

ŚARANĀGATI – CERTAIN QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS

The most important point of interpretation in respect of this doctrine of Śaraṇāgati arises from those who would interpret the texts rather than practice the surrender to God and pursue it to its logical and final culmination.

The Śrī Vaiṣṇavism have held that the great verse in the Gītā which is said to be the final (*carama*) śloka is authoritative in this matter of what one ought to do.

“Svarvadharma parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja”

renouncing all dharmas seek refuge in Me alone. The renouncing seems to precede as a condition of the refuge. “All dharmas” refers to every kind of dharma, *sva-dharma*, *loka-dharma*, dharma in respect to nature, self and gods (*ādhibhautika*, *ādhyātmika*, and *ādhidivika*) or dharmas prescribed in the codes for the several *varṇas* and the different *āśramas*. Thus this is an omnibus and omnipervasive renunciation.

The renunciation of all dharmas however appears to be too sweeping for most persons but it would appear to be so only when the individual is in no crisis of helplessness. In the absolute or real condition of helplessness one is indeed prone to throw overboard all duties before the pressing duty or obligation or necessity to save oneself. In fact life itself does not appear to be something which has to be preserved. Casting away all duties one chooses the necessity. The necessity is to be saved from all sins – sins of omission and commission of non-duties. Sin being primary, one is asked to give up all duties other than that which prevents one from being saved or from undertaking measures to get saved. God dependence becomes an imperative of being which is much more than life.

It is well – known that there is an ethics of danger (*āpaddarma*) which counsels that one must throw to the winds all duties or obligations to utter

truth and so on in conditions of danger to life, dangers to life, dangers to honour, dangers to love, and dangers to property or wealth and power. This undoubtedly is specious advice and counsel. This charter for license and falsehood is at the basis based on the necessity to preserve wealth, honour, power, and life which are considered to be necessary for man's ordinary or common existence. Its principle is of course at the back of the alive of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to give up all dharmas but it is shown also that the goal of man is not the preservation of wealth, power, honor, or life but the immortal existence of being free from sin and all other processes that bring it confusion, attachment and death. If the condition is to be beyond the delusion of hour etc, and if one wills to attain the supreme status of the Divine – of supreme śanti (peace), then all lesser duties and obligations have to be surrendered in full. It is in fact the affirmation of the supreme necessity to be free from sin – all sine (*sarva – pāpa*).

God indeed promises to grant relief and make one swiftly or speedily a dharmātma (a self established in dharma or real dharma) once a person undertake the path of devotion and surrenders at the beginning itself. This does not mean that one goes beyond all God and evil, and acts without any reference to the good and but it does mean that one acts through the will and power of an in all things for whom evil is impossible and though to man it , appears to be evil it being so is a matter of doubt. Human predication or judgments of evil and good are of the social order rather than the evolutionary spiritual order. The dimensions of spirituality are not social nor can they be equated with it. Similarly the dimension of spirituality are not even humanistic but moving towards the liberation of the spiritual and the divine in man and all,. Surrender to a little extent and not wholly will not project the being into the spiritual.

The Śrī Vaiṣṇavism conception of Nyāsa or tyāga is valuable in so far as it significantly brings out the fact that all our conceptions of what is duty or what is not or what is contrary to it are bound to be limited by the consciousness which we bring to bear on these distinctions. The divine consciousness must be made to revalue these duties or distinctions between

the dharma, adharma and vikarma. (vi-dharma), and lead the individual to the spontaneous performance of divine duty (*divya – karma*) as a necessity for his being and emancipation. It does not mean that the dharmas are give up utterly but only that they are resolved into spiritual functions of kainkarya of God and lose the force of external imperatives or inner commands but spontaneous expressions of the divine activity. As Śrī Rāmānuja is said to have stated once when some persons spite about the violations of duty or behavior of some of his followers – the *prappannas*-they could not have done them but if they indeed have done them they verily done them for welfare (spiritual welfare). This does not mean however that whatever is done by the *prpanna* or divine peruses is good in the ordinary sense of the humanistic term but that all that is done by them verily produce the ultimate good.

