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THE HARIDASA MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA – AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

Dr. Smitha M. Bhavikatti

ABSTRACT :

Karnataka is a land of poets, philosophers, saints, prophets and social reformers. It has given birth to philosophers, like Shankar, Madhva, saints and prophets like Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa. The Kannada philosophers and saints follow a path which is unique combination of knowledge and devotion, and neither knowledge alone nor devotion alone. This particular aspect can be seen not only in philosophers but also in the Haridasas. Hence a study of both philosophers and Haridasa is quite essential to know what important part 'Bhakti' plays in the life of man.



KEYWORDS : Haridasa, Devotion, Moksha.

INTRODUCTION

Man is neither purely intellectual nor emotional. He is a combination of both. Psychologically man is intellectual and emotional, but philosophically he is intellectual intuitional. We speak of emotion, intuition and mysticism; whatever their import and connotation may be, each one theme is opposed to intellect, though all of them are the means of attainment of 'moksha' or knowing Him-God, the Almighty.

If the intellectualism of a past age found culmination in Shankara-the great Advaita philosopher, the intellectual-devotional of that that age found culmination in Madhva the great Dvaita philosopher. He was not a mere devotionalist but also and intellectualist. The Advaita philosopher Shankara was only an intellectualist; there is no place for 'Bhakti', or devotion, in Shankar's philosophy, Devotion is born out of the definite knowledge that God Vishnu is 'sarvottama', the best of all; "sarvaswatantra" the one who enjoys complete independence and freedom, 'Sarvajna'-the knower of all.

This type of devotion is not therefore blind or dogmatic. It is an intellectual conviction that Vishnu exists and is supreme of all beings. He is the creator, maintainer and destroyer of the universe. He is all-powerful. This knowledge of Vishnu is a condition-precendent to a devotee. In order to understand this point very clearly, knowledge of the two schools-Advaita and Dvaita-is quite necessary.

METHODOLOGY

By studying the secondary sources thereby refereeing to primary literature the study is undertaken.

ADVAITA PHILOSOPHY

The Brahman is the only reality. The world is an Illusion. The individual soul is not different from Brahman. The Brahman is quality-less and formless. The world appears to be real on account of our ignorance.

The world has only an empirical reality based on Avidya. When Avidya is cast off, there is no world, no creation and nothing.

MADHVA PHILOSOPHY

Hari is supreme. He is different from the world as well as from individual souls. He is the creator, maintainer and destroyer of the universe. He is all in all. He possesses infinite qualities. He is all –merciful and kind. The world is real. It is different from god. There is difference between the animate and the inanimate. There is difference between god and the world. It is only by the grace of god that the individual gets redemption or moksha. It is therefore the duty of the individuals to get his grace and pure spotless devotion is the of getting it.

SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT: VYASAKUTA & DASAKUTA

Intellect plays an important part in the life of man, though devotion is the immediate means of attaining 'moksha'. That is to say, the results of devotion are always quicker and unmistakable, whereas those of intellect are gradual and doubtful. What the head cannot achieve the heart achieves. Yet the human mind is inclined to favor intellect rather than emotion. Thus we find that there are two trends, namely one trend of thought reason and the other trend favoring devotion. Thus there are two schools of thought in Karnataka one known as 'Vyasakuta' and the other known as 'Dasakuta'.

According to Vyasakuta reason is supreme and we should follow the path of knowledge. A very high place is given to this path. It is meant for only a section of the people and is aristocratic; it debar women and non Brahmins from its purview. They are regarded ineligible for the study of the Vedas and religion. Consequently the appeal of the Vyasakuta was limited. Large groups of people were dissatisfied with it and, as a result, there arose another school-the 'Dasakuta'.

The disciples of Vyasakuta were aware of the fact that mere knowledge was not sufficient for the attainment of 'moksha' and they knew, moreover, that philosophy is not meant for and isolated individual living on a deserted island. It is for the mass of people, and one should live in the world amidst temptations, but yet not succumb to them; and one should rise above them all and conquer them. 'Moksha' must be achieved through society.

The followers of Vyasakuta adopted perception, logic and the testimony as the valid means of knowledge whereas the Dasakuta adopted intuition, devotion and mysticism to know the Reality. What the Dasakuta preached was yogic perception that would take us directly to God. The Dasas were aware of the fact that God Hari is beyond proof, and beyond any reach.

