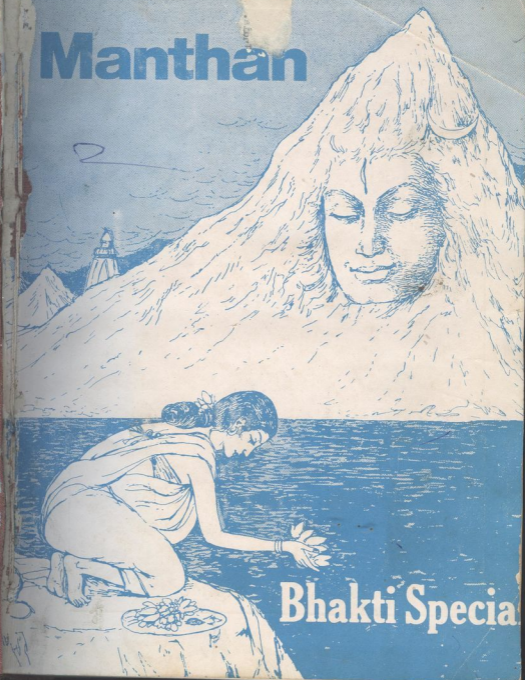


Manthan



Bhakti Special

January, 1987

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& BECOME OUR LIFE MEMBER**

Bhakti Is Shakti

THIS SMALL SPECIAL Bhakti Issue of 'Manthan', has been brought out to commemorate the coming up of Bhaktidham, a unique centre of devotion in Jaiprabhagram, Gonda, UP. Countless volumes have been written about Bhakti movement. And what we present here is only a small sample capsule of the same. But it does have one speciality; it highlights the fact that the Bhakti movement was not only a great religious phenomenon; it was also a tremendous socio-cultural movement, which transformed the country.

At a time when the political and military leadership of the country had collapsed under foreign onslaught, it was the socio-religious leadership of our poet-saints, who gave the people hope and faith—hope in a better tomorrow, and faith in themselves and in their gods. The result was a revolution in thought, in feeling, in perception, in expectation, in endeavour. Out of this *manthan*, churning, a new resurgent India was born.

It is significant that the first great poet-saint, Ramanand, was born within hundred years of Mahmud Ghazni, and after him there was an uninterrupted and glorious chain of saints and singers and Sadhus and mahatmas. The world has not seen anything like that before or since.

These saints did not denounce Sanatan Dharma—as Buddhism and Jainism had done, with its inevitable reaction.

They quietly and sweetly up-dated it. The result was action, more action, better action—and no adverse reaction.

First of all they did not reject the Vedas; they just conveyed the Vedic message in the people's language(s). This not only made Vedic spiritualism an integral part of people's thinking, it gave birth to all the modern Indian languages and literatures.

The saints simultaneously brought God down from his metaphysical *Kashisagar* heights—and raised Him up from the totem level of the masses—and installed Him securely in the heart of the people. All they had to do was to take the Lord's name 'Raam Naam'. They down-graded the externals that divide—and emphasised the spirit that unites.

They united Shiva and Vishnu through the benign intermediacy of the Mother; they evolved and popularised Rama and Krishna, the warrior-gods, as Avatars; and they made the Avatars' resistance to evil, and re-establishment of Dharma, the living faith of the people. The stone idols of Rama and Krishna fortified the Hindu heart more, than all the engines of oppression could destroy.

Since the common man cannot experience God unaided, he was advised to take the guidance of the Guru. The Guru became the friend, philosopher and guide of the seeker. (The sufi saints promptly gave a similar role to Pir or Murshid.)

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worth of a man—and not his caste, class or community. And so even Chamars and Muslims were initiated. Ramanand even broke with Guru Raghavanand to assert a saint's right to stay and dine with disciples of any caste. Apart from the Sikhs, many other religious orders also started Langars—community kitchens. These Langars not only seated men of varied castes in one bread line, they encouraged the rich to donate generously for feeding the poor and the guests.

The saints accepted caste for occupational purposes, as a social category, but they rejected its relevance in the realm of the spirit. This inclusive and integrative approach of the saints retained the bulk of Harijans in the Hindu fold and attracted millions of erstwhile tribals to the national Hindu mainstream.

Since God is there in all men, service of man became service of God. Social service became a religious duty. All the saints came out for the poor and the oppressed. Kabir said the poor had no access to justice. Surdas said: "The Patwari is arrogant, the Amir is dishonest, the Kotwal is deceitful and the Vazier is sinful". Tukaram said that "Kings are butchers". And Tulsi viewed poverty not as a virtue, but as a sorrow to be avoided.

In their traditional largeness of spirit, these saints preached no narrow philosophy. They put on par, Ishwar and Allah, Ram and Rahim, Krishna and Karim. Incidentally, this helped tame Islam—and some of the greater Sufi Saints responded positively to this situa-

tion. As a result, many Gurus and Piris came to have both, Hindu and Muslim disciples.

Many men of religion became Karma-yogis in social and even in political and military action. The Astradhari Sadhus became Sant-Sipahis of mediaeval India—and they staged many an armed revolt against state terrorism. Some of them became philosopher-guides to the new resurgent Hindu kingdoms. And so Vidyaranya helped Vijayanagar, Ramdas blessed Shivaji, Pran Nath encouraged Chhatrasal, Guru Govind Singh launched the Khalsa, which produced Ranjit Singh.

It will be no exaggeration to say that it was the Bhakti movement that transformed 'Brahmanism' into 'Hinduism'—and made Indian survival and revival possible. As the great Justice Ranade put it, this religious movement "tended in all these ways to raise the nation generally to a higher level of capacity, both of thought and action, and prepared it to take the lead in re-establishing a united power in the place of foreign domination."

The challenges that face the country today are partly old and partly new. But the need to meet them is, if anything, even greater now than before. What can be the twentieth century equivalent of Bhakti as People's Power—that is Question Number One before the country. If this Souvenir can inspire even one small positive thought in that direction, it will be a great thing. □



the spiritual

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita—Bhakti Yoga

(TWELFTH DISCOURSE)

Arjuna uvaacha

Evam satatayuktaa ye bhaktaastwaam
paryupaasate;
Ye chaapyaksharamavyaktam tesham ke
yogavittamaah.

1. Arjuna said:

Those devotees who, ever-steadfast, thus worship Thee and those also who worship the Imperishable, the unmanifested—which of them are better—versed in Yoga?

Sree Bhagavaan uvaacha

Mayyaveshya mano ye maam nityayuktaa
upaasate;
Shradhdhaya parayopetaaste me yukta-
tamaa mataah.

2. The Blessed Lord said :

Those who, fixing their mind on Me, worship Me, ever—steadfast and endowed with Supreme faith, these in My opinion are the best in Yoga.

Ye twaksharamanirdeshyamavyaktam par-
yupaasate;
Sarvatragamachintyam cha kootasthama-
chalam dhravam.

3. Those who worship the Imperishable, the indefinable, the unmanifest, the Omnipresent, the unthinkable, the Immovable and the Eternal.

Sanniyamyendriyagraamam sarvatra sam-
abuddhayah ;
Te praapnivantī maameva sarvabhooahite
rataah.

4. Having restrained all the senses even—minded everywhere, intent on the welfare of all beings—verily they also come unto Me.

Kleshodhikatarasteshaamavyaktaasaktachet-
asaam;
Avyakta hi gatirduhkam dehavadbhiravaa-
pyate.

5. Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the unmanifested for the goal, the unmanifested, is very hard for the embodied to reach.

Ye tu sarvaani karmaani mayi samnyasya
matparaah;
Ananyenaiva yogena maam dhyaayanta
upaasate.

6. But those who worship Me, renouncing all actions in Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single-minded Yoga.

Teshamaham samudhartaa mrityusamsaa-
rasaagaraah;
Bhavaami nachirat paartha mayyaaveshita-
chetasam.

7. For them whose mind is set on Me, verily I become ere long, O Partha, the saviour out of the ocean of the mortal samsara.

Mayyeva mana aadhatswa mayi buddhim
niveshaya;
Nivastishyasi mayyeva ata oordhwam na
samshayah.

8. Fix thy mind on Me only, place thy intellect in Me; (then) thou shalt no doubt live in Me alone hereafter.

Atha chittam samaadhaatum na shaknoshi
mayi sthiram;
Ahaaasyoyogena tato maamicchaaptum
dhananjaya.

9. If thou art unable to fix thy mind steadily on Me, then by Yoga of constant

practice do thou seek to reach Me, O Dhananjaya.

Abhyaasa:pyasaamarthosi matkarmuparamo bhava;
Madarthamapi karmaani kuvansiddhimava-
apsyasi.

10. If also thou art unable to practise Abhyasa Yoga, be thou intent on doing actions for My sake; even by doing actions for My sake, thou shalt attain perfection.

Athaitadapyashaktosi kartum madyogamaa-
shritha;
Sarvakarmaphalatyagaam tatah kuru
yataamavaan.

11. If thou art unable to do even this, then taking refuge in union with Me renounce the fruits of all actions with the self controlled.

Shreyo hi jnaanamabhyaasaat jnaanadhyaa-
nam vishishyate;
Dhyaanaat karmaphalatyagaastyaga itecha-
an-iranantaram.

12. Better Indeed is knowledge than practice; than knowledge meditation is better, than meditation renunciation of the fruits of actions; peace immediately follows renunciation.

Adwashtaa sarvabhootaanaam maltrah
karuna eva cha;
Nirmamo nirahankaaras samaduhkhasukh
kshamee.

13. He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain and forgiving.

Santushtas satatam yogee yataimaa
dridhanishchayah;
Mayyarpitamanobudhiro madbhaktas sa me
priyah.

14. Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me, he, My devotee is dear to Me.

Yasmaano:wiyata loko lokaanodwijate cha
yah;
Harshamarshabhayodwegairmukto yas sa
cha me priyah.

15. He by whom the world is not agitated (afflicted), and who cannot be agitated by the world, who is freed from joy, envy, fear and anxiety—he is dear to Me.

Anapekshas shuchirdaksha udaaseeno
gatavyathah;
Sarvaarambhaparityaagee yo madbhaktas
sa me priyah.

16. He who is free from wants, pure, expert, unconcerned, untroubled, renouncing all undertakings or commencement—he who is (thus) devoted to Me, is dear to Me.

Yo na hrishyati na dweshiti na shochatina
na kaankshati;
Shubhaashubhaparityaagi bhaktimaan yas
sa me priyah.

17. He who neither rejoices nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil full of devotion, he is dear to Me.

Samas shatrau cha mitre cha tathaa
maanaapamaanayoh;
Sheetoshn isukhaduhkshesu samas sang-
avivarjitah.

18. He who is the same to foe and friend, and also in honour and dishonour, who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment.

Tulyanindaastutirmaunee santushto yena
kenachit;
Aniketah sibiramutir bhaktimzanme privo
narah.

19. To whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content with anything, homeless, steady-minded full of devotion—that man is dear to Me.

Ye tu dharmyaanritanidan yathoktam
paryupaasate;
Shrad.lahaana matparamaa bhaktasteteeva
me priyah.

20. They verily; who following this Immortal Dharma (law or doctrine) as described above, endowed with faith, regarding Me as their Supreme Goal, they devotees, are exceedingly dear to Me.

□

Yoga

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Some Gems of Bhakti

WITH EARTH as the lamp, with the swelling sea as the ghee, and with the hot-rayed Sun as the flame, I have seen the Lord, and have laid, at the feet of the Lord of the red-flaming discus, this garland of words, so that my sea of troubles may vanish.

—Poikai Alvar

THIS LIFE is an illusion; it is sure to come to nothing; overcome by hunger and illness, it is sure to be lost in this sea of birth and death; therefore, do the duties of virtue and call upon the holy shrine of Kedara of the Lord who stood as one column of light, the bottom and top of which the gods Vishnu and Brahma could not find out!

—Sundaramurti Nayanar

THOSE, who have, build temples for you; what shall I build, I am poor. My legs are the pillars, this body is the temple. My head is the pinnacle of gold. See, my God, Kudala Sangama. Hear my Lord. With the fixed temple others may tamper, not with this moving one.

When they see a serpent carved in stone, they pour milk on it; if a real serpent comes, they say, "Kill, kill". To the servant of God, who could eat if served, they say, "Go, go". But to the Linga, which cannot eat, they offer dishes of food.

Listen to me brothers: The world of the Gods and the world of mortals are

not different. To speak the truth, is the world of Gods. To speak untruth is the world of mortals. Cleanliness is heaven; uncleanness is hell. You are witness of this truth, O God, Kudala Sangama!

—Basavaraja Langayat, 13th Century

A SUGARCANE may be crooked and yet its juice is not crooked; a bow may be curved, and yet the arrow is not curved; a river may have windings, and yet the water has no windings. Chokha may be an untouchable, but his heart is not an untouchable.

—Chokha Mahav

*Sonay ki sui rapay kay dhaga
Namay ka chitta Hari sew laga*

WITH THE GOLD needle and silver thread I am sewing my heart with the idol of Hari.

—Namdev

O RULER OF MEN! What canst thou give me? I ask only for Vitthal, the Beloved.

Yes, O ruler! If you would give me anything, give me the one thing I ask for. It will make me happy. Give me this, O ruler! what your lips sing—the Name of my Beloved:—Vithal! Vithal! All your wealth, o ruler, is, for me, as clay and dust. Wear a garland of Tulsi beads on your neck. Fast every Ekadasi day. Call yourself a servant of my Beloved. This is the one hope Tuka breathes out to you.

—Tukaram

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FRIEND, I shall die, I shall die, I shall surely die. With whom shall I leave my Kanu (Krishna) who is endowed with so many virtues? Friends, you all who will be with me, at the time of my death, please write the name 'Krishna' on my body. Lalita, my most dear friend, utter the mantra in my ear, so that my body may fall bearing the name of Krishna. If ever the Beloved comes to Vrindavana I shall regain my life at the sight of him. Vidyapati says, hearken, O beautiful lady, have patience, the slayer of the demon Mura (Krishna) will be attained.

—Vidyapati

*Trinadapi sunichen taroriba sahishnava
Amanina mananena kirtantya sada Hari*

A true Vaishnava must be meeker than the blade of grass, must be as tolerant as a tree, must brush aside pride and vanity, pay full respect to others and always offer prayers to Lord Hari.

—Chaitanya

ALL TANTRA is sublimated into Mantra; all Mantra into Nada; and when mind itself is sublimated, everything called object is sublimated, the subject, seer (alone) of the form of consciousness remains...

Having known everything, rest thou like one stupid; having heard everything, one should be deaf; having seen everything, become blind soon; this, the wise, say, is the cultivation of the Truth...

What act I do, that itself is worship; what I speak, that itself is Mantra; whatever material comes by chance, that is itself my Tantra here.

—Lalladevi of Kashmir

LOVE AND LAW are struggling (in

the human heart); the doubt of the heart will I settle (by relating) the questions of Law and the answers of Love I will describe, holy Sir.

Law says : Go to the mulla and learn the rules and regulations. Love says : One letter is enough, shut up and put away other books.

Law says : Perform the five baths and worship alone in the temple. Love says : Your worship is false if you consider yourself separate.

Law says : Have shame and hide the illumination (enlightenment). Love says : What is this veil for? Let the vision be open.

Law says : O faithful one, come, perform the hajj, you have to cross the bridge. Love says : The door of the Beloved is ka'aba; from there, I will not stir.

Law says : On the cross we placed Shah Mansur. Love says : you did well, you made him enter the door of the Beloved. The rank of Love is the Highest heaven, the crown of creation. Out of Love he has created Bulha, humble, and from dust!

—Bulha Shah of Punjab

IF YOU WANT to give me a human rebirth, make me, O Lord, one of the cowherds in your village, Gokula; if You are to give me an animal rebirth, let me be a cow grazing daily with the other cows of Nanda; if You are to transform me into a stone, may I become a part of the very hill, Govardhana, which you lifted by your hand, as one would an umbrella, to teach a lesson to Indra; if I

—Tukaram

am to be a bird, let me live as one on the
boughs of the Kadamba trees on the
banks of the Yamuna

—Ras Khan

*Likhalikhi ki hoi nohi
Dekha dekki baat
Dulah dulhanhi mili gage
phiki pari baat*

OH DEAR it is nothing to be described.
It is beyond description. It is a matter
of face to face meeting. The couple have
met each other, the bride and the bride-
groom are together. The marriage party
is now meaningless.

—Kabir

MY DEAR FRIENDS I have seen Him
whom you have not seen.

His sweetness exceeds the combined
sweetness of butter, honey and candy;

His brilliance exceeds the combined
light of the sun, the moon and the stars;

Shah Lalif says :

“My friends I have met the Lord”

—Shah Abdul Latif of Sind

RAMA, clear my doubt. Are Your holy
feet worshipped by Narada, great, or
Your sandals? The sages who worshipped
Your feet became equal to You; but
Bharata worshipped Your sandals and
got Your very self.

—Thyagaraja

THE FIRMAMENT is Thy salver,
The sun and the moon Thy lamps;
The galaxy of stars are as pearls scattered;
The woods of sandal are Thine incense
The breezes blow Thy royal fan;
The flowers of the forests
Lie as offerings at Thy feet.

What wonderful worship with lamps is
this

O Thou destroyer of fear !

The music of the spheres is the sound of
Thy temple drums...

—Sikh 'Aarti' composed by Guru Nanak

Chronology of Saint-Poets

Guru Gorakhnath	8th Century	Surdas	: 1478-1583
Adi Shankaracharya	: 788-820	Chaitanya	: 1488-1533
Basavaraja	: Twelfth Century	Mirabai	: 1498-1546
Dnyaneshwar	: 1275-1296	Tulsi	: 1532-1623
Namdev	: 1270-1350	Ekknath	: 1548-1600
Chandidas	: 14th Century	Tukaram	: 1598-1649
Ramanand	: 1299-1410	Ramdas	: 1608-1680
Vidyapati	: 1350-1436	Guru Govind Singh	: 1666-1708
Kabir	: 1380-1460	Bullhe Shah	: 1680-1758
Narsi Mehta	: 1414-1481	Shah Abdul Latif	: 1689-1752
Nanak	: 1469-1539	Thyagaraja	: 1767-1847

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—Thyagaraja

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: 1478-1583
: 1488-1533
: 1498-1546
: 1532-1623
: 1548-1600
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: 1608-1680
: 1666-1708
: 1680-1758
: 1689-1752
: 1767-1847

The Essence of Bhakti & the Bhakti Dham Plan

Nana Deshmukh

IT HAPPENED RECENTLY. I was touring the interior of Gonda district. In the village Chaupal, I was having a chat with the villagers. The Kumbh Mela was then shortly due, and I learnt that half a dozen families from that village were planning Ganga-snan on Kumbh Mela. One of these families was quite poor: it had only four bighas of land. But it had taken a loan of Rs. 300/- for the purpose.

I must say, I was taken aback. I told the head of this family that had made a mistake in incurring a debt which they would find difficult to repay. But this good old man said with great feeling: "Nanaji, life is fleeting. The next Purna Kumbha will come only twelve years later, when I may be dead and gone. I will feel blessed if we can all go and have this Ganga-snan."

Another villager butted in: "But why do you have to take a loan for Kumbh Mela? Why don't you travel without a ticket?"

The good old man returned: "Brother, Kumbh-shan is a religious act. One should not introduce an element of dishonesty in it".

I must say I was moved by the man's faith and his utter sincerity. This was on superstition or blind faith. It was the kind of faith that can move mountains. Faith or Bhakti-bhava like this is the foundation of character, it is the sanction

for morality. This good old villager had taught me something. People's devotion can be the basis of national reconstruction and national transformation.

It was devotion to Bharat Mata made some of the gems of the Freedom Movement to climb the gallows with a smile—and kiss the noose that was to hang them. It was this same devotion that persuaded thousands to renounce official honours and forego domestic felicity—and sweat and bleed for the liberation of the country. The power of Bhakti is the same today also. And now we need it even more than ever before. For the socio-economic transformation of the country requires greater effort, greater dedication. And all that effort and dedication is not possible without Bhakti-bhava for Bharat Mata.

Bhakti lifts a man above his physical existence. It widens his sympathies. It removes fear and gives courage. It gets over the baser instincts and fosters noble impulses. It sublimates the ego and makes one a better man. It lifts man from the rut of life and takes him nearer to the Glory that is God. Such a man can work more, work better, work wonders that is why we need today more than ever before, men with Bhakti-bhava towards society.

However, after Independence, under the false glow of modernism, we have given the go-by to the life-giving, life-

We need Bhakti more today than we did in mediaeval times

elevating force of Bhakti. We have even ridiculed it. The rat race of consumerism has drained humanity out of our life. We have increasingly become captives of the closed circuit of "We two and our two." The old happy sociability is gone; and in its place has come selfishness and pettiness. We don't care even for our next-door neighbour. That is where this "modernism," has led us. It has blinded us to our own potential for good, to our own intense humanity. Where the human heart can embrace all humanity, this modernism has confined us to our small little self. No wonder we see only pigmies all round us.

Let the common man realise his true self through Bhakti, and become the good man, the great man, the superman, Man with a capital 'M' such a man is not bound down to clan, cast, sect or region. History is witness that great men have sprung up in all classes and communities. The one common feature of great men is that they have a breadth of vision and they are large of heart. To them, in the words of Keats, "the miseries of the world are misery and will not let them rest." When such a fraternal feeling for the world sprouts in man, he verily becomes a super-man. A man grows into greatness only when he thinks beyond himself, thinks of others, see the Divine in every thing. This feeling is there in its latent form, in all of us. When this seed sprouts into spiritual flowering, with the grace of God, man sees himself as one, with all creation. He feels the bliss of it all. That is true spirituality.

Spirituality does not mean life-negation. It does not mean withdrawal from the world. True spirituality accepts life as holy; it accepts it as a whole; it sees 'Mangalya' (bliss) in everything. Such a man of God loves to augment that bliss. He renounces the selfishness of the self, and not the good of society. A spiritual experience like that is beyond body, mind or intellect. In the words of Jesus, it is "The peace of God that passeth understanding." Only a man whose body, mind and intellect are well-integrated with his soul, is a healthy man, a complete man. A materialistic man soon degenerates into a demon. A man exalted by an integrated personality, becomes a Deva. In the West, man has developed materially and mentally. But his moral and spiritual development has lagged far behind.

The thinkers and philosophers of the Indian Renaissance—of which our Freedom Movement was only one part—understood this very well. And so they made it clear that India must revive and grow morally and spiritually also, and not only politically and economically. Swami Vivekananda made it clear :

"Let them talk of India's regeneration as they like, but let me tell you as one who has been working—at least trying to work—all his life, that there is no regeneration for India until you be spiritual. Not only so, but upon it depends the welfare of the whole world. The history of the world is our witness. Nation after nation has arisen and based its greatness upon materialism, declaring man was all

matter. Aye, in Western language, a man gives up the ghost, but in our language a man gives up his body. The western man is a body first, and then he has a soul; with us a man is a soul and spirit, and he has a body. Therein lies a world of difference."

Sri Aurobindo, Tilak and Gandhi said the same.

It is unfortunate that, after Independence, we have quite lost track of the ideas and ideals that inspired the Indian renaissance. We have been swept off our feet by the false lights of the West. The more goods, services and ideals we import from them, the more dependent we are becoming on them. We produce thousands of engineers, but at the end of it, we are importing technology even for making crockery and cutlery. We are all the time importing more than exporting. There is an ever-widening trade gap. Internally also, our expenditure far exceeds our revenue. And the Government is bridging this gap by just printing more paper money. Our national debt is assuming astronomical proportions. The internal and external value of the Rupee is falling. While unscrupulous men of wealth and power are depositing billions of black money in secret accounts in swiss banks, the common man in India is being squeezed by low incomes and high prices. As a result, millions of children are suffering acute malnutrition and protein-deficiency. But the so-called people's representatives are not bothered about all these excesses and injustices. They have become insensitive to the sorrows of the people.

They are too busy promoting themselves and fighting each other, to care for the dumb, unorganised millions. They unite only to increase their allowances and perks, never to solve the people's problems. And so even the "most popular" leader is unsafe behind his iron curtain. He cannot meet even MPs freely; there is, therefore, no question of the common citizen being able to see him. That is our 'democracy'. Indeed it is more of a 'democra-cy'.

For this we cannot blame any one party or individual. We all are responsible for this state of affairs. We don't have to be content with blaming each other. Even Tulsidas noted this malady. "Par Updesh Kushal bahutere" (everybody is expert in preaching to others). Of late this malady has been on the rise. With some people it is their sole occupation.

The need of the hour is for the privileged to associate and fraternise with the poor and the appressed of the land. We must raise them and help them stand on their own two feet. These people are poor and unshaven. Their hands are corny and their clothes are dirty and tattered. Their language is rough and ready. But they are simple, honest, hard-working people. They are the true wealth of India. We have to raise them and rouse them, kindle the spark in them; and they will become a mighty force for national reconstruction and national transformation.

It is not difficult to communicate with

Spiritual experience, said Jesus, is the "Peace of God that Passeth understanding"

We must not ridicule religious faith, we must respect it, build in it.

these people and establish a good equation with them. We may not appreciate their traditional ways; but we must take care not to hurt their religious feelings and Bhakti-bhava. They are starved of affection. We must give them our love and care. And we will win their confidence in no time. The affection that Sri Rama got from Chhabri, the berry-seller, and other poor people, can be ours too. The challenge is there. It is for us to respond to it positively.

All the great leaders of India, from the days of Sri Rama, were men who understood the people, inspired them, won their confidence and attuned them to the service of society. We will have to follow the same path if we really mean to serve the country.

Go to any mandir, Mela, Yatra, Tirtha. You find young and old, men and women, rich and poor, 'high' and 'low', offering their devotions with equal high faith. Nobody invites them or urges them. Nobody even informs them of the time and the place. But they know, and they came—regardless of the expense and the inconvenience. Hundreds may die in a Mela. But the next Mela has even more devotees than before. The Pandas may cheat them. But their faith is too great to be affected by any such pettiness. These people are God-incarnate. We must respect their faith, recognise their equality and build up this country on that basis. This is the perennial stream of Indian life. It gives ever lasting life to our Santan society.

It is neither possible nor desirable to build this country on any basis other than this purity and devotion of our people. Here we have, in the hearts of the people, the rock-foundation. We must not ignore it or ridicule to. We must recognise it, respect it, build on it.

Man is a social animal. For the good of the family, he has to forego some of his purely personal preferences. Likewise the family has to subordinate itself and its interests to the good of the community, if it is to be a healthy and happy society. Gross inequalities are not consistent with a Good Society. The blind modernism that we are importing from the west, has not only made us materialistic, it is draining our innate humanity out of us. The "milk of human kindness", an ancient attribute of our society, is fast drying up. What we need is not the false god of a super-computer, but the restoration of our ancient and sacred values of life.

The basic units of human life are four: individual Family, Occupational Group, and Society. The rights and duties, functions and responsibilities of these four entities have to be understood and harmonised for a Good Society. For this, the west can be no model for us. We have to have our own values—and our own appropriate technology and matching institutions. We have the western-style trade unions. They agitate for their rights. But do they ever think of the unorganised sector, the labourer brethren, less privileged than they? We need an ideology that will widen our sympathies and make the

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whole world kin. Only Bharatvarsh with its profound philosophy can work out a global ideology like that. Lokmanya Tilak could see it long ago when he said:

"Preach Sanatan Dharma all over the world just as Christianity in India today. For modern science is gradually vindicating our ancient wisdom and establishing its superiority. Let us, therefore, be united to preach our Sanatan Dharma. Let us recreate a Nation, consolidate an Age, and Aryanise the world. If we do not find men coming forward today, let us hope they will do so in the next generation."

This is not a task for the few in the cities. It is a task for the Indian masses. Today 80% of the population is living in the villages, and it is living in poverty. But it has a high sense of honesty and sincerity. It is God-loving. It responds to the higher call. These are the people who have humility in their hearts and the Lord's name on their lips. Their ideal of

Bhakta is Hanuman, who had no use for a necklace of pearls, if those pearls did not have the name of Rama inscribed on them. When Bhakta Rameshwar saved the life of a man in distress, Sant Eknath specially anointed him with Ganga-jal. Our poor people in the villages understand these sentiments and respond to them. It is these people who, when rightly led, will transform the country and take it to new heights.

The Bhakti Dham, that the Deendayal Research Institute is building at Jaiprabhagram, will be the nucleus of just such a movement in that part of the country. The twenty-eight lakh people of Gonda District, UP, will be participating in this spiritual laboratory for them. They will man it, they will run it, with the help of others who know more about it. Tons of thousands of them have already contributed their mite to this unique effort. By the grace of God, this national experiment in Bhakti will succeed—that is the firm faith of the workers of Deendayal Research Institute.

—Myths Are History—

HISTORY, like the drama and the novel, grew out of mythology, a primitive form of apprehension and expression in which—as in fairy tales listened to by children, or in dreams dreamt by sophisticated adults—the line between fact and fiction is left undrawn. It has, for example, been said of the *Iliad* that anyone who starts reading it as history, will find that it is full of fiction but, equally, anyone who starts reading it as fiction, will find that it is full of history. All histories resemble the *Iliad* to this extent, that they cannot entirely dispense with the fictional element.

Arnold Toynbee

Bhakti Concept in the Vedas

Dr. Vishnu Shastri

Noted Vedic Scholar

THE VEDIC social system can be termed as 'Varnashram division according to Karma.' But Karma (action) is on the one hand determined by knowledge, experience, analysis. On the other, every action is inspired by, and enjoyed through, 'emotions'. The noblest form of emotion is 'Bhakti'.

The Vedic social system presents the most integrated synthesis of the three Margas (paths) for the attainment of the ultimate aim of life, God-Realisation, viz, Jnyan (Knowledge), Karma (Action) and Upasana (sitting near God). Indeed, it is generally accepted that out of the Veda-Trinity, Rig Veda is Jnyan Kand, Yajur Veda is Karma-Kand, and Sam Veda is Upasana-Kand. Atharva Veda is Vijnyan-Kand, compiled out of the other three Vedas.

The Veda, being passed on from generation to generation, at first by word of mouth, is also called 'Shruti' (what is heard). But all the 'Shruti', like intuition, or a hearing in the inner-self, was inspired by God, through 'Yajnya'.

"Yajnyen Vachah padviya mayanta
Manva Vindannrishishu pravishntam
Taama bhritya vyadadhu puratra,
Tam sapt rebha sannayante".

(Rig. 10-31-3)

(At the commencement of the universe, the beginning of man, that Yajnya-roop God, for the welfare of all beings, inspired in the Bhakti-filled hearts of the four

Adi-Rishis—Agni, Vayu, Aditya, and Angira—the four Vedas, Rig, Yajur, Sam, and Atharva. The communication thrilled the Rishis and echoed in their hearts.)

This mantra also signifies that the Supreme Soul is the fountain-head as well as the Destination of the three Margas and that, in the Vedic-ethos, the three paths are absolutely inseparable.

The conclusion is that God is the fountain-head of the three streams of Jnyan, Karma and Upasana. The same God, for achieving Anand, Chaitanya and Nitya-Shanti is Bhajneeya or Sevaneeya (the recipient of our Bhakti or Seva).

Thus Vedic Bhakti is a sacred Triveni (confluence) of three streams. The ideal of Vedic Bhakti is to harmonise the three activities of the soul viz. Knowledge, Action and Devotion.

Vedic Bhakti has four components :

1. Bhakti for Mother, Father and Guru (*Matri devo bhava, Pitri devo bhava, Acharya devo bhava*). Bhakti for God is the logical extension of the natural in-born regard for mother, father and preceptor.

2. Sublimation into the Divine of all our material desires—through Tyag (renunciation), Tapasya (austerity) and Sanyam (self-control).

3. Yajnya being the basis of all acti-

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... vity for production of physical necessities,
... the organisation of Yajnya symbolises
... concerted human efforts for development
... and prosperity.

4. The learning, teaching and practi-
... sing of Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya (non-steal-
... ing), Brahmacharya (self-control for
... God-realisation) and Aparigraha (the
... attitude of minimising one's needs)—these
... being the foundation stones for individual
... and social happiness.

In the spiritual field, *Jnyan* is the food
... for the mind, Karma is its *Pran* (life-
... breath) and *Upasana* is the *Vishvam-
... bhoomi* (place of equilibrium, or cooling
... shade under the burning sun of worldly
... afflictions) The trio combine to give
... satisfaction and fulfilment to the soul.

Jnyan is of two kinds—relating to
... Nature and to the Soul. Karma is also
... of two kinds—practical and spiritual. This
... two fold *Jnyan* and two-fold Karma get
... strengthened when one takes *Upasana*
... (lower seat) at the feet of the Lord. Simi-
... larly, Karma is also necessary for 'Lok-
... Seva' and this Karma is most fruitful
... when the desire for the fruit (*Phalasakti*)
... is sublimated. Blessed with Divine know-
... ledge, but without the desire of reward
... or return, the Seva-oriented Karma is
... counted as the best form of *Bhakti*. Such
... *Bhakti* of God through the service of his
... creation, enables one to conquer even
... death :

"*Tameva viditva atimrityumeti
Naanyah pantha vidyate anaya*".

(Yajur 31-18)

(Knowing him, and serving him through
... his creation, there is no death. There
... is no other path needed for such a per-
... son.)

Bhakti through its 'Sanskar', sublimates
... and purifies all thoughts, all emotions.
... In the Vedic social structure, social philo-
... sopher's had formulated a whole scheme
... of *Sanskaras* with great foresight and
... with the experience of ages.

The *Bhakta* has an unswerving faith in
... God. *Bhakti* is founded on faith.

"*Anuttama te maghwama*

Kirnuna....chidanah."

(That God is the Supreme Power, He
... is all-powerful; there is no one greater
... than He.)

This firm faith in the Supreme Power
... and Sovereignty of God frees the *Bhakta*
... from all fear.

"*Abhayam mitra dabhayamamitratrat*"

(Fearlessness from friends, fearlessness
... from enemies, fearlessness even from
... orces of Nature...)

... milar y in the mantra :

"*Akamo ghoramritah swayambhuh*"

(Atharva—10-8-44...)

God is described as full of Anand

*Vedic Bhakti is a scared Triveni
of Jnyana, Karma & Upasana*

You must fear neither enemies nor friends nor even the forces of Nature

(Bliss) and there is a call to come for his Upasana.

Prabhu is described as 'Mandra' Rigveda (Mantra 8-43-31) 'Madanam mahishtham' (Rig. 4-31-2) and as 'Mandmanaya' (Rig. 10-50-1). 'Mandra' means Anandit (full of bliss), 'Madanam mahishtham' means "more blissful than anyone else" and 'Mandmanaya' means 'capable of creating and preserving everlasting bliss'.

In the mantra 9-113-7, the Rigveda describes Him as 'full of immortal Light and Ananda'. The Taittiriya Upanishad also says.

"Anandam Brahmano Vidwan
Na vibhethi kadachan"

(One who knows the Anand-roop of that Prabhu, never suffers from any fear.)

Indeed, by the Upasana of the Ananda-roop Prabhu, the soul also becomes Ananda-maya (full of bliss). In the divine intoxication of this Ananda, even the hard task of acquiring Jnyan (knowledge) and the more laborious Karma, becomes 'Anandamaya'.

The purity and the purifying power of God and his Bhakti is described in many mantras, for example :

"Agni shuchi vrat tamah
Shuch viprah, shuhi kavih"

(Rig. 8-48-21)

(By his purity, the fire is pure, the Sun is pure, the Scholar is pure, and so is the poet.....)

The deeper meaning of this mantra is that whosoever dives deep into His Bhakti, can never be impure or inferior to anybody. If somehow one commits a lapse of duty, the dirt is washed away by chanting His name and meditating on Him.

