

CHAPTER-I

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Introduction

a) Genesis of Vaiṣṇavism in India

Genesis of popular religious creed Vaiṣṇavism of modern India may be traced in the Viṣṇu hymns of the Ṛg. As for example we may refer to one stanza of a Viṣṇu hymn of the Ṛg-

Tadviṣṇoḥ paramam Padaṃ sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ |

Devīva cakṣurātataṃ ||¹

The term 'sūrayaḥ' as occurred in this stanza signifies 'sectarian devotees of the God 'Viṣṇu' or a class favoured by Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is represented as one of the great Gods though not the greatest God in early Vedic period. It is said that Viṣṇu strode the three steps over the universe, thereby maintaining the settled ordinances (dharmāṇi)-

Trīni padā vicakrame Viṣṇurgopā adābhyah |

ato dharmāni dhārayan ||²

He is said to have three spaces associated with the three steps. Two of these spaces are called terrestrial while the highest of them is described as known to himself and perceptible only to Sūris (Sūrayaḥ) like an eye

glanced in the firmament. In the Ṛg Viṣṇu is represented as one of the manifestations of the sun. Savitṛ, Uṣā, Aśvins, Bhaga, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Pūṣan, Mitra, Varuṇa are nothing but different expressions of sun with relation to its different attributes and positions. Thus, it is described that when the sun touches the Zenith in the mid-day, it is called Viṣṇu. At that time the sun looks smallest but it is most powerful and scorching. This natural phenomenon gives rise to the mythology of the Pauranic conception of Vāmana, the dwarf God as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The sun rises in the morning in the eastern direction, touches the Zenith of the sky at noon and sets in the west at dusk. Again it rises in the eastern sky next morning. Thus, in three strides the sun traverses the entire universe. This natural phenomenon is conceived as the conquering of the three worlds with three steps by the Vāmana avatāra of Lord Viṣṇu. The germ of Vāmana avatāra of Viṣṇu may be traced in the Brāhmanas also. The Talavakāra Brāhmanas says ‘Vāmana (dwarf) is Viṣṇu- Vāmana Vai Viṣṇu³. Again, the Ś.B. identifies sun-God with Brahman- the supreme Godhead. That Āditya is Brahman- asau Vāditya brahma⁴. Viṣṇu is the most powerful form of Āditya. Hence, sacrifice came to be looked upon as a means of propitiation of the God Viṣṇu. It is a medium to get union with Viṣṇu. It is, therefore, presumed that the Viṣṇu-cult, the most popular religion of modern India assumed definite shape in the age of Brāhmaṇas.

In the Ma.U. it is said that food which preserves the creation is called Bhagavat Viṣṇu⁵ and in the Kaṭh it is said that the progress of human soul is like a journey, the destination of which is Viṣṇu's Paramapada, the abode of everlasting bliss. So dhvanaḥ pāramāproti tadviṣṇoḥ Paramaṁ padam.⁶

According to the Pa. gr., the bridegroom is directed to say to the bride at the time of going, seven steps, 'May Viṣṇu be with you'- Viṣṇustvā nayatviti sarvatrānuṣajati⁷. This is certainly the development of Ṛgvedic conception of Viṣṇu, as the protector and promoter of conception-

Viṣṇuryonim Kalpayatu⁸. Viṣṇu's association with cows is indicated by his epithet 'gopā'⁹. The Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra describes Viṣṇu as (Govinda) (Cow-keeper) and (Dāmodara) a herdsman.¹⁰

In the Vedic period the Aryans tried to satisfy Viṣṇu and other deities by means of sacrifice. But this Vedic sacrificial religion was basically different from the later religion dominated by Bhakti (devotion to God) and prasāda (God's glance). The origin of Bhakti doctrine may be traced to the Upaniṣadic idea of Upāsanā or ardent meditation. In this respect we may refer to the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad which teaches parā Bhakti or supreme devotion to God.

Yasya deve parā bhakti... etc.¹¹ Besides, an early reference to the Bhakti doctrine may be traced in a rule of Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī, viz. vāsudevārjunābhyam Vun¹², for the formation of the words (Vāsudevaka) and (Arjunaka). The word (Vāsudevaka) means a person whose object of bhakti is Vāsudeva. Arjunaka also means 'a person whose object of bhakti is Arjuna. However, the word bhakti in respect to Vāsudeva is used in the aforesaid rule of Pāṇini in the sense of religious veneration. It may be mentioned here that Vāsudeva was held in high esteem by the people of Mathurā during the days of Megasthenes the Greek ambassador in the –Maurya court in the fourth century B.C. The Greek ambassador Megasthenes notices that 'Herakles is held in special honour by the Souraseni, an Indian tribe, who possesses two large cities, Methora and Cleisobora.¹³ By the word Methora Megasthenes means mathurā and by celeisobora he probably means Kṛṣṇapura. Hence, even in the fourth or in the beginning of the third century B.C. Herakles, who is undoubtedly the same as Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was specially adored by the Surasenas of Mathurā, through whose territory flowed the river Jobares (Yamunā).

The Surasenas were a branch of the Yādava-Satvata-Vṛṣṇi people. In ancient time, the ruling race of Mathurā is called yadu or yādava which is divided into various sects. Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka were the sons of the yādava prince Sātvata. The names Sātvata and Vṛṣṇi are both used to

mean the same family in ancient Indian literature. The purāṇas generally identify Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Sātvata (i.e. Yādeva-Satvata-Vṛṣṇi) family as the highest God Hari and represent him as the founder of Bhāgavata-Satvata or Vaiṣṇava-dharma characterised by Bhakti. Originally this dharma merely laid stress upon the idea of a supreme God, God of Gods, called Hari or Kṛṣṇa and emphasised the necessity of worshipping him with devotion, in preference to other methods of sacrifices and austerities. In the Bhāgavadgītā the Sātvata or Bhāgavata dharma is preached first by Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna. In the Bhāgavadgītā, Bhāgavat-dharma is described as yoga. Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, son of Devaki of the Vṛṣṇi race gave a definite shape to the reformed doctrine by preaching its philosophical teachings in the Bhāgavadgītā. Thus Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was looked upon as the supreme God- the supreme soul, the internal soul of all souls.

The chhāndogyopaniṣad also refers to sage Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī as disciple of ascetic Ghora-Āṅgīrasa and gives some idea about the doctrines preached by Ghora- Āṅgīrasa. Taddhaitad ghora āṅgīrasaḥ Kṛṣṇāya devakīputrāyottvovācāpīpāsa eva sa vabhūva.¹⁴ He teaches such moral virtues as dāna (charity), ārjava (piety), ahimsā (non-violence) and Satyavacana (truthfulness) laying emphasis on tapas (meditation)- atha yat lapo dānamārjavamhisā satyavacanamiti tā asya dakṣiṇāḥ |¹⁵

The same virtues are also stressed by Kṛṣṇa in the –Bhāgavadgītā dāna, dāma, yajña, Svādhyāya, tapa, ārjavam, ahismā, satyam etc.

Abhayam sattvasaṁ śuddhirjñāyogavayavasthiḥ |

Dānam damaśca yajñaśca svādhyāyastapa ārjavan ||

Ahimsā satyamakrodhastāgaḥ śāntirapaiśunam |

Ayā bhūteṣvaloluptvam mārđavam hrīracāpalam ||¹⁶

However, just as Ghora disapproves vidhi-yajña, even so, Kṛṣṇa in Gītā belittles material sacrifice-

Śreyān dravyamayād yajñād jñānayajñaḥ parantapa |¹⁷

Since all these are emphasised by Kṛṣṇa in the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, he has been indentified by some with the disciple of Ghora. Therefore, it may be presumed that the beginnings of Bhāgavatism have been traced to the teachings of the sage Ghora āngirasa in the chhāndyogaya Upaniṣad.

In the Ś.B. the earliest mention of Nārāyaṇa is met with¹⁸. He is said to be the performer of a Pañcarātra-Satra, a sacrifice continued for five days or nights and by means of the performance of this sacrifice, he achieved the superiority over all beings and thereby he became all beings. Some scholars trace the name Pañcarātra or Pañcarātrika applicable to

Bhāgavatas to this five-day-sattra attributed to Nārāyaṇa. In other words, Pañcarātra was a sacrifice performed by puruṣa called Nārāyaṇa over a period of five rātras. Subsequently Bhāgavatism is known by the name of the Pañcarātra-Āgama and the adherents of Bhāgavatism regarded Pañcarātra superior to the Vedas. It came to be called ‘Mūla-Veda’ containing the holy teachings of Nārāyaṇa Himself to Nara and a succession of teachers like Sāṅḍilya, prahlāda, Sugriva and others, Later on, it was taught to mankind to save it.

However, in the Brāhmaṇas Nārāyaṇa is not identified with Viṣṇu or any of the Ādityas. According to some, the earliest identification of Nārāyaṇa with Viṣṇu is found in the Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra. There is a passage in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka where Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu are regarded as one and the same God, compare-

nārāyaṇāya vidmahe vāsudevāya dhīmahi tanna Viṣṇuḥ
pracodayāt¹⁹

It merits mention here that this is the Gāyatrī mantra of Nārāyaṇa.

There Nārāyaṇa is also called Hari, the eternal and Supreme Divinity.

According to the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Śāntiparvan of the Mahābhārata, Nārāyaṇa was an ancient sage (ṛṣi) and was associated with

another sage Nara by name. Nārāyaṇa was born as the son of Dharma in the quadruple form of Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and Kṛṣṇa.

Nārāyano hi viśvātmā caturmūrttiḥ sanātanaḥ |

dharmātmajaḥ svamvabhūva pitaivam mebhyaabhāṣata ||

kṛte yuge mahārāja! Purā svāyambhuve'ntare |

naro nārāyaṇaścaiva hariḥ Kṛṣṇastathaiva ca ||²⁰

Nārāyaṇa with Nara practised long austerities at Badarikāśrama in the Himālayas and thus became Supreme soul.

teṣāṃ nārāyaṇanarau tapastepaturavyayau |

badaryāśramamāsādyā śakaṭe kanakāmaye ||

tatra yaḥ paramātmā hi sa nityam nirguṇaḥ smṛtaḥ |

sa he nārāyano jñeyah sarvātmā puruṣo hi saḥ ||²¹

In the Mahābhārata also it is said that both Nara and Nārāyaṇa in their next births were born as Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa in Dvāpara era and therefore, Nara is identified with Arjuna and Nārāyaṇa with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.

However, the Bhāgavata religion as propagated by Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa is the source of later -Vaiṣṇavism. It is the development of the

original sun-cult. In the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā also it is said that the Bhāgavata doctrine was first preached by the Lord to the sun, then by the sun to Manu and finally taught by Manu to Ikṣāku.

Imaṁ vivasvate yogam proktavānahamavyayam |

Vivasvānmonave prāha manurikṣvākave' vṛavīt ||²²

However, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas particularly the Bhāgavata Purāṇa explain the name Vāsudeva as the son of Vasudeva and Devakī. Vāsudeva is also called Kṛṣṇa owing to his dark complexion. In the Harivamśa, the supplement of the Mahābhārata, a pastoral character is attributed to Kṛṣṇa. the stories about Kṛṣṇa's tender age, wanton childhood and also his youthful dalliances are met with in the Harivamśa and the Purāṇas like Vāyupurāna, Bhāgevata Purāṇa etc.

