

## ŚARANĀGATI

From the dawn of history man has been struggling to survive in an alien environment-an environment which challenged his entire resources of the body and brain. His life has been precarious in more senses than one. Threatened by forces, fire, air and water and climate he had to adapt himself in these in several ways. Against his own kind too he had to arm himself and defend himself. That he appeared altogether to fit in with the description of him as with tooth and claw, its cruel and vengeful and rapacious and cunning is not strange at all but that he should have recognized also the fact that he was devoted and charitable and kind and merciful is a factor of capital importance. Nature itself had proved a limit to his age, his infirmity and his decease; and as man grew old he found himself dependent on others; and though children and wife had revealed certain instincts of affection yet they too under the stress of circumstances proved undependable. Wives had deserted their husbands, even as husbands had taken other wives and women and affections got into difficulty. Jealousy and hatred had made life quarrelsome and disharmonious. The evolution of different kinds of races had broadened the division, and the differentiation in respect of works or labour had produced diversities and competitions the most difficult life became a synonym for struggle for survival, and later for the struggle for power that helps and protects survival and continuance or security. Thus the evolution of the political society and social dynamics became an expression of our present miseries. An ordering of all life in terms of security became imperative and law became the one chief concern of man. Man's instinct towards law-making is essentially for security of the poor against the rich, the weak against the strong, the have nots against the haves. It was also the attempt to preserve the rich against the violence of the poor, rather minority against the majority, the intelligent against the ignorant many. We have indeed many phases of the struggle.

The modern world is witnessing these struggles in larger dimensions and wider areas than ever before. Nonetheless the pattern of struggle is identical, the motives for struggle are identical, and the results of struggle are also identical. Man find no peace. Individual men who die for the sake of the security of the others of their kind and ideals are non too few and their inner conflicts are irresolvable. The individual is in constant crisis of being especially when do ideals seem no longer valid or satisfying. There is dread, fear, hrdayadaurbalyam – failing of the heart; confusion of mind and collapse of all energy to strive to live.

The incidents hat bring about his loss of faith in oneself and his future may be great like wars or small like family feuds, loss of one's beloved, the treachery of a friend, the failure of justice an collapse of economic stability. Tragedies trail main – indeed all his life. Helplessness before fate – that ineluctable and unpredictable portent is common. Inescapable is the experience of events of dimensions, whether cosmic or individual.

Man seeks refuge from the foes by hiding or running away or getting beyond reach. There are those who had fled their country, from there adversaries, and from the inclemency's of climate and weather. Wandering into wilderness, away from all mankind which seems to have turned its back on him, men have south peace. It was itself choice of a better for the worse.

So men have wandered in search of peace, of quiet, of comfort, and freedom from fear. But it is not always that man finds it possible for feasible to run away or hide or fly beyond the reach of one's adversaries. One gets caught up in the vice of opposites, Seylla and Cnarybdis: Escape routes seem to be closed and the doom seems inevitable, inescapable. No friends are within reach, not even Forces of sympathy but dire ruin. One is compelled to bow down or Forced to kneel and humble or humiliate oneself without any possibility of being permitted to be, pitiless, bleak, tragic. Men get prepared to die for values they hold dear – but they are not quite a large number. Most persons succumb hoping that they mat retrieve their fortunes after all this tragedy and failure, for while life

lasts there is hope. One hardly knows whether one is stronger of the first yielding to be able to stand up against tyranny of events which had rendered their fall into disgrace. For the succumbing to vice or humiliation only leads to weakening of the will, and once the tension of resistance is lost, it is difficult to recover it again though it is also true that one cannot be pushed too far in humiliation. There is a point where the worm turns and it is a fatal bite.

Man surrenders to one who can save him from the danger or disaster. One seeks refuge by falling at the feet of that person. It is true that in life one surrenders to almost every one from whom one expects mercy, pity – or help, but it depends upon the other person as to whether he could grant refuge or succor or cure. There is no doubt that one surrenders because one expects help and pity and hopes for it. For getting the fullest attention or help one promises to totally abide by whatever is demanded of him. unreserved and unconditional and sol loyalty is promised if only one is saved or cured or helped. Thus though it is, yet it is conditional in one sense that one is helped and cured and saved Otherwise he passes onto the next who is better. There is therefore a necessity to run away or leave one who is incapable of saving or who is guileful enough to hide his inner motives to injure. It is usually said that one falls from the frying pan into the fire, but the fire may be disguised as mouths that cool. In this world all things are possible and though some persons may save one from one kind of situation, they may prove to be more dangerous from another point. It is well – known that blackmailers adopt the technique of helping in order to blackmail their victims. Teachers who promise to relieve distress of one kind confront their followers with other kinds of subtle unmentionable distresses. So one finds that surrender to another person is not always good or helpful. Further one does not know what is indeed the price of being saved. But it is not always that one finds time for cautious decision to seek refuge or surrender to one who presumably can save and does save. Most often the panic of danger poses the need for immediate relief and reasoning is relegated to the background surrender to anybody or any one without discrimination occurs and with all its consequences. One thing is clear that man needs and craves for help and rushes to whom 0 so

