CHAPTER V
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THE CONCEPT OF DAYA OR MERCY

The earlier chapters discussed the metaphysical and ethical aspects of Visistadvaita, with aesthetics mediating in between insisting on the primacy of feeling. Ramanuja makes his philosophy enter ethical religion, Sri Vaisnavism, that solves the duality between retribution and redemption. The Sri Vaisnavite theory “starts with the idea of God as judge and ends with the incarnational assurance of salvation of all jivas including the subhuman species” (Srinivasachari 179). Visistadvaita, then, “as a true philosophy of religion corrects the one-sidedness of metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics and coordinates them into a synthetic unity” (223). Sri Vaisnavism recognizes Sri or Lakshmi as the inseparable part of Narayana, the Cosmic Ruler, and both are deemed as One. The Lord “rules the world by His relentless law of karma and His holy wrath against the evil-doer is inescapable, but the rigour of karma is overpowered by the redemptive love of krpa. . . . The majesty of the holy law of justice is eternally wedded to the all-conquering might of mercy” (166). Ramanuja’s theistic philosophy signifies specially the feminine principle of Godhead. This chapter scrutinizes this concept identified as Daya or Mercy and ventures to relate it to some of the plays of Shakespeare.

Daya is associated with the purusakara or mediator principle, acknowledged as the feminine aspect of Sri Vaisnavism, the religion of salvation
that recognizes the Fatherhood and the Motherhood of the deity. P.N. Srinivasachari in *The Philosophy of Visistadvaita* provides a cryptic explanation:

When religion is conceived in terms of will and justice, it demands the adoration of the Creator as the Father of all or *jagat pita*; but in the religion of redemption, justice is transformed into mercy. MahaLakshmi resides in the heart of religion as the embodiment of saving grace. She is the concretion of *krpa* and *karunya* and offers an eternal assurance to erring humanity that the reign of righteousness is at heart also the reign of redemptive mercy. . . . Law is pervaded by love and overpowered by tenderness. . . . The ethical idea of justice and *dhandadharatva* and the religious idea of redemption and *daya* are reconciled in ethical religion. It has its roots in justice and fruition in forgiveness. The Lord rules by law and *Sri* lives by love, and the two are indissoluble and eternally wedded to each other. (190-91).

*Sri Vaisnavism* then, upholds the worship of Mother Goddess, a common attribute found in almost all world religions and especially highlighted in the Chinese Buddhism as *Guanyin*.

*Guanyin* is the bodhisattva associated with compassion, venerated by East Asian Buddhists usually as a female. The name *Guanyin* is short for *Guanshiyin* which means "Observing the Sounds (or Cries) of the World". It is generally accepted (in the Chinese community) that *Guanyin* originated as the Sanskrit
Avalokiteśvara, which is her male form. Commonly known in English as the Mercy Goddess or Goddess of Mercy, Guanyin is also revered by Chinese Taoists as an Immortal. Folk traditions in China and other East Asian countries have added many distinctive characteristics and legends. In Chinese Buddhism, Guanyin/ KuanYin/ Kannon/ Kwannon is synonymous with the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, the pinnacle of mercy and compassion. The popular myth and worship of Guanyin as a goddess by the populace is generally not viewed to be in conflict with the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvada's nature. In fact the widespread worship of Guanyin as a "Goddess of Mercy and Compassion" is seen as the boundless satvic nature of bodhisattva Avalokitesvara at work. In Buddhism, this is referred to as Guanyin's 'skillful means', or upaya. Quan Yin - Kuan Yin- is an incarnation of Mary, Sophia, and other feminine icons that hold the Divine Mother aspect of Buddhism. The same Divine energy is carried by the Virgin Mary in Christianity and in the Egyptian mysteries, by Isis. In Hinduism it is conceded as Shakti or Sri, Parvati, and Sita, the consorts of Vishnu, Siva and Rama respectively.

The Goddess of Mercy is unique among the heavenly hierarchy in that She is so utterly free from pride or vengefulness that She remains reluctant to punish even those to whom a severe lesson might be appropriated. Individuals who could be sentenced to dreadful penance in other systems can attain rebirth and renewal by simply calling upon Her graces with utter and absolute sincerity. Contemplating the Goddess of Mercy involves little dogma or ritual. The
simplicity of this gentle being and Her standards tends to lead Her devotees towards becoming more compassionate and loving themselves. A deep sense of service to all fellow beings naturally follows any devotion to the Goddess. The characteristics of Guanyin explicate in full the purusakara (mediator) principle of Sri Vaisnavism, mentioned simply as Daya.