The theory of the four Vyūhas

The theory of Vyūha or Vyūha-vāda is one of the principal tenets of the Pañcarātra philosophy, which is absorbed in the Bhāgavatism and in the subsequent Vaiṣṇavism. This doctrine of Vyūha in its primary form is found in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Śāntiparva of the Mahābhārata and on the basis of which this doctrine has been elaborated in the later samhitās like Ahirbudhnya Samhitā etc. According to this doctrine, Lord Vāsudeva in his supreme (parā) aspect is the highest object of devotion

(bhakti). In accordance with this doctrine, Vāsudeva created from himself the Vyūha called Sañkarṣaṇa, and also prakṛti or avyakta. From the conjunction of Sañkarṣaṇa and prakṛti emanated the Vyūha called pradyumna and also manas. From the association of Pradyumna and manas arose the Vyūha called Aniruddha and also ahamkāra and from the conjunction there arose the mahābhūtas or elements with their qualities and Brahma out of these elements created the earth with all its contains.

In other words, according to Nārāyaṇīya section, param brahma manifests himself first as Vāsudeva. Thereafter, Vāsudeva in combination with Prakṛti expresses himself as Sañkarṣaṇa, the inner soul of all the Jīvas. from Sañkarṣaṇa arises Pradyumna, the mind or internal sense of all the Jīvas and from Pradyumna manifests Aniruddha, the ahamkāra of all the Jīvas.

Yo vāsudevo bhagavān kṣetrajño nirguṇātmakaḥ |

Jñeyaḥ sa eva rājendra jīvaḥ sankarṣaṇaḥ prabhuḥ ||

sankarṣaṇācca pradyumno manobhūtaḥ sa ucyate |

pradyumnāt yo'niruddhastu so'hamkāraḥ sa īśvaraḥ ||²³

Vāsudeva possess the six ideal qualities viz. jñāna, bala, Vīrjya, aiśvarya, Śakti and tejas and each one of his other vyūhas contains only two of the aforesaid qualities in turn.

It may be mentioned here that the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, the earliest religious text of the Bhāgavatas does not mention the Vyūhas and perhaps for this reason, the wider of the Bhāratabhāvadīpa, a commentary on the Mahābhārata discards the Vyūha doctrine when he comments-

Svayambhuva ityanena vāsudevasyaivaite catvāro vyūhā
ajanmānaḥ | tena tu pāñcarātrāṇāmiva vāsudevāt paramakāraṇāt
sankarṣaṇākhyo jīva utpadyate tataḥ pradyūmnākhyam mano jāyate
tato'niruddhākhyo' hankāra utpadyate iti matam nirastam/ tathā ca
sūtram- utpattayasambhavāditi na tu Kartuḥ Karaṇamih ca jīvastpattau
Vināśitvam syāt tathā ca mokṣiṇo' bhāvaḥ Kartuḥ sakāśāt
karaṇotpattirdrṣṭā loke iti Sūtrārthaḥ |²⁴

However, Vyūhas are the well-known members of the Vṛṣṇi family and there can be hardly any doubt that at first they, alongwith another Sāmba, shared the divine honours with Vāsudeva (who was undoubtedly the chief figure and ultimately superseded the rest). Vāyupurāṇa also refers to the five heroes of the Vṛṣṇi clan and they were Saṅkarsaṇa, Vāsudeva, pradyumna, Sāmba and Aniruddha.

Sankarṣaṇo vāsudevaḥ pradyumnaḥ samba eva ca |

Aniruddhaśca Pañcaite Vamśavīrāḥ Prakīrtitāḥ ||²⁵

They were defined and worshipped with the title Bhagavat in the Mathurā region Probably by people connected with the old yādava-Sātvata-Viṣṇi clan in the beginning of the Christian era. The Bṛhatsamhitā of varāhmihira contains detailed accounts for making the images of Viṣṇu (Vāsudeva), Baladeva (Sankarsaṇa), Sāmba and pradyumna.

Kāryo’ṣṭabhujō bhavāṁścaturbhujō dvibhujā eva viṣṇḥ |

Śrīvatsāṅkitavaksāḥ Kaustubhamaṇibhūṣitioraskaḥ ||

Baladevo halapāṇirmada vibhramalocanaśca kartavyaḥ |

Vibhrat kuṇḍaramekaṁ śaṅkhendumṇṇālagauravapuḥ ||

Sāmvaśca gadāhastāḥ pradyumnaścāpabhṛt surūpaśca |²⁶

But Varāhamihira does not refer to Aniruddha probably because he belonged to the class of Sun-worshipping Maga-Brāhmanas who held Sāmba in high esteem. However, Sāmba soon fell in the reverence of the Bhāgavatas.

In the Nārayaṇīya section of the Śāntiparvan of the Mahābhārata, Vāsudeva is identified with supreme soul (Paramātman) and Saṅkarṣana with individual soul (Jīvātman). Saṅkarṣana is also called Baladeva or Balarāma or Rāma. In subsequent period the devotees of Saṅkarṣana were merged themselves with those of Vāsudeva and the independent worship of pradyumna and Aniruddha was declined by degrees. Besides, the worship of Saṅkarṣana lost its popularity gradually on account of the increasing attraction for the worship of avātaras or incarnations of Viṣṇu right from the Gupta period.

It may be mentioned here that by the second century B.C. Bhāgavatism spread far beyond the confines of Mathurā. According to the records of the different inscriptions the worship of Vāsudeva is found in Mahārāṣṭra, Rajputānā and central India. We learn from Besnagar inscription that a Greek ambassador of king Antialcidas, called Heliodora (Heliodorus), an inhabitant of Taksaśīlā, called himself a Bhāgavata. He erected a Garudadhvaja, a pillar with an image of Garuḍa at the top in honour of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, the God of Gods at Besnagar, the site of ancient Vidiśā in the Gwalior state.²⁷

It is worth mentioning here that Vāsudeva's association with Garuḍa and therefore with Viṣṇu and also with Nārāyaṇa is found in the literary sources considerably before the beginning of the Christian era.

It is to be noted here that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was successively identified with two prominent Vedic Gods viz. Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa and that this identification is completed before the second century B.C. as it is evidenced by the creation of Garudadhvaja by Greek ambassador Heliiodorus for the dedication of Vāsudeva, the God of all Gods, since Garuḍa is the recognised vehicle (Vāhana) of Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu and therefore, these two Gods are ultimately considered as one. So also the identification of Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu is inferred to in the epithet Viṣṇūgopa in the expression gopaveśasya Viṣṇoḥ²⁸ by Kalidasa in his Meghaduta in the Gupta period. In the fourth century A.D. the Guptas were the devotees of Viṣṇu as it proved by the adoption of Garuḍa as their family emblem. The Allahabad stone pillar Inscription refers to Samudragupta as acintya puruṣa i.e. Viṣṇu who is the very cause of the prosperity of the noble and destroyer of the wicked. Sādūdaya-prolayahetu puruṣasyācintyasya etc²⁹. This inscription also refers to the Garuḍa-seal Garutmad-aṅka³⁰

Samudrgupta equates him as the God Viṣṇu in human form. It is worth mentioning here that though Samudrogupta was a Vaiṣṇava, nevertheless, he was not Bhāgavata as it is proved by the fact that though his successors called themselves alone ‘Paramabhāgavata’ but not that great emperor samudragupta. According to Varāhamihira the word

Bhāgavata implies Viṣṇu-worshippers in general or sometimes it is used as a particular sect of vaiṣnavas. Viṣṇorbhavatān³¹

Of course, Bānābhata mentions Bhāgavata and Pañcarātrika separately in the enumeration of different religious sects in his Harṣacarit. ‘Bhāgavataiḥ Pañcarātrikaiḥ.....’ etc.³²

But one of his commentators explains these two expressions as Viṣṇu bhakti and Vaiṣṇavabheda respectively. It seems, therefore, that even in the Gupta age the Pañcarātrikas were probably sometimes regarded as a sect of the Bhāgavatas and hence, the term Bhāgavata together with the term Vaiṣṇava was occasionally employed to signify the Viṣṇu-worshiper in general.

One of the distinguishing features of the Bhāgavata religion of the Gupta age was the popularity of the worship of the avatāras or incarnations of Viṣṇu. The number and nature of these avatāras are variously given in different treatises. First, in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Śāntiparvan of the Mahābhārata total number of avatāras was given four viz. Varāha, Vāmana, Narasinha and Mānuṣa (vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa).

Evam sa cintayitvā tu bhagavan madhusūdanaḥ |

rūpāṅyanekānyasṛjat prādurbhāve bhavāyasaḥ ||

vārāham nārasimhañca vāmanam mānuṣam tathā |³³

But later on the number of avatāras was increased up to six or ten or even more (24 or 39).

Jayadeva in his Gītagovinda eulogies Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu himself and sings in panegyrics of ten avatāras, such as, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narosingha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Balarāma (Haladhara), Buddha and Kalki. This list of avatāras as given by Jayadeva is accepted as the most authentic since the early mediaeval period. But there is difference of opinion regarding the position of Kṛṣṇa since some treatises include Kṛṣṇa among the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu.

Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣads

The seeds of Indian religion and the development of Indian Philosophies are based on the Upaniṣads. It is, therefore, natural that the root of Vaiṣṇavism also can be traced in the Upaniṣads. There are some Upaniṣads of which primarily deal with the mystery of Viṣṇu and his different incarnations. These Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣads are fourteen in number and they are-

1. Avyaktipaniṣad- The subject matter of this Upaniṣad is the attainment of the Unmanifested Puruṣa (Soul) in the manifested form. In it the nature of the ānuṣṭubhī vidya is elaborately discussed.

2. Kalisantarāṇopaniṣad- At the request of Nārada, Hiraṇyagarbha narrates the way of crossing the dismay of the elements of Kali by chanting the sixteen garlands of names of God, such as-

Hare Rāma hari Rāma Rāma Rāma hare hare |

Hare Kṛṣṇa hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa hare hare ||

Iti ṣoḍaśakam nāmnām kalikalmaṣanāśanam |

nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarvavedeṣu dṛśyate ||³⁴

This hymn has great significance Jīva. Is enveloped by sixteen cells. In order to remove each of the cells, the chanting of sixteen garlands of names of God is essential.

