Chapter III

Some Classical Texts of Bhakti: A search for theistic consciousness

What have been discussed so far in the preceding Chapter constitutes only some important external factors of the evolutions of the different phases of the theistic religious consciousness associated with the concept of bhakti. This chapter shall examine the development of this theistic religious consciousness underlying Vaiṣṇavism with reference to three texts viz: *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, the Śāṇḍilya Bhakti Sūtra, Nārada Bhakti Sūtra and the Śrimad Bhāgavata. The particular concept of bhakti as it is treated by each of these texts shall be taken to be the main views representing the historical period to which each belongs. But these are more or less sample texts; therefore, the depiction of bhakti in other texts, if any shall be considered as supplementary views, though they will not be taken up here.

The Bhagavad Gītā:

The Gītā (second century B.C.) is generally believed to be the earliest or the first authoritative text for Vaiṣṇavism or Vedānta philosophy\(^1\). As one of the three major religio-philosophical canons the praṇātrayas, though its relative position of authority as a Smṛti and, therefore is finally authenticated by the Śruti texts mainly the Upaniṣads the wide spread religio-cultural sway that had been exercising on the minds of the Hindus is unquestionable. The existence of numerous commentaries and invaluable comments on it by western scholars would show its importance as a popular text. It would not be an exaggeration to

---

say that, it stands as the text based witness to the synthetic spirit of India's religio-philosophic heritage.

In the grand synthesis of the Gītā, the various stands of theology or religion, ethics, social and political ideals and metaphysical concepts are weaved into. Such a synthetic spirit makes it a difficult text so as to discern its central teaching or anything relating to its basic metaphysical position. Perhaps, this ambiguity reflects the pluralistic spirit of the Indian philosophical thinking, and is more the result of a deliberate design of its author. But, this part of the thesis is not concern about those problems. The treatment in this chapter shall proceed from the assumption of the theistic Vedānta that, the Gītā is one of the main sources of the concept of bhakti.

The over all nature of the Gītā as stated above would not permit us to study it from the perspective of bhakti in isolation from or independent of the two paths viz: karma-yoga, the path of action and jñāna-yoga, the path of knowledge. In another words bhakti as it is being described in the text has both the elements of jñāna and karma. Depending on the particular metaphysical presupposition different schools of Vedānta had tried to interpret any one of these three as a central religio-ethical theme of the Gītā. But, it is a popular understanding that, the predominant religio-philosophical outlook of the text is theism, and thus, it has a greater leaning towards bhakti. In terms of making method and theme mutually consistent, Śaṅkara in order to substantiate its uncompromising and reductionist monism (kavalādvaita or pure monism) or the impersonal Brahman described as nirguṇa, nirviśeṣa and beyond the grasp of the bhedatraya - (a) Sajātiyabheda, (b) Vijātiya-bheda and (c) Svagata-bheda, interpreted Jñāna mārga as the sole means of realizing the nirguṇa Brahman defined as of the nature of pure knowledge or consciousness or intelligence. The bhakti-mārga and karma-mārga were treated as subordinate to jñāna mārga or their usage ends with the religio-ethical requirement of purifying the mind (citta śuddhi). This view according to non-Advaitic systems is a classic example of the
consequence of textual torture. A neutral observation would reveal that the various texts of the Gitā when read together create confusion.

For instance, before proceeding further, by way of highlighting some of the pertinent ambiguity and the resulting difficulty of comprehending a consistent meaning of the Gitā is observable when one examines the two texts: Ch. 18. 54-55. This analysis is also pertinent to the Gaudīya conception of bhakti as its own end (sādhya). According to these two texts “Becoming Brahman and tranquil minded, he neither grieves nor desires; alike to all kings, he attains supreme devotion to Me”, and “By devotion he knows Me truly; how much and what I am. Then, having known Me truly, he forthwith enters into Me”\(^2\). The next text (56) refers to Karma-Yoga to be followed along with bhakti. This text says that “Even performing all works, always, taking refuge in Me, he attains through my grace the eternal and immutable state”. These texts do not lend any coherent meaning.

The first text seems to imply the connotation of temporal sequence as it says that on “becoming Brahman” etc, “he attains supreme devotion to me”. It appears that, the text convey the sense of the highest bhakti or supreme devotion to Krṣṇa as the consequence of realizing Brahman, and that, the dynamic devotional worship continues even after one is situated in Brahman (brahmabhūta). When seen in the light of other texts of the Gitā, the critic may refuse to accept this. The above meaning of the attainment of the highest state of devotion even after one has realised non-dualism becomes untenable when one reads it in relation to the next text where, devotion is treated as a means of knowing the Bhagavad in the true sense of the term. The ambiguity becomes more pronounced when the text concludes by saying that through this knowledge one “enters into Him”. The expression “... He forthwith enters into Me” carries not one settled meaning. It may mean either the theistic notion of sāyujya\(^3\) as a

---

\(^3\) Sāyujya is one of the theistic forms of mukti together with sārūpya, sālokya and sāmipya etc. Merging in the Body of the Bhagavad is not a preferred form of salvation by the more ardent devotees. It is considered to be an offence to attain this form of mukti. It is rather liberation by
form of mukti where a devotee merges into the Body of God. The second meaning would be the Advaitic interpretation of realizing the non-deal Brahman where essential identity between Jīva and Brahman is realised. The views presented here are not conclusive, but only show the ambiguity of the meanings of the Gītā.

To any neutral observer, the synthetic character of the Gītā does not lend support to any exclusive claim of ethical and metaphysical theories as done by Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja etc. Yet, the theistic context of the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna (Kṛṣṇārjuna-saṁvāda), to certain extent provides the room for conceiving that, it may be treated as the source for an emerging devotional attitude associated with a personal God. While keeping in view of the larger syncretic picture of the Gītā, it nevertheless deals with the path of bhakti-yoga. This can only be overturned on the basis of the hierarchic or graded distinction between saguna Brahman and nirguna Brahman and their corresponding concepts of bheda śruti and abheda śruti on the one hand and smṛti on the other. This differentiation is designed so as to eventually establish the monistic ontology as done by Śaṅkara. Thus, Kṛṣṇa's own revelation of the supremacy of this divine persona is ultimately explained away as a saguna Brahman and thus not the highest reality. This would go along with the contention that, jñāna is the exclusive means of realising the impersonal or the nirguna Brahman. As already discussed in the preceding section of the chapter, this contention was rejected by Rāmānuja and following him by the other theistic scholars coming after him.

To begin with, while the respective significance of the path of knowledge and the path of action are also emphasized, the efficacy as well as superiority of the path of devotion is also being stressed on the Gītā. As a continuation of the position of the last chapter, the Gītā is also an evidence to show that, devotion as an associated concept of theistic Vedānta or Vaiṣṇavism, somehow had emerged

---

default. Advaita rejects this mukti on the ground that, it presupposes the individuality of the Jīva even after liberation. See Balasubramanian, R., trans., The Taittirīyopaniṣad - Bhāṣya-Vārtika of Suresvara, etc. Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1974, p.187.
during the historical development of India’s religious and philosophical traditions. This thesis shall not entertain the philosophical polemics about deciding whether a personal religious philosophy is superior to the impersonal one or vice versa. Rather, what is being considered as important is the phenomenological and existential natures of the discernible history of theistic religio-philosophic consciousness which because of being over shadowed by the “system building” or essentialising tendencies of the classical Indian philosophical schools of India. The abstractions of a highly ratiocinative philosophical polemics, no matter how much it has been attempted to essentialise by way of post-facto description of the reductionist and impersonal ontology as “metaphysics of experience”, was in no way addressing to the genuine religious and socio-religious aspirations of the larger populace. It is debatable whether how much the concept of “aparokṣānubhuti”\(^4\) as the direct or immediate experience of non-dualism as the description of Śaṅkara’s metaphysics is to make an abstract theory practical.

The concept of devotion according to the Gitā is always mentioned in relation to karma and jñāna. The very context of war makes it appear as a treatise on social ethics or duty. Madhusūdana says in the introduction to his Gitā Bhāṣya (Gudhārthadīpikā) that, bhakti is the bridge between the two unbridgeable sādhanas-karma and jñāna\(^5\). It is also contended that, while the first six chapters deal with karma-yoga, the next six chapters i.e. vii-xii discuss about bhakti-yoga and the chapters xiii-xviii dwell on jñāna\(^6\). The Bhāgavata also says as we will see in the next section, that, bhakti is for those who are neither too attached nor too detached. Prof. S.C. Chakravarti points to the difference in the way in which synthesis amongst the three paths is being done in the Gitā and in the Bhāgavata.

---


\(^6\) Ibid, also see Bhandarkar, p.17. Bhandarkar sums up the relation between the first six chapters and the next chapter thus: “...the processes upto the attainment of Yoga condition (which the first six chapters are about) are difficult to be practised by men with such passions as we posses and the way to be free from them is to surrender oneself to God, and therefore in this chapter (i.e., Ch. vii) Bhagavat goes on to explain the nature of created being and his relation to them”. 
He states that, Bhāgavata synthesises *karma, jñāna* and *bhakti* by making *bhakti* the fundamental principle of synthesis⁷. The said synthesis is done in terms of the ontology of *bhakti* consisting in its directedness towards the Bhagavat as the highest object of worship. It is in relation to this fact that, the He speaks about ahis two natures- lower nature (*aparā prakṛti*) and higher nature (*parā prakṛti*) in chapter seven. Rāmānuja would not take these two natures as the nature of God but the constituents (as *acit* or *jāda* and *cit* or *ajāda*) of His body on logical grounds⁸. But it is not possible to arrive at a final settlement of the question-whether as far as the central teaching of the Gītā is concerned the above synthesis is affected with *jñāna* or *bhakti* as the predominant path. This question can only be settled on the plane of ontological presuppositions and their logical tenabilities. This is what K.C. Bhattacharyya says about the fact that, logic is the shadow of metaphysics and any problem of the former should be fixed on the level of the latter⁹.

Amongst the *Kevalādvaitins* it was Madhusūdana Sarasvati who had a more sympathethic view of about *bhakti* and on personal conviction he surely had the predilection for it which eventually led to his writing *Śrī Bhagavad-Bhaktirasayana*. But it is quite understandable that, his position as a pure monist (*kevalādvaitin*) would limit his view about *bhakti*. This has been discussed in detail by R.B. Patankar in his paper: Madhusūdana Sarasvati’s *Śrī Bhagavad-Bhaktirasāyana*¹⁰. O.B.L. Kapoor sums up the definite perspective of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism by citing Caitanya’s acceptance of the different views of the Bhāgavata and other sources that, what can be obtained by *bhakti* cannot be similarly obtained by other *sādhanas* and that, *karma, jñāna* and *yoga* do not

---


lead to the same goal as that of bhakti. While bhakti is possible for everyone, the rest of the sādhnas are opened only those few who are capable. All these paths need bhakti whereas bhakti is an independent path for the attainment of the highest spiritual perfection\textsuperscript{11}. That, there may be no definite meaning of the texts of the Gītā is shown by the fact that, many scholars still continues to hold divergent opinion about these sādhnas\textsuperscript{12}.

The purpose of this section of the thesis is not to inter into the debate on what constitutes the central teaching of the Gītā or which of the paths being spoken about in it is predominant etc., but only to bring out the fact that, devotion as a religio-philosophic concept is very much one of the significant perspectives of the Gītā which is generally taken to be more theistic and personal than impersonal in the Advaitic sense. As already stated whether bhakti or jñāna is the only or the main sādhana recommended in the Gītā is only a matter of belief and no argument can prove to sustain any position adopted. This is the plausible view of K.C. Bhattacharyya brought forward in chapter 2 of his book.

Yet, the inconsistencies and the ambiguity arising out of the contentious issues of the Gītā with regard to its central teaching or the question what constitutes its main path seem to be reconciled when the Lord declares that, “Resigning mentally all actions to Me, regarding Me as the supreme goal, and resorting to yoga through intellect, ever fix your mind on Me”. The “eternal and immutable state” may be the same spiritual state indicated by “Me as the supreme goal” (mat parah)\textsuperscript{13}. Being ambiguous, the texts cited here cannot be

\textsuperscript{11} Op. cit., Kapoor, pp. 177-180. Kapoor cites various texts and ideas mentioned in the Caitanya Caritāmara. These are well established positions of Gauḍīya Vaśnavism.

\textsuperscript{12} “To attempt to say that Karmayoga attains mukti only by passing through Bhaktiyoga or Jñānayoga is an overstatement. For has not Bhagavān said in the Gītā-Asakto hyācara karma param āpnoti pūruṣah?—By performing action without attachment, man verily reaches the Supreme...If one merely worships God but fails to his karma he is not the beloved of God.” Thirugnanasambandhan, P., The Concept of Bhakti, (Prof.L. Venkatarthanam Endowment Lectures, 1969-70), University of Madras, Madras, 2nd Edition 1973, p. 25. Also see the chapter on Bhagavad Gītā in M.Hiriyanna’s Outlines of Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, First Indian Editon 1993, Reprint 2000, p.118. Hiriyanna says: “...the central point of the teaching (of the Gītā) is activism, or, to use the expression of the Gītā, karma yoga”.

held as definite conclusion based on either personal or impersonal ontology. Otherwise, how shall one interpret the subsequent sloka spoken in the 2nd person the Lord most probably points out that the “supreme peace (parām śāntim) and the eternal abode” (sthānaṁ) attainable by taking refuge in Him with all one’s heart (tameva saranaṁ gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata) and His grace (tat prasādāt). The spiritual goal attainable with the means of “taking refuge in Him” and His grace ought to be different from those means themselves. In this context, the concept of a dynamic erotic-devotional love conceived in aesthetic terms (bhakti-rasa) as the sādhya-bhakti whose only means is sādhana-bhakti itself like the Rāgaṇuga or Vaidhi-bhakti etc. is a marked advancement from this uncertain character of truth represented in the Gītā. The said inconsistencies and ambiguities of the orthodox texts like the Upanisads, the Brahmasūtra and the Gītā were so pronounced that, the entire methodological trends of bhāsyas (commentaries) based on a well established philosophy of language and hermeneutics arose within the classical philosophical systems of India. Hence, it may be deemed suffice here that, only a brief description of the way in which bhakti-mārga is depicted in the Gītā may be given.

The possible clue to the significant place which the concept of bhakti occupies in the Indian religious philosophical traditions, and its co-relation to other sādhanas are indicated by text: “Thus has knowledge more secret than all secrets (guhyātguhyataram) been declared to you by the (iti te jñānam....mayā); reflect on it fully and act as you like”. This text and the next one deal with certain truth pertaining to the significance of bhakti. That, this “supreme word, the most secret of all” (sarva guhyatamarāṇ. Paramāṇ vacah), is being revealed to Arjuna is based on the fact that, he as His bhakta and friend (bhakto’si me sakā ceti...) is very dear to Him. It is not because, God is partial that, arbitrarily He chose Arjuna, His dear devotee as the recipient of the most secret knowledge wherein leis ‘what is good for human beings (hitam).

In order to receive god's grace one has to be a qualified recipient (adhikāri puruṣa). In Christian theology this is a contentious issue in deciding what prompts God to below His Mercy upon His creatures. There is no way out of this question except that it is a divine mystery. God's love for His creatures (agape) is thought of as causeless or without any motifs in Christianity.

The point here is that, one who is His devotee, who is attached to Him and has taken refuge in Him, is very dear to Him. Such an individual becomes eligible for receiving highest knowledge. It means that, knowledge is not unrelated to devotion. But devotion in this context is more of the nature of a means rather than an end in itself. Yet the Gītā brings out various psychological characters of devotional worship like fixing one's mind pin pointedly on God, constant devotedness, bowing down to Him, becoming attached to Him, taking refuge in Him alone and giving up everything for His sake etc.

The Gītā also anticipates some forms of bhakti mainly the nine types viz: (1) śravaṇa (hearing), (2) kīrtana (Chanting the holy names and singing or praising the glories, attributes and pastimes of the Lord, (3) smarana (remembrance or fixing the mind on the name, form and sports of Bhagavān), (4) pādasevā (devotional activities), (5) arcana (worship of deity), (6) Vandana (homage), (7) dārā (acts of servitude), (8) sakhyā (friendship) and (9) ātmanivedana (complete self surrender). In Caitanya Caritāmrita (CC., Madhya, XXII, 61-71), sixty four Āṅgas or elements of sādhanabhakti are mentioned. Śrī Jīva classified them into eleven types with saranāpatti and guru-sevā in addition to the above nine which are as per the Bhāgavata.

What have been already stated before more or less touch upon these nine or eleven forms of sādhanabhakti. Thus, the Gita acts as one of the sources for the later development of bhakti in different sects of Vaiṣṇavism mainly that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. At the same time, in being portrayed as one of the sādhanas,

---

it remains as a means of mokṣa whose nature is left ambiguous. Still it has a
definite concept of devotional worship with all its basic psychological elements
directed towards the Bhavavad – the Supreme Lord.

In terms of intentions or motivations and the nature of the objects of
worship, the Gītā makes a distinction between lower or ordinary forms of worship
based on the different types of faith (śraddhā) on the one hand and the proper
devotional worship directed towards the Supreme Being on the other. The later
bhakti is characterized as worship based on supreme faith (parā-śraddhā) and is
also associated with knowledge. The lower forms of worship though founded on
different levels of faith are not illumined by the knowledge of the supreme reality,
but impelled by the respective natural dispositions of the worshippers.

The lower forms of worship are said to be determined by the three guṇas
– the constituents of the trigunātmika prakṛiti – Sattvas, Rajas and Tamas
inherent in the nature of every man\(^\text{16}\). The Sattvikas worship the gods, the
Rajasika (worship) the Yakṣas and Rākṣas, while others, the Tāmasika men,
worship spirits and Goblins\(^\text{17}\). Such forms of worship are determined by factors
of natural tendencies are lacking in the purity of intentions and discriminations.
Hence, the Gītā seems to imply that they are not devotional worship (bhakti)
proper.

But, one thing which is of philosophical and pragmatic significance is that,
Gītā is realistic enough not to expect that, man will be automatically predisposed
towards the highest type of devotional worship – bhakti being referred to as
founded on supreme faith (parā-śraddhā) śraddhayā paryopetas te me
yuktatamā matāh\(^\text{18}\). Faith in its being co-relatively described along with the
prakṛiti determined human nature, is perhaps, conceived in ontological parlance,
and thus, it is believed that, all men will always have some faith or the other. This,
the Lord in the Gītā considers as a sign of hope for the ultimate dawn of spiritual

\(^{17}\) Ibid, VII. 20-23, XVII. 4.
\(^{18}\) Ibid, XII. 2.
knowledge and the consequent act of devotional attachment and love towards Him. Therefore, the Gītā does not deny the value of even the lower types of faith in its three forms in as much as they keep people’s faith steady and gradually uplift them towards the final spiritual attainment which is attainable only by “one pointed devotion to the Lord”, bhaktyā labhyastva nanyaya. Hence, though these worshippers are not aware, the fruits of their faiths are granted by the Supreme Lord and that, they, at the end, would come to Him, and their kind of worships are in the ultimate sense of the term are directed towards Him, though the process is an indirect one (IX, 23). The importance of faith based worship is indicated by the statement “Oh Partha, anything done without faith (aśraddhayā), whether it is sacrifice, charity, austerity or any other is called as at (bad). Such deed is completely infructuous and bears no fruit either in this life or in the next.” Madhusūdana in his commentary on the text refers to the view of sankaracarya who holds that given faith, even defective non-sattvic works, can improve qualitatively.

Though, the Gaudiya scholars have their own reasons their deliberate choice to delink devotion and knowledge is to be contrasted from the assumed relationship between these two sādhanas. That, the knowledge of the ultimate reality as the source of everything is the basis of the worship of the Supreme Being with devotion by the wise, is expressed by the declaration. “I am the source of all; everything is produced out of Me, knowing thus the wise worship Me with devotion.”

No doubt the Gītā speaks about a still higher form of knowledge termed as the yoga of understanding (buddhiyogam) obtained after such process of sādhana (X, 10). With the help of this “yoga of understanding” its adherents go to Him.

---

19 Ibid, VII. 21, 22.
In addition to the mutual or reciprocal feeling of dearness (XVIII, 69), the Gita describes bhakti in the form of love when it speaks about “devotional worship with love” (bhajatāṁ prītīpurvākam, X, 10). The repeated reference to the need to fix one’s mind (XVIII, 58, 65), self-surrender to (XVIII, 66) and take refuge in the Lord (XVIII, 62) reveal them as important mental elements associated with the nature of bhakti conceived in emotional terms. But these psychological conditions of bhakti, though have become a common knowledge, are necessary factors of any devotional attitude. They are the windows through which we can discern the spiritual state of which they are the expressions. Though the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava reformulation and development of the conception of bhakti in erotic-aesthetic patterns within the transcendental theologico-histrionics of nitya-līlā subsume these factors, theirs is more theological and psychologico-aesthetically exhaustive in portraying every possible forms and nuances of the dynamic spontaneous and unexhaustive unfolding of the ever full divine love.

Inspite of the aforesaid psychological states being stated thus, they are not to be misconstrued to be mere emotive or sentimental states. Otherwise, the Gītā would not have included them with the characters of the mental functioning of the those great realised souls — mahātmas who have taken to the divine nature and are also said to be endowed with the highest kind of knowledge which Kṛṣṇa calls as the king of knowledge and the most secret knowledge of all — rajavidya rajaguhyaḥ\(^{23}\). These great souls who have taken to the divine nature—mahātmānaṁ su māṁ pārtha daivīṁ prakṛtimāśritaḥ to (IX, 13, 14) attain the higher nature of the Bhagavad—prakṛitiṁyānti māmikāṁ. His higher nature is expressed by the statement — “param bhāva” (IX, 11). The critic now may have a query as to how spirituality may be emobidied or expressed through mental states as they are already in the nature of theistic devotionalism. The answer to it very much lies within the frame work of the larger Indian Philosophical outlook where integralism is its hallmark. Irrespective of the continuing debates on its

\(^{23}\) Gītā, IX. 2
unsettling life denial or life affirming tendency, it one takes the extreme presupposed height of metaphysical truth merely as a religio-ethical postulate in the Kantian sense, it surely infuses a wholesome meaning to ordinary existence. Still, one may interpret the psychological elements of devotional worship as they are mentioned in the Gītā either as the perversions or the natural outflow of the dynamic and blissful spiritual abundance of the highest and internal nature of the Supreme Being (svarūpa śakti). The Gītā does it in its own fashion.

The spiritual nature of the devotional worship expressed in the form of psychological states is implied by the fact that, according to the Vedāntic Sāṅkhya of the Gītā, the mind, intellect and egoism belong to the eight categories of prakṛiti–prakṛtirāṣṭradhā. The other five evolutes are the five elements (VII, 4). While these eight evolutes of Prakṛiti constitute the lower nature (aparā prakṛti), the Jīvas – the embodied beings are the higher nature (parā prakṛti) of the Bhagavad. What is philosophically significant here is that God is the cause of everything else. The words “Me” and “My” uttered by the Lord Himself in relation to having two natures are to be noted. This serves as the germinal idea for the eventual development of the concept of Śaktiparināma-vāda of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. But for the matter under review, in terms of the theistic sense of an integral and life affirming ontology, the eight natures serving as the metaphysical grounds for the classical Indian psychology, provide us with a theory of a psychospiritual interpretation of devotional worship. This should act as a pre-emption against any attempt to downgrade bhakti because of its so-called emotive elements. Any logical and theoretical consideration by virtue of dealing with subject matters of belief would be deemed as extraneous to the point under consideration. But the emotivity of the Gītā is not that it is bereft of cognitive truth. It also has a strong emphasis on knowledge (jñāna).

Bhakti as it stands in relation to Jñāna and Karma:

24 Ibid, VII. 4.
The Ġītā as belonging to the epic period, and thus almost contemporaneous with the rise of the schools of Sāṁkhya and Yoga, and also the speculative philosophy of the Upaniṣads, in its own way bears the influence of the gradually shaping philosophical trends among the various darśanas. This trend makes its treatment of bhakti to co-ordinate with karma and jñāna. While it may have well developed relatively emotivised devotional worship, it does not cease to be cognitive and practical either. This would make its view of bhakti as a sādhana not very much exclusive so as to be antagonistic to jñāna and karma. Its epic context also had necessitated it to evolve an integral notion of religio-ethics where niskāmakarmayoga, “the path of detached action”, appears to be its central teaching. Perhaps, the concept of bhakti also must be understood in the light of this central teaching.

