Chapter II

GīTĀGŪDHĀRTHADĪPIKĀ- ITS ORIGIN, NATURE AND CONTENT

The Bhagavadgītā is a part of the Bhīṣmaparvan of the great Indian epic, the Mahābhārata. Scholars have raised serious doubts as to whether the Gītā was, from the very beginning, a genuine constituent of the Mahābhārata or not. A further point of controversy arises as to whether the Gītā is the work of a single author or, if not, whether it has undergone various addition and reduction in due course. It is not within the scope of the present thesis to go into all these details.

Bhagavadgītā.

Bhagavadgītā is held to have come straight from the lips of Lord Kṛṣṇa himself. Sridharasvami in his Subodhini and Varavaramuni in his Gītārthasaṅgrahadīpika have affirmed this faith.1 Most of the other commentators, however, hold that Kṛṣṇa Dvāipayana or Vyāsa composed the verses on the basis of the dialogue that took place between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.
The message of the Gītā is controversial. Some scholars interpret it as an ethical treatise while some authorities maintain that it is a text-book of mysticism and God-realization. It is as a result of this that several commentaries have appeared on the Gītā so far. The problem of the date of composition also has originated. On the evidence of astronomy, some scholars assign to the Gītā a very ancient period as its date. A few western scholars consider the poem comparatively modern, and assign it the third or fourth century A.D. In fact, interpretation of this seven hundred-verses-poem need not pose any difficult problem.

The original Gītā was in no sense specifically doctrinal. It was simply a fragment of the magnificent epic narrative. However, the importance of this treatise seemed so great that ever since its appearance many commentaries have been written on the same by several thinkers of the past and the present alike.

Sankara commented on the Prasthānatraya which is the foundation of the Vedānta system Bhagavadgītā along with Brahma-sūtra and the Upaniṣads constitute the Prasthānatraya. Many commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā and sub commentaries on Sankara's Gītābhāṣya have originated in due course. These can be classified
as belonging to Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita Dvaita, Dvaitādvaita and 'Suddhādvaita schools.

Commentaries on the Gītā.

Sidhantalankara classifies the commentaries according to their marga:-

Jñānayoga of Sankara, Bhaktiyoga of Ramanuja and Madhusudana, and Karmayoga of B.G. Tilak. Actually, there are a number of commentaries which do not come strictly under this broad classification. Several diverse philosophical stand points have been revealed through all these commentaries. However, the basic philosophical attitudes of the commentators let one classify them as of Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Dvaitādvaita and 'Suddhādvaita. Adi Śankara is the most authoritative commentator on the Bhagavadgītā. He was the great exponent of absolute idealism called unqualified monism. In his Gitābhāṣya he tries to establish that the main purpose of Kṛṣna’s discourse, is the exposition of Jñānayoga and Karmasannyāsa. The main purpose of Sankara’s Gitābhāṣya is to reiterate that the ultimate reality is the absolute Ātman and that the individual jīvātman has to be freed from its avidyā through the realization of its unity and
identity with the Absolute self

Anandagiri, a disciple of Sankara wrote a commentary on the Gitābhasya of Sankara. Other followers of Sankara and adherents of the Advaita school who wrote commentaries are Daiva jnapandita, Dhanapatisuri, Sadananda, Sankarananda and Hanuman. Madhusudana's commentary on Sankara's Gitābhasya is Gitagūḍhārthadīpikā which is the subject of the present study.

Ramanuja, the founder of Viśiṣṭādvaita wrote his bhasya on the Bhagavadgītā. It was afterwards that Yamunamuni a Viśiṣṭādvaita commentator wrote a commentary named Gitārthasarangraha. He keeps the idea of monism but, urged by devotion, introduces an element of bhakti. In the 13th c.A.D. Vedantadesika composed a commentary on the Gitārthasarangraha of his master Yamuna. He also wrote a commentary named Tatparya candrikā on Ramanuja’s Bhāṣya

Madhva, as the founder of Dvaita wanted to comment on the Bhagavadgītā on the dualistic line. He wrote two commentaries on the Gītā; a Gitābhāṣya in which he stresses the impor-
Nimbarka sought a middle path between Advaita and Dvaita through a combination of dualism and non-dualism. Anandavardhana sought more the ethic than the aesthetic beauty in the Gitā making a further compromise between Jñāna and Karma.

Vallabha became, the ācārya of the fifth sampradāya which returned to the pure Vaiṣṇava Śuddhādvaita. He wrote no explicit commentary on Bhagavadgītā, but expressed his views in the Tattvārthadīpikā to which he added a glossary. A sub-commentary-Āvaranabhāṅga also was written. Vallabhacārya, gave the Suddhādvaita school a superb treatise in his Tattvadīpikā. Like Madhusudana in the Advaita school, he brought in bhakti as a welcome corrective to the strict adherence to jñāna.

