

THE ONTOLOGY OF ŚARANĀGATI

Śaranāgati involves the choice of the path of surrender as against the path of struggle through fight or works, of discrimination and knowledge, of devotion and worship. Works (karma or dharma) have been inculcated in the scriptures and codified in various ways and involve the performances of sacrifices, yajñās, which may include the whole range ādhibhūta, ādhyātma and ādhidaiva. They require the preliminary fitness to perform them properly, a fact that has to be learnt how to do, secondly to whom these have to be performed in order to gain the desired results (phala) – ranging from the possession of son, wife, wealth, kingdom, and power and so on so as to include rich and opulent life in the other worlds after the decease of the body. Knowledge is again to be gained by study and this includes bearing the scriptures devoted to ultimate knowledge of oneself, meditation on them and meditation (*nidhidhyāsanam*) on the meaning so intuited till one becomes transformed or transcends the bonds of all limitation and has the vision of the Absolute and oneself in and of it. There are many theories but one this becomes clear the Divine Knowledge reveals the One Ultimate Being who is verily one's own self, of whom everything is in His body and who is All. One may claim identity with that, or dependence on that, or become His body in every sense within whom he indwells and in whom all indwell. Transcendental knowledge is the result. This too depends on one's capacity to listen, learn, think and meditate and gain that jñāna rising from the scriptural words (śabda or śruti – janya-jñāna). It is well known that firstly it is difficult to learn the Vedas then I think about it till it becomes transcendental Knowing or that which leads to transcendence or Reality. Devotion or Worship involves the experience of the Object as adorable, lovable, and the methodology of worship and adoring needed as in yoga dhyāna – has again to be learnt and practiced with assiduity and continuously in order to attain that Union with God which involves the knowing,

the seeing and the entering into the Divine Beloved as the Gītā says. (*jñāturn draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca pranatapa*).

It is held by some that since these three ways known as Karma – yoga and jñāna - yoga and bhakti – yoga are mentioned as each independently leading to the Divine Reality, there are three independent parts. But some thinkers hold that there is a hierarchy, karmayoga would lead to purity of the body and mind and become preparation for jñāna , which grants the śana) of God or Reality with which one becomes more and more devoted to exclusively as the very life and substances of oneself. And thus if karma gives sat, jñāna gives the cit, an bhakti gives ānanda: and since these three cannot but –exist or are indeed the Sam reality, going by the one, one gains the others or fruits of the other paths.

Thus ontologically the reality that is one has to be known and it is the business of the individual to know it, to love it, for it śeṣi sby it he lives and acts and loves and enjoys everything.

In a sense, karma yoga shows that one should seek everything through God and from God and from nobody else. By following the directions of the scriptures in respect of actions to be done and not to be done vidhi and niṣeda, not only becomes a pure doer. His knowledge of good and evil becomes more and more clear. Disinterestedness develops and there is a kind of joy and delight or pleasure in doing one's duty for God; and thus devotion to duty or bhakti itself become natural to man. So too the work of thinking about God leads to the joy of vision of oneself in God and God in an indissoluble unity or union or even utter mergence without independent name and form, with the mystery of mergence and mergence that grants one the play of Divine disunity or Māyā, or Līlā.

Devotion itself flows into activities which are divine, disinterested in the self – enjoyment but intended for the Divine Enjoyment and union which is essentially the culmination of that jñāna which is living and knowing and being in God, by God for God and so on.

The soul realises that though it started as distinct and even an 'I' as against the Other (Thou), it grew so much more intimate that the 'Thou' gradually inflexed and became identical with the 'I' and the 'I' began losing its self – conscious separation and distinction and even existence. It became its body and then the soul (Thou) of God. This mystery interchange in essence is transcendental alchemy of Being which *śeṣi* the supreme ecstasy of Rest or Ananda.

All these demand evolutionary development, environmental opportunity and above all spiritual ability of a very high order which even the ancient organization of castes (*varṇas*) *āśramas* could hardly fully provide. We know of derelicts in spirituality ossification and fossilization of practices-such failures innumerable.

