

## CHAPTER : V

### Different types of Bhakti

( *Love-devotion and Parā-Bhakti* )

CHAPTER V.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF BHAKTI.

( Love Devotion and Parā-Bhakti )

As distinguished from the above mentioned nine-fold ( नवधा ) or the three-fold ( त्रिगुणात्मिका ) Bhakti which is secondary ( गौणी भक्ति ), the tenth kind of Bhakti i.e. दशधा ( Love devotion प्रेमलक्षणा भक्ति ) or the eleventh kind of Bhakti i.e. अनेकादशधा or Nirguṇa or Guṇātīta or Parā-Bhakti is the Bhakti par excellence dominated by Love Divine either of Saṅgū Brahman as seen in the Love Devotion of Rādhā or Rukmiṇī for Kṛṣṇa or of the Nirguṇa Brahman as seen in the case of परमहंस like Śukadeva. It is in fact love for love's sake without any ulterior motive of profit or gain or reward or recognition or even of Mokṣa. It is the spontaneous ( स्वाभाविक ), uninterrupted ( अव्यवहित ) and unmotivated ( अहेतुक ) flow of the purified and concentrated heart towards God, whether with form

or without form. It commences after the --  
dedication of the earthly self to God ( Ātma-  
Nivedana), for the devotee in order to realise  
the Divine has to merge his limited being  
(i.e. the ego) in the Being of the Eternal  
Infinite. <sup>1</sup> De facto, the limited shell is  
broken so that the drop glides into the ocean.

With the annihilation of the ego (the  
limited self), the devotee now rises above the  
imperatives. <sup>2</sup> The sense of agency ( नाहंकर्ता )

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1. एवं धर्मैर्मनुष्याणामुद्धवात्मनिवेदिनाम् ।  
मयि स्रंजायते भक्तिः कोऽन्योऽर्थोऽस्यावशिष्यते ॥  
Bh. 11-19-24.

2. तस्मात्त्वमुद्धवात्सृज्य चोदनाम् प्रतिचोदनाम् ।  
प्रवृत्तं च निवृत्तं च श्रोतव्यं श्रुतमेष च ॥  
मामेकमेष शरणमात्मानं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।  
याहि सर्वात्मभावेन मया स्या ह्यकुतोभयः ॥

Bh 11-12-14 and 15

having disappeared with the dissolution of the limited self, rights and duties, do's and don'ts ( विधि and निषेध ) have no meaning for the devotee who has dedicated himself to God, for he does only that which pleases God. The centre of his activity and the standard of his morality have changed from the self to God. He is possessed of passion for God.<sup>3</sup> He lives on until all his matured actions ( कार्म ) are entirely exhausted.<sup>4</sup> His devotion to God is, therefore, a spontaneous affair, as distinguished from conscious effort directed to a definite end. He now drifts from the shore of the material to the depth of the spiritual. He

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3. तथेच्छेमदिरत्नपुरुषपरिचर्यया भगवति-

प्रवर्धमानानुरागभरद्गुलहृदयशैथिल्यम् ।

Bh. 5-7-12

4. उपभोगेन कार्मवर्धं व्यपनयन् ।

Bh. 5-10-14

goes all alone on his pilgrimage into the realm of the spiritual, having torn himself from all the times and trifles of worldly existence. It is the flight of the Alone to the Alone (i.e. God).<sup>5</sup> Having surrendered the ego, he has no private axe to grind; having no self to feed. He is completely dispossessed of desires.<sup>6</sup> He travels alone, light and free and refuses to be burdened again with the varied pleasures of life. He tramples over all pleasures that come by his way. He is not prepared to exchange his spiritual acquisition for anything, not even for the entire kingdom of heaven. He now withdraws himself from everything else to settle himself fully and entirely in God-love. It is an

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5. Sidney Spencer :- "Mysticism in World Religion"  
- P. 167.

6. न किञ्चित् सार्धद्यो क्षीरा भक्ताह्येकान्तिनामम ।  
वाञ्छन्त्यपि मया वत्सं क्वच्यमपुनर्भयम् ॥

undivided direction of his mind to God ( i.e. *एकान्तिम्* )? Like the concentration of the Yogin entering the depth of Samādhi, the devotee's Bhakti acquires spontaneity to be borne out into the midst stream of Infinitude. In terms of the Bhāgavata, the passion ( *रति* ) for God then begins to flow uninterruptedly to God ( *नैसर्गिकी-रति* )<sup>8</sup>. With the dawning of natural passion ( *नैसर्गिकी रति* ), the devotee as it were becomes a new man. He leaves aside toying with the world is transfigured into something other than what it was so long because of his spiritual insight. Every single act of his is now penetrated by God and he cries for divine grace. He sings out of

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7. या सुदये भगवति सर्वात्मनि परेऽमले ।  
एकान्तित्वं गतो भक्त्या सर्वभूतसुहृत्समः ॥  
Bh. 9-2-11.

8. यथा यथाऽऽत्मा परिमृज्यतेऽसा मत्पुण्यगार्था-  
श्रवणाभिधाने ।  
तथा तथा पश्यति परन्तु सूक्ष्मं  
चक्षुर्यक्षिणाञ्जनसम्प्रयुक्तम् ॥ Bh. 11-14-26.

intense pleasure, he breaks into dance at his spiritual conquest. The divine rapture over-takes him inspite of himself. It is in fact the descent of God in man.<sup>9</sup>

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9. गुणैरलमसंख्यैर्माहात्म्यं लस्य सूच्यते ।  
वासुदेवो भगवति यस्य नैर्गर्गिकी रतिः ॥  
न्यस्तक्रीडनको बालो जडयत्त तन्मनस्तथा ।  
कृष्णग्राहगृहीतात्मा न वेव जगदीदृशम् ॥  
आसीनः पर्यटन्नसन् शयानः प्रापियन् श्रुयन् ।  
नानुसंधन् पुतानि गोविन्दपरिरम्भितः ॥  
कचिद् रुदति वैकुण्ठचिन्ताशयल्लयेतनः ।  
कचिद् रुदति तच्चिन्ताहाद उद्गायति क्वचित् ॥  
नदति कचिदुल्कषाः पिलज्जो नृप्यति क्वचिद् ।  
कचिद् तद्भावनायुक्तस्तन्मयोऽनुचकारह ॥

13h. 7-4-36 to 40

निशम्य कर्माणि गुणानुल्यान् वीर्याणि लीलातनुभिः कृतानि ।  
यदा लिहप्रोत्पुलकाश्रुगद्गदं प्रोक्कण्ठ उद्गायति रौति नृप्यति ॥  
यदा ग्राहग्रास्त इव कचिद् हसत्याक्रन्वलेध्यायति वैदलेजन्म ।  
मुहुः स्वसन् वक्त्रि हरे जगत्पते नारायणे व्यात्ममनिर्गतत्रयः ॥

13h. 7-7-34 & 35 .

