CHAPTER III

ROLE OF BHAKTI IN THE FORMATION OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

A general term, bhakti has been given specific definition in modern studies. The current theories about bhakti, describes it as a religion and a cult and also as a doctrine, theology and religion.¹ Monotheistic belief, that too devotion to personal God is also considered as bhakti. This definition or coining the belief of monotheism as bhakti is contradictory to the stream of thought of Hindu religions, which stands for impersonal God. Emphasizing jñāna, bhakti can be taken as the path of Advaita Vedānta. The nirguṇa Brahman is interpreted as the component of monistic thoughts of Hindu religion in connection with the monotheism coupled with the awareness of the difference between creator and the creators of the creator. It is therefore described as a personalistic faith antagonistic to impersonalistic monism of the Advaita Vedānta.² The path which is different from jñāna and that which is converse with one another is signified as bhakti. The similarity and identity of bhakti with Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism has elevated it into the position of a sort of religion. This has led to the path of treating or considering bhakti as a monotheistic religious tradition along with the prevailing
non-dual philosophical thoughts which has been followed in India from time immemorial.

Definition

The term bhakti is derived by coining two words ‘bhaj’ and ‘ktin’. The term ‘bhaj’ has many synonyms like to partake of, to engage into, turn and resort, to pursue, to declare for, to practice or cultivate in prefer or choose, to serve and honour, to love and adore. The word ‘ktin’ is suffixed with a verb in order to indicate an action or act as an agent of the noun. This leads one to define bhakti as participation, resource and experience, practice of reverence, love and adoration. The study based on semantics also point out to these meanings. These meanings are found in the Indian classical texts. The rules of Pāṇini states bhakti as bhāva or condition. In the sūtra which is relevant of Aṣṭādhyāyi, the word is used in the sense of extreme liking and devotion and it also illustrates the meaning by bonding it with various things and personalities.

The general meaning of the term bhakti is love, devotion and attachment. The state of mind which is emotive or emotional is signified as a feeling or sentiment in bhakti and entity is specified. The term bhakti when related to religious field can acquire completeness only when the deity is specified. This is so because only then the particular theology and the mode of religion can be
indicated. The movement of bhakti is an amalgamation of numerous devotional movements. These movements can be accepted in the monolithic view, if bhakti is taken and accepted in the generic sense. The contradiction and similarity of nirguṇa and saguṇa bhakti schools upholds devotion of personal and impersonal Gods and this devotion to these both Gods is named as nirguṇa and saguṇa bhakti. Hinduism gives evidence to these bhakti forms. The saguṇa bhakti is related to the various worships pertaining to the Hindu traditions which are connected with the worship of personal deities. The Upaniṣads gives a clear evidence of nirguṇa bhakti in lieu with nirguṇa Brahman and non-dualistic reality. The fact is that, there is no clear cut distinction between impersonal God, that is Brahman and the personal God that is Śakti. The Supreme Being when inactive is styled as absolute or śuddha Brahman and when he becomes active and takes up creation, sustenance and destruction, he is styled as Śakti or personal God. The Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad defines bhakti as,

यस्य देवे परा भक्ति यथा देवे तथा गुरुः।
तस्यंदे कथिताहयथा प्रकाशन्ते महात्मना॥

This is the earliest definition of bhakti, all these points out to the love. In short bhakti is the anurāga between the devotee and God.
Bhakti in Classical Texts

All the classical texts wholly support the definition of bhakti, which is mentioned earlier. The main bhakti sūtras are Śāndilya, Nārada and Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Bhakti according to Bhagavadgīta is the salvation in accordance with karma, jñāna and bhakti. This was mentioned earlier in the religious speculations and Gīta wins the personal theism and the path of bhakti along with the path of jñāna. In other words the path of bhakti counterpoises with the path of jñāna. The bhakti which is overflowing in the Gīta is the result of the popular form of theistic religion and not from the Upaniṣadic thoughts.

The bhaktas are classified into four. They are,

Artha : the distressed

Arthārthi : the one who seeks some gain

Jijñāsu : the seeker of truth

jñāni : the one who is wise and has understood true knowledge of the self

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनानं सुकृतिनोऽजुनं।
आतो जिज्ञासुर्थांमथो ज्ञानी च भरतर्यम्।

6
Among the four bhaktas Kṛṣṇa says that jñāni bhakta is the supreme and such bhaktas are his beloved ones. It is considered that the jñāni who searches for knowledge of the self will attain the realization of the self. The bhakti connected or coined with jñāna is specified in the Gīta. The word jñāna with various senses like Ātman, jñāna or self knowledge jñāna coupled with dhyāna or meditation which is called vijñāna is elaborately described in the Gīta. The jñāna and vijñāna, the self knowledge and self realization is the major component of bhakti. The self knowledge purifies one and when jñāna is acquired ignorance or darkness is erased off.

**Bhakti in Śāndilya and Nārada Sūtras**

The indication of existence and acceptance of two different views on bhakti as stated in the Nārada and Śāndilya sūtras can be seen. Šāndilya sūtras are for nirguṇa bhakti and also supports the classical systems of Vedānta and Sāmkhya. On the other hand Nārada favors the Purāṇic tradition, the characteristics of Bhāgavatas which is sectarian and also the sāguṇa bhakti.

