have failed to observe this essential canon of historical judgment. Moreover these writers generally happen to be very poorly equipped in respect of their knowledge of the vast body of Scriptures to which the teachings of Sree Chaitanya stand in the closest relationship; and, even if any of them happen to possess a general acquaintance with the texts of these Scriptures, they fail to take a scientific view of the subject due to lack of spiritual insight.

The prominent defects that mar the value of these works are the purely empiric point of view of their authors, their want of spiritual knowledge of the Scriptures and their lack of critical caution in the choice and use of authorities.

The empiric method is unsuitable for the treatment of a spiritual subject. The vision of the empiricist is confined to things of this world. The Vaishnava authors on whose narratives we have to base our account of Sree Chaitanya, were not empiricists. The subject of which they have left us the account, is the Absolute, as distinct from the empiric, Truth that comes down to them in the chain of disciplic succession from Godhead Himself. They acquired this esoteric vision, when they prove to be true, by the methods of loyal submission and sincere service at the feet of spiritual preceptors as enjoined by the Scriptures on all those who desire to obtain spiritual enlightenment. They are never tired of repeating that the Absolute Truth, inherent in a *bona fide* soul, Who expresses Himself in their books, is not derived from any experience of this world and is not intelligible to those whose vision is obscured by knowledge derived from the experience of this world.

The Absolute Truth is transcendental and, therefore, no human being can attain to Him by his sensuous efforts, *i.e.*, by the ascending process, as all phenomena that are exposed to the faulty, limited senses are, by this virtue, non-transcendental. The Absolute Truth is eternally existent but is not realisable by men so long as

<sup>1</sup>Noticed in *J.R.A.S.*, January, 1897, p. 130. The book can be had at the Gauḍiya Math, Calcutta.

they are not relieved of the aptitude of their defective vision. The Absolute Truth is to be received, undoubtedly in the spirit of honest enquiry, from those wise men who bear no reference to the world of their sensuous gratification.

Very few of the existing English works on Sree Chaitanya satisfy these essential conditions of theistic authorship that are so strongly insisted upon by these devotional writers without which such description carries no useful purpose. On the contrary, these later writers are apt to offer their own views, derived from their empiric association, regarding the subject-matter of the original works, in a manner that leaves on the mind of the reader the impression that they are more anxious to point out the crudities and errors of these old authors than exhibit their views in a scientific and impartial manner. This is certainly neither history nor religion but only an uncalled-for and useless distortion of both.

The object of writing this book is to place before the English-knowing readers a strictly accurate theistic account of Sree Chaitanya, Who teaches the Absolute Truth that has been handed down through the Ages by an unbroken succession of unbiased spiritual preceptors. This narrative is broad-based on all the authoritative sources and seeks to fully present the esoteric side as explaining the exoteric in pursuance of the method of all really enlightened writers on spiritual subjects.

The superiority of Sree Chaitanya to all other teachers and prophets consists in this that He made fully known the Absolute Truth Who was only partially unveiled by others. This is the special significance of Sree Chaitanya's Deeds and Teachings. Other teachers of the religion before him had allowed more or less the worship of non-Godhead, having had reference and adulteration of their present deformities. Sree Chaitanya came into this world to make all people understand that in reference to their eternal existence they should have nothing to do with non-Godhead. Sree Chaitanya, Who speaks the language, is the Absolute Truth in His full manifestation. He has made people understand the only true way of approaching Godhead Himself. This is the proof that He is Godhead Himself. He is identical with Sree Krishna, not His Self as Lord and Proprietor of all things, but in the attitude of the agony of separation from the Absolute, *i.e.*, Himself.