The treatment of bhakti in the Ġītā never goes beyond its consideration as a way of highest realisation. Nor does it continue as an end itself in some theologically conceived divine realm as in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. That it is a sādhana, necessitates it to be seen in relation to karma-mārga and jñāna-mārga. No matter how much it has been raised as a medium of human-divine interface; as a spiritual path which “the mean of knowledge and self-realization (jñāni), the best amongst the four types of persons who worship god”²⁶ resorts to. The Lord declares that, such a person who has his or her mind fixed on Him, (and) who has taken refuge in Him as the highest goal is the best among the said four worshippers”- ārthitaḥ sa hi yuktātma māṁ evānuttamāṁ gatim, VII, 18. Fixing one’s mind on a personal god conceived to be the Supreme Being taking refuge in him etc. are characters of devotional worship. Though, the Ġītā here refers to such a spiritual aspirant as one who has attained realisation and a man of knowledge (jñāni) and the subsequent śloka states that, after many many births, the most perfect individual surrender to Him —“the man of realisation takes refuge in Me” bahunāṁ Janmanāmante jñānavān māṁ prapadyate (VII, 19), the spiritual process here is predominantly of the nature of theistic devotion. This is

²⁶ “Catuvridhā bhajante māṁ...” Ġītā, VII. 18.
not the only text from which a theistic or personal conclusion can be drawn. There are other texts in support of this view.

In support of the above contention, R.C. Zaeher\(^{27}\) states that “of the native commentators on the Gītā it is Rāmānuja who probably comes nearest to the mind of the author of the Gītā... In his (Rāmānuja) commentary on the Gītā as elsewhere he is concerned with establishing the absolute supremacy of the personal god (Krishna) not only over the phenomenal world but also over the impersonal Absolute, Brahman (of Śaṅkara)” He approves Rāmānuja when the later cites a text from the Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad\(^{28}\) and on its basis shows that, the principle theme of the Gītā (at least when viewed from the perspective metaphysics) is an integral Absolute – Brahman is the “All” - “both the sum total of eternal beings and the source and ground of all that comes to be and passes away, then God, the divine person is not only the All but beyond the All. He is an eternity beyond the ever changing world of matter”\(^{29}\). Zaeher thinks that, Rāmānuja is absolutely right in conceiving what is stated in the Śv. Up. as the principal theme of the Gītā. This shows that, theistic interpretation of the Gītā as done by Rāmānuja and others is not unsupported by textual evidence.

The realm of eternal beings and the perishable world of matter as stated above are what the Lord says to be His two Natures (Prakṛti). The divine speaker says that, He is the origin of them - etadyonīṁ bhūtin sarvānītyupadhārya. He declares that “Higher than Myself there is nothing else, O. Dhanañjaya”\(^{30}\). While this view and the subsequent texts of Ch. VII from 8 to 12 (In these texts God is spoken of as the essence of everything else) deal with the immanence of God, the following shows His transcendence.


\(^{28}\) Ibid, Śv. Up., 5.1, “dve aksare brahma-pare tvamante, vidyā’vidyāḥ nihiṁ yatra guḍhenaśūraṁ tv avidyāḥ hy amṛtam tu vidyāḥ, vidyā’vidyāḥ tīṣate yas tu so’nyah”-In the imperishable, infinite highest Brahman are the two, knowledge and ignorance, placed hidden. Ignorance is perishable while knowledge is immortal, and he who controls knowledge and ignorance is another (distinct from either).

\(^{29}\) Ibid,

The aforesaid the Sv. Up conveys both the characters of immanence as well as transcendence of God. The later character is indicated by the fact that, the world which is of the nature of trigunātmika prakṛti, though ultimately is originated from Him, and this, dwell in Him, are in Him; for the Lord says that “but I am not in them” (matta eveti tāṇviddhi na tvahāṁ teṣu te mayi, VII, 12). In another words, the entire world comprising His two natures cannot in any way exhaust His infinitude. In the succeeding verse He reiterates - “I am beyond these and immutable” (māmebhyaḥ paramavyayam, VII, 13, and IX, 4-6).

What may be discerned from the above account is that, though it does not straightaway conclude devotional worship as the central teaching of the Gītā based on the additional reason of its context of war and duty, if the stand account is true them, theistic worship is a predominant religious attitude in its close integration with the way of action and the way of knowledge. If the Gītā affirms a personal metaphysics as Zaeherne believes, then, it may contradict Madhusūdana Sarasvati’s view that, “loving devotion to the Deity” is the bridge between the inmitigable conflict between work (ritualistic) and wisdom (knowledge)\(^\text{31}\) i.e. between karna and jñāna. His interpretation is no doubt from the standpoint of Śaṅkara’s impersonal metaphysics. His personal predilection for bhakti as shown by his writing Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasāyana bearing the influence of Caitanya\(^\text{32}\) may not affect his substantiation of the philosophical position of non-dualism of Śaṅkara. Hence, according to him, devotional worship is of three kinds “(a) worship mixed with work, (b) pure worship and (c) worship combined with wisdom”.\(^\text{33}\) These successively estabishe tvam (thou), tat (that) and identity between them. Therefore, his personal view, that, he considered the unalloyed experience of bhakti-rasa as far superior to the bliss of non-dual experience\(^\text{34}\) cannot be accepted without referring to this established position of Advaita.

---


\(^\text{32}\) Ibid, Intro., pp. xii-xiii.

\(^\text{33}\) Ibid, p. XIV.

In Madhusūdana's exposition the first six (Chapters I – VI) of the eighteen chapters of the Gītā deal with karma-yoga whereas the last six i.e., chapters XIII–XVIII are concerned with Jñāna-yoga or the path of wisdom. As he had stated, in the philosophy of Vedaṇṭa works and wisdom cannot be synthesised unless they are dovetailed towards the highest spiritual perfection which consists in the realization of the Absolute reality. This great religio-ethical task can only be accomplished by devotional love or worship (bhakti-yoga) leaving aside the controversial issue whether bhakti can be an independent means for spiritual attainment or not, first of all it is necessary to ask how the act of loving devotion acts as a bridge between the irreconcilable path of action and knowledge in as much as each is being represented.

As it has been already stated, though Madhusūdana gives a broader classification or grouping in three sections of the eighteen chapters of the Gītā, being synthetic in spirit, none of the three sections would deal in exclusive term with each of the sādhanas. Say for instance chapter four, captioned as Jñāna-yoga – “The path of knowledge” begins with the revivial of a long lost continuity of knowledge termed as “eternal yoga” (yogam-avyayam, IV, 1) learned in the ancient past through disciple successions by the royal sages (evam paramparā prāptimān rājarsayoh viduh, IV, 2). Perhaps, the first reference to bhakti is being made in this chapter indirectly via the Bhagavad’s addressing to Arjuna as His devotee and friend (bhakto’si me sakhā ceti, IV, 3) because of which the supreme secret ancient yoga (rahasyaṁ hyetaduttamam, yogah purātanah) is being taught to him. Such as knowledge is only revealed to a devotee who has taken refuge in Him and devoted to Him. During the discourse, the Lord also reveals the truth about Himself in respect of His eternal divinity (IV,4-6) and the purpose of His appearance in human form on earth (IV,7-8). He says that, those who know his divine birth and work will no more be borne after death and having taken refuge in Him, they attain Him a His Being (IV, 9-10). Wisdom or knowledge, here is the truth about the nature of the supreme self which is a pre-requisite for the synergetic religio-ethical pursuit of the Gītā.
It appears that, the reason behind the above address to Arjuna as His devotee and friend, and His revelation of the highest secret knowledge and His making a distinction between His acceptance of any form of worship directed to Him on the one hand and the forms of worship of the gods tainted desires whose benefits exhausted very fast (IV, 11-12) on the other, in a chapter dealing with the knowledge is an indication for the manner in which the “path of disinterested action” is to be performed.

This portion of the thesis is mainly concerned with the way in which devotional worship is being represented in relation to Karma and Jñāna. If devotional worship is not related to the disinterested actions of one has not seen the truth about inaction-in-action and action-in-action of a seeker of spiritual attainment who is said to be the performer of all action (IV, 18), there should not have been any mention about it in text. His actions are purified by the fire of knowledge (jñānāgniṣṭhah karmanām, IV, 19). Such a person who is devoid of attachment, free, whose mind is established in knowledge, and who does work as a sacrifice (for the Lord) his entire actions melt away (IV, 23). This verse comes very close to describing about the nature of work done as sacrifice (yajñāyacratāh) as a form of worship. Otherwise, the act of relinquishing the fruits of actions as a form of sacrifice in the vedantic sense is not self explanatory.

The notion of detachment, freedom, mind situated in knowledge and performance of works or duties as sacrifice (for the Lord) (IV, 23) etc. and the very conception of the act of sacrificial duty (not in the sense of Pūrva Mimāṃsā) and ending with the declaration that at the end Brahman alone is attained by one who sees Brahman in action – brahmāpraptaḥ brahma havirbrahmāgno brahmanā hutam/brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahmakarma samādhinā (IV, 24) is a continuation of what has already been stated earlier that, the ontology of duty according to the Gita is pre-ordained by the Supreme Being – the Prime Mover (III, 16). The concept of rta as the underpinning metaphysical truth of dharma in Indian ethics is only another formulation of this fact. That is, the ontological transfiguration of duty as a sacrifice (yajña) conceptualised as non-other than
Brahman itself is the marriage between the necessity of the self as the actionless reality and the very inevitability of involving in an action bound world by every embodied self. Thus, seeing in action-in-action as a theoretical conception of niskama karma yoga entails sacrifice to the Supreme Being. This cannot prevail if one does not presuppose a transcendent reality for whose sake lower order desires are renounced in and through performing one’s own duty. Sacrifice and its underlying spirit of renunciation of attachment to fruits a prior affirmation of a worshippable deity to whom those fruits have been offered as ingredients’ oblations. This view is supported by the supreme words of the Lord who proclaims that “knowing Me, the enjoyer of all sacrifices and asceticism (austerities), the great Lord of all the worlds, and the well-wisher of all beings, one attains peace”\textsuperscript{35}.

The critic may brush aside the above divine revelation as a mere method for conveying an abstract metaphysical truth in which the personal Godhead is being transfigured in the pure Being of such a truth. The text cited here may also be deemed as inconsistent with the earlier statement that, He has no desire to accomplish and therefore no actions to be performed or that He is forever free from action. But, this declaration of the Bhagavat may be understood as the receiving alter of all the human sacrificial offerings and austerities so as to uplift them spiritually; not because, He in fact enjoys the fruits of sacrificial offerings or duties in the literal sense of the term. The act of sacrifice as imbued with the necessary spirit of emotive directedness towards the transcendent Being requires the reality of an object of worship. This fact is closely related to the concept of bhakti-rasa of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism where Kṛṣṇa is believed to be the Supreme reservoir of rasa; as such He not only relishes His own bliss potency (svarūpānanda) and but also makes others to enjoy His rasa-hood.

All these while the discussions on the nature of knowledge vis-à-vis action and devotion has been dwelling on actual sacrificial actions performed with

materials (dravyam) in a desireless manner (IV, 25 – 32). They are still on the physical plane though based on knowledge of their own. Sacrifice through knowledge is said to be superior to the sacrifices performed with materials (IV, 33). The focus on the form of knowledge discussed in this chapter (IV) will not be complete unless it is dovetailed towards the Lord in the spirit of devotional worship. After speaking highly about knowledge as the boat for crossing all sin (IV, 36), and as a response to Arjuna’s question in chapter: v, 1, as to why he has been exhorted to perform action, the Lord says that, between selfless action and renunciation of action (because of the superiority of sacrifice in the form of knowledge, IV, 33) the former is better. What can be achieved through the sacrifice of knowledge can also be attained at by selfless action (V, 2, 5). He says that, “he who sees the way of knowledge and that of (selfless) as one truly sees” – ekam Sāmkhayā ca yogaṁ ca yāḥ paśyati sa paśyati, and those who fail to realise their sameness is being called as ignorant (V. 4)\textsuperscript{36}.

The idea of self transcendence implied by selfless actions when understood in the light human personality cannot be a dry or impersonal notion of a mere absence. Though this psycho-ethical state is said to be based on knowledge, the reality of integral human nature means that, it can’t be a pure non-emotive action attended by a mere absence of attachment. It becomes a spiritually satisfying and wholesome selfless performance of duty only when it is performed as an act of worship which the Gītā time and time again reiterates. Hence, the Bhagavat states “He who performs actions dedicating to the Lord (brahmanyadhaya) and giving up attachments, is not touched by sin, as a lotus leaf by water”\textsuperscript{37}. This cannot be but selfless action and knowledge being bridged by devotion. These are distinguishable but inseparable parts of a single or integral theistic form of devotional worship.

In the next chapter (Ch. VI), after speaking about the different aspects of dhyāna-yoga – “the path of contemplation” as a further deepening of selfless

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, V. 2-5., pp. 151-158.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, V. 10, p.162.
performance of duty in a spirit of devotion, he says that, the entire steps and processes of yoga being described (VI, 1-14) should have Him as the intent as well as the supreme goal (manah samyamyam maccaittō yuktā āśīta maṭparah, 14). The act of focusing one’s mind during the process of yogic contemplation is not dissociated with the psycho-devotional state of emotional attitude towards the Lord. He is not here introduced as one of the dispensable object of contemplation as it is a popular contention among the impersonalists. Such a yogi attains peace culminating in final Beatitude in the form of abiding in the Lord (sāntāṁ nirvāṇaparamāṁ mātsarīṁstāṁ madhigacchati, 15).

The succeeding texts – form 16 to 29 ‘discuss about norms of yoga (16, 17, 25, and 26) for enabling one to have a control over the mind and achieve situatedness in the self. After repeated practice of concentration on the self and having achieved a state in which the mind is controlled by the practice of concentration get settled; in which seeing the self by the (purified) mind one is satisfied with the self; in which one realizes same absolute, transcendent bliss which is experienced through the intellect; established in which one does not waver from the Truth; ...” 38 After achieving self mastery, to the yogi of the tranquil mind and sinless and identified with Brahman, comes supreme bliss 39 and he attains the infinite bliss of union with Brahman. Such a yogi “...whose mind is absorbed through yoga and who sees the one (Brahman) everywhere, sees the self in all beings and all beings in the self” 40.

For the issue of devotional worship which acts as a bridge between action or work and knowledge is the transition of the texts from this process of yoga where one realizes the unity of existence in Brahman to equating this absolute with the Bhagavad. That is, what is stated in text 29 “who sees the same Brahman everywhere or seeing the same spiritual reality everywhere, sees the self in all beings and all beings in the self” has a parallel in the statement of the next text in

40 Ibid, 29, p. 197.
which the Lord speaks in first person — “He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, does not lose sight of Me, nor do I of him”\textsuperscript{41}. It is quite clear here that, a simple reading of these texts as per the intention (tātparya) of the author of the Gitā clearly shows that, the two sentences the yogi who “... sees the self in all beings and all beings in the self” (VI, 29) and “He who sees Me everywhere and sees all things in Me” (VI, 30) convey the same meaning. The “Self” in former sentence “Me” as the Bhagavad are one and the same. Thus, the object of devotional worship is also the same spiritual reality – the supreme self realized by the perfected yogis in their own hearts. This is further corroborated by the next text – “He who worships Me residing in all beings in a spiritual principle of unity, becomes a yogi and, whatever his mode of life, lives in Me”\textsuperscript{42}.

From what have been discussed it has become clear that, devotional worship is integrated with knowledge and the practice of yoga. The narratives of the Gita no doubt use the language of metaphysics when it refers all these spiritual process as the “path of Brahman” – brahmanah pathi (VI. 38). The spirit of synthesis does not make the way of devotion unrecognizable. According to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī bhakti-yoga proper is discussed in the six chapters staring from VII to XII. But as it has been already shown, along with other paths the element devotion runs through the entire human – divine-dialogues of the Gitā. Madhusādhana perhaps means only in the sense of giving of the Gita a predominant focus to devotional worship as a sādhana. That he considers bhakti-rasa as the supreme bliss as well as the paramapurusārtha has been brought out by R.B. Patankar\textsuperscript{43}.

The opening verse of Chapter VII begins with the Lord’s clarion call to Arjuna to listen from Him the truth about Him in full free from doubt – asanīsayām samagram mām yathā jñānsyasi. What is significant here is that, in a chapter entitled as jñāna – viṁśa-yoga which according to Madhusādana is the

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 30, p. 198.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 31.
\textsuperscript{43} Vide: Ref. No. 10.
first of the six consecutive chapters dealing with bhakti-yoga, certain characteristics of devotional practice is mentioned. In the said opening verse Kṛṣṇa says about these characters as “the mind intent on Me” (mayaḥ saktamanāḥ), “talking refuge in Me” (madāśrayah) and “practicing yoga” (yogamyuñjan). He tells Arjuna that through these devotional practices, he shall know about Him in full. Yet devotion according to the Gīṭa can’t be seen in isolation from the other yogas – paths such as karma and jñāna.

We are here more concerned about the nature of bhakti implied by the particular knowledge or truth about the Bhagavad Himself as He has assured to Arjuna “by knowing which there remains nothing further to be known here” – yajjñātvā neha bhūyo’ nyajñātāvyamavośisyate, (VII, 2). The ontological height of such a knowledge, beyond which there exists nothing more to be known, would also reveal the truth about the path of devotion leading to it. This point is further strengthened by the next verse – “even amongst those that are perfect, one perchance knows Me in reality” – yatatatamapi siddhānāṁ kascinmāṁ vetti tattvataḥ, (VII, 3). The Lord reiterates Himself by saying that, “Higher than Myself there is nothing else, Oh Dhananjaya (Arjuna). In Me all this is strung like gems in a string” – mattaḥ parataram nānyatkincid asti dhananjaya/mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre maniganaḥ iva/ and that, “I am the origin of the entire universe as also its destroyer” – aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavah pralayatathā. Thus, the said truth He is revealing is about the ultimate causation of the world of living and non-living entities from Himself as the Supreme Being. Every religio-philosophical endeavour and ethico-spiritual practice should be aiming at the eventual attainment of this highest reality which the Lord would frequently refer to as “my supreme abode” etc. Devotional worship in the way in which the Gīṭa portrays is one of the significant means leading towards the highest good of mankind if not the only one as the the Gauḍiya thinkers came to claim later on.

As we shall see later on in this chapter that, it is the yogi or bhakta or jñāni which the Gītā would be very soon referring to as the best of the four types of worshippers (VII, 16). For an ultimate examination of the underlying ontological status and also its value etc. of bhakti of the Gītā, few words need to be said in the light of some possible criticisms against it.

To begin with, though, those four types of worshipers are differentiated from one another in terms of their respective motivations, their hierarchic gradation, are not as it is done elsewhere based on the three gunas determining the natures of the worshippers. In respect of the four worshippers being discussed here, their having “done virtuous deeds” (janah surkṛtino ...) is the reason for their coming to worship Kṛṣṇa. That, those who worship the Supreme Godhead is different in quality is evident from the Bhagavad’s statement that, “even if a person is of vile conduct, if he comes to worship the Supreme Lord he should be considered to have taken the right resolve and a man of righteous conduct. There are certain important psychological elements of devotional worship being subsumed by this statement. Even when there is the element of extreme mental directedness or focus on the object of devotion, even going to the extent of psychological pathos of obsession the nature of object of worship makes all the difference. Here in lies the power of Bhagavad bhakti. It is said that, though not conventional bhakti, but because of the extreme of mental clinging towards the Bhagavad, through the negative mental state of hatred (dveṣa), Ravana, Duśāśana and Kaṁsa obtained sāyujya mukti, i.e. their souls get merged into the divine body of the Bhagavad. That, the bhaktas are in favour of this form of mukti is an altogether different matter. It is only aimed at highlighting those necessary mental conditions to be associated with loving devotion directed towards the Supreme Lord. It is this negative mental character which the Gita is hinting at. There is nothing which cannot be purified by the power of devotional

45 Nārada Bhaktisūtra, 65. The concerned text refers only to desire, pride and anger only and hatred is not included, but there are many Paurānic references to it.
worship of the Bhagavad. There are many purānic stories embodying this religio-metaphysical truth. One such is the story of Gopāla Kṛṣṇa in which a thief who came to steal child His jewelleries, thoroughly got purified and transformed himself that, he ended up becoming a bhakta; and his original intention of stealing got sublimated towards the loving devotion to God – Hari. Similar is the case of Gopīs who worship Kṛṣṇa in their feminine longing of erotic devotional love – śṛṅgāra bhakti. Nārada confirms that their loving attachment towards Kṛṣṇa is theo-centric and not profane love.

The nature of the object of bhakti and its ontological status make all the difference. For such worshippers who came to worship the Bhagavad with negative mental attitudes are sure to become purified and win the grace of God and attain His abode or liberation. The worship by the best who is called as a man of wisdom – jñāni, the best of the four wroshippers and the nature of his knowledge may be controversial issue within the schools of Vedānta. As far as the concept of jñāna (yoga) is concerned, there are various interpretations and it is merely a matter of opinion of jñāna of the Gita which is more theistic in its orientation is ultimately analyzable in the extreme reductionism of Advaitism of Śaṅkara or not. It is suffice to maintain that, it is only a matter of interpretation on the basis of a particular metaphysical assumption. In the words of K.C. Bhattacharyya logic as a shadow of Metaphysics takes its shape and nature after its substance (i.e., Metaphysics). If one takes his words to be true, and there are genuine reasons for doing so, all the logical disagreements between philosophical systems should be settled on the plane of their respective metaphysical presuppositions. Hence, using the same logic to seek to settle the very plausibility

---

46 Op. cit., Vireśvarāṇanda, Gitā, IX. 30-31. "Even a very wicked person worships Me to the exclusion of anybody else, he should be righteous, for he has rightly resolved" p. 281.
48 Op. cit., Bhattacharyya, p. 474, “The fundamental disputes in metaphysics are the unavowed metaphysical disputes. Apart from the question of accidental inconsistency within a logical system whether one logical system is better than another is not settled by logic but by metaphysics. Metaphysical dispute, however, is not settled by logic, for apparently every metaphysical system has its distinctive logic”. What Bhattacharyya says is true only in the context of logic and metaphysics and not in any presuppositionless disputes, though, it is disputable, if it is at all possible to be presuppositionless in philosophical issues.
of faith based metaphysical assumptions would be the case of indulgence in the
callacy of "mutual dependence" – the vicious circle or logical sisa –
parasparāśraya or anyonyāśraya. This justifiable contention of Bhattacharyya is
what was being overlooked by extreme logicism of Śaṅkara who rejected all forms
of difference\(^{49}\) and relations\(^{50}\) as illusory appearances of the pure absolute.
Rāmānuja did criticise Śaṅkara’s conception of pure or non-dual experience in his
theory of seven fold untenability – saptavidhṛṇūnupapatīṭh as something not
supported by experience. According to Rāmānuja, human experience is always
relational or it is always in the form of the experience ‘of’ something. This
standpoint is to be remembered for the theistic orientation of the Gītā and its
bearings on bhakti which is a relational concept.

What is important for the chapter of the thesis is that, a jñāni (bhakta)
who is said to be deeply rooted in the self, who has seen the self in all beings or
vice versa; and has situated in the impersonal Brahman, is also worshipping the
same Supreme Being just as it is declared elsewhere in the Gīta that the
impersonal absolute Brahman is established in Him – brahma-pratiṣṭhā ham.
Nowhere in the Gītā is it stated that, in worshipping the Bhagavad one is only
worshipping the saguna Brahman of Advaitism or a God of illusory appearance
when looked at from the empirical perspective (vyavahārika drṣṭi). This is what
zeahuer says to be not in terms of the real intention of the author of the Gītā.
Hence, it is not suprising that, he takes the interpretation of God in personal
terms by Rāmānuja as more authentic. Therefoe, it would be an extra-textual and
biased argument to orchestrate that, Krṣṇa is an historical personality who was
deified and not Brahman personalised\(^{51}\). Based on such assumptions the
Bhagavad’s repeated declaration of Himself to be the Supreme source, sustainer
and controller etc. of the universe is sought to be undermined and interpreted to

\(^{49}\) Sundaram, P.K., Advaita Epistemology, University of Madras, 1984, pp. 262-276.
\(^{50}\) Ibid, pp. 216-220.
subserve the cause of an extremely reductionistic ontology where bhakti itself has meaning.

The above view of Krishna Sharma tantamount to reducing the repeated revelation by the Godhead Himself of His Supreme spiritual and metaphysical status and the theistic religio-ethical dialogue surrounding such divine discloser to either a mere state of extra-polation or of no religio-philosophical importance. If one dares to reject any act of divine revelation in the manner in which the concern critic does, then, there is no known power of logic or rationality to affirm the so-called justified belief in the extreme reductionistic ontology of nirguna Brahman while at the same time ridiculing another belief which is more personal and theological. Belief in the concept of a Supreme Being conceived as the nirguna Brahman also entails the view that, it is well within the power of such an ultimate reality to appear in the divine but human form. The critic had been already anticipated by the author of the Gita when it is said that “When I take birth in the human form fools deride Me” or that “those who know the real truth about by My divine birth and activities, after death they will not be born again, but they well attain Me” – janma karma ca me divyayan yo vetti tattvataḥ, naltī māmeti so ‘ṛjuna”. In this connection it would be worthwhile to remember that, the issue of identity between the Upaniṣadic Kṛṣṇa who was a pupil of Ghora Aṅgirasa and the Kṛṣṇa of the Yadu Clan has been already settled by scholars like R.C. Majumdar and A.K. Majumdar etc.

