CHAPTER VI

The Sovereignty of the Path of Love-devotion
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The Bhagavata opens with the Gāyatrī embodying the contemplation of the Supreme Truth. It is said here that the creation through "Gunas" is false and that yet, on account of the all-pervading Reality that underlies it, it appears as real; that the production, maintenance and destruction of the universe all proceed from the Ultimate Reality, Brahman and it is through the light of this Reality that all darkness vanishes. It claims its special privilege

1. ॐ आग्नेयं गायत्रीमा ्ब्रह्मादिनिर्मितस्येऽज्ञानस्मिन:।
   प्रकृतिः स्त्रोतं ज्ञानं तेवं यत्र चैव निर्मितं भवत्।
   तदवादिनिर्मितं ज्ञातं मयं भवेन न विनयक्षज्ञ
   धार्मिकमपि सदां सिद्धान्तमेतेऽयतः प्रस्तोत्तरं परं भीमवीः॥

Bh. 1:1:1.
over other works of celebrity to imprison the Almighty in the heart of hearts, by the unique excellence of the Supreme Religion (Para-Bhakti or Premalakṣaṇā Bhakti) which it is out to expound. That such Religion is not a mere theory but comes forth from the vital spring of the experience of the spiritual stalwarts is borne out by the Bhāgavata, with copious and apt illustrations including the episode of the demon Vṛtra, which is a stock

2. धर्म: प्रातिस्थलरूपोऽन्तरा परमो निभेत्वराजा सता
वेष्म्र वास्तवमः धार्मणु शिवः शापायोंभूतनमः
स्वयं भावाते महामार्कोविकांत्सा पररीत्यः
भागवत्सर्वदेशदेशं कृत्यम्: शुक्रवः (क्षितिङ्गावल्)
Bh. 1.1.2.

3. महं: स्मरेताः पशु देवो गार्तो व सुभोवन वाप वर्त का कर्म करोऽवन कामः
ननामेन धर्मो य धर्मो धर्मेन धर्मायादेन नसतादित्वम्
नामेन शरीरसंक्रमणम् का रमक्षः एक्षा विशेषम काभुः
अनान्ततथा इव मातरः स्वमा: स्वर्गे वर्तस्याऽवस्याः शुक्लाः
पिषः प्रेमेयम् विकृतिः विषयं मनोरसिन्धुविधिविद्यं विद्यम्
Bh 6:11:24 तिथि 27
example of the triumph of the divinity over the evil spirit. Thus the Bhāgavata is unique in so far as it expounds the Supreme religion on the basis of the Supreme Truth, practised by many, of whom Vṛtra stands out with remarkable prominence. As the Bhāgavata affirms, the Supreme religion was propounded by Lord Kṛṣna who was steeped in the Upaniṣadic tradition. It is old, because it has clothed in substance the spiritual endeavour of the Upaniṣads; it is new because essentials are presented anew in exclusion of non-essentials. In this sense the Supreme religion is the regeneration of the Upaniṣadic Truth. The Bhāgavata has defined it as the means to selfless (अनन्तरूपित) and uninterrupted (अनप्रसिढ्ध) devotion (Bhakti) to the Lord of

the Senses (अन्धकार)\(^5\). Elsewhere the Bhāgavata has defined Religion as that which conduces to the devotion to Bhagavān.\(^6\) According to the Bhāgavata, devotion ensures peace of mind by divesting it to all restlessness. Devotion, therefore, is a positive gain and it offers adequate justification for its means being regarded as Religion, nay, the Supreme religion.

But this claim by the Bhāgavata in favour of the means to devotion amounts to the denial of traditional views on the connotation of the term Dharma. In the Rg-Veda Dharma emerged as sacrifice (अर्थ) to the Gods. This concept of Dharma was highly developed by the

5. \(अ व ह अ स ओ प ए श ज व ग क ) घ य म ल ब म म व र ा त ज ज ज ज ज

6. \(अ व ह अ स ओ प ए श ज व ग क ) घ य म ल ब म म व र ा त ज ज ज ज ज

\(Bhā 1:2:6\).

\(Bhā 11:19:27\).
ritualistic tradition and was laid upon a rationalistic foundation by the Hīmāmaśa School. Dharma in the sense of rituals, both vedic and smārta, was later on superseded by knowledge which in the Upaniṣads established itself against rituals; and thus the term Dharma came to be associated with a significance namely, the highest knowledge of unity between the Jīva and Brahman. But the Bhāgavata seems to have dislodged both rituals and knowledge from their status of Dharma and appropriated it instead in favour of devotion, described in the previous chapter.

In order to establish its roots in the vedic past, the Bhāgavata puts the process of ritualism to searching criticism. According to Bhāgavata, whatever might have been the ultimate

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aim of sacrifice — pleasure of the God or acquisition of religious merit — in either case God could not be dispensed with. The Bhāgavata argues in the light of the Gītā that if action is indispensably linked up with God, the inner controller (करकर्मात्मक्योऽवस्था), let the doer realise this fact (क यस्य देवः केष्व देवः) and act accordingly. The ordinary act is then transformed into a spiritual discipline, when it becomes a conscious act of dedication to God, invoking as it does, the element of devotion (भाव). Just as action takes a new colour with the touch of devotion, so knowledge as well puts on new significance, when tinctured with the element of devotion. After all, the dry bone

8. क्रमं कोणं मद्यन्तिप्रज्ञोऽवधानस्थातः भवन्ति नन्युत्तमस्वभवान्।
करोऽवधानमयं मलं भक्तदेवं परमम् नात्मण्यामोलममर्याद्येऽस्य।||

Bh. 11-2-36.

with Stīrāya's comments —

नेष्टैं मूलं तुकचदमु उनायं करं भागणनो
धमोऽथ भवति कृत्वा भावं।
of logic for its own sake can impart no relish to life. If the goal of Upanishadic knowledge is the dissolution of the individual into Brahman, the Eternal Infinite, then the rigour of knowledge seems to dry up the sap of life. Sri Siddhesvara Bhattacarya argues that self-extinction can hardly be a cherishable goal. So, if spiritual life is a continuity of ordinary life, it has to have before it the same goal, pursued through all ordinary endeavour viz. happiness. The spiritual journey ends when fragmentary pleasure finds its consummation in Eternal Bliss. Participation in bliss is not the extinction of the individual but its highest fulfilment. It is not a case of simple knowledge but of devotion, ensuring all fruits. 9 This is why a true devotee does not

wish for Mokṣa even; but wishes to be always in loving service of the Lord of his heart; whether it be the attitude of Dāsyā, Sakhyā, Vātsalya, Apatya or Madhura. The devotee has fixed his mind and intellect on the Lord in a spirit of perfect self-surrender. Being ever in tune with the blissful God, he has no desire left for anything and is ever filled with purity, dispassion, wisdom and tranquility which state he maintains by a total surrender of all his works to the Lord. The peace and joy which a devotee experiences is maintained in all conditions of life and activity. The devotee becomes totally divine, both internally and externally i.e. in the knowledge of the Ātman and in the actions of Prakṛti. 10

