

Agastya Gita

The Agastya-Gita is contained in chapters 51 & 52 of Varaha Purana.

Varaha said:

1-2. After hearing the account of Dharanivrata from sage Durvasas, Satyatapas went to a slope of the Himalaya mountain where the river there was Pushpabhadra (beautiful with flowers), the stone Citrasila (beautifully shaped) and the banyan tree Bhadravata (particularly attractive), and building a hermitage there, spent the rest of his life in contemplation.

Earth said:

3. Thousands of aeons have elapsed since I performed this vrata, and now I have forgotten all about it.

4-5. By your blessings I now begin to get a recollection of all that. I am, therefore, anxious to know more.

6. Therefore, kindly tell me what Agastya did after returning to the residence of Bhadrasva.

Varaha said;

7. When the sage returned, Bhadrasva asked him about Moksha-dharma.

Bhadrasva said:

8. Oh sage! By what means is the bondage of worldly existence snapped, and by what means the sorrows in life can be got over?

Agastya said:

9. Oh king! Listen well to this story relating to what is distant and what is near, and based on the division into the seen and the unseen.

10. At the time when there was no day, no night, no direction, no heaven, no gods and no sun, a king named Pasupala was looking after numerous beasts.

11. He once went to see the eastern ocean, and there, on that shore of that limitless expanse of water, saw a forest full of snakes.

12. There were eight trees and a freely flowing river. Five important persons were

there moving horizontally and upwards. One of them was holding an effulgent woman.

13. The woman was holding on her chest a person having the splendour of a thousand suns, and with three colours and three divisions.

14. Seeing the king, all of them became silent and still; and as soon as the king entered the forest, they became combined into a single being.

15. The king was then encircled by the serpents, and he began to think about how he could kill them and escape.

16. When he was thus thinking, another person having the three colours, white, red and yellow, came out of his body.

17. He asked by gesticulation where he should go. Just then there arose Mahat.

Mahat or Reason (buddhi, vijnana, sattva) is the first evolute of Prakrti. Its function is to make decisions both cognitively and ethically, both in cognition and in action. It is cosmic and covers the whole world (universe). The world comes into being out of a cosmic assertion or decision "That is". This cosmic decision is related to the Cosmic Person. While it is cosmic for the world, it is separate for each individual. In relation to the individual, it may be either the transparent or the static. In relation to the transparent character, it exhibits the qualities of knowledge, ethical detachment, etc. In relation to the static character, it exhibits the opposite qualities. Thus Reason may be considered to relate to the Cosmic Person in Its highest character, while it may be related to the individual beings in varying degrees between the highest and the lowest qualities.

18. The king was covered by that and asked to be alert in mind. He was then confronted by the woman (who was really Maya).

The enquiry of Non-dualism or Monism is ontology of the Spirit. Sankara, the greatest exponent of the Non-dualism of the Vedanta, introduces the concept of Maya, synonymous with Prakrti as the instrument that creates, sustains and dissolves the world of forms and names.

The verbal root of Maya is ma, meaning to measure. The etymological root of the word Maya makes it clear that it is something that makes the object we experience determinate through spatial, temporal and causal laws.

The Svetasvatara Upanisad gives an idea that Maya is a kind of net thrown on Being, making it look like the world fixed by some laws, constituting the structure of the net. This idea makes it clear that Maya is not mere illusion. The object of any illusion, like that of dream, disappears later, whatever fright it may have created in

the person experiencing it. The idea of the Brahman creating the world, which does not exist on its own, through His will, involves something like the idea of illusion. Salvation as the ultimate goal is freedom from determinateness whether it is the life of pain or pleasure, happiness or sorrow, good or bad, knowledge or ignorance. It is the same as freedom from Maya.

P. Sriramachandrudu explains succinctly that Maya is indescribable. It is neither existent, nor non-existent, nor both. It is not existent, for the Brahman alone is the existent (sat). It is not non-existent, for it is responsible for the appearance of the world. It cannot be both existent and non-existent as such a statement is self-contradictory. It is thus neither real, nor unreal; it is Mithya. But it is not a non-entity or a figment of imagination like the son of a barren woman. In the example of a rope mistaken for a snake, the rope is the ground on which the illusion of snake is superimposed. When right knowledge dawns, the illusion disappears. The relation between the rope and the snake is neither that of identity nor of difference, nor of both. It is unique and known as non-difference (tadatmya). Similarly, the Brahman is the ground, the substratum on which the world appears through Its potency - Maya. When right knowledge dawns, the real nature of the world is realized as Maya disappears.