The Sanskrit word *Daya* like many other words in Sanskrit has no exact equivalent in English. The term indicates pity, tenderness, compassion, mercy, empathy, kindness, sympathy and so on but they have slight variation in their meanings. Like the fine-tuning in a musical instrument, they become connotative in the given context. Pity is understood as a matter of regret, or sorrow felt for the suffering of the other. Tenderness is a quality of having a warm or affectionate feeling to a person and compassion, a feeling of distress for the suffering of others, almost coincides with the meaning of pity and mercy. Mercy though equal to pity usually means showing kindness and forgiveness against a person who had offended. Sympathy equated to pity and compassion, also explicitly shows the sharing of another’s emotions. In general, Empathy is the sympathetic feeling towards the others suffering. In general, *Daya* draws all these connotations to show consideration on a person favorably to help and redress the woes of an individual. This can be extended to the other living creatures also, It is usually said that the compassionate quality is of three types. *Uthamam*, *Madhyamam* and *Adhamam*. When a person readily helps the other without being requested, it is considered as the First Quality- *Uthamam*; when the help is done
on being requested, it is of second Quality – Madhyamam; and when no help is rendered even after requisition, it is of third quality – Adhamam. The quality of Mercy, especially Uthamam or at least Madhyamam is quite essential to every human being. One who is sans this quality can be dubbed as a tyrant.

Mercy gets expressed as a characteristic feature in a given content. Hence it comes under the discourse of sagunavada, the Supreme One ingrained with all qualities, which asserts that God is possessed of all auspicious qualities such as intelligence, strength, karuna (Mercy) and so on. This logic parallels the philosophy of Ramanuja that God is endowed with attributes. The quality of forgiveness of God gets exercised only in the case of a person with bad qualities and utterly devoid of any good quality. Srisaila Chakravarti by quoting Parasarabhatta’s illustrations from the epics explains:

Mercy or pity (Daya) is the quality of not enduring the sufferings of others or is the desire to remove other’s sufferings, or sympathetic suffering, as the case may be. These three aspects are different grades of the same quality. This quality of mercy is exercised in favor of persons suffering in the ocean of samsara. (243 -44).

Amidst the many schools of Vaisnavism that cater to the need of the local religions, social and language conditions, Ramanuja’s particular form of Vaisnavism is the oldest and is distinguished from other schools with the name Sri Vaisnavism.
Ramanuja identifies God with Narayana with His Sakti or consort, Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity and is the Divine Mother. She pleads with Her husband on behalf of the mortals. She introduces the devotee to Her Lord and obtains for him salvation. Lakshmi occupies a pre-eminent place in Vaisnavism. Sri Vaisnavism placing Sri on a high pedestal provides a crucial role in the jivatma-Iswara relationship. This is the Summum bonum principle of Ramanuja’s religious practice based on the Visistadvaita. He also substantiated it in the temple conventions. Ramanuja systematized this practice of ‘Mother Goddess’ worship that had been in vogue from the Vedic period in which the quality of daya was seen as a part of Lord Vishnu in the name of Sri, His consort Lakshmi, who holds an important theological position alongside Vishnu and together they form the basis of Ultimate Reality. It is said that the metaphysical aspect of Sri Vaisnavaism is Visistadvaita. Sri Vaisnavism can be traced from the time of Rig Veda and its development can be observed in five historical periods: the Vedic period, the period of the Agamas, the Smritis period, the period of the alwars and the period of the Theologians (acharyas) including Ramanuja.

According to the Sri Vaisnavaites, despite the polytheistic appearance of many Gods being addressed, the pivot that underpins the Vedas is monotheism which points only to that Supreme Being Vishnu. Purusha Suktham, the Hymn to Cosmic Man of the Rig Veda identifies Vishnu as the Supreme Being. Their belief of Vishnu is that He is always in union with Sri. During the Agama period, the Vaisnava Agamas, Vaikanasa and Pancaratra describe Vishnu as the
Supreme One, explain about the consecration of sacred images, and talk about the practice of image worship, the building of temples and observance of rituals and festivals in the temples bringing in *Sri* along with *Vishnu*.

The next phase of *Sri Vaisnava* development comes from *Smriti* Texts, such as the *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas* and *Vedanta Sutras*. For the *Sri Vaisnavites* the *Ramayana* is the oldest and authoritative *Smriti* text that describes Lord Vishnu’s incarnation as Rama playing the role of a human being and also the greatness of Goddess Lakshmi through the character of Sita. Moreover it proclaims the importance of service and surrender to God and is referred to as the *Saranagathi Sastra*, a key factor in *Sri Vaisnava* philosophy. *Mahabharata* establishes the supremacy of *Vishnu* through the single identity of *Vasudeva-Narayana*, as *Vishnu* and Krishna. The teaching of absolute surrender through *Bhagavad Gita* makes it an encyclopedia of this philosophy. Among the eighteen *Puranas*, the *Vishnu Purana* presents the basic philosophic and religious foundation of *Sri Vaisnavism* with emphasis on the supremacy of *Vishnu* with *Sri*.

*Sri Vaisnavism* has its base not only in the Sanskrit texts of *Vedas, Agamas* and *Smritis* but also in the Tamil writings of *Alwars*. The *Alwars* are mystic saints immersed in devotional experiences, expressed in their Tamil verses and collected in 4000 hymns called *Divya Prabhandam* or Divine hymns, treated on par with *Vedas* themselves by the *Sri Vaisnavaites*. The *alwars* perceive *Vishnu* and *Sri* together as the basis of the ultimate Reality and insist on
Surrender (prapatti) through devotion bhakti as the means to attain salvation (moksa).

