

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

BY

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

KING GEORGE V PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY,
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

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organs of intelligence, egoism and mind are dependent on the Lord. (3) Yoga, or discipline. It is the mental process by which the individual soul gains God. (4) Vidhi, or rules. It relates to the practices that make for righteousness. (5) Duḥkhānta, or the end of misery. It is final deliverance or destruction of misery, and obtaining an elevation of spirit, with full powers of knowledge and action. The individual soul even in the ultimate condition has its own individuality, and can assume a variety of shapes and do anything instantly. Praśastapāda, the early commentator on the Vaiśeṣika Sūtras, and Uddyotakara, the author of the gloss on the Nyāya Bhāṣya, were followers of this creed.

VIII

VĀSUDEVA-KṚṢṆA

We now pass to the most important religious doctrine of the Mahābhārata, the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult, which is the basis of the Bhagavadgītā as well as of modern Vaiṣṇavism. Garbe traces four different stages in the growth of the Bhāgavata religion. In the first stage it had an existence independent of Brāhmanism. The central features of this stage, which in the opinion of Garbe continued till 300 B.C., are the founding of a popular monotheism by Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, its alliance with Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the deification of the founder of the religion and a deepened religious sentiment on the basis of bhakti. The anti-Vedic character of this religion, which is criticised by the commentators of the Vedānta Sūtras, belongs to this stage. The brāhminising of the religion, the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu, and the pre-eminence of Viṣṇu, as not merely a great god but as the greatest of them all, belong to the second period, which is about 300 B.C. The word Vaiṣṇava as the name of the sect of Viṣṇu worshippers occurs in the Mahābhārata.¹ In the Vedic worship of Viṣṇu there is no reference to grace. The third stage is the transformation of the Bhāgavata religion into Vaiṣṇavism and the incorporation of the elements of the philosophical schools of the Vedānta, the

Sāṁkhya and the Yoga. This process took place according to Garbe from the Christian era up till A.D. 1200. Then comes the last stage of philosophic systematisation attempted by the great theologian Rāmānuja. We are here concerned with the first two stages.

The Bhāgavata religion with Vāsudeva as the central figure, taught to Nārada by the Lord in the Śvetadvīpa, is said to be the same as the doctrine of the Harigītā¹ and that of the Bhagavadgītā.²

In the Nārāyaṇya section of the Mahābhārata is found the story of Nārada's visit to Badarikāśrama to see Nara and Nārāyaṇa. Finding there Nārāyaṇa performing some religious rites, Nārada with a perplexed mind asked whether there was anything the supreme Lord had himself to worship. Nārāyaṇa answered that he worshipped the eternal spirit, his original substance. Eager to see it, Nārada goes to Śvetadvīpa, where the great Being tells him that he is not to be seen by one who is not absolutely devoted to him. The religion of Vāsudeva is explained to Nārada. Vāsudeva is the supreme soul, the internal ruler of all. Living beings are represented by Saṁkarṣaṇa, who is a form of Vāsudeva. From Saṁkarṣaṇa springs Pradyumna or mind, and from Pradyumna Aniruddha or self-consciousness arises. These four are forms of the Supreme. The

¹ Śāntiparva, 346.

² 348. 53. It is a monotheistic or ekāntika religion. The names Nārāyaṇya, Sātvata, Ekāntika, Bhāgavata and Pāñcarātra are used as equivalents. The chief sources for this school are the Nārāyaṇya section of the Mahābhārata, the Śāṅḍilya Sūtras, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, and the works of the Ālvārs and Rāmānuja. Nārada-pāñcarātra mentions as the chief works on the subject Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, the Bhāgavata, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the Bhagavadgītā and the Mahābhārata (ii. 7. 28-32; iii. 14. 73; iv. 3. 154). Rāmānuja's works are not useful for our present purpose, since they belong to the twelfth century A.D. and make a deliberate attempt to reconcile the Upaniṣad monism with the Bhāgavata religion. Even the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is not of much value since, according to tradition, its author took it up when he felt that he did not do justice to the devotional element in the Mahābhārata (i. 4 and 5). It was at the instance of Nārada that he made devotion the central feature of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The Nārada Sūtras and the Śāṅḍilya Sūtras are later than the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata, since the former mention Śuka and Vyāsa (N.S., 83), and the latter quotes freely from the Bhagavadgītā (9. 15). Thus our chief source is the Nārāyaṇya section of the Mahābhārata.

