In the introduction to this part the importance of this chapter has been mentioned. Indeed, this chapter is meant to contribute something to the truth-value of our thesis, as has been pointed out. The function of this chapter will become clear after the purpose of avatara and incarnation is dealt with. On the other hand, this chapter, in turn, will make us understand better the purpose of avatara and incarnation.

The lives of four saints will be treated, one male and a female, representing Krsna-bhakti and Christa-bhakti (bhakti understood in the broad sense) namely, Sts. Narsi Mehta, Mirabai, Francis of Assissi and Teresa of Avila. First some biographical data will be given. These data will help us to assess the nature of the 'soil' where the theanthropos-value can grow and flourish. Then we shall concentrate on the great impact the theanthropoi had on their lives. Special attention will be paid to the whole-hearted dedication of these saints to the theanthropoi.

In our study it is important to get absorbed in the lives, deeds and words of these saints. Otherwise, these lives will have the fate of a rose brought for research to the laboratory of a botanist. Once we shall have experienced realistically the Krsna-value and Christ-value by contemplating the lives of these saints, our considerations of these values will get a newer meaning and greater depth.
A. LORD KRISHNA IN HINDU LIFE-SITUATION

Krsnabhakti (i.e. Krsnabhakti in its broad sense which could be rendered in English is 'Krsnaism') has been and still is perhaps the most powerful religious-current that has been and still is fertilizing the religious soil of India as a whole. The great Krsna shrines of Bhadrinath and of Mathura in the North, of Tirupparuttii and Guruvayur in the south, of Dwarka and Pandharpur in the West and Jagannathpuri in the East are veritable fountains of Krsna-bhakti currents that flow the length and breadth of the Indian sub-continent. Some of the great acaryas like Ramanuja, Vallabha and Madhava, saints like Caitanya, and Jayadeva, in the East, the great Alvars in the South, Jñanesvar and Tukaram in the Centre and Narasimha and Mirabai in the North-West were Krsnabhaktas who radically influenced the religiosity of their respective regions and beyond, in terms of karma, jnana and bhakti.

Often it is said that the Krsna of the popular devotion has nothing to do with the Krsna of the BG. One might point out such sacred books as the Bhagavata-Purana and the Naradabhakti Sutra, or the hymns composed by saints like Jñanesvar or Narsi Mehta as the chief sources of to-day's Krsnabhakti, Krsnabhakti understood in the broad sense of Krsnaism. But hardly anyone can doubt the great influence the BG has on these bhakti scriptures and on the writings of the saints of the middle ages. Besides, if we go beyond the symbols through which Krsnabhakti is expressed we are bound to see the Krsna-value upheld in the BG.
It has been pointed out how there are various grades of jñāna and bhakti in the BG. To-day, for instance we can notice the representatives of the four kinds of bhaktas spoken of in our sacred text (7:16). On the other hand in the lives of saints like Narsi Mehta and Mirābai we can see the living expressions of niskamakarmayoga advocated in the BG though according to the temperament of the saints and according to the demands of the socio-religious situations the emphasis on karma, jñāna or bhakti may differ.

In this chapter first we shall briefly describe the life of Narsi Mehta and then shall concentrate on his wholehearted, total dedication to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Our study of St. Mīrā too will be along the same lines. When we realize the totally absorbing impact of Lord Kṛṣṇa in their lives, we are bound to appreciate more and to see in a new light the Kṛṣṇa-value we will be treating later on. Once we have described these high-points of Kṛṣṇabhakti as manifested in the lives of these saints, we will be in a position to appreciate more the popular expressions of Kṛṣṇaism in the lives of the ordinary people through various symbols.

1) St. NARASI MEHTA

"There is no singing without Kṛṣṇa"1, so goes a North Indian saying. To a great extent, this saying is true of India as a whole. For, the Kṛṣṇa-theme has been, down the centuries, one of the most, if not the most, sources of poetic inspiration in most of the Indian languages. This is true of Gujarati the birth-place of Lord Kṛṣṇa, in a special way. If Kṛṣṇa-theme is the heart of
Gujarati poetry, it is chiefly due to St. Narasi Mehta, the Adi-Kavi of Gujarati.

St. Narasi was more a bhakta than a poet-poet especially in the modern sense of the term. He was a poet who breathed Krsna-bhakti, whose every heartbeat, so to say, proclaimed Krsna-bhakti and whose life, after his special mystical experience at the beginning of his adulthood, was an uninterrupted flow of pure Krsna-bhakti. He was a religious poet, a saint. The bhakti-current that flowed from Narasi, dividing itself into various tributaries through his followers, fertilized the length and breadth of Gujarat, and other regions beyond its boundaries with warm, sweet and joy-giving Krsna-bhakti.

Biographical Sketch

It is a fact of history that often extraordinary men become legendary figures due to exaggerated popular enthusiasm. But it is also a fact of history that there have been real legendary figures, an unexaggerated description of the facts of whose lives would appear legendary. St. Narasi Mehta, in a sense, belongs to this latter category of great men. His life was so full of so many extraordinary or even miraculous happenings that people who still cling to out-dated rationalism and scientism, may call into question not only the factuality of these tradition but the very historicity of the saint. Such a position is no better than that of the uncritical and credulous attitude of the traditionalists. The change that brought about in his life-style by a
profound mystical experience near an "unworshipped Sivalinga", the various incidents narrated in connection with the marriage of his son Samal and of his daughter Kumvarbai, his challenging defiance of the political as well as the religious leaders to follow his own religious convictions and inspirations, his amazing literary qualities without any formal education etc. are narrated in terms of miracles and divine interventions.

Without much scientific research into historical questions it is quite logical to affirm on the basis of the great impact he had and still has on the religio-cultural life of Gujarat, that he was a towering personality of his time. Narsi is not only part of the conscious religiosity of Gujarat but he also has an important share so to say, in the "collective Unconscious" of Religious Gujarat. The metaphorical and proverbial use of his name in Gujarati literature as well as in the ordinary life of the people of Gujarat bears out this fact. Mr. Jethalal Trivedi in his critical study of our saint brings out this idea clearly. Thus any simple, guileless man of God is nicknamed Narasi Mehta. So too a man (in different) about his wife and children, centering his life on the Lord in chanting bhajans with special attraction towards the village temple and its surroundings is a "Narasi Mehta" in Gujarati speech. One who is unconcerned about public opinion in living one's bhakti-religion and one whose religiosity goes beyond the borders of one's own caste or creed is also nicknamed Narasi Mehta. Such Narsi Mehtas are not wanting even in the sophisticated surroundings of the universities.
Birth and Childhood

Still the date and place of birth of our saint are disputed issues. Generally all the biographers agree that his birth-place was somewhere near Junagadh, probably in the village called Talaja, as one of the verses attributed to him makes mentions. After examining the theories of various scholars like K.M. Kunshi, K.K. Sastri and others Mr. Trivedi concludes as follows: “Thus, in the light of to-day’s information and documentary sources, it seems warranted to say that Narasi Mehta’s birth was around 1540 Samvada era and death (end of his poetic productivity) around 1594 of the same era.” This opinion goes against the traditional one that the saint’s life time was between 1470 to 1530 (Samvada).

It is generally believed that he lost his parents before reaching adolescence. This names are still disputed, though many people consider them having the names as Krsna Damodar and Dayabor or Daya Kumri. The date of the saint’s marriage with Manek Mehti is not known. Numerous legends are centred round the persons of his son Samal and of his daughter Kumvarbai. He belonged to the Nagar Brahmin caste. There is no serious dispute about the difficulties and persecutions he suffered in his big brother’s house (cousin brother?) due chiefly to the hard-heartedness of his sister-in-law, since he gives hints to them in his bhajans.

There is a wide belief that he was dumb from birth until the spiritual powers of a pilgrim sadhu at Junagadh gave him the power of speech. The sadhu made him first utter the two sacred names, viz. Radha-Krsna. These two names remained for him most sacred.
till his death, and these two names form the heart of his devotional songs. This legend confirms the traditional belief that he was a dunce in his childhood.

Already in his childhood and in his early adolescence he felt quite at home with the sadhus who encamped in Junagadh on the way to Girnar. This care-free religion-centred life must have infuriated his sister-in-law. He at last leaves home, tired of her taunts, quarrels and persecutions. In his wandering through the jungles he comes across a neglected (apuj) Śiva-linga. He takes refuge at the feet of Lord Śiva symbolized by the Śiva-linga. He remains there for a few days in an ecstatic mood unconscious of the world around him. It was here he had the most significant religious experience which gave a new turn to his life. It is believed that Lord Kṛṣṇa himself appeared to him. Kunshiji however, interprets his vision of the bearded Lord Śiva as the meeting of a Southern Sadhu. We find no psychological difficulty in admitting a real religious experience of God in the Lord of Lord Śiva without postulating the presence of a Sadhu, and a South Indian Sadhu at that. The surprising thing is that he asks Lord Śiva the boon of the vision of Rasa-līla in the heavenly Vṛddhavana.

There is an apparent discrepancy in a Vaisnāvite taking refuge at the feet of Lord Śiva and of asking this deity for a Vaisnāvite experience. In fact this obvious discrepancy points towards the fact that there is some truth enshrined in these legends rather
than that the whole legend is purely fictitious. If it were purely fictitious, such an obvious discrepancy would not have escaped a fable-maker whose primary interest is to make the listeners or readers to believe as a fact what in truth is a fiction. From a philosophical point of view there is no real discrepancy since there is only one WR who manifests himself in diverse forms or who is conceived diversely by different people.

What is to be noted is that his Raśa-Kṛṣṇa experience though through a Śiva-experience, was the most overpowering of his religious experiences. We do not know whether he witnessed the Raśa-līlā in the Geographical Dvāraka or in the Psychological Dvāraka in his inner self. However, the belief that while Narasi was witnessing the Raśalīlā in total absorption holding a torch his hand got burned like a wick, That Lord Kṛṣṇa healed his mutilated hand does not seem to have taken place in a supernatural realm or in a psychological region for obvious reasons. Hence Munsiji's view that Narasi after his Śiva-experience went to Dvāraka with the a "Southern Sadhu" and witnessed real Raśa-līlā enacted probably by the devotees, has some strength. It is this 'torch incident' that made him call himself the 'Divatio' (the man who is a wick) of the Lord in the sense that his total being was burning with the Love of Kṛṣṇa like a wick, and was spreading the light of Kṛṣṇa's life of love through his own burning love. However, the unknown author of the Haradhālā describes this incident as a dream (samanamān).
After witnessing the Rasa-līla he deeply experiences within the attitudes of the gopis to Lord Kṛṣṇa, namely the attitudes of unconditional love and whole-hearted self-surrender. According to Munsiji’s picturesque description, the saint too took part in the Rasa-līla in the ‘geographical Dvāraka’.

