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Meditations on the Truth of India

by Ramchandra Gandhi

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The cover design shows Śrī Rāmaṇa Mahārṣi against the backdrop of Aruṇācala Hill. Mountain and man, Father and Son, Śiva and Jīva, *Thou* and *I*, are not in selfhood other than one another. This truth of advaita, non-duality, distinctively Indian and perfectly universal, is the Truth of India and is at the base of her spirituality and civilisation. Can it save India and the world from anarchy and annihilation? Can it resolve the moral and theological tensions within Hinduism and between Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity? Can advaita harmonise individualism and collectivism?

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These are some of the questions explored in this book of meditations in the idiom of metaphysical and theological inquiry, philosophical and conceptual analysis, spiritual history and symbolical biography, adoration and investigation, bhakti and vicāra, by the grace of Bhagavān Śrī Rāmaṇa Mahārṣi : messianic magnet of Aruṇācala drawing even our perverse century to itself in truth and love, autonomy and harmony.

The cover design also shows a little mouse partaking of the fruits of Gaṇapati Rāmaṇa's grace. May we all be blessed like that mouse! What a pity Walt Disney did not visit Tiruvannamalai!

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BOOK REVIEW

Personal Identity, P. K. Mohapatra, foreword by Richard Swinburne, pp. 310, Santosh Publications, Cuttack, 1983, Rs. 75.

In the book under review, Dr. Mohapatra has argued anew Hobbes' thesis that bodily identity is the primary criterion of personal identity. Mohapatra's achievement is of no mean order. Apart from the near compelling attractiveness of his positive thesis and the broad and painstaking survey of the literature, one distinctive contribution lies in his concern with such metaphysical issues as of definition, criterion and necessary condition.

Mohapatra begins by posing the problem of personal identity and exposes the motives of different philosophers underlying their approaches to the problem. And then in the later parts of the book he proposes what he hopes to be the proper philosophical explanation of the problem. The problem of personal identity is formulated in an interesting manner: what makes a person P_2 at a time t_2 the same person as a person P_1 at an earlier time t_1 ; and what evidence can one have for saying that such persons are the same? The word "same" is incomplete in the sense that it cannot meaningfully occur without a substantive concept. Hence the significance of the question. "Same what?" Accordingly the continuity of memory and character jointly or severally serve as the justification for making identity judgements about persons. But Mohapatra contends that the justificatory notions hardly succeed as defining notions. The so-called empiricist theories are definist theories, and have given rise to two rival theories of personal identity, the one in terms of bodily continuity and the other in terms of memory continuity. But Mohapatra's notion of definition shows that neither attempts are successful. The possibility of disembodied existence is good counter example to the body theory, and the phenomenon of loss of memory to the memory theorist. None of the alleged continuities are necessary conditions of personal identity nor jointly sufficient, and hence they are non defining notions. The concept of 'personal identity' is indefinable. What makes P_2 the same person as P_1 we cannot say.

But one could take bodily continuity and/or the continuity of memory and character as evidences for personal identity judgments. 'Are these evidences?' asks Mohapatra. For him, an evidence is criterial if it be necessary for the truth of the judgement made. And the problem of personal identity could be seen in a clearer perspective by looking at it as the problem of specifying its criteria.

I have so far summarized the first section of Mohapatra's introductory chapter to highlight the incensiveness of his analysis, his marking off the problem from trans-categorical confusions. A good example of this sort of attempt is provided by his view that the problem of personal identity is a very special problem. The speciality consists in the fact that the arguments for the identity of material objects along with that of sub-human animals, cannot be transferred for the identity of persons. Hume thought that it could be, and took the expression 'being the same' to be a synonym for 'being unchanged'. But invariance cannot be the standard of identity in all cases. In point of fact the issue is concerned with *reidentity* of persons, and not identity *simpliciter* of things through time and change. Mohapatra invokes Reid's insight that there is a difference between the identity of persons that we are and the things that are there. Persons are embodied self-knowers, they know their identity through time as well as the identity of the material things around them. The converse of the case is not imaginable. Our knowledge of personal identity of ourselves renders something special about the problem.