The inspiration of Nārada is from the Bhāgavata purāṇa and Śāndilya stands for or rather is inspired by the Upaniṣads, which are also called Brahmakānda. Nārada emphasizes prominence to the modes of rites of the Vaiṣṇava forms of bhakti which he describes as daśadhā bhakti. Šāndilya on the other hand has given them only a
status which is much inferior. Bhakti according to Nārada is a strong and deep attachment towards God. This attachment is more of personal emotion which is āsakti. Śāndilya and Nārada does not waver from the thought or ideology which is away or far from jñāna. Śāndilya establishes a strong relation between jñāna and bhakti, when the context is jñāna, karma, yoga and bhakti. Śāndilya also states that final liberation is attained when jñāna and bhakti combines together and becomes one. The combination of jñāna and bhakti are according to the understanding and recognizing of the previous knowledge. Nārada says that through spontaneous attachment resulting in the act of complete absorption.

The chanting of Lord’s name, according to Nārada is the best path of bhakti for the lay man because his mind is not under his control and it wanders far and wide. The uncontrolled mind dissuades a man from the practice or discrimination, japa and meditation which are supposed to be the paths of realization. The reading of Nārada bhakti sūtras makes one understand Nārada as a typical jñāni, yogin and bhakta in one.

He again and again stresses on the point that bhakti is the most simple but effective path, which can be practiced and adopted by all irrespective of caste and creed. Jñāna, karma and bhakti at the initial stages seems like different paths and when it’s matured these three
merge into one, there by the joy of spiritual experience becomes a reality. The jñāna, karma and bhakti yoga leads to the purity of mind and this purity leads to knowing of the God. The functions of the mind - intellect, emotion and will are purified from the ego which is the aim of these yogas. The intellect is purified by the jñāna yoga, the emotions are cleansed by the bhakti yoga and the will is the responsibility of the karmayoga. Man is at his free will to choose any of these yogas. According to Nārada all other paths of bhakti is accepted but the end result is the achievement of the final goal.

Bhakti in Bhāgavata Purāṇa

A typical Vaiṣṇava text is the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The life and personality of Kṛṣṇa is the main theme of this text. The theories that too the current one which is illustrated in this text obviously point out to the characteristic features of this text. The earliest text on bhakti is the Bhagavadgītā on the other hand Bhāgavata Purāṇa is laden with abundant and luxurious expressions. Therefore the bhakti which is overflowing in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa can be coined with Purāṇic and Vedāntic traditions. The bhakti in this text is described in connection with the beliefs of sectarian ideology and the Vaiṣṇava practices are along with the Upaniṣadic metaphysics.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa does not compartmentalise bhakti as jñāna and karma. The eleventh skandha of the twentieth adhyāya, karma is
prescribed for the anirviñña or the attached, nirviñña or the detached as for jñāna and bhakti for those who are not over attached nor too detached from the rewards of action.\textsuperscript{11} The balance between jñāna and karma is bhakti. In the same context the combination of bhakti and jñāna is the means of salvation.\textsuperscript{12}

Bhakti in Bhāgavata Purāṇa is so mentioned as the one which identifies the jīva with the Brahman and this identification helps a true bhakta to attain the state of divinity. The third skanda of the thirty second adhyāya gives an elaborate description of the characteristics of bhakti to Devahūti. This is explained by Kapila through jñāna, yoga and vairāgya.

The highest state is attained by jīva. The Kapila is advised by yogi to fix his thought on the influencing bhakti on Brahman.\textsuperscript{13} Bhakti is not a separate entity without jñāna and also without the God who is impersonal. On the other hand the nirguṇa character of it is connected with jñāna and it is pointed to the Brahman which is nirguṇa. It is urged that the impersonal atman should be contemplated with bhakti and jñāna.\textsuperscript{14} The bhakti is explained as the characteristic feature of knowledge at one place. This is the nirguṇa jñāna the knowledge of philosophy. This is complete only by the practice of yoga which makes the legitimate parts of bhakti.
Bhakti in Bhagavadgīta

The self creative factor, according to Bhagavadgīta is the path of bhakti. The mind and body is purified by this. This common and general factor of bhakti is highlighted by Bhagavadgīta as it is the most factor for development. Bhakti is a concept which is active and dynamic and this is reality. This quality of bhakti helps or is rather an activating energy or force which leads one to find the God. Three types of niṣṭha or perfection are:- karmaniṣṭha or the perception which is pertained to action; jñāna niṣṭha or perfection connected with knowledge; bhakti niṣṭha or the perfection in the devotion to God. The merging of karma and jñāna niṣṭha is the path to bhakti towards God and this leads to the fulfillment of the action of devotion.

