

Jaiva Dharma

CHAPTER IV

Vaishnava Religion another name for the Eternal Spiritual Function.

The cottage of Lahiri Mahashaya and Sree Vaishnavadasa stood side by side. There was a few mango and jack trees close by. A number of small flowering punnaga plants formed the beautiful surrounding. In the yard there was a spacious circular masonry terrace. This terrace had been in existence since the days when Sree Pradyumna Brahmachari lived in the grove. For a long time the Vaishnavas have been accustomed to gyrate the terrace which came to be designated as 'the terrace of Surabhi' (Surabhi is the name of the Divine cow) and to make their humble obeisances to it.

2. It was a short time after dusk. Sree Vaishnavadasa was chanting the Name of Hari, being seated in his hut on a mat of leaves. It was during the dark fortnight. The gloom of night was deepening apace. A dim light was burning in the cottage of Lahiri Mahashaya. The shape of a snake was noticed close to the door-step of Lahiri Mahashaya's hut. Lahiri Mahashaya at once took up a heavy stick and trimmed the light for killing the brute. But the snake had disappeared before he could come out of his room with the light. Lahiri Mahashaya then said to Sree Vaishnavadasa, "Be pleased to have some care for your safety. A snake has got into your hut". Vaishnavadasa replied, "Lahiri Mahashaya, why are you troubling about the snake ? Be pleased to step into my hut and be seated without fear". Lahiri Mahashaya at the bidding of Sree Vaishnavadasa entered the hut and took his seat there on a mat of leaves ; but his mind was agitated about the snake. He said to Sree Vaishnavadasa, "Revered sir, our place Shantipur is quite good in this respect. It is a town and there is no fear of snakes or any such thing. Here in Nadia there is always the danger of snake-bite. This is specially the case with places like Godrooma, which are overgrown with wild shrubs where is it very difficult for a gentleman to live".

3. Sree Vaishnavadasa Babaji said, "Lahiri Mahashaya, it is very bad to allow one's mind to be agitated by such matters. You must have heard of the account of Parikshit Maharaj in the Srimad Bhagawata who listened to the ambrosial account of Sree Hari with a steadfast mind from the lips of Srimad Shukadeva giving up all fear of imminent snake-bite and was able to attain the highest joy by such method. These serpents cannot hurt the spiritual body of man. That body can be bitten only by the serpent in the shape of the want of discourses about God. The material body is not permanent. There will certainly come a day when it will have to be given up. All bodily activities are properly enough performed for the sake of the material tabernacle. When the physical body will fall by the Will of Krishna, it will not be possible to save it by any kind of effort. Till the moment of the dissolution of the physical body arrives no serpent will do any harm even if one lies by its side. Therefore, a person may be counted as a Vaishnava after he gives up all fear from serpent and other similar causes. How can the mind apply itself to the Lotus Feet of Sree Hari if it is always agitated by such fears ? It is certainly one's duty to give up the fear of serpents and the attempt to kill them through such fear".

4. Lahiri Mahashaya experienced something like the firm trust in God that is natural to the pure soul. He said, "Revered sir, my mind has been freed from all fear by your true and pure words. I have understood that one can be fit for obtaining the highest good if the mind is elevated. Those great souls, who employ themselves in the service of God by retiring into the caves of mountains, are never afraid of wild animals. On the contrary they betake themselves to forest in order to live there in the midst of wild animals through fear of the danger of association with wicked persons."

5. Babaji Mahashaya said, the mind is naturally improved when the Goddess of devotion manifest herself in one's heart. Everybody loves such a person. All persons, good and bad alike, love the servant of God. It is, therefore, the duty of every person to be a Vaishnava."

6. No sooner did Lahiri Mahashaya catch the last word than he said, "I admit that you have awakened in me firm faith in our eternal function. I am also convinced that there is some close connection between Vaishnava-dharma and our eternal function. But I have not yet been able to understand that the eternal function is identical with Vaishnava dharma. It is my prayer to you that you may kindly explain this matter fully to me".

