

## ADHYĀSA IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA : IS LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS POSSIBLE AT ALL ?

Adhyāsa is the most plausible problem in Advaita Vedānta, on which the massive mansion of Advaita Vedānta is edified. However, a numerous conflicting interpretations are made by different Scholars at present, from which it is very much difficult to find out the genuine one. But it is not unlikely that a deliberate scrutiny and comparison of them with the original texts can discern the genuine from the superfluous views. In this paper it is intended to examine the recent interpretation of Adhyāsa by Prof. G. Misra *Pro et contra*, in the light of the standard texts of the School of Advaita Vedānta.

Coming to our point of discussion, we can find that Prof. Misra has dealt with the problems, which can be summarised thus :

- (a) Whether Śaṅkara's account of the concept of adhyāsa is Logical or Psychological,
- (b) Whether Philosophy, as conceived by Śaṅkara, deals with the analysis of language or factual explanation,
- (c) Whether Pramāṇa is a critique of language or scriptural revelation.

Amongst these, the first and the second are so much connected that the discussion of one must give rise to the discussion of the other. The third one can't be discussed here, as it does not come under our context.

Prof. Misra says that traditional interpreters have misunderstood Śaṅkara's view. According to him Śaṅkara does not discuss illusion at the factual level but at a logical level or the level of language.<sup>1</sup> He alleges the traditional interpreters as explaining Psychologically. He also distinguishes Śaṅkara's position as Meta-linguistic from Metaphysical.<sup>2</sup> According to him adhyāsa is given rise to by the coupling of the logical subject with the predicate.<sup>3</sup>

Now it is to be considered how far the allegation, made by Prof. Misra is justified. The allegation of interpreting Psychologically is totally unjustified as no traditional commentator, has given such remark. No traditional commentator, belonging either to the School of Bhāmatī or Vivaraṇa upholds such a view that

error is Psychological merely. On the other hand, they all have differentiated Śankara's view from the doctrine of *ātma khyāti* of the *Vijñānavāda* Buddhism. So also no traditional commentary has given the meaning of this adhyāsa as metaphysical-in which sense things-in-themeselves of Kant, the Absolute of Hegel or Bradley or Spinoza are called Metaphysical as this adhyāsa, unlike those of the above theories is a matter of *Pratyakṣa*. In fact Prof. Misra's account of Vedānta as not a metaphysical system is adequately true, but with this we have to admit the fact that no traditional commentary has interpreted this metaphysically. However, the interpretation of Prof. Misra in this point may be true, but it is highly questionable to say that this does not at all deal with any factual error. Now we have to consider what is the difficulty given rise to by a purely linguistic or judgemental analysis without any reference to factual or perceptual errors.

It is an undeniable fact in all the systems of Indian epistemology that all our knowledge is expressed in the form of judgements, having a *Prakāra* and a *Viśeṣya*. Even in the simple cognition of 'ghaṭa' or pot, the cognitive knowledge is expressed in a judgemental form "the knowledge, having *ghaṭa* as a qualificand, qualified with the qualifier 'ghaṭava' *ghaṭaviśeṣyaka* ghaṭatvaprakāra-kajñānam).<sup>4</sup> This can be expressed in the form of modern logic in the subject predicate form 'this is a pot'. Vedānta Paribhāṣā also says that excepting the identity propositions all other propositions are made with the realtion of *Viśeṣya* and *Prakāra*.<sup>5</sup> Being relational is not to be erroneous in Vedānta, though the inverse is invariably true, but being contradicted is the criterion of being erroneous.

Now let us go deep into the matter, whether according to Vedānta errors are given rise to only by judgemental coupling of the subject and the predicate or some perceptual basis is the indispensable condition to account for them. Vedānta paribhāṣā says that the ordinary cognition, expressed in the form of the judgement 'this is pot' is such one, in which the existence implied by the 'this is the Brahman on which 'Potness' is imposed.<sup>6</sup> Siddhānta leśasaṅgraha also asserts that this view is upheld by the authors of *Tattvaśuddhi* and *Nyāyasudhā*.<sup>7</sup> Advaita Siddhi and its commentary '*Laghu candrikā*' also assert this view.<sup>8</sup> From this it can be rightly asserted that according to this view the so-called true and false

propositions are false alike. This is also rightly advocated by Prof. Misra. Upto this, his assertion is justified.

