

CHAPTER : VIII

Epilogue

CHAPTER VIII.

E P I L O G U E.

Here ends our present enquiry into the subject - " Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata Purāna. "

It is now proposed to take a bird's eye-view of the whole subject so as to arrive at certain definite conclusions.

We began with "Bhakti, its origin and development" and traced the current of Bhakti in India right from the Vedic times to the modern times. We critically examined and - evaluated the Bhakti trends in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Gītā, the Purānas, the Tantras, the Bhāgavata School and the Bhāgavata Purāna. We traced the different trends of Bhakti in the Smṛti Yuga, the Ācārya Yuga, the Nātha Yuga and the Santa Yuga of the medieval times and traced the evolution thereof in modern times,

as seen in the Rādhās̄wāmī Pantha. From the historical and critical study of the various schools of Bhakti, a complete picture of the Bhakti cult in India is unfolded before our mind's eye from the Vedic times to the modern period. We have also traced the influence of Sūfism and Christianity on Bhakti with the advent of the Muslims (who ruled from 1200 to 1700 A.D.) and the British (who ruled right upto 1947 A.D.). The two main currents of Bhakti viz. Saguna Bhakti and Nirguna Bhakti seem to have evolved from the Vedic times but they are most discernible from the Santa-Yuga. The Ācāryas like Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, Vallabha and Śrī Caitanya were the chief - advocates of the Saguna Bhakti cult, while Swāmī Rāmānanda and his twelve disciples as well as the noteworthy saints of North India were the chief advocates of the Nirguna Bhakti

cult. It is seen that the aspirants of the Nirguṇa Bhakti cult seek to be oned with the God-head (Nirguṇa Brahman) by means of Parā-Bhakti, while the aspirants of the Saguna Bhakti cult seek unitive life with God (Saguna Brahman) by means of Navadhā and Premalakṣaṇā Bhākti. In order that one may have a complete and comprehensive view of the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata, we have also given in the Appendix a brief outline of the various trends of Bhakti abroad.

We have then given in brief outline the contents of the ten topics of the Bhāgavata wherein are traceable three types of languages (viz. Samādhi Bhāṣā, Paramata Bhāṣā and Loka-Bhāṣā) which centre round Bhakta, Bhagavān and Bhakti. It is seen that the dominant note of the Bhāgavata is not appeal to reason but to faith and love, for it believes that Bhakti leads the devotee straight to the goal. We then examined critically the various definitions

of the advocates of Bhakti and arrived at a clear-cut definition of the Bhakti of the Bhāgavata and brought out its special features. It is seen that the Bhāgavata Bhakti is the most catholic. The Bhāgavata defines Bhakti as the application and absorption of the mind in Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa by any means whatsoever. It classifies Bhakti from various view-points and accordingly, Bhakti in the Bhāgavata is chiefly two-fold, three-fold, nine-fold and ten-fold, whereof Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti (Love for love's sake) and Parā-Bhakti (God-love based on Divine Wisdom) are prominent. The Bhāgavata distinguishes between Bhakti and Prapatti and holds that both Puruṣārtha (i.e. Self-effort) and Kṛpā (i.e. Divine Grace) are needed for God-realisation. Like the Gītā it recognises both the types of Bhakti Nirguṇa (formless Divine) as well as the Saguṇa (the Divine with form). In the Bhāgavata, Bhakti

is said to be superior to Karma, Yoga and Jñāna; and it is regarded as an end in itself. The Bhāgavata proves that Bhakti is a mosaic of devotion, detachment and knowledge. The Bhāgavata Bhakti is mainly influenced by Nārāyaṇīya Dharma, the Niṣkāma Karma Yoga of the Gītā, the Sūtras of Nārada and Śāṅḍilya, Nārada Pañcarātra, and Viṣṇu Purāna. Broadly speaking, the Bhāgavata speaks of three types of devotees -

- 1). Uttama,
- 2). Madhyama, and
- 3). Prākṛta,

and in general the aim of the devotee is not a merger in the Eternal Impersonal (Para Brahman), but unitive life with Bhagavān or Puruṣottama.

