

possible hypothesis should be adopted, than the supposition that the Paṇḍit was repeating parrot-like what he had learnt by rote. It should be stated here, that Paṇḍit Dhanarāja himself, when such suggestions were made to him in the way of enquiry, emphatically repudiated all such explanations, and insisted that it was pure memory. When pressed to say if he felt nothing abnormal and peculiar when dictating these works, he said whenever he was making these great efforts of memory he felt something like a thread or nerve working up and down between his eyes within the forehead. This *might* mean the stimulation of the physical memory by the working of some subtler sense of sight or rather of hearing, for by his account, he never himself *saw* and *read* the books, being blind, but only *heard* them read out, and impressed them on his memory only through the sense of hearing.

The possibility that the Paṇḍit has reproduced and dictated matter which he has studied and digested and thought out and systematised for himself independently, in the same way that great orators and practising lawyers and scientific and philosophical lecturers and preachers have in ancient and modern times orally delivered large works which are studied with profit by generations—this possibility may be considered from another standpoint.

I have already said that my own experience

of the Paṇḍit's intelligence and ability is that they are not enough to account for the *Pranava-Vāda*. The other standpoint from which the question may be considered, assuming my judgment of his abilities to be wrong, is that of the question: What motive had the Paṇḍit to tell the lie that the work is not his own, when it is? Of course this enquiry can proceed only on the assumption that the work has some merit and is not mere gabble; otherwise, it is obvious, the query is superfluous, and the whole discussion falls to the ground.

The question then is, why should not the Paṇḍit claim the rightful credit of the authorship of such a remarkable work? If he did so, he would win a certain amount of fame and honour or, if he was above such considerations, would be doing the plain duty of telling the truth. He seemed to have nothing to gain by persisting in a false repudiation of authorship. I can find no satisfactory answer to this question. The only answer that can be possibly advanced on the data we have, is the unsatisfactory one that he is eccentric. Of course a certain amount of eccentricity has to be assigned to him on the other hypothesis also, *viz.*, that he has really committed a genuine old work to memory from a manuscript which was read out to him, and has now dictated it, but will not repeat what he has dictated once.

But between the two eccentricities, the latter seems to have some method in it. It is possible that he declines to undergo tests of memory either for fear of making mistakes which might be made too much of, or for some other reasons, such as promises made to those with whom he studied, which he does not wish to be known publicly. The other eccentricity, of falsely repudiating authorship, does not show even such traces of method.

A statement here as to the *Gobhili-Bhāṣhya* on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, about 26,000 shloka-measures in extent, all dictated by the blind man to Paṇḍit Parmeshri Dās, would also be helpful as evidence in enabling the reader to form his own conclusions as to the genuineness of Dhanarāja's performances. I myself have not had time enough to read through the whole of this systematically. Paṇḍit Gaṅgānāth Jhā has, however, been kind enough, at my request, to do so, and he has also made an abstract in English of its interpretation of the *Gītā*. He says that the work has a perfectly rational consistency and a distinct style and manner of its own, and refers to very many other old works now unknown even by name; but, he adds, the work has nothing remarkably new or extraordinary, or not now generally known, to tell us; and is therefore disappointing in respect of any expectations of esoteric interpretation and occult

knowledge. The portions that I have myself succeeded in studying, of this book confirm Paṇḍit Gaṅgānāth's view. I should add, however, that there is a good deal in it which is very suggestive of new ideas, and stimulates thought to work along unusual directions in a reader with the necessary turn of mind. The characters of the *Mahābhārata* story, Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Duryodhana, etc., are also explained in the first chapter as allegorical symbols of various conditions and moods of the mind; and this is distinctly new, or at least not extant. The set manner of commenting is to take each word and postulate in succession a number of meanings, on the strength of the explanations of the word given in various *Koshas* (dictionaries), and to refute each hypothesis by reasons, till the last and correct meaning is left behind, and this is generally in accordance with the (old) *Nirukṭa*. Briefly, the method followed is the approved method of *Vedānta*, *aḍhyāropa*, i.e., superimposition, assumption by hypothesis, and then *apavāda*, i.e., refutation.

