BHAKTI – SADHANA- BHAKTIYOGA

The Lord in the Song Celestial states that bhakti is the only thing that can lead the devotee to realisation: to see, and to enter into the Divine. It is the rājayogā; rājavidyā rājaguhyam pavitam itdam uttamam I pratyakṣāvagama dharmyam susukham kartum avyayam I/9.2

Rāmānuja's bhakti is a form of knowledge; which results form the growth of jn̄āna. It needs the practice of the aṣṭāngas of yarna – niryama – āsana - prāṇāyāma - pratyma - pratyma – pratyāhāra - dhāraṇa – dhyāna and samādhi. Caitanya also holds that knowledge precedes bhakti. Sraddha is an important ingredient of bhakti. Jn̄āna-Karma-Bhakti is the proper order of the yogas.

Integral Bhakti-the prable of the three ālśvārs.

Bhakti with its ten-angas practiced by Bhakti – sāra ālśvār. Ātmanivedanam is the most important fulfillment in the path which leads to tanmaya – experience of inseparable oneness which is pure rapturous delight.

Śaraṇāgati prapatti begins with ātma-samarpana, surrender due to the extreme condition of helplessness, kārpaṇya. The six-fold nature of prpatti. Illustration of the prpatti-mārga by Kulaśekhara. He also exploits the methods of nāyaki (kāntā-bhāva) and vātsalya-bhāva through tanmaya.

Toṇdaradippodi and Tiruppāṇ ālśvārs develop bhakti through dāsya to God and God's devotees.

Viṣṇu Citta Āḷvar approaches the vātsalya0bhāva through tanmya. Āndāḷ seeks the direct route of nāyaki-bhāva(withoug tanmaya). St. śaṭhakopa accepts the nāyaki bhāva (Kāntā-bāva and madhura bhava)

Ācāryas Yāmuna and Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika follow the Gītā mode of bhakti and prpatit-prpatti which governs and divineses all yoga by making bhakti not only a sādhana but a sādhya or phalabhakti.

All worship is of the five fold Divine. It is of the general types: namely the amūrta(avyakta) nature which is that of Para, vyūha and Antaryāmi. These are difficult to meditate on or surrender to though intuitively apprehensible as the Supreme person beyond all categories, and as One. Since these are difficult for mediation with the mind, the worship of the Avatār forms is welcomed. The pratīka worship of the Arcā is included in the Mūrta form. Pratīka means that which is turned towards the individual devotee. The Arcā can be said to be the Form of the Divine turned towards the indivual devotee, who thus becomes a worshippable object to which one should surrender. The first three forms cannot be represented by pratīka even as the Vedānta Sūtras (IV.i.4) Na prati ke na hi sah :states. The last two are capable of being worshipped with Ārādhana and pleased by personal devotion. Āḷvārs and Ācāryas revealed in this service of the Divine.

According to Śaiva Siddhānta the worship of the Divine is of the mūrta as well as amūrta form. Through crayā (dāsya), kriyā (upāsana), Yoga and jñāna mārga one can approach the Divine. Vīraśaiva worship of the Divine includes the mūrta as well as the amūrta.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā states clearly and unequivocally that there is no other way towards Him except devotion: bhaktyā tvananyayā śakyam. This is the rājavidyā and rājayoga. This is of the form of constant meditation on the Divine other as avyakta (amūrta) which is rather difficult or as vyakta (mūrta) which is easier. It should be sole and exclusive meditation, exclusive of all selfishness or self-interests or of any individual or power. Ekānta bhakti is of the form of dhruvānusmṛit. It expresses itself as the worship or offering of anything,

flower, or leaf or fruit or water. It is surrender to God that can save, a surrender that is to be entirely unreserved and complete. Every act has to be dedicated to God and done for HIspleasure and enjoyment. Knowledge of oneself, and of one's duties according to one's station and birth, have only one purpose, the devoted offering of all works and fruits to God (nyāsa). This leads to greater and purer and higher devotion to God in His other manifestations and presences, till one sees God in all and as All and as the Self of all (śarva-śarĩrĩ). Thus the steps of spiritual ascent are knowledge. Action and bhakti-yogas. Jn̂āna and karma are interdependent even in human conduct. Trial and error which characters our actions finally aim at knowledge through (blind) action to action that is informed by knowledge. They mutually correct and increase each other's efficiency and skill. (yogah karmasu kaualam). Jn̂āna karama samuccaya vāda pleads for this. Combined practices of jn̂āna and karma, (vidya and avidya) is counseled by the Vedic Rṣis[1].

Vidyān̂ca and avidyān̂ca yas tad Vedo ubhayam saha |
Avidyayā mṛtyum tĩrtvā vidyayā amṛtam aśnute ||

Avidyā being taken for karma (ritual or rite prescribed by the śāstras). Vidyā being taken for knowledge (either of the sciences or of God), the two must be practiced together. There can be no disjunction between theory (knowledge) and practice (karma): they are not to be taken as two different sciences. Much of the distressing conflict in modern times arises form this disjunction.