7. Vaishnavadasa Babaji proceeded with his discourse. He said, "Two dharmas which are quite different from one another have been current in the world under the common name of Vaishnava-dharma. One of them is pure Vaishnava-dharma and the other is contaminated by mundane reference. Pure Vaishnava-dharma as regards its fundamental principle is one religion. It is, however, also fourfold, according to differences of rasa. Vaishnava-dharma in its pure form can be the function¹ of a servant, or ² of a friend, or ³ of parents, or ⁴ of sweethearts. In its essence pure Vaishnava-dharma is one and not more than one. The eternal function (nitya dharma) and transcendental function (para dharma) are only other names of pure Vaishnava-dharma. The text of the 'Sruti' "that by knowing which everything becomes known" has also in view pure Vaishnava-dharma. You will gradually learn this truth in its elaborate form.

8. Contaminated Vaishnava-dharma is of two kinds. It may be contaminated with either karma and jnana. The practices of Vaishnava-dharma that are approved by *smarta* opinion are all contaminated with karma. Although there is provision in it of initiation by Vaishnava mantra, yet the all-pervading predominating person Vishnu is treated in this system as a subordinate constituent of fruitive activity. According to this view although Vishnu is the regulator of all other gods He Himself is a part of karma and subordinate to karma. Karma is not subordinate to the Will of Vishnu, but Vishnu is subordinate to the will of karma. According to the *smarta* view all worship, including the functions of the novice as well as of self-realised souls, is a constituent part of karma, there being no higher principle than karma. This form of contaminated Vaishnava-dharma, professed by materialistic Vimansakas (lit. those who profess to be able to solve all difficulties of interpretation of the texts of the Shastras), has been current for a very long time. In India most of those who belong to this school of thought claim to be Vaishnavas. They are not willing to admit the pure Vaishnavas to be Vaishnavas at all. It is, however, only their evil lot.

9. "Vaishnava-dharma contaminated with jnana also prevails extensively in India. According to this school the principle of the indiscrete and unknowable Brahman is the highest. It inculcates polytheism in the form of the worship of the sun god, Ganesha,

Shakti, Shiva and Vishnu as persons, for the realisation of the impersonal and indiscrete Brahman. On the realisation of the fullness of jnana the form of the Object of their worship is eliminated. In the final position one attains the state of the indiscrete Brahman. Many persons deprecate pure Vaishnavas by falling under the influence of this school of thought. The worship of Vishnu, that is practised by the pantheists (panchakupashakas), is not pure Vaishnava-dharma, although it includes initiation by Vishnu mantra and in the details of worship it accepts reference to Vishnu and sometimes to Radha-Krishna.

10. "The pure Vaishnava-dharma, that manifests itself to one's cognition on the elimination of these varieties of the contaminated Vaishnava-dharma, is the true Vaishnava Religion. Due to the wrong controversial temper of the age most persons, failing to understand the nature of the pure Vaishnava-dharma, mis-apply the designation to contaminated Vaishnava- dharma.

11. "Srimad Bhagabata lays down the principle that the spiritual tendency of man may have one of three directions. It may point to Brahman, or Paramatman, or Bhagawan as the Ultimate Reality. In pursuance of a tendency that points to the Brahman a person sometimes develops a taste for the indiscrete Brahman as the Ultimate Principle. The methods by which such persons seek to realise their indiscrete Brahman nature come to be recognised in due course as pantheism or the worship of five gods. Vaishnava-dharma contaminated with jnana makes its appearance inside this process.

12. The tendency that points to the Paramatman aims at the establishment of a contact between the worshipper and Paramatman on the astral plane. The methods, by which such persons hope to realise the exclusive state of identification with the Paramatman, form the systems that are known as the eightfold yoga consisting of a variety of activities, also called karma-yoga. According to this school of thought, initiation by Vishnu-mantra, worship of Vishnu, meditation etc., are all constituents of fruitive activity or karma. It is inside this process that Vaishnava dharma, contaminated with karma, makes its appearance."

