

Concept of Mind In Śāṅḍilyasūtrās

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Human life is confronted with numerous issues in its diverse aspects. Almost all these problems in life trace their origin to the mind which is affected with evil impressions and thoughts. These evil tendencies promote others and oneself through developing undesirable behavioural patterns. Proper analysis of these problems in a psychologically tuned frame work helps not only in having a deeper understanding of them but in finding their effective solutions also. For the smooth resolving of them interventions at individual level become necessary by which emotional modifications can be brought out and relief will be provided for easing tensions. The mind devoid of evil forms of thinking is absolutely calm and free from all kinds of disturbances.

According to the ancient philosophical perspectives prevailed in India; the mind is constituted with the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas. Among them, the sattvaguṇa, being the real originating factor of the mind, points to the desirable virtues like love and compassion. In the spectrum of such a mind, the feeling of love towards the whole thing in the universe will be developed. When the feeling of love is directed towards God is known as Bhakti. It ascends to a very significant and high level of experiencing bliss beyond the objective world. Among the scholars beholding the significance of the path of devotion, sage Śāṅḍilya occupies a distinct place. This erudite preceptor is the author of Śāṅḍilyabhaktisutras, an authoritative work on Bhakti which explains extensively about the necessity and the specific ways of purification of the Mind. This bhaktisutras owe a worthy place in the tradition of Bhakti and remains as the rare paradigm of

synthesizing social life with much accessible sense of unassailable philosophy in the fabulous literature of ancient India. Śāṅḍilya composed these sutras in such a methodical manner that he traverses into the emotional, ethical, psychological, intellectual and philosophical aspects of Bhakti with the intention of moulding human life meaningful with the inclusion of needful aspects of material life as well as metaphysics.

The systematic viewpoints on mind moulded by Śāṅḍilya is incredible and he conceived the elements of mind unearthing in their minute details with a vision to bless the successors in their path towards reaching a meaningful term of life. The Śāṅḍilyabhaktisūtra is a great treasure in the sense that every minute detail on the science of the mind and its functions finds worthy place and deep narration in this text. Bhakti being the state of mind dissociated from all evil impressions and it highlights the calm version of love in its purified state leading to the indescribable bliss in one's lifetime itself.

Being the most desirable state of the mind, the sage Śāṅḍilya perceives this as the most acceptable state when turned towards God. For bringing this fact within the reach of common man he put forth the sūtra: 'सा परानुरक्तिरीश्वरे'¹. This sūtra delivers the idea that Bhakti is the highest love or deep attachment to God. This affection or attachment for things is one of the main characteristic of human psyche and also human personality. There is no human being without some sort of attachment or love for something. Love is something absolutely generous, that which has no thought beyond the glorification and admiration of the object upon which our affections are bestowed. It is a quality which bows down and worships and asks nothing in return. It is not possible to continue living without it. Nārada-bhaktisūtra also says that Bhakti is the supreme love towards God². He also accepts the views of Śāṅḍilya on love or prema. This love for God is pure and unselfish. The Viṣṇupurāṇa states that the firm affection that the deluded feel towards the object of the senses, such a firm affection generated from the incessant memory of God may it never depart from my heart.³

Love of God is a way to the love of beings in the world. The love thus gets multidimensional and spread in various directions, in as much as love is a predominant note of the human mind. The love towards God grows and assumes a form which is called parābhakti or supreme devotion. The accomplishment of supreme or the realisation of the ultimate good is the aim of human life. So Śāṅḍilya pointed out that devotion is perpetual love or immortality or Amṛtatva. Devotee loves all the things and his mind stays delighted. Pleasant mind is an essential prerequisite of the development of advanced stages of devotion and reforming human personality into better heights of cultural and behavioural lifestyles. The human mind in association with the senses is in search of enjoyment from external objects. It is enthusiastic for the enjoyment of the objects confined within its range of interest. To overcome this situation brought up by evil influences there come the need to concentrate the mind. This concentration of mind is a necessary factor of human beings to accomplish higher levels of life in experience.

