

REVIEWS

Kulkarni, T. R. : *Upanishads and Yoga : an empirical approach to the understanding* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay-400007, 1972) pp XII+160.

'Upanisads' and 'Yoga' have a charm of their own for a student of Indian thought. The upaniṣads, are treasure-houses of philosophical wisdom. Similarly the 'Yoga' system has aroused a good deal of contemporary interests. It is but natural, therefore for one to have curiosity about Dr. Kulkarni's book in which both 'Upanishads' and 'Yoga' are approached empirically for their understanding.

The book consists of seven chapters. The over-all objective of the book is to contest the common belief that "Indian thought is anti-rationalistic and even a-social". According to the author this wrong view is due to a basic *methodological error* of never studying the texts "in their own right, that is to say, in terms of the contexts provided by themselves" (Preface). The objective of the book therefore is two-fold-(i) to put the ancient material in some organized form with a view to uncovering the basic frame of reference which could be expected to generate sets of propositions for experimental verification, and (ii) to prepare a case for a more systematized and organized research on the above lines.

Taking only the internal evidence of the Upanisads into consideration the author reaches certain conclusions. The negative conclusion is that the Upanisads *do not* hold that the phenomenal world is unreal or illusory as the prevailing tradition understands. On the positive side the author claims that the upanisads hold that there are two kinds of reality, an inferior one comprising of the phenomenal world, and a higher one defined simply as 'Ātman or Brahman'. This dual nature of reality is basic to four special dichotomies concerning (1) path of life, (2) knowledge, (3) action, and (4) the nature of the self. There are two paths, Śreyas and preyas; two kinds of knowledge (vidyā)—the higher (parā) and the lower (aparā); two kinds of action—action with attachment and action with detachment; and two kinds of self—the bodily or empirical and the intelligent or inner. Of these pairs, the higher path of life, higher knowledge, and superior

action are inseparably linked up with the higher form of reality which is Ātman. Ātman however, is not a metaphysical abstraction but a full-fledged biological reality as it is defined in terms of the unqualified mass of consciousness localised within the body itself and activating all living processes. In conclusion, the author accepts Deutsch's view that it is neither cosmology nor metaphysics, but "pure phenomenology of consciousness that seems to be the primary sphere of the upaniṣadic universe of discourse". (p. 34).

According to the author, there is a distinct trend in contemporary psychological literature which shows complete agreement with the upaniṣadic view of the distinction between the two kinds of reality. The upaniṣadic proposition that the objects in the world, as we see them, are the creations of the self (Ātman) finds a close parallel in Polanyi's view that "The object as I see it is the meaning I give to the responses the object—evokes in my body".

Similarly, in the section on Yoga the author finds ample scope for empirical investigation and corroboration from contemporary findings in psychology. "Yoga as taught by Patanjali is neither a religion nor a philosophy but purely a psychological process which is basic in all perceptual phenomena" (p. 64). Yoga, consists in the suppression of mental states. There is no doubt that the author is 'anti-traditional' in his interpretation of the Yoga-Sutras. For example, from the description of the distinction between the *asamprajñāta* and *Samprajñāta Samādhi*, (similar to what he calls spiritual and non-spiritual yoga), he builds up a theory that wherever there is a consciousness, i.e. perceptual awareness of an object or object-quality or any subjective feeling, there is necessarily involved the *samprajñāta*, i.e., yoga conscious-of-objects. The two kinds of *Samādhi* are most probably not two kinds but two *applications* of Yoga. It is with such a fresh empirical approach that the author discusses other topics like seer-seen-distinction, *guṇas*, *kleśa*, *Samāpatti*, *Citta* and its *Vṛttis*, and so on. In this endeavour he also takes the support of Vyāsa the commentator. The central theme of the author is that Yoga propounds a theory of perception in particular, and of knowledge in general, wherein yoga or *Samādhi* is the key-concept. *Samādhi* consisting of the three chained processes of suppression, 'one-pointedness' and steadiness, is necessarily involved in every case of perception, and always remains the same in spite of the changing

modifications of the mind. Kaivalya or isolation means the attainment of an identical form with the perceiver and it is what the Upaniṣads speak of as the knowledge of the Ātman. Such an attainment is possible only through 'asamprajñāta' or what the author calls 'spiritual yoga'.

