

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

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(Continued from the July issue)

The Process of Action

OBJECTION: What is the process of action? When a person hears the sentence 'bring the pot', the thought 'I have been appointed to bring that pot, this is my action' arises in the person's mind and an intention to action also arises. Since there is no person in the Vedas, it is *apūrva*, an invisible power that conceives the action.

Reply: No, it is not so. Generally actions are performed because of a desire or intention to perform an action. This intention arises due to two kinds of knowledge; these are: *iṣṭasādhanatā-jñānam*, the knowledge of the object attaining which the desired result can be obtained; and *kṛtisādhyata-jñānam*, the knowledge that that object can be obtained by human effort. It is established that even the desire to follow Vedic injunctions arises only by having these two types of knowledge. Therefore, it is useless to attribute

different meanings to the process of action. Even if such a different meaning is attributed to this process, we see that a person having a strong spirit of renunciation does not perform any Vedic rituals.

There is also the case of Vedic sacrifices like Vishvajit. In the Vedas we find this injunction: '*Viśvajitā yajeta*; the Vishvajit sacrifice should be performed.' However, the result of performing such action is not mentioned here. Without the mention of a result, there is no motive to perform a sacrifice. We find Jaimini saying: '*Ekam vā codanaikatvāt*; in reality only one result follows from it; as the injunction is one only.'⁴³ The meaning of a Vedic injunction does not become complete if it does not include the result of the injunction. Hence here, in the case of the Vishvajit sacrifice, we need to introduce the word *svargakāma*, desirous of attaining heaven. However, we can attribute only one result to a Vedic

injunction, as that itself will make it complete. Attributing more than one result to a Vedic injunction will make it cumbersome. This is also supported by the Jaimini sutra: ‘*Sa svargah syāt sarvān pratyaviśiṣṭatvāt*; that one result would be heaven as that is equally desirable for all’ (4.3.15).

Therefore, it is established that in sacrifices like Vishvajit, where the result is not expressly mentioned, their performance leads to heaven. Here too we see that there is a person who attributes this meaning. Also, when one becomes aware of one’s true nature or realizes Brahman, all desire to perform actions dissipates, and one becomes incapable of performing actions. Similarly, if a person is prevented from performing actions by a strong force, no action can be done. In all these cases *iṣṭasādhanatā-jñānam* and *kṛtisādhyata-jñānam* go away; this position is agreed by all. It is maintained by the Mimamsakas that since a sacrifice that is finished or gets destroyed produces results in the form of attainment of heaven much later, we should necessarily introduce a factor called *apūrva*, an invisible power, just like a door, and this is brought about by Vedic injunctions in the optative mood *liñ*. By the line of argument given above to prove that actions are done only by persons, this introduction of *apūrva* can also be set aside.

Even if we were to introduce *apūrva*, it does not necessarily prove the existence of the desire to perform actions. The obeying or violating of the commands of the master leads to the happiness or anger of the master in the realm of maya. Similar is the case with the service of kings and the like. The happiness or anger of the king or the master leads to reward or punishment for the servant. Here also the results of actions of the servant do not occur immediately after the action but later. However, there is no necessity to introduce *apūrva*. Similarly, there is no need to introduce *apūrva* in the case of Vedic injunctions.

Bhāvanā: Creative Energy

Mimamsakas have the concept of *bhāvanā*, creative energy. *Bhāvanā* means a particular activity of a *bhāvayitā*, productive agent, which is conducive or favourable to the coming into being or production of that which is to come into being, that is, an effect. *Bhāvanā* is of two types: *śābdi bhāvanā*, verbal creative energy, and *ārthī bhāvanā*, actual creative energy.

Let us take the help of an example. Yajnadatta orders his son Devadatta to bring a cow. On hearing this order, an inclination to do an action that would result in bringing the cow, arises in Devadatta’s mind. He then makes an effort to bring the cow. This incident can be looked at from two different perspectives, from that of Yajnadatta and that of Devadatta. Yajnadatta wants his son to have an inclination to bring the cow. This mental activity of wanting an inclination to arise is the *bhāvanā* here and is called the *śābdi bhāvanā*. On the other hand, Devadatta listens to his father’s order and wants the action of bringing the cow to be fulfilled. This desire of the cow being brought is the *bhāvanā* here and is called the *ārthī bhāvanā*.