After discussing the broad features of "Bhakta, Bhagavān and Bhakti", we have described the main characteristics of the different types of Bhakti in the Bhāgavata in three chapters (viz. III, IV and V). It is seen that the

nine-fold devotion is distributed into three trinities of -

- (a) Śrāvāna, Kīrtana and Smarāna, like the Vedic three - Śrāvāna, Manana and Nididhyāsana;
- (b) Pādasevā, Arcana and Vandana are the Tāntric three which mainly centre round the idol-worship; and
- (c) Dāsya, Sakhya and Ātmanivedana which are more achievements than means.

In the Bhāgavata a metaphysical significance is given to the Pādasevana as revealed in the Puruṣa Sukta of the R̥g-Veda. The ninefold devotion (Navadhā Bhakti) culminates in Ātmanivedana i.e. the giving up of " I, Me and Mine " (Aham and Mama अहं-मम) - or the evacuation of the little or lower self. It is the egoless state wherein the devotee believes himself to be an instrument in the hands of God (मां कर्तुं हरिः कर्तुम् ।). After evacuation (i.e. Ātmanivedana) comes the stage of filling the interior with God.

When the heart is filled with God to the brim, there comes the stage of Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti (i.e. love for love's sake) or the Nirguṇa or Guṇātīta or Parā-Bhakti (i.e. love based on Divine Wisdom). Premalakṣaṇā and Parā-Bhakti are believed to be the supreme religion of the Bhāgavata. It is hence that the Bhāgavata is considered the पारमहंस्या संरिता . The Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti is seen in the Gopī-like devotees, while the Parā-Bhakti is seen in Śukadeva-like devotees. It is the spontaneous (स्वाभाविक), uninterrupted (अव्यवहित) and unmotivated (अहेतुक) loving 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 (Ātmanivedana) and hence it is termed the - Daśadhā (दशधा) to distinguish it from the Navadhā-Bhakti (नवधाभक्ति).

It is seen that the Bhāgavata is pre-eminently the Bhakti Purāna, for its special

privilege is to imprison the Almighty in the heart of a Bhāgavatotama by the unique excellence of its supreme religion. It is affirmed in the Bhāgavata that the supreme religion was propounded by Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was steeped in the Upaniṣadic tradition. It is old as well as new; for the supreme religion is the regeneration of the Upaniṣadic Truth, as seen in the beginning and the end of the Bhāgavata. The Bhāgavata believes in the sovereignty of the path of Love Devotion on the grounds fully discussed in the VIth Chapter of the Thesis.

According to the Bhāgavata, the supreme religion consists in the worship (Āradhanā) of the Supreme Person (Parama Puruṣa) or the Pādasevā of the Param Puruṣa. The Bhāgavata looks upon self-dedication as the quint-essence of the teaching of the entire Vedic literature. Once the barriers of the ego are broken, the infinite possibilities of the pining soul are realised in the deepest embrace of Bhagavān,

the All-Bliss, described as the Rāsālīlā of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the Gopīs. It heralds the dawning of a new life, the regeneration of the soul from the material to the spiritual after ego-annihilation (नान्ये = त्रिरात्सयन्) as revealed in the Rāsālīlā.

As distinguished from the Śānta, Dāsya, Sakhya, Vātsalya and Madhura-rati, the love of the Gopīs of Vṛndāvana was the sweetest of the sweet, noblest of the noble and the purest of the pure forms of love. It had all the glories of Śānta, Dāsya, Sakhya, Vātsalya and Madhura-rati without their essential weaknesses. It was love for Love's sake. The Bhāgavata has knit the Puruṣa Kaivalya of the Sāṁkhya Yoga, the Brahma Kaivalya of the Upanisads, the Paramātmā Kaivalya of earlier Vaiṣṇavism into a grand hierarchy with Bhāgavat-Kaivalya at its crest. The Bhāgavata philosophy in general reconciles Vedic idealism and Sāṁkhya realism, with its emphasis on the former. It is seen that the -

Bhāgavata-Sāṁkhya philosophy is theistic at its core, and as such, it radically differs from the classical atheistic Sāṁkhya (Nirīśvara Sāṁkhya). According to the Bhāgavata, Bhakti and Jñāna are not diametrically opposed to each other but they are the two different aspects of one and the same Reality; and hence both Love and Wisdom merge in Ātmānubhava, as heat and light merge in the sun. In fact, discrimination and dispassion are the two wings of the soul-bird flying to its Home. The obstacle is the mind. It must be got over or transcended, whether in the home or in the forest. Mokṣa consequent upon Ātmānubhava can be attained here and now; for we are one with Brahman. Self-realisation is the climax of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. Self-surrender (as in Prema-lakṣaṇā Bhakti) is the same as self-knowledge (as in Brahma Jñāna or Parā-Bhakti). Self-perfection is the highest aim of life; and the egoless state is the natural and the real state of the soul.