3. Kṛṣṇopaniṣad- The divinity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is established in it.
4. Garuḍopaniṣad- The mystery of Gāruḍa-vidyā is depicted in it.
5. Gopālatāpinī- Upaniṣad- In this Upaniṣad Govinda is praised in a lucid manner-

Namo vijñārūpāya Paramānanda rupiṇe |

Kṛṣṇāya Gopīnāthāya Govindāya namo namaḥ ||

Śrī Kṛṣṇarukmiṇīkānta Gopījanamanohara |

samsārasāgare magnam māmuddhara jagadguro ||³⁵

6. Tārasāropaniṣad- In this Upaniṣad the nature of Tarak-mantra (or deliverer hymn) is determined. The hymn of eight letters of God Nārāyaṇa is instructed in it.
7. Tripādvibhuti- mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad- The theme of this Upaniṣad is mentioned in the Puruṣa Sūkta. This Upaniṣad has immense influence upon other Vaiṣṇava philosophies particularly on Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy.
8. Dattātreyopaniṣad- The Upāsanā (worship) of Dattātreyā is described in it.
9. Nārāyaṇopaniṣad- The mystery of the hymn of eight letters of Nārāyaṇo is narrated in this Upaniṣad.
10. Nṛsinha-tāpinī-Upaniṣad- In it the form of Nṛsinha and his hymn are elaborately described.
11. Rāma-tāpinī Upaniṣad- The self in which the yogis delight is 'Rāma'-

Ramante yogino'hante nityānande cidātmani |

iti rāmapadenāsau param brahmābhidhiyate ||

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Tathaiva rāmaṁ vijastham jagadetaccarācaram |

rephārūḍā mūrtayaḥ syuḥ śaktayastisra eva ceti ||³⁶

12. Rāma-rahasya-Upaniṣad- The theme of the Upaniṣad is the method of worship Rama with the necessary hymns relating to it.

13. Vāsudeva-Upaniṣad- The sublimity of Vāsudeva is delineated in it. Vāsudeva is said to be the soul of the universe.

14. Hayagrīva-Upaniṣad- The different hymns of Hayagriva are cited in it.

In fine, it can be said that the tenets of the different sects of the Vaiṣṇavism are based on these, fourteen Upaniṣads. In fact, basing on these fourteen Upaniṣads the later Vaiṣṇava-sects develop in different parts of India.

Vaiṣṇavism in the South

The influence of Vaiṣṇavism was very much developed in the far South by the Ālvārs or Viṣṇava-devotees. Their devotional songs constituting the Vaiṣṇava prabandham of four thousand verses in classical Tamil are so much marked by depth of feeling and true piety that they are looked upon as Vaiṣṇava Veda. The Ālvārs sang in praise of Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa. They also sang eulogies of the avatāras like Rāma, Balarāma and Vāmana. These songs are still very popular in South India and their authors are held in so high esteem that their images are worshipped side by side with those of Viṣṇu and his avatāras. The Ālvārs knew Kṛṣṇa's dalliance with the gopies. A female Ālvār is said to have regarded herself as a gopi and the God in the form of Śrī Raṅganātha as her lover.

According to Vaiṣṇava tradition there were twelve Ālvārs and some of them were Poygāi Alvār or Saroyogin, Bhūltattālvār or bhūtayogin, pey Ālvār Mahadyogin, Tiramaliśai Ālvār or Bhaktisāra, Nammālvār or Śaṭakopa and so on. The Ālvārs often refer to the avatāras of Viṣṇu like Trivikrama and Kṛṣṇa. All the Ālvārs appear to have flourished before the early Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas. The Ācāryas devoted themselves to the task of depending their faith on philosophic grounds. The first prominent Ācāryas were Nāthamuni (tenth-eleventh century), his disciple puṇḍarikākṣa (eleventh century), grandson Yamunācārya (eleventh century) and the famous Rāmānuja (eleventh century), Rāmānuja's name is only second to that of Śaṅkarācārya. Rāmānuja gave a new turn to Vaiṣṇavism by his Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda theory which was a reply to Śaṅkara's Advaitavāda. Rāmānuja's famous work is Śribhāṣya on the Vedānta-Sūtra. However, Rāmānujn proves that the Supreme deity is to be called Nārāyaṇa and not by any other name.

Rāmānuja travelled throughout the country to popularise his teachings and established monasteries in various places to keep his teachings alive. He made Tirupati, an important centre of Vaiṣṇavism.

The Vaiṣṇava Ācārya after Rāmānuja was Madhva or Ānandatīrtha who flourished in the 13th century A.D. He advocated new philosophical doctrines. But the most important change propounded by him was the

elimination of the Vyūhas, Vāsudeva and others. According to him, the Supreme spirit is Viṣṇu. Thus the old Bhāgavata system was replaced by pure Vaiṣṇavism. It is worth mentioning here that both Rāmānuja and Madhva discarded the ‘cow-herd’ and ‘Gopī’ episodes of Vaiṣṇavism. But these elements came into Prominence in the system of Nimbāraka. Nimbārka flourished after Rāmānuja. Though Trailaṅga Brāhmin, Nimbārka lived in northern India. Kṛṣṇa surrounded by gopis (cow-herd girls) with Rādhā as his chief lover forms the central element of his doctrine. These features still continue in the Vaiṣṇavism of northern India. Nimbārka resided at Bṛndāvana near Mathurā, the renowned place of the early life of cowherd Kṛṣṇa and his dalliance with the gopies (cow-herd girls).

Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa

Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu were identified as one from the third century B.C. Bhāgavatism was there in ancient Orissa between the second century B.C. to the first century A.D. as it is evidenced by the Ghoshundi stone inscription of the second century B.C. where Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa has been described as Bhagavat or Supreme Being.³⁷ It means, therefore, that Vāsudevism has been changed into Bhāgavatism. By the passing of time, Bhāgavatism spread to Kalinga as it is proved by the Hāthi Gumphā Inscription where youthful dalliance of Kṛṣṇa has been depicted³⁸. With

the invasion of Samudragupta in the 4th century A.D. Vaiṣṇavism spread in Orissa since the Guptas were Vaiṣṇavas. Under the imperial patronage Bhāgavatism flourished in Orissa in the 5th century A.D. Saṅkarṣana and Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa came to be known as Balarāma and Jagannātha respectively just as they were called in other places of India under new names. Jagannātha is a very ancient God in Orissa as He is mentioned in the Utkala Khaṇḍa of the Skandha purāna. Subhadra is mentioned in the Agni Purāṇa and Garuḍa Purāṇa along with her brothers. Subhādra is mentioned first by Varāhamihra in his Bṛhatsaṁhitā as Ekānṁsā standing between her brothers Balabhadra (Balarāma) and Kṛṣṇa. Compare-ekānāṁsā Kāryā devī baladevakṛṣṇaryormadhye |³⁹

In the fifth century A.D. the Māṭhara dynasty reigned in Kongadā extending from the Mahānaddī in the north to the Mahendragiri in the south. During their reign they extended active patronage to Vaiṣṇavism.⁴⁰ All the famous monarchs of this dynasty were parama Bhāgavatas. That is, they were all devoted to Bhāgavata Nārayana Swāmī or Viṣṇu. Prabhanjana Varma, a king of that dynasty built a temple of Kṛṣṇa on the bank of Vindha Sarovara.⁴¹

Thereafter, different dynasties viz. Sailodbhava dynasty (7th century A.D.), Bhaumakāra dynasty (8th and 7th century A.D.), Gangā dynasty (11-12 century A.D.) ruled some parts of Orissa. Some of the

kings of aforesaid dynasties were Vaiṣṇavas. Mādhava Varma though a devotee of Siva, compared himself with Cakradhara Bhagavan Mādhava. Cakradhara means bearer of the discus as weapon. It is an epithet of Viṣṇu. Queen Tribhuvana Mahādevi of Bhaumakara dynasty introduced herself as parama Vaiṣṇavī.⁴² Choda Gango Deva of the Ganga dynasty constructed the purusottama temple (Jagannātha temple at Puri) on the bank of the ocean. During that period Jagannāth was designated as puruṣottama and, therefore, Puri was called Puriṣottama Kṣetra. Choda Gango Deva was first a Saiva but later on he became a Vaiṣṇava by faith. During his time Vaiṣṇavism spread rapidly in entire Orissa. Puri became a centre of Vaiṣṇava faith due to the patronage of Gānga Kings. Jagannāthā is regarded as Viṣṇu, the lord of Kamalā Devi. The Gānga kings were the worshippers of different avatāras of Viṣṇu, like Narasingha, Śrīkūrma, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and so on. Rāmānuja came to Puri in the 12th century A.D. He made Jagannātha exclusively a Vaiṣṇava deity and as a result Puri became a centre of Vaiṣṇava faith. Moreover, he introduced Pañcarātra system and Śrī-cult in the Jagannātha temple. Not only Rāmānuja but other vaiṣṇava saints also like Madhava, Nimbārka, Rāmānanda, Viṣṇu-Swamī came to Orissa right from the eleventh century A.D. successively and made Puri an eternal seat for Vaiṣṇava faith. In fact, long before the advent of Śrī Caitanya at Puri, the Vaiṣṇava sects made Puri or Nilācala as the seat for the propagation of Vaiṣṇavism.

Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal

Though Śrī Caitanya is not the propagator of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal, nevertheless, his name is associated with the modern Vaiṣṇavism of Bengal otherwise called Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavim. In Bengal Vaiṣṇavism was there right from the Gupta period though the number of adherents of Vaiṣṇavism was very scanty and naturally it was not a prominent sect in Bengal. Like four other Vaiṣṇava school in India viz. Śrī Brahma, Rudra and Sanakādisampradāyas connected respectively with the names of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Viṣṇu Swāmī (Vallavācārya) and Nimbārka, Bengal Vaiṣṇavism is also a separate and independent sect. The Bengal Vaiṣṇavism followed the Bhāgavata tradition. The Bengal Vaiṣṇavism has its own origin and therefore, it is not the sub-branch of any other four Vaiṣṇava-sects of India. The Bengal Vaiṣṇavism has two characteristic features, such as, Bhakti or emotional mysticism and the other is Rādhā Kṛṣṇa cult. Śrīdhara Swāmī is the founder of emotional mysticism in Bengal. It is based on the philosophy contained in the Nārada-Śāndilya Bhakti-Sutras. The joint-worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa was there among some sects before Śrī Caitanya when Sena kings were ruling over Bengal. Lakṣmaṇa Sena and his successors were Vaiṣṇavas. Jayadeva, the author of the Gītagovinda was the court poet of Lakṣana sena. He composed Gītagovinda in the later part of the 12th century A.D. It is a lyrical poem

of melodious padāvalis written in Sanskrit on Rādhā Kṛṣṇa's spiritual love. This devotional lyric popularised Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult among the common run of people in Bengal by its Vaiṣṇava devotioned sentiments. It merits mention here that the Gītagovinda is the earliest work in which all the ten incarnations of Kṛṣṇa are mentioned and they are Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasimha, Vāmana, Parasurāna, Rāma, Balarāma, Buddha and Kalki. They are the accepted avatāras of Vaiṣṇavism which Gītagovinda introduced in a systematic manner in Bengal with the melodious songs and devotional feeling Bhāgavata-emotionalism revived. That is why, next to Śrīmadbhāgavata, Gītagovinda becomes the second book of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. To the followers of Śrī Caitanya the Gītagovinda is not only a lyric of melodious verses, but it is regarded as one of the sources of religious inspiration of Caitanyaism.