If one goes by what the Gītā says and does not go beyond its theistic framework, though at several places there are diversions to the impersonal Brahman which in no way is considered to be inconsistent with the said personal theologico-metaphysical setting, then, the idea of knowledge or wisdom (jñāna – vijñāna) as represented with the said personal religio-philosophic frame work can very well go along with the devotional attitude that is integral to it. Otherwise, there is no other way of interpreting the utterances of the divine speaker of the

Gītā that “Of these, the man of knowledge who is constantly in communion and single minded in devotion excels. To the man of knowledge I am very dear indeed, and he is very dear to Me”, and the next verses “All these are indeed noble, but the man of realization I regard as My very self; for which his mind fixed (on Me), he has taken refuge in Me alone as the highest goal,” and “At the end of innumerable births, the man of realization takes refuge in Me, knowing that all this is Vāsudeva, such a saint is exceedingly rare”\(^{53}\).

The Gītā is abounding with similar utterances of the divine. The nature of bhakti represented through its narratives can only be understood in the light of such a revelation. While thus, the highest form of knowledge-imbued-devotion is meant for those men of wisdom (jñānīs in the personal sense), the Gītā is inclusive and accommodative enough not to condemn or ignore those less capable in terms of will as well as intellectual strength. It also does not transcend the larger ritualistic morality of the Vedas. The only ingenuity of this text would be that, the much criticised ritualism of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas is retained within the broader religio-philosophic world view of Vedānta. It leaves enough room for gradually uplifting (Krama mukti) those who are somehow lacking discriminative knowledge. “Thus, being deprived of discrimination due to desires and being swayed away by their own natures, they worship other deities observing particular rites”\(^{54}\). But, such worship with faith (bhaktah śraddhayā) is kept unflinching, for the Lord (tasya tasyacalāṁ śraddhāṁ tameva vidadhāmyaham, VII, 21); and the fruits such worshippers get from those deities are indeed granted by Him alone (in the words of the divine Himself: labhate ca tataḥ Kāmānyaiva vihitānhi tān, VII, 22). Yet, the Lords warns that, “(the) fruit of these men of little understanding has an end; the worshippers of gods go to the gods, (but) My devotees come to Me”\(^{55}\). When these divine revelations are seen in the light of

\(^{53}\) Ibid, VII. 17-19, pp. 223-225.

\(^{54}\) Ibid, VII. 20, p. 226.

\(^{55}\) Ibid, VII. 23, pp. 227-228.
their possible bearings on the notion of bhakti portrayed in the Gītā, it is necessary to examine as to which import they imply.

The above verses convey the cognitive and emotive imperatives of religio-ethical paths of jñāna-yoga and bhakti-yoga of the Gītā. Their being imperative consists in the fact that, it is a duty on the part of humanity to realise the highest spiritual wisdom and resort to the process of devotional worship characterised by the Psycho-spiritual states of fixing one’s mind on God and taking refuge in Him etc. in the manner in which they are being described in the Gītā; only then, the supreme God can be attained at. Any other form of worship short of these requirements would not lead to mokṣa, but after exhausting the fruits of worshipping the demigods, though ultimately granted by the Lord, those worshippers shall continue to be entrapped in the world of repeated birth and death. The philosophical meaning which may be gleamed from the above texts and the reviews presented to them as above would be that, in the absence of a holistic knowledge so as to have an intuitive grasp of the very religio-metaphysical truth as the fulcrum of the variegated existence, driven by the ignorance of such a knowledge of truth, (tattva darśana) the spiritually depraved human beings shall remain attached to their egoistic existence, and thus shall exist a life of suffering associated with fragmented and polarised existence of Godless life (vaimukhya or externalised existence a concept used by the Gauḍīya Vaishnavas as opposed to sāmukhya inwardised or Godward existence). This is the fact which the divine speaker is referring to when He says to Arjuna that He would reveal to him the highest “knowledge together with wisdom without any reservation knowing which there remains nothing further to be known here” (VII, 2). The point is that, the devotional worship of the Gītā is intimately bound to the necessary cognitive truth discernible within the built in theistic Vedāntic metaphysical framework. There is no reason for taking the concept of its object to some rarified world of ontological abstraction as it was done by Śaṅkara. Theistic religio-ethical consciousness is the mainstay of the concept of bhakti understandable within the synthetic spirit of the Gītā. The spiritual status of this consciousness is that, the
Bhagavat is worshiped by those men of virtuous actions whose sins have been thoroughly purged and freed from the delusion of duality (VII, 28). Pure spirit of devotional emotionalism is thus not characteristic of the bhakti of the Gītā.

In essence the whole purpose of the Gītā is to enlighten Arjuna and through him the entire humanity, it approaches to the supreme goal from different perspectives and the "Way of the Supreme spirit" — the highest imperishable unmanifest is hereby revealed to be His own abode. This in fact, is a comprehensive way of deepening the faith as well as the depth of knowledge and devotion of the despondent souls and showing that these two processes of sādhana have to be embodied in one's own rigorous practical life in which the realised soul dedicates the fruits of his actions to the Supreme Being. Devotion here appears to be not serving as a mere bridge between action and knowledge, but as the expression of the eternal loving devotion that the human creatures are constitutionally inclined towards their Lord. They are predestined to this transcendental love, because, metaphysically stated their Lord is the same supreme reality as the very unifying Truth of the unity of variegated existence.

Chapter XI entitled as "The Way of Royal Knowledge and Royal Secret" — "Rājavidyā Rāja Guhya Yoga" further unfolds the theistic consciousness of devotional attitude as being rooted in a higher metaphysical knowledge (jñāna or vidyā) and its being a realized and realizable. A truth based on not mere theory but something directly experienced (pratyāvagama, IX, 2) or realization in the concrete or existential spiritual life (vijñāna, IX, 1) is being hinted at even by knowledge stylistically or metaphorically called as royal knowledge and royale secrete. Such a knowledge based on concrete spiritual experience is described as supremely holy (pavitram idam uttamam), easy to practice" (susukham kartum), righteous (dharmyam) and imperishable" (avvayam)⁵⁶.

The Bhagavad after stating that, those faithless in these teachings shall return to this mortal world without reaching Him (IX, 3), and thus showing that

such highest knowledge and its realization are a must for attaining Him, proceeds
to explaining about their nature and the ontological status in verses 4-12. That,
knowing His higher nature as the Lord of beings (maheśvaram) and the truth
behind His taking human form (mānuṣim tanum āśritam) is an essential cognitive
condition in metaphysical parlance is proved by Him declaration of those who
deride Him (in His human form) as fools (avajanānanti mām muḍhā). The idea of
royal knowledge and royal secret constitute knowing this truth. In another sense,
in Gauḍiya philosophy, as we shall se later on these attributes of greatness or
majestic splendors and glories (aśvarya śakti) of the Bhagavad is antithetical to
the idea of bhakti-rasa conceived as pure emotion of divine love wherein His
aśvarya attributes are still not absent but overpowered by His mādhurya śakti.
This will be a point of departure between the concept of bhakti narrated in the
Gitā and the one developed in Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism.

It is in contrast to those individuals of ignorance, that, the great souls
(mahātma) “taking to the divine nature” (dvīvīṁ prakritimāśritah) and knowing
the Bhagavad to be the cause of all beings and immutable worship Him with one
pointed devotion (bhajantyananyamanasa jñātvā bhātādimavyayam, IX, 13).
Thus, just as it has been similarly shown in other sections of the Gitā, devotion
accordingly is firmly rooted in the deepest metaphysical knowledge and it is
directly experienced as a spiritual truth. Always praising the Lord, “striving with
austere vows, and bowing down to Him with devotion, always steadfast” are
some of the main features of the devotional worship of Him.57

What is a matter of philosophical consideration is that, the statements in
verses 16-17 and 24, in clear cut language with no ambiguity reveal that, the
mono theistic worship is being reiterated and revealed by the Divine Himself who
is at the centre of the integral reality as its supreme truth. Devotion in this
context is only a functional expression of the highest knowledge coupled with the
realization of this central truth concerning the Bhagavad. Devotional worship of

57 ibid, IX. 14, p. 269.
the Lord expressed via media disinterested performance of duty is the natural outcome of the embodied nature of human existence.

According to this pattern of monotheistic devotion, life itself becomes a form of worship and a field of self-sacrifice. It is so effortless that, it is suffice that one offers with devotion to the Lord a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water provided that, the offerings are done in a state pure mind – \( \text{patraṁ puśparṇ phalaś toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati/ tadahāṁ bhaktyupahṛtamānasāmi} \) \( \text{pryatātmanah//26//}. \) Such a theocentric existence is so imbued with the loving devotion of the Supreme Being that, the entire span of life becomes, in Kierkegaardian terminology a "work of love", and thereby may be considered to be so authentic that, whatever one does, or eats, or sacrifices or gives and austerity one performs are to be done as an offering to the Lord (IX, 27). This the Bhagavad calls as the yoga of renunciation – \( \text{sanyāsayoga} \) and through this yoga having destroyed all the merits and demerits of action, a seeker of truth who is has mastered this path will reach the Lord's abode.

The last six verses of this Chapter under consideration, throw light on certain significant ontological implications pertaining to the merits of even negative emotions directed towards the Supreme Being in terms of its beneficial spiritual consequence and socio-cultural bearings of the form of devotional worship of the Lord. The said implications involving devotional attitude anticipate the mutual indwelling between the Bhagavad and His parikaras in and through the reciprocal experience of divine love (\textit{prema bhakti}) in Gauḍīya Vaishnavism, and the issues of socio-religious byproducts of the medieval Bhakti Movements.

First of all, the ontological implication is concerning the revelation by the Bhagavad that "they who worship Me with devotion, are in Me, and I am in them" – \( \text{ye bhajanti tu māṁ bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cápyaham} \) (IX, 29). This text anticipates one very important aspect of the nature of \textit{bhakti-rasa} – erotic-aesthetic divine sentiment as it was developed in the Gaudiya system. The above statement bears testimony to the spiritual mystery of the reciprocal loving
relation between the Divine and His devotees. The inter-subjective-experience of the particular form of religious consciousness is evident from the admission about the mutual indwelling between Him and His devotees. In Gauḍīya religious philosophy through the mutual experience of divine love there is mutual transfer of the blissful energy (hlādinī śakti of the Lord) manifested as bhakti-rasa of the highest order assuming the most intense form of spiritual love between the Divine lover and His beloved. This is explained by the religio-metaphysical doctrine of paraspara śaktyāveśa. This will be discussed in detail in the chapter on the Ontology of Divine Love.

The Gītā text does not refer to the fact of the mutual transfer of energy or interchangeability of the subject (lover) and object (beloved) of divine love as it is done in Gauḍīya School. But this is being hinted at. This fact brings out the reality of the ontological status of bhakti.

Secondly, in verse 30 the Lord refers to the power and benefits of worshipping Him. Devotion to Him has the power to transform even a wicked person who worships Him and because of His right resolve he should be regarded as righteous. This in a sense comes very closer to the attainment of sayujya mukti by those who through negative emotion like hatred and anger etc (dveśa and krodha etc.). This is made possible by the religio-metaphysical status of the object of such a pin pointed negative but exclusive emotion directed towards it. Similarly is the case about cloistered erotic-passion of divine love, on account of its complete object centricity is interpreted to be the highest end. The intense mental clinging towards the object of erotic-divine emotion purifies those mental states of desire. This shall be discussed in detail under a relevant chapter.

Thirdly as the concluding remark of this chapter, the Lord does not loose sight of the equality of mankind cutting across gender and caste in respect of religious rights thrown open by the path of devotion. The Bhagavat as the ultimate refuge does not discriminate. “Even they who are of sinful birth, women, vaishyās, as also Sudras, taking refuge in the, verily attain the highest goal” (IX,
32. He urges mankind that having born in this ephemeral and joyless world, they should worship Him for crossing it over, (IX, 33). R.C. Majumdar’s differentiation between religious right and social right may be recapitulated for any possible social implication of this catholic outlook of the tradition bhakti in the monotheism of the Gītā. When we remember that, the Gītā strictly prohibits any switching over of duties amongst the castes, it may be inferred that, social right definitely is not the meaning of the said catholic outlook of devotional worship of the Bhagavat.

The Lord ends with revealing the top and secret knowledge pertaining to the method of devotional worship of Him with the well known verse – “Fix your mind on Me, be My devotee, sacrifice to Me and bow down to Me; thus fixing the mind on Me and having Me for the supreme goal, you will attain Me alone” (IX, 34).

The culmination in the form of spiritual pursuit predominant with the theistic devotional attitude in the preceding chapters of the Gītā – mainly with the method to be followed with this form of worship continues with the succeeding chapters on “Meditation on the Divine Glories” (Ch. X) and “The Universal Form” (Ch. XI). The idea of devotional worship - bhakti yoga receives full attention in Ch. XII entitled “Bhakti Yoga”. This theistic devotionalism no doubt is linked to knowledge, action and the mystical intuitive experience of the indwelling self whose narratives extends to its identification with the objective impersonal reality - brahman. This process has the underrent of identity statement of the Vedānta-tattvamās58. The whole purpose of the Gītā here is to ultimately identify the “referent” of this identity and see if, as Sankara did, it entails his ontology of nirguna Brahman or not. The prima facie value of the meanings embodied in the statements of divine speaker will only be considered.

58 Op. cit., Kumar, p. xiv, Madhusūdana in the introduction to his Gūḍhārthaṭṭāpika, his Gītā Bhāṣya, speaks about tattvamās-“thou art that” in relation to three kinds of worship: (a) worship mixed with work, (b) pure worship and (c) worship combined wisdom. The two words, “Iṣvānt” -“Thou” and “tāt” -“that” are the undercurrents of these kinds of worship in order. “Asi”-“art” equates them. That is, the essential nature of the individual souls on the subjective plane and the objective Truth of Brahman are taken to be the one and non-dual reality (ekameva advitiyam).
The two Chapters X & XI provides those attributes of majestic splendour (aiśvarya and vibhūtim according to Ch. X) and the elements of omniscient, omnipotence and omnipresence in their grandiest height as they are overpoweringly, frighteningly and courageously done in the Universal Form (Viśvarūpam) which caused the feeling of shock and awe, fear and trembling to Arjuna. These picturesque representations on cosmic plane by the divine Himself are deliberately designed and done to convince, to deepen and strengthen the faith of the despondent souls epitomised by Arjuna on the eve of the epic war. Not only the great perfected souls realized the greatness of the Bhagavad who is non-other than the impersonal Absolute whose nature is constitutive of the manifested (vyakta) and unmanifested (avyakta) and the one reality which at the same time remains as the transcendent imperishable Absolute, they also constantly meditate on these divine attributes in a spirit of loving devotion, an unwavering mind and servitude to the Supreme Being.

The Lord seeks to re-emphasis these facts by saying that “Neither the gods nor the great sages know My birth, for I am the cause of the gods and the great sages in all respects” (X, 2). He says that those who know Him as “the birthless and beingless Lord of creatures ... (are) freed from all sins” (X, 3). Those who know in truth (tattvataḥ) the said glory (vibhūtim) and power of the Bhagavad “attains infallingly yoga – so avikampena yogena yujyate (X, 7), and knowing His status as the source of all, everything is produced out of Him the wise worship Him with devotion”59. The mind and senses of such worshippers are focused on the Lord. In this manner they are always engaged in explaining to each other of the Lord (bodhayantah parasparam), and thus, they are always pleased and happy (Kathayantaśca mām nityām tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca, X, 9). As it has been already highlighted these modes of bhakti agrees with the forms of worship performed in śravanaṁ, smaranaṁ, mananam and sankirtanam etc. which are basic to Vaiṣṇavism. According to Jiva Goswāmin these forms of worship fall

under vaidhī bhakti and are as such differentiated from rāgānugā-bhakti.60 The next text (X, 10) deals with a crucial issue in religious philosophy or theology about how the knowledge of the greatness of the transcendent—“other” whose characters have been described in the chapters X and XI which in the language of Rudolf Otto is “wholly other comes to be known to the mortal human beings. For, Kṛṣṇa declares apparently in contradictory language that, “beings are in Him” and He is in the beings and yet His supreme transcendent Self is beyond all these.” The problem is the possibility of devotional worship depends on the possibility of knowledge of the “transcendent wholly other” as one of the Upanisads stated elsewhere that, the “absolute is neither known nor the unknown” or that, “It is unknown and unknowable”. This issue may be one of the ways in which the relation between knowledge (jñāna) and devotion (bhakti) may be looked at.

The Absolute as the “wholly other” can never be known by the finite egoistic self. But there is a way out of this gap of nescience between the Infinite and finite. To those who already made sincere attempts to intellectually grasp the highest divine essence, “somehow” who have come to have faith in the divine, who are ever devoted to Him and worship Him with love (bhajataṁ priti pūrvakam), the Lord out of His Infinite Mercy grants the yoga of understanding by which they come to Him (daddāmi buddhiyogaṁ tair yena māmupayānti te, X, 10)

That is, the Supreme Being can be understood only when He reveals Himself out of His mysterious grace. This is evident from Arjuna’s statement that, “You alone know yourself by yourself”- svayamevaṁ manatmanāṁ vetha tvaṁ punaṁ puruṣottama, and “Verily, you, alone can fully tell about your divine glories - vaktumahasya sēṣeṇa divya hyātma vibhūtayāh (X, 15-16)61.

---

60 Sinha, Jadunath, Jiva Gosvāmi’s Religion of Devotion and Love (Bengal Vaiśnavism), Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, Varanasi, 1983, from the original texts of bhakti Sandarshna provided at the end of the book, p. 283, Bhaktirdvāvidhā-vaidhī rāgānugā ca/ tatra vaidhī sāstroktā-vidhinā prvarittā/atha vaidhī bhedhā:-śaṇāpattīḥ-sri gurvādi-satasevā-śravaṇa-kīrtanādayāḥ// Jiva says further that, these forms of worship are difficult to practice unlike rāgānugā bhakti-vidhirmārga-bahktirdvīdhī-sāpekṣēti sa durbaḻā.

61 These ideas are represented by the Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI. 14.2: “Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo, na medhayā na bahunā śrūtena, yamevaṁ vṛṣṇute tena labhyasatyāṣaṁ ātma vīrṇute tānuṁ śyām// That is, “Neither by eloquence, nor through intellect, nor by great learning can... (the) knowledge of the Self be obtained. It can be realized only by him whom He reveals Himself”. 
The act of self revelation of the Supreme Deity may be out His infinite compassion determined by His own Absolute freedom. This is what the Lord means when He declares about the purpose of His advent on earth- “Whenever, O descendent of Bharata, righteousness declines and unrighteousness prevails, I manifest Myself” and “For the protection of the religious and the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of religion, I come into being from age to age”\textsuperscript{62}. Though, birthless, immutable and the Lord of the creatures, He resorts to His \textit{Prokṛti} (Nature) and comes into being through His own inscrutable power - \textit{Yoga Māyā} (IV, 6). What this divine will has to do with devotional worship? To those Jñānis, men of self sacrifice and always righteous and constantly engaged in the worship of the Lord, He is ever present in their hearts. In the religious language of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism devotional consciousness and the actual acts of worship are the functions of the over flowing abundance of the dynamic bliss potency (\textit{hīādīni-sakti}) of the Supreme Being. His own self determined will to reveal His own true nature and glories to His devotees who are forever situated in spiritual awareness is the necessary ontological condition of the divine process of devotion.

That, if neither by the Vedas, nor by austerities, nor by gifts, nor by sacrifices, His infinite glories (\textit{Vibhūti}) and Universal Form (\textit{Viśvarūpam}) become visible as it was revealed to Arjuna (XI, 47,53) means that His status of the transcendent-Supreme “Otherness” is conquered by the irresistible power of loving devotion of His worshippers. That is why He declares that, of the four worshippers the man of knowledge and realisation (Jñāni) is the best. The \textit{Vṛndāvana līlā} is the affirmation of this theoretical truth where the Supreme Deity through His own infinite freedom of divine sweet will, choses to clim down from His position of majesty (\textit{mahimā} accordring Nārada) and allows Himself to be bound by the

maternal love of His mother Yasodā (due to which as the child - Gopāla Kṛṣṇa He is known as Dāmodara).

It is the above facts which become fully developed in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. The Bhagavat’s āśvarya-śakti (power of majesty and splendour subsumed under Vibhūti Yoga and Universal Form in the Gītā) is inferior to His mādhurya-śakti – The power of His madening sweetness which is manifested in the form of bhakti-rasa. Devotional love of Gauḍīya philosophy as the expression of the Bhagavat’s inner most and highest blinful potency (hlādini-śakti or svarūpa-śakti) is the selfsame functional expression of His mysterym tremendum⁶³. Those who worship Him in “undivided devotion” (bhaktī tvaṁanyā) can realise the truth about the universal form – visva rūpam and enter into it (XI, 54). It is this truth that all the works and devotional worship are directed to and being described as the supreme goal. Having attained at the realization of the supreme truth, His worshippers have no more reasons for entertaining hatred towards any creature or becoming attached to the sense objects of the world (XI, 55).

The next Chapter XII of the Gītā named Bhakti-yoga – “The way of devotion” discusses the controversial issue of the distinction between saguṇa-bhakti and nirguṇa which is found nowhere in the entire 700 verses. To the contemporary followers of Advaita Vedānta these two forms of bhakti have become the norm. It is true that, in Advaita these two forms of devotion are not borne out of two Brahman-theories but are the religio-ethical consequences of the reductionistic ontology of monism. Saguṇa Brahman and nirguṇa Brahman are not two Brahmons, one inferior and the other superior, but describing one and the same reality from two different perspectives: empirical (vyavahārika drṣṭi) and transcendental standpoints (pāramārthika drṣṭi). Though, the gita does not directly mention about these two Brahmons and their corresponding forms of

⁶³ Op. cit., Sinha, p. 279, “tāṁ ca bhagavān svavṛnice nikṣippaneva nityaṁ vartate///142// bhaktierguṇatvam///134// bhakteś śrībhagavatsvā̄pa-śakti-bodhakatvam svyaṁ prakāśatvamāhā//...siddhāsaṁyantu sutarāṁ tatprakaśitbhavati///139-40///, Bhākti Sandarbhā. What the text says is that, the svarūpa śakti is eternally placed in the hearts of His bhaktas and bhakti is to be understood to be the self-manifestation of this blissful energy. These texts also reveal that, bhakti is nirguṇa in its own way. Translation here is my own.
devotional worship starting with the first verse of the said chapter in many places of the book the forms of worship agreeable to these descriptions exist. For the objective of the thesis, it is necessary to see if the concerned texts point to the impersonal or the personal reality. Finding out the truth about it is significant for the ontology of divine love as the highest or the fifth purusārtha.

What is stated above is evident from Arjuna’s question—“Between those devotees who worship you being thus ever devoted, and those who worship the Imperishable, the unmanifest, who are better versed in yoga?” It is very much clear that, it is to Saguna bhakti which the Blessed Lord is referring to when the said “Those who worship me fixing their mind (mayyāveśya mano) on Me, ever devoted (nītya yukta upāsate), and endowed with supreme faith (śraddhayā parā) - them I regard as the best yogins.” In the same Vedantic spirit of synthesis Arjuna’s genuine query and kṛṣṇa’s response to it do not convey any radical disparity between the two forms of worshippers in terms of the nature of their respective objects. Though, the nature of the highest reality may still be subjected to interpretations in the light of an extreme form of impersonal ontology just as Śaṅkara did, going by the interpretations of Rāmānuja, Madhva and many other subsequent theistic thinkers like Nimbārka etc, and as stated before Zeahner’s admission of Rāmānuja’s and by extention of similar others, a personal ontology or monotheism would be more consistent with the intention (tātparya) of the author of the Gitā. Hence, the conception of a holistic view of the Absolute as done in the Gitā is what is being implied by the Bhagavad’s response. In this spirit the Lord proclaims that, “... (even) then who worship the Imperishable, Indescribable, unmanifest, All-pervading, Inconceivable, changeless, Immovable and Eternal, controlling well their senses, even-minded everywhere and devoted to the good of all beings, (also) attain me alone” (te prāpnuvanti māmeva). In another words, the nature of the Supreme Being is both personal and impersonal. Otherwise, the

---

65 Ibid, XIII. 3-4.
66 In Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism based on the Bhāgavata, the Absolute Being Kṛṣṇa is said to be hierarchically spoken of as Brahman, Paramātman and Bhagavān-brahmeti paramātmeti
Bhagavad would not have said the imperishable Brahman is situated in Him-Brahma pratiṣṭhāham. He also points out that the worship of the unmanifest is troublesome and difficult for the embodied soul (XII, 5).

