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A MYSTICAL INTERPRETATION

OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA (JNANESVARA)

After a review of the doctrines of the great Vedantic interpreters about the Bhagavadgita, let us now pass on to the mystical interpretation of Jnanesvara. Jnanesvara is not far removed even time from the " last of the Romans ", the great Vedantic commentators, and his interpretation is absolutely mystical and in a way super-Vedantic. Jnanesvara was not nearly one of the greatest saints of Maharashtra, but also certainly one of the greatest interpreters of the Bhagavadgita that have ever lived. The most distinguishing feature of his interpretative of the Bhagavadgita is his unique combination of philosophy, poetry and mysticism. Its philosophy is of a high order no doubt, but its poetry is of a still higher order. And when mysticism is combined with philosophical insight and poetical imagination, one can easily see how Jnanesvara's interpretation of the Bhagavadgita stands supreme.

The eight original points of interpretation which we have selected from Jnanesvara are these : In the first place, we shall speak of what he terms the Sun of Absolute Reality, or a very sustained metaphor in poetico-mystical terminology. We shall then go to the cosmological argument which has been advanced by Jnanesvara for the existence of God. This occupies a peculiar position in Indian philosophy, because other philosophers have not touched this aspect of the question. In fact, it can very well be compared with the cosmological argument as is advanced by the Western philosophers. Thirdly, we shall see how he takes up the scheme of illusion from interpreters like Samkaracarya, and speaks of the Flood of illusion or Mayanadi, which he desires in a very beautiful manner in a sustained metaphor. We shall next see how Jnanesvara tells us the way of search for God through miseries. It is probably miseries themselves which take us towards God. This will be followed by our account of his excellent psychological analysis' of the eight mystical emotions which a mystic experiences in his onward journey on this spiritual path. This compares well with the description of mystical emotions in classical Sanskrit Rhetoric as well with that given by a powerful Marathi poetsaint belonging to the line of Jnanesvara, namely Ekanatha. We shall thereafter proceed to a very important point in Jnanesvara, namely, the doctrine of unison which he unfolds at great length and in powerful terms. In fact, this might be regarded as one of his chief contributions to the interpretation of the Bhagavadgita, and even more than this is his original doctrine of asymptotism, for which it would be difficult to find a parallel. No other Indian philosopher has thought of positing such a doctrine of asymptotism, and it is this doctrine which crowns Jnanesvara's mystical interpretation of the Bhagavadgita. Finally, we come to a very graphic poetical description of spiritual victory, which is obtained by a mystic towards the end of his spiritual career.

The Sun of Absolute Reality

Let us begin with the sublime description of the Sun of Absolute Reality given by Jnanesvara. We are reminded of a simile description, though not in such poetical and powerful terms, by Plato in his Republic, when he asks his highest Idea, the Idea of the Good, as the Sun of the world of Ideas. Jnanesvara has developed his conception of the Sun of Absolute Reality in mystical terms in his Jnanesvari. There is difference between the a neat spiritual sun and the physical sun, he says. While the physical sun makes the phenomenal world rise into view, the spiritual sun makes it disappear altogether. As the physical Sun eats up the celestial stars when he rises above the

horizon, the spiritual sun eats up the stars both of knowledge and of ignorance. Janesvara proceeds to point out further resemblances as well as differences in the working of the spiritual sun. and the physical sun. When the spiritual sun dawns, the individual souls leave their nests, like birds, at dawn of day and go on their spiritual pilgrimage. Varying the metaphor, Jnanesvara tells us that the souls are like bees, which have been hitherto pent up inside the flowers of the subtle bodies, but as soon as the day dawns they rush out of the petals and fly into the open air, Further; intellect and illumination have been compared by Jnanesvara to a pair of Cakravaka birds who love each other but who are divided at night by the river of difference, They are crying out for each other but they cannot meet. It is only when the day dawns that they come together and there is great rejoicing. This is as much as to say that when mystical realisation arises, intellect and illumination meet, The intellectual faculty and the mystical faculty, which had hitherto been separated, now meet and there is great consonance between them. Jnanesvara further goes on to tell us that as the spiritual sun comes above the horizon, and as he gathers light and power and throws his rays upon the double convex lens of our consciousness, the rays meet in a focus which burns the forests of worldly life. Also taking another physical metaphor, Jnanesvara tells us that as the rays of the spiritual sun pass obliquely through various strata to the surface of the earth, a mirage of occult power is produced on account of the refraction of the rays. Let us not be tempted by these occult powers, says Janesvara, in the course of our spiritual illumination. He gives us a further happy metaphor when he tells us that when the spiritual sun reaches the zenith, the shadow of the body hides itself altogether beneath one's feet and one feels one's identity with the spiritual sun. Finally, Janesvara asks us " Who is there, let me know, who has visualized this spiritual sun ? " The spiritual sun shines so miraculously that he alone is the ultimate Reality and there is nothing left for him to illuminate. The subject-object relation comes to an end, he alone remains, the unity of the subject and object, the Absolute, the Sun of Spiritual Reality. Apart from the philosophical and mystical import of this passage, we have to notice what great powers Jnanesvara had in the observation of nature. The disappearance of the stars when the sun rises, the birds flying out of their nests at dawn of day, the bees rushing hastily out of the blown up flowers, the meeting of the pair of Cakravaka birds at daylight, and the disappearance of the shadow of the body beneath the feet when the sun reaches the zenith are observations elevated enough. But the two observations of nature which Jnanesvara makes may be regarded as of extraordinary value, considering the times in which he lived, namely, the rays of light passing through a double convex lens producing a flame of fire and the refraction of the sun's rays through different strata producing a mirage, observations which do not make mysticism irreconcilable with scientific insight.

The Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God

Let us now proceed to the cosmological argument for the existence of God, which has been very well developed by Janesvara. As we have said, this argument has hardly been used by other Indian philosophers, and we must compliment Janesvara upon having advanced this argument for the existence of God. In fact, the cosmological argument has had a great history, as students of philosophy know. The so-called arguments for the existence of God, the ontological, the cosmological and the physico-theological, have all been criticised by Kant, and he comes to the conclusion that these do not prove God ; but that God can be proved

only by the moral argument which he advances in the Critique of Practical Reason, or by the teleological argument which he advances in the Critique of Judgment. The ontological argument has had an excellent exponent in Descartes, which Kant mentions with respect ; but there was no necessity for him to make a disjunction between the cosmological argument and the physico-theological argument. The two really are connected and not merely this, but the teleological argument about which Kant speaks in his last critique, is also connected with both. So, on the whole, the cosmological argument is a very important one in trying to prove the existence of God from the order in nature. It i.e. exactly this order in nature which Jñanesvara stresses here. In the first place, he tells us that God is the mover of the world. The forces of nature are merely his bond servants. We are reminded of Aristotle's dictum that God is the unmoved mover of the whole universe. We are also put in mind of the famous passage in the Upanisad at " I am the mover of the tree " and so on. And the tree goes on in its individual and universal aspects to be regulated by the mover of the body and the mover of the world who are ultimately one. Jñanesvara also gives us some illustrations in which God's cosmological power is exhibited. It is God who commands the sun to follow a particular order every day during all months and seasons. Canute, the great king, rebuked his flattering courtiers by pointing out to them that the order of God in nature was superior to his own. God orders the wind to move ceaselessly on ; He orders the earth to bear the burden of all the creatures upon her surface. Unfortunately, sometimes there are earthquakes also, but even they are due to the Will of God. He orders the mountains not to move from their places, and he tells the ocean not to overstep its boundaries. So God's power pervades all these natural forces. Also we will not be far wrong if we say that god is the sum-total of all the forces of nature. When we look at nature, we see that the Order which governs it is nothing else except the Will of God. Also if we look at the matter even physiologically, we see that our exhalations and inhalations are themselves due to the Order of God, and when God desires that we should have final exhalation, we do finally exhale and there is no further inhalation. Death is thus itself due to the Will and Order of God. All these things show that God's omnipotence is everywhere and this omnipotence is, according to Jñanesvara, one supreme cosmological argument. for the existence of God.

The Flood of Illusion (Mayanadi

Jñanesvara's description of the flood of illusion is a very wonderful one. The concept of Maya, which Samkara had inaugurated, finds its best poetic expression in Jñanesvara. He speaks of the course of Mayanadi which starts from the precipice of Brahman, which he calls Brahmacala or Brahmagiri. Who will not be reminded of the Brahmagiri mountain at Tryambakesvara around which Jñanesvara's father with his four children used to make peregrinations ? The reference to the Brahmagiri seems to be a definite personal one. Issuing from the precipice of Brahman, therefore, Jñanesvara tells us, as: the river moves on, it produces bubbles in the shape of the elements which appear on its surface. It is further augmented by the rain of the qualities. The qualities send showers of rain into the flood and increase its flow. In this flood, as it moves on, there are whirlpools of hatred and windings of jealousy, and huge fishes in the shape of moral aberrations (Pramadas swim inside the flood. The flood in its motion carries off the small hamlets of restraint and self-control which are situated on its two banks; it breaks its waters upon the island of sexual enjoyment which is a resort of a number of creatures, so that all these creatures

ultimately are destined to be drowned in that great flood. Jñanesvara very intelligently refers to the different kinds of Pramanas. One does not know how far he had studied Nyaya philosophy, but certainly here he makes mention of two important Pramanas namely, reason and scriptures and Of those who are dependent upon their reason trying to swim across the river, no trace is left in the course of their swimming, and they sink in the abyss of self-conceit. The sacred scriptures are merely huge pieces of stone which a man fastens to his chest and thus being heavily laden, he falls into the mouth of the whale of arrogance. and having been thus disposed of, Jñanesvara tells us in a general way that other means of swimming across the river, that is, other criteria or Pramanas are only sure ways of destruction. Ultimately no intellectual criterion enables us to escape the Mayanadi. Finally, if we want to cross such a terrific stream we must have a steersman in the shape of a spiritual teacher. We must have a rudder in the shape of devotion, which conception we take the liberty of introducing in the description. We must travel on the sure raft of mystical experience. It is only when these three things meet, namely, the spiritual teacher, devotion and mystical experience, that we have the possibility of crossing that great flood of illusion. But one very extraordinary phenomenon takes place in the course of this flood. It disappears as soon as we begin to cross it. As we have noticed before that when the Sun of Absolute Reality rises, there is nothing left for him to illuminate: similarly here, in the case of the flood of illusion, it so happens that as soon as we have begun to cross it, no water remains to cross.

The Scratch of God through Miscrie

Jñanesvara's description of the search of God through miseries can hardly be paralleled by similar descriptions, reminding us as it does, at two different places of certain Hindi songs, especially the poems of Kabira, the parallelism of which we have discussed elsewhere. Jñanesvara tells us that our life might be regarded as a boat with a hundred holes. Kabira had spoken of which we have discussed elsewhere in our explanation of the song Who can keep his body bare, asks Jñanesvara, , when missiles are being hurled at him every moment ? When a conflagration is raging all round, as happened once in the Khandava-vana, who can hope to remain enclosed inside it ? ' - best endeavour should be to get ourselves out of that conflagration as early as possible. Then Jñanesvara tells us that life indeed might be regarded as a fair. Here again we are reminded of another line of Kabira's song In this fair what we see is that wares of miseries are being spread out by the sellers, and beath, who is one of the principal sellers, is measuring the years and the destiny of men ; he is rationing life's years to people. Making an appeal to the heavens, Jñanesvara asks " Is not the moon proverbially consumptive ? Do not the stars rise only in order to set ? " If this happens to the heavens, why should this not happen to men upon the earth ? In a very important discussion upon the nature of death, Jñanesvara further tells us that at the very beginning, death is encircling the foetus in the mother's womb. Perhaps, when a child is born the parents hoist auspicious flags. But in the midst of happiness comes misery, The child is really approaching death every day as it grows, and yet people rejoice and hoist flags. People., cannot afford even to hear the word ` death'. As Spinoza has said, in the course of the life-history of man, when: he begins to watch the track of those that have gone by, he sees no returning footprints. All steps point towards the den of death and none returns. Histories and mythologies consequently, says jñanesvara, are

merely coll.- tions of death-stories. Who will not be reminded of taking ourselves away from the purview of death when all these things are taking place round about us ? Finally, taking a beautiful metaphor from animal life, jñanesvara tells us that a frog, which is attempting to catch at flies, is itself at the same time being swallowed by a big boa. We in this mortal world try to aspire after many objects, unmindful of the fact that we ourselves are at the same time being devoured by death. The present writer had an opportunity of witnessing (under a microscope an analogous phenomenon in the region of the microbes, when he saw one medium-sized microbe catching hold' of another, while at the same time it was itself being caught up inside the circle set up by the tentacles of a rotifera. Such is the life of creatures from protozoa upwards to the life of the highest creatures. Wherever we look, death is encircling us and it behoves all of' us, therefore, to return to God and to think about Him un mind- ful of the power of death. On a contemplation of the various kinds of miseries enumerated above, we shall see that there is no way of escape from them except by devotion to God. Jñanesvara asks :

