

BASIC ATTITUDE IN RELIGION

Hindusim – traditional view *

INTRODUCTION

Man is considered to be tripartite, both in respect of his svarupa-having cit, and sat and anada, and in respect of his body-having rajas, sattva and tamas corresponding to the spiritual nature. These three determine the three fold approach to the Divine or Godhead or the Absolute. May be since the Divine has also the three foldness of sac-cid-ananda, the three approaches are also we find that threefold approach to the Divine triune is counseled.

But ordinarily the approaches are claimed to be independent of one another. Thus there are differences of opinion as to the superiority of one approach over the other. However, in the larger context of human aptitudes to one approach rather than the others, it is clear that a general theory has been propounded that whatever the kind of approach the result is the same- even as some have held that “all roads lead to Rome when Rome is the Center from which all roads radiate.” Or in the earlier version- ‘in whatever way one approaches me in that way do I grant him his fulfillment’ (B.G.7.21). But we know that this last has been subjected themselves, perversions in religious practices themselves, so much so, that the Lord in the Gita had to add the adjective – *avidhipurvakam*-- if the means is unconcealed then the results are also not in the normal way attained. Nor may they be normal, e.g. the way of devotion practiced by the famous or notorious enemies of God is constant remembrance of God through fear, enmity, jealousy, - the well known ari-sad-varga, kama, krodha, moha, lobha, mada and matsarya, Ravana, Hiranyakasipu, Sisupala etc.

Religion is considered to be a means to spiritual union and not merely ‘experience’ of the Deity. Spiritual Union or Yoga or sayujya, is the goal of all seekers for it is said to be equivalent to or synonymous with liberation (moksa). Hinduism definitely seeks God for the sake of liberation from samsara bandha and not for the

sake of God himself or merely for experience thereof (anubhava). This is the basic difference between western religions and Hindu -- oriented religions like Buddhism and Jainism.

The religious means were considered in the three- fold way :

i. Through right works (performance of dharma)

ii. Through right knowledge (para-jnana) –

Through right devotion (para – bhakti)

and this corresponds to the three levels of man's

make up, his kartrva, his jnatrva and his bhogyatava

and or bhoktrva

We find that the Buddhist teachers have in the main followed this in their eightfold methods of attaining the cessation of the causes that lead to rebirth. The emphasis on the 'rightness' is important , for rightness is

c.f. Dr. S.Radha Krishnan's view that Experience is more important and has been held to be more important than God Himself *Western Thought : chap on the Unborn Soul.*

precisely defined as that which tends to break the chain of causation that leads to rebirth of transmigration of bondage or samsara

KARMAYOGA

It was the view of the ancient thinkers that all works (karma) do not lead to union with reality or the Delity. Only those with reality or the could be considered to do be right. This view prevailed throughout Hinduism which had accepted the existence of the Deity or the Brahman , considered as the two ultimate of the relative and the Ultimate.

Such works were known as dharma which means right action, or action which is capable yielding the fruits of Brahma-sayujya.

(It is not wrong to affirm that Buddha realised the importance of the importance of this adjective- - right - as that which leads to release or nirvana from the fruits of karma. Further if the euphony between karma and karma is borne in mind we can see how all karma other than that which is kama or is akama is dharma. Karma binds normally but karma which is performed according to the law of release or liberation or according to the knowledge that all that is Brahman's does not bind. Akarma is usually translated as jnana just as avidya is translated as karma of Sankara and Ramanuja on the Isa . 9)

Traditionally it was well known that dharma or action as duties performed to unite oneself with the Deity and His creation lead to union and liberation.

Dharma has been explained as the discharge of one's duty or one's debts to (i) God, the creator sustainer –etc of the world (ii) to Gods who are the power in charge of the functions of the world , (iii) to the Pitrs -- ancestors who continue to maintain the progeny or continuity of creation, (iv) atithi (guests) (v) bhutas - the elemental powers of Nature or elements that constitute the world of Nature or prakriti. Yajnas are said to be dharmas- duties or debts that one owes to God and Nature. Panca - mahayajnas are raised to the level of rnas- sacred debts.

Dharma as svadharma or actions which belong to one's nature (svarupa) are the second sort and this kind of dharma is something that arises not out of the debt-idea to God and Nature but out of the knowledge of one's own nature from which functions manifest inevitably. As a self by nature has kartrva, action- performing faculty it has to do such activities which issue from that nature.