Sree Krishna opposed all addiction to ephemeral thoughts and activities. This has been communicated to us through the channel of unbiased preceptors who have no other interest except delivering in tact the whole of the Truth received by them. The Absolute Truth is sure to be obscured if He is handled by elevationists and salvationists (*karmins* and *jnanins*), *i.e.*, by those who believe in worldly activities and in freedom from misery by means of knowledge gradually gained through the senses. We do not want to learn about the Absolute Truth from these. It is only the pencils of ray emanating from the Sun when they happen to be received by the retina that enable one to see the Sun directly even from a long distance. But we must be very careful that nothing foreign interposes between the eye and the Sun, thus obstructing the passage of the ray and preventing it from reaching the eye. This is the epistemology of Absolute Knowledge offered by Sree Chaitanya. It is followed in the brochure of Thākur Bhaktivinode referred to above. My object is only to elaborate what is told briefly in that little book and elaborated in the *Bhāgavatam* and *Chāritāmrita*.

The peculiarity of my position, therefore, consists in this that I shake off the views of the schools of mundane elevationists and salvationists, the professors of temporary enjoyments (*bhukti*) and permanent release from misery attendant upon such enjoyment losing in the process the idea of the individual self itself (*mukti*), for the reason that they do not lead to the Absolute Truth. We are absolutists. We believe that our only duty is to follow the Absolute Who has His Own eternal plane to stand. We hold that the most intelligent among the contemporaries of Sree Chaitanya, those who sincerely followed Him, really understood His teaching through serving love. This truth which they received from Sree Chaitanya Himself has been communicated to my Preceptor by a succession of sincere followers of the Absolute Truth reaching back to them. Each one of this succession of preceptors submitted to the conditions of sincere pupilage to his predecessors enabling the latter to impart to him the Truth by the eradication of temporary, local errors and misconceptions that might crop up in unguided critics. Due to this careful transmission of the full Truth through unbiased preceptors to my unprejudiced Preceptor

I should rightly claim him to be a contemporary of Sree Gaur-sundar Himself. Other lines of teachers who deviate from my Preceptor are Absolutists only to an extent. Had they been fully absolutist they would have come under the banner of the line of Absolute Truth, which has no affinity of deviating from the Absolute proper. My Preceptor out of his unlimited mercy, which I craved, brought me to his path by himself coming to me and dissuading me from following other ways and means of language that would be intelligible to me in my then condition.

There is thus in my case a direct preceptorial connection extending right up to the living sources undisturbed by physical or mental obstruction. The line of the Absolutists has prevented us from going astray in any other direction but to embrace Absolutism and has given us this careful training. I am a regulated being and do not belong to the empiric school as I keep not any view of deserting this line to join the challengers. My preceptors have been free from mundane references being treaders of the path of the Absolute. We are discussing the Deeds of Sree Chaitanya in the light of our preceptors. But our preceptors did not tell us this thing in the present form and language. Linguistically it is our maiden effort. We do not know whether we shall succeed in this. We, however, claim to have received this narrative from the living sources. Only the strict followers of Sree Chaitanya can obtain the full view of the Absolute Truth. It cannot be had by the followers of any other teacher who has a different angle of vision. All other lines only offer a partial view. Sree Rādhā-Govinda, the full Truth, is attainable only on this path. I should be a sincere follower of my preceptor and of the preceptors of my preceptor and have no intention of deviating from my preceptors. There is no chance of foreign element getting into my account. There is no hypocrisy. The only thing that is new is that I am trying to tell it through the medium of a different diction and language, which happen to be different from those of my preceptors.

In this connection it will not be out of place to refer to subtle and unconscious prejudices that stand in the way of our giving a real hearing to a purely spiritual subject. The life and teachings of Sree Chaitanya are not the special concern of any narrow sect.

The knowledge of it is claimed to be indispensable for the whole animate and inert world in as much as Sree Chaitanya is the living embodiment of the highest and the most intimate distinctive forms of the service of the Supreme Lord to which every being has a claim by his constituent principle. The service of Godhead, however, has no affinity with anything of this transitory world as in the case of meddling with non-God conception. The readers of the transcendental Deeds (*Leelā*) of Sree Chaitanya may be divided into three classes, *viz.*, (1) those who read for the satisfaction of idle curiosity, (2) those who read for gathering empiric knowledge to suit their taste and to mould the same accordingly, and (3) lastly, those readers who are really seekers of the Absolute Truth as distinct from the empirical, *i.e.*, who sincerely avail themselves of the full opportunity of their reading.