Manābhārata suggests that different views were entertained about the number and nature of these Vyūhas or forms.¹ The Bhagavadgītā does not mention them, and the Vedānta Sūtras criticise the theory on the ground of its inconsistency with the accepted view of creation. There is also a mention of the avatāras, Varāha, Nārasimha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Śrī Rāma, and "he who will come into existence for the destruction of Kaṁsa at Mathurā." Buddha is not mentioned as an avatāra. The story of Uparicarvasu related by Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira knows nothing of the theory of vyuhas or forms.² From it two things are clear: that the Bhāgavata religion is a monotheism, and its way of salvation is devotion or bhakti. Slaughter of animals is avoided. It is because Buddha made the same protest against animal sacrifices that he is made an avatār of Viṣṇu. The religion inculcates a combined pursuit of bhakti and karma.³ It does not demand ascetic renunciation.⁴

Vāsudeva is the first and prominent name of the Bhagavat.⁵ "The eternal God, mysterious, beneficent and loving, should be known as Vāsudeva."⁶ The name occurs

¹ Śāntiparva, 348. 57.

² Uparicarvasu adopted the religion of the Pāñcarātra system originally promulgated by Citraśikhāṇḍins. This system was expounded by the Ṛṣis in the presence of the great Lord, who said: "You have composed a hundred thousand excellent verses, which contain rules for all the affairs of men and are in harmony with the Vedas . . . and lay down precepts about the religion of action as well as that of contemplation. This śāstra will be handed down from person to person until it reaches Bṛhaspati. From him the king Vasu will obtain it, and become my devotee." King Vasu performs a sacrifice of horses in which Bṛhaspati acts as priest and Ekata, Dvita and Trita act as overseers, or sadasya. No animal is killed on the occasion. The God appears only to the king and accepts his offering. Bṛhaspati is provoked, and the overseers tell him that the great Lord appears only to them who are favoured by His grace. They relate the story of the Śvetadvīpa, where "there are men possessing the lustre of the moon, devotees of the god, who possess no senses, do not eat anything, are absorbed in Him who is bright like the sun. It is there that we heard the great teaching that the supreme God is not to be seen by one who is not devoted to Him." See Bhandarkar: Vaiṣṇavism.

³ Śāntiparva, 334-351.

⁴ Compare: Pravṛttilakṣaṇaś caiva dharmo nārāyaṇātmakaḥ. Śānti, 347. 80-81.

⁵ See B.G., vii. 10.

⁶ Bhīṣmaparva, chap. lxvi.

in the Bhāgavata mantra.¹ It is sometimes said that the name Bhagavat indicates that the religion is a development of an old Vedic cult. We read in the Vedas of a deity called Bhaga, considered to be the bestower of blessings. Bhaga gradually came to mean goodness, and according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, the god possessing goodness comes to be known as Bhagavat. The worship of such a god constitutes the Bhāgavata religion. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa says that glory (aiśvarya), righteousness (dharma), fame (yaśas), property (sampat), knowledge (jñāna), and renunciation (vairāgya), are called Bhaga, and he who possesses them the Bhagavat.² Gradually Vāsudeva became identified with Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu.

From the beginning Viṣṇu was marked out for a great destiny. In the Vedas he is the god of three strides. He dwells inscrutable in the bright realm of light, "where even the birds dare not fly."³ "To reach the highest place of Viṣṇu" is the ambition of man in the Upaniṣads.⁴ Even in the Vedas Viṣṇu was entrusted with the work of the deliverance of man from distress.⁵ In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa⁶ it is said that "men are Viṣṇus." He is

¹ Om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya.