After the text five the Lord’s words in verse six in which He begins with the expression “Those however” or “but those – ye tu” shows that in contrast to the worship of the Impersonal Absolute, the worship of the personal god is easier while not making the later ontologically different from or inferior to the former. Unlike in the worship of the Impersonal Absolute in which actions are altogether relinquished as evil, in the case of the worship of the personal godhead, if the action are being done as offering to the Lord, being attached to Him worshipping Him through unswerving meditative devotion and lastly with their minds fixed on the Lord, He quickly delivers them from the ocean of transmigratory existence beset with death. (XII, 6-7).

Zaeherer includes texts from 6 to 12 under “Exclusive Devotion to a personal God”67. The devotional worship recommended in these verses integrate the mind and intellect in it and channelise them towards the Lord. Those who cannot do so are advised to resort to the Yoga of practice (abhyāsa yoga) and seek to attain Him (XII, 9). The inclusive nature of devotion to the Bhagavad is indicated by the fact that, those who are unable even to practice are asked to perform rites in the sole spirit of devotion to Him (XII, 10). If one is unable even to this, the Lord exhorts to take refuge in Him, to practice self-control and renounce the fruits of all actions (sarvakarma phala tyāgam, XII, 11). From these words of the Lord, it may appear that, the path of devotion directed towards the Supreme Being as the personal Absolute is of inferior spiritual merit. As stated before

bhagavānīti sabdyate. A.C.Bhaktivedānta in his puport on the first sutra of Śrī Ṣāṇapāṇiṣād, Invocation, speaks about this matter. In his view, through the realisation of the impersonal Brahman, one attains sat (existence) aspect of the ultimate reality, while in the case of realising paramātman only sat and cit (consciousness) are realised. But when the complete whole-the Absolute Truth conceived in personal term is attained all the three including ananda are realised. This will not be accepted by the Advaitins. But for a theistic system it is a normal way of interpreting the Absolute. See Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda, A.C., Śrī Ṣāṇapāṇiṣād, The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, New York, 1969, pp. 11-13.

involving one’s mind, intellect, repeated practice, rites and lastly adopting the yoga of “renunciation-in-action” are more conducive to the embodied soul. By offering alternative ways of worship in these texts, the Lord bestows His perennial divine grace and compassion to the fettered souls.

The above discussion is important from the perspective of Madhusūdana’s contention that, devotion is the bridge to remove the unmitigable gap between works and knowledge. Yet, what have been so far dealt with highlight the identifiable predominance of theistic devotional consciousness in which the human-divine “intersubjectivity” prevail. In urging to lead a life of dedication only of fruits and not their actions imbued with the necessary spirit of devotion, the spiritual endeavour is no more life denying as it has been mostly charged against the asceticism of the man of knowledge as exclusive pursuit. To sum up, in his commentary on verse 12, Zaehner opines “. . . this chapter tirelessly points out; the classic virtues of detachment and indifference are only perfected if they are complemented by the love of God.”

This chapter of the Gita, seems to re-emphasise the religiophenomenological state of the human-divine “inter-subjectivity” described in the Lord’s declarations “To the man of knowledge (or wisdom or vijnāna) I am very dear indeed, and he is dear to Me” (VII, 17) and “though He is impartial to all beings, they who worship Me with devotion are in Me, and I am also in them.” The ideas of mutual indwelling and reciprocal divine communion are embodied in the revelations of verses from 6 to 12 grouped under the caption —“Exclusive Devotion to the personal God” (from the human perspective) and the verses from the 13 to 20 sub-titled — “Whom God Loves.” While these are from the standpoint of the inter-textual continuity of devotional consciousness, the verse

---

64 Ibid, XII. 12, p. 329.
14 according to Zaehner’s translation appears to convey the meaning of the reciprocal loving relation between human and divine\textsuperscript{72}.

Though, the inter-related examination of the texts regrouped by Zaehner in terms of the continuity of the idea of devotion in them quite obviously show the said intersubjectivity or reciprocity in the loving human – divine communion, Zaehner’s translation of XII, 14 “let him worship Me with love: then will I love him (in return) most probably is not very obvious by the concerned original text “yo mad-bhaktah, sa me priyah”. Otherwise, most of the English renderings as done by Sisir Kumar Gupta\textsuperscript{73} to the concerned text and that of Vireśvarānanda only convey the sense of “such a devotee of Mine”. The last eight texts of Ch. XII, i.e., 13–20 describe in detail those personality traits of a man of meditative devotion to the Lord.

On a more philosophical plane God’s returning of His devotees’ love may be discussed in the light of the complex theoretical issues of Divine Grace and its being bestowed to His creatures. It is a divine mystery as to what determines an impartial (is evident when Kṛṣṇa says: samo’ham sarvabhutesu...IX, 29), compassionate and benign Godhead—the Absolute Being often defined as Supremely Independent and Freedom to bestow His loving grace to His devotees\textsuperscript{74}. Gītā’s transition in its narratives on bhakti from the conventional cognates like upāsana and bhajana etc. to the idea of “priyam” as one among them is relevant to the purpose of the thesis. In addition to this possibility, the Gītā also serves as the authority for the subsequent interpretation of bhakti as the extreme height of the erotic-aesthetic formulation of devotional love as sṛṅgāra-bhakti (or rasa) or prema-bhakti or Bhagavad-prīti etc. The ingenuity of Gaudīya school consists in the conception of “prema-bhakti” or divine love personified by Radha’s Mahābhāva as the fifth-puruṣārtha which itself throws up further question pertaining to its ontological status when it is seen vis-à-vis the

\textsuperscript{72} ibid, XII.

\textsuperscript{73} Op. cit., Gītā, XII. 14, p. 223.

\textsuperscript{74} Op. cit., Nygren, see reference no.15.
ontological height of the Bhagavad in the form of Krṣṇa tattva as the ultimate religio-metaphysical reality. This is echoed in one of Madhusudana’s famous devotional poem in which he confesses that he is not aware if there is any other higher reality than Krṣṇa — “... Krṣṇāt param tattvāṁ Kim’pi aham najāne”\textsuperscript{75}.

The Gītā appears to be further strengthening the ontological position of the Supreme Deity – Krṣṇa, the Bhagavat who had undertaken this task by way of re-affirming an Upaniṣadic truth\textsuperscript{76} – a truth claim readapted in the Gītā in terms of religio-metaphysical knowledge consisting in knowing the distinction between “the field” (Kṣetra) and “the knower of field” (Kṣetrajña)\textsuperscript{77}. It is necessary to see as to how this orientation of the Gītā which according to Śaṅkara is the continuation of the two Natures (Prakṛti) of the Lord has a bearing on the practice of devotion.

According to Śaṅkara the “knower of the field” is not the individual souls in the line with the puruṣas of the Sāṅkhya but the impersonal Absolute Reality-nirguna Brahman. Zaehner refers to the controversial\textsuperscript{78} issue surrounding its impersonal and personal connotations. He considers Rāmānuja’s interpretation to be more genuine. In his rephrasing Rāmānuja interprets “the knower of the field” to mean “... that God knows all ‘fields’ and ‘knowers of the field’, all bodies and individual selves which together constitute his favourite concept of the “body of the Lord”. This theistic conclusion is necessary for the relative significant position that bhakti occupies and which the Gītā repeatedly emphasises amongst the sādhanas like karma and jñāna. Though, appears to be incongruous, the practice of devotional worship in the spirit of unswerving loyalty and love for the Bhagavad with spiritual exercise on no other bent (XIII, 10, 18) is one of the

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, Gītā, Gupta, Biographical sketch Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, “No truth, I higher hold! Than Krṣṇa, beloved Lord!...”, p. xiii. The full Saṅskrit text runs as: vamśi vibhūṣita karāṇ navanirādabhāt pitāṁbāra bimbā phalādbhāroṣṭāt, purṇendu sundara mukhāḥ aravinda netrāt, krṣṇāt param tattvāṁ kiṁ api aham na jāne.

\textsuperscript{76} The Gītā itself is also known as Gitopaniṣad. The concepts of kṣetra and kṣetrajña are already referred to in the Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad, 6.16 and Maitreya Upaniṣad. In these texts kṣetrajña means individual self and not God.

\textsuperscript{77} Zaehner, Gītā, XIII. 1-2, pp. 332-333.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, p. 335.
characters of one who has the wisdom to see where knowledge of the reality (as stated in this chapter of Gita) must lead (XIII, 11).

If one does not take the impersonal ontological conclusion as in Śaṅkara’s reductionistic Advaitism, in addition to the distinction between matter or “Nature” (field-ksetra) and “person” or “spirit” (“the knower of the field”-Ksetrajñā), as per the Lord’s own revelation that these two realities are His lower nature and higher nature respectively, it has to be accepted that, He lies beyond them. This idea is closely related to His declaration that, He is the Supreme manifested Being beyond both the conventional realms of manifested and unmanifested. Based on Rāmānuja’s views, Zehner’s translation of XIII, 22, with the insertion of the implied ideas conveys this theistic conclusion. His translation of the text says “[And yet another one there is who,] surveying and approving, supports and [Himself] experiences [the constituents of Nature], the Mighty Lord: ‘Highest self’ some call Him, the “Highest person” in this body”79. This interpretation is also supported by the text which speaks about two birds sitting on the same branch of a tree one eating fruits and the other remaining as its onlooker. These two birds are the allegories of the jevatma and paramatma - the indwelling super soul or antaryamin - in the Advaitic terminology the witness consciousness (Sākṣi Caitanya). Such knowledge deepens the theistic devotional worship performed through one’s life and actions themselves as sacrifice or offerings to the Lord. This spiritual practice assumes the form of meditative or contemplative devotional love directed towards God as the “Immanent” “spiritual principle present” “in His creatures”80, “It is without and within all beings” (bahirantarāsca, XIII, 15).

Not so much importance can be attached to the chapters XIV, XV and XVI from the perspective of bhakti. But in chapter XVII, in response to the Lord’s statement (in the preceding chapter XVI, 23) Arjuna asks Him about the nature of faith (śraddhā) of “the ignorant, but faithful” individual “whoso worship, setting

79 Ibid, p. 345.
aside the ordinance of the scripture, enduced with faith, — what faith is theirs? The importance of the true devotional worship may emerge out of the discussion about different kinds of faith and worship based on them. Is it sattva, or rajas, or tamas?" The detail discussions about the correlation between prakriti born three types of faith and the forms of worship and their respective objects based on them; hint at the recommended ideal and integrated process of devotion predominant sādhana. Yet in interpreting devotional worship vis-à-vis works on the one hand and knowledge on the other, and conceiving such a spiritual pursuit as characterised by disinterestedness and wisdom, the element of transcendence from the bondage of prakṛti is presupposed. Hence, in showing the three modes of worships determined by the three gunas of prakṛti, the Gītā in this Chapter (XVII) has shown the superiority of the sāttvic type of worship to the rest. This is indicated by the text — “This three fold austerity, practiced by devout men with utmost faith, deserving no fruit, they call sāttvic”.

One of important the revealing philosophical truth which is both morally Imperative and deterministic of this chapter XVII is that, text 3 states that," The faith of each is in accordance with his nature, o Bhārata. A man is made up of his faith, as a man’s faith is, so is he. The text implies that human beings determined by the trigunātmika prakṛti or Nature constituted by the three guṇas Sattvas, Rajas and Tamas, act as per their particular faith based on one of these three strands of Nature. The origination of everything including the embodied souls (only their embodiedness) from prakṛti would mean that faith is ontologically constitutive and thus, none can escape from the ever present shadow of faith. By showing their prakṛti determined qualitative differences, the Lord has shown the imperativeness of the necessity to elevate oneself to the level of sāttvika worship which is done in a desireless manner (XVII, 17).

81 “The Ignorant and faithful” is the sub-title of chapter XVII — Śraddhātrayavibhāga Yoga or “The three-fold faith” used by The ignorant and Alladi Mahadeva who translates Śrī Śāṅkarabhāṣya, Samanta Books, Madras, 1977, XVII, p. 426.
82 Ibid, XVII, 17, p. 435. Texts 14-16, give the threefold austerity as those done through body, mind and speech.
Yet the Lords also indicates the fact that, even *sattvika* worship is not of a proper form of devotion which so far being talked about. This is because, *sattvika* worship here is the worship of gods which is to be seen in the light of the Lord’s statement - “The worshippers of gods (*devatas*) go to the gods and My devotees come to Me”\(^{84}\). This implication is being considered by this chapter of the thesis to be of utmost significance from the perspective of the monotheistic devotional love of the *Gita*. This again may turn out to be a mere contention because of various inconsistencies and ambiguities of the texts of the *Gita*. This will become evident from the concluding Chapter XVIII.

When seen in the light of the aforesaid, Śaṅkara’s introductory remark to Chapter XVIII about the fact that, “In the present discourse the Lord proceeds to teach, by way of summing up, the doctrine of the whole of the *Gita* Śāstra, as also the whole of the Vedic doctrine”\(^{85}\) may be examined. To which conclusion in essence the present chapter is said to be a sum up? No detail discussion shall be undertaken at this juncture. Stated briefly it is quite a truism to say that, Śaṅkara’s interpretation of the conclusion in essence will be as per his monistic ontology. Without going into the controversial nature of the likely conclusion in essence leading either to impersonal or personal ontology, this chapter of the thesis is mainly concern about the manner in which devotion acts as the bridge between the insurmountable gap between action and knowledge, and to see the way in which Chapter XVIII recapitulates devotional worship in relation to the other two paths. Chapter XVIII begins with an analysis of action from the perspectives of the difference between renunciation (*sanyāsa*) and relinquishment (*tyāga*) (XVIII, 1). While giving their differences (XVIII, 2-3) the

---


Chapter XVIII also refers to the contrarian positions of those who recommend the complete or literal renunciation of all action as tainted with evil (tyāgyaṁ 
doṣavādityeke karma) and those of others who say that “the work in the form of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be relinquished” (yajñadāna tapah karma na tyāgyamiti cāpare) and should indeed be performed (as duties) (kāryameva tat, XVIII, 5). The Lord reiterates once again as the final or certain truth about renunciation (XVIII, 4) pertaining to these three forms of work. They should be performed giving up attachment and fruit and the Lord declares that, This is His “decided and best view” (niscitam matamuttamam, XVIII, 6). The performance of obligatory works (niyata karma) as acts to be done (kāryamityeva yat karma niyatam kriyate ‘njuna) in above manner is regarded as the sāttvika relinquishment (saṅgam tyaktvā phalam caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ, XVIII, 6).

This is justified by the facticity of the embodied nature of human existence. As such action cannot be entirely relinquished by an embodied being. “He who relinquishes the fruit of action (alone and not the action itself), is called a relinquisher” (XVIII, 11).

Now, if one closely examines what have been stated so far, either the synthesised ethico-religious endeavours or sādhanas seamlessly weaving into its integral expression as a practically realised phenomenon of religious consciousness is also necessarily constitutive of devotion, or devotional worship (bhakti-yoga) is the last phase of the continuous process sādhana. It is the man who has become endowed with all the traits of sāttvika and one who is seeking perfection engages himself in his own duty. In this context, the Lord asks Arjuna to listen to about “how one engaged in one’s duty attains perfection”- svakarmanirataḥ Siddhīṃ yathā vindati taccchṛṇu, (XVIII, 45). In this chapter the idea of bhakti is embodied for the first time in the next verse 46. The text says

---

86 The Gitā is interpreted as reaction to “...a general and almost overwhelming propensity, as the underside of Indian practice, to attain a state of apathy, or actionlessness, in such a way that one passes a lifetime without doing anything“. Arjuna’s despondency is the highest exemplification of the said syndrome. See Edwin Alexander’s review of Arthur C. Danto, Mysticism and Morality, Oriental Thought and Moral Philosophy. Basic Books Inc. New York and London. 1972, in Journal of Indian Philosophy, 4 (1976) pp. 135-154. D. Reidel Publishing Company, Boston.
“From whom proceeds the activity of all beings, and by whom all this is pervaded worshipping Him through his own duty a man attains perfection”87. It is through the duty oriented act of worshipping such a Supreme Being that one attains perfection. The expression sva-karmaṇa tamabhyarcya - “worshipping Him through one’s own duty” is a direct reference to bhakti as a devotional worship. The text also bears testimony to the fact that bhakti according to the Gitā is a means - sādhana or upāya88. But the nature bhakti as interpreted by Jīva Goswāmin is the expression of the hlādini-śakti of Kṛṣṇa and is therefore trigunātmika.

A point of contention significant for the ontological status of bhakti is that, the personality traits of one “whose understanding is unmatched everywhere, whose mind is conquered, who is bereft of desires, attains by renunciation that supreme state of freedom from action” do not mean the complete and literal cessation of all actions but detached action. The text when seen in the light of all what have been said does not bear any testimony to the notion of the complete renunciation of action itself but only to the giving up to fruits. The text is self-explanatory; it requires to be read in relation to other correlated texts. That is, by implication it does not point to any impersonal ontology. Therefore, it cannot be cited as evidence to prove that, disinterested actions performed with devotional worship is to be contrasted from the total cessation of all forms of actions even in the muktāvasthā - state of liberation. The Gita in conceiving a modal of ethical action where action per se is not renounced but only their fruits are relinquished, necessarily also emphasises that, action is performed with devotion. It provides

88 Kapali Sastry, T.V., Lights of the Upaniṣads, DIPTI Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, pp. 158-159. Kapali Sastry states that upāsanā kāṇḍa dealing with worship and meditation is drowned in either karma kāṇḍa or jñāna kāṇḍa by the commentators of Pūrva Mimamsa and the Advaita Vedānta. He says that, Rāmānuja in his Śrī Bhāṣya cites Jaimini’s treatment of upāsana in the last four adhāyās of his sutra consisting altogether sixteen adhāyās. The upāsana kāṇḍa is treated by the interpreters of these schools as inferior paths meant for the ignorant and the incompetent. Also see, for the detail discussion on “Bhakti as Upāsana” in Plot, John C., A Philosophy of Devotion, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1974, Ch. 1, pp. 1-28. Plot makes a comparative study of the ideas of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and western scholars like Marcel, Husserl, Heidegger and Bonaventura with reference to the ontology of love, and finally approves the thoughts of Rāmānuja and Bonaventura.
the basis for further interpretation of the highest perfection to be attained at in
terms of spiritual process or dynamism entailed by devotional worship. Without
this entailment no monotheistic conception of bhakti can be meaningful. This was
achieved in the absolute and affirmative sense in the conception of bhakti-rasa in
Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. This is indicated by the eternal inner movement of divine
love remaining ever revealed and ever established in the transcendental
histrionics of nitya-lilā.²⁹

From the predominant position of devotion imbued with the syncretised
elements of action and knowledge as discussed above, its nature, forms and
process are discussed in texts 54-58 and 62-71 of which 65-66 are significant. The
Lord gives His clarion call when He makes the divine utterances — “Fix your mind
on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me, and bow down to Me, then you shall
come to Me. Truly do I promise to you, for you are dear to Me” and “Giving all
duties, take refuge in Me alone. I will liberate you from all sins, do not grieve.”³⁰

From what have been so far analysed it has become clear that, as it is
done in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, bhakti of the Gītā is not represented as an end itself
or sādhya or pañcamapuruṣārtha but only as a means for the attainment of a
personal Godhead whose truth is explained away as saguṇa Brahman in Advaita
Vedānta. But, the Gauḍīya thinkers take the Self-revelations of the Divine speaker
of the Gītā as more authentic than any extra-textual meaning read into its
statements and view that, the divine speaker is a product of māyā or avidyā
which the divine says to be His own power. But they seem to deviate from the
Gītā when they say that bhakti is nirguna based on their impersonal metaphysics.
The apparently or actually persisting theistic religious consciousness will become
more crystallised in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Bhakti Sūtras of Nārada and
Śaṅḍilya.

svarūpaśaktirhyā hādini nāmni vartate, prakāśavastunah svā-para-prakāśana
parma-vrtti-stayovaisê/”
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: A gospel of divine-love.

The next and foremost of all the religio-philosophical canons of Vaiṣṇavism in general and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in particular is Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (believed to have compiled around tenth century A.D.). Śrī Jīva Goswāmin’s Bhāgavata-Sandarbhas were written on the basis of this Purāṇa. The belief in the sect of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism that, it isVyāsa’s own commentary to his earlier work Vedānta and therefore, contains the highest essential truth of the Vedas pertaining to the Absoluteness of Bhagavat in His form of Kṛṣṇa tattva— as the original source not only of the whole world but also all the avatāras— ete cāṁsa Kālō puruṣah Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam— made them to solely rely upon this Purāṇa. This partially explains their ignoring of the convention of the tradition of Vedānta that, to expound independent or alternative philosophy agreeable to the tradition, one has to write commentaries on the three canons of prasthānatraya.

Now, it is well known that, this had caused the non acceptance of their views by the conservative Vedāntins and as a consequence to fill up the said lacuna, Baladevavidyābhuṣana wrote his Brahma Sūtra Bhāsyā called as Govinda Bhāsyā expounding and providing authority to the doctrine of acintyaabhedābheda.

Whatever is the nature of the controversy surrounding the acceptability as well as authoritativeness of Bhāgavatam, the fact is that the assessment of the Philosophical standing of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as a subsect of Vaiṣṇavism in

---

91 The date of Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa is generally placed around the tenth century A.D. This may come into conflict with the belief in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism that, the Purāṇa is Vyāsa’s (mythical author) own commentary to Brahma Sūtra or Vedānta Sūtra. For the date of the Purāṇa, see the table on “Date of Bhāgavatam” in Thompson, Richard L., The Cosmology of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Mysteries of the Sacred Universe, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., First published 2000, First Indian edition 2007, p.11.

92 Ibid, Bhaktivedānta, Bhāg., Comm. on 1.1.2.4. The Purāṇa contains “the nature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures”— nīgamakalpatarargalitam.

general can’t by done without accepting the phenomenological givenness of the form of its religious consciousness. The said phenomenological nature of religio-theological consciousness associated with the concept of bhakti-rasa as the main theme of the transcendental histronics of the nitya-lilā, therefore, may counteract the critic’s intention of de-authenticating the religio-philosophical merits of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism. Not conforming to the orthodox (āstika) pāramār tik norms of the praśthānstraya or even extolling of the feminine element in its belief system are cited as the main reasons for drawing unsympathetic attentions of the critics. At the same time, as already deliberated in the first half of this Chapter, the highly “personal” nature of the religion may be deemed as an existential reaction to the high order of impersonal interpretation of the philosophy of Vedānta by Śaṅkara. One may say that, it is an over-reaction, but, the aesthetic orientation of bhakti-rasa makes the distinct and concrete experience of divine love a possible state of spiritual approximation by man. The paurāṇic narratives exemplified by Bhāgavatam and other Purāṇas like Brhma Vaivarta and Viṣṇu Purāṇa are the manifestations of this existential possibility.

In the Gauḍiya terminology and tradition, the notion of ṛgātmika-bhakti as a sādhanā-bhakti superior to vaidhi-bhakti fashioned as an imitation of the original loving devotion the eternal associates (parikaras) of the Bhagavad have for Him, is being provided with endless episodes by the Paurāṇic accounts of the Lord’s divine activities and pastimes as objects of aesthetic contemplation. In this aestheticised context of the ethico-religious phenomenon, the nitya-lilā of the Bhagavad and His parikaras like Rādhā and Her eternal associates are continuously re-enacted in order that, the “nothingness” ever haunting the “being” of man’s erstwhile godless life is being filled up with the revisualised

94 “Nothingness” as an existential as well as phenomenological term which functions on the plane of aesthetico-religious consciousness of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism. It may be adapted as referring to the pre-sādhana state of the forgetfulness of one’s (spiritual) constitutional (vaimukhyā). Though, it is beginning-less (anādi), it can come to and end (anta) only when one becomes inwardised (sāmukhyā) and realise his or her constitutional position consisting in the awareness of the fact that one is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa (nityadāsa).
divine-love. It is to this spiritual truth which Śrī A.C. Bhāktivedanta in his commentary on Bhāgavatam, 1.1.2–3\(^{35}\) refers to this spiritual fact. The first of these two texts differentiates the Bhāgavata Dharma propounded in this Purāṇa from materially motivated or false religions. The highest truth which the Bhāgavata propounds is “. . . understandable by those devotees who are pure in heart . . . This beautiful Bhagavatam, compiled by the great sage Vyāsadeva (in his maturity), are sufficient in itself for God realization. What is the need of any other scripture? As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of Bhāgavatam, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within their heart.” Knowing this truth uproots the threefold misery (tāpatraya or duḥkhatraya). Therefore, the next text says that “the most expert and thoughtful men (bhāvukah) relish Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Śrī Sukadeva Gosvāmī. Therefore, this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarine juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls”.