According to the author "what the upaniṣads seem to present as a 'phenomenology of consciousness' is seen distinctively given a psychological background and transferred into a psychology of perception at the hands of Patanjali". The key-concept here is *nirodha* i.e. suppression or inhibition.

In the last three chapters the author uses the contemporary theories in Psychology to bear upon the understanding of the Yoga, and also brings out the implications of Yoga for Psycho-Pathology and personal efficiency. He suggests (P. 103) that perhaps a more suitable framework for an understanding of the Patanjalian concepts would be what the Russians call 'orientation reflex or reaction' or what is known in the West as 'arousal response'. Yoga is well-known for its therapeutic uses. The author tries to bring out their theoretical basis, e.g. the yoga view that man's ills or sufferings are due to faulty perceptions or non-discriminations. This view, according to the author, comes close to the currently accepted view which explains health and disease in terms of efficiency or inefficiency of what is known as 'homeostasis'. Patanjali's view, in this respect, may be called '*Psychological homeostasis*' which consists in maintaining its steadiness by the mind by creating order in perceptual chaos through the formation of related conceptual structures. This is made possible by the operations of the subsidiary factors of *Samādhi*. As for personal efficiency (which seems to be the author's phrase standing for 'Siddhi'), through the proper use of *Samyama*, human, perceptual and the other, abilities can be developed beyond the range of what is conceived to be humanly possible.

The author can claim that he has broken new ground in the field of Upaniṣadic and Yogic studies. He has been able to show that the traditional approach to the understanding of these important texts is not the only approach, and that these texts can be fruitfully understood empirically. It is necessary to understand

these texts in the light of contemporary developments in the field of knowledge. From this point of view, Dr. Kulkarni has rendered a great service to the Upanisads and the Yoga Sūtras.

However, an attempt of this kind is bound to suffer from certain limitations. As the author himself accepts, 'the study has necessarily been selective—' (p. 153), and the selection, in such cases, is necessarily determined by the approach one takes. As a result, one tends either to ignore or to explain away those aspects of the teachings which are not favourable to the accepted approach. The thesis of the author that the Upaniṣads accept the reality of the phenomenal world is only partially true. According to the Upaniṣads, the world is not real in the same sense in which Ātman is real. The same is the case with his view that Yoga gives us purely a psychology of perception. The point is that the author's approach, however important it may be for the understanding of the Upaniṣads and Yoga, can be accepted only as one of the possible approaches.

I may mention two other difficulties. One is terminological. On page 9, the author uses 'anti-rational' as synonymous with 'transcending reason'. But 'against reason' and 'beyond reason' are different concepts. The other difficulty is about his view that 'a-sociality' of Indian doctrine is an *implication* of its 'anti-rationality'. This is questionable on factual as well as logical grounds.

However, the book is a valuable addition to the existing literature on the Upaniṣads and the Yoga. The extensive bibliography at the end will be of great use for the students and scholars.

Sharma, Dharendra : *The Negative Dialectics : A study of the Negative Dialecticism in Indian Philosophy*, 1974 : Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Jullunder (India) pp. XVIII + 155. Price Rs. 11.00.

