

J~nAna-karma samucchaya

Shankara BhagavatpAda has rejected the theory of j~nAna-karma samucchaya in several places in his bhAShyas. What exactly is meant by j~nAna-karma samucchaya and why does Shankara reject it?

J~nAna-karma samucchaya is the theory that a combination of jnAna and karma is the means to liberation.

According to pUrva mlmAmsA and vedAnta, karma means the actions laid down in the shrutis and smRitis. There is no dispute about this. But different meanings are given by them to the term 'j~nAna'. Three different meanings are given to this word, namely, 1) the knowledge of the identity of the jIva and brahman, 2) the knowledge that there is an AtmA different from the body, and 3) upasana or meditation.

The mlmAmsakas hold that karma combined with the knowledge that there is an AtmA different from the body leads to liberation. This is one kind of j~nAna-karma smucchaya. This is quite acceptable and it is not rejected by Shankara. In fact such a knowledge is necessary for inducing a person to perform vedic sacrifices which have heaven as the fruit. Here AtmA does not mean the pure AtmA as in advaita vedAnta, but the Atma with the subtle body, which will go to heaven after the fall of the present gross body. But Shankara points out that this is not a means to liberation as understood in advaita.

The possibility of combiming karma and meditation is also not objected to by Shri Shankara. The IshaAvAsyopaniShad says that avidyA (karma) and vidyA (upAsana) together lead to relative immortality (not liberation).

The j~nAna karma sanucchaya vAda that is refuted is only the theory which holds that there is need for the performance of karma even after the realization of the identity of the individual self and brahman. Such a combination of j~nAna and karma is what is advocated by Bhartriprapancha and his followers. They hold that, though karma by itself cannot lead to moksha, karma combined with jnana can. Among the advocates of this view there are some who accept the existence of sannyasa ashrama and others who do not. Those who accept sannyasa ashrama say that the sannyasi also has karma in the form of the practice of shama, dama, etc.

One objection to the above view is that the quantity of karma laid down for the grihasta is much more than that for the brahmachari and the sannyasi. So there should correspondingly be difference in the

nature of moksha also if this view is accepted, just as the nature of the enjoyment in svarga varies for different vedic rites such as agnihotra, somayaga, etc. But moksha is accepted to be the same for all.

The view that karma and jnana together alone lead to moksha is rejected on the strength of Br. Su. 3.4.1 which says that jnana is the cause of moksha independently, without depending on anything else. Br. Su. 3.4. 17 says that the sannyasi has no karma at all. So the question of combining jnana and karma cannot arise at all as far as the sannyasi is concerned. This sutra also establishes that sannyasa ashrama is laid down by the scriptures. Br. su. 3.4.25 says that, since liberation results from jnana, the sannyasi has no need to perform the rites laid down which need the lighting of fire.

From the above it follows that the author of the sutras does not accept jnana karma samuccaya.

The upholders of the jnana karma samuccaya vada say that the karma laid down by the scriptures should continue to be performed even after the realization of the identity of the individual self and Brahman and that otherwise sin will accrue. They rely on the following Brahmasutras for this conclusion.

1. Br. Su. 3.4.26- This says that all religious activities are necessary.
2. Br. Su. 3.4.33- This says that the rites are jointly the generators of knowledge.

The supporters of the theory of jnana karma samuccaya contend that Br. Su. 3.4.26 establishes that karma also has a part in the attainment of liberation. This is countered by Bhagavatpada by pointing out that karma is necessary only for generating jnana, and once jnana has been generated, it does not need any other help to lead to liberation. As regards Br.su.3.4.33, the answer of Bhagavatpada is that the only idea implied in speaking of the helpfulness of karma is that it is conducive to the emergence of knowledge.

In Br. su. 3.4.27 it is said that control of the mind and the senses (shama, dama, etc.) are the dharma of the sannyasa ashrama and that they strengthen brahmanishtha. They are means for the emergence of knowledge. They are not karma because they do not involve any action, but are, on the other hand, withdrawal from action. The sannyasi has only to remain

established in the knowledge that he is Brahman. Shama, dama, etc., continue even after the rise of jnana.

No pratyavaya (adverse result) arises to the sannyasi by not doing karma, because no karma is prescribed for him. What he has to do is to give up all karma—sarvakarmasannyasa. Some persons like king Janaka continued to perform karma even after the dawn of knowledge, but this was not as a means to liberation, but to set an example to the unenlightened, so that they may also continue to perform the karma laid down for them.

The work of jnana and karma is different and so no samuccaya, or combination of the two, is possible. Karma is for those who have not realized the real nature of the self, and consider the self to be a doer and enjoyer. But the path of jnana is for those who have realized that the self is not a doer or enjoyer. Thus the same person cannot be eligible for both the paths at the same time. Karma has to be performed until the person becomes a yogarudha and then jnana is to be resorted to. This is not samuccaya, since karma and jnana are not practiced at the same time.

The term samuccaya is applicable in its primary sense only to the practice of karma and jnana at the same time. Karma samuccaya, in which they are to be practiced one after another, is not samuccaya in the primary sense of the term.