10. Rāmadās : "Gītā-Sandesh " (The Path of Devotion - Chapter XII ) - P. 87 and 90.
Generally, there is a widespread feeling that devotion is mere emotionalism and that the loving milkmaids of Vrindavana were mere sentimental lovers of Śrī Kṛśna, with no understanding of His real eternal nature as the Sarvātman, the self-in-all. The Gopīs were considered as mere beloveds of the Lord and that they had no true wisdom. This is not true; for they had no illusion that Śrī Kṛśna, their heart's Beloved, was a mere Gopa-boy. The Gopīs were the greatest devotees of the Lord, but at the same time, they had a very clear and vivid knowledge of the glory and majesty of Śrī Kṛśna's True Nature. Kṛśna was Life itself - the warm, radiant Life.¹¹ They did not ever consider the Divine Blue Boy as only an enchanting Yādava-child. They realised that the Flute Player of the Jamanch Bank was the Supreme Puruṣa of the Upaniṣads. They once said, "You are not a

mere child of the Gopa-tribe, but you are the very inner self of all living creatures in the Universe. Thou art Śrī Nārāyaṇa Himself who has taken this incarnation to serve the world.¹²

The Gopīs surrendered their bodies, minds and intellects, their very desires for gaining any spiritual or secular joys, entirely at their Beloved's sacred feet. They left their homes, broke all ties of worldly relationships only to be within the sight of the ever-smiling Lord of the Brindāvana. Day and night they apparently lived in their homes and performed their duties, yet their minds were constantly fixed in high meditation upon the Blue Boy of the Jamnā Banks. The Gopīs saw, heard, smelt, tasted and touched their Divine Butter-Thief alone everywhere, at all times. If by any chance they happened to forget the Kṛṣṇa-Form, they suffered deep anguish...

¹². "अ स्वयं औषिधिनः नन्दनः भक्तः
अविकल्पदेहिनः नयितम् देव
विभक्तधारिते विभक्तधारिते
श्रीय उदेश्यास् स्वल्पवल्लभसे कुर्वे

भ. 10. 31 4
in their hearts. Surely none can measure their voiceless, infinite, unquestioning, heartful-love.

As a result of their faithful and deep devotion Lord Krsna had to Himself confess to them, "Oh dear Gopīs! Breaking as under the strong chains of family ties you all have served Me. For this pure Love of yours even if I serve you all for aeons My debts will not be cleared. If you, out of your largeheartedness release me from this indebtedness, then alone can I be saved from My obligations." 13

To Uddhava once these devotees of Braja said, "Oh Uddhava! We can practice Yoga only where there is sense-of-separation. Here, to us there is nothing but total merger with our Syāma Sunder." This was the depth of the perfect devotion the Gopīs had for Lord Krsna. Thus the Gopīs of Vṛndāvana were not blind devotees with a thoughtless empty faith. They were all spiritual saints of wisdom (निर्विकल्प स्वयंवरा). The

13. न यथा देव देहाय दूर निरक्षरं, दूर निरक्षरं स्नेहम् विज्ञापितं सि. अः सामस्य देहायेऽदेहम् अस्तित्वम् तेन व: प्रेमिकात्मा अधबोधि ॥ पद्म १६ ३२ २.२
more they realise His glories, the more their love for Him expands. An ordinary man fails to achieve this deep devotion only because of his ignorance of His glory and Divine Nature. The Lord Himself says in the Gītā that of the four varieties of devotees, the devotion based upon and flowing forth from true wisdom is firm and deep and constant. Love of God without the precise knowledge of the Supreme Nature of Truth is only a passion low and base as the love of a woman to her secret lover. Such a love (Kāma) can never bring to the lover the true joy of pure love.

In the illicit love, based upon lust and passion, there is only an animal sense of gratification. The paramour approaches his lady-love only for the gratification of his passions.

14. "वर्तुकित्व भोजते मा औषधि शुद्धिः तुहि अरुः |
अनीदोऽति ज्ञातस्य द्विग्नः च भर्तरणम्।
।।
तेषा अग्नि विपश्चिरुपतं एकसरिपिविश्चास्वतेः |
निमित्ते ति राज्यिनो सत्यर्थम् च च गम गम इति।
।।
G.7 : 16 & 17
The secret lover demands and seeks only his own immediate happiness. It is always extremely selfish. He is not interested in providing joy for her and to fill the greater sense of fulfilment in seeing her happiness. On the other hand a true devotee seeks not his own happiness, but the happiness of the Lord. God-love (भगवान-प्रीति) is the final goal of a devotee. He is ready to suffer, strive endlessly, struggle without rest and he feels himself completely rewarded if he only knows that these self-sacrifices from him have made his Lord graciously happy towards him. Any amount of Tapas will be cheerfully undertaken in the name of the Lord-of-his-heart, if the devotee can feel that his Beloved is happy by it, for Love-labour is no labour. A smile of the great Lord of smiles is a total reward and complete fulfilment for a true devotee. To enjoy at the very joy given to his joyous Beloved is the subtlest satisfaction demanded by all true love. There
is thus an essential difference between worldly love and godly devotion. To a true Bhakta, Bhakti is most natural and very common and conceivable. There is no compulsion in practising it and he has not to sacrifice anything against his will. A true Bhakta always remains in his senses and therefore, he has not to face any fall. 15

Swāmī Śrī Gīnmayānanda distinguishes between Prema and Kama and says that today in the world lust is glorified as love and upon it is based the hope to rebuild the world. All their attempts are therefore staggering with repeated failures and curb watchers. The growing youths of the world are losing even their faith in love. The counter-feit is being circulated as the legal tender. Lust is

15. स्वामी श्री गीनमयानंदaji distinguishes between Prema and Kama and says that today in the world lust is glorified as love and upon it is based the hope to rebuild the world. All their attempts are therefore staggering with repeated failures and curb watchers. The growing youths of the world are losing even their faith in love. The counter-feit is being circulated as the legal tender. Lust is
lustily parading in human affairs as love! This is a pernicious condition. Love cannot
be lust. In love, there is an expansion in
Being, while in lust, there is the suffocating
squeeze of death, a gasping slip into the
dungeons of tragic life. Love creates and lust
destroys the peace in the heart of man. Love
is the victory of the spirit; lust is the
cry of the base flesh and the low mind. Love
generates tranquility within; lust begets
excitements all around. True love ennobles,
it enlivens, it enthralts. Pure Love totally
transports the devotee into the climbs of
joyous satisfaction, into a breathless state
of perfection. In the love of the Gopis for
the Gopālākṛṣṇa, there was nothing base, ignoble
or fleshly. It was the expression of a total
merger of their personality in the Supreme
Truth, the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. That there is
nothing sensual about this subtle and gracious
relationship between the Gopīs and the Lord of
Vrndavana is clearly seen from the very fact that it was given out by the great sage Sukadeva to King Pariksit, when the royal king was facing imminent death. Hearing and - enjoying the Bhāgavata ultimately saved the king from the sad death. Every devotee is the king of his life, waiting for his death in the house of the body, standing in an Island of the society, surrounded by the waters of the world. This is why Devarṣi Nārada believes that the love without the knowledge of His true nature is like the illicit love for a paramour.

