

## V.

## THE MANNER OF THE BOOK.

THE matter of the book has been indicated, in the briefest possible hints, above. Its manner is, generally speaking, to make a statement on each sub-head in more intelligible and modern-like prose, and then subjoin a sort of mnemonic summary in less intelligible and archaic verse, which seems (and is said by Paṇḍit̥ Dhanarāja) to be quoted from older works. The verses dealing with the detail of each department of the World-process are mostly in the Anuṣṭup-metre; those which, by antithesis, describe the nature of the Absolute 'as transcending these details' are in another longer and more musical metre. These verses illustrate the poetry of rigorous and powerful metaphysic, as distinguished from the less rigorous and, therefore, softer and sweeter metaphysic of the Sūfi poets of Persia. So far as I am aware, there are not many instances of it in western literature. Some sonnets by Fichte, some pieces by the medieval mystics, and Lucretius' poem on Nature would be such. It is difficult to understand what a hymn to the Absolute can be. These verses help us to understand.

In connexion with these archaic verses, it may be interesting to note that Paṇḍit̥ Dhanarāja

once made a statement to the effect that there were many 'layers' in Samskr̥t literature, of which the *Veḍas*, and their coeval works in expansion or exposition of them, including the first works on *Aṅga* and *Upāṅga*, constituted the first layer. He also stated that all this first layer was the work of gods of various degrees, Avatāras, descended upon earth for special purposes. These are the works called *Ārchita* in the *Pranava-Vāḍa*. He added that of this first layer he had succeeded in finding and learning only the *Veḍa*-text itself and not the *Aṅgas* or *Upāṅgas*; and that what he found on these subjects were works of the second layer, reproductions of the first layer, in the same way as a subsequent crop is a reproduction of the first through the seeds left behind from the first, made by R̥shis, progressed human jīvas, in accordance with the laws and the requirements of succeeding cycles of evolution.

Something of the kind is observable in the growth and decay of even recent literature. One main idea expressible in an aphorism is started by a thinker; expansions and commentaries embodying cognate ideas grow round it, till the bulk becomes insupportable; then abstracts and redactions begin, till the whole is reduced to a number of aphorisms, tables of contents, so to say; and then the whole process begins again. Careful divisions of sub-heads,

the demarcation of the more important from the less important, by means of larger and smaller types respectively, even the use of distinct aphorisms, is observable in modern scientific and philosophical literature, too, notably in German works.

To return to the manner of the *Pranava-Vāda*. In the endeavour to make the inseparable connexion and the interdependence of all parts of the work, as of the World-process, perfectly unmistakable, there is an incessant reference throughout the book to the Logion and to facts and laws previously stated. This leads to repetition, which often becomes burdensome to a reader who does not specially delight in intellectual pugilism, and, either for want of leisure or of inclination, is desirous only to have the essential ideas clearly put before him, and willing to take the details on trust, without perpetual argumentation, or even to forego them altogether.

On the subject of these repetitions, and also of the digressions under which the book labours, the following facts may be noted:

It is well known that the Indian syllogism has five steps or propositions which deduce the desired conclusions from the necessary premises, and also include the induction which is the basis of the deduction. In it the conclusion appears twice, in the place of the first proposition as a

thesis *to be proved*, and again at the end as a thesis *proved*. It is the following of this method generally by the author of the work that produces in it what will appear to the reader in English, a cumbersome repetition. To the reader in Samskr̥t it does not appear so very tedious; perhaps the repetition may sometimes give him even some intellectual pleasure, as carrying with it a sense of power, of "driving the conclusion home". I have omitted such repetition in the translation as far as possible.

Another cause of repetition is that after expounding a certain system of ideas in his own prose, the author sums them up in verses which, as said above, appear to be taken from more ancient writings, and string together the ideas in very abrupt fashion, almost by mere lists of single words, each expressing the most important element of an idea. These also I have largely omitted. On the other hand, the space thus gained by omissions has at least partly been spent in the numerous sentences or words that I have added within brackets where the sense of the author was made doubtful by the opposite defect of too much brevity.

As to digressions, a person looking cursorily into the paragraphs one after another, on page after page of the book, will perhaps think that he has never come across a more disjointed and disorderly collection of ideas. But if he will look

carefully at the ends and the beginnings of paragraphs in succession, he will generally discern a good transition made out. And at the end of the longest apparent digression he will unexpectedly find the author returning rigorously to the idea from which he seemed to have drifted away so completely.

