



BHAKTHI YOGA AND HINDU MYSTICISM

*Dr. Jaisymol Augustine, Assist. Professor, Dept. of Malayalam,
Assumption College, Changanacherry, Kottayam, Kerala*

Received: 06/01/2018

Edited: 17/01/2018

Accepted: 29/01/2018

Abstract: *The central focus/ subject matter of mysticism is the overwhelming and ineffable ecstasy attained by the seeker of eternal reality. Mystic union occurs when the individual self (Jivatma) becomes one with eternal self (paramatma) in an inseparable bond. In Indian literature those poets who worked along with the Bhakti Movement and sang the various strains of Bhakti poetry are mainly considered as the spokesmen of mysticism. Mysticism is construed as the essence of Bhakti Yoga by the Indian sages including Swami Vivekananda. Narada Muni, Sandilya Muni and Vivekananda consider Bhakti, the ideal and impeccable form of love, as a means of union with the Divine. This article attempts to discuss how a devotee reaches the perfect form love or union with the Divine from the lower level of commonplace devotion and elucidates the particular features of this journey taken by the devotee. It also tries to accentuate the significant characteristics of Hindu mysticism being nurtured by and rooted in the Upanishad doctrines.*

Key words: *Bhakti Yoga, Mysticism, Hindu, Upanishad.*

Mysticism: An Essence of Bhakthiyoga

Mysticism may be transcendental experience that a talented individual can contain. While God to some, is faith, an assumption, a belief, a conjuncture or hypothesis to others it is a blissful experience or realisation. The existence of God cannot be proved or established through concrete reasoning, logical thinking or physical or external observation. But the blissful experience of God is bestowed as a grace or divine gift on certain poets

*"I was submerged in the sea of forms
in search of formless jewels"(1)*

No writer, however realistic he is, cannot deny this statement as such. The Bhaktha (devotee) tries to find out the same jewel through the pursuit of God, which is traced by the poet plunging himself in the ocean of forms. The human instinct for pleasure assumes forms as art. Thomas Merton has pointed out that artistic experience and mysticism at its peak point get merged.(2) That is the level of experience. Today in literature also mysticism has gained a significant position. In Indian literature, it may be said that mysticism is known under the label Bhakthi Movement

In his work the essence of Bhakthiyoga (Bhakthiyogasara) SivanandaSwami categorises the devotees into five types namely semi devotee, the inquisitive, one who searches for meaning, Njani and the Heroic Devotee. The Njani's such as SreeSuka who realised themselves as 'Anandamaya' are the lofty ones in this hierarchy. The other devotees as well can attain the lofty position. The Puranas uphold the story of prince Dhruva who had begun worship of God in order to escape the torture of his aunt attained a stage in which he needed only Easwara-God.(3)

In the book Bhakthi yoga Vivekananda Swami, assimilating the essence of 'BhagavathGitha' categorises human beings as 'Aasuri' and 'Daivi'. For aasurature, up keep of the physical body is vitally important. But the Daivi-natured men (divine natured) find the physical body as a meer tool for self realisation. Bhakthi or devotion is a means resorted to by the Daivi-natured men for self- realisation (4)

The BhagavathGitha has given due importance to Bhakthiyoga. Six Chapters of this exemplary text discusses Bhakthiyoga. The very title of the 12th chapter is Bhakthiyoga. 'Partha' (Arjuna) disheartened and dispirited in the battle field of Kurukshethra becomes ready for the performances

of his action at this juncture. When he gets the real knowledge of Moksha the 12th chapter of BhagavathGitha unravels the power of 'Bhakthi' and 'Njana' to make life action oriented.

The essential secrets of Bhakthiyoga is that the different emotions impulses instincts and Bhavas of human heart are not intrinsically despicable. They are not to be denied and dispensed by their very nature. Nor do they become wickedness evil or sins. They need to be controlled sensibly and lifted up until one reaches the supreme level of transformation. Tagore introduces this liberating nature of Divine Love in verse 32 of Gitanjali:

By all means they try to hold me secure who love me in this world.