13. It is by the operation of the theistic impulse, which is also innate in us, that all fortunate souls (jivas) realise a liking for the principle of bhakti that is at once pure, tangible and in consonance with Godhead's Own Entity. The functions of worship, etc., that are practised by such persons, are not any constituent limbs of either karma or jnana, but the body of pure bhakti itself. The Vaishnava religion, that follows this school of thought, is alone unmixed Vaishnava dharma. This is supported by the following clear text of Srimad Bhagabat (Bhag. 1/2/11): "That Who is 'Advaya-jnana' (Absolute Undivided Cognition) is called the Reality by all those who are conversant with the Ultimate Reality. He manifests Himself in the form of the words Brahma, Paramatma and Bhagawan in the Scriptures."

14. It should be noticed that the Entity of Bhagawan, also not different from that of Brahma and Paramatma, is ulterior to all entities. The Entity of Bhagawan is moreover the same as the Entity of Vishnu. Souls (jivas), that are subservients of that Entity are alone in the pure, natural state, The aptitude of such a person is bhakti. Bhakti to Hari is alone unadulterated Vaishnava dharma, nitya dharma (eternal function), jaiva- dharma (function of all souls), bhagabat dharma (theistic religion), paramartha dharma (conducive to the highest good), para dharma (transcendental function). All those religions, that have

been produced by the inclination towards the Brahma and Paramatma conceptions are naimittika (contingent). There is mundane purpose (nimitta) in the quest of the discrete Brahma. Therefore, the process is contingent and temporary, or, in other words, it is not eternal (nitya). The individual (jiva) in the conditioned state is anxious to get rid of the conditions of his unwholesome thwarted existence by reason of his actual experience of such unwholesomeness. Under this temporary urge he falls back upon the quest of the state that is devoid of the concrete quality of mundane existence. The function, that he thus proposes as the final goal, is the product of a temporary urge or mundane purpose (nimitta). It is, therefore, definitely established that the Brahma religion is not eternal (nitya). The jiva, who takes recourse to the Paramatma religion, tempted by the desire for pleasure that accrues from the state of exclusive concentration (samadhi), is led into that form of the contingent function for the purpose of the enjoyment of the subtle form of pleasures of the flesh. So the Paramatma religion is also not eternal (nitya). Unadulterated Bhagabat religion alone is nitya.”

15. Having listened with attention, Lahiri Mahasaya now gave vent to his thoughts. He said, “Revered sir, be pleased to discourse to me about the unadulterated Vaishnava religion. I am advanced in years. But I throw myself on the protection of your holy feet. May you be pleased to accept me, out of your mercy. I have heard that even if a person has been already initiated and taught the principles of religion by an unworthy teacher, he should submit to be initiated and taught afresh if he finds a worthy teacher. By listening to your holy instructions during these days I have come to experience firm faith in the Vaishnava religion. I now offer myself to you for instructing me in the principles of the Vaishnava religion and for subsequently initiating me in the same. May you be pleased to sanctify me by your mercy”.

16. Babaji Mahasaya showed a slight embarrassment as he said, “Respected brother, I will instruct you to the best of my power. I am not fit to be diksha-guru (preceptor who initiates into spiritual life). However that be, you should now apply yourself to learning the principles of the Vaishnava religion.”

17. “Sree Sree Krishna Chaitanya, the Original Spiritual Teacher of the world, has taught as follows. There are three fundamental principles in the Vaishnava religion. These are respectively : 1. the principle of relationship (sambandha-tattva), 2. the principle of natural function accruing from true relationship (abbidheya-tattva) and 3. the principle of the fruit of such function (prayojana-tattvah).

18. “Under the principle of relationship there are to be found separate instructions about three distinct subjects viz, 1. the material world, or the principle of Maya (lit. that by which we are enabled to measure or comprehend a thing by our limited faculties), 2. individual soul (jiva) or the entity of the subservient, 3. Bhagawan (Personality of Godhead) or the Entity of the Lord or Master. Bhagawan is One and without a second. He is the Possessor of all power. He attracts all entities. He is the Sole Emporium of all sovereignty and mellowness He is the Only Support (Ashraya) of Maya and the jiva potency. But despite the fact that He happens to be the Support of both Maya and jiva, He is at the same time and most appropriately also possessed of His Independent Specific Individuality. The Glow of the Beauty of His Divine Form being reflected to a great distance manifests itself as the discrete Brahma. His power as Master, Lord or Sovereign (Ishvara),

