Chapter – III

DIVINE GRACE AND ITS EXPLICIT EXPRESSION IN BHĀGAVATHA PURĀNA

Section – 1

Our main concern in this chapter is to analyse the doctrine of Divine Grace in the Bhāgavata Purāna, especially in relation to other purānic doctrines.

Divine Grace

As we have noted in the preceding chapter, the predominant tone of BhP. is the 'Divine Grace', which is explicit in ‘Posana’ – one of the lakṣḥnās of this Mahāpurāna. The concept of Divine Grace is very crucial to all the theological systems.

What is Grace? Though the common lexical meaning given to Grace is favour, elsewhere it is given as 'God's mercy'. Dr, Ninian Smart rightly says it as 'the help given
by the Lord to his devotees'. The Greek equivalent of this word is ‘charis’ and in the Hebrew it is ‘hesed’ – the loving kindness of God. The characteristic words used in the classical Sanskrit literature, especially in BhP., which denote the meaning of Grace are Prasàda, Krpa, Anukampa, Anugraha etc. There are also words such as daya (from root meaning ‘grant’), Karuna (from the root word meaning ‘do’) etc. to imply the above meaning. Whatever may be the etymology of these words, they have acquired the meaning ‘favour’ especially ‘helpful favour’ to those in need of it with which it is now associated.

Grace, in view of its general lexical usage, may be defined as a favour which we receive for nothing, or something that we get which is more than what we really deserve. Grace operates at three levels viz., at the level of nature, at the level of humanity and at the level of God direct. The grace that functions through nature and humanity is temporal and is limited in its scope, whereas the grace that comes direct from God is permanent and unlimited. This divine grace generally operates in the
spiritual life of mankind. Belief in grace presupposes a belief in a personal God (or at least a person able to grant help) who is the author and source of grace. This grace also points to man and his relation to this loving and merciful God. Hence, I think it is pertinent and needful to have glance at the nature of God which is pictured in the Bhāgavata purāṇa and the relationship of man to God.

The Nature of God

The personality and the nature of God in BhP., has been a controversial issue. Various schools of philosophy ranging from Advaita Monism to saṁkhya dualism try to accommodate their darśanās in line with BhP. But a close look at BhP. indubitably proves that the BhP., is mainly theistic. The very name of the Purāna-Bhāgavata purāṇa – (The purāṇa of the Lord) indicates that it is the story of the Lord par excellence. The emphasis on the personality of the Lord is effectively laid in the preliminary story of the genesis of the BhP., of how Vyāsa at the instance of Nārada composed the Bhāgavata for chanting the exclusive glories of the Lord and thus removing the
emptiness of his heart even after composing the *Mahābhārata*. So also the last *skandha* says:

In other works the Supreme Lord Hari, who destroys all the evils of the Iron age of Kali has not been praised in all their parts, but in this narrative the Bhagavān has been glorified in every word of it.

The supremacy of the Lord is more explicit in considering Āsraya as the chief characteristic of *Bhāgavata*. God is a God who creates, sustains and withdraws the universe into Himself. At the very outset of the *Purāṇa*, King Pariksit poses a problem before Suka regarding the character and the means of the highest realization. Suka’s answer brings out the full implications of the problem and points to one personal ultimate reality, the attainment of whom is the only possible way to realization. Suka says:

Hence, Oh King, in all places and at all times Lord Hari is the only object worthy of being studied, sung and remembered by men, with all their heart. Those who drink this nectar get their minds purified of the contamination of worldly objects, and attain to his lotus like feet.
It is this personal God who is the highest goal of men and should be understood as the Ultimate Reality, (parā-satya), the one who is eternal (nitya), and infinite (ananta). He is the fullness of being (purna satya) and dependent on nothing (svatantra). He is also conscious of his own existence (abhiṣa) and hence the fullness of bliss (ananda-nidhi) or the embodiment of highest bliss (ananda-matra). Therefore we can rightly say that the BhP. introduces Hari as sat-cit-ānanda, i.e. a highest Brahman. God is presented elsewhere as the only reality and apart from him nothing exists, though we will need to look further into the meaning of this later.

Whether it is substance (Dravya), deed (Karmam), Time, nature or individual soul – none of these have any existence independent of the Lord. It is by His grace that everything functions in the cosmos and they cease to do so when he becomes indifferent to them. This is an oft quoted passage by the famous Dvaitavādin, Madhva in order to prove the svatantra-paratantra philosophy. God is the source of all, and he is the highest cause of the
whole universe and the one who alone existed in the every beginning.\textsuperscript{19}

God is also pictured as the highest mystery in BhP. who is highly transcendent and who cannot be understood fully by finite men.\textsuperscript{20} No effort of man is feasible to understand the full reality and form of this transcendent God.\textsuperscript{21} Human knowledge is so limited that the cannot comprehend this transcendent God. Unless and until by his grace He reveals himself to man, man cannot know God. There are some who are fortunate enough and elected by God to experience him. The sages who instructed Narada can be cited as the best examples for this.\textsuperscript{22} Hence scriptures being the written expression of divine experiences are considered as but a partial revelation of the highest mystery. This fact is expressed in Siva’s words to Parvati where he says:

He is the same Eternal ancient person, unaffected by time and incomprehensible to the Vedas – The person about whom you enquired of me at the end of my deep yogic meditation which lasted one thousand years.\textsuperscript{23}
Brahma also admits that even though he and others sing the glories and various incarnations of God, they could not understand him fully. Only God alone knows Himself fully.