But it is otherwise with thy love which is greater than theirs,

and thou keepest me free.

Lest I forget them they never venture to leave me alone.

But day passes by after day and thou art not seen.

If I call not thee in my prayers,

if I keep not thee in my heart, thy love for me still waits for my love.(5)

MaharshiSandilya and BrahmaarshiNarada have stated that Bhakthi is the supreme passionate love towards Easwara(God).(6) The manifestation of this passionate love has different phases or levels namely *Reverance* (respect for God), *Preethi* (enthusiastic pursuit), *Virabam* (the situation in which one finds it rather impossible to live without God even for a moment) *Thadeeyatha* (belonging to Easwara). These phases lead one to to the state of Liberation. In the status of *Thadeeyatha*, the nature of a devotee or a Bhaktha becomes totally pure and mature. In this state the sense of ego ceases to exist totally, and a feeling that the entire nature, world is pure and endearing.

The verse 82 of the *NaradeeyaBhakthi-Suthra* states that there are eleven BhakthiBhavas, or attitudes of devotion depending on the attitude of individuals mind, if one is to attain the experience of *Thadeeyatha*. They are: the craving for the greatness of quality (*Gunamahathmyasakthi*), craving for form

(*Roopasakthi*), craving for memory (*Smaranasakthi*), craving for worship (*Poojasakthi*), craving for servitude (*Dasyasakthi*), craving for comradeship (*Sakhyasakthi*), craving for affection (*valsalyasakthi*), craving to be the spouse (*Kanthasakthi*), craving to dedicate the self (*Athmanivedanasakthi*) craving for oneness (*Thanmayathasakthi*) and craving to be with Easwara always not to be separate from Him (*Virahasakthi*)

These subtle aspects of passionate love have different levels of intensity. The lowest form of love is called '*Santham*', The *Gunamahathmyasakthi*, *Roopasakthi*, *Smaranasakthi*, and *Poojasakthi* are by nature '*Santham*' (peaceful-pacified). This is the nature of the ordinary Bhakthas or devotees. The next two phases, servitude and comradeship show the tendency to identify Bhagavan or Easwara as the master and friend or comrade. In servitude the predominant tendency is for subordination or obedience. The devotion of Hanuman for Sri Rama is an example for this. In the case of the devotion of comradeship, passionate love between Easwara and the devotee (Bhaktha) flows on the basis of equality. Easwara (God) being the bosom friend, a situation evolves in the craving for comradeship in which even the most guarded innermost secrets can be revealed without reserve. The love between Arjuna and Krishna is of this category

In the craving of affection (*ValsalyaBhakthi*) the self is dedicated identifying Easwara as an Infant. This type of devotion is prevalent in the religions which believe in Incarnations. Infant Jesus and Unnikkannan are worshipped. Craving to be the spouse or the sweet Devotion (*MadhuryaBhakthi*) is a divine experience of Love. Swami Vivekananda upholds this kind of devotion as the noblest of all forms .This is the attitude in which the *Jeevathma* (the individual soul) loves *Paramathma* (the universal soul) as a wife loves her husband or the lover his beloved. Of all forms of love in the world, the noblest, the most powerful, and the most ecstatic one is the passionate love between man and woman. Thus Swami Vivekananda qualifies the self or the individual soul as the female or sthree and the

Paramathma or the Universal soul as the male or Purusha.

But real and genuine spiritual love does not stop here. An intensely powerful passionate love which intoxicates, causes ecstatic feeling and does not bother about customs and formalities could be found in the craving to dedicate oneself (*Athmanivedanasakthi*). *Thanmayatha Bhakthi* (craving for oneness with God) prompts one to identify oneself with God, and merge into Easwara. Such a devotee will always be in anguish due to the fear of losing Easwara. Hence such a devotee is always in search of God. *Virahasakthi* or *Virabitha Bhakthi* is the total enquiry and eternal search for God, for fear of losing him even for a second.

