

APPENDIX II

THE RIDDLE OF THE VEDANTA

Of the six schools of philosophy which were expounded by the ancient philosophers of India the most famous is of course the Vedanta philosophy. Not only has it the name but it has also a hold on the Hindus which none of its rivals has ever had. Every follower of the Vedas is proud of the Vedanta. He not only owns it but regards it as the most valuable contribution which India has made to the philosophic thought of the world. He regards Vedanta philosophy as embodying the end or aim of the teachings of the Vedas, a sort of culmination or flowering of the teachings of the Veda. He never suspects that there was any time in the history of India when the Vedanta Philosophy was regarded as repugnant and hostile to the Vedas. He would never believe that there was a time when the word Vedanta had a totally different meaning than the meaning which is now current and according to which the word Vedanta far from being used in the sense of culmination of Vedic thought was used to designate a body of thought contained in a body which was outside the range of the canonical part of the Vedic literature. Yet that was in fact the case.

It is true that this repugnance between the Vedas and the Vedanta does not become manifest from the word Upanishad which is the generic name of the literature on which the Vedanta philosophy came to be built up and about the etymology of which there is a considerable difference of opinion.

Most European scholars are agreed in deriving Upanishad from the root *sad*, to sit down, preceded by the two prepositions *ni*, down, and *upa*, near, so that it would express the idea of session, or assembly of public sitting down near a person. As Prof. Max Muller points out there are two objections to the acceptance of this derivation. Firstly such a word, it would seem, would have been applicable to any other

This is a 21-page typed first copy entitled 'The Riddle of the Vedanta'. The chapter seems complete and does not contain any modifications by the author.—Ed.

portion of the Veda as well as to the chapters called Upanishad, and it has never been explained how its meaning came thus to be restricted. Secondly the word Upanishad, in the sense of session or assembly has never been met with. Whenever the word occurs, it has the meaning of doctrine, secret doctrine, or is simply used as the title of the philosophic treatises which contains the secret doctrine. There is a third explanation noted by Prof. Max Muller proposed by Sankara in his commentary on the Taittiriya-Upanishad II, 9, is that the highest bliss is contained in the Upanishad (*param sreya'syam nishannam*). Regarding this Prof. Max Muller says:

“The Aranyakas abound in such etymologies, which probably were never intended as real as plays on words, helping to account somehow for their meaning.”

Prof. Max Muller however favours a derivation of the word Upanishad from the root *sad* to destroy and meant knowledge which destroys ignorance, the cause of Samsara, by revealing the knowledge of Brahma as a means of salvation. Prof. Max Muller points out that this is the meaning which the native scholars have unanimously given to the word Upanishad.

If it be granted that this is the true derivation of the word Upanishad it would be one piece of evidence in support of the thesis that there was a time in the history of India when Vedanta was regarded as a system of thought which was repugnant to the Vedas. But it is not necessary to depend upon the help of etymology to support the thesis. There are other evidences better and more direct. In the first place the word Vedanta was never used to denote “the last books of the Vedas” which they are. As observed by Prof. Max Muller¹:

“Vedanta as a technical term, did not mean originally the last portions of the Veda, or chapters placed, as it were, at the end of a volume of Vedic literature, but the end, i.e. the object, the highest purpose of the Veda. There are, of course, passages, like the one in the Taittiriya-Aranyaka (ed. Rajendra Mitra p. 820), which have been misunderstood both by native and European scholars, and where Vedanta means simply the end of the Veda : *yo vedadu svarah prokto vedante ka pratishthitah*, ‘the Om which is pronounced at the beginning of the Veda, and has its place also at the end of the Veda’. Here Vedanta stands simply in opposition to Vadadu, it is impossible to translate it, as Sayana does, by Vedanta or Upanishad. Vedanta, in the sense of philosophy, occurs in the Taittiriya-Aranyaka (p. 817), in a verse of the Narayana-Upanishad, repeated in the Mundak-Upanishad III, 2, 6 and

¹ The Upanishads (S.B.E.) Vol. I, Introduction p. Ixxxvi.

elsewhere *Vedantavignansuniskitarhah*, ‘those who have well understood the object of the knowledge arising from the Vedanta,’ not ‘from the last books of the Veda’, and *Svetasvatara-up.* VI, 22, *vedante paramam guhyam*, ‘the highest mystery in the Vedanta’. Afterwards it is used in the plural also, e.g. Kshurikopanishad, 10 (bibl. Ind. p. 210) *pundariketi vedantesfau nigadyate*, ‘it is called pundarika in the Vedantas’, i.e. in the Khandogya and other Upanishads, as the commentator says, but not in the last books of each Veda.”

More direct evidence on the point is that which is contained in the Gautama Dharma Sutras. In Chapter XIX verse 12 speaks of purification and says¹:

“The purificatory (texts are), the Upanishads, the Vedantas, the Samhita text of all the Vedas” and so on.

From this it is clear that at the date of Gautama the Upanishads were distinguished from Vedantas and were not acknowledged as a part of the Vedic literature. Hardatta in his commentaries says “those parts of the Aranyakas which are not (Upanishads) are called Vedantas”. This is unimpeachable proof that the Upanishads did not come within the range of the Vedic literature and were outside the cannon.