The other side of the problem is to be thought over, that is whether this error is due to the descriptive character of judgement or due to some other factor viz., perceptual error, positive *ajñāna* etc. As in the case of *anyathā khyāti* the perceptual background is the indispensable antecedent of mispredication in a judgement, here also the something. Had it not been so, then there would have been no distinction between truth and falsity, as in both true and erroneous judgements the cognition is expressed in the similar manner of subject-predicate relation. In both the cases, namely, in both true and erroneous cognitive judgements alike, the referent is conjoined with some predicate. If it is argued that according to vedānta, the Brahman being the invariable existential ground, limited by *Viśeṣyatā* (*Viśeṣatāvachinna*) and the predicative elements, being imposed on it, there is no distinction between true and erroneous judgements, then it is a mistaken view. Whether there is a primary distinction between truth and error, as it is in the case of *anyathā khyāti* of the Naiyayikas or there is a secondary distinction, as it is asserted by both Advaita Vedānta and the Mādhyamika School of Buddhism, advocating *anirvacanīya khyāti* and *asat 'khāyati* respectively, there is always a distinction, which can not be accounted for, without any perceptual background. The distinction between *Vyāvahārika* and *Pāramārthika*, which is upheld by Advaita Vedānta can not be made in the judgemental level, for which, without even a least injustice to logic, we can vouchsafe the perceptual basis or the factual basis of error. This distinction is clearly observed by the illustrious commentator of Vivaraṇa: 'Existence is three fold, of which ultimate existence belongs to the Brahman; empirical existence belongs to the world, consisting of *ākāśa* etc., possessing the power of fruitful activity (*arthakriyāsāmarthyā*), having *Māyā* as the *upādhi*, and the existence, possessing *avidyā* belongs to false silver.'<sup>9</sup>

It is not even tenable to assert that all Subject-Predicate propositions, being relational (*Samsargāvagāhi*), although Prof. Misra has taken the pain of rendering it as 'bringing them together in a non-relational tie',<sup>10</sup> are erroneous, as such a doctrine is completely alien to the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. If all the judgements, unfolding this relational character are wrong, then a

line of Vedānta Paribhāṣā, that is, the judgement, in which the relation between the terms involved is not contradicted by other Pramānas is true, can't be justified.<sup>11</sup> All descriptions can neither be erroneous merely because of this that they are descriptions nor due to this that some of them being erroneous, all of them are possible of being so. The varacity of the first alternative can't be proved by any reason *a priori* or by any necessary implication; the second argument, on the other hand, proceeds from less generality to more generality and also fraught with probability. So it can be safely concluded that adhyāsa does not arise due to description, but due to misdescription, given rise to by the mingling of the two indiscrepant concepts, which also presupposes the perceptual ground. Relational or descriptive judgements can't be made about the Brahman, as it is destitute of *Jāti*, *guṇa* and *kriyā* etc., without which no description can be possibly made, but not due to this that description is erroneous. This point requires a separate paper to be completely dealt with, as it is closely connected with the conception of Śabda Pramāṇa in Advaita Vedānta, having a different contextual ground.

For this, the factual character, which is also translated as *bhāvarūpa* or positiveness of the errors is to be recognised. The Pañcapādikā reads the word '*mithyājñāna*' in adhyāsa bhāṣya as two words '*mithyā*' and '*ajñāna*'. To the first word, it assigns the meaning '*anirvacanīyatā*', which means in vedānta, neither reality nor unreality but to be positive and to the second word, it assigns the meaning 'the unconscious power of *avidyā*'.<sup>12</sup> By saying 'the unconscious power of *avidyā*', it is intended to be said that *ajñāna* is not the absence of knowledge or erroneous perceptions etc., but something positive. Virvarṇa explains the Pañcapādikā text, 'the word *ajñāna* also means the absence of knowledge ( *Jñānabhāva* ), and by saying '*mithyā*' the erroneous perceptions may be meant, to differentiate from these two, he has distinguished the two Padarthas<sup>13</sup> Tattva pradīpikā clearly expresses that *ajñāna* is beginningless, positive and sublated by right knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Bhāmati, Kalpataru and Parimalā also agree on this point, though Vācaspati takes the word *mithyājñāna* as adhyāsa or erroneous perception and assigns its causality to *lokavyavahāra*.<sup>15</sup> Not only the commentators but Śaṅkara himself also says that there is positively some power of *avidyā*, signified by the word '*avyakta*,' residing in *parameśvara*.<sup>16</sup>