The Bhagavadgīta is such a text which gives a clear cut view into mystic devotion which gives a clear cut view into mystic devotion which arises from the depth of devotional consciousness. This consciousness is very strong and also has different steps and modes. The different mode of bhakti influences the emotional and intellectual realm of the human mind. The influence on these realms will purify the human mind. The purification of mind with the sponge of bhakti will help one to realize the higher level that is the realization of the self or Brahman.
The symbol of bhakti is the purity of inner emotions. The twelfth chapter of Bhagavadgīta says that there are three levels of devotion, āsakti bhakti, prema bhakti, and parā bhakti. The āsakti bhakti is the strong love towards oneself; prema bhakti is the love for God and the love which is shared with others; parā bhakti is the bhakti towards one’s self and the self of the others.

Two types of bhakti are stated in Bhagavadgīta- saguṇa bhakti and nirguṇa bhakti. One is attributing and the other attributeless, the senses of pleasure and pain are conjoined with the feeling of cold and heat. The inflow of bhakti equalizes these feelings and helps to overcome all sorrows. When the bhakti is infused all the unwanted feelings disappear. The acquisition of knowledge and the deep devotion are equal in the weigh balance, but when the devotion is true and sincere it is more glorious than knowledge. Better practice, better in turn is meditation, better still is renunciation of fruit of action, supreme peace immediately follows such renunciation.15

The path of peace is cleared off ego, desires and ignorance to reach the supreme real of the realization of God. A true sincere and faithful devotee, in all walks of his life thinks about God. He always remembers the God and has great adoration for God. A devotee who has this nature is called bhaktiman.
Bhakti Yoga

The devotee and lord are united by a yoga called bhakti yoga.

There is no restriction for anyone to practice this yoga. It is well known that devotion and worldly pleasures cannot exist together. The sakāma bhakti will be changed to niṣkāmabhakti. The jñāna bhakti and parā bhakti are considered to be one. Then bhakti is taken as the devotion towards the lord

Bhakti yoga is easier than kundalini yoga. The limbs or angas of bhakti yoga are the prayers, japas, kīrtanas, remembrance, worship, mediation and self surrender. Five types or a kind of bhāva or mental attitude is mentioned in bhakti yoga and they are śānta bhāva, dāsya bhāva, vātsalya bhāva, sakhyā bhāva and madhura bhāva. Besides these the nine modes of devotion are also mentioned. They are śravaṇa, kīrtana, smaraṇa, pādasevāna, arcana, vandana dāsya, sakhyā and ātmanivedana.
It is considered that parābhakti is the supreme form of bhakti. Parābhakti and jñāna bhakti is one and the same. In the parā bhakti there is no rituals. To a devotee of parābhakti God is seen everywhere, the entire world is bhagavadsvarūpa to him.

Vivekacūḍāmaṇi defines bhakti thus,

The emotional part of any religious quest is bhakti. This upholds a prominent part in all religious tradition and devotion in the general sense.

**Bhakti in Tāntric Philosophy**

The origin of the word tantra is from the root ‘tan’ which means to draw out or to spread. The general concept of tantra is rituals and this is the general for all religions all over the world. The Śakti which is identical with Brahman and it glorifies the motherly aspects of the supreme power. According to tantric philosophy all females are Śakti and all males Śiva. The manifestation of great Goddess is Śakti or Śaktism. This also empowers women by giving them an exalted position. The prominent role given to women is more relevant and reflected in the philosophy of tantra. The roots of
tāntrism run deep into old traditions of body yoga cult. The Śakti concept was coined to bring about existence in the universe\textsuperscript{22} and the creative and preservative energy of the Brahman is Śakti.

Dasanamavidyās or ten Mahāvidyas are discussed in tantra philosophy. There are chosen as to go with the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. The ten mahāvidyās are Kāli, Tāra, Śodasi, Bhuvanesvari, Bhairavi, Cinnamastakā Dhūmāvatī, Bagata, (Bahaḷā mukhi), Mātangi and Kamalātmika or Kāmata.

The Kāli concept was the one which influenced the Tāntric philosophical aspects. This is because among the mahāvidyas the concept of Kāli is of great importance as She is the creator preserver and destroyer of this universe

\begin{quote}
कलनात् सर्वभूतानां महाकाल प्रकृतिता।

महाकालस्य कलनात् त्वमाद्या कालिका परा॥
\end{quote}\textsuperscript{23}

In the 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries the Tāntrism and tantra tradition reflected in Bengal. The Śākta cult was influenced by Vaiṣṇavism in the later medieval period. The aspect of divine love which is above all emotions, that is bhakti is the great and prominent theme of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śaktism. Bengal became the land of the tāntric establishment.
The tāntric literature in the late medieval period had its foothold in Bengal. This made Bengal the platform of the revival of creative Hindu Tāntrism in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. A mystic emotion is created by the emotion bhakti. The bhakti means the full emotional devotion to the Goddess and the devotion should be true and real. This led to the upcoming of many Śakta temples and almost all of them where dedicated to Kāli. The Bengali literary culture started in the seventeenth century. It was then Ramaprasad declared that Kāli and Kṛṣṇa were one and the same or rather there was no difference between them. The eighteenth century witnessed the neo Śakta movement. SRKP a great mystic saint of Bengal in the nineteenth century dawned to propagate this mystic bhakti.