Gradually, the excitement subsides, he takes to silence and the steady and dynamic flow of love gradually assumes profundity. Love has now deepened into sublime tranquility from its superficial expressions. Love is now properly assimilated by his constitution. The softening effect of Rati is thus replaced by the solidity of devotional fervour.<sup>10</sup> The devotee now opens his eyes to behold the world in an entirely new perspective as is seen in the case of a Bhāgavatottama (the best of devotees) like Rantideva. One who sees Viṣṇu everywhere is called a Vaiṣṇava or a Bhāgavatottama.<sup>11</sup> The ether and the air, the

10. क्वचिदुत्पुलकस्वृष्णीमास्ते संस्पर्शनिर्वृतः।  
अस्पर्दप्रणयानन्दसलिलामीलितक्षेत्रजः ॥

Bh. 7-4-41

क्वचिद् रुदन्त्यच्युलचिन्तया  
क्वचिद्दसन्नित नन्द्यन्नित एवन्त्यलाकिकाः।  
नृत्यन्ति गायन्त्यनुशीलाश्चन्त्यजः  
भवन्ति वृष्णी परमेत्यं निर्वृताः ॥ Bh. 11-3-32

11. Translated and Compiled by Ātmananda:-

" Words of Śrī Ānandamayī Mā " - P. 5

fire and the water, the earth and the stars, beings and directions, trees, rivers and seas are found to articulate the Divine. God must be the alpha and omega of whatever is done. Naturally the response to this revelation is reverential submission to all forms of God.<sup>12</sup> The prostration of the devotee goes to the underlying unity, the spiritual that binds the particulars into harmony. Tranquility then reigns supreme in his heart.<sup>13</sup> The devotee sees the oneness of all life; and if everything is God, whom can one injure without offending God,

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12. खं वायुमग्निं सलिलं मह्यं च  
ज्मोलीषि सच्चानि विशो दुमावीन् ।  
सरित्समुद्रांश्च हरेः शरीरं  
सत्किञ्च भूतं प्रणमयेन्नन्यः ॥

Bh. 11-2-41

13. इत्यद्युजाङ्घ्रिं भजलाडनुवृच्या  
भक्तिर्विरक्तिर्भगवत्प्रकोधः ।  
भवन्ति व॥ भागवतस्य राजस्तलः  
परां शान्तिमुपैति साक्षात् ॥

Bh. 11-2-43

so the devotee is marked at this stage by serenity ( उपशम ) and nonviolence ( अहिंसा )<sup>14</sup>.

If all particulars are integrated into the harmony of the spiritual, the devotee who is endowed with the integral vision cannot be left out of it. Hence, inclusion is not to be a part of the larger whole. To know is to be. To know that Brahman embodies all is to be Brahman, as revealed in the Śruti,<sup>15</sup> but such Brahman is not the negation of particulars but the -- indissoluble unity of all the particulars. Once the devotee is endowed with this integral vision, his devotion attains a new dignity. Devotion, with the surrender of his limited self, was so

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14. सर्वात्मना न हिंसन्ति भूलवामेषु किञ्चन ।  
उच्चावचेषु वैल्येन्द्र मद्भावेन गलस्पृहाः ॥

Bk. 7-10-20.

15. ब्रह्मवेदं ब्रह्मैव भवति ।

M. U. 3-2-9.

far selfless but now it is marked by the sense of non-differentiation as well. Unitary and selfless, it is described by the Bhāgavata, as devotion par excellence (Parā-Bhakti). Parā-Bhakti is said to accompany or follow the highest knowledge. It is supposed to be an eternal state that is self-contained. It is to be Brahman transcending the three Gunas - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (Nirguna Bhakti).<sup>16</sup> With the attainment of the status of Brahman, his spirit of dedication finds a new significance. At one with the world, he now feels with all poignancy, all worldly afflictions as his own. Yet this new bondage becomes in his hand a new apparatus of emancipation

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16. मद्गुणस्रुतिमात्रेण मयि सर्वगुह्यस्य ।  
मनोगतिरविच्छिन्ना यथा गङ्गाम्भसोऽम्बुधौ ॥  
लक्ष्मणं भक्तियोगस्य निर्गुणस्य ह्युराहलम् ।  
अहंभक्त्यव्यवहिता या भक्तिः पुरुषोत्तम ॥  
Bh. 3-29-11812

स ह्येव भक्तियोगस्य आत्यंतिक उदाहृतः ।  
येनात्तिद्रज्यं त्रिगुणं मन्नाद्यायोपपद्यते ॥  
Bh. 3-29-14.

because he now yields the power of spirituality. So what might have been the source of infinite sorrow becomes the spring of perennial joy. He not only wails with the world, but also knows the secret of removing tears from it. A - Bhāgavatottama,<sup>17</sup> as the Bhāgavata designates, is dedicated to the removal of troubles from the world. He is a citizen of the world charged with divine mission.<sup>18</sup> Like Rantideva, he would say, "I do not crave for the supreme goal, the high majesty or release from re-birth. I should

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17. सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्येत् भगवद्भावमात्मनः।

भूतानि भगवत्यात्मन्येष भगवतोत्तमः ॥

न मरुतस्यः पर इति विलेष्वात्मनि वा भिदा।

सर्वभूतसमः शान्तः स वै भगवतोत्तमः ॥

Bh. 11-2-45 & 11-2-52

18 मन्थे भगवतः साक्ष्णत् पार्श्वान् वो मधुद्विषः।

विष्णोर्भूतानि लोकानाम् पापनाय वरन्ति हि ॥

Bh : 11 - 2 - 28

rather work among men to take upon myself the burden of their sorrow, so that they are relieved of it." <sup>19</sup> Like Prahlāda, he would take the vow, " I would not seek release till a single being remains in chains. I will do my very best to remove sorrow from the suffering world. <sup>20</sup>

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19. न कामयेऽहं गतिमीश्वरात्  
परामष्ट द्विचुक्त्तामपुनर्भवं वा ।  
आर्तिं प्रपद्येऽखिलं देहभोजामन्तः  
स्थितो येन भवन्त्यदुःखाः ॥  
शुच्युत्प्रमो गात्रपरिप्रमश्य  
दन्धं क्लमः शोकविषादमोहाः ।  
सर्वे निवृत्ताः कृपणस्य  
जन्तोर्जिजीविषोर्जीवजलार्पणान्मे ॥

Bh. 9-21-12 & 13

20. प्रायेण वैव मुनयः स्वदिमुक्तिकामा  
मौनं चरन्ति विजनेन परार्थनिष्ठाः ।  
नेतान् विहाय कृपणान् विमुमुक्षु एको  
नान्मं त्वदस्य शरणं भ्रमताऽनुपश्ये ॥

Bh. 7-9-44.

Wherever goes a Bhāgavatottama, he brings welfare.<sup>21</sup> As he is the living embodiment of detachment, knowledge and devotion, he infects

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21. अथापि मे बुभुक्षस्य विबुधोत्तमदर्शने ।  
भवितव्यं मङ्गलेन येनात्मा मे प्रसीयति ॥

. Bh 6-2-32

अहो ययं जन्मभूतोऽद्य हास्य  
वृद्धानुवृत्त्यापि चित्तोमजाताः ।  
दोषकुल्यमादिं विधुमोति  
शीघ्रं महत्तमानामभिधानश्लोकः ॥ Bh 1-18-18

संगो यः संमृतेषु तुरसत्सु चिह्नितोऽधिया ।  
स एव साधुषु कृता निःसङ्गव्याय कल्पते ॥

Bh 3-23-55

सुरक्षे त्वं हि धन्योऽसि मद्भाग्येन समागतः ।  
साधूनां दर्शनं लोके सर्वशिक्षकरं परम् ॥

Bh. M. 1-79.

life and his contact opens up the door to liberation.<sup>22</sup> His company rouses the mind to settling on God.<sup>23</sup> A Bhāgavatottama is one who is totally absorbed in God through his body, mind and intellect.<sup>24</sup> And the dust of such a Bhāgavatottama ( पादरजोभिषेकम् ) evokes Kṛṣṇa-mindedness. In fact, presence of water does not make a place holy, nor does

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22. प्रसङ्गमजरं पाशमात्मनः कवयो विवुः ।  
स ह्य सार्धं कृत्वो मोक्षद्वारमपावृतम् ॥  
Bh. 3-25-20.