Bhakti arises from the growing knowledge of Divine through practice of His presence. Śrĩ Rāmānuja thus speaks of bhakti as of the form of Knowledge: śemuṣĩ bhakti-rūuā[2]; Caitanya also held that bhakti succeeds knowledge rather than precedes it. This point requires some clarification. The need for devotion in action or worship is well-known. But the devition is to the truth or tne knowledge; the performance must be precise and exact in order to yield the result that is

sought. Indeed raddhā meant at the beginning this loyalty to precision, not so much a belief in the process or theory as

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[1] Andham tamah praviśanti ye vidyām upāsate I tate bhūya iva to tamo ya u vidyāyāg ratāḥ || Anyad evāhur vidyayānyad āhur adviyayā I iti śuśruma dhīrā ṇām ye nas tad vyācacakṣire ||

The same relation can be developed between jn̄āna and faith: faith leads to jn̄āna and jn̄āna illumines the (blind) faith and leads to further faith and so on till the two coincide and become one.

[2] Śrī Bhāṣya; opening verse.

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such. The test of a theory lies in verifying it without committing any errors in observation or inference. The knowledge may be at the stage of a hypothesis but the hypothesis demands verification and proof. In this sense, then, theory and practice demand an overall mental conative state of faith, bhakti in this sense is not an affective state, but a conative stagte of mind. It is a tendency to clear and effective verification of the knowledge. The more we find it to be true in the verifications, the more we have belief and faith in its truth.

Thus the Vedic Ṛṣi had equated Medhā, śraddhā and Sarasvati. The most important ingredient of bhakti is śraddhā which is suffused with knowledge. True knowledge then is that which grants the knowledge of God, and His experience is suffused with bhakti, is itself form of bhakti. Thus when we heat that some grat writers have pleaded that knowledge alone grants kaivalya or freedom (jn̄ānad eva kaivalyam), it is this integral knowledge that is meant, knowledge that is of the fomr of bhakti.

Further bhakti that is not manifested in works and worship of the Divine is not real integral bhakti. Bhakti is devotional knowledge and all knowledge is expressed in works. But some great thinkers have stated that bhakti is a

substitute for works, even as it is a substitute for knowledge. Indeed the goal of life according to them is to be freed from all works and all types of samsāric bonds which enforce works. All works are due to ignorance and once knowledge is got then everything is abolished-works and bhakti to. I this view clearly considers that ignorance is the cause of wors: but the works that bind are only those that are performed with kāma: which are propelled by tṛṣṇā which are sustained by ignorance of the true nature of one sale and one's destiny. As the Iśāvāsyopaniṣad states it, such karmas as are performed with the knowledge that all is of the Lord, pervaded by the Lord, and as such belong to Him alone will not stain the individual. This truth the Great Divine Teacher Śrĩ Kṛṣṇa has stated luminously as niṣkāma-karma. Far from binding and clinging to the individual they unbind and leave the individual free from all the fruits and results of the actions; they help cross over death. But the faith in this is necessary: this is in truth the meaning of dharjma: the performance of dharma requires devotion to the highest state of Being transcendent to any limited state of being – the nirvāna. One is asked to take refuge in the Highest, the Teacher, the Buddha, with the faith that they call save. Btu such a devotion is to be constantly practically assisted by action, right action, and so on. Thus bhakti is a strenuous path[1] which can be full-fledged only when it is integrated with knowledge of God, of oneself as one is and as one ought to be, and with works that express this recognition of one's duty.

This wonderful truth of an integral bhakti is illustrated by an episode in the lives of the earliest Āḷvārs, the saints of Śrĩ Vaiṣṇavism – Three Āḷvārs namely Poygai, Bhūtattār and Pey, wandering in different directions, it is stated, once met in a particular house in a corridor. Thy entered into it one by one, as there was heavy rain outside. It had lying space for one, sitting space for two, and standing space fur three. When all

[1] Yatindramata Dī̃pika: Bhaktiyogo nāma yamaniyamāsana-prā ṇāyāmapratyāhāradhāraṇānasamādhi rūpāṣṭāṇgavān…..

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the three had assembled and were pressed together they became aware of a Fourth invisible but verily present, and beheld Him gradually each according to His search, perhaps. The first Āḻār perceived God through his knowledge of the transcendent-para-jn̄ña:[1] the second Āḻvār through maturing knowledge which had passed on to the stage of parabhakti[2], but the third saw the Divine Auspiciousness through his parama-bhakti[3], The last gave a description of the vision of the transcendent form difficult to behold. We can see that this parable (or rather incident which does duty for a parable) shows that Jn̄āna, Karma and Bhakti are absolutely necessary to each other, and each one of them, though capable of giving us ultimate knowledge of Brahman, does not give the entire nature of Brahman to us. Further we can see that they lead us on form one to the other. When all the three meet, then each beholds the Divine uniquely. The philosophical understanding of Poygai gets its luminous vision in the perception of the First Cause.

