

THE AMRITANUBHAVA OF SRI JNANADEVA

The AMRITANUBHAVA (Ambrosial Experience) is a magnificent collection of about 700 short, pithy declarations that emanated from the mouth of Sri Jnanadeva (also known as Sant Jnaneswar) describing in words that which cannot be expressed in words, i.e., the Transcendental experience. Because it happens to be a blissful experience, he calls it AMRITANUBHAVA.

The work puts in a nut-shell the philosophy of the Natha Sampraday (Sivadvaita) and also is a distilled form of the essence of the Upanishads. Jnanadeva says that the world is not an illusion, but a projection of the Supreme Being. For there is nothing in the world that is outside the Divine principle. And anything that exists in the Divine, cannot be untrue.

Explaining the nature of the relationship of the world to the Divine, he says: The existence of the face does not depend upon its reflection in the mirror. Therefore, whether the face looks into the mirror or not, it exists by itself. (VII.224)

The sayings are categorised into 8 chapters each having a particular theme. The remarkable and radical idea that I found in Jnanadeva's words is the one where he declares that BOTH Ignorance and Knowledge are false. Many of our scriptures devote lot of space to this matter but Jnanadeva says: All that is visible is His expansion only. There is nothing else (VII.235). And the radical statement: In the locality where ignorance is not prevalent who will understand the subject of knowledge? (VIII.10). And: Therefore, where no ignorance exists, knowledge (vis-à-vis ignorance) also vanishes. Now the road is closed to both – knowledge and ignorance. (VIII.12) This in my opinion is quite an explosive way of debunking both ignorance and knowledge. For in the state of the Ambrosial Experience, neither exist. Because knowledge implies duality, whereas that state is one of Supreme oneness.

Other subjects include: the nature of Siva-Shakti, the greatness of the Guru, the utility of the written word, the nature of Sat-Chit-Ananda as attributes of the One etc.

Kudos to Ramchandra Keshav Bhagvat for his translation of this spiritual classic from Marathi and to Samata Books, Chennai for bringing the wisdom of Jnanadeva to the modern readers.