Various Names of Supreme Reality

There are so many complicated terms such as *saguna* or *nirguna*, *para* or *apara*, (Brahman) used to indicate the ultimate reality. Our problem here is to analyse the nature of these distinctions and find out the real meaning behind them. The BhP. itself says about Visnu.

Some regard you to be the *Brahman*; while others considers you to be Dharma. Some think you to be Supreme controller transcendental to both *prakrti* and *purusa*. Others regard you as one endowed with nine powers, while some others know you to be the Supreme Person, while your are changeless and self dependent absolute.

This may seem as merely reporting the various thought currents of the day. However, right at the very beginning the BhP. identifies *Bhagavān* as *para Brahman*
or the highest *Brahman* who is the Lord of the *satvatas*.\textsuperscript{26}

Also it explicitly states that Bhagavan Vasudeva is identical with the Ultimate Reality.\textsuperscript{27} The BhP. thus rules out the gradation of reality and the *saguna-nirguna* distinction when it speaks of Krisna. Devakis prayer reads thus:

> You are Mahaviśnu Himself, the light spiritual – what philosophers describe as the first, the unmanifest, the vast, the luminous, the one beyond the gunas; the changeless, the pure being, the unmodified and the desireless.\textsuperscript{28}

Kapila elsewhere identifies *Isvara* and *Puman* with para-brahman. He tells his mother:

> The *Para Brahman* is pure consciousness. He is described as the *Supreme ātman*, the *isvara* and the *purusa*. The Lord (Bhagavan) is the same who is equally perceived in different capacities.\textsuperscript{29}

Thus BhP. makes use of different titles to point out the ultimate truth.

But, as was implied above, it is important to note that nowhere in the BhP., do we see any particular title
used to indicate the 'higher and lower aspects'\textsuperscript{30} of the ultimate reality. Since the goal of man's search is \textit{Bhagavan} or \textit{Isvara} or \textit{Hari}, the author of the BhP., borrows the \textit{Upanishadic} words such as \textit{Brahman} and \textit{Atman} and equates them with the above. The BhP., thus identifies \textit{Viṣṇu} with \textit{Para Brahman}. This is implied in the words of Devahuti, when she addresses her son Kapila – an \textit{avatāra} of Lord \textit{Viṣṇu}.

I pay obeisance to you, Kapila, (who are the) Supreme Reality (para Brahman), (the) Supreme man (Para-Puman) (who are) worthy of meditation in the mind which is withdrawn from external objects, and who have dried up the flow of \textit{gunas} by your brilliance and who are \textit{Viṣṇu}, the source of Vedas.\textsuperscript{31}

If Kapila, the partial avatāra of \textit{Viṣṇu} becomes the \textit{Para Brahman}, how much more \textit{Kṛṣṇa} the \textit{pūrṇa avatāra} of \textit{Viṣṇu} according to BhP? The worthy disciple of \textit{Kṛṣṇa}, Uddhava – makes the following statement:

You are the Supreme Brahman, taintless like the sky, the spirit beyond prakṛti, yet, O Lord, you have \textit{descended} having assumed a distinct personality at your own will.\textsuperscript{32}
Bali, the King of daityas confesses:

Salutation to the O Kṛṣṇa! Who are the creators of the universe. The path of sankhya and yoga disciplines have both been originated by you. You are the Absolute, the Supreme Spirit.  

Hence he approves that Kṛṣṇa is the Para Brahma. According to BhP., to fix ones mind on the para Brahma means to fix it on Vasudeva

From the above discussion it is clear that the ultimate reality of the BhP., is identical with that of para Brahma, Bhagavān and Isvara as well as Kṛṣṇa, without any gradational meaning.

Another important aspect of God which needs our attention is the saguna-nirguna distinction. Saguna Brahma, and Nirguna Brahma is commonly understood according to advaitins and others as lower Brahma and higher Brahma respectively. We must however seek to understand these words saguna and nirguna in their original setting. The BhP., maintains that Bhagavān, the
final goal of man is both saguna and nirguna and the best example for this is Kapila’s instruction to his mother:

Through the realization of the true nature of the self and through dispassion do we attain to the same self-effulgent Lord, who is both with attributes and without attributes.\(^{34}\)

Other terms used in BhP., which convey the same meaning of saguna are possessed of numberless attributes, “possessed of infinite strength and many virtues and endowed with endless attributes.”\(^{35}\) Bhagavān is endowed with endless virtues and no body can surpass him in that.\(^{36}\) The word Nirguna also means at least in some places, that the Lord is devoid of the three gunās, namely satva, rajas and tamas.

The Lord is infinite and beyond the three gunas (Nirguna), assumes these gunās of sattva, rajas and tamas out of His inscrutable will (Māya) for purposes of creation, redemption and destruption.\(^{37}\)

Since the Lord is beyond prakṛti, he is nirguna.\(^{38}\) Although the Lord uses the gunās in creation, he is totally detached from them. This is well explained in the words of Uddhava to Nanda
Though untouched by the gunās (nirguna) He the unborn assumes these qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas, and sporting with them, though transcending them, creates, preserves and destroys the universe.\textsuperscript{39}

The BhP. is explicit in stating that God is not a void (śunya) even though some call Him like that.\textsuperscript{40} We can summarise this discussion by asserting that God is ubhaya-lakṣana\textsuperscript{41} i.e., He is free from all defects and is the abode of all noble virtues or qualities.

