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The Concept Of Bhakti In Dvaita Philosophy

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to bring out the core concept of Bhakti in Dvaita Philosophy advocated by Sri Madhvacharya, which paves way as a means to Liberation.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and highlight the significance of Bhakti through which the Mumukshu can attain Salvation.

KEY WORDS: Bhakti, Isvara, Vairagya, Mahatmya, Upasana, Moksha, Jnana, Karma, Isvara-Prasada, Liberation, Samsara, mukta, Salvation.

INTRODUCTION

Definition of “Bhakti”

According to Jayatirtha, Bhakti is thus, the steady and continuous flow of deep attachment to God, impregnable by any amount of impediments and transcending the love of our own selves, our kith and kin, cherished belongings, etc., and fortified by a firm conviction of the transcendent majesty and greatness of God as the abode of all perfections and free from all blemish and by an unshakable conviction of the complete metaphysical dependence of everything else upon Him. This definition can be accepted as a classical definition of Bhakti. (1)

The firm and unshakable love of God, which rises above all other ties of love and affection, based upon an adequate knowledge and conviction of His great majesty, is called “Bhakti”.(2)

Meaning of “Bhakti”

The term bhakti is derived from the root word bhaj which means seva or meditation (bhaj sevayam). Bhakti denotes the positive aspect, an active longing, a state of love an outpouring of devotion, reverence awe, and admiration, a surrender of the soul in melting tenderness. (3) Love is the ruling key-note of this faith.

Importance of “Bhakti”

Bhakti is necessary for anyone who tries to emancipate himself from bondage because in its absence neither any Upasana nor the knowledge of Isvara would ever be possible.

Bhakti is the outcome of a profound admiration for Divine majesty coupled with a spontaneous love and regard for the supreme. It cannot be dissociated from knowledge, but this knowledge of God is not the cold intellectual apprehension of Reality. Bhakti is nothing but a blend of both knowledge and love. Jnana is constituent of bhakti.

The causal chain terminating in emancipation starts with the hearing of the greatness of the Lord along with detachment from the worldly-affairs. These two viz., Mahatmya and Vairagya infuse in the aspirant a feeling of devotion towards the paramatman, which is called Bhakti.

Impelled by this devotion, the aspirant hears about the nature of Isvara, ponders and concentrates on it and then the Lord being pleased with the devotee imparts him, the right knowledge about himself or reveals to him His true nature.

Prerequisite Spiritual Qualification to attain “Bhakti”

Can knowledge liberate one and all acquired through hearing the scriptures about the nature of Brahman irrespective of their spiritual Qualifications?

The orthodox system of Indian Philosophy believes that they always attach importance to the possession of certain Qualifications as a necessary condition for the attainment of knowledge, which is technically called adhikara sastra. Madhva was no exception to this general tradition and he prescribed certain essential Qualifications for a man who aspires for moksha. (4) They are:

1. The renunciation of the desire for enjoyment both in this and the other world.(ihamutra-Phalabhoga viragah)
2. Study of the sastras.(adhyayana)
3. Complete resignation before paramatman. (saranagati)
4. Living in the house of guru.(Gurukavasa)
5. Hearing of the sastras through the teacher.(sravana)
6. Acquiring full conviction about the subject heard from the teacher through reasoning.(manana)
7. Devotion towards paramatman.(paramatma bhakti)
8. Performance of actions enjoined in scriptures without any desire for fruit.(nivrttakarmanusthana)
9. Renunciation of karma prohibited in scriptures.(nisiddhasamtyagah)
10. Knowledge of the five types of difference (Pancabheda). (5)

Madhva advocates the reality of five-fold differences – between soul and God, between soul and soul, between soul and matter, between God and matter, and between matter and matter. (6)

Practice of “Bhakti”

Bhakti needs repetition of upasana and requires adherence to the sruta and smartakarmas and varnasrama dharmas. (7) The way of bhakti is thus the more arduous one and long drawn out. It is also burdened with the obligations of sastric karma. (8) It seems better for holding that there will be a greater measure of trust in god created by Bhakti on account of constant and repeated practice of upasana.

Stages of Bhakti

Madhva distinguishes three stages of Bhakti: (1) mediate knowledge of the Deity (2) one that follows it, and (3) that comes after direct realisation and wins the absolute grace. These three stages of Bhakti were designated by Jayatirtha as Pakvabhakti (ripe devotion) is the means of acquiring knowledge of God, Paripakva-bhakti (riper devotion) is the means of direct vision of the Lord and Ati-Paripakva-bhakti (mellowed devotion) consists in the welling up of the spiritual joy of communion with the Lord.