" Upon what power do these people count, that they do not try to worship Me ?.. Who has ever heard a tale of happiness in this world of mortals ? Can one sleep with comfort on a bed of scorpions or of burning coals ?.. . . Alas, born in this mortal world, that Arjuna, get thyself away from it ;go by the path of Bhakti, so that thou mayest reach My immaculate home. "

The Eight Mystical Emotions

As a man advances in his mystical experience he exhibits. various kinds of physiological, physio-psychological reactions, which have been classified by writers on Alankara Sastra as well as on mysticism into a number of prominent emotional features. They are generally regarded to be eight Sattvika Bhavas; but it is not necessary that there should be only eight, There might be many more ; and even in regard to the eight there is no consensus of opinion among the various writers on the science of emotions. On the whole, therefore, we may say that the following are the chief mystical emotions that a man exhibits in his spiritual development. Physiologically, we might say, the symptoms which a mystic develops are horripilation, perspiration and lachrymation, this last being particularly due to feelings inside the mind. Then there are physio-psychological reactions such as tremor and paresis. These two are opposed to each other and yet the mystic develops them both and exhi- bits them at different times. As regards the psychological reactions, we have epoch, peace and joy. Paresis physiologi- cally produces epoche psychologically. Consequently, epoche is equivalent and conducive to peace, while opposed to peace is joy, and the great beauty of psychological reaction to mystical experience is that antithetical qualities become mingled together. On the whole, therefore, the eight different mystical emotions which a man enjoys on his spiritual march are horripilation; perspiration, lachrymation, tremor, paresis, epoch, peace and joy. jñanesvara has given a graphic description of these emotions in a classical passage which we quote below

" The duality that so long existed between the self and the world, now ceased to exist. The mind became immediately composed. Internally there was a feeling of joy. Externally there was a fading of the power of the limbs. From top to toe, the aspirant became full of horripilation, as at the beginning of the: rainy season the body of a mountain becomes overspread with grass. Drops of sweat crept over his body, as drops of water creep on the rnoonstone, when it is touched by the rays of the

moon. As an unblown lotus swings to and fro on the surface of the water on account of the bee which is pent up inside its petals, similarly the body of the devotee began to shake on account of the feelings of internal bliss. As drops of camphor fall down when the core of the camphor plant opens out, similarly tears of joy trickled down from his eyes. As the sea experiences tide after tide when the moon arises, similarly his mind experienced surge after surge of emotions. Thus all the eight Sattvika emotions began to compete in the mind of the mystic, and he sat on the Throne of Beatific Joy. "

Unison

Jñanesvara has given an excellent account of the unison of a devotee with God. He gives a good philosophical interpretation of it which shows what great powers of reasoning he had. In the first place, he tells us that the chief condition of unison is surrender. Surrender philosophically interpreted means identification. "Be submissive unto Me ", says the Lord, " so that thou mayest become united with Me." Unless, therefore, we surrender to God, no unison can ultimately take place. Secondly, we have to see how Jñanesvara discusses the complete annihilation of individuality which leads to a mystical unison. He gives various illustrations to express what he means. These illustrations might be classified as scientific, material, psychological and moral. The mystic becomes identified with God, as space inside a pitcher becomes identified with the space outside when the pitcher breaks. When iron and fuel, which are material objects, come in contact with the touchstone and the fire respectively, they are transformed into gold and conflagration. Dreams pass into wakefulness act lose their individuality. Sin and merit likewise, which are moral conceptions, says Jñanesvara, are ultimately transformed into God's Being, so that from all these points of view there is annihilation of individuality and unison with God.

"To say that, when God is seen, the separate individuality of a person remains, is this not a piece of foolish gibbering?... Iron in its ironness may rust, but when it has become gold by contact with the philosopher's stone, no impurities can continue to spoil it. When fire is churned out of sticks, the sticks will no longer remain as sticks. When the Sun has arisen, shall darkness reappear? Or when wakefulness comes, shall the illusion of a dream continue to give trouble? Take no thought, therefore, Oh Arjuna, for thy sin and merit shall both be transformed into My Being... From this time onwards thou hast become free. Entertain no anxiety, therefore, and resign thyself to Me in being united with Me.

-Jna. XVIII. 1398-1416.

After having discussed the philosophical conception of unison, Jñanesvara next proceeds to a further one, namely, the annihilation of difference. Is there any difference between Eastern and Western waters, he asks. The Eastern sea and the Western sea are only different in name. The ocean and the river cease to be separate when the river flows into the ocean. If a piece of salt, says Jñanesvara, tries to separate two different kinds of water, it becomes mingled with both. Jñanesvara gives an excellent illustration referring to Sanjaya, who says that when he was hearing the sublime mystical conversation between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, he was so enraptured that he became mingled with both. In this way, in a state of unison all difference is annihilated. Further, Jñanesvara tells us that in such a state, the self and God may be related to each other as quality and substance. Ramanuja has already said so. Jñanesvara points out that as camphor and its fragrance are not different, or a jewel and its lustre are not different, so there is

no difference left between the individual soul and God in such a state. One becomes the quality of the other, which is the substance, *causa sui*, that which exists in itself and for itself.