In the second part of his book Mohapatra has proceeded to show that the memory theorists like Locke and Hume, substance theorists like Butler and Reid, the Kantian critique of rational psychology and its pragmatist follower, William James—they all failed to maintain the two questions of meaning and criterion sufficiently apart. Locke's account of personal identity was based on his notion of a person. Mohapatra has persuasively argued that Locke looked upon self-consciousness as constituting personal identity. And self-consciousness partly at least means memory. Locke's concern with the problem of identity was by way of explaining how ascription of normal responsibility could be shown possible. But whatever explanatory power the concept of consciousness might possess, it is, says Mohapatra, neither the sole

means of establishing personal identity nor can on it ascription of responsibility be grounded. Hume's memory theory is shown to be based on different premises than Locke's. Mohapatra has argued against Hume, that from the fact that Hume was led by his impressionist psychology to deduce propositions about the nature of things, i.e., whether there is or not a personal self. Moreover, Mohapatra does not think that Hume's denial of the existence of a self which is permanent, substantive and immaterial should entail the unreality of personal identity. And more importantly, Hume ignored the question of the identity of other selves, for he, given his method of inner test, could consider the question about his own identity alone. As a memory theorist Hume sleighted references to the body of the actor. I do not know if Mohapatra would be justified in making this criticism in the light of Hume's talking distinctively about mind and body. But that is another story.

Butler and Reid had maintained that selves or persons were simple and hence indefinable substances. To find out the permanent substantive is to have access to 'real' and 'perfect' identity. Mohapatra's point against this view is that substance theory is non-criterial. The intuitionistic point of view implied that the discovery of one's identity must not be mediated, it could only be apprehended in terms of one's awareness of past selves. Accordingly, Butler and Reid remained concerned more with the meaning of 'personal identity' than with its criteria, and ended as memory theorists with a difference.

I need not dwell on Mohapatra's account of Kant's views on the problem of personal identity. This part of book is as able and excitingly written as the earlier sections. But all through his critique of the traditional approaches so the problem Mohapatra appears to have a predilection for the criterion question. His main charge against the traditional theories of personal identity is that they were meta-philosophically naive, they understood the problem at issue as one of definition, and consequently, defined it in terms of what was only a criterion. It is also surprising that while Mohapatra admits the importance of the body in connexion with the problem of personal identity, he never mentions Hobbes. The traditional story of the problem (or meaning) of personal identity is not the story of memory theory alone. The con-

temporary protagonists of the bodily criterion are unconscious advocates of Hobbe's thesis.

Since Wittgenstein the meta-philosophical question of 'criterion' has gained currency in philosophical discourse. The term has become a part of the critical apparatus of the philosophers. Mohapatra has prefaced his critique and survey of the contemporary approaches to the problem of personal identity with a discussion on the notion of 'criterion' and specifying the sense in which he proposes to employ it. The section on 'criterion' shows him in possession of an ability for sharp and nice distinction, and innovating his necessary tools by modifying the old ones.

Mohapatra's concept of 'criterion' may be put as under :

For Mohapatra, his enterprise of getting clear about the concept of 'criterion', and attempt at disentangling himself from the tyranny of the commentator of Wittgenstein has been quite vexing. At the first instance he has sought to put Wittgenstein's intentions aright, and secondly, distinguished 'criterion' from both 'definition' and 'necessary condition'. A criterion or criteriological relation obtains between two sets of phenomena (or propositions describing the phenomena) such that the one is a justification conditions for the other. If the former is not true, one would not have a justification for asserting the truth of the latter. As distinguished from a definition, a criterion does not entail that of which it is a criterion. Hence a criteriological relation is not strictly logical, nor empirical either. One has to learn the criterion for being able to apply justifiably a concept or description to a state of affairs. Mohapatra notes further that a criterion possesses evidential value, though it is not a conclusive evidence. He feels that a criterion needs be distinguished from a necessary condition since the latter may sometime entail that of which it is a necessary condition. It is true, though, that the two concepts are not incompatible, provided that what is called a criterion be also advanced as a justificatory evidence for something to be the case. But the compatibility does not rule out a general asymmetry and logical independence between the two notions. In short, for Mohapatra, p is a criterion for q , if and only if, it be the case that p is a good reason or justification for q , but is not inductively so established.

Mohapatra's intentions in getting himself clear about the concept of 'criterion' is that he commits himself to keep the questions of meaning and criteria apart. He has shown in his critique of the traditional theorists that they often lapsed into confusing the one for the other, and also that they mistook the problem of personal identity for one of definition (or meaning) instead of criterion.

The remainder of the sections of third part of Mohapatra's book is devoted to a thorough analysis and examination of the contemporary approach to the problem of personal identity. All along he is guided by the question how do we know or what evidences do we have for saying that a later person is the same as an earlier? And to ask for evidence in this case is to ask for a special kind of evidence. He takes up at length the views of Bernard Williams, Shoemaker, Wiggins and Derek Parfit, and argues that the spatio-temporal continuity of something corporeal is a necessary condition of personal identity. The psychological criteria cannot be the sole primary consideration.