The three yogas therefore seem to demand certain qualifications and finesses. They are designed for the purpose of offering a technique of procedure for attaining certain ends and goals, such as well-being here and hereafter; liberation here and hereafter, delight or spiritual bliss which is eternal and liberation and one's attainment of self – nature an perfection and fullness.

Man as a creature is dependent on God and His hierarchy for his well – being. the *śāstras* are the spiritual documents that give us knowledge and duty and also devotion to the Ultimate. Man's goes are *dharama*, *arhta* and *kāma* and *mokṣa* duty, wealth, pleasure or desire and liberation. Though the yogas are used for all these they are all subordinated to the realisation of liberation from the cycle of *samsāra*, of ignorance of death and birth, which seems to be the netgative attainment whilst the positive attainment of sense of being (*sat*), of Super – Intelligence – consciousness and Bliss are about as transcendental and different from our meanings and connotations as possible.

The *Śaraṇāgāyit* is sometimes called *Nyāsa –Yoga* Union that is attained through placing ones at the feet of God, by renouncing all or rather by placing all of them to be disposed off by God. This *Nyāsa – yoga* means giving or returning

to God all that one has because everything belongs really to Him, and one is said to one is said to have been holding all as His subordinate in trust. Renunciation which is said to be a necessity in practice of jñāna –renunciation of all works or duties – as in sannyasa – for the sake of devoting oneself to God alone and His meditation and attainment is now included under the general notion of Nyāsa – placing everything at the disposal of God, including one’s own body, life property wife and children if these too are of course willing, as also one’s dependents, disciples and so on. This is knowledge that God alone is the ruler and owner of all, is the Creator and Protector and Sustainer, and everything in this Universe belongs to Him and no one has a right to claim complete and independent ownership of anything when He comes. One of course awaits His coming and prays for it for the burden of carrying on alone this life, this property and this office is heavy. Therefore this placing oneself or returning all to God’s custody is felt to be the returning of the burden *bhara* to the real *bharta*, who really is sustaining or bearing the burden of creation (*sarvādhāra*) (*sarva* – *bhara*). Thus from the point of view of deliberate technique of returning the burden of one’s existence, being and all to God, *bhara – nyu* is a process that deepens on certain factors: firstly to whom to return? If it is said that it is to be returned to God, the material wealth etc., have to be transferred to somebody who can be taken as God. Thus we have the problem of practical ontology is God, the Guru, the Teacher? Or should we give it as such to the temple icon or Church or some such Samgha? This brings up problems of most delicate nature. All these above alternatives had been tried by this sect or that and so far as the individual himself is concerned it had not always or for any length of time worked.

God has been taken to be in certain religions (āgamas) as fivefold: As transcendent Reality- the One without a Second, He himself manifests Himself in four forms (vyūhas) each with a distinctive function of creation, sustention and destruction, and transcendence. He himself manifests or descends as the Self in the Heart of all seekers or devotees as their inner Ruler immortal, (*hārda*). He himself descends as the Historical Avatar in manifold ways to establish righteousness and remove unrighteousness and this is done also for saving form

destruction his devotees and the good and destroying the wicked. Finally He is said to be capable of descending into Icons, (made of wood or metal or stone) which can be the abodes of God to whom one could go and offer service (karma of kainkarya), whom one could meditate on (dhyāna) or worship with love and devotion(bhakti). Many writers hold that this last can be the person to whom one could offer all of oneself, and thereafter be His only. This I rendered possibly by the institution of the temple in which all types of yoga, are possible and therefore one can grow in spirituality through service meditation and devotion: the temple, whether at whom or society, (Church or others had later made this icon take several form as symbols of God etc or the Guru who was claimed to represent or be a substitute for God). Thus Bharanyāsa is a kind of yoga which assists the fuller development of the ontological status and realisation of the soul as utterly recognizing the Ruler ship of God and therefore of one's total dāsyatva (slavehood) to Him alone. But in actual practice it entails the slave hood to all those delegated by Him or who claim that delegation to them. Thus the divine – right theory has come about bringing about as much distress and disgrace to spirituality as can be imagined or which was not even imagined by the founders and prophets of religion. There is needed a concrete situation where renunciation of goods and life could take place and the person to whom one surrenders must be one who could take care of the individual wholly and for ever. One surrenders all in return for the care that one is getting. This principle of bhara – nyāsa, is exalted by those who find that this relieves them from all burden-and one is said to become fearless about one's own future and present. Such a kind of bharasamarpana or Nyāsa : is capable of being the instrument of limb of the toehr yugas also, and by itself it may well integrate the other yogas because of the basic realisation that all belongs to God and so one is but restored to one's real nature as the servant, salve or body of God in every sense of the term. This may well be called self – offering, not something compelled but freed realized, and involving the act of waiting on God who is the Truth and the way and Bliss. He is the One Substance, One Life, One reality the source and sustenance of all that exists.

