

Reconstruct the world with Advaitic Notion with Special Reference to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's Concept of Bhakti

Sangeetha L

Research Scholar, Department of Vedanta
Śrī Śaṅkarācārya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala, India
Email: lekshmisangeetha283@gmail.com

Abstract: Diversities make uniqueness from each other. But these diversities sometimes create great fissures between human minds. Every moment people living in different parts of the world are subjected to exploitation of each other in the name of colour, caste and religion and smuggled out of the country and lose their lives in the midst of hunger and poverty. Even India, which thrives on the great concept of unity in diversity, often witnesses inequalities formed in the name of caste and religion. The solution of these social insecurities perhaps can be found in the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkarācārya, which originated in India itself. But how the principles enunciated centuries before by Śaṅkarācārya can be propagated throughout the world in a modern way can be found in the scriptures composed by Madhusūdana sarasvatī combining the Bhakti with Jñāna. This research paper attempts to examine how can the philosophy of Madhusūdana sarasvatī enhance people in all over the world and how a single religion can be constructed through these concepts in a possible and effective way.

Keywords: Śaṅkarācārya, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Bhakti, Jñāna, Religion

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī who was lived in Bengal in sixteenth century was a great person who was recognized equally as eminent Advaita philosopher and a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. His books like Advaita Siddhi, Siddhānta Bindhu etc., reveal and elucidate his mastery in Advaita, while his books like Bhakti-rasāyana, Guḍārtha-dīpikā, Paramahansa-priyā etc. reveal his passion towards the Concept of Bhakti.

Place of Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta before Madhusūdana Sarasvatī

Bhakti had a place in Advaita Vedanta even before the period of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. Many hymns composed by Śaṅkarācārya such as Bhaja Govindam, Gaṇeśa Pañcaratnam, Śivānandalaharī and Śiva-mānasa-pūjā etc. for daily Worship, Purification of mind and those for who cannot attain salvation through jñāna, validate the place of bhakti in Advaita Vedānta. In his famous work Vivekacūḍāmaṇi he places devotion at the top among the means that lead to liberation.¹ Also he reestablished the Ṣaṇmatās or the worship of the six ancient Gods, viz., the Śaiva, the Śākta, the Gāṇapatya, the Vaiṣṇava, the Saura and the Kaumāra and restored the influence of Hinduism among the people, with a belief in itself and in its capacity to satisfy the religious needs of its adherents.² Although he accepts Saguṇa Brahman in the world of Vyāvahārika but completely rejects duality and do not admit bhakti as one of the ultimate path to salvation. All the Bhakti schools that emerged later on had accepted Bhakti as the ultimate means of salvation which Śrī Śaṅkarācārya accepted only as a means

of salvation and they rejected the path of Jñāna and this was one of the reasons that guided the rise of these schools. Many Advaita Ācāryās who came after Śrī Śaṅkarācārya like Sureśvarācārya, Sarvajñātma-muni etc. did not completely reject the concept of Bhakti but accept the need of it. But like Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, they were also not ready to accept Bhakti as a free stream to salvation. But Madhusūdāna went a step beyond what Śrī Śaṅkarācārya had wrote and accepted Bhakti as on of the independent path to salvation.

The elements that Influence Madhusūdāna to Compose Scriptures based on Bhakti as an independent path

The question of what would be the factors that motivated him to become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and to write scriptures based on devotion points to some answers. From some texts that mention his biography³, he is said to have traveled to Navadvīp to seek refuge with Caitanya, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and the first preacher and activist of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. But not having the opportunity to meet Caitanya, he later became proficient in various subjects and became a great Advaita philosopher. Although there is no concrete evidence of this incident. But after Caitanya's disciple Rūpa Gosvāmī, it is Madhusūdāna who gains attention by recognizing bhakti as a rasa through his work Bhaktirasāyana. Also, there is no evidence for his reference to Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu or any books were wrote by Rūpa, Jīva or Sanātana Gosvāmī etc. The common factor that connected with each other is Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī's Concept of Bhakti is also based on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which the Gauḍīya Vaisnavas consider their fundamental text. Another was the challenge posed by Bhakti schools which was recognized Bhakti as the ultimate path to salvation or supreme than salvation and given equal importance to women, lower caste people etc. Recognizing the possibility that the Bhakti movement, which had great influence among the common people, might alienate Advaita from the masses, he gave a new dimension to Advaita Vedānta by integrating it with Bhakti itself. V. Rajagopalan wrote that In the synthesis of bhaktimārga and the path of knowledge he followed the famous Sarvajñātma-muni, the author of Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka, who has offered salutation to nirguṇa Brahman called Murāri in the very first verse of his work, which is a summary, in verses, of Śaṅkara's Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya.⁴ According to Sanjukta Gupta He seems to have continued the tradition of the bhakti theology of Śrīdhara and Bopadeva, (thirteenth century CE), two very important commentators on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BP) who attempted to interpret the religious position of the BP in the light of monism.⁵ Although many factors may be assumed to have influenced him thus, he succeeded in conflating Bhakti with Jñāna and presented Bhakti as an independent path to salvation.