So then, does the BhP., understand God as personal or impersonal? Advaitist scholars tend to think that a personal God is necessarily inferior, (saguna and aparabrahman) whereas impersonal God is higher, (Nirguna and para-brahman) Dr. Chandradhar Sharma says “God is personal aspect of the Absolute and the Absolute is the impersonal aspect of God.\textsuperscript{42} Dr. Radhakrishnan also states that Isvara, according to Śaṅkara, is the determinate (saguna) Brahman regarded as the Supreme personality.\textsuperscript{43} To find out a solution to the above problem we have to understand the various meaning and functions of the words such as saguna and nirguna. Since there is
no unanimity in the concepts of ‘saguna’ and ‘nirguna’ among the Vedantins, we can depend only on the usages in different contexts.

Suka, while his conversation to King Parikshit says that though he was thoroughly grounded in nairgunya still he is charmed by the greatness of Hari. The BhP. elsewhere states that the sages who are known as nairgunyastha also delight in the glories of Hari. If these sages and Suka are ‘impersonal’ how can they delight in the stories of Hari? This clearly shows that nairgunya does not necessarily mean impersonal existence. Other usages such as nirguna bhakti, nirguna sradha in BhP. also do not mean impersonal. But the Bhagavatha’s usages of nirguna or aguna is meant to qualify certain nouns, such as hari, narayana, bhagavân, viṣṇu, Īsvar etc. which are commonly understood as indicating a personal being.

It is interesting to note that the function attributed to the personal, saguna God is equal to the impersonal, nirguna Brahman in Bhp. Īsvara is considered as the Lord
of Maya, who is responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. He is the revealer of Vedas and one who descends to the earth and bestows grace to men. Some of the earlier Upaniṣads also take the view of nirguna Isvara as personal being. In his advice to Dhruva, Svayambhuva says:

The Lord who transcends (puruṣarṣabha) the three gunas (Nirguna) serves only as an occasion for the transformation of these gunas. It is due to Him that this universe, consisting of both cause and effect remains in a state of flux even as iron is set in motion (by the presence of load stone). The Lord’s energy is divided when the equilibrium of the three gunās gets disturbed under the force of His energy known by the name of time. That is how He creates the universe, though remaining a nondoer and dissolves it even though a nondestroyer. The Lords energy is indeed hard to conceive.47

The above words prove that it is Bhagavān (nirguna purusarsabhā) who creates, and dissolves the world.48 The BhP. also holds that the nirguna puruṣa abides in all by His immanence.49 It also identifies Kṛṣṇa the son of Vasudeva (pūrnāvatāra of Viṣṇu)50 as Parabrahman and
hence nirguna. The prayer of King Mucukunda can be cited as an example for this. The best way to the bhakta to appropriate his grace is detachment from the world and attachment to Hari – the nirguna Brahman. Devotion to Vasudeva or fixing the mind on nirguna Brahman, BhP. exhorts, as the only way to attain the goal. There are innumerable passages which hold the view that the nirguna brahman is the personal Lord himself or the functions of the personal God and nirguna Brahman are identical. In short the concept of nirguna brahman of BhP. should be viewed in relation to Krsna – the pūrnāvatāra of Viṣṇu, who is the object of loving devotion of his bhaktās and the one who bestows his abundant grace upon all. Although the BhP. deals with various characteristic topics of purānās, its main and central theme is the all-merciful Personal God.

The Nature of God and Grace – Advaitic view point.

Though Śankara and Rāmanuja did not write any commentaries on BhP. some other advaitins have written commentaries on BhP. (as did Madhva the Dvaitin). In
fact the first available commentary is by Sridhara Swámin – an advaitin. Though the advaitic school also tries to accommodate the Bhágavatha Philosophy in line with their own, a close study of the BhP., reveals that the advaitic doctrine of God and grace is incompatible with important aspects of its philosophy. The main trend of the BhP., is theistic and hence bhakti and grace are its intrinsic undercurrent. No philosophical argument is needed to prove the existence of God – a personal saviour who bestows grace in BhP.

In the language of Dr. Ninian Smart, the system of Advaita is a double-decker\textsuperscript{53} theory or a doctrine of levels of truth. He says:

The fervent expression of the loving adoration of the Supreme Being, coupled with the sense that salvation depended with the non-dualism of the Advaita.\textsuperscript{54}

According to Śankara, Brahman is the only Reality. It is absolutely indeterminate, nirguna, indescribable and non-dual. This Brahman, conditioned by Māya is called Īsvara or God. Īsvara is the personal aspect of the
impersonal Brahman who is also called Apara Brahman, or lower Brahman as contrasted with the unconditioned Brahman which is called Para Brahman or higher Brahman. Isvara, the lower Brahman is responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. He is the one who is loving and gratuitous, not para Brahman. But Śankara's thrust is that apart from para Brahman all else is Maya or illusory. He maintains that the Absolute truth is impersonal i.e., devoid of distinguishing qualities. But we know that the absolute truth would be incomplete or abstract without personality. Śankara gave great emphasis to the Sanskrit phrase tat tvam asi and concluded that essentially there is no distinction between man and God. If it is so, there is no meaning in the concept of Divine Grace. As we have noted in the preceeding paragraphs, the BhP., emphasizes a personal loving God, yet who is transcendent and highest reality. The sharp theist-Monist divergence regarding the nature of Brahman becomes most serious on the question of divine grace.
Dr. Eric Lott says:

For while the theistic Vedântin tended to see the very highest form of transcendence, again immanently expressed, in the supreme persons freely bestowed grace, the Monist is bound to regard such ideas as little more than anthropomorphic projections, to be interpreted inline with his dominant theme – the limited reality of all relational existence.\textsuperscript{56}