Animal-instincts are pacified and sublimated through Vedic Bhakti. The Ved-Vaani expresses the same idea when, for the fulfilment of personal and social aims, the Bhakta declares his firm determination to perfect his self-control :

"Ahamindro na parajigyee.....
(Rig. 10-48-5)

(I will not be conquered by my sensual, baser instincts.)

The Bhakta feels pure and supreme joy in his Bhakti, because his Prabhu has listened to his prayer :

"Doorachcha komanaya pratipanay
akshaye"
(Atharva. 19-52-3)

and

"Na Dhatvadrik apveti me manah."
(Rig. 10-43-2)

(My mind which has found You, does not run in any other direction now.)

The concept of God in any culture is commensurate with the richness of its civilisation. The Vedas describe the

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abstract and through its mantra:

"Sa paryag
avranam as"

(That God limbs, without manifest through of the universe.

That God is tal among mor all the inan space and time, less, all-pervad 7-4-4; Kathopar

That God is "Preyadagne

and 'Vishwato pervading, env

"Twam hi V (I

The Kathopanis

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(smaller and fine than the univers

"Taddure tao Tadanarasya Tadasarasya

(He is near, yet

Manthan

abstract and absolute form of God through its 'Saguna' form, as in the mantra:

"*Sa paryagachchu Krma kayam—
avranam asnaviram...*"
(Yaju 40-8)

(That God without body, without limbs, without physical movements is manifest through all the physical activities of the universe.)

That God is the poet of poets, immortal among mortals, all-conscious amongst all the inanimate nature; beyond all space and time, limitless, bondless, endless, all-pervading all-enveloping (Rig 7-4-4; Kathopanishad 2-5-1)

That God is all-illuminating:
"Preyadagne..."
(Rig. 1-97-5)

and 'Vishwatomukham', (all-present all-pervading, enveloping the universe)

"*Twam hi Vishwato mukhah.*"
(Rig. 1-97-6)

The Kathopanishad describes Prabhu as:

'*Anorniyan, Mahto mahiyan...*'

(smaller and finer than the atom, bigger than the universe). In the Yajurved it is

"*Taddure tadavantike
Tadantarasya sarvasya
Tadusarvasyasya bahyanah*"
(Yaj 40-5)

(He is near, yet far off; He is inside every-

thing yet covers all. He is everywhere—in and out, of everything for everything...)

Only such a glorious and magnanimous macro and micro concept can make Bhakti an all-absorbing and untiring emotion for the individual and for society.

The Veda emphasises the Upasana of Brahma collectively with all members of the community.

"*Ma chidananyada vishansat sakhayo
marishanyate.
Indramit stota vrishanam sachasute—
muhurukathya cha shansata.*"

(Rig. 8-1-1; Atharva 20-85-1)

(On all happy and auspicious occasions, it is incumbent on all to have congregational worship, yajnya and prayer to fulfil the cherished desires.)

The chanting of 'Om' is done both by the individual in meditation and with Pranayama as well as by big or small congregations:

"*Om kham Brahm*"—(Yaju-40-17)
(Om is Brahm itself)
"*Om krito smarah*"—(Yaju 40-15)

(O, soul! Always remember Om.)
And so is the Gayatri Mantra, the final cream of the Vedas:

"*Om Bhoorbhava swah tat savitur
Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya dheemahi—Dhityo yo
nah prachodayat.*"
(Yag. 40-17, 36-3; Rig. 3-62-10)

*On all auspicious occasions
we must have congregational prayers*

Vedic yajnya is the highest mass-effort to perform the best karmas

(That Creator, Preserver, Illuminator, Benefactor is the ultimate cherished Destination of all of us. May He always be in our souls, so that He may mercifully guide us in everything and every way.)

It may be remembered that the congregational Yajnyas and worship of Agni, Surya, Indra, Varuna and Yaju is a worship of the same one God, who is manifest both in the individual and in society. The ultimate objective is to merge the self into Society, humanity, and the Universal Spirit.

The Bhakta feels the Divine consciousness—His Light is everywhere and fills him with celestial joy.

*Ahasidhiti pitu parih meghamritasya
Jagrama
Aham Surya eva jani."*

(Rig. 8-6-10)

(I have grasped the Eternal existence of my Father and his kindness full of Jnyan, Light and Ananda from all sides. Having got it, I have become illuminated like the Sun.)

And with this there is shower is of prosperity over all the Vedic society:

*"Om shanno devi rabhistaya
Apo bhavanu peetaye
Sanyo rabhishravantu nah."*

(Yaju 36-12)

and then these Vedic Bhakta-saadhaks proceed on their Sadhana-Path, never looking back. They are always prosperous and victorious :

*Aprateeto joyati saadhanani
Parti jayati krit ya sajanya
Avasya ve yo varivah krunoti
Brahmane raja tamvanti devah"*
(Rig. 4-50-9)

And, last of all, about the Yajnya. Vedic-Yajnya means the highest mass-effort to perform the best of the Karma:

*"Yadagne syamyham twamanyam
Vadha syamaham
syushte sanya ihashishah"*
(Rig. 8-44-33)

(The Bhakta wants blessings so that he may merge with Bhagavan; also the individual may merge with society—so that in the Supreme Bliss the Bhakta may become equally blissful, Anandmaya.)

And

*"Ayur yajnyena kalpatam,
Prano yajnyena kalpatam,
.....
Yajnyo yajnyena kalpatam."*
(Yaj. 18-29)

(This Yajnya mass-effort for all-round progress to the Divine goal gives long life, it creates vigour - - - and one Yajnya creates another Yajnya.)

Such is Vedic Bhakti! □



Divin
a

BHAKTI, is representation of nations (Avatars). The Supreme God who represents Preserver—as Trinity of The Mahesa in (Siva) represents The Creator of the most features of V

A total of Avatars are as follows : (The Boar);

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Garudarohi Vishnu

Divine Incarnations for the Protection and Joyous Living of the People

Smt. Sharda Mittal

BHAKTI, in various forms (symbolic representations), of the numerous Incarnations (Avatars) of Bhagavan Visnu, The Supreme Person (Purusottama) or the God who represents the Godhead as The Preserver—and, thus, forms part of the Trinity of The Highest as Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesa in which Brahma and Mahesa (Siva) represent, respectively, the roles of The Creator and The Destroyer—is one of the most significant and interesting features of Vaisnavism.

5. Kapila; 6. Dattatreya; 7. Yajna; 8. Rsabhadeva; 9. Prthu; 10. Matsaya (The Fish); 11. Kacchapa (The Tortoise); 12. Dhanavantri; 13. Mohini (The Enchantress); 14. Nara Simha (Man-Lion); 15. Vamana (The Dwarf); 16. Parasurama; 17. Ved Vyasa; 18. Hamsa; 19. Hayagriva (The Horse-Necked Being); 20. Rama Candra; 21. Bal-Rama; 22. Krsna; 23. Buddha; and 24. Kalki (The Future Avatara)

(See Baladeva Upadhyaya's Purana Vimarsa pp. 174-175.)

A total of as many as twenty-four such Avatars are spoken of. They are named as follows : 1. Kaumarasarga; 2. Varaha (The Boar); 3. Narada; 4. Nara Narayana;

Some out of this list, such as Kaumarasarga, Nara Narayana, Hamsa and Yajna sound mere names repeated from

Scientist Haldane saw in 'Dasavatara' the origin and development of species

the Stotra (Panegyric) *Vishnu Sahasranama* (The Thousand Names of Vishnu); Narada is known as a devotee of Vishnu and not as an Avatara; Veda Vyasa, as the author of Puranas; Dhanavantri as a Medical-Man; Kapila as a Great Philosopher; Prthu as a famous king (after whose name the Earth has been called Prthivi); Dattatreya as a great sage and Rsabhadeva as one of the Jain Tirathankaras; Mohini (the only incarnation in the female form) had been more a disguise assumed by Vishnu than an Avatara, and Hayagriva a modification of Shri Krsna.

The well-known Avatars are the remaining eleven only, about whom we have it said: "Matsaya (the Fish) and Kurma (the Tortoise) are water-born; the (next) Two (Varaha, the Boar, and Nara Simha, the Man-lion) are jungle-bred; the (next) three are each a Rama (Parsurama, Rama, the son of Dasartha, and Balarama, the elder brother of Krsna); Then there is Vaman Avatar (the Dwarf) one of them (the Buddha) is a Compassionate-being, whereas another (the Kalki) is the one without Compassion; and Lord Krsna is the God Himself."

Excepting Balarama, *The Padma Purana* (Uttara. 25, 7, 40-41) gives a list of the Ten Avatars as follows :

*Matsayah, Kurmo, Varahasca, Nara-simho Aya Vamanah;
Ramo Ramasca Krsnasca, Buddhah
Kalkisca Dasah.*

(The Fish, the Tortoise, the Boar, the Man-Lion and the Dwarf; Parasurama,

Rama and Krsna, the Buddha and Kalki are the ten)."

It is the legendary account of these Ten Avatars that we find in the celebrated *Dasavatara-Carita* of Ksemendra, the well-known poet from Kashmir and the praises of these very Avatars are sung by poet Jaideva of Orissa in his famous lyrical work, *Gita Gobinda*. Again, it was this conception of the Ten Avatars—especially their arrangement or order in which they have been mentioned in the above quoted Sloka and in the profession of the popular belief in them—that led the renowned Biologist, Late Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, to see in it the Hindu Version of the "Origin and Development of Species in the Process of the Biological Evolution."

As is clear from the stories associated with the Descent of Vishnu into these Incarnations by Ksemendra, Jaideva, numerous other poets, Saints and Bhaktas, the primary purpose of the Lord seems to be to protect the good people against the onslaughts of the wicked over them, and to promote and preserve 'the rule of law (Dharma)' by setting the same right, whenever it is upset. A clear enunciation of this has been made by none other than Bhagavan Krsna Himself in the following two slokas of *Srimad Bhagavadgita* :

*Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya, Glonir
Bhavati Bharata;*

*Abhyuthanam Adharmasya, Tada
'Tmanam Srjamy Aham.*

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(Whenever there is decline of Righteousness. O Descendant of Bharat,

And unrighteousness does rise, I incarnate myself.)

*Paritrāyaya Sadhunam, Vinsaya Ca
Duskrtam;
Dhormasamsthapanarthaya, Sambhava-
vami Yuge Yuge.*

(For the protection of the good, and destruction of the wicked; for the establishment of Righteousness, I come into (worldly) being from age to age)."

—Ch. IV Slokas 7 & 8)

After this grand testimony, the fact of 'The Divine Incarnations Being for Protection' becomes at once obvious. The other fact that of 'the Avatars Bestowing Joy (*Mudita*) upon the People, as referred to in the title, needs to be argued about only a little, to make it all the more obvious.

Joyous living results not merely from the attitude of carefreeness (*Upeksha*) generated by the assurance held out here, but also from the Faith and Knowledge implied by the same that the Good, who like Bhagavan Vishnu Himself, are having compassion (*Karuna*) and friendliness (*Maitri*) towards all—*Sarva loka hite ratah* (always engaged in the good of all)—have constant support from Him. Besides, each of the Incarnations of Visnu, in being His Representation, shares essentially the three aspects of Truth, Good and Beauty (*Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram*) of Visnu as also his Omniscience, Omnipre-

sence and Omnipresence. Even if the relationship between an Incarnation and Bhagavan Visnu is thought of as that between a part and a whole, it is not of the kind that is there between an *avayava* (a forming part) and an *Avayavi* (the summed up whole), but of the type that is between an *Amsa* (a sub whole or a complete unit) and an *Amsi* (a whole, though inclusive of the other wholes, is completely a unified whole). This can be understood in the light of the following verse (Sloka) from the *Bhadaranyaka-Upanisad (V.I.I.)*.

*Om Purnamadah Purnamidam, Purnam
Purnamudacyate;
Purnasya Purnamadaya, Purnā Meva-
visiyate*

(Om that is Complete, this is Complete, (this) Complete arises from (that) Complete, Taking out of (this) Complete, Complete itself remains.)

We need just to substitute Visnu for 'That Complete' and any of his Incarnations for this Complete, to realize that the 'presence of the one is as good as that of the other for providing both Protection and joy. If there is any difference, then the same is that an Incarnation's presence is a bit better since it comes into being specifically for the sake of protection, and makes for delightful living because the incarnation, being generative of intimacy, inspires less of awe and more of happy love. An incarnation is near at hand, and it is easier to call on the part of a supplicant Bhakta, than Bhagavan Visnu from Baikuntha (his heaven). It, however, remains true that Vishnu is

*The three attributes of Vishnu are:
Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram.*

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*Dharmasya, Glanir
Bhavati Bharata;
Dharmasya, Tada
nam Srjamy Aham.*

Omnipresent, as has been conveyed by The Bhagavan Himself, through the following statement addressed to His upreme Devotee (Parama Bhakta) Narada :

*Na Aham Vasami Baikunthe, Yogian-
nama Hridayam na ca;
Mama Bhakta Yatra gayanti Tatra
tistami Narada.*

(I do not stay in the Baikuntha (only) nor in the hearts of Yogis; Where my devotees sing (songs of joy), I stand there O Narada.)

Surely, every form in which Bhagavan Visnu manifests Himself delights Bhaktas by his presence itself, and He manifests Himself in all those forms which the bhaktas put their faith in (this seems to be the meaning of Sloka 21 of chapter VII. of *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*). Every Divine Incarnation is 'Beauty-incarnate', along with being 'Truth as well as Good-incarnate'. Its being a source of joy is an essential feature of it. This reminds us of the following from the pen of the famous English Poet Keats :

*A thing of beauty is a joy forever;
Its loveliness increases : It will never
Pass into nothingness.*

(Keats in 'Endymion')

*Beauty is Truth, Truth is Beauty—
that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to
know.*

Keats in his Ode on A Grecian Urn'.

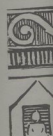
The Divine incarnations have been great inspirers of arts and crafts of all sorts from poetry and music to dance, drama, painting, sculpture and architecture. Finally, the observation of centuries testifies that millions of people all over the world are being delighted through a look (by way of having *Darsana*) at some form or representation of one or other of the Divine Incarnations—say, that of Rama, Krsna, or the Buddha—almost every morning when they pay visits to the *Bhakti-Dhamas* (temples) dedicated to the Divine Incarnations. It is not just their belief, but a fact, that the *Darsana* puts them in a mood of joy that is considered to last all the day long. □

—Assimilative power of Hinduism—

MAX WEBER, the father of modern sociology writes in his "The Religion of India" that Hinduism has grown tremendously during the last eight centuries through absorption of old tribes. He attributes the assimilative power of Hinduism to its legitimization of social rank and economic security. The Purans, he says, integrated Aryan and primitive with "ineradicable folk deities."

Weber says that a fatal weakness of Buddhism and Jainism was that their organisation was confined to religious orders and it did not extend to the laity.

Vaishnavism, he says, converted the orgies of Shaktas etc. into Bhakti.



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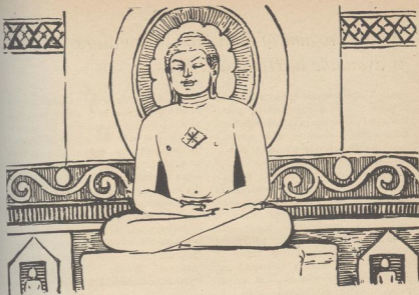
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*Namo Arihantanam, Namō Siddhanam, Namō Aaryāyanam
Namō Uvajjyanam and Namō Lōye Savva Sahunam,*

The Jain Bhakti Tradition

Smt. Kusum Mittal

JAINISM, like Buddhism, is a Religion and Philosophy that does not accept God as Creator, Preserver or Destroyer of the world. It regards the world to be a beginningless (anadi) and endless (ananta) evergoing concern (Samsara), that has within its flow ever-arising (having utpada), expending (declining or moving towards destruction-vayaya) yet continuing, (having 'Dhruvya') infinite number of multi-aspected multi-functional (ananta-dharma) beings of two kinds, i.e. 'living-beings' (Jivas) and 'non-living beings' (ajivas).

Each of the Jivas, though essentially a soul, potentially possessing the four infinite qualities of 'Infinite Vision' or faith (self-confidence, Ananta-Darsana),

'Infinite knowledge' (Ananta-jnana), 'Infinite power' (ananta-virya) and Infinite Excellence' (infinite airvarya). But all these remain dormant as long as one does not actualise them through realising one's freedom (Moksa) or aloofness (Kaivalya) from the bondage (Bandha) that is caused by its constant weighing down through the inflow (airava) of the ajiva towards it. The bondage is accentuated by all sorts of worldly activities (Karma). Karma works towards the bondage of the soul in eight different ways; that is why it is considered of eight kinds :

1. Vision or faith obscuring (Darshanavaraniya);
2. Knowledge-obscuring (jnanavaraniya);
3. Feeling generating (Vedaniya);
4. Emotion-evolving (Mohavaraniya);

A vast amount of Jain Bhakti literature is available in Hindi and Prakrit

niya); 5. Age-determining (Ayuha-Karma); 6. Clan or caste determining (gotra-Karma); 7. Character-determining (Nama-Karma) and 8. Resisting such activities that are undertaken to get rid of all activities (antaraya Karma). In so far as Jainism considers Moksa to be considered as consisting in the knowledge of aloofness of the jiva from its association with the ajiva-kevalajnana (which is described as omniscience, 'Sakaljnana', as well) and works out a way to achieve it through 'stopping of the inflow of the ajiva towards the jiva (samvara), and destruction of the already stuck matter to the soul (Nirjara) through intense activity conceived in terms of extreme austerities—in the style of picking up a thorn, that has pricked the body, through another thorn—it can be said to uphold 'the ways of knowledge and that of activities (Jnana and Karma margas)' serving as the means towards the realisation of the aim and there seems to be no place for 'the way of devotion' (Bhakti marga) here. But during the course of centuries of its existence, Jainism has also developed a very strong tradition of Bhakti that is unique in the sense that it goes very well with their Philosophy of the seven fundamentals (sapta tattvas) such as jiva, ajiva, asrava, bandha, samvara, Nirjara and Moksa—or nine fundamentals Nava-tattvas; when papa and punya are added at the Third and sixth places, before 'asrava' and after 'bandha', respectively, that does not have a place for God or gods as worship-worthy persons. The worship-worthy being in the Jain

tradition are the Five Categories of human beings who have either been able to attain victory (have got to be victors, the Jinas) or have become destroyers of the enemy (Karma, and attachment towards the same, through rising above the needs for shelter, clothing and food even—the vita-raga Arihantas), achievers of the goal (Siddhas) or are professing a way of life (acharyas), instructing about that way (Upadhyas) and the good people in the world (Sadhus) who are moving towards the goal. Panca-Narokaro—the stotra for obeisance to the Arihantas the 24 Tirathankaras, of whom Lord Mahavira had been the last, a great number of the Siddhas, Acharyas, Upadhyayas and the Sadhus of the world, is recited by every Jain every day. There are temples throughout the length and breadth of India wherein the statues of the Tirathankars are worshipped by those of the Jainas who accept 'Murti Puja'. One of the divisions of Jainas is known as Sthanakvasi. They have Bhaktidhams in the form of specially constructed buildings; yet others regard the Bhakti-dhams to be there at every place where a Jaina Sadhu or Sadhavi is staying. Every town had during the four months of the rainy season, a place or places where a group of sadhus or sadhavis do in fact stay and sanctify the atmosphere with their unique teachings and noble moral practices. A vast amount of Bhakti literature in Hindi and Prakrit is available at the numerous Jain Bhandaras (private collections) and the libraries—for example articles in 'Titthayar', a journal in Hindi. □



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THE BUDDHIST BHAKTI TRADITION

Kewal Krishan Mittal

Head, Department of Buddhist Studies Delhi University

BUDDHISM, a recognised world-religion, like every other Religion has, in its practice, an ample, actual room and scope for Bhakti. This is so even though its Philosophy, unlike those of many other Religions, does not have a place either for God, 'the Object-Supreme of Bhakti (worship)'—as accepted by most of the latter—or for the 'Soul' that may be regarded as the Bhakta (the devotee or the worshipper). Yet if from that fact it is assumed that there is any cleavage between the Buddhist theory (Philosophy)—the head—and the Buddhist practice (the religious aspect of Buddhism)—the heart—it shall be a wrong understanding. Buddhism is, in fact, that Religion and Philosophy wherein the 'The path of

knowledge (the Jnana-marga)' 'The path of Action (Karma Marg) and the path of devotion (Bhakti Marg) are balanced and unified in what is called 'The Middle-Path that brings about the cessation of suffering (*Duhkha-Nirodhagamini Madhyama pratipada*),—or the Noble Eightfold Path (*Arya Astangika Marg*) comprising the following Eight steps :

1. Right View (*Samyak drsti*), 2. Right Resolve or Determination (*Samyak Sankalpa*), 3. Right Speech (*Samyak Vak*), 4. Right Conduct (*Samyak Acara* or *Karmanta*), 5. Right Livelihood (*Samyak Ajiva*), 6. Right Effort (*Samyak Vyayama*), 7. Right Mindfulness (*Samyak Smriti*) and 8. Right Balancing of the Intellect (*Samyak Samadhi*). The enun-

Shila and Samadhi constitute the Buddhist Bhakti tradition

ciation of this Path was made by the Buddha (the Enlightened Being), the Best Wayfarer (the *Gautama*) while explicating the fourth Noble Truth of 'The Four Noble Truths (*Catvari Arya Satyani*)', that constitute not only his first and foremost but also the most basic Teaching (*Upadesa*) that sums up or implies all his teachings forming the core of Buddhism.

These Noble Truths are :

1. The Truth about the fact of suffering (*Duhkha*) wherein the worthlessness (*Heyata*) of the world (*samsara*) or the worldly life is indicated by pointing to its 'impermanence (*Anityata*)', 'non-substantiality (*Anaimata*)', and 'misery (*Duhkhata*)', i.e., its being subject to 'decline and death' (*Jara-marana*) ;

2. The Truth about the 'regular arising of suffering (*Duhkha-samudaya*)' wherein, by tracing the origin of 'decline and death' (*Jara-marana*) to 'ignorance (*Avidya*)' through 'birth (*Jati*)', 'will to be (*Bhava*)', basis of will to (*Upadana*)', 'desire (*Trsna*)', 'feeling (*Vedana*)', 'contact (*Sparsa*)', 'six organs of sense-mind and the other five, eye, ear, nose, tongue, touch (*Sadayatana*)', 'mind-body frame-work (*Namarupa*)', 'Consciousness (*vijynana*)', and 'Impressions or influences (*Samskaras*)', an explanation of the 'Circle of being or existence (*Bava-Cakra*)' is offered in terms of the 'twelve-linked chain of causation (*Dvadasa-nidana*)';

3. The Truth of the 'cessation of suffering (*Duhkha-nirodha* or *Heyahana*)' wherein the hope is held out that misery can be removed by removing 'Ignorance (*avidya*)' through acquiring

'Wisdom (*Prajna*)' and the Final Goal that is attained thereby, called 'Nirvana (doing away with the habitually upheld false sense of separate being, *Prthag-jana*, in Sanskrit and, *Puthu-jana*, in Pali) or Tathata (becoming one with the ever-changing Unidentifiable—as this, that or the other—reality as such)' which is described to be a state of 'supreme Bliss (*paramam-Sukham*)' is pointed out ;

4. The Truth of 'the way to the removal of suffering (*Duhkha-nirodha Marga* or *Hana-upaya*)', a reference to which has already been made.

It is true that the emphasis on 'Knowledge (*Vidya*)' or '*Prajnya* (Wisdom)' is direct in Buddhism, in so far as it places the source of bondage in 'Ignorance (*Avidya*)', and the freedom from Bondage according to it can come through 'Knowledge (*vidya*)'—confirming, thus the definition of knowledge as that which brings about release from the bondage (*Sa Vidya ya Vimukheya*). But the emphasis on 'Action (*Karma*)' and 'Devotion (*Bhakti*)' is no less. The same becomes quite clear when it is found that *Prajnya* is essentially connected with '*Sila* (moral action)' and '*Samadhi* (proper Balancing of Intellect)' and that not only *Samadhi*—which is defined as the 'concentration of mind *Cittasya Ekagrata Samadhih*'—but also *Sila* represents a mental attitude quite in line with the advice of the Buddha to the Bhikshus (the monks): "*Karma, O, Bhikshus; I speak of as consciousness (*Cetna Aham, Bhikkhave, Kammam Vadami*)"*. If *Bhakti* be defined as that mental attitude that is not only

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action—desisting from the bad action all
the more— then the entire Buddhist tradi-
tion of *Sila* and *Samadhi* can be safely
said to be 'The Buddhist Bhakti Tradi-
'One is left in no doubt that the
same, in fact, is the case when one finds
the *Dhammapad*, a work that is regarded
as the Buddhist Scripture, stating in its
very first two starting gathas (verses) as
follows :

"All that we are is the result of
what we have thought : it is found-
ed in our thoughts; it is made up of
our thoughts. If a man speaks or
acts with an evil thought, pain fol-
lows him, as the wheel follows the
foot of the ox that draws the
carriage."

Bhakti as a mental attitude (*Bhavana*)
of admiration and adoration of 'the
Triple-Gem (*Triratna*)—the Buddha,
Dharma and Sangha'—'numerous gods',
'ancestors' and 'good men and wo-
men' and as 'silent meditation' till to-date
but also has been strengthened, made elab-
orate and variegated through various
phases and developments of the Excellent
Religio-philosophic Movement that
Buddhism is. The external form of Bhakti
started in Buddhism with the worship of
the relics of the Buddha and some of his
chief disciples enshrined in the specially
constructed structures called Stupas, pas-
sed into the worship of certain symbols
and yielded place to the worship of the
statues of the Buddha—'*Butt*' in *persian*—

(*Murti-Puja*) so much so that today every-
where there is Buddhism, Buddha images
are being worshipped in the Buddha
temples, though some temples still stay
dedicated to the worship of the Relics,
as, for example, the famous Tooth Relic
temple at Kandy, in Sri Lanka. The
emphasis on the mental aspect of Bhakti
continues more with the form of Bud-
dhism known as the Hinayana, Theravada
or the Southern, Pali-based, Buddhism.
But in the Form of Buddhism known as
Mahayana the Northern, Sanskrit-based,
Buddhism even though the mental aspect
is retained, an elaboration of the external
aspect of worship through the addition of
rituals, use of Mantras, Tantras, Homas
and Yajnas etc. has been effected.

A fairly good idea of the inner core
of Bhakti in Buddhism can be had from
the daily recitals enjoined upon the fol-
lowers of the Theravada Buddhism. Some
of these are : I. the *Ratnasutta*, wherein
the refuge of the Buddha, Dhamma and
Sangha is repeatedly sought, recounting
the qualities of the three Gems ; and the
benefits one is likely to derive from going
under their protection ; II. the *Metta-*
sutta, which is the 8th of the 12 Suttas of
the *Sutta-Nipata* Section first, *Uruga-*
vagga and runs as follows :—

1. Whatever is to be done by one
who is skilful in seeking (what is)
good, having attained that tran-
quil state (of Nibbana) :—Let him
be able and upright and consci-
entious and of soft speech,
gentle, not proud, (142)
2. And contented and easily suppor-

*Worship of the relics of Buddha became the
starting point of external Bhakti in Buddhism*

Maitri, Karuna, Mudita and Upeksha lead to Nirvana

ted and having few cares, unburdened, and with his senses calmed, wise, not arrogant, without (showing) greediness (when going his round) in families. (143)

3. And let him not do anything mean for which others who are wise, might reprove (him); may all beings be happy and secure, may they be happy-minded. (144)
4. Whatever living beings there are, either feeble or strong, all either long or great, middle-sized, short, small or large. (145)
5. Either seen or which are not seen, and which live far (or) near, either born or seeking birth, may all creatures be happy-minded. (146)
6. Let no one deceive another, let him not despise (another) in any place, let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another. (147)
7. As a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child, so also let every one cultivate a boundless (friendly) mind towards all beings. (148)
8. And let him cultivate goodwill towards all the world, a boundless (friendly) mind, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred without enmity. (149)
9. Standing, walking or sitting or

lying, as long as he be awake, let him devote himself to this mind; this (way of) living, they say, is the best in this world. (150)

10. He who, not having embraced (philosophical) views, is virtuous, endowed with (perfect) vision, after subduing greediness for sensual pleasures, will never again go to mother's womb. (151)

(The Sacred Books Of The East Vol. X.P. 24-25)

III. By the recitation of the *Mangala-sutta*, one reminds himself of 'Duties (Does and Don'ts)' such as the following :

1. Desist from the company of fools;
2. Have company of the wise;
3. Worship those who deserve to be worshiped;
4. Dwell at a suitable place;
5. Develop and strengthen your internal possessions (wealth of good qualities);
6. Acquire mental, physical and vocational (arts and crafts) training and Education;
7. The discipline enjoined by the Buddha (*Buddha-Vinaya*) be adopted;
8. Let your speech be sweet and proper;
9. Serve your mother and father;
10. Protect your wife and son (from harm);
11. Let no action of yours be such that goes against the (good) traditions of your family;
12. One should donate liberally (for good causes);
13. Ever act on the maxims of

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12. One should
(for good causes);
a the maxims of

Dharma (righteousness); 14. Cul-
tivate the habit of seeking well-
being of your (neighbours, friends
and) relatives; 15. Stay away from
the doing of (the morally and
socially) prohibited deeds; 16.
Desist from the use of intoxic-
ants and avoid getting into the
states of sloth or stupor; 17. Be
self-confident; 18. Cultivate con-
tentment and the feeling of
gratitude; 19. Listen to the views
of others properly and be tolerant
(of the differences); 20. Seek the
company of saints; 21. One ought
to realise Dharma timely (with-
out loss of time in wordly pur-
suits); 22. One should realise
Nirvana leading a life of Brahma-
charya—a life in accordance with
a balanced practice of the four
virtues of Brahma Vihara (Way-
faring towards spiritual growth),
.e. friendliness (*Maitri*), compas-
sion (*Karuna*), Joy (*mudita*), equa-
nimity (*Upeksa*) and understand-
ing the real import of 'the four
Noble Truths; 23. Be not shaken
in the face of differing circumstan-
ces; 24. Realising one's aim by
shedding sorrow and getting free
of the defilements, is the best of
well-being (*etam mangalam utta-
mam*),"

- IV. Some gathas of Dhammapada, includ-
ing the 'Commandments : (Gatha.
183) "Not to commit any sin, to do
good, and to purify one's mind, that
is the teaching of (all) the awakened
(the Buddhas)"; (Gatha. 185); "Not to

blame, nor strike, to live restrained
under the law, to be moderate in
eating, to sleep and sit alone, and to
dwell on the highest thoughts,—this
is the teaching of the Awakened."

- V. Recounting of some *Jataka*-tale for
dwelling upon the most altruistic
character of Bodhisattva (the Buddha
to be) who is so compassionate that
he is ever ready to make even the
supreme sacrifice for the happiness
and the good of others.

- VI. Recitation of the Panca-sila or the
'Five Vows' that a Bhiksu undertakes
to practise. They are :

1. Undertake to respect (through
acting upon) the educative Maxim
of 'not to kill' (*panatipata vermani
sikkhapadam samadiyami*); 2. I
undertake to respect (through
acting upon) the educative Maxim
of 'not to steal' (*Adinnadana ver-
mani sikkhapadam sama-di-yami*);
3. I undertake to respect
(through acting upon) the educa-
tive Maxim 'not to transgress in
sexual behaviour' (*Kamesumic-
chacara vermani sikkharapadam
samadiyami*); 4. I undertake to
respect (through acting upon) the
educative Maxim of 'not to tell a
lie (*Musavada vermani skikkha-
padam samadiyami*); 5. Undertake
to respect (through acting upon)
the educative Maxim of 'not to
have the maddening drugs and
drinks like wine etc. (*Sura
meriya mjjapamadathana vermani*

*Sangharamas and Viharas are
their Bhaktidhams*

sikkhapadam samadīyami).'

sada sothi bhavantu te.

- VII. The daily recital is rounded up with the following verse (repeated thrice) seeking well-being of all :

"Let there be good of all, Let all gods protect; With the blessings of all the enlightened ones, Let there be always their well-being.

*Bhavatu sabba mangalam
rakhantu saba devata;*

Sabha Buddhanubhavena,

The Buddhist Bhakti Tradition has been so much intimately interwoven with all the other aspects of life that the abodes of the monks and nuns, known as the Sangharamas, Viharas, hermitages and monasteries can as well be called as so many Bhakti-Dhams. For, not only have they been seats of learning—a few of them such as Nalanda, Taksasila and Vikramasila became world famous as great seats of learning— and centres that inspired all sorts of intellectual, ethical and aesthetic activities, but been also abodes of Bhakti.

"SERMONS IN STONES"

EVEN in the hey-day of Buddhism, the Brahmin continued to regulate the life of the laity.

Even "Nibbana" that is Nirvana (non-lusting, or desireless-ness) the highest Buddhist aim, was already there in Chandogya Upanishad,

The Indian 'Dhyana' became 'Jhana' and later Chinese 'Chan' and Japanese 'Zen' (Buddhism).

Once upon a time, Huen Sha, a great Buddhist sage in Central Asia was to deliver a major sermon. As he stood up, a little bird began to chirp. And it kept on chirping for a long time. Huen Sha did not utter one word. When at last the bird stopped, Huen Sha said one could hear a sermon in that chirping; he need not, therefore, give another sermon. Verily, in the words of Shakespeare, a man of vision "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, "Sermons in stones, and good in everything."



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BHAKTI : AS MASS MOVEMENT AND TOTAL REVOLUTION

Dr. Sharan Bihari Goswami

Principal,

Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Vrindaban (Dist-Mathura, UP)

Every nation, just like every individual, has a distinct personality, a characteristic identity. One nation may be conspicuous for the bravery of its citizens, another may be distinguished by its proficiency in trade and commerce. India's role has always been prominent in the realm of the spirit. The quest for the realisation of the Pervading Spirit of the Universe, the urge to experience it as a Living Reality, to attain it through spiritual *sadhana* (effort) has been going on in this land from times immemorial. This is what is called its national 'Chiti'.

This 'Chiti' (consciousness) is the cumulative result of the environment of the country, our material, mental and moral resources, and our history. Bharatvarsh has always been known as the Land of the Sages. A comprehensive and profound philosophy, and evolution of a system to put that philosophy into practice, that has been the special characteristic of our land.

The Vedic seers realised long ago that behind all existence there is the one supreme all-pervading spirit. This was

Rama is Maryada Purushottam & Krishna is Leela Purushottam

termed as the Universal Soul, God or Brahma. Many ways were devised to attain Brahma. *Swadhyaya* (study), *Yajnya* (sacrifice), *Daan* (charity), *Tap* (austerity), *Gnyan* (knowledge), *Karma* (action) each had its own importance in this scheme of things. Karma, Gnyan and Bhakti were regarded as the three main paths to spirituality. During the Vedic period, Yajnya-oriented Karma held its sway. In the Upanishadic age, 'Gnyan Marg' assumed greater importance. But, whereas Karma depended on physical action, Gnyan emanated from the Mind. And then there is a third force inherent in man—the Heart. When the heart overflows with love for the *Ishta-Deva* (the deity of one's choice) and submerges the existence of the devotee into the Deity, this *upasana* (coming near) takes the form of Bhakti. This is *Bhava marg* (the way of emotion).

The roots of Bhakti can be traced to the Vedas. The emotions of the Vedic Rishis flowed powerfully towards the natural as well as the super-natural. And so they invoked Usha (light of dawn) and Indra and Brahma. The word 'Bhakti' occurs in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* also, wherein it proclaims the pre-eminence of *Guru-Bhakti* along with *Devabhakti* :

*Yasya Deve Para-Bhakti,
yatha Deve tatha guro.
Tasyete Kathita hyarthah,
praka-hante mahatmanah.*

(Supreme Bhakti is as relevant for Guru as for God; that is why great souls emphasise it.)