From the above bird's eye-view of the whole subject and from the critical examination and evaluation of the different trends of Bhakti of the Bhāgavata, we now arrive at the following conclusions :-

1). The complete and comprehensive view of the Bhakti cult in India and abroad, right from the Vedic times to the modern times and the critical exposition and evaluation thereof are quite original.

2). We have proved that the Bhakti of the Bhāgavata is non-sectarian and most catholic; for the Bhāgavata maintains that God should be installed in the heart not only by Pure Love but by any means whatsoever - whether it be Rāga (passion), Dveṣa (hatred or malice), Bhaya (fear) or anything else.

3). The Bhāgavata proves the sovereignty of the path of Love-Devotion; for God is the religion of the Bhāgavata (whether with form or without form).

4). It is conclusively proved that the Bhāgavata is the परमदृश्या संहिता , because of its synthesis of the various modes of Upāsana and because of its supreme religion, narrated in the Thesis.

5). We have shown that the Bhāgavata believes in the doctrine of the oneness of all life, as revealed in the life of the Bhāgavatottama and in its aphorism ¹ and thus its insistence is on Advaita rather than Dvaita which is only apparent, and not real.

6). We have conclusively proved that the Bhāvagata Bhakti is not pure emotionalism but a grand synthesis of both Divine Love and Divine Wisdom; for love is the spontaneous flow of the heart towards God and wisdom is the constant

1. सर्वात्मिकं ब्रह्म । Bh ॥ २९:१४.
वासुदेवपरा वेदा वासुदेवपराभर्याः ।
वासुदेवपरायोगा वासुदेवपराः क्रियाः ।
वासुदेवपरं ज्ञानं वासुदेव परं तपः ॥
वासुदेवपरो धर्म-वासुदेवगरा गतिः ॥
Bh. १; २; २४ & २९

consciousness or awareness of the presence of God, in all, at all times, at all places and in all modes of life (सर्वं , सर्वदा , सर्वत्र and सर्वथा).

7). We have shown that purity of heart or morality or straightforwardness (i.e. अर्जुन) is the condition precedent to God-realisation. It is only the pure-hearted and God-minded people that ever see God.²

8). We have shown that the Bhāgavata is an authoritative scripture on Bhakti because of the sovereignty of the path of Love-Devotion. It is hence that it is worthy to be accepted as a चतुर्थ प्रस्थान as done by Śrī Vallabhācāryajī.

9). It is proved that the Bhāgavata has illustrated and proved most vividly the truths of the Upaniṣads. It is not in the least opposed to the Upaniṣadic Truth, as is evident from its

2. सदापश्यन्ति सूरयः ।

RV 1:22.

upakrama and upasāhāra (beginning and end).

10). We have shown that the current of Bhāgavata Bhakti starts with Parā-Bhakti, passes through Navadhā Bhakti and culminates in -- Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti and ultimately merges in Ātmānubhava, as is evidenced from the fearlessness (Abhaya) of King Parīkṣit at the end of the Bhāgāvata Śravaṇa.

11). It is shown that the Bhāgavata has a universal appeal to all seekers of truth as beautifully revealed in the Bhāgavata verse.³

3. पुंजीभूतं प्रेमगोपाङ्गानां
मूर्त्तीभूतं भागधैर्यं यदुनाम् ।
अेकीभूतं गुप्तापित्तं क्षुलीनाम्
श्यामीभूतं ग्रहम मे सान्निधत्ताम् ॥

गोपालचरण ॥ कंठाभरण ॥

12). It is proved that the Bhāgavata is the amplification of the doctrines of the Gītā for the easy comprehension of all men and women. The Gītā is a Siddhānta Grantha, while the Bhāgavata is the Dr̥ṣṭānta Granthā. The Lord's song or speech (भगवद् वाणी) is the Gītā, while the life-history of the Lord (भगवच्चरितम्) is the Bhāgavata.

To conclude, the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata cleanses, elevates, divinises and transforms the soul into a God-like Being or God.