



Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

NOW LET US LOOK AT the opinion of the third group. It is admitted that the function of words is accomplished when their meaning is understood. Even so, after studying the Vedas and its auxiliaries³⁶ and after cogitating upon the meaning of the Vedas thus studied, it is incontrovertible that the Vedas prescribe actions. Also, the Upanishadic texts contained in the Vedas speak about the Atman without any special difference from the manner in which the Vedas speak about actions. That is, both texts prescribing actions and texts speaking of the Atman are found in the Vedas, and we understand that we are entitled to perform actions; it is thus established that there is conjunction of knowledge and work or *jñāna-karma samuccaya*. Further, the *Isha Upanishad*

prescribes lifelong performance of actions through statements such as, 'By performing actions, indeed, should one wish to live here for a hundred years.'³⁷ It denounces ignorance and presents knowledge through statements such as, 'Those worlds of devils are covered by blinding darkness' (3). The Upanishad says that actions or knowledge cannot individually be the means of liberation: 'Those who worship *avidyā*, rites, enter into blinding darkness; but into greater darkness than that enter they who are engaged in *vidyā*, meditation' (9). It further states that the conjunction of actions and knowledge is a means of attaining immortality: 'He who knows these two, *vidyā* and *avidyā*, together, attains immortality through *vidyā*, by crossing over death through *avidyā*' (11). This is also supported by

Smṛiti texts such as, 'Just as birds fly in the sky with both the wings, through both actions and knowledge the immortality is attained.'³⁸ This is the opinion of the third group.

These three schools of thought are now refuted. Actions cannot be the means of liberation; knowledge is the means. However, actions can purify the *citta*, mind-stuff, and make one fit to attain knowledge; so actions can be accepted as an auxiliary to the attainment of knowledge.

The relation of a word to its meaning is called *śakti*, the denotative function. The denotative function of a word is not always related to action. When someone is told 'a son is born to you', he becomes happy; when he hears 'you have lost your wealth', he becomes sad. Such happiness and sorrow can be inferred by the signs of the face becoming cheerful or morose. Even a child can understand that these words cause the change of mood. However, the true import of these words can be understood only by knowing their meaning and the relation of the words, *sambandha*, with something. According to the changes in circumstances, one has to insert, *āvāpa*, or remove, *udvāpa*, some words and arrive at the intended meaning. In this case the denotative function is not related to action but to the knowledge of the birth of a son or the loss of wealth leading to change in moods. Though in the beginning one considers the denotative function of the word 'jar' to be connected to some actions, later, for the sake of simplicity, *lāghavam*, the denotative function of the word 'jar' is limited to being connected to a jar alone and not to any action. Because of its being cumbersome and also lacking support in evidence, the denotative function cannot be considered to be related to actions alone.

A detailed discussion on *śakti*, the denotative function of a word, and how it is apprehended is found elsewhere:

The manner in which verbal comprehension takes place is being shown. ... It is not that words actually being known are the instrument of it; for we have verbal comprehension even in the absence of words (uttered), as in the case of a man under the vow of silence mentally reciting a verse, and so on. ... The recollection of the meaning of words produced by those words is the operation. Otherwise a man who has a knowledge of words would have verbal comprehension even when he has a knowledge of the thing denoted by the words, through perception etc. Even there the recollection should be understood as being produced by words through their significatory function (*vytti*). Otherwise, when words like 'jar' have given rise to a recollection of ether through the relation of inherence, ether too would become an object of verbal comprehension. Significatory function is the relation consisting in either denotative function (*śakti*) or implication (*lakṣanā*). It is in this that the knowledge of denotative function has utility. Because, unless denotative function is first known, there would be no recollection through the association of words even if there be a knowledge of them. For the knowledge of words reminds us of their meaning by virtue of being the knowledge of either of two related things. ... Denotative function is the relation of a word to its meaning. It is of the form of a divine will that such and such a word should denote such and such a thing. Recent names also do possess denotative function; for (behind them) there is the divine will; 'On the eleventh day a father should name his child.' One school holds that recent names possess no denotative function. The new school, however, maintains that it is not the divine will that constitutes denotative function, but any will. Hence even recent names certainly possess denotative function. The knowledge of it, however, is derived from a grammar etc. Witness the following: 'The elders say that denotative function is apprehended from grammar, comparison, dictionary,

statement of trustworthy persons, usage, supplementary statement, paraphrase, and the contiguity of a well-known word.³⁹