The supreme soul pervading the uni-

verse in abstract form is described as *Nirvikar* (unchangeable) or *Nirguna*. He is *Avinashi* (indestructible), *Aviral* (continuous) *Aniha*, *Aseem* (limitless) and *Anivarchaniya* (indescribable). He pervades all, and yet is beyond all; He envelopes all. One may not be able to perceive this abstract (*Nirvikar*), all-pervading form of God directly with the physical eyes; but his light can be perceived; and he who experiences this glow with joy, becomes part of this Light. That is what Kabir, the devotee of the abstract *Nirguna*, song:

*Lalee mere Lal ki, jit dekhoon tit lal,
Lalee dekhain main gai, main bhee ho gal Lal.*

(I see the light of my Lord everywhere. Lo! I went to see this glow, and I myself became the glow!)

The Yogi has a vision of this *Nirguna Nirankara* through Yoga. He enjoys the bliss imperceptibly when he describes this experience in words, whether he is a Rishi of the Upanishads or a saint of the *Nirguna cult*. He becomes overwhelmed with loving emotion and begins to sing about God, the Beloved :

Mere ghar aaye ho, Raja Ram bhartar.

(My master—husband—Ram has come to my house).

Here Rama is the bride-groom, and the soul, the bride. The experience of this union is so blissful, that no other analogy can convey it to the masses (*Lok-Vyanjana*).

In the Vedas, the *Saguna-Saakar*

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Brahma is described in the form of various gods—more explicitly as the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

These are the different forms of Purusha, the one Brahm, functioning as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, respectively. They manifest their powers through their respective 'Shaktis' (powers). Then there is a gradual development of their distinctive forms. The Puranas give a vivid description of these forms. It is not a case of polytheism because the one and the same Brahm assumes different forms. The devotee worships the deity of his choice in accordance with his nature.

Gradually Vishnu assumed the most dominant form of Brahm (God). The stages of evolution of the universe are represented through the ten manifestations of the Supreme Power known as the ten incarnations (Dash Avtara)—Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varah (boar), Nrisimha (man-lion), Vaman (dwarf), Parashuram, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. We may also see here the various stages of evolution of man. The Indian vision of Reality is that the manifestation of the Divine Power is seen in a series starting with animal-forms and attaining the perfect organic form of Ideal Man.

The Bhakti cult found its culmination in two ideal men—Rama and Krishna. Rama is Maryada Purushottama—the Ideal Man, the man who does every thing that is proper. He is Dharma Personified—'Ramo Vighrahan Dharmah'.

Krishna, on the other hand, is the

Leela Purushottama—the Ideal Man of Divine Play. Rama manifested himself to establish and strengthen all the ideal norms of human relations. But Krishna deviates from all accepted norms of conduct and plays with the endless possibility of development of human relationships. His life exhibits Dharma based on radical change. He is able to present conflicting life-principles, simultaneously blending them in a novel inimitable way. Whereas all other incarnations are "partial" (Ansh Kala) manifestations of God, Krishna is the whole of God Himself, with all the sixteen divine facets perfectly represented in him. Viewed another way, no great man has given so much to the world in just one span of life as Krishna. He dances on the river bank and, on the battle-field, he preaches 'Gita' to Arjuna. His philosophy of *Nishkama* (selfless) Love and *Nishkama Karma* (action) is a panacea for all the ills that ail mankind.

The word 'Bhakti' is a morphological development of the root 'Bhaj' (Sevayam) with a suffix 'Ktin', which together means 'to serve'. Actually Love of God is 'Bhakti'. According to Shandilya Bhakti Sutra: 'Sa Paramuktir Ishware'—intense attachment to God, that is Bhakti. According to Bhakti-Sutra, Bhakti takes the form of boundless Love. It is just like nectar. The man of Bhakti becomes perfectly satisfied with the nectar of Bhakti.

*Yallabdha puman siddho bhavati,
Amrito bhayate, tripto bhavati.*

'Bhakti' has been defined as unpara-

The word 'Bhakti' is derived from 'Bhaj' and 'Ktin', to serve

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Bhakti Age saw a social, religious, literary and cultural renaissance

lleled, constant, continuous, like the flow of oil. Another aspect of Bhakti is that it is flawless. It inspires and immortalises the Bhakta and elevates him above his environment. It is not a joke to be a Bhakta; being Bhakta is the summit of human achievement.

It should be remembered here that although many paths were devised to follow Dharma, none of them was as efficacious as the way of Bhakti. The paramount importance of Bhakti has been emphasised in the Ramayana, the Mahabharat and the puranas, particularly the Bhagvat Purana. In the Gita, Shri Krishna has spoken of the importance of Karma and Gnyan but he says in no uncertain words: "I cannot be realised through Vedas, Tapa, Daan or Yajnya as surely as through Bhakti. I can be seen, known and attained only through undivided Bhakti" (Gita 11/51-54). The Gita, by appealing for '*Sarva Dharman Parityajya*' (Leave all other ways of Dharma), prohibits other paths and regards 'undivided Bhakti' as the supreme way.

The speciality of Bhakti is that it is not only a philosophy but also a model code of conduct. There have been 'Bhaktas' since times immemorial, but Bhakti movement as such belongs to the Middle Ages. The Alwar Bhaktas of the South followed the northern 'Vaishnava Bhakti' tradition of Narada and Shandilya. And Ramanand reflected it back to the North. Thus the advent of Bhakti movement inundated the whole of India with spiritual effulgence. It also influenced all aspects of human life. Bhakti age had a special

religious, literary and cultural importance. Bhakti movement extensively and intensively influenced all aspects of life—individual, social and national. It enriched Indian culture as nothing else has enriched it before or since.

In comparison with the Karma Marg of the Vedic age and Gnyan Marg of the Upanishad age, Bhakti Marg attained a power and a popularity that completely won over the masses. It became a people's Movement.

Bhakti is not a mere individual emotion or activity. It is social-consciousness and mass-exaltation. It floods the land with spirituality from one end to the another. During the middle ages, in the 15th and 16th centuries, this Bhakti movement was such a tidal wave of joy, that it moved the whole country, united the people and strengthened the masses, classes, and even the tribals, alike. Kabir, Raidas, Rajjab, Dhanna, Nabhaji and others did not rise from the so-called high castes, but they were respected by all. Even some rajas renounced their kingdoms and became mendicants. Queens took the 'Khartals' in their hands and started dancing in the streets. The rich opened the portals of their grain godowns for the poor. Emperors bowed down at the feet of the saints. Even immigrant Turks were greatly influenced by this all-enveloping Bhakti movement.

Ras Khan wished to be anything—a cowherd, a calf, a rock or a bird—provided he could be in Brij Bhoomi (Krishna's Leela Dham), near Govardhana,

wandering in Kadamb bowers.

*Mamus hon to vahee Raskhan, bason
Brij Gokul gaon ke gwaran,
Jo pasu hon to kaha bas mero, charon
nit Nand ki dhenu manjharan,
Pahan hon to vahee giri ko, jo dharyo
kar chhatra Purandar dharam,
Jo khag hon to basero karon, nit
Kalindi kool kadamb ki daran.*

Rahim Khan-khanan, the Mughal
Chancellor sang :

*Rahiman kou ka kare, jwari chor labar ?
Jo pati rakanhar hai, makham-cha-
khanhar—*

(Nobody can harm me—neither
gambler, thief, nor boaster—if my pro-
tector is the Butter-lover, Shri Krishna).

Bhakti swept the whole land. When
the great scholar of Bengal, Chaitanya,
started dancing in *Kirtan*, the whole of
Banga Desh became mad with love of
God. Many made their way to Brij
Bhoomi. In Assam, the songs of Shankar
Dev and Madhav echoed and re-echoed.
Mira, the princess of Mewar (Rajasthan)
with *Payal* on her feet, danced her way to
Vrindavan. Punjab had the great Guru
Nanak and numerous other saints. Maha-
rashtra was crowned with saints like
Namdeva, Eknath, Tukaram and Ram-
das. Uttar Pradesh produced immortal
saint-singers like Kabir, Sur, Tulsi, Swami
Haridas and so many others. It became a
socio-cultural, national and moral revo-
lution, a total revolution. Society got
re-structured on a new reformed basis.

The ideals set by Ram-Charita-Manas be-
came the established norms of Bharatiya
society. To this day they are the recognis-
ed standards. Surdas songs of Krishna
echoed and re-echoed in the mass con-
sciousness. They immortalised Bhakti in
the common man everywhere.

Bhakti is not a mere chant or song. It
is the intense desire to be one with God.
Through Nama-Smaran (chanting God's
names), singing his glories, Bhakti became
the heart-beat of the people. Once a man
was touched by Bhakti, he was a changed
man, a man of God.

All the great ideals of humanity are
an integral part of the character of the
Bhakta. There is no greater promoter of
humanity than the Bhakta. This is what
Goswami Tulsidas thinks of the ideal life-
style of Bhakta.

*Kabhunk hon vah rahni rehongo i
Shri Raghunath Kripal Kripa ten' senti-
swabhva gahongo ?
Jatha-labh santosh sadu, Kahoo se kuchh
na chahongo.
Par hit nirat niranter, man kram vachan
nem nibahongo.
Parush vachan ati dusah sravan sumi, tehi
pavak na dahongo.
Vigat man sam seetal man par gun nahim
dosh kahongo.
Parihari deh janit chinta dukh, Sukh sam
buddhi sahongo.
Tulsidas prabhu yahi path rahi, avichal
Hari-bhakti lahongo".*

(When will I acquire the life-style of a
saint? Contented with whatever I earn,

*These great poet-saints are still the
solace and inspiration of the masses*

Separation (Viyog) stirs the soul as much as union (Sanyog)

I will not expect anything from others. I would be always engaged in rendering help to the needy. Angry words of others will not pain me. I will praise the good qualities of others, but not denounce them for their defects. To me, pleasure and pain would be alike.)

The saints overlook the defects of others. Helping others, kindness to all livings being, a spirit of service, constant struggle to conquer the passions—these are the qualities required for perfecting Bhakti Marg. Wherever there are saints, the Bhaktas will be there. The two of them constitute the training school of society for removing personal shortcomings and striving to attain the ideals. The life of the saints everywhere reflects these qualities. The life and work, the precept and example, of saints and Bhaktas, strengthen the concept of Dharma, a just and moral order. Even today, centuries later, these Saints and Bhaktas are the inspiration and solace of the masses.

There is a story about Guru Nanak that a rich man came to him with rich food and a poor man, with his dried bread. Guru Nanak squeezed the rich food and blood began to ooze out of it. When, however, he squeezed the dried bread presented by the poor workman, milk flowed out. He explained that the rich suck the blood of the people, whereas the poor workmen feed the society by the sweat of their brow. Can there be a better definition of socialism than this? Sahjo Bai says :

Bara na jaane paihai, Sahib ke dartaar.

Dware hee to legihai, Sahjo motee mar.

(Big people cannot enter the court of the Master. They get a sound beating right at the portals.)

These saint singers were the salt of the earth. They laid down the norms for the Good Life. Tulsi says that Ram-Nam is the litmus test of what is right :

Jaake priya na Ram-Vaidehi

Tajiye tahi koti vairi sam, jadapi param

sanehi

Tajyo pita Prahlad Vibhishan bandhu

Bharat mahtari.

*Bali Guru tajyo, Kant Brij-Vanitan, bhaya
mud mangal karai.*

*Naate neh Ram te maniyat, suhrid suseryo
jahan lon.*

Anjan kaha aankh jo phoote, bahutak

Kahon Kahon lon?

*Tulsee so sab bhanti param hit, pojya
pran te pyaro.*

Jason hoi saneh Ram-pad, eto mato

hamaro.

(One who does not love Shri Ram and mother Sita, leave such company at once, although they be your dearest. Prahlad renounced his father, Vibhishan his brother, and Bharat his mother, for the same reason. Bali broke away from his Guru, Shukracharya, the Gopis left their husbands. But all of them have been blessed. The only relationship which has an immortal sanction is the Love of God. What is the use of an eye-drop that makes you blind? Tulsidas is of the opinion that one who loves

Ram, he alone is our dearest and nearest.)

The important thing is that human relationships must be based on 'ideals'. They should kindle the spirit of purity and virtue. That is why the saints condemned the use of meat and intoxicants for collecting dubious followers. For example, take the Shakta-cult. Nobody has ever opposed the august form of worship of Shakti, but the tradition of using wine and flesh in worship has been denounced by all the saints.

*Vaishnav ki khapri bhali na sakat ko bar
gaon (Kabir) (Vyasa Ji)
Kav man sakat ko muhn kaaro.
Sakat sang na jaiye, jo sone ko hoy.
Sadhik Sidhin ko gane, kite goye gath*

khoy.

—Biharin Dev

(It is better to live in a solitary cottage of the Vaishnavas than in a big village of Shaktas—Kabir)

(O mind! let the face of the Shakta be blackened — Vyasi)

(Do not go in the company of a Shakta, even if he is of gold. Who counts the number of Siddhis, if you have lost the path you were following? Biharin Dev.

The saints have supported the right traditions—and rejected all perversions. They have depicted their deities in accordance with accepted norms. Whereas the life-history of Rama is an example of social ideals, every play (lila) of Krishna fills the hearts of the Bhakta with sheer

joy. Bhaktas have emphasised the identity not only of Rama and Krishna, but also of Vishnu and Shiva, Shiva and Shakti, and all that in such a way that they have become complementary to each other. Whatever form one's favourite deity may take, there is surely a place for that concept in the broad spectrum of Hindu Dharma. The saints have no reservations about the God or gods of other religions also, because these saints have harmonised all the cults and modes of worship on the basis of ideal life-principles. All modes of worship are regarded as uplifting, so long as they conform to the culture and tradition of India. This is a great contribution of the Bhakti movement.

The Bhakti-marg (the path of devotion), is the path of *Bhav-Sadhana*, the disciplining of the mind, its thoughts and attitudes. All the arts originate in *Bhav*. When the heart is suffused with the spirit of the deity, whatever springs from it, assumes the same spirit. That is how Bhakti has influenced literature the most. The literature of the Middle Ages is known as 'Bhakti-Kal'. The *vani* (expression) of every saint was an out-pouring of the realisation of Truth. Naturally it was gifted with the highest quality of poetic beauty. This is why we find during the 'Bhakti-Age' an ocean of love surging high on all sides. Whether it is Nirguna sect or Saguna, all of them sing of Love. This out-pouring of Love not only connects the devotee to the Deity but also links one man with another. It re-organises the whole society on the basis of love and equality. We find the fullness of Beauty

*Rama and Krishna superceded
the kings in the minds of men*

It was fighting the invaders by other, cultural, means

and Love, here, there, everywhere in the literature of this age. Where the Rasa (essence) of Bhakti identifies itself with the Rasa of literature, we have the best and highest of feeling. And when Bhakti-rasa combines with the sense of beauty, the aesthetic spirit, we have an everlasting ocean of nectar satiating the thirst and the innermost urges of the soul. John Keats had an intimation of this realisation when he wrote :

*Beauty is truth, truth-beauty—that is all
Ye known on earth and all ye need to
know.*

Whether it is a case of Sanyog (union) or Viyog (separation), the soul is stirred to its depths. In communion, there is 'delight' and 'Roop-puja' (worshipping the manifestation of Beauty) : in separation the Vyatha (intense pain) is expressed through unending streams of tears, wash ing the soul clean. Such is the unique power of Bnakti.

Like literature, music also fills the soul with heart-felt Rasa (ecstasy). And Bhakti literature is endowed with a spontaneous music. It echoes with immortality. It resounds with the "music of the spheres." Bhakti music is far superior to the court music of the kings. It is not entertainment for some mortal chieftain, but an offering to the Lord of Lords. It is said that Tansen was the most talented musician in the court of Akbar. Once Akbar was so over joyed to listen to his music that he remarked that there had neither been, nor could there ever be, a greater singer than Tansen. But Tansen

knew better. He decided to give Akbar a taste of the music of Swami Haridas, his Guru. It is said that he took Akbar in *cognito* to Swamiji in Vrindavan. However, Tansen could not ask his Guru to sing for him. So he himself began to sing. And he deliberately slipped in his song. That prompted Haridas to correct his old disciple by correctly singing the song himself. And what divine singing it was when they came out, an overjoyed Akbar asked Tansen : "How is it that you cannot sing like that ?"

Tansen replied : "I sing for the Emperor."

"And who does Swami Haridas sing for ?" asked a surprised Akbar. Replied Tansen : "He sings for the Emperor of emperors. He sings for God."

Tansen was only too right. Bhakti exalted all arts to their climax.

The centres of Bhakti were the temples. Even the beauty of their architecture, sculptures and paintings was intended to inspire a divine experience. At the same time, these temples were centres of social organisation. Ramayana, Mahabharata, Shrimad Bhagwat, Geet-Govind, Shri Krishna, Brij-bhoomi, Ragas and Raginis, all became the subjects of arts—and even of crafts. These traditions and art-forms continue to this day. And they are even stronger in the south than in the north.

When an artist chiselled or painted a divine figure, he poured his whole being into the act. He became one with the

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chisel and the stone, the palette and the paint brush. The artist, so to say, spoke to the deity—and the deity responded to him. And that produced the highest art. Even preparing of garments and garlands and crowns and prasad for the deity, became an act of worship, a great work of art.

The chiefs of small principalities, into which Bharat of that age was divided, were defeated one after another. They lost their self-respect and became proud lieutenants of the Sultan in Delhi. Maharana Pratap was the sole exception.

It is a marvel of history that whereas other invaded countries were completely taken over by Islam, India maintained its identity by and large. What was this inherent strength of India that saved our people? It was our culture which, in that age, centred round Bhakti. The Bhakti of Rama and Krishna gave the masses the confidence that even the most powerful ruler was a mere dwarf before God. The real king enthroned in the hearts of the people was Raja Ram. The leader who commanded their complete loyalty was Shri Krishna. Guru Nanak described the Lord as 'Sacha Padshah (the true king). That is how our culture and our dharma, inspired by the divine examples of our Avatars and our saints, and by the sanskars (divine influences) prescribed by them, saved the nation from annihilation.

The invasion of Islam posed a greater danger than previous aggressions of Huns and Scythians etc. This was so because the latter came only for loot. After some

time of looting here, they got assimilated into the Hindu society. But the followers of Islam brought the sword in one hand and Koran in the other. It was a wholly new situation.

In those days, the temples were not only centres of worship and prayer; they were also community centres and places of moral authority. They were also the store-houses of gold and grains. In 1017, Mahmud Ghazni attacked Mathura, the temple-town of Shri Krishna. As he approached Mathura at sun-rise, he called the whole army to halt—to stop and enjoy the beauty of this great city before it was destroyed by them. He said that structures like these could not be built even in 200 years by spending as much as 10 crore Dinars.

Mahmud was challenged by the local King Moolchand. Fifty thousand soldiers met their end in this battle and only after the king had killed the queen and himself, could Mahmud enter the city. It is said that even after the defeat of the royal army in the field, the Bhaktas of Shri Krishna fought pitched battles in every street, lane and by-lane. They were not strong enough to put the enemy to flight, but they fought till death, with their back to the temple-walls. Mahmud ordered all the temples to be razed to the ground. He looted the city and carried away 5000 people as slaves.

The invaders established an empire with Delhi as their capital. Sultans Qutbuddin Aibak and Iltmush continued with loot and forcible conversion of men

*Kabir stood in the forefront
of the people's movement*

How Keshav of Kashmir saved Mathura from Sikander Lodhi

and mandirs. Then came the Khilji dynasty. The stories of the cruelty of Alauddin are well-known. He destroyed the temples of Kunda Ghat, Mathura, and built a mosque on that site. Firoz Tughlak started pulling down the temple at Krishna's birth-place, but it was rebuilt later by Vijay Mal Dev. Then came Sikandar Lodhi who imposed Jeziya on the Hindus and started a long chain of oppressive actions.

The saints opposed the cruel ruling power at two levels. The first was at the level of rejuvenation of their culture—a process to keep our society united and strong, in following our life-ideals. We have already discussed that above.

The other level was the struggle against the power of the tyrant. We have seen that the saints exhibited their lofty character against all odds in the most unfavourable circumstances. The first quality of Bhakti is "Abhaya"—fearlessness. Where there is fear, there is no Bhakta, no Bhakti.

In the saints' role of challenging the oppressive ruling power, we find Kabir in the forefront. He sang on his 'Ektara':

*Kankar pathar jor ke, masjid lai chunay
Ta charhi Mullah bang de, kya bahara
Ina Khuday ?*

(Stones and bricks have been heaped together to let the Mulla go up the minaret to cry aloud for prayer. I ask, why? has khuda gone deaf?)

Kabir chided both, the Hindus and

the Muslims, for their blind beliefs. The Hindu was already down-trodden. How could he react? In any case, he is always ready for reforms, based on felt needs. But, when Kabir chided the Muslim in the mosque, he was challenging the very authority of Muslim State. How could this be tolerated? His Dohas were slogans of revolt against established but tyrannical authority. Kabir's effort in bringing the Hindus and Muslims on par, hitting out at their follies, was nothing short of a revolution. He was putting the conquered on the same level as the conqueror. It was bound to provoke the ire of the Muslim states. And so Sikandar Lodhi decided to punish Kabir. The saint was bound in chains and thrown into the Ganga. The story goes that Kabir was still chanting God's name. The power of God was far superior to the power of Sikandar Lodhi. People said that Kabir was not drowned. He continued to float on the waves. The fetters were broken. Kabir did not beg for mercy when the punishment was pronounced; God saved him. Maybe the Bhaktas did not allow him to be drowned.

The Bhakti-Ras Bodhini Teeka (commentary) of 'Bhakta Maa' describes the cruelties imposed on Kabir in great details. Scholars may interpret these stories variously. Nearly all saints showed miracles in their lives. It could also be interpreted as the people's power blessed by Divine Power.

Sikandar Lodhi imposed a special tax on the Hindus of Mathura. Their idols

were broken and Moorti fragments were distributed to the butchers, for meat to be weighed against them. They were not allowed to bathe in the holy Yamuna. Not only this, a machine was put up at the Vishrama-ghat to circumcise Hindus mechanically *en masse*.

There was an undercurrent of revolt. Just then a Bhakta appeared on the scene. His name was Keshav Kashmiri Bhatt. He met the situation with the help of 1000 of his disciples. It is said the oppression of the Sultan could be met only through the struggle of the people. This is how Bhakta-maal describes it :

*Kashmir ki chaap paap tapani Jag-mandan
Dridh Hari-bhakti kuthar aan Dharma
vitap-vihandan*

*Mathura madhya malechha baad kari
barbas jeete,
Kaji ajit anek, dekhi parichay bhaybheete
Vidit baat Sansar sab sant sakhi nahin
doori
Shree Kesho Bhatt mukutmani, jinki
prabhuta vistari.*

(He came with the stamp of Kashmir —the destroyer of sins, the protector of the masses, a hewer of trees of other religions through the axe of Hari-bhakti. In the Mathura region, the Mlechhas were challenged and he conquered them. There were many invincible Kazis, but they became terrified when they heard his name. The whole world knows it—the Sant Sakhis also speak of. Shri Keshav Bhatt is the crown-jewel of Bhaktas, whose divine character is described here

in detail.

—Brij Sampradayan Ka Itihās
P. 193-6, The History of Religious sects
in Brij Area)

Priyadas also mentions that Keshav Bhatt defeated the Subedar of Mathura and had him drowned in the Yamuna.

*Aap Kashmir suni basat Vishrant teer,
turak samooch dwar jantra ek dhaariye
Sahaj subhay kou niksar aay, tako pekarat
pay takee Sunnat nihariye
Sang le hazar shishya bhare bhakti rang
maha, are vahi thor bole neech pat dariye,
Krodh bhari bhari aay; ve to suba pe
pukare, ve to dekh sab hure mare jal bori
dariye.*

(He heard in Kashmir that the Turks were camping in groups at the Vishrant Ghat of Mathura. They had planted such a machine there that any one who in natural course happened to come by, was caught by the leg and was circumcised. He took one thousand disciples with him and all of them were intoxicated with Bhakti. They challenged the mean tyrant right at his spot. They were very indignant. There was a frantic cry for the Subedar, who saw all his soldiers defeated and killed and in the end he was also drowned in the river.)

Mathura was suffering untold misery in the days of Shri Vallabhacharya also. He has described very clearly how the country was overrun by the Mlechhas, in his 'Krishnasharma Stotra' (Book XVI,

*When Kumbhan Das put even Akbar's
Fatehpur Sikri in its place*

How Mahamati Pran Nath inspired Chhatrasal of Bundelkhand

Shloka 2-3):

*Mleechchakranteshu, paapekanilyeohucha
Satpeeda vyagra lokeshu, Krishna eva*

*Gangavitirna Varneshu, dushte reva
Kriteshviha,
Tirohitadhideveshu, Krishna eva gatira-
mama.*

(While the country is overrun by the Mleechhas, while the fire of sins is burning all round, while there is divine affliction in the heart for the masses—let me find refuge in the presence of Shri Krishna.)

According to Shri Prabhu Dayal Mittal, Shri Vallabhacharya sent two of his disciples to the Emperor to protest against the installation of a machine to cut the 'choti' of the Hindus. (Brij Ka Sanskritic Itihas—p. 430)

Akbar was different. He had realised fully well that a firm foundation of the kingdom could not be laid by antagonising the Hindus. That is why he followed the policy of synthesis. He even contacted Hindu saints. He went to Vrindavan to have a darshan of Swami Haridas. It is said he saw the great poets Kumbhan Das and Sur Das too. He also paid respects to Goswami Vitthal Nath. What did Akbar want? And what was the attitude of the saints towards him?

Akbar summoned the saint-poet Kumbhan Das to his capital, Fatehpur Sikri, and he wanted him to recite some poems in his praise. But Kumbhan

Das was a saint of a high order. He was not afraid of speaking the truth. The song that he recited in his court turned out to be a challenge :

*Santan ko kaha Seekri so Kaam ?
Aavat jaat panhiyan tootin, bisari gayo
har -naam.
Jako mnkh dekhath duka lagat, tako
Karan pau parnam.
Kumbhandas Lal Girdhar binu, yah
sab jhooto dham.*

(What have the saints got to do with Sikri—the royal capital? My shoes gave way in treading my way to the palace; at the same time, the name of Hari was forgotten. I had to salute one, whose very sight is painful. Kumbhan Das feels that without Giridhar Lal, Krishna, the Govardhan-lifter, all this pomp and circumstance is a mirage.)

Could there be a stronger protest against authority than saying: "I had to salute one, whose very sight is painful"?

In Mathura, when Akbar met Surdas, he wanted him also to say something in his praise. The great poet spoke out :

*Nahin rahivo man men thaur
Nand mandan aachat kaise, aaniye man
aur*

(There is no place available in my heart. All of it is occupied by Nand Lal. In His presence, how can anyone else enter?)

This honest expression was an answer worthy of a valiant adversary.

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latter, in order to sublimate the ego of the Emperor, showed him a vision of the Celestial Vrindavan. The emperor could never forget the grandeur of the scene, laid with glittering gems of divine lustre everywhere. Historian Vincent Smith says that Akbar used to remember that vision again and again. And he would get up in ecstasy even during the night. He became so much influenced by Hinduism that he often behaved like a Hindu. That is why he has been praised in many books written by Hindus.

Even Akbar's reign was not all peaceful. During his period also many government servants did not hesitate to disturb the calm of the masses. The Bhakt-poet Hari Rai Vyas has described the same in his Vani :

*Ab sanchehu kaliyug aayo,
Mathura Khudat, katat Vrindvan muni
jan soch upayo
It no dukh saahibe ke kalen Kahe ko
Vyas jiyayo ?*

(Kaliyug—Iron Age—has truly arrived now. Mathura is being dug up and Vrindaban is being levelled down. Vyasji is requesting the saints to find some way out. O God ! If there could be so much suffering in your world, why have you kept Vyas alive ?)

Sevak, the follower of Shri Hit Hari Vansh wrote :

*Udvas Vishva bhayo sab Dis, Dharma
Rahit medini naresh
Mlechcha Sakal puhumi barhe*

(Sevak Vani, Hit Yash Vilas Prakashan.)

(The whole country has become a hell. The ruler of the Land is without Dharma. The Mlechhas are spreading all over the earth.)

Even Jehangir and Shahjahan were influenced by the saints to some extent. But their lieutenants did not cease their acts of oppression. And the advent of Aurangzeb was nothing short of a disaster, which wrought devastation far and wide. He completely destroyed the Krishna Janmabhumi Temple of Mathura and got a mosque built over the site. The temple of Kashi Vishwanath was similarly destroyed, and a mosque built over the debris. But the Bhaktas were not slow to act. Taking inspiration from the nation-building saint of Mahar ashtra, Samarath Swami Ram Das, Chhatrapati Shivaji challenged Aurangzeb in the South. In the Punjab, Dashmesh Guru Govind Singh built up a strong army of his Sant-Sipahis and founded the Khalsa for the protection of Dharma.

The Sikh Panth was one of the main Bhakti sects of Hindus. Gura Gobind Singhji's Spiritual Kingship (Sachi Padshani) played an important role in the emancipation of India. One of his followers, Bairagi took up the sword and routed the tyrants. In the end he met his martyrdom along with seven hundred companions.

An armed revolt against Aurangzeb

*The Saints of Brij inspired
Gokul Jat to rise in revolt*

The story was the same in Kashi, Mathura & Ayodhya

was led by Chhatrasal in Bundelkhand. Chhatrasal himself was a disciple of Mahatma Narhari Das in the tradition of Swami Hari Das of Vrindaban. He has written about Swami Hari Das as follows :

*Shri Swamī Hari Das ki, Karat chhata
nit aas.
Kunj keli ras pay jo, harat arigan
ki pyas.
Nrip ananya nidhi-van nripati Shri
Lalita Haridas.
Lal Ladavat Lal ku, Chhatrasal hit-
aas.*

Chhata—Chhatrasal—always looks for inspiration to Swami Hari Das, who, with his Bhakti of Kunja-Bihari, Shri Krishna, and his Sakhis, quenched the thirst of his followers. Shri Lalita Haridas is the unique Lord of Nidhi Van of Vrindavan. He always pleases Nand Lal Shri Krishna, who is the centre of all hopes and aspirations of "Chhata".

Bhakti, according to the Sakhi Sampradaya, is no bar for the brave followers to root out with their swords the oppressors of the land.

The struggles of Sant Pran Nath were very important in the history of armed resistance. He also came from the line of Swami Hari Das and was a Bhakta of Shyama-Shyam (Radha-Krishna). He was also a powerful centre of inspiration, backing Chhatrasal's movement of liberation in Central India. The rousing call of Pran Nath was the clarion-call of

history :

*Rajao milo re rāne raj ke, Dharmajate
Koi dorō
Jago he jodhao, utho khare raho, neend
nigori chhore.*

(O Kings! Get together, you are masters of your land. Your Dharma is being attacked. Come quick, wake up O warriors! Get up and be steadfast. Give up your slumber.)

*Triloki men Uttam Khand Bharatka,
tame Hindu dharmā.
Take chhatrapatiyon ke sir, aay rahe
it sarma
Bharat Khand Hindu Dharma jham ke,
manage Vishnu Sangamartha.
Phirat aap dhindhora pukarta, hai koi
deve re Samarth.
Hardwar dhahaye uthave tapasvi tee-
rath, Govandh kassiyore vighan,
Asia julum hua jag me jahir, par kamar
na bandhi kin?
Prabhu-pratima re gaj-paon bandhake,
Ghaseet ke Khandit Karay,
Pharas bandi taki Kar ke, tapar khalak
chalay
Asure lagaya Hinduon par jazia, vako
mile nahi khan-pan
Jo garib de na seke jazia, takō mar
kare musalman.*

(Prem Path Page-35)

(This land of Bharat is the best in the three worlds. The great Hindu Dharma is there. That Dharma is in danger. This is a matter of great shame for its rulers. Vishnu himself

is in the battle-field one a rousing call destroyed. Tapa from the Tirhachers are massacred world now k But, Hindu king they are not rea with elephant's the Lord, drags road for peop demons have Hindus, who anyone cannot and converted

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is in the battle-field. He is giving everyone a rousing call. Hardwar has been destroyed. Tapaswins have been expelled from the *Tirthas*, holy spots. The butchers are massacring the cows. The whole world now knows these oppressions. But, Hindu kings have not united and they are not ready for action. The tyrant with elephant's foot breaks the idols of the Lord, drags it, puts the pieces on the road for people to tread upon. The demons have imposed *Jeziya* tax on Hindus, who do not get food to eat. If anyone cannot pay *jeziya*, he is beaten and converted to Islam.)

This saint for whom Hindus and Muslims were equal, had to give a clarion call for the masses to stand up. This is a historical truth and it shows the role played by the saints. No one should think that the saints remained indifferent to society in critical times. The saints of the Brij area exhorted the Jat chieftain Gokul to challenge Aurangzeb. The state of Bharatpur was the result of that resistance. At that time in Brij the oppressions of Aurangzeb were so cruel that many ancient idols were removed to the safety of Rajasthan.

When Ahmed Shah Abdali attacked in 1757 and massacred people in Delhi and Brij, the famous saint-poet Ghannand was also murdered. This holocaust caused widespread death and destruction. The saint poet Vrindavan Das describes this vividly in his "Harikala Veli":

*Atarah so terah baras, hari aisee kari,
Jam bigoyo des, vipat garhi pari*

(In 1813 Vikrami—1757 A. D.—God so ordained that the Yavana attacked the land and there was a great catastrophe.)

He has given a heart-rending account of the massacre, the desecration of temples and cold-blooded murder of saints. The Bhaktas killed during Abdali's attack included Mukund Lal, Baba Pran Das, Krishna Das Malik, Jado Das (Ghannand), Jugal Das, Pujari Krishna Das and Bhagavan Das.

Abdali's hordes looted the entire land of Mathura and Gokul. Meanwhile Naga Sadhus formed an army and gave a valiant fight. Just then cholera broke out and Abdali's army withdrew. It is said that he took away the enormous valuable property of Mathura, Vrindavan, amounting to some 12 crores and innumerable women to Afghanistan. "Bhan Sahib ki Bakhar" relates that two thousand Vairagis took up arms, challenged Abdali and obstructed the movement of his army.

The land between Delhi and Agra—Brij Bhoomi—had to bear untold miseries under this merciless attack. Abdali had ordered that this land of Bhaktas be turned into a desert-waste. "Mathura is a city sacred to the Hindus; destroy it completely. Not a single house should be left standing up to Agra. Wherever you go, let there be complete massacre and loot of property. Whatever you procure in the loot, will be yours. Let the soldiers bring the heads of kafirs and heap them in the tent of the commander. For every single head, a reward of Rs. 5/- will be awarded

*Bhakti Movement was the vanguard
of the National Resistance Movement*

Gandhiji also saw God in the poor masses (Daridra Narayan)

from the government treasury.' (History of the Jats, Kalikaranjan Kanungo, P. 99)

One muslim gentleman has given a first-hand account of this attack on Mathura in these words: "On the roads, and in the markets, the bodies of the butchered persons were lying in heaps and the whole city was burning. Many buildings were razed to the ground. The waters of the Yamuna flowed with the red of blood even a week after the massacre. On the banks of the river there were many huts of Vairagis and Sanyasins. On each door was now nailed a cow's head. At one place, two hundred bodies of beheaded children lay rotting."

The situation at Vrindavan was still worse.

It is no wonder that this land of Krishna, this Brij-Bhoomi, that lies like a tongue between the two sets of teeth i.e. Delhi and Agra, has still been safe and alive with Bhakti. Has any one given a thought to what these Brij-vasis, these Bhaktas, had to suffer to confront the tyrants?

The story was the same in Kashi, Ayodhya and elsewhere. Everywhere it was the Bhaktas who suffered and served and persevered in the defence of Dharma. The Bhakti-movement was not an escape from a cruel world; it was the vanguard of resistance, national survival, national revival.