The renunciation of dharmas means ultimately placing all dharmas under the sovereignty of God or at His feet so to speak and await His will – this is the primary and basic ānukūla – samkalpa from which all else follows. It is also ātma - nikṣepa and viśvāsa and goptṛtva - varaṇa: self – offering or placing, faith and choice of the highest protector, and the best.

2.. There has been another continuing mistake on the part of those who surrendered. It is claimed that even this surrender is something that the ācārya or God Himself must do as one is entirely dependent on Him, and has no independence. This doubt is fantastic metaphysics. In being asked to surrender or renounce or seek God or do any dirty or in fact any command there is the implication of freedom to do or therwise. At the level of man, his ego becomes very clear and freedom is granted to sin or not to sin, to emancipate oneself or to become a bond soul. The crisis it is which again impels activity of this kind. kārpaṇYāmuna becomes a necessity, for it is waiting on a shock which awakens man from his 'dogmatic slumber' which makes him throw all the blame or burden of decision on someday else albeit God. This is the psychological truth which is indeed much more important for higher evolution or liberation than the metaphysical dogma of God's responsibility for all man's ills, and hence His responsibility also to save. This is an argument or peal for slothfulness. Btu when fire enters into ones soul, all

sloth becomes burnt up and one seeks the Divine Refuge. Misery waiting an dread – has been a shock to slovenliness which brings it not being the urgency and imperativeness to awaken and seek refuge. May be misery, shock, is God's own gift to man to make him awaken from his slumber and arouse him to the sense of danger. It is not always however that we have a divinity – produced gift of schlock or misery etc: but all such shocks could have the power to awaken man to his lot and prod him to seek solutions to his problems of being.

to seek God's refuge and not any other is perhaps the best advice and none other, for the others may well grant an illusory solution with deepening threats to being and all. One may walk from frying pan into the fire as the saying gods.

God's grace is stated to be spontaneously generated by His love for the creatures in suffering and worms independently of even the cries of anguish but does not wait on these cries. But the cry must be for God's spiritual and final help, for liberation and ultimate beatitude and service of God alone and not for any thing lesser, nor could it be invoked when the suffering is the consequence of sin itself as a punishment of the crime, divinely ordained as the necessity for the maintenance of cosmic justice or order. Thus once the punishment is enjoyed, the divine grace operates for liberation of man from the causes that produce crimes and sins and determine their fruitarians.

Man's sufferings must be understood as results of former sins, which he cannot but suffer. God's grace operates almost immediately for producing higher levels of awareness which firstly made one realise the sinfulness of the past and the possibility of sinlessness in the future, under his direct grace.

To bring man to God is the ācārya's great work, that of the Śrī or Divine Mother herself who is the incarnate day Śrī of mercy. Surrender is to God's grace or Śrī and God Himself and it is this operation that produces the concept go God's vātsalya – maternal feeling.

3. There is a theory or dogma of course very coarse and gross which would play on this concept of Vātsalya of God, by a play on the meaning of the term vatsa which means also the calf. God's love to man is like that of the cow to its calf. From this analogy it is explained that the cow licks the dirt of the calf and delights intensely so God delights in removing the sins of the soul which seeks refuge in Him or spontaneously and of His own account does it. The extension of this undoubtedly divine love activity to say that God delights in the act of sin – licking or removing and as such the calf must provide this substance or occasion for God by committing or continue to do so is atrocious, but nonetheless there.

from this to the other equally atrocious dogma that since no man has a sense of guilt inborn or native to his experience to have this sense of guilt and sin one has to perform a few acts of sin and then he can have the real sense of guilt gaining what we may call the 'wages of sin'. After this experience of punishment of sin what guilty conscience one could naturally run to the refuge of God. This realistic enactment of the drama of sin and śaraṅāgati is pretty bad, though it stages the normal procedure of all those who seek refuge. That one should sine or ought to in order to get saved is a pernicious precept it is. This dogma is said to be the cardinal tenet of Rasputinian Christianity. But variants of this are not all wanting in other climates of casuistry and sensuality or rationalization of it.

