

DISCUSSION I

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE DISCUSSION ON THE MAHĀVĀKYAS

It is a bit surprising that even after three rounds of discussions the issue concerning the correct import of the Mahāvākyas should appear to some disputants as unresolved. As a matter of fact the main issue triggered by Dayakrishna's suggestion of the similarity of the imports of the Fregean and the Upaniṣadic sentences might be considered as fully resolved in the absence of any sensible objection to the clarification of the sharp distinction between the imports of the two kinds of sentences. However a different issue not quite pertinent to the issue of the correct import of these sentences was raised in the course of the discussion. This is the issue of the truth or otherwise of the Advaitic metaphysical hypothesis that the empirical self and the absolute self are fundamentally identical, their distinction being only apparent and therefore imported only by ignorance. This issue we say is not strictly pertinent to the discussion on the imports because the truth or otherwise of the hypothesis would affect only the truth or otherwise of the import not the fact that it is the import of the Upaniṣadic sentences and that it is arrived at by the employment of a special kind of suggestive mode of meaning. Since the issue of the truth of the metaphysical hypothesis is the most important and basic issue of Vedānta it needs to be discussed by itself. Whole treatises in Vedānta have been devoted to the discussion of the pros and cons of the issue. This is why reference was made to the treatises where this issue has been thoroughly discussed. To write them off without mentioning a single argument to controvert even the most minor argument discussed even in an elementary work of Advaita would be like the early positivists' elimination of all traditional metaphysics by dubbing it as 'nonsensical'! How this intellectual bravado even of eminent positivists like Shlick, Carnap etc. recoiled upon them is past history.

A reference has been made in the course of the discussion to recent researches into the nature of consciousness by philosophers of mind and even scientists to suggest perhaps that the Advaitic view of consciousness is unscientific and that consciousness can be understood and its functioning explained in mechanistic terms. If this is the implication of the said reference then another far more important reference may be cited here to call in question the veridicality of the implication. The reference is to the elaborate technically scientific discussion of the nature of consciousness that we have in a recent scientific study of mind and its functions contained in the book '*Shadows of mind*'. This book is authored by Professor Roger Penrose, one of the most eminent post relativity physicists of today. Prof. Penrose was the former research guide of another great post relativity physicist Stephen Hawking. According to the professor even the most advanced computer cannot fully simulate the working of consciousness at its best. Moreover the idea of the participatory universe gaining more and more ground in the scientific speculations of today it would not be very audacious for Advaitic philosophers to maintain that absoluteness and universality of consciousness can be upheld at least as *vera causa* if not as established truths.

It has been asked how the spiritual teacher of the Mahāvākyas himself attains the knowledge of the truth contained in them and how he is able so to impart his knowledge to his disciple as to make him realise his identity with Brahman. This is an important question in praxiology which needs to be considered separately. The spiritual process through which the teacher and the disciple have to pass before spiritual realisation is consummated is discussed in detail in concerned texts. It may be particularly noted in this connection that this process is absolutely unlike indoctrination or brain-storming. It is rather like energizing the mind to assimilate to make its own truths whose logical and empirical justification has been understood but not inwardly accepted.

This inward acceptance of a truth is the essence of spirituality. Indian philosophers one and all insist upon the inward acceptance or realisation of philosophical truths as the ultimate goal of all philosophical activity. As Śaṅkara

says in his *Bhāṣya* while expounding the nature of Brahma Jigñāyasa or philosophical inquiry that the right kind of philosophical inquiry must culminate in the *actual attainment* of the knowledge of Brahman. Mere argumentation about philosophical issues is no better than intellectual frivolity. So, to regard philosophy as essentially a spiritual pursuit is not to degrade but to glorify it.

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NOTES

1. a) Dravid N.S. : a Note on "Is Tattvam Asi' the same type of Identity statement. as The Morning Star is the Evenging Star ?" *IPQ*. vol. XXV, No. 4 pp. 533-46
- b) Dravid N.S. : "Mahāvākyas Again", *IPQ* Vol. XXVII No.3 (pp. 335-37)
- c) Bokil S.V. "A Note on Tattvam Asi" *IPQ* Vol. XXVI No. 3 pp.425-34

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