NOTE ON TWO SANSKRIT RELIGIOUS TERMS

_Bhakti_ and _Sraddhā_

by

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I propose to investigate here from a philological point of view two Sanskrit words, _bhakti_ and _sraddhā_, which are of considerable importance in the expression of Hindu religious attitudes. The two terms are often treated as synonymous, but a careful philological study will show their fundamental difference and this in turn will point to an important distinction in the religious attitudes to which the words refer.¹

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In order to ascertain the connotation of the word _bhakti_, the following method is adopted. First, we shall enumerate the contexts in which the

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I regret that I have been unable to secure the apparently excellent monograph by Dr. Hans Werbin Köhler, _Sraddhā in der vedischen und alt-buddhistischen Literatur_ (Göttingen, 1948), which has been referred to in various studies, such as A. Thumb und R. Hauschild, _Handbuch des Sanskrit_ § 653, Anmerkung 10 (Heidelberg, 1959), P. Thieme, _KZ_, 70, 1951, p. 126, L. Alsdorf, _ZDMG_, 100, 1950, p. 636, M. Mayrhofer, _Studien zur Indogermanischen Grundsprache_ p. 47 (Wien, 1952), and J. Gonda, _Die Religionen Indiens_ I. p. 43 (Stuttgart, 1960).


For the texts the following editions are used in this paper.

_Bhása_: _Svapnavasavadatta_ 2nd Ed. (1915), _Cárudatta_ Revised Ed. (1922), _Pañcarātra_ 2nd Ed. (1917), _Pratimānātaka_ (1924), _Pratijñāyaugandharāyana_ 3rd. Ed. (1920). Other plays are those of the First Edition published in _TSS_.


word bhakti appears in compound, standing either as first member or as last member. By reference to other members of the compounds, one aspect of bhakti will be revealed. Second, sentences in which the word bhakti appears as simplex are collected and these reveal another aspect of the word. The words which appear in close context or juxtaposition with the word bhakti will help us to ascertain the connotation. Last, we shall refer briefly to explanations of the word which have been given by the ancient commentators.

1. bhakti as first member of a compound

tatra vyaktaṃ dṛṣadī caraṇa-nyāsam ardhendu-mauleḥ 
śaśvat saddhārṇ upacita-balim bhakti-namraḥ pariyāḥ (Meghadūta I.55ab) 
aho tapasvi śaṁto 'yam iti khyātiś ca sarvataḥ 
udapadyata tatrāśya bhakti-namre 'khole jane (Kathāsaritsāgara 24.105) 
idaṃ tu te bhakti-namrāṃ satām ārādhanaṃ vaiṇḥ (Kumārasambhava 6.73 cd) 
itthāṃ bhagavatī devi bhakti-namreṇa pārvatī 
saṃstutā daitya-patānī putrāve jagṛhe 'ndhakam (Kūrmapuruṇa I.16.219) 
mahāpānṇebhyo vyavahārīṇas ca mahā-munau bhakti-vaśāt praṇemuh (Saundarananda 5.1cd)

In these examples, we notice that the word bhakti is followed by the adjective namra or construed with verbal root nam-. The idea involved in “bowing” presupposes a human relation and requires the presence of a person or personified God, to whom personal devotion can be directed. Other terms following the word bhakti in compound are tuṣṭa (Kathāsaritsāgara 22. 246, etc.) and rāga (Saundarananda 18.4), which also indicate a personal relationship. Further we have a passage from Ratnāvali, bhakti-sādṛṣam ācarāmi (Comm. svāmina iti śeṣāḥ) (IV. 16, Lehot ed. p. 75 lines 5–6), which again presupposes a person, here a master, to whom the action is directed.

2 Cf. also Saundarananda 18.53. ato 'sti bhūyas me vivakṣitaṃ nato hi bhaktaś ca niyogam arhasi.

3 Thus the concept of bhakti presupposes the existence of a personified God. It may possibly be foreign to the Brahmanical tradition (J. Gonda, Religionen Indiens I. p. 244, Stuttgart, 1960), which is crystallized in the speculation of the impersonal and neutre principle, brahman. (Cf. A. Silburn, Śvetāsvatara Upanisad, pp. 7ff. Paris, 1948).