16. Śrī Śrī Cimnayananda: "Unpublished commentary on the aphorisms of sage Nārada"

17. तिरुमला आयामित्रि |
   N.R. S. 2.3
It is hence that the Bhāgavata believes in the organic unity of devotion, detachment and knowledge and designates it as पारमर्श्य धर्म (i.e. the religion of the recluses). This explains why Bhāgavata at the colophon of each chapter would describe itself as the पारमहेष्ठ अद्वितिया. It is so because it professes to be a work on the religion of the great spiritual Swans (देवों) who have chosen once for all to abide by the Lotus feet of the Lord. The claim of the Bhāgavata that devotion or rather the discipline of devotion (Bhakti-Yoga) is a mosaic of devotion, detachment and knowledge may be understood in this way. Supposing devotion is emotion at

18. उपद्रवम श्रीत्व नामसुपरोक्त कृपायम् महामुलीय अश्वर्द्धिनेन दैविग्नो गुणवत्ताय यानेष्वरस्यधर्मम्।
स्मात् ५:५ २:८

19. श्री श्रीमेघांश्रवने महापुराण धर्मस्मृतोऽर्द्धतिरीयः श्रीमन्तिवेशोष्ठाने प्रकृति घमे।
स्मात् १:१
its core, it has to be a sort of attachment (अभिव्रत्य) to God. Now, attachment presupposes on the one hand detachment from other objects and the knowledge of the object of attachment on the other. How can one become attached to a particular object, if one's mind continues to dissipate itself in other engagements as before? and, how can one be attached unless one knows beforehand the object of endearment? So, attachment in order to be what it is has to be associated with detachment and knowledge. The Bhāgavata has duly seen through the workings of human mind and has organised its discipline of devotion in the same light. Indeed of the three fibres of the discipline of devotion viz., devotion, detachment and knowledge, detachment is a necessary concomitant to attachment. But knowledge is the vital spring to devotion.\(^{20}\)

\(^{20}\) धर्मस्य तर्कः वैद्यत |
Bh 7:7.15
The Bhāgavata has thus built up its structure of devotional discipline on the Upaniṣadic knowledge. This is why Devarṣi Nārada holds that the Supreme devotion is, as a technique even superior to the Path of Action (Karma), the Path of Knowledge (विज्ञान) and the Path of Disciplined Contemplation (Yoga). According to Devarṣi Nārada, God love is superior to all other methods of Sādhanā known to us from the sacred scriptures. Of the innumerable techniques prescribed by the Rṣis, the most famous and also the most popular are of course the path of selfless dedicated service (Karma), the path of discriminative knowledge which would dispel the ignorance of the nature of the self, and the mystic path of self-development through disciplined contemplation (Yoga).

21. ॐ कर्मान्यायं भवे तयाः प्रविष्टिनासि ।
    न ॥ २.५
Compared with these techniques, true devotion for the Lord (Bhakti) is superior and nobler, because devotion is the final outcome of all.

In all the four above mentioned methods of self-unfoldment, the great Rais insist upon certain minimum qualifications in the Sadhakas in order that they may harvest maximum from those paths. But in the case of God-love there are no such conditions at all. Everybody can follow the path and even the worst amongst us can straightway take up the pursuit of the path of Devotion to the best of his ability. The mystery of the Bhakti Yoga lies in the fact that it does not destroy the inborn feelings of human beings; the only thing that requires to be done is to channelise them.
properly. There should be sublimation of feelings. The feelings which are towards the senses should be directed towards God.\textsuperscript{23} In short, while all other paths can help us to evolve from whatever level we are in, at any given moment. This alone is sufficient to consider Bhakti as greater and more beneficial a path than all others.

Besides, the pursuers of other paths have perhaps a greater chance of forgetting the Lord in their anxious pursuits. The Karma Yogi in the work undertaken, the Jhāna Yogi in the study that he pursues diligently or the Yogi in his regular practices of contemplation may perhaps lose sight of the goal, the Lord. They may get over-attached with the means and come to forget the noble end. But a devotee,

\begin{quote}
23. \textit{\textit{मरे अशुष्ठहि वर्तनि}} य \textit{\textit{॥}}
\end{quote}
as he is an ardent lover of the Lord, cannot remain even for a moment forgetful of the Lord and His grace. Thus, devotion indeed is superior to all other methods of spiritual practices.

All other paths described so far are the means that will take the seekers to the end, the final goal of spiritual experience. But in Devotion there is very little difference in essence between the means and the goal, between the path and the destination. In Bhakti love is love's own end. It is well known to all that love is its own fulfilment. According to sage Nārada, Bhakti is both, the means (संवेदना) and the end (आत्मा). So long as the residual वृश्चि
are still lingering in the devotee's personality constitution, Devotion is a path, Sadhanā. But when as a result of his love, love for the Lord, the Vāsanās disappear totally, a stage comes to him when his Supreme love itself becomes the Lord of Love Supreme.

Furthermore, a man of devotion invokes God's grace upon himself more readily - more naturally than the followers of the paths of Karma, Jñāna and Yoga. They may discover a vanity in their own progress, because in all those paths there is an inherent conscious self-effort; constantly involved. But a devotee has less chance of developing such a vanity; in as much as he is constantly conscious that all his spiritual progress, whatever be his dimensions, is all due to the blessings of the Lord of heart. Love of God removes all arrogant self-assertions and vainful self-glorification from the devotee. In fact, the Lord comes to help the devotee the more, in as much as the Lover of the Gopīs has infinite
compassion on the meek and the subdued. This is another reason why the supreme devotion for the Lord is nobler than all other known - spiritual paths of realisation of the Truth.

Granting that the Supreme religion leads to devotion coupled with detachment and knowledge, one is now entitled to the question - what is the nature of the Supreme religion? To this, the Bhagavata answers that the Supreme religion is the worship (Aradhana) of the Supreme Person (Prama Purusa)\(^25\) The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad has asserted the presence of the soul in every inch of the body from the tip of nail, and so the soul dwelling in the composite body is called Purusa.\(^26\) The Bhagavata has propagated

\(^{25}\) Bh 4.14.2

\(^{26}\) Br U 1.4.7
the same view when it says that the soul lies as life in diverse bodies of men, of animals, of hermits and of Gods, after they were created by the soul itself; and abiding in them all, the soul is called Puruṣa (पुरुष). The assertion of the Bhāgavata that the soul first creates bodies before entering them is an echo of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad which observes that pure existence, in the process of its becoming, had created the world and then entered it. So the same reality existing before (Ādi) creation and yet lying in it when it was created (Puruṣa) can legitimately be called Ādi Puruṣa. Ādi Puruṣa is life eternal that in the process of self-manifestation solidifies itself into composite bodies and yet maintains

27. पुरुषप्रथेन्नृत्यो भिष्मप पद्मिनिकन्तकसं। श्रौते श्रीनि रूपं पुरुषं पुरुषः श्रयः॥
वेष्कृष्णां भ्रमन्त्वां रुपस्तितस्तं गुरुभो॥
सर्वार्तं परं हि पुरुषं आत्मात्मां प्रथयेत॥

28. तेषुकृष्णं तद्वापनमतिधारं ।

Bh. 7:14. 37 & 38

Tai U 2:6
its transcendental nature by pervading them all, as life distinct from bodies. 29

But eternal life is the exuberance of the infinite reservoir of Bliss. So, the Taittiriya Upaniṣad proclaims that all beings have sprung from bliss they are all sustained therein and finally they will all sink into bliss. 30

By intrinsic law of its own, bliss is expressing itself as life which, out of its vital urge is again resulting in the universe charged with life in all its details. So divine play has undergone three successive strata of development - Parama Puruṣa, Ādi Puruṣa and Puruṣa; and the Supreme religion of the Bhāgavata

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29. सर्वो धर्मस्य अनुपोजेति स प्रमुखे कुटरथे आश्रयते तदृशः स्वाभिन्नः।

30. आनन्दाद्वैतस्य सत्त्वगत्व ज्ञोर्वश्च आत्मस्य अभवते।
प्रकृतं विश्वं भविष्यन्ति।

Tat 3.6.
is the worship of Parama Puruṣa, the fundamental source of life, the Bhagavān, the all bliss.