Yoga is a great vision involving all kinds of psychological elements to develop Bhakti. Because of its practice man acquires a concentration and his mind becomes delightful. It eliminates all darkness from within and removes all bondage forever⁴. The mind should be elevated by means of prayer and concentration. Keeping this in mind, Śāṅḍilya the great sage also provides more significance to Yoga through his bhaktisūtras. In his opinion, it is unfeasible to live in a state of ultimate happiness without practising some sort of Yoga: ‘योगस्तूभयार्थमपेक्षणाद्प्रयाजवद्’⁵ He states that the prayāja ceremony is a subsidiary of the vājapeya and other sacrifices. And is also a subsidiary of the dikṣanīya and other parts. Yoga is useful to knowledge and devotion because the concentration of mind is necessary in these two pathways. The practice of Yoga is proposed for the sake of attaining true knowledge which does not sub serve devotion. The mind will be purified by the practice of Bhakti and it cannot be brought into control in the absence of a form or prayer. When mind is purified it goes in search of eternal truth and succeeds in its attempt. The mind is freed from all disturbances. It becomes filled to the brim with the calmness of tranquillity. Desire for worldly objects never brings

peace to the mind. Controlling the mind is essential to attain peace. But this controlling power is difficult to get.

By detaching the mind from all worldly objects through constant meditation and fixing the mind upon the Supreme Being, control of the mind can be achieved. Śāṅkhya also supported this view and he says that vairāgyam or dispassion is also a quality of the mind which an aspirant has to practice and it is necessary for the attainment of immortality, which is the same as effectuated from Jñāna, Karma and Devotion. Cruelty, jealousy, hatred, sexuality, greed, dishonesty and such other evil qualities are obstructions in the path of Yoga. They create adverse impressions which present fruits of a painful nature through repeated rebirths. By constant contemplation of their evil consequences and by meditating on their opposite qualities of a virtuous nature, the mind can be made steady in the practice of yama and niyama. Devotion also has to be given up if one seeks the liberation since it is non- different from the affection as mentioned in the Yogaśāstra. Yoga says that attachment, aversion, and clinging to life are the afflictions or kleśa⁶. If yoga is practiced for the purpose of attaining knowledge alone, surely it helps the growth of devotion also. This concentration of mind is indispensable for doing karma yoga also.

It is already made clear that human beings cannot live without affection or love. Both the aspects of affection and concentrated mind are interrelated and unavoidable in reaching the goal of life. When there is affection to God, there is a necessity to keep the mind concentrated. So this affection is converted into the discipline of yoga. Love and the practice of yoga are also complementary to each other. Both of these have their own specific nature, but they are to be brought together through creative ways for maintaining happiness in life. Śāṅkhya certifies that devotion should never be doubted to be of the form of faith or śraddha, because faith is subsidiary only to ceremonial activities. This is a common ingredient in all pathways. It forms a part of all acts. Devotion of God is higher than this type - 'नैव श्रद्धा तु साधारण्यात्'⁷

The mind should be purified and the understanding made clear, then the deep meditation will be possible. Meditation is the goal. The real yoga is meditation, but meditation can be done through the understanding, through the scientific intellect, or it can be done through the love or emotion of the psyche. Meditation takes place in many ways. The function of the mind can be made the channel of meditation. When a particular change of the mind takes place, meditate through that particular transformation. When the intellect is scientific and rational meditate through this analytical mind. The cultivation of bhakti thus requires the abandonment of attachment for worldly objects. But it is cultivated naturally and gradually. As love of god increases, attraction for other things disappears. Śāṅḍilya says that only evil company should be avoided. Company with virtuous is desirable. Even so devotion, though it has the characteristics of attachment, is highly desirable because its goal is the highest.⁸