Hence the concept of the divine grace takes a negligible role in Sankara’s scheme. Many scholars claim that Sankara’s whole writings are in tune with the \textit{Upani\textsuperscript{sd}adic} teachings especially the earlier \textit{Upani\textsuperscript{s}ads}. But we can see that the expression ‘\textit{neti, neti}’ used for \textit{Brahman} in \textit{Brihad\textsuperscript{ar}anyaka} does not necessarily mean that \textit{Brahman} is one without attributes at all, but is something more than the qualities posited. This certainly is a convincing explanation of this text as far as many \textit{vaisnavas} are concerned. \textit{Vi\textsc{\textsc{s}}\textsc{\textsc{n}}u Pur\textsc{\textsc{\textsc{n}}}na} also speaks of the Personal God:

Wisdom, might, strength, dominion, glory, without any evil qualities are all denoted by the word \textit{bhagavat}. This great word \textit{bhagavat} is the name of Vasudeva, who is the
highest *Brahman* and of no one else... All auspicious qualities constitute his nature... glory, strength, dominion, wisdom, energy, power and other attributes are collected in him... in whom no troubles abide... He who is the highest of the high, the person, the highest self...

The personal nature of God as seen by BhP., is perhaps most clearly shown in contra-distinction to the *advaitic* position in which *Brahman* the only ultimate reality, is understood to be pure quality less being, identical with pure consciousness, unqualified by differences and therefore pure unity. The *advaitin* who regards *Brahman* as ‘nirguna’ must use experience which is the ultimate proof according to BhP. The argument of *Brahman* as *nirguna* cannot be supported by perception also. The only reality, which is experienced is not one of pure and undifferentiated unity but as one characterized by difference.

In short, even if there is an *advaitic* dimension, the theistic strand is clearly to be taken as reality according to BhP., teaching. And most interpreters in the tradition
being Vaiṣṇavism have seen personal theism as the ultimate reality.

**Human Relationship to God**

What is the nature of man in relation with God or is there any need of divine grace for man? The answer is to be found when we analyse the nature of man and his relationship with God. As an answer to his enquiry Suka says to Parīkṣit:

You for your part, O King, give up this notion, characteristic of a brute, that you will die. Unlike the body, - which is born at a particular moment while it was non-existent before and therefore perishes – you were not so born and will not die.58

This is a pointer to show that life of man does not end with death, but there is something which continues beyond. The BhP., says that when death occurs, the jīvātman is not destroyed but can attain Brahman.59 One who identifies himself with the fickle body is a foolish man, says Kṛṣṇa60 - vidya or avidya, svātantrayam or pāratantryam exist in man in relation to this jīvātman
and this ķīvātman is also subjected to the karmic cycle. 61 Ignorance of one’s own real nature being unaware of ķīvātman as a particle of God is the cause of transmigration. The attachment of ķīvātman to the body in the previous life naturally gives birth to our present life. Hence ķīvātman is the connecting link of the karma samsāra. 62 Although the ķīvātman, (as a particle of God) is companion with the paramātman, the former may not know this. 63 Hence the grace of God is necessary to achieve liberation. In order to bring forth the distinction of the ķīva from the body, the BhP., borrows the Upaniṣadic usages of the relationship of fire and its sparks. 64 In other words, ķīva is distinct from Brahman, though related to it. In between the conversation Ḫṛṣṇa tells Uddhava that since ķīva is bound up with ignorance, it cannot attain self-awareness by itself, 65 but only by the grace of God. If the ķīvātman and paramātman are identical in all respects, then there would not be any need of divine grace. In his spiritual pilgrimage man should
know that he is more akin to God than to the world and only in Him can be find his ultimate aim fulfilled.

Section – 2

The Explicit Expressions of Grace in Bhāgavata Purāṇa

In the case of Bhāgavata's central theme, there is as we shall see, no doubt about the centrality of the Lord's Grace, even though it is intermingled with other doctrines. But at present in this chapter I shall deal with the isolated prasāda loci in BhP., and in the succeeding chapter, Divine grace in relationship with other doctrines.

Bhagavan, the Compassionate Lord

In all bhakti treatises, the greatest emphasis is laid on the importance of God's grace. So it is no wonder that the BhP., which extols mainly the bhakti path, explicitly indicates grace as an important topic. For the BhP. God is essentially the God of Grace. According to BhP., all preservation and nourishment, all kinds of protection
and progress of follow from the grace of God. Hence the Sloka:

‘Posanam tad anugrahah’

God is even more anxious about the welfare of His creatures than they themselves are, like a cow anxious about the welfare of her new born calf. God’s grace is perennial, spontaneous and impartial as it is His very nature, God’s prasāda is the best expression of his parental affection towards His devotees. At the arrival of Kṛṣṇa at Dwaraka after the Mahabharata war, the people gave him a warm reception. The response of the Lord was the bestowal of His grace upon them.

The Lord, who is the lover of the devotees heard these words of greetings of his people and bestowing his blessings upon them by graciously looking at them entered his city of Dwaraka.

God’s grace should be seen as the gift of God’s love towards his creatures. Grace and Love are the two sides of the same coin. He is not only bhakta-vatsala but compassionate to the afflicted also – ārta-anukampin.
Since God loves men and desires their well being, some of his *anugraha* may seem to be frowning at the first instance. But at the end may find that was a blessing in disguise. Narada says that the death of his mother was an *anugraha* of God for his spiritual upliftment. He says:

> Considering this as a blessing (in disguise) bestowed on me by the Lord who knows what is good for devotees, I started from that place in a northerly direction.\(^7\)

The very names *Hari* and *Kṛṣṇa* are also suggestive of Gods grace as they mean one who is eager to take away the sins, miseries and ignorance of *bhaktās* and to steal their hearts. The grace of God narrated in the BhP. is not theoretical but practical – a fact experienced by his ardent devotees. The BhP. holds the view that God is the only independent reality and all that exists does so only by His abundant Grace.