Here we are facing the real problem of the metaphysical nature of the individual soul.

- i. If the soul is pure atman or cit alone then its functions regarding its body cannot be its. It has no other function except to be a saksi or spectator.
- ii. If the self is social being it has some varna or caste- function colour – function, white, or red or black or variegated or Brahmana, Ksatriya, vaisya or sudra. Or any other variant of this.
- iii. As young , middle aged or old, or student bachelor , married man or householder or renouncer and so one-of ashrama.

Permutation and combination of these threefold or fourfold categories have provided the dharma- sastras with all kinds of casuistry or apologetics. But if the main idea is kept in mind the spiritual aspect alone is valuable. - Therefore the consensus has been that the varna-ashrama duties can have a determining influence on an individual's conduct on the path of liberation so long as the spiritual awakening about one's spiritual nature has not happened. One that is awakened- and that is the purpose of true religion or spirituality – the karmas or dharmas are of little consequence, though one goes on doing them habitually in order not to provoke social tensions.

It could be seen that karma yoga necessarily means dharmas- yoga and it has to be done without weighing the consequences or fruits good or bad that might follow upon the doing of duty. Real liberation is seen to be the liberation from fear of consequences in doing one's duty, and the highest duty is not the lower duties but the greatest duty to realise one's unity with God. May be the doing of duty in a selfness manner without seeking fruits or even thinking of them pleases God and hastens one's attainment of sayujya and moksa. But the ancients also knew that many of the dharmas were linked up with fruits by some and have been phala- srutis to grant incentive to their performance and this has lowered their power to lead to Moksa and Sayujya.

Śrī Krishna has beautifully summarized this aspect of karmayoga as anasaktai yoga- work done in dedicated spirit to God and as *divya-karma*

There is a traditional opinion among some that karmayoga is a preparation for jnana- yoga since it acts as a purifier and prepares the individual. In other words it creates adhikara for jnanayoga. Perhaps this view arose out of the interdependence of the two purvamimamsas – the purva- mimamsa which deals with dharmas – karma and which leads to the brahma- jnana expounded in the Uttara Mimamsa. Later on it must have sufficed for some who in yearning for jnana seek the results which would entitle a person to be fit for anitya-viveka, uparati titiksa and so on of the sadhana - sampatti. However it has been held that Karma-yoga by itself can lead to Union with God, though – this may be different from the union achieved through the other yogas even as Madhva school inclines to regarding the ananda – taratamya- concept which has been limited to the experience of union of each individual with the Deity. Its truth seems to lie in the differences of union experience (sayujyata) through the different yogas.

JNANA – YOGA

The union through knowledge has to take into consideration not the epistemological situation as such. Is the knowledge of Deity or the Absolute of the same order as of things (visayas)? On the basis of recognition that Sruti or the Veda alone can give the entire effort has been to know the nature of the Deity through the hearing (sravana) study (manana) and dhyana or meditation or upasana or nidhidhyasana of the Vedic truths, and methods. There are different schools in this regard ; there is one school that holds that the Sruti teaches knowledge which is the *opposite* to the knowledge received through perception and inference etc. Verifiability is impossible through the lower instruments of knowledge such as senses and mind. The deity- cognition can arise only through meditation on the supreme truths of the Upanisads such as *Ekam sat : Ekamevadvitiya. Tat tvam asi, and So' hamasmi or Brahmasmi*. The supra- intuition arising out of the meditation on these crucial sentences leads to the glimpse of the Brahman or the Deity and finally absorption or laya or ekibhava or samadhi and thereon leads to final liberation. This is also Brahma -- nirvana-- the changeless condition of Brahman. This obviously does not need any other help but

jnana anubhava of the Ultimate. It is its own means. This is an independent path not needing karma or bhakti but only jnana -- awakening. This is Adaita jnana –yoga.

