

ANANDABODHA'S DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

In ranking philosophical writers according to their substantial contributions to the Indian Philosophical literature in general and Advaita Vedānta in particular one should give a very high place to Ānandabodha. He occupies unique place in the history of Advaita in that he had the courage to advocate his original and independent views at a time when some critical issues of Advaita Vedānta were sharply criticised by the Naiyāyikas like Jayanta Bhaṭṭa and Udayanācārya and Mīmāṃsaka Śālikanātha. With a notable attempt to prove the logical validity of the important tenets of Advaita Vedānta Ānandabodha has made valuable contribution to the Indian Philosophy in general and Advaita Vedānta in particular. In the following pages his contribution has been discussed.

8.1 Ontology

Ānandabodha asserts that the supreme bliss which is identified with Brahman is not only an absence of misery but it is a positive state of joy or delight. He argues that the transcendental bliss of which the empirical pleasure is only a fragment should be conceived positively and not negatively; for only a positive category admits of specification and determination. The comparative degree, more and the less are possible only in the case of a positive category. Brahman or the Self is bliss, because

it is the seat of supreme love (parama premāspadatayā)¹. There is not only the authority of scripture to show that the self is of the nature of bliss, but there is also the evidence of practical experience in the life of almost every person, viz., in case of all the creatures the Ātman is dearest of all as it is stated by Brh. up. II.4.5.

Thus, Ānandabodha has explained the blissful nature of the supreme Reality.

Ānandabodha in a brilliant critique shows how the reality of the concept of difference (bheda) cannot be maintained with the help of any of the recognised means of valid knowledge.² He has successfully established the mithyātva (illusoriness) of the phenomenal world (jagat) which has no absolute reality. Employing appropriate logical syllogism in support of the mithyātva of the world he has made his position free from some logical fallacies³ like Viruddha, Satpratipakṣa, Asiddha, Savāybhicāra etc. Though the mithyātva of the world is one of the central tenets expounded by 'Śaṅkara and others still Ānandabodha's explicit discussion on this point is conspicuously marked by logical arguments and pertinent syllogisms which are generally not found in the earlier similar texts.

1. Vide Chapter, III. p. 106

2. Vide Chapter, III. p. 121

3. Ibid. p. 114

In the Nyāyamakaranda and pramāṇamālā Ānandabodha has explained the theories of avacchedavāda and the pratibimbavāda which according to him are not distinctly different from each other like water tight compartments. Though all the Advaitins admit that the Jīva is essentially non-different from Brahman, the post - 'Śaṅkara Advaitins hold different views with regard to the way in which the Jīva is to be regarded. The reflection - theory (pratibimba vāda) is favoured by prakāśātman, the author of the pañca-pādikā vivaraṇa⁴. According to this theory, the Jīva is a reflection of consciousness (caitanya) present in ego (ahaṁkāra) which is a mode of avidyā. Since there is no difference between the reflection and the prototype, the Jīva is essentially non-different from Brahman. On the contrary, Vācaspati Miśra advocates the limitation theory (avaccheda Vāda)⁵. According to this theory, the Jīva is consciousness limited by avidyā even as pot-ether (ghatākāśa) is the ether (mahākāśa) limited by pot. Though the same ether is both in and outside the pot the form of the pot imposes an apparent limitation with the result that we talk about the pot-ether (ghatākāśa). Similarly, though the Jīva (Individual self) is really non-different from Brahman, it appears to be different due to avidyā which limits its original nature. In the Nyāyamakaranda and pramāṇamālā Ānandabodha has furnished illustrations to prove the identity of the Brahman with the Jīvātman. Since Ānandabodha employs the illustrations for both the theories of pratibimba and avaccheda for expounding the central doctrine of the non-difference of Jīva

4. Vide, Chapter, I, p. 31

5. Vide, Chapter I, p. 24

and Brahman he shows his originality in not following blindly any particular sub-school.

Ānandabodha has also strongly refuted the views advocated by both heterodox and orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy. According to him, the Brahman is absolute bliss, one without a second and esoterically it is identified with the individual self.

8.2 Epistemology

Ānandabodha's contribution to the epistemology is as valuable as his contribution to the Advaitic ontology. He has thoroughly examined and refuted in his Nyāyamakaranda, pramāṇamālā and Nyāyadīpāvalī the important theories of erroneous cognition,⁷ viz., (a) the ātma-khyāti of the Yogācāra school of Buddhism, (b) the asatkhyāti of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism, (c) the akhyāti of the prābhākaras, and (d) the anyathākhyāti of the Bhāttas.

The doctrine of avidyā or māyā plays an important part in the metaphysics of advaita vedānta. According to Ānandabodha, Avidyā alias Māyā is the material cause of the empirical illusion and is the root cause of the diversity of the selves. Avidyā, according to Ānandabodha, is beginningless (anādi) and indescribable anirvācya, i.e. distinct from both sat and asat. The term avidyā cannot mean either absence of knowledge (vidyābhāva) or false knowledge (mithyā-jñāna). Since such a thing cannot be supposed to

7. Vide Chapter IV, p.188

be a material cause of anything. The nature of avidyā is determined from the nature of its effects, the illusion. It is regarded as beginningless since there will be an infinite regress if some other cause of this avidyā is accepted, for, the cause of that case also will have to be admitted. Without accepting avidyā there would not be any possibility of the appearance of absolutely non-existent objects like horn of human being and there would not be sublation of the real objects.