The melodious verses of the Gītagovinda had inspired the Bengali poet Candīdāsa and the Maithilī poet Vidyāpati in composing the poems of devotional sentiment of Vaiṣṇavism. Their poems were very popular among the mass people of those days. Vidyāpati belonged to the 15th century A.D. and Candīdās flourished towards the last part of the 14th century. He was the author of the book Śrīkṛṣṇa Kīrtan. However, these two poets of Vaiṣṇavism had great influence over the common run of people. Even Śrī Caitanya was also very much influenced by their heart

rending Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa lyricism. It is said by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in his C.C. that towards, the later part of his life at Puri Śrī Caitanya used to chant the passionate lucid Vaiṣṇava verses of the Candīdās and Vidyāpati.

However, Mādhavendra Puri was the initiator of the pre-Caitanya Bhakti movement (otherwise called Rādhākṛṣṇa cult) in Bengal. His disciples in Bengal were Īśvarapuri and even Advaita, the forerunner of Caitanya at navadvīp. Bṛndāvan Das in his Caitanya Bhāgavata said that Mādhavendra puri was the Ādi-Sūtradhār of the Bhakti-rasa in Bengal.

‘bhaktirasa mādhavendra ādi-sūtradhār’

Gauracandra ihā Kahiyāchen vāre vār ||⁴³

i.e. Mādhavendra is the forerunner of Bhakti rasa (in Bengal); this has been said by Gauracandra again and again.

From Madhavendrapuri his disciple Īśvara puri inherited it. Again, Īśvara puri transmitted it to his disciple Śrī Caitanya and his followers developed this cult into a full grown system of its own. Thus Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Goswāmī in his ‘C.C. writes that Mādhavendra is the seed, Īśvara puri is the sprout, Śrī Caitanya is the trunk, Advaita and Nityānanda are the two main branches and their followers are the minor branches etc. of the great tree of loving devotion.

Bhakti-Kalpataru rupilā siñci icchāpāni | jay Śrīmādhavapurī
Kṛṣṇapremapur | bhakti-kalpatarur tehño prathama ankur || Śrī īsvarpuri
rūpeankur puṣṭa haila | āpane caitanyamālī skanda upajila |⁴⁴

Vaiṣṇavism in Assam

Before the advent of Śankaradeva Vaiṣṇavism was not unknown in Assam; but it was not so popular since Assam is traditionally a land of Śāktism and Tāntrism. The two famous books written in Assam are the Kālikāpurāna and the Yog.. These two books give the Vivid descriptions of the system of worship of different Gods and Goddesses. But significantly enough these two books end glorifying Viṣṇu with the ascertain that Viṣṇu is the supreme God. Thus goes the glorification of Viṣṇu at the close of the Kālikāpurāna-

pradhānapuruṣe yasya prapañco yoginām ḥrdi |

yaḥpurāṇādhipo Viṣṇuḥ prasīdatu sa Vaḥ śivaḥ (Sthitaḥ) ||

yo heturagraḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ sanātanaḥ śāśvata īsvaraḥ paraḥ |

purānakṛdvedapurānavedyah prastaumi tannaumi purāṇaśeṣe ||⁴⁵

So at the very closing of the Yog., the author of the book glorifies Hayagrīva Mādhava, a form of Viṣṇu of Maṇikuṭ in detail.

Jaleśa nārāyaṇa viśvaśankara

kṣitīśa viśveśvara viśvalocana |

śaśāṅkasūryāyataviśvamūrtaye

hayāsyarūpāya namo Namaste ||⁴⁶

Tradition has it that this temple of Hayagriva Mādhava at Maṅikut of Lauhitya Tirtha (Hājo) was founded by Indradyumna of Orissa in ancient time.

There are also other temples of Viṣṇu as mentioned in both the books and these are as follows:-

1. Viṣṇu temple on the top of the Matsadhvaja mountain where the fish incarnation of Viṣṇu is worshipped.
2. Viṣṇu temple on the Citravaha Mountain where Viṣṇu is worshipped as the boar incarnation.
3. The temple of Pāṇḍunātha where Narsimha Avatāra of Viṣṇu is worshipped.

Narasimha mahāvīrya trāhi mām dīptalocana |

Viṣṇurupa namaste'stu Pāṇḍunāthā namostu te ||⁴⁷

4. Viṣṇu temple in the area known as Dikhar basini where Viṣṇu is worshipped as Vāsudeva.

hum namo bhagavate vāsudevāya svāhā |

It is to be noted here that Vaiṣṇavism which prevailed in Assam before Śankaradeva's neo-vaiṣṇavism was of the nature of Pañcarātra Vaiṣṇavism since Viṣṇu was in the form of Vāsudeva. Moreover, it merits mention here that during that period Viṣṇu is worshipped according to the method and system of the Kālikāpurāṇa. But the neo-Vaiṣṇavism of Assam propounded by the great Vaiṣṇava-saint Śankaradeva is pure Bhāgavatism based on the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā and the Bhāgava Purāṇa. Śankaradeva was influenced by the Vaiṣṇavism of South. He initiated Bhakti movement in Assam being influenced by the teachings of Rāmānuja.

Vaiṣṇavism in ancient Sylhet and Cachar

Ancient Sylhet or Śrīhaṭṭa is very rich in cultural heritage. The Bhātevā copper plate Inscription No. I of Govinda Keśavadeva and the Bhāṭerā copper plate No. II of Īśanadava of eleven century A.D. mention Śrīhaṭṭa as a sovereign kingdom. However, in ancient Sylhet Vaiṣṇavism was not unknown as it is proved from the records of the different copper plates of Sylhet. The Nidhanpur copper plates of Mahārājā Bhāskara Varman (7th Century A.D.) mention a temple of Viṣṇu (Vāsudeva). For the maintenance of the Bali-caru-Satra of the temple deity Viṣṇu (Vāsudeva) a vast portion of land was donated. Similarly, we find mention in the

Kālāpur copper plate that Sāmanta Maruṇḍanātha (7th Century A.D.) erected one temple of Anantanārāyana (Viṣṇu) in Sylhet and for the maintenance of the temple (Bali-caru-Satra) he donated land. Compare-
'bhagavato' nantanārāyaṇasya śaśva bali-caru satra-Pravṛtta etc.⁴⁹

It merits mention here that at present in Pañcakhaṇḍa area (in the village of Supātalā) there exists the temple of the ancient deity Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu). The Bhāṭera copper plate II of Īśānadeva (eleventh Century A.D.) mentions that king Govindakeśavadeva erected one sky-kissing stone made temple of Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu), the enemy of Kamsa in Sylhet area.

Sa mandivam kamśanisūdanasya śilābhiruccairvidadhe mahaujāḥ |
yattungaśṛngasthitacakrdhārākṣatāḥ kṣarantyamvuganādivāsthah ||⁵⁰

His worthy son Mahārājā Īśānadeva was also a Vaiṣṇava in faith.
He also constructed the temple of Viṣṇu, the enemy of Madhukaiṭabha.

Vinirmame'sau madhukaitabhāreḥ prāsādamabhramlihamūrjitaśrīḥ |
yattungaśṛngapracalam Patākānabhastarormanjakevabhāti ||⁵¹

From these records it may be inferred that during those days common people of Sylhet were Vaiṣṇavas. The Vaiṣṇavism which prevailed in ancient Sylhet or Śrīhaṭṭa was Pañcarātra Vaiṣṇavism, since Viṣṇu was in the form of Vāsudeva.

In ancient time Cachar is known as Heḍamba kingdom. The kings of Haiḍamba dynasty ruled the kingdom. The history of kingdom was based on Purāṇas. They were śāktas; but in the life of Dimāsās the influence of Vaiṣṇavism spread gradually in later stage on account of the cultural friendship with Manipur. Even the kings of that dynasty in subsequent stage adopted the title Nārāyaṇa with their names in order to – signify their faith in Vaiṣṇavism. The king Suradarpanārāyaṇa (1708-1720) had in possession- a family conch-shell with the imprint of ten incarnations (avatāras) of Viṣṇu. During his reign Bṛhanārādīya Purāṇa was translated into Bengali by his court Paṇḍit Bhuvaneśwaa Vācaspati Bhattachārya to establish the superiority of Viṣṇu.

Vaiṣṇavism in Maṇipur

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult spread in Maṇipur due to the influence of Caitanyism. But Vaiṣṇavism was not new in Maṇipur. An inscription of 799 A.D. written in Manipuri script begins with the invocations to Hari, Śiva and Durgā.⁵² The invocation to Hari appears to show that Vaiṣṇavism was the main religion in Manipur during that period. The kings of Maṇipur were all Vaiṣṇavs right from ancient time. Kayamba, a king of Manipur of the 15th century A.D. was a friend of the Tai-king. It is said that as a mark of friendship, the Tai-king presented a holy disc of Viṣṇu to the king Kayamba and the holy disc of Viṣṇu was installed and

worshipped in a temple in the palace of Manipur.⁵³ During the reign of king Kayamba of the 15th century A.D. Manipuris were Vaiṣṇavas belonging to the Viṣṇuswāmī sect. the king Khāgembā (1597-1652) also contributed a great deal to the progress of Vaiṣṇavism in Manipur. The king Khāgembā was considered as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in his time.⁵⁴ The king charairongba in about 1698 changed the Viṣṇuswāmī sect of Vaiṣṇavism and introduced Mādhavacaria sect of Vaiṣṇavism in Manipur. The king Garibnawaj (in about 1713 A.D.) was influenced by the Bengali Padāvali Kītans. The king Bhāgyacandra (1777 A.D.) and his people were influenced by the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism.⁵⁵

b) A Brief Introduction to the Life of Śrī Caitanya Māhāprabhu

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprbhu, the illustrious Vaiṣṇava apostle of medieval Bengal and the prime figure of neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement was born on the 18th February, 1486 on the Phālugini full moon day as the son of Jagannāth Miśra and Śacīdevī of Navadwip. The birth of such a luminous personality on an auspicious day was also noted for a lunar eclipse. The people of Nadiyā took holy ablution on that occasion in the Ganges with chanting the name of Hari which appeared to have welcomed the birth of Śrī Caitanya just before the lunar eclipse started. Mother Śacīdevī was delighted seeing the divine beauty of the face of newly born son. The neighbours assembled in the house of Jagannāth Miśra with presentations

to bless the newly born baby. They were all fascinated seeing the beaming face and the fair complepion of the baby.

Brāhmaṇ-sajjan-nārī, nana dravye thāli bhari,

Āilā save yautuk laiṃ |

Yena kāñcā sonā dyuti, dekhiyā bālak-mūrtti

āśīrvād Kare sukh pañā ||⁵⁶

Jagannāth Mísra was originally a native of Dākādakṣin of Śrīhatta. His father's name was Upendra Mísra and mother Śobhādevī. For higher studies he came to Navadwip, the seat of advanced learning. Besides he had an intention to reside on the bank of the Ganges permanently. Soon he became a versatile scholar in different lores. However, after staying there for some times Jagannātho Mísra married Śacīdevī, the daughter of Nīlāambar Chakraborty. With the passing of times Śacīdevī gave birth to eight daughters one after another. But they all died in their infant stage. Thereafter, a son, named Viśwarūpa was born to them. In the mean while, Jagannāth Mísra with his family came to Dākādakṣin to meet with his parents.