But, even so, the reader will not be able to avoid feeling very frequently that the transition is made over a bridge constructed only of a word. That is to say, because a number of words have been used to describe an idea, any one of these words has been taken up at random, and an idea seemingly totally unrelated has been expounded *therefrom simply because that word happens* to have a place in the description of that idea also. But the connexion is not a merely superficial one. A very instructive psychological or metaphysical alliance between the ideas is hidden underneath the surface, in the etymology of the word, and is the reason why the word occurs in the description of the two seemingly disconnected ideas.

Finally, in connexion with the manner of the work, I would mention that the whole book is pervaded by an all-embracing charity and benevolence, by the highest possible ideas and conceptions of human life and evolution, by the constant aim of elevating the student and by an incessant endeavour to bring together and

harmonise and unify all possible differences of view, and show them as being due only to differences of standpoint. It rigorously eschews and deprecates discord to this extent that we do not meet with a single word even of polemical condemnation of any view. The ethical and metaphysical level of the work is so high that it has nothing in common with ordinary works of philosophy, but stands out rather as a scripture, wise and calm and earnestly compassionate.

With these eulogies on the merits of my author I pass on to a few observations as regards *the nature of the present translation and summary.*

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## VI.

### THE NATURE OF THE PRESENT TRANSLATION AND SUMMARY.

I began the translation into English of the *Pranava-Vāda* shortly after the writing down of the original had been completed, that is to say in the summer of 1901, when I was staying in Shrīnagar, Kāshmir, for a few months. I may mention here incidentally that I made enquiries there also, as one of the principal seats of Samskr̥t learning in India, of many Paṇḍiṭs; but they too all professed entire ignorance about any such work as the *Pranava-Vāda*. In Shrīnagar I completed only the translation of the preface and a few pages of the first section. Then, for various reasons, mainly that I was busy with *The Science of Peace* on the one hand and with work connected with the Central Hindū College, Benares, on the other, the translation was laid aside. On my return to Benares, I took it up again, but at the third section, which was the easiest to follow in point of language and also contained a large amount of varied information. About half of this section (which constitutes quite three-fourths of the whole work) I translated systematically. Then, getting a little tired of the mannerism, I took up portions here and there as I found them

interesting. This kind of work continued, with many long and short breaks caused by press of other unavoidable duties, till the whole was finished.

This method of work naturally left behind many defects. The portions that I took up first I translated in entirety and with greater adherence to the letter of the text. In those that I did later, as I became more and more familiar with the author's ways of thought and consequently more sure of the meaning of his language, I have thought more of the sense than of the word, more of the spirit than the letter, and have allowed myself a little more freedom in the use of the English language. In many places I have condensed or omitted altogether, in some paraphrased, in others expanded, in a few cases, especially those of the metrical hymns to the Absolute, I have used the text only as a basis. But in most cases where I have used words which are not directly justified by equivalent or corresponding words in the immediate text, though so justified by sentences occurring elsewhere, I have enclosed these words within brackets.

Finally I may mention that it was my intention at first to publish the translation and the text without any intermediate work, but I was advised by friends on whose judgment in such matters I rely, that a full summary in English

of the work would be more desirable to begin with. The present summary is the result. The remarks in which I have described the translation practically describe the summary also, with this difference, that the condensations are much more frequent, in all sections except the third. In the third I have made many more extracts from the full translation than in the other five, which do not give so many details of facts. With these extracts, indeed, I believe that the summary so fully reproduces and represents the original that a literal translation, even after omitting the palpable repetitions, would perhaps add little to the reader's information, and the publication of one may possibly be a waste of energy. However, this matter will be decided by the amount of interest that this summary arouses. If it succeeds in attracting attention, the next step ought to be the publication of the full original text.

BHAGAVĀN DĀS.

श्रेयस्कामस्तव नित्यं यतोऽसा-  
 वात्माऽन्वेषे श्रांतं त्वां च मन्यते ।  
 मुनिर्गिरां कारुणिकीं परामिमां  
 कल्याणार्थं तव तस्मात् संदिदेश ॥  
 नेयं गिरा कर्महीनेन लभ्या  
 न चाऽपि बोध्या योगमृते तपश्च ।  
 यं व्युपनीतं मात्रीयति तेन लभ्या  
 जगद्हृदयं विवृणुते तस्य चेयम् ॥