

A REVIEW ON GOD IN ANCIENT SCRIPTURES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO YOGA

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ABSTRACT

Since the late 19th century, Hindus have reacted to the term Hinduism in several ways. Some have rejected it in favor of indigenous formulations. Others have preferred “Vedic religion,” using the term Vedic to refer not only to the ancient religious texts known as the Vedas but also to a fluid corpus of sacred works in multiple languages and an orthopraxy (traditionally sanctioned) way of life. Still others have chosen to call the religion sanatana dharma (“eternal law”), a formulation made popular in the 19th century and emphasizing the timeless elements of the tradition that are perceived to transcend local interpretations and practice. Finally, others, perhaps the majority, have simply accepted the term Hinduism or its analogues, especially hindu dharma (Hindu moral and religious law), in various Indic languages.

KEY WORDS: ancient scriptures, existence of God, affirmation, God in yoga.

INTRODUCTION

Forms of theism find mention in the Bhagavad Gita. Emotional or loving devotion (bhakti) to a primary god such as avatars of Vishnu (Krishna for example), Shiva, and Devi (as emerged in the early medieval period) is now known as the Bhakti movement. Contemporary Hinduism can be categorized into four major theistic Hindu traditions: Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, and Smartism. Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism worship the Hindu deities Vishnu, Shiva, and Devi as the Supreme God respectively, or consider all Hindu deities as aspects of the same, Supreme Reality or the eternal and formless metaphysical Absolute, called Brahman in Hinduism, or, translated from Sanskrit terminology, Svayaṁ-Bhāgavan ("God Itself"). Other minor sects such as Ganapatya and Saura focus on the deities Ganesha or Surya as the Supreme. Hindus following Advaita Vedanta consider ātman, the individual soul within every living being, to be the same as Vishnu, Shiva, or Devi, or, alternatively, identical to the eternal and formless metaphysical Absolute called Brahman. Such a philosophical system of Advaita or non-dualism as it developed in the Vedānta school of Hindu philosophy, especially as set out in the Upanishads, was popularized by the Indian philosopher, Vedic scholar, teacher, and mystic Ādi Śaṅkara in the 8th century CE, and has been vastly influential on Hinduism. Therefore, Advaitins believe that Brahman is the sole Supreme Being (Para Brahman) and

Ultimate Reality that exists beyond the (mis)perceived reality of a world of multiple objects and transitory persons.

OBJECTIVE:

1. To know the God in ancient scriptures
2. To obtain the knowledge on denial, affirmation of the existence of God and yoga of God

GOD IN ANCIENT SCRIPTURES

In most of the hymns referring to various Gods such as Surya, Agni and so on, we can find the underlying divine principle to be the same Paramatman. The glory of the various Gods and Goddesses is, in fact, the glory of the same divine reality. This idea is explained in the form of a story in the Kenopanishad, belonging to the Sama Veda tradition. This Upanishad tells us that when Gods like Agni and Vayu forgetting that it was really Brahman's power that gave them strength to do various deeds, became proud of their mistaken greatness, Brahman appeared before them in the form of a Yaksha and taught them humility. The Rg. Veda also states that all Gods and Goddesses are under the control of Brahman. All the Gods have taken their seat upon the Supreme Space in the form of the imperishable Vedas (rks). At one stage, the Vedas speak of thirty-three different deities. The important principle behind the concept of Vedic Gods and Goddesses is that they are all reflections and manifestations of the one God. According to the Satapatha Brahmana, these thirty-three deities include eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Adityas, Dyu, and Prthivi. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Yajnavalkya tells Shakalya: In reality that there are only thirty-three Gods; the others are their manifestations (mahimanah). To the question from Shakalya, 'which are the thirty-three Gods?' Yajnavalkya replies; the eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Adityas, Indra and Prajapati are the thirty-three Gods. In the beginning Yajnavalkya had enumerated the number of Gods as three hundred and three, and three thousand and three but, on repeated questioning, finally scales down that number to just one, Prana identified with Brahman. In the Vedic and Vedantic tradition the ultimate Supreme Reality is designated though it is beyond description or definition, as sat-cit-ananda. According to the Rg. Vedic sages Agni, Surya and Soma are the symbols of sat, cit and ananda respectively. In other words Agni, Surya and Soma together constitute Satcidananda. Sometimes sat and cit are described as aspects of ananda, especially in the Upanishads for instance, anando brahmeti vyajanat; (He) knew bliss as Brahman. Perhaps, that is why a whole mandala is devoted exclusively to Soma. At the earlier stages of spiritual evolution and metaphysical thought the Vedas mention the names of various Gods and Goddesses: Mitra, the Sun; Varuna, the God of night and of the blue sky; Dyu and Prthivi, the Sky and the Earth; Agni or Fire God, the friend of all; Savitr, the Refulgent; Indra, the master of the Universe, Vishnu, the measurer of the Three Worlds; and Aditi, the mother of all other Gods (the Adityas). However, gradually, we come across a tendency towards extolling a God as the greatest, controlling all other divine entities. This marks the progress of man's concept of God or the ultimate Reality from polytheism to monotheism, ultimately leading to monism. That is why the Rg. Vedic Rishi asks: To what God shall we offer our oblations? (kasmai devaya havisa vidhema). And again, who saw the first-born? (ko dadarsa prathamam