23. नष्टप्रायेष्वभद्रेषु नित्यं भागवतसेवया ।  
भागवत्युत्तमश्लोके भक्तिर्भवति नष्टिकी ॥  
Bh-1-2-18.

24. हरिजन ले हरिमे रडे, मनसा वाया हाय.  
— डॉ. ई. अ° ४४४२ " श्री अथाजनी साजीमो"  
पृ. ४

earth or stone constitute God-head. They are useful as far as they go, but a Bhāgavatottama's impact on life is immediate.<sup>25</sup> The physical sun dispels physical darkness, but a Bhāgavatottama removes the mental gloom.<sup>26</sup> It may be questioned

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25. न ह्यभ्ययानि तीर्थानि न देवा मृच्छिन्नामयाः ।

ते पुनन्त्युरुकालेन दर्शनादेव साधवः ॥

नाग्निर्न सूर्यो न च चन्द्रलारका  
न भूर्जलं खं स्वप्ननाडय वाङ्मनः ।

उपासिता भेदेकृत्वा हरन्त्यघं  
धिपश्चितो घ्नन्ति मुहुर्लसेवथा ॥

यस्यात्मबुद्धिः कुजपे त्रिधातुके  
स्वधीः कलत्रादिषु भौम इज्यधीः ।

यत्तीर्थबुद्धिः सलिले न कर्हि-  
चिज्जनेष्वभिसेषु स एव गोखरः ॥

Bh. 10-84-11, 12 & 13.

26. यक्षोपक्षयमाजस्य भगवन्तं विभावसुम् ।

शीतं भयं तमोप्येति साधून् सँसेवतस्तथा ॥

Bh. 11-26 - 31

where the secret spring of his power lies. A Bhāgavatottama is so sanctifying because he is a God-filled soul.<sup>27</sup> It is no wonder then that his sight is auspicious and gives pleasure to the mind. His mere association kindles the mind of others into detachment, devotion and knowledge.<sup>28</sup> In fact, God love would be found to be the central virtue in which are focussed all other virtues.<sup>29</sup> A devotee of this stature

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27. सार्धयो न्यासिनः शान्ता श्रद्धिष्ठा लोकपावनाः ।  
हरन्त्यद्यं लोकेऽङ्गुलान् तेष्वाम्बुते ह्यद्यभिन्नरिः ॥

Bh. 9.9-6.

28. तस्मान्नरोऽसङ्गमुसङ्गजालसानासिनेहैव विवृण्वमोहः ।  
हरिं तदीहाकथनश्रुताभ्यां लब्धस्मृतिर्योऽयनिपारमध्वनः ॥

Bh. 5-12-16

29. Dr. Rānade :- " Article on - God-Love " -  
P. 29. Bhavan's Journal, May 22, 1966. /

is a counterpart of God. Indeed, God is as indispensable to him as he is to God.<sup>30</sup>

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30. नाहं वस्नामि वैकुण्ठे योगिनां हृदये न च ।

मङ्गलता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥

P. P. Uttar. 94-23.

પ્રાણા ધરી મને વૈષ્ણવ વ્યાલા, અદ્યોમિશ હૃદયે ધ્યાઈ રે;  
જપ લપ લીરધ વૈકુંઠ લજને, મારા ભક્ત દ્યોય લ્યાં નહં રે - છે  
અંબરીષ રાજા મને બહુ વ્યાલો, દુર્વાસાએ માનભંગ કીધો રે;  
ગજને માટે પાળો રે પડીઓ, અવતાર દશવાર મેં લીધો રે - પ્રાણ  
લક્ષ્મીજી અર્ધાંગના મારી, તે તો મારા સંલની દાસી રે;  
અડઅઠ લીરધ મારે સંલને ચરણો, કોયે ગંગાને કોયે કાશી રે - પ્રાણ  
સંલ ચાલે લ્યાં હું આગળ ચાલું, સંલ સૂવે લ્યાં હું નર્તુ રે;  
મારા ભક્તની મિંદા કરે તેના, કોયે જુલ હું ભાંગું રે - પ્રાણ  
મારા બાંધ્યા સંલ છોડે, સંલે બાંધ્યા મેં મવ છુટે રે;  
એકવાર સંલ મને બાંધે તો, તે બંધન નવ તૂટે રે - પ્રાણ.  
બેસીને ગાય લ્યાં ઊભો ઊભો સાંભળું, ઊભો ઊભો ગાય લ્યાં નાર્યું રે;  
હું તો વૈષ્ણવધી ક્ષણ નક્ષ અજગો, બલો નરસંધો એમ સાચું રે - પ્રાણ.

— નરસિંહ મ્હેતા.

પુરુષોત્તમદાસ:

"શ્રીશ્રીવૃહદ્ લાગવત મુધામિધિ"

પૃ. ૫૫.

A Bhāgavatottama lives in God, as God lives  
in him. 31

According to the Bhāgavata, Reality is the  
grand synthesis of both the immanent and -

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31. अहं भक्त परार्थीनो ह्यस्वतन्त्र इव द्विज ।  
साधुभिर्गुणैस्तद्दयो भक्तैर्भक्तजनप्रियः ॥  
नाहमात्मानमाशान्से मद्भक्तैः साधुभिर्यना ।  
प्रियं चात्यन्तिकीं ब्रह्मन् येषां गतिरहं परा ॥  
ये वारागारपुत्रात्तान् प्राजान् विलपिर्म परम् ।  
हित्वा मां शरणं याताः कथं तांस्त्यक्तुमुत्सहे ॥  
मयि निर्वृद्धहृदयाः सार्धय समदर्शनाः ।  
वशीकुर्वन्ति मां भक्त्या सत्स्रियः सत्पतिं यदा ॥  
मत्सेवया प्रतीतं च मालोक्यादि यनुष्टयम् ।  
नेच्छन्ति सेवया पूर्णाः कुतोऽन्यत्कालविदुतम् ॥  
सार्धयो हृदयं मह्यं साधूनां हृदयं त्वहम् ।  
मदन्यत् तेन जानन्ति नाहं तेष्यामनागपि ॥

Bh. 9-4-63 to 68.

transcendent (like the Puruṣottama of the Gītā) and so the opposition between the two aspects need not be absolute. In fact, the transcendent is the highest fulfilment of the immanent. Transcendence is other than exclusionism. The mind of the Bhāgavatottama is divested of Rajas and Tamas and therefore, his integral vision sees God here, there and everywhere. His love of the world is in fact the love of God, because God is immanent in the world. In course of time, finitude with all its infinite-simal details recedes to pale insignificance. He sees Brahman everywhere. It is possible, therefore, to realise the crest of devotion (Parā-Bhakti) here and now. Just as fragmentary life on earth is sustained by integral pleasure. According to the Bhāgavata, the consummation of pleasure is Bhagavān, to be achieved by supreme love (Parā-Bhakti).<sup>32</sup> In brief, Parā-Bhakti or

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32. नैवेच्छत्याश्रितः क्वापि ब्रह्मर्षिमोक्षमप्युत ।  
भक्तिं परां भगवति लब्धवान् पुरुषोऽत्यये ॥

devotion par excellence is the stage when the devotee and his Bhagavan coalesce into the Single Reality. It is the highest fulfilment of Life Divine, the Summum bonum, the destination of all spiritual aspirations.