Later on he would celebrate this experience by the well-known bhajan according to which the physical weakness of the sakhi is the greatest strength to please the all-powerful Kṛṣṇa and that his masculinity has very little to do with his liberation for which the strength of the Lord’s grace is needed. As Munsiji says “the whole of his later life was a great (pracand) shadow of this experience.”

He remained Kṛṣṇa’s, so to speak, ‘male’ sakhi all through the rest of his life psychologically, intellectually and spiritually. At times he used to dance singing bhajans dressed like a woman.

Bhajans of pure Kṛṣṇa-bhakti began to flow from his mouth. Some people began to join him in singing the praises of the Lord while some others laugh at him. The number of Radhākṛṣṇabhaktas under his leadership began to increase. Large number of devotees began to go about in procession singing the songs of the Lord with the accompaniment of various types of musical instruments, having Narasi at the head. Unlike St. Tukaram’s wife, Narasi’s wife cooperated with him in his various bhakti-programmes. The untouchables too wanted to share the sweetness of Kṛṣṇabhakti imparted by Narasimehta. Knowing fully well, in the spirit of the Gītā (9:32) that the Lord does not make distinction between different castes as far as bhakti is concerned, Narasi Mehta goes to the colony of
the untouchables (śāhīvāda). to the fury of the Nāg-r-brahmins of the place. The Hindu religious leaders ostracized him for following the BG.18

Narasi’s death occurred after that of his son and of his wife. There is a legend according to which he had vowed to complete one and a quarter lakh verses before his death. He began to be sad at the thought that death would soon occur before the fulfillment of his vow. He had by then completed only a hundred thousand verses. It is believed that his daughter-in-law set his mind at peace, promising him that she would compose the remaining twenty five thousand verses in his name. Not many people share in this belief. However, it shows that in his old age his daughter-in-law was with him at his service.19 Probably he returned to his Lord in mukti not in Junagadh but in Māngarol where still there is a cremation ground known as “Narasinhni khād” (the valley of Narasinh).

Numerous interventions of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and Lākṣmīji in the life of Narasi are believed to have taken place. In one sense it is quite logical to believe that the Lord for whose sake one had renounced all the "dharmas" and taken refuge in him, should see to it that the dharma of his bhakta would not remain unfulfilled keeping with his promise in BG 18:66. Hence, it must be said that an uncritical belief in the miracles in the lives of saints like Narasi is no greater foolishness than an outright denial of them on a priori rationalistic grounds. After all beliefs in palmistry and in astrology are on the increase especially in the
sophisticated cities like London, Paris and Bombay, and these beliefs betray to a great extent, as much credulous and uncritical attitudes as in beliefs in miraculous events believed to have happened in the lives of saints. The numerous miracle stories spoken of in connection with the life of our saint can be taken as the expressions of the traditional belief with some foundations in reality that in his life the Gita-statement that "Vasudeva Sarvamidam" was realized in the sense of the japa which St. Francis was fond of reciting every now and then, namely, "My God my all".

Narsi Mehta and Lord Krishna

In our brief analysis of religious experience we have seen that "limit-experience" as one of its most fundamental aspects. In this limit-experience two aspects have been distinguished viz. the negative and the positive, the former standing for the experience of the nothingness of the world which we called 'maya-experience' and the latter standing for the overpowering, positive experience of the "numinous". These two aspects are very obvious both in his life and in his bhajans. Though these two aspects are inseparably connected as far as our saint is connected, for the sake of clarity they shall be treated separately at the risk of artificiality.

The negative aspect of limit-experience

Narasi felt deeply in his being the transitoriness or temporariness of the world with its manifold attractions. This idea is brought out picturesquely with a simplicity peculiar to him in
a bhajan some of the verses of which could be paraphrased as follows:

For the fleeting pleasures of the world, Oh fool, why do you go about puffed up while Yama is gashing his teeth sitting on your head? Don't you know that you are a fragile and wretched creature with a life-span of a moment to go about proudly twisting your mustache? Holding fast to Reality (sara) and uttering the unchanging truths with the divinized mouth, forsake this transitory world. Don't give up bhakti towards the Lord of Narsî, for everything except bhakti is just dust.

The nitvanitya viveka expressed by the saint in this bhajan is very obvious. In the bhajan very dear to Gandhiji and beginning with the line 'Vaisnâvanjanato tene kahiye' he says that true devotees of the Lord will not be entangled by the illusory and inordinate appetites since the attitude of detachment would be very strong in them. Elsewhere emphasizing the momentariness of youth says that one's youth, money and body are momentary, and Yama will come silently to take us away unexpectedly. "Therefore renouncing Maya be wise", thus he concludes.

Narasi experiences this fundamental limitation in his own person. For him, he is a dîna (helpless) seeking help before the Dinanâth (the Protector of the helpless). He considers himself a beggar before the Lord. As other saints he too feels his total inadequacy before the Lord, and his sinfulness. He confesses how the Lord forgives him innumerable sins. He felt deeply in himself that by his wrong deeds he has been "drinking deadly poison
abandoning the nectar placed at his disposal. Elsewhere he points out that his label as a Vaisnavite is meaningless because he has not possessed Ram (in the sense of the incarnation of Visnu) and so his situation is like that of a cradle without a child installed in the midst of a house, of a marriage procession of the bridegrooms party without the bridegroom himself. Indeed, his Vaisnavite label (Harijana), without possessing Hari, appeared to him as the one who tries to quench the appetite a hungry man with talks about a perfect festive meal. In short, for him, he was a sinful wretch, helpless and needy, and the world with all its manifold attractions appeared to him as of little value in comparison with the supreme value of wholehearted self-surrender to the Lord in freedom and love.

The positive aspect of his limit-feeling

His experience of the fleeting nature of the world and its pleasures is another side of his experience of the UR under the form of Krsna. His detachment (vairagya) from the world was dependent on his attachment to the Lord, the source of everything, as the Lord himself has counselled (BG. 7:1). Indeed, his detachment from the world was in so far as it was an obstacle to reach the Lord. This idea is very clear in many of his bhajans especially in the following one:

Let us abandon those who prevent us from uttering the name of Narayana.

Let us worship in love Laksmivar (the husband of Laksmiji)
with our thoughts, words, and deeds.
Let us for this purpose renounce our dynasties,
families, parents, sisters, sons, and wives as a
snake does with its slough.29

Narasi asks us to renounce our sweet relationships with our
parents not because these relationships are bad but because in
his Lord he finds an infinitely more attractive mother, father,
brother, etc. He prays: "Thou art, 0 Supporter of the world
(Bhūḍhara) mother, father, and brother, and I know no one except
thee. Knowing that I am your servant and you my Lord I praise
thee sitting at the door-step."30 The saint points out how Prahalad
renounced his father for the sake of the Lord, Bharat and
Satrughna their parents and the Gopis everything and everyone at
home.31

In one's experience of God there are ups and downs, the
feelings of union and of separation. Unlike Mīrabai, Narasi had
chiefly the experience of union with the Lord in varying degrees of
intimacy rather than that of separation. In one of his bhajans there
is an outburst of joy at his intimate experience of the Lord
saying that he is in Divali.32 In another bhajan he expresses his
great joy (anādānā heli) even in a more realistic picturesque
way as follows: "To-day an intermittent and heavy rain of joy
has been showered on me. Indeed, blessed is the moment in which
the Lord has visited my home and removed all my sorrows. On each
door I will get people hand the wreath of leaves, and I will be the
earliest to worship him. It is great that the Lord of Narasi Mehta has been encountered. Of course there has already been love-relationship between us." This poor and dry English rendering of these verses does not express the joy so obvious in the Gujarati original.

Narasi sees his Lord pervading the whole universe. In his famous bhaajan which begins with the line "Nirakhane gacanamam" we have the very deeply mystical statements making use of many of the BG concepts, about his experience of the omnipresence or all-pervasiveness of the Lord. He hears from different parts of the 'gagana' the voice "It is I, It is I." He sees Krsna in the stationary things (sthavara) and in the moving things. This idea of the all-pervasiveness of the Lord in the whole of the cosmos is described as follows, very much in the spirit of the BG: "The Veda declares, becoming sound in the empty space, that in the whole of the universe you alone are the one, infinite Lord, who appear in many forms. Oh supporter of the earth, you are the wind, water, earth, and the trees stretching out blossoms into the sky. You created many things to enjoy different 'rasas' and became the life of Siva for the same purpose."

**Total Self-surrender to Lord Krsna**

From the moment of his experience of the Rasa-lila his whole life was a whole-hearted self-offering to Lord Krsna. He entrusted everything, including his family responsibilities into the hands of the Lord. Indeed, many of the supposedly miraculous interventions were
of the Lord in the life of our saint took place to help him to perform the *pitr-dharma* (duty of a father). In bhajan 76 of our text, he vividly describes his attitude towards dharma in the spirit of *BG.* 18:66. He says that once one has given himself to the Lord in bhakti, there is no reason for any worry about his various dharmas.

This idea of total dedication to the Lord is well expressed in the bhajan no. 160 of our text which begins with the line "Vaisnavajanane visayathā talavum". Here he shows while describing the qualifications of a Vaisnavite how the mind, heart and other faculties of a true Vaisnavite are totally immersed in the Lord as though expressing his own experience. The following bhajan brings out his total reliance on the Lord entrusting to him all his difficulties with the full awareness of his own helplessness and of the Lord's great love for his devotees:

I take refuge in your name. Who will help me except you? Oh merciful Damodara, friend of the poor, the time has come for you to protect me. Oh Laksmivara, today you are the honour of your bhakta, be true to your name 'Karunakara' O Krishna, you have millions of servants, but for me you alone are the hope... Oh Lord, preserve this orphan from sorrows. With endless hope we take your name.