Concept of Bhakti According to Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī

Although he composed several books based on the concept of bhakti, but Gīta-gūḍārtha-dīpikā an extensive commentary on the Bhāgavad-gītā-Śaṅkarabhāṣya and Bhaktirasāyana one of the first independent work in Advaita which often admit the independence of bhakti are two of his major

works on the basis of Concept of Bhakti.

In Bhakti-rasāyana, he considered Kṛṣṇa as Brahman. He says that bhakti can be accepted as parama-puruṣārtha, equal to mokṣa. Because by attaining mokṣa one attains the ultimate relief from sorrow and attain happiness. But at the same time one accept Bhakti get ultimate bliss and relief from sorrow. Therefore, whether Bhaktiyoga is considered within Puruṣārtha-catuṣṭaya, or considered as an independent, separate (goal), being in the form of ultimate bliss, it is always considered as Parama-puruṣārtha.

He defines Bhakti as,

“द्रुतस्य भगवद्धर्माद्वारावाहिकतां गता ।

सर्वेशे मनसो वृत्तिर्भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते ॥३॥”⁶

It is an uninterrupted flow of the mind's awareness of Lord, which arises in a mind that has become completely melted (drūta) by love for God. Just as a river reaches the ocean as unbroken just like one reaches the god through his unbroken love. Thus, the liquefied mind through subjects like kāma, Krodha etc., reaches the previous state with the termination of the subject. But the mind that enables the Bhagavad Bhakti always remains in the form of fluid and untainted.

He considered Bhakti as a Rasa. The Ācāryas of Rasa-śāstra like Bhārata etc. have considered Rati, the subject of the Gods as Bhava and not as Rasa. But it is only applicable to other Goddesses not to Kṛṣṇa, because he is the Paramātmā and Supreme bliss. As the light of the sun is more intense than the light of fireflies likewise the subject of the Bhagavata Rati, is stronger than the other subjects of Rati's.⁷ Hence he proves that pure Rati towards the God is superior to all other Rasās.

In the third ullāsa he defines rasa.

“विभावैरनुभावैश्च व्यभिचारिभिरप्युता स्थायी भावः सुखत्वेन व्यज्यमानो रसः स्मृतः ॥”⁸

The Sthayibhava which is expressed in the form of bliss after being nourished by, Vibhāva, Anubhāva and Vyabhicārībhāva is called Rasa. Taittirīya-śruti “रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वा आनन्दी भवति” propound that Rasa is Atman and that Atman is bliss. therefore, there is no locus for it. But it manifests itself in the Antaḥkaraṇa-vṛtti of Sāmājika (listener) and this is purported to be the locus of Rasa.⁹ Therefore Rasa is not a Antaḥkaraṇa-vṛtti, not any divine power (Sakti) but it's the Supreme bliss, and that Supreme bliss is actually the Brahman. Here he proves that Kṛṣṇa and Brahman is one and the same.

In Bhagavad-gītā-gūdārtha-dīpikā the 16th Verse of the 7th chapter, he clearly describes the four types of devotees by giving examples of various Characters like Peoples in Vraja, Draupadī, Uddhava, Sugrīva, Sanaka, etc. in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Among the four, the first three Ārtaḥ, Jijñāsuḥ and Arthārthī have desires, and the last one, Jñānī, is desireless. By worshiping the Lord, even these three transcend Māya. Among these, the Jñānī directly transcend Māya through the rise of wisdom. Anyone who approaches God with selfless love and devotion also included in Jñānī. the examples for a

selfless devotee being a man of Knowledge are as of Sanaka and others, as of Nārada, as of Prahlāda, as of Pṛthu, or as of Śuka. The examples for a selfless devotee with pure love are as of the Gopīs and others, or as of Akrūra, Yudhiṣṭhira, and others.¹⁰ Śiśupāla, Kaiśa, etc are constantly thought of Lord because of the fear and enmity, but due to the lack of love towards the God they were not devotees. Of these four types of devotees, Jñāni is Superior to all because he is free of all desires, unselfish deeds and his devotion is only love for God. Therefore, he is dearer to Lord. Here Madhusūdana give more importance to Love for God than the Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's concept of Ananya Bhakti.

