

The Nature of Divine Power According to Spanda System

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Abstract

Present paper is an effort to throw light on the nature of Divine Power according to spanda system.

The Spanda system is purely monistic system of philosophy. It therefore believes in the existence of one supreme reality, which has been variously named as the supreme Lord (Para-mesvara) Supreme Siva (Parama siva), Supreme Samvid (Para samvid), the supreme. Experiencing principle (Para-pramata). He is by his very nature eternal, immutable and infinite. Though He is eternal and immutable, He underlies as the innermost and true self. The diversity-as in the universe, both individually and collectively and hence in that all-Pervasive or cosmic aspect, He is called the Atman and the Caitanya. At the sane time He is one, indivisible and infinite. He is not exhausted by its innumerable and diverse manifestations as the universe, nor is limited or conditioned by space (desa). Time (Kala) and form (Rupa).

The ultimate Reality has two fold aspect-A transcendental aspect in which He pervades the universe.

The ultimate reality in its immanent aspect is referred to by three names—with a distinctive implication in each case. The implied distinction refers to the relation of the universal consciousness with the manifestable. It is called Anuttara,¹ when the manifestable is in the state of Absolute unity with it. As for instance, at the time of total universal dissolution (Maha-pralaya), when the relation of Absolute unity is substituted by predominant unity (Bhedabheda), it is spoken of as Siva, as at the time of pure creation. The term Mahesvara is, however, applied only when the manifestable assumes distinct existence within the universal consciousness, much as our thought currents or ideas do within ourselves, when we are about to deliver a very thoughtful speech. Anuttara, Siva and Mahesvara can be compared with para, Pasyant! and Madhyama respectively.¹

The word (Mahesvara) in the Saiva terminology means the manifestor of the impure creation, on which all the worldly transactions depend.²

In Spanda karika, transcendental aspect is called kartartva (subjectivity) and the other one is called karyata (objectivity).³ Abhinavagupta describes the transcendental as *Nirdvaranama-bhati bhatydvrttanijdtmakah*.⁴

Objectivity is perishable and the subjectivity is indestructible. Destruction is never possible to that inner nature, which forms the abode of the attribute of omniscience, because another is not found. The Lord creates and destroys the only objective aspect of the preceiver, i.e. body etc. and not the subjectivity. Anuttara is beyond the human mind.⁵

The caitanya, according to the Spanda system, is essentially of the nature of Pure-Illumination (suddha-prakaSa), that is always self luminous (sphurata) and self-revealed (svayarh-Prakasita). The caitanya as the pure illumination (Suddha-prakasa) is the substratum of all things that exist or have a being (satta)' because of the existence or being must necessarily be either revealed to experience (Prakasita) or capable of being revealed (Prakasya). That is to say, the concept of being (satta) in spanda view, is co-extensive with manifestedness (Prakasita).

Caitanya is always self luminous by nature. This means that the caitanya, is not merely of the nature of Suddha Prakasa, which always shines and illumines. It is also at the same time the illuminator (Prakasaka), which illumines and reveals (Prakasati) the three aspects being one and identical in essence. The identity of illumination, illuminator and the illumined, may no doubt seem strange as it is contrary to our ordinary experience, in which we always find them as separate and independent entities. But in the case of Caitanya, which is the sole reality, it is true both logically and as fact Sarhkara thus represents one's own nature.⁶

The capacity of self-revelation, that is unique in caitanya is technically called the Amarsana sakti of caitanya or simply the Vimarsa sakti of and the act of self-revelations the Para-marSa of Caitanya. The vimarsa Sakti is the eternal nature of caitanya as it is inalienable from its essence. The Supreme Reality which is of the nature of caitanya in the Spanda System⁷ is therefore always described as PrakaSa (Siva) vimarsa (Sakti) maya. The supreme Reality, which is both absolutely immutable and self same Reality and at the same time ever-vibrating ; is the equilibrium (samarasya) of the both. That is to say, Siva and sakti are held in perfect equilibrium in the Supreme Reality, which is Parama Siva.

The Prakasi is conceived to be very much like a mirror". The difference, however, between this aspect and a mirror is that the latter, in order that it may receive reflection, requires an external light to illumine it, for it can not reflect any image in darkness. But in caitanya, PrakaSa aspect shines independently of all external lights and does not need an illuminator. The Prakasa aspect is not the most characteristic aspect of the Reality, but vimarsa is also a distinguishing aspect of it. It therefore, the Supreme Reality had been only called Prakasa-maya. it would have been no better than a substance capable of receiving reflection. The word vimarsa explains what other distinctive features it possesses. It signifies the capacity of Reality, in the state of perfect freedom from all kinds of affections. At times 'AmarsV and 'PratyamarsV also are used as substitutes of vimarsa but they always do not connote all that 'vimarsa' does. The point has been very clearly stated by Abhinava in his Pratyabhijna vimarsinl.⁸

Vimarsa sakti (Power) is not in any way different from, or independent of 'Parama Siva but in one and the same with Him.⁹ The spanda system, being strictly monistic system, does not believe unlike the pluralist Naiyayikas, in the duality of sakti and saktimana, guna and dravya. Dahika sakti can never exist without Agni or saitya can never exist without hima. The Sakti and the saktimana, the guna and the dravya are, in the opinion of this system, not only inseparable as entities, but they are also one and identical in essence, so that it is impossible to think one without the other. This power is also spoken of as 'svatantrya, because its existence does not depend upon any thing else, as does that of will (Iccha), knowledge (jftana) and action (Kriya). each of which depends for its existence upon what immediately precedes. This represents the highest Lord This includes all other powers, which are attributed to the ultimate.¹⁰ For the conception of the principal power of Parama Siva as svatantrya, the system seems to be indebted to Panini, because it is Panini, who so far first conceived the svatantrya to be the chief characteristic of an agent."