**Self-surrender and Gopibhavana**

Among the various types of unions between human persons, the most intimate and the most profound one is that between that of a husband and wife since here the persons concerned are affected,
corporally, psychologically, intellectually and spiritually in a very unique way. The less the ego, the more profound would be the union. It is a mutual self-offering. And the mystics of practically all the great religions have conceived this union as the nearest image of the union between the jīvatman and paramātman. However, in this type of union there is the danger of the husband dominating the wife while the wife submitting herself almost masochistically to the husband or vice versa. Secondly the sweetness of this union is partly diminished by the weight of the feeling of responsibility for the family. However, in the relationship between the lover and the beloved (sakha and sakhi) these drawbacks are overcome to a great extent. Here, since the aspect of equality is more stressed than that of domination and submission, the danger of masochistic submission is averted thereby the dignity of persons are upheld. Besides, there is greater sweetness in this relationship because of the lack of the lurking shadow of family responsibility which includes the painful delivery of a child and that of bringing it up. As all the marital unions do not imply these drawbacks, and a healthy marital relationship implies the lover-beloved relationship these two types of relationships cannot be adequately distinguished. In the Bhagavata Purāṇa, especially in the 10th Skandha, the jīvatman-paramātman relationship is symbolically expressed in terms of the relationship between the Lord and the Gopis.

Narasi from the days of his experience of the Rasa-līla began to relate himself to Lord Kṛṣṇa as a Topi. His whole work
'Surat Sangram' bears out this fact. Here, more than the omnipotence of Lord Krsna, his loving recognition of the dignity and individuality of his beloved Radha is stressed. It must be noticed, however, that this feeling of equality the Lord has for the sakhis is entirely due to his self-giving, loving condescension. When the Gopis fail to recognize this truth, the relationship is strained. What is to be noticed especially is that there is mutual self surrender without however being dominated by the other sadistically. On the other hand, it must not be foregone that none of the images that symbolically explain the love-relationship between the Lord and the bhakta, is adequate or exhaustive, and this will explain the various tensions we find in the devotees as beautifully depicted in the Bhagavatapurana.

Our saint's relationship with the Lord is best expressed in the following lines:

The most meaningful birth in this world is that of an abala (woman) the strengthless strength of which pleases Lord Krsna. What is the use of my masculinity, Oh Sakhi, by which my muktī is not going to be achieved? There is self-realisation till muktī for a male person if there is true self-surrender in humble service. The female person who keeps on asking the Lord for help with the feelings of a sweetly wounded heart, will not be born again.  

The above lines remind one of what St. Paul said about his relationship with God. He writes in his letter to the Corinthians what the Lord told him when he asked for a special favour: "...but he (the Lord) said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my
power is made perfect in weakness". (2 Cor. 12:9). In other words, for ultimate mukti the most important thing is to have the ego-less self-surrender of a sakhi in painful yet sweet love. Our saint more clearly expresses this idea of strength in weakness in the following words: "My courage is from your strength; you have to give and I have to take." 42

One of the bhajans where the saints Gopibhavana is very manifest is the one which begins with "rohan morali vagi re" 43 recalling the Vrindavana scenes of Lord Krsna's amours with the Gopis, and his enchanting play of the flute. He uses the feminine for himself. 44 In one of his lyrical outbursts he speaks to his sakhi how he met the Lord and received the love-embrace and kisses. 45 Trivedi referring to the verses where srngar is predominant says: "These verses seem to have been composed not as a poet or devotee but as a gopi, as a sakhi. In describing the absorption of the gopis he betrays his own gopi-attitude." 46

St. Narasi approached the Lord chiefly with stricetana either as a dasi before her Master or as a wife before her husband or as a sakhi before the lover. For him, this stricetana or abalatva represents his total self-surrender with nothing of the ego remaining in him. Those who have carefully studied his life and his bhajans will agree with the following opinion of Mundhiji: "Already from childhood, there was indeed, an element of femininity in him... But when he witnessed the rasa-lila, for a short time, he had the illusion of being a woman." 47
Conclusion

The chief purpose of this brief study on the life and writings of St. Narasi Mehta has been to see his personal relationship with Krsnavatara. This study has brought home to us that for this saint Lord Krsna meant everything and everyone. He experienced the world as maya in comparison with the infinite truth, infinite love and infinite beauty (satyam-sivam-sundaram) he experienced in the Lord. This could remind one of what St. Paul said of his Christ-experience: "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3:8). Narasi who found in Lord Krsna everything and everyone which or who attracted him, in an infinitely more eminent way than other things and persons, surrendered himself wholeheartedly to the Lord in true bhakti. And he expressed this surrender chiefly in terms of strictana in such relationships as between the Lord and the maid-servant, husband and wife, lover and the beloved. He believed from the very depths of his being that his happiness here on earth and his ultimate mukti depended entirely on the Lord.

2. ST. MIRABAI

In the Sixteenth century, North West India was a scene of chivalry, romance and religious enthusiasm. It was the age when the Rajput warriors charged like lions against armies with soldiers that outnumbered them many a times, never yielding until the "glorious death". It was the age when the Mogul power was approaching its zenith bringing under its clutches like an octopus the
divided Rajput princes. It was the age of Rana Pratap Singh, Akbar the great, Birbal and Tansen.

However, a description of this age ignoring St. Mira would be like the description of a rose ignoring its fragrance. The bhakti-currents in its varying forms and hues like the Radhakrishna bhakti promoted by Sri Caitanya and the Balakrishna bhakti advocated by Sri Vallabha-caryya had already reached the North West from the East and from the South respectively. Rav Dudaji Rathod of Medatha, the grandfather of Mirabai, had surrendered himself in bhakti to Lord Krishna rather than to the goddess of war. In St. Mirabai the romance of the palaces, the chivalry of the battle fields and the philosophy and asceticism of the asrama got merged, sublimated and divinized to form a mighty bhakti current which submerged the whole of the North West and much of North India as a whole.

a) Brief Biographical Sketch

Historians today seem to be in agreement to assign the period between 1557 and 1624 (samvat era) as the life-time of our saint. Because of the early demise of her mother Vir Kumri she stayed with her grandfather Dudaji Rathod, in Medatha. The date assigned for the demise of her father Ratnasinghji is ca 1584, i.e. when our saint was well in her adulthood.

The little Mira imbibed the spirit of Vaisnavism from her grandfather. The incident often referred to by her biographers as to how she got possession of the little idol of Bal-Krsna, is quite interesting. Once a pilgrim sadhu, a great devotee of Bal-Krsna
stayed in the palace of Dudaji. Mira, seven or eight years old, was charmed by the way this holy man bathed, dressed and offered naivedya to the idol singing hymns of devotion. She asks her grandfather for the idol. The demand of a young and beloved princess would not go unheeded in a palace like that of Dudaji. The sadhu sensed the situation. He presented little Mira with reluctance the image of his Lord. Later on she celebrates this event with a beautiful bhajan saying how she got the divine-toy (rām-ranakdum) which no great munis could get in spite of their great efforts. She gave this idol the name ‘Girdhar-Nagar’ (the holder of the mountain) a name with which she usually addresses Lord Kṛṣṇa in her bhajans.

Another childhood incident which aroused the curiosity of her biographers is about her marriage with Lord Kṛṣṇa. This must have been previous to the possession of the idol. Little Mira saw a marriage-procession with the child-bridegroom mounted on a horse with drawn sword going towards the bride's house, a custom still quite common in North India. This aroused the curiosity of child Mira and she began to ask her mother numerous questions about it. After hearing detailed informations about this custom, she began to pester her mother for a bridegroom. Initially all laughed at this childish insistence. But she persisted in her insistence. At last her mother pointed her finger at an idol of Lord Kṛṣṇa and said: "That is your bridegroom." As the later bhakti relation of our saint to Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals, this incident had deep impact on her. Later on in one of her bhajans she would sing that she has been
married to Lord Krsna, and so she would not accept anyone else as her husband. 52

Mīrābāi was given in marriage to prince Bhoj of Mewad, the heir apparent, of the Sisodiya clan. Majmudar gives 1573 as the approximate date of this marriage. 53 If so it was when she had just entered her teens. Prince Bhojraj died in the battlefield ca 1578–80. 54 This shows that she became a widow at an early age after a few years of married life. It is generally agreed among her biographers that the married life of the saint was an unhappy one chiefly because there was no intimacy or cordiality between her and her husband. According to legends prince Bhoj saw Krsna in Mīrābāi and Mīrābāi saw Krsna in her husband, when they made some effort to fulfill their maritial obligations.

When Mīra reached Mewad soon after her marriage, she was totally and wholeheartedly committed to Krsna, or better, wedded to Krsna. No other reality could come in between them. Just before entering the palace of her husband she was told to pay homage to the family goddess Parvatīji. But she refused to do so to the exasperation of the prince and of her in-laws. 55 Because of this she was told to stay in a separate building like one under house-arrest. There she spent her time singing bhajans to her Divine Bridegroom and by receiving holy men.

Apart from the legends we can get some information about the persecutions she suffered in Mewad from her own bhajans. After the death of her husband, her brother-in-law Vikramaditya began to persecute her in diverse ways. It is quite natural for a worldly and pleasure seeking man like Vikramaditya to get annoyed at the
life of a devotee like Mīrā in complete detachment from the worldly things and in total dedication to the Lord. These persecutions are described in the following bhajan attributed to her:

Rāṇa made a present of a basket of serpent. 
Mīrā performed her ablutions and put her hands in it. 
Lo! it was turned into an image of the Lord. 
Rāṇa sent a poisoned cup: having performed her prayers 
Mīrā drank of it. 
It had changed into nectar. 
Rāṇa sent a bed of nails for Mīrā to sleep on. 
Evening fell and Mīrā slept on it. 
Lo! it was transformed into a bed of roses. 56

We are not sure whether this song is the composition of the saint herself. But the traditions of such miraculous incidents are strong in Hindi and Gujarati literature. About the credibility of these miraculous incidents we hold the same position as with regard to such incidents in Narasi and other saints.

It is said that once Viśramadītya wanted to behead her when it was reported to him that Mīrā was having amours with some other men in her room. The Rāṇa's spy had heard the saint talking with somebody with such expressions which are used between the lover and the beloved. When the Rāṇa came with drawn sword he could not see anyone else except his sister-in-law absorbed in meditation. According to the legend when the Rāṇa aimed his sword at her neck he saw her two forms. Once again when he aimed the sword at her he saw her in four forms. 57 What is credible in this legend is that the saint did hold loving conversations with her Divine Bride-groom in the silence of the night, and this must have been
m is understood by the Rana.

Since she was continuously harassed by the Rana and his men she at last decided to leave Mevad with her maid Lalita. First she goes to Medatha where hardly any one of her relatives still remained. From there she goes to Vrndavan, the Land of her Divine Lover.

