XXIV

THE ASTADASA-BHEDAS, OR THE EIGHTEEN POINTS
OF DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE
TENGALAI (SOUTHERNERS) AND THE VADAGALAI
(NORTHERNERS) OF THE VISISTADVITA VAISHNAVA
SCHOOL, SOUTH INDIA

By A. GOVINDACARYA, M.R.A.S.

[On p. 566 ante reference was made to the two kalas or
schools of the Visistadvaita Vaishnavas—the Tengalai and the
Vadagali. The points of difference in their doctrines are of
considerable importance for the study of religion in India, and
I have much pleasure in forwarding to the Royal Asiatic Society
the enclosed communication from Swami Govindacarya, himself
a follower of the Teengali belief. It may be noted that while
each school has numerous adherents in Southern India, the
great majority of Vaishnavas of Northern India trace their
spiritual descent from Ramananda, and profess doctrines akin
to those of the Vadagalai.—G. A. G.]

S. = South School.
N. = North School.

1. Grace of God (Prasada).
N. Say that Grace is to be earned or bought; i.e. "co-
operative".
S. Say that Grace comes freely. God's grace is sovereignly
free and, therefore, has no price; i.e. "irresistible".

2. Grades of Bliss in Moksa.
N. Say that there are no grades.
S. Say that some variation exists, but it is neither
quantitative nor qualitative. The variation or
difference arises in virtue of different duties assigned
to different Muktas (i.e. freed, liberated, or salvated
souls).

3. Works (Karma) and Gnosis (Jnana).
N. Say that these do not constitute direct means to
attain God; but are ancillary to Bhakti. Bhakti,
therefore, constitutes the direct means to Mokṣa (= God-attainment).

S. Say that any of these so-called distinct means may lead to Mokṣa; for in each case the mental attitude of the person is the chief determinant. It is the conversion of the heart that is chiefly aimed at.

4. Nature of Śrī (or Lakṣmī).

N. Say that Śrī has essential pervasion (Svarūpa-Vyāpti) also, as Nārāyaṇa; i.e. pervasion by essence.

S. Say that Śrī has attributive pervasion (Guṇa-Vyāpti) and corporeal pervasion (Vigraha-Vyāpti), but not the essential pervasion (Svarūpa-Vyāpti). The Motherhood differs from Fatherhood and differs again from Sonhood. Son is the Soul, who has attributive pervasion only. Mother is Śrī (or the passive female principle of the kosmos), who has attributive plus corporeal pervasions. Father is Nārāyaṇa (or the active male principle of the kosmos), who has essential plus attributive plus corporeal pervasions. This pervasive character is what differentiates the three Principles from each other, viz. Soul, Śrī, and Nārāyaṇa.

5. Śrī’s Powers.

N. Say that Śrī has the power to grant Mokṣa—a power which she shares equally with Nārāyaṇa.

S. Say that Nārāyaṇa alone possesses this power; and that Śrī performs the function of the Paraclete, i.e. Mediatrix in this magnum opus.

6. Definition of Vātsalya or God’s Love (or parental affection) to His creatures.

N. Say that by the expression “God’s love for soul” it is meant that the love is blind to its (soul’s) taints or faults.¹

¹ i.e. Dōṣā-’dāsītram.
S. Say that by it is meant that the love is not merely blind, but is so overpowering as to evince a relish for the so-called taint.¹

7. Definition of Dayā or Compassion.

N. Say that compassion is that feeling (or emotion) in the heart which begets the wish to relieve the pain of the pained.²

S. Say that it is that feeling in the heart which, on seeing pain, is itself as painful as the pain of the pained. It is the feeling which cannot simply bear to see the pain of others, but is itself painful or pain-feeling.³

8. Prapatti, or Resignation to God.

N. Say that Prapatti or Resignation is also a soul-initiated act, like Love to God (Bhakti), leading to Mokṣa. Resignation thus is one among the several ways leading to God.

S. Say that Resignation is not one among the ways, but the Way or the Means, the adoption of which specifically characterizes those high souls who have sought that way, to the exclusion of others. This attitude of entire capitulation or surrender to God differentiates such souls from others, so that they are not to be classed with others, i.e. others whose hearts are still attached to the other ways, and have, therefore, not arrived at the ripe condition of implicit attachment to the way of Resignation. This Way is God Himself, whereas the other Ways are Ways of God. Prapatti is called a “Way” for convenience (upacāratuh).

¹ i.e. Dōṣa-bhūgyatram.
² i.e. Para-duḥkha-nirācikīrṣā.
9. **Who should resort to Prapatti?**

N. Say that only those who are incapable of walking in the other paths resort to this path of Prapatti or Resignation. It is sheer helplessness that drives the soul to seek shelter in Resignation.

S. Say that the way of Resignation is for all, be they capable or incapable. Resignation is the *sine qua non* of every penitent soul. Without this chief feature other qualifications are futile. With it other qualifications, because they qualify, derogate from the greatness of Resignation. Resignation *per se* is all-powerful. Qualifying it is to weaken it and detract from its dignity.