having created the mundane world, and entering the same by His Portion as Paramatma, is the Immanent Divine Lord of this mundane universe. As Manifestive Entity of the Plenitude of His Divine Lordly Majesty, He is Narayana in Parabyom (lit. transcendental world). As Manifestive Entity of the mellow quality, He is Sree Sree Krishna-chandra, the Beloved Consort of the gopees (spiritual milkmaids) in Goloka-Vrindavana. All His Manifestive and Dynamic Forms are Eternal (nitya) and Endless (ananta). There is no one or nothing that is equal to Him. There is, of course, nothing that is superior to Him. All His Manifestations and Activities are brought about by His transcendental power (Para Shakti). Of the various potencies of His transcendental power jiva is aware of only three. One of these is known as the enlightening potency (*chit vikram*). All the Pastimes (Leela) of Sree Krishna are occasioned by it. Another of the potencies is called jiva potency, by which the infinity of the individual souls have their manifestation and existence. The third of the potencies is called Maya. By Maya all the measurable entities, passing time and worldly activities have been created. The Principle of Relationship has reference to the relationship between jiva and Bhagawan the relationship between Bhagawan on the one hand and jiva and *jada* (inanimate) on the other, and the relationship of *jada* with Bhagawan and jiva. The knowledge of the Principle of Relationship is realised when the fact of these relations becomes fully known. Those who are devoid of the knowledge of the Principle of Relationship can never realise the unadulterated condition of their Vaishnava nature.

19. Lahiri Mahasaya said, "I have heard from the Vaishnavas that they surrender themselves wholly to their emotions, and that there is no necessity of any knowledge in their case. Why do they say so ? I myself have also up till now, in my chanting of the Name of Hari, cared only to secure an accession of emotion. I have never tried to acquire the knowledge of relationship."

20. Babaji Mahasaya replied, "The appearance of the emotion of love is certainly the ultimate result of the practice of devotion by the Vaishnavas. But the realised emotion must be unadulterated with mundane elements. Those, who apply themselves to the culture of emotions that are appropriate to the endeavours laid down in the system aiming at the realisation of merging one's entity in the discrete Brahma, miss the perfectly pure quality of emotion. Their emotions and practices are only a pretence of purity of emotional culture. The realisation of the least particle of the unadulterated emotional quality has power to fulfil all legitimate requirements of the true nature of all individual souls (jiva). But emotionalism adulterated with the imperfect knowledge of the discrete Brahma must be regarded as a source of tribulations for the soul. The emotional displays of a person, who cherishes in his heart the ambition of merging in the discrete Brahma, are only a make-believe for deceiving the people. For this reason it is imperatively necessary for all pure devotees to be well-versed in the knowledge of relationship."

21. Lahiri Mahasaya now asked with all due respect, "Is there any higher truth than Brahma ? If the entity of Brahma is derived from Bhagawan why do not the seekers of the knowledge of Brahma betake themselves to the worship of Bhagawan, by giving up the quest of discrete Brahma" ?

22. Babaji Mahasaya smiled gently as He said, “Brahma, the four Sanas, Shuka, Narada, Mahadev, god of the gods, have all sought ultimately the protection of the Feet of Bhagawan.”

23. Lahiri Mahasaya asked, “Bhagawan is an entity possessed of Form. How then can He, a limited entity, be the basic principle of unlimited Brahma ?”

24. Babaji mahasaya said, “The entity, which goes by the name of the sky in this mundane world, is also unlimited. This being so, where is the higher greatness of Brahma for being simply unlimited ? Bhagawan is unlimited by the Glow of the Beauty of His Form. But He is at one and the same time also possessed of His own Proper Form. Is there to be found another such entity ? For this unique and unparalleled innate characteristic Bhagawan is superior to the principle of Brahma. What a wonderful All-Beautiful Form He possesses, in which Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence, All-Kindness and All-Bliss exist in the fullest degree. Tell me, Lahiri Mahasaya, whether this Form is good or an unknowable, all-pervading, attributeless and powerless Impersonal Entity is good ? As a matter of fact, Brahma is the Impersonal manifestation of Bhagawan. Both Impersonality and Personality simultaneously and beautifully co-exist in Bhagawan. The formless, immutable, impersonal, unknowable and immeasurable, imperfect aspect of Bhagawan is liked by shortsighted persons. But those, who are all-seeing, do not relish anything short of the Fullest and Perfect Personality of Bhagawan. The Vaishnavas have but little faith in the Impersonal Form of Godhead, as it is in contradiction of the Eternal religion and Divine Love of Krishna. The Supreme Lord Sree Krishna is the Receptacle of both principles. He is the Ocean of Infinite Bliss and is All-Attractive.