The excellent attributes of God, His divine compassion, His incite consideration of for the freedom and volition of the soul for the dust or divinity, are all essential to His glory. The śaraṅa-the refugee becomes soon one who has found a refuge that can protect him from all and yet take him to the mansions of the Divine and the Ultimate Being. thus the man who crouched and cringed becomes a fearless one.

As Rāmā states that

Sakṛdeva prapannāya tavāsmiit yācate

Abhayam sarvabhūtebhyo dadāmi etat vratam mama./

Even if one seeks my refuge once, him do I save from all elements and creatures. This is my Vow.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa states that

Sarvadharmān parityajya, mām ekam śaraṇasm vraja
Aham tvā sarvpāpebhyo moksyiṣyāmi Mā Sucah/

Renouncing all dharma seek refuge in Me alone
I shall release you from all sins. Do not Grieve

We have here two important elements of the results of Surrender even if only once made or as some state only once made (needing no second surrender lest it should mean that one does not have faith) namely fearlessness from all elements (Nature) and secondly freedom from all sins and their resulting consequences.

Such is the purpose of the surrender and such the result. But the higher development so path of surrender are divine evolution and utter company of the divine and supreme felicity of attainment of the Transcendent state without break or diminution a timeless experience which is only for those who are made or Brahman and His consciousness (brhma – kalpa).

Thus Surrender becomes the sole path through facilitating the results of the other yogas and sustaining them and finally transcending them. It is thus the path of Singleness *Ekayana*.

Only those – indeed all those – who seek the Ultimate and the Utter Transcendent alone are fit for its final culmination. To others seeking lesser relief too it offers a divine intercession that turns our little ends towards ultimate beatitude and transcend attainment.

4.. There is yet another view which holds that self – surrender is not necessarily to be performed by the individual but can be performed by somebody else. The surrender is done in proxy so to speak and the benefit goes to the person who has been surrendered in proxy. Thus there are cases where the individual is not aware that he has been served by proxy.

Thus Śrī Rāmānuja is said to have surrendered all human being, if not only the Śrī Vaiṣṇavism and therefore there is no need for any one to perform self – surrender., God of all consideration for the self – surrender and proxy surrender by Śrī Rāmānuja grants all felicity and freedom as if the individual had themselves done it. This of course shows the great heart of compassion ofsr Rāmānuja, but it takes away the significance of conscious and conscientious surrender. The most important fact about surrender is that though Śrī Rāmānuja might hve performed it, on knowing about this the individual seeker ought to perform the surrender out of gratitude to Śrī Rāmānuja. Perhaps it may be enough to surrender to Śrī Rāmānuja but this is an act of faith at least as far as the supreme Śrī Rāmānuja has departed from the world of men. It presumes that Śrī Rāmānuja yet exists terrestrially in some form till the final pralaya or withdrawal takes place. This is of course quite a necessary and common indeed belief among all religions which depend on the surrender of the Ācārya and by him to God on behalf of all mankind or rather those who embrace the religious dogma propounded by that respective ācārya. This common enough belief also emphasizes human belief in the eternal or quasi eternal existence of and presence of the ācārya. The believer has but to keep the idea, and image of the Ācārya in his heart and all things are said to follow naturally. From the cradle to the grave the Ācārya takes care of the infant who is born within the fold.

This view as pointed out emphasizes the very important role played by the first āfārya or the fonder of sect, or religion, and not so much the last of the ācāryas of the individual, though its is not omitted or altogether minimised. The proxy – theory of surrender would perhaps be admitted when the individual himself I incapable of saving or surrendering himself either by word or deed. Thus the dumb and the deaf and the idot the animals etc., in distress could hardly be in a condition to surrender to the Divine. An ācārya could then it is presumed plead for them by surrendering himself. He could offer them or their burden to God by naming hem as His, and by putting sings (of cakra or others) on their bodies by branding and etc., His faith is that God will accept heir burden. All creature, whether gods or men or animals, have the path of surrender open to them for attaining their own salvation and ultimate freedom.