As distinguished from Parā-Bhakti, discussed above, the Love Devotion is in fact " the supreme love for God, " as revealed in the love of the Gopis for Lord Kṛṣṇa.<sup>33</sup> It depends upon nothing else. A mind totally turned towards God in love, demanding nothing, not even liberation, is a mind filled with devotion. Thoughts constantly flowing in love towards the supreme is devotion. Nobody else, nothing else; no one/else - this attitude of the heart is love. This state is called exclusive love (Ananya Prem), and this total love is devotion. God love ( ईशके हकीकी )

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33. सात्वस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा

N B.S. 2 .

यथा प्रजगोपिकानाम्

N. B S. 21.

should be distinguished from ordinary love i.e. human love ( इंसानों के मीठापन). In the ordinary lower love the lover expects a return while God love is the exclusive love for God demanding nothing but God. All things must die, but love alone eludes mortality. Love warms the heart with unspeakable solace, even more when it is given than when it is received.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, God-love is above all sectarianism; for the concept of God includes both the manifest and the unmanifest, the immanent and the transcendent i.e. God with form and without form. Love is a relation that first relates the lover to the beloved. Thereafter, it becomes a bond that fastens them into a permanent intimacy. Love is a link that connects, a force that attracts, a fascination that seizes

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34. Will Durant:- " The Pleasures of Philosophy " -  
Chapter VII ( The Spiritual Development ) -  
Page 114.

and a clasp that grasps. Therefore, when one establishes oneself in the relationship of devotion with the divine, one steps up into a realm of his own, having his own enchantments and personal experiences.

In our ordinary human life, we identify ourselves with the ever-changing instruments of experiences and we live nothing but a life of change in the midst of this ever-changing world. The equipment of experiences (viz. Body, mind and intellect) and the objects, emotions and thoughts that constitute the fields of experiences are both finite and in their constant flux the individuality in us (viz. the perceiver, the feeler and thinker) as the experience of this change is itself constantly changing. These disturbances constitute the real pain of mortality, the source of all sorrows and agony in life. In God-love or utter devotion when an individual lifts all his identification from the realm of change into the contemplation of the changeless, immutable Lord, the constant agitations cease,

and therefore, all sense of mortality too vanishes. This constant experience of the changeless - infinitude and the consequent equi-poise lived by a true devotee is the stage of immortality. This is why Narada says that the supreme love for the Lord called Devotion Divine is of the nature of immortality.<sup>35</sup>

In Supreme Love, the devotee forgets his self entirely. He has only thoughts of God. The devotee wants God and God alone. There is no selfish expectation here. Devotion is the seed. Faith is the root. Service of saints is the shower. Communion with the Lord is the fruit. Bhakti is the greatest power on this earth. It gushes from one's pure heart. It redeems and saves. It purifies the heart. Bhakti grows gradually just as we grow a flower or a tree

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35. अमृतस्वरूपा च ।

N. B. S. 3.

in a garden. We should cultivate Bhakti in the garden of our heart gradually. <sup>36</sup>

Man is constantly seeking his share of peace and happiness, and since he does not know the real source of this, he seeks them in the midst of the sense-objects; but when he, in his devotion, comes to turn his entire attention towards the Higher and the Nobler and when he in his Supreme devotion comes to turn completely towards the self, he experiences the infinite or infinitude as intimately as he experienced before the world and its changes. To love the

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36. Swami Sivananda: "Amrit Gita" - P. 16.

All-perfect is happiness.<sup>37</sup> Bhagavān Himself says in the Bhāgavata " the mind that constantly contemplates upon the sense-objects irresistably comes to reveal in their finite joys and the mind that learns to remember Me constantly comes to dissolve into Me and revel in Me ".<sup>38</sup>

Through the divinely passionate love for the Lord ( प्रेमलक्ष्मणा भक्ति ), when the devotee turns his entire devotion towards the supreme, he comes to live no more in the realm of the finite changes but comes to experience the Immortal Nature of the Infinite Bliss, the Lord. This reminds us of the Upanisadic declarations

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37. Swami Krisnanda: "The Divine Life" - Vol. XXVIII. No. 8 - August, 1966 - Article on 'The True Church' (Sri Sivananda-Valentina, Florida, U.S.A.)- P. 190.

38. विषयान् ध्यायतश्चित्तं विषयेषु विषज्जले ।  
मामनुस्मरतश्चित्तं मय्येव प्रविलीयते ॥

that " the knower of the Brahman becomes Brahman".<sup>39</sup> Here the knowing is the state of fully awakening to the divine nature of pure consciousness, the Ātman (the Parā-Bhakti described above).

The essential difference between the Parā-Bhakti and Premalakṣaṇā-Bhakti lies in the दूँत or अदूँत attitude and the consequent goal of the devotee. In Parā-Bhakti (transcendental Love-devotion), the devotee like Śukadeva believes in the oneness of all life and hence aims at merger in the Eternal Infinite (Brahman) whereas in Premalakṣaṇā-Bhakti (Love-devotion i.e. conjugal or married love like that of Rukmiṇī or passionate or romantic love like that of Rādhā and other Gopīs) the devotee believes himself or herself to be distinct from the Lord, the Saguna-Brahman (God with form) and consequently

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39. अहं वेदं ब्रह्मैव भवति ।

aims at the everlasting union with God. Both the aspects of love viz. conjugal and romantic (i.e. as between a lover and the beloved) find a place in the Bhāgavata. The former has been given expression at Dwārka through Kṛṣṇa and his wives, while the latter finds scope for play at Vṛndāvana.<sup>40</sup> It will be evident from the above that the devotee of the Pāra-Bhakti type aims at identity with the God-head whereas the devotee of the Premalakṣaṇā type aims at union with God, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The great Purāṇas describe that the eight mighty powers (अष्टसिद्धिः) wait upon a true devotee. But to a true devotee of the Lord all the powers and gains are of no value at all. He rejects them as insignificant, for he has given away his heart to God. Thereafter he claims nothing other than

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40. Narendra Nāth Law :- " Muktaṭphala " -  
Prefatory Dissertation - P. xxvii.

God - neither the status of Brahman nor the throne of Indra nor the emperorship , nor the kingdom, nor the eight Siddhis ( सिद्धिः )- nay not even Mokṣa does he come to demand.<sup>41</sup> Love is its own fulfilment. A devotee after having gained this subtle wealth of Supreme Devotion discovers an infinite satisfaction in itself, by itself, for itself. He lacks thereafter nothing. Rich in his love, he steadily lives on, and experiences no change. No more is he conscious of the usual slavery of existence. He comes to gain and live immortality here among us, even while apparently living the worldly life of daily joys and sorrows. Since his mind is constantly resting at His feet in devotion, he lives the Infinitude which is the nature of the Lord. There is an exhilarating

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41. न नाकपृष्ठं न च पारमेष्ठ्यं न  
सार्वभौमं न रसाधिपत्यम् ।  
न योगसिद्धीरपुनर्भवं वा  
समञ्जसं च वा विरहय्य काङ्क्षे ॥

Bh. 6-11-25

satisfaction in the subjective bosom of a true devotee. Even though he may be living in utter starvation and penury, misery and sorrow as Sudāmā did, he lives inwardly fully rich and happy. When an individual gains the Supreme joy of full devotion to the Lord, he has no more any desires for the things of this world. How can there be any attraction for the foul-smelling ditch-water of sensuality to one who is swimming in the ocean of Hari-Bhakti ? A true God-lover has only one desire - be he in heaven or hell, his only demand is that his love for his Lord must ever increase. He cares for nothing but God. Moreover, he never grieves at the loss of anything, for grief is the - feeling that comes in the human mind, when the already acquired objects of his attachment perish or decay. Since to a true devotee, there is no attachment for anything of the world around, and his entire attachment is only for the imperishable truth i.e. God in the midst of

the ever-dying, ever-perishing world of being and objects, a true lover's heart knows no grief.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, a true devotee in his supreme love for God recognises everything as the play of the Lord of his heart. He, therefore, knows no hatred and slights none. In his vision everything is sacred and divine and therefore he hates none.<sup>43</sup> Generally, things that are conducive to our nature gather around us, we come to feel an expansion of joy within our bosom. The heart of a true lover is ever-dwelling in the thoughts of his beloved and so a true devotee discovers no situation in life wherein he can particularly discover a great delight because of a certain set of things or circumstances

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42. न किञ्चिद्वाञ्छति न शोचति ।

N.B.S. 5.

