UNIT-13 RĀMĀNUJA'S CONCEPT OF LIBERATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the meaning of the concept of liberation and the concept of bondage
- discuss the path of liberation in Indian-philosophy
- describe the path of liberation according to Rāmānuja
- describe the five types of liberation
- discuss the two concepts of liberation- Jivanamukti and Videhamukti
- explain the concept of Prapatti.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

Mokṣa or liberation means freedom. In the philosophical sense mokṣa means the freedom of the soul from the cycle of birth and death. Man's life on earth is a state of imperfection which is called as Bandhana or bondage. Every religion and philosophy consider this life on earth a degradation, an imperfect state of existence, a samsara. The soul is born here and dies and again takes rebirth. Moksa or liberation means the freedom from this process

of birth and death. Thus liberation is a guarantee that the soul, whom it once attains liberation, is not bound in the body again.

According to Rāmānuja, the bondage of the soul to the body is due to its karma. As the effect of its karma, the soul is associated with the particular kind of body it deserves. Being embodied, its consciousness is limited by the organs of knowledge and the body it possesses. In the state of bondage the real nature and the natural qualities of the soul remains veiled and it identifies itself with the body or the not-self and the soul becomes subject to sorrows and sufferings of the body. Thus, through ignorance, the soul is degraded from its original state and are in bondage.

13.3 THE PATH OF MOKṢA OR LIBERATION

In Indian philosophy, there are three ways, which leads to liberation. They are - knowledge (jñana), action (karma) and devotion (bhakti). Śaṅkara believes in the path of knowledge for the attainment of liberation. On the other hand, Rāmānuja believes in a harmonions combination of knowledge, action and devotion (jnanakarma - Samuccayavada).

Rāmānuja believe that the attainment of liberation must be sought through action and knowledge, because they pave the way for devotion. By action Rāmānuja means here the different obligatory rituals enjoined by the respective Vedas on persons according to their respective castes and stations in life (Varnasrama). Disinterested performance of such duties destroys the accumulated effects of the past deeds which stand in the path of knowledge.

Knowledge (jñana) does not mean only book learning of the Vedānta. It is a real knowledge which must be steady, constant remembrance of God (Dhruva smrti). This is variously described as meditation (Dhyana), prayer (Upasana) and devotion (Bhakti). Constant meditation on God, as the dearest object of love, should be practised continuously by prayer, along with the performance of the obligatory rituals which remove the obstacles of knowledge.

In the Bhāgavadgitā, Puranas and many other Vaisnavite religion, there is inspiring message of the glory and fruitfulness of devotion. Devotion

express the love of God. The person who have simplicity, regard, pure heart full of love, are the owner of the path of devotion. Rāmānuja admits that knowledge is the cause of liberation and that knowledge leads to highest bhakti or devotion. Intense remembrance of God or devotion thus practised, ultimately leads to an immediate knowledge (Saksatkara) of God. And this is the final means of liberation.

13.4 THE FIVE TYPES OF LIBERATION

Rāmānuja follows the various types of moksa in consistent with the Smrtis and the Purānas. In the Smrtis and the Purānas, five types of liberation has been mentioned, viz. Salokya mukti (living in the same land with God), Sasti (possessing power similar to God), Samipya (living in proximity with God), Sarupya (attaining the form of God) and Sajujya (being identical with God).

13.5 RĀMĀNUJA BELIEVES IN VIDEHAMUKTI

The Indian philosopher recognizes two types of liberation - Jivanmukti and Videhamukti. Jivanamukti means attaining liberation while still living in the world and Videhamukti means disembodied liberation i.e. liberation after the destruction of the body. For Rāmānuja, there is no Jivanmukti. So long as the soul remains associated with the body, the karmas persist and as the karmas persist as long as, the soul cannot acquire its Mokṣa i.e. its innate Purity. Hence, there is no jivanmukti.

13.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAPATTI

Rāmānuja recognizes the value of Prapatti or complete resignation to God, as a distinct means to the attainment of liberation. Prapatti or self surrender to God is possible, only by constant memory of God. It is said that the Jiva, until he totally surrender to God, he cannot attain the union with God. And God, when he is totally satisfied in Prapatti, He bestows the Brahmajñana to the soul. Thus there is no liberation without God's grace, for unless the Divine grace dawns, the knowledge or devotion alone cannot pave the way to liberation. Thus Rāmānuja believe that by the Divine grace which itself dawns on account of Prapatti and Upasanā only, man can attain Mokṣa or liberation.



ACTIVITY: 13.1

What is bondage?

Ans……

Rāmānuja believes in a harmonious combination of knowledge , action and devotion Explain.

Ans……



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is bondage?

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Q 2: Ignorance is the root cause of bondage - is it true?

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Q 3: Rāmānuja does not believe in Jivanamukti - Is it true?

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Q 4: How many types of liberation are recognized by Indian philosophy?

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Q 5: How many types of path are there, leading to liberation, in Indian philosophy?

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Q 6: How many types of liberation are recognized in Smṛti and Purānas?

.....

Q 7: "Rāmānuja believes in the concept of Jivanamukti"- is it true ?

.....

Q 8:"Prapatti means self surrender to God" - is it true?

.....

. Q 9:'Only through Prapatti and Upasanā, man can attain the Divine grace of God" - do you believe it ?

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13.7 LET US SUM UP

In Indian philosophy, Liberation is the highest end of life. All the systems whether Āstika or Nāstika, believe in the concept of Liberation as the ultimate goal of our life. Rāmānuja also believes in the concept of Liberation. In this Unit, you have come to know about the concept of liberation, according to Rāmānuja. Some points, which you have learnt in this unit are as follows-

- Liberation means freedom of the soul from the circle of birth and death.
- There are three ways which leads to liberation. They are -knowledge, action and devotion.
- According to Rāmānuja, liberation can be attained through the harmonious combination of knowledge, action and devotion.
- The best means of liberation is Bhakti or devotion.
- There are five types of liberation - Salokya, Sarsti, Samipya, Sarupya and Sajujya.
- Rāmānuja recognizes only the concept of Videhamukti i.e. liberation after death.
- Rāmānuja believe in the value of Prapatti or self-surrender to God, as the best way to liberation.
- There is no liberation without the grace of God, according to Rāmānuja.



13.8 FURTHER READINGS

1) Radhakrasnan, S. Indian Philosophy, Vol.-II

2) Chatterjee, S.C And Dutta D.M. An Introduction To Indian Philosophy

3) Hiriyana, M.,(1983). Outlines Of Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarasidass, Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi.

4) Sharma, C.D.(1973): A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi

5) Misra, Hridaya Narayan (2006) Bharatiya Darshan (Hindi), Sekhar Prakashan, Allahabad



13.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very short questions

Q 1: What are the five types of liberation?

Q 2: What does the word 'mokṣa' mean?

Q 3: What are the three ways leading to liberation?

Q 4: Mention the five types of liberation.

Q 5: What is Videhamukti?

B) Short questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q 1: Write short notes on:

a) Devotion

b) Varnasrama

c) Dhruba smrti

d) Jiranamukti

e) Prapatti

Q 2: Explain the concept of mokṣa very briefly.

Q 3: What is Videhamukti? Explain briefly

Q 4: What is meant by prapatti? Explain in brief.

C) Long questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: What is the concept of liberation, according to Rāmānuja ?

Q 2: Explain the various paths leading to liberation recognized in Indian philosophy.

Q 3 Explain the concept "J̃nana-Karma-Samuccayavāda" - according to Rāmānuja.

Q 4: What are the five types of liberation in the Smṛti and Purānas? Explain.

Q 5: What is Praptti? Explain.

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