In Vrndavan

Various incidents are narrated about Mira's stay in this sacred land of Lord Krsna. One is with regard to her visit of Jiv Goswamy. Hearing about his great sanctity Mira wanted to pay a visit to him but Goswami refused to see her saying that he would not see any women. She sent the following memorable message to this saint which was enough to change his attitude: "There is only one male being, and it is Vasudeva. All the rest are feminine". This sentence gives a true clue to the bhakti-relationship both of Narasi-Mehta and of Mira. It is also believed that Akbar the Great with Tansen paid a visit to Mira in Vrindavan.

From Vrindavan Mira with her maid Lalita comes to Dvaraka, the town believed to have been sanctified by Lord Krsna's presence. It is not certain as to how many years the saint spent in Dvaraka, but her stay over there is not disputed. Meanwhile one calamity after another began to fall on Mevad. The wise men in the court of the Rana advise him to bring back the saintly queen from Dvaraka so that by her sanctifying presence the land of Mevad would be purified of its sins and the Lord would shower abundant blessings
on it. The Rāṇa sends some learned and holy men to bring back the saint. It is historically certain that the saint did not go back to Mevād. The legendary belief is that she, while absorbed in her Lord, was completely merged into the image of Kṛṣṇa, symbolizing her sayujya mukti. Her mukti must have been ca samavād 1624, while she was above sixty.

Mirabai is known to us chiefly because of the numerous devotional songs composed by her and sung all over India especially in the North. Mirabai did not compose these poems like a modern poet sitting in a quiet room but rather gave expressions to her powerful, inner feelings of warm, pure and wholehearted bhakti towards the Lord through devotional songs often while dancing like the Gopis. These spontaneous overflow of bhakti currents in song forms were taken down by other devotees like her sakhi Lalita. Having lived in Marvād, Mevād, Vrindavan and Gujarat it is natural that these bhakti songs contain words from different languages and dialects. The basic language of her poems is Marvādi Rajasthani or "Ancient Western Rajasthani" which is believed to have been the mother of Gujarati and Marvadi. Some of the bhajans which are more Gujarati than Marvadi must have been those sung by her during her stay in Dvaraka which eventually got more Gujaratized by later Gujarati devotees.

The Kṛṣṇa of Mirabai

About St. Mirabai's devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa we know chiefly from her bhajans. These bhajans are a living proof that for this saint
Lora Krsna meant everything. In her the Gita-statement "Vasudeva sarvam idam" was in a sense fully realized. Her Krsnacentred poetic utterances remind us of St. Francis' fascination with the japa "My God my all". In this section our considerations will be limited to a few bhajans in so far as they give us an insight into her Krsnacentred life.

Detachment from the World (Vairagya)

A sense of detachment from the world or what may be called, mayabhavana is a common element found in all the saints. This is usually as a consequence of one's deep experience of God. But, as in the case of Lord Buddha, it can also be due to the result of a deep experience of the transitoriness of the world. Mira's sense of detachment is the former type. She says:

"The world inside and out, nothing appeals to me, Without the Beloved(piya) all is so insipid"

In another bhajan she expresses the same feelings as follows:
This world and all is an illusion(Jhutho) and is false, false are all relations and connections

Elsewhere she says that the world is 'māyā' to her.

The world is māyā for her because she experiences everything in the Lord. Hence, it is not a pessimistic or negative vairagya. In one of her bhajans which begins with 'bol mā bol mā' she considers the choice of other things in the place of Radhakrsna as the choice of bitter neem leaves in stead of sugarcane juice, and of the light of glowworm in stead of the light of the sun and the moon.
This feeling of the nothingness of the world when one is in possession of the Lord is expressed most touchingly in the following lines:

Meditate thou, on the lotus feet of the Lord, Indestructible. All that lies in between the earth and sky, Shall all pass away.

.................

Be not vain of this body. One day to dust it shall turn. This world is a mere market-place That assembles, only in the evening to pass away. 65

The Pangs of Separation

As Majmudar points out, in Mīrā's bhakti the predominant note is one of the feeling of separation from her Divine Lover. The pangs of separation could be paradoxically expressed as the presence of the beloved by absence. Unless one has experienced the warmth and sweetness of a person, one will not feel much pain by his absence. The feeling of emptiness is meaningful only in contrast with that of fullness. The pathos due to the separation from the Lord which we see right through most of her bhakti songs is to be understood not in terms of negativity or despair but rather the longing for her Beloved with the assurance that she would be united with him. It is precisely these bhajans which express most graphically as to what Kṛṣṇa meant for her. What water is for lotus and the fish, Kṛṣṇa was for her. Indeed Kṛṣṇa was her very life (prāṇ). 67 She longed for the Lord as the bird catak for the rain. 68
Among the various bhajans which express this poignant feeling of separation from and the ardent longing for her Divine Bridegroom we shall rest content with citing just the following one:

Without a sight of Thee, even a moment's rest
I know not.
Thou art my life how can I then live.
The meals do not appeal to me, the eyes
Know no sleep, the pangs of separation (virah) trouble.
Like the wounded one, I roam about, none is acquainted with my pain.
The day passed in eating, the night in sleep is o'er.
The life is gone in agony of separation, the sight
I have lost through tears.
Had I known that to love was to invite pain,
To the beat of drum in the city I would have proclaimed,
let none love
I stand waiting, watching Thy course, cleansing Thy path,
Mira's Lord when will You meet her?
On meeting Thee she shall find peace. 69

For Mira Lord Krsna was life and she felt it impossible to live without him. But he, once in a while appears to her only to disappear soon, leaving her like a fish out of water. It is in this sense we have to understand the following lines:

As opened I my eyes, the vision gone, how luckless
I felt at last.
Taking hold of the dagger, my heart I shall tear and
I will commit suicide (apghat)
Mira, the restless one, lies separated, crying as a child. 70

The Interrupted Experiences of the Lord

It is her experience of the sweet and reassuring presence of
the Lord that made her pangs of separation all the more poignant. This is expressed as follows:

On my bed as I closed my eyes in brief reverie
Just then appeared the Beloved, in the twinkling of an eye.
And as I got up to offer my respects and cordially receive Him
I woke up only to find that the Dear One has fled.\(^7\)

At times she sings about the great rest her restless heart got at the meeting of her Lord. She expresses this experience of peace as follows:

When met the Lord Giradhara, pain left Mira, all round was comfort; Every pore of the body gained peace and came she out of the cycle of rebirths.
Turning a disciple she hath the ocean crossed.\(^7\)

She celebrates her deep joy at the sound of the arrival of the Lord by the following bhajan:

I hear the sound of the approach of Hari.
The heights I climb, O friend,
When shall the dear one arrive.
The frog, the peacock, papiya,
And the Cuckoo strike melodious notes.

Mira's Lord is Hari, the eternal.
Pray meet her soon.\(^7\)

\(^7\) These few verses are enough to see how Mira had the experience of her Divine Lover every now and then. But every meeting was for separation leaving her with greater and greater pangs of
separation. This encounter with Lord Krsna was described by her in very realistic terms. In one of the Gujaratized bhajans she describes the joyful mood, the dress, and gait of her Lord, very graphically. At times she wakes up at night at the sound of the Lord's flute and tries to go to meet him saying: "The sound of his flute is heard, let us go and meet him." 75

Total Self-surrender to the Lord

In comparison with her Lord the whole world and its things looked as mere illusions. She was ready to give up everything for the Lord. This is well expressed in the following bhajan which begins with the words "mere to girdhar Gopal dusaro no roī":

Now none else but Him can I claim as my own.
I forsook my father and my mother and all those that were dear to me.

..............................
With tears I nourished the everlasting creeper of love. 76

In another well known bhajan too she expresses her detachment from her immediate relatives like the parents, husband and the like. 77

In the spirit of the Gītā-verse "manmana bhav madbhakta madyaji mam namaskuru "(18.65) Mārānī too concentrated all her powers on the Lord. This is well brought out in the following bhajan which begins with the line "bala me bairagan hungi":

O my friend, I shall turn a Vairagi.
In whatever form my Lord is pleased,
That I shall adopt.

He who is called Niranjana
On him I shall meditate.

The mind on Him fix.

With love shall I sing songs to Him,
As I cling to the feet of the Lord.
Of this body I shall make an instrument (kimkari)
On it the melodies of Thy Name I shall chant.

Mārī's Lord Giradhara Nagara,
With Him, I shall live night and day long.

This bhajan shows how totally she was absorbed in the Lord.
For her Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa alone mattered. This ekāṅti-kāṅti bhakti is
expressed elsewhere with the picturesque image of a lamp giving
the idea of totality and wholeheartedness even more powerfully
than in the above bhajan.

I shall make this body a lamp, and my tender heart shall
be its wick;
I shall fill it with the scented oil of my young love
and burn it night and day at your shrine, O Beloved!
For your love I shall sacrifice all the wealth of my youth:
Your name shall be the crown of my head.

My parents gave me to you, I have become Yours for
ever, who but you can be my Lord?

Mārī's love for the Lord is expressed relating herself to
him chiefly as a servant (cakar) wife and sakhi. All these approaches
to the Lord express different aspects of total self-surrender.
Love has to be expressed in the service of the beloved. The well-known bhajan 'mamhne cēkar, rākhoji' brings out this idea very clearly pointing out the different kinds of services she is willing to do for her Master. Elsewhere she pleads with her Lord to make her his maid-servant (dasi).

Her childhood prank of getting married to Lord Kṛṣṇa found its most concrete and realistic expression by her constant reference to Kṛṣṇa as her husband (var). She sings joyfully saying that she is going to accept Lord Kṛṣṇa (Girdhar) as her husband casting off all feelings of false shame. Here she shows the distinction between the marriages in the royal palaces and her marriage with Kṛṣṇa. In this marriage her meal consists of pure love, her marriage (varmala) won't be of pearls but of tulsi flowers, her attire won't be royal robes but saffron clothes. In another of her bhajans the mystical element of this marriage with the Divine Bridegroom is brought out, saying, that how she never had attraction towards any other male human beings and how she intends to swim across this sea of samsar. In some bhajans with bhakti-srīgar she, with modesty, describes the scenes of love-embrace with her Divine Husband.

Imitating the example of Radha, Mīra approaches the Lord with the madhurya feeling (sweetness) of a sakhi. Her long stay in Vṛndāvana might have intensified in her this feeling. Her bhajans beginning with the lines "mat dāro pickāri" (Don't sprinkle (coloured water on me with the syringe) and "hāth liye pickāri Radha" (Take up the syringe, O Radha) are expressive of the
reenactment of the scenes of the Bhagavad where Lord Krsna's amours with Radha and the other Gopies are described. The theme of Krsna as the flute-player occurs every now and then in her bhajans. Many of her bhajans where she addresses Krsna as 'piya' (beloved) is expressive of sakhi-bhakti.