The book by Dr. Sharma is an attempt in the direction of a partial fulfillment of the urgent need of reinterpretation and representation of some of the important doctrines propounded by philosophers in India. It has illuminatingly brought to the notice of the readers the different senses and ways in which the notions of *abhāva* and *anupalabdhi* have been employed by the philosophers of the schools of Nyāya, Buddhism and Mīmāṃsā. Further, it is extremely important that Dr. Sharma points out that it was not Kumārila who introduced Anupalabdhi as an independent Pramāṇa. It was Pārthasārathī Miśra who used Anupalabdhi as an independent Pramāṇa and the background for it was prepared by the faulty edition of the Śāstradīpikā. This important claim deserves serious consideration by scholars. Lastly, it is again very important, on the part of Dr. Sharma, to have pointed out that although the philosophers of the schools of Nyāya, Buddhism and Mīmāṃsā make use of both *abhāva* and/or *anupalabdhi*, the context (and therefore the significance) of the use varies. It is, therefore, both confusing and misleading, as some of the traditionalists have done, to maintain that they are facing the same problems. All these points are important not only for the historian of Indian Philosophy but also for a student of the history of the Indian Philosophical Ideas. It is again for this reason that many such works are badly needed so far as Indian Philosophy is concerned.

The book intends to undertake a 'study of the negative dialecticism of India' (p. XIII) and attempts 'to show the manner in which Indians have applied negation to their dialectics in many cardinal doctrines....' (p. XIII), the two main types selected for a detailed consideration being the negative dialectic of Non-Violence (*ahimsa*) and the negative dialectic of summum bonum (*mokṣa*) (pp. 127-136). The programme, the book sets before itself for a fullscale consideration is important indeed ! But except for the sporadic reverberations of such expressions as 'negative dialectic' (p. 44), 'dialectical basis of the renowned Indian doctrine of Ahimsā' (p. 59), 'apoha or dialectical theory of meaning' (p. 60) etc. there is hardly any consideration of 'dialectic' anywhere in the entire book. If Dr. Sharma presumes that what is meant by 'dialectic' is obviously clear to everybody, I am afraid, he is surely mistaken, since the term 'dialectic' is understood in at least half

a dozen different senses. Further, what is meant by either positive or negative dialectic? Since every 'dialectic' is called 'dialectic' by Dr. Sharma simply because it makes use of the notion of negation in one or the other form, how are we to understand the distinction between positive and negative dialectic? Is positive dialectic bereft of the notion of negation? If so, can it be 'dialectic' if not 'positive dialectic'?

Secondly, Dr. Sharma wants to explain *Ahimsā* and *Mokṣa* in terms of dialectic. It is next to impossible to understand what he means by it. Does he mean to say that *Mokṣa* as well as *Ahimsā* are dialectical? If so, was it not necessary for him to show how they are so? Is it because in each some notion of negation is involved? But then if that is so, would Dr. Sharma be prepared to extend the notion of 'dialectic' to every consideration where negation is involved?

This is not, however, the only, although major, shortcoming of the book. In the treatment of the subject Dr. Sharma also raises certain issues that are at least misleading. We shall focus our attention on four such points: (i) What is meant by *Padārtha*? Are they predicables (p. 5), realities (p. 12) or categories (p. 14)? Mixing of these considerations is, to say the least, confusing, (ii) How many kinds of meaning are there? How are we to distinguish between these on the one hand and logical meaning (p. 57) and dialectical meaning (p. 60) on the other? What is meant by saying, for example, that meaning is dialectical? How are we to understand the expression dialectical theory of meaning (p. 60)? (iii) We are told that reality is twofold—existence (*bhāva*) and non-existence (*abhāva*) (p. 12).—But we are also told that reality is divided into two categories—existence (*bhāva*) and non-existence (*abhāva*) (p. 116). We are further told that these are parts of reality (*ibid*). (iv) What is 'apoha' precisely? Sometimes it is differentiation or dichotomy (p. 53), sometimes theory of meaning (p. 57), sometimes dialectic (p. 110), sometimes dialectical theory of meaning (p. 60) while sometimes it means just discrimination (p. 79).

Although the book has some shortcomings like these yet from the point of view of its worth both for history of Indian Philosophy and history of Indian Philosophical Ideas such attempts are very much to be welcomed.

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