All the commentators of the Gitā advocate the performance of action in this world even after the actor has achieved the highest union with the supreme deity by jñāna or bhakti.
Apart from the above mentioned commentaries of the *Bhagavadgītā* there are several others too.³ *Hanumatbhāṣya* on *Gītā* is wellknown. The *bhāṣya* on *Gītā* by Kesava also is famous. Abhinavagupta's *Gītārthasamgraha* approaches the *Gītā* from a fresh stand point. Daivajnapandita's *Paramārthaprabhā*, as the very name indicates, throws new light on the inner meaning of the *Gītā*. Dhanapati's *Bhāṣyotkārṣadātipikā*, Jayatirtha's *Prameyadātipikā*, Nilakantha's *Bhāvadīpā*, Purasottama's *Amṛtatarāgini*, Raghavendra's *Arthasamgraha*, Ramanatha's *Sarvatobhadra*, Sadananda's *Bhāvaprakāśa*, Sankaranada's *Tāiparyabodhinī*, Sridhara's *Subodhinī* and Venkatanatha's *Brahmanandagītini* are the other commentaries on the *Gītā* mainly available in Sanskrit. Translations, glosses, studies etc. on the *Gītā* produced in various Indian and foreign languages are numerous.

*Gītāgūḍhārthadātipikā*-its origin.

Even though any number of commentaries are available on the *Bhagavadgītā*, it is very difficult to grasp the ultimate sense of it. This has been stated by no less an authority like Sankara in his introduction to his own commentary on the *Gītā*.⁹ As Sankara himself states, though many have striven to elucidate
its words their imports and their totality as a reasoned treatise; the result has been that men have got it as a mass of contradictory ideas. It was after taking note of this predicament that Sankara himself ventured to set forth the context of the \textit{Bhagavadgītā}, briefly explicating the text in the due discrimination. May be because it is brief, the commentary of Sankara also is not easily understandable to the common reader. It is to be subjected to intensive study. And that also is to be undertaken by scholars and not by laymen. It is in this context that Madhusudana takes up the mission. He has specifically stated it in the first of the introductory verses of the \textit{Gītāgūḍhārthadīpikā}. Sankara's commentary needs the most intensive study for understanding its true import. Madhusudana when he undertook this study had to annotate the \textit{Gītā} word by word in the form of the \textit{Gītāgūḍhārthadīpikā}.

\textbf{Gītāgūḍhārthadīpikā-its nature}

The nature of \textit{Gītāgūḍhārthadīpikā} is explicit in its name. The author himself says that he has named it \textit{Gītāgūḍhārthadīpikā} as it would shed light on the in most implication of the book. Madhusudana has bridged the gulf between
Sankara's commentary on the Bhagavadgītā and its common reader. Gitāgūḍhārthadīpikā can be considered to be a sub-commentary since it explains the inner meanings of Sankara's commentary on the Bhagavadgītā.

The greatest contribution of Madhusudana is the rapprochement between Bhakti and Jñāna which is evident in his works. This salient feature of the works of Madhusudana can be seen in Gitāgūḍhārthadīpikā also. In two of the introductory verses of the Gitāgūḍhārthadīpikā, Madhusudana has made it clear:- The scriptures say that the ultimate truth is revealed to him who is extremely devoted to God and his Gita. 11 Based on the scriptural testimony Madhusudana established the fact that devotion to God expressed in thought, word and deed, is the most effective means to attain knowledge of Reality. 12 The nature of Madhusudana's being eloquent on touching the point of devotion is evident in the Gitāgūḍhārthadīpikā. The Gitāgūḍhārthadīpikā, being a sub-commentary on the commentary of Sankara's commentary on the Bhagavadgītā cannot be studied without relying equally on both the verses of Gītā and Sankara's commentary on them.
Gitāgūḍhārthadīpikā- its Content

The contents of the original and its commentary being different, is something unusual. But it has been the usual practice in the vast commentary literature of Sanskrit. In fact, more and more new ideas have been incorporated into the original text by commentators at different points of time. Even new systems of thought have been brought into the commentary literature. The very origin of the Advaitavedānta is evidence for the same. Advaitavedānta first originated in Gaudapada's commentary on the Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad. Sankara then commented on the Prasthānatraya and Gaudapada's kārikas for establishing Advaitavedānta on a firm footing. The very same method has been followed by Madhusudana also in the Gūḍhārthadīpikā.

Madhusudana has presented the whole content of Bhagavadgītā as interpreted by Sankara in three kāṇḍas namely the Karma, Bhakti or Upāsana and Jñāna of the eighteen chapters of the Gitā. The first six chapters constitute the Karmakāṇḍa, the next six the Bhaktikāṇḍa and the final six chapters the Jñānakāṇḍa.
The first six chapters relate to the way of work. The word *Karma* means action, deed or activity which also includes its consequence. *Karma* is not only physical action but also mental action and action arising out of thought. In accordance with the Law of *Karma*, a person will have to face the consequence of his actions either immediately or at a later date and from which there is no escape. Actions are either good or bad. The *karmas* are classified into four types.\(^\text{13}\) *Sāncitakarma*, *Prārabdhakarma*, *Kriyamāṇakarma* and *Āgāmikarma*. Madhusudana in his commentary states that *karma*, which has not begun to bear fruit is totally annihilated. The fire of wisdom destroys even destiny, by doing away with all *karmas*.\(^\text{14}\) The accumulated actions of the previous lives have to be burned up in the fire of knowledge. Finally he stresses in his commentary that all the karmas being exhausted, one attains final union with the Supreme self.