Considering all these facts together, the proper conclusion to draw seems to me to be that while Paṇḍit Dhanarāja may have indulged in exaggerations, mystifications, sensationalism, sometimes even divergences from truth, and self-contradictions, there is behind and beneath all these a certain amount of basic truth which

makes it eminently desirable that persons with better opportunities and abilities than I have had at my disposal, should systematically take up the work of investigation and search for old MSS. on the spot.

To reiterate, with respect to the *Pranava-Vāda*, over and above all other considerations must always stand the consideration of the inherent merits of the work itself. It has always been the test of truth that it should be independent of the virtues and vices, perfections and failings of any one individual, that it should not be claimable as the exclusive property or invention of any one person, and that even in connexion with the mere *discovery* of any truth the personality should remain or become doubtful, so that the truth may stand on its own feet and not on those of any passing mortal. The best work generally is, or rapidly becomes, nameless. Truth is the property of every one. Why should any one be allowed to claim it exclusively? Those ideas only are really true to every one which come home to every one, which every one feels he has himself discovered or always possessed. Even such works as the great epics and dramas of the nations, different as they are in nature from scientific or metaphysical truths, become nameless—because they embody that surpassing excellence of description which makes them truths of psychology and ethics. What do we

know of Vālmīki or Vyāsa or Homer? Even Shakespeare is becoming shadowy. Well may the *Pranava-Vāda*, then, rest on its own merits and well may its authorship remain always doubtful! Facts, laws, theories, should be judged in themselves, independently of who propounds them. The way in which *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* have been given to the world has been already referred to. The Paurāṇic story tells how Indra came to Uṭanka disguised as a foul chāṇḍāla, and offered him the nectar of immortality in that guise. Uṭanka refused to take it and lost his chance, for the time being. Truth often comes to its votary in uncouth garb, just to test whether the votary loves it or only the garb; to test whether he has developed the keenness and strength of eyesight which can discern it unerringly beneath all changes of outer form—when only he can really profit by it; or whether he is yet too feeble of mental vision and grasp to be able to successfully perceive and hold it. “One of the most valuable effects of Upāsikā’s (H. P. Blavatsky’s) mission is that it drives men to self-study and destroys in them blind servility to persons.” (Letter from a Master quoted in Col. Olcott’s *Old Diary Leaves* Vol. iii. p. 92.) So let us judge the *Pranava-Vāda* by its own merits, whatever the quality or the name of the writer may be.

Before concluding this section of the introduc-

tion I wish to state that I have appeared to myself as rather wanting in appreciation and gratitude, while writing as I have written about the blind Paṇḍit. But I have done so and pointed out his shortcomings myself only in order that others, less sympathetic, less appreciative, less bound by gratitude, may not do it in a worse form, with exaggeration and without balance. I have acted on the instinct which makes a brother feel that for any sin he may have committed, he would rather be punished by his own brother, who, even in inflicting the stroke, would feel sad, would feel that he was cleansing and purifying for rehabilitation, than by the public gaoler, who would have no such sympathy and yearnings.

My gratitude to him is deep indeed for the confirmation and amplification he has brought to me of my most cherished views, for the hopes he has given me of further discovery, for having accepted me as the repository of one of his most precious possessions, without any obvious and sufficient reason and remuneration of any kind. Holding the views I hold about him, his shortcomings arouse in me only the affectionate sympathy due to the neuropath, the genius encased in a frail body, the sensitive and shrinking soul bound to a sightless frame, that has not met in the early years of life the friendliness that aroused

confidence and trust, but the want of sympathy that leaves behind a permanent apprehension of pain from others.

I earnestly hope that no reader of mine will make this mistake, of imagining me to be wanting in gratitude to the Paṇḍit, who compares these few pages of a criticism that is only intended to disarm worse criticism, that is only intended to uphold justice as against blind partiality on the one hand and equally blind condemnation on the other, with the many pages of the summary of the *Prāṇava-Vāda* that are the most expressive embodiment of my appreciation of him.