43. न द्वेषति । N.B.S. 5.

around him. Even when the situations are bad, the devotee is in supreme ecstasy because his heart is constantly dwelling in His presence.<sup>44</sup> A true devotee is always full of the drunken joy of His presence within and around him at all times, therefore, he lives a full-life-sans interest, sans-enthusiasm.<sup>45</sup>

To a true devotee, all objects of happiness other than God are unimportant and extremely insignificant. He cares not for them. Things may come and things may go; joys may visit him or sorrows be deep in his heart, but he ever

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44. न रमते। N. B. S. 5

45. न उत्साही भवति। N. B. S. 5.

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति।  
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः समेप्रियः॥

Gita. 12-17

lives in the maddening joy of Hari-Bhakti. His mind never goes anywhere. It has no place to go. Whenever it goes, he has no other experience other than the beloved of his own heart. The Gopīs are devotees of this type. They once said to Uddhava, " Our minds never remain even for a moment with us - how can they go then to our neighbours or others?<sup>46</sup> Once a lover, the Lord fascinates him so much that in the language of the Bhaktas, the Lord is the thief of the hearts (Citta-Cor). In the great glory of the Lord, the love-heart of the devotees melts to become one with Him. Thereafter, there can never be any anxiety over anything; or even a distant chance for the remembrance of the sense-objects and their enjoyments. It is hence that

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46. पुनः पुनः स्मरन्ति नन्दगोपसुतं वल।  
श्रीनिकेलैस्त्वयकेर्विस्मर्तुं नैव शक्नुम ॥  
गत्या ललितसोदारहासलीलावलोकनैः  
माधव्यागिराहसधियाः कथं लं विस्मरामहे ॥

Bh 10-47-50851 .

the immortal devotees, the Gopīs of Vraja, the true lovers of Lord Kṛṣṇa openly confess - " when we cannot shift our minds even for a moment from our beloved Kṛṣṇa, how can we strive for getting any worldly objects, or weep over things that we have failed to procure ? Our minds know nothing other than Kṛṣṇa".<sup>47</sup> The mind of the Gopī-like devotee comes to be so jealously occupied by the Lord that there is no accommodation in it thereafter for anything else. Hence, the Gopīs are regarded as the ideal devotees of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa; the love of the Gopīs was the very ideal of love which wants nothing which cares not even for heaven, the love that does not care for anything in this world or the world to come.

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47. लन्मनस्कास्तदा लापास्तद्विद्येष्टास्तदात्मिकाः ।  
तद्गुणानेव गायन्त्योनात्मसंगाराणि सस्मरुः ॥

He who has gained this all consuming Devotion (Premalakṣaṇā-Bhakti) becomes "mad" with his own Love-Divine. He cannot behave as all others do in the world; and due to his incapacity to conform to the usual mode and attitude of the worldly people, the members of the society brand him as mad. He sings the glory of the Lord always; he cries in ecstatic joy; he laughs in his own floods of inner joy. He smiles and weeps, dances and rolls in ecstasy ever-living in a private world of bliss - all his own.<sup>48</sup> Others around him have no entry into his private world of endless joy and suffocating peace. His palace of fulfilment is built on the top most peaks of satisfaction - no one can scale them and visit him there, where he lives in divine luxury.

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48. योगं गङ्गादा द्रवते यश्च चित्तं रुदत्यभीष्टं हसतिक्वचिच्च ।  
विलज्ज उदायति नृत्यते च मद्भक्तिभुक्ता भुवनं पुनाति ॥

Srīmad Bhāgavata describes the mind of such a great devotee : " Hearing again and again from other Bhaktas, the stories of the Lord's incarnations and his exploits (Līlā), the devotee's mind becomes overwhelmed with love and devotion for Him; and he, with no sense of shame or reserve bursts out chanting and singing His glorious names and his mind becomes merged with the Lord-of-his-Love. Overpowered by the rising tides of his surging love, the devotee weeps and laughs, sings and dances like a mad man.<sup>49</sup> Thus, having sung and danced, wept and laughed, he, in his own inner crisis of mounting Love, becomes silent and quiet - both within and without.<sup>50</sup> The

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49. मत्तो भवति । N. B S. 6.

50. इवद्धो भवति । N. B S 6.

devotee at this stage becomes unconsciously lifted into the state of deepest meditation, when the Divine form of the Lord alone has the exclusive chance to be in his heart. During such moments of utter meditation without the help of any other Sādhanā, a true Bhakta comes to plunge deeper and deeper into his own inner quietude to reach ultimately the realm of the self, the Ātman. Thus, he comes to "revel in the self".<sup>51</sup> This is in brief a general picture of Divine Devotion ( or Prema-lakṣanā Bhakti).

As the Love Devotion is of the nature of renunciation, there is no element of desire in that Love Divine. Love is its own fulfilment.<sup>52</sup> A true devotee cares not even for his own

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51. आत्मरामो भवति | N.B.S. 6.

52. मा न कामयमाना | N.B.S. 7.

liberation. His only desire is for the Love of his heart's Beloved, the Lord. Love is a reward in itself. To love the Lord for the fulfilment of a desire is not true love; it is a desire-promoted devotion (Kamañā Bhakti). Such -- commercialism in religion cannot bring about any sense of fulfilment to the seeker's bosom. A true devotee never comes to demand anything from the Lord except more and more Love for Him, and that this Love should ever remain steady and grow in its dimension. In short, desire departs from the heart in which Devotion has entered. To live in Love is to live desireless. The very essence of Devotion lies in the spirit of renunciation of all other infatuations and seekings. To a lover, there is nothing more sacred than the beloved; all his urges and demands in life are to acquire, possess and enjoy his beloved. The individuality in such a devotee, who has turned totally towards the Lord, comes to turn away more and more from the usual anxieties and efforts in earning, procuring, enjoying and saving the material

objects of the world, emotions and thoughts. He renounces them all, in the name of the Lord, who alone is the one coveted possession for him to seek. A lover can express his love only in the language of his ready sacrifices. Everywhere we find that all lovers are always ready to make sacrifices, each for the sake of the other. In fact, the spirit of happy renunciation is the very heart of love. When devotion to the Lord increases, all secular (Loka) and - ritualistic (Veda) preoccupations (Vyāpāra) leave the devotee to function in any field.<sup>53</sup> The individual must have his heart thrilled by a desire to gain his end in that particular field. When one's mind has become drowned in the fullness of Bliss of Hari Bhakti, how can such a lover entertain any desire other than