Patrīprapya Jagannātho Bhāryayā sahitaṃ laghu |

Svadeśamagamad vidvān pitroḥ prītim vivarddhayan ||⁵⁷

During his stay at Dākādakṣin, Śacīdevī became pregnant. Śobhādevī being directed in dream sent back Jagannāth Miśra and Śacīdevī to Navadvīp without delay. There at Śrīhattiyā pādā of Māyāpur within Navadvīp Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared on earth in the auspicious evening of lunar eclipse that occurred on the Phālagunī full moon day in 1407 Śāka. As Śrī Caitanya was born in a hut under a Nim tree he was named as Nimāi. In the C.C. it is written-

Dākinī śñākhinī haite, sankā upajila cite,

ḍare nām thuila ‘nimāi’ |⁵⁸

Yama, the God of death took away so many daughters, so the mother named her son as ‘Nimāi’.

The purport of naming the son as Nimai is that the Nim is very bitter the taste. Therefore, Yama would have an aversion to him.

Śacī’s father Nīlāmbar Chakraborty who was a reputed astrologer on calculation of the horoscope declared that his grandson would be an eminent person. He identified 32 physical signs of a great man in him and named him Viśwambar as he would save the mankind. Again, some people addressed him Gaurāṅga for his exceptionally bright complexion. He was as beautiful as the full moon. That is why, some people called him as Navadvīp candra. Besides, some people named him ‘Gaurhari’ as

he was born in the midst of chanting the name Hari. Right from the childhood many peculiar features were noticed in him. One such peculiar trait is that his cries could be stopped by chanting the name of Hari.

Another account of his infancy is very astonishing. One day the crawling lad Nimāi caught hold of a poisonous snake and began to play with it. At one time he lied down on it. By this account he displayed the sport of sleeping Viṣṇu on the Śeṣa-serpent. The parents and the neighbours became afraid of lost hope of the boy. They recalled Garuḍa and prayed for his life. At one time the serpent went away.

Ekdin ek sarpa bādīte beḍāy |

Dharilen sarpe prabhu vālak līlāy ||

Kuṇḍalī kariyā sarpa rahila veḍiyā |

Thākur thākila tār upare śuiyā ||

Āthe-vyathe save dekhi hāy hāy' kare |

Śuiyā hāsen prabhu sarper upare ||⁵⁹

As he grew up he became naughty and restless. He took away what ever he noticed of the neighbours. But they did never complain of it. His charming appearance and miraculous activities fascinated ever one.

One day two thieves being attracted by his valuable ornaments took him away by their shoulders. They moved on towards their house with the boy. But being infatuated by Vaiṣṇavī illusion miraculously they lost their way to their house and roaming here and there they came to the house of Jagannāth Miśra thinning it to be their own house. Nimāi jumped down from the clutches and ran to his father.

The thieves were fortunated enough since they carried Gaur-hari. In this way Gaur-sundar blessed the thieves.

Another interesting story connected with the childhood of Nimāi records that one day a devotee of Gopāla came to the house of Jagannāth Miśra as a guest. To him the cooking materials were provided. When the cooking was over, the guest was ready to offer the food to Gopāla, but suddenly Nimāi came and started eating food. Being disgusted he cooked food for the second time. This time also Nimāi repeated the same thing. On being requested by Viswarupa, the guest cooked the food for the third time. This time Nimāi was guarded elsewhere for fear of touching the food. Nimāi also pretended to have slept. Now was advancing and everybody in the house being deluded fell in sleeping. The guest was ready to offer the food to Gopāla. But all on a sudden Nimāi came and touched the food. The guest uttered yell. To the surprise of the guest, Nimāi showed him the eight armed incarnation of Viṣṇu.

seikṣaṇe dekhe vipra parama adbhut |

Śaṅkha, cakra, gadā, Padma, - aṣṭabhujaṛūp ||

Ekhaste navaṅīta, āṛ haste khāy |

Āṛ dui haste prabhu muralīvāḷāy ||⁶⁰

The brāhmin guest realised that the boy was no other than his beloved Gopāla Himself. Nimāi told the Brahmin guest not to disclose it to anyone.

Nimāi was extremely naughty and indomitable in his childhood. His schooling started ceremonially at the age of five. It was very astonishing that within three days he could learn all the letters including the diphthongs. He could also even write the names of incarnations like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa Mukunda, Vanamāli and so on.

In the traditional school he became the leader of the students and engaged in the notorious activities with his unruly class-mates. He used to take bath everyday in the Ganges with his naughty class-mates and disturbed the other bathers in the Ganges. Sometimes he inter changed the clothes of female bathers with those of the males. Even sometimes Nimāi and his group teased the girls and took away their worship materials etc. Jagannāth Miśra wanted to punish Nimāi, but the girls requested him not

to take any stern action against him. One day the father went out in anger to chastise the boy; but Nimāi and his group fled away. After sometime Nimāi came back and embraced his father. The father out of affection could not take any stern action.

Nimāi's elder brother Viśwarūp was eight to nine years older than Nīmāi. He was getting his schooling under the discipleship of Advaitācārya. He was quite handsome, brilliant and religious minded boy. When the preparation of his marriage ceremony was going on, Viswarūp in order to get rid of the troublesome world suddenly left home. Nobody knows where he went. It is gathered that he became a forest dweller ascetic taking the name 'Śankarāraṇyapuri'. To his fond parents it was nothing but a shock. They had lost eight daughters and now they lost their eldest son on whom they could rely to look after them during their old age. But consoled them saying that he would look after them as a true son. Thereafter Nimāi paid more attention to studies and excelled all his class-mates in merits. But parents were not at all satisfied at this. Jagannāth Miśra stopped Nimāi's study paying no heed to anybody's request. The mother Śacīdevī condemned Advaita calling him a demon since he induced her eldest son (Viśwarupa) to relinquish the worldly life by imparting knowledge which awakened in him the spirit of renunciation.

‘Ke vale, advaita’, - ‘dvaita e vada gosāñi |

Candrasama ek putra kariyā vāhir |

Eho putra nā dilen karivāre sthir ||⁶¹

So Nimāi was removed from the school. But Nimāi was not all happy with the adamant decision of his parents. He spent most of his time with the association of unruly boys. The neighbours and relatives insisted upon Jagannāth Miśra to send Nimāi again to school.

His Upanayana ceremony was performed when he was 8 years old. He was then admitted to the Tol of Gangādās paṇḍit. Within a short time he earned reputation as an intelligent student. In arguments and discussions he always took the lead. In the Tol of Gangādās Murāri Gupta, his earliest biographer and also a close follower was his classmate. Within the shortest possible time Nimāi mastered Sanskrit Grammar, Kāvya and Rhetoric. He also studied Smṛti and Jyotish under Viṣṇu Miśra, Darśana under Sudarśan Paṇḍit, Veda and Bhāgavata under Advaita Ācārya and Nyāya śāstra under Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma. After the completion of his studies at the age of 16 (sixteen), he was awarded the title ‘Vidyāsāgarra’. He composed one Tīkā styled ‘Vidyāsāgarī Tipanī’ on the Kalāpa Vyākaraṇa.

His father Jagannāth Mīśra passed away when he was only eleven years of old. Their financial condition was not sound. So after the completion of his studies Nimāi took up the profession of teaching. He set up a Tol in the 'Candi Maṇḍapa' of the house of Mukunda Sanjaya situated on the bank of the Ganges and engaged as a teacher of the son of Mukunda Sanjaya. Soon a large number of students came to read under the extra-ordinary brilliant teacher. In the mean time, Nimāi was given in marriage with Lakṣmī priyā, the daughter of Vallabhācārya who was originally a native of sylhet.

One day Īśvarpuri, Nimāi's future preceptor came to Navadwip and was received warmly by the devout Vaiṣṇavas. Īśvarpuri was highly impressed by the beautiful appearance of Nimāi. Nimāi invited Īśvarpuri to his house cordially. When intimacy grew Īśvarpuri showed his book named 'Kṛṣṇalilāmṛta' to Nimai and asked him to comment upon it; but Nimāi expressed his inability as it was written by a devotee of Kṛṣṇa at this Īśvarpuri was very much pleased with Nimāi.

The bathing ghats of the Ganges were the centres of discussions on various subjects. In the afternoon Nimāi used to go there with his students and challenged any one to dispute with him on any topic. To hear his challenge many people gathered there on the bathing ghats. One day a digvijayī scholar named keśava Kāśmīrī after defeating many scholars of

Āryāvartta came to Navadvīp for triumph. He was believed to be the son of Sarasvatī. In one evening he came to the bathing ghat of the Ganges and met Nimāi who was sitting there with his students and other people. He challenged Nimāi in discussion. In reply Nimāi Politely said that he was only a grammarian. On the other hand, the Paṇḍit was the son of Goddess Sarasvatī. So he could easily able to defeat him in discussion. But before doing so he should narrate the magnanimity of the Ganges adorned with the twilight. The Paṇḍit started reciting hundred of extempore verses in praise of the Ganges. After the recitation of the verses Nimāi eulogised him saying that he was really the blessed son of Sarasvatī because such erudition was not seen in ordinary human being. Then Nimāi requested the paṇḍit to explain any portion of the recited verses. In reply, the Paṇḍit enquired as to which stanza. Nimāi then quoted the following stanza and requested him to explain-

Mahattvam gaṅgāyāḥ satatamidamābhāti nitarām

yadeṣā śrīviṣṇoścaraṇakamalotpattisubhagā |

dvitīya-lakṣmīriva suranarairarcyacaraṇā

bhavāmībhartturyā śirasi vibhavatyadbhutaḡaṇā ||⁶²

i.e. the grandeur of the Ganges is always revealed as shining since it is fortunately originated from the lotus feet of Śrīviṣṇu. Gods and

human beings worship her as second Lakṣmi. Besides, Śiva Himself also places her on His Head.

The Paṇḍit became astonished and said, ‘I have recited the stanzas like the speed of a storm. How could you remember it among the stanzas?’ In reply Nimāi said, ‘I am a man of retentive memory being blessed with the boon of that Goddess by whose blessing you have become a Digvijayī Paṇḍit.’ Thereafter, when asked to elucidate its blemishes and merits, the Paṇḍit became enraged, since according to him, by the blessing of Goddess Saraswatī what came out from his mouth became flawless. When asked to discuss the stanza, Nimāi showed two figures of words and three figures of speech. So these are the merits of the said stanza. But the verse is tainted with five blemishes, such as, Viruddhamati, Bhagnakrama, Punarukti and Avimṛṣṭavidheyāmsadoṣa in two places. The Paṇḍit was overwhelmed and felt ashamed.

Seeing the defeat of the Paṇḍit, the students of Nimāi began to laugh. But Nimāi stopped them saying ‘it is the duty of every one to save the dignity of the honourable person.’

Nimāi requested him to come next day. It is said that the Goddess Saraswatī told the Paṇḍit in a dream to revere Nimāi who was no other than the Lord of the universe. Next day, the Paṇḍit came again and revered Nimāi. He also narrated his dream of last night. On hearing him

Nimāi asked the Paṇḍit to go back home and worship Kṛṣṇa. In the C.B.a it is said-

Sei se vidyār phal jāniha niścay |

Kṛṣṇapādapadme yadi citta-vitta ray ||⁶³

The Paṇḍit realised the import of this saying of C.B. in the core of his heart.