We need not stop to consider the case of that class of readers—the dilettantes and mere literateurs—who read for the satisfaction of idle curiosity.

Those readers who will approach the subject in a real spirit of enquiry may take up one of two possible attitudes. Some of these may consider the subject as one that is capable of being understood in the light of worldly experience like any non-spiritual subject. Such persons will accept only those portions of this work which may appear to them to agree with their existing convictions. But as these convictions, in the case of empiricists, happen to be themselves based on the experience of this world, which is changeable, they are in their nature only relative, and not absolute, Truth. Those convictions are in fact unspiritual and, instead of helping, prevent us from understanding the Absolute. Those readers who, failing to grasp this real difference between the spiritual and the physical and mental, may try to understand the subject with the help of their empiric knowledge, are bound to be dissatisfied as they proceed with this study, and the net result of their labour in going through these pages may be even to confirm them more strongly in their empiric, *i.e.*, unspiritual, attitude. The object of study in such case will be entirely missed.

That class of sincere readers who, recognising the difference between the empiric and the spiritual Truth, are inclined to seek for the latter only in these pages and may be prepared for the pur-

pose to disregard, at least for the time being, the clamorous opposition of their empiric convictions, and are thus in a position to give the narrative a patient and sympathetic hearing, will be thereby enabled to understand gradually the reason why the most sincerely religious people happen to cherish the subject of this work with such tender and absorbing devotion.

It is not possible to enter into the spirit of a subject unless a really patient hearing is given to it. But it is very difficult to submit with patience to listen to a subject that is declared to be situated completely beyond the scope of all experience and convictions of the hearer. The ordeal that faces us on the threshold of spiritual life is truly formidable. It is only such people who combine openness of mind with a sincere desire to know not the empiric, changeable, relative, but the Absolute, unchangeable, eternal Truth, that are enabled by the grace of Godhead to listen patiently to a spiritual narrative which appears to be almost needless from the point of view of the empiricist.

The transcendental career and teachings of Sree Chaitanya are bound to prove to be of the highest interest to all sincere seekers of spiritual enlightenment. The fact that Sree Chaitanya appears to be born in Bengal need not mislead those readers who belong to a different country into supposing that His teachings are meant for the people of Bengal or of India, of this or of a former Age. It is difficult for most to free their minds completely from national, ethnological or chronological prejudices in these days of militant nationalism and empiricism. But the real meaning of the career of Sree Chaitanya will be missed if He be regarded merely from any mundane point of view, *viz.*, that of race or nationality; limited time or limited space; physical bearing; intellectual endowment, caste, creed or colour, etc. His teaching and activities belong to the plane of the Absolute which transcends all the petty unwholesome limitations of our worldly existence. Let the sympathetic reader lay aside these subtle and unconscious prejudices and allow the eternal Truth to enter the mind thus opened out to Him, without hastily passing the final judgment by a mere cursory look at the title page. Whatever the quarter from which the Absolute Truth enters His appearance and, in this matter His choice is free, the Absolute Truth when He actually knocks at

our door should be assured the unreserved welcome that is His due from those who really seek for Him.

The sincere reader need also be on his guard against specific misconceptions at the very outset, of an unfavourable kind. The Deeds and Teachings of Sree Chaitanya have been consciously or unconsciously misrepresented by most modern writers. We have already referred to this fact. Any idea, favourable or unfavourable, regarding Sree Chaitanya that the reader may have already formed from the writings of these authors or their partisans may be temporarily laid aside to allow of an impartial hearing being given to the present narrative. Dogmatism, superstition or self-sufficiency can never lead to spiritual progress. Our readers are much more likely to gain what they require if they do not reserve any contrary thought which is likely to receive these tidings coldly or prevent them from taking up a sympathetic and enquiring attitude. The advice is to stop temporarily any conception that they may have already formed and even to dismantle any awkward construction that may lie across the path of their following the course of the narrative with seriousness of purpose.