Nor can it be argued that the definition 'bhāvarūpa' is discrepant with the definition 'to be different from both *sat* and *asat*', as *bhāvarūpa* is *sat* only. Trying to explain the argument of vivarana, 'the apparent things in adhyāsa, being effects, must be endowed with some material cause as the pot',<sup>17</sup> Bhāva Prākāśikā, commentary on vivarana, raises some proleptic charges and answers them. It says that if the opponent will ask how can there be a material cause of the apparent things in the perceptual error, which are not real, then he is mistaken, as the *anirvacanīya* silver is also endowed with the characteristic of being positive, it being cognised alike the pot in a similar manner. The characteristic of being positive is not identical with the characteristic of being real, which is present in the Brahman, but absent in the empirical things like pot. Nor can it be said that an effect should be necessarily real, in order to be endowed with a material cause, as according to the opponent's theory (Nāya theory), the 'Pradhvaṃsābhāva' is also the effect of a *sat*.<sup>18</sup> Thus we see that *bhavarūpa* is not discrepant with *ajñāna*.

It can not also be argued that truth, falsity and indescribability ( *anirvacanīyatā* ) being, only known in the judgemental level, the characteristic indescribability is the characteristic of the cognitive judgements,<sup>19</sup> as it has been discussed before hand that this distinction in the judgemental level, if admitted at all must be based on some factual basis. If no distinction is admitted, but only indescribability is asserted as the characteristic of judgements, then this is untenable, as the before said secondary distinction will vitiate this position. So we can safely conclude that the character of the cognitive judgement is determined by the perceptual basis, which is further determined by reality. Śrīharṣa clearly remarks that indescribability is not due to the means of description, but it is the characteristic of knowable ( *mevasvabhāvānugāminī* ).<sup>20</sup>

It is not even true to assert that since the universals are different from the particulars, their application to the particulars in the judgements is responsible for their illegitimacy.<sup>21</sup> This is neither the view of the Naiyayikas, advocating the *Samavāya* relation nor this is the view of the Vedāntins, those who advocate the *tādātmya* relation between the universal and the particular. Vedānta Kalpataru, a commentary on Bhāmati, going to explain it, says that the *tādātmya* (identity), which is a fact in reality, between the *jāti*

and *Vyakti*, should not be mistaken as an instance of *adhyāsa*, to exclude which Vācaspati says that losing sight of the discrimination is the cause of error.<sup>22</sup> So Prof. Chattopadhyaya is quite correct in his remark, "But they are 'free floating' is not the view of any School of the Vedānta".<sup>23</sup>

Nor can it be said that, a cognitive judgement, being made by the application of a class-concept, which is possible through memory is, a case of *adhyāsa*, as the real individual is here supposed to be qualified with a class-concept.<sup>24</sup> Such an exposition seems to hold that according to vedānta the so-called *Pratyakṣa* is really a presentative-representative one, in which a conceptualisation takes place after the perception by the help of memory. But such an interpretation is completely mistaken. The upholders of such a view must have been misled by the word '*smṛtirūpa*' should not be understood as memory, but it only means 'like memory'. All the commentators of different schools of Advaita vedānta agree with this interpretation unanimously.

The distinction between *arthādhyāsa* and *jñānādhyāsa* in vedānta also does not mean the distinction of error in propositional level and the judgemental level.<sup>25</sup> Vivaraṇa has clearly mentioned that when '*artha*' is to be taken as *adhyāsa*, we have to understand it in the ontological sense and when '*jñāna*' is to be taken as *adhyāsa*, it should be understood in the epistemological sense.<sup>26</sup>

Let us come to another point, Prof. Misra's rendering of the first sentence of *adhyāsa bhāṣya*. Śankara says in the introduction of his *adhyāsa bhāṣya* that the *Viśaya* and the *viśayi*, signified by the cognitions 'you' and 'I' respectively, can't be identical either in themselves in their qualities, being incompatible as light and darkness :— '*Yuṣmadasmatpratyagocarayoḥ viśayavisayiṅhoḥ tamah-Prakāśavat viruddhasvabhāvayoḥ itaretarabhāvānupapattau siddhāyām taddharmāṅāmapi sutarām itaretarabhāvānupapattih*'. Prof. Misra observes : 'The knowledge obtained by this kind of analysis has no factual claim. As a matter of fact, light and darkness may co-exist in empirically observable world. A statement like 'here is darkness and light together' may be true depending upon circumstances. The logically mutual exclusive relation does not obtain at the factual level.'<sup>27</sup> From this we can find that the basic mistake lies in the unauthorised translation of '*itaretarabhāva*' as co-existence, where as it really means identity. Kalpataru,