jayamanam?) The idea that names may be many and different but they all denote the one God occurs in Visvakarma Sukta too.

DENIAL OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

There is a widespread impression that the Samkhya teaches atheism, that it does not only offer any positive proof of, but positively denies, the existence of God. This impression is directly based upon some aphorisms. This impression becomes confirmed when it is found that no attempt has been made in the whole system to explain and prove any of its themes by reference to the Godhead. On account of the non-proof of Isvara or Lord or more fully, it is no fault in the definition of perception that it does not extend to the perception of Isvara, because Isvara is not a subject of proof'. This is perhaps the most important of all the aphorisms referred to above on which much stress has been laid by the upholders of the theory that the Samkhya teaches the non-existence of Isvara or God, or that, at least, there is no proof of the existence of Isvara or God. For instance, Vijnana Bhiksu interprets it in this way: "On account of the absence of proof in regard to Isvara, it is no fault, the last four words following from the ninetieth aphorism as the complement of the present one. And he adds, this negation of Isvara is, as has been already established, only in accordance with the bold assertion made by certain partisans in order to shut up the mouth of the opponents. For if it were not so, the aphorism would have been worded thus: on account of the non-existence and not, on account of the non-existence of proof of Isvara, as we have it. Aniruddha Bhatta gives a similar interpretation. He holds, "If there were evidence or proof to establish the existence of Isvara, then the consideration of the perception of Him would properly arise. But, no such proof exists, therefore, both of these commentators maintain that there is no proof of the existence of Isvara, though they do not deny positively His existence. So according to them, though the aphorism does not positively affirm atheism, it, at least, affirms Agnosticism. But, they do not expressly say what sort of proof of the existence of God the aphorism denies. The Samkhya admits three kinds of proof, of which Testimony or Authoritative Statement (aptavacanam) is one. It asserts that whatever cannot be proved by perception and inference may be proved by Testimony. It is well known that the testimony of the Sruti proves the existence of Isvara; so that when the Samkhya says that there is no proof of His existence, it must mean some other proof. What is, then, that proof? If we carefully examine the context of the aphorism we find that it has been introduced only to show that by sense-perception (pratyaksa) God's existence cannot be proved. Vijnana Bhiksu himself says that this aphorism is introduced as a reply to the contention: But, still, the definition does not extend to the perception of Isvara by Yogins, devotees etc., because, being eternal, the perception of Him is not produced through contact. From this it is evident that, it is not proof in general, but proof by sense-perception only, that is said to be impossible. And it is undoubtedly true that Isvara or God, who is eternal and infinite, cannot be perceived by the organs of sense. Thus, the true interpretation of the aphorism is, "there being no proof by sense-perception of the existence of Isvara". Although Vijnana Bhiksu has tried to obviate the inconsequence of his erroneous interpretation by adding that the aphorism affirms, not the non-existence of God, but the non-existence of the proof of the existence of God, these two interpretations come practically to the same thing, or at best, lead to Agnosticism, though not be positive Atheism.