The financial condition of Nimāi was not sound. So when he found it difficult to maintain the family he went out to East Bengal to earn money by teaching students. He stayed on the bank of Padmā for about two months. Within a short time many students gathered round him to learn grammar. He taught them his ‘Vidyāsāgarī Tippanī’ on the Kalāp Vyākaraṇa. From there he went to Śrīhaṭṭa to meet his grand parents. At that time he went upto Baraṅgā or Buruṅgā in Śrīhaṭṭa. There he fortunately met with his grandfather Upendra Miśra and came back to Navadwip from Buruṅgā. At that time he did not proceed up to Dākādakṣin, their ancestral home.

Nimāi returned home from East Bengal with good amount of money and handed it over to his mother. On enquiry Nīmāi came to know the sudden death of his wife Lakṣmīdevī by a snake-bite. Listening the

sad demise of his wife he maintained patience and consoled his mother saying-

Mātā, duḥkha bhāva' ki-kāraṇe?

bhavitavya ye āche, se Khaṇḍive kemane?

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Ataeva ye haila Īsvar-icchāy |

haila se Kārya, āṛ duḥkha kene tāy?

Svāmīṛ agrete gangā pāy ye sukṛti |

Tār vaḍa āṛ Ke vā āche bhāgyavatīd ||

Eimata Prabhu jananīre prabodhiyā |

Rahilen nij-kṛtye āptagaṇ laiṃ⁶⁴

Thereafter Nimāi in order to please his mother married again Viṣṇupriyā, the only daughter of Rājapandit Sanātana. The marriage took place with pomp and grandeur. It is said that Mukunda Sanjaya volentared to bear all the expenses of the marriage.

Nimāi then went to Gayā in order to offer oblations to the manes of his deceased father. There he happened to meet Īsvarpuri and secured his permission to perform certain rites. One day while cooking his meal

Īśvarpuri came to him and gladly dined with him. There Nimāi prayed for initiation to Īśvarpuri. At his prayer Īśvarpuri initiated him to Kṛṣṇa mantra. Nimāi surrendered himself to the Guru and prayed for his blessings to devote himself to Kṛṣṇa. He then intended to go to Mathurā, the birth-place of Kṛṣṇa, but a divine voice dissuaded him going to Mathurā. Staying at Gayā for sometime he alongwith his companions returned to Navadwip.

The people of Navadwip noticed a great change in Nimāi after his return from Gayā. He was always found brooding over Kṛṣṇa. the Vaiṣṇavas like Gadādhara, Gopināth, Rāmāi and Śrīvās and also Advaita Ācārya were glad to know Nimāi Paṇḍit's conversion to Vaiṣṇavism. However, Nimāi met with his teacher Gaṅgādās Paṇḍit who advised him to devote himself to classes. As advised by Gaṅgādās, Nimāi from the next day started to go to the Tol and went on lecturing on the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa. His students could not follow his lecture except Kṛṣṇa his greatness. Gaṅgādās Paṇḍit, the old teacher of Nimāi scolded him and asked to teach grammar properly in the class. At this Nimāi continued to teach the grammar for about four months but thereafter he gave up teaching in the Tol.

One day being followed by Gadādhara, Nimāi came to see Advaitācārya. On seeing them Advaitācārya began to chant the name of

Hari which made Nimāi fall into a rapture. Advaitācārya recognised Nimāi as his Lord of his dream and started reciting the Verse of Viṣṇu Purāṇa-

Namo brahamāṇyadevāya go brāhmana hitāya ca |

Jagaddhitāya Kṛṣṇāya govindāya namo namaḥ ||⁶⁵

With delight Advaita Ācārya made obeisance to Nimāi though he was older than him (Nimāi). Gadādhara and other Vaiṣṇavas present there were astonished and protested against Advaita's behaviour. But Advaita in reply said that all would see the wonderful activities of Nimāi in near future.

Nimāi came to his senses and bowed down to Advaita and sought his blessings. Advaita then suggested to all Vaisnavas to perform Samkīrtana with Nimāi who delightfully agreed to the proposal. Thence forward began famous Samkīrtan at Nadiyā.

Nimāi started Samkīrtan in every house of Navadvīp. Śrīvās did not participate at first in the Samkīrtan. One day Nimāi came to the house of Śrīvās. At that time he was worshipping Nṛsimha in his house closing the door. Śrīvās did not care to come out. But Nimāi told him that his deity of honour was standing at the door. Immediately Śrīvās came out and to his surprise he saw four armed Nimāi seated in Virāsana posture

with conch, disc, mace and lotus in four hands. Seeing this sight Śrīvās Pandit was shivering out of fear. All his family-members also saw this vision.

Dekhe vīrāsane vasi' āche Viśvambhar |

Caturbhuḡ- śankha-cakra-godā-padma-dhar ||

Garjjite āchaye yena mattasimha-sār |

Vām-kakṣe tāli diyā karaye huṅkār ||⁶⁶

They all eulogised Nimāi in the form of Nṛsimha. After that Nimāi left the house of śrīvās telling them not to disclose the happenings to any one. On another occasion Nimāi appeared in the house of Murāri Gupta as an incarnation of Varāha. In this manner, Nimāi overwhelmed the people of Nadiyā and thereby he gathered them into his group.

The arrival of Nityānanda to Navadvīp was a great event in the life of Nimāi and in the history of neo-vaiṣṇavism. Nityānanda soon became the chief disciple of Nimāi. However, on account of his ardent devotion and sincere services Nityānanda was deified with Śrī Caitanya and they in a pair came to be known as 'Gaur-Nitāi'. The meeting of Nityānanda with Śrī Caitanya was miraculous. Nityānanda left his home at the age of 12 with an ascetic and travelled all the holy places of India. He was an

Avadhuta when he met Śrī Caitanya. They could know each other through their divine power.

The Vyāsapūjā was an important festival of the Vaiṣṇavas. It was celebrated in the house of Śrīvās and in that festival Nityānanda performed as the priest. When the worship was going on Nimāi appeared there. Nityānanda garlanded him. Instantly Nimāi assumed the form of six-armed Viṣṇu and delighted all. After the Pūja was over the Samkīrtan began in which Śrī Gaurāṅga and Nityānanda took the lead. Right from that day the Samkīrtan group came to be known as Gauḍīya vaiṣṇava sampradāya or Caitanya Sampradāya.

One day Nimāi came to the house of Advaita-Ācārya and wanted to know his desire. In reply Advaita said that just as he (Nimāi) revealed his infinite shapes and figures to Arjuna, even so he (Advaita) was desirous to visualise his infinite forms and figures from him. Then God Śrī Gaur Sundar displayed his infinite forms and figures to Advaita Ācārya. Thereafter, Advaita Ācārya prayed to Śrī Gaurāṅga to distribute bhakti irrespective of caste, creed, sex or education. Śrī Gaurāṅga then made up his mind to preach his tenets irrespective of caste and creed. His close followers viz. Nityānanda, Haridās Thākura, Śrīvās and others frequented every house of Nandiyā and asked the dwellers to worship Kṛṣṇa. In course of time many people were converted to vaiṣṇavism. But

there were also oppositions. Jagāi and Mādhāi, two brothers were trouble-makers of Nadiya. They were born in a Brahmin family. Their full names were Jagadānanda Bandyopādhyāy and Mādhavānanda Bandyopādhyāy. They were drunkards. Haridās Thākur and Nityānanda wanted to rescue them from their untold sins. They approached them and chanted the name of Kṛṣṇa. Being intolerant of the Vaiṣṇavas, they went away. On another occasion, Nityānanda came across Jagāi and Mādhāi in the vicinity of a liquor shop. Seeing him they shouted at Nityānanda and in madness of anger Mādhāi struck Nityānanda on his head. Still then the wounded Nityānanda chanted the name of Kṛṣṇa. Again Mādhāi came forward to strick him. But Jagāi stopped him saying what he would gain by assaulting a saint. Hearing this Nimāi rushed to the spot instantly and seeing the blood-satined body of his close follower Nityānanda lost his temper. But Nityānanda prevented Nimāi to take stern action against them as Jagāi rescued him from the hand of Mādhāi. Rather he prayed for their redemption. Nimāi then embraced Jagāi and showed him his four-armed shape. Mādhāi also bowed down to the feet of Mahāprabhu and sought his blessings. Mahāprabhu forgave him too.

Prabhu vale,-‘torā ār nā Karis pāp’ |

Jagāi-Madhāi vale,-‘ār nāre vāp ||

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Prabhu vale,-‘uṭh uṭh Jagāi mādhai |

hailā āmār dās – ār cinta nāi ||⁶⁷

Then both the brothers became devoted Vaiṣṇavas. Mādhai repented for his past misdeeds and prayed to Mahāprabhu for his redemption. He instructed him to construct a bathing ghāt on the bank of the Ganges in order to wipe out his past sins in complying with the instruction of Mahāprabhu, Madhai built a ghāt on the bank which came to be known as Mādhai-Ghat. However, people of Nadiyā then gradually began to feel that Nimāi Paṇḍit was an incarnation of God.

The Samkīrtan Party grew increased day by day with the addition of more new members; but strict privacy was maintained in the early stage. Mahāprabhu then started Nagar-samkīrtan in which he took the lead. It should be noted here that Samkīrtan in public was the greatest contribution of Śrī Caitanya. In the Samkīrtan people irrespective of caste and creed joined.

One day Kāzi of Navadvīp heard the sound of Samkīrtan. He ordered his men to stop the Kīrtan. The news of Kāzi’s order enraged Nimāi terribly. He asked Nityānanda to inform everyone to take part in the Nagar Samkīrtan. Many people came out to participate in the Samkīrtan. The whole procession was divided into four groups. The first

group was led by Advaita, the second group by Haridās Thākura, the third one by Śrīvās, while the fourth group was led by Gaur-Nityānanda themselves. The procession then reached the house of Kāzi. The kāzi out of fear fled away. Nimāi then sent men to call kāzi. The kāzi came out and bowed down from distance. Nimāi then said in jest, ‘I have come to meet you as your guest, but you hide yourself. The kāzi replied, ‘You came in an angry mood, so I kept myself away. Now your temperament has cooled down, and hence I come to meet you. I am fortunate enough that you are my guest. I used to address your grandfather Nīlāmbhar chakraborty as my uncle. So you are my nephew. Me thinks, nephews do not mind any offence committed by their uncles’. So Kāzi finally lifted his order and allowed performance of Samkīrtan without any hindrance. Now with the chastisement of the Kāzi, Śrī Gaurāṅga ended his Navadvīplā.

In the mean time keśava Bhāratī, an eminent Vaiṣṇava monk came to Navadvīp. Viśwambhar approached him and prayed for initiation to his order. Keśava Bhāratī agreed and fixed date for his initiation. His companions like Nityānanda, Gadādhara, Mukunda, Advaita and others were astonished hearing his decision. When Nimāi expressed his decision to his mother, her lamentation knew no bound. But Nimāi consoled his

mother. Then he informed Nityānanda that he would go to kātṡā to be initiated by keśava Bhāratī, another disciple of Mādhavendrapuri.