² vi. 5. 74. The Bhāgavata religion is also called the Sātvata religion, since Vāsudeva is giver that name (Ādiparva, 218, 12). The Bhāgavata mentions the Sātvatas as worshippers of the Bhagavat (ix. 9. 49). They along with Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis were Yādava tribes (Bhāgavata, I. 14. 25; 3. I. 29). Megasthenes also alludes to them. The aryanisation resulted in the identification of Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa and later Viṣṇu. We cannot be sure that at the time of the Bhagavadgītā Viṣṇu stands for the supreme reality. In it he is only an Āditya. In the Nārāyaṇya section of the Mahābhārata Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa are identified. The old Vedic conception of two birds dwelling in a tree, friends and associates of each other, might have given rise to the stories of the eternal friendship of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the individual soul and God. The onlooker is Nārāyaṇa, and the eater of the fruit is Nara. Nārāyaṇa, the eternal soul of the universe, is the resting-place of men (M.B., xii. 341). Manu says that the waters were called Naras, and since the Supreme had them for His resting-place he is called Nārāyaṇa (i. 10; see also R.V., x. 82. 5 and 6). He is the origin of the whole world, the Supreme God represented as lying on the body of a huge serpent in the ocean of milk. Metaphor apart, He is the self-conscious Lord of the universe confronted by the principle of not-self. It is from Him that Nārada is supposed to get his monotheistic religion.

³ R.V., i. 155. 5

⁴ R.V., 6. 49. 13.

⁵ Kātha, I. 3. 9.

⁶ v. 2. 5. 2-3.

the great helper of the gods against the asuras according to Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. He assumes the form of a dwarf to recover the earth for the gods from the asuras.¹ We find the name Nārāyaṇa for the first time in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,² though there it is not connected with Viṣṇu.³

How does Kṛṣṇa become associated with Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa? In the Mahābhārata sometimes he is distinguished from them.⁴ But soon he becomes identified with the Supreme. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the court of Candragupta (300 B.C.), mentions the fact that Kṛṣṇa was worshipped then at Mathura. If we try to trace the ancestry of Kṛṣṇa, we find it to be the name of a Vedic ṛṣi who composed a hymn.⁵ He is said to be a descendant of Aṅgiras.⁶ In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad we find Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, as a pupil of ṛṣi Ghora,⁷ an Aṅgirasa. It is clear that from the time of the Vedic hymns down to the Upaniṣad period there was a tradition about Kṛṣṇa as a Vedic thinker. But in another passage of the Ṛg-Veda Kṛṣṇa is spoken of as a non-Aryan chief waiting on the banks of Amśumatī with an army of 10,000 to fight Indra.⁸ Sir R. G. Bhandarkar believes that a nomadic tribe of cowherds called ābhīras were worshippers

¹ Śat. Brāh., i. 2. 5. 5; Tait. Brāh., i. 6. 1. 5.

² xii. 3. 4. 1.

³ In Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, Nārāyaṇa appears as "the deity, eternal, supreme and lord," and receives the name of Hari (Tait. Ar., x. 11. 1). In the Mahābhārata Nārāyaṇa is called an ancient ṛṣi (see also R.V., 10. 90, and M.B., v. 49. 5-20; vii. 200. 57). During the period of the Brāhmaṇas Nārāyaṇa assumes a cosmic character, and in the Mahābhārata he is identified with Viṣṇu. Thus in the Bhīṣma parva of the Mahābhārata, Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu are used as equivalent terms (chaps. lxv. and lxvi).

⁴ xii. 334. 18.

⁵ R.V., viii. 74.

⁶ See Kauṣṭaki Brāh. xxx. 9; Pāṇini. iv. 1. 96.

⁷ iii. 17.

⁸ viii. 96. 13-15. The later legends relating to Kṛṣṇa's turning the Gopas away from the worship of Indra, and the consequent indignation of Indra, which resulted in the pouring of incessant rain, and Kṛṣṇa's feat of lifting up the Govardhana hill over the heads of the Gopas to protect them from the rain, may all be based on this incident narrated in the Ṛg-Veda. In the Atharvasaṁhitā Kṛṣṇa is described as having slain the giant Keśi. Buddhistic works also mention his name (see Lalitavistara.) We have evidence to believe that the worship of Kṛṣṇa was prevalent when Jainism arose, for we find that the whole story of Kṛṣṇa is reproduced with slight alterations in the life of the 22nd Tirthaṅkara Ariṣṭanemi, who was a famous Yādava. See S.B.E., vol. xxii., pp. 276-279.