Last comes the period of acharyas in the development of Sri Vaisnavism. The three principal acharyas are Nathamuni, Yamunacharya and Ramanuja. By the time of the Acharyas, at the beginning of the ninth century, Sri Vaisnavism had to contend with other systems of philosophy and religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism, Advaitic system and others. While Nathamuni revived, edited and arranged the 4000 hymns of the Alwars into four sections and introduced their recitations as part of daily temple worship, Yamunacharya, his grandson composed six major works in Sanskrit bringing out the principles of Visistadvaita that emphasize not only the supremacy of Vishnu but also the ontological status of Sri. His writings are considered to be the starting point for Ramanuja’s systematization of Visistadvaita, earlier expounded by Bhodayana in his Vritti written about 400 B.C. Ramanuja is said to have followed Bhodayana in his interpretations of Brahma Sutras known as Sri Bhasya. While the alwars relied entirely on bhakti, the acharyas regarded jnana and karma also to be combined with it for realization.

Ramanuja insists on total faith on Vishnu (Maha Viswasam) as the Supreme Being along with His consort Goddess Sri (Lakshmi). His main teaching is that Goddess Lakshmi, Sri, the mother of entire creation, being inseparable from Sri Vishnu acts as a mediator between man and God. In Sri
Vaisnavism, the person who performs the act of intercession especially between God and soul is said to be performing *purusakara*, which comprises three essential qualities: *krpa* (compassion), *paratantraya* (dependence) and *ananyarhatva* (deserves only to the Lord). K.K.A. Venkatachari in his book *Sri Vaishnavism - An Insight* (2006) refers to the word *purusakara* as explicated in *Sri Vacana Bhushanam*, the master-piece of Pillailokacharya. He states:

In the first part Pillailokacharya defines the act of intercession (*purusakara*), a pivot point of Vaisnava philosophy. When man is a sinner, it is possible that God may turn His grace away from him because He is vexed by his sins. Then someone has to intercede for man . . . There is no one better to do this than Lakshmi, the Lord’s spouse, for She intercedes so that man’s sins themselves are made a qualification to win God’s love and pity. . . . There are three essential qualities of Sita as a *purusakara*; her compassion (*krpa*), her dependence (*paratantraya*), and her state of not being deserved by any one else but the Lord (*ananyarhatva*). (243).

These three qualities are explicitly expressed in the behavior of Sita when She was separated from the Lord three times. In the first separation, she submitted herself to Ravana’s imprisonment and through her compassion, got the release for all. The second separation happened when she was pregnant. Then she submitted herself to Rama’s will illustrating the principle of dependence, The
final separation occurred when she returned to the bowels of Mother Earth after her re-union indicating that she belonged to nobody but the Lord awaiting for Her return in their celestial Dwelling place. Thus, the purusakara principle has been adequately explained through the role of Sita in the smriti text, the Ramayana.

K.K.A. Venkatachari also indicates the philosophical significance of Sri by referring to Mumukshupadi Sutra 41 that the syllable ‘A’ in ‘AUM’ is to be understood to indicate not only the Lord but also Lakshmi or Sri because:

1. She is ever inseparable from the Lord.
2. She is full of compassion and is ever ready to come to the succour of the devotee and
3. Though a human soul’s mission is to serve God, it also serves Goddess Lakshmi just as the feudal vassal who though covenanted to serve his master, also serves the Lady of the House. (235)

The scholar also confirms that Sri is the embodiment of Mercy and Compassion. It can be noted that Sri plays an equally significant role in the emancipation of the souls. This notion spread by Ramanuja accords supreme implication to Lakshmi, the inseparable consort of Vishnu. It describes Her as possessing Divine Attributes the foremost among them being Mercy. The word Sri rendered with the concept of succour as one of the basic tenets of Visistadvaita philosophy, later came to be recognized as purusakara in the Sri Vaisnava parlance. (K.K.A. Venkatachari 29)
Sri is endowed with the power of playing the role of Universal Mother and She is referred to as the Guardian Angel of the soul. The origin of the word purusakara, though obscure, may be taken as a Sanskrit word, which means keeping someone in between. In the later period, the acharya or Guru was acknowledged as the mediator or purusakara between the soul and God. The later acharyas, naturally built the concept of purusakara around Sri. While in union with Iswara, She argues for others, appeals to Him for Mercy and wins. During the time of separation, she tries to correct the individuals by advising them. Sri is the embodiment of kindness and shoreless ocean of compassion. She takes pity on the erring soul and recommends pardon from the Lord rendering her arguments acceptable to Him for granting salvation. She is purusakara, observes K.K.A.Venkatachari (36). He further refers to the etymology of the word ‘Sri’ as developed by Vedanta Desika, an erudite Vaisnava personality in the post-Ramanuja period:

- Sriyate: She is worshipped by devotees.
- Srayate: She obtains [the Lord],
- Srnoti: She listens [to the devotees],
- Sravayati: She causes the Lord to listen,
- Srnati: She removes the faults of the individual,
- Srinati: She develops the proper qualities for kainkarya in the heart of the individual. (259)
Desika in his work *Sri Daya Sathakam* gives a special personification to the character of Mercy of the Lord as *Daya Devi* and describes her as the apt person to surrender and get things done from the Lord.