The Bhāgavata considers all powerful bliss as Bhagavān. 31

In what consists the worship of the Supreme Puruṣa? Dedication (Arpana) of the self (Ātman) is the answer of the Bhāgavata. 32 The Bhāgavata looks upon self-dedication as the quint-essence of the teachings of the entire vedic literature. By 'self' the Bhāgavata means the wife, the son, the wealth, the body - in short whatever the votary considers to be his including his ownself. Worship (Aradhana), therefore, is the act of consecration of "I" and "mine" to the Divine, the surrender of the lower or empirical self

31. तस्य प्रायवेद्यात्मनं तदेः भगवान-अन्तनं
   अनुपालसमस्त एकतस्ति।
   अनिक्षे विषयवं परम् शास्त्रेण सिद्धावर्गः।
   विषेष-विषेष भगवानमिति प्रसन्नम्।
   Bh. 4. 1. 30.

32. धम्मशक्तिकामं यज्ञं शस्त्रितनवशेषस्तु ईश्वरः
   प्रथैव सब्दं विषयवं यव अत्ति।
   मैत्रे वरदाते विशेषं निगमस्य सत्यं
   स्वाधिकायेऽवज्ञ वसुहिदं परस्य-युधः।
   Bh. 7. 6. 2. 6
to the higher or spiritual infinitude. The Bhāgavata describes it as the Bhāgavata Dharma in its purest form, preached by Nārada to his worthiest disciple Prahlāda and leading to Bhagavān as the final goal. So, the Supreme religion or the Bhāgavata Dharma expounded by the Bhāgavata as the essence of the Vedas and described as the worship of the Supreme person consists in the dedication of the self to Bhagavān, the all Bliss. Self-surrender is in fact the emptying of the immediate self for the restoration of the spiritual one.

The Bhāgavata has tried to present a prima facie justification for the worship based

\[ \text{Verse 33.} \]

\[ \text{Bh 7:6:28} \]

\[ \text{Bh 7:10:45} \]
upon the presupposition that God is self-sufficient and the worshipper is out to please Him. How can the act of worship, the Bhāgavata objects, incur pleasure of God? Being self-contented God cannot derive pleasure from the devout act of worship. If, on the other hand, worship leaves God unaffected, then it becomes useless. To this, the Bhāgavata answers that worship does no good to God, yet directed to God, worship returns to the worshipper to brush aside his impurities. But worship, according to the Bhāgavata, does not stop there. It takes to the form of self-dedication so that the barriers of the ego are broken and the infinite possibilities of the pining soul are realised in the deepest embrace of the all-bliss; described as Rāsa of Kṛṣṇa with the Gopīs.

34. 

नवानं: प्रमुखः निज-मेघपूर्णः
मैत्रां अंजने प्रदृः कृष्णोऽर्जुनीति |
यद हरियोर्मर्मस्य निर्द्धानं माने 
तत्तांत्यथेऽप्रति स्वरूपेऽक्षे गूढःश्रीः || 

ṛṣi. 7.9.12
It is our impurities viz. the memmoth store of action that veil God from the Jīva. The Jīva performs actions and they are appropriated by his egoism and preserved in the mind as its acquisitions. The Jīva ignores the basic fact that God, the impeller (अन्तर्गतः) should in all legitimately be the agent of actions.

With the lapse of time some of the actions ripen and they determine the genesis of a particular birth. In that birth, the Jīva performs actions which are again deposited, as before, in the mind as fresh stock. Thus the vicious circle of Vāsanā, Karma and Birth (कृत्तिक, कृत्तिर्देश, and राजसीर्व) goes on ad-infinitum, to keep the material show going for ever till God-realisation. In truth, God-realisation is the only medicine for the soul.

35. माया मनुष्य कृत्तिक ब्रह्मात्माये
कृत्तिर्देश योहिष्ठतत्त्वातुविन तेन
पुरुष: ||

तथा 7:7:21
Hence the mind purified by worship and not exposed to fresh infections serves as the fitting instrument for further worship,\(^{36}\) that goes under the name of nine-fold devotion (Navadhā Bhakti), described in the previous chapters. By means of the nine-fold devotion, God is freely allowed to dwell in and play upon the mind of the votary so as to perpetuate his presence. The steady growth of God's personal contacts removes all fears and suspicions so that the process of nine-fold devotion results in the completely willing surrender of the personal ego to the irresistible splendour of the infinite. After the total evacuation of the ego the heart is filled to the brim with God. Such a stage is marked by the destruction

\(^{36}\) ब्रह्मचारीयं विश्वासं विपुलं संदर्भायता -
इन्द्रधनुषं कामिनं ब्रह्म भक्तं विनितं परमात्मा अर्थात्
वागुरुवेसं महापरिर्मपरंपरानं -
\(\text{Prabhū 5:7:7}\)
of huge stock of accumulated action with the only exception of matured action (Prakṛtī); and it heralds the dawning of a new life, the regeneration of the soul from the material to the spiritual, as revealed in Rāsalīla.

Surrender of the pragmatic self by the votary renders him selfless.37 Now that the ego is surrendered, the votary is settled upon his isolated nature of the bare witness (Prakṛtī)38, yet according to the Bhāgavata it is not the stage of absolute disinterestedness. True, that he no longer finds joy in limited ends and has thus detracted from material pleasures;39 yet such detraction

37. अकृत प्रकृति तत्तत्त्वज्ञान अवगतम्।
    मेघ अविच्छेदकर: स्वरी: सुभवमः दृष्टा:।
    प्रत्येक ॥ ॥ 14:13

38. प्रकृति: पुकटवस्थेत् दुःखस्मात् त्यं निविद्याम्।
    नित्योऽर्थिन्धाने अवनिरंतरशः। ॥
    प्रत्येक ॥ ॥ 27:23

39. इति मतिरघा कलिपेन विनोदम अभावते।
    अतिक्रमपुजुः के विवेकिन्तः।
    अध्यक्षायुपनीते अविचित्तः प्रकृतिमयेषु प्रति ॥
    प्रत्येक ॥ ॥ 9:32
is fulfilled because it gives in the strength and solidarity to take plunge into the infinite. This means that the mind becomes dead to materiality only to awaken to the fullness of spiritual life. So worship continues, even at this stage as an effortless direction of the mind towards God. At the stage of dedication of all actions to God, the unitary knowledge was nothing more than an intellectual conviction. At the stage of nine-fold devotion, the votary persuaded the inner controller of all actions to give up His passive presence in the heart of man in favour of His inward revelation, so that the votary may directly feel His presence.

40. भजनायुक्तम् मनमनिः हरिमीण्डरसि | भ 7:7:48

41. अन्तरिक्षयो मध्यर्थः परे वृः कण्णि अस्यपूर्वे अखः संबलित भविष्य नियमरक्तेऽदे श्लोऽकृति परसेतत्वायं महत्त्वं न्यूनं हन आपयमाये | भ 5:7:6
to open up with Him fresh spiritual dealings. Hari is now visualised as the fundamental unity behind all diversity of external elements. At the stage of nine-fold devotion, the all embracing character had only been partially revealed in the cherished deity of the votary, but it is not completely realised in the infinitesimal details of the universe. The world of matter is transformed into the splendour of the spirit (ॐ). When all conflicts and differences dissolved into the vision of unity, the votary may be said to have gained control over Maya, the principle of differences, with the aid of divine knowledge. He is now settled upon the tranquility of -

42. सर्वकृष्ण्येन तस्य स्वगत्व सत्संगमायेऽविधेया।
परिप्रेक्ष्येन नृपसमेतं श्रद्धिर्मूखोऽहं संस्कृते॥
अर्थं दि सर्वकृष्णयोऽर्थ्यापीताम् मयं मम ॥
मन्नवं: सर्वभूतस्व भगवानाय विद्वृत्तिभिः ॥

Bh. II : 29 : 18 & 19.
infinitude (कृत्व्य एवंतः ||). Thus Nirguna Brahma denies differences, while Saguna Brahma unites differences. In the eye of the devotee, the whole universe appears as the manifestation of one Brahman.