Mr. A.P.Karamarkar in his book 'Mystic Teaching of the Haridasas in Karnataka' has rightly pointed out the differences as follows:- "The word Dasakuta denotes 'a class of Dasas (slaves of Hari)' and it is equivalent to the expression 'Bhakti-Pantha' or "Bhakti Sampradaya". The word 'Dasaru' and 'vyasaru' first came into vogue in the time of Purandaradasa and his religious preceptor Vyasara. Later on, the disciples of Purandaradasa were called "Dasakutasthas". But the words Vyasakuta and Dasakuta assumed a different meaning altogether after sometime. "Vyasakuta meant the branch of devotees who were well-versed in Sanskrit and who knew the philosophies in the original, and Dasakuta meant that branch of devotees who conveyed the message of Dvatiya philosophy and religion through the vernaculars.

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE HARIDASAS OF KARNATAKA

The peculiar characteristic of the Haridasa of Karnataka is that they are all, without any exception, followers of the Madhva school of thought. They are worshippers of Hari. What was a matter of meditation with the Vyasa was a matter of experience and faith with the Dasas. The great Madhva and his followers well knew the fact that intellect alone was barren and emotion also was blind; and the combination of reason and emotion was the noble path. There is complete agreement between the Dasas and the Vyasa regard the ultimate nature of God. But God is revealed to the dasa through devotion. As a matter of fact, the Dasas made the gospel of Madhva more popular with the public and that way contributed a great deal to the advancement of philosophy.

The Dasas were not founders of a religious movement; they were followers of a particular school of

philosophy, that of Madhva. They possessed no super ordinary or miraculous powers. They wrote and sang the praises of God Hari from divine inspiration. Their descriptions and praises of God were not based on fanciful imagination, but on their deep meditation. Though Madhva and his followers worshipped God through devotion, their main interests were intellectual and philosophical. It is very difficult to draw a line of distinction between philosophy and religion in India, for we Indians practice philosophy, and the practice and performance of philosophy in life is religion. We practice what we preach; and we preach what we believe.

By the translation of philosophy into action in life coupled with pure devotion, Madhva and his followers gained powers which baffled humanity. They worked wonders to show to the world that a true devotee of God is not bound down by any law, natural and supernatural, and that by the grace of God one can transcend all barriers. They were not only perfect in themselves, but they had the power to purify other men. This was the unique possession of Vyasakuta.

The Haridasas surrendered themselves to God Hari in the complete devotion and dedication. They wandered from place to place, converting men and women to the Dasakuta. They had no fixed abode, for the whole world was their home. They composed songs in praise of Hari, and though the moods of their songs were different, the underlying faith was one and undivided. They exhibited a complete sense of detachment from family ties and were indifferent to worldly possessions and happiness. Hari was their spiritual friend, philosopher and guide not only in moments of distress and depression, but in moments of joy and elation as well.

To listen to the songs of the Dasas is to forget the surroundings and to identify oneself with the Eternal. The word of the Dasas goes straight to the heart, because they come from their heart. Sripadaraya, Vyasarayya, Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa, Vijayadasa, Gopaladasa and Jagannathadasa were the most prominent among them and let us learn something of their lives.

PURANDARADASA

Purandaradasa contributed much to the richness of the Kannada Language and contributed a great deal to the advancement of Karnataka music. It is said that Tyagaraja derived inspiration from him. Purandaradasa, according to tradition has composed nearly 475,000 songs. In his life-time he travelled far and wide and spread his philosophy through songs in Kannada. Mr. Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, the eminent scholar and writer, has aptly described Purandaradasa's works in the following words: They (the songs) indicate a mind familiar with the world and its ways and inclined as much to see without as within. Wide knowledge, deep experience, and a great love of humanity are visible in them. Their range is great.

KANAKADASA

The Dasakuta recognized no barrier of caste or color. Kanakadasa's name is enough to show to the world that all are equal in the eyes of God and that caste is no disqualification for a devotee. Kanakadasa was born at bada in the district of Dharwad. He was a shepherd by caste and chose a military career. It is said that God Keshava used to appear in his dreams and ask him to become a Dasa; but Kanaka persistently refused to do so. Later, it is said, Kanaka sustained a terrible defeat in battle, after which he became a Dasa,

There were many orthodox, Brahmins who opposed him. But the great Vyasarayya, religious preceptor of Purandaradasa, offered him the holy water (tirth) and thus accepted him as a member of the Dasakuta. There is a story current about Kanaka, that once he was not allowed to enter the temple of Lord Krishna at Udipi- and that, determined to see God, he went to the back of the temple and stood there like a statue without food or water for days together in meditation. Lord Krishna was so pleased with the prayers of Kanaka that he turned round on his pedestal and stood facing Kanaka. There is, even today, a little window, through which people obtain, 'Darshan' or Lord Krishna in Udipi and that window goes by the name "Kankana Khindi".

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I can say that India is a land of saints and prophets. Like all others, the saints and prophets of Karnataka have left their foot-prints on the sands of time. As Radha Krishna said philosophy leads us to the gates of the promised land but never lets in." It is devotion that leads us in; intellectual devotion is never blind; it

is all seeing.

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