Another school prescribes union with the Deity but the Deity is not the opposite of the Nature and the Self which are not mere illusions. In fact the Deity with whom one seeks to unite is the Lord of Nature., (sarira), one seeks union with the Deity as his Self and not the barren Oneness or Ekaki without relation to Nature. But jnana yoga aims at annihilation through union with the Deity and as such is not very much concerned with the union with the God of Religion. But one could anticipate this and say that perhaps knowledge aims at knowing the deity as he is for himself and not as he is for us and as such it a deeper spirituality going beyond the religious demand for the personal God -God for us obviously there cannot be from this point of view the radical opposition between Godin himself and God or us which brings the whole set of probiems of reality and unreality value and non- value and so on and of the probiems of oneness and manyness and their inter relations which have fogged all spintual yogas ever since knowiedge became the means to union with the deity in one sense it cannot lead to God or Deity in another sense its transcendental nature seems to be quite other than what we know as knowiedge divya jnana is a gift of Godeven as divya – drsti is and mere menntation even of the texts could not help. Constant remembrance of the Divine and His nature is what is called smrti and duruvanusrmrti is continuous remembrance of the Deity. The other methods of japa – yoga and mantra – yoga are variation of the jnana- yoga. They are means to the dawn of Divine vision and knowledge (para-jnana_. Jnana yoga may entail the awareness of the Divine as the Self that is immanent in the organism or the body of the jnani.

But the jnani is also one who sees all as Divine -- Vasudevas sarvam iti mahatma su—durlabhah : says the Gita. He is said to be a jnani : Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman. He it to be meditated upon as the Tajjalan – the orgin and dissolution of he Universe -- all these reveal the jnani's development of supreme consciousness to the fullest limits. When cognitivity extend to the farthest fullest limits. When cognitivity extend to the faarathest limit (anantam), then the ignorance that restricts is removed once for all. In Karma – yoga karma binds, in jnanayoga ignorance binds, and in either case the

union can only be attained by the Divine removing the karma – binders and jnana – binders. They can be independent of each other or may be mutually reinforcing each other because of the inseparability of action from knowledge and knowledge from action. Though the jnani may claim that the spirit is not action and is not bound to it, yet he has to do them for lokasamgraha and/or desirelessly (niskama). If karma – performance is said to lead to svarga (sukrtasya loka), jnana leads to the transcendence over that : but ultimately both are said to lead to the Union with the Divine. As Śrī Krishna says, samkhya and yoga are said to be different only by the children not the wise.

Thus knowledge of the distinction between the body and soul or the knowledge . the knowledge that God is the Ultimate self of all is possible through the awakened intuition and through dhyana and not merely through the constant repetition of the maha vakyas

BHAKTIYOGA

Union through affection or devotion is the most counseled by religion since it leads to real concrete experience of the Deity as person. In fact the affective mode of approach or the aesthetic approach to reality leads to experience of closeness and oneness much better to than either karma or jnana could do. Says Śrī Krishna 'Bhaktya – tvananyaya sakya evam vidho' arjuna.

Jnatum drastum ca tattvena praveṣtum ca parantapa.

The second half of the above verse reveals that the very possibility of knowing and seeing and entering into union with God in essence is possible only through devotion entire and total to God. It is devotion not for any return., for the sake of any thing sought after other than God, but devotion to God, for God's sake. This union is really knowledge and vision of the Divine for the Divine.

Devotions is popularly expressed as something much less than action or knowledge and as such placed in the lowest level fit for the people who do not have the capacity to perform action. This view of devotion may be quite popular. Bhakti leads to

constant remembrance of the Deity as the goal to be attained as the supreme personality without whom one cannot be or exist. Singing , hearing the names, worshipping , performing other acts of love may be there in order to propitiate or make God respond to the love offering or yearning or craving for god or the Ultimate Person known as God. This upasana is known as Bhakti. It is living near God and moving nearer to God for the sake of union with Him. Beauty of God or his other auspicious attributes may be there to induce self-offering of oneself to God, but since the transcendent is beyond all relational categories, it would follow bhakti or devotion may take the form all those attributes which characterise finite things and experiences. Or it might be beyond all of them but remaining as their source and ground. But if Bhakti is defined as the love of the infinite personality then it becomes clear that it can refer to Reality as Personal and personality deity.

