

## BOOK-REVIEW

Nayak, G. C.; *Evil and Retributive Hypothesis*; 1993, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass; pp. viii + 204, Price Rs.225/-(HC)

The present book is a revised version of Professor Nayak's earlier book entitled *Evil, Karma and Reincarnation* published in 1973. Apart from other revisions and modifications, the book under review has two features distinguishing it from the earlier version : (a) it has an appendix dealing with the nature and importance of subtle body (*Suksma Sarira*) connected with possibility of survival after death. (b) The author's 'philosophical position has undergone drastic changes' (Preface) since the publication of the earlier book. Holding retributive hypothesis to be 'the most satisfactory or least unsatisfactory of all the explanations offered to solve the problem of evil' the book seeks to critically examine its simultaneous coherent satisfiability with the theistic belief in omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent God 'who alone is both creator and sustainer of the world-process and whose will is what prevails everywhere' (p.6). This sort of investigation is designed to be undertaken within the framework of 'critical or rational theism distinguished from the dogmatic theism'(p.12). In the process, the author also takes into consideration such issues as retributive justice, survival after death, personal identity etc. The principal task has been to show that theistic world-view is not incoherent with retributive hypothesis. The book has succeeded on the whole in its main concern. It is written in a readable style and it would be profitable to study it, although it amounts to be a contemporary elaboration and defence of an age-old thesis.

In spite of such merits of the book we wish humbly to draw attention of the concerned to the following points of seminal significance which have not been paid due attention to in the entire book. Had it been done so, the focus and the main line

of argument presented in the book might have undergone a drastic change. First, it seems to be presumed in continuation with the earlier book that retribution hypothesis is very closely connected with the theory of *Karma* and that its main concern is to satisfactorily account for evil. This seems to be questionable for two reasons. On the one hand, retribution hypothesis is basically brought in, both in the west as well as in the east, to make sense of reward and punishment i.e. with a view to satisfactorily accounting for allocation of responsibility. Its extension with regard to solving the problem of evil is a derivative issue. On the other hand, in the west the retribution hypothesis has been put forth independently of the theory of *Karma*. Secondly, even if it may not be disputed that retribution hypothesis in the form of theory of *Karma* and theistic world-view are non-incoherent with each other, yet two important points cannot be ignored: (a) Adherents of Jainism and *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* accepted theory of *Karma* without in any way subscribing to theistic world-view, and (b) even if *Nyāya* became explicitly theistic in its orientation, it was almost from, if not after, tenth century A.D. Thus considered, it was in some of the post tenth century trends of the Indian philosophical thought that the issue of reconciliation between theistic world-view and retributive hypothesis in the form of the theory of *Karma* became prominent. But the book seems to be silent about such developments and instead draws heavily upon the western discussion of the question of reconciliation between the problem of evil and belief in theistic world-view. Thirdly, two questions of considerable significance need to be distinguished and considered separately : (a) Relation between *Karma* on the one hand and its results and consequences on the other. Connected with it is an equally important issue: whether this sort of chain between *Karma* and its results and consequences is terminable or otherwise, (b) The question of allocation of responsibility of *Karma* and whether this necessarily presupposes a permanent or quasi-permanent doer (*Kartā*) and further whether such a doer must be the knower (*Jñātā*) and/or enjoyer (*Bhoktā*) as well. In this context, too, it needs to be understood that consideration of none of these problems necessarily presupposes subscription to a theistic world-view. Quite outside the framework of such a world-view these problems were discussed by adherents of Jainism, Buddhism and *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* in this country, although

later on, as observed above, they were discussed within theistic framework as well. However, the book nowhere makes reference to any of these questions. Nor does it tell us about the theistic world-view of any Indian philosopher/s it is drawing upon. Under such circumstances author's attempt to coherently reconcile theistic world-view with retributive hypothesis seems more to be hypothetical in character so far as Indian philosophy is concerned. Fourthly, considerations of internal coherence, adequacy etc. are certainly methodologically important. But so too is that of non-counter intuitivity. And subscription or otherwise to the latter is one of the most decisive point of controversy between adherents of Buddhism on the one hand and those of various non-Buddhist trends of Indian philosophical thought on the other so far as satisfactory explanation of *Karma* is concerned. The book, again, is silent on the issue presuming that internal coherence and adequacy are the only methodological concerns which played a decisive role in the matter with adherent of any trend of Indian philosophical thought. This is neither tenable nor factually true. Lastly, survival after death is not merely a matter of entertaining a coherent logical possibility. It is also connected with the discussion of the respectable and appropriate sort of parameters of trans-world or trans-life identification, re-identification and recognition of self or agent. The book, except bringing to the notice of the concerned coherent possibility of life after death, is, again, largely silent on such issues of enormously complicated ontological and epistemological implications.

The book has a bibliography and an index at the end for the convenience of the prospective renders and researchers.

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