The second Āḻvār sees that this devotion has been able to make the 'melted soul' perceive the Divine, whereas the third Āḻvār perceives in a V8ision the twon – Divine (divyadamptai)

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[1] Deeming the word as bowl, the full sea as ghee, the fierce rayed Sun as the wick flame, I have twined a garland of speech for the feet of Him who wields the red flaming discus, so that there might be freedom from the ocean of misery.

[2] Devotion as lamp-bowl, aspiration as ghee, the mind that has melted out of delight as the wick, the melt in soul have I lighted the bright flame of devotion to Nārāyana, in the revealed Tamil language in verse.

[3] The Mother have I seen in the Lord ocean-hued: That Form of Golden a splendour have I seen: that Form radiant Sun-like have I beheld; ….

Accessible only to the supreme transcendent devotion (parama-bhakti). This bhakti is not only that which grants the Vision of the most wonderful Form of the Divintiy but also that which reveals all gods and mean and all in His Body even as in the Viśraūpa darśana of the Cosmic Virāt Puruṣa. there is thus an intimate connection between jn̄āna and bhakti.

Bhakti-Sāra yogi or simpley Sārayogi is the name of the fourth Āḷvāṛ. He was firstly a great philosopher—the logion. He was a great investigator into the nature of the First Cause. He indeed was loyal to the texts of the Vedas and the Āgamas. His first verse in his work entitled Nān-mukhan-Tiruvandādi almost speaks about his accepting the Bhārata version of the origin of Rudra Śiva from Aniruddha, the fourth vyūha of Brahman (Para vāsideva): Nārāyaṇa begot the four-faced: the four faced on being the first creature, himself begot Śankara:.. 'Who knows as I do the supreme causal substance of the Universe, the true Being enjoyable of all creatures; He is the incomparable Person in the Waters lying on the ocean of milk and a Śrī̃ranga, and who slept on the Leaf (at pralaya)' (N.T. 1 and 3). Thus the Āḷvār has beheld Him in three forms – the transcendent, immanent creator, destroyer and redeemer. God is to be known as the Supreme Creator whose creatures we ar: the attainment of God is not possible though tapas, knowledge or works only- but by His grace (NT 30) echoing the Upaniṣads : yam esa vr nute tena labhyah: He points out that tapas perhaps grants godhoold but not liberation (N.T. 6 and 53) 'I hare no the God except Rāma, the destroyer of Lankā of the asuras. Do not deem as fit to be attained śiva and other gods, who being wrathful have not the ultimate godly nature though they have achieved God – state. Thus deva jātitva (superman-hood) is not to be identified with godhood. At another place he asks whether 'he who has three eyes knows thee!' almost suggesting that even yoga-pratyakṣa or intuitive vision cannot perceive the inner and fuller nature of the Divine ineffable. It is beyond all comprehension[1]. Śrī̃ Kṛṣṇa in the Gita says thea t he who knows God (his divine births and divine activities – Janma Karma ca me divyam yo vetti tattvataṭaḥ) is

one who transcends all: and at another place he says that he who knows the Divine as the Puruṣotama is a kṛtakṛya. Bhaktisāra following this clue as well as the Pāṇcarātra shows that the incarnations and forms of the Divine are not human births at all, subject to karma and ignorance, but forms taken out of dayā or grace (love). All the statuses of the Divine are divine, free, complete and ineffable.

Thus the āḷvār following the view hymns thus:

One person : in all four persons. Being thus the enjoyable Being and the person realised through merit and the person of manifold manifestation forms, O First Lord lying on the serpent in the milk ocean and beyond it, Thou art the Transcedent Special (Ineffable)(Form. (Tirucchandaviruttam 17).

To know such a five = fold Single Being bhakti is necessary. It is a ten-fodl rope by which the mind ties itself to God. 'O Lord'

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[1] Ṛg V.IV.i.7 (and X.53.5) Threefold are those supreme births of this Divine Force that is in this world; they are true, they are desirable. He moves three wide-overt within the Infinite, and shines pure-luminous, fulfilling …'

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he says 'decorated with hopeful tulsi-garland even though I attain the blessed ineffable on reaching Heaven, on separation from Thy feet, the love of Thee which binds my mind to Thee with ten-fold rope[1] firmly will itself become happniess'.

