CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. A word about the way of treatment of the subject, which is not altogether untouched in the past, is at the outset not out of place.

2. The tremendous progress made by Positive Sciences, both physical as well as psychological, has shaken the very foundation of religious dogmas giving rise to the two opposite camps. Scientific fanatics have dubbed aside as blind belief anything and everything that cannot be demonstrated. Religious fanatics, on the other hand, owing to their mental inertia, have not only failed to grasp the true scientific spirit, but have left no stone unturned in persecuting any person who happened to profess a belief different from their own, regardless of the fact whether such a person pursued science, or belonged to a different religion, or merely to a different denomination of their own religion. Their pioneers had delight in being persecuted by their opponents; these followers delighted in persecuting their opponents. The former loved and forgave their opponents; these latter hated and harassed them. The result is the alienation of the best brains. It is not the religious pioneers but the religious fanatics that have brought Religion into disrepute. The new generation is not irreligious at heart. It has been made irreligious by
religious persecutors of the past as well as the present. The common run of men looks to facts which are concrete and not to principles which are abstract. They think, if religious persons are bad, religions are bad. And thinking so they leave Religion altogether. And in leaving Religion in this way, they are deprived of even the best elements of Religion. There is nothing absolutely bad in either Religion or Science. What is bad is the ignorance of the true nature of both. What is bad is unwarranted belief. What is bad is hypocrisy and not sincerity in either. There is nothing nobler than sincerity. True Science and true Religion need fear nothing. Why should they? Why should true light fear darkness? Fearlessness is the foremost among divine virtues. If anything is to be feared, it is fear itself. True faith and fearlessness always go together. True faith is eternal. It is never shaken. "A faith which cannot survive collision with the truth is not worth many regrets" says A.C. Clarke, an eminent British scientist. (1)

3. There is a marked difference between a body and a soul. Though individual bodies die as a rule, the soul animating them has survived through ages. And it is this continuity of the soul alone that can account for the steady progress of the human race. What is true of the individual bodies and the universal soul is equally true of the individual religions and the Universal Religious Spirit.
Their outward forms constitute their bodies only. The inward animating Spirit is everywhere the same. That is why Dr. Rādhākrishnan has said somewhere in his inimitable style "Religions must die if Religion is to live." (2) By "Religions" he means outward religious forms and beliefs. By "Religion" he means the one Religious Spirit animating all individual religions. The importance of the outward body lies in so far as it embodies the inward soul. The outward body without the inward soul is dead subject to disintegration and decay. Fanatics are familiar only with the outward forms. Of the inward animating Spirit they know nothing. And it is only for the outward forms that they fight. The really faithful alone know what the inward animating Spirit is. The truly faithful followers of one religion never quarrel with those of another. They not only respect but also love each other. And this is always so in spite of the fact that on account of their different practices they cannot physically mix together. And, incidentally it may be mentioned that, generally, just as there are no souls to be found without bodies, so there are no religions to be found without outward religious practices. And just as, in our general commerce, we do tolerate the bodies of other persons, so we ought to tolerate the outward practices of other religions. And the future Universal Religion is sure to take some such form. And it is the Spirit of such Universal Religion that has inspired the following words of Svāmī Vivekānanda:
"I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with any one of them ... We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutations to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future." (3) And it is because, in the religious system of Śrī Vallabhācārya, I have found the elements of such a Universal Religion, that I have chosen it to be the subject of my Thesis. And since the rational and the universally acceptable presentation of his doctrines has been my sole aim, I have refrained from going into doctrinal details.

4. I cannot conclude this little Introduction without thankfully remembering my First Guide, late Prof. G.H. Bhatt, the Chief Editor of the Critical Edition of Vālmīki’s Rāmāyana, published by Oriental Institute, Baroda. When I approached him and expressed my wish to write a thesis for my Ph.D. degree, his joy knew no bounds. It was he who very enthusiastically suggested the topic for my Thesis. He was a sincere devotee of Śrī - Vallabhācārya, of his philosophical and religious system, and of his works. This sincere devotion of his, though instinctive, was strongly nourished by his deep study thereof. It was his pious wish to present to the intelligent world the tenets of this great Vaisnava Vedāntā- cārya, last in the line headed by such mighty personalities.
as Śrī-Śaṁkarācārya and Śrī-RāmānujaŚaṁcarārya. Though he is not as widely known as these two great Ācāryas, he has all the qualities as would place him in their rank. He is original, rational, comprehensive, catholic, yet very humble. He flourished during the last quarter of the fifteenth and the first quarter of the sixteenth century of the Christian Era. Like other Vedāntācāryas, he has to his credit a Bhāṣya on the Brahma-Sūtras, wherein we find a thoroughly well-formulated system of Vedāntic philosophy and religion. His crowning work, however, is his mighty and masterly commentary on Śrīmad-Bhāgavata. And this Śrīmad-Bhāgavata ranks in importance with Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata in Indian religious literature. He openly declares that it was to write this commentary that God had sent him to this world of mortals. (4) Moreover he openly declares that God appeared in person before him and asked him to propagate his faith. (5) Unfortunately, he could not write this commentary on the whole of that work because of the repeated orders from God to return. To these orders from God also he openly refers in one of his minor works. (6) That such phenomena are not unusual in India has been ably shown by Christopher Isherwood in his work "Ramakrishna and His Disciples." Śrī-Vallabhācārya has a very vast number of followers even to-day. Fortunately he was a householder. And the writer of the present Thesis has the great fortune of being his direct descendant. Among his descendants there have been many learned persons who have
enriched the philosophical and religious literature of India.

5. Next, I have sincerely to thank Dr. A.N. Jānī, the Head of Sanskrit Department, the M.S. University of Baroda, who most sympathetically came to my help in my sad bereavement caused by the sudden death of my First Guide, Prof. G.H. Bhatt, by very willingly accepting to be my Guide in spite of his many pre-occupations, and thus amply facilitating my work.

6. Last but not the least, I cannot help acknowledging the deepest debt of gratitude I owe to Śrī-Dīksitajī Mahārāja of Badā Mandira, Bombay, at present occupying a unique position among the direct descendants of Śrī-Vallabhācārya, because of his profound scholarship in the field of Vedāntic philosophy. It is he who first initiated me into the philosophical tenets of Śrī-Vallabhācārya. It is he who has nourished me in this field as a mother does her child. And it is no exaggeration to state that it is through his sheer grace that the work of this Thesis has proceeded smoothly and that this Thesis has seen the light of the day. My thousand prostrations before this mighty Guru of mine.

7. Now, I can very well conclude this little Introduction by mentioning a few points of technical importance. The original Sanskrit Quotations have been given in transliteration, the scheme whereof is the one current among the Oriental Scholars of today. They have been given with a slight
modification, so far as strict Samdhi-rules are concerned, in order to make them easily understandable. Mostly they are followed by a free, flowing, full, yet faithful rendering thereof. In some places, where their rendering and substance practically coincide, they are followed by their substance. But nowhere do they occur without their meaning being made clear. As to the indication of the source of these as well as other quotations, it has been done separately in an Appendix and not where they occur, in order that the body of the Thesis may have a smooth appearance. The underlinings of certain important portions thereof plus the additional punctuation marks and the additional words in square brackets put therein, one to emphasise and the other to make the sense clear, are entirely due to me. As to the presentation of the material, it has been throughout rational, at times proceeding from the very first principles. The language employed is simple and direct. Every effort has been made to make the meaning as clear as possible. As this work is intended for the general public, I have taken a little liberty with the use of certain philosophical terms, which the strict students of philosophy will kindly pardon.