

Chapter V

Estimate

(i) Introductory:

We have seen in the preceding pages, the contents and evaluation of the works of GO. A question may naturally be raised as to what was the contribution of GO to the S'uddhadvaita School of Philosophy and Religion. We shall try in the following few pages, to draw an estimate of his teachings and show his contribution. In Samskr̥ta, he wrote only the comm on the works of VL and VT and tracts on some of the lines of GB BG and Sub. Except the Vijn̥apti, he has not produced any important original work. It may appear surprising that he did not produce any original work, which is purely philosophical. In this context, it is to be said that the S'uddhadvaita doctrine was fully propounded by VL and VT with all its theological and philosophical content. Hence GO saw his duty to explain what they said in their works. His field lay in elucidating and interpreting the works of VL & VT¹-

1. In this connection, we may look to the work put in by Ācārya A.B. Dhruva in Gujarati literature. He took certain quotations from different poets and philosophers and commented on them freely; but that does not minimise the importance of his articles.

mostly religious and ethical, and preaching the practical side of religion. The philosophical part of the S'uddhādvaita view was well drawn out and GO took on himself the burden of explaining how the doctrine can be translated into practice. Of course, this was done to a certain extent by VT, but GO did it in greater details. As Udyotakara is to Gotāma and Vātsyāyana, in the school of Nyāya, GO is to VL & VT.

(ii) Use of the popular dialect:

We noticed that GO's works are found in two languages: Samskr̥ta and Vrajabhāṣā. The first was understood by a few persons. Most of the followers of the Puṣṭimārga were either illiterate or had a little education. Naturally, such followers could not read the works of VL and VT, which were in Samskr̥ta, and if they could not read them, their understanding and practice of religion would not be backed by conviction, and unless there is conviction, practice of religion would result into blind faith. GO, therefore, preached the doctrine in the popular tongue and that too, ~~with~~ with illustrations, anecdotes and allegories, so that the religious principles could be well inculcated in the minds of the followers. What Tulsidāsa did in the field of Rāmākathā and Kabir in the field of Nirākāra Bhaktimārga, GO ~~is~~ did in the field of Puṣṭimārga. Not

only that; he gave a spiritual interpretation of all the ceremonies and rituals and the materials used for the performance of the Lord's worship. The Vārtās and the Bhāvanās are very much important, and are his great contributions, from this point of view. They are just like the Purāṇas of the Sāṅgātana Hinduism. Every religion or every Sampradāya requires such type of literature and GO filled the gap. His religious discourses (Vac) brought home to the devotees the principles ~~xxxxx~~ of ethics and the Puṣṭimārga in a very interesting way. It would be no exaggeration to say that this literature of GO has influenced the Puṣṭimārgīyas more ~~ea~~ than anything else and that the Vārtās have become instrumental in its propagation.

His usual practice of sitting at noon and night with the followers and talking about things religious and spiritual, is perhaps responsible for the system of the 'Bethaka'³ in the Puṣṭimārgīya

2. Cf. जाते तथा प्रभुक्था कथने तदानीमुत्थापिते परिचयेण पुद्पधाने।

- Kṛṣṇarāya's Gokules'as'ayanāṣṭka St.4.

3. Some of the followers gather at night in the temples (or in the house of some devotee) and sing the stotras, read the Vārtās and other scriptures and sometimes discuss religious problems. Such a meeting is called 'bethaka' or 'satsaṅga' or 'bhagavad Māṇḍalī'.

temples. Go always emphasized that one should always ~~emphasized that one~~ be in contact with the 'bhagavadiyas' and seek their grace; for it is through them that the secret of the bhaktimārga can be learnt. He equated them even with the Gosvāmīs, in this respect. VL said that the learned are the protectors of the right path⁴; in the eyes of GO, the bhagavadiyas, too, are the protectors of the Path of Bhakti.

