

QUINTESSENCE OF THE MESSAGE OF SRIMADHVACHARYA

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A Translation of a booklet in Kannada under the title "Tattvanjali" by H.H. Sri Vishveshateertha Swamiji Pejavara Mutt, Udupi.

The advent of Sri Madhvacharya

The Indian Philosophy was passing through a state of intellectual confusion at the time of Sri Madhvacharya's advent 750 years ago.

Then, the following genre of thoughts was in currency:

- 1) Bare materialism which refuted the existence of super-sensuous objects such as the finite soul, the infinite soul, heaven and hell
- 2) A school of thought that admitted the existence of mere sentient beings and refuted the inanimate objects, that are cognisable by sense organs, in toto.
- 3) Nihilism that refuted both sentient and insentient beings.
- 4) Atheism that refuted the omniscient and the omnipotent God, though it accepted that animate and the inanimate objects and the objects perceivable and beyond perception.

The thoughtful and virtuous people, being caught in the net of these divergent thoughts and consequently being unable to know the path of truth and the means of the highest good, were perplexed. These people were eager to formulate a path of life on a true foundation after understanding the truth about the world. Sri Madhvacharya descended on the earth during the period of such confusion.

He never refuted the reality of the present life and the vast universe. He never held the view that the world is maya and therefore never made us

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averse to the world. He proclaimed that the world is real. But he cautioned to not drown in the life of material enjoyment with the view that the material world alone is real.

He analysed the structure of the spiritual world which serves as a background to the diversities of this wonderful world and which can give a shape to our present life.

Mere inanimate objects or both the animate and inanimate objects do not exhaust the world God who transcends both the inanimate and the animate beings and pervades within and without them, is the centre of the world; All the activities of the universe take place under the auspices and under the control of this great sentient power. Thus set forth Sri Madhvacharya. He enunciated the existence and the mutual relations of the inanimate objects, the finite soul and the infinite Lord known as Janardana. Vayudeva, who is known as the life energy and preceptor of the entire world. and. as Jiva par excellence, incarnated as Sri Madhvacharya under the commandment of the Lord and promulgated this message. This booklet is an attempt at introducing briefly, this great message of Sri Madhvacharya to the world

Proofs of Knowledge and the Vedas

There are three instruments to know the facts of the universe. These are called perception, Inference and verbal testimony.

We get to know the sensible objects by means of perception. We get to know about many objects, which are not known by ourselves, through the testimony of trustworthy persons or through books. They are called verbal testimony. While getting to know the objects by means of perception and verbal testimony we make use of inference as supplementary to them.

There is no other source than these three to the know the truth.

What is the method of knowing the Lord who is invisible and beyond the reach of our sense organs? If the main principle of the world is not known, our life may not have a proper foundation. Our activities would be meaningless. The whole social life would be chaotic if the spiritual principles, which have a bearing on the order and progress of the society, are not understood properly. This would lead to absence of discipline, rule of law

and motivation in the right direction and consequently life may become licentious and polluted by selfishness and may collapse at last. Though, it may be possible for us to know the external form of the world by means of perception, the same may not be helpful in knowing the spiritual truth.

Though it may be possible to know this truth by the statements of seers, how do we decide as to who is a seer? When there are hundreds of founders of schools of thought and when there are differences and contradictions in their thoughts how should we be able to decide as to who is the seer of truth? How would one fully trust these people as perfectly learned and as ones who have overcome the deficiencies and defects that are natural to human beings?

Therefore, the authorless vedas alone are the only means of teaching the spiritual truth. These vedas are not composed by anybody and therefore there is no room in them for any defect .caused by human mind. They have been flowing continuously since the time without beginning, in tradition, to future generations. They have been safely deposited in the omniscient and omnipotent Lord's mind. We should try to know the principles of universe by these vedas in the light of our experience, perception and reason

The Essence of the Lord and the Supremacy of Vishnu

God is the supreme being in the world and it is very important to know Him in our life. He is the sentient power of the Jiving, the knowledge and the activity of the universe. The world part from God is stagnant like a body without soul, like a machine without electricity. He, being the prompter of the power of the sentient and the insentient beings, is responsible for all the activities of the world.

He is the treasure-house of infinite excellences, free from all defects, the cause of creation etc of the universe. Independent and supreme, His very virtues are his sentient form. He is the perfect, blissful personality without any deficiency.