Thus the Indians have a vast universe of love which has such ever so many petals and intensities, under the label Bhakthi or Devotion. The different layers of mysticism introduced by the westerners have been condensed into the concept of Bhakthi or devotion by the Indians since the time of the Vedas.

Hindu Mysticism

Mysticism is spiritual bliss. As a blissful experience it is universal, it is of all times and places, beyond the domains of time and space. According to the Hindu vision mysticism is innate. What happens in mysticism is the total transformation of the spiritual being into the total reality, or absolute reality. Bhakthi or devotion is its unique feature. The four Vedic *MAHAVAKYAS* evolved as a result of meditation of the first Preceptors or *Gurus*. *Chattampi Swami* introduces them as follows:

1. Pranjanam Brahman - Aithereyopanishad
2. Aham Brahmasmi - Brihadaranyopanishad
3. Thathwamasi - Chandogyopanishad
4. Ayamathma Brahman - Mandookyopanishad.

All these transform into verses of personal self experience. The real, genuine fruits of mystic experience are the following verses *Prapanchasvaroopam Brahman*, *Ekameva Dvithieyam Brahman*, *Bhavatheetham Brahman* and

Swanubhavaatheetham Brahman. The spiritual unity with the eternal fidelity is manifested as mysticism. In order to attain the ultimate reality, mind should be free from sorrow and desire, and preserved as such intact. It should also attain Divine Knowledge. The mystic ecstasy is possible in the *Thuriya* state and not in *Jagrat*, *swapna* or *sushupthi* states. Mystic *Thuriya* is the stage of physical experience of the essence of spiritual wisdom.

The 14th chapter of Bhagavat Gita elaborates on the attainment of *Amrithathmam* and *Akshyathmam* (the stage beyond any kind of ruin or destruction). The secret to know God is possible only when one grows beyond the *Thrigunas*. (sathwa, rajo, thamogunas). The Sathwa Guna should be transformed into the light of consciousness, Rajo Guna should be transformed into *Tapas*, and Thamo Guna should be transformed into peace or *Santhi*. The one who has surpassed the thrigunas will be a *Sthira Pranja*, *Jeevanmuktha* and a *Bhaktha* or Devotee.

The new forms of Indian mysticism is unravelled through Tagore and Aurobinda Ghosh in modern times. "Who is the one who resides at inmost being?. I experience pain and spiritual bliss in his powerful touch, He scribbles down in my eyes wisdom of *Manthras*; He plays on the Veena of my heart.(7) In the works of Tagore, who sings as above, all the five stages of mysticism are manifested. Those five stages are: the rising of passion, Purification, Instruction (Teaching), Dedication the self, and the union of the Soul (spirit).

Aurobinda Ghosh who considers Indian literature and other art forms as the emanations of spirituality, introduces the spiritual hierarchy as the physical essence (bhouthika Satha), Jeeva (Jeevan) Mind (Manassu) Manifested mind (prakasithamanassu) transcendental mind (atheethamanassu) and Sachithanandam. His Minor works and the epic poem *Savithri* are the unusual creations of Indian Mysticism which contains Hindu Mysticism.

Notes:

1. Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem: 100
2. Raymond Bailey, Thomas Merton on Mysticism, P.57
3. Sivananda Swami, Bhakthiyoga, P.25-26
4. Swami Vivekananda, Bhakthiyogam, P.84
5. Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem: 32
6. Saparaanurakthisware, Sandilya Bhakthi Sootram
SathwasminParamaPremaRoopa, NaradaBhakthiSoothram
7. Tagore, Gitanjali, Poem :72

Work cited:

1. Rabeendra Natha Tagore, Githanjali, Macmillion &Co., London, 1913
2. _____. The Religion of Man, Sahithya Acadami, New Delhi,1953
3. Raymond Bailey, Thomas Merton On Mysticism, Image Books, London, 1976
4. Swami Vivekananda, Bhakthiyoga, Sree Ramakrishnamath, Culcutta,(12th imprint)1998
5. Sandilyasoothram, SreeRamakrishnamath, Bangalore, 2004
6. NaaradaBhakthisoothram, Sreeramakrishnamath, Thrissur, 2006