25. Lahiri—“How can His Form be eternal when Krishna is subject to birth, death and mundane works ?”

26. Babaji—“The Form of Sree Krishna is *Sat* (Ever-existing), *Chit* (All-Intelligent) and *Ananda* (Ever Blissful), and is devoid of mundane birth, death and works, etc.”

27. Lahiri—“Why is He described to be such in the Mahabharata ?”

28. Babaji—“The Eternal principle is beyond human description. The liberated soul sees His Eternal Beautiful Form, Superhuman Qualities and Deeds, in his unalloyed existence, which when put in language, cannot but be described as worldly history. Those, who can appreciate the real worth of the Mahabharata, can understand and realise the Qualities and Activities of Sree Krishna in a manner that is quite different from the conclusions of those blunt-headed men who are prone to misunderstand the representations of the Mahabharata.”

29. Lahiri—“To meditate on the Form of Krishna, a conception confined within time and space naturally awakens in the mind. What other Divine Form can transcend this kind of meditation ?”

30. Babaji—“Meditation is a activity which cannot transcend matter (material conception) unless and until mind becomes purely transcendental. Mind, impregnated with devotional aptitude, gradually becomes spiritual. In the devotional mind meditation is also a purely spiritual process. When the worshipful devotees chant the Name of Krishna, they are beyond the gamut of the mundane world. They become purely spiritual. They are in a position to meditate on the daily Activities of Krishna manifesting themselves eter-

nally on the transcendental plane, and to enjoy the constant bliss of His confidential service

31. Lahiri—"Be pleased to vouchsafe the self-same spiritual bliss to myself."

32. Babaji—"When you will constantly chant the Name of Krishna leaving aside all mundane doubts and arguments, you will realise ere long the true nature of the spiritual function. The more you indulge in polemic controversies, the more does your mind tend to be world-tight. The more you will strive for the manifestation of the spiritual relish of the chant of the Holy Name, the more will the world-tie be slackened and the spiritual realm and its activities manifest themselves in your purified heart."

33. Lahiri—"I do most desire that your reverence be pleased to communicate to me, out of your mercy, the actual experience of the same".

34. Babaji—"The mind, with all its thesaurus of words and expressions, receives a setback when it finds its access to the spiritual realm barred by these limitations. The spiritual realm is accessible only to the exclusive cultivation of the bliss of spiritual activity. Be persuaded to betake yourself to the practice of the chant of the Holy Name, for some appreciable time, by giving up your barren argumentative habit. You will be then relieved of all your doubts and you will no more have to ask any person for the answer of your questions on any matter."

35. Lahiri—"I now learn that all spiritual bliss is attainable by relishingly chanting the Holy Name and drinking the nectar accruing therefrom with a firm faith in Sree Krishna. I shall throw myself on the absolute guidance of the Holy Name after receiving the knowledge of relationship in an adequate manner."

36. Babaji—"It is the best course. You should first of all strive for the realisation of the knowledge of relationship in the proper form."

37. Lahiri—"I have now been able to grasp the Nature of the Personality of Bhagawan. Bhagawan is the only Supreme Principle (of Reality), Brahma and Paramatma being subordinate to Him. Though All-pervading, He is Ever-present in His Own unprecedented Beautiful Form (Sree Vighraha) in the spiritual world. He is the Supreme Personality focusing all existence, all intelligence and all bliss. He is Omnipotent. Though He is the Lord of all the potencies, He is nevertheless always in the state of Divine rapture in blissful union with His exhilarating energy (Hladini). May you be pleased to explain to me the principle of the individual soul (jiva) ?"