In the third part Mohapatra finds the two criteria of personal identity, the bodily criterion and the memory criterion, somewhat 'over schematic', and proceeds towards a reassessment of the nature and the status of the two. His argument runs to the effect that since persons are embodied beings, the bodily criterion should have a primacy over the non-physical. Memory is a secondary and non-independent criterion, since its use as a criterion implies a covert presumption of bodily continuity. As against the Platonic Cartesian theory of persons, i.e., the belief in non-bodied existence, Mohapatra's point is that since the bodied idea of persons constitutes the primary sense of persons, the idea of non-bodied existence is unintelligible. Again, for the same token, the idea of dis-embodied person would be parasitic upon the assumptions that there are bodied persons. The two possibilities of non-bodied existence and dis-embodied survival appear to strengthen the thesis that memory is not the sole criterion of personal identity. The possibilities are either difficult or embarrassing. The possibility of non-bodied existence ignores the fact that the distinction between what is actual and what is possible is not absolute and logically independent. So to deny what is possible would imply the denial of what is actual.

and which is patently absurd. Incorporeality of persons is both counter intuitive and conceptually odd. This is a good piece of reasoning, and Mohapatra is applying, what is called in Modal Logic, the axiom of possibility, and its transposition. The primary use of the concept of person adheres to what persons actually are, i. e. embodied. The incorporeal view of persons cannot be intelligibly maintained.

The survivalists are philosophers of diverse persuasions, from Aquinas to Strawson. Against them Mohapatra has argued that not all predicates that apply to persons (in the primary sense of being embodied) could be ascribed to a dis-embodied person, and that Strawson would have to stipulate a third category of predicates (besides the M—and P—ones) to ascribe to a person of such description. The point is that a dis-embodied person cannot enjoy the same logical status as the embodied ones. Hence the survival possibility not only effects conceptual change but also is intelligible in the secondary sense alone. Generally memory is said to relate the pre-mortem and post-mortem modes of existence of the person, for the survivalists. But memory, as Mohapatra has shown as a criterion of personal identity presupposes and thus depends on the fact of bodily continuity, hence the personal identity judgements made on the basis of the dis-embodied survivor's memory would be void. In the absence of bodily continuity, the survivor's statements would go unchecked and lack genuineness. No bodily tests would be available in this case. And thus the criterion of memory should stand underwritten.

Mohapatra's is not a revisionistic account of personal identity, his has been an analysis of the concepts of 'person' and 'personal identity.' His concluding estimate is especially interesting. He takes up the issue of the problem cases in which the literature on philosophical psychology abounds. With regard to their relevance, Mohapatra contends that the problem cases like bodily transfer or change of body caused brain transfer, etc., compel a fresh review of the nature of personal identity but do not create any conceptual difficulty to the issue. The possibility of problem cases, and even the adoption of new concepts or criteria to suit these cases need not necessitate dropping of the everyday concepts of person and personal identity. The relevance of the

problem cases is only philosophical, i.e., they initiate discussion on the problem from unforeseen alternative perspectives. Mohapatra reminds us of Wittgenstein's dictum that the philosopher leaves everything as it is. It is the description that matters.

Finally Mohapatra's idea of personal identity is of identity *simpliciter*. Our belief about the nature of personhood and personal identity and its importance in the practical undertakings of life oblige us to get over the logical compulsions of the evidential facts in making personal identity judgements. A certain urgency attaches to the problem and demands, what Mohapatra says, "all-or-nothing answers." In a sense this may appear to be an attractive account, but is there not something like *samyak dṛṣṭi* in these matters? Can one not say that the logic of the concepts of 'person' and of 'personal identity', even if they demand categorical answers, are not philosophically trustworthy, and ontologically delusive? Mohapatra has put so much of premium of the ordinary language affair that he never pauses to doubt the efficacy of the process of bringing words back to their everyday use from the metaphysical. But this remark need not be taken to steal away any merit of Mohapatra's closely-written treatise. He writes like an insider of Western philosophical ideas and its history. And this is no mean achievement. The present reviewer, has in the mean-time, grown in years to realize that matters and questions relating to personal identity often relate to one's cultural dimensions and moorings. Praśastapāda's arguments for the existence of *ātman* or the Buddhist critique of the substance theory of persons are what we are direct heirs to, and our philosophical decisions, of whatever persuasions they might be, should, in part, be directed to set our own house in order. On this score, Mohapatra has been disappointing. This, of course, is a personal reaction.