**Conclusion**

Both in her life and in her bhajans one thing comes out as indisputable: Krsna meant for her everything. He was above her parents, husband or other relatives. Her thoughts, her emotions and her body were absorbed in Him. Indeed, her love-dances were the bodily expressions of her intellectual and emotional attunement with her flute-playing Eternal Dance, Lord Krsna. She surrendered to Krsna as maid-sevant, wife and sakhi, all expressing the different levels of self-giving, wholehearted devotion.

**B. CHRIST IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE-SITUATION**

The question of Lord Krsna in Hindu religiosity and that of Lord Christ in the Christian religiosity are not identical. For, as it is well known, bhakti-religiosity does not exhaust the whole of Hindu religiosity, nor does Vaisnavism the whole of Hindu bhakti-religion, nor does Krsnaism the whole of Vaisnavism. On the other hand, in Christianity Christ is taken as the one and only way to God, and so there are no other alternative ways in Christianity. Hence, naturally Christian religiosity has to be centred on the person of Christ, usually in terms of a synthesis of karma, jñāna and bhakti
each of the components of which being emphasized differently according to the differences of persons.

In terms of the Christian ideal, a Christian is true to his name not merely in imitating the life of Christ taking him as an ideal but chiefly by reliving Christ's life in the Holy Spirit, thereby becoming God's children in Christ. This is not very different from what Lord Krsna meant by the expression "madhavamacatah". In our consideration of man as God's image we have remarked that "to be conformed to the image of Christ" or to "grow into the full stature of Christ" is a Christian ideal.

The nearer one will be to this ideal the deeper and purer one's love be, both for God and for men. For, according to the NT God is love and Christ is the incarnate-expression of God's love. Hence to share divine life through Christ means to live a life of genuine love. This naturally leads to the question of the social dimension of Christian religious ideal. Christ said "I am the vine you are the branches" (Jn 15:1) This social or communitarian way of sharing divine life through love is expressed by Paul through the image of a body and its members (Rom. 12 and 1 Cor.12). Christ wanted brotherly love or fraternal charity as THE characteristic of his followers.

In this section we shall see how the Christ-value as a way and as a partially realized ideal is realized in the concrete religious situation. Christ value in its concrete expression is found in a strikingly tangible way in the lives of saints. In this section
too we take the example of a male saint and of a female saint.
Let us see what Christ meant for them.

1) St. Francis of Assisi

"He was born in a stable. Though he could have lived in princely luxury he chose to live as a poor man. His greatest ambition and life-mission was to establish God's 'kingdom' on earth uniting man to man and man to God by the bond of love. For this he chose 12 disciples and went about preaching for the coming of "God's kingdom". Not much before his death one of his disciples turned against him, and later on hanged himself. After preaching the message of the Divine Kingdom, he used to withdraw to the mountains to commune with his Heavenly Father. After his death his disciples, in great reverence kissed his five wounds, two on the palms, two on the feet and one on his side."

Reading the above narrative a Christian would say that it is an imperfect and fragmentary account of the life of Christ by somebody who is not very familiar with the founder of Christianity. But the fact is that it does not refer to the life of Christ at all but to that of a person who tried his best to relive Christ's life in his own person, namely of St. Francis of Assissi. An unprejudiced inquirer may easily give much credence to the documents basing on which the above sketch has been drawn.

Assissi is a mountainous town which can be reached by two to three hours of train-journey from Rome towards the North-east. It is
a region of high mountain peaks and mountain caves, springs and rivulets, vineyards and olive-groves, giving even to an ordinary man the feeling of the sublime. It was in this town Francis was born in 1182 to Pietro Bernardone and to Madonna Pica, both of noble families. His father was a rich silk merchant who loved to accumulate more and more wealth, but his mother was a very religious person.

a) Biographical Sketch

Francis was born in an age of chivalry and poetry, of crusaders and troubadours. And "Francis grew up in warlike times, when Emperor was opposed to the Pope, prince to king, village was against village, and burgher against the noble." To know how violent and savage was the age it is enough to recall that there were Princes like Ezzelin who had shields with the inscription, "Enemy of God, of pity and of mercy." At that time Europe's ideal was the knight. No wonder then why Francis's father let him go to war against the neighbouring town Perugia when he was just getting out of his teens, a war in which he was taken prisoner.

Later on he joins the papal army led by Prince Walter III of Brienne against the Germans. His father purchased for him the costly armour and weapons used by princes. And Francis goes in a chivalrous mood to be knighted by Walter himself. On the way, at Spoleto he falls sick. At night he hears a voice asking him whether the Master or the slave can help him more. He answers: "The Master,". Then the voice asked: "Why do you then desert the Master?" As he was told by the voice he returns to Assissi to the
exasperation of his prestige-conscious father and to the joy of his loving mother. The mother was quick to notice the great change in her son though not the father.

After his return he began to avoid the gay company of his friends with whom he used to eat, drink, sing love-songs and talk of pleasure and glory. Often he retired to a cave to spend long hours in meditation. He counted his Godless life of pleasure of the past years as wasted years. He felt a great disgust for anything except God as manifested in Christ. A feeling of compassion and love was growing within him as he began to get fascinated by the person of Christ. "Riding one day in the plane below Assissi, he met a leper whose loathsome sores filled Francis with horror. Overcoming his revulsion, he leapt from his horse and pressed into the leper’s hand all the money he had with him, then kissed the hand." Christ's words that whatever is done to the least and to the poorest, is done to Christ himself (Mt. 25:31-46) became a deeply felt and constantly challenging truth. When he went to Rome for a pilgrimage, he gave away his rich clothes to a beggar and put on the beggar's clothes and began to beg with other beggars. The news of this behaviour infuriated his father.

In Assissi there was an old church called San Damiano. He used to spend quite some time daily praying before a Crucifix in this church. Suddenly he felt that the Crucifix was talking to him. He heard this much: "Francis, seest thou not that my house is in ruins? Go and restore it for me." He thought that what
Christ meant was that he should repair the dilapidated church San Damiano, though later on the realized that it was not the material church what Christ meant but the Church, the community founded by Christ himself, which the NT calls the Mystical Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; ) He sold his own horse, and them sold several bales of costly clothes. And gave the money to the priest in charge of the church; for repairing the church. This was too much for his father. Already he was exasperated by his son's erratic ways with the beggars and lepers. He had locked him up in a dark room of his house from where he was later on released by his mother. Peter Bernardone approached the Bishop of Assissi to lodge a case against his son.

Francis was summoned to the court of the Bishop. The Bishop had already known about Francis and about his good intentions. His father insisted that he should either return home or renounce before the Bishop all his share in the inheritance. Francis chose the latter. He stripped himself of his costly garments, piled them in a heap in front of his father and tossed the money on top of them. He then declared publicly: "Hitherto I have called you father on earth; but now I say with more confidence, Our Father, who art in heaven, in whom I place all my hope and treasure." Somebody gave him an old garment on which he drew the sign of the cross, wore it enthusiastically and left the court merrily.

From them on Francis felt great freedom and joy. He went about preaching the value of detachment from the transitory things of the world, and the joy and peace of following the path of Christ.
A born poet as he was, he went about singing the praises of God without bothering about the jeering crowd.

So many people began to understand the truth of his "folly" Lord Bernard, one of the richest and noblest men of Assissi was the first to follow Francis. Taken up by Francis's way of life and by his sermons Lord Bernard invited him for supper with him. After dining with Bernard, Francis straight went to bed without even saying the usual prayers. He began to wonder how a holy man like Francis could go to bed without prayer and meditation. Sensing something mysterious behind his "unsaintly" behaviour he kept himself awake. At the dead of night Francis slowly got up hearing the snoring sound of Bernard spent the remaining part of the night in prayer. The author of The Little Flowers of St. Francis, writes:

Looking up to Heaven and raising his hands, he prayed with intense fervour and devotion, saying; "My God and my all!" And he sobbed out those words with so many tears and kept repeating them with such devout persistence that until matine he said nothing but 'My God and my all!'

Another disciple who followed Francis, after getting inspired by his speeches and way of life, was a young lady called Claire, belonging to a princely family, daughter of Favorini dei Scifi, Count of Sasso-Rosso. Her parent strongly oppose her decision. She cuts off her beautiful hair and takes refuge under the altar of the church. Her sister Agnes too follow her in spite of the princes. Claire became
the moving spirit behind the women's wing of the Franciscan movement. Soon other eminent men follow Francis's way of total sanyasa and whole hearted dedication to Christ and His Church.

Among the Western saints few were so fond of Mother Nature as Francis was. For him everybody or everything in the world was his brothers and sisters manifesting the image of the one and only Father that is God. And the root of this feeling is his deep experience of his oneness with Christ who is the Son par excellence of God, the archetype of all other creatures. He could tame the murderous wolf of Gubio with as much ease as the murderous robbers. He preached to his "sisters" the birds, talked with brother sun and sister moon. And he closed his eyes for ever welcoming "Sister Death" in October 3, 1226. By that time his disciples have been preaching the message of love

b) St. Francis and Christ

St. Francis is considered to be one of the most perfect images of Christ. We have already hinted at it already at the very outset of our study on this saint. From the moment he heard the voice of Christ bidding him to follow the "master" rather than the "slave", he was struggling to surrender himself wholeheartedly to Christ accepting him as the one and only Master.

In his approach to Christ, he was most fascinated by the Crucified Christ. It was when he was praying before the Crucifix
in San Damiano he heard Christ's command of "repairing his Church".

