

Upadesa Saram- Ramana Maharishi

(Address on the release of Publication “Upadesa Saram” (A Commentary by Shri K C Subbaiah) at Ramana Kendra New Delhi On 16.04.2001)

It is a unique feature of Hinduism that true to the Lord’s promise that for the purpose of establishing Dharma (Dharma Samsthapana Arthaya), He would embody himself Yuga after Yuga. The Avathars, Narasimha, Ramana, Rama & Krishna bear testimony it. Apart from incarnations, the Supreme Lord has taken the human form and restored the Snantana Dharma from time to time. Adi Sankara is an outstanding example. In our own life time, we have seen Jivan mukhtas like Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Ramana, Arabindo, the Mahaswami of Kanchi and a host of saints and sages who have appeared on the scene. Other religions do not seem to have produced the same galaxy of Gururs. After Buddha, Jesus or Prophet Mohamed, there has been no reincarnation of their Supreme God in any form. Ramana came into the land at a time when Adi Sankara’s Advaita philosophy was being enveloped in smoke of ignorance. The sophisticated texts and Bashyas were not understood by the masses. It was the property of the elitist Sanskrit Scholars. They could not transmit to the common man that the Atman and the Brahman is a unity.

Bhagawan Ramana filled the void. In simple language, he taught without teaching the common man to himself find the answer. He initiated the simplest of people to find out whether the “I” he was talking about, was the body or something else. He laughed them on a self – examination which would ultimately lead to self- realisation, which is the goal of Jnana Marga. Upadesa Saram contains the quint essence of the ultimate goal of self-realisation.

The Supreme Lord stated in Bhagawat Gita

Sreyohi Jnanam abyasath

(Better than abyasa (rituals) is Jnana(knowledge)

Jnanath Dyanam visishyate

(Dyna, meditaion, devotion or Bhakti is Superior to Jnana)

dynath Karmapala tyaga

(Than meditation, the renunciation of fruits of action)

tyagath Chantir Annataran

(shanti, peace immediately follows renunciation).

The same concept is found in Sloka 4 of Upadesa saram which says that the body – Kaaya should be used for Puja, Japam an mediatation which corresponds to Abyasa Jnana and then the dyana. Various practces connected with each form of worship is dealt with; for instance, in Sloka 9. The essence of Bhakti is described as transcending all thoughts through intense devotion. Sri Subbaiah’s Commentaries add polish to the gems. The author details several forms of Bhakti carved out from Bhagavatam such as Sravanam – Hearing the praise

Kirtanam – Singing

Smaranam – Remembering or Chanting etc.

Bhagawan finally takes one in his hand and leads him to the state where Jeeva and Isa are one and same and the difference is only “Vesha”.

Supreme Lord in Bhagawat Gita says:

Yo mam pasyathi Sarvatra

Sarvam Cha Mayee Pasyathi

Thas ma ham no pranasayami

Sucha meva na pranasayathi
Who sees me in everything
Sees everything as myself
He is not separate from me
Nor am I separated from him.

In Iso Upanished, the same concept is put in a different way
Yasthu Sarvani Bhutani
Atman eva anu pasyati
Sarva Bhudeshu Cha Atmanam
Tho to Vigupsathe

Who sees all beings as himself and sees himself in all beings. Thereafter he hates none. All this is embodied in the Rig Vedic statement “Vasudeiva Kudumbakam”.

Shri Subbaiah has brought a wide range of references from several renowned pieces like Bhagavatam, Bhaja Govinda, Dakshina Murti satakam etc. to illustrate and clarify the precious thoughts he was dealing with. This has lent lustre to his Commentaries. Perhaps a word by word translation of the Slokas in addition to the meaning now provided would have enhanced the value of the Book and made it easier for those whose knowledge of Sanskrit is not adequate. I deem it a privilege to release the Commentary on Upadesa Saram by the erudite scholar Shri K C Subbaiah.

Though a four – fold path – Abyasa . Jnana, Dyana and Karmapalas Tyaga – have been expounded in Upadesa Saram, Bhagawan laid emphasis on the Jnana Marga which leads to self knowledge and self – realisation. Even the Bhagawat Gita talks of only of two paths – the path of Jnana and the path of Karma. In Chapter 3, Karma Yoga Arjuna asks Krishna, the pertinent question.

“If you hold that (Jnana) knowledge is superior to (Karma) Action, why then do you enjoin on me to engage myself on this terrible action?” (war and destruction of my own kith and kin).

Krishna answered
Lokesmin Divida Nishta
Pura Proctva Maya Anagha
Jnana Yogena Smakyanam
Karma Yogena Yoginam

The two fold path was given by me at the beginning of the creation of the world. The path of Jnana (Knowledge) to the meditative and the path of action for the active. In Sankara Bhasya, it is stated that of the two paths, one is Jnana Yoga which is taught for the Samkyas, those who possessed of the discrimination to distinguish between the Self and the Non-self;

who renounced the World even from Brahmacharya,
who perfectly understood the “truth” (in everything) in accordance with

Vediantic Wisdom,

who belonged to higher order of ascetics known as Paramahansas and
who always abided in Brahman alone.

The other is Karamayoga, the path of devotion to action, action itself being Yoga which was taught for the Yogins i.e. Karmins, who are inclined to action.

When I pointed out to Swami Dayanand Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam who is a profound sanskrit Scholar, Master of Sanskrit Grammer and expert in Sankaras Gita Bhasya, why Chapter XII of Bhagavat Gita is captioned “Bhakti Yoga” if there were only dvida nishta.

Swamiji replied that in Bhagavat Gita, the term Yoga has been used to denote a Chapter and not a marga or path. He then referred Chapter one dealing with despondency of Arjuna which is captioned “Arjuna Vishada Yoga” and despondency cannot be termed “Yoga”.

Therefore, it would appear that there are only two paths – the Janamarga for the sanyasins and the Karmayoga for the Active. And Bhakti must inform each of the margas.

Rituals (Abyasa), Knowledge (Jnana) an Action (Karma) without Bhakti is devoid of merit. Since the Samkyas have this knowledge, Jnana marga stands supreme as the path to salvation.

We, therefore, come back to the simple teaching of Bhagwan Ramana that self – realisation is the true path to salvation. The ignorant have not understood the depth of Bhagawan`s own realisation which he shared with other mortals. This is also what Sankara taught centuries ago.