**Sri Ramakrishana as a Mystic**

Political, theological, social and mystical are the four main approaches which lead to religious harmonies. The main theme of the political harmony is that of the policies of government towards religion. The social welfare, upliftment, social movements and so on which are related to the common people are dealt with in the social approach. The study of doctrines which are re-interpreted forms the theme of theological approach. These doctrines were formulated long back. The direct experience of man is the mystical approach. The real mystical exemplar of the world is none other than SRKP. The
knowledge he acquired and revealed is by the experience he had gained.

The experience of SRKP was the stepping stone for SV to re-interpret the ancient scriptures to give it a touch of modernity in its outlook as to shape the integral Hinduism. The knowledge and spiritual experience which is an acquired directly is called as aparokṣānubhūti or the mystical knowledge or the realizing the ultimate reality. With all proofs and evidences SRKP presents the mystical knowledge or direct experience. SRKP’s this view is accepted by one and all and also by all world religions. The mysticism is not new concept or view but is of ages back. SRKP, Jñāneśvara and so on are the mystics. The experience of the mystics is varying slightly. One thing is that all agree, to be the direct experience, is the ultimate reality. This agreement is the major factor which establishes the harmony of religions. SRKP was the one who strongly and very staunch in following it. SV was the one who expounded his master’s view. The approach of oneness is the result of the combination of all approaches. The idea of the harmony of religion was not acquired through books by SRKP but it was through direct experience. Gandhiji remarked about SRKP as ‘SRKP was a living embodiment of Godliness. His sayings are not those of a more learned man but they are the pages from the book of life.’
The pluralism which was adopted by SRKP is the same thing which SV’s calls as universalism. The concept of pluralism is based on the truth of all religions. The ultimate reality does not take a single reality in modern days is used as religious pluralism. The motto of religious harmony is the basis of the establishment of Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The activities of this establishment revolve around this concept. The harmony of religions is based on two principles one is the acceptance and the second is the awareness of unity which is the underlying principle. This aspect is one of the divine consciousnesses. This harmony is not of religions alone but is applicable for all human activities. They are also applicable for the social, national and international interactions. In this yuga, the tidal wave of SRKP’s love has unified all.

**Sri Ramakrishna’s Perspective of Bhāvamukha**

SRKP did not stick only to Hinduism, but accepted and adopted all other religious spiritualism. He was able to co-ordinate and harmonizes all his experiences of spiritualism. Diversity is caused by the merging and meeting of absolute, relative and unity, which is subjected to changes. The whole range of reality being realized was surveyed by him, that too from all dimensions. This integral vision is known as bhāvamukha. SRKP was a man who did great sādhana. During such long periods of sādhana SRKP used to hear the
command of the Divine Mother to remain in the state of bhāvamukha. The state of being in the bhāvamukha is the highest level or reality. His outlook and insights into nature of reality, the view of human life has been dedicated to the world in the form of simple teachings and messages.

**Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s Concept of Bhakti**

SRKP a godly man or incarnation or avatāra has made great contributions to Indian philosophy. The most important among them is a religion which is acceptable to all. He tried his level best to unifying various schools of Indian philosophy. This made him indiscriminate towards jñānin or bhakta or the modern knower. SRKP was a true devotee of Goddess Kāli and this fact is well known, yet he was for Advaita. SRKP accepted māyā as Śakti ofĪśvara and he says that it was the grace of the motherly Goddess. The untouchability ofĪśvara by māyā is explained in a very interesting and accurate way through examples.

The philosophy of SRKP is based on bhakti. He says that the direct path of liberation is attained by bhakti and jñāna. The devotion which SRKP advocated was related to the knowledge of ‘jñānamiśrita bhakti.’ This he says is the most suitable. This is also because one who adopts this mode of devotion helps in realizing and
reaching the summit of benevolence that is realization of the God. He also shows several spiritual paths and disciplines.

SRKP says that ‘God reveals himself to seeker in various forms and aspects. He reveals himself in the form which his devotee loves most’. The sādhana, jñāna, bhakti, yoga and karma occupy an important place in the philosophy of SRKP. A devotee can either practice all of these together or any one of them. The experience got as a result of practicing any of these is not mere jñāna. This is vijñāna a higher phase of the discernment which is connected transcendence. He says, ‘and nothing will happen if I speak to God. Now I see that I and the Mother have become one.’ The Gīta stresses the dialectical procedure of knowledge and devotion, the exegetical analysis which is to be dealt with great care.

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान् यशचास्मि तत्वतः!

ततो मां तत्त्वं ज्ञात्वा विश्वते तदनन्दरम्।

An all round achievement was the aim of SRKP so he was not satisfied by the one sided attainment. He always wanted to enjoy and experience God in various ways that is, through devotion prayer hymns, meditation that too whole heartedly and in the brim of excitement and also in the deepest samādhi. SRKP when he enters into the normal life or when he was aware of his physical existence he was of opinion that God is one and he is called by different names and
forms. The God is said to reveal himself to a true devotee in the form which the devotee wishes to see. A true devotee acquires knowledge through loving all the beings that too by accepting one form of God whom he loves most. So also SRKP is immersed in the deep love for the divine Mother, sees everything as this Mother and experiences the love and affection of a loving Mother. He acquired all these experiences in a single day or in a split of second, but it was a very gradual process. He with his great effort came to see, touch, converse and be one with it. A slightest inclination towards meditation made him experience the living presence of the Lord. This made him feel the presence of God in all beings, in all forms and he soon started perceiving the other forms of God which comes out from his own beloved form.