19. He was thus engulfed by Maya. Then the Lord of all beings caught him in his possession.

20. Then five other persons came there and surrounded him.

21. All these hid themselves within the king's person when the serpents came united to attack.

22. The king then appeared highly resplendent and all his sins disappeared.

23. In him were unified earth, water, fire, air and ether and all their qualities.

Gross Elements (Mahabhutas) are the products of the five subtle elements (tanmatras). They are Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space. According to the Vedantic tradition, out of the subtle element of ether, gross ether comes; out of gross ether, subtle air; out of subtle air, gross air; out of gross air, subtle fire; out of subtle fire, gross fire; out of gross fire, subtle water; out of subtle water, gross water; out of gross water, subtle earth; and out of subtle earth, gross earth. Although the Cosmic gross elements are created thus out of one another, every object in the world is considered to contain all the five elements, but in different proportions. This doctrine of every object containing five elements is called Quintuplication. It is doubtful whether this doctrine can have a scientific basis. Even the doctrine of the five elements being based on the five senses may not be scientific in the modern sense of the term.

The gross elements are symbolic of solid matter, liquid matter, energy matter, and gaseous matter in relation to the first four elements, space remaining as such. They are the transformations of the subtle elements. Otherwise, the correlativity like that between hearing and sound cannot be explained. Reversely the correlativity points to the unitary origin in the ego and finally in the 'I' consciousness.

24. Thus Pasupala unified all these that stood around him.

25. Seeing the king then, the tri-coloured person said to him:

26-27. 'Oh king! I am your son; please command me to do what you wish. We decided to bind you, but were defeated and bound by you, and we now remain hidden in your body. When I have become your son, everything else will arise of its own'.

28. Told thus, the king spoke to the man.

29. 'You (say you) are my son, and, as a result, other things arise. But I don't desire to have attachment to any of the pleasures men may have'.

The divine Ground reveals itself only to those in whom there is no ego-centredness or alter-ego-centredness either of will, imagination, feeling or intellect. It is the state of imagelessness in contemplation and, in active life, the state of total non-attachment in which eternity can be apprehended within time; samsara becomes one with nirvana.

The bliss into which the enlightened soul is delivered is something quite different from pleasure associated with the body. Blessedness depends on non-attachment and selflessness. It can, therefore, be enjoyed without satiety and revulsion. It is a participation in eternity and, therefore, remains itself without diminution or fluctuation. The liberated soul attains to bliss eternal and immeasurable, and abides in the Brahman.

30. So saying he released the son, and with him others also. And freed from them, he stood alone.

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Karmakanda

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Agastya said:

1. The king made himself into a tri-coloured being and produced a tri-coloured son named Aham (ego).

Ego is the sense of the 'I' in experiences such as 'I know X', 'This is mine'. Its function is to appropriate all experiences to itself. Otherwise, the experiences become impersonal. This is to say that all objective experiences fall within personal experiences and cognitions. Otherwise, there will be no door open even from initial or tentative subjectivism to reach the objective World.

The ego is of three kinds, depending on which of the three attributes is dominant – the transparent ego, the active ego and the static ego. In fact, the three are aspects or phases of the same ego. All the other non-physical categories such as the mind, the five senses, the five organs of action, the five subtle elements and the five gross elements, all of which constitute the world of experience issue out of the ego. It comprehends and covers the entire world. It is not merely related to any one point of reference.

There is no experience that is not the experience of the ego. Neither the mind nor the senses work in the absence of the ego such as 'I see', 'I do', etc. They work only in unison with the ego. If the ego is not present, the mind does not think, nor do the senses perceive. Yet the Ego is a product of Prakrti or Nature.

The ego is the thought 'I'. Of all the thoughts that arise in the mind, the 'I' thought is the first. Other thoughts arise later. Holding a form, it comes into being. It stays on as the form is held. It breeds on it and grows strong. It changes form as suddenly as it assumes form.

All suffering revolves around egotism. Egotism is the sole cause of mental distress. Spreading the net of worldly objects of pleasure, it is the egotism that traps the living beings.

Indeed all the terrible calamities in this world are born of egotism. Egotism eclipses self-control, destroys virtue and dissipates equanimity. When one is under the influence of egotism, one is unhappy. Free from egotism, one is ever happy.

Egotism is but an idea based on a false association of the self with the physical

elements.

When the self of one, self-forgetfully, identifies itself with the objects seen and experienced and thus becomes impure, there arises craving based on ego-sense. This craving intensifies delusion. All sufferings and calamities in the world are the result of craving. Ego-sense is the source of all sins. One is to cut at the very root of this ego-sense with the sword of wisdom. When the whole universe is realized as illusory, craving loses its meaning.

Craving ascends to the skies and suddenly dives into the nether world. It is ever restless, for it is based on the emptiness of the mind. He alone is happy who is free from egotism. Only he is a hero who is able to cross the ocean known as the mind and the senses.

The delusion known as the ego-sense is like the blueness of the sky.

Of the mind and the ego-sense, if one ceases, the other ceases to be.

If one focuses one's thought on ego-sense, it takes to flight. One is, therefore, able to transcend the phenomenal existence of the ego when one dives deep into the source from where the 'I' thought arises. Everything rises with the rise of the ego. Everything subsides when the ego subsides. To destroy the ego through self-enquiry is renunciation.

Renunciation of everything puts an end to all sorrow. By renunciation, everything is gained. Renunciation of the ego-sense leads to realization of the Absolute. There is total renunciation when the mind – citta with the ego-sense is abandoned. When one abandons the mind, one is no more afflicted by fear of old age, death and such other events in life. That alone is supreme bliss. All else is terrible sorrow.