The commentator refers to twelve rasas of which dayā (mercy), dāsya (servitorship), sakhyā (fraternity), śānta (neutrality) and vātsalya (parenthood) are relevant to bhakti-rasa. He discusses at length (pp. 4-5) about the importance of rasa understandable by extension from the second text. The Bhāgavata ultimately “. . . (deals) in the science of eternal relation with Lord”, and since the said rasa as relish of bhakti-rasa is thus considered to be the Lord Himself. This is because, though the Lord Himself reveals the Supreme Truth about Himself in the Gītā, Bhāgavatam in essence is the description of the divine glories, name, activities and pastimes of Lord from the words as well as the deepest spiritual experience of great souls like Sukadeva Gosvāmī. Just as the Gītā says, the Lord is highly pleased if His devotees spend their time in talking about of His divine

activities etc. and thus in constant spiritual communion. This is the function which the picturesque and “personal” (monotheistic) narratives of the Bhāgavatam fulfill through its concrete accounts of the Lord’s greatness. It is also true that, the Purāṇa contains almost all the strands of faith, belief, doctrines and metaphysical ideas.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the most popular work and occupies an important position amongst the Purāṇas. It “... deals with cosmogony, genealogies, myths, legends, etc., and enumerates in detail the avatāras of Lord Vishnu with particular reference to Lord Krishna. It is a work of profound religious import enshrining in it the noble ideals of Bhāgavata Dharma. In its vast framework, it encompasses the sublime concept of bhakti and mysticism”. One of the Purana’s chief characters in relation to its plurality of subject matters is that, “Every page ... (of it is) abound with charming and ennobling hymns in praise of the Almighty God and the Purāṇa in the tenth canto describes the divine sports (līlā) of the Lord in detail, so that even a mere reading of the sacred book ensures some amount of spiritual progress to the most ordinary man ... who finds himself absorbed in the charming narratives about the birth and action of Sri Krishna”96.

Just as it was stated in the case of the Gītā, “it is a wonderful book of synthesis ... Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma, are assigned their respective spheres: Karma is prescribed for the attached (Āsakta), Jñāna, for the detached (Viraṅkta) and Bhakti for those who are neither very much attached nor very much detached and indifferent. It preaches Bhāgavad–dharma or the religion of love that is as universal in application, as Catholic in its principles, that is as safe as


“Forming an important part of epic literature of India, the Puranas are indispensable source for the cultural history of India. They have been held to be of great importance and were considered sacred and are mentioned along with the four Vedas, Itiḥāsa, etc., and called as the fifth Veda. They throw flood of light in regard to the history, religion, rites and customs, language and cultural aspects of ancient India”.

sure, as easy as efficacious”. This account fits with what Madhusūdana speaks about bhakti as the bridge for synthesising jñāna and karma. At the same time while thus, being comprehensive and broader in its outlook, its monotheistic connotation can’t denied. It seems that, in spite of its myriads of themes it does not any more speak about bhakti as a mere sādhana, and therefore cannot be treated as a mere means for blending jñāna and karma.

As a sign of inclusive or broader framework in the matters of its topics Sukadeva enumerates ten subject matters of the Bhāgavata namely: “Sarga (creation in general by God), Bisarga (creation in particular by Brahma), Sthāna (position), Poshana (preservation), Uti (desire actuating an action), Manwantaras (pious modes of living by the saintly persons), Ishānukathā (discourses relating to God and his devotees), Nirodha (merging in), Mukti (liberation), and Āśraya (stay upon or support of). Of the above ten, with a view to obtain true knowledge of the tenth viz. Āśraya, saintly people would have its discourse on the (first) nine ..., by way of hearing, meeting and drawing analogy.” Among them, the grace of the merciful God towards His devotees called as “Poshana”, “Manwantara as the piety of the saints graced by the bountiful Lord and “Ishanukathā : the discourses on His incarnations and the meritorious acts of His devotees are significant for the theism of Bhāgavata Religion which is more or less a continuation of Bhāgavatism (Sātvata or Ekāntika Dharma) and finds their religious trend manifested as Medieval Vaiṣṇavism.

It is necessary to examine if these ten subject matters out of which the first nine are said to have designed to reveal the ultimate truth about the nature of the tenth viz. Āśraya the realm of the Greatest Puruṣa or the God of Gods –

97 Ibid, Sanyai Publishers Note, P.V.
98 Ibid, 2.10.1-5, pp. 123, and also op. cit., Bhaktivedānta, Bhāg., 2.10.1, p. 391. atra sargo visargasca sthānair āpyaṁ muktena/ Manvantaretāṇukthā nirodha muktirāśrayaţi/ “Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmi said: in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam there are ten divisions of statements regarding the following: the creation of the universe, sub-creation (by Brahma), planetary system, protection by the Lord, the creative impetus, the change of Manus, the science of God, returning home back to Godhead, liberation, and the summum bonum”.
Parameśvara in the ultimate analysis leads to impersonal ontology or personal ontology. No doubt, the Bhāgavata employs religio-metaphysical and purely theistic cognates like Parambrahmā or Brahman and Paramātman (Bhāg. 2.10.7) on the one hand, and Bhagavān or Narāyana etc. as pointers to the same Absolute Truth on the other. Bhaktivedānta opines that Kṛṣṇa – the highest of the Bhagavad tattvas consisting of His entire mind boggling manifestation or avatāras (Nāma avatar, guna avatar and the highest lila avatāra in the Gokul Dham or broadly coming under vilāsa and prakāśa) classified hierarchically prakāś and vilās etc. is the last word as confirmed by the statement “Kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam” – Kṛṣṇa is the self-same Supreme Personality of Godhead\(^{100}\). Though, many scholars like S.K. De would consider it as controversial and mat take this as sectarian, the Bhāgavata statements – sa āśrayah param brahma paramātmeti śābde (Bhāg. 2.10.7) and in the preceding canto: vadanti tat tattvam vidas tattvam yajjaānamadvayam/ brahmeti paramātmeti bhagavānti śābde//11// (Bhā g., 1.2.11), are taken to be speaking about Kṛṣṇa's absoluteness in terms of the impersonal Brahman, Paramātman as the indwelling Supersoul and Bhagavat in the form of Kṛṣṇa-tattva to be the highest reality. Bhaktivedānta interprets Brahman, Pramātma and Bhagavān, as the graded cognates of the highest reality subsumed in the Supreme persona of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This was what Jīva Goswāmī did in a grand manner observable in his treatment of Kṛṣṇa Sandarbhā and Pṛti Sandarbhas in which the highest ontology of divine love is traced right unto the core or the innermost yet transcendental bliss potency (hīdinī-śakti) of the Supreme Being Kṛṣṇa. This inner dynamics of the blissful energy is not manifested in full in other Bhagavad tattvas.

The scholars of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism treat Bhāgavata as the highest scriptural authority embodying in it “the highest fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge”. But its catholic outlook makes it possible to draw any ontological conclusion, especially that of impersonal absolute, nirguṇa Brahman. This was the

\(^{100}\) Op. cit., Bhaktivedānta, Bhāg., Comm. on 1.2.11, p. 15 and 2.10.7, p. 393.
conclusion believed by many scholars. Any conclusion other than that of nirguna Brahman was already precluded when śaṅkara made a highly controversial methodological approach by way of classifying scriptural texts into the hierarchic order of śrutī and smṛti, abheda-śrutī, bheda-śrutī, and parā-vidyā and aparāvidyā. This way of division was strongly opposed by Rāmānuja according to whom the Vedas or agamas which include the entire range of scriptures like Purāṇas etc. are equally important. As already stated in the last chapter, this is an altogether matter of belief and no logic can be deemed fit enough to sit in judgment in support of any ontological stand. This issue shall be returned to after briefly outlining the larger patterns of conceptual framework through which it may apparent as to how all the ideas are dovetailed towards the Godhead whose abode is taken to be ultimate refuge – Āśraya.

Bhāgavata, 2.10.6-12 distinguishes in the qualitative sense the eighth subject matter: “Nirodha” from that of the ninth one: Mukti. The first is the merging of the jīvas - the individual beings with the divine energies of the Lord Śrī Hari when He is in the state of sleep in “Self-communion” during the process of dissolution. The jīvas along with the entire universe will remain thus merged in their subtle state (suksmāvasthā) till the next phase of creation during which the cosmic collectivity of subtle states of sentient beings and sentient entities will assume gross forms. Hence, this state of “Nirodha” does not constitute liberation. Liberation in this context is defined as “(the) . . . Existence of the soul in its native form after the renunciation by it of all other forms as assumed through illusions is called “Mukti”. The Great Soul or Parameśvara “. . . Is known as ‘Āśraya’, from whom proceeds the creation, destruction and manifestation of the universe, and who is called Para Brahman and Paramātmā . . .”.

---

101 Op. cit., Sharma, p. 124, “Passages are not rare in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa where bhakti is stated as a means to the complete identification of the jīva with Brahman, and through which the bhakta attains the state of divinity”. Sharma gives this opinion keeping in view of Kapilla-Devahuti dialogue in Bhāg., 111.32. p. 31-35.

The subsequent texts (12-46) trace the ultimate genesis of the physical universe and the physical beings – the embodied souls to the Supreme Being. The entire processes discussed in detail in these texts are the illustrative affirmations of similar ontology arrived at in the Gītā (8.19-20). Our main concern is whether they would entail any theistic connotation or not which on account of the diverse subjects being treated in the concerned Purāṇa may not be very obvious.

That, any attempt to draw theistic conclusion from these and other texts of the Bhāgavata is problematic is shown by Sukadeva’s statement: “O King! Thus I have described unto thee the greatest of the gods (i.e., through the entire range of the causation etc. of the world). But the learned one would not take the great purusha in this form, because the Vedas (Śrutis) do not admit the instrumentality of Parameśwara (God) in the work of creation, in as much as the universe, according to them, is but creation of illusions”.¹⁰³ A closer reading of the texts do not convey any meaning of “illusion” in the Advaitic sense, though, the Supreme Being, being transcendental, somehow through His divine mystery and inscrutability (acintyatva) in no way becomes affected by the causation of the universe.¹⁰⁴ Hence, drawing any conclusion like nirguna bhakti from the texts of the texts of Bhāgavatam as done by some modern scholars may not be warranted.

Amongst the modern Indian scholars of Indian philosophy, Krishna Sharma’s view is that, nirguna bhakti is being considered by Bhāgavatam to be the highest. While conceding that the concerned Purāṇa is a Vaiṣṇava text,¹⁰⁵ he is of the opinion that, amidst the integral presentation of jnana, bhakti and karma, nirguna bhakti is described as the highest. He cites the dialogue between Kapila and Devahuti as its evidence. He argues that, the disappearance of the

---

¹⁰³ Ibid., 2.10.46. p. 127.
¹⁰⁴ In Gauḍiya metaphysics the causation of the world is carried out through Kṛṣṇa’s external or material energy (bāhirānga śakti or māyā śakti). Therefore, He remains unaffected by the causal process.
"otherness" of God in the loving relation of the Divine and human points to nirguna bhakti or the ontology of nirguna Brahman.\textsuperscript{106}

Much in contrast to the established theistic doctrine, Sharma is also of the contention that, the saguna-bhakti under the nine forms of bhakti-novavidhābhakti\textsuperscript{107} is directed towards an ontologically lower personal deity. It is a deity which is not Brahman personalised but a historical person deified. Since his criticisms are based on the assumption that Śaṅkara’s methodological framework of classifying the verbal testimony into Śruti and Smṛti etc. is authentic in the absolute sense or unquestionable, his views need not be given further attention. We may examine other texts of Bhāgavata from the standpoint of monotheistic understanding of bhakti. Texts: 3.29.11-12 may be cited for the purpose. The said texts state: “The manifestation of unadulterated devotional service is exhibited when one’s mind is at once attracted to hearing the transcendental name and qualities of the supreme personality of godhead, who is residing in everyone’s heart. Just as the water of the Ganges flows naturally down towards the ocean, such devotional ecstasy, uninterrupted by any material condition, flows towards the Supreme Lord.”\textsuperscript{108} Now, the metaphor of the water of Ganges flowing into the ocean cannot mean the distinction-less and attribute-less nirguna Brahman, unless one interprets the concept of “Supreme Lord” (Puruṣottama) to mean nirguna Brahman. Since, this is not the meaning the theistic schools would like to draw, the reference to either saguna or nirguna traits of bhakti in the Purāṇa should be interpreted not in the Advaitic framework.

From the perspective of a neutral observer it is also quite possible that both the Bhagavad Gītā and the Bhāgavatam being multidimensional and synthetic in their treatments of themes, were non committal to any exclusive ontological stand, but were content with only presenting all those ideas

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, Sharma, Bhāg., 4.22.18-30, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{107} Bhāg., 3.25.25, 32-37.
synthesised without any clear cut ontological stand and the reader is left with the promise of some vague notion of ultimate spiritual ideal. Yet, since we are dealing with a religious system which takes Śrīmad Bhāgavatam as the authority, it is necessary to see how the concept of bhakti and its highest object Kṛṣṇa as the highest Bhagavad tattva are represented in it. In this respect A.C. Bhaktivedanta says: “Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the science of Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute personality of Godhead of whom we have preliminary information from the text of the Bhagavad Gītā.”  

109 He cites Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu who conceived these two texts as dealing with the science of Kṛṣṇa. Thus understanding this Purāṇa is essential for the eventual reconstruction of the philosophical significance of prema-bhakti or Bhagavad pṛiti as divine-love – The pañcama puruṣātha or the sumnum bonum of life.

It may not be very farfetched to say that, the notion of bhakti which was vague and ambiguous in the Gītā becomes more articulate and exuberant in the Bhāgavatam. Some scholars are of the view that: “the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is a stage of transition from the ancient religion of works (karma) to the medieval religion of bhakti”.  

110 The nature of the bhakti, though steeped in emotional attachment to Kṛṣṇa is also not devoid of contemplative character. Most of the contemporary interpreters try to toe the line of the grand ontological abstraction of Śaṅkara. Therefore, they hardly attempt to find any non-impersonal interpretation. Most of these scholars who are too eager to interpret these texts according to their monistic predilection amazingly leave behind those texts which speak in favour of a more personal form of bhakti. In text: 11.14.21 Kṛṣṇa declares that “I can be attained only through bhakti not through any other means”.

109 Ibid., Intro., p. IV.

110 See S. Radhakrishnan’s “Forward” to Siddhesvar Bhattacharya’s, The Philosophy of Śrīmad Bhāgavata, Santiniketan, 1960, pp. VII-VIII.

111 “na śādhyatati mām yogy na sārīkhyam dharma uddhava/nā svadhyāyastapastya yathā bhaktirmamorjitā bhaktivāhamekyya grāhyāḥ śraddhyā ’tman priyata satām// Bhāg., 11.14.21, quoted in op. cit., Kapoor, p. 176. This text is also quoted in Caitanya caritāmṛta, Madhya, XX, 121.
The Devahuti-Kapila dialogue in the third book of the Purāṇa makes a threefold distinctions of bhakti each of which as caused by Sattvas, Rajas and Tamas. These are again contrasted from the nirguṇa bhakti. But this highest bhakti is still directed to the worship of the Supreme Being described as Paramātmā and Param-Brahman. Hence, Krishna Sharma\textsuperscript{112} is most probably wrong when he says that, the navavidhā-bhakti (111. 25. 32–37), as saguṇa-bhakti is on the same level with the three bhaktis based on the three gunas of prakriti. Since, the impersonal and akṣara Brahman are considered to be one and the same in the Gītā as well as the Bhāgavata, it is not right to maintain that, the devotional worship of Him is like the worship of personal deities (devatās). Just as Rāmānuja interprets nirguṇa only to mean that the Bhagavat is devoid of evils, defects and any empirical impurities, so also the definition of bhakti-yoga as nirguna is to be understood accordingly. This was also the opinion of Jīva Goswāmin in his Bhakti Sandarbha - śravaṇādi-lakṣaṇa-kriyārūpāyā api bhakte nirguṇatvameva/134. In this statement is not even referring to the higher bhakti but to the viadhī-bhakti.

Since, both the so-called saguṇa-bhakti and nirguṇa bhakti are of the nature of selfless-devotion (ahaituki-bhakti) and both lead to salvation, there differences are only a matter of perspective. The Gauḍiya thinkers do not take them as having different ontological states. Moreover, “Bhakti is recognized in the Bhāgavatam as parama dharma, the highest and also the most satisfying function of the soul” — sa vai punisām para dharma yato bhaktir adhokṣaje/ahaitukyapratihatā yayā’tman sampradātī.\textsuperscript{113}

Nevertheless, the Purāṇa still accommodates the spirit of syncretism in stating that, “Karma is recommended for anirvinca or the attached, jīnāna for the nirvāṇa or the detached and bhakti for those who are neither excessively attached nor too detached from the fruits of action”.\textsuperscript{114} This can only be explained

\textsuperscript{113} Bhāg., 1.2.6. as quoted by Kapoor, pp. 176.
in the light of the idea of devotional worship associated with the performance of one’s duty in the spirit of detachment of the Gītā.

Bhāgavata also points out that, the greatness of bhakti consists in its capability to operate independently of jnana and karma: jñāna vairāgyorbhakti-sāpekṣatvam/bhakti-yogah tarkādyagocaramaupaniṣadam jñānamāśu iṣac-cchṛnaṁatṛṇaḥ janayati/4/ bhaktinirapekṣā, jñāna-vairāgye tu tatsāpekte ... bhakteranyanirapekṣatvādanyasya ca tatsāpeksatvād bhaktiyogaeva śreṣṭhaḥ ... //83//. This is the view of Jīva Goswāmīn. It is said that vairāgya is its phala which further leads to the cherishing of the higher form of bhakti towards Kṛṣṇa. “No matter how long the yogi (n) performs yogic exercise and practices austerities, all his efforts will be useless, if he lacks in Bhakti”. 115 That means these sādhanas cannot be practiced independently of bhakti. It is perhaps, in the light of the differentiation between “Nirodha” and “Mukti” of the ten religio-philosophical themes of the Purāṇa mentioned above Lord Kapila is referring to His mother Devahuti (Bhāg. 3.32.9-23). Kapila conveys in clear cut terms in texts 3.32.9-10, that, the yogis have to wait for a long time till they reach God’s abode till the time when the world is dissolved by Brahma – the sub-creator and enters into the divine realm. This is an indirect and tedious process. But, if one “by devotional service take direct shelter of the supreme personality of Godhead, who is seated in everyone’s heart”, then, he attains freedom from bondage (text, 11). The texts 12-15 indicate distinctly that, the above abode of God stated in text 10 is the first puruṣa incarnation – puruṣa ṭṣabhām (text 13) belonging to the lower order amongst the innumerable Bhagavad tattvas (or vyuhas) through whose agency, the Supreme Bhagavat-Kṛṣṇa as the avatārīnī (the source of all the avatāras) comes to be involved in the endless and alternating processes of creation and dissolution. Hence, the texts explain that those great yogis and jñānis like the four Kumāras (Sanaka and Sunanda etc) and others shall once again return to the world at the time of the next creation – sa sainṛṣṭya punah kāle kālenśvaramūrtinā (14). “Such persons called as traivargika because they are interested in the three (gradual) elevating processes .... They are not interested in the

pastimes of the Lord Hari who can give relief to the conditioned soul” and whose activities are “worth hearing because of His transcendental prowess” (text, 18).\(^{116}\)

That the position of bhakti as a process of sādhana is evident from Lord Kapila’s advice to His mother to take shelter of the Supreme Being (paramesthīnam), for His Lotus feet are worshipping (bhajanīyapadāṁbujam), to accept this process with all devotion and love, for thus she be situated in devotional service of the Lord (tadgunāśrayayā bhaktyā).\(^{117}\) The text 23 speaks about such a devotional worship directed towards the Bhagavad Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa) as productive (in the sense of realizing an ever attained spiritual state and not the attainment of something new) of advancement in knowledge and detachment, as well as in self-realisation: \(^{118}\) The expression “self-realisation” as the translation of “yadbrahmadarśanam” may also mean the realization of the nirguṇa Brahman. But, the context of the discourse here, points to self-realisation in general.

The Bhāgavata appears to be well ahead of its time in its according of various religio-metaphysical concepts like the “pure intelligence” (jñānamātra), “highest absolute” (paramāḥ Brahma), Supreme Self (paramātman), the Supreme Controller (Īśvara) and the Super Soul (pumān) etc. as ultimately referring to the Supreme Being (Bhagavān) as per the different processes of understanding — drṣṭadibhiḥ prthagbhāvairbhagavāneka ṣyate. These different religio-philosophic and linguistic formulations are indicative of the democratic outlook of the Purāṇa and the reasons for its popularity. Whether one likes it or not, since what counts is faith and the particular orientation of the Purāṇa’s religious consciousness characterised by monotheism, the following would show the spirit in which its accommodative and diverse narratives have to be understood. This is indicated to some extent by the reasons behind the worship of the Purāṇa as the Lord Himself in Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism.


\(^{117}\) Ibid., 3.32.22. p. 767.

\(^{118}\) Ibid.
The Bhāgavata texts 1.1.23 and 1.3.43\textsuperscript{119} are self-explanatory of the fact that, after the return of Lord Kṛṣṇa to His eternal abode, the task of spiritual guidance in the age of Iron Age (Kaliyuga) was being left in the form of the Bhāgavatam as the manifestation of śabda-Brahman. Elsewhere Zaechner in his commentary on the Gītā also mentions about similar ideas in the Biblical tradition. One may summarily reject this belief as mere theological dogma. In the matters of religio-metaphysical presuppositions epitomised by Advaitism which was successful in lodging itself in the highest prowess of logical abstractions or any other alternative view of darśana in the Indian context cannot be freed from the charge of indulging in dogmatism of some form or other. Just as Aquinas did, Śaṅkara had made an attempt to synthesise faith and reason (faith embodied in śruti and yuktī). Thus, the significance of Bhāgavata in respect of its authoritativeness and representations of theological and religio-philosophical ideas has to be appreciated in accordance with the givenness of the existential and phenomenological nature of the religious consciousness represented in the Purāṇa.

In the light of the aforesaid as the sign of synthesis and catholic outlook, in the text 3.32.32, Kapila one of the incarnations of the Bhagavat declares that “philosophical research culminates in understanding the supreme personality of Godhead. After achieving the understanding one becomes free from the material modes of nature, he attains the stage of devotional service. Either by devotional service or by philosophical research (jñāna-yoga), one has to find the same destination, which is the supreme personality of Godhead (dvayaor'apyeka bhagavat-chabda lakṣaṇāḥ).\textsuperscript{120} The said spirit of synthesis is exhibited by the next three texts 3.32.34-36 in which the entire range of the Indian ethico-religious practices are summed up where jñāna, bhakti and karma are represented. The

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., Bhaktivedānta, Bhāg., 1.1.23.pp.11, 37, “bruhi yogesvare Kṛṣṇa brahmanyae dharmavarmano/ svāṁ kāṣṭhāmadhunopete dharmāḥ kam sarapam gataḥ//23//”.

“Kṛṣṇasva-dhāmapagate dhar majijnānādiḥ bhīḥ saha/kalou naṣṭa dṛśāmeṣa purāṇārko/ dhunodītāh//43//”.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 3.32.32. p. 770, Philosophical Research here means jñāna yoga.
resurgence of the synthetic spirit of the Gītā is evident when these refer to both the path of activism (pravṛtti-mārga) or the path of attachment and the path of asceticism or detachment (nirvṛtti-mārga) and in their having harmonised with devotional worship (bhakti-yoga). They conclude with the fact that, all these spiritual endeavours ultimately end with the realization of the Bhagavān (or Bhagavat) whose supreme truth is immanent in the empirical world as the saguna reality as well as a transcendent reality — nirguna reality — iyate bhagavānebhīḥ saguno nirgunaḥ svadṛk (Bhāg., 3.32.36). Text 3.32.37 clearly shows that all these spiritual pursuits have a predominance of bhakti-yoga whose identity (or continuity) in four different social divisions have been so far established in the preceding texts. This is what Kapila says to his mother that He has explained to her the process of devotional service — pravocāṁ bhaktiyogasya svarūpaṁ te caturvidham.

S.K. De traces the origin of the attempts to combine Advaita teachings of Śaṅkara with emotionalism of the Bhagavatam by Advaitins like Mādhavendra Puri, his discipleĪśvara Puri, and well known Śrīdharaka Śvāmin (1300 A.D.). The later wrote commentaries on Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the Bhagavat Gītā and the Bhāgavata. Śrīdharaka greatly influenced Caitanya and his followers and was accepted as an authority in spite of his being an Advaitin. De also mentions about one Viṣṇu Puri of Trihut who wrote Bhāgavata-Bhakti Ratnāvalī. His work was profusely quoted by Rūpa in his Padyāvalī and no one can mistake the depth of their devotional fervour. In addition to these accounts, Madhusūdana Sarasvati — the last great Advaitin is also well known for his predilection of devotional emotionalism (common opposition to the Mysticism of Emotional Experimentalism). This was evident from his writing Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasāyana. He also belonged to the above period during which the synthesis of Śaṅkara's teachings and devotional emotionalism of the Bhāgavata had occurred.121 This sets the background for


"Madhvaism is more speculative than emotional . . . (the) Mādhvas reject the erotic Rāśapāñcadhyāya of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata, which is one of the sacred text of the Bengal
considering in brief the characteristic manner in which devotional love in its highest form of erotic-aesthetic emotional sentiment of bhakti-rasa is being depicted in the idyllic and pastoral setting of the līla of Gopi-Kṛṣṇa in the tenth book of the Bhāgavata.

