

Essay

Krishna – the catalyst for emancipation

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Hinduism (Dasa, 2009) unlike Buddhism, Christianity and Islam does not have a founder. While most major religions derive from new ideas taught by a charismatic leader, Hinduism, the Santana Dharma or the eternal tradition is simply the religion of the people of India, which has gradually developed over four thousand years. The origins and authors of its sacred texts are largely unknown. Yet an understanding of Krishna (Richard, 1994) is critical to understand Hinduism. The universal nature of Krishna's teaching is explored here.

Key words: Enigmatic, Krishna, catalyst, emancipation, gopis, Devine-in-human, human-in-devine, bhakta (Devotee), Viswarupa Darshana (Vision of the Almighty), Bhagavad Gita-(song celestial), samskara (Impression), maya (Illusion).

THE UNIVERSAL NATURE OF KRISHNA'S TEACHING

Vivekananda (Majumdar, 1965; Vivekananda, 1963) said that we should worship God through unselfish love and pointed out that the way to achieving love of God was, 'fully developed and taught by Krishna, whom the Hindus believe to have been God incarnate on earth. The enigmatic attraction of Krishna's personality has transcended ages and cultures. Poets particularly of medieval times have depicted escapades of Krishna-the celestial lover with gopis in general and Radha in particular in amorous details. The character of infant Krishna has inspired motherhood as a blessed state for women. The help rendered to friend Sudama is part of common folklore. Many poets and saints have added their shades to the depiction of this enigma. Poets from Ved Vyas to Surdas, from Jayadeva to Meera and many more have contributed to the build up of this personality. More recently Yesu Das and Anup Jalota enchanted masses with Krishna bhajans. But it is only in the Bhagavad Gita that Krishna emerged as the catalyst for emancipation.

Of the many devotees of Krishna many loved him deeply as a human being like yashoda and the gopis, yet others like Bhisma and Yudhisthira accepted him as completely divine (Rajagopalachari, 2005). Only Arjun it

was said accepted Krishna as devine-in-human as well as human-in-devine. So true bhakti (Bhaktivedanta et al., 1975) was established; while Krishna was Arjun's ideal he was also very close to him. For Arjun the choice between Krishna and his Narayani army was an easy one. A true bhakta keeps his eye on the lord and does not hanker for the powers and prosperity that the lord can offer.

Often in any war only two factors are in the arena, that is, selfish interest and heroism. The presence of Arjun and Krishna added a new dimension to this conflict (Nikhilananda, 1944). Arjun (Radhakrishnan, 2009) was no mere archer; he was a great bhakta as well. So it was no surprise that he saw the futility of fighting a selfish war and the issue of "Paramarth" had to be discussed. So Arjun says, "I don't want to kill them for whom we seek prosperity even if they kill me". "After killing them the food we will eat will be stained with their blood."

Krishna instead of being sympathetic says, "don't behave like a coward; it does not behove you". What follows there after is an elaborate conversation on the rights and wrongs, the methods their relative merits followed by the Viswarupa Darshana. Further Krishna says "you are not fighting for your petty gains; you are

an instrument in my hand and I have hand and I have Dharma-order to establish (Paramahansa, 1995)". After the Viswarupa, Arjun says, 'have mercy on me, show me the form I have always been in love'. What was the purpose of Viswarupa Darshan? Did it serve the purpose? The Gita would have ended there had the purpose been served. Perhaps even the lord could not convince Arjun through arguments. This proves only one thing the intellectual approach can not carry us really very far. So what does the guide do? He wants to show that He is a far superior being and his guidance must be accepted without question. Does it help? No. The disciple is miserable; praying to see the familiar form but yet has trepidation in his heart.

The final sloka of the Bhagavad Gita contains its essence; Krishna says "Give up all support systems (Your reliance on judging rights and wrongs); rely only on me. I shall redeem you of all sins, do not doubt". Krishna as the guru here is the catalyst for emancipation from all bondages of birth, samskara and attachment. The poet puts it this way where you have a guide like Krishna and a follower like Arjun, victory is a bygone conclusion. While the guru guides us, he remains a catalyst and does not participate in the conflict. Yet his guidance is the only silver lining in this hour of gloom. Even a great saint like Arjun, after seeing Viswarupa had doubts; so this is the overpowering influence of maya (Gandhi, 2009) over all of us. The prayer to lord must be to redeem us from our slavish attachment to our wishes and to reign in our hearts. The relevance of the teachings of Krishna can never be over emphasized and is nicely summed up by Paramahansa Yogananda (1995) in the following words,

"Wherever one is on the way back to God, the Gita will shed its light on that segment of the journey... It is at once a profound scripture on the science of yoga, union with God, and a textbook for everyday living."

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