The message of the transcendental realm that has come down to this phenomenal world through the medium of sound is known as the *Veda* (*i.e.*, knowledge), or as the *Sruti* (*i.e.*, that which is heard), as the ear alone of all the organs of sense is fit to receive the distant message which is transmissible only in the form of sound. The Absolute Truth, for the simple reason that He happens to be located beyond the reach of our physical senses, cannot be directly perceived by us. All the other senses, *viz.*, those of touch, sight, smell, taste require, as the condition of perceiving any object, actual contact with the same. But the ear possesses this special peculiarity that it can perceive an object in subtle form without being in gross material contact with it. As for example it is possible to hear about London from Calcutta by means of the ear. It is not possible to learn anything about London from Calcutta, in the same natural way, by means of any other sense. The Scriptures, *i.e.*, writings, are but the visualized revealed transcendental sounds. Therefore it is not so extraordi-

nary as it seems at first sight that of all our present organs the ear alone should be privileged to receive the message of the Absolute. The transcendental sound is, however, different from ordinary sound inasmuch as it is identical with the object denoted by it, while the object denoted by the latter is different as object from the sound which is a symbol to signify the object without itself being the object.

The identity of the transcendental sound with the object denoted by such sound is due to the fact that everything on the transcendental plane happens to be an entity of incomprehensible infinite dimensions. This is not submitted to the present limited understanding of man which is strictly limited to entities of three dimensions only. The transcendental Truth possesses unity and is infinite by His Nature. All this is contrary to our limited reason and so accustomed we are to the rationale of limited experience that it appears to us to be *therefore* irrational. Unless this really irrational opposition of our finite reason is temporarily stopped it will effectively bar all access to the real infinite. But once the voice of Godhead is allowed really to enter our attentive ear He will purify our perverted reason and render it fit to appreciate that which in its present degraded state it is unfit to understand. Let us, therefore, assume for the present that unwholesome heterogeneity is not possible in the Absolute Who is altogether unitary in His character.

The rational necessity of revelation for our knowledge of the Absolute should be perfectly clear. The alternative to this are the multifarious spurious theories regarding the Absolute that have been put forward from time to time by the human mind. These man-made theories are, and can be, neither conclusive in themselves nor in agreement with one another. They are liable to constant modification with the progress of empiric knowledge. These wrong theories can never lead us to the Absolute Truth Who admits no such self-contradiction as is inevitable with empiricists. The word of Godhead as revealed in the *Veda*, i.e., by means of the recorded transcendental sound, has been, and will ever remain, the only rationally possible source of all human knowledge regarding the substantive nature of the unchallengeable Reality.

There is thus nothing irrational *ab initio* in holding that the *Veda* is the Word of Godhead Himself. The *Veda* exists from eternity. The *Veda*, according to His own version, was originally revealed in this world to Sree Brahmā, the first *jiva* to appear in the realm of physical Nature, and by him made available to other *jivas*, that have since made their appearance in this world in course of time, through the channel of disciplic spiritual succession.

The *Veda* contains the Absolute Truth Whose service is the eternal and universal function of the proper nature of all entities. Not being made by any one the *Veda* is free from all taint of narrowness, error or partiality. The path to which He points is the only one that should be trod by every soul if he wants to walk in the way of Truth. It is necessary to put off all prejudices against the authority of the revealed Scriptures arising out of misapprehension of the nature of the subject. The admission of the supreme authority of the *Veda* does not involve the utter annihilation of thinking. On the contrary it is the Absolute Truth Who enables us to find the real value of empiric thought and its relation to ourselves. Nor does the acceptance of the *Veda* involve the rejection of the Scriptures of other countries. The revealed portions of all the Scriptures are one and the same. They are the Word of Godhead differing only in the degree of manifestation. This oneness of all revelation will become clearer in course of this narrative.

The *Veda* is self-existent and eternal. It was not made by anybody. It has the quality of attracting to itself the devoted homage of all sincere souls. Men of this world love a thing by reason of its worldly benefits for themselves. There is nothing in the shape of worldly value to explain the acceptance of the *Veda* by the most sincere seekers of the Truth. It is as if one is irresistibly attracted towards a chance passer-by and welcomes him into one's house by a spontaneous instinct. No extraneous circumstance, no previously found ties, would explain this spontaneous liking. It must be entirely due to some innate excellence in the object of such attachment. The *Veda* has ever been loved in this impartial and detached attitude. Theories that are made can mislead inasmuch as they attempt to substitute the convic-

tions of their authors in place of those of others. It is the substitution of one untruth in place of another, due to the vanity or spite of clever or aggressive thinkers. There is no room for impartiality in such case. The Absolute Truth alone is really impartial. His impartiality is the cause of the acceptance of His service by sincere souls.