The word 'Svatantrya' does not imply erraticness, senselessness or self-willedness. The ultimate power is not wanton, capricious or self-willed, according to this system. Svatantrya-Sakti is a very comprehensive expression of the spanda terminology. It is used with reference to the Universal, self. When all the possible powers which can be attributed to self, are intended to be implied.¹¹ It represents that essential nature of the universal consciousness, which is responsible for its apparent change¹² from the state of Absolute Unity.

The Saiva writers on the various branches of the monistic Saivism, looking at the Svatantrya aspect of the universal consciousness from different points of view, have given it different names. In the Siva-Sutra of Vasugupta, it is called Caitanya' for the simple reason that it has the power of uniting, separating and dealing in multifarious other ways with what is within.¹² It is called sphurata or spanda in Spanda literature.¹³ "*Lelihdna Sadd devi sadd purnd ca bhdste Urmiresd vibodhdbheh saktiricfrUmikdprabho.*"¹⁴ It is also called Mahasatta because¹⁵ it is the cause of all that can be said to exist in any way. Another name by which it is referred to at some places is 'Paravak'¹⁶ because it represents the speech in its most subtle form. This will be described in detail in chapter entitled "The Nature of Divine Power."

The term 'Svatantrya' indicates that the essence of consciousness consists in great Lordship (Mahesvarya). It represents the chief characteristic of Absolute. In this respect, Parama Siva differs from Brahman.¹⁷ Parama Siva might be described as the Pure Absolute, there being no separation between cognition and freedom (Bodh and Svatantrya) in it. Freedom is the very nature of the light of consciousness. For in the absence of Freedom, the consciousness would not be different from material object like crystal, mirror etc.¹⁸ The essential nature of luminosity, as apposed to materiality consists in having freedom in respect of manifestations. This freedom is natural to the self-luminous consciousness (Prakasa) and is known as Absolute Independence. There appears to be lack of freedom only in the intermediate state of consciousness, which is characterised by 'thisness' (Idarhta). This manifestation of lack of freedom is itself due to the freedom of the Absolute consciousness. The essence of citi is great splendour. This brings out the difference between the saiva concept of absolute and the vedanta concept of Brahman. Citi possesses Ultimate power or infinite potency. In it alone may be found the way to happiness and great reward.⁹

Although the terms like 'svatantrya', 'sakti', 'Ahihta*', 'sphurata', 'Vimarsa' etc. represent the dynamic aspect of the absolute, all of them do not equally emphasize the same form of dynamism, while Ahmta emphasizes the dynamism of integration, sphurata indicates the manifestation of the unmanifest, similarly, vimarsa expresses the determination of the indeterminate and : svatantrya : stands for the capacity to perform the impossible.

The concept of 'svatantrya' supplies us the key to the riddles of the universe. It helps us in our attempt at solving some of the most crucial and knotty problems which could not be solved in earlier philosophies. Due to its power of freedom, consciousness appears as phenomenal and noumenal, as being and becoming as sentient and insentient, as subject and object. Consciousness is essentially a self-aware force of existence. In every manifestation it is one and the same consciousness, which is organising or expressing itself differently. It is this principle that is responsible for maintaining the identity or unity of the Absolute during the state of manifestation of the world of plurality.²⁰ The essential characteristic of the Parama Siva is the free act of consciousness. The saivite interpretation of the supreme self is unique in itself and is not found **any** where else. The act of consciousness or the characteristic feature of the agent in the act of consciousness, is spoken of as the self.²¹ The Parama siva which **has** created consciousness **as** its essential characteristic, can not be described merely **as**

pure being, nor can it be described as Sunya, which is wholly negative in character, for the absolute is the source of all finitude.

Parama **Siva** is the Supreme Samarasya of Bodha and Svatantrya; consciousness and freedom, siva and sakti. Parama siva is taken to be the fullest and richest existence and the perfect harmony of opposites. There is no negation of finitude, but merely a rejection of discord in it. It is consciousness which manifests even the absence of consciousness.²² It pervades even the imaginary objects like, sky-flower.²³

Existence **and** consciousness both **are** essentially **and** wholly identical with each other. Existence is consciousness **and** consciousness is existence. Consciousness is essentially self luminous. Its presence can also be felt during the states to which one is reduced at the time of excessive anger, joy, fear, deep grief, hunger etc." Parama siva is ever a personal Impersonal God, the absolute subject (Para Pramata). The absolute is the supreme—the all inclusive reality. The conception of the absolute as the supreme ego enables the saivite to avoid the two extremes, the danger of drifting towards abstract or pure monism of the vedanta type and drawing into the great void of the consciousness is existence. Consciousness is essentially self luminous. Its presence can also be felt during the states to which one is reduced at the time of excessive anger, joy, fear, deep grief, hunger etc." Parama siva is ever a personal Impersonal God, the absolute subject (Para Pramata). The absolute is the supreme—the all inclusive reality. The conception of the absolute ego is the most appropriate expression. The absoluteness of self-consciousness has been established on the basis of reasoning in the Saiva system alone.²⁵ His being the great Lord consists in his eternal self-consciousness, unrestrained freedom etc.²⁶

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