10. **Conditions of this Resignation.** (Vide Bhagavad-Gitā, xviii, 66.)

N. Say that the conditions may be stated thus: "If you, souls, are incapable of following the other ways ordained in the Śāstras, give them up and come to Me."

S. Say otherwise—"If you, souls, are capable of walking in the other ways, then try your might. If your capability alone will elevate you to Me, well, try; but if you are at once keenly alive to your weakness, i.e. imbecility and ignorance to compass that end by your own strength, then why not lean at once on what is Strong and Wise, i.e. God, Myself?" The former attitude is that of *self-assertiveness*; the latter, *self-abandonment*. The former attitude is measuring *one's own* strength; the latter, giving it up for God's strength. The former attitude is one of *self-emphasis*; the latter, *self-renouncement*. The former attitude is *self-glorification* or *self-aggrandisement*; the latter, *self-abusement* or *self-abnegation*. The former attitude is one of *self-perpetuation*; the latter, *self-effacement*. The former
attitude is one of self-condensing; the latter, self-rarefying. Self-indulgence the one, self-sacrifice the other. In fine, self-projection by self-will is the one, whereas self-rejection for God’s Wisdom (omniscience) is the other; self-strength in the one case, God’s omnipotence in the other.¹

11. Do qualifications of the other ways qualify Prapatti?  
N. Say, Yes.  
S. Say, No; on the other hand, they disqualify. For the only qualification that is required is for the soul to absolutely cognize its intimate relationship with God.² That relationship is the one which comes of Serviency (śesatva) on the part of the soul, and Sovereignty or Paramounce (śesitva) on the part of God. “I am Thine, not Mine” is the cry of the Prapanna. The distinct vision by the soul of its own helplessness, in its relation to the only helpfulness of God, is the only help; the only passport to success; the only way leading to the open portals of Heaven; and, therefore, liable to be vilified by other qualifications which the soul may put forward as its own self-earned quantum or modicum for salvation.

12. Meaning of Works to the Resigned (Prapanna).  
N. Say that the acts done by the Resigned soul conduce to evoke God’s pleasure; and should, therefore, be performed to seek that end.  
S. Say it is presumptuous to think that the souls’ acts ought necessarily to please God. They may or may not. It is not for the soul to judge or predetermine

¹ The object of this constant effort to negate oneself is to break the shell of the soul’s hardened material past, and destroy the consequent mainspring of egoism (ahankāra).
² “Iśe śatavya-sambandhat an-idam-prathamād api |  
Rakṣisyaty anukūlān na(h) iti yā sudṛdhā matih!  
(Lakṣmi-tantra, xvii, 70.)
the effects from causes set afoot by itself. Performance of Works by the Resigned has not this sense, but the sense that by their means an example may be set to those whose way to salvation is yet begun—steep and uphill—that they may so be led up. Philanthropy is the motive of Works, not currying the favour of the Godhead. To imagine thus a purchase or barter with God savours of audacity indeed in the Soul.

13. What are the limbs (anga) of Prapatti (i.e. necessary preliminaries to it)?

N. Say that the sixfold preparations necessarily precede Prapatti, viz. those mentioned in the verse—

(1) "Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpah, (2) prātikūlyasya varjanam |
(3) Raksīyatī 'ti viśvāsā, (4) gōptrtvā-varanam tathā |
(5) Ātma-nikṣēpa, (6) -kārpaṇyē, sadvidhā 'śaraṇā-'gateh ||" ¹

S. Say that solid, steadfast, stable Prapatti stands in no need of any prelude. It is per se the main act which spontaneously engenders, on the other hand, the so-called preliminary signs. E.g. the pounding of paddy is the act; perspiration and other signs follow it as a matter of course. Ānukūlya, etc., are thus not postulates but corollaries. The offspring is mistaken for the parent. It is a posterior effect, not an anterior cause.


N. Say that if a Prapanna, subsequent to the act of Prapatti, stumbles, or slips into error, or relapses into his old ways, the atonement consists in

¹ Lakṣmi-tantra, xvii, 56, 57, et seq.

(1) Harmony with God and all His creation.
(2) Riddance of the reverse of (1).
(3) Implicit faith in God's providence.
(4) Supplicative temper.
(5) Self not for self, but oblated to God.
(6) Humility (or destitution of means).
repeating that act again, and as often again as one may so slip.