The four limbs or angas karma, yoga bhakti, and jñāna are the religious practices which are alternative paths to follow. They are not antagonistic to each other; on the other hand are the different paths to experience and realize the final aim of life that is the realization of the self or absolute Brahman. The view of SRKP at times has pointed out some dissimilarity between jñāna and bhakti, nirguṇa Brahman and saguṇa Brahman etc. SRKP says for example jñāna is in complete and general knowledge and vijñāna a complete and special or universal knowledge. This is called as viseṣa jñāna and the sāmānya
jñāna. SRKP is of opinion that jñāna leads to viññāna or viśeṣa jñāna.

Jñāna is the path which leads to the impersonal God. Bhakti leads to the personal God. This pilgrim of the personal God ends finally in the understanding the experiencing the humility and whole hearted devotion towards the God. He never wavers from his aim to meet the God nor does he ever abandon his aim of life. The most superior of all sacrifices is the sacrifice of knowledge. These sacrifices are performed by offering various ingredients. All these lead to the acquisition of the supreme knowledge of Ātman.

श्रेयान्त् द्रव्यमायाद् यज्ञात् ज्ञानवज्जः परन्तपः ।
सर्वं कर्मांखिलं पार्थ ज्ञानेन परिसमाप्ते।

Bhakti is not a particular method of attainment over others but as the highest spiritual realization or parābhakti. The spiritual practices and paths adopted to attain parābhakti and also to control mind are all of equal importance and value.

SRKP has experienced the supreme energy or eternal power Śakti or Kāḍi the divine power, the absolute Brahman. The acquisition of right knowledge leads to the divine realization there by the eternal energy known as Śakti and Kāḍi and absolute Brahman is experienced. So it is clear that Brahman is the part of Śakti. The divine mother, Kāḍi is that eternal energy which creates preserves and
destroys. It is also known that there is no distinction between impersonal God and the Śakti which is the personal God.

SRKP’s approach towards Kāli is like that of a son towards his mother, that is, Kāli is SRKP’s mother. This can be seen in SRKP’s messages and sayings. God to different persons is different, to some He is Allah, to some others He is the Christ, and to some others He is Hari, Rāma, Viṣṇu and other Gods. The reality is that God is one but viewed differently by each and every one. So also Kāli is one but to some She is a loving Mother, and yet to some others She is a terrible God. To SRKP, Kāli was real because he was a highly spiritualized man. A highly spiritualized man can feel the reality of his personal God and this is crystal clear in the case of SRKP. The emotion called prema has two characteristics. The first is that it makes one forget the world. The second is that, ‘one has no feeling of my-ness towards the world. One wholly gets rid of the feeling that the body is the soul.'

Śakti is called by different names of Śrimāta (creator of the universe), Citśakti (intelligence), (dynamic energy) kuṇḍalini and so on. She has form and She is also formless. The various names given to Her in various fields are Prakṛti in Sāmkhya, Avidya in Advaita, Matṛka by Grammarians and Śakti by Śaktas. The core of the
universe is the Kāli. The power of śakti is seen in the creation. Kāli is also known as māyā, avidyā, parā, vidyā and so on.

Śakti or Saccidānanda is the rūpa of the Kāli. The Śakti and Śiva are one and the same. The creation and the destruction of the universe is like creating gold ornaments and destructing it. In the end, the gold is used for making the ornaments shines as such. So also the reality of Kāli is like gold which retains its shine, whatever are the actions. The one thing which exists is the cause and reality. According to Sāmkhya philosophy, the plot or clay is not different but the same reality, there by proving that the reality is one and the same. All the different phases and projections is nothing else but Kāli. This can be compared to a coin which has two sides, so also the Śiva and Śakti are different entities but of the one reality. Hence it can be considered that Saccidānanda is an infinite ocean of ample water. This water becomes the ice of ignorance. This ice of ignorance is melted off by the sun rays and heat of knowledge which becomes water. So as ocean the water is all over, below and above. The aspiration of all human beings is purification or perfection. The perfection or purification inborn in all human beings but dark cloud of ignorance hides it from the beam of light of knowledge. This dark cloud of ignorance helps the growth of avidya or ajñāna. Those who have erased off ignorance and attained the knowledge and the state of
mind is purified and perfect through great effort and in a natural way will always be immersed in the thoughts of qualities and forms of divine. The God is that form which is uninterrupted and the greatest practice of devotion is self surrender.