of a boy-god.¹ They were a non-Aryan tribe with unrefined manners. The stories of libertinism relating to the life of Kṛṣṇa may have been derived from these wandering tribes.² According to Mr. Vaidya, Kṛṣṇa belongs to the Yādava race of Kṣatriyas, who came in the second invasion of the Aryans, a community still pastoral in its habits, which found its habitation on the banks of the Jumna.³ Other indologists, like Weber and Dutt, contend that the Pāṇḍavas were a non-Aryan people, with the peculiar custom of brothers marrying a common wife. In them prevailed the Kṛṣṇa cult, and the writer of the Mahābhārata tries to show that by their devotion to Kṛṣṇa they were led to victory. The wars and incidents of the Pāṇḍavas, a people from outside the pale of Brāhmanism, was worked up with a religious motive into the epic, and they were themselves admitted into the Aryan fold under the name of the Bhāratas. Garbe believes Kṛṣṇa to have lived about two hundred years before Buddha, to have been the son of Vasudeva, to have founded a monotheistic and ethical religion, and to have been eventually deified and identified with the god Vāsudeva, whose worship he founded. In the Mahābhārata we have a combination of all traditions about Kṛṣṇa that survived till then, a non-Aryan hero, a spiritual teacher, and a tribal god.

We see in the Mahābhārata the process by which Kṛṣṇa is made into a supreme deity. In some places he is represented as worshipping Mahādeva.⁴ There are contexts where his divinity is denied.⁵ In Sabhāparva Śiśupāla contests Kṛṣṇa's claim to rank as god; Bhīṣma defends it: "Whoever says that Kṛṣṇa is a mere man is of dull intellect (mandadhīḥ)." From this it is obvious that there was strong opposition to the deification of Kṛṣṇa. He is sometimes looked upon as the warrior Lord of Dvāraka. Occasionally he becomes a religious preacher of monotheism, which has for its object of worship Bhagavat, the adorable. Sometimes he is identified with Bhagavat himself. The Mahābhārata contains several layers of thought super-

¹ Mausalarparva, chap. vii.

² *Epic India*, chap. xviii.

³ Muir: O.S.T., iv. pp. 205 ff.

⁴ Vaiṣṇavism, etc., pp. 36-38.

⁵ See Droṇaparva.

imposed one upon another in the course of ages representing Kṛṣṇa in all the grades, from a historical character to an avatār of Viṣṇu.

It is clear that the editors of the Mahābhārata felt that some popular hero must be made the rallying centre to counteract the mighty influence of the heretical sects. The figure of Kṛṣṇa was ready to hand. There were, however, certain acts which were not characteristic of a divine being associated with his life, such as the Rāsa-līlā, or the circular dance with the Gopīs, Jalakrīḍā, or water sport, and vastrāpaharaṇa, or carrying away of clothes. These demanded some explanation. King Parīkṣit asked Śuka to clear his doubt: "The Lord of the universe was incarnate to establish religion and destroy irreligion. Did he, being the revealer, master and preserver of religious laws, violate them by committing the unholy act of adultery?" The answer is: "The violation of religious laws by the gods and the daring acts of the glorious do not bring any stains, as fire is not stained by feeding on impure substances. But those that are not gods should never commit such deeds, even in thought. If a man foolishly drinks poison in imitation of Śiva, he is sure to die. The words of the gods are true, but their acts are sometimes true and sometimes not."¹ But the ingenuity of the Brāhmin will not leave it there. He will allegorise and attempt to sanctify the whole life of Kṛṣṇa and mystify the atmosphere. The Gopīs symbolise people who found God by devotion without learning. The desertion of home and husband by milkmaids is a symbol of the soul's self-surrender to the heavenly Bridegroom. Bṛndāvana is the heart of man. Rādhā and the Gopīs are entangled in the māyā of the world. The flute of Kṛṣṇa is the voice of God. To follow him means to sacrifice name and fame, cast away dignity and self-respect, and give up home, family and all. Those who care for social safety and peace cannot respond to the call of the infinite. To love God is to take up the cross. The surrender of the soul to the heavenly Bridegroom who is common to all and special to each—a metaphor not peculiar to India—involves the desertion of earthly home and husband. The greatest sacrifice of all