Janesvara goes on to his favourite metaphor of the mirror and tells us that in the case either of single reflection or of infinite reflection, the difference between the devotee and God vanishes. Taking the case of single reflection in a mirror, the original and the image lose their difference. Patanjali has spoken of *The Gita* speaks: of In any case, the devotee sees God in his own image. The Bible says that God created man in His image, and we may say man is paying back the debt by creating God in his. Further, there is that sublime conception of infinite reflection which Jnanesvara now puts forth. When two mirrors are placed, one in front of the other, which, shall we say, reflects which ? There are infinite reflections between the two. As a student of physics the year 1904 at the Deccan College, I used to perform this experience at in our room. Two mirrors with two, differently colored borders, when placed against each other, show themselves in alternately coloured infinite reflections, one into the other. Similarly Janesvara tells us that there is no limit to the number of reflections that take place between the devotee and God. Arjuna, tells us, saw himself along with God in God, and God saw himself along with Arjuna in Arjuna. This is a state of infinite reflection to which the devotee is . to go on to two final points under this head of unison: 'First, devotional unison and then mystical) unison. Under devotional unison, we have two extracts from Jnanesvara, which tell us that God says whatever his devotee utters is His praise, whatever he sees is His vision, whatever he touches is his wor- ship, whatever he contemplates is, the chanting of His prayer, while his sleep constitutes ecstasy. Then again, being pleased with : the great devotion of the aspirant, God says ultimately " I am he ". We are accustomed to hear in Vedanta of the expression ` I am he ' as uttered by the realiser ; or is that expression. In the present case, however, it is God who says : ` I am he ', that He is the devotee. The tables are turned. Whether I am He or He is I, it does not matter. It only means there is absolute devotional unison between the devotee and God. Finally, we find one very significant remark in the Jnanesvari, where Janesvara speaks of the identification of the aspiring mystic with the object of his vision :

Now, it has been the usual teaching of the great mystics that the forms which they see in mystical experience are ultimately identical with themselves, and a man has to sit in judgment upon the quality of his own mind and his own experience by taking into account the different forms of mystical realisation which he experiences. There is also a graded development in these forms. The mystics teach also that such a rising dev otee must ultimately feel his identity with his own Self. It is only then that there is perfect unison ; but the point is that whatever a devotee mystically experiences is always an index of his own spiritual achievement.

Aeymptotic Realisation

jnanesvara next makes a very original contribution to the philosophy of mysticism. This is what might be called his doctrine of asymptotism. Under this we shall discuss two points : (1) asymptotic realisation, and (2) the doctrine that perfection can be attained only gradually. We are familiar with the word ` asymptote' in mathematics. A curve and an die approaching each other infinitely and meeting at infinity is the essence of asymptotic approximation. What we find in the case of an aspiring mystic is that he goes on asymptotically approaching God. That

is janesvara's doctrine. Instead of there being a final and perfect identity between the mystic and God, the mystic moves towards God and so we may say that he meets God at infinity. There is just a little difference between them. Just as there is difference between the moon of the fourteenth day and the fullmoon of the fifteenth day, or just as a diamond of fifteen carats just falls short of gold of sixteen carats, to that extent only does the devotee fall short of full divine attainment. As one can distinguish between the sea and the river by the stillness and the motion of the waters, similarly in the case of God and devotee also we can make a slight distinction. " The devotee attains to the Godhead, falling just short of His entire Being " (Jna. XVIII. 108 i-90). The reason, for this approximation or asymptotic realisation is the physical, the mental and other limitations of the mystic. So long as he has a body and a mind and has to live in the world; to that extent and till that time he must fall short of complete divine attainment.

Even though the devotee may reach unison with God, yet he remains a devotee. The saint remains a saint so long as he has to discharge his bodily functions. " -Jna. VII. 114,117.

Janesvara further proceeds to talk of the gradual and graduated perfection in the mystic. It is the time factor that counts. A man who starts on his journey must not expect to reach the end at once. There is bound to be a time interval between initiation and realisation. A Sadhaka who gets himself initiated by a teacher must work and wait for attaining realisation and therefore liberation. It will require a good deal of time before he conquers his mind and intellect, devotes himself entirely to God, makes possible some definite attainment in that line and ultimately achieves divine realisation. So, initiation and realisation should not be spoken of in the same breath. Perfection is only gradual. says Mirabai. A gardener might sprinkle water upon the trees and the plants, but it is only after the spring sets in that the trees and plants bear fruit. Also Janesvara here makes a fine remark that the great God Samkara Himself is only a pilgrim journeying on the spiritual path, He has just made an approximation to the infinitude of God; and if this happens in the case of God Samkara, far more must it happen in the case of us small mortals.

Granted that all the preparation is made for the realisation of God, that one meets the Guru, that the Guru imparts to him the knowledge of the true path ; granted that the seed that is sown is the best of its kind, yet it is only in course of time that a rich harvest can be reaped." -Jna. XVIII. 996-1008.

The Spiritual Victory

Janesvara closes his account of the message of the Gita in a passage which it would be hard to surpass. In that passage he summarises the whole mystical teaching of the Bhagavadgita ; and as this would be a fitting sequel not merely to our discussion of the mystical philosophy of Janesvara but also to our present part of the work, we shall end it by an account of Janesvara's powerful mystical description of the ultimate victory of a spiritual warrior. This victory could be looked at in four stages of development. First, the accoutrements of the warrior ; second, the battlefield of life ; third, the imperial procession after conquest and the last, the coronation of the mystic on the Throne of Unitive Life. regards the accoutrements, Janesvara tells us that such - a developing mystic mounts the steed of Rajayoga, puts on the armour of dispassion and holds the sword of concentration in his hand. Equipped with these accoutrements, he proceeds to the battlefield of life. Into the battlefield itself he moves like the Sun into

darkness, and cuts to pieces all the different enemies, such as at and which jñanesvara mentions by name. All this is done ultimately for the sake of winning the bride of liberation;

Similarly a great Kannada poet-saint has spoken of the mystic as marrying the Maid of Liberation, . So when the battle is won, liberation is attained. Then we go on to see how Jñanesvara describes the mystic's procession on the imperial road. Virtues such as and the rest, which have been enumerated in the Bhagavadgita, all now act as vassals and move along with the victorious warrior as his retinue. The so-called Yoga-Bhūmiks, the different stages of Yogic development and all the powers and prosperities, , assemble in thousands in order to see the spectacle and shower flowers on the mystic who is now soon to be crowned king. Ultimately, the coronation takes place, the drum of victory is beaten, attainment of Swarajya, which word has been specially mentioned by Jñanesvara, proclaimed. All the three worlds become filled with joy. Such a state of beatification, the banner of self-identity is unfurled, as is seen in the case of all victorious achievements. In the present case, it must be remembered, the banner is of self-identity, identity of self with God. And finally, when all this has been accomplished by the mystic, he is crowned king on the Throne of Spiritual Experience.