S. Say, Not so. Prapatti is the act once for all of freely surrendering oneself into God's hands. When that act is done, it is done once for all. This first act contains all the potentiality for salvation; and therefore can never be cancelled by a moral fall again or subsequent act of folly. If it be said that there is and must be a reparation for every defilement, we say that that reparation or atonement consists in bringing vividly to one's mind the saving virtue of his first efficacious act of surrender, Prapatti. This vivid recollection contrite is repentance enough, and thus the first act of Prapatti remains intact and unabrogated, the mental remorseful recollection adequately satisfying all expiatory demand. The first stout act of surrender remains pure and unrepealed, and never on any account rendered nugatory by any subsequent peccancy. The defiled soul is cleansed by a pathetic appeal to its former pledge of faith and trust in God, i.e. Prapatti. "Atone for faults, then go to God," N. say. "Go to God and faults get atoned," S. say.1

15. Does Prapatti win or buy grace?

N. Say, Yes. As in the Path of Works (read Karma-Mimāṁsā) works leave insensible residua, technically called Apūrva, so in the path of knowledge (read Brahma-Mimāṁsā) Prapatti answers to Apūrva; and as Apūrva produces material fruit, Prapatti produces Mokṣa fruit or spiritual fruit.2

S. Say that to interpret Prapatti as a means or effort

1 Says Vedāntācārya himself, who is identified with the North School—
``Aṁśu'ṇād atavā juāṇād aparāddheṣu satsv api |
Prāyaścitām kṣamasvē 'ti prarthanāī kāī 'va kēvalam ||''
(Paśca-rātra-Rākṣi.)

2 This is humorously called markaṭa-kiśora-nyāya.
put forth by the soul to compel God's grace is tantamount to not knowing the very nature of Prapatti. Prapatti as understood by you, viz. as compelling grace, is not Prapatti at all; for, so interpreted, it is not explained as unconditional surrender or as undoubting resignation. Nay, it thus constitutes a barter, or a huckstering with God. Prapatti is that which completely resigns, and leaves Him the Master of the situation. Prapatti as understood by you may be called Svagata-Svikāra, or acceptance by God initiated by your asking; as understood by us, it is Paragata-Svikāra, or acceptance by God of His own free will and choice, unmasked, uncompelled. Apūrva is no other to us than this Grace.1

16. Caste and Prapanna, how related?

N. Say that a Prapanna, but who is of an inferior caste, is deserving of only so much respect as may be displayed by the tongue.

S. Say that no such limitations can be tolerated. A Prapanna must be regarded completely as a Prapanna, irrespective of caste, creed, or colour. No inequality begat by caste or other such formalities and conventions ought to separate the godly from the godly.


N. Say that inasmuch as the soul is subtile (अमु), it cannot be permeated by God, as then (i.e. when it is permeable) it can no more be subtile (अमु), but pertains to the category of the "gross" (i.e. pervaded, vyāpyata). So God's permeating power is limited by the subtile soul.

1 This is humorously called mārjūla-kīśāva-nyāya.

2 "Tena' pūrvain hi bhavati sa ēva Paramēśvaram" (Bṛhad-Brahma-Saṁhitā, i, 7. 16).
S. Say, Not so. God's permeating power passes our power of conception. He is most subtile, aye, more subtile than the most subtile. So He can inter-penetrate even the soul. His power of pervasion, pari-samāpya-vṛtti as it is designated, is like that of genera and species co-inhering in every group and individual constituting such genera and species; like that of class pervading every integer of that class; like number pervading the figures 1, 2, 3, and alphabet pervading A, B, C, and so forth.

18. Kaivalya(Isolation)-Mōkṣa (or Soul-sight or Soul-actualization; or the State of Atomic-aloofness).

N. Say that this state is temporary.
S. Say it is perennial. The soul wished for it, strove for it, and got it. What it got is eternal, by its own making. Where, then, is extrication from this state? Being a spiritual state, return to material planes is cut off. Being a soul-state, rising to Divine-planes or God-state is shut off.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

1. Gain, Soul or God?

N. Say that God is gain to the Soul.
S. Say that the Soul is gain to God.

2. Definition of Vyāpti or Presence.

N. Say that Vyāpti is extension conterminous with the ten quarters of space; in other words Vyāpti is a spatial relation.
S. Say that it is not merely this, but by the inscrutable power of Providence the Presence is not only external but internal, and in ways and modes un-thinkable by man.
3. अष्टाक्षरी-मन्त्र (or Eight-Syllabled Holy Prayer).
N. Say that when this is taught to others than Brāhmaṇas, the Prāṇava must be omitted; and that without the Prāṇava, the remainder of the mantra is capable of being split into eight syllables, justifying its name.
S. Say, to say so is artificial and torturing of the text, for without all its parts retained intact, no mantra can possess any efficacy. So, then, to be efficacious, this mantra is intended to be taught in its pristine purity and entirely to all, irrespective of caste, creed, and colour.

4. The power of Free (Nitya) and Freed (Mukta) Souls.
N. Say that the Free and the Freed Souls have no power to create, or, for example, make a kosmos.
S. Say that there are no such restrictions. Any Nitya or any Mukta is capable of doing anything by virtue of God's commands.

5. Location of Kaivalya.
N. Say that Kaivalya is situate in a corner of the Material Universe.
S. Say that Kaivalya, per se, by hypothesis, i.e. by endeavour, is a trans-material (metaphysical, so to say) state. Hence it must be located in some corner of the Spiritual Universe.