The tenth book (Rāsapāṅcadhyāya) of the Purāṇa is ethically its most controversial section, and it is also the main source of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend, though Rādhā’s name is nowhere directly mentioned in it. Rāmānuja and Madhva were more or silent about this section and the later rejected its erotic content. Its related issues of symbolism or otherwise of religious language and ethical implication will be discussed in the main body of the thesis. Most probably it is not just the ethical problem inherent in the sexual representation of the nitya-līlā alone, but the hair splitting philosophical debates through which these two ācāryas were actively engaged as pioneer theistic thinkers in refuting Śaṅkara’s Māyāvāda and Advaitism which were mainly responsible for their lack of the tendencies of devotional emotionalism. In whatever is the case, for the philosophical appreciation of the concept of divine love or prema-bhakti set against the theologico-histrionics of nitya-līlā based on the Gopi-Kṛṣṇa legend of the Rāsapāṅcadhyāya has to be accepted as something phenomenologically given in the religious consciousness of the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas. It is quite possible that, their erotic-theological concept of bhakti-rasa is an indirect affirmation of something existentially concrete in human life which was threatened in the essentialism of Advaitism. It is this state of emptiness of impersonal Absolute of nirguna Brahman, form which Rāmānuja is said to have saved man from losing their individuality.

There can’t be a more concrete, vivid and a more satisfying spiritual experience than the divine-amour of bhakti-rasa. Madhusūdana famously claimed

---

Vaiṣṇavas. In Madhva devotion, there is hardly a place for Rādhā, nor is the Vṛndāvana leela of Kṛṣṇa an exclusive object of adoration”.

122 Ibid., p. 21.
124 Ibid., p. 82.
that, the pure bliss of bhakti-rasa is far superior to the experience of pure non-dualism. His writing of Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasāyana stands as a witness to this view. Devotional worship is satisfying to the devotees or spiritual aspirants not because of its anthropomorphic values, but on account of the fact that, it has both the characters of action and knowledge. Thus, it fulfills both the necessities of action as well as knowledge. It destroys the evil taints of action through the process of sacrificing its fruits to the Lord. The truth that is arrived at through rational method is accompanied with the self-surrender; one-pointed-ness of mind and devotional love directed towards it which is non other than the refinements of the Lord’s own bliss potency towards Himself. But by the time of nature of devotion transforms itself into the intensely passionate erotic-aesthetic form of bhakti-rasa of the highest order as exemplified by the Gopī-Kṛṣṇa dalliance picturesquely set against the scenic backdrop of the pastoral life of Vrindāvana, classical or the more traditional form of devotional attitude is left behind far below the spiritual hierarchy.

Such a divine love portrayed in the language of amorous and aesthetic-literary terminologies as observable as it has been depicted in the Rāsa paṅcadhyāya of the Bhāgavata, ŚiVa Viṣṇu Purāṇa Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa and

125 “Paramārthikair advaitam dvaitam bhajana hetave/ tādy yadi bhaktiś svat sā tu mukiṣṭātādhiḥ/ advaitam mahāya bodhot prāk jāte bodhe maniṣaya/ bhaktyartham kalpitāṁ dvaitam advaitad api sundaram/” As quoted by Kapoor, p. 176.

126 Swāmi, Śrīdharā, Comm., Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇam. Also see (Bhāvārthā Dipika) (in Sanskrit), Edited by Motial Banarsidass, Delhi 1983, The following sub-titles are based on Sanayā’s book and is cross checked with the original Sanskrit source. The following texts deal with the different accounts of Rāsapaṅcadhyāya, the tenth canto: 10.22.1-38, pp. 471-476, 10.21.1-13, pp. 476-480, 10.29.1-48, pp. 490-494, 10.30. 1-44, pp. 494-496 (In this chapter Gopīs are afflicted with pang of separation and search for Kṛṣṇa), 10.31.1-29, pp. 496-497 (Gopīs pray Kṛṣṇa’s return), 10.32.1-22, pp. 498-499 (Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives consolation to milk women), 10.33.1-49, pp. 499-501 (A Rāsa Līlā of Śrī Kṛṣṇa) 10.35.1-26, pp. 502-504 (The lamentation of the milk women for the absence of Kṛṣṇa).

127 Śrī Śrī Viṣṇupurāṇa (with original text in Devanāgri with Hindi Trans.), Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 1990, Rasakṛdā between Kṛṣṇa and Gopīs, 5-14-62, pp.344-347.

128 Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa, Uttara Bhāg (Volume1), Śrī Kṛṣṇa janma khaṇḍam- Pūrvārdham, Hindi Translation by Tāriniṣa Jhā, Hindi Sammelan, Prayāg, 1984, Ch. 2, pp. 7-12, Ch. 5, 30-47, Ch. 17, pp. 166-168, Ch. 18, pp. 302-314, pp. 323, Ch. 48, pp. 324-337, Ch. 52, 516-519 and Ch. 53, pp. 520-524. Second half or the Uttarārdham (Volume 2), Ch. 66, pp. 496-598, Ch. 68, Ch. 92, pp. 786-793, Ch. 94, pp. 802-813, Ch. 95, pp. 814-817, Ch. 97, pp. 826-832, Ch. 126, Ch. 127, pp. 995-999.

The above sources are some of the main references to the legend of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on which the entire concept of madhura-bhakti of Gaudīya Vaishnavism is based. Also see Brahadnārādyā
the Gitāgovinda of Jayadeva\textsuperscript{129}, and the Vaiśṇava Padāvalīs\textsuperscript{130}, has all the characteristics of pathos of mutually engrossing cloistered passions of ordinary love. This is been dealt with purely from the psycho-analytical perspective, yet with enough hints to draw philosophical conclusion by Sudhir Kakar and John M. Ross in their book: “Tales of love, Sex and Danger”\textsuperscript{131}. What is quite interesting about their subtle and critical examination and analysis of the varied moods and nuances of world famous love tales is that, they are successful in finding some universal patterns which are perhaps; themselves suggestive of the possibility of divine-love as having a trans-figured ontology\textsuperscript{132}. The more detail treatment about it will be done in the chapter on the ontology of divine-love. This section of the thesis shall only portray in brief about the place of bhakti-rasa in the divine schema of Rāsa-līlā as it is portrayed in the Bhāgavata. This is inevitable on account of the fact that prema-bhakti or Bhagavad priti which is also called as madhura-rati etc. culminating in the summum bonum of Rādhā’s self-subsisting (nirāśraya) and self-

\begin{footnotesize}


For the entire Vaiśṇavas Padāvalīs collected in one volume, see Śrī Padāmṛta Samudra by Rādhāmohan Thākur with his Mahābhāvānusāriṇī Ṭīkā translated into Bengali from Sanskrit, Calcutta University, (Bangābdha 1391).

\item[131] The concept of transfiguration or transcendence of ordinary pathos is evident when Bhāg. 10.34.40 says that “Devotional love directed towards the Supreme Lord will enable humanity to get relief of their heart’s psychosis of desire- Bhaktire parāṁ bhagavatī prati labhaya kāṁśarī harekṛṣṇa āśraye cīreṇa dhīrtāt”. Op. cit., Śrimad Bhāgavatam, Śrīdharā, p. 501.

\item[132] The element of self-transcendence of ordinary love is also brought out in detail by Kakar and Ross from the perspective of psychoanalysis but with enough suggestions for drawing spiritual conclusions in their “Tales of Love, sex and Danger”. See Tales of Love, sex and Danger, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986.
\end{footnotesize}
revealing (svaparakāśa) mahābhāva\textsuperscript{133} which no empirical categories are anymore applicable so as to use them for its description, is the central theme of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism. It is the highest spiritual attainment achievable or to be achieved by man (pañcama purusārtha or the fifth value), lying even beyond the realm of mokṣa. As it has been already stated before, this is the sole reason for calling the sect as a Bhakti Religion or Bhāgavata Dharma, and also as having an exclusive bhakti-theory which no other Vaiṣṇava sects allegedly have.

The nature of the bhakti so far being discussed has not gone beyond the conventional forms popularly represented by the Gītā and has already been confirmed by the Bhāgavata uptil now. The only distinctiveness being the orientation of such a devotion towards a personal God, who has been described using all the descriptive terms like Puroṣottama, Paramātma, Parabrahman and Bhagavat etc. By the time the narratives of the Bhāgavata reaches the Rāsapāñcadhyāya, the nature of bhakti takes the form of Supreme Love whose greatness was also referred to by Nārada in his Bhakti Sūtra: 20-24. In the language Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, the true nature of bhakti “... is of the nature Supreme Love” – sā tasmin para(m) prema rūpa\textsuperscript{134} The descriptions of devotional worship in psychological terms like taking refuge in God, thinking constantly about Him, self-surrender and pin pointed direction and focus of one’s mind, and doing whatever one has to do in a spirit of self-sacrifice and offering to God and much more are also repeated in the Purāṇa. In the nitya-lilā of the Lord with the


\textsuperscript{134} “Bhāva is anu-rāga sui juris, a Substantive State (sva-svarūpvedya-daśa), when it ceases to need a substratum for itself, is mahā-bhāva...(it) can be reached only by the milkmaids of Vṛndāvana”, Op.cit., Kapoor, p. 207.

“...the bliss (ānanda) and Sweetness (mādhurya) of Mahābhāva are of the highest order. But the supreme excellence belongs to it intrinsically, even as the sweetness of sugar belongs to it intrinsically. Its sweetness and bliss do not depend on any external factor. Another important characteristic of Mahābhāva is that the mind of the Gopi, who has attained the state of Mahābhāva is itself dissolved into Mahābhāva, and ceases to have a separate existence of it own, Rādhāgovindananāth Vol. IV, p. 2576”.

damsels of Vraja (Rāsa Kṛśā), they cease to be descriptive in the dialogues between God and man, but they become suggestively embodied in the aesthetic representation of such divine histrironics. The above characters of bhakti and much more discontinue to be thought of issues but become vivid and concrete facts of the experience of divine love. No doubt, there are dialogues or representations of bhakti in the prose form or in a non-theatrical process just as dialogue between Rādhā and Uddhava etc. The aesthetic representation of nitya-līlā is complete in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

The above psychic states represented as abstractions of thought in spiritual discourse are not lacking in existential character as the elements of meditation and contemplation are always involved in them and are not also entirely freed from emotive factors of devotional worship. But this is different from the direct transcendental aesthetics of Rāsa-līlā depicted in the Rāsapāñcadaṁśyāya of the Bhāgavata. Till this canto the representation was mostly in prose or dialogue form. This can be understood only through understanding the particular way in which the form of bhakti as prema-bhakti or madhura-bhakti culminating in the experience of the unalloyed madhuraraṣa or śṛṅgāra-raṣa relishable through the imaginative and aesthetic contemplation of rāgānuga-bhakti on Rādhā-Kṛśna's divine amour set against the pastoral scene of Vṛndāvana.

The theatrical settings for aesthetically depicting the nitya-līlā in the Rāsapāñcadaṁśyāya begins with the portraying of the sensuously charming and mind captivating onset of Autumn season in the twentieth chapter of the tenth canto (X. 20, “Description of the Rainy and Autumn Season”) named as Śaradvarṇanam. The imageries of rain, sky and earth conveying erotic suggestivity can hardly be unnoticed. The concerned chapter depicts the onset of rainy season thus: “Then set in the rainy season, the regenerator of all things, during which the cardinal quarters become clear and washed, and the sky is interspersed with clouds. The concave sphere, overspread with deep blue rain clouds emitting thunder and flashes of lightening, became hazy, and with its splendour veiled
over, it shone like unto Brahman existing behind the principles of goodness, energy and dullness. The wealth of moisture of the earth, which the sun had sucked by his rays during the other eight months of the year, is now, in proper time, poured down by the rain-cloud \textit{Parjanya} \footnote{Op. cit., Sanyal, Bhāg., Vol.II, X. 20, pp. 83-87.}.

"The mighty and large clouds charged with lightening and agitated by violent gusts of winds, poured down their life giving and shooting contents, as if struck with pity at the parched condition of the earth". \footnote{Op. cit., Śrīdhara, Bhāg., 10.20.4-7, pp. 478, English trans. is of Sanyal, Ibid, X. 20.4-7, p. 83.} The imagery of a perched earth suggests the passionate longing of the souls for the divine whose complexion of "dark-rain laden cloud"— \textit{mehovaharna śubhāṅgarī} agrees with "deep blue rain cloud". "Thunder and flashes of lightening carries the sense of soul’s passion for uniting with the Supreme Being. "(Being)... desirous of holding sport, Krishna in company with Balarāma surrounded by the kine and the cowherds entered into a forest luxuriant and overgrown with ripe dates and blackberries". The next chapter XXI entitled "Singing of Krishna’s Praise by milk-women continues with the scenic beauty of autumn seasons; Sukadeva describes it thus: "Being thus surrounded by the kine and the cowherd-boys, Krishna entered into Brindabana where the lake waters were rendered translucent on the advent of the autumn and where a breeze, laden with the fragrance of lotuses, was continuously blowing the trees therein were decorated with floral wealth, and the lakes, river and mountains rang with the humming and chirping of enraptured bees and birds. Wandering deeper and deeper into that forest, Madhusūdana (Krishna) grazed the cattle in company with Balarāma and the cowherds, playing charmingly on his flute. On hearing the music of his flute, the damsels of Braja came under the spell of cupid (the god of love)". The scene thus just referred to acts as the excitants..."
(vibhāva) for the stirring of the permanent emotion (sthāyīvibhāva) of divine love (prema-bhakti or pṛīti) and leading to the experience of bhakti-rasa is quite assured.

To sum up, the brief analysis of the religio-aesthetic language of the transcendental histrionics of divine-love as the principal erotic-aesthetic devotional emotion ultimately giving rise to the experience of the pure delight of madhura-rasa or śṛṅgāra-rasa would reveal that, the metaphysical concept of the simultaneous and unthinkable difference and non-difference between the Bhagavad and His saktis-acintyabhedābhedā is existentially affirmed in the experience of divine-love by the Gopīs. While the detail philosophical examination will be done in chapter four, a brief high light of the said spiritual truth may be given here.

The extreme aesthetico-mystical fact of psycho-spiritual oneness in the dynamic lack of “subject-object distinction between the lover and beloved is exemplified by the ecstatic utterance of one of the Gopīs when she says as a sign of her psychic-union with Hari: “I am krisna Kṛṣṇaḥam” (X.30.19). She is completely lost herself in Hari-yānti tanmayatam hare (X.29.15). “Through deep longing for Me the thoughts of the Gopīs were firmly fixed on Me and hence they were not conscious of their bodies or what was far or near, just as sages absorbed in contemplation, or like reverses that have entered the sea are not distinguished by name and form”\(137\). “Their hearts given to Him, they talked of Him alone; they imitated His sportive activities; they couldn’t think of themselves as different from Him; they sang only of His excellent attributes; they didn’t think of their home”\(138\). A similar rapturous experience of divine love characterised by the theocentric or object-centric act of self-transcendence is also seen in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa in which a Gopī says in the loving mood of the pang-of-separation (vīrāṭ)
“I am krisna, indeed”, look how in beautiful gait I walk; another Gopī would say “kṛṣṇa is Me. Ah! at least hear my song”. In their aesthetico-religious imagination they have totally merged in the moved of identification with Kṛṣṇa. The texts 27-29 continue with other Gopīs identifying themselves with the object of their divine-love kṛṣṇa when they are afflicted with the separation from Kṛṣṇa during His absence from Vraja.

Thus, love-in-separation (viraṭ) and love-in-union (saṁbhoga) as alternating endless expressions of divine-love are the functional expressions of the metaphysical truth of acintyabhedābheda. The conceptual frame work of aesthetics of bhakti-rasa and the metaphysical doctrine of acintyabhedābheda provide the philosophical foundation to madhura-rati or divine-love experienced as a concrete form of dynamic spiritual truth in the intersubjectivity of the Gopīs and Kṛṣṇa. It may not be therefore, an impossible endeavour to find the suitable ontology of divine-love from its discernible phenomenological and existential framework as they are implied by the form of religious language of the Rāsapāṇacadhyaṭya and its similar echoes in other Purāṇas.


141 Ibid, For (Saṁbhoga), X. 21, pp. 87-94 and X. 22, pp. 127-131.
142 Perhaps, it is undercutting this fact that, Kṛṣṇa says that, though, He is the same to all; there is no one hateful or dear to Him; if one worships Him with devotion, ‘there are in Me; and I am in them’, Gitā, X. 29. But this should not be seen to be inconsistent with another statement: “All this is pervaded by Me of the unmanifist form all beings are in Me, but I am not in them”, X. 4. The latter text is to be read in the context of the relation between the Bhagavat and the gross universe.
consolation to women for the absence of Krishna” (XXXV) may be treated as dealing with “virah” - “Love-in-separation”\(^\textit{143}\).

The Gauḍyā Vaiṣṇavas would re-group all the psychosis of divine-love under \textit{sambhoga} and \textit{virah}, each of which are sub-classified into thirty two types of \textit{rasas}; thus, altogether there are sixty four rasas. But this classification is only for the sake of convenience; otherwise, being the \textit{līlā} of Lord Kṛṣṇa, their expressions will be so many that, they would be beyond human comprehension. Rūpa Goswāmin interpreted them as varied forms and moods of expressions of \textit{parama-bhakti}. They remain eternally yet dynamically manifested in the intersubjective experience of both the Bhagavat and His eternal associates (\textit{parikaras}) chief of whom are the Gopīs led by Rādhā. Thus, as the self expression of the bliss potency (\textit{hlādini-śakti}) of Kṛṣṇa they are the eternal inner movements of the Lord. The highest form of divine love - \textit{madhura-bhakti} and its maturing into \textit{madhura-rasa} is styled by Rūpa as “the shining blue sapphire” (Ujjvalanilamaṇi)\(^\textit{144}\) in “the ocean of devotional sentiment” (Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu)\(^\textit{145}\). The Bhāgavata provides the plot of divine love for the exhaustive aesthetic treatment by the Gauḍyā Vaiṣṇava scholars pioneered by Rūpa. The conception the experience of \textit{divine-love} – \textit{śrīgāra-rati} may be explained as the Self-love of the Supreme Being as well as the individual beings by extension\(^\textit{146}\). This will be discussed in the succeeding chapters in detail. This truth constitutes the central theme of the Bhāgavata\(^\textit{147}\).

\(^{143}\) Vide references 49 & 50.

\(^{144}\) Pandey, Dr. Syāmanārāyaṇa, Hindi trans., Ujjvalanilamaṇi by Acārya Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmi, Grantham Kanpur.

\(^{145}\) Śrī Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu, by Śrīmad Rūpa Gosvāmi Prabhupāda, with Śrī Śrī Mad Jīva Gosvāmi Prabhupāda’s “Durgāma-Saṅgamanī” (Bengali), Śrī Caitanya-Śārasvata-Kṛṣṇanuśilana Sangaha, Calcutta, Bangābda 1396.

\(^{146}\) Bhaktivinode, Thakur, Jaiva Dharma, Edited by Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Goswami Maharaj, English Trans. from Bengali by Bhakti Sadhak Nīshākchana Maharaj and Śrī Haridas Maitra, Śrī Gauḍyā Math, Madras, 1975, preface p.IX. Note: “Jaiva Dharma” indicates that devotional love constitutes the true purpose of human life. This agrees with the view of A.C. Bhaktivedanta that, the constitutional position of the jīva is to realise that it is the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.

Self-love from the human perspective explained here as the existential realisation of the eternal constitutional position of the jīvas in the ever abiding servitude towards the Lord, is in no way self-centric, but directed to the “over-soul” (Bhaktivinod, p. IX) and therefore a self-effacing-act of theo-centric-love. Notwithstanding the general philosophical view that God is complete and, hence, he has no desire or pleasure to seek, the Bhagavat tells us that. “The devotee serves Kṛṣṇa for His pleasure alone and not for anything else” - svanusthitasya dharmasya samsiddhiḥ haritoṣanaṁ. From the standpoint of the Supreme Being, it has deeper implication for the higher ontology of Gauḍiya theology. It consists in the histrionics of the divine aesthetico-religious phenomenon of the nitya-līlā, and sacred-love as its eternal and dynamic theme constitutes the mysterium tremendum of the Self-actualising and unending Self-expression of God’s highest or core essential nature (svarūpa-śakti) or blissful energy – hlādinī-śakti-tasya paramānandaikarūpasya svaparānandini svarūpaśaktiryā hlādinī nāmnī vartate, prakāśavastunāḥ sva-para-prakāśana-śaktivat paramavṛttistāyai vaisā/ tāṁ ca bhagavān svavṛn de nikṣipe neva nityaṁ vartate/. It is the spontaneous outflow or overflow of the fullness of the “Inner movements” of God Himself. In this respect God’s own self-expression becomes an act of loving grace bestowed to the perched souls or rather as an eternally established and ever abiding spiritual principle it is always available to the “internalised individuals” (sāmukhyā). It is this evolving idea of divine devotionalism emotionalism which continues in the other texts like the Bhakti Sūtras of Nārada and Śaṅḍilya though more in the form of reminiscence and restatements thereby giving credence to a much maligned divine emotion.

Representations of bhakti in Bhakti Sūtras of Nārada and Śaṅḍilya:

In the Bhakti Sūtras of Nārada and Śaṅḍilya bhakti receives exclusive attention while not ignoring other sādhanas. Narada’s Bhakti-Sūtra begins with

---

148 Bhāg., 1.2.6.
150 Bhakti Sandarbha, 142.
the usual āstika language of athāto: atha - therefore, atah - now or then, i.e. “Now therefore”. “Now therefore, (there has to be) the enquiry into the nature of bhakti.” Nārada uses the expression: Hariḥ oṁ il athāto bhaktim vyākhyaśyāmah//1/1\textsuperscript{51}. Whereas Śaṅdilya states in the more familiar style: athāto bhaktijñāsas //1//. The familiar linguistic formulation already used in the opening texts of Brahma Sutra 1.1.1: athāto brahmajñāsā and Pūrva Mīmāṁsā Sūtra or Jaimini Sūtra (1.1.1.), always involve their own respective controversies existed before uttering this sentence: “athāto” – “Now therefore”. It implies a succession of ideas of which we are only aware of the fact that, “Now therefore” is a conclusion of certain preceding issues or debates which we are not sure of. There were intra school disagreements as to what constitutes the exact nature of contention. This particular Sūtra style linguistic formulation always conveys some problem.

Similarly, we may safely assume here that, the settled statement that we should undertake enquiry into the nature of bhakti is a conclusion. That means, though one is not aware of the nature of the disagreement, we are certain that, bhakti is an important ethico-religious concept and deserves full investigation. One of the possible facts of this preceding sequence may be about the question if any precondition like the study of knowledge, performance of action and yoga etc. are required so that one becomes qualified to undertake enquiry into the nature of bhakti. The answer is in the negative, because, bhakti is ahaituki or causeless. It does not depend on any precondition for one to become qualified to follow the devotional path.

What is stated above is important for the cause of theistic religion in which devotion is indispensable if not entirely the independent means for spiritual attainment, though its possibility is not being ruled as we see in Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism. The two Sūtras only bear testimony to the emergence of a highly evolved devotional attitude in the religio-philosophical literatures of India. Next

to the Bhāgavata these two Sūtras to a greater extent anticipate or serve as the invaluable sources for the bhakti-theory of Gauḍiya School.

As it is usual for all the Sūtra texts, on account of their terseness, obscure and ambiguous nature with ‘the laconic expression and elliptical construction’ employed in their composition, they have given room for many interpretations, even mutually opposed. But the explanation of bhakti in juxtaposition with jñāna-yoga and karma-yoga etc. and Śaṅḍilya’s reference to metaphysical concepts like cit (intelligence) and acit (non-intelligence) (Śaṅḍilya Bhakti Sūtra, 41) may give the impression that they have some philosophical standpoint according to which their conception of bhakti is to be interpreted. Śaṅḍilya’s use of the phrase Bhakti-kānda with the stress on the suffix kānda may give us the idea of his metaphysical standpoint.

According to Sharma, Nārada draws his inspiration from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, 68) and Śaṅḍilya was motivated by the Upaniṣads. From this Sharma concludes that, Nārada’s bhakti is saguṇa, whereas that of Śaṅḍilya is nirguṇa. It appears that, Sharma is right when he says that Nārada Bhakti Sūtra draws inspiration from the Bhāgavata, because in Sūtra 20-24 as the examples of perfect expression of bhakti (astyevamevam, 20). “Narada gives the essential nature of bhakti to be the consecration of all activities, complete self surrender to god, and extreme anguish if he were to be forgotten” (Sūtra, 19) nāradastu tadarpitākhilācārata tadvismaraṇe parama-vyākulaṭeti (ca). Nārada refers to “the bhakti of the Gopīs of Vraja” as the example of perfect expression of bhakti-yathā vrajagopīkānām (Sūtra 21).