Bhara – Nyāsa however must be seen to be different from Śaraṇāgati. Though those who seek refuge may also surrender, yet one who seeks refuge in God does not realize the truth that one is but retiring to God and that which belongs to Him, or that one is transferring one's burden to God because of inability to do the work allotted him. as we have stated there is the fact of crisis, of dread of moral fear, which reduce the individual to a total condition of physical and moral and or spiritual collapse. One's fitness does not count: one's unfittedness also corns and instigates this surrender, this falling at the feet of gone or saviour. It may be for the great crisis of spiritual feat of bondage to the wheel of birth and death: it may be the day to day ciriss of having to choose between right and wrong, to be or not to be, to have or to have-not, to obey or not to obey removal power, and so on . such ethical crises or conflicts are affairs that may be taken seriously or not according to the sensitivity of the individual, his self – reliance to solve them to take decisions or his inability to do so, engulfed by doubt and dimmed in his vision. Crisis of wealth and honor wife and children health and stability do not lead one to bhara – Nyāsa straight away because that demand knowledge of the nature of God and man. Here there is no such knowledge: it is the impulse for escape and refuge, may be with an intention to get back what one has been forced to lose, there is in the back of them in the yearning for restoration to one's own nature, even when one during his Śaraṇāgati does all renunciation or is made to renounce them.

The search for a saviour is very much like the attempts of the animal which likes to escape from its danger or suffering. One runs from one end to the other, from one apparent route of escape t another, even as we find one rushing form one doctor to another. Sometimes there is time, sometimes hardly any. So first seen first sought. Thus till we find him who can save. Saviors range from the immediate rescuer to the final reliever of all dear till all fear is abolished and one finds security, so we find men women and children in all walks of life going on a pilgrimage so to speak to all places of worship, to all persons who are known to have given relief to some or at least well known to have given relief to some or at least well known as such, to all denominations of teachers till one finds the final

haven of security or Guru of final emancipation. Till then like the fabulous bird Kākāsura one moves from one individual to another (well known as saviors) till he reaches the Avatar, who removes all fear, though he is punished for transgression in a merciful way. Similarly the individual borne down by fear of punishment due to sinful conduct, though he might be saved by God Himself, yet has to undergo the punishment in some wilder way - as no sin can completely escape from punishment in the natural course framed by God Himself.

Thus the saviors are many, but for the Ultimate Liberation there is only the One Absolute Deity for one and all. That is why the ancient ṛṣis proclaimed Him as the summum bonum Nārāyaṇa – connotatively – the path of all Men, seekers after liberation from all sorrow, the refuge of all creatures. Thus God is known as the Path, the Goal of all – and one to whom alone therefore all should surrender in whom alone there is refuge for all (Śaraṇyam). Hence the most important Speech of Surrender (namaukti) is “I surrender to Nārāyaṇa). all gurus and saviors are but delegates of the One Divine Saviour. He is thus the Ultimate Refuge and the only refuge. It is clear that this Speech of Surrender, the act of seeking refuge in God alone in the act of utter helplessness both in respect of means and person. The mystic belief and faith is that God – the Invisible Ruler and Savior becomes or makes some advanced soul to take up the work of training the soul in the further path of righteousness, till finally the fulfils all the conditions of total surrender and becomes fit for higher and purer knowledge and devotion and works. There are indeed cases when even in death were to supervene the guide would lead the soul upward and onward without leaving him for a while till the Ultimate condition is attained, if indeed the soul has sought that condition.