On the day of his initiation a barber shaved his head and then he took ceremonial bath in the Ganges and took his seat near his Guru. Keśava Bhāratī then initiated him to Gopāla mantra and named him as Śrī Kṛṣṇa caitanya. At that time Śrīkṛṣṇa Caitanya was only 24 years of his age.

After initiation Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya wanted to go to Vṛndāvan; but his companies thinking that the time was not suitable for the journey, guided him in a way to come back to Navadvīp. On roaming here and there they came to Śāntipur and thereafter at Navadvīp. At the appearance of Śrīkṛṣṇa Caitanya, the followers delighted and arranged Samkīrtan. A vast crowd including the mother Śacidevī assembled to share a sight of the ascetic (Sannyāsin Śrīkṛṣṇa Caitanya). Looking at the shaven head and the garb of her son, the mother could not control herself nor could speak anything. Śrī Caitanya bowed down to the feet of his mother who told him not to be so cruel to her like Viśvarūp.

Śrī Caitanya then expressed that it was not proper for an ascetic to reside in his birth-place. So he had to go to a new place for preaching his tenets. Mother Śacī suggested Nimāi to live at Nīlāchal (Puri) because according to her Nīlāchal is the next door of Navadvīp. People used to go

there and hence she could get news of her son. But before going Nīlāchal she directed her son Nimāi to go to Dākādakṣin in Śrīhaṭṭa to meet his grandmother Śobhādevī. Accordingly Śrī Caitanya again went to Śrīhaṭṭa. Arriving at Dākādakṣin he met with his grandmother Śobhādevī. At that time his grandfather Upendra Miśra was no more. There many devotees accepted his advice, prominent among them were Rāmdās, Mādhavdās, Jñānavar, Kalyānvar and others. At his grandmother's request Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu installed at Dākādakṣān his two images viz. two armed Śrīkrṣṇa playing Murulī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

From Dākādakṣin he went to Hājo in Assam to visit Hayagrīva Mādhava Temple and from Hājo he went upto Sadiyā to have a holy ablution in Paraśurām Kuṇḍa and Brahma Kuṇḍa. then he return to Hājo and stayed for some days at Hājo in a cave, now called Caitanya Gumphā and after that he started his return journey through East Bengal to Śāntipur and finally he started for Nīlāchal with Nityānanda, Dāmodar, Jagadānanda and Mukunda. On seeing the top of the Jagannāth temple of Puri from afar Śrī Caitanya was overwhelmed with joy; tears rolled down from his eyes in extreme devotion. He quickened his pace and rushed to the temple leaving his companions at the back. He ran to the Jagannāth temple to the astonishment of all present there. His beautiful appearance attracted everyone. Śrī Caitanya rushed like a bumble bee to embrace the

idol of Jagannāth; but fell in rapture. The temple priests apprehending violation of the sanctity of the deity lifted him in order to throw out elsewhere. But Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma came forward for his rescue. He with his attendants carried Śrī Caitanya to his residence. In the meanwhile, Nityānanda, Mukunda and other followers of Śrī Caitanya arrived at the temple and were shocked knowing the incident. They then approached the house of Sārvabhauma. Sārvabhauma, the Vedāntic Paṇḍit realised that the young ascetic was not an ordinary personality.

However, the meeting of Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma was a landmark in the Caitanyaism. Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma was an erudite Vedāntic scholar. He earned reputation in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and eventually settled at Puri. He enjoyed royal patronage and was in the good books of Gajapati Pratāparudra.

Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma was delighted to know his close relationship with the family of Śrī Caitanya, since Sārvabhauma's father was the classmate of Nīlāmbār Chakraborty. He had a great respect for Caitanya's father Jagannāth Miśra. However, Sārvabhauma wanted to teach Śrī Caitanya the Vedānta philosophy. Śrī Caitanya agreed to learn Vedānta from Sārvabhauma. The next day Sārvabhauma started teaching Śrī Caitanya the Vedānta philosophy telling him to listen attentively. Śrī Caitanya listened for long seven days without making any comment. On

the eighth day, Sārabhauma asked him whether he could follow anything. Śrī Caitanya replied that he could not understand anything. Sārabhauma said angrily that if he could not understand he should have asked. Now it was not possible on his part to repeat. Śrī Caitanya then said, ‘I understand very clearly the meaning of the Sūtras (aphorisms), but your explanation puzzles me. You do not explain the plain meaning of the Sūtras. In these Sūtras Vyāsa has plainly given the main tenets of the Upaniṣads. But your fanciful interpretations cover them up as you abandon the primary meaning of the text and ascribe secondary meaning to it. As a result, you discard the Abhidhāvṛti and interpret it with the help of Lakṣṇā. The meaning of Vyāsa’s Sūtras is as clear as the day light; but you have covered it up with your interpretation.’

Thereafter, Śrī Caitanya went on explaining the stanzas cited by Sārabhauma quoting various instances from vedas, Purānas and Upaniṣads. Vāsudeva Sārabhauma then adopted the logical method to interpret things, but Śrī Caitanya refuted them with his arguments. Thus Sārabhauma was defeated and sought his blessings. Śrī Gaurāṅga then quoted one stanza of the Bhāgavata as-

Ātmārāmaśca munayo

Nirgranthā apyurukrame |

Kurvantyahaikīm bhakti-

mitthambhūtaguṇo hariḥ ||⁶⁸

i.e. Devotion to God is the chief aim in life. Even the selfless and emancipated sages devote themselves to the service of the Lord Kṛṣṇa. Such is the marvel of the infinite merits of the Lord.

On being requested Sārvabhauma explained the nine meanings of the aforesaid verse. Thereafter, Mahāprabhu without uttering a single word on his interpretations rendered as many as eighteen explanations of the stanza. Sārvabhauma then realised that the young ascetic was none other than Kṛṣṇa Himself and fell down to his feet. Śrī Caitanya then assumed first as four-armed Viṣṇu and then as Kṛṣṇa playing on his flute.

People of Puri and other places in Orissa gradually realised the greatness of Śrī Caitanya. They also realised the power of Nāma Samkīrtan and became his devotees.

After staying at Puri for a few months, Śrī Caitanya decided to travel South India. He did not like to accompany him by any one to South India. But at last he agreed to accompany Kṛṣṇadās to South. Before his tour he paid his homage to Jagannāth. The temple priests offered him a garland of Jagannāth. At the time of his tour he sang Kīrtan on the way as-

Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!he |

Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!he |

Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! rakṣa mām |

Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!Pāhi mām ||

Rāma!Rāghava!Rāma!Rāghava!Rāma!Rāghava!Rakṣa mām |

Kṛṣṇa!Keśava!Kṛṣṇa!Keśava!Kṛṣṇa!Keśava!Pāhi mām ||

Seeing his dance and kīrtan on the way people got attracted to the handsome saint and began to Utter ‘Kṛṣṇa’ and ‘Haribal’. At the time of his departure Sārvabhauma requested him to meet Rāi Rāmānanda, the governor of Rājmahendra, a true Vaiṣṇava. Though he was discharging royal duties, there was none like him as true devotee in the world. Mahāprabhu had three and a half close devotees and they were Rāi Rāmānanda, Swarupadāmodar, Śikhimaiti and his sister Mādhavī Devī. As Mādhavī Devī was a woman, she was counted as a half. However, after crossing a long path, Śrī Gaurāṅga reached Rājmahendri on the bank of the Godāvarī. He took his holy ablution in the sacred water of the Godāvarī and engaged in Nāma Samkīrtan. At that very time Rai Rāmānanda came with a large group of Vedic Brahmins to take his bath in the water of the Godāvarī. While getting down in the water of the river

Godāvarī for a bath, Rāi Rāmānanda noticed a handsome monk chanting name. He instantly bowed down at the feet of the monk. Śrī Caitanya embraced him and asked him, ‘Are you Rai Rāmānanda?’ Rāi replied, ‘Muhi dās Śūdra adham’. i.e. ‘I am indeed that vile slave of a Śūdra’. Caitanya then embraced him firmly and rolled down on the ground in a mood of ecstasy pronouncing with a lisp the name of Kṛṣṇa.

In the evening Rāmānanda came to Caitanya and began to discuss in a solitary place. The discussion between Śrī Caitanya and Rāi Rāmānanda as recorded in the C.C. and C.B.a is a precise treatise in the history of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Śrī Caitanya asked questions one after another and Rāmānanda replied befittingly citing Bhagavadgītā, Viṣṇu purāṇa etc. In course of discussion Śrī Caitanya asked the extreme limit of Bhakti. Rāmānanda replied that ‘Prema’ was the best form of Bhakti and of all kinds of ‘Prema’ Rādhā’s prema for Kṛṣṇa is considered to be the highest.

Prabhu kahe ehottama āge kaha ār |

Rāy kahe kāntāprem sarvasādhyā sār ||

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Ihār madhye Rādhār prem sādhyāśiramani ||⁶⁹

Rāmānanda pointed out further and said that in order to attain Kṛṣṇa one should adopt the attitude of a Gopi and constantly meditate on the union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. On hearing this Śrī Caitanya embraced Rāmānanda in emotional ecstasy. Then he asked Rāmānanda to stay with him at Puri. When the discussion was over Śrī Caitanya revealed to Rāmānanda his true form in which were blended Kṛṣṇa the monarch of Rasa and Rādhā the extreme devotional sentiment.

Tave hāsi tare prabhu dekhāilā svarūp |

rasa rāj mahābhāv dui ekruṇ ||⁷⁰

Rāmānanda out of rapture bowed down at the feet of Mahāprabhu. Then he embraced Rāmānanda and said that he (Rāmānanda) should not disclose this to anyone. He advised Rāmānanda to give up the worldly life and spend the rest of his life at Puri with him.

Mahāprabhu then proceeded further towards south and after visiting different holy places he reached at Rāmeśwaram. There after he arrived at the house of Venkaṭabhaṭṭa in Śrīrangam within Tricināpalli. Staying in the house of Venkaṭabhaṭṭa for four months Śrī Caitanya performed Cāturmāsyavrata. Gopālabhaṭṭa Goswāmī, the son of Venkaṭabhaṭṭa was in his good blood. Incidentally he was one of the six

Goswāmīs of Vṛndāvan. However, in the Śrīrangam temple. Śrī Caitanya immersed the Tamil people with the name of Hari singing-

Hari haraye namaḥ Kṛṣṇa-Yādvāya namaḥ |

Yādavāya mādhavāya Keśavāya namaḥ ||

Śrī Caitanya again met with Rāi Rāmānanda at Vidyānagar. Here he offered two manuscripts viz. ‘Brahma Samhitā’ and ‘Kṛṣṇa-Karṇāmṛta’ to Rāmānanda and said that these two manuscripts reflect Rāmānanda’s philosophy.