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53. निरोधस्तु लोकवेदव्यापार-यासः। N.B S. 8.

maintaining the Love-play with the Lord of Love in his own heart? His mind comes to dwell - constantly upon his Lord. The entire mind of the devotee throbs with the single thought of the Lord of the Universe ( शुद्ध ईश्वरकार ). A Divine Lover's mind can never wander to any other object of fascination. Everything reminds him of nothing but the All-pervading Nārāyaṇa. To such a true and ardent devotee, rituals (Vedic or Purāṇic) are of no significance. They are of no avail to him. When once the world-ward flow of the mind has completely ended, to such a devotee performance of rituals, be the Vedic or Samārta, becomes totally impossible. Every moment of his existence, in every thought of his heart, he is constantly at His feet. To divine lover who is thus living in unbroken memory of Lord of-his-heart, even without any ritualism, his very existence is a constant oblation of Love at the Altar of the Lord. This kind of an all-consuming sweet Love for the Lord is nowhere so completely exemplified as in the love of the Gopīs for the Blue-Boy of Brindāvana. The Gopīs say to Lord Kṛṣṇa "Oh darling, our

hearts, happily attached to our homes, have been stolen away by you; our hands, ever engaged in domestic work have become as though paralysed and our feet refuse to take even a single step to anywhere else but to you. How shall we return home and, even if we return, what else shall we do there? 54

Single-hearted, complete identification with the Lord of-the-heart, and consequently to have nothing but an attitude of utter indifference to everything else that snatches away the mind from the sense of oneness-with-the-Lord is truly the nature of a Gopī-like devotee. As devotion for the Lord increases in a Divine Lover, his activities in the world outside and his attachments to the things and beings of the world

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54. चित्तं सुरवेन भवतापहृतं चृहेषु  
यन्निर्विशत्युत करावपि गृह्यकृत्ये ।  
पादौ पदं न चलत्स्त्वय पादमूलाद्  
यामः कथं प्रजमयो करयाम किं वा ॥

drop off by themselves from him. His attention and his entire life come to exist only to play and serve around the Lord of his heart. When the mind is exclusively single-pointed in the contemplation of the Lord, that mind seeks no shelter in any other object of the world when a true devotee in his great devotion finds his heart entirely occupied by the Lord of His devotion, he finds therein no accommodation to entertain anything else. He comes to depend upon none but the Lord of his heart. A sincere devotee sees the whole universe as the very form of his beloved.<sup>55</sup> The Gopīs saw the Lord everywhere, even in the chirping of the birds in Brindāvana, they heard the birds chanting of His glories. To be thus in Him with all one's mind, so that even the sense-organs cannot land upon anything without bringing the association

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55. श्रीनि के मन एह सल  
श्रीर लखन कु प्रलिमा राम  
— श्री. श्री. श्री. ४४४२  
" श्रीनिनी श्रीनिनी"  
५.२८.

of the Lord to one's experience is called -  
" Whole heartedness ".<sup>56</sup> Such a mind in this  
state sees in the Lord all things; and in all  
things they see but the "play" of the Lord. To  
have this experience of "the all-in-all" is  
ananyatā, the whole-heartedness. A heart thus  
ablaze with God-Love even while experiencing  
the world of objects - emotions - thoughts through  
the vehicles of one's own body, mind, intellect,  
can never be away from the joyous Love-Divine.  
To such a devotee His Lord is never far away.  
The eternal hide-and-seek which He plays with  
His devotees in their love-hearts is the world  
of experience that they live, in all their day-to-  
day life.

To a Gopī-like lover who has intense whole-  
hearted devotion to the Lord, total rejection

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56. लक्ष्मिन्ननन्यला लद्धिरोधिषूदासीनला च ।

N B S. 9

अनन्याश्रयाणां ज्यागोडनन्यला ।

N. B S. 10.

of all activities hostile to this all-consuming Love is not only easy but is quite natural. It becomes almost impossible for such a devotee to undertake any activity which is detrimental to his Love Divine. Even if such an act was prescribed by the Vedas or by the secular laws of the country, he will not obey them if it is contrary to his Premā-Bhakti. A true devotee rejects them all even if they are prescribed and insisted upon by the Vedas and the Purānas. To the unregenerate the scriptures are the authority. The injunctions of the Vedas are only external, and do not bind us when we reach the highest condition, where we act naturally in accordance with the law of spirit.<sup>57</sup> Such acts of a devotee cannot be classified as disobedience, because there is no such intention in his heart. Thus, Prahlāda rejected the strict command of his father

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57. Dr. Rādhākṛṣṇan :- " The Theism of the Bhagavad Gītā " - P. 75.

Hiranyakāśipu, Vibhīṣana discarded his brother Rāvana and Bharata slighted his mother. The Gopīs of Brindāvana ignored the vigorous objections of their husbands. And yet, none of them has been accused in the world for any of their such Bhakti-prompted tresspasses. In fact, they had grown to be, in their very disobedience and rejection, light-houses guiding generations of man to a life of greater grandeur and nobler sacrifices at the Altar of their real devotion.

According to the Gītā and the Bhāgavata, to act without ego and ego-centric desires, in a spirit of dedication unto the Lord of one's own heart is the royal road to develop devotion. By so acting, we are in fact rejecting all activities prompted by selfishness and selfish desires. Till the love for the Lord grows a pitch of whole-heartedness when it comes to take hold of us completely, such dedicated - activities must be undertaken and pursued

sincerely. Thereby the devotee escapes doing even unconsciously acts which are hostile to the birth and development of Love Divine in his heart. As a rule, after choosing to live a dedicated life of total devotion unto the Lord, the devotee should not give up the rules of conduct laid down and the practices of devotion prescribed in the scriptures.<sup>58</sup> The exceptions pointed out above are according to Nārada only for those who in their supreme devotion have become temporarily mad with their God-love. Just as in the secular world disobedience to the laws of a country in a state of temporary mental imbalance is legally overlooked and largely forgiven, so only during such rare occasions when a devotee has become divinely "mad" in his whole-hearted ecstasy of devotion. In such a fully blossomed devotee self-conscious acts wither away all by their own accord. This

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58. भयानु निश्चयदाढ्यावूर्ध्वं शास्त्ररक्षणम् ।

is a stage wherein the devotee is so fully merged in the Higher and the Divine consciousness that he is no longer aware of either of his body or his bodily acts. So long as a devotee is in the State of ecstasy, and, therefore, in a condition of blissful self-forgetfulness, he need not, and cannot strive to follow the strict injunctions of the Śāstras. Whatever such a devotee in that state of his God-madness does, becomes the very foundation of all Śāstras. The great scriptures can only copy such a Bhakta's behaviour and hold it up for other seekers as the ideal to follow.

But as long as the devotee is fully conscious of his physical body and entirely aware of its conditions, he must obey faithfully the strict injunctions of the Śāstras; or else there is the fear of a fall from the spiritual path. <sup>59</sup> There is always a continuous

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59. उन्नयथा पालित्याशङ्कया ।

pull upon the devotee to bring him down into his old habit of living, a life of sense enjoyments prompted by his ego and ego-centric desires as is seen in the case of Gopīs' egoism and the consequent disappearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa for some time. To live in obedience to the dictates of the Śāstras in a mode of life wherein the devotee becomes completely insured against all such chances of a relapse of his old mental disease, and the consequent false evaluations of life.