In the case of a Vedic injunction the *śābdi bhāvanā* is the intention of the Vedic sentence giving the injunction. But there is no person who has this intention, as the Vedas are *apauruṣeya*, not originated from a person, and hence the Mimamsakas hold that the intention of the Vedic injunction resides in the optative mood itself. Using the logic adopted while setting aside the concept of *apūrva*, we can set aside the concept of *śābdi bhāvanā* residing in the Vedic sentence.

Thus, we find that *iṣṭasādhanatā-jñānam* and *kṛtisādhyata-jñānam* quash each other. Also, the optative mood *liñ* does not support these two kinds of knowledge, and we perceive a mutual contradiction here. The optative mood conforms to experience and to the connection between the

root word and its meaning. Similarly, actions like sacrifices are accomplished through human effort, and no sentence can mean action in itself. The lamentation of Mimamsakas calling Vedanta a desert amidst the Vedas is nothing but the display of unhappiness upon defeat.

By this line of argument, the group who—by adding the words ‘to be worshipped thus’ to the *mahāvākyas*, great Vedic sentences—believe that worship leads to liberation, are defeated. Further, there are methods of meditation in the Vedas like the *pañcāgni vidyā*, of the *Chhandogya Upanishad*,⁴⁴ through which a person bound by the cycle of transmigration visualizes release from this cycle. Since this kind of meditation is possible and is sanctioned by the Vedas, it is not necessary to posit worship of Brahman, which is nothing but *sat*, absolute existence. Such an interpretation will lead to the error of *vākyabheda doṣa*. This error occurs when it is possible to interpret a sentence as having a single idea or proposition and yet two ideas or propositions are attributed to it. To avoid this error Vedanta refrains from holding that Brahman can be worshipped. In reality, the worshipping of Brahman by a jiva who is bound by the cycle of transmigration and assumes an attitude of the liberated does not do any good. It is just like the mixing of copper and mercury leading to a combination appearing like gold. However, a cup made of such combination cannot be used for the purpose of drinking, as mercury is poison. In the *Kena Upanishad* it is said: ‘Know that alone to be Brahman, and not what people worship as an object.’⁴⁵ By this Vedic statement the possibility of the worshipped object being Brahman has been forcefully refuted, and the error arising out of the erroneous introduction of words to Vedic sentences has been struck at its source.

Prasankhyāna: Continuous Meditation

Some hold that the *mahāvākyas* produce only

relational and mediate knowledge but cannot apprehend Brahman. It is just like the knowledge obtained from an ordinary sentence. *Prasankhyāna*, continuous meditation, on these sentences gives rise to another kind of knowledge, which is non-relational and immediate, and this knowledge destroys *avidyā*, ignorance. Some hold this continuous meditation or contemplation to be an injunction in itself, called *prasankhyāna vidhi*. This cannot be, since the knowledge of Brahman is not conditioned by the *puruṣa-tantra*, will of an agent, but by the *vastu-tantra*, reality of the object. The knowledge of Brahman is conditioned by another knowledge *viśaya-pramāna-tantra*, which destroys ignorance, and Brahman is self-revealed. Therefore, there is no necessity of an injunction. Injunctions are applicable in matters where there is the volition of a person who *shakyah*, can; *kartum*, do; *akartum*, not do; or *anyatha kartum*, do differently. However, the knowledge of Brahman is self-revealing and is *viśaya-pramāna*, and if it arises, it cannot be restrained by even a thousand injunctions. Similarly, if this knowledge does not arise, it cannot be created by a thousand injunctions. Needless to say, injunctions that speak of attaining the impossible, like the crossing of an ocean by swimming, are like a sharp blade that becomes blunt on striking a stone, and are useless. Hence, even if one is firmly resolved or takes special efforts to practise the austerities of worshipping Brahman, its knowledge cannot be attained in that manner. Therefore, the worship of Prana and the like can be done in conjunction with the performance of actions, but it cannot go hand in hand with the knowledge of Brahman.

(To be continued)

References

43. *Mimamsa Sutra*, 4.3.14.
44. See *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 5.4.1 to 5.10.10.
45. *Kena Upanishad*, 1.5–9.