Prabhu kahe,-tumi yei siddhānta kahile |

Ei dui puthi sei sav sākṣī dile ||⁷¹

Śrī Caitanya then returned to Puri with Rāmānanda after about one year. At that time Nityānanda and others sent Kṛṣṇa Das to Navadwip to inform Śacī of Śrī Caitanya’s safe return to Puri. When this news were communicated to śacī, Advaita and other followers were exceedingly happy. They decided to go to Puri to meet Śrī Catanya. They went to Puri a the time of Ratha-Yatrā festival to meet Śrī Caitanya and to participate in the festival. At the festival Mahāprabhu danced and sang the name of Hari before the Jaganātha’s chariot alongwith his followers of Navadwip. He also recited the eulogistic verses from the scriptures. In one verse

addressing to Śrī Jagannāth he expressed that he was not a Brahmin, nor a king, neither a vaiśya nor a śudra; he was not a celibate nor a householder, nor a Vānaprasthin nor an ascetic. But he was the slave of the lotus-feet of the Lord of the Gopis (Kṛṣṇa) who is the essence of the universal bliss.

During Jagannāth's stay at Guṇḍica Bāḍi for eight days, Śrī Caitanya used to dance and sing with his followers before the God which earned him popularity among the masses of Puri.

After two years of his return to Puri from South Śrī Caitanya then wished for a pilgrimage to Vṛndāvan. It was decided that he would start for his journey to Vṛndāvan on the Vijayādaśamī day. Accordingly Śrī Caitanya left Puri with a group of followers and reached at Śāntipur. He stayed there in the house of Advaitācārya. Mother Śacīdevī came there to see her son Śrī Caitanya. This was the last meeting of Śrī Caitanya with his mother. From there Śrī Caitanya proceeded towards Ramakeli. There he met two brothers viz. Sākara Mallik and Dabir Khās. They were the two high officials of Hussain Shah, the then Sultan of Gauḍa. Later on, they became famous as Sanātana Goswāmī and Rupa Goswāmī and established Gauḍīya vaiṣṇava school at Vṛndāvan. However, at Rāmakeli a vast crowd gathered round Śrī Caitanya.

The news of Śrī Caitanya's activities reached Sultan Hussain Shah. He was very much pleased with him and did not disturb his activities. But this time his journey to Vṛndāvan was not possible since the crowd of followers was so vast that Sanātana requested Śrī Caitanya to go back to Puri. So Śrī Caitanya returned to Puri and after staying there for four months, he again started for Vṛndāvan in autumn with a Brahmin attendant named Balabhadra Ācārya.

On his journey Śrī Caitanya did not follow the main road, rather he followed the hazardous path through Jhārrikhaṇḍa forest. But with the grace of Providence he overcame all the difficulties and gradually reached at Vārānasi. There he came in contact with Tapan Miśra, an original resident of East Bengal. Incidentally Tapan Miśra was former disciple of Śrī Caitanya. After staying at Vārānasi for ten days in the house of Tapan Miśra, Śrī Caitanya left for Mathurā through Allahabad. On his way to Vṛndāvan Śrī Caitanya rolled on the way several times out of excessive joy. At Vṛndāvan, Śrī Caitanya restored the hidden sportive places of Śrīkṛṣṇa. His first task at Vṛndāvan was to discover Rādhākuṇḍa and Śyāmakuṇḍa. He also paid his homage to Gopāla Kṛṣṇa on the summit of Govardhan hill. The people of Vṛndāvan and Mathurā could realise the divine power of Śrī Caitanya and assembled in large number for initiation. Śrī Caitanya's companions suggested him to leave

Vṛndāvan quickly otherwise his life might be in danger for his frequent trance. However, Śrī Caitanya reluctantly agreed to leave Vṛndāvan for prayāga. Being accompanied by Balabhadra Ācārya, Kṛṣṇa Dās and a Bengali Brahmin he started for Prayāga. On the way they took rest under a tree, but all on a sudden Śrī Caitanya fell into trance. His respiration seemed to be stopped. His attendants tried to regain his consciousness. In the mean while a group of ten Pāṭhān soldiers came there and thought them to be robbers who poisoned the handsome youngman in order to rob him of his belongings. Thinking thus the soldiers arrested the attendants. But suddenly Śrī Caitanya regained his senses and started dance chanting the name of Kṛṣṇa which struck the soliders with astonishment. They at once released his followers. Howeve, they paid respect to Śrī Caitanya and told him that he was poisoned by these robbers. Śrī Caitanya prevailed upon in such a manner that they finally became his ardent devotees. One of the conversts was renamed as Rām Dās. In the C.C. it is written as-

Tā-savāre kṛpā Kari prabhu ta calilā |

Sei ta pāṭhān sav vairāgī hailā ||

Pāṭhān vaiṣṇav vali haila tār khyāti |

Sarvatra gāiyā bule mahāprabhur kīrtti ||

Sei vijati khān haila mahābhāgavat |

Sarvatīrthe haila triār param mahattva ||⁷²

At Prayāga Śrī Caitanya met Śrīrūpa Goswāmī and taught him Abhidheya Bhaktitattva for ten days.

Kṛṣṇattva, Bhaktitattva, rasatattva-Prānta |

Sav Śikhāila prabhu bhāgavat-siddhānta ||

Thereafter, Śrī Caitanya instructed Rūpa Goswāmī to go to Vṛndāvan to preach his doctrine to people. Śrī Caitanya then reached Kāśī and met Sanātana Goswāmī and taught him Sādhyā-Sādhana tattva and Acintya-bhedābhed tattva. About the nature of Jīva, Śrī Caitanya taught Sanātana that-

‘Jīver svarup’ hay- Kṛṣṇer nityadās |

kṛṣṇer ‘tatastha-śakti’, bhedābhed-prakāś ||⁷³

This is popularly called Śrīsanātan śikṣā.

Thereafter, Śrī Caitanya directed Sanātana also to go to Vṛndāvan. Accordingly Sanātana went to Vṛndāvan with his nephew Śrījīva Goswāmī.

In Vārānasi Śrī Caitanya had to face a critical problem. The vedāntins of Vārānasi denounced the philosophy of Śrī Caitanya. They made out a plan and invited Śrī Caitanya at a conference, Śrī Caitanya accepted the invitation under the persuasion of his followers. In the conference prakāśānanda Saraswatī enquired why Śrī Caitanya did not study vedānta and why he resorted to emotionalism. In reply Śrī Caitanya said that he was very dull, so his preceptor advised him to recite constantly the name of Kṛṣṇa. but in the discussion he indicated the fault of Śankara's monistic philosophy. At this the monists could realise that he was not an ordinary ascetic. Many of them being convinced uttered the name of Kṛṣṇa. Prakāśānanda Saraswatī also at last accepting his defeat resorted to the feet of Śrī Caitanya. Five days after the meeting with Sannyāsins at Vārānasi, he left for Puri and arrived at thereafter in absence of about ten months. Since then he never left Puri. He lived there for rest of his life.

While sending the two brothers Rupa Goswāmī and Sanātana Goswāmī to Vṛndāvan, Śrī Caitanya instructed them to record his tenets for guidance to Vaiṣṇavas. Accordingly these two scholars and saintly persons composed in later years the fundamentals of Vaiṣṇava theology, philosophy and Rasaśāstra.

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in his C.C. records that when Śrī Caitanya came back to Puri from Vṛndāvan he was 36 years of his age. He passed his last 12 years in extreme devotional ecstasies like that of Rādhā. Lively and passionate conversation on Kṛṣṇa-līlā with Rāi Rāmānanda, Swarupa Dāmodar were dear to his heart. Sometimes, devotional songs and poems of Jayadeva, Caṇḍīdās and Vidyāpati were melodiously sung by him alongwith Swarupa Dāmodar and Rāi Rāmānanda.

Śrī Caitanya also enjoyed Swarūpa's lively reading of Śrīmadbhāgavata. But he maintained strict austerity cutting down his daily food which resulted in breakdown of his health. He used to sleep on the ribs of plantain leaves. However, Jagadānanda, one of his followers made a cotton mattress and a pillow for him but Śrī Caitanya did not accept the bed. At last his associates prepared a comfortable bed of plantain leaves.

Śrī Caitanya used to enjoy the moon-lit night in roaming different gardens. One night when roaming on the sea-shore he thought the sea as the river Yamunā and at once jumped into the water of the sea. He was carried towards Konārka at a high speed of the waves of the sea. His associates searched him here and there but could not find him anywhere. They thought that Śrī Caitanya disappeared for ever. However, on the way, they came across a fisherman who was shouting Hari, Hari in joy.

When asked the reason of his shouting Hari, Hari he said that he had caught one body in his net. Swarup Dāmodar and others at once rushed to the spot. They recognised that he was no other than their Master Caitanya. The Vaiṣṇavas then chanted the name of Kṛṣṇa. After sometime Śrī Caitanya regained his consciousness and related that he was enjoying the water sport of Kṛṣṇa.

As days passed by, devotional passion overtook Śrī Caitanya completely and he became incapable of taking care of himself. Swarūpa Dāmodar and Rāmānanda looked after him with loving care. But even then he came out and fell down in the temple gate like the shape of a tortoise shrinking all his limbs into the trunk. Or sometimes he was found lying near the main gate of Jagannāth temple stretching his body about 9 feet in length and each arm and leg about 4 ½ feet long.

In such a state of emotionalism one day Śrī Caitanya recited his self-composed eight verses popularly called Śīkṣāṣṭaka in Sanskrit and explained the significance of Nāma-māhātmya to Swarūpa Dāmodar and Rāmānanda. After this there is no account recorded anywhere about the life of Śrī Caitanya.

Mystery surrounds the manner in which the end came. Many stories are prevalent about his disappearance.

Some saw him going towards the ocean, another group saw him merging into the idol of Dārubrahma Jagannāth, again some other group saw him entering into the abode of Gopināth and thereafter he was traceless.

According to Vaiṣṇavas, Mahāprabhu is Bhagavān Parama Brahma Himself. Thereafter, he has no death. That is why, the author of C.B.a writes-

Adyāpio sei līlā Kare gaur rāy |

Kona kona bhāgyavān dekhīvāre pāy ||⁷⁴

c) Objective of the Study

Śrī Caitanya was one of the mystic saints of the medieval Bhakti cult of India. He was like an angel for the neglected and downtrodden masses of India. It is an established fact that Śrī Caitanya was the protagonist of the neo-Vaiṣṇavism and a redeemer of the troubled and suffering masses. He was the initiator of a new movement by means of a novel method of mass samkīrtana and thereby attracting people of all castes, sects and creed. Besides, he was an upholder of the cult of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa ushering in a new era in the religious history of India. The ideologies of the Bhakti movement viz. religious tolerance, non-violence, universal fellow feelings, social justice and last but not the least unalloyed devotion to Kṛṣṇa were

spread of Śrī Caitanya in the entire Eastern India by means of his socio-religious movement. These principles are essential to eradicate the present violence and intolerance which is going on the name of religion in India.

In my thesis entitled “Bhakti movement of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu study in contemporary perspective”. All these socio-religious aspects of Śrī Caitanya’s neo-Vaiṣṇavism in the entire Eastern India will be vividly reviewed.