¹ Bhāgavata, Book x. 33. 26-29.

must be made before God can be possessed. We hear in Vaiṣṇava poetry the constant refrain, "I am become a harlot for thy sake." Many a folktale is interpreted in this mystic manner, and incidents of doubtful morality are metamorphosed into relations of God and the individual soul. Yet with the best will in the world to recast history, to allegorise facts and invent explanations, we cannot accept the life of Kṛṣṇa as described in the Purāṇas. These incidents together with the story of Kṛṣṇa's childhood and Balarāma's weakness of drink clearly indicate the non-Aryan origin of Kṛṣṇa. If to-day Kṛṣṇa is the most popular Indian god, it is because the author of the Bhagavadgītā makes him the spokesman of the highest religion and philosophy. When Kṛṣṇa became a god, his other names, Keśava, Janārdana, etc., were transferred to Vāsudeva, and the stories of his being the son of Devakī were assigned to the original god, and even to-day we have contradictory descriptions of him as a high spiritual soul, with keen philosophical insight, and a popular hero not quite knightly in his behaviour.

The Bhāgavata system, with its worship of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, is also called the Pāñcarātra religion. We do not know the origin of this name. In the Padmatantra it is said: "The five other great śāstras are like darkness in the presence of this, therefore it is currently known by the term Pāñcarātra."¹ The name, perhaps, may be due to the fact that the system combines five different doctrines. We cannot be sure that we have an account of this religion in its purity even in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata, for the Vedic adaptation seems to have begun even then. The Āḷvārs of South India, the earliest of whom may be said to belong to the fifth century A.D., adopt this doctrine. The term "āḷvār" means one who is immersed in god-love. There are twelve āḷvārs recruited from all castes, and their works, which are in Tamil, are called Prabandhas, or songs in praise of some form of Viṣṇu, full of piety and devotion. These constitute the Vaiṣṇava Veda. Rāmānuja, the commentator of the Vedānta Sūtras, belongs to a later period, being the sixth in apostolic succession

¹ i. 1. 69. For a different view of the origin of the name see Schrader: *Introduction to Pāñcarātra*.

from Nādamuni, who was initiated into the faith by Nammāl-vār. The Bhāgavatas are the direct forerunners of Vaiṣṇavism in India. The followers of the Pāñcarātra were apparently not allowed originally to adopt the Vedic forms of worship. They themselves seem to base their views on what are called the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.¹

The Āgamas generally classify the topics of discussion under the four heads of—(1) knowledge (jñāna), (2) meditation (yoga), (3) construction and establishment of images (kriyā), and (4) rites (caryā or saṃskāras). The central god is Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, with his four vyūhas. The immanence of god Kṛṣṇa is insisted on: "Everything is Kṛṣṇa from Brahmā to a reed."² Viṣṇu, the supreme by means of his śakti or energy, which has a double aspect of kriyā and bhūti, answering to force and matter, effects the creation of the world. The relation between Viṣṇu and his energy is said to be one of inseparable connexion or inherence, like that of substance and attribute. Rāmānuja accepts from the Pāñcarātra theory the distinct existence of Brahman, the individual souls and the world. The way of sacrifice yields to the worship of images in temples. The religion becomes more emotional. Bhakti, or devotion, is insisted on. A chief feature of modern Vaiṣṇavism derived from this system is the doctrine of prapatti, or absolute self-surrender. God helps those who without any other hope fall at His feet. The question arises, How can a just God excuse the sinning souls? The system elevates Lakṣmī, the consort of God, to the place of the mediator. The strict justice of God is tempered by the mercy of Lakṣmī, who knows not what it is to punish.³ This mediator is of the very nature of God, and does the work when called upon by the devotee. The favour of Lakṣmī is a necessary prelude to that of God Himself. Even past karmas may be forgiven.

¹ Many of them are referred to in Vedāntadeśika's Pāñcarātrarakṣā. This, along with the Āgama-prāmānya of Yāmūnācārya of the tenth century and the Pāñcarātra section of the Vedānta Sūtras (ii. 2. 39-42), are our data for the system. The Vaiṣṇavite who looks upon the Āgamas as revealed by Nārāyana himself never troubles about fixing a date for them.