Whenever and wherever Dharma was in danger the Bhaktas stood up to defend it. The Sikh Panth was born. During the

British reign also, the Sikhs individually and as a group fought for independence. The Kuka revolt of Namdhari Sikhs for the protection of the Cow, is a well-known instance of history. Swami Vivekananda inspired the challenge to British rule on the basis of rejuvenation of Dharma. Swami Dayanand was also a great saint, who blew the trumpet of patriotism at a very critical juncture. He built up a cadre of Sanyasins who, on the one hand, fought against the blind orthodoxy of their own society and, on the other, fortified it against the onslaughts of the foreign political and ideological invasion. The Arya Samaj has played a unique role in the Indian struggle for Independence.

Mahamana Malaviya and the saintly Ravindra Nath Tagore revolutionised the system of education. Yogiraj Aurovindo was an arch-revolutionary who, in the later part of his austere life, gave a spiritual elixir to the nation. The revolutionaries of India were inspired by Gita. They were Karma-Yogi Bhaktas.

Lokmanya Tilak wrote his 'Gita Rahasya' to rouse mass-consciousness. He devised and popularised Ganeshotsava. Mahatma Gandhi, the supreme guide in the freedom struggle, lived with Ram-Naam and he roused and organised the masses on that basis. His favourite song was a composition of Narasi Mehta:

*Vaishnava Jana To Tene Kahiye
Je Peer Parai Jane Re.*

Gandhiji's Bhakti had place for practitioners of all religions. This broad-minded

tolerance has been the strength of Bhakti. The speciality was that it was not a 'Ram and Rahis' politics. There is a great Bhakti struggle for independence.

In the modern age that Bhakti is individualistic and society-oriented. It is the times.

From the abode that the Bhaktas have dedicated and, the capacity to service and nurture every temple was social life, when Kirtan, and Satsang, the temple of society social reconstruction self-surrender. Even today, in the temples fill the spiritual and national awake.

The attitude that of escapism responsibilities. (renunciation), of charity and where 'Pravritti' Bhaktas directly leads the people

Swami Satyamitrananda has built Bharat Mata Mandir in Hardwar

tolerance has been a tradition of all our sages and they never made a distinction in the name of God. But Gandhiji's speciality was that he wanted the unity of 'Ram and Rahim' as the basis of his politics. There is no doubt that Gandhiji was a great Bhakta and he led the mass struggle for independence as a saint.

In the modern context, it is appropriate that Bhakti should become less individualistic and more mass-based and society-oriented. This is an urgent need of the times.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the Bhakta is a very important factor in society. He has the spirit of complete dedication and, for this reason, he has the capacity to inspire others to social service and mutual help. In earlier times, every temple was an important centre of social life, where, along with Bhajan, Kirtan, and Satsang, the influential people of society also planned schemes of social reconstruction through dedicated self-surrender and mass-participation. Even today, in spite of degeneration, our temples fill the Bharatiya Society with spiritual and social consciousness for national awakening.

The attitude of the Bhaktas is not that of escapism, of fleeing from worldly responsibilities. Wherever there is Nivritti (renunciation), there is built up the ideal of charity and freedom from greed. But where 'Pravritti' is the guiding factor, the Bhakta directly plans mass-contacts and leads the people for social uplift with a

'Nishkam' (selfless) attitude. According to '*Siya Ram Main Sab Jag Jani*' (see the whole world in Sita-Ram) society also is in object of worship for us. It is also a manifestation of God. Hence the question of being cut off from society does not arise at all. Swami Vivekanand had always exhorted his followers and admirers to see God in society. Gandhiji also enlived the service of 'Daridra Narayan' (God in the form of the poor masses).

Even today the importance of Bhaktas who are exclusively engaged in their Sadhana (austerities), through their sweet influences, guide and bless the people who come in contact with them, in the service of society. They regard all the incarnations and saints of their tradition as their ideals. At Saptasarover near Hardwar, Swami Satyamitrananda has built the temple of Bharat Mata, for this very purpose. Truly speaking, today the organisation of Bhakti should be done on the basis of patriotism and urge for national welfare. But at the same time patriotism should also have its roots in the perennial philosophy of our spirituality. Spirituality gives us our life-values. We become purified inwardly also, only through spiritual practices. Otherwise mechanical patriotism has a tendency to weaken man. The reality is that Bhakti is a spiritual life-value. When we dedicate ourselves to spiritual values, the spirit of service and compassion enters our personal and social life. Only then do we become worthy of being called a Bhakta in the modern context. □

Chandidas' Love for Rami..

THE MOHAMMEDAN CONQUEST of India is probably the bloodiest story in history. It is a discouraging tale, for its evident moral is that civilization is a precarious thing, whose delicate complex of order and liberty, culture and peace may at any time be overthrown by barbarians invading from without or multiplying within.

Saints seem more abundant in India than elsewhere. When heresies or strange gods became dangerously popular, they (the Hindus) tolerated them, and then absorbed them into the capacious caverns of Hindu belief; one god more or less could not make much difference in India. Intolerance came with Islam and Christianity.

Abul Fazl describes "thousands of poets" at Akbar's court; there were hundreds at minor capitals, and doubtless dozens in every home. One of the earliest and greatest was Bhartrihari, monk, grammarian and lover, who, before retiring into the arms of religion, instructed his soul with amours. He has left us a record of them in his "Century of Love"—a Heine-like sequence of a hundred poems. In Jayadeva's *Gita-Govinda*, or "Song of the Divine Cowherd," the amorousness of the Hindu turns to religion, and intones the senuous love of Radha and Krishna.

Sur Das, the blind poet of Agra, composed 60,000 verses on the life and adventures of Krishna; we are told that he was helped by the god himself, who became his amanuensis, and wrote faster than the poet could dictate. Meanwhile a poor priest, Chandi Das, was shocking Bengal by composing Dantean songs to a peasant Beatrice, idealising her with

romantic passion, exalting her as a symbol of divinity, and making his love an allegory of his desire for absorption in God. Excommunicated by his fellow-Brahmans on the ground that he was scandalizing the public, he agreed to renounce his love, Rami, in a public ceremony of recantation; but when in the course of this ritual, he saw Rami in the crowd, he withdrew his recantation, and going up to her, bowed before her with hands joined in adoration.

"There is one God," says Tulsi Das, "it is Rama, creator of heaven and earth, and redeemer of mankind. For the sake of his faithful people a very God, Lord Rama, became incarnate as a king, and for our sanctification lived, as it were, the life of any ordinary man. Sir George Grierson considers that it establishes Tulsi Das as "the most important figure in the whole of Indian literature". "I regard the Ramayana of Tulsi Das," says Gandhi, "as the greatest book in all devotional literature."

We have kept for the last, though out of his chronological place, the greatest lyric poet of medieval India. Kabir, a simple weaver of Benares, prepared for his task of uniting Islam and Hinduism by having, we are told, a Mohammedan for his father and a Brahman virgin for his mother. Fascinated by the preacher Ramana, he became a devotee of Rama, enlarged him (as Tulsi Das would also do) into a universal deity, and began to write Hindi poems of rare beauty to explain a creed in which there should be no temples, no mosques, no idols, no caste, no circumcision and but one god.

(Will Durant: *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 1: *Our Oriental Heritage*.)

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THE PLACE OF SRI KRISHNA IN OUR NATIONAL LIFE

Late Deendayal Upadhyaya in 1947

NO ONE has wielded so much influence on our national life as Bhagavan Sri Krishna,—excepting, of course, Bhagavan Sri Ram. We have been worshipping both as incarnations. Our scholars have studied their character, the poets have sung it and the Bhaktas have performed their poojas in all the nine ways (Navadha Bhakti). Whereas Mira has ignored all taboos of her times and burst out: 'Mery to Giridhar Gopal, dusaro na Koi (I have my Giridhar Gopal and no one else), Sur in the role of a friend, has complained :

*Haath chhuraye jat ho, nibal jan ki moi;
Jab hriday ten chhootihon, sabal*

janihon toi.

(You are going away, leaving my hand, because you know I am weak. I will recognise your strength only if you can get away from my heart.) Shankaracharya, the prince of scholars and philosophers, who declared, "Brahma Satya, Jagan Mithhya" (world is a delusion; the only reality is Brahma), sings :

*Punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam
Punarapi janani jathare Shayamam
Iha Sansare, Khalu dustare
Kripaya pare pahi Murare.
Bhaj Govindam, Bhaj Govindam
Govindam bhaj moorhamate !*

(You will be born again and die again. Again you will have to lie in your

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The melody of the life of Krishna makes the whole country dance

mother's womb. This world is very difficult to cross. You can go across it only by Murari's grace. So, chant Govind's name, chant the holy name of Govind, oh foolish soul !)

Krishna's message which has inspired warriors down the ages, is :

*Sukha dukkhe same Kritva, Labhalabhau
jayajayau,
Eto yuddhaya yujyaswa naivam papam
vapsyast."*
(Gita, 2:38)

(Pleasure and pain, profit and loss, victory and defeat, regard them all equal; do not worry. Apply yourself to your duty to fight, and you will incur no sin therein).

The bravery of these righteous warriors built great empires and made the country prosperous. Not only in the sphere of Jnyan, Karma and Bhakti, but also in every field of human activity, Krishna has been our guide.

No one can occupy such a central place in a nation's life easily. For some time you may carry the whole nation with you; or you may become a source of inspiration for ever for a particular group. But, to be able to inspire a whole nation in age after age, a leader has to have the best qualities in the highest degree. Only he is worshipped, in whom a society sees its own soul. All-time nation-wide reverence is earned only by one who spends his whole great life for the nation. If such a person has realised the soul of the nation, then his whole life becomes such

a great saga, that its melody makes the entire nation dance with him.

We worship Bhagavan Krishna even today. His birthday is celebrated throughout India with *eclat*. Poets are ecstatic even today while singing of Him, and philosophers make a critical study of his philosophy. Millions take part in Kirtans and dance with divine joy. Even then, the nation is going down. There is only one reason : we have shied away from reality and are clinging only to the form. We chant the name of Bhagavan Krishna. But we do not grasp the significance of his life—and we do not act accordingly. The people who do not comprehend his mission, but only mechanically repeat his name, are, in the poet's words, not Bhaktas, but sinners :

*Apahaya nijam karma, Krishna Krishnetai
Vaadinah
Te tu Papa Harer dooshna dharmartham
janma baddhareh.*

(The people, who only chant the name of Krishna, but shirk their duty, and then blame Hari for their lapses, are sinners, because Krishna took birth only for the establishment of Dharma.)

And what is our 'Karma', duty ? Without doubt, the same as that of Bhagavan Krishna, because He is our ideal.

Although Bhagavan Krishna was the sum of all virtues at their highest, his intense love of Rashtira and his readiness to do anything and everything for it, stands out foremost. He

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cared for nothing for himself, and everything for Rashtira. The person who devotes his life for his nation, fulfils the criterion of a Sthita Prajana described in Gita :

*Dukhsheshwanudwigna manah
Sukhesh vigat sprihah,
Veetraga bhayakrodhah
Sihthidheermuni uchyate. (Gita : 2 : 56)*

(One who is unafflicted in misfortunes, and is unattached after attaining prosperity, such a person, free from temptation, fear and anger, may be called a *Sthit prajanya*, a sage of steady wisdom.)

Bhagavan Krishna was an ideal person who was free from the duality of pleasure and pain, fear and anger, attachment and envy, honour and dishonour. Everything was subordinate to his intense love of the nation. Even if prevailing social and moral disciplines concerning the individual came in the way of any national interest, he overrode them.

Bhagavan Krishna was brought up at Gokul in Vrindavan at his foster-father Nand's country house. Nand was a man of means. It was not necessary that Krishna should go with the cowherds of the flock every day. The danger of the flood that has been depicted in the Mahabharata does not have well-to-do people going after cows of mixing with poor and illiterate people like cowherds. But Krishna wanted to go with them, play with them, chat with them, dine with them, sing and dance with them. He had shed his ego. He would converse with the most insignifi-

cant individual of the countryside, any Gopa or Gopika. He would wander far away from Gokul, perhaps deliberately—and the procession of cowherds would follow Him, like a flag. Many dangers and onslaughts of 'demons' were almost invited in this manner. The entire neighbourhood was full of them—the people of Kansa-type. Krishna gave them deliverance after destroying their Asuri (demoniac) proclivities. They were all filled with religious zeal and love of nation. He freed their minds from fear and internecine jealousies. Because of his large-heartedness, the whole of Gokul—men, women and children—began to dote on him and they vowed to sacrifice their all at his signal. That is why the old traditional Indrapooja was replaced by the symbolic national worship, Govardhan Pooja. Bhagavan Krishna broke away from out-of-date tradition, but he had the sanction to establish new traditions. That is the significance of the lifting of Govardhan.

Krishna received a challenge from Mathura. The right moment for killing Kansa had arrived. For this, he had to leave the beloved land where every particle vibrated with his love. Nand, Yashoda, Gopas, Gopis, herds of cows and their calves—all of them were feeling the pangs of separation. All Gokul was crying because their very soul was leaving them. Krishna was also a human being. He too had a heart. He was not a stone-idol. But duty is higher than emotions. The streams of tears in Gokul could not drown his resolve to proceed to Mathura. That is how Krishna sacrificed Love at the altar of Duty.

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How Krishna Saved Mathura by becoming 'Ran-chhod'

He had no difficulty in vanquishing Kansa because the entire public supported him. He had met many people on the way to Kansa's durbar and all of them, without exception, sided with him. The crown of Kansa was in the palm of his hand, but instead of crowning himself, Krishna anointed Kansa's father—and his own maternal grandfather—Ugra Sen, as King. However, he continued to serve the public. But the close friends of Kansa could not tolerate this. And so Jarasandh attacked Mathura. Under the leadership of Krishna, the people of Mathura gave a fitting rebuff to the attackers. Jarasandh had to flee. But he attacked again. He was defeated again, but he repeated the attack. This continued for sixteen long years. Krishna thought over the consequences of the long drawn out feud. He came to the conclusion that the root cause of these attacks was not Jarasandh's enmity towards Mathura, but a personal grudge against Krishna. He, therefore, contemplated leaving Mathura, to save it. But before he had left, Jarasandh again came with a great force—and this time he brought Kal Yavan also with him. The contending forces were standing face to face. The trumpet was about to be sounded. And then all of a sudden people saw that Krishna was on the run. A renowned hero like Krishna, running away! Jarasandh challenged him loudly: "O Krishna! where are you running away like this? That is cowardice." It was really cowardice to leave the battlefield like that. But, it was essential for the sake of Mathura. Krishna himself had urged Arjuna to fight, and not to

run away, because that would be 'Anaryjusham aswahyam akitikaram,' (Gita 2/2) (Unworthy of an Arya, conducive to hell). And now he himself was leaving the field of battle (Ranchhor). Why? Because both, in fighting as well as in running away, he had only the welfare of society in mind. Jarasandh's attacks were there because of Krishna. By running away from the battlefield, he saved Mathura! We have many Ranchhod Dasses even today, but they do not leave the field because of intense patriotism, but out of cowardice and weakness.

After leaving Mathura, Krishna laid the foundation of the city of Dwarka. But how could he sit quietly there? The task of demolishing Adharma and re-establishing Dharma, still lay ahead. He had only one ambition—to rebuild and reorganise the scattered fragments of society. India needed a strong and well-unioned polity. In that age only Kauravas and Pandavas at Hastinapur, Jarasandh in Magadh and Narakasur in Pragjyotishpur were the prominent ruling families—and a Chakravarti Raja could come only from one of these families. Each one of them aspired to the honour. Krishna thought only Pandavas fit to rule Bharat and establish Dharma Rajya. He, therefore, applied his heart and soul to realising that dream. Once the aims and objects of a nation are decided, it becomes incumbent upon every patriot to contribute his mite to fulfil those aims. Thereafter there is no need to stand and think 'to be or not to be.' Whatever is conducive to the achievement of the

national aim, is fair; whatever can make the dream come true, is the truth. This principle is the guiding motto of Krishna, the greatest interpreter of Dharma for all times.

The Pandavas were wandering from one forest to another, after losing their kingdom. It was Krishna who became their undaunted supporter. It was only with his help, and under his guidance, that the Pandavas could collect nine Armies (Akshauhini) on their side. How he won people to their side, would be clear from just one example. He was afraid that even his elder brother, Balram, would side with Duryodhan, as the latter was his disciple. Therefore, to create a soft corner for the Pandavas in Balram's heart, he planned a strategy. He decided to give his sister Subhadra in marriage to Arjuna. Balram would not have agreed in the normal course. And so he invited Arjuna to elope with Subhadra. Once the marriage had taken place, Balram also came round. Ordinarily, who will not condemn a person for running away with his sister? Bhagavan Krishna did just that—and yet no one could raise a finger, because this questionable act was motivated by a superior aim. Just at the commencement of the great battle of Mahabharat, Balram was even induced to go on a pilgrimage, to ensure that he would not be around, to support Duryodhan against the Pandavas.

Both Duryodhan and Arjun arrived to seek Sri Krishna's help. Krishna wanted to help Arjuna. Hence he kept

his eyes closed when Duryodhan arrived first. But he greeted Arjuna as soon as he came and asked him the reason of his visit. What shall we say about this? Hair-splitting commentators would term this as 'fraud', but the whole world acclaims it as a superb example of Dharma in action.

According to the terms of help, he himself went to the side of the Pandavas but directed his armies to help Duryodhan. Everyone knows what this army did on the side of the Kauravas.

What Krishna called Dharma, becomes even clearer during the course of the battle. Krishna had vowed that he would not wield any weapon during the battle. But at the critical juncture, he raised his arm against Bhishma. Breaking one's vow is regarded as the worst of sins. But nobody calls Krishna a sinner. He had taken a vow to uplift society; and every action for the fulfilment of that aim, was Dharma. A person wedded to lofty aims is absolved of all other, lesser, commitments.

We all are acquainted with the chain of events leading to the death of all the chief warriors on the Kauravas side. Bhishma received the mortal blow from Arjuna, though it was supposed to come from Shikhandi, when he had stopped shooting his arrows. Dronacharya was beheaded after immobilising him with the false grievous news of his son Ashwathama's demise, under the guise of killing the elephant 'Ashwathama', and inducing Dharmaraj Yudhisthir also

How Krishna neutralised his brother Balaram

to testify "Ashwathama hata!" (Ashwathama has been killed)—and drowning the latter part of his sentence, 'Narawa kunjara wa' (either the man or the elephant), under the heightened beating of drums. Jayadarth was persuaded by the artificially induced evening shadows to come out, when Arjuna took his toll, although that gentleman had been ready to commit suicide. Karna was killed while he was engaged in extricating his chariot-wheel stuck in mire. Duryodhan was put to death, against the rules of duelling, by Bhima hitting him on the thigh, "below the belt". Superficially viewed, all these were acts of Adharma, injustice, but everybody is agreed that this was real justice, unadulterated Dharma. Only through such clear-headed acts was established the Dharma Rajya, which all the seers and sages had dreamt of. Earlier the great Maharshi Vyas himself had lamented :

*Urdhva bahur virontu shu na cha kashit-
shrinoti me.
Dharmadurthascha kaamshecha, Sa dharm
Kim na sevate.
(Mahabharat)*

(I shout with my arms raised high, but nobody listens to me. Arth and Kaam are served only through Dharma. Why do you people not attain that Dharma)?

This Dharma-Rajya was established through the policies and strategies of Bhagavan Krishna. How can we call him an *Adharmi* or *Asatya-Vaadi* (liar)?

With the Bharatiya ideal of Monogamy, it is said that Bhagavan Krishna married sixteen thousand damsels. Did Yogeshwar Krishna do it? Was he

an infatuated pervert? These damsels were captives in the prisons of Narakasur. Bhagavan Krishna freed them. And then, to save the society from possible consequences, he gave them all his protective hand.

He did everything for the sake of society. So much so that when drinking habits over-powered his Yadava clansmen, and they became a menace to society, Krishna himself enticed them into an internecine feud, and saw them completely liquidated. He saw to the destruction of his kinsmen—all for the sake of the nation.

This is the underlying significance of Krishna's character. If we grasp this core of his character, we can grasp his life mission and that of other incarnations. Today we only took to the *Siddhis* (achievements) of such celebrities, but we do not understand their *Sadhana* (efforts). The key to the mystery does not lie in the worship of the *Siddhi*; the highway to success lies in the path of *Sadhana*. Krishna had urged the co-operation of all men of ideals of his age thus :

*Manmana bhava madbhakto madyaji mam
namaskuru.
Mam vaishyasi satyam te pratimane
priyoest me.*

(Gita : 9 : 34)

(O my devotees, thinkers, perform the Yajnya for me, owe allegiance to me. I vow with truth that, in this way, you will attain me.)

The complete surrender of all our faculties in the service of the nation, is the true Pooja of Krishna. □



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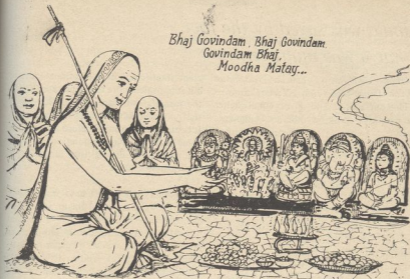
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*Bhaj Govindam, Bhaj Govindam,
Govindam Bhaj,
Moodha Matag...*

Adi Shankrachariya ji Maharaj

How the Acharyas and the Saints Saved India in its darkest hour

MANY PEOPLE WONDER why a strong central Government has been the rule in China but it has been the exception in India.

The main reason is that China is a two-river country—Yangtse and Hwang-ho; India is a ten-river country. In addition, China's two rivers have had a convenient connecting canal (the Grand Canal, completed by Kublai Khan); and both its rivers flow into the same one China Sea. Although China is almost twice the size of India, its cultivated and thickly populated area is almost a level rectangle bounded by the two rivers, the one canal and the one sea. India has more

area under cultivation than China; and this cultivation goes on in all the river valleys. These rivers in turn flow into two different seas. All this makes for greater diversity and less centralisation.

One-river countries like Egypt need a central Government to organise a canal system for maximum utilisation of its river waters. In India where there are plenty of rivers and plenty of rainfall, there is no compelling need for a "hydraulic despotism".

The Indian situation, therefore, called for great local autonomy with only a central suzerainty. the Atharva Veda says:

India was saved by the fact that it was multi-centric

'Janan bibhrati' bahuda vivachasan
Nana Dharmavan Frithvi Yathoukasam—
(This our motherland gives equal shelter
to peoples speaking different languages
and following different faiths.)
And this central suzerainty
was more cultural than political
or military. India integrated itself by
requiring ritual uniformity but making
thought free.

Although Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' pleaded for a strong centre, strongly supported by a strong central army, mainstream India was for local autonomy. It stood for the supremacy of 'Dharma' (a just and moral order) and not that of 'Artha' (political economy).

The over-centralisation of the Iranian state; and its total identification with one religion, proved fatal for it when Arabs defeated Iranians in the battle of Qadesia. The State—and the Church—collapsed simultaneously and only a few Iranians escaped; they become the Parsis of India. The flexibility inherent in the political decentralisation of India, and the supremacy of culture, ensured the survival of Indian people and Indian thought. There was no single political centre or religious church, whose destruction could destroy Indian Society.

The freedom of thought made it possible for Buddhism to come up in a big way. It was a great movement, but it had its flaws. In the words of Herman Keyserling ('Travel Diary of a Philosopher'), Buddhism made a vegetable out of a man. It had

great intellectual and emotional appeal; but it appealed more to townsmen than to the farmers—who are very earthy—or to the poor who have nothing to renounce. It became international before it could become national. The population of India fell drastically during the centuries of Buddhist ascendancy.

Though many in China and other countries welcomed Buddhism, important elements also resented it as 'alien' and 'unrealistic.' As the Buddhist monasteries grew numerous and prosperous, an Imperial Edict of China, in 845 AD demolished 4000 large establishments and forced thousands of Buddhist monks to get back home. India in turn felt the loss of enterprising young men to foreign missions. And it did not fancy the incorporation of all kind of 'mlechhas' (from Sanskrit 'mlan' i.e. 'yellow' people) into the Buddhist and, therefore, by extension, into the Indian Society. The Brahmin-Buddhist relations became so cool that when a storm tossed the boat carrying Hieun Tsiang, some Brahmins considered throwing this "Shraman" into the sea, to appease the storm-god!

Hun and Scythian attacks pulverised much of north-west India. With the rise of a fanatical Zoroastrianism, King Gush-tasp drove Indians and Indian influences out of Iran, Khurasan, Iraq, Mosul, Balkh and Azerbaijan. India, therefore, became very allergic to Middle East and Central Asia—even before Muslim invasions confirmed that allergy. In this situation, Buddhism appeared at once hollow and unrealistic.

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India quickly incorporated many desirable features of Buddhism—simplicity, vegetarianism, pacifism into 'Hinduism'; but it rejected the Buddhist excesses and the Buddhist church. In the cultural interregnum, there was some vacuum of thought, some confusion of concepts. Buddhism was dead but the 'new Hinduism' was yet to be born. The Vedas were all but forgotten; and the Puranas were yet to be written. It was during this period—from the sixth century to the tenth—that Indian thought and Indian society were reorganised and re-integrated.

Guru Gorakhnath was a great Hathayogi, whose practice of *Nasa* or *Sabda* left a deep impact on the North. Centuries later, Nanak and Kabir were to invoke Gorakhnath. Dnaneswar of Maharashtra also belonged to this Nath Sampradaya. But it was the Acharyas who invoked the Avatars, to generate the tidal wave of Bhakti which put new life in the country.

Interestingly enough, this movement started in the South. Tamil Nadu has always had a strong erotic (Aham)—as distinguished from heroic (Puram)—literary tradition. And after the decline of the Gupta empire in the north, a large number of Brahmins moved south after the fourth century. This interaction between the sacerdotal Brahmins from the north and erotic Tamil Nadu, produced the passionate poetry of God-intoxicated saint-singers.

The Tamil Saiva and vaishnava hymns are called the Tamil or Fifth Veda. Vaishnava saint Nammalvar is described as

'one who sang the Sanskrit Vedas in Tamil (Vedam Tamil Saidu Maran Sathagopan). An old Tamil couplet says in connection with the work of the Tamil Saiva saint Meykandar: "Veda is the cow; the Agama is its milk; the Tamil psalms of the four Nayanars is the excellent ghee in it; the great knowledge is its fine taste....."

Bhakti was there in the Vedas and the Gita too. But this new Bhakti reached new heights—and it moved the masses to their depths. The Nayanars sang the glories of Siva. ("If your feet strike hard, the nether world would go to pieces; if your head shakes too much, the heavens will split; therefore, dance carefully my Lord.") The Alvars sang the glories of Vishnu. ("He is not male; He is not female. He is not neuter; He is not to be seen; He neither is nor is not; when He is sought, He will take the form in which He is sought; and He will not also come in such form. It is indeed most difficult to describe the nature of the Lord.)

The Mother cult neatly bridged the two schools. Appayya Dikshita was among the earliest to see Devi as the bridge between Saivism and Vaishnavism. At the Puranic level, Devi or Amba was the consort of Siva and sister of Vishnu, and she brought both sects together. At the theological level, Dikshita maintained that all three of them were the same in the Ratnatraya Pariksha or the Analysis of Three Gems. This school of Devi worship claimed among its later adherents, several thinkers, poets and mystics all over India, such as Bhaskara Raya, Kumara Gurupara, Ramakrishna Param-

Guru Gorakhnath's tremendous influence on North India

The Saivite Nayanar & Vaishnavite Alvar Tamil poetry became the 'Fifth Veda'

ahamsa, Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda, Tagore and Bharati. All of them proclaimed a non-sectarian devotion to Devi that unified all. 'Mukha Panchasati' sang :

Oh Victor of a million wars !
Oh ocean of a hundred joys !
Oh consort of Lord Paramsiva !
Protect me, Grantor of a million
wishes.

Before long everybody was singing the glories of Rama and Krishna. Jayadev's 'Gita Govinda' became the rage. Dynaneswar viewed himself as a Gopi of Krishna. And then there was Bhagavat Purana, the world's masterpiece of devotion. It has had the greatest influence on Indian thought. It is even today the main inspiration of the world-wide Krishna Consciousness movement. Writes V Subramaniam ('Cultural Integration in India', Ashish Publishing House, H-12, Rajauri Garden, New Delhi-27); "Dr. Hardy has established clearly the function performed by this Purana in this direction. In the first place, the romantic outpourings of the Tamil Vaishnava devotees were based on Tamil Aham literary conventions which had no meaning outside the borders of Tamilnadu. Hence its content had to be restated without the Aham idiom, and in a language common to all India. This was exactly what Bhagavatha Purana did by portraying the love of the Gopis for Krishna in Sanskrit, devoid of Aham conventions, though much poetic beauty was thereby lost. Secondly, Hardy has established in some detail how Bhagavatha Purana not only displays close knowledge of Alvar poetry but in fact follows

many verses closely indeed. Thirdly, there is enough evidence to show that it was composed in Tamilnadu, perhaps in Pandya country. Fourthly, it is also fairly clear that it attained the status of a major Purana very quickly as Al-Beruni in the 11th century refers to Bhagavad-Gita and Bhagavatha Purana equally frequently. Fifthly, the Bhakti synthesis of Bhagavatha Purana was closer to Advaita, but not polemical. In fact, this vague non-polemical Advaita made it exportable and acceptable over a wider area. Thus non-polemical Acharyas such as Vallabhacharya, Nimbarka and Sri Chaitanya found much of their inspiration from it. Its influence became so pervasive that one can trace it indirectly on every North Indian devotee from Namdev to Dynaneswar on to Meera Bai, Vidyapathi, Chandidas and Chaitanya.

"In this final shape, the Bhakti movement was capable of enormous flexibility. It was based upon identification but it could take several forms in the devotee, to wit, that of a beloved mother, servant, camp-follower, friend or student. Whenever there was no perceptible Muslim oppression, the Hindu devotee could relate to Krishna the child or lover, but where Muslim oppression was a pertinent fact, the devotees collectively identified themselves as followers of warrior Rama in the Gangetic valley. The Bhagavatha Purana facilitated all this variety by including several stories of different types of Bhaktas from the chid Dhruva to the profligate Ajamila—from the Gopis to Akura and Arjuna and virtually equated

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all possible personalized emotional relations with God, each with the other. These were classified in due course as different aspects of Bhakti.

"Secondly, the community of Bhaktas or the Hindu Millat was already recognised as above caste, though caste was in full swing for several worldly purposes. The Islamic message of human equality did not have the expected impact on the Hindu masses, partly because Bhakti had already armed the Hindus with the same message. Indeed, the mediaeval saint singers of Hindustan could either build a bridge to Islam or challenge it, as they wished—and in the final analysis, Islam was perhaps more affected by Bhakti mysticism than the latter was influenced by Islam."

Would Bhakti have developed without this Tamil synthesis of eroticism and yoga? It might have, but in a totally different and weaker form, because the elements that were available in North India, namely, hero worship with the concept of Avatara, the wealth of Puranic legend and the Bhagavadgita conception of Bhakti Yoga, did not contain the Tamil erotic element which fused them to make Bhakti the totally personal and at the same time universal phenomenon, that it became.

Just sample this Tamil poetry of *perunthinal*, overflowing love. Andal is jealous of the conch-shell 'Panchjanya' monopolising Krishna's lips :

Oh Conch from the ocean !

*Andal is jealous of 'Panchjanya' for
being closer to Krishna's lips*

*Like the crescent Moon, you ride on his
hands
And without any ado, you reach his
ears*

*You whisper your wishes therein, you
Conch !*

*Not the Lord of Heaven has such good
fortune, oh Conch.*

*And what do you drink ? the sweetness
of His mouth.*

*And where do you rest ? In the hand of
Him blue-hued like the sea.*

*And if all the women pile their com-
plaints about you,*

*You just sing and sing away, You
Pancha Janya !*

*When ten thousand women in love, wait
in vain,*

*You drink away the sweetness of his
lips*

That belong to all of us. And

*Why will not they look daggers at you
My dear great Conch ? Oh Conch ?*

Oh Conch !

And Kulasekhar says in Perumal Tirumoli :

*In this city there are plenty of milk-
maids*

*Wearing fine flowers on their braids
Who want to embrace your chest—I*

know that;

And yet I believed your lies

*And waited shivering in the sharpest
wind*

*On the banks of the Yamuna on a sand-
hill*

All waiting for you to come.

*You winked lovingly at a raven-haired
one*

Shankaracharya gave the country its high intellectual unity

And then you set your heart on taking
another
And you told a third and lied to another
You enjoyed still another with beautiful
tresses.

Nor to her were you true
For with you, as you grow, grows your
wily Maya.

You asked me to come
To the bower of Jasmine
And you slept with another there
And seeing me, you became apologetic,
Pretended to be scared—and you slipped
away

Holding your golden cloth by your
hand;
But if you do come within my reach,
some day,
I shall settle my scores with you, oh
Lord!

Devotion to the Lord like this, had never been heard before! It moved and elevated the masses as no mantra, tantra or yantra could. It gave the people a new faith, a new confidence, a new courage to face the world. The brave new note was eloquently struck by Appar—a Jain celebrity who converted to Saivism in the South: He sang: "We are not the subjects of any; we are not afraid of death; we will not suffer in hell; we live not in illusion; we are proud; we know not ill; we bend not to anybody; it is all one happiness for us; there is no dejection; for we have become servants, never to turn back, of that Lord who is subject to none, and have become one with the beautiful flower-strewn feet of that Lord of white conch ear-rings."

While the Alvars and Nayanars—both

meaning "Nath"—took God to the masses, Shankaracharya and other scholars gave a new philosophy and a new unity to the classes. The popular saying "Bhakti Dravida upji, laye Ramanand" (Bhakti was born in the South, it was brought north by Ramanand) is literally true. He inspired all the Nirguna saints, including Nanak and Kabir. Vallabhacharya initiated Surdas. His followers established the Shree Nath Dwara complex in Rajasthan.

Sankara gave intellectual unity to the country by working out a methodology that was accepted by all schools of philosophy. In other words he fixed the rules of the philosophical game, whoever played it. Its central element was the identification of valid sources of (spiritual) knowledge. On this, there was no agreement before Sankara. The Buddhists ignored the Vedic canon as an undisputed source of knowledge, and relied heavily on intelligent personal observation, introspection, logic and the experiences and saying of their teachers. The Charvakas relied almost completely on the first three. The other Darshanas also relied in part on the Vedas and in part on other things, while Mimamsa was based solidly on what Sankara characterised as only a part of the Vedic canon, i.e., its Karma-kanda. In short, the sources of reference were not the same for all philosophers before Sankara. After Sankara, there was complete agreement on the three sources of spiritual knowledge, the Prasthanathrayas, or three starting points, namely the Upanishads, Brahmasutras and the Bhagavad Gita.

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His primary job was to undermine non-scriptural evidence in matters spiritual. This was made easy by the contemporary decadence and discrediting of Buddhists who used non-scriptural evidence. Nevertheless, Sankara went about his job thoroughly. He conceded somewhat ostentatiously that for what can be seen, felt or heard, observation was the final authoritative evidence, and that scripture is to be ignored when it says that fire is cold or dark—against observed facts. This prepared the ground in part for accepting scripture as the main source of non-observational evidence. Sankara then used the logic developed by Buddhists to challenge the findings of other Darśanas, based on inductive logic and observation. Having demolished them in part, he went on to reach the conclusion that logic is useless for understanding inner experience. He reinforced this often by rhetorically asking how one can deny the obvious joy and fulfilment of one, right in front, such as his Parama Guru, Gaudapada. Thus having more or less established spiritual experience and insights as their own proof, Sankara still had the problem of further restricting the valid sources of this knowledge. He had the option of including the individual experiences of great seers such as his own Guru. Instead, he chose three older works (which were destined to win universal acceptance) as the sources of spiritual experience and revelation. The way was shown again by his Guru Gaudapada who implicitly claimed to derive all his own mystic experience from the Mandukya Upanishad. Sankara explicitly generalised this

into the proposition that all spiritual experience is repetition and rediscovery of Upanishadic insights. He did this—quietly (i) by calling the Upanishads the second half of the Vedic canon or the Jayakanda while the Samhitas were named as the Karmakanda (ii) and by prescribing a criterion other than command or direction, a new test of importance, namely that of producing fruitful knowledge. Having brought in the Upanishadic lore, Sankara set apart twelve Upanishads as the crucial ones through his commentaries on them. The Brahmasutras were automatically included—as the essence of Upanishadic wisdom. The Bhagavad Gita was then brought in as a continuation of Upanishadic thought and as a compendium of differing viewpoints on spiritual discipline.