Ānandabodha does not make any distinction between two terms avidyā and māyā which according to him are synonymous.

There are different views regarding the locus of avidyā among his predecessors.

According to Sureśvara and his follower Prakāśātman, the Brahman is the locus of avidyā. On the contrary, according to Vācaspati, Jīva is the locus of avidyā. This is an important point of difference between the Bhāmatī school and the Vivarana school. It should be pointed out here that the source of Sureśvara's view is found in 'Sankara's Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad bhāṣya. In the same way Vācaspati's view is to be traced to Maṇḍana's Brahmasiddhi. Ānandabodha in his Nyāyamakaranda puts forth the views of Maṇḍana and his followers like Vācaspati; refutes this by forceful arguments and finally supports the view of Sureśvara and Prakāśātman. He establishes that the Brahman is the locus (āśraya) of avidyā. Thus his contribution lies in the offering

valid logical arguments against the Jīvasrita avidyāvāda and making a thorough discussion of the said issue which is not found in the prominent works of his predecessors.

Ānandabodha in his Nyāyamakaranda takes up the doctrine of sattādvaita or bhāvādvaita⁸ expounded by Maṇḍana. In Advaita literature, there is a well-established tradition which recognises two ways of viewing the Advaita doctrine; one of them is generally known as bhāvādvaita or sattādvaita^{††} (ens-monism). According to this view, there is only one absolute reality of a positive kind, viz., Brahman; all the non-dualistic Upaniṣadic texts like "Advitīyam, Asthūlam ananvaharsvam and Neti Neti teach the negation of the world (prapañcābhāva). The realisation of Brahman as the only absolute reality brings about the removal of nescience, which being negative in nature does not conflict with the absolute monism of Advaita. It excludes only a second positive reality (bhāva). The Advaita philosophy taught by the vedāntic texts reduces itself in this manner to the accomodating type of advaita known as bhāvādvaita or sattādvaita^{††}. Ānandabodha has adopted this doctrine from Maṇḍana in a slightly different way. As Ānandabodha has admitted both positive and negative reality, i.e. positive reality (bhāvarūpa sattā) of the Brahman and negative reality (abhāvarūpa sattā) of the avidyānivṛtti, he has accommodated the doctrine of bhāvādvaita and presented it in a little different way.

8. Sastri, S.K. Brahmasiddhi of Maṇḍanamisra with Sankhapāṇi's Commentary, intro. p. x/- x/v.

In the Nyāyamakaranda Ānandabodha maintains by an elaborate process of reasoning of superiority of the scriptural texts (śruti pramāṇa) over other means of knowledge like perception.⁹ He exposes fully the hallowness of the prābhākara concept of niyoga or kārya & shows that this concept would turn out to be a meaningless shibboleth. Iṣṭasādhanatā (contributoriness) to a desired end) and explains fully by saying that it is a vain attempt to bring Brahman-realisation directly within the scope of any kind of injunction (vidhi) as it is skillfully pointed out by Śāṅkara in his bhāṣya.¹⁰

Further, Ānandabodha is renowned in the history of Advaita philosophy as an expounder of specification or definition of mithyātva or falsity of the world. This definition has been maintained by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in his outstanding work Advaitasiddhi. But Gauḍa Brahmānanda in his commentary on Advaitasiddhi entitled Laghucandrikā has very clearly referred to Ānandabodha i.e. ādyam syāt pañcapādyuktam tato vivayanodite/citsukhīyam caturtham syāt antyam ānandabodhajam.¹¹

Ānandabodha like Śāṅkara maintains that the knowledge which one aspirant gets from the Upaniṣadic texts is direct (aparokṣa) and immediate. This is a very significant contribution to the Advaitic thought. In expounding the above said view he

9. Vide, chapter, IV. p. 131

10. BSSB. I. I. 4.

11. Gauḍa Brahmānanda, Laghucandrikā on the Advaitasiddhi, p. 206.

evidently differs from Māṇḍana who maintains in his Brahmasiddhi that the knowledge which we get from the Upaniṣadic texts is indirect and mediate (parokṣa) and necessarily involves relation in some manner like any other cognition arising from a valid verbal testimony (śabda pramāṇa). Meditation upon the content of the verbal cognition is necessary in order to transform the indirect and mediate knowledge into direct and immediate experience. So, according to Māṇḍana, the direct intuition of Brahman springs from prasaṅkhyāna or repeated contemplation on the true import of the Upaniṣadic texts (mahāvākyas).

8.3 Soteriology

Ānandabodha has a noteworthy contribution to the Advaita soteriology also. Following Śaṅkara he has explained the Advaitic concept of bandha and mokṣa and means thereof in very clear terms. According to him, the paramapurusaṛtha (supreme beatitude) is the removal of avidyā and the manifestation of the supreme of bliss identified with Brahman¹². Since avidyā is the root cause of all suffering which an individual experiences because of his misunderstanding of original nature i.e. Brahman, avidyā is bondage and its absolute removal is mokṣa. The removal of avidyā takes place, when there is the realisation of the Self as the Absolute Reality.

