CHAPTER V

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On the basis of the general study and also of textual examinations of Śaṅkarabhāṣya and Jñāneśvari undertaken, some observations are made here. Ācārya’s attitude towards Karman is most revolutionary and emphatic. It has been stated that Karman is meant for purification of mind, not for comprehending the nature of the Ultimate Reality. The Ultimate Reality can be attained only by reflection, not even in a little bit of it can be known by performing even a crore of Karmans.\(^1\)

Some people say that Gītā teaches us Karmayoga only. But Lord explained to Arjuna, the vital role of Jñānayoga and Bhaktiyoga also. Bhagavadgītā thus takes a balanced view of the Karmayoga, Jñānayoga and the Bhaktiyoga. It would be no exaggeration to say that there is no other book than the Gītā which tells the philosophy of life so cogently and lucidly.

The Dharma taught in the Vedās is of a twofold nature, characterized by Pravṛttidharma and Nivṛttidharma\(^2\). \textit{Pravṛttidharma}
means outward action and ‘Nivṛttidharma’ means inward contemplation. The fruits of these paths are ‘Abhudaya’ and ‘Niśreyasa’. Ācārya deals about these Dharmās in the beginning of his commentary. Ācārya declares that the fangs of Karman can be extracted and the snake made useful and beneficial. Karman can be turned into ‘Karmayoga’. What was conceived as Pravr̄tti can be made to reverse its direction and be converted into Nivṛttikarman. The result is purification of mind. It is the first step towards the highest spiritual attainment. The cause of bondage is Kāmā or desire. So, the real enemy of man is Kāmā, not Karman. Karman originates from Kāmā and results in bondage. Who acquires the equanimity in regard to failure or success in action, he is clever.

By bringing the message of the Bhagavadgītā to the people amidst their daily life, Jñānesvara consolidates the Bhāgavata Dharma. It teaches that one can attain liberation not by Nivṛtti but by Pravr̄tti. Here ‘Nivṛtti’ means the renunciation of social duties and religious obligations. Seeking renunciation of the reward within the social duties and religious obligations means ‘Pravr̄tti’.

According to Ācārya, Brahman is the Ultimate Reality. Brahman is one without a second. The Jīva is the same as Brahman and hence it is without limitations and free. ‘Tattvamasi’, the Upaniṣādic dictum
reveals the identity of Jīva with Brahman. A true picture of the nature of the Absolute Reality, ‘Brahman’ is revealed through many verses. Brahman doesn’t perish. In Brahman, there is no possibility of increase or decrease. Brahman can’t be destroyed by anyone on an account of its being one’s own self. In Śaṅkarabhaṭṭya, while explaining the word ‘vināśa’, Ācārya denies the possibility of two types of destruction in Brahman. Neither increase nor decrease is possible in Brahman. Ultimately Brahman is one without a second, one’s own self.

Through the 19th śloka of the 5th chapter, Ācārya reveals the secret of the experience that this universe is Brahman. Brahman is the only principle which is spotless and one and that the even minded people don’t see the outer world or the doer of actions. Ācārya uses the word srṣṭi to show the principle which contains srṣṭi, sthiti and saṃhārā. Jñāneśvara describes the peculiarities of a yogin, citing examples from daily life. Jñāneśvara points out that both water and the waves formed by wind in water is one and the same thing. While on one side Ācārya points out the characteristics of Brahman which is the basis of Advaitic experience, Jñāneśvara through his usual style describes with the help of similes, the characteristics of a yogin. From this, one can understand the depth of the Advaitic knowledge of Ācārya and the simplicity of Jñāneśvara’s language.
Both Ācārya and Jñāneśvara have revealed the truth that Brahman has three names viz Aum, Tat, Sat in the Upaniṣads through the 23rd śloka of the 17th chapter. Ācārya specially mentions that it was through these three names that Brāhmaṇs, Vedās and yajñas were created along with the universe in the beginning of creation. These mantras have the power to connect and join Advaita with Dvaita, says Jñāneśvara. From this it can be understood that Jñāneśvara had a clear vision of both Dvaita and Advaita. Though his customary similes are less employed here, the commentary on this śloka is a detailed one. It can be inferred that this style is followed by Jñāneśvara in order to make the message clearer. In offering his commentary for each śloka it can be seen that Jñāneśvara has taken into consideration the common people of Marātha.