For the first time he feels his identification with the universe, which makes him consider

43. परिष्ठितवक्तुश्च: सम्बन्धविभिः। विदायासः ||

44. चलाशि आश्रितपदिः। ॥ अध्यात्मोऽग्रवः ||

45. तथो वैद्युतिशीलाम विज्ञातं महीं च विपरीते। अन्तःकरणं विद्यस्य तरे। उपर्य अविक्रय शर्म। प्रथम मेवाहः। ||

तिरु || 2: 41.
the happiness and sorrow of the universe as his own. This is why Prahlāda's aching heart, full of compassion for others gives vent to the following:

"Oh Lord! you need not bother about the liberation of the deserving, for they will get it by their own right. I am worried about those who have turned away from You in the indulging of trifling pleasures. It pains me that people should resort to solitude for their personal liberation; they do not care for others. Oh friend of the fallen! exhibit your mercy on those who cannot do without it. You are their only hope. Excepting in their company, I shall not cherish alone the
But Prahlāda who wails in this strain is not alone to feel like this. The milk of human kindness surges in the heart of every — Bhāgavatottama whose only mission at that stage is to travel all over the world to alleviate the troubles of all, to remove tears of the oppressed and to establish on earth the kingdom of God instead. They are possessed by universal pity and being masters of powers, both material and spiritual (Māyā and Cit Sakti), they themselves can cure the world of its malady. Thus their pity is not a
helpless rancour but the source of eternal joy. This is termed as Pa&a Sevā of the Lord and the Bhāgavata extols Pađa Sevā even above the achievement of unity with God. It may therefore, be taken as the goal of the Supreme religion.

In the context of personal God, Pađa Sevā may plausibly mean clinging to the Lotus feet of the Lord. But Pađa Sevā, from the metaphysical stand-point, is a very noble concept.

According to Siddheśvara Bhāṭṭācārya, in his progressive spiritual journey to reach the
centre of the transcendental the votary first enters the region of the limitless (चुंबनाधर). He then assumes the form of Paramātmā (Viṣṇu). Gradually the majesties of Paramātmā are manifested in him. Finally, he enters Paramātmā.

But all the four types of salvation viz. Śālokya, Sārupya, Sāraṣṭi and Sāyujya are but the hierarchical degrees of the enjoyment of the second Pāda that is Parmātmā. So the votary dives deeper into the core of Parmātmā - Bhagavān of the Bhagavata.

Bhagavān of the Bhagavata is all bliss; and the votary enters the land of light (Goloka) to participate in the perpetual and integral ovation described as Rasa because such ovation consists in the perpetual realisation of Rasa or Bliss. Rasa is the expression of the divine ecstasy to which the votary is now introduced. The Supreme religion of the Bhagavata is the Ārādhana of the Parama Puruṣa. He who undertakes Ārādhana is Ārādhikā, for the votary plays the role of the female seeking the union with her dearest. When the votary makes bliss her own,
her incompleteness (अपूर्णता) disappears and, as Radhikā, her being is united with that of all bliss. This is described as the divine union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and makes the seva of the third Pāda complete.

What remains after the divine union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa? (Premalaksana Bhakti). The Absolute or non-dual consciousness (Para Bhakti) according to the Bhagavata, According to the Bhagavata, Pāda Sevā reaches its climax with the concept of the Absolute.

Herein, then, lies the sovereignty of the path of devotion or the supremacy of the religion that Bhagavata stands for. It has set before itself the ideal of comprehending Reality both in width and depth. When the religion of the Bhagavata presents Reality

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49. भिषणे हृदयान्धिः हिंदुयाय तारतं श्रवणं श्रवणं।
    कृत्यवृत्तं कृत्यकृत्य छट्ट एवात्मक नीर्धरे ||
    तद्रेषु तद्विबिद्धस्वन्तं पञ्चप्रकाशं यज्ञयोगद्ययः ||
    प्रेमलक्षणिति परमात्मेनि भगवति निन्दिति इशयेते ||

Bh 1: 2: 41
pervading all details of physical existence, integrated into its being, it may thereby be said to have assessed the width of Reality. When, on the other hand, such religion rises above the material to the spiritual and is concerned with the unfoldment of the transcendental in its hierarchy of pure being, pure consciousness, pure bliss and finally the Absolute, it may be said to have explored the depth of Reality. The Supreme Religion of the Bhāgavata has tried to achieve this ideal within the frame-work of what it calls Pāda Seva - a term which, originating from the Puruṣa Sūkta of the Rg.Veda, has steadily evolved through the Upaniṣads to find its culmination, from the strictly personal point of view, in the concept of the Lotus-feet of the Lord, and, from the purely metaphysical point of view, in the concept of Reality, immanent and transcendant, the world and beyond the world. The Supreme religion of the Bhagavata has no resting place
excepting in the Absolute. 50

According to Bhagwatkumār Gosvāmī, to attend complete self-fulfilment in its emotional aspect, life must cultivate intimacy with nothing but Life and breathe nothing but the air of true life as is seen in the case of Gopiśa. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the heart and soul of all life. And so the love of the Bhakta is the love of all life; the laugh he laughs is the laugh of all life; the grief he grieves is the grief of all life; his anger is life's true anger; his zeal is life's true zeal, his dread is life's own dread, he hates what life hates, he wonders at life's wonders, he settles in peace in the calmness of life - such is the conception of the worshipper of Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all life drawn unto itself. It is superfluous to observe after all

that has been said that all the varieties of emotion flowing and ebbing in the heart of the Kṛṣṇa-worshipper are no better, no worse, than different sides of one eternal glorious love of the ONE, lovely, lovable and loved.

The love that the Supreme God born as Kṛṣṇa evoked in the heart of His worshippers manifested itself as love proper in more ways than one. Worshippers like Uddhava and Bhīṣma, the man of contemplation and the man of action for the sake of abstract duty, attached themselves quietly to His person in all their thoughts. Their love for Him was the love of a peaceful Yogi and was thus Śanta Rati or peaceful love. The love of His great charioteer Dāruka represented the highest phase of slavish attachment or Dāsya Rati. The love of Sudāma or Arjuna bore the mark of indissoluble friendly attachment or Sakhya Rati. The love of His foster-mother was the noblest form of maternal affection or Vātsalya Rati. The love of His consorts was of course sweet love or Madhura Rati. All these phases of love, noble as they
were, had one cardinal defect in them as genuine love or love for love's sake, as shown below.

If Bhīṣma or Uddhava loved Him, they loved Him for the sake of final emancipation from the miseries of cosmic life through concentration of thoughts upon His visible Divine Form. They availed themselves of the glorious opportunity presented by His incarnation to grasp Him thoroughly and fix Him in their mind. Their love was thus not 'unselfish'.