The omniscient and omnipotent Lord conducts the activities of this world by his free will using Nature, jiva and his intrinsic nature. By what name is God to be addressed? What are his forms and shape? There is no room for such disputes. We call a coconut when it contains the kernel. A mango is so called when it contains its juicy essence. Otherwise it is only a shell or a pyrene. Therefore words do not denote, primarily, the external forms of objects. They denote their inner essence.

As the Lord is the innermost essence of all entities, whom else the words can denote other than the Lord? Therefore all the words primarily denote the Lord who is the inner controlling principle and the sentient power of all the objects.

Therefore God can be addressed by any name. He is the primary meaning of all the words. When this is the case, where is the room for dispute about his name. Water assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is con-tained. Likewise, the Lord who enters within all objects and souls and controls them, would have all forms. He shines within all entities with the form of respective entities. But those forms are sentient. Though the Lord has a blissful form that is natural and beautiful, he assumes diverse and infinite number of sentient forms to regulate the world. Therefore, there is no room for dispute about God's forms too, in Madhva's school of philoso-phy.

The Lord dwells within the gods like Brahma, Rudra and Indra with the form of those very gods and therefore He is denoted by all those words. This Lord alone is the supreme diety of the universe.

Hinduism is not polytheism as believed by many. Though there is plurality of gods to govern the world, the supreme principle that regulates all these gods is one and one only. This supreme principle which is second to none is called Parabrahma, but he is particularly described by words Narayana and Vishnu, etc., these words clearly highlight his perfection and the possession of infinite attributes densely. These are His beloved and special names though he is denoted by all words. Therefore God can be prayed by any name and in any form. But we should not forget that he is perfect with infinite attributes, defectless, of the nature of pure consciousness and different from the sen-tient and the insentient beings. We should give the pre-eminent and affectionate place to such God in our life. We should under-stand him as the supreme. But, instead, we have been giving ut-most importance to objects of material enjoyment and have been living in the belief that the material pleasure is the be all and end all of life. We must understand Sri Madhvacharya's message of the supremacy of the Lord sri hari and must live a spiritual life in which the Lord occupies the pre-eminent position.

The reality of world and our duty

The spiritual life advocated by Sri Madhvacharya does not make us averse to the world. Sri Madhva has proved that this world is as much real as the Lord.

Our experience is an unmistakable proof for the reality of the things around us, which we have been using. It is not proper to brand, without reason, this unsublated experience of all an illusion. The influence, the effect, the pain, the pleasure et al produced by material objects in our life confirms the reality of the world in every step.

Besides the modern scientific research too, discovering newer and newer facts in nature, is wiping out all our doubts about the reality of the world,

Therefore we should not ignore this world and our present life in the belief that the world is illusionary.

We should welcome this world as a bridge that unites us with God and as steps to progress in spiritual path. Steps themselves are not our destination. 'But we cannot reach destination without them. Likewise, we cannot reach the Lord without means in the form of this world.

Therefore, we should understand the world as real like the Lord; we should worship him by practice and duty and please him. Thus we should accomplish the spiritual progress.

Should we, considering this world as unreal remain neutral and unconcerned towards injustice, sorrow and misery around us? Should we not, attempt to reduce sorrow and misery of people?

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The idea that the world is unreal make us insensitive to society. A tendency of indifference to any injustice or impropriety in society, to any calamity that befalls people, grows.

The acceptance of the reality of the perceptible world invests us with the courage to face the reality before our eyes and this enables us to devote ourselves to the task of relieving or reducing the distress of people

Only the acceptance of the reality of the world can inspire in us the attitude of service and duty. The reality of the world is not just a subject matter of philosophical debate. It discloses and helps understand the Infinite attributes and power of the Lord who conducts the activities of

creation, protection, regulation etc of the world. It also inculcates in us a sense of awareness about our duties in this world-created by the Lord,

That is why, Sri Madhvacharya, who proclaimed the reality of the world, has reminded with greater emphasis one's personal and social duties. He has propounded the' need for doing one's duty all along the life till the accomplishment of emancipation. He has enjoined to carry out one's prescribed duties for the sake of livelihood as the worship of God. He has proclaimed that one should do the social service compulsorily as payment of tax to God, He has given the prime place to the lofty human efforts along with the pure devotion to God. He has reconciled the divine grace and human effort and has thus accomplished the happy reconciliation of spiritual and material life.