**Goddess Kālī in Ramakrishna’s View**

The term Kālī is derived from the word Kāla or time. Kālī is called as time, because is the power of time which gulps all evils. The legend says that Kālī is Devi or the great mother Goddess. The Sanskrit word ‘div’ meaning shining is the root of the name Devi. Mother is placed in a higher plane because she is the manifestation of power. The father is only next to her. By the utterance of the word mother, the power of the divine Śakti rushes to one’s mind. A child is of great hope that its mother is all powerful and is capable of doing anything. The Kundalini which is asleep undisturbed by none, as all are unaware of it, is none else than the Divine mother. The Divine Mother is lauded with the attributes like merciful, powerful and omnipresent etc. Besides these attributes she is praised as life, intelligence, love, and universe and able to accept any form. The Divine Mother is able to take different forms names and even a name without any form. For all these She is worshipped and this also makes one understand that form and name is not necessary for being a pure human being.
SRKP has remarked thus, ‘A mother never longed so intensely for the sight of her child, nor a friend for his companions, or a lover for his sweet heart, as I longed for them.’

Sādhana is practiced by all Hindus to know and understand the God. The practice of sādhana leads to the purification of the mind. The aspirant is revealed to the taste of the spiritual joy by it. The purified mind leads one to the higher level of concentration or meditation, which is yoga and in attaining boundless mental power. The mental status of SRKP was so pure and innocent like a baby. His will was completely surrendered at the feet of Mā Kālī. The worship of Goddess as a mother signifies that a true sādhaka experiences the oneness with the manifested all pervading and all powerful divine power. The power of God can be realized only by a true and real sādhaka. One must have the power to understand that the immanent and transcendent divine power is present in each and every cell and in all his walks of life. “All spiritual endeavors of true devotee of Śakti, aim at the realization that his self including his body mind and spirit, is an instrument through which the great mother produces the song of life, a song infinitely varied in tunes and melodies.’

The God, as said earlier assumes many forms and Kālī is supposed to be the most misunderstood form. The Kālī is looked upon as hideous and absurd by the common Westerners. They forget that
their faiths are also looked upon thus by the Hindus. According to the belief of the Christians, they have a God who is all good as well as a bad devil. To the Hindus, there is only one power that too a universal one, which is far beyond good and bad. This is illustrated by the example of fire. The fire is used to cook food and also to ward off cold, this same fire is capable of burning down a house. Here it is clear that the God of Hindus can be good and bad at the same time. The Divine Mother Kālī is hence called as Bhavatārini.\(^{36}\)

The embodiment of the complete universal power is Kālī. The power of Śakti is māyā assuming various names and forms. She is also called as the Mother, the Benign and the terrible. She takes up the creation, nourishment and destruction process of the universe. It is by her magic the good and evil occurs, but this is just a supposition because the result seen is neither. The things which are visible, but the trick of māyā which was the veil of Divine Mother’s power. SRKP says that, that which is also Brahman is also Kālī, the Mother primal energy.\(^{37}\) The supreme God is neither good nor bad. The God is said to be a far cry from the pair of opposites which is the cause of the relative existence. The energy, which is primal, consists of two major aspects vidyā or avidyā. Avidyā is the one which deludes, conjures up lust and greed, and casts the evil spell. The vidyā leads to devotion, kindness generosity, wisdom and love. Thus it is the vidyā
which leads one to the God. The Brahman is with attributes has been declared in the Vedas, the Purāṇas and the Tantras, to be Kāli, the primal energy. This vidya was the main factor which led SRKP to experience the power of the divine mother. He was also clutched by the desire to experience and know the divine mother in all beings, things and also to know all rites and rituals. He says that, ‘I saw that it is the fullest manifestation of Saccidānanda, but this time the divine power is manifested through the glory of satva.

SRKP had undergone the practice of tantric disciplines and came out with flying colours. Now it was Brāhmani’s role to teach him the Vaiṣṇava sādhana. The Vaiṣṇavites believed that the realization of God needed only bhakti and nothing else. The Vaiṣṇavites also show great intimacy towards the god which they say will intensify the love for god. SRKP had only the vision of his personal God and he used to worship it as the affectionate and compassionate mother or as the loving father. This conception of God that is, the concept of humans is considered as a lower conception of truth according to the philosophy of India. All human definitions assigned to God is defined by the transcendental aspects of God. God is beyond names and forms, yet it is named as existence, knowledge and absolute bliss. SRKP’s life turned to a new leaf when they became a priest in the temple of Kāli. The Goddess Kāli to him was
the divine Mother of the universe. The Kāli idol of Dakṣiṇēśwar is also called Bhavatārīṇī. She is the mother, the savior of the world and is called by the name Mā Kāli. Whatever is the result, material or spiritual is fulfilled by Mā Kāli. She bestowed all the knowledge and power on SRKP. SRKP was not contented with the blessings of the mother, as he wanted to know all other religions and faiths. He ventured to find out everything in all religion and faiths and thus proclaimed that as many faiths so many paths. The direct experience which SRKP underwent made him know through and through the form of the divine Mother. He compares the Mother’s form with that of the Brahman which is formless. He also compares Her to the fire and its ability to burn and to milk which is the whitest thing. The views which SRKP has about divine Mother as Brahman, Kāli, Puruṣa, Prakṛti, Śakti and Māyā are all similar and identical forms or rather one and the same.