It is, however, God alone not human effort who can grant the utter felicity of vision and love and jn̄7na and freedom from samsāra. The ineffable magician alone must help man' cries out the Āḷvār (TCGV. 91,92). There is a great recognition too of the several worlds of Gods which are gained by the bhakti to

those powers or through sacrifices. But sāyujya with the Ultimate Person which is the self of all personalities is the aim, the goal and the parama purruṣārtha:

'Though one attains the things of the world of Brahmā blest with indestructible prosperity, and the things of the world of Hara replete with power of all destruction, and the things of the world of Indra thousand-eyed, and the fullest happiness that is the sign of the highest Godhead, should not the mind seek out that happiness of being united to Thee alone? (TCV. 18)

Love in bhakti seeks union not for getting the benefits of sacrifices and tapas. It is not the happiness depending on the loka (world or vision) and residence in such lokas (worlds) but the union with the supreme Being.

The most sedate and clear bhakti is thus expouned by

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[1] Bhagāvata mentions : śravaṇam, etc., numbering eight. Kāntabhāva and Tanmaya are the two added by the Āḷvār.

Bhakti –sāra. In his compositions we find the fine mingling of knowledge with the bhakti till it reaches the exquisite realisation of the Highest Being and union with Him. such a union grants the vision of the Divine in His Integral Fullness which reveals the ever-present presence of His manifold Forms (personalities) which are different from the gods of the pantheon. Such a realisation is the apprehension of ht divine which is indeed later conformed to by every other God on the significant pattern of the Divine Nature. We see here the echoes of the Śiva-Śakti dorctrien internalized rather than as subordination of Śakti to Śiva or Śakti. Nor should we contemplate the doctrine that Lakṣmi is not a śakti but rather a soul that has risen to the most exalted state of a power of the Divine even as the other gods are considered to be different powers of the Divine. The three āḷvārs especially the last, Pey āḷvār who is considered to have initiated

Bhaktisāra had instructed the inalienable presence of the Śrī̃ or Lakṣmi in the Divine Lord.

Bhaktisāra acknowledges this discovers handsomely. The Vedic seers had stated that the Divine is known variously but He is one only. A later development showed that all those gods are but the bodies of the Lord not the real presence of the Divine as in the case of the fourfold manifestations of the Divine or His infinite number of manifestations. But a new development of the perception of the Divine Mother with all her equal glory in the Divine Lord is a unique contribution towards the synthesis of Bhakti.

The ingredients of Bhakti as a process have been stated to be Śravanam, Kī̃rtanam, pādasevanam, arcane, vandanam, dāsyam, sakhyam, ātmanivedanam, kāntam and tanmayam. Sśravanam means listening to the scriptures of stores of the Lord. It is comparable to the jn̄āna mārga's Śtrotavaam: listening to the Śrutī̃s, Veas, which teach the One Lord. Kī̃rtanam is to praise or laud the Lord as one who had constantly saved the world. Created it and looked after its dharma and so on. The service of the feet of Viṣṇu (Omnipresent Lord) is the worship of the images of God representing truly the glory of His presence at particular places, considered Holy, namely temples. It is to decorate His feet with flowers and so on. Arcanam is the offering of flowers or tulsi leaves beloved of God, and thus illumine one's own consciousness by remembering his exploits and reminding the Lord of His glory. Vandanam means prostrating, thanksgiving. Dāsyam means service of God without any commercial motive or payment but purely out of love. This aspect has been emphasized by the mystics as it is a measure of one's utter devotion to God so that He may dispose of the individual as He likes. The Idea is spiritual slavery to God alone and not to any other – ananyagit, anayacintana, anayaśaraṇata are all phases of his consciousness. Out of this entire devotedness without any remuneration or payment, rises a new type of relationship known as sakhyam.

It must at this poit be stated that the order of these worshipping acts (ārādhana karma) should be distinguished from the nature of the doer's relationships and nature (svabhāva). Thus śravanam, kĩrtanam, viṣnoḥ pādasevanam, arcanam, vandanam may be followed by ātmanivedanam. Ātmanivedanam will lead to tanmayatva (absorption in the Divine as expressed by delight, trance, perspiration and so on). These are the seven stages of perfec devotion. Dāsya-bhāva, sakhya bhāva and madhura (kānta) bhāva facilitate the growth of bhakti in these seven stages. Each one of these attitudes (bhāvas) requires the close observance of these seven steps. In other words, were are here in the presence of increasing grades of intimacy between the seeker after liberation and love and the Godhead. We pass from dāsya to sakhyā and then to the fuller and inner intimate tanmaya through ātmanivedana. But it does not mean that they arer stages which are transcended: later stages include and enrich the lower. The Lord in the Gĩtā has stated that the ingredients must be followed in the right way (vidhi pūrvakam). Ācāryas pointed out that bhakti yoga required qualifications not merely of birth (caste) but also of jn̄āna and karma which are preludes to bhakti. Though modern interpreters of bhakti-yoga (or Yoga) have been chary of accepting the view that bhakti is for those who have certain fitness (adhikāra) both by heredity and by training (in yama-nimyama and other yogāngas), yet it is clear that bhakti is not blind devotion or superstitious worhiop of all but a conscientious consecration to t3h highest Lrod apprehended and chosen as ch. It means the correct following of the path of jn̄āna free from dehāt-ma bhrama, and the path of karma free from seeking the results of activities (niṣkāma). These two yogas lead to bhaktiyoga of love of God for the sake of God, because the soul is His, His śarĩram, His dāsa.