It was interested, though perfectly rational. When the charioteer Dāruka attached himself to His person, he was in duty bound to do so as his "servant". He 'ate His salt' and he must keep loyal to Him. The cordiality that sprang up, the sense of cheerful following that supervened, transformed his sentiment of a mere slave into one of willing and hearty attachment. But love in this instance also arose out of a necessity, and was thus not
untainted, though it had its reward. The love of Arjuna or Sudharma stood undoubtedly on a higher plane, but it was also brought about by lucky circumstances. Love came after and not before the chance combination. They did not come to Him out of love but they remained with Him in love. This chance element detracted from their value of love, great as it was, and sufficiently recompensed as it was. On a far higher footing must be placed the love of His foster-mother Yasoda. Her cares, her troubles, her solicitude for the welfare of her darling, betray the sublimest phase of motherly affection. It was, however, still fortuitous. He came to her or rather was brought by a despairing father to her to be brought up by her. She nursed Him as her own child, and the feelings of motherly attachment grew up as a matter of course. It was fortunate of her to secure the darling of the Universe as her own, but it was not of her seeking. The affection she bestowed upon Him had a fitting
reward, but her love was nothing but accidental. Now as to the sweet love of the consorts they certainly loved Him and which wife would not — in the fullness of their hearts. It was intense, it was deep, it was unalloyed. But was it not also of others' making? They had not been seized with a passion for Him and had not come to Him of their own accord. They were given away in marriage to Him. United in wedlock, they began to admire and worship the husband. But the feeling began after the union, not before. The touch of chance is still here. As such, it could not be accounted as the highest perfection of love. It failed with regard to the supreme test. It was not love for love's sake. It hoped to be requited and rewarded and so it was in a way, possibly more than they had expected or bargained for. It was not therefore "Love and nothing else". The various aspects of love mentioned above, have a touch of the selfish in them except that Prema between two lovers in which the selfishness is lost, and love
for love's sake is uppermost. 51

As distinguished from the above mentioned — Santa Rati, Dasya Rati, Sakhya Rati, Vatsalya Rati and Madhura Rati, the love of the Gopīs of Vṛndāvana was the sweetest of the sweet, noblest of the noble, and the purest of the pure forms of love. It had all the glories of Santa, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhura Rati without their essential weaknesses. It therefore, stood above all in its intrinsic sublimity and dignity. The Gopīs thought of Lord Kṛṣṇa in all their thoughts. They followed Him slavishly, they associated with Him as comrades, they nursed Him with care and solicitude, they loved Him passionately and all this voluntarily, without any impulse from without, without any hope for

reward on the contrary in complete disregard of the ban of the society. What impelled them to love Him was nothing but innate and irresistible love for Him. It conquered all opposition, it carried them away from everything else, but kept steadily to the path of love for Him. That was their sole ambition, that was their glory, that was their joy, that was their single-minded devotion, that was their one aim, one pursuit. For that love they lived, in that love they lived. Call it impure from the worldly or social point of view, if you like, but it was purity itself as love. It was love in its inception, love in its sequel, love in essence, love in growth. It was life's true love, love for itself and nothing else. To brand it is to brand life itself and condemn the pursuit of the path of life's self-fulfilment.
Passion for Krsna exclusively filled the lives of the Gopis to such an extent that they remembered neither themselves nor their homes. The Gopis went forth with curds and butter to sell, but their hearts at Murari's feet dwelt so deep that the fancy lost damsels raised the cry, "Here Oh! Damodar Govinda Madhava - buy!" Life, love and knowledge go hand in hand, and the Gopis were fully aware of the fact. They had no misgivings on the point. To them Krsna was the dearest of the dear (तत्त्वज्ञानेष्वरस्य श्रेष्ठं तत्र), Life of the life and soul of the Soul.

53. अक्षरितायः कुष्णाम् शृणूर्दश्मानसः। \( Bh. 10: 19.4 \)
   तत्त्वज्ञानेष्वरस्य श्रेष्ठं स्वाभाविकं गमनात्।
   तरं गुणालयं आमर्त्यं नान्मार्गारण्यं दमनः।
   \( Bh. 10: 30.43 \)
   तु तत्त्वज्ञानेष्वरसः, भक्तिनि वर्षेः फिर्तः समुत्सुकः।
   \( Bh. 10: 29.5 \)
   प्रयोगं दिमिश्यत्वा संभाषिप्रवेशार्ग्यं अधिष्ठये।

54. तिकितको भावः किल्ले गोवर्धनः।
   भूसासाहार्यत्सिंहं शुद्धितः।
   \( Bh. 10: 39.6 \)
   क्षेत्रिन्यं भावं दानेऽरे भाषयो।
   \( Bh. 10: 39.6 \)
   "कुष्णकार्ति ततः" - Verse: 55.
This is why they say, "You are the Soul, the essence of life, whereon ever centres the love of those who know." A husband, a child, a so-called near and dear one are one and all but sources of misery. They have no use in the pursuit of life's true and eternal love of itself." The intensity of the exclusive devotion was brought out by their conception of Him as the illegitimate lover, for legitimate love of the world is selfish, interested and tainted love, love that takes note of and feeds on things other than love. The "guilty" love raised them above the guilty, for it was love of Full Life (Bhagavan), and nothing but Full Life, while the so-called pure love of the world is love murdered by no-life, or restricted

55. कृपया देखें ऐसी वातीं कृष्णलोकः जब आत्मिक निरुपणकृत्य विषयों परिलोकितविधिविषये विषयनात्मकों।
लोक: दिशार्थ परममक्षता आ विन्यास अति वर्धितम तथ्याच्या विद्युतविधिविषये अनुमान रखला होता।
भ १०:२९:३३.
life. This intense and comprehensive emotion filled their hearts so completely that even true knowledge of His essence was kept in the background or ignored. That is always the case in the exuberance of an emotion. An overflowing sentiment carries away all sense and sense-activities in its impetuous rush. The tidal wave of a full emotion submerges reason but drowns it not. If it does not rise to the surface, it works deep in the mind and unconsciously guides the emotion itself. From

56. लाभदरङ्गान्यः सतेनास्तसपतः कारणोऽशुद्धम्।
तायस्मोहंसदिक्षितादेव आयत्त ज्ञातं स सत्ता॥
भ. १० : १४ : ३६।

57. कृष्णं विदु तथा भक्तं तथा सुभव्यथा मुने।
गुष्टंशदाद्यथा परमस्तलासि गुणाविधाय वशये॥
भ. १० : २९ : १२।
the very beginning of their amorous career they were full of Him. They were all love and joy when they were in full enjoyment of His Company (Rati) and participated in His laughs of love (छाया). They were equally full of His love and joy when they apparently lost Him and were consequently overwhelmed in grief (सोच). It was again He who filled their hearts when they energetically searched

58. "सन्तु: अनन्तर समयं चारित:।
कर्ययहस्तोऽथिैः बोध्य:। श्रीरस्वमनःसदा अतु:॥

Bh. 10:21:20.

59. "ताभिः संतेताबिन्दारं ध्वेषित:।
विच्छेर्वाच हनुर्धर-व्युह-पुस्विंद्रवर्षु:।
उदारवात दस्मृत्तम्यक्तं। दीर्घितित्वद्विन्दूर्व्य पति:॥

Bh. 10:27:43.

60. "तत्त्वतिले अनुमानिसंतसद्भावं अतान:।
अनप्यस्वमञ्चकं। करियनुद्रुत्य युधभयस्॥

Bh. 10:30:1.
They were full of love, respect and admiration for Him even in their wrath when they began to admonish Him after His return (क्रोध). They were full of Him again when they trembled at the thought of permanent separation (भय). When the apparently destructive phase of love began to work in their minds at His impending departure.