**Bhakti.**

Worship or *upāsana* stemming from *Bhakti* the devotion to God, has the characteristics of both work and wisdom. It fits in both *jñāna* and *karma* and removes all hurdles to the
attainment of liberation. Worship is of three kinds:-(a) worship mixed with work (b) pure worship, and (c) worship combined with wisdom.

The conception of Bhakti plays a vital role in the philosophy of Madhusudana. The gist of Madhusudana's Bhakti may therefore be summed up here. It is as follows:- by the practice of listening to the merits of Bhagavān the mind melts. Such melted mind develops an uninterrupted flow towards the Supreme Lord. Madhusudana takes Bhakti to mean the reflection of consciousness on the mental mode. It is apparent that of the two Advaitavedāntic theories of knowledge, mental mode as jñāna and reflection of Caitanya on the mental mode as jñāna, Madhusudana adopts the latter in his conception of Bhakti. Madhusudana has drawn a line of difference between Brahmacidhyā and Bhakti; yet his synthetic mind has eventually assimilated Brahmacidhyā in the texture of Bhakti and has integrated it in the hierarchical evolution of Bhakti in its different stages. Madhusudana's mind has moved in this direction in his commentary on Gitabhasya.
Jñanakāṇḍa.

Jñāna or knowledge or consciousness is the existing reality which is the essence of Brahman, the only ever revealed entity. The word knowledge is used in Advaitavedānta to mean both absolute knowledge when left by itself and pragmatic knowledge when falsely related to false objects.

In Gitāgūḍhāṁthadīpikā Madhusudana deals with the direct knowledge which is of two kinds: Savikalpakapratyakṣa and Nirvikalpakapratyakṣa. Savikalpakapratyakṣa means the direct knowledge of an object, which reveals the substance in terms of its attributes. As for example, the knowledge the pitcher is red, reveals both the substance pitcher and the attribute viz. red colour of the pitcher. But in a nirvikalpakapratyakṣa the differentiation of substance and its attributes is not manifested. As for example, the direct knowledge, generated by the proposition this is that Devadatta revealing Devadatta qualified by that time or this time. In the Vedic sentence tattvamasi each of the words tat and tvam produces nirvikalpaka knowledge and presents an akhaṇḍārtha, while the whole sentence too generates the nirvikalpaka knowl-
edge or realization of the Supreme is the content of the Gītā. According to some reviewers like Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhusudana of the Gītāgūḍhārthadīpikā, the opening six chapters of the Gītā explain the significance of the term thou (tvam). The second section of six chapters explains the term that Tat. In these chapters one will be getting a true glimpse of the goal of spiritual science. The last six chapters naturally express the meaning of art (aṣṭi) and explain the identity of that and Thou.

Madhusudana establishes his views with impeccable logic. These essence of the pure self indicated by the word tvam of the upaniṣadic sentence Tattvamasi is established through a dissertation on work and its renunciation. Similar is the treatment in the second part as well as the first part.

The philosophical systems which existed before and during the period of the Gītā must have influenced the poem in its formulation. Ancient and modern, Indian and foreign, orthodox and rational—all types of scholars have contributed towards an adequate interpretation of the Gītā. Sankara's Gītābhāṣya is foremost among them. Madhusudana proves through his commentary that the monistic metaphysics and
devotionalism go hand in hand in the search for perfection and the achievement of unlimited bliss.

There are people who insist that the central theme of the Gītā is sannyāsa, or jñāna, or Bhakti, or mystic experience, or self realization. The idea is not something to be summarily rejected. In the introductory verses of his commentary, Madhusudhana gives a full description of the nature of spiritual pursuit. The knowledge of Brahman devoid of all duality is the primary requisite for the ultimate knowledge of the identity of jīva and Brahman. What Madhusudana strives to establish in the Gītagūḍhārthadīpikā is nothing other than this.

Notes and references

1. Khair, Dr., G.S., Quest for the original Gītā. Bombay, 1964, p.7.

3. Siddhantlankara, S., Srimad Bhagavadgītā, Delhi, 1965, p.103-9


5. Shilanand Hemraj, op.cit. p. 90.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.


10. Ibid.

11. Yasya deve paraḥ bhaktiryathā deve tathā gurau-

   Tasyaite kathitā hyarthāḥ prakāśantāḥ mahātmanah.
12. Ityādā'sruti mānena kāyena manasā girā

Sarvāvasthāsu bhagavadbhaktiratropayujyate. V.31.


14. Jñānāgnih sarvakarmāṇi

Bhasmasātkurute tathā B.G. IV. 37.


16. Ibid.

17. Sathyam jñānamanantīlam Brahma, Tai., 2-1-1.