The catholicity of this view as well as its universal application are admirable in idealism. However if highest evolution is to happen it takes place in gradual stages and hence the salvation or liberation seems to be not the highest but some what a lower one. However radical thinkers hold that since nothing is impossible to God qua God it is not impossible for God to grant liberation to any creature however low in evolution. Insects and worms too are entitled to liberation through the path of surrender. So much so that Āḷvārs is not afraid of being anything, provided he is in the proximity of God (Kulaśekhara expresses this sentiment fully). The entire philosophy behind the practices in the temple culture is based on its opening out the portals of śaraṇāgati to Āḷvārs creatures whatever the level of evolution. All are invited to the service of God; cows, bulls, horses, elephants and so on and all are helped to attain their liberation by being adopted as children of God. The domestication of the wild animals also is signally effected by their being (through three types) made vehicles of God or Goddess force. Such are the vehicle of Lion, tiger, Garuda, Hanumān, peacock and so on. All the taming of the lower level creatures is done through their being offered to God. The psychological explanation that man in fact recapitulates all evolution and thus displays all the bestial forms of emotions and conduct is by no means denied but only reformulated in terms of the practical process undertaken in and by self surrender both direct and by proxy or by training for domesticity of the higher God consciousness. But all these are further steps after the surrender which is complied. The question is whether self – surrender is to be voluntary or compulsory, though it may be that no one really surrenders unless he is forced to surrender by the pressure of events resulting in total helplessness (KārpaṇYāmuna). With all good intentions such compulsory surrender forced on any one might lead to psychological twists which produce instead of obedience to God and surrender revolt and antipathy to one's own welfare.

Such tragic results even of the best-intentioned disciplines could show how difficult it is to walk the path of self – surrender of śaraṇāgati. But once it is embraced with full awareness of its imperative need in crisis of being (existence), there is nothing like it for it leads to the natural evolutionary

unfoldment of divine nature in oneself and helps attainment in the speediest manner and within the shortest time the ultimate realisation.

5 The question of questions is whether one can attain the divine liberation at once, that is to say whether it can or does happen immediately after the surrender is made. Since time is said to be an important element in realisation and one is expected to wait for the result to happen long after the performance of surrender, this becomes an important question.

Advaita has solved this by its theory of jiva mukti, liberation even within this body, no sooner than the illumination occurs out of the śāstra – jñāna . however Viśiṣṭādvaita holds that all final liberation or the only liberation so to speak happens after departing from this body. This known as videha – mukti; this of course is said to be the final samādhi or mahāsamādhi by the former thinkers, Sadyomukti is immediate release from the body and all karma, without any interval between the performance of the surrender and the result. It is claimed to be a possibility. God in His infinite compassion can grant instantaneous liberation. This is conditional on that fervent desire or yearning for the ultimate status of God union or God merger of the part of the individual seeker. The soul should feel that it cannot exist apart from the Para or transcendent and Primal state or being of God and is not satisfied with experience of the arcā or hārda or vibhava or even the vyūha forms of God. Such a dedication to the transcendent Being is the sole condition so this attainment or gift of God. So long a soul is charmed with the Arcā as in the temple lover, or charmed with the hārda as in the case of the yogi-antaryāmi – yogi-or so long as one is entranced with the beauty of the avatar or so long as one is engrossed in the admiration of the cosmic deity in his cosmic functions of creation, sustention and destruction or pravṛtiti and nivṛtiti, and sthiti, that long will he remain in the created worlds and bodies and though enjoying the bliss of Brahman would yet go through the sorrows of the created world. One may participate in the workings of the creation with God. This too is beauty and admiration and enjoyment of beauty (sundaram). However liberation and experience of the transcendent Primal beauty are beyond all our experience of all kinds.

Rare indeed are such souls which yearn for this supreme gift of God for them sadyomukti has a meaning and significance and to neon other