38. Babaji—"There is a marginal (*tatastha*) potency among the infinite powers of Sree Krishna. From that potency springs forth a principle which is in the intermediate position between the *chit* and *achit* worlds and susceptible to association with either. This principle is known as the jiva. By his individual constitution the jiva is an unalloyed spiritual atom. By reason of his infinitesimality he is susceptible to entanglement in the material world. But on account of his unalloyed spiritual composition he can become the eternal inhabitant of the spiritual world and live in supreme bliss, if he receives the slightest spiritual impetus. The jiva falls into two distinct categories. He may be either *mukta* (free) or resident in the spiritual world, or *baddha* (in the state of bondage) or resident in the material world. Jivas in the state of bondage are again of two kinds, viz., those whose sense of right and wrong has been thoroughly aroused and those in whom it is more or less dormant. Those human beings, who display no spiritual activity as well as birds and

beasts, are examples of jivas whose conscience is dormant. Those human beings, who walk in the path of a Vaishnava, are possessed of awakened conscience. This happens to be so for the reason that none except a Vaishnava have any active interest in the *summum bonum*. Hence the cultivation of the service and society of the Vaishnavas is the foremost of all duties enjoined by the Shastras (spiritual Scriptures of India). Association with a Vaishnava is easily consecrated in the devotional aptitude as enacted by the Shastras with which a jiva of awakened conscience is endowed by which he is led to adopt the spiritual culture of chanting the Holy Name of Krishna,—a fact which is always ignored by persons with a dormant conscience, who prefer to follow the conventional method of the ritualistic worship of the symbolic form of Krishna, and wherefore the consecration of honouring the holy temple in the form of a Vaishnava does not take hold of their hearts.

39. Lahiri—“I have now an idea of the Entity of Krishna and of jivas. May you be pleased to explain to me the principle of Maya ?”

40. Babaji—“Maya is the unspiritual factor. Maya, is also of course, a potency of Krishna. It is designated as the non-Absolute potency (*a-para*) or power appertaining to the external form (*bahiranga*) of Krishna. Just as the shadow of light always keeps away from light, so also Maya keeps away from the neighbourhood of Krishna and His devotees. The fourteen grades of the mundane world, the elements of solid, liquid, energy, gas, space, the mind, intelligence and egoism centering in the gross material body, all these are made manifest by the agency of Maya. The subtle as well as the gross material body of the conditioned soul are of the essence of Maya. The spiritual body of the soul is cleansed of these impurities on the attainment of liberation. The bondage of a soul in matter is proportionate to his backwardness or aversion to the service of Krishna, and his liberation or freedom from bondage is similarly proportional to his proneness to serve Krishna by coming in close touch with Him. The *mayik* world has sprung up by the will of Krishna to serve as the sphere of material enjoyment of conditioned souls. This *mayik* world is not the eternal abode of jivas. It is only a prison-house for them.”

41. Lahiri—“My Master, may you be pleased to tell me about the eternal relationship between jivas, Krishna and Maya.”

42. Babaji—“The jiva is a spiritual atom, and hence he is the eternal servant of Krishna. This *mayik* world is the house of captivity of the jiva. By resorting to the spiritual culture of the Holy Name of Krishna in the society of His pure devotees, a jiva, even during his temporary sojourn in this world, enjoys, by the Grace of Krishna, the spiritual bliss of His confidential service in the spiritual realm in his unalloyed perfect body. This is the most hidden reciprocal relationship of the three entities. How can the service of Krishna be possible till the knowledge of this is realised ?”

43. Lahiri—“Is it expedient to acquire scholarship in the empiric knowledge of the Scriptural lore, before one becomes a Vaishnava ?”

44. Babaji—“It is not necessary to study any of the branches of human knowledge, nor any particular language, to become a Vaishnava. It is only necessary for the jiva to submit unreservedly to the guidance of the real spiritual master, who helps in attaining the knowledge of relationship by speech and his culture of devotion. This goes by the name of initiation and teaching.

