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Delineation of Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu bhakti in Dvādaśa stotra

Dr. RAKHY

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ABSTRACT

Dvaita philosophy of Madhvācārya is a popular one till today and he is regarded as the founder of Vaishnava tradition of Indian philosophy. He has also shown the world that through devotion one can be blessed with the love of Lord Viṣṇu and also attain liberation. As a prolific writer, Madhvācārya wrote a number of works, of which thirty-seven have been collectively called Sarvamūla. Among his independent works Dvādaśa stotra is very famous. It is believed to have been composed by Madhva at the time of his acquisition of the image of Sri Kṛṣṇa, which is installed in the Matha of Udupi. According to Madhva Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Reality. He equates Brahman, the Supreme Being with Lord Viṣṇu. He states that Viṣṇu is not just any other Lord, but rather the singularly all-important Supreme Reality. Viṣṇu is always the primary object of worship, with all others regarded as subordinate to Him. In this stotra he also praises Lord Viṣṇu and explains the importance of Bhakti. An attempt is made in this paper to portray Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu Bhakti in Dvādaśa stotra.

KEYWORDS

Dvādaśa stotra ,Viṣṇu

RESEARCH PROBLEM

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METHODOLOGY

analytical,descriptive

Introduction

Dvaita philosophy of Madhvācārya is a popular one till today he is regarded as the founder of Vaishnava tradition of Indian philosophy. He has also shown the world that through devotion one can be blessed with the love of Lord Viṣṇu and also attain liberation. As a prolific writer, Madhvācārya wrote a number of works, of which thirty-seven have been collectively called Sarvamūla. Among his independent works Dvādaśa stotra is very famous. It is believed to have been composed by Madhvācārya at the time of his acquisition of the image of Sri Kṛṣṇa, which is installed in the Matha of Udupi.

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Delineation of Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu bhakti in Dvādaśa stotra

Dvādaśa stotra is a series of 12 cantos composed by Madhvācārya, the greatest among the leading Vaisnavite philosophers. These 'twelve' cantos are in praise of Lord Viṣṇu and is said to abridge the doctrine of Dvaita to a great deal of depth. This work contains 126 verses. According to Dasgupta¹, it contains 130 verses. Viṣṇu, the Supreme soul, the world and the individual souls are accepted as real entities in Dvaita. One of the major contributions of Madhvācārya to Indian philosophy is the firm assertion concerning the identification of Brahman, the Supreme Being with Lord Viṣṇu. Madhvācārya attempts to synthesize the Lord of religion and the Absolute of philosophy through Bhakti. It is the eternal love for God with full awareness of His eminence.

Viṣṇu as the God of protection must have been worshipped by humans in this earth in some shape or other from time immemorial. Viṣṇu, is a great Lord of the Hindu trinity. The arjans who spoke Sanskrit coined the word 'Viṣṇu'². The term Viṣṇu is derived from the root Viṣ ie; to pervade. It refers to one who is all pervasive in time, space and metaphysical attributes of Reality, omnipresence and infinite blissfulness. Viṣṇu is the attribute of the Lord Nārāyaṇa³, who resides in water. Viṣṇu is said to lounge on a sea of milk or water as 'Nara' means 'water' in Sanskrit. Manu mentions that spirit of God moving in water is called Nārāyaṇa. Madhvācārya states that Viṣṇu is always the primary entity of worship, and all others are considered as inferior to Him.

In the first canto of Dvādaśa stotra the following points are mentioned regarding Lord Viṣṇu.

- Lord Viṣṇu's glories are revealed by the Vedas.
- His other names like Vāsudeva, Śrīpati, Iṣa and others are depicted.
- Even Brahmā and other deities have not been triumphant in enumerating all the attributes of the Lord.
- Viṣṇu's graceful and warm-hearted elegance directed towards the devotee puts an ending to the vicious circle of transmigration in which the latter is caught and brings about his absolution.