> The gross elements, Karma, Time, the mutability of matter and the *jīvās* exist only by His grace and cease to exist, the moment he shows indifference towards them.\(^8\)
Nobody can attain the grace of God unless He Himself takes the initiative. It is His flute that gathers all to Him.\(^72\) Man cannot, by himself know the Lord but God does reveal himself to man. Since God is essentially the God of Grace, all His creation is marked with His grace and the creatures realize that they are receiving the same every moment of their life.

Elsewhere in the BhP., *poṣana* is given a different word, namely ‘*Rakṣa*’ that also means protection given by the Lord.\(^73\) Though from the beginning to the end, the *anugraha* of the Lord is manifest in BhP., the sixth *skandha* has a special significance, it especially illustrate Hari’s special grace towards His fallen devotees. The *Indra-Vṛtra* legend\(^74\) and the salvation history of Ajamila, the sinner\(^75\) shows the nature of God’s Grace. Visnu is seen from the beginning as a God who had bonds of love and mercy, which culminated in *Kṛṣṇa*. The Supreme *purusa* is an ocean of kindness and mercy to all who depend on him. Grace, *per se* is without self-interest. This love is entirely altruistic. As divine grace is
love at its core, our devotion to God culminates in the love of Bhagavān.

**Discipleship – The Grace of God**

The insistence of instruction by an adept guru for attaining spiritual maturity is vivid with regard to the traditions of Hinduism. The individual guru as religious teacher who transmits the great religious truths becomes a locus, for worship in Hinduism. The Sanskrit term guru has a cluster of meanings with significance beyond the English translation as teacher. ‘Gu’ means ignorance and ‘ru dispeller.76 Thus guru as the dispeller of ignorance really is a Grace of God. The term guru also means heavy or weighty hence holy persons are of uncommon weight.77

J. Gonda states about Guru:

> It must primarily have described the man who on account of his special knowledge and function was held to be a bearer of power conspicuous by his prestige, weight and influence.78
It is also maintained, though not commonly, that guru is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘giri’ meaning one who calls.\textsuperscript{79} Kripal Singh writes:

Thus he who always hears this (divine) call within himself and is devotedly attached to the call and can make it manifest in others is described as Guru.\textsuperscript{80}

If the word \textit{guru} means many things, it is because the \textit{guru} is many things. Primarily, however the \textit{guru} is the personal teacher of spirituality, that is, of the basic, ultimate values perceived within the Hindu tradition. Further the \textit{guru} possesses experiential knowledge, not only intellectual knowledge of these values. In early Hinduism he was a vital factor in imparting \textit{vedic} knowledge, in later times the \textit{guru} became the visible embodiment of truth, and in some cases he has been worshipped as an incarnate deity. In later \textit{puranic} times, the devotional attitude towards the personal deity is shared by the Guru.

The opening scene of the BhP., stands as the preamble of the entire work, where we find the important
concepts of spiritual guide and grace. That is meant to tell us that the spiritual journey of a *bhakta* should be started by resorting to a worthy guide. In fact the whole BhP. is the teaching given by Suta to the *Rshis* who are longing to learn the highest good of man. As such this is a vast mine of secret mysteries of spiritual discipline (*sādhana*), which is meant for all who seek salvation. The BhP. teaches that, since man is bound by *anādi-avidya*, he needs a spiritual preceptor in order to lead him to God-realization. Hence the earthly teacher mediates this divine instructions; he is given to the devotee by God. Therefore a good teacher is a Grace of God. The sages of the Naimiśāranya accepted Suta as their spiritual master and told him that it is the great providence (*dhatr*) of Īśvara, that they met him to help them crossing the turbulent sea of Kali age, that they themselves cannot cross over. Therefore in the opening chapter of the BhP. itself we come across the concept of divine grace, mediated through *Guru-śiṣya* relationship. We have already noted the providential meeting of Ṣuka, the
supreme teacher of the ascetics – and Parīkṣit who longed for God’s Grace.\textsuperscript{86} There are many instances in BhP. which how the role, nature and importance of spiritual Gurus. The BhP. teaches that the guru is to be regarded as the deity and worshipped, for mokṣa is attained only under the guidance of a guru. (10.86. and 11.3) On the other hand, the BhP, counsels, this Guru must know the Vedas well, worship Kṛṣṇa (11.3.21) and be in control of all passions (11.10.5).

The prasāda of a teacher has long lasting effects even after the end of guru-sisya relationship. Even Kṛṣṇa himself under went discipleship and in later times recalled the happy time of Gurukulavāsa, when he met his friend and classmate Sudāma. Not only both the friends recalled the over flowing love and kindness of their preceptor, but Kṛṣṇa even remembered the last blessing.

‘May your knowledge of scripture always remain fresh’ – also. He also added that one becomes pūrṇa only by the Grace of God.\textsuperscript{87}
Devahuti considered herself blessed by the advent of Kapila (Visnus descendent) as her guide to lead her from darkness to light like an eye and like a sun.\textsuperscript{88} She feels that being a woman she cannot comprehend the eternal truth that leads to God-realization, but she strongly believed that by the grace of Kapila she will easily understand that which is needed.\textsuperscript{89}

Spiritual instruction is not just imparting certain vague ideas to be realized but is a self disclosure of the guru, whereby the sisya understands what he wants to know which is \textit{tattavatah} and hence God realization. This sharing is considered by BhP. as an expression of \textit{anugraha} towards the beloved student.\textsuperscript{90} The very act of teaching of a guru also is marked with his grace. To make his teaching forceful, the Guru also seeks God’s Grace. We see Suka who fixes his mind on Visnu before he narrates the story of Hari and begs for his grace.\textsuperscript{91} Hence the Grace of God not only works in the guru, but also through the guru, it works within the heart of the sisya. The Guru is the channel of divine grace. It really is the
Grace of God that works within an individual, while removing the dirt of avidya and leads him to God realization.