How *Daya* or Mercy, the prime *purusakara* principle gets revealed in some of the anecdotes of Shakespeare’s plays will be presently seen. A few instances are selected and discussed. Mercy seems to be a recurring theme in the plays like *The Merchant of Venice, Measure for Measure, King Lear*, and *The Tempest* and so on. Again forgiveness in the last plays is a major ingredient in his recipe of happy ending. In all these plays Shakespeare shows that moral order is as undeviating as natural law. He teaches through his plays the establishment of harmony, learning to love and achieve altruism. Altruistic love is opposite to possessiveness. The nature of possessiveness signifies man’s desire that ultimately destroys him as a whole.

Shakespeare’s characterization of such persons makes him feel that law of a country has some faults and so his belief in justice tempered by mercy and compassion takes an upper hand in his works. He has in mind that lawyers might use ‘tricks’ or confuse people with legal niceties, their quillets and quiddities. Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* laments in Act III thus: “In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt /But being season’d with a gracious voice, / Obscures the show of evil?” (III. ii.77-79) Weak spots in law are likely to devour the helpless innocents. Such instances can be crossed or over-thrown by merciful thinking.
and compassionate action. An empathic performance yoked with an unquestionable wisdom is salubriously carried on by Portia who becomes the personification of *purusakara* and acts.

It may look outwardly that a person entitled for justice by law sometimes is given a judgment that may seem to be against moral conviction. Such a problem is created in the play *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock, the Jew strictly adheres to the bond he has executed to Antonio. The intention of getting rid of Antonio once for all nurtured in his mind, finds a chance to get satisfied publicly under the cover and help of the country’s law. At this juncture Shakespeare emphasizes the meaning of mercy and he does it through the mouth of his character Portia. The famous speech of Portia is perhaps the best portrayal of the traits of *purusakara*. Portia disguised in male attire as a lawyer argues on behalf of Antonio who has been victimized by Shylock, signing a bond that he would surrender a pound of flesh if he is unable to repay Shylock’s debt. Antonio could not pay back. He stands arrested before the court of law. Shylock insists on executing the condition incorporated in the bond. Portia now addresses the court as well as the Jew, which undoubtedly deserves mention:

> The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
> It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
> 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer, doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much,
To mitigate the justice of thy plea,
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

(IV.i.186-209)

This superb rhetoric on Mercy is par excellence heaved from a woman’s very being, the woman representing Sri Herself, the Matchless Mediator. The six main qualities of Mercy specified in this speech are:
• Mercy cannot come by force.
• It comes automatically and gently.
• It is beneficial to both the giver and the receiver.
• A king’s scepter shows his temporal power and creates awe and majesty but Mercy is above all these and is enthroned in the hearts of Kings.
• It is an attribute to God Himself.
• When Mercy seasons justice earthly power can be made to become soft like that of God.

It is really astonishing to note that how the western dramatist has effectively brought out the principles of *purusakara* of *Sri Vaisnavism* as propounded by Ramanuja. The main theme of this speech is to make the readers understand that Mercy plays the key part in determining the outcome of the play. Shylock could not accept the moral value, Mercy. Justice according to the bond turns its iron rod towards Antonio. The effective words of Portia “Shed thou no blood” (IV.i.331) clearly indicates how Shakespeare simultaneously makes the readers understand what is benign Mercy and mercenary justice.

In this play, it is only through the mouth of Portia the qualities of Mercy are explicated. Her compassion towards her husband’s dearest friend makes her appeal for Mercy to Shylock. Bassanio, her husband is ready to pay back double or triple the amount of money mentioned in the bond but he never seeks any mercy from Shylock. Antonio is also prepared to show his bosom for extracting a pound of flesh rather asking for any mercy from his complainant. It is strange that a lady newly married, who does not know much about Antonio tries her best
to convince Shylock. She readily comes forward to help out of sheer humaneness. Shakespeare has a firm belief in Christian preaching’s Covenant of Forgiveness in the New Testament. The Jewish law of ‘eye for an eye’ is thwarted by the cleverness of Portia who acts as a mediator between Antonio and Shylock. She employs the trick of words only upon the stubborn refusal of accepting anything in lieu of the flesh of Antonio. Her actions drive one to come to a conclusion that ladies in general are not only very compassionate but also would win in their mission through a proper and intelligent method. In his book \textit{Prefaces to Shakespeare} (1972) Granville Barker analyses Portia’s character and remarks that the playwright is not able to develop her character as long as she remains a slave of the circumstances. He continues:

Once he can set his Portia free to be herself, he quickly makes up for the lost time. He has need to; . . . half the play’s life is left her, and during a good part of this she must pose as the young doctor of Rome whose name is Balthasar. He does not very deliberately develop her character; he seems by now to know too much about her to need to do that. He reveals it to us mainly in little things, and lets us feel its whole happy virtue in the melody of her speech. This it is that casts its spell upon the strict court of Venice. The ‘Shed no blood’ . . . is an effective trick. But ‘The quality of mercy is not strained; / It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven / Upon the place beneath . . . ’ with its continuing beauty, gives the true Portia. To the very end she expands
in her fine freedom, growing in authority and dignity, fresh touches of
humour enlightening her, new traits of graciousness showing. She is a
great lady in her perfect simplicity . . . (45)