Further, by statements like ‘a brahmana should not be killed’, the killing of a brahmana out of anger is prohibited and no action is prescribed. In statements of daily parlance like ‘this is blue and not red’, the meaning arising out of previous experience of understanding of these words cannot be easily concealed. Statements like, ‘*Codanālakṣaṇo’rtho dharmah*; dharma is that which is indicated by (known by means of) the Veda as conducive to the highest good’,⁴⁰ state that dharma gives injunctions for the performance of actions. Even the sutra, ‘*Tadbhūtānām kriyārthena sāmāmnāyo’rthasya tannimittatvāt*; (in the sentence) there is only a predication (or mention) of words with definite denotations along with a word denoting an action, as the meaning (of the sentence) is based upon that (the meaning of the words)’ (I.1.25), is thus commented upon: ‘The words which are contiguous to passages of injunction and convey that which is to be accomplished are to be construed as being one with the passages of injunction, because from the syntactical connection, *samabhiṅyāhara*⁴¹, of that which is to be established, *siddha*, and that which has been established, it is only proper that the deduction of the meaning of the words denoting that which has been established should be construed as that which is to be established.’ The idea is that whenever in the Vedas we encounter some passages that do not directly instruct us to perform a sacrifice, but such passages are contiguous to passages that instruct the performance of sacrifices, we have to take the former type of passages to be complementary to injunctive passages. Why should these passages be so construed? Suppose we have to accomplish something and a person tells us that once our goal is

accomplished we will be in such and such a state. What meaning do we make of this person’s talk? We can only infer that this person is coaxing us to accomplish our goal. Let us take the example of the Bhagavadgita. In the second chapter, in verses 55 to 72, Sri Krishna describes the characteristics of a *stithaprajña*, a person of steady wisdom. Tradition has it that though they are the qualities of a knower of Brahman, they are the disciplines to be practised by an aspirant of the knowledge of Brahman. In the present context too we have to understand the meaning in this manner. Thus, it is established that not the entire part of the Vedas is injunctive in nature. This is the meaning obtained from the sutra placing this objection: ‘*Āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād-ānarthakyamata-darthānām tasmād-anityamucyate*; (objection) the purpose of the Veda lying in the enjoining of actions, those parts of the Veda that do not serve that purpose are useless; in these therefore the Veda is declared to be non-eternal (unreliable).’⁴² This is the true opinion of Jaimini, which has not been properly understood by these schools of thought.

(To be continued)

References

36. The six auxiliary disciplines of Vedas called *vedāṅgas*: *śikṣā*, phonetics; *kalpa*, rituals; *vyākaraṇa*, grammar; *nirukta*, etymology; *chanda*, metre; and *jyotiṣa*, astronomy. The study of these disciplines is considered essential to understand the Vedas.
37. *Isha Upanishad*, 2.
38. *Yogavashishtha Ramayana*, 1.7.
39. *Vishvanatha Nyaya Panchanana, Bhasha Parichcheda* with Siddhanta Muktavali, verse 81. The translation is from *Bhāṣā Pariccheda*, trans. Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2004), 148. Also see *Annambhatta, Tarkasamgraha* with Dipika, 8.1.
40. *Mimamsa Sutra*, 1.1.2.
41. *Laugakshi Bhaskara, Arthasamgraha*, 22.
42. *Mimamsa Sutra*, 1.2.1.