But the ‘sisya’ who desires to receive the Grace of God through the preceptor in its full capacity also needed to fulfil certain requirements such as jijnāsa, vairāgya, sraddha, ūṣrūṣa et. The devotee should be eager to know the real truth (jijnāsu) while admitting that human being in this world is the victim of ignorance who is not aware of his life goal and is a mūdha. He should wake up from his sleep and keep away from the unrealities of the world. The BhP. says, that this world is naśvara

Secondly he should be one who has subdued all his passions and desires, (Vairāgik) or show virakti to desire, covetousness, selfishness etc. and meditate upon the lord only. Or he must be free from all worldly attachments.

He also should have complete faith or confidence (sradha) both in the Guru and what he teaches him. As
we have seen earlier, the sages of Naimiṣaranya had full faith in Suta and requested him to narrate the glorious katha of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. The death of his mother came as a Grace of God to Narada to have more sradha in the Lord.

Another important quality the seeker should have is 'susṛuṣa – the notion of loving servitude. It also means, desirous to hear as well as showing reverence. All these spiritual qualities will help the seeker for the bestowal of Guru’s Grace, i.e., God’s grace. The eleventh skandha of BhP. gives a long list of do’s and don’t’s for the spiritual pilgrim. The guru who is transformed by Hari leads his sisya to a deeper love and communion with the Lord. Thus Guru acts as the mediator of God’s Grace. The dialogue between the guru and 'şiṣya in the opening chapter of BhP. is symbolic of God and man because God is the true and real teacher of all mankind. Ultimately it is the loving God who shows mercy upon his devotees. A call to discipleship is a call to Anugraha.
**Mahat-Sanga – the Krpa of God**

The company of holy men and true devotees— the *sat-sanga*, which is itself regarded as a divine favour is another important channel of divine grace in BhP. It is even believed that it is God Himself who comes to the earth in disguise in order to grace His devotees. This idea is beautifully illustrated in Prthus words to Sanatkumara:

> It is obviously certain that the unborn bhagavān who shines as the immanent spirit of the self-knowing sages, and who manifest himself goes about in the world, in the form of *siddhās* (like you) for showering his grace upon his votaries.\(^{100}\)

The sānnidhya of a saint is definitely an *anugraha* because it helps the devotee to convert from their miserable ways. In dialogue between Vidura and Maitreya, the former says:

> It is a fact that really auspicious devotees of Lord Krṣṇa move about in this world with a view to be gracious to people who by their misfortune have become averse to Krṣṇa and (consequently) unrighteous and extremely miserable.\(^{101}\)
What is the reason behind the BhP's assertion that the company of holy ones is an *anugraha*? This is because the BhP., believes that the saint is an embodiment of all spiritual qualities, who not through his words, but through his special way of life give expression to that which is an *anugraha* to those who really seek God-realization. By imitating the saints one can reach his destination. However for this kind of imitation also man needs God's Grace. Apart from Him one can do nothing. Bali says about himself with reference to Prahlada:

> It is impossible for persons like me, whose tendencies for worldly enjoyments have not been effaced and who have not received the Lord's grace to think or dream of following the example of that great personage.\(^{102}\)

The saint is one who is very much concerned about the spiritual progress of his fellow beings, an embodiment of love and charity and bears the burden of others, so that others may draw to the Lord through his saintly activities.\(^{103}\) He is one who has renounced everything for the sake of Lord, just like Parikṣit renounced everything, reckoning that adoration of the feet of the Lord is superior.
to all else.\textsuperscript{104} He is one who is fully possessed by Sri Hari and acts as a "way" to the Lord.\textsuperscript{105} He is the man transformed by his love for God a love which is made possible only by the Lord's grace and his life is a revelation of the glory of God. Through \textit{Hari Katha} the saint attracts others to God. Thus he makes available the presence of the Lord as a reality. Even Krsna tells Uddhava that the saints are God's as well as one's own kith and kin. He also identified the saints with Himself.\textsuperscript{106} The service of the feet of holy man is equal to the service of the Lord Himself.\textsuperscript{107} The BhP., says that the Lord is the soul of the saint.\textsuperscript{108}

The mission of a saint is to bestow God's Grace upon various people. It was with this intention that Kṛṣṇa sent his beloved friend Akrura to Hastinapuri:\textsuperscript{109} The effect of saints upon sinful people is well defined in Kṛṣṇa's words when he sent Akrura to Hastinapuri:

Such revered and worshipful personages like you should alone be approached and served by those who care for their own real good. For even the Devas are selfish but not such noble and holy personages. It is not that holy
waters are not purifying. It is not also that divine images made of stone or muds are not sacred. The purification they effect is however, attainable only in the course of a very long time, but holy men effect it at sight.\textsuperscript{110}

The life and work of the saint forces a sinner either to repent or to react strongly, for the presence of holy men shakes the very life of the sinner. On the other hand the true bhaktās consider the availability of saints in their midst as a great expression of God's providential act. The God who showers his blessing upon his devotees does it through the sending of saints to them. Kṛṣṇa's dealings with the cowherdess reveal this truth. As he was away from them he sends his friend Uddhava to Vṛja in order to replace his absence among them. Nanda received him, considering him as Lord Kṛṣṇa himself. Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava:

\begin{quote}
O Uddhava! O dear one, you must go up to Gokula, you have to cheer our parents (Nanda and Yasoda). You have also got to assuage the grief of the Gopis, arising from separation from me, by delivering them a message.\textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}
He graced the cowherdesses by singing the glories of the lord, staying with them and consoling them, telling that their great friend will come soon. Krṣṇa says that sat-sanga is the best means for helping one to attain God.\textsuperscript{112} In sum the BhP., explicitly advocates that sat-sanga is really the grace of the Lord.