The 66th śloka of the 18th chapter, both the commentators proclaim the truth that the Lord will save that devotee who leaves all his dharmās and surrenders before the Lord who is Brahman, the one without a second. Ācārya has substantiated his comments with references from Kaṭopaniṣad, The Mahābhārata and several ślokās from the Gītā itself. Jñāneśvara says that a devotee should dissolve in the Lord as salt in water. Jñāneśvara has presented a sublime thought in such a simple way here. Jñāneśvara’s great affinity towards simplicity, similes, Marātha common folks and the Lord Himself can be seen dissolved in
his commentary too. The Lord is the source of all beings and is the Supreme Brahman, from whom the whole Universe evolves. Ācārya describes God as all-pervasive, immanent, the illuminating light of consciousness, all-sustaining life, as the digestive fire vaiśvānarā in all beings, and as the self in the hearts of all.

Jñāneśvara synthesized the Absolute Monism of the Vedānta and Pure Bhakti of the Bhāgavata tradition. Through the twelfth ślokā of the ninth chapter, he says that the God is formless, changeless, and inactive (as is the Puruṣa according to the Sāṃkhya philosophy) and all pervasive. Out of ignorance, people conceive Him in some form or other, make idols of Him and worship Him.

Jñāneśvara accepts ‘Brahmasatya’ - the doctrine propounded by Śaṅkarācārya. However Jñāneśvara rendered a theological bend to the doctrine and hence he accepted the reality of the Universe. He considers Universe is the form of God. The Jñānibhakta experiences that he is one with the Universe. According to Jñāneśvara there is Bhakti in the state of Advatia. This state cannot be described in words. It’s a matter of personal experience. Ātman becomes one with the Lord and hence becomes steady.

Ācārya diffuse the esoteric principles of Ātman as revealed in the Upaniṣads to the common man through his commentary. In the process,
Ācārya has helped to instill courage and strength of soul in them. Jñāneśvara compares the existence of Ātman with the non existence of everything that came in a dream with the return to the waking state. Jñāneśvara brings in his customary style of explaining with the help of simple similes and here he brings in the images of beating the shadow, pot full of water which reflects the sun, space in the form of a temple and brings in the dream phenomenon to explain the state of Māyā and reality lucidly for the masses and the learned alike. From their commentaries, the deep knowledge of Ācārya and the simplicity of Jñāneśvara are revealed.

From the 17th śloka of the 7th chapter it is clear that a Jñānin is one who knows the principle behind everything. The soul of a Jñānin is the Lord Himself. Here it should be remembered that one who knows Brahman becomes Brahman itself. For a Jñānin the truth of the universe and his soul are one. Jñāneśvara too says that whatever a yogin does, his soul is a part of the Lord. Both the commentators establish the truth that though yogin and Jñānin are known by different names, they are basically performing the same dharma.

The sight of bhakti embracing jñāna can be seen in the 10th śloka of the 10th chapter. The shortsighted think that bhakti and Jñāna are different. It is from the flower that one gets the fruit. In the same way
through the flower of bhakti the fruit of Jñāna emerges. This truth is revealed through this śloka by the Lord. Jñāneśvara has compared this truth to the love of a mother towards her child. By the use of the word ‘dadāmi’ in the śloka, the Lord has affirmed that he will confer budhiyoga or Jñānayoga. Hence those who aspire for liberation can place faith on the Lord’s affirmation and follow that path advised by the Lord. This advice should be followed by everyone as there is unity in both the commentators too, in this regard.

That devotee is the best yogin and dearest to the Lord, who meditates the Lord with faith. This subject is explained in detail by Ācārya and Jñāneśvara while expressing their views on the 2nd śloka of 12th chapter. According to Ācārya such a state can be achieved only by the best devotee. On the other hand, Jñāneśvara compares a devotee to a stream which widens in the rainy season and to the movement of the rays along with the sun. Ācārya has attempted to share the knowledge he has got from his preceptor. The sublime level of spirituality of Jñāneśvara is reflected in the commentary to this śloka. Moreover his intrinsic mood of bhakti also is maintained here.