Meditation is a constant remembrance. When this kind of remembrance has been attained all bondages will break. Thus scriptures reveal and employ the scheme of constant remembering as a means to liberation. This remembrance is denoted by the word bhakti. In commenting on a sūtra, Śāṅḍilya recognizes and takes the word "praṇidhana" is a sort of bhakti in which, without seeking results, such as sense enjoyments etc all works are dedicated to that teacher of teachers"⁹ that meditation through the analytic, scientific, logical mind is called jñāna yoga, the yoga of wisdom or knowledge. But if the predominant feature of mind is love, affection, emotion, sentiment and feeling, then meditate through that aspect of the mind. That is bhakti yoga- "भक्त्या जानाति इति चेन्न अभिज्ञप्त्या साहाय्यात्"¹⁰

The feature of the mind called emotion or love is taken as a medium for the concentration and meditation of the mind. While the object of meditation may be anything, it is the method of meditation that gives the name for the yoga. A single object of meditation can be meditated upon either through jñāna, or bhakti or karma or yoga. The object of meditation does not determine the nature of the yoga. It is the method of meditation that determines the particular label or name that is given to the yoga. Thus, concentrate on the object of meditation through

love. Now, the Ultimate reality of the universe is mainly the object of meditation. It is a universal, immanent force or energy present in all things, manifest in men, animals, trees, mountains, and so on. Whatever be the object of meditation, even if it may be the universal force, the predominant feature of the mind is the medium of meditation. So through love, think and meditate on that universal force. The Supreme Being as an object of love, it gives a feel that it is superior. The emotions are inferior to this attitude.

Emotions can be stable or disturbed under different circumstances. Love is a general term which is a predominant feature in the mind of every human being, but in kind it differs because of the different relationship we have with the particular object. Our relationship with our child is different from our relationship with our father, mother, wife, husband, etc.¹¹ These forms of love become a source of bondage and suffering to us inasmuch as there is a likelihood of bereavement from them. Bereavement is separation. Generally we love because it gives us happiness, but love can bring sorrow. The thinkers thought that although love is inescapable in the human mind, it will cause bondage to us inasmuch as we do not know how long the object of love will last. As we do not want bondage, we should have a permanent object of love. Nothing is permanent in this world. Everything is perishable. The only permanent thing in the world is the Ultimate Reality, the universal energy, so we love that alone and love nothing else. We will never suffer due to this love because that will never die. That object of our affection is always there.

The most feasible method of love is the psychosomatic aspect of bhakti yoga. This bhakti is psychological because it is concerned with the feeling, the function of the mind. One of the methods of developing and implementing love of God is to hear and to listen to His glories. He is called Almighty, which means enormous strength in every aspect. Listening to these splendours as described in the scriptures. This is one method of implementing the feeling and psychological affection, for the Supreme Being. Hearing His glory is one method, and singing is another. A third method of practising this love is to close your eyes and think only Him. This is called japa, which means repeating His name and His form. That is

another way of practising devotion. Śāṅḍilya says that remembering god, praising His glories, reciting his story etc are to be included in the ārtabhakti or the devotion of the distressed because they have the nature of expiation

- स्मृतिकीर्त्योः कथादेश्चातौ प्रायश्चित्तभावात्¹²

Viṣṇupurāṇa also says that of the various kinds of penances, the constant remembrance of Kṛṣṇa is the best.¹³ Then another form of bhakti is mass prayer. There is mass prayer in churches, in temples, etc. In a group setting we offer a common prayer to the Īśvara, the ultimate doer of all things. He is the agent of all actions. He does it through you, and you are commissioned to do His mighty deeds. This is how a devotee feels. Then finally, the highest form of devotion is self-surrender.