61. नितिनित्तिलकेश्वर भगवान दिनु नियमः। नितिनित्तिलकेश्वर भगवान दिनु नियमः।

62. समानाधिकृतः तमसंन्द्रितः देवताः लोकलक्षणिक विविधानुमयः।

63. समस्ताधिकृतः सुषुम्नस्य भीति (विरसंतानः);

64. भीति: समस्त: भूषणाय्या शाृष्टमा (विरसंतानः)

61. Bh. 10: 30: 3.


63. Bh. 10: 39: 12.

64. Bh. 10: 39: 29.
from Vṛndāvana, they found consolation in thinking and singing of His life activities (शब्द). When they cast all shame to the winds and publicly lamented the departure of their lover Kṛṣṇa, they were still full of Him and thought of nothing else. They followed Him, soul and mind when they stood bewildered (विनिस्मय) fixing their gaze at the car that took Him away from them. Passing thus through all the leading emotions, their love for Kṛṣṇa

65. विषोथा अहाम् किल्यु जाधिनः क्रिय-बेकिलयः।
   (Bh. 10: 39: 37.)

66. रामसं भुजन दर्शिनेन लालकस्त।
    (Bh. 10: 32: 1.)

67. याथादास्यते कैलुम्भित्रस्तु रेणुर रथस्य-आ।
   अनुप्रहार चिताल्यानि। (वेदव्यासनीकोषमा)।
   (Bh. 10: 39: 36.)
shown ever undiminished in glory. Such is not the case unpropitious circumstances and it is altogether lost when subjected to a destructive influence. The reason of this difference is simple. In the one, the love ever attaches to true life (Bhagavān) and in the other, it seeks shelter with false life and hence ends in disillusionment. The Gopīs or the milk-women loved ONE in whom all life is merged in eternal reality.

This emotional devotion of the Gopīs, set up as the model of devotional perfection, has been subjected to much criticism. But the criticism has been very much misdirected. No question of moral perversion comes in when the whole thing is placed above the region of cosmic life, and the "massive voice" of society, the foundation of cosmic morality does not extend beyond the confines of the cosmos. The founder of the Bhāgavata doctrine made it as clear as language could make the thing clear, that the
amorous activities proper of the milk-women and Kṛṣṇa must be conceived to have been confined within the "charmed circle of true life". All so called guilty acts become guiltless when done within these boundaries. Yoga-māyā herself stood guard at the gate, and behind the screen set up by her the lovers met for sports of life. 68 Before her, the great principle that bridges the gulf between life and no-life, stands on the side of no-life, the universe of man with man-made conventions of morality. The whole scene of Rāṣa was enacted beyond and behind the jurisdiction of Māyā, in the region of absolutely full life and true life. The Gopīs came to this region of life, not in mortal flesh and blood, but in immortal flesh and blood or true life. They disregarded social ban because they placed

68. तीन प्रकार भगवान गोगा यहां गुप्तम किये।
भ. 10: 29: 1.
themselves above social life. Cosmic society can take cognisance of acts of commission and omission only of cosmic life, and not of any act done beyond cosmic life by transcendental life that stands behind mortal life. In the Rāsa, on the one hand the fullest play of their intense life-devotion was assured and on the other hand, purity of society was quite safeguarded. The whole thing need give no shock even to the most scrupulous moralist.

Whatever the Gopīs did, they did in their spiritual state where their transcendental life alone was concerned. After this, it is needless to discuss whether the Gopīs were married or not. The question is wholly irrelevant. It does not arise at all where transcendental life alone is involved. The question may be asked why the

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69. नास्यन् यथेऽि रक्ताय भोतिता-केषय सामया।
तत्स्मात्मा: स्वयंपर्य-स्थानु: स्वानु: स्वानु: प्रांत आक्ष:॥
प्रेमार्त्म उपाख्ये कालुदेयःसामुदिताः॥
आत्मानं दश्यतो अयुसल्लोः रक्तुलामेन अहंवतिभः॥

Bh. 10. 33. 34. 239.
Gopīs of Vṛndāvana alone were so qualified as to choose the highest mode of self-fulfilment and not the meditative Yogins and the practised ritualists, or the self-sacrificing ascetics? It has been answered from two different stand-points (i) from the view of Karma-vāda and (ii) from the view point of Bhakti-vāda.

De facto, the Gopīs of Vṛndāvana were the ascetics and sages of Daṇḍkāranya, the women of Ayodhya and several other groups of purified and properly inspired souls. They were so charmed by the beauty of Rāma that they craved for partnership with His life. Rāma asked them to be born as Gopīs in His Kṛṣṇa incarnation. And that craving was satisfied when Rāma afterwards was born as Kṛṣṇa and they were born as

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70. 350 Śrī Mahāviśṇu Ādhisthānēyāṁ lokiṣyāṁ
rāma-cēnaṁ hṛṣṭāṁ abhināśyaṁ munaśe
nabāvāśālāṁ viśīmītāṁ vīryu. | bhavante
śūrya-ātviṣa. mūlta māṁśaṁ ēkāṁ ānaye
me ́vabāsatiṁ hi ānārganāṁ sāmīkṣaṁ ni śūrya. ||

Ku.1 verse 1

bhaktyaṁ yāyāṁ mātmāno māṁśaṁ puruṣam: pāre
bhaktyāṁ bhūdānam māṁśaṁ pāre || bh.10-1-23
milk-women. Fully qualified for salvation, they attained salvation through this path of sweet devotion, as they had bargained for by their Karma. S.S. Cohen too holds that the Gopis and the Gopas were no ordinary mortals, but celestials who had taken special births for the Lord's purpose, for which they were rewarded by His bodily presence and contact, a privilege which was denied to them in their heavenly spheres. Much in the same way but in pursuance of different modes of emotional life,

71. अद्वैतपरमेश्वरलोके से श्रीसृद्धिकायं सिद्धस्थयति / अन्यथा पिनं हक्कति कै ज्ञातस्य सचः सिद्धि: ||

His enemies, His kinsmen, His friends, His followers attained salvation as they had bargained for. Their karma had qualified them for salvation, their innate tastes and choice had guided them in the matter of their different attitudes towards all life, but they were all full of Him one way or the other. Thus Karma was the determining factor in these cases for the development of particular attitudes for life-fulfilment.

A different explanation, consistent with the Bhakti-cult, is supplied by a close examination of the avowed object of Kṛṣṇa incarnation. The glorious mission of the Kṛṣṇa incarnation was to draw living beings close towards Himself in love and joy, the sweetest of the bonds of attraction. Hence he was Kṛṣṇa (From Ṛṣṇa = to draw) to fulfill the object of this mission, He must spread His own sweet Nature far and wide. Like a magnet He attracts all beings towards Him. 73

73. रुषणे "ञरा दरा" -
In other words, His incarnation should coincide with the incarnations of His sublime powers of sweetness. This simultaneous multification or many-sided manifestation of Divine nature is one of the characteristics, one of the exclusive privileges of Divinity. He must love and be loved. The lover and the loved in ONE must for the propagation of the cult of devotional love divide Himself on earth. The Gopīs were the incarnations of love for Him, and He the incarnate object of their love. The the power of love and joy to fulfil self was revealed as so many Gopīs Kṛṣṇa enjoyed His love and joy through them.

If of Kṛṣṇa revealed herself as so many Gopīs, it stands to reason that the central figure of this group of love incarnations must stand for the life of that . She, of all others must represent the highest form of worship as expressed in emotional devotion towards the God of sweetness.
Most appropriately, therefore, then she was named in the Bhagavata Rādhā or Rādhikā, the worshipper par excellence (from स्वतः = to worship). When Viṣṇu came down as Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā was the incarnation of the spirit of devotion, and the Vrajabhoomī and were suitably associated with Viṣṇu worship; and Rādhā was symbolised as the central life of emotional devotion on the part of the worshipper. Hence, the advocates of devotional love claim that even the sacred story of the eternal sports of love (Rāsalīlā) is calculated to drive away mortal tastes and mortal passions.