The Absolute Truth Who finds implicit expression in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, has been put into a systematic and more explicit form in the *Brahmasutra* of Sree Vyasadeva. In this remarkable work the subject has been treated under the four heads of (1) relationship of everything with Godhead, (2) solution of apparent heterogeneity that is found in Nature, (3) the means of spiritual realisation, and (4) the object of spiritual function. The *Brahmasutra* establishes the existence of personal Godhead, and devotion as the means of realising transcendental love for Godhead as the final object of such activity.

The Authority of the *Brahmasutra*, as part and parcel of the revealed Scriptures, is admitted by all transcendentalists. The chain of disciplic succession in the case of Sree Vyasadeva is as follows. Sree Vyasadeva received the Word from Sree Nārada who received it from Sree Brahmā, the first god representing the bound creation, to whom it was communicated by Sree Nārāyana Himself, *i.e.*, Personality of Godhead as He exists in *Sree Vainkuntha*, the realm that is free from all limitation.

The *Brahmasutra* gives us the Truth in a highly condensed form. It is the text-book of all theistic philosophy. The conclusions embodied in it and their significance have been elaborated in a number of commentaries written by different authors.

Sree Vyasadeva is also the author of the *Srimad Bhāgavatam* which gives us the comprehensive history of the transcendental activities of Godhead Himself and of His different Avatāras. The deeds of Sree Krishna Who is declared by the Veda to be Godhead Himself, as He is, constitute the central theme of this great work. The *Srimad Bhāgavatam* thus forms, as it were, the natural commentary, in the concrete or explicit form, of the *Brahmasutra*, from the pen of their common author.

The Deeds of Sree Chaitanya, the Subject of the present work, are the living Embodiment of the teaching of *Srimad Bhā-*

*gavatam*. The Deeds and Teachings of Sree Chaitanya stand alone as history of the service of the Supreme Lord in the form of the deepest and perfectly unreserved intimacy.

The privilege of this form of service, the hidden truth of all Scriptures, was never before given to the fallen *jīva*. In the words of Sree Rupa Goswami Prabhu, the authority on the esoteric significance of the Deeds of Sree Chaitanya, "God Himself with the beautiful golden complexion out of mercy appeared in this world in this most degenerate Age to confer the grace of devotion to Himself, of the superior order that had not been given to this world before." Even the *Geetā* which teaches the service of Godhead with single-minded devotion and in the spirit of complete self-surrender, does not tell us much about the actual, concrete form of the highest service. The *Srimad Bhāgavatam* describes all different kinds of service in the concrete form and establishes the supreme excellence of that which was practised by the transcendental milk-maids of Braja. Sree Chaitanya is the living Embodiment of this highest and most intimate form of the service of the Divinity.

The Brindābana pastimes of Sree Krishna, which have been given the place of honour in the greatest devotional work of the whole world, are of all forms of Divine service the one that is also liable to be most grossly misunderstood. The subject will be treated in greater detail in its proper place in the body of this work. It will suffice for our purpose here to state that Sree Chaitanya made clearly manifest by His Deeds and Teachings what this form of service really means. His Deeds are in fact the *Brahmasutra*, *Geetā* and the *Srimad Bhāgavatam* displayed to our view in the living form. He is the living Vedānta. Other Avatāras and prophets have taught the reverential worship of the Supreme Lord. Sree Chaitanya proved by His Deeds that the highest form of service is to be found in the *Srimad Bhāgavatam*, that its inner meaning had not been properly understood up to His time by anybody and that it offers what all the Scriptures have been endeavouring from eternity unsuccessfully to express. Sree Chaitanya's own career is the concrete living expression of this highest form of the service of the Lord.