It was the suffering of the Crucified One that stood before his eyes, when as a young man he went and wept in the woods by Portiuncula. A person met him there one day and asked the reason of his sorrow. 'I am weeping,' answered Francis, for the pain of my Lord Jesus Christ! "And so great, so real was his unhappiness, that even the other began to weep." The great mystic philosopher Bonaventure, a second generation disciple of St. Francis writes about his special attachment to the mystery of the suffering God-man: "His soul melted at the sight (of the Crucified) and the memory of Christ's passion was impressed on the depths of his heart, so vividly that whenever he thought of it, he could scarcely restrain his sighs and tears, as he afterwards confessed towards the end of his life." His contemporary and first biographer Bro. Celano attests that he used to weep the whole night saying, "Love is not loved". Indeed, as we shall see more in detail soon, he interpreted life and realities in terms of the Cross and with reference to Christ Crucified. His empathetic love for the crucified was extended to other human beings, and even animals, who reminded him of the sufferings for Christ. Thus he had a special affection for the lepers, whom he called 'Christian brothers'... He had a sympathetic love for the lamb, which reminded him of the 'Lamb of God, who was immolated for him. He showed love and sympathy for worms, which reminded him of the prophecy of the suffering servant of God."
Among the many enigmatic things that happened in the life of Francis were the wounds of the Crucified Christ which were deeply imprinted in his psyche by constant meditation on the subject, which became apparent in his own body. This phenomenon of the apparition of the five wounds of the crucified Christ on the bodies of the devotees is known in the Christian tradition as "stigmata". Raphael Brown says that covering the last seven centuries there have been some 300 known cases of stigmatics.

After the celebration in honour of the Cross Francis, weak, tired, sick, yet full of joy, was lying outside his hermitage. Composed the following prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ, two favors I beg of thee before I die. The first is, that I may, as far as it is possible, feel in my soul and in my body the suffering which thou, O gentle Jesus, sustained in thy bitter passion. And the second favor is, that I, as far as it is possible, may receive into my heart that excessive charity by which thou, the Son of God, wast inflamed and which actuated thee willingly to suffer so much for us sinners.  

After this prayer Francis felt that Christ was going to grant him these favours. Then, according to the Little Flower, he then had the vision of Christ crucified which gave him simultaneously intense joy and suffering. We shall cite a passage from the lengthy account of the stigmatization of Francis from the Little Flowers:
Now when after a long time and a secret conversation, this wonderful vision disappeared, it left a most intense ardor and flame of divine love in the heart of St. Francis, and it left a marvelous image and imprint of the Passion of Christ in his flesh. For soon there began to appear in the hands and feet of St. Francis the marks of nails such as he had just seen in the body of Jesus Crucified, who had appeared to him in the form of a Seraph. For his hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the center with nails, the heads of which were in the palms of his hands and in the upper part of his feet outside the flesh, and their points extended through the back of the hands and the soles of the feet so far that they seemed to be bent and beaten back in such a way that underneath their bent and beaten-back point — all of which stood out from the flesh — it would have been easy to put the finger of one's hand as through a ring. And the heads of the nails were round and black. Likewise in his right side appeared the wound of a blow from a spear, which was open red, and bloody and from which blood often issued from the holy breast of St. Francis and stained his habit and breeches.

To-day even the highly critical historians accept the truth of the stigmata of St. Francis since there are numerous attestations of many reliable witnesses. There are of course differences of opinion with regard to the mystical, psychological and physical reasons given to this phenomenon. But hardly any one would deny that the stigmata of Francis were the corporeal manifestation of his spiritual identification with the crucified Christ. Rightly
therefore Dr. Kurusummoottil writes: "His heart was so much identified with the wounded heart of Christ that it could be believed, as St. John of the Cross observed, that the stigmata he received, were only external expressions of the internal wound he already had."115

For Francis, the crucified Christ was the deepest and most tangible expression of God's love for man, on the one hand, and the living proof of the nothingness of the world independently of God. Francis's 'mantra' which he so fondly and so continually recited, 'My God my all', is a Christian version of Śaṅkarācārya's 'Brahma satyam jagat mythya', though in Francis this experience has been more in terms of bhakti than in terms of jñāna while for the Acārya it was more in terms of jñāna than in terms of bhakti. It was the naked and totally dispossessed Christ who inspired Francis to give all his inheritance back to his father including his own clothes. His marriage with "Lady Poverty" was in a sense, an expression of his love embrace with the crucified Christ.

It is his love-union with the crucified Christ that gave him such an intense love and reverence for the things of this world, Francis was at once an enjoyed (bhogi) as well as a renunciator (tyāgi) of the world in tune with the first verse of the Īśa Up. that we should enjoy the things of the world with renunciation. (tyakten bhungitha) In terms of the sacrificial symbol, for Francis, everything in the world was the remnants of the sacrifice (yajna-sista ) and this yajnasista got its saving
value because of its union with the eternal sacrificial priest-victim that is the crucified Christ.

His intense, affective and deep experience of God as a loving Father had its origin in his experience of the crucified Son. Therefore, naturally his love for Christ was expressed most tangibly towards those people who were totally dispossessed and oppressed like the beggars, lepers and other sick people. His experience of the crucified Christ as the Son of the most loving Father, God, made him feel literally at home with everything. When the physician was applying red-hot iron on Francis, he welcomed it smilingly calling fire "Brother fire", and he literally meant it. Francis' feeling of oneness with the whole of reality through the bond of 'familial-love' a familial love which made him consider God alone as the one and only Father, and all the rest, including the material creation, as brothers and sisters in the person of the crucified Christ. This is the reason which made him compose the famous Sun Song which he used to sing with great gusto and intense joy, and make others sing with great enthusiasm and ardour.

As an example of Christian Monism we may cite a few verses from the song:

Most high omnipotent good Lord,
Thine are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all benediction.
To thee alone, Most High, do they belong,
And no man is worthy to mention thee.
Praised be thou, my Lord, with all thy creatures.
Especially the honored brother sun,
Who makes the day and illumines us through thee.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour
Bears the signification of thee, Most High One.
Praised be thou, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,
Thou hast formed them in heaven clear and precious and beautiful
Praised be thou, my Lord, for Brother Wind,
And for the air and cloudy and clear and every weather,
By which thou givest sustenance to thy creatures. 117

Thus in this song, he goes on thanking God Almighty for Sister
Water, Brother Fire, Mother Earth and so on. Of course, the hymn
has lost much of its charm by its translation from one of the most
musical of languages into a rough language like English. If we do
not have the spirit of St. Francis, it is enough to have the spirit
of the Rigvedic sages to appreciate the beauty of this hymn.

As we have seen the Cross is at the centre of the Christian
revelation. But, except for the mystics, the mystery of the cross
is as enigmatic to-day as at the time of St. Paul. He writes to the
Corinthians: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are
perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...
For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ
crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles. (1 Cor.
1: 18, 22, 23). Unless we deeply experience within our lives that
love and suffering are intimately connected and that the world is
the result of sacrificial love as symbolically expressed in the
Puruṣa Sūkta or as expressed in the Upaniṣads that in the beginning
there was 'desire' or as expressed symbolically in the NT
through the primordial Slain Lamb representing Christ, it is difficult
to grasp the mystery of the Cross. It is this mystery which leads
to the paradoxes of joy in suffering, success in failures, last becoming the first etc. In the Christian tradition one can hardly speak of a saint more joyful and hilarious than Francis, yet there has been hardly any saint who looked at the whole world from the point of view of the crucified Christ with such depth of conviction and intensity of emotions as Francis did.

e) Some Other Aspects of Francis’s Christo-centric Life.

As we have seen, in the B.G. self-realization is intimately connected with *lokasanegraha* so too in the N.T. one’s own self-realization in terms of salvation is intimately connected with helping others too to find out the right path. To put it in psychological terms, personality growth is achieved in interpersonal relationship bound by purer and purer, and deeper and deeper expressions of love in terms of self-transcendence. Francis’ experience of the love of God in Christ, makes him share this joy with others. Besides, he knew that it was the explicit command of his Master to preach his message (Mt. 28:18-20; Lk 24:47). So Francis went about preaching the message of Christ in spite of the jeering crowds and insulting nobles. Even when bitter crusade was going on between the Muslims and the Christians, he goes to the camp of Sultan Nalek el Kamal and speaks to him about the love of God manifested in Christ. He went to the camp with the hope that he would be able to die as a martyr for the cause of Christ. But the Sultan listened to him with great attention and respect, and saw to it that Francis and his companion suffered no harm from his
subordinate officials. When Francis died his disciples were preaching the message of Christ all over the world. He prescribed the following rule for his disciples (Franciscan Friars) only after practising the same rule by himself: "The friar must always remember that they have given themselves to our Lord Jesus Christ, and so they should be prepared to expose themselves to every enemy...for love of Him." For the could not bear the fact that "Love is not loved".

The immediate disciples of Francis lived in small groups or communities centred on the person of Christ. They lived doing hard work and ate what the people gave, to imitate the simple and hard-working life of Jesus with his mother before he began his public life. In his last will and testament to Clare and to the other sisters he writes: "I, Brother Francis, wish to follow after the life and poverty our Lord, Jesus Christ, and of His most holy Mother, and I will hold out in this to the last. And I pray you, my ladies, and counsel you, that you always remain in this holiest way and in poverty."

Apart from the Holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, there is another model from the NT which Francis gave to his followers to imitate in their small hermitages. It is taken from the scene of Christ's visit to Martha and Mary, the sisters of his friend Lazarus (Lk. 10:38-42). When Christ visited them Martha ran to the kitchen and began to prepare various dishes for Christ while Mary remained at the feet of Christ, contemplating Him, listening to his wisdom. In Christian tradition Martha stands for karmayoga while
Mary for bhaktivada. This is what he prescribes for his followers:

Those who wish to live piously in a hermitage must be three or at most four brothers. Two of them shall be mothers and shall have the other two for sons or the one. But the mothers shall lead the life of Martha and the others the life of Mary... 121

Conclusion:

In Francis we have a person who, as his companions testify, "was always occupied with Jesus; Jesus he bore in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ear, Jesus in his eyes and in all his members." 122 As in the case of other devotees of Theanthropoi, Francis too transcends to the Supreme Godhead, expressed in personalistic terms as Father to stress the loving aspect of God." Francis' discovery of Christ paved the way for the discogery of the Father... In Christ he learned the love, goodness and mercy of the Father... Through the Gospel he learned that Christ was the way to the Father, and that he who sees Christ sees the Father. 124 This is exactly what Christ expected from his disciples when he said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, except by me. If you had known me, you would have known My Father also." (Jn. 14:6 and 7a).