The perfect embodiment of the eternal truth which spreads over various forms or assumes various forms and incarnation, is the supreme Lord and is worshipped as this lord of all beings and is also the master of all worlds. All the above said is about SRKP the great master. SRKP was a real jñāni and vijñāni at the same time. This is so because a vijñāni is always in the constant company of God and can see him always. This quality made SRKP have an indifferent
outlook towards the world. The most remarkable thing is that he was able to see God and even with his eyes open, as he sees his fellow being. It is said that sometimes he comes down to the līla from the nitya and sometimes he goes up to the nitya from the līla. 40 The jñāni who is true will reach the eternal truth through the concept of neti neti (नेति-नेति). 41 After being blessed with this concept he reaches the Saccidananda which is indivisible. The incarnation of SRKP is a unique one with lots of mysterious qualities. His nature is of a jñāni, vijnāni bhakta and sannyāsa svarūpa. 42

**Jñānamiśrita Bhakti**

SRKP often used the term jñāna miśrita bhakti in his teachings and messages. He also gives a clear cut meaning, the mode of practice and the difference between bhakti and jñāna miśrita bhakti. The common bhakti is a conventional mode of devotion. It is just accepting a chain of creeds and practices and observances which has been handed over by generation after generation. This will be genuine only when it is dynamic by śraddha and accepting the spiritual values which is an inherent component in one’s life.

भक्तेर्वत्या परा काष्ठ लोकेन्सान प्रकृतितम्।

वैराग्यस्य च सीमा सा ज्ञेने तदेक्ष्य वतः। 43

Man is able to go forward only if there is an element of jñāna in bhakti and whatever be the mode of practice of bhakti and element of
jñāna can be seen in it. The man visualizes and comprehends God as the omnipotent and omnipresent. Madhusūdana Saraswati an Advaitic scholar par excellence and an exponent also a theoretician in bhakti says “I am he, he is mine, I am he.’ Devotion has three forms depending on the maturity of one’s spiritual effort. The attitude of ‘I am he’, ‘I am His,’ is the result of jñāna at the various phases of progress. The first saying shows the dominance of the consciousness of the majestic power of the divine and the traces of jñāna can be seen mixed with it. When the devotion is fully matured the jīva surrenders and becomes one with the supreme spirit. At this stage the bhakti and jñāna merge to form and whole being. Majority of the people resort to the “jñāna miśrita bhakti” which is easy to follow when compared to the super devotion. The super devotion can surpass the majestic sense of divine power that he is one’s own. It can be said that if the pure jñāna is able to obliterate the sense of ‘I’ or ego, by merging into bhakti, then the bhakti which belongs to this kind is sure to obliterate. This means that sense of mine with the lord and the service to the Lord is based on this sense.

The Indian tradition points to view the path of pure jñāna, those devotees who follow the path of pure devotion also comprehend God as personal. One has to compromise with the absoluteness of the impersonal principle of God. When such compromise takes place
God is still bliss that to in a very active form. The God has power of bliss which very actively helps the devotee top elevation to a higher plane of thought. One, who approaches him through prayer and surrenders at the feet of the God, is able to become a participant of the divine bliss. The divine bliss is obtained by shattering all the obstacles which stands in his way to be risen to the state of being bestowed with the bliss of service.

"अपि तु मायाज्ञानिकाराच्छन्नः सः सुखेन दर्शनं न लभ्या।
कामकाजशंकामनेव माया। तद्यथापि सः स्वायत्तवाचिभवति
मेधागापेताौशुमानिः ज्ञानमिश्रतिर्भक्तिच्य मायानाशोपायः। स एव सर्वमित्यतो
दीन- दरिद्र- रोगी- अज्ञातानां नारायणदृष्ट्वा सेवापि
अद्यतनकालेवनुतमोपायस्विंतसुदृढ़विरागं तः साक्षात्कर्षम्।" 44

The jñāna and bhakti have different paths. When they are matured they opt the same path. They are like the two sides of the spiritual coin, reserve and observe. A beginner will find a lot of difference between himself and the God. This acceptance of difference is a must for rigorous practice which leads to being one with God. SRKP through an analogy makes this point clear. A loyal and faithful servant works sincerely and for ages for his master. The master is really pleased with the loyalty and sincerity of this servant. As a reward for the servant, he seats the servant in his chair and lauds him as he is equal to the master. In this way the Lord whom the
devotee loves, adores and serves, loyally and sincerely will place his devotee in his heart forever.

The path of jñāna is the foremost lesson the aspirant learns. The lesson of the ‘I’ similar and identical with the Brahman and if at the entire aspirant feels the difference, it is illusory, is also taught. One who practices jñāna has to distinguish between the real and fake speakers on this subject. The discipline helps the devotee to understand that the adjuncts which are all hindrances, are fake and the actual always when through his intuition knows the Brahman which has split into jīva and jagat and also the fact that the Brahman’s power is itself the manifestation of Śakti is as real as Brahman.