A ‘Jñāni Bhakta’ is superior to all other bhaktās and he perceives the Lord everywhere, says Jñāneśvara. According to him, true bhakti leads to the union with the Lord. Jñāneśvara synthesized Karman and
Jñāna into Bhakti. Whatever actions an individual performs are as though the flowers to be offered at the feet of the God\textsuperscript{13}. The God is only concerned with the spirit in which the gift is made to Him. “A leaf, a flower, a fruit is just a token of worshipping Me; I am worshipped by one-pointed love”, “My devotee loves Me and I care only for his one-pointed devotion”\textsuperscript{14}.

The Lord says through the 55\textsuperscript{th} śloka of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} chapter one should always try to find the bliss in one’s own self only. Ācārya and Jñāneśvara opine that unbridled desires in a person will always be a block for enjoying real joy. The Lord has made this declaration for the whole world. Everyone is in the pursuit of enjoying bliss. But everyone is after other things ignoring the priceless jewel with oneself. The Lord has given this advice with such persons in His mind. Everyone can depend on this śloka as a way to attain self satisfaction.

Ācārya accepts ‘Varṇāśramadharma’. ‘Dharma’ means literally that which one lays hold of and which holds things together, the law, and the norm, the rule of nature, action and life\textsuperscript{15}. The word ‘Dharma’ stands for the various duties and responsibilities and one who adopts his duties properly and peacefully can attain final realization. The means of Abhyudaya and Niśreyasa is Dharma. Ācārya stresses the importance of dedicated work. Selfless dedicated work purifies the mind and
delivers it fit for meditation and realization of Self. So, action should never be deserted.

Among the living beings it is only human being who can perform vihitakarmās. Through the 14th śloka of the 4th chapter the Lord has classified human beings to four classes based on their quality and actions. Through this śloka the Lord has negated the misconception that the difference in varṇa is based on birth. The famous ‘puruṣasūkta’ in the Vedic literature describes the ‘Supreme Being’ to be a composite of the four castes, ie., Brāhmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śudrās as its mouth, arms, stomach and feet respectively. The caste system that can be seen in the world today is created by the Lord Himself. The Lord has also made it clear what all are the duties of each varṇa. The message that this śloka offers is that everyone should live in amity and cooperation performing the duties assigned to them.

Through the 35th śloka of the 3rd chapter, Ācārya and Jñāneśvara have opined that one should engage in Svadhanuṣṭāna despite all difficulties. The advice offered here is helpful to each and everyone. Everyone is interested in what others are doing than in doing what one should do. This advice is a pointer to such people. This śloka gives the message that only virtue will accrue in this world or the other for those who engage in Svadhanuṣṭāna. Both the commentators had as their
objective the strengthening of virtues and attainment of prosperity for the whole world in their mind, while treating Gītā.

The Bhagavadgītā admits Dharma is the means to liberation. It helps to develop the sattvaguṇa and lead directly to the divinity. The Gītā says, Dharma can be considered as the connecting link between society and Advaita Vedanta.

The necessary actions that Jñāneśvara speaks about are those natural to one’s ‘svadharma’. ‘Svadharma’ means duty according to one’s own caste. Does this follow that Jñāneśvara upholds the caste system? He follows the caste system because; following the guṇa-karman theory of the Bhagavadgītā he respects vaṇṇāśramadharma or caste system. Jñāneśvara does not follow the caste system because he holds that it is not caste but integral Bhakti that is the standard of excellence. He says in his Jñāneśvari ‘the divisions of Kṣatriyās, Vaiśyās, Women, Śudrās, and out castes remain only until they worship Me’.

In Jñāneśvari, the reflections on Karman are divided into three categories, according to its purpose: Karman for the purification of Buddhi, Karman for the good of others, and, Karman for the offering to the Īśvara. Performing one’s own duty without desiring its fruit helps to purify the intellect. Jñāneśvara links it with the very concept
of Advaita as regards the well being of all. The Ultimate end of all Karman is to become one with Brahman i.e; Brahmasvarupa. “A person who performs his prescribed duties............... reaches the gateway to liberation”\textsuperscript{20} says Jñāneśvara.