The Deeds and Teachings of Sree Chaitanya offer everything that is contained in the whole body of the Scriptures of this country or of any country. They give us the complete view of the Absolute, which is not to be found in any Scripture. And because it is the full view of the Absolute Truth that we get that the Deeds and Teachings of Sree Chaitanya possess the quality of solving all doubts and difficulties. It has the power of delivering from the thralldom of this limited existence the elevationists who base their hope for mankind on worldly activities and also the empiric philosopher who is caught in the cob-web of his own ephemeral speculations. It throws open the gates of the limitless world to all sorts and conditions of people by simply presenting the complete view of the Truth which reconciles all apparent contradictions and composes all the seeming differences and discords that so trouble the material world and, in their place, it establishes the reign of universal spiritual Harmony.

No apology is needed from the historian of the Deeds of Sree Chaitanya for anything in His transcendental career. His Deeds and Teachings, as we find them recorded in the immortal works of His associates and followers, are not the concoctions of the human imagination. Anyone who reads these sublime works with an open mind, is bound to be convinced of the Absolute reality of all those Activities. The task of the historian of Sree Chaitanya is rather not to miss the least detail of His Divine career. This may not appeal to the taste of those historians whose vision is incapable of passing the line of secular interests. But they nevertheless constitute the most momentous facts of theistic history and are, in fact, the goal to which all history leads and in which it should find its supreme fulfilment and real explanation.

The pseudo-Vedāntists are specially liable to under-estimate the significance of the concrete activities of personal Godhead as constituting His fullest manifestation. According to them the Vedānta is a mere theory of the Absolute and is, like any product of mental speculation, an abstract subject; although such view is clearly opposed to that of Sree Vyasadeva himself who would otherwise have not been at so much pains to describe minutely every detail of the Activities of Godhead Himself and of all His Avatāras and assign to the Braja Pastimes of Krishna-Chandra

the place of honour in his comprehensive history of the Divinity. This is the subtle danger that threatens all who put their trust in empiric wisdom. The Deeds of Sree Chaitanya are the practical refutation of all casuistry and empiric speculations regarding the Absolute that are to be found in all parts of the world.

The writer has ventured upon a task that is by its nature super-human not from any pride of empiric knowledge. This task of propagating the eternal religion of all animate beings has been handed down to him in the regular line of spiritual discipleship. It was the wish of Thākur Bhaktivinode to spread the knowledge of the eternal religion taught and practised by Sree Chaitanya to all countries outside Bengal through the medium of the English language. The writer would be failing in his duty towards his spiritual preceptor and towards the growing community of the pure devotees who are desirous that the wish of Thākur Bhaktivinode, the same as that of Sree Chaitanya Himself, should be carried out, if he did not make a sincere effort of putting into the English language information that he has received from his predecessors. The writer feels no misgiving in thus offering to the world at large this message of the Absolute inasmuch as in doing this he is only performing a duty that has devolved on his unworthy shoulders in the regular chain of disciplic succession. He makes his prostrated obeisances at the feet of the preceptor who opened his sealed eyes by the spike of the collyrium of spiritual knowledge and all the devotees of the Supreme Lord that the word of God may through their mercy find expression in these pages.

The Absolute Truth cannot be discovered by the ascending effort of the human mind. Such effort, as a matter of fact, leads to quite the opposite direction. The Absolute Truth has been appropriately compared to the disc of the Sun. It is not possible to find out the Sun during night with the help of the most powerful lamp that can be devised by the ingenuity of man. The Sun can be seen only by means of rays that come from itself. The Sun is visible when it is above the horizon and there is nothing to obstruct our vision directed towards it. The Sun is seen easily enough when these conditions are fulfilled. The Absolute Truth is like the glorious disc of the Sun that is always above the horizon. But we

bound jivas cannot see it as we are led by our empiric knowledge to direct our sealed eyes to the opposite direction and on the mists and clouds of worldliness that further obstruct our view. It is transcendental Truth that is offered in these pages and not any speculations of the writer. This transcendental Truth Whom he has received from his preceptor and Whom he is trying to impart to others is not something that can be challenged by the limited reason of man. His predecessors have been enabled to receive Him by submitting to Him, *i.e.*, by listening to and accepting Him in the sense of practising and preaching the same. This constitutes the sole justification of the present undertaking. The writer is desirous of serving the Absolute Truth by telling Him to others as by doing so he can serve himself and all animate beings in the only really useful way.