In Yogasūtra, Patanjali says that Īśvarapraṇidhāna or self-surrender to God leads to Samadhi. Praṇidhāna is not primary devotion but secondary. Hence there is no contradiction with Patanjaly and Śāṅḍilya. Parābhakti or the highest devotion is actually the devotion that takes place after the realisation of God. Apārabhakti or lower devotion also known as Gaṇibhakti is the means thereof. This later is of the form of chanting the lord's name, singing his glories etc. It is clear that the same purports are the two succeeding sūtras of Patanjali.¹⁴ This is the highest form of devotion. Meditation is the easiest way to contemplate on a visible object. However, the rule regarding meditation is there, because it is easier to contemplate a visible object: “ध्याननियमस्तु दृष्टसौकर्याद्”¹⁵. While commenting this sūtra, Svapneśvara states that the rule restricts meditation to a particular visible object, because, otherwise there is the possibility of the mind being distracted by several objects. Therefore its mention is to be considered only for the convenience it affords. If the object of meditation were invisible there is a diversion of choices. Therefore the rule is different with regard to the different passages of the sṛuti. That is why the milkmaids, Śísūpala etc, even without recourse to this rule, could obtain such results for their meditation which would normally be very hard to obtain.¹⁶

It is a psychological fact that thinking is possible only with the help of visual or auditory symbols; hence words and sentences are indispensable in the re-

membrance of God, if the mind is not entirely lost in a visualized form. Thinking is sub-vocal speech mostly; and ideas and words are intimately connected. The purpose of meditation is to help one attain a direct and immediate experience of his basic nature as सच्चिदानन्द. In continuous meditation, an unbroken series of words and passages are therefore necessary. The employment of language in support of meditation is what is meant by śravaṇa and kīrtana. The point behind all these methods is that you have to remember only that Ultimate Reality as the basis and substratum and substance of the various forms and things that perceive in the world and by this form of meditation personality will get absorbed into Reality and will imbibe the character of eternity as Reality. This is an outline of the method of Bhaktiyoga. Mind or psychical elements are obligatory factors to develop bhakti. Bhagavadgīta also advises to worship with a single mind.¹⁷ Śāṇḍilya believed that the mind is regarded as the major thing in the existence of a man and mental restlessness on account of worldly matters should be dispensed off. He expresses his idea throughout his Sūtra that deepens the power of thought and love or affection to God. The mind can be pleased through Japa. While doing japa, one should cease to be conscious of the external world and set up conscious spiritual union with the Eternal within. Evil thoughts may arise in the mind. They can be eliminated through constant practice and renunciation. He says that believe first in our self and then in God. At that time we need a mind to feel. He also stresses that surrender yourself to the Lord.

In the midst of this psycho-physical life and the material world attachments, man has lost all the benefits of peace of mind and he becomes inseparable from the supposed fear of extremities of anger along with increased violence in his life. Many of these human problems traceable to the psychological premise is again no doubt the result of our improper thinking, negative attitudes towards others as well as ones own self, and undesirable behavioural patterns. Because of this reason, Śāṇḍilya treats his Bhaktisutras in a psychological manner and he elaborates the attainment of Bhakti through the purification of mind. The study of the gorgeous concepts of human mind and nature can bring about an amalgamation of the men-

tal and material aspects of the entire human mind. Śāṅḍilya consciously attempted to bring the conceptual variations of the mind into limelight for arresting the vicious tendencies therein and to nourish a culture of desirable values.

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3. Viṣṇupurāṇa, 1-20-17
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5. SBS, 19
6. yogasūtra 2-3
7. SBS, 24
8. “हेया रागत्वादिति चेन्न उत्तमास्पदत्वाद्सङ्गवद्” (SBS, 21)
9. Īśāvarapraṇidhānādva- Yogasūtra,
10. SBS, 15
11. SBS, 6
12. SBS, 74
13. Viṣṇupurāṇa II-6. 134-135
14. Yogasutra I-27, I-28).
15. SBS, 65
16. Sv B on SBS, 65
17. महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैर्वीं प्रकृतमिश्रिताः।
भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादमिव्ययां। Bhagavadgīta, 9-13

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