45 Lahiri—"What has a pupil to do after having gone through these processes of diksha and shiksha ?"

46. Babaji—"One has to practise the service of Krishna, while leading a moral life. This is the practice of the proper function of the soul and is called the principle of *abhidheya* (natural means). The Supreme Lord (Sree Krishna Chaitanya) has declared it to be the only principle of *abhidheya* in as much as it happens to be the message that has been strongly emphasised in the Veda and all the spiritual scriptures."

47. Lahiri (with eyes suffused with tears)— "My Divine Master (Guru), with unreserved submission I throw myself on the mercy of your spiritual guidance (I take refuge in the Holy Feet of Your Divine Grace). Your ambrosial words have awakened the consciousness of my true relationship with things, and simultaneously I am at a loss to understand why, by your grace, all my former impressions of disposition, learning and culture are dissipated. May you be graciously pleased to teach me now the principle of the unction of spiritual endeavour (*abhidheya*).

48. Babaji—"There is no more any cause for anxiety. The rare quality of humility has manifested itself in you. This shows unmistakably that Sree Krishna Chaitanya has been merciful to you. Association with pure devotees (*sadhus*) is the only means of spiritual endeavour open to soul in the state of bondage. The pure devotee in the role of the spiritual preceptor (Guru) instructs one in the confidential service of Godhead, out of his causeless mercy. By the strength of such endeavour the desired end is gradually attained. The due performance of the intimate service of Hari is the only means."

49. Lahiri—"Be pleased to teach me how it is possible to serve Hari".

50. Babaji—"The practice of *bhakti* is itself the only service of Hari. There are three stages in *bhakti*—*sadhan* (endeavour), *bhava* (substantive liking) and *prema* (love). When *bhava* is perfected it is called *prema*."

51. Lahiri—"Teach me the different varieties of *sadhan* and the modes of their performance."

52. Babaji—"Sree Rupa Goswami Prabhu has elaborated all these subjects in his work "Sree Haribhaktibilas". I am telling them briefly. *Sadhan* is ninefold. They are hearing, chanting and recollecting Vishnu, tending His Feet, worshipping His Emblematic Figure (Archa), hymning Him, serving Him as a servant, behaving to Him as to a friend, offering oneself for His exclusive service (Bhagabat VII-5-23). The revered Goswami Sree Rupa has described sixtyfour modes of devotion by adding to these nine their adjuncts and derivatives. There is another point to which it is necessary to give our special attention. *Sadhan bhakti* is twofold according as it happens to be either *vaidhi* (reverential) or *raganuga* (following the impulse of love). Of these *vaidhi sadhan* is ninefold, as detailed above. *Raganuga sadhan bhakti* consists in serving Krishna mentally after the manner of the servitors of Braja by surrendering oneself completely to their guidance. One should practise that mode of *sadhan* for which he is eligible."

53. Lahiri—"What is the criterion of eligibility for *sadhan bhakti* ?"

54. Babaji—"One, who is loyally inclined to place himself under the scriptural regulations, is eligible to be taught by Sree Gurudeva *vaidhi sadhan bhakti* as a preliminary. One, who is eligible for *raganuga bhakti* is instructed in the unconventional service that belongs to the sphere of love".

55. Lahiri—"How will a person know his own eligibility ?"

56. Babaji—"One, who has not yet experienced in his soul the principle of spiritual love and is inclined to perform worship in accordance with the injunctions of the shastras, is eligible for *vaidhi bhakti*. One, who is not inclined to submit to the regulations of the shastras in his worship of Hari, but in whose soul the natural love for the service of Hari has manifested itself, is eligible for the practice of *raganuga bhakti*."

57. "My Divine Master, may you be pleased to declare my eligibility, so that I may be able to understand the principle of eligibility as it really is. I am unable to follow your exposition of *bhakti* and *raganuga bhakti*."

58. Babaji—"If you carefully scrutinise your inmost mind (*chitta*), you will be able to understand your own eligibility. Do you detect any such conviction in your mind as that the service of Hari is not practicable except by submitting to the regulations of the shastras ?"