Devotion is really the path of adherence to the Divine or Master and dedication to its attainment is the means. This devotion liberates man from his ignorance by granting the help of the wisdom of God, in one word by being granted God's mind which is free from all limitations and ignorance and crookedness and hate,. *Maccitah sarva durgani mat prasadat tarisyasi* says Śrī Krishna about this granting of the mind of God, if he has a mind at all in the sense in which we understand it. It may mean by bhakti alone one transcends the mind and enters into existence or being (*sat*)

That being is of greater value than cognition of jnana has been one of the earliest discoveries of the Indian sagas Knowledge must lead to Being jnana culminates in the realization of Being. That is why Śrī Rāmānuja emphasized that jnana must and does lead to being or devotion All the later efforts to raise the trichotomy between the three modes of human experience are bound to fail for they are an organic unity like the sac – cid—ananda, or sattva, rajas, tamas, or the spirit-soul and body which are one but which analysts break up into three for the sake of what they call 'understanding'. Similarly the supposed opposition between jnana and bhakti has no point. The views that there is a *mudha bhakti* and perhaps a *mudha jnana* which are transcended by the jnana in the former case and bhakti in the

latter case are just intellectual devices to support the dichotomous or dialectical mind which could only lead to doubt and even to nihilism.

Bhakti is said to be an independent means or yoga but it is so only to those who wish to emphasize one aspect of the human personality disgruntled or dissatisfied with the tarka or dialectical mind. An intuitive devotion to the Ultimate is of the nature of enlightened or illumined mind. Under it one grows in direct proportion to one's cleaving to the Divine Ultimate. It is then that one realizes that the Ultimate is not a metaphysical substance but a personality, omnipresent and omnibenevolent. One transcends the impersonal and reaches the mystic personality of the Divine which transcends all the standards of vision, speech, and mentation.

This bhakti reaches up more easily to the mystic state of sahaja samadhi or illuminational state of the Divine consciousness than through karma or jnana. Dhyana is so close in nature to devotion that all bhakti could be said to be dhyana. Of course as it was clearly pointed out there are karma – samadhi and jnana- samadhis, which are ecstatic experience of oneness with the Divine in selfless creative work for God, and in selfless absolute contemplation in thought which precipitate respectively the Divine consciousness or one's sayujyata. But it is through devotion alone that one feels oneself of the very stuff of divinity within and without and even transcends awareness of it or consciousness of it.

The Mystics have borne witness to this bhakti – samadhi and this results most easily through the self- surrender that one makes to the Divine for the sake of the realization of union with the Divine.

The orthodox thinkers have definitely known the unity of the three, and they knew that if one starts with one the others follow invariably and inevitably, unless sectarians divide what God has united.

To conclude

The three yogas may be considered from the psychological basic attitude of conation, cognition and affection. They could be considered in terms of the basic

relationships between the individual and the Deity, karma referring to the attitude of the disciple, and the Divine, Jnana as the attitude of the disciple, and bhakti as the attitude of the lover. These three are equally valid from the point of view of religious life. The metaphysically valid relationships of the distinct separateness of the individual to the divine usually realizes itself in the karma-yoga, whereas the oneness best fostered by the love and the jnana would only lead to the relationship of subject-object unity in cognitive relation. A transcendence of the subject-object relation in pure of them to objectivity. As discerned in the sentences -- *aham brahmasmi* or *tat- tvam asi*. Jnana must forever try to go beyond jnana and become ajnana -- or bhakti where the lover and the beloved could merge into each other by the alchemical fusioning of the affective oneness. These are the basic modes and the traditional thinkers knew these too well. A further thought of the past deserve to be considered. Karma yoga has its eye fixed on the goal (purusartha). It is a kind of kama even if it be satya-kama or atma-kama or brahma-kama. This is an attitude in respect of the Purusartha. Jnanayoga is concerned with tattva or the Existence-Essence of Reality, whereas Bhakti has its determination on the upasana or upaya or means to the realization of the identity of tattva and purusartha. The usual importance given to the artha-traya of tattva, hita, purusartha is reflected in the triple yogas. But as it was known also to the traditional thinkers the impediments to the realization of tattva, hita and purusarthas are avidya (ignorance) incapacity (anadhikarata) and lack of desire for realizing the Divine. These could only be eliminated by the supreme Divine Himself who is the remover of all obstacles to His attainment as the threefold. Therefore they counseled the Self-surrender to earn His help as upaya or means. This is also a hita or upasana known as saranagati yoga.