74. अनकौशल राधिको नृसं भगवान कृषिणो दूरिस्क्षरः।
यथा विदाय आविष्कृतः प्रमो यमनं वदूः न: ||

75. विकीर्दितं श्रद्धावृत्तिः समजनुमित्रिः || निस्प्रशोऽभिषेकं जयाद्विनिविश्वविषयं न: ||

(Translation)

74. With Kṛṣṇa, Radha was the incarnation of the spirit of devotion, and was suitably associated with Viṣṇu worship; and Radha was symbolised as the central life of emotional devotion on the part of the worshipper. Hence, the advocates of devotional love claim that even the sacred story of the eternal sports of love (Rāsalīlā) is calculated to drive away mortal tastes and mortal passions.

75. The deed was done with good intentions, but was later misinterpreted. ||
Rāsalilā is a vilās of the Brahma with Brahma. 76

In brief, when love centres round itself, works upon itself, lives upon itself, moves upon itself, where there is nothing else to think of, to know of, nothing else to feel but love, where love is exclusive, absolute, permanent and self-sufficient, where love fills the soul, fills the mind, fills every outlet of life, it is beyond the jurisdiction of all phases of cosmic life. Such was the love of Gopīs as revealed in the Rāsalilā. Love carried them into the ocean of Love. They loved love and nothing else. 77

76. रासलिला एक लिला है। "तत्सवितु नूतन।"

77. Dr. Bhagabat Kumar Goswāmi: "The Bhakti-cult in Ancient India" - Pages from 390 to 409.
The only thing the Gopis understood was that Sri Kṛṣṇa was infinite love, that was all. They did not care to know that he was Almighty, Omnipotent and so forth. Kṛṣṇa, the leader of the hosts, the king of kings, to them was the shepherd, and the shepherd for ever. A great landmark in the history of religion is here, the ideal of love for love's sake, work for work's sake, duty for duty's sake, and it, for the first time, fell from the lips of the greatest of incarnations, Kṛṣṇa, and for the first time in the history of humanity, upon the soil of India. 78

Sri Sukadeva too says, "virtue can be transgressed only by the Lord. He alone is privileged to do any kind of action however rash; for, in Him and His action, He is above all conventions, as He has nothing to gain or

lose by good or evil actions." Thus, super-men are not to be judged by the standards of ordinary humanity. 79 God is spoken of as Rasa (रसा) in the Upaniṣads. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is described as rasātmā, rasasātīrta, rasottamā, and rasārtha. The essence of the Rāsalīlā of the Gopīs with Kṛṣṇa lies in the fact that there was infinite joy and bliss in the Rāsalīlā and the Gopīs drank the nectar of the Rāsalīlā. Even the Bhāgavatkāra addresses Śrī Kṛṣṇa as ahaṁ māṁ kātyāyaṁ. 80

79. धर्माधर्मात्तक काम विग्रहर स्त आद्यम्।
लेवे श्रस्तः न द्रोहते, अविनेत्रो तथा॥

Par. 10: 33, 30.

80. जय! तहळुङे पुरुषे! "यह सुकुमारते"।

Har 950
Prof. G.H. Bhatt holds that the Avatara of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is for the redemption of all and especially of the resourceless devotees like the Gopīs. That is why the Lord has enacted Rasalīlā for the Gopīs which is a way of grace (Puṣṭi-Mārga or Anugraha Mārga); and hence, the Gopīs are regarded as the pioneers of the path of love for love's sake. There is no eroticism whatsoever in the Rasalīlā; for God is above all desires and Perfect in Himself. 81

Nīlakanṭha in his commentary on "माय कथान " says that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Parmātman; and so his intimacy with the Gopīs was not adulterous. The Gopīs are Śrutis (Ṛks, Vedic Mantras), the Deva-girls and Rṣis desirous of liberation. The Bhāgavatakāra too believes that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān Himself (परमात्म) and the

81. Sri G.H. Bhaṭṭ; "Tāmasa Phala Prakaraṇam"
-. Introduction - P. 12.
plane of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is beyond the seven-fold plane of the Cosmic Egg. Śrī P. N. Sinha says that Sat (the existence aspect) makes individual evolution a possibility through thousands of births and experiences. Cit (the consciousness aspect) gives the wisdom side of man's evolution and leads to the path of Jñāna; and Ānanda (the Bliss aspect) directly leads to the union of the human soul with the Over-Soul, of Jīva with Īśvara through divine love. It reveals the path of Parā-Bhakti, as seen in the Rāsalīlā of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the Gopīs. The Bliss of the Gopīs is self-attainment; for self finds bliss in Self, devoid of personality. The universal self in Brdāvana is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Symbolically there is an essential connection between the Gopīs

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and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, i.e. the Ṣrutis and the Brahman, like that of a word to its meaning (आध्यात्मिकीय-संबंध). The one cannot be without the other (अविज्ञातय).

Further more, in the Vedic sense, Viṣṇu or Śrī Kṛṣṇa is likened to the Sun and the Gopīs are likened to the Sun's rays; and accordingly, Kṛṣṇa-Gopi Līlā is the play or sport of the rays with the Sun and as such, it is pure and divine. 83

The Rasālīla or Gopīsm wherein Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Lord and the Gopīs are the beloveds, may well be compared with Sūfīsm wherein God is the Beloved and the devotee is the lover. But for all that self-annihilation of the devotee into God (निर्माण) is the main factor common to both - Gopīsm and Sūfīsm.

83. यह आध्यात्मिकीय संबंध "सत्त्व के स्त्रकरण"
The Gopīs threw aside all karman, all actions, all attachments, all bonds and offered themselves up completely to the Lord. When the Gopīs approached the Lord, there was no trace of human passion in them, no love of human flesh, no idea of material gratification. They placed themselves entirely at the service of the Lord.

The Brāhavanalīlā is Nitya or constant. The Rasalīlā is for all time, for all Bhaktas. To conclude, man-woman love in the Rasalīlā is sublimated to the level of Divinity; and hence the Gopi-like Bhakti of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is looked upon as Bhakti par excellence.

However the Rasalīlā be interpreted, historically, metaphorically or symbolically,

it embodies the highest truth of Divine Love and Grace; and there is no eroticism whatsoever in it, as believed by the adverse critics of the Rāsalīlā episode in the Bhāgavata Rāsa-Pāncādhyāyī.

The Bhāgavata is at its best in fusing in its stream the best of the vedic and the tantric thoughts. And the result is the unique doctrine of love of the Bhāgavata Dharma – the sovereignty of the path of Love-Devotion. The central note of religion viz. Self-discovery is nowhere so emphatically borne out as in the Bhāgavata Dharma. It aims at nothing less than the realisation of Bhagavān, the Supreme Person, the highest fulfilment of the individual. It is a self-growth of all the three faculties – willing, knowing and feeling – phasing them out into their natural order of hierarchy.
The Bhāgavata has knit the Purusa-Kaivalya of the Sāmkhya Yoga, the Brahma-Kaivalya of the Upaniṣads, the Paramātma-Kaivalya of earlier Vaiṣṇavism into a grand hierarchy with Bhāgavat-Kaivalya at its crest. This state is symbolised in the grand union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, when the individual embraces eternal bliss in which the duality of the worshipper and the worshipped is transcended in the Absolute. This is the contribution of the Bhāgavata Bhakti to the Philosophical Thought.

The Bhāgavata prefers the path of Love-devotion, in which knowledge kindles into love for Reality, the immanent and the transcendent in which love for the world is satisfactorily accommodated in the love for the transcendental.