

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 Vākya*s, 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 *Māṇḍūkya*, the *Tāra-Sāra*, and other *Upaniṣhaṭs*, the *Gopātha Brāhmaṇa*, and *Tantra*-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 obvious that these three factors, or rather two factors and the nexus between them, exhaust the All without leaving behind any remainder.

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-vākya*s, great sentences, logia, 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 logia. Twenty-four other logia, 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 Samskr̥t equivalents are *jñāna*, *icchā* and *kriyā*, and *dravya*, *guṇa* and *karma* respectively.

The *R̥g-Veda* deals with *jñāna*, Cognition, Knowledge, predominantly. The *Yajuh* with *kriyā*, action. The *Sāma* with *icchā*, desire. The *Atharva* 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) *Samhitā* or *Mantra*, (b) *Brāhmaṇa*, (c) *Upaniṣat*, and (d) *Upaveda*, or *Tantra*, and their developments into the (e) *Kṛṣṇa* and *Shukla Shākhās*, or *Yantra*, the Black and White branches, of each *Veda*; (2) the six *Āṅgas*; and (3) the six *Upāṅgas*. 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 *Īshvaras* are touched upon. The nature of *mukṭi* is discussed in terms of the logion. The various *Āṅgas* and *Upāṅgas*, 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 *jīvas* into *Īshvaras* and creators of ever new world-systems, and the real as well as technical significance of *mokṣha*, 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 Samskr̥t 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, nay, extravagant-seeming 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 *Pranava-Vāda* 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 Piṭāmaha, *par excellence*, the Manus and Ṛṣhis, 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 *Pranava-Vāda* will of course be of much help to him, although it does not deal with interpretations of *Veḍa*-texts directly.