2. ST. TERESA OF AVILA

3) Some Biographical Details

Perhaps no woman has made so much impact on the European religious scene as St. Teresa of Avila. And religious impact in
the medieval Europe meant impact in matters, social, political and cultural as well. In a male dominated society she turned out to be one of the most powerful religious reformers and organizers of Europe, and in an age when women hardly ever pursued academic or literary careers, she has bequeathed to her posterity some of the best masterpieces of world literature purely on its literary merits i.e. viewed somewhat independently of its philosophical height and mystical depth. The following verses in 17th century English summarily and picturesquely express what she was and what impact she had:

O thou undaunted daughter of desires
By all thy dowr of Lights and Fires;
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
By all thy lives and deaths of love;
By thy larg draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;
By all thy brim-filled Bowles of fierce desire;
By thy last Morning's draught of liqud fire;
By the full kingdom of that final kisse
That seiz'd thy parting Soul, and seal'd thee his;
By all the heaven's thou hast in him

By all of Him we have in Thee;
Leave nothing of my Self in me.124

St. Teresa was born of noble parentage in 1515 A.D. in Avila, a small town in Spain. Her mother died when she was twelve and she was brought up by her father with exceptional love and concern. In 1531 she goes to do some studies in an Augustinian convent, and in 1536 enters the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation in Avila,
and after a year takes the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. To say goodbye to her affectionate family members especially to her dearly loved father was very painful to Teresa as she recounts in her autobiography. She writes: "It seemed to me as if every bone in my body were being wrenched asunder; for, as I had no love of God to subdue my love for my father and kinsfolk, everything was such a strain to me that, if the Lord had not helped me, no reflections of my own would have sufficed to keep me true to my purpose."

At that time convent life in Spain had degenerated into such an extent that it had become the resorts of economic security with little responsibility, of social respectability with little reason than outwards shows and of hunting for pleasure under the guise of the monastic garbe. Mostly girls from rich families joined, and backed by their powerful and worldly relatives compromised the rules and regulations of the respective founders of these congregations. And the visiting rooms of these convents had become places of social gathering especially for the young nobility of the place.

Almost for the first twenty years of her life she flows with the current. Because of her natural qualities and talents she found herself becoming the centre of attention and attraction, was much loved and respected by the other members. Winifred Hevin writes: "With beauty allied to mother wit and a lively manner, Teresa had no difficulty then or at any period of her life, in
attracting friends of both sexes.¹²８ Perhaps the chief reason for joining the convent was not to dedicate herself wholeheartedly to live a life of bhakti in brahmacarya but rather, as she later on writes,¹²９ not to become subject to a man doing the duties of a wife faithfully.

Almost for the first twenty years in the convent was a life of compromises. She tried to have the best of both worlds, of the grasthasrami and of the recluse. The Gujarati saying that "The recluse lost both the worlds"¹³⁰ was about to be realized in her life, though now and then she had occasional experiences of divine presence and of union with God. This was chiefly due to her illness and the experience of the limitations and transitoriness of human endowments and pleasures. It would be wrong, however, to imagine that her life was a barren desert in the matters of spiritual life even during the early years of her convent life. She had an insatiable thirst for truth, and devoured books whenever possible. And above all, she looked for spiritual gurus. In chapters 23 and 24 of her autobiography she describes the great turn in her life which took place under the guidance of two Jesuits, Juan de Pradanos and Francis Borgia who the Duke of Gandhia before he renounced the world and accepted a monastic way of life. From then onwards her life was one of whole hearted dedication to Christ and to establish Christ's spiritual kingdom of love, joy and peace on earth. She writes of her early years in the 'math': "I spent nearly twenty years on that stormy sea, often falling in this way and each time rising again, but to little purpose, as I would only
From 1557 onwards, after her "final conversion" till her death in 1582 her achievements, even from a human point of view, were so great a marvellous that the later generations felt them almost unbelievable. She set about for the reform of monastic life first of women and then of men, at the teeth of deadly opposition both from the religious as well as the secular leaders. She had the courage to ask and get help from Philip II of Spain, at that time the Emperor of half of the known world, to get official recognition for her plans of reform. When she died she had already founded some 16 monasteries of nuns and with the help of persons like St. John of the Cross 14 monasteries for men, through the length and breadth of Spain, and also in Portugal.

In 1582 this indefatigable devotee of Christ lay dying in a convent in Alva de Tormez, exhausted after a long journey. After this long journey when she reached the convent she said to Sr. Anne, her companion: "At last, my daughter, I have reached the house of death." All felt she was dying. Her superior, Antonio de Jesus said to her: "Mother, ask our Lord not to take you away. Don't leave us so quickly. "Can it be you speaking like that? I am no longer necessary in the world." As she was lying unable even to move her limbs, the sacrificial bread representing Christ, was brought to her she sprang up suddenly and got on her knees and received the prasad saying: "My Bridgroom and my Saviour! The longed for hour has come. It is time for our meeting, my Beloved,
On the following day singing psalms she closed her eyes to the light of this world to enter the "Seventh Mansion", to use her terminology, to be with Christ her divine Bridegroom, for ever.

As in the case of many other saints her body too remained incorrupt until various limbs were cut off by devotees from all over the world, for veneration. The following is an eye-witness account of her body after the tomb was opened three years after the burial by a group of authoritative men including, doctors, judges and secular and religious dignitaries:

The doctors examined the body and decided that it was impossible that its condition could have a natural explanation, but that it was truly miraculous...for after three years, without having been opened or embalmed, it was in such a perfect state of preservation that nothing was wanting to it in any way, and a wonderful odour issued from it.

When we go through the autobiography of St. Teresa we begin to realize that there have been few saints who had so many supernatural visions and mystical experiences, and among them only very few of them were as skeptical and critical about the 'reality' or truth of these experiences. She submitted her extraordinary experiences to the critical judgement of her spiritual gurus as well as that of other spiritual savants and wise men. She writes in the third person in one of her letters: "And she could not avoid seeing these visions, however hard she tried, she would be most distressed by them, fearing they might be a delusion of the devil. She began to
discuss them with spiritual persons of the company of Jesus." 136

After writing the Interior Castle, the most sublime of her mystical writings, she had regular sessions with two very eminent theologians of the period to listen to their critical comments. One of them, P. Xanguas writes about these sessions:

I would take numerous phrases in the book, saying that they did not sound well to me, and Fray Diego would reply, while she (St. Teresa) would tell us to expunge them. And we did expunge a few, not because there was any erroneous teaching in them, but because many would find them too advanced and too difficult to understand. 137

If we realize that it was the age of the Inquisition and of "witch-hunting" an age when mystics fared very badly before the religious authorities, we can understand the courage and deep commitment to truth to allow such sessions.

b) St. Teresa of Jesus and Jesus Christ.

St. Teresa took for herself the name Teresa de Jesus, i.e. Teresa of Jesus, when her order of religious women was recognized and she became ex officio a member of this Order. So it was. She surrendered herself to Christ in the entirety of her being. What St. Paul said about his identification with Christ that "For me to live is Christ (Phil. 1:21) or that "It is not I but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20) was very much realized in her too.

(i) Total self-surrender

As in the case of other mystics, the basis religious attitude
of St. Teresa too was one of total self-surrender to God in bhakti. A prayerful outburst in her autobiography ends with this statement: "I desire neither the world nor anything that is worldly, and nothing seems to give me pleasure unless it comes from Thee: everything else seems to me a heavy Cross." After a vision of Christ even a very good friend with outstanding virtues became very insignificant. She says that "from that time forward everything I see appears nauseating to me by comparison with the excellences and glories which I have seen in this Lord." She writes about her feeling after a vision of heaven and an experience of the Godhead: "All the things that can be desired were there at one and the same time, yet I saw nothing... Afterwards my soul was dismayed to find that there was any created thing in which I could rest, still more that I could come to have affection for any, for everything else seemed to me a mere ant-hill." In these statements it can be easily noticed that her total dedication to Christ was simultaneous with a feeling of the nothingness or worthlessness of anything apart from God. For in God she found "all the things that can be desired."

This God-man to whom she wholeheartedly surrendered herself was somebody within her though in the Semitic religious traditions God is considered more in terms of his transcendency that in terms of immanence. Thus we read in her autobiography: "On one occasion... my soul suddenly became recollected and seemed to me to become bright all over like a mirror, no part of it—back, sides, top or bottom—but was completely bright, and in the centre.
of it was a picture of Christ Our Lord as I generally see Him. I seemed to see Him in every part of my soul as clearly as in a mirror, and this mirror - I cannot explain how - was wholly sculptured in the same Lord by a most loving communication which I shall never be able to describe." Elsewhere she says that when she turns the eyes of her mind "to the image of Him which I have within my soul" she experiences an extraordinary sense of freedom and a sense of great detachment from other things. As a good teacher she explains her vision of Christ within and the fruitfulness of meditating as He is within. She says: "This vision seems to me a very beneficial one for recollected persons, for it teaches them to think of the Lord as being in the very innermost part of their soul. This is a meditation which has a lasting effect, and, as I have said on other occasions, is much more fruitful than thinking of Him as outside us." 

As in the case of other mystics like Mirabai, for Teresa too, the incarnate deity was her divine Bridegroom. We have already referred to her welcoming Christ addressing him as Bridegroom just before her death. And Christ reciprocated her bridal sentiment by accepting such a relationship explicitly. She writes thus about this: "Often His Majesty says to me, as a sign of His great love: 'Now thou art Mine and I am thine'. She narrates what Christ told her placing his palm, pierced by the nail, in her hand: "Look at this nail: it is the sign that from to-day you are my bride... in future you will be jealous for my honour not only because I am your Creator and your King, but as my true bride."
describes in chapter 29 of her autobiography how she had the experience of her heart pierced by a golden spear by an angel, which experience left her "completely afire with a great love of God". This experience of hers is interpreted by later mystics as mystical marriage. Her heart, still remaining incorrupt in Al de Torres, still bears witness to the reality-content of this experience since it can be seen as a pierced heart.

Her self-surrender to Christ was also in terms of a friend, as his sakhi. She says: "Although He is my Lord, I can talk to Him as to a friend, because He is not, I believe, like those whom we call lords on earth, all of whose authority rests upon an authority conferred on them by others." This divine Sakha was for her the most powerful protector. She speaks of a vision in which she saw herself surrounded by enemies with all sorts of weapons. She writes: "I was in great distress of spirit, and had no idea what I should do, when I raised my eyes to Heaven and saw Christ, not in Heaven, but in the air high above me, holding out His hand to me and encouraging me in such a way that I no longer feared all the other people." She says that she realized the meaning of the vision only when she found herself "attacked almost exactly the same way" by people who opposed her reform movements or called her as one possessed by the devil or a witch. She deeply felt that "all the time He was at my right hand, and a witness of everything that I was doing." St. Theresa felt that she received almost everything she asked of Christ and felt that when she prayed
for something which was not according to her Beloved's will she could not continue praying with any enthusiasm. Though she got various blessings, spiritual and material, she mentions only very few cases in her autobiography as for instance, the favour of giving eye-sight to a man who was almost blind.