This bhakti culminates in perfect nivedanam, offering of oneself to God in th knowledge that one belongs to Him as śesa. Bhaktisāra though said to have been an avarṇa followed the path of devotion and proved its efficacy. That Vision wihc was grated to Mārkaṇdeya was his also. It was a result of God's grace.

Liberation 2was got by this Āḷvār but it was coupled with the vision, the most satisfying, which has given a richness hardly to be found in the other Āḷvārs.

The āgama (pāñcarātra) being much more concerned with elaborating the ātmanivedana aspect of this bhakti discovered certain other potentialities in the Divine nature which almost ruled out the 'fitness' test or condition. The other yogas are conditional an adhikāritva, but this new method of prpatti is unconditional. God is love is iddhopāya ever-ready to save any body, who seeks refuge: there is not time, no place, no caste or even nature. What are necessary according to ths prapatti are six conditions, psychological rather than ehical or social: ānukūlyasya samkalpam, prātikūlyasya varjanam, rakṣiṣyat iti viśvāso goptṛtvavaranam tathā, atamanikśepo kārpaṇye ṣad vidha śaraṇāgatiḥ[1] Willing the helpful renouncing the obstructive, faith that He can save, choice of the goal, self – surrender, and utter helplessness in other directions),' The six steps are not toe be considered as chronologically arranged (for they do not differentiate themselves in that manner) but logically each one of them is related to the rest and leads to the complete integral following

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[1] Nyāsa Daśaka: Venkatanātha: Nyasyāmi akiñcana Śrīman anukūlo anayavarjitaḥ visvāsā prārthanāpūrvam ātmarakṣābharamtvayi. I.
in the ordinary movement we start with Kārpaṇya which leads to surrender and thence to Viśvāsa, goptṛitva varaṇam, pratikūlavarjanam and ānukūlyuasya samkalpa.

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activities demanding or seeking no fruit. Further the great rites are not within the competence of most men. If the mind cannot be checked except by laborious practice (vyavasāya), this labor of checking the mind (citta-vṛitti-nirodha) from moving towards object becomes a strenuous exercise. This too requires competence. But the man who is suffering and is in an extreme condition of distress finds it impossible to undertake the control of the mind. Nor is he is a

condition even to choose the several method by which he could seek the Divine's aid. In thus extreme condition of utter collapse (ārti), one could only cry out to the Lord to save. Śrī̃ Kṛṣṇa indeed has mentioned in the Gī̃tā four types of men who seek refuge in Him – the ārta, Jijñ̃āsu, arthārthi, and jñ̃āni (vii, 16): the most glorious is indeed the last one who has utterly intelligently soucth and achieved the Divine Lord has His Self (so much so the Lord says in, reciprocal words-he indeed is My Self so dear is he to Me). But all ways are open to the Lord—all seek Him: some for liberating, some for wealth, some for succour not merely from samsāra but from every evil and sin, and threat to even this life.

The path of Śaraṇāgati is a path open to every body, the fit as well as the unfit. Neither sex nor caste nor even kind or time is a bar to this path. Not until one turns to God does the lord move, for in the freedom which the individual has been granted there is implicit the choice to seek to live for on else for God for the world. Ultimately God knows that every body will turn to Him alone, despite much wandering away or prodigalising. But a return after the knowledge that all else is only sorrow-bearing rather than joy-giving, is a knowledge that is precious. The two conditions that we had mentioned—ānukūlkyasya samkalpam and prātikūlyasya varjanam, thus happen simultaneously and radically. Not only the world of change but all other types of relations or attachments are those which are recognized once for all as obstructive to one's existence, sense of reality or real life -- ujjī̃vana. God alone is chosen deliberately as the one Being who could save. This is the goptṛtva varaṇam; even here we have instances where an individual in distress runs from one teacher to another, form one doctor to another, from one God to another, from supersitution to superstition, till all become unhelpful. The Ultimate Godhead alone is to be surrendered to. Indeed one knows the Ultimate Godhead as such only when all others fail though they may be very helpful in smaller things within their competence. Thus through ages we have witnessed the growth of religions with their own special kinds of Namesor the Nameless – Namely vying with one another of being acclaimed the Highest. Sectarins apart, from a clear philosophic point of view we have to