The subsequent sūtras are of extreme importance in terms of the characteristics of the bhakti of the Gopīs. According to the Gopīs own admission and also general perception the Gopis are mostly thought of as ignorant, and thus undervaluing their devotional love directed towards Kṛṣṇa. Nārada refutes this

---

charge and says that, they did not recognise the divine glory of the Lords is not correct (Śūtra 22) - tatrāpi na mahātmayajñāna vismṛtyavādāḥ.

He reasons that “Had they lacked this knowledge of the Divinity of (glory of the Lord - mahātmayajñāna) the object of their love, their love would have been similar to the base passion of a mistress for her paramour” – tadvihinaṁ jarāṇamiva\textsuperscript{155}. The happiness of a mistress does not at all consist in the happiness of the other-nāstyeva tasmin tatsukhasukhitvam (Śūtra, 24).

The above statements of Nārada is revealing of some important features of Gopis’ love for Kṛṣṇa. Their love is characterised by knowledge and expression of object-centricity in the form of the others’ happiness. Their confusion that they are ordinary milk women and that, they are not aware of Kṛṣṇa as the God of splendour (aiśvarya or mahātmya) but only as a cowherd boy with whom they have fallen in love has some other explanation. That, they are not ignorant is shown by the fact that, it is believed that Upaniṣads were born as the Gopis. This will be elaborated further in the chapter on “The ontology of divine love” with reference to the idea of “emotive knowing”. The rejection of jñāna in its manifestation in the form of Advaitism by the Gaudīya thinkers does not necessarily rule out the possible of cognitive element of bhakti as a divine emotion in some way or the other. Their aesthetic paradigm throws up as the avenue of this as a distinct possibility. “If erotic imagery is an expression of the intensity and intimacy of divine love, rather than a portrayal of worldly passion . . . (then), Rāsa Līlā . . . (is) the greatest revelation of love”\textsuperscript{156}. Graham M. Schweig cites the phrase “prema-netra”, “the eye of pure love” from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja’s Caitanya Caritāmrita (CC., 1.5.21): “which sees a world permeated by supreme love constantly celebrated by all beings and all life… “prema-netra” is said to be attained when the “eye of devotion” is anointed with the “mystical ointment of love”, an ointment that grants a specific vision of the “incomprehensible qualities

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., Śūtra, 23. p. 7.
of the essential form of Krṣṇa\textsuperscript{157}. The theological context in which this view is being maintained may make it an object of suspicion to the skeptic. On a more theoretical plane there are certain scientific reasons for believing that human emotion like love are not totally blind. Aristotle says elsewhere that, “anger” as a negative emotion is not based on ignorance; it has its own reference to certain cognitive truth for the cause of which one becomes angry. Thus, the analysis of human emotion is very complex; one requires going deeper so as to discern its underpinning ontology.

In the second Chapter – “Parambhaktimahattvam”, Nārada considers “the Supreme Divine Love” to be something more than Karma, jñāna and yoga – sā tu karmajñānayogabhya ‘pyahikatarā (Sūtra, 25). This view agrees with the position of the idea of bhakti of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism. But, that such a form of Supreme Love is of the nature of the fruit of all these may not be accepted by Gauḍiya thinkers. Nārada brings out a very important character of divine-love pertaining to the creature feeling of helplessness in the mind of a bhakta. He says that “God dislikes the reliance on one’s own unaided self-effort and likes the complete of misery due to one’s helplessness in independently working out one’s salvation”. This makes bhakti greater – tīṣvarasyāpyabhimāna(ni) dveśitvāt dainyapriyatvāt ca hetoḥ bhaktiḥ adhikatarā\textsuperscript{158}. Perhaps, this explains why Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism holds jñāna and mukti to be driven by selfishness or ego. Nārada’s view conforms to kunti’s prayer to the Lord to always place her in a state of suffering so that, she will always remember and seek refuge in Him\textsuperscript{159}.

One may argue that, such an intense feeling of helplessness and waiting for divine grace or intervention is tantamount to reducing man to a state of uselessness. Personal effort (puruṣaṅkāra) is the expressed virtue of Jainism and Buddhism. In the context of Advaita, the necessity of personal effort or being person-dependent – pusuṣatatantra is the reason behind the rejection of karma-

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.


yoga as a means of mokṣa. But, such a feeling need not be seen in this manner. It cannot be taken in the literal sense of the terms. The third Chapter of Nārada Sūtra deals with the general features of bhakti as a sādhana which are well known. In the fourth chapter, Nārada says that, the essential nature of bhakti is indescribable – anirvacanīyaḥ premasvarūpam (Sūtra, 51). Nārada in the Sūtra 54 seems to be anticipating the subtle and endless capturing of every knowable nuances of psycho-spiritual emotions portrayed in aesthetic terms by Rūpa Goswāmī in his Bhakti-Rasa-Śāstras: “Devoid of all attributes and freedom all characteristic tendencies to selfish action, it is of the nature of a homogeneous and integral spiritual experience, subtler than the subtlest, manifesting itself in the wake of the fulfillment of certain conditions, and expanding every moment” – guṇarahitam kamānārahitam pratikṣaṇavardhamānam avicchinnam suksma-taram anubhava rūpam.

As the self expression of the fullness of an overflowing internal and blissful divine energy (hādini-śakti), Kṛṣṇa-prema-bhakti never suffers from depletion. Its ending in the mahābhāva of Rādhā the “counter whole” of Kṛṣṇa is only the theistic narrative of an internal pure movement of divine-love as a form of divine energy – a movement which ends where it had begun; and thus divine-love becomes a self actualisation of the creative freedom of the Absolute. The true identity and purpose of existence etc. of individual souls consist in reawakening this subterranean spiritual dynamism (i.e., becoming sāmukhya) as the driving force of all life.

Another spiritual truth being revealed by Nārada is that, parābhakti does not depend on any other proof; because it is “self evident” – pramāṇantara-

160 This was the view of Advaita presented by Prof. R. Balasubramanian in his classes on Advaita during 1985-1987 at the Dr. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Studies in philosophy, Madras University. Professor was the then Director of the Institute as well as the Chairman, ICPR, New Delhi.

Karma being “person- dependent” (apurussatantro) is based on the whim or wish of the door. It requires personal efforts to produce its desired fruits. But knowledge or jñāna in its pure form is always self-revealed (sva-prakāśa) and ever established (svatāb-siddha), and therefore, is not “person-dependent” like karma.

syānapēksatvāt svayrṇ pramāṇatvāt ca (Śūtra, 59). This was what Jīva Goswāmīn means by the fact that, bhakti as the function of the hlādinī-sakti of Kṛṣṇa is self-established and remains eternally self-revealed. Another fact is the description of bhakti as “of the form of complete peace of mind and supreme joy” – sāntirūpāt paramānandarūpācca (Śūtra, 60). The notion of “supreme joy” will be interpreted as the dynamic blissful energy of the Bhagavad in Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism. Nārada does not indicate if this joy is nirguṇa or saguṇa.

Nārada speaks about dedicating in the sense of dovetailing the entire human emotions desire, anger, pride, etc. towards the Parameśvara, or employ them only in the loving devotion towards Him. “Love and love alone, such as that of a devoted servant or a wife which transcends the three forms (of prakṛti) mentioned in sūtra 56, should be practiced” (Śūtra 65-66)”. Since, Nārada or the actual author speaking through the mythological character of Nārada appears to be well aware of the nature of bhakti portrayed in the Bhāgavata in respect of the Vraja-līlā where the nature of the forms of devotion depicted in it conforms to what these two sūtras are referring to. Say for instance, Kṛṣṇa’s hatred (dveṣa) and anger (krodha), pride (abhimāna) of some Gopīs (technically explained as a conceit in the aesthetic sense) and the imagery of their divine amour (kāma) aimed at their divine object being associated with strong passionate clingingness and pin-pointedness of mind towards the Bhagavat etc, are what the highest form of bhakti is supposed to manifest. The very concept of līlā as applicable to the pastimess of the Lord implies suggestiveness of all these psycho-aesthetic expressions of divine love.

Śūtra 66 is about the forms of madhura-bhakti like dāśya and kānta which were already well established in Vaiṣṇavism. These are illustrative of the power of divine-love which conquers the majestic splendour (aṣṭvarya or mahātmya) of God, and subduing it He appears on earth and seeks the company of his devotees. This is the classic case of heaven seeking earth and earth seeking heaven. Confirming the spirit of this view Bhāgavatam (9.4.64) says: “He derives greater pleasure in being controlled by His devotees than in lording over them”- ahaṁ
bhakta parādhīno hyasvatantrya īva dvijah/ bhūyasi sādhubhirgrastā hṛdayo bhakti bhakta janapriyah.

The belief that God can be conquered by the power of divine love can only be explained by saying that, such a sacred love constitutes His own deepest being; and to that, extent, either it is His own lilā - spontaneous play or the highest but the sweetest expression (mādhurya or parānandini) of His Self determination of His own supreme freedom. From the human perspective it may look as if God has been won over by His own dear creatures.

The last Chapter - mukhyābhaktā mahimā, the sublime attributes of primary devotees as the last word of Nārada brings out the fundamental characteristics of such a bhakta. As the confirmation of the repeated statements of the Gītā and Bhāgavata, this text, 67 says that primary devotees are those who have one pointed love of God for His own sake-bhakta ekāntino mukhyaḥ. This is in conformity with Bhāgavata dharma as an Ekāntika dharma which is the essential character of Bhāgavatism. After dwelling on various qualities of primary devotees Nārada declares that “Only love of the absolute, eternal truth is the greatest; this love, indeed is the greatest” – trisatyasya bhaktireva garīyasī, bhaktireva garyasyā (Sūtra, 81)\textsuperscript{162}.

In the Sūtra 82 Nārada sums up the most essential features of bhakti which are in tune with the views of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. “Bhakti, or Divine love, though in itself is one only, manifests itself in the following eleven different forms; (a) Love of the glorification of the Lord’s blessed qualities, (b) Love of His enchanting beauty, (c) Love of worship, (d) Love of constant remembrance, (e) Love of service, (f) Love of Him as a friend, (g) Love of Him as a son, (h) Love for Him as that of a wife for her husband, (i) Love of self surrender to Him, (j) Love of complete absorption in Him, (k) Love of the pain of separation from Him.”\textsuperscript{163}.

Among these for the theme of the thesis as well as Gauḍīya philosophy (d), (j) and

\textsuperscript{162} The English translations of the texts are of Tyāgīśānanda.

\textsuperscript{163} Op. cit., NBS, Tyāgīśānanda, sūtra, 82, p. 23.
(k) may be given special attention the detail of which will not be done at this juncture. Briefly stated, these highlight the nature of the devotional emotionalism of *madhura-bhakti*. Their aesthetic-psycho-spiritual significance is proved by the fact that, the concept of contemplative imagination\(^ {164}\) as a phenomenological state is raised to the highest ontological level in Gauḍīya Vaisnavism. The *rāgātmika-bhakti* and *rāgānuga-bhakti* of the school under cosideration as aesthetic rendering of a blissfully dynamic spiritual process operate via this creative imaginative function. The love for the pain of separation from Him which Nārada is referring to as above is consistent with the idea of Kakar and Ross (pp. 202-203), that, “the longing for union a (as in *sambhoga-bhakti* or *rasa*) is not for a fusion . . . (and thus) . . . makes the boundary of self permeable; it does not altogether erase it; the anxiety of separation does not lie in a regressive dedifferentiation of self and another” (God for the Gauḍīya system). This issue relates to the question of the ontology of divine-love which will be discussed later.

All these indeed are embodied in the divine-love of the residents of Vraja Vrāndāvana mainly the Gopīs. That, the mysterium tremendum of God is revealed in these forms of sacred-love, shows that, His greatness is affirmed on a higher ontological plane only through the intersubjectivity of the God-human experience of divine-love.

If God is to remain as the “wholly other”\(^ {165}\) evoking the feeling of distance, fear and trembling, there is no way of attaining spiritual communion. Kierkegaardian “leap of faith” has to be meeting with the self-limiting act of God which has become manifested as His divine grace, and being determined by His own “infinite will” He enters into the loving relationship with human beings. This

---

\(^ {164}\) Op. cit., Kakar & Ross, p. 52. The authors are referring to Sufi mysticism in which the mystic contemplates on the image of the Beloved. Without this imaginative union, physical union is a delusion, a cause or symptom of mental derangement. Pure imaginative contemplation is all that the mystics want.

is the religio-philosophical understanding of divine-love supremely exhibited by the Gopīs. The Upaniṣadic statement: “It thought, may I become many” (tādāikṣate bahūsyama) as the first utterance of the Supreme Being as the dawn of the natural impulse of its creative abundance is the expression of this Will of the Divine.

Nārada acknowledges the Śāndilya’s view of bhakti and says that his ideas are the restatements of many others including him (Śūtra, 83). Thus, Śāndilya probably belongs to an earlier period. His view of bhakti no doubt is intermittently couched in Upaniṣadic ideas. Otherwise, he begins his critical investigations into bhakti (bhakti jijñāsa, Śūtra 1) by stating that, “It (bhakti) is the supreme loving attachment to Īśvara” - parāṇuraktirīśvare. Kapoor translates this as “exclusive and intense loving attachment”. Hence, it anticipates Nārada’s definition of it as “the Supreme Love of God” - parapremarūpa (Śūtra, 2). This fact is also confirmed by the Bhāgavata. The Purāṇa’s position that; bhakti is for those individuals who are neither too detached nor attached echoes the above view of Śāndilya. Gopīs’ love directed to their dear Lord exemplifies this form of attachment. This psychological under current of bhakti throws up complex ethical question as to how as a spiritual practice, it is freed from undesirable negative connotations associated with mundane desire and attachment in the ordinary parlance. This will be elaborated in the sub-chapter on the moral implications of divine-love due to its erotic elements.

Nārada’s prescription that, “all activities including desire, anger and pride, etc. should be directed towards Him” (Śūtra, 65) was already referred to. Since, Śāndilya belongs to an earlier period than Nārada, the former’s definition of bhakti as “supreme attachment to the Lord” agrees with the later’s view as quoted above. This attachment is not to be confused with earthly attachments which are based on lust. That is not tainted by happiness for oneself but the solely directed towards the happiness of the supreme object of love (Śūtras, 22-24),

shows that, it is not to be equated with earthly attachments. Nārada uses the word *kāma* (Sūtra 65) to refer to “desire” as something to be directed to the Lord and should be understood as being object centric, and therefore it is selfless. This is the meaning implied by Nārada Sūtra 7: “*Bhakti* is not of the nature of lust, because it is a form of renunciation”- sā na kāmamānā, nirodhṛupatvāt. In this respect prahlada prays to god: “May that uninterrupted attachment, as is entertained by indiscriminating men towards earthly object, deserts my heart, while I am constantly meditating upon Thee”\(^{169}\). Therefore, Śaṅḍilya says that God as the object of such an attachment being the best and the highest, since it is also freed from worldly desire (*kāma*), ought not to be avoided- heyā rāgatvāti cennottama spadatvāt saṅgavat (Śaṅḍilya Sūtra, 21). Yet, being of the nature of experience (*anubhavarūpa*), its true nature is indescribable.

According to Nārada (Sūtra 3) and Śaṅḍilya (Sūtra 3), *bhakti* as the highest form of Divine Love (*prema svarūpa*), is of the nature of *āmyta* (nectar) which may mean either mukti or experience of bliss. Śaṅḍilya’s view of *āmyta* is drawn from the text of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 2.23.1: brahmaśaristhoṁmrṭatvamēti. Both of them are silent about whether the Supreme State of the Divine still has functions even after mukti is being attained or not. They seem to have settled with the ultimate Upaniṣadic ideal which may or may not lead to the impersonal ontology. In the case of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism as interpreted by Jīva in Bhakti Sandarbha, devotional love continues even after the attainment of liberation\(^{170}\). Jīva mentions Śrīdhara’s citation of Bhāgavata text 10.87.20-21 in which the reference is being made to the mental worship of the Lord through the imaginative creation of a spiritual world (*svakṛtapureśvabahirantarśarirāntaraṁ* pravartati) based on their respective attained-spiritual-state (*svabhāvasisiddha*).

---

Śridhara in his tīkā on Bhāgavata text 10.87.21 also cites Sarvajñamuni who says that, the liberated souls worship and contemplate on the mentally reconstructed image of the Lord and His divine activities (līlās) – mukta api līlayā vigrahāṁ krtvā bhagavantarāṁ bhajante. Just as Prahlāda prays to Viṣṇu, the only desire the devotees have is to be always in His devotional service, and in whatever is the birth they make take either in hell or heaven, they pray that their remembrance of and loving devotion to God may never come to end\textsuperscript{171}. This conforms to both the above idea of imaginative contemplation and Kuntī’s prayer to Kṛṣṇa to always keep her in endless throes of suffering so that, God shall never be erased from her mind as her saviour. This import is not suggested by the two sūtras; thus, though they raised bhakti to the highest spiritual plane of divine-love, they do not go beyond treating it as a means (sādhanā-bhakti) to mokṣa. Hence, their ideas of bhakti are a far short of its necessary ontological necessity which the Gauḍīya scholars had conceptualised.

At the same time Śāṅḍilya speaks about one of the significant characters of bhakti in relation to jñāna. He makes an important distinction between knowledge and devotion by stating that, “mere knowledge does not constitute devotion, for it is present also in hate”\textsuperscript{172}. This view is presented in sūtra, 4: jñānamiti cenna dvīṣatoh’pi jñānasya tadsamsthiteḥ. Again as we approach liberation knowledge is eclipsed by devotion. Though, not very explicit, sūtra, 7 points to the element of self-transcendence in the inherent psychic fact of selflessness involved in an object-centric divine-love. The sutra indicates this fact by stating that just as it is in the case of jñāna, there is no distinction between action and agency (usually seen in ordinary action), therefore, it is not of the nature of action - na kriyā krtyanpeśanāj jñānavat.

It is not clear if by saying that bhakti is not of the nature of action, Śāṅḍilya thinks that bhakti is antagonistic to hatred (dveṣa), and on the contrary defined it as loving attachment “towards the Lord anointed with experience of unalloyed

\textsuperscript{171} Op. cit., Viṣṇou Purāṇa, 1.20-19, p. 94.
delight known as rasa, the nature of spiritual experience here is identified with the experience if non-dualism. But that, on account of its being contradictory to hatred, it is of the nature of loving attachment for the Lord characterised by maddening delight of rasa, yet, in linking the nature of bhakti to rasānubha - pure delight of aesthetic-devotional sentiment is important for the concept of bhakti-rasa. It is well known a fact in the vedantic tradition; the Supreme Being is identified with rasa.

In the second section of the first chapter, (sūtras, 10-25) Sandilya revisits or review the relative position of jnana, bhakti, karma and yoga in the light of chāndogya, Svetaśvatara, Bhāgavata, Yoga Sūtra and the Gītā, and also the Brahmakānda of Śrutis and reconfirms the supreme importance of bhakti - tadeva karmi-jñāṇi-yogibhya ādhikya śabdāt (sūtra, 22). This is in continuation of sūtra, 9 in which there is reference made to the Gītā text 7.19: jnanavānmāṁ prapadeyate, “the most intelligent man or jñāni surrenders into Me”. He says that, saraṇāgati or prapatti bhakti in which one in utter feeling of helplessness surrenders to God as the only resort or upāya, is not of the form of knowledge. The sūtra makes a distinction between prapatti or saraṇāgati and jñāna. Rāmānuja makes a contrast between bhakti which is of form of bhakti and prapatti or saraṇāgati. This distinction is being made on the ground that, in bhakti wherein jñāna or karma (under the doctrine of sammucaya or synthesis of jnana, karma and bhakti) is synthesised, the input of personal effort is required, and thus, no complete surrender or taking of refuge” (as the Gītā repeatedly


Bhāg., 10.82.45: “mayi bhaktirhīḥḥūtāḥātyavā koipate/ diṣṭā yadā simmatvam eva bhavatīnāṁ maddāpanāḥ/, cited in sūtra 14: “ata eva tadābhāvāvādavallīvināṁ”. The Gītā 7.19-20, 18.58, 6.46-47 and Ch.12 are also being referred in sūtra 10, 16, 22-23, 25. Through these sources Śāṅkṣyāya tries to prove the predominance or the independence of parama- bhakti in the form of supreme attachment to the Lord.
recommends) takes place. One still holds unto oneself which according Nārada is the feeling conceit or egoism and god dislikes such an idea of self-reliance –

\textit{īśvarasya abhimāna dveśītvāt} (Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, 27). One may interpret that \textit{saranāgati} or \textit{prapatti} is lacking in knowledge and may even distinguish those who resort to total self-surrender to the Lord as inferior to a \textit{jñāni}. The long, winding and painful process of the \textit{jñāna-yoga} (characterised by \textit{śravaṇam}, \textit{mananam} and \textit{nīdirdhyaśasanam} as stages of the \textit{sādhana catuṣṭaya}) no doubt is also one of the ways of attaining the spiritual state of self surrender just as the Gītā says. But this does not make it the same with the direct process of \textit{prapatti} which Śāṅḍilya is referring to.

It is not possible to arrive at a commonly acceptable reason behind somebody’s resorting to self surrender without going through the traditional process of \textit{jñāna-yoga}. But, it is also true that, in taking decision to surrender to God only, one has “somehow” or in a way comes to have some vague awareness of the Supreme Truth which \textit{jñānis} reach after a long and arduous process. Therefore, Śāṅḍilya’s opinion has to be read with some modification.

The above inconsistency observed in Śāṅḍilya’s view that \textit{prapatti} as complete self-surrender to the Lord is not of the nature of knowledge in actuality or in appearance will be resolved if it is kept in mind that in the second half of this chapter (second half of his Sūtra) he distinguishes secondary or subsidiary \textit{bhakti} (\textit{gauṇī bhakti}) from chief or highest \textit{bhakti} (\textit{mukhya or para or ananya-bhakti}). In another words, that self surrender may not be having the character of knowledge only when the form of \textit{bhakti} is the higher one. This takes us to the fact that, on the plane of ancillary or subsidiary devotional worship one has to also take the help of rational and discriminative enquiry (\textit{viveka-jñāna}, just as the Gītā also says in Ch. 12 that knowledge consists in the discriminative understanding between “field” (\textit{kṣetra}) and “the knower of the field” (\textit{kṣetrajñā) or in ordinary parlance \textit{nityānitya-vivaka-jñāna}). This enquiry by showing the true nature of the object of devotion as the central thesis of Śāṅḍilya Bhakti Sūtra, devotional worship is established on firm intellectually satisfying truth. This is necessary for deepening
the faith as well as the depth of a spiritual aspirant’s religious conviction. The entire narratives of the Gītā and Bhāgavatam stand as witness to this view. The truth behind the nature of the object of devotion is no doubt, according to Śaṅkṣīla the Upaniṣadic reality Brahma or Ātman with which the essential spiritual self-hood of the worshipper, the human jīva the embodied self is being identified.

The first part of Chapter 2 of Śaṅkṣīla Sūtra has to be examined in the light of the above framework. Śaṅkṣīla, most probably, as per what are stated above, and also based on the general process of sādhanā, recommends, the preliminary or gaurī-bhakti to be practiced along with those conventional norms of mental purification. This is the meaning conveyed by sūtra, 27: buddhirhetupavrūttiravi śuddheravaghātavat. These practices leading to mental purification (citta saddhi) are subsidiary steps of gaurī bhakti and are expressed by the word “tad”, “that” in the sutra 28: tadaṅgānāmca. Śaṅkṣīla in the next text quotes Kāśyapa’s opinion that, only when the buddhi resulting from the cleared mind takes refuge in the Parameśvara one can attain mokṣa – tamāśvāryapāram kāśyapaḥ paratvāt. He also cites Bādarāyana as the authority and seems to accept the later’s view of meditative worship on the supreme non-dual Self (ātmaika parām vādarāyanah, sūtra 30). In his own contention in tune with these views he thinks that one has to undertake the ethico-religious practice of the way of understanding (buddhi-yoga) in which synthesis of Vedic statements and relevant reasoning (śābdopapattiḥyāṃ) which finally lead to mokṣa. The purpose of this integral approach to spiritual attainment is arriving at the knowledge of essential identity between jīvātmā and paramātmā.\(^\text{175}\)

Śaṅkṣīla tries to establish the nature of parābhakti through a gradual but hierarchic process of analysis based on the fundamental truth revealed in the narratives of the Upaniṣads and the Gītā. The concept of parābhakti to be

\(^{175}\) Op. cit., Radhakrishnan, Ch. Up. 3.14.1-4, p. 393, “śarvām khalvidam brahma tajjalānīti śānta upāśita... esa ma ātmā nitarhyāhanāyaḥ...etad brahmatam itaḥ pretyabhisamḥbavitāṃśmiḥ yasya syādādhā na viicitikṣśāḥ sa smāḥ Śaṅkṣīlayah Śaṅkṣīlayah/. Also see ibid. Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 111.1.1., p. 553, “yatovaimāni bhātāni jāyante”, Gīta, 15.7: “māmālvāsā fīva loke jīvabhūtah sanātanaḥ.”
achieved via subsidiary devotional practice (gouṇī-bhakti) is the worship of this Truth of Šrutis which is none other them the Paramātman or Parameśvara. The following discussions would show that, he attempts to reconstruct impersonal ontology. He seems to prefer the non-dual thesis to dualism which bhakti necessarily imply. This is proved by his rejection of any third metaphysical reality other than cit or caitya-puruṣa (sentient principle) or jñāta and prakṛti or jñeya (material principle which acts as the source of all the objects of knowledge. Keeping in view of the ultimate non-dual thesis this boils down to showing the ultimate oneness between jīva and Īśvara or Parameśvara in terms of their sharing the common essential character of self revealing (svapraκāśa) pure consciousness (cinmātra) on the one and mentaphysically subsuming prakṛti and its product the entire world of matter into the power (śakti) of Parameśvara on the other.