In the twelfth chapter of Bhaktiyoga, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa in the form of a doubt whether as the seeker of liberation, should worship Saguṇa Brahman or Nirguṇa Brahman and who are the finest knowers of Yoga among them. Here Madhusūdana Sarasvatī explains the importance of Saguṇopāśanā very beautifully and analytically and his perspective on the Concept of Bhakti becomes more clearer and accurate. Kṛṣṇa answers Arjuna's doubt that For, having turned away from other objects, they pass their days and nights thinking of Me alone with their minds fixed on Me. Therefore they alone are considered to be the most perfect yogis.¹¹ Then again through the fifth Sloka he describes the importance of Saguṇopāśanā. Although the fruit and goal obtained by Saguṇopāśanā and Nirguṇopāśanā are the same, but the Saguṇopāśaka can reach his goal by an easier way than the Nirguṇopāśaka. who attains the same goal in most difficult path by fix the mind on Brahman by withdrawing it from other things. Again he illustrates the importance of Saguṇopāśana through an answer of an through an answer of an opposition that, Nirgunopasakas attain absolute supreme Bliss and Consciousness by the extermination of Maya on the other hand, the Saguṇopāśaka they attain only glory from Brahmaloka because there is no eradication of Maya. The Saguṇopāśakas, they meditate on the qualified Brahman, even without the Guru's instruction, and without the pain of continues practice of śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana, etc and by the association of Gods grace through the self-manifested Vedantavākya, one getting rid of Avidya and enjoying the opulence in Brahmaloka and attains the ultimate Kaivalya, the result of Nirguṇa Brahmanavidyā. Here he proves that Saguṇopāśanā is equally important as Nirguṇopāśanā. and by the grace of God one attains the ultimate reality. In the final chapter, he comments that, while bhakti is the means to success in the paths of both knowledge and action, it is at the same time the fruit (phala) of both, being Kṛṣṇa's highest teaching.¹²

Characteristics of Madhusūdana's Bhakti

Madhusūdhana reinforces the place of Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta by considered Bhāgavata Purāṇa as the main source as like as the Upaniṣads. Like the teachers of other Bhakti schools, Madhusūdana was also a monotheist and a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Bhakti-rasāyana, Gūḍārtha-dīpikā, etc., which he composed based on bhakti, further strengthens the monotheistic

concept of him. In his commentary, Bhagavad-gītā-gūḍārtha-dīpikā he added some beautiful verses by praising Kṛṣṇa in the end of the Chapters 9, 10 etc. These verses, which were not included in the original Bhagavad Gita, further portrait his devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Through his works which discuss the concept of Bhakti he repeatedly emphasizing the idea that Bhakti verily is an enough means to Salvation.

Madhusūdana, the Renewer of Advaita.

Madhusūdana gave a new dimension to Advaita, by digressing from the previous Advaita Acāryāss and giving importance to Bhakti as equal as the path of knowledge and presented it without any deviation from concepts of Advaita. Madhusūdana states the universality of the path of bhakti in the most emphatic terms possible: “All living beings,” he says, “are qualified for devotion.”¹³ Although he did not deviate from the main ideas of Advaita Vedanta, but he was often open to change according to the time and circumstances and often added and rejected some elements from what his teachers had said. An example of this is he emphasis on love for God in Gūḍārtha-dīpikā, which differed from what Śaṅkarācārya had said in his commentary on the Bhagavad-gītā.¹⁴

Relevance of Madhusūdana’s Concept of Bhakti

Advaita which occupies the great and unique concept of Unity Between Jīva and Brahman, even today discussing among the scholars and others, taught as a subject of study in various schools and universities and Research works, books etc. are published every were throughout in India and in various countries around the world. But the extent to which Advaita philosophy was able to influence human minds reminds as a question. Śaṅkarācārya accepted jñāna alone as the basic means of salvation, in later times most of the people could not follow Advaita Vedānta and they were attracted to other philosophies and bhakti schools. This is where the Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s concept of Bhakti comes in relevance. He accepted Kṛṣṇa as Brahman and Bhakti as an independent Parampurusartha even without harming the ideas of Advaita. His efforts to combine bhakti with Advaita Vedanta become Succeeded and he was able to influence Advaita teachers like Appayya Dīkṣita etc. who were also later combined Bhakti with Jñāna.

Reconstruction of a single Religion According to Madhusūdana’s Concept of Bhakti.