Notes & References


3. 1.5.8-9


5. Daśamasya Viśudhyartham
   navanamiha lakṣanam.

6. 2.10.1-7.
7. atah procchāṇi samsiddhim yoginam paramam gurum, puruṣasyeha yat karyam mānasya sarvathā ......va brūhi yadva viparyayam. 1.19.37.38

8. tasmāt sarvātmanā rājan hariḥ sarvatra sarvadhāḥ, srotavayaḥ kīrtitavyaśca smartavyo bhagavān nṛnām tatcāranaśarōruhantikam II.2.36-31

9. I. 1.1b.
10. 2.6.39b.
12. 2.6.39b.
14. Ibid.,
15. 2.1.89b.
16. Dravyam karma ca kalasça svabhavo jīva eva ca vasudevat parō Brahman anyorthostī tatvāt. 2.5.14.
17. dravyamkarma ca kālasca svabhāvo jīva eva ca yadunugrahataḥ śānti na śānti yadupeksāya. 2.10.12.
18. jannadyasya yataḥ....1.1.1a
19. bhagava neka asedamagra atmaḥ tmanam vibuh 3.5.23
20. so, mṛtasyābhayasyeśo martyamannah yadatyagāt, mahimaisa tato brahman puruṣasya duratyayah. 2.6.17
21. na cāsya kascinnipunena dhaturavaiti jantuh kumanisa ātih, nāmāni rupāni manovacabhiḥ
The names used by various groups are identified as:

- Vedāntins - Brahman
- Mīnāmsakās - Dharma
- Sāṅkhyas - Supreme controller
- Panḍarātrās - One endowed with nine powers such as vimala, ut-karṣini, jñāna, kriya, yoga, prahvi, satya Ísana, anugraha
- Patanjala Yoga - Mahā puṣuṣa


26. ...bhagavān satvatāṁ patiḥ 1.1.12.

27. jñānam viśuddham paramārtham -
ekamanamtram tvabahirbrahma satyam
pratyak praśāntam bhagavacchabdaramjñam
yad vāsudevam kavayo vadanti. 5.12.11.

28. rūpam yat tat prāhura vyaktamādyam
brahma jyotimirgunam nirvikāram
sattāmātram nirviseṣam nirīham
sa tvam sākṣad viṣṇuradhyātmadipah 10.3.24.

29. jñānamātramparam brahma paramā tmesvarah
puman
drśyādibhiḥ prthagbhavairbhagavaneka iyate.
3.32.26.

30. Para and Apara Brahman

31. tam tvāmaham brahma param pumāmsan
pratyā ksrotasyātmani samvibhāvyam
svatejasa dhvastagunapraśvāham
vande viṣṇum kapilam vedagarbham. 3.33.8.

32. tvm brahmā paramam vyoma puruṣah prakrteh
paraḥ, avatirnosi bhagavān
svecchopattapṛthagvapuh 11.11.28.

33. namoṃnantaya brhtenamaḥ kṛṣṇaya-vedhase,
sāṅkhya yogavitanaya brahmane paramatmne
10.85.39.

34. ātmatatvā vabodhena vairāgyena drdhena ca,
iyate bhagavanebhīh sāguṇo nīrgunaḥ svadrk.
3.32.36.

35. aneka guna 4.21.34a.
duranta-virya-uru-guna-anubhava. 5.25.13a.
ananta-guna, 10.50.30a.

36. cf.1.18.20

37. sattvam rajastama iti nirgunasya gunastrayah, sthti sarganirodhasu, grhita mayaya vibhoh, 2.5.18.


39. nirgunoppi hyajosvyakto bhagavân prakrteh para: 7.1.6a.

40. cf. 9.9.49.

41. Having two fold characteristics.

42. A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, rep. 1979) p.27.


44. idambhagavatam namapurana nam brahmasammitam adhitavan dvaparadau piturdyapayanadaham parinistthi toj pi nairgune uttama slokali laya grhitaceta rajarse akhyanam yadadhitavan 2.1.8-9.

45. prayenamunayo rajan nivrtta vidhise dhatah, nairgunyastha ramante sma gunamikathane harch. 2.1.7.

46. 3-29.12, 11.25.27.
47. nimmattamātram tatrāśīṁnīrgunah puṁsarasābāh, vyaktāvyaktamidam viśvam yatra bhramati logavat, sa kalvedam bhagavān kālaśaktya gunapravahena vibhakta viryāh, karotya kartāiva nihantyahanta ceṣṭā vibhummah khaluy durvibhavya. 4.11.17.18.

48. cf. 2.5.18 and 3.7.2-7.

49. 3.26.3 & 8.24.6.

50. Kṛṣṇa as the pūrnāvatāra of Viśṇu will be dealt with later.

51. tasmād viṣṛjyāśīsa īśā sarvato rajastamahsattvagunanubandhanāh, niranjanam nirgunamadvayam param tvām jñānaptimātram puṁsam vṛajamyaham. 10.51.57

52. 4.22.22a.


54. op.cit p. 35.