Highest Bhakti an End in Itself

A unique feature of Bhakti in Madhva Philosophy is that it is viewed, not as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. The light of bhakti shines brightly not only from the side of release but also from the other side as well.

The relation between the individual Self and the Supreme Being is not something that is destroyed by release but something that is rooted in its very nature and being (svarupa).

The intrinsic spiritual relation between the human spirit and God is so dynamic in its magnetism that the attraction of the former to the latter becomes more fully manifested in release than in samsara. it cannot be

described in detail the behaviour of the blessed ones in release towards the Lord. This state of blessedness is something beyond our comprehension in its richness and glory.

Knowledge as a means to Moksa

Let me ask a question about: What is the position and utility of knowledge in Madhva system and why does Madhva recognize the importance of knowledge when it cannot be the ultimate instrument in salvation? Though knowledge is not recognized by Madhva yet he gives importance to knowledge because it ultimately leads to moksa.

Jaya-Tirtha in his tattvaprasika on Madhva's Brahma-sutra-bhasya writes that liberation is possible only through the grace of god. (9) This grace is granted only to those who possess correct knowledge about Him.

In Madhva Philosophy, the Lord cannot be known unless He reveals Himself. This knowledge in turn produces Isvara-prasada or the Lord's Grace which is ultimately responsible in man's deliverance from bondage.

This process explained by Madhva and his followers for the attainment of emancipation discloses the position of knowledge in the hierarchy as a means that bring in the deliverance of man.

Kinds of Isvara-Prasada

This Benediction of God is conceived to be of three kinds in accordance with the three types of devotees.

1. Adhama is acquired through karma brings to its agent svarga and not moksa.
2. Madhyama is invoked by hearing (sravana) about the real nature of God and this brings to the devotee the janaloka (earth).
3. Uttama Bhakta's is the supreme type of benediction acquired through the knowledge of the true nature of God renders the soul free from the bondage of transmigration. (10)

Madhva has given unique place to Divine grace in his system, because it is the ultimate cause of self-realization and God-realization. This can be done by Bhakti as the deepest attachment to the Lord, deep-rooted and based on a clear understanding of His greatness and majesty.

"Bhakti" as a means to Liberation

Madhva being one of the pillars of the vaisnavite movement and the followers of the Bhagavat and Pancaratra culture was also constrained to acknowledge and establish the supremacy of Bhakti much more than what was assigned to it by sankara, though his treatment could not give it a superior place to knowledge (11)

Bhakti in his system doesn't acquire supreme status as was expected from a doyen of the Bhakti-movement. Both Madhva and Jaya-Tirtha referred knowledge as the only means that can invoke the blessings of Isvara. The utility of Bhakti consists in being causative in the production of knowledge through upasana on the greatness and the real nature and qualities of the Lord. On account of the nature of Bhakti and its importance as a means to liberation is found in the works of Madhva and his followers.

Means of attaining Salvation

The idea of the means that is capable of delivering the final good implies not only the ultimate instrument as the final cause leads to attainment of liberation, but also all other condition that are instrumental in bringing the summum bonum of mankind.

According to Madhva, the ultimate instrument of emancipation is neither jnana nor karma but the grace of God (Isvara-Prasada) (12) because bondage is real, it cannot be removed through knowledge. Knowledge may destroy a false appearance caused by ignorance but it cannot remove the reality.

Bondage, according to Madhva, has its cause in the Maya of Isvara and as such it is. He alone who can exonerate the jiva from its clutches (13) Though knowledge is given importance as a means to the attainment of the Lord's grace; yet it does not acquire that ultimate position.

Through Bhakti and the knowledge of Isvara: the devotee is in a position to invoke the divine Benediction thereby, he becomes free from the clutches of His vaisnavi-maya, through His desire.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, we come to know that Sri Madhvacharya's concept of bhakti is a traditional way of understanding, through which it makes one to analyse the root-cause for getting release from bondage.

In Madhva's Philosophy, Bhakti has been placed as a means to attain Liberation by adopting Sadhanas to practice and the only aim of practicing Bhakti is to attain Moksha.

Madhva's Philosophy is more orthodox in tradition and restricts people those who have qualified for the practice of Bhakti and the purpose of practicing Bhakti is to liberate oneself from the samsara.

In the present scenario, the purpose of practicing bhakti is not only to liberate oneself from samsara, but also to lead a life of detachment by understanding one's own true nature and this realization keeps them away from unreality.

A mukta must serve for the society without any fruits irrespective of any caste, creed and religion and also see the divineness in other beings which makes him feel so happy extrinsically and enjoy bliss intrinsically.

FOOTNOTES:

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