

A P P E N D I X.TRENDS OF BHAKTI ININDIAANDABROAD.

*

It is a matter of common knowledge that the fundamental doctrines of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads underlie every system of religion and thought in India. Indian thought-record begins with the Vedas. At first the ideas about God and His nature were poly-theistic. But this poly-theism (अनेकेश्वरवाद) soon developed into Henotheism. Henotheism, in due course, evolved into Monotheism - (अकेश्वरवाद), which culminated in monism (केवलाद्वैत) or Brahmanism (ब्रह्मवाद) or "Infinite Oneness" (अनंताद्वैत). The origin of Bhakti is traceable to the Vedic hymns and the Upaniṣads, as revealed in the discovery and worship (उपासना) of one

great God behind the visible Phenomena of nature. In spite of the depth and brilliance of Upaniṣadic ideas they cannot be regarded as sufficient for the moral or religious needs of man. They could at best make their appeal only to the intelligent, but fell flat on the average man to whom the attainment of such a profound knowledge appeared as an Utopian ideal. Hence, there was an age of revolt (600 B.C. to 300 A.D.) against the Vedic cult of sacrifices and the Upaniṣadic Doctrines of the Impersonal Godhead, the Brahman, led by Gautam Buddha (433-373 B.C.), Mahāvīr (485-413 B.C.) and Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva in their systems of philosophy known as Buddhism, Jainism and Bhāgavatism respectively.

THE BHĀGAVATA SCHOOL OF PERSONAL GOD.

Hence arose the need of a cult of Personal God; and accordingly, in the Bhāgavata School the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the impersonal Godhead was fused with the devotional worship

of a Personal God; and in course of time a theistic school of Vaiṣṇavism was evolved from Bhāgavatism.

The word "Bhakti" in the sense of love for God is first used in the Śvetāśvataropaniṣad. Here we find the beginnings of the theistic system which was further developed in the Bhāgavata School, especially in the Bhagavadgītā and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, by stressing the element of Bhakti (devotion) over abstract knowledge. We find a very early account of the Bhāgavata system in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata. There it is called "Ekāntika Dharma" and is said to have been revealed by Nārāyaṇa himself. The Bhagavadgītā of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa generally regarded as forming the basis of popular Hinduism, contains the earliest philosophical exposition of the Bhāgavata system.

It truly represents the moderate revolution heralded by the Bhāgavatas, as will be apparent from its hostile attitude towards the Vedas as an infallible authority and the traditional

views about the caste system and sacrificial performances. As regards ideals of life and ethical principles there is a striking -- resemblance between Buddhism and the Gītā, but by denouncing the ascetic life and the negative attitude of the Buddhists towards metaphysical doctrines, the Gītā shows its greater adherence to the old orthodox creed. It is in the Gītā that we find for the first time the full description of the Bhakti Yoga where Bhakti is said to be the best means to attain to the Karma Yoga i.e. the active life of selfless work without an eye to the fruit thereof, as distinguished from the contemplative life of the sanyāsin of the Upaniṣads. It should however, be noted that Bhakti in the Gītā is only a means to an end of Yoga, and not an end in itself, as held by sage Nārada in his code of Love or Bhakti Sūtra.¹ Moreover,

1. स्वयं कलरूपतेति ।

it does not mention the worship of Vāsudeva in his four-fold Vyūha or form, as advocated by the Pañcarātra system which consists of the worship of Vāsudeva in his four-fold form. It is a characteristic element of the Bhāgavata School and appears to have been evolved shortly after the Gītā was composed, and not later than the second century B.C.² Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā is identified with Brahman which is both Personal as well as Impersonal; and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa too believes that Kṛṣṇa is God Himself.³

Gītā's Bhakti is broad-based on faith in God and sincere faith develops into love; and

2. The (Old) Cultural Heritage of India -
Vol. III - P. 17.

3. कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।

Bh. 1: 3: 28

ultimately when the Bhakta desires nothing but the ONE (God), he becomes united to God. A devotee of God never comes to grief;⁴ for God takes him under His wings, fulfils all his desires and at last makes him His own.⁵

The Bhakti cult of the Gītā is thus a purifying and ennobling factor par excellence in the life of a single-minded, true devotee of God. It is indeed unique and non-sectarian, and hence, the Gītā is accepted as one of the three stays of Hinduism (*प्रस्थानत्रयी*).

Gītā's Bhakti reaches its climax in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa wherein Bhakti is believed to

4. कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ।
Gītā 9:31

5. अनन्याश्रित्यन्तयन्तौ मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याश्रित्युक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥
Gītā 9:22.

सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ।
Gītā 6:31

be an end in itself; for it is Love for love's sake without any ulterior motive whatsoever, like that of Gopīs for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the acme of Bliss (रसो वै सः।). It is open to one and all, whether he be a saint or a sinner, irrespective of caste or sex. By its magic-effect even a sinner of the worst type is transformed into a saint, provided he repents of his folly and the consequent past mis-deeds and turns back to God with a sincere resolve to die in flesh and to be reborn in spirit. It is a democratic force of the first magnitude; for it breaks down all the barriers and distinctions of caste, creed or sex and believes in the essential equality of all, the four-fold classification (चतुर्वर्त्य) being based on only functional classification according to the varied - temperaments of individuals. Besides, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is a Mokṣa-Śāstra (i.e. a scripture for unitive life with God or for

God-realisation as per the will of the devotee), as it believes Mokṣa the Summum bonum of human life, as exemplified in the beatitude of King Parīkṣit; and love-devotion like that of the Gopīs for Śrī Kṛṣṇa is believed to lead to the highest bliss of God union (मोक्षवायिनी). The Personal as well as the Impersonal aspects of God are both of equal importance from the view-point of a God-realizer or a devotee of God.

In the Bhāgavata Bhakti, a Bhakta - establishes an individual relationship with Bhagavān or God according to the predominance of his or her natural emotional tendency. The different types of relationship that one can establish with God are those of -

- (1) a quiet devotee.. (शांत);
- (2) a servant (दास्य);
- (3) a friend (सख्य);
- (4) parents (पात्सल्य);
- (5) a son (अपत्य);
- (6) a beloved (मधुरभाव).

By cultivating a particular relationship and through it directing human love to God, one attains to the realization of unity with Him. It is said that the Gopīs forgot themselves and attained complete unity with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is why the Gopī-like love-devotion to God is said to be the Bhakti par excellence.⁶ Love alone breaks the barrier between man and man and Śrī Kṛṣṇa offered himself for such love to those that are devoted to Him.

SECTARIANISM OF THE SAGUNA AND NIRGUNA SCHOOLS.

De facto, the Bhakti of the Bhāgavata is the development and perfection of the non-sectarian Bhakti cult of the Gītā, as discussed above. It begins with self-surrender, culminates

६. यथा व्रजगीयिकानाम् ।

in self knowledge and ends in self realization. From the Bhāgavata view point, the difference between the Personal and Impersonal God is a distinction without a difference; it is no more than that between ice and water. It is the sacred creed of the Bhāgavata Bhakta to be a cosmic friend and cosmic benefactor, to feel oneness with each and every one and to treat all with equal vision.

In course of time, however, there developed two distinct schools of Bhakti - the one Saguna School and the other Nirguna School. The Nirguna Bhakti cult believes that Bhakti leading to Mokṣa or God-realization must be accompanied by meditation and divine wisdom. In fact, God is both Love and Wisdom; for both are essentially needed for Perfection, like heat and light in the Sun. Love is a unifying principle or force, while wisdom is a discrimination or balancing force leading to equal vision (समदृष्टि) whereby we see the ONE in the manifold universe.

The above mentioned double aspect (Love and Wisdom) of Bhakti has been mostly ignored by the commentators of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in their exposition of the doctrines of the Bhagavata-Bhakti, as shown above. Unless a man sees the ONE in his own self (स्वरूप) and the universe (विश्वरूप) unless he is thoroughly unified, he cannot experience the ultimate Reality.

SŪFĪSM.

With the advent of the Muslims, the Bhakti cult was influenced by Sūfīsm, the Mysticism of Islam. India being under the direct supremacy of the Muslim emperors, "Sūfīsm" had not exercised little influence over the Hindu religion, the Hindu literature and over the very Hindu life. The Mystic way of the Sūfīs for ecstatic union with God insists on ego-annihilation (Fanā), as best revealed in the lives of Hazrat Mansur and the lady saint Rabia. As contrasted with

Gopīsm, it is the love of the lover for the Beloved (i.e. God). For self-realization Manzur advises the Sūfī (a) to reject all ceremonial religion, (b) to utilize every breath for the contemplation of Reality, (c) to destroy the ego, (d) to take the hand of the apostles of God, and (e) to realize "I am one with the Reality". (अनलरक).