(iii) GO's Views and Teachings:

GO's teachings are in line with ^{those} of VL and VT. The difference lies in his method and the degree of emphasis. He laid emphasis on the worship of the Lord and pondering over the sports of Kṛṣṇa, particularly the Rāsakṛidā, for the svarūpa of the Rāsakṛidā is the pure Puruṣottama. He, therefore, advocated the reading of the BG, particularly the 'phala-prakarana' (BG X-25 to 32).

There are two methods of exposition, in philosophy: epistemology (प्रमाणवाद or ज्ञानप्रक्रिया) and ontology (प्रमेयवाद or ज्ञेयप्रक्रिया). GO laid emphasis on the second method and characterised the Puṣṭimārga as the path beyond the means of proof⁵.

4. Cf. विद्वद्भिः सर्वथा श्राव्यं ते हि सन्मार्गरक्षकाः।

-VL's Patrāvalambana, St.40 (ed. G. H. Bhatta, 1960 A. D.).

5. Cf. प्रमाणातिरिक्ते भक्तिमार्गे...! GB (ed. M. G. Shastri) P.1.

Prameya is the Highest Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and His will is the law. There is no any other law more sacred than God's will. According to this view, God is the 'Sādhana' (means)⁶ and God is the 'phala' (fruit). So, even though, he (GO) accepted the four pramāṇas, he quoted more from the Gītā and the BG. He maintained that even if there is no knowledge, of God, but if there is love for God, it leads to realization.

Worship of the Lord with pure, unadulterated and disinterested love is the supreme duty of the devoted soul and love knows no law; everything is subservient to love, for the Lord. According to his view, the soul has to have no will and has not to depend on his power, but he has to merge his will into God's will and depend on His grace. "There's not to reason why, there's but to do and die," is the law of love. GO practised the preached this way of Pure Puṣṭi.

If all the rituals are performed completely, but if they are not inspired by love for the Lord, it is no worship. When love reigns supreme, rules and regulations are of little importance. The story of Vāghājī Rājapūta in the BhS is an instance in

6. Cf. अलीकि के भगवानेव साधनम् । -

point. But at the same time, GO tells us in his long com on the SS and in the Bhāvanās, with what spirit worship is to be done, with what spirit food-articles are to be prepared and what rules are to be observed.

True love involves selfless devotion and complete surrender. GO, therefore, laid much stress on the principle of 'ananyatā or ananyās'raya' (seeking refuge in Kṛṣṇa only) and abandonment of unoffered food and drink⁷. That has been illustrated in some of the Vartās. He even showed minutely how the fault of 'anyās'raya' occurs. There are different svarūpas of the different sports of the Lord and if a devotee concentrates on one of the līlāsvārūpas, he should not concentrate on another svarūpa; and if he does so, he commits the fault of 'anyās'raya'.⁸ He (GO) said that

7. The principle of 'asamarpita - tyāga' is very useful from the hygienic point of view. When there has been no restraint on food and drink in our lives and no cleanliness or purity is observed in day to day affairs, the importance of the principle need not be overemphasized.

8. Vide Chapter IV, Footnote No.10. (लीलाभेदे स्वरूपभेदः etc.)

the Puṣṭimārga is लोक वेदातीत (beyond the Vedic and worldly rules and traditions) and showed in his tract on the stanza धन्यास्तु मूढमतयः and other comm that what is considered a fault in the 'maryādā-mārga' (the way of convention) is a virtue in the Puṣṭimārga. Thus, he has made clear the svarūpa of the Puṣṭimārga.

He did not attach much importance to traditions. Traditions may be followed, he says, but if there is conflict between a Vedic tradition and the Sevāmārga, the Vedic tradition may be shelved. He crossed the river Sarasvatī for the cause of religion. He has in one case, allowed initiation of ~~any~~ a person, even for a second time and ^{had} have even approved of initiation by a letter of a Gosvāmī or by a dream and even by a bhagavadīya. 'Ātmadharmā' is more important than the 'dehadharma'. He does not discard the rules of the Varnās'rama, but on the occasion of conflict between a tradition of the Varnās'rama and that of the Bhaktimārga, he would attach importance to the ~~later~~ later.