स्मरेत यामनीनाथ सहस्रामतिकान्तमित् ।

भवतापापनोदीड्यं श्रीपतेः मुखपङ्कजम् ॥ ८ ॥

Canto II explains the chief aim of Lord Viṣṇu ie; to fulfil the longing of the devotee. Viṣṇu is devoid of gunas namely sattva, rajas and tamas and having auspicious attributes are mentioned. He is considered as the remover of nescience and the supreme among Brahmā, Śiva and others and is considered as the creator of Universe. He is regarded as the controller and doer of all and is not created by anybody. Viṣṇu's embodiment is

gazed at by Indira's profound, devotion-dense, divine, side-glances, whose goal lies in accomplishing our aspirations.

चदिचदिभेदं अखलिं वधियाधाय भुञ्जते ।

अव्याकृतगुहस्थाय रमाप्रणयनि नमः ॥ ३ ॥

Canto III is a summary of Madhvācārya's teachings. This canto exemplifies that Lord Viṣṇu alone is Supreme and alone is the preceptor. He is the father, mother and the refuge of the Universe. No one is equal to Hari. "Bahavah purusah purusapravaro haririthyavathath svayameva harih"⁴. "Souls are multitudinous, among the sentient Hari is the Supreme". The devotee is exhorted to give up all the attachments in the world and must concentrate on Hari who is the embodiment of external happiness.

कुरु भुङ्क्ष्व च कर्म नजिं नयितं हरपादवनिम्रधया सततं ।

हररिव परो हररिव गुरुः हररिव जगत्पतिमातृगतः ॥ १ ॥

Madhvācārya defines Bhakti as the eternal love for God. "Snehapurvakamanusandhanam dhruva smritirbhaktih"⁵. There can be no real devotion to Hari without a real sense of moral purity, sincerity of purpose and detachment from worldly happiness. Bhakti is considered as the only panacea for getting rid of worldly troubles. Purity of life is the outcome of Viṣṇu Bhakti and Viṣṇu Jnana. Viṣṇu is called by various names like Hari, Govinda, Madhava, Damodara, Kṛṣṇa etc:-

In the IVth canto Madhvācārya vindicates the visible, sensible and intelligible world. World is the manifestation of divine thought. Lord Viṣṇu has many wonders and his omnipotence represents Supremacy. Removal of our internal enemies such as passion, lust, anger etc:- is a sinequa non to the act of Bhakti to Lord Viṣṇu.

नजिपूर्णसुखामतिबोधतनुः परशक्तरिनन्तगुणः परमः ।

अजरामरणः सकलार्तहिरः कमलापतरींङ्ग्यतमोऽवतु नः ॥ १ ॥

Vth canto begins with an invocation to Vasudeva, as the twelve forms of Lord starting from Keśava to Dāmodarā are praised. It is the Vāsudeva form of Viṣṇu that brings about final liberation of the soul. It is said that there is no difference between the original form of Viṣṇu and his manifested forms in various incarnations.

गोवन्दि गोवन्दि पुरन्दर वन्दे स्कन्द सनन्दन वन्दति पाद ।

वशिष्णु सृजशिष्णु ग्रसशिष्णु वविन्दे कृष्ण सदुष्ण वधशिष्णु सुधृष्णो ॥ ४ ॥

In the VIth canto Madhvācārya explains the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu like Matsya, kurma, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, Srirāmā, Balarāmā, Paraśurāmā, Srikrṣṇa and Kalki are explained.

मत्स्यकरूप लयोदवहिरन् विदेवनित्र चतुरमुखवन्द्य ।

कूर्मस्वरूपक मन्दरधारन् लोकवधारक देववरेण्य ॥ १ ॥

The VIIth canto is devoted to the glorification of the divine consort of Viṣṇu ie; Lakshmi.

वश्वस्थितिप्रिळयसर्गमहावभूतिवृत्तप्रिकाशनयिमावृत्तिबिन्धमोक्षाः ।

यस्या अपाङ्गलवमात्रत ऊर्जति सा श्रीः यत्कटाक्षबलवत्यजतिं नमामि ॥ १ ॥

The whole process of creation, sustenance and destruction of the Universe, fortune and bliss are all regulated by the benign grace of Lakshmi who derives all her greatness from Viṣṇu.