To his great glory he thus integrated the three legacies of Buddhist logic, Tamil Bhakti and Upanishadic insights in a unique way at the right time. This integration set him clearly apart and well above the giants that preceded or succeeded him—such as that mighty trio of logicians, Dinanaga, Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna, the great Gaudapada himself, the talented Mandana and the scintillating poet philosophers of the South, Nammalwar and Manickavacagar. In sheer brain power, each of them was the equal of Sankara—but the task of uniting the three streams into a Gāna Ganga fell to Sankara alone. Nammalwar and Manickavacagar were well versed in Upanishadic lore and were legatees to the rich Tamil 'Aham' tradition which they (along with their predecessors) shaped into the great Tamil Bhakti cult.

Shankara integrated Upanishadic insights with Buddhist Logic & Tamil Bhakti

Without Swami Vidyaranya's Vijayanagar, there might have been no Shivaji

But they exhibit no acquaintance with the treasures of Indian logic. The obvious reason was that neither of them went north to Buddhist centres of learning, where it was cultivated, and Buddhist logic, unlike Buddhist ethic, had not penetrated down South to Tamil country to the same extent.

Nor did Sankara stop at giving Indian thought a new and universally accepted methodology. He gave us religious centres, religious orders, temples and icons.

Vedic religious life centred round rituals at home and contemplation in the Ashram, though Mohen-Jo-Daro civilisation had known temples and idols. When the Greek civilisation collapsed, Greeks spread out in all directions. Many of them settled down in and around Afghanistan, and became Buddhists. The Greek artistic sense produced statues of Buddha in the great, Gandhara (Qandhar) style. (The word Buddha became corrupted into 'Butt', a Turkish synonym for all "idols"! To this day many Kashmiri converts are named as 'Butt'.) The popularity of Buddhas' !! idols led to carving of idols of various Hindu gods and avatars.

Sankara in addition set up four Dhams in the four corners of the country. The four Jagad Gurus with their pomp and ceremony became the new leaders of society. The Sankaracharya of Sringeri Mutt particularly became as powerful as a Pope. Vidyaranya Maharaj of Sringeri played a crucial role in the establishment of Vijayanagar Empire

as a Hindu bastion against Muslim expansion. He reconverted the forcibly converted brothers, Harihar and Bukka, and encouraged them to found that great Hindu Kingdom in the South. But for Vijayanagar, there might have been no Shivaji!

The Alvars and Nayanars had inspired many Pallava and Chola kings to build great temples all over the South. These temples became the visible expressions of people's faith and people's power. Parandardas and Thyagaraja took devotional music to heavenly heights. They married art to religion, and thus strengthened both. Vyas had described pilgrimages as the poor man's Yajna. And now more pilgrimages to religious centres further united the people and integrated society.

Said Mahatma Gandhi: ".....Our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock-carts. They learnt one another's languages and there was no aloofness between them. What do you think could have been the intention of those farseeing ancestors of ours who established Setubandha (Rameswar) in the South, Jagannath in the east and Hardwar in the north as places of pilgrimage? You will admit they were no fools. They knew that worship of God could have been performed just as well at home. They taught us that those whose hearts were aglow with righteousness had the Ganga in their own homes. But they saw that India was one undivided land, so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing thus, they established holy places in

various parts of the world. In addition, he converted the forcibly converted brothers, Harihar and Bukka, and encouraged them to found that great Hindu Kingdom in the South. But for Vijayanagar, there might have been no Shivaji!

In addition, he converted the forcibly converted brothers, Harihar and Bukka, and encouraged them to found that great Hindu Kingdom in the South. But for Vijayanagar, there might have been no Shivaji!

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In addition, Sankaracharya also organised Hindu monks into Ten Orders—Dasnami. They organised the silent Hindu resistance to Muslim proselytising, while the arms-bearing sect of Astradhari organised armed resistance, where kings and chieftains failed. The vigour and continuity of this tradition is proved by the Sanyasi rebellion against the East India Company, so well romanticised in Bankim Chandra's "Ananda Mutt." In short, the simultaneous creation of Peethas and the Dasanamis provided common islands of reference in the shoreless Hindu ocean of flexibility. The authority of the Jagadguru over his entourage and monks in the area was substantial.

There was division of labour among various orders of monks, the Saraswatis looking after education, the Puris after organisation, and the Astradhari acting as Knights Templar. The Pontiff was scheduled to tour his region regularly, as were the various orders of monks, to exercise some control over religious performance.

All these thoughts and practices and institutions were factors in the Indian revival that followed the fall of Buddhism. It was this revival that flowered forth in Tulsi and Mira, Sur and Kabir, Namdev and Dnyaneshwar, Vidyapati and Chandidas, Rahim and Raskhan, Tukaram and Ramdas, Chaitanya and Sankardev, Guru Nanak and Guru Govind. It was these saint-singers who rose above caste and united the people in Bhakti, even in the absence of a common church. They laid the literary foundation of all modern languages in India. They carried the essence

of the Veda to the masses. They were the Rishis of the middle ages. When Muslim rulers forbade temples and idols, these saints kept the flame of faith alive with just Raam-Naam (Ram-dhun). In the words of Sister Nivedita : "Greatness is but another name for interpretation..... Every profound truth waits for the life that shall be all its voice, and when that is found, it comes within the reach of multitudes to whom it would have remained inaccessible."

At a time when India's political and military power lay broken, religious leaders rose to the occasion. Although Hindu society lost millions to Islam, these saints brought more millions—mostly tribal people, earlier out of the pale of society—into the national mainstream. This is the finding of Max Weber, father of Modern Sociology. They inspired the people with song and story, with example and precept. They pitted the higher and immortal sovereignty of Rama, against the might of the ruler of the day.

Ramayana laid down the norms of all human relations—within the family and outside. No wonder, to this day. 'Jai Ram Ji' is the most popular greeting in India.

It is significant that Hindu rulers carried on the administration in the name of the presiding deity of their area. It was Eklingji in Mewar, Chamundi in Mysore, Padmanabha in Travancore. 'Dharma' was king; the ruler was only a viceroy of the Lord. Even Indra, the King of the Devas, was repeatedly punished for attacking his Gurus. Bhagavat Puran celebrated the fall of arrogant kings like Hiranya Kashyap, Vena and Mahabali. All these ancient tales, repeated in song and story by saints, had their moral relevance in the middle ages. That is how the Bhakti movement saved India in its darkest hour. KRM

VIDYAPATI & CHANDIDAS...

Sri Aurobindo

AS THE SANSKRIT literature begins with the Vedas and Upanishads, the later literatures begin with the inspired poetry of the saints and devotees. It was always poetry of this type that was nearest to the heart and mind of the people. The desire of the soul for God is thrown into symbolic figure in the lyrical love cycle of Radha and Krishna. This accomplished lyrical form springs at once to perfect birth from the genius of the first two poets who used the Bengali tongue, Vidyapati, a consummate artist of word and line, and the inspired singer Chandidas, in whose name stand some of the sweetest and most poignant and exquisite love lyrics in any tongue.

Another type is created in the perfect lyrics of the Rajput queen Mirabai, in which the images of the Krishna symbol are more directly turned into a song of the love and pursuit of the divine Lover by the soul of the singer. This is given a still more direct turn by a southern poetess (Andal) in the image of herself as the bride of Krishna.

Tukaram, first Marathi poet is at once a devotee, a yogin and a thinker; the poetry of the saint Ramdas, associated with the birth and awakening of a nation, is almost entirely a stream of religious ethical thinking raised to the lyrical pitch; and it is the penetrating truth and

fervour of a thought arising from the heart of devotion that makes the charm and power of Tukaram's songs. A long strain of devotee poets keeps sounding the note that he struck and their work fills the greater space of Marathi poetry. The same type takes a lighter and more high-pitched turn in the poetry of Kabir. In Bengal again at the end of the Mahomedan period there is the same blending of fervent devotion with many depths and turns of religious thought in the songs of Ramprasad to the divine Mother, combined here with a vivid play of imagination, turning all familiar things into apt and pregnant images and an intense spontaneity of feeling.

Even the 'ignorant masses' of India have this distinction that they are by centuries of training nearer to the inner realities. Where else could the songs of a Tukaram, a Ramprasad, a Kabir, the Sikh Gurus and the chants of the Tamil saints with their fervid devotion and also their profound spiritual thinking have found so speedy an echo and formed a popular religious literature? This strong permeation or close nearness of the spiritual turn, this readiness of the mind of a whole nation to turn to the highest realities is the sign and fruit of an age-long, real and a still living and supremely spiritual culture. (Extracts from 'The Foundations of Indian Culture'.)



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“Hari Bol ! Hari Bol !”

Politico-Social Consequences of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Prof. Vishnukant Shastri

Head of Hindi Department, Calcutta University

CHAITANYA MAHAPRABHU was basically an extremely devoted Bhakta. The ultimate aim of his life was to attain Shri Krishna. His main activity was Bhakti, through unalloyed love—realisation of Radha-bhava (Radha-spirit) in his own life—and to help fellow-devotees to achieve the same. The outward form of this Mahabhav was compassion for all living beings and nam-sankirtan, singing the name of Krishna. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu tried his best to fill the life of the masses with Bhakti. And he succeeded in his efforts to a great extent. So a reference to his political and social influence may at first sight appear inappropriate to

many. But on a deeper reflection, it would be clear that the socio-political consciousness, which was a by-product of the spiritual awakening brought about by Shri Chaitanya and other great Bhaktas of the middle ages, also put new life in the common man of India.

As a matter of fact every radical religious Sadhana affects the whole way of life of the devotees concerned. The wider the mass base of a sadhana, the greater is the scale on which the *status quo* is challenged and changed. The political and social leaders with a vested interest in the *status quo* oppose these changes with all their

Bengal before Chaitanya was a very stagnant, casteist society

might. Only after passing through this acid test, can the new way of life establish itself. This is also true of the Bhakti cult of the middle ages. The way the great Bhakti movement spread from the Himalayas to the seas in an environment of violence is proof of its invincible idealism and its irresistible power to mould society on a new philosophy of life. To appreciate the achievements of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu fully, it is necessary to consider the prevailing situation.

In 1204 A. D., 281 years before the birth of Shri Chaitanya, Bhaktyar Khilji had annexed Nadiya, Lakhnauti—i.e., Navadwip and Lakshmanavati—after defeating Lakshman Sen. Upto the thirteenth century there were independent Hindu rulers in eastern and southern Bengal. But after that, Bengal remained almost continuously under Muslim rule, until the British came on the scene. The only exception was the 3-year rule of Danujamardandev Raja Ganesh and his successor, Mahendra Dev, who ruled from 1415 to 1418. After the conversion to Islam of Yadu, the son of Ganesh, no independent Hindu King could rule Bengal.

According to Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Muslim rulers had a set policy regarding Hindus :

1. Every Hindu had to pay *Jeziya* tax for residing in his own motherland;
2. Hindus were not allowed to build temples or instal *Moortis* in them. In

actual practice, it generally meant that demolishing the existing temples was also a 'virtuous' Islamic act;

3. If a non-muslim wished to adopt Islam, nobody was allowed to stand in his way. But if some Muslim convert wanted to re-convert to Hinduism, any muslim was authorised to kill both, him and anybody helping him in the matter.

Meanwhile in the organisation of the Hindu society of Bengal, many complexities had crept in on account of the confusion of Buddha-Shakta-Vedic systems. Re-organisation of society on the lines of Varanashram, initiated in the Gupta period, did not proceed apace in Bengal due to the influence of Buddhism on the Pal dynasty. The Sen dynasty from Karnatak tried to reimpose Varna Ashram on Bengal. It had even invited Kanyakubja Brahmin families from Kanauj for the purpose. Bengali law-givers, in their allergy to Buddhism, had consigned large sections of society to the category of shudras and Antyejas. (To this day, these former Buddhists, now converted to Islam, are known by their old disparaging description as 'Nygre', shaven-headed.) And so the caste system of Bengal consisted only of Brahmins, Shudras, Antyejas and Mlechhas and there was seldom any clear reference to Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. Next to Brahmins were Karanas, Vaidyas, Kayasthas, Ambashtas and other mixed castes. These sections were basically occupational but they were converted into castes often designated as Shudras. Next to them were Kainvartas who wielded lot of

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influence. Chandals and Doms were considered very low and they usually lived on the out-skirts of the towns. A caste-system based on work and worth has a lot of elasticity, while the one based on birth is very rigid; it divides and weakens the society. Before the coming of Islam, the structure of the Bengali Hindu society had become wooden and moth-eaten. In this situation many poor people came under the influence of Sufi missionaries and embraced Islam.

On the one side was the Smarta Dharmna, based on hidebound rules of law-books, and rituals. On the other, Vajrayanis and Sahajayanis of Mahayana Buddhism had become perverted. They made wine, meat and sex the dominant means of their Sadhana. This also affected the Shaktas and Sahajia Vaishnavas. This practice of worship with five M's (*madya* (wine), *mansa* (meat), *meena* (fish), *Mudra*, (obscene postures) and *maithun* (sex) seriously subverted the social norms. These cults, though condemning caste-differences and empty rituals, could not present a positive healthy alternative for social organisation.

It is really a miracle that Bengali Hindu society could preserve itself against all these odds. Scholars give credit for this survival to the decentralised life of self-sufficient villages. Turmoils, both political and religious, in the middle ages, could reach far off villages only very slowly, and so the rural areas continued their traditional way of life almost unchanged. This explanation is partly

correct but it throws no light on the positive side of the continuity of the traditional life. Some scholars have suggested that, robbed of political and military power, Hindus adopted for their protection the policy of social boycott. They despised muslims as 'mlechl' and 'yavan' in order to maintain a sense of their intellectual, cultural, moral and spiritual superiority. They ordered excommunication of all those having any contacts with them and tried to save the Hindu society by pursuing a policy of amputating the unhealthy organ in order to save the healthy body. This explanation also contains some truth. However, a culture does not grow by these negative attitudes; what is required for its development is love, broad-mindedness, large-heartedness. And fact is that the Indian society, which was in very bad shape in the middle ages, was rejuvenated by the inspiring influence of Bhakti movement. It should also be kept in mind that this movement was the fruitful culmination of high endeavours spread over several centuries. Some superficial historians have tried to paint this movement as an escapist reaction to the Hindu political defeat. They forget that a reaction is vengeful, narrow, extremist and short-lived. But the liberal, all-embracing, all-loving, all-elevating Bhakti movement could not be a reaction to political defeat. They should also remember that the phase of the Indian Bhakti-cult of the middle ages took its birth between the fourth and twelfth centuries—before Islam arrived on the scene—mainly by the inspired efforts of the people's poets, the Alvar

*The survival of Bengali society
was the miracle of Chaitanya*

Under the influence of Ishwar Puri, he became Krishna Bhakta in Gaya

Bhaktas, together with the highly learned Acharyas in the South, where Islam was yet to be heard of. It is, therefore, contrary to facts, to see Bhakti movement as a reaction of the Hindu society to Islam. This immortal tide of cultural nectar reached Bengal by the middle of the fifteenth century by the efforts of the monistic Bhaktas and teachers like Madhavendra Puri and Ishwar Puri. Some great leader was, however, needed to turn it into a gigantic tidal wave. And such a leader arrived in the person of Chaitanya.

The night is darkest just before the dawn. Bengal had such a situation before the advent of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Fatch Shah, Sultan of Gaur, had let terror loose on Navadweep, the cultural centre of Bengal. Vasudev Sarvabhaum, a highly respected Brahmin of Navadweep, had to flee the place to take refuge in Puri, Orissa. According to 'Chaitanya Mangal,' written by Jayanand Kavi, when the residents of Navadweep had lost almost all hopes of their lives (*Praan bhaye sthir nahe Navadweep-vasi*) Jagannath's wife Shachi Devi gave birth to a child on February 18, 1486, who later became famous as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the saviour of Desh and Dharma. His parents named him Vishwambhav, but they lovingly called him by the pet name of Nimai, while the people of the locality in general called him 'Gaur', or 'Gora Roy' because of his fair complexion.

Nimai was a child of an exceptionally

strong will and brilliance. When his elder brother Vishwa Roop took to Sanyas, and his own schooling was discontinued by his father, for fear that he may do the same, he sat dharna on the heap of unwashed utensils, and went on fast, until he was allowed to continue his studies. At the age of eleven, he lost his father. At sixteen, he acquired a good knowledge of shastras and started teaching. He now married Lakshmi Devi, a girl of his choice. Some time after this, he defeated a champion-scholar in 'Shastrartha' and earned great honour for Navadweep. Lakshmi Devi died of a sanke-bite two years after their marriage, when Nimai had gone to East Bengal to earn greater name and more money. In 1505, Nimai married Vishnupriya Devi, daughter of the court-scholar Sanatan Mishra. Nimai visited Gaya in 1508 for performing his father's Shraaddha. Here he came in contact with Ishwar Puri, under whose influence the fountain of Krishna-bhakti gushed forth in the heart of Nimai. Six years earlier, too, Ishwar Puri had met him in Navadweep. Nimai also had many acquaintances among the local Vaishnavas. But it was in Gaya that he was all of a sudden over-powered with the divine ecstasy of Bhakti. He was now initiated into 'Dash Akshar Mantra (ten-letter sacred chant)' by Ishwar Puri. Again it was here that Radhabhav (Radhaspirit) came over him. In Gaya itself he prepared to go to Vrindavan. However, his companions prevailed upon him not to go just then, and he returned to Navadweep after four months. On his return from Gaya, Nimai was a changed man.

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Humility had replaced brilliance. Henceforth for him teaching became unimportant and Krishna-Bhakti became the passion of his life. Crying out "Hay Krishna! Hay Krishna!" he became unconscious now and then.

Even before Nimai's conversion to Vaishnavism, Navadweep did have a small circle of Vaishnavites. Its leader was Advaita Acharya. Off and on, in the courtyard of Shrivats, this Vaishnav Samaj had its congregation and Kirtan. This samaj welcomed Nimai with open arms. As Nimai's Bhakti became more and more intense, his profession of teaching lost all interest for him. Within four months, he had wound up his teaching work. He now started Kirtan with a divine ecstasy. Ordinary folk thought that he had become a patient of Vayu-vikar (crazy). Shrivats and other Vaishnavas believed that Mahashakti yoga had appeared in Chaitanya. Within months, Advait Acharya realised that Nimai was the future leader of the Vaishnava Samaj. In May 1509, he anointed Nimai, entrusted the leadership of the Vaishnav Samaj to him, and himself went away to shantipur.

Vaishnava Samaj of Navadweep was a victim of oppression not only by the ruling Muslims, but also by some thoughtless Hindus, who believed that Kirtan was only a shrill cacophony, disturbing their sleep. Nimai inspired Vaishnavas to be fearless and have courage. His devotees believe that he gave darshan to Shrivats in the form of the incarnation of Narsimha (man-lion) and to Murari in the form of

the incarnation of Varah (Boar) and thus made the Vaishnavas fearless. They now ignored the hypocrites and began to hold Kirtans in public places. During the same year, on the eve of the full moon of Ashadh (lunar-equivalent of July) Nityanand Avadhoot, alias Nitai, joined the Vaishnava Samaj of Navadweep. Nitai was eight years older than Nimai, but he gladly accepted Nimai as his Guru. On his return from Shantipur, Advait Acharya himself bowed to the divine pair of Nimai and Nitai. The Vaishnav Order accepted Nimai as the incarnation of Krishna, and Nitai, as that of Balaram. A great pillar of this society saw Haridas who, inspite of being a muslim, was an ardent devotee of Krishna, and had prayed continuously alongwith Advait Acharya, for the reincarnation of Shri Krishna.

Nimai now decided that henceforth Vaishnava-kirtan will not be held in the courtyard of Shrivats, or within the closed doors of his house. The name of Shri Krishna must be propagated far and wide. For this mission, he selected Nityanand and Haridas. Shri Vrindavandas has given a very reliable report of this occasion in 'Chaitanya Bhagavat'. Vrindavandas was the son of Narayani Devi, a direct disciple of Nityanand. In the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, he is considered to be an incarnation of Vyasa and his work 'Chaitanya Bhagavat' is accepted as an authoritative document, Nimai directed.

*Shun-shun Nityanand ! shun Haridas !
Sarvatra amar agya karah prakash.*

*Nimai and Nitai were viewed as
incarnations of Krishna Balaram*

The story of Jagai and Madhai, Nityanand and Haridas

*Prati ghare ghare giya kar ehi bhiksha,
Krishna bhaj, Krishna bol, kar Krishna-
shiksha.*

(Listen, O Nityanand! And listen, Haridas! Propagate my message everywhere. Go from house to house, begging for alms. Pray to Krishna, cry out Krishna and teach Krishna to the people.)

This plan of broad-basing Vaishnavism, was an open challenge to thoughtless Hindus and Muslim rulers alike. The first showdown came with unthinking Hindus, who called them names and insulted Vaishnav missionaries.

But the latter continued to propagate their Bhakti message with redoubled zeal. This provided an opportunity to Jagai and Madhai, the leaders of the Hindu hypocrites, to listen to the sweet and melodious Vani of Nimai. Jagai and Madhai, Brahmin by birth, were unscrupulous criminals. They were always heavily drunk. Haridas and Nityanand withdrew when they saw their red eyes and aggressive postures. But a few days later, Madhai broke an earthen pitcher on Nityanand's head, which began to bleed profusely. Nimai was furious when he heard of it and he promptly reached the place of occurrence. The Bhaktas believe that Jagai and Madhai saw the Chakra-bearing form of Shri Krishna in Chaitanya. The villains were completely nonplussed; they now begged for mercy. They were thenceforth completely transformed into ideal Vaishnavas. This single incident demoralised the antagonists and

Navadweep now witnessed a powerful tide of Kirtans and religious congregations.

Soon there was a direct confrontation with the ruling power. Chand Kazi of Navadweep was getting regular information that under the leadership of Nimai Pundit, Hinduism was raising its head. The Vaishnavas believe that the hypocrites also had a hand in instigating the Kazi. The Kazi came to Navadweep, determined to suppress the Vaishnavas. Vrindavandas has given a first-hand graphic account of this episode:

*Kazi bole, Dhar, dhar aaj karon karya
Aji va ki kare tor Nimai Acharya.
Aadhe vyathe palail nagariagan.
Maha trase kesh keho na kare bandhan.
Yahare paip Kazi maril tahare.
Bhangil mridanga anachar kail dware.
Kazi bole Hinduani hail nadiya
Karimu ihar shasti nagali paya
Kshama Kari yav aaji daive hail rati.
Aar din lagi pai lei latb jati.*

(The Kazi said: "Catch them, catch them. Today I will complete this work. I will see what your Nimai Acharya can do. All citizens ran helter-skelter. They even forgot to tie their hair for fear. The Kazi belaboured every one he could lay his hands on. He broke their Mridangas (drum) committed excesses on every door. He warned that he would punish Nadiya severely because Hinduism was spreading. Today, luckily for you, it is night, so I am sparing you people. Next time, whom-

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soever I can lay my hands on, I will destroy his dharma'.)

It was clear that he wanted to terrify the residents so that they may desert Nimai. So he started making a round of the city, with a bunch of scoundrels :

*Aehi mat pratidin dushta gan laiya
Nagar bhramayee Kazi keertan chahita.*

The citizens stopped performing kirtan because of the fear of the Kazi. The Vaishnavas sought Nimai's permission to shift from Navadweep to somewhere else. But, Nimai was made of sterner stuff. He decided to oppose this unwarranted onslaught. No Dharmaguru before this had dared to confront the ruling power.

Shri Girija Shankar Rai Chaudhry, analysing the leadership of Chaitanya, has rightly remarked : "Nimai decided to defy the orders of the Kazi after weighing the pros and cons. He said : '*Sarva Navadweep aaj karimu Kirtan*' (I will have kirtan in the whole of Navadweep today)."

This was Nimai's riposte to the Kazi's ban orders. He provided the crucial leadership for Vaishnavas in this hour of crisis. He flatly rejected the proposal to evacuate from Navadweep. And he lost no time in taking the decision as the leader of the movement. He addressed the citizens and appealed to them to come to his house after dinner, with a burning torch each in their hands. "Today, not only will I lead the kirtan; I will demolish the Kazi's residence and perform a

Kirtan at his very door. Have courage and do not have any fear". This was a fitting reply to the Kazi.

Nimai had extra-ordinary organising capacity. First, he went with Nityanand to the houses of all the Vaishnavas. Then, he appealed to all citizens : "*Chal, chal bhai sab nagaria gan !*" (Come one, come all, brother-citizens !)

So that it no longer remained a confrontation between the Vaishnavas and the Kazi; it was now a battle of self-assertion of all citizens of Navadweep, against an oppressive ruler.

With a clear fighting strategy, it was decided that the vanguard of the kirtan procession would be led by Advait Acharya and his companions; in the middle will be Haridas, followed by Shrivats pundit with all his party; and the rear will be brought up by Gaurang Sundar (Nimai), with Nityanand and Gadadhara on the flanks. Everything went on with precision. All Navadweep was intoxicated with enthusiasm. The kirtan procession moved on; nobody dared to stop it or put any obstacles in its way. It wended its way to the Kazi's residence. This is how Vrindavandas depicts Nimai's angry indignation :

*Aasiya kajir dware prabhu Vishwamber
Krodhaveshe hunkar karaye bahutar
Krodhe bole Prabhu are Kazi beta Kotha
Jhat jan dhariya katiya phe! matha
Niryavan karoh aji sakl bhidwan
Poorev yen bauh kelaon se kalyavan*

How Chaitanya bearded the Kazi in his own den

The Kazi now removed all restrictions on kirtans

*Pran lama Kotha Kazi gel diya dwar
Ghar mang mang Prabhu bole bar bar.*

(At the Kazi's door, Prabhu Vishwambhar began to give a war-cry with great fury. He angrily asked where the 'Kazi-beta' was. "Catch him and cut off his head," he shouted, "just as I had earlier killed demon Kalyavan (from the life of Krishna). I will now free this land from the Yavanas. Where has the Kazi fled for his life, closing his door?" Again and again Prabhu was shouting to break the doors open).

Just like the fury of Narasimha, after killing Harinyakashyap, the anger of Nimai was not abating. To thousands of devotees thronging the kirtan-procession, Prabhu said: "If the Kazi does not come out, burn him in his own house. Let me see what his master the Badshah does. Let me see who saves him from my hands". This is what is on record:

*Prabhu bole agni deh badir bhitre
Pudiya masak sarva gane sahite.
Dekhon more ki karo uhar narpati.
Dekhon aaj kaun ase kare avyahati.*

There was every possibility of the frenzied crowd setting fire to the Kazi's abode. But the kind-hearted Nityanand pacified the Prabhu, prevented the repetition of Lanka-burning. Krishnadas Kaviraj says that, thereafter the Kazi apologised and, with tears in his eyes, the Kazi touched Nimai's feet and in polite words said, "My ignorance and arrogance have been washed away with your grace.

Please be kind enough to allow me to be your devoted Bhakta". The account reads:

*Acto shuni Kazir dui chaks he pade pani
Prabhur charan chhui kahe priya vaani.
Tomar prasade more ghuchil kumati.
Ael kripa kariya tomate rahu bhakti.*

The Kazi also promised that henceforth there would be no restrictions on Kirtan. Nimai now forgave him.

Advait Acharya said that the aim of the incarnation of Chaitanya was that, in addition to the propagation of Bhakti, the hypocrites should be crushed and the Muslim aggressors disciplined. Nimai's role justified this interpretation. This puncturing of the pride of the Kazi had a very salutary effect on the Vaishnava Samaj of Navadweep. After this nobody dared put any obstacle in their way.

It should be remembered that Nimai was not a political leader, as such. He did not use this victory for any political gain. Being a Bhakta par excellence, Krishna-Bhakti was his only life-aim. As his Bhakti grew, he became altogether indifferent to the ways of the world. Accordingly, soon after this 'Kazi-daman' in 1510, at Kantakpur he got his 'deeksha' from Keshav Bharati and thereafter Nimai was transformed into 'Shri Krishna Chaitanya'. The Guru said, "You have made the entire world sing (the name of Shri Krishna and you have made everyone Chaitanya (conscious) through Kirtan, so

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According to Vrindavardas, one aim of Nimai's becoming a Sanyasin was to be able to propagate Bhakti more vigorously. Nimai knew that everyone respected a sanyasin. He, therefore, resolved to go from door to door to beg in the name of Krishna. "Let me see who kills me or obstructs me", he said :

*Sanyasire sarva lok kare namaskar
Sanyasi keho aar na kare prahar,
Sanyasi haiya kaali prati ghor ghare.
Bhiksha-karibun dekho ke mohe mare.*

Modern scholars like Dr. R. C. Majumdar and Dr. Shanti Kumar Das-Gupta have interpreted Chaitanya's Sanyas and exit from Gaur (Bengal) as having been influenced by political events. Chand Kazi was a grand-son of Sultan Hussain Shah, the contemporary ruler of Bengal. This Hussain Shah had demolished idols and temples in the whole of Orissa :

*Hussain Shah sarva Oriyar Deshe
Devamurti bhanglek deul visheshe.*

He inflicted similar excesses on Bengal also. Hence, the followers of Shri Chaitanya were apprehensive about his security. Shri Das-Gupta believes that the induction of Nimai as a sanyasin must have spoiled all the plans of the Kazi for wreaking vengeance on him. His opinion is : "No doubt Chaitanya Deva was a sanyasin, but his activities make him out to be a political sanyasi." Hussain Shah does

not seem to have taken 'Kazi-daman' in good spirit. On seeing the extensive influence of Shri Chaitanya over the masses, he apparently had admired him. But the apprehensions in the minds of his Hindu employees about the real intentions of the Sultan towards Shri Chaitanya, became clear when the latter arrived in village Ramkeli near Gaud, the capital of Hussain Shah. Hussain Shah had two senior officials, Senatan and Roop. Both of them were devoted Bhaktas and they used to address respectful letters to Shri Chaitanya at Puri. To bless them with his grace, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu arrived at Ramkeli. He had decided to go to Vrindavan, so there was a large number of followers accompanying him. Seeing that Hussain Shah was assessing Chaitanya's mass support, Keshav Chhattri, another officer on the one hand tried to assure the Sultan that Chaitanya was only an ordinary wandering mendicant with little influence, and on the other, he continued to press the Mahaprabhu to leave the place. Sanatan and Roop called on him at midnight in disguise, so that Hussain Shah may not know of it. Chaitanya blessed them. But they requested the Master to return quickly to Puri, because although for the moment the ruler of Gaud apparently admired Shri Chaitanya, no reliance could be placed on a Yavan's word. They did not also approve of his going to Vrindavan with such a huge procession.

*Iha haite chait Prabhu,aha nahi kaaj
Yadapi tomar Bhakti kare Gaud Raj
Tathapi Yavan jati na karitha prateet*

*Chaitanya was very much
of a Political Sanyasi*

Hussain Shah and his two officers, Sanatan & Roop

*Yahar sange chale aei lok laksha koti
Vrindavan yavar a nahi paripati.*

*Prajay palana tor ehi bad dharmā.
Praja putra, Raja pita kahil e marmā.*

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, with his foresight, took the hint. He returned to Puri and visited Gaud again. It is interesting to note that when Roop went to Vrindaban, Sanatan was put under arrest. He, however, made good his escape after bribing the guard. It is difficult to say how Hussain Shah would have behaved with Shri Chaitanya, if he had continued to stay in Bengal. Remarks Dr. Majumdar: 'Shri Chaitanya Dev lived for 24 years (1910-33 A.D.) after his anointment. But during this period he did not stay even for one year in Hussain Shah's realm in Bengal. He spent most of his time under the benign protection of King Pratap Rudra Dev of Orissa, Hussain Shah's brave adversary.

It is also noteworthy that whereas he inspired high-placed officials like Roop and Sanatan to relinquish their lucrative posts and get inducted into the Prema-Bhakti, Chaitanya did not allow King Pratap Rudra to do the same, although the latter begged of him so many times for it. The brave Pratap Rudra was the saviour of Dharma and protector of freedom in eastern India. According to 'Chaitanya Mangal', written by Lochan Das, Shri Chaitanya blessed him and advised him to concentrate on his kingly duties. He made it clear to him that the protection of his subjects was his highest dharma; the king was the father, and all his subjects were his children :

Prabhu bole Raja her shunahu vachan

After taking sanyas, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu travelled from Puri to Dwarika from 1510 to 1512. Was it a Teertha Yatra? Or, did it have some deeper motive? Nothing can be said for certain. This journey of Shri Chaitanya took him all along the coast. All the coastal-regions were under the control of Hindu kings. Was this new sanyasin systematically moving on with a view to inspire and organise the Hindu masses and their rulers against the Muslim aggressors? Records are silent on this point. However, a probing modern scholar, Shri Das-Gupta, writes :

"Before the all-devouring Muslim onslaught, when Hindu Dharma was almost in tatters, when, in the East, Hussain Shah's hordes were spreading death and destruction, when, in the South, the Bahmani-Bijapuri Sultans were expanding their territories, and the North was reeling under the heels of Sikandar Lodhi, Hindu Dharma and culture were facing the gravest peril in the land of their birth. And he wended his way, avoiding the turmoil of the mainland, through one Hindu kingdom after another along the sea-coast, right from Puri to Dwarka illuminating and inspiring the hearts of kings and commoners, young and old, men and women alike. We do not know whether or not he had a conscious plan to integrate and unite the disrupted power of the Hindus, but there is not an iota of doubt that his itinerary filled all the populace with divine love,

self-confidence, fearlessness and determination to do something nobler in life."

Some scholars have seen the inspiration of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the signing and implementation of several important agreements between King Pratap Rudra Dev of Orissa and King Krishna Dev Raya of Vijayanagar. Dr. R. C. Majumdar has accepted the version of Jayanand's 'Chaitanya Mangal' that Chaitanya dissuaded King Rudra Pratap from attacking Gaur Bengal, because in his opinion, Hussain Shah was very powerful and the latter could even harm the Puri temple.

On the basis of the reference cited above, this much can be concluded that, in spite of Shri Chaitanya being basically a religious celebrity, he acted as a political mentor, Raja Rishi, also. His efforts did exercise tangible influence on the polity, as a by-product of the spiritual renaissance. The morale of the vanquished Hindu society went up and hopes began to rise in their hearts. Even the resistance at Navadweep forced the Muslim rulers to adopt a policy of at least limited religious rights to the Hindu populace. Shri Giriraj Shankar Chaudhary, another scholar, tells us that, to wear down the dread of the Muslim ruling power, Nityanand even began to propagate the Vaishnava cult in a wrestler's dress. Even during the reign of Nasrat Shah, the son of Hussain Shah, we have many instances of skirmishes between the tyrannical administrators and the Vaishnava preachers. This only shows that even after Shri Chaitanya, his tradition inspired a

spirit of struggle for religious and political rights.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's influence in the social field was even more extensive than in the political field. But, it is equally true in reference to this aspect too, that he was basically a devoted Bhakta, and not a social reformer. The reforms brought about under his influence are also just another by-product of his Bhakti movement. Once you accept the mission that the greatest life-value for a human being is the attainment of Bhakti, the entire attitude and behaviour of an honest person undergoes a transformation. If Bhakti is the way, then everybody, irrespective of caste, creed or sex, should have the right to adopt it. Then again, the measure of greatness also should be one's intensity of Bhakti. The logical conclusion in practical life is that, from a Chandal to a Brahmin, all men and women are equal in the realm of Bhakti. A person will be judged high or low, poor or rich, according to his standing in the realm of Bhakti. This preamble challenged the tradition-ridden society of the day, which gave only nominal rights to women and 'shudras'. If a society gets stuck with the idea that a Brahmin is honourable, even if he is morally depraved, whereas a Shudra, howsoever virtuous, is not worthy of honour, then such a society is bound to stink. The contemporary society in the times of Chaitanya was a chronic patient of this malady.