Egotism is quietened by constant practice – abhyasa. Abhyasa is thinking of 'That' alone, speaking of 'That', conversing of 'That' with one another and utter dedication to 'That' alone. When one's intellect is filled with beauty and bliss, when one's vision is broad and when passion for sensual enjoyment is absent in one, then that is abhyasa or practice. When one is firmly established in the conviction that this universe has never been created and, therefore, it does not exist as such, and when thoughts like 'this is the world', 'I am pleased', etc do not arise at all in one, and then that is abhyasa or practice. In such state one is beyond attraction and repulsion and, as such, egotism. One will have attained true wisdom. This is the practice of the yoga of true wisdom by means of which one acquires the faculty of instantly materializing one's thoughts. By such practice one acquires full knowledge of the past, the present and the future, too.

In other words, what covers the embodied soul is egotism. This egotism covers everything like a veil. All troubles come to an end when the ego dies. Then, though

living in the body, one is liberated. This Maya, that is, the ego, is like a cloud. The sun cannot be seen on account of a thin patch of cloud. When the cloud disappears, one sees the sun. If, by the grace of the guru, one's ego vanishes, then one is liberated.

2. The son got a daughter Avabodha (consciousness) and she got a son Vijnana (knowledge).

Consciousness is the central aspect of our inner world and thus, first of all, an experience. Basically the term has been used in three distinct ways. First, it is as a theoretical construct referring to the system by which an individual becomes aware of. Second, it is to refer to reflective awareness, an awareness of being aware. Third, it is as a general term encompassing all forms of awareness. The first two ways of experiencing consciousness are restrictive. Therefore, consciousness is best utilized as a general term referring to all forms of experience or awareness. This is not restricted to either conscious behaviour or to waking experience.

Shankara says, "If you do not have a consciousness, then everything is dark and nothing in the universe exists." This corresponds to the view of the modern quantum mechanics that unless you can observe a thing, it just does not exist. This is for the reason that there must be an interaction between the observer and the observed to complete a measurement. It is consciousness that fills the bill in the material world in the sense that it determines its existence.

The Perennial Philosophy considers that pure consciousness is the true state of the divine Ground or the Godhead and it permeates the whole universe as the pure activity of the Godhead. All conscious experiences are the states of consciousness altered or modified with respect to pure consciousness. As a corollary, consciousness is presumed present in all beings – sentient and insentient in the universe. The material world exists. The conscious world exists. They go together. It is the combined cycle that operates. One must have the other. And there is not one without the other. Both are ever in symbolic interaction with each other.

Taittiriya Upanisad propounds that the Brahman is the Truth, Consciousness and the Infinite. From the Atman is born ether, air, fire, water, earth, plants, food and man as 'I', one from the other sequentially. Man is called atman because he eats, swallows and absorbs (adyate) the different elements constituting the objective world. Inward to the atman made of food is the atman made of the vital principle (prana). Inward to the vital principle lies the mind, inward to mind, reason (vijnana) and inward to reason, bliss (ananda). Each latter is the atman of the former and each former is the body of the latter. But every one of them is a form of Purusa (Atman) Himself. Thus, vijnana (reason) is what leads to bliss (ananda), the state of liberation.

3. He got five sons comprehending all comprehensible objects, and named Aksa

and the rest (eye etc).

What comprehend all comprehensible objects are the sense organs (jnanendriyas) corresponding to their sense perceptions. They are eye, ear, nose, taste buds in the tongue and skin. The five corresponding powers of sense perception are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling by touch.

4. These (sense-organs) were the Dasyus (hostile aborigines) who were subjugated by the king.

5. In their abstract form, they made an abode for themselves (in the king's person), a city consisting of nine outlets, a single pillar, four pathways, and numerous rivulets and ponds.

6. All the nine entered the city together and soon Pasupala became the concrete Purusa.

7. Established in that city, the king brought the Vedas there by contemplating on them.

8. The king also arranged there for all the Vratas, rules and sacrifices laid down in them.

The Vratas are primarily meant to propitiate Visnu, but also Siva, Sakti and others with fasting, prayer, worship and gifts. Each Vrata is taken as capable of dissolving sins, and to confer special benefits such as health, wealth, progeny, etc. But performance of Vratas without any desire is also recommended.

The rules include recitation of mantras prescribed for ritualistic worship. They may not be drawn from the Veda, but are only puranic.

9. The king once felt distressed and evoked the karmakanda (ritualism), and then the Supreme Lord, remaining in yogic slumber, got forth a son with four faces, four hands and four feet, embodying the four Vedas.

Karmakanda is what is prescribed for performance of sacrifices (yajnas – yagas) in the Veda. In other words, it is Vedic ritualism.

10. From then onwards, every object of sense came to be under the king's perfect control.

11. He found the sea and the forest, the grass and the elephant, etc alike, as a result of his invocation of the karmakanda.