This eternal function of the proper selves of all animate beings that has been taught by Sree Chaitanya and all the revealed Scriptures, is at once profound and easy. It is easy because it possesses the quality of satisfying the wants of foolish, senseless and unlettered persons. It is also profound inasmuch as it is capable of benefiting the most erudite scholars, *i.e.*, those who are masters of the art of controversy and most deeply versed in the Scriptures. This combination of apparently opposite qualities is not to be found anywhere else in this world. In fact any one who is free from bias can be heir of this religion; on this *simple* condition it lies open to all mankind. The idealist no less than the practical man of action is equally enabled by its means to successfully cross this great ocean of limited, physical existence. But unthinking worldly-minded people have always been misled by its pervert forms as it has been often misrepresented by the malice, worldly interest or ignorance of its pseudo-preachers. The only way that is open to bound jivas for disentangling themselves from the fetters of ignorance and thereby regaining their natural condition of the spontaneous, spiritual service of the Lord, is that offered by the methods of listening to the transcendental deeds of the Godhead from the lips of His devotees and making the same known to others by obeying the Word of God in their actual conduct and preaching it to others. It is only by constantly listening to the Word of God from those who exclusively serve the Absolute and practising the

same with body, mind and speech that the fallen jivas are enabled gradually to get rid of their materialistic hallucinations which stand in their way of realising their own proper nature and its true relationship with God and therefore of serving Him in the proper manner.

The materials for the present work have been drawn from— (1) the *Sikshāstakam* of Sree Chaitanya which gives the summary of His teachings in His own words; (2 and 3) the *Karchās* (memoirs) of Sree Murāri Gupta and of Sree Swarup Dāmodar (the latter as embodied in his works by Sree Raghunāth Dās Goswāmin, Sree Swarup Dāmodar's closest associate); (4) *Prem Vivarta* of Sree Jagadānanda; (5) *Sree-Krishna-Chaitanya-Chandrodaya-Nāṭaka* of Kavi Karnapur; (6) *Sree-Chaitanya-Charit-Mahākāvya* of Sree Chaitanya Dās, the elder brother of Kavi Karnapur; (7) the works of Sree Prabodhānanda Saraswati; (8) the *Bhajanāmrita* of Sree Narahari Sarkār Thākur; (9) the numerous works left by five of the famous six Goswāmins; (10) Sree Brindābandās Thākur's *Sree-Chaitanya-Bhāgawat*; (11) Sree Lochandās's *Chaitanya-Mangal*; (12) Sree Krishnadās Kavirāj's *Sree-Chaitanya-Charitāmrita* and lastly (13) the works of those later writers who have strictly followed the above authors. Most of these works are in Sanskrit, some of them in Bengali.

Sree Chaitanya has not left any books written by Himself. A few shlokas composed by Him are quoted in the works of His associates, the chief of them being the *Sikshāstakam* which gives in eight stanzas a summary of his teachings.

Sree Murāri Gupta was the constant companion of Sree Chaitanya's younger days. His memoirs are a careful record of the activities of Sree Chaitanya at Nabadwip. Sree Swarup Dāmodar attended on the person of Sree Chaitanya night and day throughout the period of His long residence at Puri. His memoirs which have not come down to us in their separate form are the chief authority as regards Sree Chaitanya's latter career and relied upon by all the contemporary writers. Sree Krishnadās Kavirāj Goswāmin in his detailed account of this part of Sree Chaitanya's career made use of the information which he obtained directly from Sree Raghunāthdās Goswāmin who was the spiritual ward of Sree Swarup Dāmodar to whose charge he was committed by the



express command of Sree Chaitanya Himself. Pandit Jagadānanda was the loved playmate of Sree Chaitanya's boyhood and His constant companion to the end. Kavi Karnapur was the son of Sree Sivānanda Sen, one of the closest associates of Sree Chaitanya. Sree Chaitanyadās was the elder brother of Kavi Karnapur. Sree Prabodhānanda Saraswati was the contemporary of Sree Chaitanya. He was a native of Southern India and the younger brother of Sree Venkata Bhatta at whose house at Sree Rangam Sree Chaitanya resided for the period of four months during His travels in the South. Sree Prābodhānanda Saraswati was the uncle and preceptor of Sree Gopāl Bhatta, one of the six Goswāmins. Sree Narahari Sarkār Thākūr was one of Sree Chaitanya's principal associates.