As regards the knowledge of the greatness of the Lord (māhātmyajñāna), he has rightly stated that it is necessary to be immune from faults, but when supreme love for the Lord ~~downs~~ ^{fills} and takes ~~five~~ ^{five}.

footing in the heart, it is not necessary. He advocated that life must be lived in full, but it must be lived in God and for God. The devotee has to attend to the comforts of the Lord, rather than his happiness. So, there is scope for enjoyment in the life of a devotee, but it is with restraint and with offered things.⁹ The theory of self-renunciation and self-destruction, as preached by some other sects, is not approved of in the Puṣṭimārga. Life can have its full thrill in the worship of God. (That is why, Vaisnavism spread in the medieval times.) Go advocated this type of approach to life.

According to GO, Brahman is rasātmaka (blissful). The 'rasa' is रस which is twofold: संयोग (union) and विप्रयोग (separation). He emphasized that great bliss lay in experiencing the feeling of separation. He said that experiencing deep pangs of separation from the Lord is the only means of realizing Bliss and that the Puṣṭimārga is the pathway of experiencing 'tāpa' (agony) and 'kles'a' (pain). We know that even in literary

9. Cf. धर्माविरुद्धः कामोऽस्मि....! - Gītā VII - 11.

criticism and in life, प्रेम (sentiment of love) is given a high place. GO makes use of the same content and ~~pre~~ paraphernalia in describing the relation between the soul and the Lord, and also in describing the Nikuñja, the abode of the Lord viz., Rases'a S'rī Kṛṣṇa. Svāminī or Rādhā is not here the 'S'akti' only, but a beloved, who also becomes instrumental in leading the soul to ~~B~~ Supreme Bliss. GO is, therefore, called by his followers, the propagator of the 'rasamārga' - the path of Divine ~~Flab-F~~ Flavour or Bliss.

As regards a devotee's conduct in the world, he has said in the '32 Lakṣaṇas' on the '24 Vac', how ~~he~~ he must behave. He should realize that the world is a form of the Lord and should perform his duty, in the world with equanimity, he should not be unjust to anyone and be generous and merciful to all beings. He emphasized that our life is regulated by Divine Force, by God's will, and so we should not feel miserable for any loss or failure. Not only that, he says that a devotee should not ask for anything from the Lord, lest it should cause discomfort to Him. Prayer (prārthanā) is, therefore, forbidden in the Puṣṭimārga, for the Lord is antaryāmi and knows what is good for the soul. GO says that God

does not make a true devotee's life, easy and comfortable, for that would make him engrossed in worldly enjoyments.

It is this approach and emphasis and also interpretation of the Puṣṭimārga, that is contributed by GO to the S'uddhādvaita school. VL and to a certain extent VT, too, were laconic in their works and it was necessary to explain fully the S'uddhādvaita mode of worship and approach to life, and it should be observed that GO did it well.

(iv) The cult of Guru and GO.

The cult of Guru in the Saṁpradāya was started by VT, by writing the SS and the Vallabhāṣṭaka etc. GO gave a momentum to it by writing comm on both the works and endorsing what his father had said. In this connection, it should also be noted that he held an original view. He did ask the followers to worship VL and VT, but did not put all the descendents of VL on par with them. VT said that VL transferred his greatness to his descendents,¹⁰ but GO held the view that VL transferred his greatness to VT only. He perhaps saw and foresaw a state of degeneration of the Saṁpradāya and warned the Gosvāmīs, in his tract on the stanza 'Asmat Kulam', that they should not be

10. Cf. SS St. 22.

self-complacent and that their family is spotless only when the Lord accepts them as His own and that spotlessness can be achieved by the true worship of the Lord Only. He attached ~~importance~~ importance to their execution of spiritual attitude in life rather than the hierarchy of the Gosvamis.