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INTERPOLATIONISM

Hitherto we have seen how the Bhagavadgita stands in relation to the Upanisads, Samkhya-Yoga and the Brahma-sutras, and how the great Vedantic commentators have inter-pretend the Bhagavadgita, each in his own way. We have also seen the original points in the mystical interpretation of the Bhagavadgita by the great poet-saint of Mahārāstra Jñanesvara. We shall now pass on to modern interpretations of the Bhagavadgita. There is a very large number of such interpretations, but we shall select only eight of them for our purpose, namely those of Garbe and Bhandarkar, Farquhar and Buddhiraja, Tilak and Gandhi, Otto and Aurobindo. The opinions of these we shall consider under the following philosophical heads : Interpolationism and Bhagavatism, Christianity and Buddhism, Activism and Detachment, Numenism and Divinisation. A student who undertakes a study of the Bhagavadgita will really find his head turned when he goes into the depths of all these different interpretations and he may well find himself in a labyrinth. Is there a way of rescue for him from this labyrinth ? Yes. The only line of rescue for him, according to us, would be the path of God-realisation.

Let us begin by discussing the theories of interpolationism in regard to the interpretation of the Bhagavadgita. On the whole, there might be said to be five such theories, the first being the most important. The names that can be mentioned here in connection with these theories of interpolationism are Garbe, Holtzmann, Oldenberg, Schrader and Otto. Garbe's theory of interpolationism is intertwined with the doctrine of theism ; Holtzmann's with the interests of pantheism; Schrader's is really an interpolationism more than an interpolationism; Oldenberg stands as an apostle of a twelve-chapter work of the Bhagavadgita and Otto introduces eight external tracts in the original form of the Bhagavadgita. We shall see that even though there is this incidence of a pluralistic interpolationism in Otto, still the total summing up of the meaning of the Bhagavadgita is a numenistic, mystical idea for which he stands, as we shall see at the close of this chapter.

Garbe

(a) Exclusion of mamsic and Vedanta Passages :- Before we go on to Garbe, we must mention that the theory of interpolationism was first suspected by Humboldt in the year 1826, and that Garbe might be regarded as one of the great modern apostles of interpolationism. We may say that just as there is a large collection of works on Biblical criticism, so even here the Gita criticism was started by Garbe. We shall consider the following points under Garbe's interpolationist theory about the Bhagavadgita. We shall begin by considering the reasons why he excludes the Vedantic and Mimamsic passages from his text. Then we shall deal with the criticism that has been made upon this procedure particularly by Edgerton and Winternitz. Next we shall examine the significance of the capital which Garbe makes out of the occurrence of the word Maya six times in the Bhagavadgita. Then comes a very important point and a point to the great credit of Garbe, namely, his interpretation of and , God, the all-seer and the all-knower, as common to the and the Bhagavadgita. Finally, following his philosophic bent of mind, we see Garbe speaking about Krsna as rising from the conception of a man through the conception of a man-God to the conception of God in the course of progressive development. This, in short, is a brief outline of Garbe's account of his interpolationist theory about the Bhagavadgita.

We have said above that Garbe excludes the Mimamsic and Vedantic passages from his text of the Bhagavadgita. On a general review of all the passages that have been excluded by Garbe, we do find that his two chief enemies are Mimamsa and Vedanta, Advaitism in particular. But there are many other points also on account of which Garbe tries to exclude a number of verses from the original Bhagavadgita. For example, all considerations of super-moralism or transcendence of the three qualities involved in the conception of Nistraigunya, all essences such as the great luminosity in the Sun as in the XV chapter, the conception of the Vibhutis in the X chapter, all considerations or references to Brahman, all schemes of absorption in Brahman, Yogic effects like the equanimity to be obtained in the process of Yoga, all these have been excluded by Garbe. On the other hand, all those passages have been retained which promote theism, which promote moralism as ancillary to theism, and particularly philosophic devotion. It would take a long time to go into the details of all these exclusions and preferences; but we have mentioned these because, of all these exclusions, Advaitism is the chief enemy whom Garbe wants to fight. Dr. Bhandarkar liked his procedure very much, though he would have preferred to interpret the whole of the Bhagavadgita theistically, regarding even the pantheistic passages, as theistic. That of course is going even a little further than Garbe. Garbe is endowed with great powers of linguistic interpretation, of philology and of philosophic analysis. So, his opinion became the most respectable during the early years of the present century.

Garbe himself mentions that the two sets of passages which he wants to exclude are the Mimamsic and the Vedantic. We shall take two typical specimens of these very shortly. In the meanwhile, we might mention that Garbe suggests that it was a slowly gathering and accumulating conviction that he was able to exclude these passages not as a matter of chance nor as a fit of fancy, with the result that out of 700 verses, 170 fall out. He says ;

" I have ventured to carry into practical execution the idea of separating certain portions of the Bhagavadgita not as a result of any abrupt conceit but on the basis of a slowly accumulating conviction. (He takes the credit for having read the Gita six times) ; thus

decidedly by removing passages from most of the chapters of the Gita with the result that out of 700 verses, 170 fall out. "

Introduction to the Bhagavadgita, p. 31.