– ever could be thought of as capable of helping under certain conditions men (and women) have sought refuge from inanimate objects, poor and indigent persons, weak and ignorant persons also, which almost reveals them to have broken down completely in their sense of discrimination. Distraughtness in such cases verges on insanity or foolishness.

One seeks refuge till one gets it. And when one does not get refuge there is collapse, or a break up or a surrender to the inevitable. So tragedy is the heroic result of a failure to get refuge from nature and man, instances of these are rather frequent and have been the subject of novels and plays, and enacted everyday and everywhere they have impressed the minds of men with the inevitableness of the tragic in life, in Āṅvārs life, especially when it confronts the values of truth, goodness and beauty, and harmony.

The search for a saviour has been from all times: the question is almost there for some body or other all along the history of each individual being. The presence of the crisis for each individual not once in one's lifetime but almost continuously from birth to the grave, is a continued challenge and men have been searching for the saviour scourer deliverer. Man has however found that for each kind of crisis he requires quite a different type of saviour. And thus goes on the search, the search for savior, by those who are in utterly incapacitating crisis, a crisis of helplessness, abasement and poverty of spirit.

The whole Personality of man confronted with a crisis of being finds in a state of utter helplessness that rouses one to a supreme point of surrender to him who can save or render succour. This condition is what the psychologist of Self surrender calls the condition of KārpaṇYāmuna - kṛpaṇa – svabhāva, when one's self – wretchedness that makes one seek refuge in another being – incapable of depending on one's own capacity and ability and resources.

But though helpless and alone and in dire straits one does not know at once or intuitively as to whom and to which place one has to go for refuge. We are men who are by anguish taught to distinguish the false from the true, and

more often than not a we take the wrong turn and seek that wrong refuge. This has to be learnt at least. But in difficulties and crises this discernment is almost absent and luck must decide ultimately by the fruits whether our choice was right or wrong. The psychological condition of the individual in such an emotional condition might move from all sorts of tensions and be violent. There may be no other alternative route (*anayagati*) and no other refuge (*Anaya śaraṇatā*) except the Supreme Being or God. This necessity for having a refuge may be one of the most important for the existence of God: we want a person to save us therefore there must be such a person. Though it

---

<sup>1</sup> But this meaning seems to be not quite twhat Upaniṣadic seer Yājñavalkya meant by the word Kṛpana. A Kṛpana is one who quits the world withoug knwoign Reality or Brahman “Yo Vā etad akṣaram Gārgi, aviditvā smallokāt Prait sa Prāmaṇah”. Kṛpana thus is equated with one who is in sorrow (dhukha) and one who in the word of kenopaniṣad has attained greatest loss - Vinaṣit or wretchedness. The meaning that it means Ungrateful is very far fetched.

---

looks pretty bad as an argument yet through ages mankind has presumed to hypostatize this kind of Deity – and assert His existence and seek verification of His existence by surrnedeirng to Him. an what superb and innumerable instances of the Existence of God, the ultimate, the Śaraṇa, Even Buddhas find refuge in the knower (Buddha), in the dharma and in the Samgha. The Divine Kṛṣṇa had declared unequivocally that One should surrender to Him. Divine Śrī Rāmā spoke of His compassion as ready and all embracing succour to whosoever seeks Him in surrender. So have the others but the refuge must be real; permanent and salutary.

Thus it may turn out one may be forced to surrender or seek refuge of another person or God for he are of escaping form the supreme predicament of life. The loss of honor, the threats o life, the deprival of healthy, the disease or decease of one’s own dearest and nearest relations and friends, or the threat of annihilation

of all that one holds as essential to being, his being, freedom in all its forms. There is no doubt that there are conditions in which the giving up of life itself in order to prove one's love for the preservation of it becomes an imperative of being. Thus a friend, a Guru, or beloved may demand one's own entire life for proving one's love to them, not to speak of giving the one's property and all material possessions. But that does not come under surrender unless one is in love with God to whom one gives all of them or when the choice of God is made against the allurements and possessiveness of these kinds of wealth and power, desires and even ways of living (*dharma*).