Difference and Gradation

Another important aspect of Sri Madhva's teachings is difference and gradation. This aspect in Sri Madhva's philosophy has given rise to a considerable misunderstanding. Many feel that aspect thought of difference and gradation causes the growth of disunity and conflict in the' society. But, in fact, there will be no room for this kind of misunderstanding, when the exact nature of difference and Gradation propounded by Sri Madhvacharya is understood

The inanimate body or the sense organs or the mind is not the I , that is, soul. We should not develop inertia under the impression that the very body itself or the very sense organ itself is 'I'. Similarly, we should not submerge ourselves in the illusion that the perfect God who created the universe is 'I' and as a result of such illusion, we should not forget our place and duty in arrogance. When we understand our personality that is different from that of the inanimate objects and from that of the Lord we can identify our exact role and duty in the world and make progress.

The doctrine of five-fold difference of Sri Madhva-charya ; at enlightening jiva of his personality as different from those of other jivas the Lord and the insentients. This would not to any kind of disunity or conflict.

Though Jiva has his own personality, he should not ignore the prevailing spiritual relation with God and other jivas. There everyone should conduct a harmonious life with God and all others, especially with virtuous people. Therefore Sri Madhva's doctrine of dualism is not against the harmonious life in society.

This doctrine of dualism, which propounds the existence supreme Lord, the sentients and the insentient-ents, give us inspiration for devotion to Lord, elevation of the soul. co-operation and duty

The difference between one object and the other is a truth vouched by modern science. Difference between and variety among objects manifest more and more with more and analysis and investigation.

Sri Madhavacharya has made only a scientific analysis of the nature of sentient and insentient beings. In addition he has shown a way of social harmony in our daily life along with this natural difference.

The true philosopher would not black out the real state of the world and take us to the world of fantasy. The doctor explains the teal condition of the body and gives necessary guidance for a healthy life. Similarly , a philosopher explains the real state of the world and educates us about the way of living a meaningful life with reconciliation with the world of diversity.

Sri Madhvacharya's doctrine of dualism, having propounded the difference and diversity in jivas and the inanimate objects and having propounded the supremacy of God who is

Emancipation and its pathway

It has been stated already that the perishable and inanimate body or the subtle mind that is subject to change and perturbation is not jiva. Jiva is eternal. He is not subject to change and perturbation. He is of the nature of sentience.

The infinite Brahman itself has lapsed into the state of jiva on account of its association with avidya. Thus opines a school of thought. The scriptures proclaim that Brahman is defectless, omniscient and omnipotent. Is it plausible that such all pervasive Brahman is locked in the inanimate body and is subjected to the tragedy of sorrow and perturbation? How come a perfect entity lapses into imperfection? Can the inert avidya wield its power on the omnipotent Lord too?

Therefore jiva is neither an inanimate object nor the perfect Lord. He has got his own, unique personality, full of bliss and knowledge.

His beautiful personality of virtues is veiled by the inanimate principles like avidya Virtues like knowledge, bliss, etc of jiva are hidden under the

cover of avidya as the power and light of the burning charcoal are hidden Under the cover of ashes. When the wind of God's grace blows, the beautiful personality of jiva shines as the intensity of fire manifests after the ashes are blown away by the wind. Emancipation is not acquiring any kind of knowledge, bliss and power from outside. But it is a discovery of our hidden personality.

Bondage is the belief that the objects and their properties which do not belong to us, are our essential form. The white cloth gets dirty with the contact with dirt. The dirt itself is not its true form. When washed, the cloth shines in its original form. We too are in the similar state. Our essential form is hidden on account of our contact with the inanimate things and we have acquired the dirty form of passion, hatred, sorrow and helplessness. When we are washed by the flowing water of devotion to God, we will get rid of this dirt and discover our auspicious personality.

Sorrow, ignorance, ego and infatuation which we are experiencing are not our essential form. These are mere sloughs that have masked us. This mistaken judgement, of considering the objects which do not belong to us as our essential form and inseparable attribute, is bondage. Emancipation is discovering the real and blissful personality after casting off the slough of nature

Mukti naijasukhanubhutiramala*

This is the pleasant message of Sri Anandatirtha.

God's grace is essential for this. Our ability has been sunk down by the attack of prakrti. Our ability and efforts are not enough to get rid of this avidya which has sunk down our spirit and which has suppressed our soul. The release from this bondage is possible only through the grace of God who is the controller of all sentient and insentient and who has no peer in the world. The whole-hearted devotion to the Lord is the only means of this grace.