He who ignores the injunctions of the Śāstras and follows the urges of the desire can neither attain perfection nor happiness nor the supreme state.<sup>60</sup> By merely posing to be "mad" with Love Divine and then to disobey the instructions of right conduct, as laid down in the Śāstras, will ultimately end only in a

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60. यः शास्त्राधिधिमुत्सृज्य चल्ले कामकारलः ।

न स सिद्धिमयाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥

Gulā. 16-23.

profitable self-deception. In the end, such a false devotee falls from his own grace and poise, peace and sense of fulfilment which true devotion always brings into the heart of a sincere seeker. Narada therefore, insists that so long as there is the consciousness of the world experienced by the seeker, he should implicitly follow the strict codes of life as laid down by the ancient teachers. To leave them is to allow the lower and animal passions in the devotee to over-whelm him in sudden fits of sensuality. The animal nature, to an extent inherent in the heart of man finds a conducive climate to flourish, when the seeker lives disobeying the healthy injunctions of the Śāstras. These can in the end, push him down into the lower levels of existence to suffer therein the destinies of those states. The instructions so carefully enumerated by the great seers of old are the only barricade that can save a sincere devotee from all such tragic pitfalls on the path of his Divine Love progress. Therefore,

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so long as we are conscious of the outer world of objects and the equipments of experiences, let us implicitly follow the moral codes and spiritual exercises as laid down by the ever loving Rsis for the guidance of the Sādhaks.

Sage Nārada says that the worldly duties in the various social contacts are to be performed only to that extent so long as the consciousness of the external world continues with us, but activities such as eating etc. will continue as long as the body exists with us.<sup>61</sup> In fact these (food, sleeping etc.) are merely the प्रारब्ध of the body, for the devotee's body has taken its birth to enjoy or to suffer these residual Karma from the past ( कर्मशेष ). When this Prārabdha ( प्रारब्ध ) ends, his body too shall fall off, when all his functions shall naturally

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61. लोकोऽपि लावदेव किन्तु भोजनादे -  
व्यापारस्त्वाशरीरधारजावद्धि | NB.S. 14

cease. The true devotee never strives or struggles for food etc.. Yet the Lord in his infinite mercy arranges everything for a truly dedicated and whole-hearted devotee. Such a real devotee is not in least perturbed by hardships and disappointments, but he understands it to be the lack of Prārabdha ( प्रारब्ध ) of his body as revealed in the भिक्षुगीत<sup>०</sup> of the Bhāgavata.<sup>62</sup> In brief, a true Bhakta comes to live in a private plane of his own from wherein he observes his own body as though it is an object far removed from his self.

Love is essentially something so very much of a subjective experience that it refuses to be fully and efficiently handled by language. Words fail to define it, and yet the main features of God-love, recognised everywhere, have been discussed above in brief.

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62. एवं स भौतिकं दुःखं वैयिकं वैहिकं च यत् ।  
भौक्त्वयमात्मनो विष्टं प्राप्तं प्राप्तमबुध्यत ॥

Kalāpī says in one of his best gazals,  
" He, whose body is covered with the dust of  
'love' and the tabloid of heart branded with  
'love' shall vigorously destroy thousands of  
strongholds by blowing one breath." <sup>63</sup> Immense  
is the force of love - it works wonders and  
miracles, never dreamt of in man's imagination. <sup>64</sup>  
In the eye of the Lord, Love rules supreme; <sup>65</sup> for  
God is ALL Love. The Lord is, therefore, the

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63. છે ખાક યાજી ઘાપ મારી ઈશકની જને દિલે,  
લો ઈશકની કૂંકે હમારી લાખ કિલ્લા વૂરશે!  
કલાપી : "કેકારવ", "ઈશકનો જંદો" પૃ ૨૯૩.

64. "સંક્ષિપ્ત સમીક્ષા" પૃ. ૩૭.  
દિરાલાલ એમ. દેસાઈ

65. ઉબ્દો રવિઃ શીલલ હવ ચન્દ્રઃ  
મર્યમહા ભૂસ્વપલઃ સમીરઃ |  
માધુઃ મુર્ધરોડમ્બુનિધર્ગમીરઃ  
સ્વભાયતઃ પ્રેમવશો હિ કૃષ્ણઃ ||

lover of whole-hearted devotion which is Love  
in essence, as shown above.<sup>66</sup> He does not  
bother about other qualities or qualifications,

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66. सभ्रमं सभ्रमं वत्स! मङ्गौरवकृतमत्यज ।  
नैष प्रियो मे भक्तेषु स्वाधीनप्रणयी भव ॥  
अपि मे पूर्णकामस्य नयं नवभिवं प्रियम् ।  
निःशङ्कः प्रणयावभक्तो यन्मां परयति भाषते ॥  
सदा मुक्तोऽपि बद्धोऽस्मि भक्तेन स्नेहरज्जुभिः ।  
अजितोऽपि जितोऽहं तैरवश्योऽपि वशीकृतः ॥  
त्यक्तबन्धुर्धनस्नेहो मयि यः कुरुते रतिम् ।  
एकस्तस्यास्मि स य मे न ह्यन्योऽस्तावयोः सुहृत् ॥  
नित्यं च पूर्णकामस्य जन्मानि विधिधानि मे ।  
भक्तसर्वेष्वदानाय तस्मात् किं ते प्रियं वव ॥

H. B. S.

एवं स्वभक्तयो राजन् भगवान् भक्तभक्तिमान् ।  
उपलब्धाऽऽविश्य सन्मार्गं पुनर्द्वारवतीभूताम् ॥

Bh 10-86-59.

as is seen in the cases of Vyādha, Dhruva, Gajendra, Vidura, Ugrasena, Kubjā, Sudāmā and others. What were the good practices of Vyādha? What was the age of Dhruva? What was the learning of Gajendra? What was the caste of Vidura? What was the prowess of Ugrasena? What was the beauty of Kubjā? and what was the wealth of Sudāmā?<sup>67</sup> If the heart longs for God, embodiment does not matter. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa says, " I abide not in the heaven nor in the

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67. चार्धस्याचरणं ध्रुवस्य च वयो विधा गजेन्द्रस्य का  
कुब्जायाः किमु नाम रूपमधिकं किं तत् सुदाम्नो धनम् ।  
का जातिर्विदुरस्य यावदपलेशग्रस्य किं पौरुषं  
भक्त्या लुब्धति केवलं न च गुणैर्भक्तिप्रियो माधवः ॥

Pd. 8.

मन्ये धनाभिजनरूपतपःश्रुतो जस्तेजः  
प्रभावकलापौरुषबुद्धियोगी ।  
नारार्धनाथ हि भवन्ति परस्य पुंसो  
भक्त्या लुलोष भगवान् गजयूथपाय ॥

Bh. 7-9-9.

hearts of Yogis; I dwell and dance and rejoice  
where My devotees sing My glories." <sup>68</sup> It should,  
however, be noted that even as the horizon remains

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68. नाहं वसामि वैकुण्ठे योगिनां हृदयेन च ।

सङ्गमना यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥

P P 94-23.