It appears that, the power and the ontological status of parā-bhakti is derived from the fact, that, it is directed to the highest reality – Parameśvara or Paramātā with which the jīvas are identified, and also the same wielder of the power of prakṛti conceived in terms of His majestic splendour, aiśvarya or mahātmya (according to Nārada). It is only when the jīvas realise the truth as stated that they remain unaffected by the affliction caused by their internal organs (antahkaranas) - na ca klīṣṭaḥ para syādanantaram viśeṣat (sūtra 33). The "internal instruments" (antah karanas) are the evolutes of prakṛti or māyā or avidyā known as upādhi or limiting adjunct of the "pure self". The practice of "parā-bhakti requires the prior discernment of the above Truth.

One thing to be noted and which is also important for the ontology of bhakti would be that, the world caused through the beginning less conjunction (sūtra 41) of prakṛti and Parameśvara is not false, because prakṛti as the power of the Lord (aiśvara being referred to by Śaṅḍilya is the dynamic expression of prakṛti) is not unreal (śaktitva nānṛtam).

176 This view is known as the Vedāntic Sāṁkhya of which the Gītā is the chief exponent. In the original Sāṁkhya of Kapila, Prakṛti and Puruṣa are the only two ultimate realities.
This would make the path of bhakti a worthwhile and soul satisfying spiritual endeavour for its adherents. That is, the world which is the product of māyārūpi prakṛti the power of Brahman or Parameśvara is not mithyā or antam would mean that, the entire spiritual practices under devotional worship is also not false. Since the concept of bhakti in Śaṅkṛilya’s philosophical schema is always a means even when it is conceived as parā-bhakti, its non-dual goal would be irrelevant to it after having served its purpose with the down of mokṣa. Atleast, it would be assured to the spiritual aspirant that, as an embodied soul, his sādhana in this respect happens in a world which is not unreal (nānṛtam). The repeated reference in his choice of the vocabularies of his narratives to prakṛti as synonymous with māyā, śakti and aiśvarya of Parameśvara are in conformity to his intention of showing the reality of the world wherein the practice of parā-bhakti will be meaningful. Just as Madhusūdana later on came to do, Śaṅkṛilya while not deviating from his understanding of the monism of the Śrutis, attempts to infuse some sense of realism into the concept of devotion well within the philosophical framework of Vedānta.

It is in the light of the said devotional realism that, Śaṅkṛilya in Sūtra 44 enumerates the different divine personalities as the embodiments of different forms of bhakti. He seems to suggest that, the respective levels of the purities of devotional emotions (tatpariśuddhīsca) are to be understood in their manifestations in the form of mundane relations (gamyā lokavallīngabhyaḥ). In doing that, neither the said purities shall be diminished, nor will they become mere imageries (sūtra, 43). Yet, it is not presupposed here that, imageries or metaphors are necessarily determined by some reductionist thesis of monism. This is based on the fact that, imageries may remain imageries even in a world believed to be governed by dualism or pluralism.

Hence, against the above background sūtra 44 describes different forms or stages of bhakti: “Arjuna’s devotional attitude of conceiving God as his equal (sammān) as it is always in the case of friendship (sakhyā), Īkṣvāku’s worship of God through his meditation on the holy names and immutable supra subtle
sounds of letters (nāma and varṇāksara), Vidur and others’ loving attachment to God, worshipping of God in the mood of “love-in-separation” (virahānubhūti) by the Gopīs, the feeling of tastelessness of everything unrelated to God by Upamanyu and the residents of Svetādvīpa, always glorifying the greatness of God by Bhīṣma and Vedavyāsa etc., taking of God as the ultimate or only refuge by Hanumān and resident of Vraja, Prahlada’s constant engagement in reciting devotional hymns to the Lord, not doing anything which is not conducive to the worship of the Lord, and in similar manner various Smṛti Śāstras including the Itihāsas and Purāṇas describe the nature of bhakti.\footnote{177}

All these forms of bhakti are devoid of hatred – dveṣādayastu naivam (sūtra 45). This is supported by the Mahabhārata text anu, 140/135 – na krodho na ca mātsaryam na lobho nāsubhā matīḥ/ bhavanti kṛta puyānām bhaktānām purusottome//. The absence of bhakti and negative tendencies like infatuation or lust and greed etc, are socially significant. Such a bhakti described as parābhakti is also associated with the worship of the Lord’s advent in human form (avatāravigrāh, 46). After the two sūtras 45-46, Śaṅdilya offers evidences from the Gitā and other Āgamas for the theistic necessity of worshipping God in His divine birth in human form – His very presence on earth and the need to know the truth about His divine birth as well as activities. Śaṅdilya reaffirms the same revelations made by the Bhāgavat in the Gitā in the sūtras 48-49 and the rest. Sūtra 49 confirms that, the main reason behind His incarnation is to bestow His causeless mercy and redeem the fettered souls – mukhyam tasya hi kārṇyam.

On the basis of the teachings of the Gitā (10.37), sūtras 51-52 show the worship of Vāsudeva Krṣṇa to be the highest, and He is the Parabrahman Viṣṇu Himself. These are also supported by the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and Bhāgavata.\footnote{178} In continuation of these monotheistic assertions, sūtra 53 refers to Viṣṇu’s identity with Krṣṇa (pratibhiḥjñanāsca). The Vibhūti Yoga of the Gita (Ch. 10. 21) speaks of Vāsudeva to be the best amongst the people of Yadu dynasty, and His being

\footnote{178} Op. cit., Viṣṇu Purāṇa, 4.11.2 and Bhāg., 1.3.28.
worshipped in the forms of other famous avatāras like Vāmana. All these forms of worship lead to mokṣa – evam prasiddheṣu ca, (Sūtra 55).

All these references being made from the Gītā and Śaṅḍilya’s approval of them is quite in valuable for the objective of establishing bhakti as per its satisfactory representation in a personal conception of the Absolute. But when seen in the light of his differentiation between subsidiary devotion (gaunī-bhakti) and higher devotion (parā-bhakti or ananya-bhakti) all these theistic narratives may sound empty. Because, as we shall see later on, he supports the concept of non-dualism of the Upaniṣads interpreted in the same sense in which Śaṅkara did much later. The only exception would be that, he conceives māyā or prakṛti as the power (sakti) of Para-meśvara and the world as not unreal (nāṅrtaḥ). But, parābhakti will operate in full predominance only right up to the ultimate threshold of mokṣa. He makes a significant statement when he states that, it is not ajñāna or ignorance but lack of bhakti (abhakti) which is responsible for bondage – saṁśṛtiṁabhaktiṁ syānnājñānāt kāraṇāsiddheḥ, sūtra, 98. Therefore, at the end of the sūtra he would argue that, bhakti is the only means leading to mokṣa.

The second half of the second chapter of the sūtra examines the nature of difference between subsidiary devotion (gaunī-bhakti) and chief or higher devotion (parā-bhakti). This distinction is also to be found in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism with the exception that, in the case of the school para-bhakti or prema-bhakti is no more subservient to any other goal, but itself. Most of the conventional devotional worships are grouped under gaunī-bhakti by Śaṅḍilya, and he says that, they finally lead to cittaśuddhi or mental purification which will further culminate in the attainment of parā-bhakti which in turn results in the attainment of mokṣa where oneness of everything is realised. And there is no indication of the fact that parā-bhakti is operative even after mokṣa.

The points to be noted in Śaṅḍilya’s account of bhakti are his references to the idea of religious right of the lower castes including the Caṇḍālas and the most sinful of all sinners - ānindyayonyadhikriyate pāparamāpyat samānyavat (sūtra 78)
cutting across every social strata. He says that, this is the view accepted by tradition. It can destroy the sins of these worst of the sinners (mahāpātakināṁ tvārtou, sūtra 82). As a logical conclusion of the distinction made between the two forms of bhakti Śaṅkilya also believes in the concept of “kramamukti” – gradual process of salvation. This is discused in sūtras 80-81: kramaika gatyupapatteṣu/ utkṛṣṭi smṛti vākyāsāṃca/179.

The next important thing which Śaṅkilya speaks about is his idea that bhakti belongs to Ekāntika Dharma which is one of the characteristics of Bhāgavata Dharma or Bhāgavatism or Vaiṣṇavism180. He concludes this subsection with stating that parā-bhakti is the same with Ekāntika Dharma (sūtra 83) which consists in the exclusive loving attachment and devotion (ananya) towards Parameśvara. The text makes a direct reference to the fact that, his views are based on the Gītā, 9.22, 34, 6.30, 11.55, 12.6 respectively. Śaṅkilya says it is this parā-bhakti which causes the realisation of freedom (mokṣa). Thus, parā-bhakti here would not be the same with that of the highest form of bhakti of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. According to the school parā-bhakti would mean the spiritual attainment beyond which no further realisation is to be attained at.

Śaṅkilya appears to be making an attempt to re-understand the Gītā and its strong personal connotations by referring back to the identity between jīva and Parameśvara allegedly to be the true teaching of the Śrutis. Otherwise his quoting the Gītā and re-emphasising the said oneness in the light of conceiving parā-bhakti leading to its realisation. This attempt to re-understanding the Gītā may mean to de-personalise its teachings. Otherwise, there is no other explanation behind Śaṅkilya’s reiterations on the identity thesis. He only does this not through extolling jīvana but reinterpreting bhakti as the predominant (mukhya or para) sādhana for the attainment of mokṣa.

---

179 The word smṛti here is with reference to the Gītā 8.10-13 and 24.
Hence, Śaṅdiliya speaks about prakṛti rooted upādhi, the limiting adjuncts like the internal instruments (antaḥ karaṇa) to be responsible for the experience of difference, pleasure and pain etc. He cites the well known Vedāntic analogical illustrative reasoning of abhāsavāda using the example of sun’s ray etc. to prove that difference is not the truth about his world\textsuperscript{181}. Śaṅdiliya’s reaffirmation of a well established Upaniṣadic position in order to explaining the concerned ontological position in the context of bhakti taken in its highest form demands justification. The reason for doing this lies in his predilection for bhakti just as it became in the case of Madhusūdana as well as the inability to go beyond his advaitic conviction. He repeats the non-dual arguments in sutras 95-96: na vikārinastu karaṇa vikārāt and prthagiti cenna pareṇa sambhandhāt prokāśānām. What these texts say are that the jīvatma as the pure self in actuality does not suffer from modification or undergo transformation; yet it appears to be coming under modification because of the dynamic nature of internal instruments (karaṇa i.e., mind). This is inconsistent with his earlier view that the world or God’s power is not false or unreal (nānṛtam). The second text is only revisiting the argument of advaita that, being of the nature of self manifesting pure consciousness, no ultimate distinction is possible between jiva and Parameśvara. This ontological fact is reasserted in order to affirm advaitism without at the same time undervaluing bhakti which was evident when he argued that, the cause of bondage is not ajñāna but abhakti.

The last five texts of this treatise on bhakti; Śaṅdiliya in no uncertain terms establishes that, through ananya-bhakti or para-bhakti (aṅgī) wherein other aṅgas (limbs) of sādhanas were subsumed in the lower stage of spiritual pursuit (mainly gaṇi bhakti), one gets merged into the pure self and one gets mokṣa thereafter – ananya bhaktyā tadbhudhirbuddhi layādatyantam (sūtra 96). Thus, it has become evident that, parā-bhakti according to Śaṅdiliya is the cause of mokṣa which consists in realising the essential oneness between the worshipper and

\textsuperscript{181} Op. cit., Śaṅdiliya, 93, p. 36.
worshiped. This state of non-dualism is indicated by the word “antyantam” in the
text cited above.

However there is one important fact which emerges from Śaṅḍilya’s
discourse on bhakti. This may constitute his fresh idea enriching the heritage of
theistic religion. This fact relates to the question whether the root cause of
bondage lies in ajñāna or ignorance, or is it the abhakti (absence of bhakti) (sūtra
98)? His response to this query would make his contention a contrarian view to
that of the mainstream Advaita according to which ajñāna of the truth of non-
difference is the root cause of bondage. Śaṅḍilya’s, idea of bondage as caused by
the absence of bhakti towards Parameśvara is needs to be seen with the position
of the Gītā that, after many many births the most intelligent man or the best man
of knowledge surrenders unto the Bhagavad – bahunām janma nāmante
jñānavān mām propadyate\(^{182}\) and that, among the four men who worships, the
man of knowledge (jñāni) is the best and the most dear to the Lord. What the Gītā
says does not seem to imply what is meant by Śaṅḍilya.

Śaṅḍilya’s statement made in the negative as he says that, the main cause
of non-attainment (karaṇāsiddheḥ) is not ajñāna (syānajñānāt) but absence of
bhakti towards the Supreme Being (samsṭireśāmabhaktih). Most probably what
he means is that, he intends to give prominence to bhakti as a sādhana and not to
jñāna, though the later is still essential during the initial stage of the long and
arduous path of liberation. This idea is warranted by the fact that, he also believes
is krama-mukti – the gradual process of liberation which should ultimately
become ripened into parā-bhakti towards the Bhagavat as the sole cause of
mukti.

\(^{182}\) Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, Śaṅkarabhāṣya (Saṅskṛt), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 7.19, p. 122.
Śaṅkara in his commentary on the text says: “Bahunāmiti: bahunāṁ janmanāṁ
jñānaṁ harhasāmārgaṁ yonīṁ mantram samāptou jñānavānprāpta pariṇāṁ jñāno māṁ vāsudevarāṁ
pratyagātmānāṁ pratyākṣatoḥ prapadyate.” That is, through a long pursuit of knowledge and
after having acquired knowledge or having become a jñāni; and after knowing that, He is the all
pervasive Supreme Being, such as jñāni surrenders to the Lord.
But, when his contention, while giving credence to bhakti, in its matured form of bhakti is the “cause of” both bondage through its absence and means of liberation when it is present, would still leave the hearts of the true bhaktas thoroughly unquenched and always haunted by a sense of spiritual emptiness. Gauḍyā Vaiṣṇavism despite its excessive trappings of a dramatised theological dogma, in its believing in an eternal spiritual dynamics, more explicitly in the eternal unfolding of the “process” of the “divine amour” of the madhura or ṣrīgāra-rasa which its relishers (bhakta-rasikas) refuse to interpret as allegory, but something which is vivid, maddeningly delightful and concrete “divine-process” relishable through its built in communicative power of aesthetics, is a definite existential response to the said spiritual lack which the Gauḍyā Vaiṣṇavas seriously believe to be a syndrome of the impersonal state of mokṣa.

For the followers of Gauḍyā Vaiṣṇavism the highest form of bhakti refashioned as madhura or ṣrīgāra-bhakti culminating in the experience of the pure erotic-aesthetic sentiment of transcendental love, as the sādhya-bhakti or pañcamapuruśārtha is a dynamic process of an externally self manifesting spiritual phenomenon. It is the function of the self actualising dynamic bliss potency of the core (svarūpa-śakti or antaraṅga-śakti) nature of the “personal” Absolute. Thus, since, it is the highest as well as the innermost core of self-same potency of the Supreme Being; there is no self contradiction in maintaining that, divine-love as the functional expression of the mysterium tremendum of the Absolute Being is the summum bonum of existence. Perhaps, just as Gandhi did in the case of God and Truth and changed the earlier expression from “God is Truth” to “Truth is God”, for the Gauḍyā Vaiṣṇavas God is not Love, but Love is God. The emphasis on love constituting the core reality of God is to be noted.

183 Op. cit., Bhāg., Bhaktivedānta, Comm. on 1.1.1. p. 3. Bhaktivedānta is explicit in his admission of pure-sex-life of the spiritual world. He is says that, mundane-sex is the perversion of the pure or transcendental-sex. He cites Śrīlā Viśvanātha Chakravarti (one of the well known commentators of the Bhāgavatam) as one who deals with the original or archetypal and pure-sex psychology. According to him the impossibility of the impersonalism consists in the fact that, there can’t be pure spiritual-sex within such a non-dual ontology. No doubt he is speaking about the “divine-amour”.

As a brief introductory remark of subsequent examination to be made on
the above issue as the main theme of the thesis, “Divine Love” in the above sense,
appears to be assuming a distinctive, yet, a supreme ontological status of its own
due to the fact that, God Himself becomes overpowered by its irresistibility; and
as a result God Himself hankers to taste its own maddening delight of divine-
frenzy (divyonmāda). Aesthetico metaphysically it is expressed in the technical
language of the nitya-līlā as picturised by Rūpa, that, śaktyānanda – the relish of
bhakti-rasa, as the Bhagavat ward sentiment of sacred love (returning from the
bhakta’s heart by the original hlādiṇī-sakti) is far superior to His own self-reflexive
relish of His own blissful nature – svarūpānanda or brahmānanda. Lord Kṛṣṇa
as the highest Bhagavad tattva is conceptualised as the infinite reservoir of the
overflowing bounty of rasa. Therefore, He has been also defined as Rasarāja –
King of transcendental delight. That is, such a conception of God is not
unsupported by Śruti texts is already shown by the statement “raso vai saḥ” of
the Supreme Being that, elsewhere the Absolute Being is reported to have
declared in the language of the joy of creation of its infinite freedom: “It thought,
may I become many”. The spontaneous creative upsurge of the blissful
abundance is termed in theological context as līlā. The ethical question pertaining
to erotic imagery of the excessively theological interpretation of the nitya is to be
discerned thus.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa 2.10.13-30 while describing the different stages of
the causation of the world from the Supreme Being, the genesis of sex is also
traced to its creative urge: “When the Lord became desirous of having offspring
and enjoying women and heaven etc. there came into existence His organ of
generation and its presiding deity patriarch Brahma”. The same truth was also
declared by the Bhagavat in the Gītā that “He is the sexual desire between men
and women” etc. The entire value schema of the puruṣārtha has a strong

emphasis on the facticity of *kāma*. Therefore, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas cannot be blamed to be excessively erotic in their religious ideas. As Nārada says, it is imperative that, all the human actions including desire (*kāma*) are to be dovetailed towards the loving devotion of the Lord. What it means is that, through the adoption of any psycho-spiritual emotion like desire, attachment, extreme fondness and love, if directed towards their supreme object i.e., God, without any selfish interest to sub serve, but exclusively to please the object of love (hence, such a love is object-centered), then, it is true love or divine love exemplified by the lives of the Gopīs. But, it has many theoretical issues involved like the psychological implications of object-centricity of divine-love like “self transcendence” and in what sense God – the Absolute Being becomes pleased etc.? If Divine Love is aimed at the exclusive purpose of pleasing or serving the Lord, then, how is it become consistent with the Lord’s declaration in the Gītā that, He has no to desire to be accomplished by performing any work? Again, how shall one understand these problems with the Lord’s revelation that He is the source, sustainer and the supreme enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities of men? All these issues will be addressed in the main body of the thesis. For the time being it would be sufficed if we take that divine-love is no more a means to any other further goal but an end itself.

As it has been already mentioned earlier Jīva Gōvāmī and other scholars of Gauḍīya School consider devotional worship or “divine-love” to be a post-mukti transcendental process. Hence, there is no other way of interpreting the Bhāgavata text which says: “bhakti is the *parama dharma* and therefore the most

---

186 Badrinath, Chaturvedi, The Mahābhārata-An Inquiry in the Human Condition, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 2007, see the sections on “Kāma subject to dharma”, pp. 331-334, & “Puruṣārtha: human endeavour”, pp. 482-486. Also see, Chakravartl, Sitansu S., Ethics in the Mahābhārata, Munishiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2006, pp. 9-14. All these materials only deal with the conventional idea of dovetailing *kāma* towards the highest ideal of mokṣa. A reading of these sources becomes more problematic because of the fact that, it is yet not very clear if, Gauḍīya School believes in sublimation theory or looking at *kāma* with a negative attitude. This issue is crucial, because, the application of erotic imageries in the aesthetics of *nītya-līlā* is still a problem.
satisfying function of the soul” even in the post-liberated state. But this conclusion is not evident either in Nārada’s nor Śaṅḍilya’s Bhakti Sūtra.

The basic contributions of Nārada and Śaṅḍilya or those authors who speak through their mythic brand names which carry an automatic aura of being authoritative consist in re-imagining the concept of bhakti as a distinctive religio-philosophic attitude which they believe is indispensable for the attainment of mokṣa. Nārada’s conception of bhakti is more theistic and Paurāṇic, rather than its being a contention based on Śruti and Smṛtis like the Gītā just as Śaṅḍilya did on the philosophical assumptions of the Vedānta. Both would agree with the fact that devotional love or in its highest manifestation as divine-love in the ultimate analysis is the only means of spiritual perfection. In contradistinction to the Gītā, both believe that in bhakti all the other forms of sādhana are subsumed or transfigured in the sense that, when compared to bhakti, sādhana like karma and jñāna only serve the purpose of mental purification and the removal of obstacles standing on the way of the dawn of divine-love directed towards the Supreme Being. This is a position different what Madhusūdana said that, bhakti is the bridge between karma and jñāna.

Therefore, in having established the indispensable religio-philosophical status of the concept of bhakti, not merely as one of the ingredients of the synthesised process of sādhana, but as a predominant (mukhya or ananya) spiritual path these two Bhakti Sūtras have given credence to an evolving theistic spiritual consciousness. In doing this their respective authors had provided the authoritative reasons for further researching any possible ontological undercurrent of bhakti raised in their works as the highest form of spiritual-love. But, what is important for the theme of the thesis is that, both would leave prema-rūpa bhakti (Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, 2) right at the threshold of mokṣa and beyond which it has no more function.

187 Bhāg., 1.2.6, by “Sā vai pumsāṁ parodharmo yato bhaktiradhokṣaje/ ahaitukyapratiḥhatā yayātma sarhprasidat//”, as quoted by Kapoor, p. 176.
The said threshold syndrome is itself the point of departure for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas to install the same parama-prema right at the heart of the Divine, whose dynamic blissful energy (hīdainī śakti) and its sweetness (mādhurya) is far superior to His greatness or majesty and splendor (aivalaya). Thus, divine-love is His spontaneous and dynamic self-actualisation which is echoed by the declaration of Yājñavalkya in the Br. Up: ātmanastu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavatī⁵⁸⁸ — which most probably convey the philosophical truth that, directly or indirectly or as perversions or otherwise, every act of desire, love and attachment etc. eventually are the Self-reflexive, Self-love of the Supreme Being. They are the foretaste or the vague awareness of the ever lurking divine love. We love not because we choose, but because we cannot act otherwise. But as to how, the divine-love experienced in the life of a bhakta is reflected in this sort of spiritual situation is an altogether a different issue which will be dealt in the subsequent chapters. It will be sufficed to merely state here that; Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas would not interpret the above Upaniṣadic dictum in the reductionist sense of Advaita Vedānta but as the spontaneous self-expression of the Supreme Being. The whole concept of the nitya-līlā is the erotic-aesthetic representation of prema-bhakti which is not an allegorical illustration but a dynamic play of the creative as well as blissful Divine relish called bhakti-rasa. Thus, the Gauḍīya scholars would dedicate their entire lives just to give an aesthetic and religio-philosophical exposition and picturisation of divine-love as the sthāyibhāva (permanent spiritual emotion) of the Divine Drama or nitya-līlā which was left lurking at the threshold of mokṣa by Nārada and Śāṅkilya. For the Gauḍīya thinkers mokṣa is not the highest puruṣārtha – the sumnum bonum of life, but Bhagavad prīti or prema is.

⁵⁸⁸ Price, A.W., Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, Chapter 1: Friendship and Desire in the Lysis, pp. 7-8. Though connotations are not the same, the discourse on this topic has a reference to the fact that “there must be a single starting point, a ‘first dear’ (prōton philon) for the sake of which ‘all the other things’ are dear (219c-d2). This argument is rejected by Socrates as a futile distinction between two values as mean and end. This comes closer to Yājñavalkya’s statement “One loves everything else for the sake of the Self”.