In her desire to follow the path trode by her Beloved she would meditate on various scenes from His life. The scenes from the sufferings of Christ had a privileged place in her meditations. The scene in which Pilate, the Roman judge, showing Christ to the people after the scourging and the crowing with thorns, saying "Behold the man", was one of her favourite images for meditation. She liked to be with the suffering Christ in those scenes where He felt most lonely as in Gethsemane before His arrest. She had a passionate desire for suffering with Christ, for she realized that suffering is a concomitant factor of genuine love. Thus when she was pierced in her heart by the angel she experienced intense joy and suffering simultaneously. She says: "I sometimes say to Him with my whole will: 'To die, Lord, or to suffer! I ask nothing else of Thee for myself but this.'"

(ii) Christ as Man

Usually when the Christians use the terms God, Lord etc. referring to the UR they mean Christ. This is especially so in popular devotions while in the official prayers Christ is represented as the Way to the 'Father' as the 'Mediator' between man and the UR. That is why, the official prayers end with the words
"through Christ our Lord". All the same right from the beginning of Christianity there existed a tension between the absolutization and relativization of Christ more or less like the tension between the Nirguna and Saguna Brahmans in the Indian philosophy. This problem is all the sharper in the Western religious thinking due to the fact that the Christian monism is such that it tends very much to dualism. Hence, the dogmatic statement "Christ is true God and true man" is far more paradoxical to the Western than to the Indian mind where the mahavakyani like "Thou art that" constitute much of the daily bread of the religious life of the people. Possessed with an intellect which was exceptionally intuitive yet highly rational and analytical, in St. Teresa's descriptions of her mystical experiences, this tension is very obvious.

St. Teresa writes referring to the treatment of this question by some authors:

And these books advise us earnestly to put aside all corporeal imagination and to approach the contemplation of the Divinity. For they say that anything else, even Christ's Humanity, will hinder or impede those who have arrived so far from attaining to the most perfect contemplation. But these writers think that, as this work is entirely spiritual, anything corporeal may disturb or impede it, and that what contemplatives must contrive to do is to think of themselves as circumscribed, but of God as being everywhere, so that they may become absorbed in Him.152

St. Teresa was aware of the reasons advanced by these who
spoke against the devotion to the human aspect of Christ (human nature, humanity). The main NT text used by these writers was Jn. 16:7-14 where Christ says to His disciples that unless He ascends to heaven leaving them here on earth the "Spirit of God" would not come to make them realize the truth of Christ. But her argument is that this was told to the Apostles and not to Mary, the Mother of Christ, who was more attached to the human aspect of Christ than the disciples themselves. Of course, she is not altogether against the contemplation of the Divinity independent of Christ's human nature, she says: "It will be all right, I think to do this sometimes, but I cannot bear the idea that we must withdraw ourselves entirely from Christ and treat that Divine Body of His as though it were on a level with our miseries and with all created things." She says that she does not oppose this view since "God leads souls along many roads and by many ways." She also affirms that contemplation of the Godhead independent of the Humanity of Christ was full of delight for her. Yet she expresses her negative feeling towards this sort of contemplation in this way after her own experience: "I believe I was committing an act of high treason, though I committed it in ignorance." She found great spiritual profit in having an image of Christ before her eyes.

Let us examine the reasons given by her for her preference to have contemplation of the Humanity of Christ. She says: "The first, which I was beginning to speak about earlier, is a certain lack of humility, a desire on the soul's part to rise before the Lord
raises it, a dissatisfaction with merely meditation on something so precious, and a longing to be Mary before one has laboured with Martha. Just before she had already given the examples of great mystics like St. Francis, Catherine, Antony and co. who, were the great devotees of the humanity of Christ though great mystics. Before commenting on the first reason let us look at the second reason advanced by her. As we shall see, this point is of great importance for our study of the question of theanthropos. She says:

To come to the second point: we are not angels and we have bodies.... As a rule, our thoughts must have something to lean upon, though sometimes the soul may go out from itself and very often may be full of God that it will need no created thing to assist it in Recollection. But this is not usual: when we are busy, or suffering persecutions or trials when we cannot get as much quiet as we should like, and at seasons of aridity, we have a very good Friend in Christ. We look at Him as a Man: We think of His moments of weakness and trial; and He becomes our Companion.

According to St. Teresa "Christ's most sacred Humanity must not be reckoned among these corporeal objects." It is through the sacred Humanity of Christ her contemplative prayer "began to take shape like an edifice with solid foundations". She takes seriously the NT image of Christ as the door to the Father (Jn.10:7) and according to her we must enter through this door...if we wish His sovereign Majesty to show us great secrets.

From these statements it is clear that this saint does not
oppose the type of contemplation independently of the Humanity of Christ. From her first reason it seems that she considers the former kind of devotion superior to the latter as the former is considered as an ascent from the latter by God's grace. In the second reason too she seems to consider the former kind as more unusual and extraordinary, and in the sense higher. This view seems to be similar to the following statement in the BG: "But greater is the toil of those whose thinking elings to the unmanifest (avyakta) for difficult (indeed) it is for embodied men to reach-and-tread the unmanifested way" (12:5)

Then how shall we explain her experience of going from the contemplation of the 'Nirguna Brahman' to that of the Saguna? She had felt great delight in the former contemplation also. If Christ were just a door He must be transcended. All the same, she felt that her spiritual edifice had strong foundations only when she 'came down' to the contemplation of the Humanity of Christ. The reason seems to rest in her statement that the Human Nature of Christ is not like any other human bodies. Of course, she does not state the nature of this difference. From the NT however we know that Christ's body had an eternalizable content as His resurrection proved it. Here, we may compare the nature of Christ with the para and apar a prakrtis of the Lord.

Conclusion

In St. Teresa we have a marvellous example of margatrain samanvaya. Her dealings with men of highest authority in Europe
like the Pope and the Emperor, her dealings with so many other men and women of different degrees of social status for support for her reform movement, her function as a guru for the spiritual initiation and formation of her followers, and her founding of some 16 monasteries for women and co-founding of some 14 monasteries for men show that she was very much of a karma-yogini. But her voluminous and monumental writings on mystical philosophy, and the profound wisdom she shows in understanding man’s relation with the Absolute and the various psycho-somatic reactions that follow according to the degrees of the intensity of this relationship, she stands as a true Brahma-mani. However, her whole hearted bhakti towards Christ, the theanthropos, that gave all her actions aura the sacrificial sure and all her knowledge the quality of intense warmth and personalistic appeal for the last four centuries.

For St. Teresa Christ was her father, king, friend and bridegroom. She surrendered herself wholeheartedly to Christ. Her famous saying “either suffer or die” is a clear proof of her selflessness in this love-relationship. She preferred to be with the suffering Christ than with the triumphant risen Christ. True, she had the deepest experience of God-head getting into the Trinitarian mystery, but she always had the prop of the human nature of Christ.

C. FINAL CONCLUSION

In our study of the lives of these saints we were very much absorbed in their magnetic personalities and in their relationships with the Theanthropoi, Krsna and Christ. We hardly ever stopped
and reflected to see how their religious commitment was influenced by the theanthropic-value taught by the BG and the NT, directly or indirectly. It is quite evident to us to express their religious commitment very fittingly by such conceptions as 'total self-surrender' or 'wholehearted dedication' to the theanthropoi. "Vasudeva sarvanidam" of the BG is echoed not only in the lives of Narsi and Mīrā but also in the lives of the Christian saints as can be perceived in Francis' much loved mantra 'My God my All' or in the similar expressions of dedication found in the autobiography of Teresa. Christ's call in the NT to leave father, mother, brothers and sisters and whatever else in the world for the sake of "God's kingdom", is realized not only in the lives of the Christian saints but also of the Hindu saints.

The wholehearted dedication to the theanthropoi implies also, so to say, a horizontal dimension, in so far as it manifests itself in love and kindness towards one's fellowmen and also towards other beings. The "sarvabhūta hite rataḥ" and the "lokasaṅgrevah" ideals of the BG, and the NT doctrine of the eternal value implied even in giving a little cold water to the thirsty, are realized in the lives of these saints. If St.Francis could embrace a leper seeing Christ in him, St.Narsi could fill the hearts of the untouchables with pure joy and peace by singing bhajans going to their locality braving the opposition from the high caste Brahmins. But the greatest service of these saints to humanity was their very presence as light in darkness, as eternity in time, as God-wardness in materialism. Thus even a casual consideration like this taking
just one or two points can make us see how the theanthropos-value taught by our two sacred books is eminently realized in the lives of these saints.

Another point that strikes us is the great similarity, and at times even identity of attitudes in their commitment to the theanthropoi Krsna and Christ. Both pairs lived in very different socio-religious and geographico-historical situations. Yet when we go deep into their religious attitudes we find surprising similarities. After getting into the true meanings of the words of these saints expressed through their hymns, prayers and teachings, suppose that we remove the name of Christ from the words of the Christian saints and replace it by the name of Krsna, and suppose that we remove the name of Krsna and replace it by that of Christ. After these verbal readjustments if we present the Hindu expressions of Krsnabhakti to the deeply religious Christians and the Christian expressions of Christabhakti to the deeply religious Hindus, will not both the groups accept these expressions as pure forms of Krsnabhakti and Christabhakti respectively? For instance, if somebody were to remove the expression "vaisnava-janato" from the famous bhajan of Narsi and replace it by the expression "christavajnato" and give to a religiously committed Christian community even of a far-away country, the Christians in all probability will cherish it as a genuine expression of Christabhakti. Even from our little study we can find out a number of similar examples.
From a psychological point of view, taking chiefly into account the subjective attitudes rather than the objective forms, one might say that the Krsnabhakti of Narasī and the Christabhakti of Francis are fairly identical. Let us take the example of a dedicated and loyal Burmese wife and that of a dedicated and loyal French wife. The external objective forms of their expressions of their loyalty and dedication to their respective husbands do differ considerably, but from a psychological point of view their loyalty and dedication would be practically identical. A similar thing can be said about the religious commitment to Kṛṣṇa by Narasī and Mīrā, and by Francis and Teresa to Christ.

What is this Kṛṣṇa-power or Christ-power that transforms people so radically? Have these powers a common source or different? If the same source, do they lead to the same goal or different? How to assess and appreciate the Kṛṣṇa-value and Christ-value? These questions will have a partial answer in our treatment of the purpose of avatāra and incarnation in the following chapter.