going to justify Vacāṣapti's rendering of this as identity (tādātmya), clearly repudiates co-existence.<sup>28</sup> Not only the commentators, belonging to the Bhāmatī school, but also those, belonging to the School of Vivarana interpret this as identity. Even the word 'itaretarabhāva' can't be translated as co-existence in ordinary Sanskrit language, but it only means identity of one with the other 'itarasya itarabhāvaḥ'. When this is the case Prof. Misra has no grounds to advocate for the truth of his theory that vedānta speaks of the logical possibility but not of the factual world.

From this above analysis we can safely conclude that no linguistic analysis is intended to be said by the vedantic doctrine of adhyāsa, nor vedānta is only concerned with the logical possibility in opposition to the factual world. Although prof. Misra is not so much unjustified as he seems to be at the first sight, in his linguistic interpretation, still it is quite fair to hold that he is completely mistaken in depriving vedānta of the factual truth. His allegations against the tradition are also quite unjustified and empty. It is a matter of great regret that some critics of the present time are occupied by their preconceived ideas of despising the tradition, with which they are not conversant properly. But it is very much desirable that one should fully understand the tradition before he criticises. To end this with a verse of Śaṅkara :—'*Yairime gurubhiḥ pūrvam padavākyapramāṇataḥ vyākhyātāḥ sarvavedāntāstānnityam praṇato smyāham*' (Taittirīya Bhāṣya. Intr. 2nd verse)

'I bow down before the previous teachers, those who have explained all the vedāntas with due consideration of *pada*, *vākya* and *Pramāṇa*.'

Department of Sanskrit  
Utkal University  
Bhubaneswar-4

Haramohan Mishra

#### NOTES

1. Vide 'The Advaita Conception of Philosophy: Its method, scope and limits' by Prof G. Misra. P-70
2. Ibid, pp. 62-63

3. Ibid., p. 62, also 'Analytical studies in Indian Philosophical Problems' by the same author. pp- 3-8
4. Nyāya sidhānta Muktāvalī, with Kiranāvalī comm. chowkh. Ed. p...196.
5. Vedānta paribhāṣā, Cal. Un. Ed. pp-77-78
6. Vedānta Paribhāṣā, p-168.
7. Siddāntaleśa sangraha, Madras Un. Ed., p-49.
8. Advaita Siddhi, Nirnaya Sagar Ed., p.49
9. Vivarana, Madras Govt. oriental series Ed., p. 165
10. The Advaita conception of Philosophy : its method, scope, and limits, p. 67.
11. Vedānta paribhāṣā, p-182-183.
12. Pancapādikā, Madras Govt. orient. ser. Ed., pp- 26
13. Vivarana, p. 64
14. Tattva Pradipikā, I-9, Chowkh.Ed.
15. Bhāmati, Nirnaya Sagar Ed. p. 16, pp, 23-24.
16. Śārīraka Bhaṣyam, 2.4.3
17. Vivarana. p. 68
18. Bhāva prakāśikā comm. on vivarana. Madras Govt. oriental. Series Ed., p. 68.
19. Vide 'Śankara's conception of adhyāsa: Has prof. S.K. Chattopadhyaya refuted Prof.G. Misra?', published in the Indian philosophical Quarterly, July 1977.
20. Khandana Khandā Khādyam, pariccheda. I, Pramānatadābhāṣakhandana chap., passage.2, Chowkh.Ed.
21. 'The Advaita conception of philosophy: Its method, scope and limits, p. 72
22. Kalpataru comm. on Bhāmati, p. 16, also 'parimalā' on it.
23. 'Śankra's concept of Adhyāsa: A textual interpretation' published in the Indian Philosophical Quarterly. July. 1976.
24. 'Śankara's conception of adhyāsa : Has Prof. S. K. Chattopadhyaya refuted Prof. G. Misra?', published in the Indian Philosophical Quarterly, July 1977.
25. 'The Advaita conception of Philosophy: Its method, scope and limits, p. 91.
26. Vivarana, p-127.
27. The Advaita conception of Philosophy: Its method, scope and limits; p-2
28. Kalpataru Comm. on Bhāmatī, p-7.