These according to Garbe do not belong to the original Bhagavadgita. In this procedure Garbe has given a rude shock for the first time to traditional interpreters of the Bhagavadgita. He takes this for granted and everything that goes against it is an interpolation. His method involve a *petitio Principie*, taking a thing for granted and then working out from it, in fact taking for granted what one wants to prove. The outcome of such a procedure ultimately, tells us, is that no real gap is left anywhere in the whole of the Bhagavadgita. We shall see presently what other scholars have said in regard to this real gap or unreal gap. We cannot help noticing here the words of Garbe, " put into execution his scheme of exclusions ". We must indeed give him the credit for having carried out of exclusions ! For, was it not he who first sundered Bhagavadgita into two parts, the theistic and the pantheistic, under the impression that the pantheistic doctrine did not belong to the time of the Bhagavadgita ? If, however, we were to interpret the Bhagavadgita in a mystical manner, we well see how the theistic and the pantheistic portions could be reconciled. We might take two typical passages of exclusion in order to justify what we mean. The first is a passage from Chapter III, verses 10 to 15, where a defence of Yajna is made, which Garbe wants to exclude ; the second is a passage from Chapter II, verses-42 to 46, which is of anti-Mimamsic and Vedantic content and which defends self-realisation. If we just bring out, in a very terse form, the meanings of these two passages, we shall see the reason why Garbe was tempted to exclude both. He wants neither the Purva Mimamsa, nor the Uttara Mimamsa to interfere in his theistic interpretation of the Bhagavadgita. If we take the first passage, Chapter III, ' 10-15 we shall see that that passage makes the following points : (i) It was God who created the institution of sacrifice which is indeed the fulfiller of all desires. (ii) We are asked to propitiate the gods with the result that the gods will propitiate us. (iii) The highest ideal, therefore, to be achieved is such a mutual propitiation by gods of men and men of gods. (iv) He who does not perform a sacrifice .and who does not make an oblation, or an offering, in fact, he who does not give, as we shall see later on, a spiritual income-tax, should be regarded as a thief. (v) Finally, all sins will be removed in the case of a man who lives on the remnants of a sacrifice. He must first offer everything to others, and what remains as residue with him, with that alone he should remain content. He who thus partakes and lives merely on the remnants of a sacrifice is the greatest of those who lead a sacrificial life. This is a passage which Garbe wants to exclude, because it defends ritualism.

Another passage which he wants to exclude on the ground of its defence of the Vedantic attitude consists of the verses, 42 to 46 in Chapter II. We note the points which this passage makes : (i) The passage condemns sacrifice because the ideals of a sacrifice are merely enjoyment and power. (ii) It involves aspiration towards stability in God. (iii) The Vedas, the author tells us, are subject to the suzerainty of the three gunas and hence of no avail. (iv) It is only life in Atman which can take one beyond considerations of Yoga and Ksama, acquisition and security. (v) Finally; the Vedas are like a pond in an all-enveloping sea of spiritual experience and are of no consequence when we take into account spiritual realisation as a whole. These are the points which the Vedantic passage makes and on that account Garbe wants to exclude this Vedantic passage also. So on the

whole, both ritualism and non-ritualism seem to be his enemies. In a similar way, if we just carry our imagination back, we shall find that the same antinomy of ritualism and non-ritualism as in the Bhagavadgita is mentioned in the Muqdaka Upanisad also. What the Bhagavadgita has done is merely to copy the antinomy from the Muadaka. As the writer has observed in his " Creative Period of Indian Philosophy" (Bombay University, 1927) : "It is evident from a consideration of the halting attitude of the philosopher of the Mundaka that while in one breath he extols ritualism (I. 1.6) and in another condemns it outright (I. 7-12), that even in this respect the Mundaka has been the prototype of the Bhagavadgita " (p. 279). This conception of the battle of ritualism and non-ritualism, which was started by the Mu daka, has been taken over bodily by the Bhagavadgita from the Mundaka, but it rises beyond both ritualism and non-ritualism. Garbe's procedure has been subjected to criticism from different points of view and by different scholars. We shall not enter here into many linguistic or philological criticism which have been made but mention only few points of philosophic importance. (1) Edgerton tells us that Garbe contents himself by saying that when we have removed the excised passages, the two ends meet and there is no real gap created anywhere. This is exactly the point with which Edgerton disagrees. According to him, the excised passages, even as they are, can in many cases be shown to be connected both ways to the preceding and the following portions. (2) Again, Edgerton relies upon the authority of an old scholar like Uldenberg, who believed in the unitary teaching of the Bhagavadgita, and entirely agrees with him in regarding the spirit of the Bhagavadgita as completely unitary. Edgerton says :

"Garbe is mistaken in thinking that the elimination of certain passages reunites verses which evidently belong together but have been separated by the alleged interpolations. I believe that just the opposite is the case. That is, a verse immediately following a passage excised by Garbe can in many cases be shown to be connected with the excised passage."

The Bhagavadgita, p. 98.

" I am glad to find that so high an authority as Oldenberg felt as I do that the general spirit of the Gita is no less unitary than that of similar works of its class, and that it is an error to see in it a mixture of different schools of philosophy. "

ibid, p. 99, Footnote.

(3) Winternitz tells us that a reconciliation of different points of view or of different aspects of philosophic thought which has been effected by the Bhagavadgita, and which, in fact, is the essence of its teaching, has been falsely represented as involving a theory of interpolation. (4) Bhandarkar's point of view instead of being merely theistic may be regarded as even super-theistic, which we may call by the name of Bhagavatism or Prapattism. He would go even a little further than Garbe so far as the theistic aspect of the Bhagavadgita is concerned, and not allow anything to be understood in a pantheistic sense. Instead of dividing the Gita into the theistic and pantheistic portions, he would like to regard the whole of the Bhagavadgita as theistic or even as super-theistic involving the doctrine of Bhagavatism or Prapattism.

(b) Occurrence of the word May` the Bhagdvadgita :-- Taking This stand on the theistic interpretation of the Bhagavad- gita, it is no wonder that Garbe should fight ,shy of the word Maya, and particularly of its significance which involves the conception of unreality or illusion. The word Maya has occurred six times in the Bhagavadgita,

twice in the sense in which Garbe would like to have it, thrice in the sense to which Garbe is opposed, and once in the sense which Garbe would try to enlist along with those who support Vedantism, but which is really Janus-faced pointing both ways. Garbe's contention is that the earlier passages are theistic in character and the word Maya occurring in those passages means miraculous power. For example take the two quotations : (1 IV. 6) and (2) (XVIII. 61), where Maya means miraculous power, the power of God who wields a magical weapon in his hand. Later passages according to Garbe involve pantbeism, and therefore Maya is introduced there, according to him, in the sense of illusion. These passages are : .14. and VII. 15. In these cases, the word Maya means illusion and the passages must therefore be excluded, says Garbe, from the orthodox scheme. Finally, the word Maya also occurs in the expression, I VII. 25. Garbe would like to understand Maya here in the sense of illusion, but we may point out that it may mean power also. Hence even though Garbe would try to include it in the later passages, we feel that it cannot be so included. The reason for such inclusion by Garbe, in our opinion, seems to be that he approaches the question from a preconceived notion.