The interesting fact to note is that Mercy is looked upon as a ‘Person’ and that
the foremost and essential feature in a human being is mercy. P.N. Srinivasachari
explains this redemptive motive of God as Desika has seen it as one of the
attributes of God. He says:

The infinite perfections of Iswara are dominated by the redemptive
motive of daya, and this view is a reorientation of the metaphysical
qualities of satyam, jnanam and anantam, the ethical idea of amalatva
or purity and the cosmological ideas of omnipotence and omniscience.
They are restated in the light of the redemptive motive of God as the
attribute of daya. (163)

Shakespeare also deems Mercy as an attribute to God, as is seen by the twin
acharyas, Ramanuja and Desikan. This unparalleled aspect is revealed only
through the female characters in his works. Generally it is said that women are
personification of Mercy; of course, there are occasional exceptions like Lady
Macbeth. A few other plays can be taken to see how the dramatist portrays the
quality of Mercy.
Shakespeare’s concept of Mercy in the tragedy of *King Lear* is delineated clearly through the character of Cordelia, the third daughter of the King. The king wants to divide his kingdom among the three daughters proportionate to the love they express for him. The first two daughters make a lip-service and articulate their love in such a way that the king is much satisfied. On the other hand, Cordelia, the youngest of the three is quite plain in enunciating her love which does not cross the boundaries. The conversation between the daughter and father is as follows:

Lear : What can you say to draw Speak
      A third more opulent than your sisters?
Cordelia : Nothing my Lord.
Lear : Nothing?
Cordelia : Nothing.
Lear : Nothing will come out of nothing. Speak.
Cordelia : Unhappy that I am, I cannot have
      My heart into my mouth: I love your
      Majesty according to my bond, no more
      or less. (I.i.75-84.)

Her refusal to make a public declaration of her love for her father irritates Lear. His behaviour towards Cordelia becomes so rude that he not only relinquishes her as his daughter but also disinherits her and sends her away with the King of France without giving any dowry. The merciless father declares: “We have no such daughter, nor shall ever see / That face of hers again. Therefore be gone / Without our grace, our love, our benison.”(I.i.270)
Though Lear actually disowns her and also demonstrates his hatred so openly, she shows her deep concern when she meets her father in a pathetic moving condition. She does not mind the insult she received from his hands but shows her tenderness of heart. This is a good example for her quality of compassion which flows out automatically. The innate quality of Mercy in a lady is seen in her words:

All bless’d secrets
All you unpublished virtues of the earth,
Spring with my tears! Be aidant and remediate
In the good man’s distress! Seek, Seek for him
Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it.       (IV.iv.16-21)

Unable to withstand the grief on hearing the plight of her father, she even addresses the herbs. She rues for the lack of sanity in Lear and his inability to lead a proper life. Even at that moment she gives priority to the restoration of her father’s kingdom. In Act IV she conveys her compassion, pity and love:

O! dear father,
It is thy business that I go about:
Therefore great France
My mourning and importuned tears hath pitied.
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our aged father’s night
Soon may I hear and see him.       (IV.iv.24-30)
The meeting between the father and the daughter is an emotionally packed scene. Lear has disinherited her for not revealing her love openly that does not at all deserve such a big punishment. It is unbearable for her to see her father kneeling down before her in his insanity thinking her to be a good spirit. She is jolted to see this and tells him with all respect: “O, look upon me sir / And hold your hand in benediction o’er me: / No, Sir, You must not kneel”. (IV.vi.58-60). He should not do this to her. He should bless her. She earnestly seeks his blessings. After gaining senses when Lear expresses his sorrow of disowning her and repents for it, she never shows her anger or disappointment to him. With remorse Lear tells his pain–stricken daughter, “I pray you, you should not weep. I know you have no love for me. As I do recollect your sisters have been unjust to me. You have sufficient reason for becoming angry with me and not loving me; they don’t have any such cause”.

He himself admits that she has enough reason to be angry with him. But, she sincerely pacifies him saying, “no cause, no cause”. It has been already emphasized that forgiveness and mercy when given unasked is the greatest virtue for anybody. Lear’s words at the end of the scene “You must bear with me. Pray you now, forget and forgive” is the best example for mercy that he has already received from his daughter because Cordelia is gracious enough to have forgotten all the wrong-doings of her father. She is no doubt, compassionate to her father only, but it is mercy shown to a stubborn, rude father-king, who had inflicted in her a deep agony. Mercy is exhibited through the daughter after experiencing the
worst type of torture and negligence from the father, a king who acts harsh to his kind daughter. John R. Mabry in his article entitled Severe Mercy in King Lear. Christianity Through Image and Story quotes Susan Snyder’s words from her article King Lear and the Prodigal Son in Shakespeare Quarterly, Autumn, 1966 (361-369) as:

In King Lear Shakespeare found . . . a story resembling in its broad outlines that of the Prodigal Son. . . . Two features . . . were connected . . . with the Prodigal Son: family relationships and . . . the premature granting of portions. The Prodigal Son parallels . . . Lear as a child. His Prodigal is an old man who has lived to a great age without ever reaching maturity. (362-63).

(www.apocryphile.org)

The words of Cordelia when she sees her father must have provoked Snyder to remember the Biblical parable: “And wast thou fain, poor father / To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn, / In short and musty straw?” (V.vii.38-40).