Viṣṇu is proclaimed by all the Vedas and is the subject matter of discussion among the scholars and is the fulfiller of all that is sought after by the devotees. This is wonderfully mentioned in the VIIIth canto.

सृष्टसिंहारलीलावलिआततं पुष्टषाड्गुण्यसद्वगिरहोल्लासनिम् ।

दुष्टनःशेषसंहारकर्मोदयतं हृष्टपुष्टातशिष्टि (अनुशष्टि) प्रजासंश्रयम् ।

प्रीणयामो वासुदेवं देवतामण्डलाखण्डमण्डनं प्रीणयामो वासुदेवम् ॥ २ ॥

Madhvācārya says that our life is a gift and a duty. Therefore, all our actions and thoughts have the worthiest aim of gratifying Viṣṇu who, in fulfilment of the devotees committed total surrender, showers grace leading to beatific vision.

The ten incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu are praised again and again in the IXth canto. Madhvācārya explained this again because he wants to establish the fact that there is no fundamental difference between the real and the incarnated forms of the Lord. Viṣṇu is considered as the import of the holiest philosophical debate, immaculate, ever shining prime cause of the Universe, source of unfolding and decadence of the entire world and the root cause of transcendental ecstasy.

अखलिजनविलिय परसुखकारण परपुरुषोत्तम भव मम शरणम् ।

शुभतम कथाशय परमसदोदति जगदेककारण रामरमारमण ॥ १५ ॥

In the Xth canto Madhvācārya is praising Viṣṇu again and again by considering him as the surpasser of trigunas, unique supporter of all, bestower of boons, contriver of causes, giver of death and life, possessor of impeccable glory, omnipotent etc:-Gleams of euphorial of articulation can be seen in this canto leave an ineradicable feeling on the mind of bibliomaniacs.

Again, Viṣṇu is praised in the XIth canto by Madhvācārya. Viṣṇu is considered as the source of all divinities and is free from infirmities. Viṣṇu is proclaimed everywhere in the Vedas and is depicted as the destroyer of the delusion of the virtuous.

सर्वदेवादिवस्य वदिरतिमहत्तमः ।

आनन्दस्य पदं वन्दे ब्रह्मेन्द्रादिअभविन्दतिम् ॥ ३ ॥

Madhvācārya concludes this canto with a fervent hope that the devotee who recites the hymns may attain the state of blessedness, the highest goal of all human endeavors.

In the XIIth canto the recital of the prayer rises to a crescendo. Madhvācārya is asking to Lord Viṣṇu to shower down the moonlight of bliss. Atlast Madhvācārya brings up that there is no other deity superior to Lord Viṣṇu and none is equal to him. Verily, he excels the host of all sentient selves.

सुन्दरीमन्दरिगोवन्दि वन्दे ।

आनन्दतीर्थ परानन्दवरद ॥ २ ॥

FINDING AND CONCLUSIONS

In order to understand the various schools of Vedanta the Dvaita school of Vedanta is most popular till today. Madhvācārya is regarded as the founder of Vaishnava tradition of Indian thought. As a prolific writer, Madhva wrote a number of works, of which thirtyseven have been collectively called Sarvamūla. Among his works Dvādaśa stotra is much popular even today. In this stotra he exemplifies the true spirit of modesty and sublimity by commanding that every individual shall consider always himself as a servant at the feet of Viṣṇu, who is the embodiment of all perfection. Lord Viṣṇu is omniscient, omnipotent, perfect, eternal, extremely subtle and immutable. He also says that purity of life is the result of true devotion and knowledge.

The idea of a supreme personal God esteemed as the creator and regulator of the world as the guide and the liberator of the souls serves as a different psychological need as far as Dvaita metaphysics is concerned. Madhva harmonises religious, ethical and philosophical views while depicting his concept of Viṣṇu in Dvādaśa stotra. Though the metaphysical talents reflect pluralistic trend his theistic concept is monistic in nature.

It is here that devotional stotras like Dvādaśa stotra help us to regain our balance. Fulfilment can be approached in many ways. Of these Bhakti is the easiest and best. And to deepen the feeling of devotion Madhva who is devotion embodied can be our able guide.

END NOTES

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