12. Vide, chapter, V.p. 236

According to Ānandabodha, jñāna (realisation or intuitive experience) is the only means to mokṣa, the highest beatitude. Like Śaṅkara, he advocates that since the removal of avidyā is mokṣa, the jñāna has only the capability of eradicating completely the binding and blinding tree of avidyā. The ritualistic action (Karma) has only secondary importance in that it removes the sins, purifies the mind of a mumukṣu and thus helps him in attaining the true knowledge of the self.¹³ In this matter Ānandabodha does not agree with Maṇḍana who contends that Karma and jñāna are related as means (upāya) and end (upeya). He does not accept the contention that Karma and jñāna being diametrically opposed to each other could not be brought into relation of means and the objective. Maṇḍana further holds that the verbal cognition which arises from the Upaniṣads should be supplemented by certain aids. (sādhana) like contemplation (dhyāna) in order to attain Brahman-ituition (Braha sākṣātkāṇ). As a result of the repeated contemplation (dhyānābhyāsa) the impressions of the knowledge of the non-dual self obtained from the Upaniṣads grow and develop in such a way that they are able to remove the impressions of the beginningless illusion and thereby bring about the final manifestation of the real nature of the self. Since karmas are prescribed by scripture, they are also useful in attaining mokṣa. Ānandabodha does not subscribe to this view as according to him, karma has no utility for the attainment of mokṣa. He also does not favour the combination of jñāna and karma (jñāna karma sammuccayavāda).

13. Vide, chapter, V.p. 239

Vācaspati Miśra follows Maṇḍana's view and holds that verbal testimony can generate only mediate knowledge¹⁴ having a relational content. It is prasamkhyāna or continued meditation which brings about the intuitive experience of Brahman. But this view has been rejected by Ānandabodha. He successfully shows that verbal testimony is capable of generating immediate knowledge. He is bold to reject the views of the great Advaitins like Maṇḍana and Vācaspati. Ānandabodha has also made a significant contribution in clearly explaining the concept of avidyānivṛtti (cessation of nescience). He has duly refuted the view of Maṇḍana who identifies avidyānivṛtti with the Ātman itself in his Brahmasiddhi. According to Ānandabodha avidyānivṛtti is of fifth kind of reality (sattā), i.e. pañcamaprakāra since it cannot be either sat or asat or sadasadubhaya or anirvacanīya like avidyā. Avidyānivṛtti can not be regarded as 'real', for then the doctrine of monism fails, since both the avidyā nivṛtti and Brahman would be real and that would be duality; it cannot be regarded as unreal in the sense of absolute nought or non-existent, for then how could it be removed by right knowledge; it cannot be both existent and non-existent in the same sense, for that would be self contradictory; it cannot also be considered to be indefinable in its nature for it may well be contended that there is no reason why it should not then exist even after emancipation or why it could after all be removable by true knowledge (tad - upādāna jñānānuvṛtty - upapatteḥ jñāna nivarttyatvā pātesca). It is therefore to be regarded as being of a unique nature different from all these four possible kinds, viz.

14. Vide, Chapter I. p. 24

sat, asat, sadesatubhaya, and sadasadanubhaya, a fifth and distinct kind of entity. Because of this reason, the well-known scholar Appayya Dikṣita in his Siddhāntaleśasamgraha respectfully refers to Ānandabodha, pañcamaprakāravidyā nivṛttiriti Ānandabodhācāryāḥ¹⁵.

Methodology

Another significant contribution of Ānandabodha is his special approach to the several problems. In the early eleventh century there was a great dominance of Naiyāyikas.~~like~~. Therefore Ānandabodha thought it necessary to defend Advaitic philosophy by adopting the Nyāya methodology to some extent in his works. Apart from forceful logical and dialectical arguments he has also employed a number of significant syllogisms to explain his points. Ānandabodha paved the way for the writing of the great dialectical works like Citsukhī of Citsukha and Ādvaitasiddhi of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. The uniqueness of Ānandabodha's texts lies in amalgamating the advaitic as well as Naiyāyika methodology to explain the principal tenets of Absolute monism.

The greatness of Ānandabodha is amply attested by the number of thinkers, like Appayya Dikṣita, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Candupandita, Vyāsa Tīrth and others who have taken note of his prominent doctrines. His contribution to Advaita is of lasting importance and his prominent views still held sway over the minds of scholars even after a lapse of several centuries. Ānandabodha is one of the best known figures in the literature of Advaita

15. Dikṣita Appayya, Siddhāntaleśasamgraha, p.539.

vedānta and one of the few teachers of great renown who have left the characteristic hallmark on their successors. A respected authority and a reputed preacher of Advaita, a doughty champion of the upanīṣadic tradition and a master mind skilled in dialectical reasoning Ānandabodha occupies unique place in the galaxy of Advaitic philosophers.