The sense of justice of Shri Chaitanya led him to declare: "*Chandalopli dwijat*

Spiritual & Political Guide to the Great King of Orissa

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Shreshthah Haribhakti parayanah". (One who is devoted deeply to Bhakti, even if he is a Chandal, is greater than an ordinary Brahmin.)

Hari-bhajan is the root of all good qualities. Chaitanya held that if one was a Hari-Bhakta, even if a cobbler by birth, he was pure, whereas one who is supposed to be pure, but denounces Hari, he is worse than an ordinary cobbler.

*Muchi hai shuch hai, yadi Hari bhaje.
Shuchi hai muchi hai, yadi Hari Tyaje.*

It is true that the Bhakti-sutras of Shandilya and Narada and Bhagwat Mahapurana also do not accept caste-distinctions in Bhakti but it was Chaitanya who translated the high scripture into actual practice devotedly. He himself was a Brahmin but, for his followers, he had prohibited the restrictions of caste: "*Mor jati, mor sevaker jati nei.*" (I had my caste but my followers do not have any caste.) Naturally the repressed, depressed and ignored sections of society were greatly attracted to Chaitanya and his Bhaktisadhana. He could rebuff the hypocrites and the rulers on the basis of this very People's Power.

The traditional Hinduism gave the right of 'Guru Mantra' only to a Brahmin or a Sanyasin. But Chaitanya rejected this mandate too. He honoured Rai Ramanand, a Shudra, as his Guru:

*Kimva vipra kimva sanyasi, Shudra kene
a naya
yei Krishna tatva vetta sei guru hatha.*

(Whether one is a Brahmin or a sanyasi, or even a Shudra, if one has deep knowledge of Krishna-tatva, then he is entitled to be a Guru.)

And, indeed, in his order, even Shudras become Goswamis after becoming Hari-bhaktas and they were entitled to give Guru-mantra to even Brahmins. He directed even his Brahmin disciples to have charanodak (i.e. charnamrit or holy water touched by Guru's feet) of Bhakta Haridas, who was originally a Muslim. His right-hand associate, Nityanand, started a caste-breaking 'Chiwra Mahotsav' 'Festival of Chiwra, fried rice. In this festival, everybody, from Chandal to Brahmin, got the Chiwra 'prasad' in the same line. The Brahmins raised an objection. But Chaitanya endorsed the practice. The feelings of equality and respectability roused and fostered by this movement, created immense goodwill. A side-effect of this treatment was that the temptation to embrace Islam, to gain respectability, was gone.

When the Muslims forcibly destroyed the caste purity of some Hindus, they felt lost. Even if somebody by mistake took food touched by a Muslim, he was automatically ostracised; the fellow had no option but to become a Muslim. Chaitanya corrected this situation also. Hussain Shah had polluted one of his high Brahmin officials in the same way. When the latter wanted to perform a penance, the pundits of Kashi gave the verdict: "you swallow boiling ghee and embrace death!" The afflicted fellow

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came to seek shelter under Chaitanya. "Harinam is the penance for all evils. You go to Vrindavan and chant Harinam continuously". In a similar way many others who were declared outcastes because of Muslim contact, became socially respectable once again, by adopting Vaishnava-cult.

Then again, sex perversions had crept in through so-called Sadhana. The Panch-Makar worship of the Sahajyani Baudhs had percolated to the Sahajiyi Vaishnavas too. The Darkeya Bhav Upasana of Shri Krishna had degenerated into Parkeya (illicit) sex in practice. Dr. R.C. Majumdar writes: "The greatest antagonist-incarnate of this black and filthy cult was Shri Chaitanya. His sturdy manhood, pure attitude and exceptionally strong character, raised the standard of romantic Vaishnava Dharma to great heights. The manifest experience of Bhakti, the Kirtan and the divine ideal of Radha-Krishna emotion exhibited in his own life, washed away all the dark and dingy dirt from the foaming waters of the mass movement."

In the new Vaishnav-Vidhan, marriage amongst different castes was also accepted. Love marriage, that is Gandharva-vivah, was also permitted. Mere exchange of Gail or Kanthis sufficed to solemnise a marriage. The exorbitant rites at cremation and Shraaddha ceremonies were reduced to a simple Nam-Kirtan and Vaishnav-Bhoj. Child-widow Narayani, a Bhakta of Chaitanya, was probably remarried. It is true many Brahmin, Kayastha and Vaishya disciples of

Chaitanya could not entirely adapt themselves to these radical changes in their personal lives and followed more or less the same old traditions. But it is also true that many of the old chains were sufficiently loosened. At least a new field had been levelled where the so-called 'low castes' or backward sections of the society were treated as equals, equally respectable. That is how the Manipur tribes became Vaishnava.

Shri Chaitanya, by initiating these social changes, had put new life in the ancient Indian tradition. He did so by rejecting the fossilised aspects and supporting a liberal and tolerant interpretation.

In the economic field also, there is some influence of Chaitanya. Just as he had rejected the fixed status of the so-called high castes, similarly he refused to accept that: "*Sarve gunah Kanchan-mashrayamte.*" (All the virtues are embodied in gold)

He himself shunned wealth and even under prosperous devotees like Roop, Sanatan, Jeewan Rai and Ramanand, who were highly placed administrators, Chaitanya opted for a life of simplicity and poverty. This made renunciation respectable, virtuous living honourable. The movement became mass-based and the brotherhood of the order became a fact. At a later stage, kings and rich men also joined the sect. Nityanand himself assumed royal style in order to propagate the cult the more vigorously.

Truly speaking, after sadhana, the

*The Bengali renaissance began
with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu*

greatest influence wielded by Chaitanya was on literature. Vaishnav Padavali, Vaishnava Darshan, Rasa Shastra, Charit-treatises, Kathaks, Chaitanya Lila, painting, sculpture etc. rose to the climax of development under the influence of Vaishnav movement of shri Chaitanya. The words of Dr. Asit Kumar Vandyopadhyaya are true to the letter, when he describes the renaissance ushered into the life of Bengal by the touch of the philosopher's stone of Chaitanya cult :

"The spirit of Bangladesh, in the wake of the rise of Chaitanya cult, blossomed and brought forth the choicest

fruits. Those, who had been cowering under the fear of foreign rule, now shed away all fear, inactivity and hesitation and proceeded towards self-realisation. Those drowned in lust and ignorance, now looked at the open sky. Those who were bereft of their human rights under the inferiority complex of caste, were now carried high in the Bhakti wave, which washed away all inequalities and dirt. In short with the rise of Shri Chaitanya, the whole society underwent a transformation, both internal and external, to an extent never before seen in history."

How Hindu India Survived

Welhelm von Pochhammer
Consul General of Germany in India for 30 years

HISTORIANS are often inclined to favour success. When discussing the subjugation and plundering of North India by the Muslims, they have often placed the invaders in the centre of the picture. The true 'history of India', however, must show the resistance offered by the Indians.

The causes of defeat of the Indians in the Muslim invasions were political, military, social and religious. The most important political cause was the want of a central authority. Hinduism knows neither a Pope nor a church. From the spiritual point of view, this was perhaps an advantage, but from the political point of view, this was a disadvantage, because the individual priests remained isolated in their narrow divisions and did not form any groups for taking action. Europe should recognise that it owes its freedom from Islamic expansion at least partially to the Papal church which, with its crusades began the counter-action against the Islamic storm. This was something that was wanting in India. Vidyaranya (of Sringeri) forms a glorious exception.

And yet a new and living religion grew in this strait jacket, which contained the nucleus of the old highly developed culture. Since 1400 so many really great religious leaders arose that one can speak of a renaissance of Hinduism. And this new faith became the religion of the common people. If success was obtained in preserving Hindu culture in the hell of the first few centuries, the credit goes undoubtedly to the Brahmins.

The power of Hinduism to unite its adherents has proved stronger than that of Christianity. That is explained by the fact that it is a religion that has grown from the soil. The Hindu's conception of God stems from their surroundings. Gods that have assumed human form or men that have been deified, like Rama and Krishna, are honoured as heroes and also as Gods. To the Hindus they are both heroes as well as Gods. The Hindu finds his holy places in his own country. This identity of religion with the nation has given Hinduism tremendous strength, toughness and length of life.

(Extracts from his book, 'Indian Road to Nationhood', Allied Publishers, 1981)



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Shivaji's Guru Dakshina to Samarth Swami Ramdas

Tremendous Impact of Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra

C. P. Bhashikar
Veteran Journalist

BHAKTI IN INDIA is as old as Vedas. But the dominant religious form was sacrifice and ritual. Buddhism and Jainism were basically protests against this sacerdotalism and rigidity. They, therefore, attracted the masses. But they could not long hold the masses because they did not relate themselves to the problems of the common man. Out of this thesis and anti-thesis came the synthesis known as Bhagwat Dharma or Bhakti movement. It was this movement that united and inspired the people and enabled them to survive the foreign onslaughts.

We find a good example of this in

Maharashtra. The empire of the Yadavas of Devagiri was spread in the South during the life-time of Gyaneshwar Maharaj, the first in the line of Marathi saints. His monumental work on the Gita, *Gyaneshwari*, mentions towards the end the peaceful administration of the Yadav King Ramdev Rai. But by that time the Jain, Buddhist and Mahanubhav had started spreading in Maharashtra. The Sanskrit-knowing priests, believing in the authority not only of the Vedas but of themselves, their mantras and their rituals, had become oblivious to the spiritual thirst of the common people. People were also getting attracted to the sects imparting religious instruction in

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mage to other parts of India and spread
the message of *bhakti* far and wide.

After Gyaneshwar's passing, Namdev
went to the North, spent 18 years there
and spread the *bhakti path* there. He
composed many 'abhangs' in Hindi, 61 of
which are included in the *Guru Granth
Sahib* as 'Namdevji Ki Bani'. His work in
North India and in Maharashtra proved
of inestimable value in the difficult times
that followed.

The work of Gyaneshwarji and other
early saints was four-fold :

- (1) They defeated the attacks on the
Vedic ideology and re-established faith
in the traditional advaita philosophy;
- (2) They enriched Marathi language
and literature;
- (3) They preferred the path of Karma
(action) to that of *sanyas* (renunciation);
- (4) They inspired confidence in the
liberation of all, irrespective of caste and
creed.

A few years after the mahasamadhi of
Gyaneshwar, Maharashtra was invaded by
Turks and the Yadava King of Devagiri,
Ramdev Rai, was defeated. By 1313
A.D., the Yadava kingdom was dead.
For about two hundred years after that,
Maharashtra was in the shadows. Al-
though the *bhakti* sect was alive, the
upper class of society started serving the
foreign rulers. In such a difficult situation
the Bhakti movement inspired by the

teachings of Gyaneshwar and Namdev
kept the flame of dharma alive. And
then, in the same old tradition, the great
saint Eknathji (1532-1599) carried on his
work at Paithan, the ancient seat of
learning.

The work of Eknathji encompasses
both, religious and social aspects. His
Guru was Janardan Swami. After initia-
tion by him, Eknathji called himself 'Eka
Janardan'. Eknath traversed various parts
of India. Later on he settled down with
his family at Paithan. He was well-to-do,
but he set the fine example of living for
others. Eknath wrote a treatise on the
eleventh chapter of Shrimad Bhagwat
under the title 'Eknathji Bhagwat'. His
commentary on the Ramayana (*Bhavarte
Ramayan*) and 'Bharud' for the common
people, have proved very useful for reli-
gious instruction. The life and work of
Eknathji is proof of his conviction
against any feelings of high and low. He
handed over a child born in a "low
caste" family to his mother, after embrac-
ing him. He also went to dine with a
Mahar in a Mahar basti. He did not
hoard any money. Whenever he found he
had more than he needed, he used to
give away the surplus. He always wore a
smile.

Eknathji wrote about the downfall of
Brahmans from their high ideals and of
the influential people who helped the
alien rulers to perpetuate their rule.

"Swamukhe Brahman'na karti adhyayan;
Hoti bhrashita jaan madyapi te.
Neechanche sewak karti gharoghari;
Shewana chiye pari pot bharti."

*The saint who adopted an abandoned
child and dined with a Mahar*

Eknath asked the Turks: Did Khuda make a mistake in creating Hindus?

(Brahmans do not engage themselves in study. They are corrupt and have started drinking. They serve the mean and live the life of dogs.)

Had saints like Eknathji not propagated love for dharma, faith in God, good behaviour, detachment and 'Janin Janardhan' (presence of God in good persons) Hindu society would have gone to pieces. Eknathji inspired the quest for freedom among people and depicted the life and work of Rama and Krishna in such a manner that society was mobilised against Islamic terror. For example, he has depicted the rakshas as in 'Bhavarta Ramayana' as "bearded" ones. He has given description of how Lord Ramachandra put such rakshasas down. In a Hindu-Turk dialogue he writes :

*Hindu Musalman doi; Khuda ve paida kiyā
bhai
Turk ki nishtha pai; Hinduvar pakadkar
Musalman karo
Hindu karita khuda chukla; Sahu na thor
tunchya akla.
Hindu Musalman kela; gunha lavila
devasi.*

(Hindus and Muslims, they are both the creation of God;

But they are forcing the faith of the Turk to convert Hindu;

Did God err in making him a Hindu ? Are you trying to be more intelligent than God ?

By making a Hindu, Muslim, you are practically blaming God.)

In another poem, Eknath has expressed his anguish against slavish and devilish tendencies. The sense of mutual belonging necessary for keeping the society united, and other qualities of high character, were all made available to the people in their own language by him through his books. On the basis of his work the great sant Tukaram Maharaj and the national saint Samarth Ramdas Swami worked further and provided a congenial atmosphere for the establishment of swaraj by Shivaji Maharaj.

Although Tukaram and Samarth Ramdas Swami were contemporaries, they differed in their temper. They were, however, agreed in their attack on social ills. Both of them condemned selfishness, lethargy and hypocrisy of Brahmins and discrimination against some castes. If somebody is born in a lowly caste but takes to Bhakti, Sant Tukaram considers him Brahman :

*"Brahman to yati antyaj asata,
Manavat twata nishchaye sau;
Ram Krishna nam uchhari saral,
Anvi Savle rup manin.
Shanti kshma daya alankar anga.
Abhang prasangi dhairyawant;
Tuka mhame golya shadurmi anga,
Sanduniya mag Brahman to."*

(If a person born in a low caste family recites His name in true faith, if he meditates on God, if he is adorned by peace, forgiveness, compassion, and such other qualities, and if he has freed himself from the six distortions like attachment, anger etc., then he becomes a real Brahman.)

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About the condition of society he says : *"Vandi to Chetwawa re chet vilachi chetato."*

"Santa nahi mann; dev mani Musalman. Aise potachye mariley: deva asha vitanvile. Ghali lotangan; vandi nichache charan. Tuka mhane dharm; na kale bhajal yacha bhram."

(Instead of respecting our own saints, people consider Muslims as gods. They denounce God for the sake of food. They bow before the mean. They do not know religion. They have lost their senses.)

Tukaram Maharaj emphasised the efforts for swarajya and propagated Vithal bhakti, which provided a strong inner urge against conversion.

The national saint Ramdas took direct interest in changing the servile situation and exerted himself in that direction. For him the protection and establishment of dharma and bringing about swarajya were not two different things. He built a nation-wide organisation comprising of 1100 Mutts with Mahants, by his untiring efforts. All these Mutts and Mahants propagated Ram bhakti and worship of Mahavir Hanuman in such a manner that people were inspired to work for the revival of their own dharma and resistance to tyranny. He had seen the pitiable condition of the country and was very much pained by it. All this is reflected in his writings. The qualities of courage, patriotism, perseverance were all emphasised by him in memorable words :

Yatna cha lok bhogyo cha; yatne ven daridrata. Dharmakarita marawe; marone awadhyas marawe.

Marita marita dhyawe; rajya aapule. Dev mastaki dharawa; awadha hal kailol karawa.

Mulakh badwawa ki budwawa; Dharm sansthanane sathi. Budala Aurangya papi; Hindusthan balavale.

Ahbaktam cha Kshayo jhalo; anandabhoovani."

(You try to light the fire, and it will certainly be lit; Make an effort, and you will have good luck; Without effort, nothing can be achieved; Die for the Dharma and finish the foes; Struggling for the same, attain freedom.

God will be with you and you will go around merrily; Expand your territory or stake it for the sake of Dharma. I can foresee that Papi (sinner) Aurangzeb is destroyed and Hindustan has gained strength.

The enemies of God are doomed; Everywhere now there is going to be Anand.)

Samarth has had the most profound political influence of all Marathi bhaktasaints. He considered only the worship of God, that is dharma, as the instrument of man-making and social change.

Ramdas moulded the National Psyche for Swarajya, said Tilak

On 26th Feb. 1908, Lokmanya Tilak had delivered a lecture on the occasion of Dasnavami, birth anniversary of Ramdasji. Assessing the work of Ramdasji on that occasion, he observed :

"Dharma refines one's mind. This function is considered dharmic (religious). But it is difficult to distinguish between religious and social functions. Both are, so to say, the right and left organs of the same body. We have

overcome difficulties by knowing the truth of Vedanta through dharma. If the mind is prepared, Independence is there with us. Ramdasji moulded the national psyche for swarajya. This is done through education. But Ramdas did not open any school. Rather, through unity among his disciples, he spread the message of swarajya and *bhakti*. He taught everyone to do one's duty. He showed us the way to national resurgence."

—The Fighting Sadhus—

It is tempting to see in the traditional 'danda', staff of the standard Samnyasis, described by Manu and in the Upanisads we have referred to, their first weapon of offence and defence over and above its being their symbol.

The poet Chanda Bardai, the celebrated author of Prithviraj Rasau, gives an animated description of the bodyguard of the King of Kanauj which was composed of these monastic orders.

J.N. Farquhar (The Fighting Ascetics of India) mentions a tradition, which he discovered as current among ascetics of northern India, explaining the origin of the fighting classes of Saiva ascetics. According to it, it was Madhusudana Sarasvati, the famous ascetic writer on monistic Vedanta, who lived in Banaras in the latter part of the 16th century A.D., that first organised a corps of ascetic fighters. Though an ascetic Madhusudana was intensely interested in the lives of ascetics. He was very unhappy over their frequent massacres by Muslim fakirs, who generally carried some arms and were always militant. It seems he consulted the famous Birbal and, having been advised by him and permitted by the Emperor Akbar, decided to form a section of ascetics, who would carry arms and protect fellow-ascetics. It is curious to note that to get his fighting division manned, Madhusudana had to go further afield that the first three classes of Hindu society. His purpose could be achieved only by ordaining Sudras in the ranks of Samnyasis.

It is reported that as many as seven thousand Naga ascetics armed with spears, bows and arrows, and shields, used to march in the vanguard of the Jaipur army in battle.

This historically attested conflict between Dasanami Samnyasis and Aurangzeb's forces in the year A.D. 1664 is also credited to the Mahanirvam akhada at Prayag.

Jadunath Sarkar has stated that the single Atal Akhada counted three lakh persons as its members during the time of Delhi Emperors.

—G. S. Ghurye : "Indian Sadhus"

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Guru Nanak & Guru Gobind Singh Bhakti Tradition i.e. Sikhism

Aniruddha Mittal

GURU NANAK & GURU GOBIND SINGH BHAKTI TRADITION is represented by a unique and excellent religious movement that was initiated by Guru Nanak, a little more than four hundred years ago. It was carried out through Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind, Guru Harirai, Guru Harikishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh and beyond to our own day through the sacred work, 'Shri Guru Granth Sahib' (declared to be the eleventh and the last Guru by Shri Guru Gobind Singh himself). That Bhakti tradition is known popularly as Sikhism.

The sacred Sikh scripture, Shri Guru Granth Sahib, a great collection of

hymns to be sung and recited by the devotees on all occasions of life—and thus 'a guide book for a fuller and richer life'—is essentially a treatise on, of, and for *bhakti*. The fifth Guru, Shri Guru Arjan Dev compiled it in 1604 A.D., at Amritsar, and its final version was prepared by Shri Guru Gobind Singh in A.D. 1705 at 'Guru ki Kashi', i.e. Damdama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo, in Bhatinda District of Punjab). The latter, (the Tenth Guru) made no alteration; he only made a very important addition—that of the Bani (i.e. *vani* or sayings) of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur (his father, the ninth Guru).

The Granth (called *the adi granth*, for distinguishing it from *the Dasham Granth*, the work containing the Bani of Guru

Gobind Singh) that we have from the times of Guru Gobind Singh as the most sacred scripture not only to the Sikhs but also to all those who have the will and capacity to benefit from its universal altruistic message, has rightly been described 'a magnificent compendium of the religious, mystic and metaphysical poetry written or uttered between the 12th and 17th centuries in different parts of India'. (See Introduction to *Guru Granth Rainaval*—a selection of hymns from *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, in Punjabi-Hindi—and English published by the Punjabi University Patiala p. 29).

Its 1430 standard pages contain not only the Bani of the Six (the first five and the ninth) Gurus, but also the verses (songs, hymns, Psalms etc.) of numerous other Bhaktas, Saints, Sufis, and Faqirs, i.e. 'God-intoxicated souls in quest of Truth and Love', such as Sheikh Farid, Jaidev, Trilochan, Namdev, Sadna, Beni, Ramanand, Kabir, Ravidas, Pipa, Sain, Dhanna, Bhikhan, Surdas, Bhai Mardana, Baba Sunder, Bhai Balwand, Bhai Satta, and Bhattis like Vani, Kalsahar, Jalap, Kirat, Bikha, Balya, Sallya, Bhalya, Nalya, Gyanđ, Mathura and Haribans. Seeing this list, one can rightfully observe that 'The Granth' contains the compositions and utterances of the 'highborn' Brahmins and the proud kshatriyas, as also of the 'lowly' Shudras and the 'unlettered Jats', and that their hymns and couplets rendered in their own language and idiom, are so dovetailed as to find a complete correspondence with themes and motifs in the compositions of the Sikh Gurus. Obviously, the

idea of Guru Arjan Dev was to establish the fundamental unity of all religious and mystic experiences. It was, so to speak, an integral congress of minds and souls, operating on the same spiritual beam! (Ibid. P. 28) It reminds us of a Hindi couplet—'*Jat Pat Jane Nahi Koi; Hari Ko Bhahe, So Hari Ko Hoi*—that tells us that the 'Bhaktas do not recognise caste distinctions among themselves for they hold that caste distinctions lose their meaning as one who recites the holy name of God, becomes 'of God'.

The author (or authors) of the Introduction to *Guru Granth Rainaval* (already referred to) seems (seem) to possess the most proper understanding when it is pointed out: "The Sikh Philosophy as embodied in the *Guru Granth* is chiefly a philosophy of action and deed and consequence. Though in its essentials, it is completely in tune with the ancient Indian thought regarding the genesis of the world and the ultimate nature of reality, it moves away from quietism, passivity and abstractions. The emphasis is on shared communal experience, on purposive and idealistic involvement. The extinction of the ego or self is the cornerstone of sikhism. A person finds fulfilment or vindication by immersion in the sea of life."

In the light of this brief statement about 'Sikh philosophy as found in the *Guru Granth* and a look at the Sikh behaviour as revealed in history, it is quite appropriate to sum up the Sikh way of living in terms of three basic practical attitudes as 'recitation of the name of God'

*Guru Granth Sahib has selections from
Jaidev, Namdev, Ramanand, Kabir, Farid*

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(*Nam Japana*), 'to be up and doing' (*Kirat*—*Karna*) and 'To enjoy the fruits of one's labour sharing them with others' (*Vand Chhakna*). Nay, these are not three separate attitudes but one only with the three aspects and the spirit of Bhakti (*Nam-Japna*) is at the core of it, as is given out in the utterance—"Nam-Khumari Nanika, Chadhi Rahe Din Raat"—of Guru Nanak, "The intoxication of name be, O Nanak, upon you, day and night". History is ample testimony to the fact that this had been the spirit of each and every Guru, and is of *Guru Granth Sahib* as also of every Sikh who truly follows the eleven Gurus. In doing so, a Sikh has no difficulty or conflict. For, the path set and traversed by all the Gurus is one straight path that has been paved with Bhakti.

Bhakti with the Gurus as well as with the Gur-Sikhs, is not of the weak and the meek—which every one is supposed to be before God only, and before no one else—but of the strong in mind and soul that inspires them to fight against injustice and to make supreme sacrifice for the sake of righteousness. Humility is indeed the hall-mark of a Sikh in the sense that he is never selfish and 'does not allow pride to enter his mind even when he serves others in their suffering' like 'A true Vaishnava' described by a Gujarati Bhakta in his song with the refrain: "*Vaishnava Jana Tau Tene Kahiye Je Pida Parayi Jane Re Para Dukkhe Upkara Kare Toye Mana Abhimana Na Ane Re*". It is in this light that we may view what is called 'the transformation of Sikhism' by some well-meaning friends.

It is true that Guru Gobind Singh in enjoining upon every Sikh the wearing of a military outfit in the form of 'Five Ks—*Kaccha* (half pant), *Kada* (steel-bangle), *Kirpana* (sword), *Kanga* (comb) and *Kesh* (long hair)—made him ready to fight for a just cause. He himself fought some holy battles and encouraged his followers to do so, as a result of which many, including two of the Guru's own sons, laid down their lives fighting, as was expected of those 'brave ones' according to their tradition that spoke of 'brave one is that who fights in the open field (an undecisive battle), dies fighting to the finish in which every limb of his is cut, but leaves not the field (*Sura Soi Pachhaniye Jo Lade Khet Ke Vich; Purza purza Kat Mare Par Kabhon Na Chhade Khet*). Two of his younger sons who were laid alive in a wall merely because they boldly refused to yield to temptations and threats held out to them for leaving their faith. And his great father Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur allowed himself to be beheaded rather than be converted to an alien faith by force, acting on the Sikh maxim, 'he gives his head but abandons not his faith' (*Shish Det Par Dharam Na Chhade. Or Sir Jave Tan Jave, Par Sikhi Sidaq Na Jave*.)

Further, it is not to be denied that Shri Guru Gobind Singh who established the institution of the Khalsa gave to the Sikh Panth a new orientation wherein every Sikh is supposed to be a soldier as he himself was one, and not a mere Bhakta. Yet, in so far as he is regarded 'a Saint-Soldier' (Sant Sipahi) and his Khalsa is *Wahe Guruji Ka Khalsa—God's*

"*Naam Khumari Nanika,
 Chadhi rahey din raat*"

“Sir Jave tan Jave, Par Sikhi sidq na Jave”

Pure Being (That being a precondition of the Khalsa being victorious—*Shri Wah - guruji Ki Fateh*—for the Khalsa to earn God in grace for victory. The Guru’s saintliness permeates his soldiership. The progress of the Khalsa lies in the will of God for the good of all (*Khalsa Panth Di Chadhdi Kala; Tere Bhane Sarvatt Da Bhal’a*). In the person of Shri Guru Gobind Singh are revealed all those marvellous traits of a true religious Guru that make him a successful leader of humanity.

All those traits of character are equally found in the personages of all the other nine Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur. Only this is the case that they become obvious in their fully flowered form in the life and personality of Guru Gobind Singh. Not because his humility is so great that even when he finalised the *Adi Granth*, he did not add a single word of his own, and made no alteration whatsoever, but because his scholarly understanding took no time to realise that *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* is a complete guide that deserves to be declared as the last or the eleventh Guru of the Sikh Bhakti tradition and all that transformation that he himself is credited with bringing about is already found in the *Adi Granth* in an implied form if not directly. Obviously it is a book of Hymns or Psalms that are meant to be sung—their very arrangement is set in accordance with music. Another feature of its arrangement is to indicate the

Bani of each of the other five Gurus whose teachings are included in the *Granth* through a number (Mohalla) as they all speak in the of Guru Nanak.

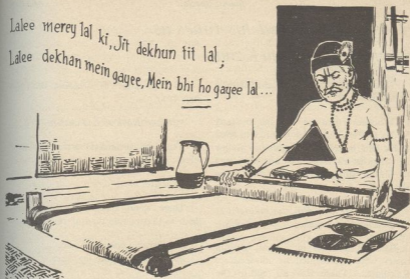
One way of explaining the non-inclusion of his own bani on the part of Guru Gobind Singh may be his indirect way of following the same practice, apart again from his humility. The Sikh way of life is said to be the way of Bhakti (*Nam Di Rehani*), on the whole, that is inclusive of ‘the way of knowledge (*Gyan Di rehani*)’ and the way of Action (*Karam di rehani*), i.e. a balanced way.

The daily (morning and evening) recital (*Nit Nem*) of edited selections such as the following, is enjoined on every Sikh; All these recitals create a deep devotional impact. The key note of Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh Bhakti tradition may be stated in just three words: ‘Friendship’, ‘Human Unity’ and ‘Love’ in terms of the following three couplets—or parts thereof—one from Guru Nanak and two from Guru Gobind Singh :

Nkoj Vairi Na hi Begana ; Sagali Sang Nam-ke Ban ayi. (There is no enemy, nor an alien; we do find suiting all company.)

Manas Ki Jat Sabhe Ek Pahichanvo (Look at the entire human kind as one).
Jinh Prem Kiyo Tinh Hi Prabh Payo (Those who love can alone attain God). □

Lalee merey lal ki, Jit dekhun tit lal,
Lalee dekhun mein gayee, Mein bhi ho gayee lal...



“Ram-Ratan-Dhan” Achieved

Om Prakash Kohli

Deshbandhu College, New Delhi

THERE ARE moments in the life of a nation, when it begins to swirl like a boat caught in a whirl-pool. The all-enveloping danger comes from all sides; there is “darkness visible” within and outside. The fortifications of faith are shaken; public life is tortured and agitated. Some such situation must have been there in his day, for Tulsidas has depicted it in his Ram-Charit-Manas, to describe the ‘Kali-Kaal’ (Kaliyug).

The misdeeds of the ‘Nishacharas’ (demons moving in the night, night-revellers) described in the ‘Bal-Kanda’ of the ‘Manas’ of Tulsidas, are in reality the tyranny of the rulers of his times. It is quite another matter that Tulsidas has signified these oppressions on the people

without using the word ‘Hindu’ in his writings. He tells us that at that time there was a move to ‘root out’ Dharma. In the very next line the poet points out that all the actions of these ‘Rakshasas’ were against the Vedas. Wherever they saw the cow or a Brahmin, they butchered them. Cities and villages were burnt to ashes:

*‘Jehi Vidhi hoi Dharam Nirmula
‘So sab karhin Ved-pratikula.
‘Jehin-jehin des dhenu dvij pawahin
‘Nagar-gaon pur aag lagawahin.’*

The study of the Ved-Puranas was stopped because of tortures of these aggressors:

“Sapnehun sunion Ved-Purana”

Tulsi has depicted his times as 'Kali-Kal' in, Bal-Kanda

(Ved-puranas are now heard only in dreams).

Whosoever had the courage to study Vedas and Puranas, and wanted to stick to his Dharma-Nishta, or dared to follow his religious traditions, he was subjected to untold suffering and banished from the land :

*Tehi bahu-Vidh trasai, des nikasai
Jo kahe Ved-Purana ;*

The evil deeds of mediaeval Muslim rulers were represented as misdeeds of Rakshasas. There was no end to the distress of Hindu society. The poet was afflicted to the core to see it :

*Barani na jay aneet, ghor nishachar
jo karhin.
Hinsa par ati preet, tinhn ke papahin
kavani mit*

(The misdeeds and inhuman behaviour of Nishacharas cannot be described in words. Those who revel in violence and murder, what can be the limit of their sins ?)

On the one side these oppressions gave no respite to the people, and on the other, there was so much social disorder and disunity that the Hindu society was like a boat without oars, tossing on the rough seas. In the Kali-Kaal description, we see the socio-religious disruption of the day. The Nigam (moral order) was very much loose, the Shastras were ignored :

Kou na man Nigam-anushasan.

In the name of Dharma, there was hypocrisy :

"Jo kar danbh so bad aachari"

The Varnashrama Dharma was shattered :

"Varnashram Dharma achar gaye."

There were famines every now and then, so that people died of starvation.

*Kali barahin bar dukal pare
Binu anna dukh sab log mare.*

This disorder and chaos was reflected in mushrooming of ever new sects and creeds. "Veda-supported Sanatan Dharma was lost in the labyrinth of a multitude of sects. The contemporary state of the society is described by Tulsi-das in these words :

*Shruti-sammat Hari-Bhakti path,
Sanyut virat-vivek,
Tehin na chalaïn nar moh-bas,
Kalpahin panth anek.*

(The path of Hari-bhakti is supported by the Vedas and is based on renunciation and reason. They are relinquishing that path and creating ever new sects.)

This was the grave danger in which society was found—a situation which the Bhakta-poets could not overlook. They saw that higher values of life were being ignored and people were compromising with the ruling tyranny and evading the challenge to the Nation. The affluent were finding ways of retaining their

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wealth, while the common people were struck with poverty and woe. In this situation the masses had forgotten higher values of life and come to regard food as their highest Dharma.

*Matu-pita balkanhin bolavahin,
Udar bhare soi Dharma Sikhavahin,*

(The parents call their children and teach them that whatever helps to fill your belly, that is Dharma.)

After losing power, people had lost all confidence to rally again. Tulsidas has described this lack of confidence very beautifully through a situation in his Ram Charit Manas. The context is the battle between Rama and Ravana. On one side is Ravana on his chariot, equipped with all sorts of arms, and on the other side is Rama, without a chariot or any other conveyance. Vibhishan sees this and loses all patience. "How could Rama win?" He thinks this lack of confidence overshadowing Vibhishan's thought-process is a symbolic representation of the lack of confidence enveloping the contemporary Hindu mass-mind, which, like Vibhishan, was full of doubts whether we could rally against the tyrant. We can visualise the mental tortures of the Hindus of the day, through a description of Vibhishan's loss of patience:

*Ravan rathi, virath Raghuvira,
Dekh Vibheeshan bhayau adheera.*

(Ravan is on the chariot. Ram is without any vehicle. Vibhishan saw this and became restless.)

The greatest need of the time was to instil faith and foster confidence. Ravana with a well equipped chariot could be conquered by Rama without any vehicle—this faith had to be built up in Vibhishan's heart. The Hindu society was facing the same cruel repression at the hands of the tyrant, as Vibhishan. Having been badly mauled, Hindus were demoralised, just like Vibhishan. It was necessary to build their self-confidence once more. So, Tulsidas built up the metaphor of the "Dharma rath" of Rama, for Vibhishan to take courage, and have faith that Rama, the warrior with Dharma-Rath, would surely and certainly defeat Ravana, in spite of his armoured chariot, in spite of all his deadly weapons:

*Sakha Dharma-may us rath jake
Jeetan kaha na katahu ripu take*

(O friend, one who possesses such a chariot, however large may be the number of his enemies, he is bound to win.)