Of the six Goswāmins Sree Rupa and his elder brother Sree Sanātana were instructed by Sree Chaitanya Himself in regard to the subject-matter of their respective works. Sree Raghunāthdās Goswāmin got his information from Sree Swarup Dāmodar and he himself associated with Sree Chaitanya. Sree Gopāl Bhatta's connection with Sree Chaitanya has already been mentioned. Sree Jiva was the nephew of Sree Rupa and Sanātana and was the disciple of the former.

Sree Brindābandās Thākūr was the recipient of the favour of Sree Nityānanda, the associated facsimile, so to say, of Sree Chaitanya. His mother Sree Narāyani was the niece of Sribāsh Pandit, the foremost of those Vaishnava householders who were the direct followers of Sree Chaitanya. Sree Lochandās got the materials of his work partly from Narahari Sarkār Thākūr, one of Sree Chaitanya's close associates and by his devotional impressions. Sree Krishnadās Goswāmin got his information as has already been mentioned from his preceptor Sree Raghunāthdās, one of the six Goswāmins.

Most of the works of the authors named above are still extant and they are the authorities for all subsequent writers. The chief of these later authors whose works have been consulted in the compilation of the present account are, (1) Sree Narottamdās Thākūr who was the disciple of Sree Lokanāth Goswāmin, one of the closest associates of Sree Chaitanya, (2) Sree Viswanāth Chakravarty belonging to the line of disciples of Sree Narottamdās Thākūr,

(3) Sree Baladev Vidyābhusan, the first Gauḍiya commentator of the *Brahmasutra*, (4) Sree Narahari Chakravarty in the line of disciplic descent from Sree Viswanāth Thākūr, (5) Sree Bhaktivinode Thākūr, the sincere guardian of the true Vaishnavas of the present day, and (6) my Sree Gurudeva, His Divine Grace Paramahansa Paribrājakāchārya Sree Sreemat Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Goswāmi Mahāraj whose mercy is my only hope of attaining the service of Godhead.

It will be seen from the above that there is no lack of materials of the most reliable character available to the historian of the Career and Teachings of Sree Chaitanya. It is, therefore, rather strange that the personality of Sree Chaitanya has been misunderstood and misrepresented by a certain class of writers. The neglect of the original sources was one cause of this. A constructive motive was supplied by the animosity of sectarians and the greed of worldly interests of pseudo-followers.

It was the life-work of Thākūr Bhaktivinode to re-discover the true history of Sree Chaitanya and make the same available to the present generation. The magnitude of this service to his country, to humanity and to all animate beings time alone will show. The eternal religion taught and practised by Sree Chaitanya have been made intelligible to the modern reader by the labours of Thākūr Bhaktivinode. It is bound to re-act most powerfully on all existing religious convictions of the world and make possible the establishment of universal spiritual harmony of which the whole world stands so much in need. Most of the works of Thākūr Bhaktivinode were, however, written in Bengali and Sanskrit. The present work is a slight attempt to present in the English language an outline of the Life and Teachings of Sree Chaitanya made known by Thākūr Bhaktivinode, the pioneer of the movement of pure devotion in the present Age, which aims at re-establishing in practice the eternal religion of all animate beings revealed in the Scriptures and taught and practised by Sree Chaitanya. The activities of my most revered Preceptor are well known to the world. His Divine Grace is commissioned by Godhead to spread the Teaching of Sree Chaitanya to every village of the world and re-establish the spiritual society. This was foretold by Thākūr Bhaktivinode.