55. Brahma satyam Jagad mithya


57. Viśṇu Purāṇa. VI. 5.72, 82-87 , 1.2.10.

58. tvam tu rājan marisyeti paśubuddhimimām jahi, na jātah pragabhūtodāya dehavattvam na nanksya si. 12.5.2

59. evam dehe mṛte jīvo brahma sampadyatepunah – 12.5.5b.

60. murkho dehadyahambdhīh... 11.19.42a.
61. atah param yadvyaktamavyūdha

at par

advat

yadv

yadvyaktamavyūdhagunavyūhitam,
adṛṣṭa śrūtavastutvāt sa jīvo yatpunarbhavah.

1.3.32.

62. 11.28.16.

63. na yasya sakhyam purusoṅvaiti sakhyuh

na yasya sakhyam purusoṅvaiti sakhyuh

sakhā vasan samvasataḥ pureṣmin. 6.4.24a.

64. yada sudīptat pāvakād vis phulingah

yada sudīptat pāvakād vis phulingah

sahasraśah prabhavāute...Mund. Up.II.1.1

sahasraśah prabhavāute...Mund. Up.II.1.1

...yathagnēḥ kṣudra viśpulinga vyuccaranti

Brh. Up. 2.1.201 cf. Bhp.3.29.40. Quoted from

Brh. Up. 2.1.201 cf. Bhp.3.29.40. Quoted from


65. 11.22.10.


67. 2.10.4.

68. Iti cōṭirita vacā praṇānam bhaktavatsala

Iti cōṭirita vacā praṇānam bhaktavatsala

srūvanojnugraham drṣṭya vitanvan

srūvanojnugraham drṣṭya vitanvan

pravisantupurim. 1.11.10.

69. kṛto meṣ nigrah pūrvam harina/arthanukampina

kṛto meṣ nigrah pūrvam harina/arthanukampina

tamāpādayitum braḥman bhagavan yūyamāgata.

tamāpādayitum braḥman bhagavan yūyamāgata.

4.22.42.

70. tada tadahamiśasya bhaktānām samabhīpsatah,

tada tadahamiśasya bhaktānām samabhīpsatah,
anugraham manyamanaḥ: pratistham diśamutaram.
anugraham manyamanaḥ: pratistham diśamutaram.

1.6.10.

71. dravyam karma ça kālascu svabhāvo jīva eva ca

dravyam karma ça kālascu svabhāvo jīva eva ca

yadanugrahataḥ santi na santi yadupekṣaya.
yadanugrahataḥ santi na santi yadupekṣaya.

2.10.12.

72. cf. 10.29.3.
73. 12.7.14
74. 6.7-17.
75. 6.2-3
81. 1.1.6-11.
82. pumsāmekāntataḥ śreyastannah saṃsītum arhasi 1.1.9b.
83. Beginningless nescience.
84. anādyavidyāyuktasya puruṣasyātma veda pari, svaṭōna sambhavādanyastattvajno jñānado bhavet 11.22.10.
85. 1.1.22.
86. anyatha te 7 vyaktagaterdarsanam naḥ katham nrnam, nitharam mriyamānānām samsidyasya vanīyasah. 1.19.36.
87. 10.80.42-43.
88. tasya tvam tamaso/ndhasya duṣpārasyādyaparagam, saccakṣurjanmanāmante labdham me tvadanugrahāt. 3.25.8.

89. 3.25.30.

90. 1.1.8

91. 2.4.19-22.

92. naṣṭa-smṛti

93. evam lokam param vidyānناسvaram karmanirmitam 11.30.20.

94. sarvatomānaso/sangamadau... 11.30.23a.

95. cf. 1.6.27-28, 1.12.4b, 1.13.25a, 4.22, 21b, 3.24.47, 3.25.24a. etc.

96. cf. 1.1.22.


98. 11.3.18-30.

99. sad guru and jagad guru (1.11.7 & 1.8.25).

100. vyaktamātmavatātmām abhagavānātmabhāvanah svānāmanugrhayemamsiddharūpī caratyajah 4.22.16.

101. Anugrahāyehah caranti Nūnam, Bhūthānī Bhavyānī janārdhanasya 3.5.3.


103. sarva-bhūta-hṛdaya. 1.2.2b.
104. 1.19.5b.

105. Vaikunta-vartman. 3.7.20a.

106. devatā bāndhavāḥ santaḥ santa atmāhameva ca 11.26.34b.

107. yatsevāyā bhagavataḥ kūtasthasya madhudvisah, ratiraso bhavet tīvraḥ pādayorvyasanārdanaḥ. 3.7.19

108. bhāgavata ātmanah satām. 2.2.37a.

109. sa bhavan suhrdam vai nah sreyam sreyacheyascikīrṣaya jijnasartham pāndavānām gacchasva tvam gajahvayam. 10.48.32.

110. bhavadvīdha mahābhāgā nisevyā arhāsattamāḥ śreyaskāmaṁairnbhirṇityam devaḥ sarthā na sādavah, na hyammayāni tīrthāṇi na deva mrchilamayah tepunantyurukalena darśanādeva sādavah. 10.48.30.31.

111. gacchoddhava urajam saumya pitornau prītimāvaha, gopīnāṁ madviyogādhim madsamdeśairvimoçaya. 10.46.3.

112. na rodhayati māṁ yogona sāmkhyam dharma eva ca,

na svādhyāyastapastyāgo neṣṭapūrtam na daksīṇa, vratāṇi yajñaśchandānsi tīrthāṇi niyamā yanāh yathāvarundhe satsangaḥ sarvasangapaho hi māṁ. 11.12.1-2.
Chapter - IV

DOCTRINES INTERRELATED WITH THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE GRACE