For the realisation of God, we have to acquire the knowledge of the supreme God, who is the central point of the universe, by the study and contemplation of scriptures and purification of our life by good conduct, dutifulness and selfless service to society. With this knowledge, we should develop a deep love in God.

Then, we can realise God by means of meditation and devotion which is a harmonious blend of the said knowledge and love.

After the vision of God, the devotion will be elevated to great heights when we can forget ourselves in the process of loving Him. Then only, we will deserve his Grace par excellence and consequently will get rid of the bondage of the primeordial avidya and will enjoy our natural and beautiful personality.

This is the nature of emancipation and its means taught by Sri Poornaprajna i.e. Sri Madhvacharya.

Gradation in emancipation

Jivas will not be equal even after emancipation, because emancipation is the realisation of our real personality.

We experience difference and diversity in the life of bond age because there is fundamental difference and diversity in the(* "Emancipation is the experience of one's own natural and pure bliss") in the very essence of all the Jivas.

How did the present difference and diversity originate if the nature of the essence of all the jivas is same originally? It is not possible to say that the Lord, who is viceless, has brought about difference and inequality in this world without any reason. That the origin of this difference and inequality is within ourselves is scientific.

Difference is the nature and the tastes of each jiva is responsible for the present diversity in the world.

Though the cloud rains equally on an plants, difference occurs in the taste of fruits in accordance with the intrinsic nature of seeds. Similarly, though God lets his power flow equally on all, the intrinsic nature of jivas is responsible for the diversity we see in the world.

All will not be equal after-emancipation because all of us will experience our intrinsic nature.

The effort of some souls for emancipation is of long duration and strenuous while that of others is shorter duration and less strenuous.

If the result, i.e emancipation, of such different efforts, is equal it is neither proper nor scientific.

Therefore, the finite souls would never get, ever after emancipation, the qualities and grandeur of the Lord.

There is difference, even in the state of emancipation, in the knowledge and bliss of different souls in proportion with their effort.

In spite of this difference, all derive a feeling of perfection. When vessels of different size and shape are filled with water all the vessels are full. Likewise, all jivas in spite of difference in their intrinsic nature in the state of emancipation, are perfect. We can see a scientific harmony of perfection and gradation in this arrangement

The doctrine of devotion is the last rung of spiritual knowledge

Many think that the doctrine of devotion propounded by Sri Madhvacharya is the first step of spiritual advancement. "Dualism prevails in the state of ignorance only. Then, we treat the path of devotion consisting of worship, prayer and contemplation. This attitude of devotion finally takes us to the peak spirituality" This is their view; But this is not correct. The doctrine of devotion taught by Sri Madhvacharya is not the first step of spirituality, but it is the last.

Materialism, which holds that the world of matter is everything; that there is nothing supernatural beyond the material world, is the first stage of inquiry into truth.

The universe does not consist of mere inanimate objects. There are sentient beings too which are quite different from insentients. This is the second stage of inquiry. This is helpful in turning the people, immersed in materialism, to spirituality. The Sankya, Jaina, Buddhist, Advaita and Bhatta schools come under this second stage of inquiry into truth.

This investigation, which turned from insentients to sentients, reaches its last stages when it advances into further depth and discovers the existence of the supreme soul that is different from sentients and insentients, the subtle and central force of the universe.

Sri Madhvacharya's doctrine of devotion has a beautiful and philosophical analysis of this supreme soul and on this foundation it has formulated the style and ethics of our life.

Summary-Four aphorisms

1. The Lord Vishnu alone, who is the primary meaning of all the words, who has infinite and auspicious attributes and has a beautiful body of knowledge and bliss, is the supreme entity in the universe.

2. There is mutual difference and diversity in all the animate and the inanimate objects of the world. There is intrinsic difference too in their individuality.

3. As this perishable world is created by God it is real even as God is. We should do our duty as service to this God. The creator of this vast world and endowed with infinite power.

4. Emancipation is the manifestation of our personality of knowledge and bliss. Devotion and duty are its means.

The essence of the philosophy of Sri Madvacharya is capsuled in these four aphorisms. Let us try to understand and digest this correctly and enrich our life, thus.

This book is reprinted and freely distributed on the occasion of Akila Bharatha Madhwa Mahamandala Golden Jubilee Function. held in Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha, Bangalore and Udupi from 6-1-2003 to 12-1-2003

Courtesy : Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee Akila Bharatha Madhwa Mahamandala , Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha, Katriguppa Main Road , Bangalore - 28