Like the Hindus, the Sūfīs believe in the four stages or phases in the evolution of religious life leading to God-realization viz. (1) Śariat, (2) Tarīkat, (3) Hakīkat, and (4) Mārifat, corresponding to the four vedic stages of (a) Karma (i.e. disinterested action), (b) Upāsana (i.e. meditation), (c) Jñāna (i.e. Divine Wisdom), and (d) Anubhava (i.e. God-realisation) respectively. ⁷

7. Dr. R.D. Rāṇade: "Pathway to God" - P.70-71.

BASAVA AND LINGĀYATA.

Besides Saivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Sūfism, there was evolved in the Karnāṭaka the Lingāyata cult by Basava. In essence, it is a kind of Saivism of a peculiar type. It is a religion with a Śiva Linga as its guiding and central theme. It has a path, practice and philosophy of its own. In it Guru, Linga and Jāgama (i.e. a moving ascetic) commands the same reverence as "Hari, Guru and Saints" in other religions. In fact, no particular part of India can claim monopoly in spiritual speculation and revelation.

THE PREDOMINANCE OF GURU BHAKTI.

The Rādhā Svāmī Pantha represents a peculiar form of the Bhāgavata Bhakti. In the Rādhā Svāmī Pantha or Santa Mata, there is God-like Guru Bhakti, for the Guru is looked upon as God. It is note-worthy that in the Santa Mata and in the Nirguna Bhakti cult there is an unparalleled, wonderful and sincere

devotion to Guru, who is looked upon as God incarnate for the disciple.

TANTRISM AND ITS SĀDHANĀ.

In India, especially in Bengal, Tāntrism was evolved to a very great extent. The Tantra-Sādhana is a synthesis of Karma, Yoga, Jñāna and Bhakti. The main elements of Sādhana common to all Tantras are as follows :-

1). Pūjā (पूजा), Pratimā (प्रतिमा), Upacāra (उपचार), Yantra (यन्त्र), Mantra (मन्त्र), Nyāsa (न्यास), Mudrā (मुद्रा), Bhūta Śuddhi (भूत शुद्धि), Japa (जप), Puraścaraṇa (पुरश्चरण), Sandhyā (संध्या), Yajña (यज्ञ), Vrata (व्रत), Mandal (मंडल), Dhyāna (ध्यान) and Sanskāra (संस्कार). The whole end and aim of the Tantric ritual is Cit-Śuddhi and union with Brahman (ब्रह्म सायुज्य). "Transformation of thought is transformation of being" - is the

essential principle of all Tantric Śādhana.⁸

In view of the three types of Śādhaka - Divya, Vīra and Pasu, the Tantra Śāstra prescribes four different forms of worship. First, the realization that the supreme self and the individual self are one and that everything is Brahman - is the highest state of self-realization or God-consciousness (ब्रह्मभाव).

2). Constant meditation upon the deity (देवता) in the heart is the lower form of worship.

3). Lower still is the Bhāva where of Japa (recitation of Mantra) and Sttava (hymns of praise) are the outward expressions, and

4). Lowest of all is the external worship

(ब्रह्मपूजा). For the Siddha who has realized that "All is Brahman" there is neither worshipper nor worshipped. The Mahāmāyā Tantra truly says "For him who has faith in and knowledge of the root, of what use are the branches and leaves?". Thus, Tantrism lessens and refines ritual, as spiritual progress is made upwards

8. "Śakti and Śākta" - P. 274 - 292
By Sir John Woodroffe.

and it dispenses with it altogether when there is no longer need for it.⁹

Free of law, a Brahma-Jñānī follows his own will. Owing to the infinite diversity of individuals there is no one fixed method of approach for all. Each has his path which, if sincerely followed, will procure for him the fruit of his Sādhana. Thus the Tantric culture aims at the spiritual perfection and psychic development of man and as such it is one of the greatest cultures of India. In the Tantric view, Brahman is both changeless and changeful. Śiva is the changeful aspect of Brahman. In view of the dual aspects of Brahman, Śiva exists both in his changeless "Svarūpa" and the changeful world (Viṣvarūpa); and hence union may and should be had with Him in both the aspects.

Sir John Woodroff:-

9. "Śakti and Śākta" — P. 275

In fact, the world is the Self, whether as "I" (अहम्) or as this (इदम्) and accordingly, the aim of the Sādhaka is to attain Pure and Perfect Cit or consciousness (सच्चिदानन्द). The Tantric cult thus makes a near approach to the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata in its true sense. To sum up, there is no short-cut to perfection; for man must reform himself, conform himself to the God-men and ultimately so transform himself as to be God-like to be united with God or to realise God.

Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The element of Bhakti is seen in Mahāyāna Buddhism too. Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism was raised to the status of God and worshipped in temples, erected all over India and abroad where Buddhism spread. The Mahāyāna Cult believes in ritual worship (पूजा), recitation of mantras (जप), singing hymns of glory to Buddha (स्तव) and exhorts its followers to be a

Bodhisattva i.e. a cosmic person like Buddha by living a life of selfless service unto all living creatures. It is thus more a religion of Right Living (सदाचार) than of Love-devotion to God for attaining Nirvāṇa or abiding peace for evermore.

Like Buddhism, Jainism too does not believe in God but yet to attain the divine state of a Tirthankara (i.e. a prophet - सिद्ध), the Jains worship the idols of the Twentyfour Tirthankaras, especially of Mahāvīra. The Jains strongly believe in the doctrines of Karma and non-violence and place Karma above Divine grace for Nirvāṇa. Hence, they mostly rely on strict asceticism for self-perfection; for they maintain that we are "self-bound" (स्वयं बद्ध) by our downward actions motivated by love and hate (रागद्वेष) and hence, we can be "Self-released" (स्वयं मुक्त) by our upward actions like Tapas which leads to the annihilation of likes, dislikes and infatuation (रागद्वेषमोह). It is

thus a religion of self-discipline and self-denial rather than a religion of Love-devotion to God. The Tirthankaras are worshipped only as models of perfection for facilitating the way to one's Nirvāṇa.

We have reviewed so far in brief outline the different trends of Bhakti, as revealed in the great faiths of India like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Tantrism, Santism and the like.

We shall now take a bird's eye-view of the different trends of Bhakti, as revealed in the great religions of the world - such as Tāoism, Confucianism, Shinto-ism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

TĀOISM.

Tāoism teaches that the first duty of man who wants to lead the good life is to believe in Tāo (the way of God) and the world will take care of itself. Lāo-tze, the founder of

Tāoism, inculcates an ideal life of natural spontaneity, masterly inactivity and quiescence as distinguished from the artificial worldly life of crookedness, hypocrisy and deceit. Tāoism is thus more a religion of right living than of Love-devotion to God.

The Chinese Confucianism is a code of social and political morality and not a system of religion or philosophy.

It preaches "Reciprocity" and insists upon recompensing kindness with kindness and injury with justice; and regards both the king and the sage as God's Ministers.¹⁰ The Japanese "Shinto-ism" is a national creed of hero-worship and ancestor-worship and has no philosophy in the true sense of the term.

10. Dr. K.A. Thakkar: (in his Thesis for M.A.) -
 " The Philosophy of Sri Akhaji. "

Zoroastrianism, founded by sage Zoroaster, believes in an abstract God beyond the ken of the senses. It is Ahura Mazda, the one wise Lord who created all that was good in the world and whom we know only through His works. He preaches that man must fight for good against evil and help Ahuramazda to win his battle with Angra Manyu, the Evil Spirit. He preaches the life of purity in thought, word and deed, cleanliness, charity and kindness to useful animals. Zoroastrianism is thus not so much a cult of love as a law of right living. It is true that the Zoroastrians worship the Fire, the Sun, the Sea with a devout frame of mind.

Judaism, as preached by Abraham and Moses, believes in the following ten commandments of Jehovah:-

- 1). To have no other God than Jehovah.
- 2). To worship no idol or image of any kind.
- 3). Not to take the name of Jehovah in vain.

- 4). To observe every seventh day as a holiday.
- 5). To honour one's father and mother.
- 6). Never to commit murder.
- 7). Never to commit adultery.
- 8). Not to steal.
- 9). Not to swear falsely or give false testimony, and
- 10). Not to envy other people and covet what they have.

It will be seen from the above that it is more a code of morals than the cult of Love devotion to God.

Christianity, as founded by Jesus believes in the law taught by Judaism and teaches love for God. It, however, does not come up to the level of the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata , except in Christian Mysticism.

Islam, founded by Prophet Mohammed, preaches the following ten commandments :-

- 1). Allah is the one God and Mohammed is His Prophet.

- 2). Give up idolatry.
- 3). Don't steal.
- 4). Don't lie.
- 5). Don't slander,
- 6). Don't be intoxicated.
- 7). Pray five times each day.
- 8). Be kind to the poor and give alms.
- 9). Keep the Fasts in the month of Fasts, and
- 10). Make the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca, the
Holy City.

Thus, Islam too is a religion more of right living than of Love-devotion to God. It is the most orthodox religion in the world.

It would be evident from this bird's eye-view of the oriental and the occidental trends of Bhakti that the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata is par excellence the ideal cult of Love-devotion to God leading to self-realization and God-realization, as shown above.