The Sixth verse of Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad States that, the wise man who perceives all beings as not distinct from his own Self at all, and his own Self as the Self of every being, he does not, by virtue of that perception, hate anyone.¹⁵ For him he recognizes the unity of existence and believes that every being is his own self then there is nothing will exist. Advaita Vedanta, which contains the essence of the Upaniṣads also reaches through the concept of Jīva Brahma Aikya to these great concepts of thought. A Jīvan Mukta who has attained Jīva-Brahma aikya can see all living beings as himself and not doing anything that harms others. In today everyone faces various inequalities in all over the world. The most important of which are the anar-

chies faces in the name of colour, Caste and religion. Although Advaita Vedanta itself contains the solution to these anarchies, but liberation from worldly life and became a Jīvanmukta is not possible for all in this age. But the ideas of Madhusūdana, who started a new renaissance by recognizing bhakti as the path to salvation, could find to be a sharp weapon against these inequalities. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Neo-Vedatins like Vivekānanda and Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru etc. introduced the concept of Bhakti Yoga and wrote many stotra works etc. to solve and aware the social insecurities of that time. But the results of their activities today are confined to a few organizations or people. Hence the need for a new religion in this 21st century is possible by one and only the Concept of Madhusūdana that “Kṛṣṇa is Brahman, one can attain that Brahman through selfless love”. Religious organizations like ISKCON have succeeded in creating a large following inside and outside of India and emerging as one of the major global devotional movements. ISKCON is a good example and a guide of how Madhusūdana’s concept of Bhakti can be spread all over the world as a religion or a movement.

Conclusion

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, the most renowned Advaita philosopher who laid more foundation for Advaita Vedanta by writing books like Advaita Siddhi, Siddhānta Bindhu, Vedānta kalpalatika etc. after Śaṅkarācārya. Also, he integrated bhakti with Advaita and marked a new way of thinking in Advaita Vedānta. Through his concept of Bhakti, one can explore how Advaita can provide a solution to the social insecurities faced today. His concept of Bhakti, which embodies the Advaita essence, will eliminate inequalities and injustices by creating a single religion throughout the world and create a new world based on Advaita thought.

Endnotes

1. Sankarācārya, Vivekachūdamani, 32
2. N. Ramesan, Preceptors of Advaita Vedānta, P. 47
3. Rekhā Vyās, Bharatīya Sahithya ke nirmātā Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, P. 8
4. V. Rajagopalan, Preceptors of Advaita vedanta, P. 258
5. Sanjukta Gupta, Advaita Vedanta and Vaisnavism, The Philosophy of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, P. 1
6. Madhusudana Sarasvati, Bhaktirasayana, 1.3
7. Ibid, 2.77
8. Ibid, 3.2
9. Ibid, 3.3
10. Swami Gambhirananda, Bhagavad Gita with the annotation Gudarthadipika, p. 514-515
11. Ibid, P. 686
12. Lance. E. Nelson, Bhakti Preempted: Madhusudana Sarasvati on Devotion for the Advaitin Renouncer, P. 59
13. Ibid, P. 58
14. Śaṅkarācārya, Srimad Bhagavad Gita Śaṅkara Bhāṣya, P. 203
15. Svāmī Śarvānanda, Īśāvāsyopaniṣad-6, P. 9

Bibliography

- Jyotsna Nigam, *Bhagavad Bhaktirasayan or Bhaktiras*, New Bharatīya book Corporation, New Delhi, 2005
 - Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī, *Śrībhagavat Bhaktirasāyanam*, Trans. By Jānardanāśāstrī Paṇḍeya, Caukhambā Vidyābhavana, Vārāṇasi 2021
 - 3. Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī, *Bhagavadgītā with the annotation Gūdārthadīpikā*, Trans. by Svāmī Gambhīrānanda, Advaita Āśrama, Kolkata, 1998
 - Rekha Vyas, *Bharatīya Sahithya ke Nirmata Madhusūdan Sarasvatī*, Sahithya Academy,
 - Raveendru Bhavan, New Delhi, 1997
 - N. Rameshan, V. Rajagopalan, *Preceptors of Advaita*, Sri Kāñcī Kāmakotī Śāṅkar Mandir, Secunderabad, 1968
 - Sanjukta Gupta, *Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism: The Philosophy of Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī*, Routledge Taylor and Francis group, London and Newyork, 2006
 - Śāṅkarācārya, Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Trans. by Madhavānanda, The Advaita Āśrama, Mayāvātī, 1921
 - Śāṅkarācārya, *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā Śāṅkarabhāṣya*, Gītā press, Gorakhpur, 2010
 - Śarvānananda, *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*, Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Maṭha, Mylapore Chennai, 1943
- Journal
- Lance E. Nelson, Bhakti preempted Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī on Devotion for the Advaitin Renouncer, *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*