59. Lahiri—"I think that great good accrues from the performance of *bhajan* and *sadhan* by the methods laid down in the shastras. But I am also beginning to feel now-a-days that there is an immense ocean of *rasa* (perfect mellowing tastiness) in the intimate service of Hari (*bhajan*) which is capable of being gradually realised by dint of the assiduous culture of *bhakti*."

60. Babaji—"You can now see that the regulations of the shastras possess complete sway over your mind. You should, therefore, follow *vaidhi bhakti*. By degrees the principle of *raga* (spiritual love) will manifest itself in your heart." On hearing these words Lahiri Mahasaya, with tearful eyes, touching the feet of Babaji Mahasaya, said, "May you be pleased mercifully to bestow upon me eligibility for the method for which I happen to be fit. I realise my unfitness for discussing a subject that is at present above my comprehension." Babaji Maharaj thereupon embraced him with great affection and made him resume his seat.

61. Lahiri—"Be pleased to command the mode of service that I am to practise now."

62. Babaji—"I advise you to receive the name of Hari. The service of the Name is the most efficacious of all the enjoined modes of service. There is no distinction between the Name Himself. The realisation of the transcendental service of Hari is attainable very soon by practising the chant of the Name without offence I advise you to practise the chant of the Name with firm faith. All the nine modes of *bhajan* are automatically performed by the due practice of the chant of the Name. Both hearing (*shrabana*) and chanting (*kirttan*) are performed by the utterance of the Name. The recollection of Hari and the mental worship of His Feet and His Emblematic Form, recital of hymns in His praise, mentally doing His Bidding as His servant, behaving towards Him as one's friend and making the complete surrender of oneself, are practised simultaneously with the chanting of the Name."

63. Lahiri—"My mind is experiencing a most acute state of suspense. My Divine Master, may you be pleased not to withhold your mercy from me any longer."

64. Babaji—"Sir you may say constantly the following words by keeping clear of all offence ?"

"HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA,
KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE,

HARE RAMA HARE RAMA,
RAMA RAMA HARE HARE”

As he recited the Name, Babaji Maharaj placed a rosary of basil-beads into the hands of Lahiri Mahasaya. Lahiri Mahasaya shed tears as he began to tell the Name on the rosary. He said, “My Divine Master. I cannot express the joy that I experience this day.” And, as he said so, Lahiri Mahasaya fell down senseless at the feet of Babaji. Babaji Maharaj with great care kept his hold on the senseless man. After a long interval, Lahiri Mahasaya spoke again, “I feel myself blessed today. I have never experienced such happiness.”

65. Babaji—“Sir, you are most fortunate, indeed, as you have received with firm faith the Name of Hari. You have also made me blessed. ”

66. From that day Lahiri Mahasaya began to tell the Name of Hari on the rosary in his hut without fear. Some days passed in this manner. Lahiri Mahasaya now painted the twelve tilaka marks on the twelve parts of his body. He took no other food except what had been duly offered to the Deity. He recited daily two lakhs of times the Name of Hari. He made prostrated obeisances as soon as he met a pure devotee. Every day he prostrated him self in submission to Paramahansa Babaji before attending to any other duties. He employed all his time in the service of his Gurudeva. He no longer felt any inclination for idle gossip or the songs of musical experts. Lahiri Mahasaya was no more his old self. He now became the transcendental devotee of Vishnu.

67. One day, after making his prostrated obeisance to Vaishnavadas Babaji Mahasaya, he submitted to him this question, “My Divine Master, may I be permitted to ask what is the ontological nature of the *summum bonum* ?

68. Babaji—Love of Krishna is the only desideratum of a jiva. By the constant practice of *sadhan bhakti* one attains in due course to the state of *bhava bhakti* (real loving inclination). On the attainment of nature development *bhava bhakti* is designated *prema* or love. It is the only eternal natural function of the jiva soul, the only eternal treasure and the final goal. Want of this love is the only misery, the wordly bond and addiction to the enjoyable things of this world. There is nothing higher, or better than love. Krishna submits to be served only by love. This love is of the essence of unclouded cognitional activity. The principle of spiritual bliss turns into love by concentration.”

Originally published in THE HARMONIST, across Vol. XXXII. No. 2; September 23, 1935 and Vol. XXXII. No. 5; November 7, 1935