On the path of Śaraṇāgati, for the ŚaraṇYāmuna there is only before him the goal of been saved and only God (Guru) who leads him. other factors do not enter into the picture of his experience. the world is what he is fleeing from is a snare and a web or a darkness or a wheel of misery or a delusion.

The concept of God as the Ultimate Haven of Refuge and Saviour also according to some of the leading mystics of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism includes the acceptance of the Divine Mother known as Śrī, who is inseparably present with Divinity. She is said to typify the link between the individual who seeks the Ultimate Being and the Ultimate Being. The most important part played by this seasonality is to play a part very much similar if not identical with that of the teacher who mediates, and granting refuge finally takes the seeker to the direct presence of the Divine and the infinite. Thus one is in seeking liberation or mokṣa asked to surrender also to this supreme Mother so that she could mediate or bring about the *samyoga sambandha* with the Divine. It is clear from the hierarchy that this mediator is perhaps necessary for almost all types of succor or help: with respect to the world affairs, in crises of wealth, power, desire and wants pleasures etc, the mother called Bhū-devi or the Earth Mother, in respect of the transcendental wealth She is called Lakṣmī and in respect of sheer grace that takes one beyond all She is called Nīḷa (Dark Lady). These three are verily the forms of the Śrī, the mother who links the individual soul with the Ultimate Nārāyaṇa. Thus in offering surrender to the Ultimate, the sages of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism have offered the mantra of double surrender – surrender to both the Mother and Lord, ‘ I surrender to Lord and Mother’s feet to the Divine Couple Nārāyaṇa. “This clearly enunciates the profound meaning underlying the ontological hierarchy – the eternal twin – personality of God as Goal and as Parat (Guide) and Link. This is symbolically enunciated by the expansion of the Praṇava (Om) into A (the – Lord), U (the Mother) and M (the soul) which are inseparably to be uttered together as OM. Thus the expansion of the AUM is contained in the Root – Mantra (OM NAMO NārāYANĀYA) and in the expanded Dvaya. (Twin) (Srimannārāyaṇa caraṇau śaraṇam prapadey Śrīmate Nārāyaṇāya).

All this is explained by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his final or concluding advice to Sri Arjuna in the Gītā “*Sarvadharmān parityajya mam ekam śaraṇam vraja I aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyami Māsucah!* Surrender or Renouncing all dharma (duties) ME alone seek as refuge. I shall liberate you from all sin. Do not grieve. A deeper level of understanding may but to make over all dharmas and

their results to God and act as God's instrument of all things. Thus all activities are to be done as sacrifice to God)by the Principle of *viniyoga prathaktva* that is to substitute the result or method from its ordinary end to another or the higher).

Whatever may be considered to be the interpretation, whether the final verse inculcates the principle of *śaraṇāgati* for removing distress about the results of our duties (as it appeared to be the case of Arjuna) or to remove sin-as a propitiation of a sinful act *prāyaścitta*, it is clear that the realization of the reveals a conscious necessity to do this act of surrender when doing any and every duty as it is almost equivalent to the stop known is *ānukūla-samkalpa*, willing the helpful act.

Thus the ontology of *śaraṇāgati* involves as the *Gītā* says the acceptance of God as the Ultimate Being (as represented by the Avatar or *ācārya*) in one's spiritual life, and as the person to whom one should surrender completely renouncing all duties in an integral sense – theory performance being considered to be done by Him, their results being that of the Divine alone. And thus one gets utterly saved from the sins of omission and commission. This *śeṣi* the only *prāyaścitta* that one has to perform to render unto God all that is God's the sense of agency sense of enjoyer of results, and feel oneself as the supreme instrument (*nimitta*) and *śarīra* (body) of God, whose inner ruler immortal he is.

Thus in the *Gītā* at any rate we do not have the specific mention of the *Śrī* - the inseparable spouse of God who incarnates with Him in all his statuses and descends as *Yāmunācārya* states *yanyanyāni yathāsukham vihārate rupāṅ| sarvāṅ| tāni*.