1. The purposive or productiveness of prakrti is through proximity to Isvara, as is the case of a loadstone.

2. Actual productiveness is of the antahkarana, because it is lighted up by Isvara, as is the case with the iron.

In both these aphorisms, we meet with the word 'tat', what does it really imply? Both Aniruddha and Vijnana Bhiksu maintain that it refers to purusa or the finite soul. But if we examine it more closely we find that it really refers to Isvara, not to the purusa at all. The aphorist first speaks of Isvara in aphorism ninety-three and all the subsequent aphorisms seem to have evident bearing on the same theme, having regard to the fact that in no one of them he speaks of purusa, i.e. the finite self. So that, if we read each of them with the rest, it evidently follows that the word 'tat' in aphorisms ninety-six and ninety-nine, like the word 'tat' occurring in aphorism ninety-three must indicate Isvara occurring in aphorism ninety-two. Moreover, this interpretation is further strengthened when it is compared with the interpretation of the Samkhya philosophy as given in the Santiparva of the Mahabharata in connection with the conversation between Vasistha and Janaka, and between Yajnavalkya and Janaka. As we do not know any other purusa by sense-perception except the released and the confined, the existence of Isvara, who is above sense-perception, is not proven". Vijnana Bhiksu has explained it differently; he maintains that as Isvara can be neither released from afflictions nor bound by them, nor be anything of a different character, there is no proof of His existence. Aniruddha also offers a similar explanation. But what do they mean by the expression, 'Isvara cannot be anything of a different character'. Is He not eternally free (nitya-mukta) and therefore something of a different character? The real meaning is that there is no something of a different character which can be known by sense-perception, because every perceivable purusa is either released or confined. Hence, what the aphorism really means to prove is that the existence of Isvara cannot be proved by sense-perception. And this explanation only is consistent with that given to the preceding aphorism. Therefore, this aphorism, confirms our previous conclusion.

As every perceptible embodied purusa is either released or confined, Isvara is above the proof of sense-perception". This aphorism evidently bears the same meaning as the preceding one.

According to Vijnana Bhiksu, the word 'asatkaratvam', occurring in this aphorism, means 'aksamatvam', i.e. incapacity to effect anything. But it is difficult to understand how this meaning arises. It should mean 'asiddhatvam', i.e. absence of proof, and this meaning only is consistent with that of the preceding aphorism. Here no query arises with regard to creation (sargah), because that will make it quite unconnected with the preceding one, and will raise a new problem. Aniruddha also says that this aphorism explains the very same position as the preceding one. The sacred texts, which speak of Isvara, are either glorifications of the free self, or homages paid to the perfect ones or glorifications either of the free-like Self, or of one made perfect by Yoga". This aphorism is introduced as a reply to such queries as these: In numerous texts in the Sruti, the Smrti and the Puranas there are stories to the effect that the devotees and Yogins saw Isvara, uttered words in His praise and adored Him; and also of the worship of Brahma, Visnu, Mahesvara and all the incarnations regarded as Isvara: if He is really imperceptible, how were these possible? The reply does not mean to say that there is no Isvara, but simply that 'Isvara' there means the liberated souls or the souls made perfect by Yoga, because they, having attained exaltation and perfection, may be regarded as Isvara. Therefore, the aphorism clearly implies that those facts do not stand in the way of the theory that the existence of Isvara cannot be proved by sense-perception. But it should be very carefully remembered that this aphorism does not deny the truth of those texts of the Sruti etc., where the real Isvara is mentioned. The purposive creativeness of prakrti is due to its proximity to

Isvara, as is the case of a gem or loadstone”. This aphorism is an answer to the question: How is Isvara imperceptible, if he is always present in prakrti and guides her in her evolution? And it means to say that as a piece of iron acquires the power of attracting another piece of iron by virtue of its proximity to loadstone, which itself remains inactive, so prakrti acquires the power of evolution by virtue of its proximity to Isvara, who Himself remains inactive. Here we should carefully remember the real meaning of the word ‘tat. In the case of all particular effects the creativeness is of the jivas”. This aphorism clears up the meaning of the preceding one: it means to say that the jivas, i.e. the finite purusas, are the direct creators of all particular effects Isvara having nothing to do with them at least directly. But it may be objected that if that is so, why Sruti has made such false declaration that Isvara has voluntarily created the world. The answer is given below. Those teachings of the Vedas were meant for those who were perfect and of exceptional intellectual power, and who were, therefore, perfectly competent to understand their true meaning; and those teachings conveyed to them exactly what they meant. Actual productiveness is of the antahkarana because it is lighted up by Isvara, as is the case with iron” or, more fully, as iron acquires the power of heating and burning other things by virtue of its proximity to fire, so antahkarana acquires the power of creation by virtue of its proximity to Isvara. Here, too, the real meaning of the word ‘tat’ should be carefully ascertained. Aniruddha and Vijnana Bhiksu both understand by it purusa or the finite self. But it appears, after careful examination, to mean Isvara. The reasons are: the argument begins with the aphorism ninety-two, which denies the proof of the existence of Isvara by sense-perception, and all the succeeding aphorisms are introduced to confirm the conclusion by the refutation of all possible objections. Therefore, the whole argument, of which all the aphorisms hitherto considered are mere parts, is directly concerned with Isvara, not at all with the finite purusa. Let us now consider the second series of aphorisms on which the Non-theistic character of the Samkhya is based. Of these aphorisms the sixteenth and the seventeenth are usually quoted in support of the contention. Vijnana Bhiksu supposes that these aphorisms are meant to refute the contention of the opponents that there are other proofs of the existence of Isvara. A closer examination of the aphorisms conclusively shows that their purpose is quite different. In this instance the whole argument is intended to establish not that Isvara does not exist, but that He does not exist as the designer, creator and governor of the world.

AFFIRMATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

So far, we have examined and discussed only those aphorisms of the Samkhya Pravacana Sutra which appear to deny the existence of God or Isvara. But there are other aphorisms which seem to affirm the existence of God, and thus supply positive evidence for such existence. We now propose to examine and discuss them. We have shown before that in the aphorism ninety-six and ninety-nine of the Samkhya Pravacana Sutra the existence of Isvara has been admitted. But there are other aphorisms also which are more clear and emphatic, consider the aphorisms fifty-six and fifty-seven. The former should be read with two preceding aphorisms in order that its true meaning may be clearly understood. They are: “It is not through the absorption into the cause that the end is accomplished, because, just as in the case of one who has dived, there is a rising again³³; and “Though prakrti is not an effect, or not directed by another to act, yet, the rising again takes place through its being subordinate. Now a question arises: To what is prakrti subordinate. Thus, Vijnana Bhiksu explains it as through its being under the rule of the object of purusa, under the influence of the object of purusa in the form of the manifestation of the discrimination between prakrti and purusa. One absorbed into prakrti is raised up again by it.

Such is the meaning. ‘Paravasyat’ has been explained as purusartha-tantratvat, i.e., through it is being under the rule of the object of purusa: this is quite an unnatural meaning. The word ‘paravasya’ is derived from the word paravasa which means under the influence of another; so that, paravasa should mean subjection to another. Aniruddha gives exactly this meaning, for he means by paravasyat paratantratvat i.e. on account of subjection to another, and by ‘paah’ he means self (atma). Now, the question is - who is that self? The answer is given in the next aphorism: “He is the all- knower and all-doer”

The word ‘sa’ i.e. ‘he’, evidently implies Isvara, for He only can be all-knower and all-doer. But Vijnana Bhiksu gives a different interpretation. He observes that for, he who was, in a previous creation, absorbed into the cause i.e. prakrti, becomes in another creation, the adi or original purusa, bearing the character of Isvara or the Lord, all-knowing and all-doing, because, by reason of his absorption into prakrti, it is but fitting that he alone should reach the status of prakrti. Thus, according to Vijnana Bhiksu, ‘sa’, i.e., ‘he’ refers to purusa and not to Isvara at all. But by this interpretation he has committed some serious mistakes. The purusas, who are absorbed into prakrti during the pralaya, are those who have not as yet been released, not those who have been already released. The unreleased purusas rise in the following creation and act according to their previous instincts. Now the question is – how can those unreleased purusas, those who are still under the bondage and have not as yet attained self-knowledge, can become the all- knowing and all-doing Isvara? Moreover, it should be noted that ‘sa’ has a singular number, and therefore indicates a single purusa. Now, the question is which one of those numerous purusas becomes all- knowing and all-doing Isvara? Either all of them, or none must be so. Aniruddha also offers exactly the same interpretation of the aphorism fifty-six. Mahadeva Vedantin means by ‘sa hi’, prakrti-padarthah (the thing called prakrti and that alone). This is still more absurd. He supposes that in the present aphorism (fifty-six) the author discredits the view that there must exist some intelligent being as the superintendent of the non-intelligent prakrti, and that it must be all knowing and all doing. Prakrti’s consciousness or intelligence is borrowed and apparent. In its essential nature it is unconscious and unintelligent. This is only the popular interpretation of the Samkhya view. But it may still be contended that after becoming conscious and intelligent prakrti may also become all-knower. But that is impossible, for, all-knower, means one who knows everything, and prakrti as an all-knower must know that before it became all-knower, it did not know anything, it was unconscious and unintelligent which is absurd and self-contradictory. For these reasons we must reject Mahadeva Vedantin’s interpretation and hold that ‘sa’ refers to the Supreme Self or Isvara, as is held by Aniruddha, and not to prakrti.

