IV.

THE NATURE OF THE PRAṆAVA-VĀDA.

A tradition, common all over India, is that the world is derived from Veda (which etymologically means Knowledge and which contains all knowledge whatsoever), that the essence and source of the Veda is the Gāyatrī with certain Mahā Vākyas, and that these, finally, are born from the Aum. Consequently the Praṇava (which is the name of the sound Aum, pronounced as Ōm) is the most sacred of sounds. Such is the tradition. But what the reason for it is, is not quite clear. The Māndākya, the Tātra-Śāra, and other Upaniṣād, the Gopāla Brāhmaṇa, and Śaṅkara-works give many elaborate and instructive interpretations of the three letters A, U and M, of which this sound is made up; but none seems sufficient to justify such an all-comprehensive claim as is made by the tradition.

The Praṇava-Vāda justifies it. It explains that A stands for the Self, U for the Not-Self and M, for the relation of negation which exists between them. It is evident that these three factors, or rather two factors and the nexus between them, exhaust the All without leaving behind any remainder.

PREFACE

The AUM, thus, is equivalent to the Idea or Consciousness "I-This-Not (am)". The three factors of this single, partless, timeless, spaceless and motionless consciousness, in the simultaneous affirmation and negation involved in their juxtaposition, constitute the triune Brahman, the Absolute, which is at once the Changeless as well as the exhaustless storehouse of all change and of all that changes.

All the main facts of the World-process are deduced from this logion, which is shown as the one law of all laws, all other laws being corollaries from it.

The permutations and combinations of the three factors give rise to various subordinate Mahā-वाक्यas, great sentences, logias, each of which represents one principal law or method governing the World-process. Four, the most important, form the foundations of the four Vedas respectively—the Atharva dealing with the logion, "I-This-Not", itself, and summing up the other three Vedas and their logias. Twenty-four other logias, next in importance, are each represented by one letter of the Gāyatrī. The Vedas may be regarded as an extended interpretation of the significance of the Gāyatrī.

The interplay between the A and the U, the Self and the Not-Self, by affirmation and then negation, gives rise to the Jīva, or individual Ego, and to various triplets of qualities or
attributes in Spirit and Matter. The most important are Cognition, Desire and Action
in the former, and Substantiality, Sensuous Quality, and Mobility in the latter. The
Samskrit equivalents are jñāna, icchāhā and kriyā, and dravya, guṇa and karma
respectively.

The Ṛg-Veda deals with jñāna, Cognition, Knowledge, predominantly. The Yajurveda
with kriyā, action. The Sāma with icchāhā, desire. The Atharvaveda with the summation of them all.
Each of these is reflected and re-reflected endlessly in the others, giving occasion for the
statement, in the work, of much valuable and exceedingly interesting and suggestive information
on the psychology of cognition, desire, and action.

The outlines of the whole of the World-process, and consequently the whole circle of human
knowledge, are laid down in terms of Vedic technicalities, under the headings of: (1) the
Vedas, with their fourfold sub-division into (a) Saṁhitā or Mantra, (b) Brāhmaṇa, (c) Upaniṣhads,
and (d) Upaśāstra, or Tantra, and their developments into the (e) Kṛṣṇa and Śukla Śākhas, or
tantra, the Black and White branches, of each Veda; (2) the six Dhāraṇas; and (3) the
six Upaniṣads. Each of these is divided and sub-divided endlessly; and many derivative
and intermediate sciences are mentioned.

Metaphysical explanations of the sacraments are
given.

Cycles of time and space with their respective
Rulers or Ishvaras are touched upon. The
time of mukti is discussed in terms of the
logion. The various Dhāraṇas and Upaniṣads, sciences
and philosophies, are shown to be consistent
parts of one organic whole. Spiritual and
material evolution, through mineral, vegetable,
animal, human, and various other kingdoms,
astral or elemental, and the development of
sixth and seventh senses in future cycles, are
referred to. And the high destiny and the
ultimate development of jīva into Ishvaras
and creators of ever new world-systems, and the
real as well as technical significance of mokṣa,
are described with great fulness.

It should be emphatically noted in conclusion,
that whatever else the matter of the book may
be, it is entirely and absolutely unique. There
is nothing like it to be found in extant Sanskrit
works.

One question will inevitably strike the modern
reader at this point. Is there any connexion,
any reconciliation possible, between this profound interpretation of the Vedas, which goes
to justify the exaggerated, may, extravagant
reverence traditionally paid to them in
India, on the one hand, and, on the other, that
recent interpretation of them which looks upon
them as "the babblings of child-humanity," the improvisations of rival bards of warring and semi-savage tribes, the incantations of fetish-worshippers, a medley of the natural beauty and poetry of primeval man, and the artificial customs and superstitions born of animal terrors and malice, and worship and propitiation of anthropomorphised sun and moon and fire and wind and rain?

This is a difficult question to answer. It is not possible to pooh-pooh the Prāṇava-Vāja after carefully reading it; it is not possible to ignore all the results of modern scholarship and research; and yet the one pictures saints and sages, and the other ill-trained, even savage, children! But perhaps we have the explanation and reconciliation in these very words. The grandfather and the child riding on his knee form parts of the same congruous picture, and not of two incongruous ones. The objection to which the modern theory is open, viz., the assumption involved in it that children are able not only to appreciate highly poetical and allegorical tales, but to write them, is also obviated by this explanation. The grandfather Brahmā, the Pīṭhāna, par excellence, the Manus and Rāṣṭis, the Hierarchs, Guides and Guardians of the Human Race, explain to their first children the facts and laws of Nature, in language which because of their comprehensive thought is corres-
pondingly comprehensive of all possible good and evil aspects of the World-process; the children understand only the story-aspect of them, and very often misunderstand and misapply them too. When the modern scientist says that plants compete with each other for food, that they marry, that they beget children, and that they make the best provision in their power for their children, he is talking poetical myths as well as rigorous science; if his hearers misunderstand him it is little fault of his. This is only one consideration which seems the most generally applicable. For detailed discussions and facts and other considerations bearing on the subject, the student who has not already finally made up his mind that the scriptures of nations are babble, should study theosophical literature generally.

The Prāṇava-Vāja will of course be of much help to him, although it does not deal with interpretations of Veda-texts directly.