address ourselves to the Highest Being alone who could solve the problem of liberation and grant refuge. God of course chooses the man he saves or who seeks Him out of an inward conviction for which he could given no explanation. But the individual must call out to Him an seek Him alone. This is the varaṇam: the complementary of God's varaṇam. This choice cannot of course be left alone to find its expression in action, there must arise the faith (viśvāsa). No other path should he seek to follow if the progress is slow. God will save, only the means adopted by Him would be wonderful, unexpected though not irrational. Miracle is the word that expresses the manner of His saving acts. akiñfcanativam and ananyagatitvam are necessary conditions for this śśaraṇāgati[1]. thus we find that praptti or prapadana is an open way for all seekers after refuge as well as for all seekers after greater knowledge and liberation and eternal Ānanda, since ultimately all depend on the grace of God rather than on individual effort.

Technically then bhakti involves individual effort though consummated by Divine Grace, whereas praptti requires almost nothing at all of individual effort since it renounces all individual effort having arrived at its utter inefficacy and futility.

Here again in respect o Bhakti there is another important question debated by many thinkers. It is the place of the Guru or Mediator. Hbhakti as e have shown does not improvise the methods of worship but utilizes the path lad down by the śāstras. The śāstras are the continuous tradition, unbroken and unadulterated, which the Ācāryas live and practice and instruct. To change the method to suit individual idiosyncrasy is to fail to get the benefit. It may not be merely that but might entail sinfulness. Btu some do not wish to accept tradition or the ācārya. Strictly speaking it is the refusal to put to experiment the ancient method of winning the approval of God. No doubt many variations have occurred throughout the world in the manner of worship of God. There is however a hard core of identity. The instruction is better to be taken. As an elder brother on the path, as an elder scientist in

[1] In the definition of śarĩra, Śrĩ Rāmānuja uses the adjective Śeṣataikyasvarūpam exclusively dependent on the sentient being. The above adjectives bring out that force.

the field, he could be an āpta even if it be empirically, capable of being tested. Bhakti is jn̄āna-paramparā stream of knowledge awareness. The Ācārya seeks to intercede on behalf of the individual who seeks Him as a patient seeks the doctor.

But there are times when one might not be able to meet an ācārya nor find one. Then he may devote himself to God directly, even as a man in distress does not wait for a mediator to go to a doctor. Thus ācrayaniṣṭha and svaniṣṭha are possible. Thus also there can be a mediated approach (sadvāraka thorugh some teacher or Mother or Mūrti) and a direct unmediated approach (advāraka, amūrta). All these depend entirely on each individual situation and the individual's nature. Thus Tirmnagai was directly initiated by the Lord in the temple. Provided there are these three conditions kārpaṇya, utter despondency, akiñcanativa, helplessness in which God alone is the refuge, and ananyagatitvam, no there resort the praptti will be fruitful and lead gradually to fitness for the proper love of God (bhakti).

All these stages are illustrated in the lives of he saints all over the world. It is a universal phenomenon. It is how th Transcendent meets the soul. The royal devotee Kulaśekhara illustrates the stages of this praptti – bhakti. Overpowered by the love emotion he used to dance and sing having became mad with the devotion to Śrĩ Ranganātha (Arcā-form) at Śrĩrangam. Its is a result of ātma nikṣepa accepted by the Lord. In fact the samādhi-state of bhakti yoga is reached through praptti when it is performed in the proper way. Kulaśekhara in hs Perumāl Tirmoḷl speaks about the renunciation of the company of the sinful

which is the second condition of prapatti. In the second decade he seeks the company of the good or God-seekers; and in the third decade he speaks of the need for renunciation of those that are harmful to complete surrender. He says ‘Thoug the bad people, world-interested persons, call me mad, they ar3e to me madmen’. In the fourth decad athe Āḷvār chooses the Lord of Tiruvengadam for his master.

He seeks to serve and adore and behold the Lord as ‘as a bird or fish in the Puṣkariṇĩ (sacred tank), as abearer of the spittoon of God even as a step in the sanctum sactorum to be trodden by God-lovers and to be holding the wonderful face of God unceasingly by night and day’. This is called ananyārha śeṣatvam. The fifth decade reveals mahā-viśvāsa. God is as a mother to be, as a husband to his wife, as a physician to his patient, as a ship’s mast to the bird in mid-ocean. His belief in the efficacy and instinctive love and ability of God to save through His immeasurable love of the soul which has handed over itself to His grace and mercy is immense.

The psychological situation of the integral surrender is clearly illustrated by the āḷvār’s own experiences. This too is the bhakti that passes beyond the bhakti that is the result of the jñ̃āna; but this indeed verily take the individual soul to the same bhakti for it grants the soul the truth and certitude of the deharma-inculcated path of bhakti. The world’s urgency however demands a more liberal path for al the fit and the unfit alike, and the discovery of the āḷārs lies in the practice of praptti that suspends all rules except the one single fundamental surrender to Him alone and none other, for He is the Saviour of all , being the Self of all.