Through the comments on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} śloka of the 13\textsuperscript{th} chapter, Ācārya says that real knowledge is that concerned with kṣetra and kṣetrajña and about the discrimination about body and soul. Ācārya has particularly differentiated between jñāna and ajñāna, vidyā and avidyā, and śreyāḥ and preyaḥ and also about their results. He deals with the customs of nivṛtti and pravṛtti too. He has established his views with the references from Kenopaniṣad, Kaṭṭopaniṣad, Taittirīyopaniṣad, Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, The Mahābhārata and Puruṣasūkta. But Jñāneśvara has concluded his commentary on this by just stating that knowledge is differentiating totally between kṣetra and kṣetrajña. His customary style of explanation with the aid of similes or detailed descriptions is not seen in the commentary on this śloka. From this Ācārya’s detailed and in depth knowledge of Vedās can be understood.

Ācārya points out that Brahman is the cause of the world phenomenon, like the rope which is the cause of the illusory snake\textsuperscript{21}. The illusory snake originates from the rope, stays in and gets dissolved in the rope only. He describes the relation of Kṣetra and Kṣetrajña caused by avidya, the ignorant misunderstands one for another.
Ācārya states in the fourth śloka of the ninth chapter, that the unmanifest form of the Lord can only be Brahman. Brahman is the innermost subtle essence of all things dwell in any being. The 13th chapter of the Gītā, specially the Lord’s statement, ‘kṣetrajñaṁ cāpi māṁ viddhi’ (13 - 2) has served as the catalyst in bringing forth to the lime-light the subtle points of Advaitavedanta in the Śaṅkarabhāṣya. Here, Ācārya says by knowing the true nature of the Kṣetra, the kṣetrajña and the Īśvara, everything can be known, and so, there is nothing else to be known.

The indestructible ‘aśvattha’ tree having its roots above and branches below, and whose leaves are the metres is described in the first śloka of the fifteenth chapter. The essence of the tree is said to be Brahman. One that cuts this tree with the mighty sword of knowledge attains the bliss of the self, and never takes birth again. This tree is said to be eternal in the sense that this illusion of saṃsāra exists in time without beginning and it depends on a continuous series of births without beginning or end.

Doctrines of the Sāṃkhya are seen in different ways in the Gītā. The significant principles of the Sāṃkhya such as prakṛti, puruṣa, trigunās, twenty five tanmātrās etc are described in it. In his introduction to the 13th chapter, Ācārya explains that the prakṛti
transforms itself into all objective forms such as kārya, kāraṇa and viṣaya. In Bhagavadgītā, Kṛṣṇa interprets the Sāṃkhya doctrine in five places.

Commenting on the line 2-39, Kṛṣṇa interprets Sāṃkhya as ‘paramārthāvasthaviṣaya’ in regard to the Supreme truth. Kṛṣṇa uses the word ‘Sāṃkhya’ to mean only metaphysical reality and not as a reference to the atheistic Sāṃkhya system attributed to Kapila. Some verses of the 13:(1-5) refer to the 25 tattvas. In 14th chapter, 5 to 21 ślokās present the guṇās in the dual role of psychological qualities and constituents of prakṛti.

In order to find out the exact nature and notion of Karman in the Jñāneśvari, it would be good to dwell on how Jñāneśvara conceives reality. It is beyond challenge that Jñāneśvara is an Advaitin. He considers the world to be true and inseparable part of reality which is single without a second. Jñāneśvara regards the one principle as the cause of the creation of the world and also regards the creation as its manifestation and essentially identical with it.

The statement ‘seeing action in inaction and inaction in action’ is not self contradictory. Both action and inaction presuppose an agent and therefore are caused only by Avidya. The Self has been described
in 2:20 to 24 as actionless. The ignorant attributes action to the actionless Self. Action done by the body being superimposed on the Self.