² Abraham stambaparyantam sarvam Kṛṣṇaś carācaram (Nārada Pāñcarātra).

³ Nityam ajñātanigrahā.

Prapatti seems to be the way by which the individual soul attains to the supreme spirit, and it is quite as efficacious as any other method, Sāṁkhya or Yoga.¹ Among the worshippers of Viṣṇu there is no caste. Jābāla Brāhmaṇa says: "The people of the Kirāta tribe, of the Hūṇas . . . are purified of their sins by their mere contact with those who have their heart knit in Viṣṇu." The followers of this school did not very much care for the varṇāśrama (the caste regulations) as did the Smārtas, or those who adhered to the Vedic śāstras.

It is a debated question whether the Pāñcarātra, Bhāgavata or Sātvata religion was in its origin Aryan or non-Aryan. Some contend that it was non-Aryan, because its worship was non-Vedic. It did not adopt the Vedic rites or saṁskāras and its doctrine of the birth of jīvas and minds from Saṁkarṣaṇa was opposed to Vedic theories. Yāmunācārya in his Āgamaprāmāṇya notices the several objections against the authoritativeness of the Āgamas and refutes them all. The considerations urged against are that their contents are of a different spirit from those of the Vedas, that they do not mention rites and ceremonies like the Agnihotra or the Jyotiṣtoma, that they even rebuke the Vedas, and that they are not accepted by the twice-born or the Dvijas. On the other hand, they are practised by the Sātvatas, apparently a non-Aryan tribe.² There is too much of black magic and superstition.³ The system is not counted in the traditional list of doctrines. Even Bādarāyaṇa, if we accept Śaṁkara's view, does not support it. It has its own peculiar system of ceremonies, branding, etc. To such objections, Yāmunācārya replies that the system is related to the Vedas, it is accepted as authoritative by Bādarāyaṇa in the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata, and also by such reputed seers like Bhṛgu and Bhāradvāja, that the Bhāgavatas are the best of Brāhmins, and that the name Sātvata does not refer to a caste, but stands for those who possess the quality of sattva in a predominant degree. Rāmānuja follows Yāmunācārya. The very need for defence seems to show that it took some

¹ Śāntiparva, 348. 74.

² Kshudravidyā pracurata.

³ Manu, 10. 23. 5.

time for the system to be accepted as Vedic. Some of the essential elements of modern Vaiṣṇavism, such as image worship, branding the body, the wearing of the ūrdhvapuṅdra (the vertical mark), are due to the Pāñcarātra religion.

Under whatever name it be called, there is no doubt that the religion is a very old one, perhaps as old as Buddhism itself, if not older, but since the Nārāyaṇīya section in which the religion is described speaks of Nārada's adventures in the Śvetadvīpa, or the white island, where the residents were ekāntins or monotheists, it is sometimes argued that the monotheism is borrowed from Christian sources. Dr. Seal says: "This Nārāyaṇīya record, in my opinion, contains decisive evidence of an actual journey or voyage undertaken by some Indian Vaiṣṇavas to the coasts of Egypt or Asia Minor, and makes an attempt in the Indian eclectic fashion to include Christ among the avatārs or incarnations of the supreme spirit Nārāyaṇa, as Buddha came to be included in a later age."¹ Weber is of the same opinion.² Lassen agrees with it. He thinks it probable that certain Brāhmins might have learnt to know of Christianity in a land lying to the north-west of their mother country, and might have brought to India some Christian tenets. He believes, however, that this land is Parthia, where "the tradition that the apostle Thomas had preached the gospel is old." But monotheism is not unknown in Vedic literature. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad mentions the Ekāyana religion as one of the śāstras learnt by Nārada.³ The Bhāgavata religion does not possess any elements fundamentally foreign to Indian religious thought. "For one who is intimate with the intellectual life of ancient India the doctrine of bhakti is entirely conceivable as a genuine product of India,"⁴ according to Garbe. "No shadow of evidence has up to now been brought forward to support the theory that the conception of bhakti is derived from Christianity. The religious significance contained in the word bhakti

¹ *Vaiṣṇavism and Christianity*, p. 30.