We have seen that Kulśekhara shows that the devotees of the Lord are to be recognized by their extreme love of God, so much so, they sing and dance and have horrification too and so absorbed are they that they appear to be mad. Their connection with the world almost passes away through their complete indifference to it.

In the exposition of the Kānta-bhāva revel some āḷvārs like Nammāḷvār and Maṉgai, and āndāḷ: in the VI decade of his Perumāḷ Tirumoli Kulaśekhara also engages on this path of anurāga. ‘Desiring the beloved lover, these hymns were sung at midnight out of extreme absorption in Him’. But Kulaśekhara did not stay on at it for th he almost immediately enjoys the Father-son and Mother-son relationship as more conducive to his vātsalya mode – an approach also reveled in by Śrĩ Viṣṇu Citta, the father of Āṇdāḷ. The Āḷvār converts the marital or bridal approach to one of Mother-son (vātsalya relationship of course of the reversed kind). The āḷvār identifies himself with Kauslayā and Devaki. But in the IX decad the Āḷvār identifies himself with Daśaratha and bemoans the cruel fate which made him permit the exile of Śrĩ Rāma. The epic movement of upāsana of Bhakti is thus Cleary given by Kulaśekhara.

Ālūār Kulśekhara, in one sense, seems to revel in the dhruvānusmṛit continuous contemplation of the Divine not as present but as absent (viraha or viśleṣa of God). The contemplation also take the route of identification with a character who had direct contact with the Divine or assumed as such. this tanmayatva (mentioned as the tenth state) is a rich source of poetic inspiration. It is not to be equt4ed with sympathy: it resembles empathy a feeling into the character and re-enacting the original drama of relationship.

The Āḷvārs, Pān and Toṇdar-adip-podi (Bhaktāṇ-ghri-reṇu) were distinguished by their complete direct approach and realisation of the grace of God. They took ‘service’ of God-men as the war to real pure bhakti. They did not undertak the kānta and tanmaya attitudes but fonfined themselves to the dāsya’ approach or the metaphysical ‘śeṣativa’ approach. Thus Pāṇ-āḷvār in the excellent then verses of Revelation of the form of the Divine Person speaks about His purity (amalatva, vimalatva, nimalatva) and His grace in making him the servant of His devotees, which has the highest power of making one pure (ānukūlya) and by the same token also removes obstacles to His enjoyment and service. Evn so, Toṇdar-adip-podi (his name is Vipra-Nārāyaṇa) as distinguished from Pāṇ who was a pancama who had the unique fortune of being carried into

the sanctum sanctorum of Raṇganātha on the shoulders of Muni (a jñ̃āni), speaks of the purifying powers of the Name of God, which is a mṛtyuñ̃jaya mantra so to spak, and capable of granting the Vision of the five-fold Divine.

Viṣṇu Citta (periya-Āḻvār) followed the path of tan-maya already intimate dby identifying himself with the Mother of Śrī̃ Kṛṣṇa from his childhood to His youth. The Āḻār then sees Kṛṣṇa and Rāma as one ans alternately sees Rāma and Kṛṣṇa the hero and the lover as one with two forms for two different purposes. Satya and Dharma are both in Śrī̃ Rāma who wandered (at the behest of His father-exiled though) through the length and breadth of India to meet and save all creatures. Āḻvār Viṣṇucitta does indeed contemplate on the Divine couple but more as a father would look on his son and dauther-in-law. the dyāna of the deeds of God in all incarnations related to each other by perceiving the ones of the Supreme Presence (yad yad vibhūti mat sarvam)[1], is a very wonderful kind of dhruvānusmṛrti. The continuity that is split up between the three states or consciousness by the separation from the Divine (viśleṣa) is sought to be regained by the contemplation on the Divine in all planes and activities and in temples and tī̃rthas. God alone can gather or remember the organic limbs of one's being and harmonies them by His descent into the soul and around and above it. This complete following of the life of the Lord through contemplation had given Viṣṇucitta a primal place as the one who got both complete knowledge of the ancient Veda untaught and the fruit of Vedic knowledge – the vision of the Divine. He also gave to the world a dotted who ranks equal to Rādhā in Southern Vaiṣṇavism, one who sought and gained the spouseship of God.