(v) GO, the saviour of the S'uddhādvaita School :

The sampradāya saw a great challenge in Gidrūpa who had prepared himself to wipe the S'uddhādvaita School out of existence. GO stood the challenge, faced the political authorities, suffered great hardships and proved the correctness of the stand of the S'uddhādvaita view. GO was, thus, instrumental in setting the sampradāya on a firm footing.

(vi) GO's influence

As stated in the previous chapter, many men and women were drawn towards GO and some of his followers began to look upon him as the Highest Lord. He proved to be so powerful a personality and his influence was so great, that he became the subject of poetic compositions. Harirāyaji, Kṛṣṇarāya, Gopāldās, K. Bhaṭṭa and others, have written a great deal about him. He has proved himself a distinct personality in the S'uddhādvaita School and is remembered along with VL and VT as a great ācārya, although he never called himself an ācārya. Truly, he was the third

ācārya of the school. His influence is clearly seen in Harirāyaji . The great writers of this school are VL, VT , GO, Harirāyaji and ~~Rux~~ Purusottamaji, and GO occupies a high place as a writer and a true exponent of the Puṣṭimārga.¹¹ He has also left an indelible impression in the school as a great ~~xxxx~~ teacher (guru).

(vii) GO's contribution

Recapitulating what is said, we may evaluate GO's contribution in a few lines in this way: Even though he wrote in Samskr̥ta mainly on the works of VL and VT, the 'pūrvasūris', and did not produce, in Samskr̥ta, any original work on pure philosophy, he has done a great service by his comm. and Vrajabhāṣā literature. His long com on the SS, his comm on the Gadyamantra and the Guptarasa and his tracts on the GB and 'asmat Kulam' are really great contributions to the S'uddhādvaita School, and so is his Vrajabhāṣā literature. It is he who attached spiritual significance to the rituals and materials used in the worship of the Lord. VL and VT propounded what the Highest Truth

11. Cf. श्रीगोकुलनाथ प्रकट किया नारग बखान ।

- Paramānandadāsa in one of his pada.

Cf. also बल्बभूके वंशमें गुननिधि गोकुलनाथ अति।

- Nābhādāsa's Bhaktamāla (Lucknow edition) P.783.

is and GO explained clearly the path of realizing that Highest Truth. He sifted out what was 'laukika and vaidika' and propounded the pure Bhaktimārga, depending on the Lord alone, the Highest Prameya. VL propounded the doctrine of grace and instituted the school, VI finished what was left unfinished by his father, established the 'church' and gave an esoteric touch to it. GO followed the footsteps of his father. He protected and consolidated the sampradāya. He developed and explained the esotericism of the System. Harirāyaji rightly calls him the propagator of the religion.¹² Thus his contribution is twofold: as the consolidator and as the interpreter and propagator of the S'uddhādvaita school of Philosophy and Religion. According to the words of a non-sectarian writer, 'Gokulanath - being more eminent, however, gave the new cult and religion wide currency and popularity throughout the country of Rajasthan and Gujarat.'¹³

12. Cf. धर्मो येन विवर्धितः

-Gokules'āṣṭaka: vide appendix No.7.

13. Vide Vallabhacharya (published by G.A. Natesan & Co., Madras, P.2.

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We would like to wind up the Chapter
with a verse which is written by VT in an eulogy
of VL, but which ^{in my view,} is also applicable to GO:

क्वचित्पांडित्यं केन निगमगतिः सापि यदि न
क्रिया सा सापि स्याद्यदि न हरिमार्गं परिचयः।
यदि स्यात्सौऽपि श्री ब्रजपतिरतिर्नेति निखिल -
गुणैरन्यः की वा विलसति विना वत्सभवरम् ॥

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