² I.A., 1874. "An investigation into the origin of the festival of Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭami."

³ vii. 1. 4.

⁴ Garbe: *Philosophy of Ancient India*, p. 84.

has nothing exclusively about it that is specially Christian. Not only have devotion to God and faith in Him developed themselves gradually in other monotheistic religions, but even beyond the circle of monotheistic ideas the two conceptions are to be found. And particularly in India we possess all the essentials on the strength of which we have to regard bhakti as 'indigenous' fact, as Barth says, since monotheistic ideas are to be found prevalent from the time of the Ṛg-Veda onward through almost all the periods of the religious history of India, and the powerful longings after the divine, peculiar to the Indian soul from yore, must have developed such sentiments as divine love and divine faith in a popularly conceived monotheism." The Śvetadvīpa, or the white island, is, according to the cosmology of the age, a part of India which is north of Mount Meru. Christianity, after all, reached India only in the second or the third century A.D. We have evidence to show that the monotheistic religion prevailed much earlier. Vāsudeva's name occurs in Pāṇini's grammar.¹ According to Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Pāṇini flourished "in the beginning of the seventh century before the Christian era, if not earlier still."² Buddhist and Jaina scriptures refer to the bhakti school.³ M. Senart writes that the word *bhaktimān* used in Theragāthā is borrowed by Buddhism from an earlier Indian religion. "If there had not previously existed a religion made up of the doctrines of Yoga, of Viṣṇuite legends, of devotion to Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa worshipped under the title of Bhagavān, Buddhism would not have come to birth at all."⁴ Barth says:⁵ "The ancient Bhāgavata, Sātvata or Pāñcarātra sect, devoted to the worship of Nārāyaṇa and its deified teacher, Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra, dated from a period long anterior to the rise of the Jains in the eighth century B.C." In his comment on Pāṇini, Patañjali says that Vāsudeva is the name of the worshipful, that is God.⁶ We have also archæological evidence to prove the priority of the Bhāgavata religion to the rise of Christianity. The Besnager inscription of

¹ iv. 3. 98.

² Theragāthā, 370.

³ I.A., 1894, p. 248.

⁴ *Bombay Gazeteer*, vol. i., part ii., p. 141.

⁵ *Indian Interpreter*, 1910, pp. 177-178.

⁶ J.R.A.S., 1910, p. 168.

the second century B.C.¹ mentions the erection of a flagstaff with Garuḍa's image in it in honour of Vāsudeva by Heliodora, the Bhāgavata. The Ghosunḍi inscription speaks of the worship of Bhagavat Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva. A third inscription of the first century B.C. existing at Nanaghat contains an adoration of Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva. From all this it is evident that the monotheistic religion of India is absolutely independent of any foreign influences, and is the natural outcome of the life and thought of the period.

IX

EPIC COSMOLOGY

In cosmology the Mahābhārata accepts the Sāṁkhya theory, though not consistently. It makes both puruṣa and prakṛti aspects of the one Brahman. The world is regarded as a development from Brahman. The self is said to send out from itself the guṇas, the constituents of nature, as a spider emits a web.² The same idea of the productive activity of Brahman is found in other forms. We have also the view that from Brahman was created the god Brahmā, who sprang forth from a golden egg, which forms the body of all creatures. The conception of the cosmic egg survives. The Sāṁkhya duality becomes more explicit sometimes. Nature is other than the puruṣa, though the latter is conceived as cosmic. Both puruṣa and prakṛti are derived from one principle. Prakṛti creates under the control of puruṣa,³ or puruṣa impels to activity the creative elements.⁴ Elsewhere it is also mentioned that all activity rests in prakṛti, that puruṣa never acts, and if it considers itself as active it is deluded.⁵ The idea is also found that though creation and destruction are the work of prakṛti, still prakṛti is only an emanation from puruṣa, into which it resolves itself from time to time.⁶ We do not think that, except by implication, the māyā theory is

¹ *Epigraphica Indica*, vol. x.

² xii. 314. 12.

³ xii. 222. 15-16; see also B.G., vi. 37.

⁴ xii. 285. 40.

⁵ xii. 315. 8.

xii. 303. 31 ff.