GOD IN YOGA

The tradition of classical Yoga admits only two transcendental categories, the self (purusa) and “nature” (prakrti). Hence, the question arises how the concept of the Isvara is to be understood. Patanjali anticipates this question and defines the Lord as a special kind of self. His specialness lies in that He was at no time embroiled in the play of Nature, whereas the self of any enlightened being can be said to have, at one time, been caught up in the illusion of its bondage to the mechanisms of Nature. More precisely, Patanjali states that the Isvara transcends the causes of affliction (klesa), action (karma) and action’s fruition (vipaka), as well as the deposits (asaya) in the depth-memory which, in the ordinary individual, lead to repeated embodiment. To make the special status of the Isvara quite clear Vyasa emphasizes that those who have attained to ‘Transcendence’ (kaivalya) are many . These multiple ‘Transcenders’ (kevalins)

differ from the Lord in that they attained transcendence by severing the three bonds which Vacaspati Misra explains as: The natural (prakrta) bond of those who have merged into the Ground of Nature (i.e. the phenomenon of prakrti-laya).

Modified (vaikarika) bond of the disembodied (videha) entities (such as the deities). The bond of sacrificial offering and so on (daksina-adi) of those who pursue the experience of divine and non-divine matters. The Lord's relationship to the condition of transcendence pertains, as Vyasa⁴³ puts it neither to the past nor to the future, that is, it is eternal. Vyasa adds: He is always liberated, always the Lord" (satu sada eva muktah sada eva isvara it). Vyasa also indicates that the Lord's eminence (utkarsa) results from His 'acquisition of a perfect sattva (prakrsta-sattva-upadana). That is to say, since the transcendental self, by its very nature, cannot intervene in the spatio-temporal processes of nature, the Lord must appropriate for himself a medium through which He can exert his influence. The highest expression of manifest Nature, as recognized by all Samkhya Yoga traditions, is that aspect or quality (guna) of Nature which has from ancient times been called sattva, meaning literally being-ness it conveys, as the name indicates, the idea of sheer existence, or presence. In combination with the qualities of dynamism (rajas) and inertia (tamas), it is thought to weave the whole web of manifestation. Vacaspati Misra makes clear the perfect sattva which Vyasa speaks is devoid of any trace of rajas or tamas. This is strikingly different from the position of the author of the Yukti Dipika.

This work speaks of the Lord's occasional assumption of a glorious body (mahatmya-saria) which consists of rajas, even though his proper medium is constituted predominantly of sattva. The Lord appropriates such a perfect sattva for the gratification of beings (bhuta-anugraha). We know from the Yoga Bhasya that the Isvara favors the Yogin who is intent on Him. Does he favor only Yogins or all beings? The phrase gratification of beings' suggests the latter. This is made evident in a passage where Vyasa has the Lord ponder "Through instruction in morality and wisdom I shall uplift the world-bound selves, at the end of the age or at the great cosmic end". This resolution is a sufficient motive. The lord, as Vyasa affirms, is above self gratification (atma-anugraha). The motive is selfless compassion (karuna), as is acknowledged by Vacaspati Misra. He makes the point that the Lord's compassionate instruction of beings is to be distinguished from the compassionate instruction engaged by such enlightened beings as Kapila, the legendary founder of the Samkhya tradition. As Vacaspati Misra emphasizes, Kapila's own enlightenment was due to the compassion (anukarunya) of Mahesvara (Siva) alone.

CONCLUSION

Hinduism is commonly perceived as a polytheistic religion. Indeed, most Hindus would attest to this, by professing belief in multiple Gods. While some Hindus believe in the existence of three gods, some believe in thousands of gods, and some others in thirty three crore i.e. 330 million Gods. However, learned Hindus, who are well versed in their scriptures, insist that a Hindu should believe in and worship only one God. The major difference between the Hindu and the Muslim perception of God is the common Hindus' belief in the philosophy of Pantheism. Pantheism considers everything, living and non-living, to be Divine and Sacred. The common Hindu, therefore, considers everything as God. He considers the trees as God, the sun as God, the moon as God, the monkey as God, the snake as God and even human beings as manifestations of God! Islam, on the contrary, exhorts man to consider himself and his surroundings as examples of Divine Creation rather than as divinity itself. Muslims therefore

believe that everything is God's i.e. the word 'God' with an apostrophe 's'. In other words the Muslims believe that everything belongs to God. The trees belong to God, the sun belongs to God, the moon belongs to God, the monkey belongs to God, the snake belongs to God, the human beings belong to God and everything in this universe belongs to God. Thus the major difference between the Hindu and the Muslim beliefs is the difference of the apostrophe 's'. The Hindu says everything is God. The Muslim says everything is God's.

References

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9. muktatmanah prasamsa upasasiddhasya va // Ibid. I. 95.
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12. na ragadrite tatsiddhih pratiniyatakaranatvat //Ibid. V. 6.
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