(c) God as All-Seer and All-Knower on Tapaniya Upanisad :-We must, however, compliment Garbe upon having in fact made a discovery in regard to the expression showing the connections between the and the Bhagavadgita. Garbe contends, and contends correctly, that the word Anumanta in this sense is of rare occurrence, and if the has used that expression and if that expression occurs in the Bhagavadgita also, it would follow that the Bhagavadgita is the borrowing party provided the Upanisad could be proved to be earlier. In any case, this is a remarkable coincidence about, God the all-seer and God the all-knower, that these words should occur both in the. and the Bhagavadgita. Garbe contends for the value of the present reference only so far as the age of the Bhagavadgita is concerned as being later than that of the. But he should have also contended for this expression as having a particularly theistic significance, and should therefore have included this under his own scheme of a theistic interpretation of the Bhagavadgita. It has been observed above that- is an expression of rare occurrence ; but another analogue for the word Anumanta in the is which occurs many times in that Upanisad. In one case it links itself up with For example, in the verse : Also we have in the same Upanisad that famous expression , one who penetrates the secret of things. Hence even though' is a more familiar expression than of and both mean the same thing, the expression ncurrin even once in the Bhagavadgita as in the: might well lead us to suppose that the Bhagavadgita relies upon that upanisad for its authority for them expression. let us see what Garbe says :

The words spectator ' and assurer' here stand side by side, of which the latter is of such rare occurrence that the historical connection of the two passages is not open to doubt. As in the case of other references to Upanisadic literature, the must here be regarded as the original and the Bhagavadgita (XIII. 22) the copy, because the word Anumanta, as the designation of a form of the highest spirit, has its originality absolutely guaranteed in the by the whole content of the text." Introduction to the B. G., p. 46.

In this connection the present writer feels that the Upanisads have not received their due recognition from Upanisadic scholars. Both the Upanisads are of high poetico-mystical value and replete with quotations. This might itself have served as an incentive to the Bhagavadgita. Further, the particularly calls its chapters by the

name of Upanisads, not Khandas, Prapathakas, Vallis or . . Adhyayas. The Bhagavadgita also consciously or unconsciously calls its chapters by the title of Upanisads, Keith points out in this connection that the Gita might itself be regarded as an Upanisad of the Svetasvatara type. As the present writer has said in a previous chapter, he would like to give to the Bhagavadgita the status of an Upanisad, The determination of the age of the Upanisad would go a long way in the determination of the age of the Bhagavadgita and would be of greater service than the older Upanisads such as Katha, Mundaka, and the rest from which the Bhagavadgita has definitely borrowed. In any case it stands to reason that the Bhagavadgita was deeply influenced by the expression as occurring in the

(d) Doctrine of Krsna as Man, 'Man-God and God :- Finally, we come to the interpretation of the personality of Krsna by Garbe. With his deep insight into philosophy he does not find it difficult to point out that the conception of Krsna rises from the status of a mere man through that of a demi-god to that of God himself. It was when Krsna helped the Pandavas to secure victory in the great war that he was veritably raised from manhood to demi-godhood and then to God hood itself. In a similar vein Hopkins has told us that exceptional personage's may first be raised to the status of a demi-god and then to the status of God. Edgerton tells us the same story :

" In the greater part of the Mahabharata, Krsna appears in a strictly human guise. In the narrative of the Gita he is still both god and man, an incarnation of the Deity in human form. In the philosophical teaching of the Gita, Krsna has all the attributes of a full-fledged mono-theistic deity and at the same time the attributes of the Upanisadic Absolute. " The Bhagavadgita, p. 31.

Other Interpolative Theories

(Holtzmann. Let us go on now to the four other interpolative theories. These are not so important as that of Garbe, and yet there are some points in them which are worth noticing, especially in the case of Otto whom we shall treat last in this section. As Garbe stands for theism, Holtzmann stands for a pantheistic interpretation of Bhagavadgita. If Garbe said that theism was the original portion and pantheism the added one, Holtzmann says that pantheism was the original portion and theism was added later. Winternitz tries to reconcile these two extremes. He stands between Garbe and Holtzmann. He tells us that " after repeated readings of the Gita and the most thorough investigation of the passages cut out by Garbe, he has come to the conclusion that even the original poem did not teach pure theism but theism tinged with pantheism. " The points on which Holtzmann relies about the pantheistic interpretation of the Bhagavadgita are the conception of the world-soul and the illusory nature of the fear of death. Which these two are combined together, we have pantheistic poem like the Bhagavadgita. Very peculiarly; however, Drona is made by Holtzmann the speaker of the older portion, while Krsna's character as speaker has been retained in the later one. We cannot call such an utterance by any other name except that of a rambling statement. What Drona had got to do with the pantheistic basis of the original Bhagavadgita is hard to imagine. Krsna, of course had got something to do with the theistic portion; but his name is mentioned by commentators more in connection with pantheism than even with theism. Finally, Holtzmann tells us that "the theological idea underlying the Bhagavadgita is at war with itself- On the one hand, we have the pantheistic world-soul which is impersonal, and on the other, a personalistic and realistic Krsna-Visnu, and we are asked to believe

that the two are one." In trying to reconcile, therefore, the pantheistic conception of the world soul with the theistic conception of a personal God, we find the present Bhagavadgita to be a peculiar mixture of both these doctrines.