Father Dominic Emmanuel, the Director of communication of the Delhi Catholic Church reflects the same idea in his article published in the Deccan Chronicle:

At several places, the New Testament of the Bible speak about forgiveness which includes both forgiveness of human beings. One of the most touching parables narrated by Jesus is found in the
Gospel of St. Luke and popularly known as the parable of ‘Prodigal Son’. . . . Of course, the great message of this parable is that God is patient and gracious with all of His children and we too could try and emulate that in our lives. God is willing to welcome each of us home into His loving and forgiving arms. (Deccan Chronicle, Open Ed. 7 March 2011, 9)

G. Wilson Knight in Shakespeare’s Dramatic Challenge (1977) quotes A.C. Bradley’s views on Cordelia’s tragic end:

The more unmotivated, unmerited, senseless, monstrous, her fate, the more do we feel that it does not concern her. The extremity of the disproportion between prosperity and goodness first shocks us and then flashes on us the conviction that our whole attitude in asking or expecting that goodness should be prosperous is wrong; that if only we could see things as they are, we should see that the outward is nothing and the inward is all. (72)

The critic refers to the meeting between Lear and Cordelia in The Wheel of Fire and makes a note of the poignant speech of Cordelia:

In the scene of his reunion with Cordelia, he wakes up to music like a mortal soul waking to immortality, to find his daughter bright as a ‘soul in bliss’; now both find the richness of love more rich for the interval of agony, misunderstanding, intolerance, . . . All women’s motherly love is caught up in Cordelia’s speech [IV.vii] (225).
He adds further indicating Cordelia’s motherly love portrayed by Shakespeare:

Cordelia, in that she represents the principle of love, is idealized.

Edmund is of the past, Lear of the present, Cordelia of the future dispensation. She is like a ‘soul in bliss’. Her tears are ‘holy water’ and her eyes ‘heavenly’ (IV.iii.32). She alone here has both goodness and fascination. . . . She is a personality, alive, tangible. . . . She is of the future humanity, suffering in the present dispensation for her very virtue. (228 – 229)

Another play of Shakespeare that deserves scrutiny in terms of daya is Measure for Measure. The qualities of Mercy have been sufficiently delineated by Portia in The Merchant of Venice. Nevertheless he tries to emphasize more the magnitude of mercy through the argument between Isabella and Angelo in Measure for Measure. In Vienna, Angelo, the deputy of the Duke vested with all powers, resolves to revive the vigorous laws against sexual license which he thinks have fallen into disuse. Unfortunately, Claudio, the brother of Isabella, the female protagonist of the play is caught in the grip of the law and sentenced to death. At this juncture, Lucio, a friend of Claudio persuades Isabella to plead mercy for him, from Angelo:

Our doubts are traitors,

And make us lose the good we oft might win

By fearing to attempt. Go to Lord Angelo,

And let him learn to know, when maidens sue,
Men give like gods: but when they weep and kneel,
All their petitions are as freely theirs
As they themselves would owe them. (I.v.84–90)

In any religion or country, the belief is, when a woman requests mercy for a grave offence, it prevails upon the authorities and the person receives immediate remedy. Lucio quite clearly emphasizes this notion. Shakespeare exemplifies the value of the virtue Mercy through the words of Isabella:

No ceremony that to great ones ‘longs,
Not the king’s crown, nor the deputed sword,
The marshal’s truncheon, nor the judge’s robe,
Become them with one half so good a grace
As mercy does. (II. ii.76-80)

Nothing like a king’s crown, his powers, or his military officer’s commands or even judge’s robes would suit or equal even half of the value of a virtue like showing mercy. In other words, the power of Mercy is incomparable to any other human power because Mercy is divinity. In the same scene, when she finds that Angelo is unheeding to her plea, she counsels him that at the Day of Judgment when he has to face God, he for his sins would plead for mercy. Shakespeare, through her seems to communicate the meaning of Christian Salvation and Christ’s redemption of mankind. She pleads:

. . . How would you be,
If he, which is the top of judgement, should
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips
Like man new made. (II.ii.92-99)

At the end, due to the intervention of the Duke when everything comes to a
happy ending, Angelo himself becomes remorseful:

I am sorry that such sorrow I procure,
And so deep sticks it in my penitent heart
That I crave death more willingly than mercy
‘Tis my deserving, and I do entreat it (V.i.498-501)

The Duke sees genuine repentance and fresh life in the eyes of Angelo. He, in a
brief statement expresses his exemplary quality of seeing only the good in others:
“Methinks I see a quickening in his eye. / Well Angelo, your evil quits you well”
(V.i.520-21). He advises him to love his wife Mariana and pardons him saying
“I find an apt remission in myself” (V.i.523) thereby proving that, by showing
mercy to a wrong-doer, his own wrongs are cleansed off thus making him purer.
Duke in the end forgives everyone. None is punished. Wilson Knight in The Wheel of Fire remarks:

He has seen an Angelo to fall from grace at the first breath of
power’s temptation; he has seen Isabella’s purity scarring, defacing
her humanity. He has found more gentleness in ‘the steeled gaoler’
than in either of these. He has found more natural honesty in
Pompey the bawd than in Angelo the ascetic; more humanity in the
charity of Mistress Overdone than in Isabella condemning her brother to death with venomed words in order to preserve her own chastity. . . . Therefore knowing all this, the Duke knows his tolerance to be now a moral imperative: he sees too far into the nature of man to pronounce judgment according to the appearances of human behavior. (106 – 107)

The universal forgiveness born out of compassion is well-displayed in the character of Mariana. Her love for Angelo is an altruistic, benevolent love. Erich Fromm defines what ‘erotic love’ is, which is exclusive in his thin but scholarly volume *The Art of Loving*. He observes that this exclusiveness is misinterpreted as meaning possessive attachment. He states further:

Erotic love is exclusive, but it loves in the other person all of mankind, all that is alive. It is exclusive only in the sense that I can fuse myself fully and intensely with one person only. . . . Erotic love, if it is love, has one premise. That I love from the essence of my being – and experience the other person in the essence of his or her being. In essence, all human beings are identical. We are all part of One; we are one. . . . Love should be essentially an act of will . . . One neglects to see an important factor in erotic love, that of *will*. To love somebody is not just a strong feeling – it is a decision, it is a judgement, it is a promise. (50-51)
In other words, such a love kindles the inlaid compassion and makes the person forgive all ills and errors of the other person. Dedication in love purges off the infirmities of the self and creates a more humane being. John C. Plott in his work *The Philosophy of Devotion* indicates the different approaches to *daya* by the northern and southern *Vaisnava* traditions. While the former believes that “Love simply overlooks the jiva’s faults, [the latter] goes further, and asserts that the Lord even evinces a certain relish in their weaknesses so that He may have more pretext for showing mercy and forgiveness – a doctrine not unknown to St. Paul” (233). *Vatsalya* or God’s parental affection for His creatures as a component of *daya* is stressed. Mariana’s forgiving nature, her motherly attitude sees nothing but love as she ends up saying: “. . . best men are moulded out of faults./ And for the most, become much more better/ For being a little bad” (V.i.457-459).

Before investigating the effect of forgiveness in the play *The Tempest*, how it is viewed must be seen. The most important Christian lesson on the true nature of forgiveness can be found in Christ’s ‘Sermon on the Mount’:

But I say to unto you which hear, love your
enemies, do good to them which hate you
Bless them that curse you, and pray for them
Which despiseth you…for if ye love them
Which love you, what thank have ye? For
Sinners also do even the same. But love
Your enemies, and do good, and lend,

‘Sermon on the Mount’ carries the inevitable message to humanity that men should practice the virtue of mercy. It should be steadily cultivated.

Shakespeare’s women, especially young women always carry the gem of motherhood within them long before they are even married. In The Tempest it is this motherhood in Miranda that reveals with immeasurable compassion. It makes her plead to her father Prospero when she sees the shipwreck:

… O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart. Poor souls, they perished.

Had I been any God of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere
It should the good ship so have swallowed, and

The fraughting souls within her. (II.i-14)

Obviously. As a kind-hearted lady unable to bear the suffering of others, she pleads with her father to allay the storm. But even after coming to know the circumstances under which she has been pushed to a living of hardship in a lonely island for twelve long years losing all her childhood happiness and luxury, and about the persons traveling in that ship, she still urges her father for the sake of Ferdinand when he is made to toil hard. While comforting Ferdinand she does not use any disrespectful words about her father in spite of her disagreement with her father’s action: “Be of comfort / My father’s of a better nature sir, / Thus he
appears by speech: this is his unwonted / Which now came from him” (II.i.583-586). She acts as a mediatrix between her father and Ferdinand, which role she again displays in Act IV Scene 1 defending her father “Never till this day Saw I him touched with anger, so distempered” when Ferdinand remarks about Prospero’s strange behaviour: “This is strange: Your father’s in some passion / That works him strongly” (IV.i.155). Ferdinand is all admiration for Miranda and does not hesitate to admit his frailty openly. Rather, it is the natural purity of Miranda not only makes him esteem her but also chastens him within.

Admired Miranda,

Indeed the top of admiration, worth
What’s dearest to the world! . . .

. . . For several virtues
Have I liked several women, never any
With so full soul but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed,

And put it to the foil. But you, O you,

So perfect and so peerless, are created

Of every creature’s best. (III.i.46–57)

The admiration of Ferdinand in Miranda as that of the best creation lays the foundation of a bond of marriage between them. But her position as a mediatrix between all those in the ship and her father is the one that stands as a perfect paradigm of purusakara. Prospero like a God of power rules the island and
Miranda is his cherished flower as Sri to Narayana, the Mother-goddess who admonishes and reigns over him. In Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Miranda is *daya* personified. As the all powerful Narayana heeds to the requests of his Sri, Prospero also without any resentment assures her of all aboard the ship safety. Alan Hobson in *Full Circle* remarks: “But in *The Tempest* happiness comes, not because of Ferdinand and Miranda love each other, but because Prospero loves in a different and a larger sense and because his love is indistinguishable from his wisdom, from duty and action” (210). Prospero’s affection for Miranda and her innocent tenderness are mutually inspiring that direct her to approach a powerful father easily and freely. She does this *purusakara* out of her innate quality of pity revealing her as one of the feminine models of Mercy in Shakespeare.