The present reviewer, while congratulating Mohapatra for his philosophical achievement, feels like recommending the book to everyone interested in philosophical psychology, for its argumentative power, wide survey, and frankness in disagreements. He, going through Mohapatra's book, was reminded of a Blackwell monograph by P. A. Minkus, entitled *Philosophy of the Person*, published in 1960. In the preface Minkus had said, that the purpose of his book was "to understand why people get

spoken of as what they are not and to find sober sayings which will help us to appreciate what a person is, to see and see again how people are what they are." Mohapatra, too, could say that.

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Professor D. D. VADEKAR

It is with a great sense of loss and deprivation that Indian Philosophical Quarterly records a sad demise of Professor D. D. Vadekar, who passed away at the age of 83, on Tuesday, 5th March, 1985 at Pune. With his passing away the culture of commitment and devotion to Philosophy has suffered an irreparable loss.

Prof. Vadekar was born on 25th May, 1902 at an obscure place at Satara District of Maharashtra. He received his early education at Ahmednagar and joined the reputed Fergusson College at Pune. He received his B. A. and M. A. degrees in Philosophy and joined Fergusson College as a Tutor. Though a substantial part of his academic career was spent in Fergusson College, for sometime, he was also a research fellow at the Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner; Assistant Lecturer at the Deccan College, Pune; Assistant Professor at Rajaram College, Kolhapur and Willingdon College, Sangli. He was also Professor-in-Charge of the University Department of Philosophy, University of Poona during 1951-53 and 1957-62. Prof. Vadekar was actively involved in the functioning the various bodies of University of Poona and Deccan Education Society. He was the General President of the 43rd General Session of Indian Philosophical Congress at Dharwar in 1969.

Professor Vadekar's lasting contribution to Philosophy is his *Marathi Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. This monumental work consisting of 1800 pages in the first of its kind in any of the regional languages of India, and may be regarded as a significant event in philosophical research in our country. Besides this, Prof. Vadekar has eight books and several papers to his credit.

In his passing away, Indian Philosophical Quarterly has to endure a specific and personal loss because ever since the conception of Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Prof. Vadekar has graced IPQ's Board of Trustees and we were always assured of his serene blessings and generous encouragements and support. It is with reverence and gratitude that we wish to pay our tributes to him.

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2. *Mystery of Universe* : R. N. Srivastav, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay : First Edition, 1984. Rs. 25/- pp. 87.
3. *Pluralism : Challenge for World Religions* : Harold Coward, Orbis Books, New York : First Edition, 1985, pp. vii+131.
4. *Relation and Consciousness* : Eric Toms ; Scottism Academic Press : First Edition, 1984. £ 4.75. pp. 56.
5. *Religious Inquiry : Participation and Detachment* : Hobes Rolston III, Philosophical Library, New York : First Edition, 1985. \$ 22.50. pp. xiv+309.
6. *Self and Society : A Study in Gandhian Thought* : Ramashray Roy. Sage Publication / New Delhi : First Edition, 1984. Rs. 120/- pp. 203.
7. *The Concept of Self Luminosity of Knowledge in Advaita Vedanta* : Dr. Girdhari Lal Chaturvedi, Adarsha Prakashan, Aligarh : First Edition, 1982. Rs. 50/- pp. 197+42.
8. *Unfolding Your Destiny* : K. M. Sahebu, IBH Prakashan, Bangalore : First Edition, 1984. Rs. 15/- pp. 104.
9. *Vedanta Darshan* : R. C. B. dwe, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay : First Edition, 1984. Rs. 27/- pp. 96.
10. *Western Philosophy from Descarts to Kant* : Archana Roy, Gitanjali Publication, New Delhi ; First Edition, 1985. Rs. 100/- pp. xiv+204.
11. *Thoughts and Afterthoughts* : A. W. J. Harper, Phelps Publishing Company, London, Ontario, Canada, 1984. pp. vi+60.

Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper 'Indian Philosophical Quarterly'.

Form IV

1. Place of Publication .. Department of Philosophy,
University of Poona,
Pune 411 007.
2. Periodicity of its publication .. Quarterly.
3. Printer's Name .. Dr. Surendra Sheodas Barlingay,
Department of Philosophy,
University of Poona,
Pune 411 007.

Whether Citizen of India .. Yes.

4. Publisher's Name .. Dr. Surendra Sheodas Barlingay,
University of Poona,
Department of Philosophy,
Pune 411 007.

Whether Citizen of India .. Yes.

5. Editors Name and Address .. (i) Dr. Surendra Sheodas
Barlingay,
Department of Philosophy,
University of Poona,
Pune 411 007.
(ii) Dr. Rajendra Prasad,
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Whether Citizen of India .. Yes.

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