The best method of achieving salvation is through bhakti. The Bhagavadgītā does not support any one method of bhakti, but rather gives importance to all the methods. The unity of all the methods is the point stressed by Bhagavadgītā. Nārada puts forward many aphorisms for bhakti as it is intense love of God. When the intense love of God is acquired by a man, the word hate is forgotten by him. Thus the radiance of satisfaction shines all over him. The love of God is experienced only when a man is above all worldly desires. Again he says that bhakti is much greater than karma and yoga. The karma and yoga is for a purpose, where as bhakti does not have any intention and has its own fruit or rather it is own means and its own end.
It is said in Devi Bhāgavata that the higher love or para bhakti as oil poured from one vessel to another, it falls in an unbroken line, so the mind should be in an unbroken stream in the thought of the Lord. The devotee’s bhakti should be like the oil, undisturbed and steady mind towards the lord. He should be so attached to the Lord as he would never be separated from the God, who is the manifestation of man’s love.

The two complementary things needed for spiritual attainment is knowledge and meditation. Meditation is a must for the acquisition of knowledge. To realize the self the experience of knowledge is the most wanted factor. The combination of mediation and knowledge manages the mind by controlling to the one pointed concentration and there by leading one to the reality. The personal effort which leads to self realization is tapa, dhyānam and gyān. Self disciple and ethical conduct are the back bone of the tapa, the bhakti and meditation that of dhyāna and the revealing of one’s identity is that of jñāna. The prayer of the devotee who is in intense love with Divine Mother, O Mother, I am very much afraid of selfish actions, such actions have desires behind them and if I perform them I shall have to reap their fruit.

The two guides who led SRKP to the path of knowledge is Bhairavi and Totāpuri. The ways opened to SRKP were like two
weapons. The first path, ‘not this, not this’, the knowledge of radical negation. This is of course the greatest weapon of progressive affirmation, the bhakti or bhakta. The first weapon pertains to intellectual knowledge which when rejected, erases off the real or apparent. The effort of strained resolution and with only one aim towards supreme goal is preceded. The love is the secret of second weapon. The path of jñāna is absolute impersonal and the personal God is the path of bhakti. The aim of each and every human life is attainment of God. Work is only a preliminary step; it can never be the end, even unselfish work is the means, it is not the end. The goal of life is the attainment of God.

Bhakti in short can be said to be an emotion, a practice, a stream of philosophical thought or a state of consciousness. Bhakti is an invisible silk thread which connects the Lord and human soul and fills it to the brim of love for God. This emotion is pure and unselfish love for God. The religions all over the world are based on bhakti and this lifts the common man to the summit of love and devotion. Jñāna is also a component of bhakti which cleanses the mind which is laden with egoism.

SRKP opines if a person seeks knowledge of Brahman, he can attain it by following the path of bhakti too. God who loves his devotee can give him the knowledge of Brahman, if he desires. By
realizing the divine mother of the universe, you will get knowledge as well as devotion. You will get both.

He was never against image worship as he worships Kāli as in an image. The worship of Kāli is the presence of life. Whatever be the beginning of a man, bhakti can be practiced as he wishes. The bhakti through jñāna is the most acceptable one which leads on to the real eternal happiness.

The particular feature of a religion is that it symbolizes different ways, but the end is the reality, which is one and the same. The worship and devotion towards Kāli, Śiva, Kṛṣṇa or Śaktism and Vaiṣṇavism are of the same faith but of different manifestations. According to SRKP Kāli is not a mere woman but Bhavatārini.

The kundalini Śakti which curls up like a serpent, but SRKP through his rigorous meditation uncurls the serpent and raises the power of Śiva and Śakti which are like the rays of the sun.

The pursuit of the philosophy of SRKP is karma, yoga bhakti, and jñāna. He is called ‘sarvadharmasvarūpa’, the embodiment of all religious ideals.

The peculiar and most remarkable feature of SRKP is the form of bhāvamukha. The author of the great master’s gospel explains the word bhāvamukha thus: bhāva means something that exist
etymologically, it is derived from the verb bhū to exist. The point of bhāvamukha is where the dvaita and advaita mukha is one and the bhāvas are of various types appearing on one’s face. Here Advaita is the mukha and dvaita is the bhāva.

SRKP’s views on Neo-Vedāntic thoughts concretes his attitude towards the jñānamiśrita bhakti. This is dealt in the succeeding chapter.

Resume

SRKP’s religion or philosophy breathes a new trend of thought and a new spirit to bring a harmony among all nations of the world. The life of SRKP took a new turn when he was engaged as a priest in a temple, where the deity worshipped is Kālī who is prayed as the Divine Mother of the universe. He emphasized that Kṛṣṇa, Hari, Rama, Christ all are different names of the same God. All bhakti is related to jñāna. Bhakti leads to jñāna and bhakti is greater than karma and yoga and it is the most powerful prayer of mind. SRKP says that this is the miśrita of jñāna. All bhakti reaches vijñāna or viśeṣa jñāna and all religion’s aim is self realization. The understanding of jñāna is the way of bhakti. Bhakti and jñānamiśrita is known as jñānapūrṇa. SRKP advocates devotion tempered by knowledge (jñānamiśrita bhakti). As most suitable this helps in
realizing and reaching the highest good and the Master is the king maker of the paths of bhakti.
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