ભૂલપ લલિત પદારથ મોટું, પ્રહ્લ-લોકે માં નાદિરે;  
પુલક કરી અમરપુરી પામ્યા, અન્લે ચોરાશી માંદીરે. ધુ.  
હરિના જન લો મુકિત ન માગે, માગે જનમોજનમ અવલાર રે;  
નિલ સેવા, નિલ કીર્તન ઓરધવ, નીરખવા નંદકુમાર રે-૧  
લરલમંડ ભૂલપ માં જનમી, જેલો ગોવિંદના ગુણ ગાચારે;  
ધનધન રે એનાં માલ પિલાને, સક્ષપ કરી એલો ડાચારે-૨  
ધન વૃન્દાવન, ધન એ લીલા, ધન પ્રજનાં વાસી રે;  
અઠ મહાસિદ્ધિ આંગણાયે ભૂલી, મુકિત છે એજની દાસી રે-૩  
એ રસના સ્વાદ સંકર જાણે, કે જાણે શુકભોગી રે;  
કુંઈએકે જાણે પ્રજની રે ગોપી, જાણે નરસૈયો લોગી રે-૪.

- નરસિંહ મહેતા.

"આપ્તમ ભજનાવલી" પૃ. 137.

at a level with our eyes, however high we may climb, the nature of God cannot be higher than the levels of our consciousness. Love-devotion (Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti) like that of the Gopīs to Lord Kṛṣṇa, described in the tenth Skāṇḍha of the Bhāgavata Purāna is held to be the ideal Bhakti or Bhakti par excellence, far superior to the nine-fold Bhakti which is described in the Bhāgavata to suit the different temperaments of the devotees. The nine-fold devotion (Navadhā-Bhakti) consisting of Śravaṇa, Kīrtana, Smaraṇa, Pāda-Sevana, Arcana, Vandana, Dāsyā, Sakhya and Ātma-Nivedana is only a means to the end of Love devotion (Premalakṣaṇā or Parā-Bhakti) . It is regarded as the Māryādā-Mārga by Śrī Vallabhācārya for union with God; whereas the Gopī like love-devotion to God is considered by him the Puṣṭi-Mārga or Anugraha-Mārga leading to the summum bonum of human life. The chief objective before the Bhāgavata-kāra seems to be the propagation of Love-devotion (Premalakṣaṇā-Bhakti)

or Parā-Bhakti (transcendental Love-devotion).  
The Bhāgavata begins with Parā-Bhakti as revealed  
in its very opening verse.<sup>69</sup> This is why the  
Bhāgavata is called the Pāramahamsyā Saṁhitā for -  
it gives the description of the lives of the  
Paramahamsas or Parabhaktas like Sukadeva. It  
culminates and ends in the Gopī-like love-  
devotion (Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti) vividly revealed  
in the Rāsa-Līlā and the opening verse of the  
Bhāgavata. In between the two (Premalakṣaṇā and  
Parā-Bhakti) there is the description of the  
nine-fold devotion (Navadhā-Bhakti) which  
serves as a means to the achievement of devotion  
par excellence (Parā-Bhakti) or Love devotion  
of the Gopī type (Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti). Parā-  
Bhakti or Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti is in fact "Love for  
Love's sake" without any kind of ulterior motive  
of any kind of material happiness or even libera-  
tion. It asks for no return whatsoever except

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69. जन्माद्यश्च चलोऽन्यथादितरतश्चार्थेष्वभिमतः ।  
स्वराट् तेने ब्रह्म हृदा ये आदिकवये मुह्यन्ति यद्वारयः ।  
तेजोवाग्निमृदा यथादिनिमयो यत्र त्रिसगोऽमृषे ।  
धाता स्वने सदा निरस्ता कुहकं सत्यं परं धीमहि ॥

God. That is why Divine Love rules supreme in the Rāsālīlā, for it is extra-ordinary and beyond the body-idea and worldly wisdom, as it culminates in entire self-surrender to God.

The Bhāgavata through Rāsālīlā preaches the Royal Road of God's grace (Puṣṭimārga-Anugrahmārga) for the spiritual welfare of Gopi-like resourceless ( निराश्रय ) devotees who are quite ignorant and unable to practise penance or sacrificial rituals and who have nothing to offer to God but their little selves. The Gopī-like Bhakti is also termed as Sr̥ṅgāra-Bhakti or Premalākṣaṇā-Bhakti or Puṣṭi-Bhakti according to Sri Vallabhācārya and it is called Madhura-Bhakti according to the Caitanya-Bhakti cult of Bengal in later Vaiṣṇavism. Love was the one bond which united Gopas and Gopīs to Lord Kṛṣṇa. They merged themselves entirely in Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Vedas did not exist for them. They did not tread the path of Karman. Love-bound they give themselves entirely upto Lord Kṛṣṇa,

and they did not ask the reason why they did not stop to cast a glance at the world they left. They have known Kṛṣṇa as the Puruṣa of the heart. The Gopīs thus cast off the Jīva-bhāva and were united for ever with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The Gopīs were fully aware of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's supermanhood. In the Gopī-Gītā, they tearfully broke out in clear cut terms " thou art not the son of a Gopī, thou art the inmost seer and self of all beings." <sup>70</sup> It is hence that they wished to be "one" with Him, and Sri Kṛṣṇa was "one" with them as they were with Him. Śrī Vallabhācārya in his " सिद्धांतमुक्तावली" says that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself is Parabrahman; and He played different roles with different individuals in this universe. His forms are different, but in reality He is one. There is no difference between that Kṛṣṇa

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70. न खलु गोपिकानन्दतो भवान्  
अश्विन देहिनामन्तरात्मकम् ।  
विश्वेन सायिलो विश्वगुप्तये  
मखे उदेयिवान् सात्वतां कुले ॥

Bh. 10 - 31 - 4 .

who played in the lap of mother Yaśodā and the one who played with Gopas, Gopīs and the universe at large. <sup>71</sup> The Rāsālīlā is, therefore, the most sacred, most sublime and most soul-enchanting act of Sri Kṛṣṇa. It is meant to serve as a guide for the initiated Bhaktas, and not for the world at large.

The true spirit of Rāsālīlā of Lord Kṛṣṇa with the Gopīs is often ignored and misunderstood by the Critics, especially by the Westerners, who do not recognise or realise the supermanhood or the divinity of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the extra-ordinary non-erotic nature of Gopīs' attachment to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The learned scholars like Śrī Nilakantha, Dr. Bhagwatī unār Goswāmī, Prof. G.H. Bhatt and many others have in different ways confirmed the view that the Rāsālīlā is pure beyond comparison and divine

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71. परं वृक्षं तु कृष्णो हि ।

सिद्धान्तमुक्तावली

जानीत परमं तत्त्वं यशोदात्सङ्गितं ।

in the superlative degree. It may also be compared with highest sufistic experience wherein God is the Beloved and the devotee is the Lover. As the God with form or without form is one and the same, as viewed from the - different angles of vision, so the difference between Parā-Bhakti and Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti as described above is a distinction without a difference, as is seen in the case of ice and water. In the language of the Yoga discipline, the Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti may be said to be सविकल्प ब्रह्म समाधि and the Parā-Bhakti may be said to be the निर्विकल्प ब्रह्म समाधि . Love and wisdom (Bhakti and Jñāna) are the two aspects of one and the same God, as heat and light are of the sun. Both merge in one - Ātmanubhava.<sup>72</sup>

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72. प्रेम प्रीष्ट नरकु लली, अथा सो जने कोष्ट  
प्रेम मिलाले पियुको, प्रीष्टे अनरस दोष्ट  
- अथा लाल  
श्री अथाजनी सायीयो - ५१८

To sum up, it will be evident from the above that we have described here in brief outline the main characteristics of Parā-Bhakti and Premalakṣaṇā-Bhakti and the pitfalls to be guarded against in the path of Love-Divine. We shall now describe in brief outline the essence of the Bhāgavata, as revealed in the Rāsālīlā.