The course that the Bhaktas adopted to boost the morale of society, was to build up an unswerving faith in Rama. Rama became a symbol of Justice and Dharma; while Ravana and his associate Rakshasas symbolised injustice, immorality and adharmas. This duel between Injustice and Justice, between Darkness and Light, would surely end with the victory of Right over Wrong—this faith must have inspired the Hindu community with courage and strength. Fear is the most dangerous feeling, as it paralyses the will of individuals and

*Hindus were as demoralised
as Vibhishana in Rama's days*

'Ram-Nam' frees us from the horrors of the world

societies. To rebuild shattered morale, it is necessary to liberate the individual as also society, from the benumbing nightmare of fear. Ram-naam has a wonderful capacity to remove fear and so the Bhakta-poets, especially Tulsidas, propagated it in innumerable forms. He was using Ram-Naam, Ram's character, Ram's Leelas to revive faith. Faith in Rama could put new life in individuals and in society. Tulsidas reveals that Ram-naam is 'Abhay' (free from fear), Ajeet (invincible) and Sukhdai (harbinger of happiness):

"*Ram-naam abhay-ajeet sukhadai hai!*"

It is said that it was the rebuke of wife Ratnavali, which steered the psyche of Tulsidas from 'kaam' (lust) to Rama.

*Asthi-cjarmamy deh mum Ta men
aisee preet,
Hotee jo Shri Ram men, To Na hoti
Bhav-bheet.*

(My body is just bones and flesh. You are so enamoured of it. If only you have as much love for Shri Ram as you have for me, you would not have been afflicted by *Bhav-bheet*, horrors of the world.)

Ram-naam liberates us from *Bhav-bheet*. This faith had to be rekindled in the psyche of the demoralised society. This truth was injected into the life-stream of the individual and the society by Bhakta-poets like Tulsidas and this must have contributed the most to boost the morale of the society in an extremely difficult situation.

Bhakta Narasi Mehta has also emphasised the chanting of 'Hari-naam' in this difficult 'Kali Kaal' and has assured us that this has got a wonderful capacity to bring every kind of success at hand:

*Hari-Hari ratan kar
Kathan Kali-Kaal man,
To sara karaj sidh karsh.*

When the ship of the nation was swaying dangerously on the waves of adverse circumstances, the Bhakta poets stabilised it with the anchor of Ram-Naam. Tulsidas writes in Dohavali:

*Ram bhareso, Ram-bal, Ram-naam,
Vishwas,
Sumirat sab mangal kushal, mangal
Tulsidas*

(Ram is my Faith, Ram is my strength, Ram-naam is my confidence. Tulsidas says, all kinds of well-being come from Ram-naam).

Ram-naam can be Sanjivani (elixir or panacea) for a down-trodden community. The Bhakta-poets must have realised this. Tulsidas had described the miracle of this 'Sanjivani' power of Ram-naam and Ram-Katha in many ways. 'Ram-Naam is *Kaipatru*' (wish-fulfilling tree); it is '*Bhav-Bheshaj*' (medicine to remove worldly dangers) or '*Kali-Kalush-vibhanjan*' (destroyer of the darkness of Kaliyuga); it is a '*Maha-mantra*' which even Shiva chants; it is '*Charu Chintamani*' (a jewel giving out divine light).

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Sometimes it is alleged that Tulsid
looked down upon shudras and women.
This is entirely wrong. In saying that
"Dhol, Ganwar, Shudra, Pashu, Nari,
Sakal tadana ke adhikari" he was only
expressing conventional wisdom of the
times. He was the first poet to raise
Sita to the same high level as Rama.
For him 'Seeya' came even before Rama !
Tulsi had only one criterion of high and
low—Ram-naam. He declares without
reserve :

*Neech jati swapach bhalo, jape nirantar
Ram,
Ooncho kul kehi kam ko, njahan na
Hari ko Naam.*

(A low-caste chandal is respectable if
he chants Ram-naam continuously. What
is the use of a high family, if there is no
Hari-naam in it ?)

Tulsidas was fully convinced of the
power and potential of Ram-naam. His
Ram embraces Kevat, the boat-man, eats
berries already tasted by Shabari (for
their sweetness), and regards the Vanar
Hanuman even superior to his own
dearest brother, Lakshman.

"Tain mam priya Lachman to duno"

(You are twice as dear to me as
Laxman.)

Hindu society is divided badly into
innumerable castes. It has had to pay
a very heavy price for this. Many
Hindu brethren therefore left the fold

and got converted to other religions.
Tulsidas and other Bhakta-poets knew
this. They wanted to checkmate both,
untouchability and conversion, by the
simple antidote of Ram-Naam. Tulsidas
has referred to this purifying power of
Ram-naam in the following lines :

*Swapach, Sabar, Khal, Jaman, Jar,
Pamar, Kol, Kirat,
Ram japat pavan param
Hot bhuwan vikhyat"*

(The whole world knows that even
the so-called low-castes, and untoucha-
bles like chandals, sabars, the evil-minded
yavanas, low-laid Kol and Kirats, on
chanting Ram-naam, they all become
purified.)

Here the word 'Jaman' (yavan)
deserves special attention. If converts
from Hinduism to Islam, chanted Ram-
naam, it was penitence enough to secure
them re-admission to the Hindu fold.
Ram-naam had the capacity to give
respectability to even the lowest of the
low. Tulsi recognised this power of
Ram-naam and he assured all the down-
trodden and forcibly converted persons
that they needed no other purifying
process except Ram-naam, to bring them
back into the main-stream of society.

Mira challenged orthodoxy with the
support of Ram or Giridhar-Gopal. She
did not care for distinctions of caste,
power and pelf: "Ranaji mhane ya
badnami lage meethi".

*Ram-Naam took care of both,
untouchability & conversions*

(O Rana ji, this disrepute, of mixing with lowly masses, tastes very sweet.)

"*Chhadi dai kul kee kaan, ka kare koi*"

(I have given up all family traditions. What can anyone do to me?)

The Bhakti-kal is that epoch of Indian history when the Hindu religion and society had to face a tremendous challenge in the form of Islam. This challenge could be met only on the level of Faith. Challenging the ruling power required the moral support of even a superior power. The thinkers of the day had an intricate problem to solve, as to what could be that central point of Faith, which could assure freedom from fear of the ruling tyrant and at the same time challenge the arbitrarily set up power system. This is what Tulsi's Vanavasi Ram says :

*Nishichar heen karon mahee Bhuj
uthay pran keenha.*

(He raised his arm and took a solemn

vow to eradicate from the world the scourge of the night-revellers, Rakshasas—symbolically the invaders.)

Thus the psyche of that age discovered Ram-naam. This can remove the darkness within and outside :

*Ram naam mani-deep dharu Jeeha
dehri dwar.
Tulsi bahar bheetaru Jo chahat ujyar."*

(Place the light of the jewel Ram-naam on the tip of your tongue—i.e. at the entrance of the door from sensual perceptions to inner experiences—so that you may have light both, inside and outside.)

Mira sang:

*Mainne Ram Rattan Dhan Payo.
Basat amolak dee mere satguru
Kripa kar Apnayo.*

(My Guru has given me invaluable wealth ; in Ram-Naam I have acquired the currency of jewels.)

Guru Gorakhnatha

GORAKHNATHA, in founding the sect of Kanphata Jogis, rendered valuable service in the process of transforming the more obnoxious forms of beliefs and practices then current in northern India into less objectionable ones. He also helped in giving a final death blow to Buddhism in northern and especially north-eastern India. He not only strengthened the practice of 'Hathayoga' but even seems to have contributed a significant quota towards its formulation. What exactly were the services rendered by him and his sect to Hindus and Hinduism in their fight against the onslaughts of Islam, we do not know. One thing that we do know is that there is even today a sect among Indian Muslims known as Jafar Jogis which, among other things, is given to the practice of 'Yoga'. Tradition records that Gorakhnatha was a much-travelled man and had even visited Mecca.

G.S. Ghurye: "Indian Sadhus"

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BHAKTI MARG : SEVA MARG

Babulal Goswami

THERE ARE several paths leading to God, the Truth-Incarnate. The Path of Devotion (Bhakti Marg) is one of these; it is easy yet excellent. Truth is the essence of all religions, and the sole end of all thought and feeling. Physical sciences as much as spiritual philosophy see it as the repository of supreme power. As Lord Buddha put it : "Truth is supreme. It has no alternative. It admits of no reform."

The three well-known paths to Truth are Gyan (knowledge) Karma (Action), and Bhakti (Devotion). The Path of Action is entirely world-oriented—given to gross involvement even. The Karma-yogi, of course, lives on a higher plane. Rituals without knowledge are, therefore, incomplete. Karma, coupled with Gyan, puts man in a relatively secure position. Action, and not the fruit of action, that is the noble form of Karma. One who performs Karma with an eye to one's own enjoyment, invites only bonds.

But if Karma, geared to one's own happiness, is wrong, it is pertinent to ask : Why should one perform such action at all ? Why should one get involved in Karma for nothing ? The Path of knowledge (Gyan Marg) says that this world is an illusion ; it is unreal, and so one had better avoid it. This naturally leads to detachment from Karma along with all other worldly activities.

Here then opens the Path to Renuncia- tion. Since the world is unreal, and

inclination to Karma is at the root of sorrow, the only dependable path is that of renunciation. This idea breeds the Absolute-seeker (Brahm-jigyasavah) into seclusion, far from the madding crowd. This is what converts them into Salvation-seekers (Mumukshavah). Lord Buddha was a salvation-seeker. He accepted the Path of knowledge and renunciation. But at the same time he wanted to see others also freed from worldly sorrow. It is this element of compassion in him that distinguishes him from an ordinary knowledge- and salvation-seeker.

How did this benevolence, this feeling for the welfare of all creatures, come into Buddhism ? How did non-violence and compassion come to be united with Truth ? Clearly, the suffering man occupied the centre of Buddha's thought even though he considered the world illusory. Compassion for the salvation-seeker tied him down to the world, in spite of all his knowledge. He strongly held that salvation for one man was futile. The salvation-seeker cannot rest content so long as sorrow exists in the world. This is where the Bhakti Marg came in. All the streams of thought and the essence of experience unite into a mighty river of compassion and devotion, inviting everyone to take a holy dip into it. The Bhakti Dharma, in the form of feeling and worship, existed even earlier, but it had, at its centre, the joy and mystery of God's creation. But this joy, unless assisted by compassion, could not touch the common man. Bhakti had always rested on God, the Truth-Incar-

Great men not content with salvation; they also want to save others

nate, the Gracious and the Beautiful; but now it also came to include the Compassionate.

Human consciousness recognised its Creator, took in His loving nature, and accepted only Him in all the relations—worldly or unworldly. God, as Truth, sustains the universe with His Power and Splendour. But where is He? How are we to worship Him and please Him? How are we to win His compassion so that we can not only free ourselves from the cycle of life and death but also immerse ourselves in the contemplation of His joyous Reality? That human life drew its significance only from this feeling, gradually became clear.

God, the Truth-Incarnate, is present in all beings, animate or inanimate. He is the essence of all. Mere intellect cannot grasp Him. He can, however, be perceived. He can be experienced. This God, the Joyful one, came to be the Absolute Power or Soul to the devotees. The phenomenal world only reflects that hidden Power. It is only His play, *Leela*. He fills all, and man does not exist apart from Him. All that is, is, in fact, nothing but God. The Path of Devotion (Bhakti) developed its philosophy from this feeling. In this Marg, therefore, attachment and detachment (Pravritti and Nivritti) co-exist, and Knowledge and Karma unite in service (Seva). The world, mortal and illusory to the Path of Knowledge, comes to be the play-ground and permanent abode of God. He reveals Himself. He enters our experience, sustains us, frees us, gives us both, attachment and detach-

ment. This Supreme Being, known to all as Love, is the truth of the world of feeling. Single-minded love for God is known as the prime feature of Bhakti. The word 'Bhakti' is synonym of the word 'Seva' (Service). Service is a special act: Karma, altruistically performed, is Seva.

In this sense, nobody can do his own 'Seva'. Bhakti has at its root reverence (*Shradddhaa*). And *Shradddhaa* is for someone else. Reverence changes into Bhakti (devotion) when one acts to please the revered one. But mere reverence is not Bhakti; it must be fortified with Karma. Only one, worthy of God's love, deserves worship or 'seva'.

We are indebted to our parents, our teachers, and to our country. All these debts come within the purview of Karma. Can't these assume the form of true seva? Well, they can, if performed without desire for return. Allied with desire, they cannot shed their grossness. According to the 'Karmakanda', all these Karmas indicate only the debts we owe one another. That is why the Bhaktas have stoutly opposed 'Karmakanda'. Karmas like 'Shraaddha', 'Tarpan' and the like are also not in keeping with Bhakti feeling. Goswami Tulsi Das, in fact, finds all the relations acceptable only in terms of God—*Jaake priya na Rama Vaidehi, Tajiya Tanhi koti bairisam, Jadapi Parama Sanehi*. (Give up all relations however dear, to whom Ram and Sita are not dear).

It is clear from the above that true service does not consist of Karmas either

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for one's own happiness or for being quits with someone else. A true 'sevak' does not expect even God to requite his Bhakti with grant of boons. We find the story of Bhakta Prahlad in the Bhagvat. Bhagavan Narasimha, pleased with Prahlad's Bhakti, wanted him to ask for a boon. But Prahlad humbly responded: "Lord! Right from my birth I have been steeped in pleasures. Why do you then tempt me with boons? Afraid of the stinging pain caused by my immersion in pleasures, I have in fact come to you, expecting freedom from them. I am sure, O All Merciful one, that you are only testing me. Why else should you suggest my entrapment in pleasures? For, O Lord, a servant who expects his master to fulfill his desires, is a mere trader. I am your servant, who expects nothing, just as you are my master, expecting nothing from me. Our relationship is not a selfish one that exists between a king and his servants."

The above example brings true Seva into bold relief. The Bhaktas, given to 'seva', spurn not only worldly enjoyments but also salvation, in favour of Bhakti. Their sacrifice is the highest. Kapil Muni says: "Those wedded to my service do not accept any type of salvation: residence in God's abode, luxuries befitting God Himself, permanent closeness, God-like form and splendour, or identification with God. Those who aim at nothing but God's love, refined by service, attain to the highest class of Bhaktas."

Service to God represents supreme service, supreme sacrifice. But how is one

to serve God? Is there a tangible manifestation of God which may be worshipped? People worship His image, as if it were the Lord Himself. The middle ages witnessed an All India Bhakti Movement which started the temple-worship of Lord Krishna and Lord Rama. A war was on between the temple and idol-breakers and those who would restore the shattered idols and temples to their glory. In man, both the creative and destructive powers co-exist. Today the iconoclasts are gone but the temples stand high. A mosque is also a place of worship. Such conflicts have been due to ignorance, and they will continue. Idol worship is also acceptable in the devotional world, but this is only for the common man. The true form of 'Seva' is a later stage. "Those who slight me in my creatures and worship only my idol, offer just a mockery of worship since I, the supreme soul, fill all beings in the form of the soul. He who keeps himself busy worshipping the image, ignoring me who live in all creatures, seems to pour his 'abuti' into ashes." (Gita)

To serve all creatures is, thus, to offer true service to God. The above statement does not oppose idol-worship. An installed image of God represents God Himself, but one would be worshipping in vain if one were to worship the idol, while ignoring the God manifest in His creatures.

God is Daridra Narayan. He is specially the God of the poor and the helpless. True service consists in serving such 'people honestly, unostentatiously. This is why Lord Rama says:

Natuham Kamaye Rajyam

God is specially the God of the Poor and the Helpless

Worship of stone idols is better than that of foreign rulers

*Na Saukhyam na Punarbhavan;
Kamayee dukhatapatnan,
Praninamart nashanam.*

(I don't want the crown, or pleasures or even new lives; my only desire is to remove the sorrows of the people.)

These examples show that Bhakti Marg furnishes us with a supra-terrestrial vision to buttress our faith in the world. If the Yoga Margis and sanyasis (ascetics) had not preached contempt for the world, and if they had succeeded in properly guiding society, the Bhakti Movement might never have arisen with such force in the sixteenth century. This movement did promote idolatry, while retaining its spiritual vision. But this form of worship celebrated the joy (Rasa) of life. It awakened people's faith in life—people who had become indifferent to the world. But for this awakening, people's miseries would have seen no end. Foreign aggressors had trampled Hindus into dust, who, therefore, had become disgusted with the world. Goswami Tulsi Das portrays the situation thus.

*Nari Mari, ghar sampatti nasi,
Moond Mundaye, bhaye Sanyasi.*

(His wife is dead, his house and other property are gone; so he now shaves his head and declares himself a sanyasi.)

This noxious thing had to be stopped. To celebrate an ideal master-servant relationship, the Omnipotent Rama was the obvious choice. Lord Krishna, who

fascinated all with his multi-faceted personality, encouraged Anuyayini Bhakti (devotion of a younger brother for the elder brother) so that all the 'Jeevatmas', in the form of His companions (milkmen and milkmaids), could have the good fortune of being His playmates.

The Bhakti Marg was the only way to stop the rot in society. It did its level best for the poor, the so-called "lower" castes and women. To achieve these ends, Hindu society could think of nothing better than worship of the Peerless God—not a transcendent God, but one who would concern himself with human affairs. This God is 'Leeladhar', Player. The world is a manifestation of his play—and He Himself is the player. How could one reach God, the Joyful one, and yet himself remain dispirited? Whoever approached him—as a saint, as a servant—returned more than satisfied. This God would run errands for all: he would even graze their cows. They were all mad after Him, whether they belonged to Braja or Dwarika.

The incarnations of Rama and Krishna were really devised by the Bhaktas to unite the whole of Hindu India. Tife Vasant-Ras at Manipur and the Rukmini wedding at Dwarika drew together all the people. The Shaktipuja performed by Rama at Rameshwar, had reverberated even in Mount Kailas in the far North. The 'Seva Marg' had really a remarkable way of cementing society. Service to Rama and Krishna was really service to the Motherland stretching from the Himalaya to the seas.

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The Bhaktas adopted the 'Pravriti Marg' (Path of Attachment)—but they did so only to generate intense passion for Rama and Krishna. All the 'sadhana' would have gone waste if society had collapsed into anarchy. This is why the 'Kamini Roop' of woman (the form that awakens desire) and the lustful man, have been castigated. Those steeped in their appetites have been condemned. This had a clear aim ; it gave a higher ideal to society. They curbed the sensual tendencies of Shaktas. And this was a great social service. The real history of India is not the annals of sensuous kings ; it is the history of the saints who sacrificed everything to achieve their spiritual aim. They refused to truckle down to political-cum-military power. The lives of Kabir and Kumbhan Das testify to the fact that mentally, India did not bow to foreign rule. We did not accept slavery. The 'Seva Marg' thought it more respectable to worship stone idols than to serve foreigners. It is well-known how stones helped this movement. The Bhaktas awakened India through stone idols. When Surdas sang :

*Jagiye Gopal Lal, bhor bhayi pyare ;
Jagiye Gopal Lal, Panchhi ban bole.*

What does "morning" mean here ? And what are these birds which are twittering in the forest ? What kind of morning do they expect ? It was the morning of a new dawn in people's awakening. It was the stirring of a new national consciousness among the people. Would Krishna not rush to save the honour of the 'gopis' (milkmaids) whom

he prized more than His life in the rasleela.

In North India, Avadh and Braj have been the respective favourite playgrounds of Rama and Krishna. These areas represent the throbbing heart of India—and it was this which the foreign powers trampled under foot the most. This is where the Bhaktas took a stand; they took recourse to 'Seva' and awakened the progeny of Rama and Krishna. This 'Seva' is that of 'Jagarana' (awakening), wherein the mental service gets precedence over the physical and the monetary.

The Sanatan Dharma specially adapts itself to time and place. It is a Dharma which perpetually renews itself. Even today the Bhakti Marga, brimming over with self-abnegation and renunciation, thanks to the rising sensualism, is poised to place man on a higher pedestal.

Indian culture has always accepted service as the basis for social order. The Varnashrama system represented an ideal of family feeling. All the Varnas and Ashramas served society according to their aptitude and capacity. Those possessing the qualities of sacrifice, intellectuality and nobility of feeling, for example, gave society excellent 'Samskaras'. This service came mostly from the Brahman. The Kshatriya used his valour for social order. The farmer, as the 'Annadata', fed and nourished society. The Shudra and Antyaja served the entire society with their manifold skills. These Varnas lost their harmony with time and

*Let Seva be Supreme Religion
and not just another business*

circumstance, until today, almost everybody has become a "businessman". Every social service has been commercialised; altruism is all but dead. Today this new commercial class superintends society. It is tightening its grip on arts and sciences, politics and economics. And it has bought the farmer, the scientist, the artist, the craftsman, the scholar, and the soldier into virtual slavery. This class controls power in almost the whole world. The Antyaja and the Shudra have been exploited for long; but now all the four Varnas are falling prey to the exploitation of the 'businessman'.

Service has been commercialised in this country, which earlier recognised it as the supreme religion. Today all services can be bought. This state of affairs cannot but have a harmful effect in the sphere of religion. Now service has been commercialised even in temples and places of pilgrimage. Even "Dharmshalas" have been constructed to yield

money—and temples built to exploit people's faith. Donations for a religious project, as for a political institution, are also now big business. Those dedicated to true service, shun publicity; they consider it bad form. Donations do not constitute service, so long as they come from vanity or expect a return, either in this life or the next.

The highest Seva is that of the sadhu and the saint. And the saint, according to Bhagvant Rasika, has the following qualities: "He sings the praises of Vishnu, prays to Him, serves sadhus, and is kind to all. He renounces violence, greed, vanity and guile, and sees wealth as poisonous; the saint is tolerant, generous, patient and discriminating. He speaks the truth, makes everyone happy, and has single-minded devotion to God; He is, moreover, not proud of his victory over his senses; if a man has all these virtues, he is a saint. Such a man sanctifies the world, and association with him destroys all sorrows."

—The heart of so great a Mystery—

In his 'An Historian's Approach to Religion,' Arnold Tonbee refers to what the 4th century Roman Senator Quintus Aurelius Symmachus wrote to the Christian Bishop Ambrose of Milan: "The heart of so great a mystery cannot ever be reached by following one road only", and observes that while the Roman Senator's words fell on deaf ears and his "ancestral religion is long since extinct, Hinduism lives to speak for Symmachus today".

Dr. V. Raghavan in 'The Great Integrators'.

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“Seeya Ram Mai Sab Jag Jani”

Dr. Ram Prakash, Delhi University

*“KNOW THAT THE WORLD IS
PERVADED BY SITA AND RAM.”*

The above half-couplet from the invocation in ‘Ram-charit-manas’ written by Goswami Tulsidas is, in fact, the fountain-head of the stream of ‘Tulsi-manas’ as also the key to the total character of Indian culture. It is worth mentioning that earlier in the epic the author has, after reckoning the noble elements and attitudes present in the universe, attempted a coordinated analysis of their natural existence. In the same vein, and by way of conclusion, he has offered obeisance to this worshipful couple. In the pre-Tulsi literature of Rama Bhakti, Rama is almost everywhere depicted as worshipful and revered; but Sita is mentioned by name at places simply as a character. Veneration by Tulsi of ‘Sita’ as an omnipresent power alongwith Rama is without doubt an acceptance of the *vishishtadvaitam* of the Ramanujacharya.

Acharya Ramanuj, while elaborating the advaitism of Sankaracharya, for the first time established ‘Shree’—Para-Shakti—alongwith Brahma. Without ‘Shree’ the character of Brahma would remain in oblivion. For this reason ‘Lakshmi’ accompanies ‘Vishnu’, and ‘Shakti’ accompanies ‘Shiva’. Tulsi considers the world not as full of ‘Rama’ but as filled by ‘Seeya-Ram’. He has thereby amalgamated the principle of God-Nature unity of Sankhya and the Shiv-Shakti unity of Shaiva philosophy, into the Vaishnav bhakti principle.

Let us now look at its cultural aspect.

To consider the whole world as an expression of Seeya-Ram, is to reiterate that all-pervasiveness of Indian culture, according to which the whole earth is looked upon as a family and the well-being, health and happiness of *all*, is desired. The Brahma existing in every creature is precisely so popular and accepted as ‘Rama’, since He is in the whole world and the whole world is in Him. Ramcharitmanas also says :

*Jadyapi Prabhu ke nam aneka
Sruti kali adhik ek te eka
Ram sakal namau te adhika
Hou nath agh khag gan badhika*

(Although he has many a name, and scriptures mention many of them, ‘Rama’ is most common of them. O Lord! you are the destroyer of all vices.)

It is but natural for bhakta Tulsi to remember the evil-destroying name of Rama again and again; but as a litterateur, leading the people or striving for balance, the author of ‘Manas’ stands out for establishing that manifestation of the Supreme Power—Shree—Nature as Power beyond, in the form of ‘Sita’, who is present as the Mother-Power (Matri-Shakti) in the universe. The poet’s obeisance to the universe as the image of this dual power is in accordance with his all-pervasivist humane viewpoint, explained by himself in these words :—

*Tulsi is sansar mein, sabse miliye dhaya
Na jane kis rup mein, Narayan mil jaaye.*

(Tulsi calls upon all to greet everyone in this world with warmth, for no one knows in whom one may come across Narayan.)

The advaita philosophy has been enunciated by the saints and seers of India in various forms. For example Nanak says :

*'Ekai Allah noor upaya, Kudarai de sab bande;
Ek noor tel sab jog upajya, kaum bhale kaum mande'.*

(The whole creation is born out of the one God; who then are virtuous and who, vicious.) And Kabir says : '*Jyou til maahi tel hai, jyou chakmak mein aag*' and '*Jyou puhupan mein baas*' (Just as oil is present in the oil seed and fire, in fire-stone—as fragrance is there in flowers).

Tulsi has presented a coordinated picture of 'Nar-Narayan' on the practical plane, clothing it with the worship of what can be perceived. The ancient Indian concept of universal brotherhood and humanism, integrated with the philosophical, cultural and worldly context, has found expression in Tulsi's 'Manas'; there has been a metamorphosis of godhood into manhood and of 'Purusha' (Brahma) into 'Prakriti' (Nature), of other-worldly essence into worldly environment, and of schism into re-integration.

The above Chaupai from the Ram-charit-manas has also got a broad social context. Firstly it makes a woman equally venerated with man. The power that moves the universe, instead of being male-dominated, becomes a joint effort of both, woman and man. Not only this, woman is mentioned first, for she is the power from the start, without which man

is altogether incomplete. This is the significance of the phrase 'Seeya Ram mai sab jag jani.' Secondly, joint veneration of woman and man on the part of a poet, indicates that the existence of an individual in comparison to the society at large, is insignificant; ego has its significance only if there is dedication and humility.

The word 'jag' (or universe) in the line under reference also merits consideration. What is that 'jag', or the universe, that is venerated by Tulsi? What is that universe which is pervaded by Seeya and Ram? The word 'universe' here indicates the entire creation, including the living, and non-living which means air, water, land-mass, vegetation, animal life—they are all worthy of respect and veneration. Also venerable are those sons of the soil who are out to make this land worth living in; all of them are the images of the creator of the Universe 'Rama'. What is meant is that God is not merely an other-worldly, invisible and inaccessible power. He exists in every particle—and Goddess Shakti is always by His side. In this way one finds that a sense of veneration for all existence is characteristic of Tulsi. This happy and harmonious concept of social and collective existence is characteristic of the most representative poet of Indian culture. Recognising the harmonious, life-oriented and practical approach of Tulsi as the foundation-stone of Indian renaissance, the national poet Sohanlal Dwivedi has aptly said :

Hindukul ka jab mahapot tha is jag jal-nidhi mein adhir; Tum bane achal akash-deep dikhalaya pratipal Sugam teer.

(When the ship of Hinduism was in doldrums, you, Tulsi, became the stable light-house indicating every moment the easy path to the safety of the shore.) □

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Narada Bhakti Sutras As Devotion to Nation

Dr. S. B. Verma

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DEVA-RSHI NARADA was one of the foremost scholars of his age. In the Chhandogya Upanishad (7—12), we find a reference to his vast scholarship in his own words thus :

“Sir, I have studied Rgveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda thoroughly. Itihasa-Purana the fifth veda, Grammar the Veda of Vedas, Pitra Vidya (concerning Shraddha ceremony etc.), Rasi Vidya (Mathematics), Daiva Vidya (science of natural calamities), Nidhi Vidya, Logic, Ethics, Deva-Vidya, Brahma-Vidya, Bhuta Vidya, Kshatra Vidya, Astronomy, Science of snakes and Deva-Jana-Vidya—all these have been mastered by me.”

We in Bharat still remember this great ancestor whose name has come down to us through the ages. Narada is also famous as a musician per excellence, tourist extra-ordinary, wise politician, sagacious diplomat, a spiritualist devoted to public welfare, etc. He is specially famous as a great missionary, propagator and intellectual of the ancient Narayana Dharma which later blossomed as Bhagavata Dharma and is known today as Vaishnava Dharma. Narada is depicted in our early literature as a saint chanting “Narayana—Narayana” or playing on the Vina, capable of going anywhere and everywhere, equally respected among Devas, Daityas, Rakshasas, Manavas.

The great sage Narada was a great scholar of Bhakti i.e. the path of Devotion to God and his work ‘Narada Bhakti Sutra’ (i.e. the Aphorisms of Bhakti) is very highly regarded in the Vaishnavaworld. He was a devotee of Narayana. In the Harivansha Purana (Bhavishya Parva 33.37), Narayana Tattwa (i.e. the Narayana-Principle) has been described thus :

Narayana paro moksho, Narayanavara gati ;

Narayana paro dharma, Narayanapara kratu.

(Salvation aims at Narayana. The highest aim is Narayana. The highest objective of Dharma is Narayana. Yajna is for Narayana). Accordingly, Acharya Ramachandra Shukla, in his Hindi work ‘Suradas’ rightly explains Narayana Tattwa thus : “Narayana means that form of Brahma which is pleasing to Nara Prakrti.” In Narayana Dharma, and in its later manifestations also complete devotion to the Omnipresent Lord Vishnu is clearly ordained in conduct conducive to public welfare. In the ‘Vishnu Sahasranama’, which is recited with devotion by the Vaishnavas throughout Bharat, and which contains one thousand names of the Lord, the very first name is not ‘Vishnu’ but ‘Viswa’. This also pointed to the same secret that the devotees of Vishnu i.e. Narayana, should always re-

The very first name of Vishnu is 'Vishwa,' i.e. the universe !

member the concrete form of Vishnu i.e. his mortal life immortal.
the vast universe.

No wonder the Narada Bhakti Sutra includes in its spirituality that social, national and humanist approach which, in modern times, has been put forth by Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramtirtha, Sri Aurobindo, Lokamanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Madhavrao Golwalkar, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya and others. The Bharatiya view accepts the nation and the world and, indeed, the universe, as forms of God and from this point of view, nationalism and service of humanity is also a form of devotion to the Lord Himself.

This brief work of 84 aphorisms is a glorious example of Bharatiya sagacity. These aphorisms have been explained by various scholars from the religious angle only. But we have established devotion to the Nation on a spiritual pedestal and the present is an attempt to see these Sutras in the light of this spiritual path of nationalism.

The first seven aphorisms explain the nature of Bhakti. Here we find many points of fundamental importance. Narada tells us that "Bhakti is Supreme love for God and it is essentially of the nature of immortality". It means that devotion to the nation means Supreme love for the nation as a form of God and it brings immortality to the devotee. A nationalist is a true devotee of the nation only when his heart is full of infinite love for the nation, and this devotion makes

According to Narada : "Having gained Bhakti, a devotee becomes perfect, divine and contented". Lives of great nationalists show us that by practising nationalism, they themselves became 'perfect' i.e. they were transformed into the ideals they had cherished. By their precept and example, they became immortal. They became contented also as they got elevated morally.

Another aphorism says : "Having attained Bhakti, one neither desires nor grieves, nor feels enmity, nor rejoices, nor exerts for his own interest." A true nationalist regards national service as supreme. He does not desire any rank, wealth or fame. While others exert to fulfil their individual ambitions, a true nationalist thinks and acts very differently. For example, Mansingh was eager to become a Mughal general to achieve worldly fame, while Maharana Pratap thought otherwise. Nationalism inspires sacrifice and renunciation, not selfish ambition.

According to Deva-Rshi Narada, "Having known Bhakti, one becomes intoxicated and full of peace, and lives in a state of continually enjoying the Bliss of the Atman." It means that a nationalist is intoxicated with a keen desire to make his nation great and prosperous and, therefore, he always thinks of his nation, and not of his own self. The lives of the revolutionaries, who kissed the noose—which was to hang them—with a smile, is an illustration of this intoxication. As

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a result of devotion, a patriot who looks upon every particle of his motherland as sacred, becomes intoxicated with love. And so Chaitanya Mahaprabhu became mad with love on seeing Vrindavan, the land of Lord Krishna's Leela. To a nationalist, every part of his motherland, Bharatmata—be it Srinagar or Kanyakumari, Vrindavan or Ajmer, a town or a village, a mountain or a valley, a river or a sea—appears as the land of Leela of national heroes. Some place is associated with Mandhata's penance, another is connected with Mahatma Buddha, Acharya Shankara or Swami Dayananda, etc. One spot reminds him of Lord Rama's deeds, another, of Lord Krishna's. Here is Vivekananda's Rock, there is Gandhiji's Sevagram.

Blessed with the peace that comes with the love of the land, a nationalist finds praise and abuse, shower of flowers and shower of stones, alike. He is not in a state of enjoying either the pleasures of the senses or of objects, but he finds bliss in himself, as he enjoys the Bliss of the Atman, becoming 'Atmaram'.

Acharya Narada has enunciated eight aphorisms (7—14) to explain the uniqueness of Bhakti. According to these, devotion to the nation is unique as there is desire for national interest only, unmixed with any other desire. This Bhakti ordains the consecration of secular and sacred activities along with unique devotion to one's nation and with complete indifference to all anti-national things, again secular or sacred. As Rahim, the Hindi poet said—

*Pritam Chhabhi nainan bausee, par
Chhabhi kahaan samaya;
Bhari sarai Rahim lakhi ; Aap pathik
phiri jaye.*

(My eyes are filled with the beauty of the beloved, so where is the room for anything else? Having seen the crowded inn, the traveller will no doubt go back.)

Here Narada says that great devotees should abide by scriptural ordinances, otherwise there is the risk of fall. Those who indulge in propriety and indecency in the name of nationalism, soon become depraved, corrupt and selfish. History has many examples of this kind.

The characteristics of Bhakti have been variously enunciated by the Acharyas owing to difference in view-points. In the next group of Aphorisms (15—24), the opinions of Vyasa, Garga and Shandilya have been described respectively as "devotion in acts of worship" "devotion to holy talk" and as "absence of prejudice, to the delight in the Atman." Lastly Narada gives his own opinion thus :

*Naradastu tadarapitakhila charita
Tadvismarne param vyakulateri*

(Narada is of the opinion that essential characteristics of Bhakti are the consecration of all activities, by complete self-surrender to Him, and extreme anguish when He is forgotten.)

Undoubtedly, the highest characteristic of devotion to the Nation is to remember the Nation while awake or sleeping, and while doing any actions, to consecrate all

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of the Lord to see anything else*

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Seek the company of great souls and, with God's Grace, you'll get it

activities to the Nation, and to feel extreme anguish when the Nation is forgotten. A real devotee of the nation has so much love for the nation, that he feels anguish when that service is not possible.

In the opinion of Narada, as expressed in his aphorisms (25-33), Bhakti is superior to Karma (Action), Gnyan (Knowledge) and Yoga, because it is of the nature of their fruit or result. Devotion to nation, like devotion to God in any other form, is its own reward. Those who are devoid of devotion to the nation, their activities do not conduce to their spiritual development. The same is true of Jnanis, the men of knowledge, and Yogis, who are engaged in spiritual practices, but who have a strong ego. Bhakti alone teaches renunciation of arrogance and egoism. Countries like U.S.A. etc. succeed in attracting various scholars and yogis who are devoid of devotion to their own country.

The substance of Narada's statement regarding the means of Bhakti and the importance of pious company (34-45) is that these are various means of Bhakti, viz.