(b) Oldenberg. When we come to Oldenberg, we find him to be more level-minded than Holtzmann. He is a great Sanskrit scholar. His idea is that out of the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavadgita, the first twelve only constitute the original text, while the last six may be regarded as addenda. Such suggestions have been made by other writers also, especially in view of the fact that a particular chapter of the Bhagavadgita like the XVI finds a place in these last six chapters, as well as a chapter like the XVII. The XV, of course, is all right and a major portion of the XVIII. But the fact that the group of the last six chapters contains some Adhyayas, which do not stand on a level with the other parts of the Bhagavadgita, might well tempt a scholar like Oldenberg to suppose that only the first twelve chapters constitute the original Bhagavadgita. Also a suggestion has been made by other scholars that if the Mahabharata is to be supposed to contain interpolations, as it grew from its early beginnings to its later fully developed form, from Jaya to Bharata and from Bharata to Mahabharata, why should not a suggestion like this also have tempted Oldenberg to consider that the original Bhagavadgita consisted only of twelve Adhyayas while the later Adhyayas were added in course of time ?

(c) Schrader. The theory of Schrader might be regarded as a theory of interpolationism more than that of interpolationism : the former, because according to the Kasmirian text there are verses in the Bhagavadgita which figure is greater than the orthodox number of 7(10 ; the latter, because the Kasmirian it introduces 282 new readings of the orthodox text. for these reasons the Kasmirian recension may be regarded as a peculiar combination of interpolationism and interplanatism. The grounds for constituting a distinct Kasmirian recension on account of these readings, says Dr. Belvalkar, are not of any more compelling character than those for constituting a Bengali or a Malayalam recension. Out of the 282 new readings in the Kasmirian text, Dr. Schrader claims greater intrinsic importance for thirty-seven. Dr. Belvalkar has examined carefully all these thirty-seven cases and has come to the conclusion that most of them are not of any particular significance, except a dozen minor variants. Out of these we select only three for our purpose. (i ; In the Bhagavadgita II. 5. the classical reading is, while Schrader reads :, for grammatical purposes we have to append to instead of) In the Bhagavadgita II.11; the classical reading is which has been the cause of much controversy. In the first place, Schrader who seems to be too much influenced by socio-democratic doctrine reads and translates : as the people speaketh " which has no significance for the content in the Bhagavadgita. Madhusudan Sarasvati interprets it as (probably combining and "words not fit to be uttered by intelligent men. " Anandatirtha interprets as " words of thy own understanding and not sanctioned by Sastras, " which seems to be a good interpretation. Finally, Schrader tells us that the Kasmirian reading is which has some significance, but is not so good as the orthodox reading itself, Lastly, in regard to Bhagavadgita, VI. 7, the Classical reading is We are told by Schrader that the Kasmirian recension is " We must have in mind the treatment of others like our own selves." This is not a bad reading, but there is no reason why the original reading should be dispensed with. On the whole, therefore, the value of the efforts

undertaken by Dr. Schrader for the establishment of the Kasmirian recension of the Bhagavadgita hardly 'bears any comparison with that of the efforts undertaken by either Garbe or Otto for the establishment of their own theories of interpolation.

(d) Otto. In the discussion of the theories of interpolation Otto stands on a much higher level than the previous scholars. He was a pupil of Dr. Garbe, but there were certain points of difference between their theories of interpolation ; (1) While Garbe advocated a dualistic hypothesis, Otto advocated a pluralistic one ; and (2) while Garbe remained content with theism, Otto came very near to mysticism. According to Otto, the original Bhagavadgita consisted only of 133 stanzas, all the other stanzas being later interpolated either individually or in groups. " The original Bhavagadgita, according to Otto ", says Radhakrishnan, "was a splendid epic fragment and did not include any doctrinal literature. " Eight tracts consisting of 450 stanzas, says Otto, were later on interpolater ; and 117 were either glosses or marginaia. These together with the original 133 stanzas make up the total figure of 700 verse. We shall see towards the close of the present part of our work that Otto's doctrine is concerned more with a philosophico- theological interpretation of the Bhagavadgita than with a mere theory of interpolation. The four fundamental points that he raises in the teaching of the Bhagavadgita are the immortality of the soul, the Visvarupa Darsana, the doctrine of predestination and the theory of divine instrumentalism. All these must be covered in the original 133 stanzas of the Bhagavadgita. The eight different tracts, which were interpolated later, were introduced by different writers and at different times. Otto does not fight shy of saying that the Prapatti-Bhakti tract has thus been introduced, a Sesvara Yoga has been introduced, a Vibhuti Yoga has been introduced and so on ; .so that he does not confine himself, as Garbe did, to the division of the Bhagavadgita into mere theistic and pantheistic portions. There are, he tells us, eight such tracts. We shall make a slight re-arrangement of these tracts and mention them as follows :

(1) Prapatti-Bhakti Tract (XI-XII), in the manner of the Narada Sutras.

(2) Moral Theism (XVI-XVIII).

(3) Sesvara Samkhya (XIII).

(4) A Combination of Samkhya and Yoga (V).

(5) SeSvara Yoga-Psycho-technical Yoga (VI).

(6) SeSvara Yoga-Character Yoga (II). God in the Bhagavadgita, not as in Patanjali.

(7) Advaita Bhakti (VII). There is neither mere Advaita nor me Bhakti, but a combination of the two.

(8) Vibhuti Yoga (X . God is here the optimum in the omnibus song of praise and is present in all excellence.

These are very fine names. . Otto was a master of philosophy and a master of language ; hence he could use so beautiful expressions. A full discussion on the tracts is beyond the scope of a philosophical work like the present. It is really a tempting work for any linguist who might undertake it; for finding out the original text of the Bhagavadgita. We ourselves think that Otto has gone beyond his own limitations. While he should have contented himself with interpreting the fundamental ideas of the Bhagavadgita philosophically and theologically, he has entered too much into a linguistic discussion of these tracts and their justification in which, we think that he has not succeeded. A philosopher should deal with philosophic problems and not with merely linguistic or textual questions. These to him ought to be

secondary, and should remain secondary. We are glad, however, to find that a full discussion of these eight tracts which Otto has made does not come in the way of his numenistic interpretation of the Bhagavadgita, as we shall see later on. That is a fine interpretation and he has earned a great place among the interpreters of the Bhagavadgita by his doctrine of holyism and numenism.