The demand by a Godhead may be for a complete renunciation of all see as the *Gītā* states: renouncing all *dharma* seek refuge in me alone. The demand may be interpreted in terms of a jealous God who could brook no equal and certainly no superior. But it can also be interpreted to show that there must be a complete abidance with a single direction and therefore one should leave all means and method of rescuing, succoring, saving and curing or liberating to God's wisdom, because it *śeṣi* omniscient, and omnipotent. Thus one should place oneself at the disposal of God and follow Him through all. He who has sought refuge and has been granted it was nothing more to do than to wait on God and willingly yield to His modes of saving.

Thus it can be seen that one must have faith in the Saviour or in him who has been sought after. One must place oneself entirely at his disposal, and one must also do all that he wants one to do and not do what he prohibits us from doing. All these have been expressed psychologically as *ātma-nikṣepa* (placing oneself at the disposal), faith (*viśvāsa*) *ānukūla* and *prātikūla* –*varjana*. Of course the most important feature is that all these are done for the sole purpose of liberation from sorrow, from danger to life, honor, property and to all those one holds dear.

Thus the *āgama* says that

1. One should will to do that which is helpful, reject that which is unhelpful, choose that which sought to be sought, have supreme faith in the saviour, place oneself at His disposal (feet), and have complete submission bordering helplessness. These six are said to be the limbs or steps or śartaṇāgait.

In classic statement couched in the form of a prayer of submission Śrī Vedānta Deīka has expressed the import and method of performing śaraṇāgati or nyāsa or nikṣepa.

1. The burden of protecting and (or) the fruits of protecting me are not mine. Both are of the lord of Śrī: thus the wise deeming plane (the self or) themselves (or surrender to the Feet of God).
2. I (therefore willing the helpful and renouncing the rest prefacing my surrender with faith (in the Divine lord of Śrī). O thou wealth or these who have nothing, surrender the burden of protecting me, to thee.
3. o Master (Svāmin). Indeed it is Thou who places in Thy self thus burden – that is dependent on Thee. That is under Thy control, that being supported by thee who art free of all burden, that by the wisdom granted by Thee for Thy purposes.
4. o Varada! Granter of the Wish! I have sought my refuge in Thee. Make me again Thy feet after my life's duration is over.
5. may I have firm faith in being thy dependent. Let me have only one aim that of attaining Thee. Make me free from all activities propelled by prohibited desires – me who am Thy eternal *kinkara* (attendant).
6. May Thou order me to do always non – offending service to thee.
7. All those that are mine and me both inconscient and conscient O Varada! Make them serviceable to Thyself directly (by Thyself).

8. Thou are my sole Refuge, O Merciful! Let me not do sin (prevent me from doing evil deeds) Turn me away from all worldly deed (pravrttani).
9. Excuse me for deeds that should not have been done and for doing not the deeds that have to be done, O Lord who save those who are recumbent (prostrate) before Thee.
10. O Lord of Śrī! Thus have I put myself under Thee according to the fixed five – fold śaranūāgati. I am now absolutely here without fear.

The technique strictly follows, the āgma instruction about the limbs to be executed in performing śaraṇāgati or nyāsa according to rule. This is ritualized in later times and it is asserted that all other kinds of śaraṇāgati will not yield result unless it is all done at once (*sakṛdeva*). Thus there would be truncated śaraṇāgati which may not yield results of being granted refuge. As against this ritualistic view there has always been that condition of psychological integration of steps as in a chain – reaction, or links in the chain spontaneous being fit in at whatever point we might start in the process of surrender. Thus once the state of akincanata helplessness arises in whatever and wherever it will had to two possibility (i) a personal effort to stake redress, refuge which is about the most important if conditions permit and (ii) grace of God which operates spontaneously when the Divine finds one helpless and yet seeking help somehow. As it was stated God rushes not only to the rescue of one who calls and prays and surrenders but also the those who unconsciously utter even a word or half a word which includes the word of surrender – one may almost say by *ākāṅkṣa* or *sannidhi* or *yogyata*.

However it is clear that whilst the human being has his own Psychological conditions which dictate his seeking refuge in God, the psychological conditions of God are also fully represented in the view that God is utterly gracious – Śrīman-full of kindness and sympathy (*karuṇāmiva rūpiṇim*) which is His inseparable spouse and comrade (*sahadharmacāriṇi*), and the giver of the highest wishes mokṣa, dharma, and kārma. All these are indeed sought after by

the intelligent person (budhāh) but would be granted to the ordinary seeker as well when he chooses God alone as His refuge – and not any other.

The importance of Surrender therefore lies in seeking one who can save or give refuge fully, and lead one utterly out of the wrongdoing which separates man from God. There is no doubt that God alone can be the Refuge and only God and Śrī can lead us to Him.

Once this is done even partially it spontaneously leads to the practice of the other limbs of śaraṇāgati.