The Kānta approach is indeed very difficult to gain unless blest. It is at this point that the soul has the great conflict which tears the world – the Kāma—the sex which disturbs the even tenor of life. The approach is counseled as

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[1] Viṣṇu Purāṇa VI.7.61: Viṣṇuśaktiḥ parā proktā:

substituting the Divine Lord as beloved in the place of the ordinary person in order to transcend, the sexual. The finite soul is deemed to be female (of the Prakṛit—considered female as the kṣetra or field of creative proliferation or multiplicity). It is its privilege to be the Kṣetra of God. But is baser sexual quality should be got rid of in two ways: (I) by offering itself to the Divine to deal with its nature as He pleases for higher creation (If there be any such) a creating that does not bind the soul to the delusive feverishness of carnal existence which it has renounce or to pass beyond the sexual polarities to the transcendent uncreative state. (2) It has to be understood in the 'platonic sense' or in the metaphysical sense of love for the essence of one's being or love for what is its substance and support. This is known as madhura bhāva: sweet experience. obviously it must have some reference to the madhuy-vidyā also[1]. it has been experienced as a sober wooing of the Divine with vrata (observance of practice of thirty days in Mṛgasirṣa māsa—dhanurmāsa) by Āndāl and then choosing the Divine by incessant contemplation on him by approaching the two personalities; Kātyaāyanĩ - Lakṣmi and madana to lead her to the manmathamanmatha, Śrĩ Kṛṣṇa This is the process of Āṇdāl's approach. Being naturally feminine (in the West parallels could be seen in St Theresa and others) she could really appreciate the triple femininity of dependence and love for her svāmĩ, pati bhartā in body, mind and soul. I is but natural that Āṇdāl like Rādhā (of well-plaited Hair of devotion). Should feel the Lord to be the only person to whom she ought to belong. This has also been seen in Sĩtā and Rukminĩ. The

[1] Ch. Up.III. Where God is sought as madhu – sweet.

distinction obviously drawn between the Divine Mother and the soul that seeks this love-approach just obviously be there. It raises many problems and few indeed could take it up with success. It may be that ultimately all souls must become feminine to get at that ultimately all souls must become through becoming parts of the Mother – amśabhūta, even as by the path of śeṣatva one has to become amśas of the Ādiśeṣa—the collective soul. Speculations and

personal experience abound in this direction. We measure them as possible approaches entertained and adopted and successfully completed by some of the Āḷvārs, the most notable being St Śaṭhakopa (Namm – Āḷvār). He, though male, in his wonderful Tiru-vāmoli and Tiru-viruttam has sought to experience the Divine through the path of Śṛ̃gāra-kānta-tanmayatva. His way, of course, was not altogether to follow the tanmaya with a personality that dwelt and played and enjoyed the Divine in presence and in absence and separation. But to seek a direct love even as Āṇdāl had done. It is thus an original attempt for direct experience of the Madhura bhāva. It is to think of God as the useful, precious, auspicious Lord. Just as the wife is anxious about her husband, so should the soul feel anxious about God's welfare and be useful to Him and in every way pleasing to Him. to please Him in every way should be the sole aim of the soul.

It is one of the most illuminating processes of devotion that St Śaṭhakopa illustrates. The ever-anxious sleepless love for God-experience, to merge oneless in Him, to be pure and beyond the grip of he senses, with a feeling to offer oneself entirely to Him, moved and thrilled and dazzled by the love, grandeur and light of the Divine Godhead; with such splendour does the sincerity of the Āḷvār reveal the devotion or love that he bears to God. Sleepless like the heron doleful like the anr i(bird), restless like the waves of the ocean, moaning and tossing, wandering hither and thither fruitless like the breezes, shy and languishing like the wan moon, feeling helpless like the distressed in darkness, and passionate like the ever-shinning lamp of the temple, craving and supplicating, which is the devotee-wife in the absence of the Lord. (TiruvāvmoḷI II.I – and VI.I.) To see God in everything, to describe and remember His greatness and beauty and exploits seems to be one important way of soulful absorption. The vision too is wonderfully given: 'Thy Form is like a thunder-cloud with a flash of lightning in it. Thy fruity-like lascivious mouth, Thy eyes like lotus petals, Thy feet like two morning suns…. ' (VII>7) (Or again III.I)

Love distilled by separation makes the Āḷvār in the hours of sorrow gloriously sensitive to every image of the Divine in every thing. Thus the newly

opned outs recalls the holy eyes of Kṛṣṇa, His discuss and, strangely the two angels of Death, which remove the sense of selfness and uproot the heart. The immeasurable infinity of God is yet the seat of love which leans to the finite and embraces it. St Śaṭhakopa in this experience of devotion reveals how the Divine Lord Himself does all. For the Upāya is He alone and the Upeya is He alone. The means to the Infinite immeasurable can be no to her than itself.

But the soul indeed is almost to go through the valley of the shadow of death. The Āḻvār almost cries out ‘show me a way how to kill myself’ for life without is meaningless (I.49). he has to endure the long nights of solitude and consecration and dedication crying out ‘O my great black tem! Stand steadily for a day at least in Thy Holy Form before mine eyes and