The perfect sage has been described to have fixed his consciousness in Brahman having realized that the Supreme Brahman is the Ātman, explained in the 17th śloka of the 5th chapter. Ācārya adds here that the sage renounces all actions and dwells in Brahman alone. The sage sees the Sāttvic, Rajāsic and Tāmasic predominant people alike.

*Bhaktimārga* raises the man perfect bliss or Ātmānanda. Jñāneśvara places Bhaktimārga as a bridge between Karmamārga and Jñānamārga. According to him, Bhakti means Parābharti or Advaitabharti because total surrender to the Lord is possible in parābharti. In Advaitabharti the human person and the entire cosmos remain integrated and ‘aham’ is not lost but winded beyond one’s ego. ‘Jñānamārga’ and ‘Karmamārga’ find their fulfillment in the ‘Bhaktimārga’. He says “Of what value is a deserted city, however beautiful? What is the good of a dry lake...? In the same way, is that life cursed which is without devotion to Me”.

According to Jñāneśvara, true wisdom is which goes beyond speculation and arguments. Jñāna brings Jñānadṛṣṭi and makes man desire the Lord alone. He teaches integrated Bhakti in which
Karmamārga or Jñānamārga are not done away but raised to radically new level. Jñānesvara acknowledges, Kṛṣṇa as having all attributes of a monotheistic God, standing higher than the Puruṣa and Prakṛti of Sāṅkhya, and supporting the Brahma of the Upaniṣads and righteous living or dharma.

After the commentary on the 66th sloka of the 18th chapter, both the commentators have offered a clear exposition of the summary of Gītā. Ācārya considers Jñāna as the way to Mokṣa among the two paths of Jñāna and Karman. On the contrary Jñānesvara considers Bhakti as the way. Ācārya has presented the summary of Gītā by referring to all the ideas he has earlier presented regarding Jñāna-Karman. The gist of this summary on Gītā is a debate on which is the cause of liberation, Jñāna or Karman. Ācārya has established the greatness of Jñāna by bringing in mantrās from the Vedās, puraṇās and Upaniṣads. Ācārya’s erudition can be clearly understood just by going through his commentary on Bhagavadgītā.

Jñānesvara has given a simple and brief account of the different subjects of discussion in each chapter of the Gītā. It can be seen that here also Jñānesvara has taken into consideration the common folks of Marātha. But Ācārya has done the summary exhibiting his erudition.

In the entire commentary by Ācārya the exposition of Advaita Vedanta is what is projected most. Moreover there are numerous
references from the *Vedās, Purāṇās and Itihāsās*. Ācārya has given detailed commentary on ślokās which are difficult to understand and left the simpler ones with brief description. As there were so many lovers of the Sānskrit language in that time, Ācārya wrote in the most sublime style in Sānskrit. It is clear from the commentary that he has got a good education and a better preceptor. He didn’t write his commentary coming down for the masses. On the other hand he tried to bring them up to his level. The freshness of Ācārya’s commentary can be traced to this fact.

The commentary which started with the 11th śloka of the 2nd chapter ends with that on the 66th śloka of the 18th chapter. The Lord says that the sorrow caused by a misunderstanding can be avoided by surrendering before Brahman which is the basis of everything. As the introduction and conclusion deals with the ways to avoid sorrow, it can be inferred that the main subject matter of the entire *Gītā* is the escape from sorrows.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. EG - P. 12
2. Ibid - P. 12 - 13
3. PL - P. 33 Introduction
4. TSG - P. 63
5. PL - P. 35
6. Ibid - P. 36
7. CPG - P. 16
8. SOBG - P. 248
9. CPG - P. 16 - 17
10. JI - P. 507
11. PL - P. 37
12. JI - P. 510
13. CPG - P. 20
14. KM - II - 50
15. TMG - P. 16
16. GFA - P. 85
17. JI - P. 203
18. Ibid - P. 203
19. PL - P. 42
20. Ibid - P. 42
21. TSG - P. 68
22. Ibid - P. 68 - 69
23. Ibid - P. 72
25. PL - P. 40
26. JI - P. XIV - 4 - 16
27. PL - P. 58
28. Ibid - P. 59
29. JI - IX - 29, 30, 32