The story reveals a purported, alleged, sexual attack on Miranda by Caliban. Yet Miranda never purports to give him the maximum punishment though she could exercise do it with a powerful father like Prospero. With a monster-like Caliban too, her treatment is not so harsh except that she says that Caliban deserves to be confined. (I.ii.421). Such a compassion shown by Miranda is comparable to the compassion shown by Sita on Kakasura who tried to molest her modesty in the great epic *Ramayana*. For a lady, modesty is the most precious jewel and if that is in danger she will definitely rise up furiously. But, Sita and Miranda because of their motherly compassion show mercy even to those who went against all goodness. Alonso, the King of Naples had helped Antonio, brother and usurper of Prospero’s kingdom. When Miranda sees him
and his retinue she is full of appreciation of a person who has been the cause of
her suffering in an island: “O wonder! / How many goodly creatures are there
here! / How beauteous mankind is!” (V.i.203 ) This is a good illustration of the
fact that a person full of mercy in heart can see only goodness in others. One can
easily understand that Miranda is a person devoid of erroneous qualities like
uncontrollable anger and irrepressible vengeance. Shakespeare has portrayed her
as a benign angel, a ready redeemer and Mercy incarnate, a divine creature that
cannot entertain inappropriate qualities. This soft, gentle and mellifluous dame
with her sheer, quiet disposition effects a sea-change in the rough-hearted
Prospero, who readily renounces his art of enchantment, a supreme prayer “that it
assaults / Mercy itself and frees all faults” and asks for pardon, “Let your
indulgence set me free” (V.i.373-75) ‘Prayer’ is approbation and forgiveness and
‘indulgence’ must be understood as approval of official release from sin,
according to Christianity.

These four plays – The Merchant of Venice, Measure for Measure, The
Tragedy of King Lear and The Tempest show clearly that women readily plead
for mercy and remain compassionate even to those who have wronged them.
Portia, Isabella, Mariana, Cordelia and Miranda reveal their tenderness and care
with an inborn motherly empathetic quality. Mercy takes myriad forms like Sri
herself and Shakespeare’s deft hands portray meticulously all the nuances. John
C. Plott provides an interesting observation by relating the aspect of Sri,
especially the svarupa-vyapti, or pervasion by essence, to the Eastern Orthodox Christianity. He observes:

> It is interesting to note that here, roughly, we the analogue of the Virgin Mary as interpreted in the Eastern Orthodox Christianity, where she is regarded as the incarnation of Sophia, the cosmic feminine principle which is also identified with the Holy Spirit, the theotokos, the God-bearer, who is thereby even more than Mediatrix. (226)

Plott also refers to Russian philosophers Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) and Father Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944), who have contributed to Sophiology and whose views corroborate Ramanuja’s Visistadvaitic notion of Sri. He quotes Soloviev’s words:

> For God, His other (i.e., the universe) has from all eternity the image of perfect femininity, but He wants this image to be not only for Him, but to be realized and embodied for each particular being capable of uniting with Him. The eternal Feminine itself which is not a mere inactive image in God’s mind, but a living spiritual being, possessing all the fullness of forces and activities, strives for the same realization and embodiment. The entire cosmic and historical process is a process of its realization and embodiment in the great variety of forms and degrees. (226. Quoted by N.O. Losaky, History of Russian Philosophy, 103)
One immediately identifies Ramanuja’s perception of *bhuvanasundara* and the Hindu ‘avatar’ concept. Plott also mentions Father Bulgakov who insists that “a distinction is to be made between the *divine* Sophia and the *created* – a distinction that would necessarily follow also . . as to the relation of Sri with her earthly avatars such as Sita, for that distinction is based on that between *nature* and *personality*”. (227) The divine concerns the *nature*. In Bulgakov’s words: “[It is] the image of God in God Himself the realized divine idea, the idea of all ideas realized as beauty . . . She is a live and living entity, though not a personal one” (227. Losaky, 208-9). Plott’s scholarly enunciation of the *created Sophia* engrossed in *personality* must be stated:

But the created Sophia, while having the metaphysical function of bringing forth the world . . . is to be interpreted as her operation of *becoming*, as God mirroring Himself through Her in non-being, is personalized in the human personality, so that just as the Logos is incarnated in Christ as the “second Adam”, the created Sophia is, in the Holy Virgin, the “second Eve”, containing in her nature all personalities, and is “the manifestation of a human hypostasis of the Holy Spirit”. (227)

An identical notion is expressed by P.N. Srinivasachari, noted earlier in the discussion, that *Sriyapati* and *Sri* constitute a “dual self” in “cooperative identity” as She is of the same order of infinity as Her Lord. Another *Sri Vaisnava* conception is that *Sri* is believed “to have Vigra-vyapti or corporeal
pervasion, has no divinity by nature, but has a divine *function* by attributive gift” (Plott, 227). Such a belief not only explicates the performance of the above said female-heroes but also underscores that Mercy operates as *dharmabhutajnana* in them. *Daya*, then, has to motivate others to purge off their ills and make an absolute surrender or *prapatti* to the Lord. The next chapter takes up this discussion.