1. Renunciation of the objects of sensual pleasure and attachment to them.
2. Uninterrupted meditation on the form, the secret qualities and the greatness of the adored Lord and
3. Hearing and singing the glories of the Lord even while engaged

in the ordinary pursuits of life.

Narada says that superior to all these, and the principal means of Bhakti, is the grace of a great man 'Mahapurusha', or the grace of God. The company of the great is rare but unailing. Nevertheless, the company of the great is attained only by the grace of God. So, Deva-Rshi says: "Seek, therefore, the company of great souls." Considering the great men of the twentieth century, we see that the holy company of Lokamanya Tilak, Subhash Chandra Bose, Dr. Keshav Rao Hedgewar, Mahatma Gandhi and others had lit the torch of national devotion in them. Due to this very devotion to nation, are added new chapters of love, service, renunciation and sacrifice in the histories of nations.

Narada says that evil company is an impediment to Bhakti while pious company is a help. Evil company leads to the rousing of lust, anger, delusion, loss of memory, loss of discrimination and it finally brings utter ruin. These vices, looking like ripples at first, may overwhelm a man, if not controlled in time.

Narada then raises the question: "Who crosses or overcomes Maya?" His own answer is: "He alone overcomes Maya who gives up attachment, who resorts to, and serves, great spiritual men, who is free from the sense of 'I and mine', who lives in solitude, cuts through the bondage of the pleasures of this world, gives up all ideas of acquisition, gives up the fruits of his actions, renounces all selfish activities, beyond all pairs

of opposites
and attains
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of opposites (such as pleasure and pain) and attains to uninterrupted love for God."

A person devoted to the Nation, and realizing God as Nation for his devotional practice, should never be entrapped by Maya (the great Illusion) and for this he requires spiritual qualities. For example, he cannot work if he is blindly tied down to prevalent customs and conventional wisdom. Maharana Pratap fought for the freedom of his motherland, renouncing the prevalent practice of running away from the battle-field. Self-introspection in solitude and self-development in the company of the pious, is a beneficial path for a devotee of the nation. The examples of revolutionaries clearly illustrate this. Accordingly to Acharya Narada, such a devotee of the Nation crosses Maya and helps others also to cross it—

Sa tarati sa tarati, sa lokans a tarayati.

In the words of the author, "*Aniravachaniyam prema swarupam*". (the intrinsic nature of Supreme Bhakti, i.e. supreme love, is inexpressible.) Therefore, we may say that in the highest form of national devotion, the devotee is full of love for the nation. He feels the joy which a dumb man experiences when he tastes something sweet. It is inexpressible, but the joy gleams through his eyes. This supreme devotion, nevertheless, manifests itself only in rare persons of worth. Such a nationalist never adores his nation for its attributes, nor for his

own selfish interests. This Supreme Bhakti is ever-growing in intensity, is always an unbroken inner experience, and is very subtle. Therefore, a nationalist, who is blessed with Supreme Bhakti, thinks, speaks, sees and hears only the Nation. The devotion to nation of Sri Madhav Rao Golevalkar was of this type.

In the later aphorisms has been proposed the ease of the path of devotion and its importance (58-60), the means and obstacles in Bhakti (61-65), the glory of devotees (66-73), the obstacle of disputatious discussion (74-75), helping practice in Bhakti (76-79), the result of Bhakti (80-82), and the supremacy of Bhakti (83-84).

National devotion is equally easy for all. Poverty, illiteracy, age, lack of pedigree etc., are no obstacle. From this point of view, the examples of Maharana Pratap and his Bhil followers are before us.

The joy of his devotion is well-enjoyed by a devotee and hence Bhakti needs no proof other than itself, of its soundness. A nation may not be in need of the knowledge of all its Jnanis, nor of the Yoga of all its Yogis, but the love for the nation by all its nationals is essential for a nation. Undoubtedly, therefore, the importance of national devotion is self-evident. Bhakti is also of the form of complete peace of mind and supreme joy. A nationalist also feels supreme joy and peace of mind if he serves his nation without self-interest.

*The nature of Supreme Bhakti
is inexpressible love*

Avoid all talk of money, women, atheists & enemies

Narada's code of conduct lays down that "any talk of money, women, atheists and enemies should not be listened to."

Narada further says that a devotee should give up pride. Dedicating all activities to Him, all his vices also, if they cannot be completely avoided, should be directed only towards Him. This means that if a nationalist finds it difficult to cast out his pride, he should not pride on himself but on his nation.

Acharya Narada tells us that the highest devotees are those who have love for God only and that also for God's sake. "When such devotees overflowing with love, hair standing on edge with joy, sit together, conversing with one another with all their heart, they purify not only their own families but the whole world. Such illumined devotees impart sanctity to the very places of pilgrimage; they add glory to their actions and lend authority to the scriptures." *Teerthi Kurvanti teerthani sukarni Kurvanti Karmani sachshtri Kurvanti shastrani*. For example, due to Tiruvalluvar, Kabir and Gandhi, even ordinary tasks like spinning and weaving have become hallowed professions. Narada is justified in his statement that "they give joy to their forefathers and the earth gets saviours in them".

Deva-Rshi Narada gives an important aphorism :

Nasti teshu jati, Vidya, Rupa, Kula, Dhana, Kriyadirtaah. "Among devotees there are no distinctions based on caste, learning, complexion, high or low family,

wealth, occupation" etc. This aphorism, when applied to the field of national devotion, becomes the nourisher, protector and supporter of national culture and national integration, bestowing great power to a nation. All patriots are dedicated to their motherland as God. Their diverse methods of work are the beauty of their nation and they enhance its prosperity too.

The fellow-travellers of Bhakti-path have been directed by the great Acharya to remember that "It is not proper for a Bhakta to enter into controversy" (*Vaado naava lambya*), as there is plenty of room for diversity in views and no one view is conclusive in itself. Certainly, to make one a national devotee, arguments are of little use, while devotion itself may transform the minds of others, as if by magic.

Discussion and meditation upon the teachings of the scriptures, teaching Bhakti, and practices capable of rousing and fostering devotion, should be undertaken, says Narada. He also teaches that one should not delay moving on the Bhakti-path, thinking that it may be done only after sufficiently cultivating oneself intellectually or mentally; in the realm of Bhakti, what is to be done tomorrow, should be done today itself.

A devotee should observe 'sadachar' like ahimsa, truthfulness, purity, compassion and faith in the existence of God. Also the "Lord alone should be worshipped through every aspect of life, without any distracting thought." Narada further says : "Being thus worshipped, the

Lord reveals Himself blesses them with God, worshipped reveals Himself in His devotee. To the as Nation, He has the form of the 'Mahashakti Bharat' vision was Bankim compose 'Vande M bindo organised an only picture in the was that of "Bharat

The great Acharya supremacy of Bhakti the Eternal Truth is propounds the following Bhakti—

1. Love of the Lord's blessing
2. Love of the beauty
3. Love of the Lord
4. Love of the Lord
5. Love of the Lord
6. Love of the Lord
7. Love of the Lord
8. Love of the Lord
9. Love of the Lord
10. Love of the Lord
11. Love of the Lord

All Bhakti is only forms of devotees of the nation, all the ed. In literature mainly the love

Narada's multi-dimensional Bhakti includes Rashtra Bhakti

Lord reveals Himself to his devotees and blesses them with divine realisation". God, worshipped in whatsoever form, reveals Himself in that very form before His devotee. To those who worship Him as Nation, He has revealed Himself in the form of the Great Motherland, 'Mahashakti Bharata Mata'. By such vision was Bankim Chandra impelled to compose 'Vande Mataram' and Aurobindo organised armed revolution. The only picture in the room of Sri Aurobindo was that of "Bharatvarsha".

The great Acharya, propounding the supremacy of Bhakti, says; "Bhakti of the Eternal Truth is Supreme". Later he propounds the following eleven forms of Bhakti—

1. Love of the glorification of the Lord's blessed qualities
2. Love of the Lord's enchanting beauty
3. Love of Lord's worship
4. Love of constant remembrance of the Lord
5. Love of Service of Lord
6. Love of Lord as friend
7. Love of Lord as for son
8. Love of Lord as husband
9. Love of self-surrender to the Lord
10. Love of complete absorption in the Lord
11. Love of the pain of separation from the Lord

All Bhakti is one, and these eleven are only forms of Bhakti. Among the devotees of the Lord seen in the form of a nation, all these forms may be discovered. In literary nationalists, there is mainly the love of the glorification of

nation's blessed qualities. In nationalists who are artists, love of the nation's enchanting beauty is predominant. Love of worship prevails in those who serve great national heroes or the poor. Historian-nationalists abound in love of constant remembrance. In physician-nationalists, love of service dominates. Those who follow national heroes or work as their comrades, exhibit love of Him as friend. Teachers, philanthropists, warriors have love of Nation as of father to his son. Love for the nation as that of a wife for her husband is manifested in various forms and includes all those devotees of the nation who serve the nation for duty's sake but with great love and care. Among those nationalists who are sages and saints, love of self-surrender prevails.

In conclusion the 'Narada Bhakti Sutra' (or 'Narada Bhakti Darshana' or 'Narada Prema Darshana') mentions the great Acharyas of Bhakti in the ancient tradition viz. Sanatkumar and his three brothers, Vyasa, Shukadeva, Shandilya, Garga, Vishnu, Kaundinya, Shesha, Uddhava, Aruni, Bali, Hanuman, Vibhishana etc. All these are well-renowned and unforgettable heroes of the various ages and in the various walks of our national life.

It is clear that the multi-dimensional Bhakti propounded by Acharya Narada includes 'devotion to nation' (Rashtra-Bhakti) also. To see God manifested as Nation and Universe, is a unique characteristic of Vaishnava Dharma and this brief (84 maxims only) but great work has enunciated Bhakti on this principle. □

Ram Leela & Krishna Leela : Ideal People's Theatre

Prof. Vijendra Snatak

RAMAYANA AND MAHABHARATA occupy the pride of place in Indian literature. Their importance in the day-to-day life of the people manifests itself through "Leelas" which are performed in all parts of the country. Shri Rama and Shri Krishna are the heroes in the said two Leelas. Both Ram and Krishna are also worshipped as incarnations of Lord Vishnu in human form. While Shri Rama established high ideals which strengthened society, Shri Krishna stood by justice and promoted all-round human happiness. The lofty ideals and human values upheld by them have left such an indelible impression on the society at large that people stage their Leelas year after year, with lot of fanfare. These Leelas are diverse in character, e.g. 'Ram Leela', 'Ras Leela', 'Daan Leela', 'Maan Leela', 'Dushth-Sanhar Leela', etc. Each Leela, however, vividly depicts the unique qualities, beauties and excellence of Shri Ram or Shri Krishna. This exercises tremendous influence on the common man.

The different Leelas of the two divine personages have doubtless a deep religious and spiritual meaning. But they also have a great influence on the national and social fabric because the common man invariably associates Shri Rama and Sri Krishna with his daily life. The practical aspects of their Leelas also deeply influence people's social outlook and behaviour.

Before going into the wider aspects of the Leelas, let me define the word 'Leela', whose dictionary meaning is "sport, game or recreation". Shri Vallabhacharya also gave the same meaning to it. Taking it as God's will (Bhagavan ki Ichchha), Vallabhacharya felt that Leela was some sort of endeavour or sport (Cheshta or Kreera). In his monumental "Life Divine", Shri Aurobindo defined it thus: "The word Lila means Immortal's ecstasy, the Divine play, an inalienable underlying delight of existence, of which all outward or surface sensations are a positive, negative or neutral play, waves and foamings of that infinite deep; eternal immutability in sum and foundation along with an eternal mutability in aspect and apparition. World Existence is a self-delight of externally existent Being, the play, the child's joy, the poet's joy, joy of the Soul, of things eternally young, perpetually inexhaustible, creating and re-creating Himself in Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation—Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the play-ground—the three generalisations of the play of existence in its relation to the eternal and stable, the immutable Sachchidananda. A constant and yet always variable rhythm of creative consciousness casting up, projecting in itself phenomenal truths of its own infinite and eternal being, and this rhythm in its essence cause and purpose of play of the infinite delight of

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Thus Shri Aurobindo considers Leela as God's divine sport which provides eternal joy to all in accordance with His will. Aurobindo also did not lay any stress on the social or national aspect of Leela. Before him, too, many a philosopher and man of letters had evaluated Leela in terms of religion and spirituality. But hardly anyone had analysed the national and social significance of Leelas. In modern times, no activity, not even spiritual activity, is recognised, until and unless it stands the test of intellect or reason. Further, the social impact of the activity is very important. If the social significance of an activity is unclear or weak, it will not carry conviction. The pertinent question, therefore, is as to what is the usefulness of the Leelas to society. What does society gain from them?

In the present scientific age, there are serious doubts about Leelas that have mythology as their basis. It is very difficult to establish their social and national significance. Leelas relating to Rama and Krishna do replace high values like divine love, devotion, compassion, devotion to duty. But their national and social purpose is not very obvious. The origins of Leelas were no doubt essentially religious. However, their impact became wide with the growth of a variety of Leelas associated with different manifestations of God. The Leela got intimately linked with national and social life. When a Leela is staged, its mystic

and spiritual meaning extends and embraces the work-a-day world, and viewers start linking it with current social problems. By this analysis, I do not wish to play down spiritual or religious importance of Leelas: my only object is to see their relevance to the social field. I know that hardly anyone in the past has thought on these lines. But the effort seems to be worth making because a proper study of the social importance of these Leelas could make a significant contribution to national awareness and social cohesion.

"Ram Leela" depicts the whole life history of Bhagavan Rama. In the Ramayana, Rama is portrayed as possessing sterling character,—brilliant, brave, magnanimous, compassionate, self-less. He is considered as an ideal man—best among all human beings, who propounded and practised all the high values and traditions of our way of life. Thus, Ramayana truly depicts our traditional values. From the very beginning, Sri Ram's life was dedicated to the well-being of others. In essence, Ramayana tells us that anyone who wants to share India's national pride must live and die for others i.e. for the national good. As the saying goes: "Ramadivat pravartitanana Ravanadivat" (We should behave like Rama and not like Ravana).

Sri Rama's whole life was full of struggle. One fine evening his father, King Dashrath, announced Rama's succession and coronation, but that very night, the King was constrained to change his decision and banish Ramato the forest

The role of mythological Leelas even in this scientific age

Ram Rajya is a living concept, superior even to democracy

for fourteen years. Rama's greatness lies in the fact that he received both the decisions with equal equanimity. Even when he was exiled, he was in good cheer, accepting the tradition of obeying one's father without the least hesitation. Sri Rama thus established his lofty character which, in turn, set up a norm for national character. By reading Ramayana—whether Valmiki's or Tulsi's—one may not necessarily get the point, but when one views these events staged in Ram Leela, the impact is captivating as well as lasting. Viewers instantly identify themselves with high ideals like keeping your word, obedience, sacrifice etc., and start taking pride in our ancient traditions.

"Ram Rajya" denotes the vision of an ideal government. The concept of "Ram Rajya" may sometimes appear difficult to follow in view of the frequent incompatibility of interests between the ruled and the ruler. But the concept of "Ram Rajya" envisaged by Goswami Tulsi Das appears to be far superior to any democratic or communist system of government. In spite of being king, Rama was subject to the highest traditions of justice and was ever-ready to make any sacrifices for the people. When this theme is staged in Ram Leela, the people see for themselves the model of ancient India's system of government. Thus from beginning to end, Ram Leela compares the past with the present and provokes thinking about Bharat Rashtra, national heroes and an administrative system most suited to the country. The many achievements of Sri Rama even

during his exile show that his real purpose was to set a high standard of obedience, and devotion to duty, fight evil forces and save the people from their onslaughts. Since the basis of nationalism is mutual affection, national security, people's welfare and their happiness, Ram Leela vividly depicts all these features of real life.

At the social level, too, Ram Leela brings out various inspiring episodes and events. The most significant feature of Ram Rajya is well-knit social organisation and mutual cooperation. This is indicated by the fact that on seeing Ram Leela, one invariably gets a vision of an ideal society. Viewers instantly start learning that they should also discharge their social duties and responsibilities in the same manner as the character in Ram Leela. In spite of portraying Shri Rama as the incarnation of God, Goswami Tulsi Das in his Ramayana has not depicted his character as beyond the scope or power of a human being. Tulsi Das has, in fact, shown Rama as a social human being performing all his duties and responsibilities as a model man, Maryada Purushottam. There is hardly any doubt that the viewers get lot of inspiration from Ram Leela as it re-establishes the highest social values. Further, social outlook is not merely confined to Rama, it permeates all the characters of Ramayana. Even the evil characters have a semblance of character. For instance, in spite of his weakness, Ravana did not behave like a loose character, and this greatly impresses the viewers. Mahatma Gandhi, too, saw in the Ramayana a high degree of social discipline and character.

Ram Leela has mainly because of its social impact. Leela has been duty and respect honestly. All have only one society at large. Ram Leela, the viewers to come of Rama, Sita

In short, various characters merely provide a reminder of society. The Leela is provided motivated madivat practice the social a Ram Leela.

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Ram Leela has become so widely popular mainly because of its social content and social impact. Every character in Ram Leela has been cast to perform his/her duty and responsibility to the society honestly. All the Ramayana episodes have only one objective viz. welfare of society at large. The principal aim of Ram Leela, therefore, is to inspire the viewers to emulate the life and character of Rama, Sita and other noble characters.

In short, the vivid performance of various characters in Ram Lila does not merely provide entertainment but also reminds us of our duty towards the society. The wide popularity of Ram Leela is proved by the fact that people get motivated and follow Ram viz. "Ramadivati pravrajitavyam." And this is the social and national significance of Ram Leela.

THE FIELD OF Krishna Leela is even wider. It is not confined to only Mahabharat but extends to the whole "Purana" literature. The basis of Krishna Leela, however, is the individual. Sri Krishna, who is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, performs Leelas in human form, which can be broadly classified into two categories. They are :

(i) Aishwarya Parak Leela (ii) Madhurya Parak Lila. 'Aishwarya' is unique power, Parakarma and power (Shakti-Smartya). The word 'Madhurya' denotes love, sweet sentiment, passion. It has many forms and many facets. However, what needs to be seen is whether there is any social content in Krishna Leela.

The Aishwarya Parak Leelas of Sri Krishna are connected with annihilation of evil forces like Kansa Vadh Leela, Kalia Vadh Leela, Pootana Vadh Leela, Dhenuk Vadh Leela. In analysing these Leelas, we cannot but see Sri Krishna as a just ruler who is ever ready to fight and destroy evil forces. For example, if public welfare was not dear to Sri Krishna, he would not have rebuked Dushasan for depriving Draupadi of her sari, and saved her honour by increasing the sari's length beyond any limit. Secondly when Lord Indra poured heavy rains on 'Braj' to punish the people, Sri Krishna saved the Braj-dwellers by giving them shelter on the Govardhan hill. This mythological story could be linked with the objective of people's welfare because a true nationalist is one who cares more for the society, forgetting his ownself. In the said Leela, Sri Krishna's sole object, therefore, is selfless service.

Leelas depicting the devotees, pure love for Sri Krishna are mainly contained in the devotional poetry of Surdas. Shri Vallabhacharya in his "Subodhini Teeka" has also given a spiritual meaning to these Leelas but he did not comment on their national or social significance. Surdas sang Sri Krishna's 'Bal Leela' in detail. While sentiments like Sakhya Bhav (friend's affection) and Vatsalya Bhav (parental love) dominate in Surdas, it lacks the national or social outlook. Family, and not society, is the domain of Bal Leela. As a child lives and moves in the family, the same sentiments have been depicted in the 'Purana' literature

*The field of Krishna Leela
is wider—and richer*

as well as in the subsequent devotional poetry. The Tamil "Alvar" saints also have sung this Leela. Its meaning is quite clear. A devotee gets immense joy to see 'Bal Krishna' close to him, playing within the compound of his own house. The various sports associated with Sri Krishna in his childhood, are identical with any child's play-things. In this family atmosphere, the social picture that emerges is quite natural and joyful. The place that a child occupies in the society, and the way parents express their love for him, also have a social implication. By seeing such Leelas, not only devotion is aroused, but the viewers, attention is also drawn towards their social purpose. In addition, the sentiment of goodwill for the common man is aroused by seeing the Leelas relating to the "Gopis" and "Gopikas", the ordinary cattle-men. Similarly, much social and national significance can be seen in other Krishna Leelas also.

In short, Ram Leela, Ras Leela, Bal Leela etc. help bring out vividly the sterling qualities of our great national heroes. These Leelas, therefore, have a significant national and social purpose. No doubt the original object of the Leelas was to foster devotion, but today they

are additionally certainly serving a national purpose. The common man is inspired by them. While the 'Aishwarya' Parak Leelas give a message of valour, enterprise and spirit of sacrifice, the 'Madhurya' Parak Leelas teach us social cohesion, mutual love and selfless service. By seeing these Leelas on the stage, the viewers get deeply moved. Their outlook becomes wider and they feel emotionally integrated with the society. When we see the Leelas dramatically depicting the sterling character of Sri Ram and Sri Krishna, Harish Chandra and Yudhishtira, who were staunch believers in truth, Bharat and Lakshman, who were obedient brothers, Hanuman and Sugriv, whose one and only life-aim was service, and Sita and Savitri who were model women, we forget that these stories may be based on mythology. We imbibe from them high values that are the cement of our society. Through these Leelas we are also reminded of our responsibilities and duty to the society. Thus the entire Leela literature and framework has a great moral, social and national purpose. Through them, the supermen or avatars are depicted as human beings, so that these Leelas not only provide recreation and joy to the viewers, they also help social cohesion and national integration.

The Sanctity of All Languages

I SHALL so bring out the beauty and the melodiousness of the Marathi language that she will adorn the literature and would even surpass nectar in sweetness. If my Dynaneshwari, which is a critical book, were to be compared with the Bhagavad Gita, nobody would be able to make out a s to which is the original and which is a translation. Whether Dynaneshwari is an exposition or extension of Gita, or Gita is the digest of Dynaneshwari, such doubts will arise in the minds of the people. If Sanskrit is supposed to be the language of the Gods, is Prakrit or Marathi a contribution of the thieves, and the lowly elements? --SANT DNYANESHWAR

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BHAKTI— A MASS MOVEMENT

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THE MOVEMENT which is by the people, of the people and for the welfare of the people, is a mass movement par excellence. 'Bhakti', right from the beginning, had shown definite signs of a mass movement. The Bhaktas had always proclaimed :

*lati pati poochhe nahin koi
Hari ko bhaje so Hari ka ho.*

(Caste and creed is not important. One who remembers god, becomes one with God.)

Grierson, a keen nineteenth-century student of Indian languages and literatures, was wonder-struck by the Bhakti movement. He said : 'Like a sudden flash of lightning there shone a new light on the dark clouds of all the old religious schools and sects. No Hindu knows where this new light came from and nobody can fix the era of its origin.'

Actually, however, this lightning was not sudden. The fundamental tenets of Bhakti movement can be seen in the Vaidic literature, Ramayan, Mahabharat. As early as the second century B.C., a Greek by the name of Heliodoros was so impressed by the 'Vaishnav Bhakti' that he erected a 'Garuda Stambh' in Besnagar near Gwalior and inscribed his name as 'Bhagvat Heliodor' on it. Owing to the support given to it by Gupta Kings, the Puranic Vaishnava Bhakti grew apace. Also there were Alvar and Nayanar Bhaktas in Tamil Nadu. They included

princes, paupers, women. Their writings were compiled into what has come to be known as the Fifth Veda (Panchan Veda).

This was intelligible and available to all people. Ramanuj Acharya's Guru Raghunath Acharya, gave him the 'Deeksha Mantra' and told him that its recitation would result in the salvation of man. Ramanuja began to recite this 'Mantra' loudly from the top of his house, so that the whole population may receive the 'Mantra' and attain salvation. The flow of Bhakti current turns to North from here. That is why it is said : "Bhakti David upaji, laye Ramanand". ('Bhakti' was born in Dravida Nadu; it was brought up north by Ramanand).

To Raghavanand, who belongs to the school of Ramanuja, goes the credit of spreading Vaishnav Bhakti in the North. Hitherto only high-borns had had the right to be 'Sanyasins'. Ramanand, one of the Kanyakubj Brahmin disciples of Raghavanand, went south and came back north. He now insisted that members of all castes should have the right to become 'Sanyasins'. The Guru could not do this work; but he entrusted the task of organising such a new religious school to his disciple. Ramanand organised the new Bhakti school, 'Ramavata'—and accorded the right of becoming a 'Bairagi' to all classes and castes. Consequently, through the medium of these Bairagis, the whole society was reorganised. 'Ram' reached every hearth and home. Ramanand reclaimed all those who were forcibly

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Rama & Krishna embraced the poor who, in turn, worshipped them

converted, encouraged the use of people's language, Hindi—in place of Sanskrit—established 'Akharas' (Gymnasia) and imparted instruction in the use of arms to Vaishnavites, so that they may defend themselves against injustice and tyranny.

Tulsidas, the most powerful poet in Rambhakti tradition, exhibits a far stronger social consciousness than the other Bhaktas. His Rama is a supreme being—a Super—God—which combines the triple qualities of Sheel, Shakti and Soundarya. This Rama, is extremely liberal and affectionate towards his Bhaktas. He meets forest tribals and gives them affection and respect; he does not let them feel inferior. When these tribals, full of love and emotion for Rama, talk to Rama in their illiterate and innocent ways, he listens to them with loving interest like an affectionate father listening to the stammerings of his kids :

*Vachan Kiratanh ke sunat,
Jimi pitu balak bain.*

Anybody who recites the name of such a Rama, in whatever way, whether out of laziness, with good intention or bad, even in irritation, will receive his benediction said Kabir :

*Baj kubhay anakh alas hoon.
Naam japat mangal disi dashoon.*

Such is the glory of Rama's name. Whoever, whether a 'Chandal' or a tribal, or a 'Yaman' (Yavan), or a fool recites his name, attains supreme holiness :

*"Swapouch, Sabar, Khal, Jaman, Pamar,
Kol, Kirat"*

*Ram kawat pawan param hot bhawan
Vikkhyat.*

While the 'Varnashram' system was in the process of disintegration during Tulsid's times, caste restrictions were very rigid. Tulsid endeavoured to mitigate the rigours of caste inequalities through the medium of 'Ram Nam'.

It was due to the influence of 'Ram Nam' that Bharat embraced the lowly 'Nishad' tribal, whose very shadow would have otherwise required sprinkling of gold-washed water :

*Lok Ved sab bhantih neecha,
Jasu chhan chhui lei seencha.
Tehi bhari ank Ram—laghu bhrata,
Milat pulak paripoori: gaata.*

The Brahmin Vashisht also embraced a 'Kevat' in his arms when he saw the latter doing 'Pranam' from a distance :

Ram sakha rishi barbas bhenta.

Kabir believed in formless (Nirguna) god. He declared that even though the prestige of the son of Dashrath had spread in all the three worlds, Ram whose 'Bhakt' he was, was different; he was formless :

*Dashrath s:t tihun lok vakhana,
Ram naam ka maram hai aana.*

But even Kabir could not remain untouched by Rama's personality. At times he calls himself Ram's dog, Moti.

"Kabir kutia Ram ka; Mutta mera naam."

At other times Rama.

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At other times he calls himself beloved of Rama.

Sinners 'Ajamil', Gaj and 'Ganika' were also Bhaktas of Saguna Ram, God with form.

Ajamel, Gaj, Ganika, patit karam keenhen, Eu utar par gae, Ram nam Leenhan.

All this shows that even those who believed in formless (Nirguna) God, were deeply influenced by the pleasing aspects of the personality of God with form.

Sexual attraction is a fact of life. Sexuality and love are of vital importance in the life of man and woman. Krishna represents the sublimation of both, sexuality and love. Krishna was wholly and whole-heartedly acceptable to the common man in both the forms: naughty lad and fond lover. Surdas described Krishna's child-like nature in such simple, natural and captivating terms that humanity began to identify even their naughty and playful children with Krishna. People's hearts were delighted with both the 'Rasleela' and 'Parnayleela' of Krishna. The populace, immersed in the thoughts of Krishna-leela, forgot that the country was ruled by foreign oppressive kings. The only king they recognised in their hearts was the Lord as Rama or Krishna.

Mira went *Gunghroos* on her feet and danced in love of Girdhar Nagar. Even Muslim poets did not lag behind. Ras Khan says : Krishna, who is worshipped by all other gods, dances to the tune of the daughters of Ahirs, because these girls tempt him with 'Chhaachh' (butter-milk). The Bengali Muslim poet Chand Qazi's Radha complains to Krishna as to why he plays his flute when she is with her teachers; she almost dies of shame!

Jakhan aami baisya thaki gurujanar majeh, Nam dhaira bajao banshi aami mairi laje.

The Oriya poet Salbeg's Radha has renounced all sense of shame for her Krishna.

*Navghan Kalia,
Taare lagl mor jati gel,
Pati gel, laj laya gel.*

The Bhakti of Rama and Krishna had reached even tribals who lived in deep forests. They began to identify themselves with these two Avatars in one form or the other.

Bhaktas had established intense personal and family relations with these supreme beings. Mundane affairs and worldly prosperity had become secondary affairs. 'Bhakti' had fortified them to such an extent that they could withstand any trauma on its strength. During mediaeval times foreigners defeated us militarily and politically; but they could not defeat us morally and culturally. The foreign culture proved inferior to the Vaisnava culture. Another quality of 'Bhakti' was its universal character. Upanishadic philosophy was beyond the mental horizon of most people. The ban on its reading by the common man was only a formality; fact is that it was quite beyond them. Their unthinking reading could only have led to its misinterpretation, vulgarisation. On the other hand, there was nothing incomprehensible about Bhakti. It was the spontaneous overflow of feeling of a loving heart. There were no impediments to Bhakti; rich and poor, high and low, men and women, they all had equal rights and equal interest in Bhakti. The current of Bhakti swept the whole country. If integrated the nation at the people's level, into one organic whole. It manifested itself as a tremendous mass movement. □

Who is A Noble man—Vaishnavajana

A POPULAR Vaisnava hymn, in Gujarati, with the refrain 'Vaishnav Jana tau tene Kahiye, Je pida parayi jane re' initially, composed and sung by the famous saint devotee of Lord Visnu (in the form of 'Sanwal Shah, the Munificent Banker'), is that excellent devotional song (Bhakti-Geeta) that tells us of the ideal noble qualities of a noble man. This hymn was made all the more popular by Mahatma Gandhi by getting it sung regularly at his 'prayer meetings'.

The full text of the hymn, in original (Gujarati), is as under :

Vaisnavajana tau tene kahiye, je pida
parayi jane re.
Paraduhkhe upakara kare toye, mana
abhimana na ane re ;
Sakala lokaman sahune vande, Ninda na
kare kanti re ;
Vaca, kacha mana niscala rakhe, dhana
dhana janani teni re ;
Samadrsti ne trsna tyagi, parastri jene
mata re ;
Jihva thaki asatya na bole, para dhana
nava jhale hatha re ;
Moha maya vyape nahi tene, drdha
vairagya jene manama re ;
Ramanama su tali re lagi, sakala tiratha
tene tanaman re ;
Vana lobhi ne kapata rahita che, kama,
krodha nivarya re ;
Bhane Narasaiyo tennu darsana karatan,
kula ektera tarya re ;
Vaisnavajana tau tene kahiye, je pida
parayi jnea re.

In my own free English rendering the song may be read as follows :

"A Vaisnava jana be called such a one,
who suffering of others discerns.
Does good to others in suffering Though,
yet pride from Heart he turns ;
The good he worships in the entire World,
ill he speaks of none's ;
Such keep control over speech body and
mind, blessed be mothers of such as ones ;
With equanimity of vision he renounces
desire, another's wife like mother he
discerns ;
Even by fault his tongue does utter no lie,
the touch of adther's riches his hand
spurns ;
Bind him not greed, fear, infatuation and
the like, in whose heart holy fire of renun-
ciation burns ;
Absorbed is he in 'Ramanama' as, for all
pilgrimages, he to his body turns ;
Neither he is greedy nor deceitful, passion
and anger he abandons ;
Narasi says 'In one go whole Gnan gets
liberated, of those who get to see such
noble ones'.

The song may to be a paraphrasing and elaboration of the Sanskrit Sloka :

Matrvat para darsu, Para dravyesy
losthavat ;
Atmavat sarva bhutesu, yaha pasyati sa
pandita.

(Another's wife as mother, other's riches as clod of earth ;

(All beings like one's own self, one

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who perceives thus is, the wise man). But, perhaps, that is not the case. There is one big difference and the same is that whereas the Sanskrit Sloka seeks to define or describe a wise man, the song expects all those qualities, and more, to be found in an ordinary person. For a Vaishnavajana is no other than a common man who is a follower of that Dharma (Vaishnavism) that has been conveyed to him by the great Veda Vyasa through his eighteen Puranas, by Goswami Tulsi dasa through his 'RAMACHARITA MANASA' and by numerous saints and Bhaktas of Lord Visnu through their respective compositions. Rightly has it been said that 'In the eighteen Puranas, Vyasa has spoken of just two things': To do good to other is meritorious, and to inflict pain on others is demeritorious'.

*Astadasesu puranesu vyasasya vacanam
dayam ;*

Paropakaram punyaya papaya parapidanam.

And it is fairly well known that Goswami Tulsidas offers to one and all the following advice :

*Daya dharma ka mool hay, papa mool
abhimana
Tulsi dayana chodiye, jab lag ghat mein
prana.*

(Compassion is the foundation of Dharma and demerit consists, in pride ; Tulsi says, 'abandon not compassion, so long as you breathe').

It is the self same message of all saints, seers, and devotees that has been conveyed so beautifully by the great bhakta, Narsi Mehta, through his wonderful hymn couched in a simple and lucid language. ('Ritambhara')

—The Glory of Hinduism—

IRRESISTIBLY and apparently inevitably the expanse of sand generates the offspring of violent despots (p. 21)

HINDUISM in its boundless richness can only be understood as a vegetative process. (p. 39)

EVERY HINDU devotee reveres sensual love as the image of divine creative forces and uses it as the vehicle of pious thoughts of sacrifice. (p. 97)

ONE SINGLE dancing Shiva embodies more of the essence of divinity than a whole army of Olympians. (p. 101)

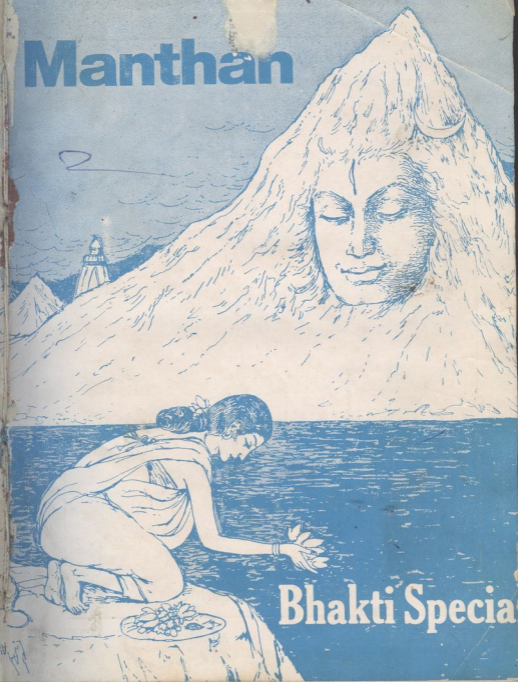
THE FIGURES in the Indian pantheon, in so far as they embody primary forces, are so convincing that I am inclined to believe the seer who told me once that they were the true likeness of divine reality. (p. 98)

ALL INDIGENOUS religions have an absolute advantage over imported ones, because they represent a medium in which the best and most ideal elements can be expressed intelligently. (p. 177)

—Count Hermann Keyserling :

"The Travel Diary of a Philosopher". Vol. I

Manthan



Bhakti Special