This view is also supported by the use of the Veda in the Bhagwat Gita. The word Veda is used in the Bhagwat Gita at several places. And according to Mr. Bhat² the word is used in a sense which shows that the author did not include the Upanishads in the term.

That the Upanishads were excluded from the canonical literature of the Vedas is provided by the opposition of the Upanishads to the views preached in the Vedas that the religious observances and sacrifices were the only means of salvation. A few citation from some of the Upanishads will suffice to show their opposition to the Vedas.

The Mundaka Upanishad says:

“Brahma was produced the first among the gods, maker of the universe, the preserver of the world. He revealed to his eldest son Atharva, the science of Brahma, the basis of all knowledge. (2) Atharvan of old declared to Angis this science, which Brahma had unfolded to him; and Angis, in turn, explained it to Satyavaha, descendent of Bharadvaja, who delivered this traditional lore, in succession, to Angiras. (3) Mahasala Saunaka, approaching Angiras with the proper formalities, inquired, ‘What is that, O venerable sage, through the knowledge of which all this (universe) becomes known?’ (4) (Angiras) answered, ‘Two sciences are to be known— this is what the sages versed in sacred knowledge declared— the superior and the inferior. (5) The inferior (consists of) the Rig-veda,

¹ Sacred Books of the East Vol. II. p. 275.

the Yajur-veda, the Sama-veda, the Atharva-veda, accentuation, ritual, grammar, commentary, prosody, and astronomy. The superior science is that by which the imperishable is apprehended.”

The Chhandoyaga Upanishad says:

“(1) Narada approached Sanatkumara, saying, ‘Instruct me, venerable sage’. He received for answer, ‘Approach me with (tell me) that which thou knowest; and I will declare to thee whatever more is to be learnt.’ (2) Narada replied, ‘I am instructed, venerable sage, in the Rig-veda, the Sama-Veda, the Yajur-veda, the Atharva-veda (which is) the fourth, the Itihasas and Puranas (which are) the fifth Veda of the Vedas, the rites of the pitris, arithmetic, the knowledge of portents, and of great periods, the art of reasoning, ethics, the science of the gods, the knowledge of scripture, demonology, the science of war, the knowledge of the stars, the science of serpents and deities; this is what I have studied. (3) I, venerable man, know only the hymns (mantras), while I am ignorant of soul. But I have heard from reverend sages like thyself that ‘the man who is acquainted with soul overpasses grief’. Now, I venerable man, am afflicted; but do thou transport me over my grief. Sanatkumara answered, ‘That which thou hast studied is nothing but name. (4) The Rig-veda is name; and so are the Yajur-veda, the Sama-veda, the Atharvana, which is the fourth and the Itihasas and Puranas, the fifth Veda of the Vedas, etc. (all the other branches of knowledge are here enumerated just as above), all these are but names; worship name. (5) He who worships name (with the persuasion that it is) Brahma, ranges as it were at will over all which that name comprehends;—such is the prerogative of him who worships name (with the persuasion that it is) Brahma. ‘Is there anything venerable man’ asked Narada, ‘Which is more than name?’, ‘There is,’ replied (Sanatkumara), ‘something which is more than name’. ‘Tell it to me’, rejoined Narada.”

The Brahadarnyaka Upanishad says:

“In that (condition of profound slumber) a father is no father, a mother is no mother, the words are no words, the gods are no gods, and the Vedas are no Vedas, sacrifices are no sacrifices. In that condition a thief is no thief, a murderer of embryos is no murderer of embryos, a Paulakasa no Paulakasa, a Chandala no Chandala, a Sramana no Sramana, a devotee no devotee; the saint has then no relation, either of advantage or disadvantage, to merit or to sin; for he then crosses over all griefs of the heart.”

This is what the Katha Upanishad has to say:

“This soul is not to be attained by instruction, nor by understanding, nor by much scripture. He is attainable by him

whom he chooses. The soul chooses that man's body as his own abode".

"Although this soul is difficult to know, still it may easily be known by the use of proper means. This is what (the author) proceeds to say. This soul is not to be attained, known by instruction, by the acknowledgement of many Vedas; nor by understanding, by the power of recollecting the contents of books; nor by much scripture alone. By what, then, is it to be attained? This he declares".

How great was the repugnance to the Upanishads and the philosophy contained in them will be realized if one takes note of the origin of the words Anuloma and Pratiloma which are usually applied to the marriage tie among the Hindus. Speaking of their origin Mr. Kane points out that¹:

"These two words Anuloma and Pratiloma (as applied to marriage or progeny) hardly ever occur in the Vedic literature. In the Br. Up. (II. 1.15) and Kausitaki Br. Up. IV. 18 the word 'Pratiloma' is applied to the procedure adopted by a Brahmana of going to a Kshatriya for knowledge about "*Brahman*".

Anuloma means according to the heir that is in the natural order of things. Pratiloma means against the heir that is contrary to the natural order. Reading the observations of Mr. Kane in the light of the definition of the word Pratiloma it is obvious that the Upanishads far from being acknowledged as part of the Vedic literature were if not despised, held in low esteem by the Vedic Brahmins. It is a riddle to find that the Brahmins who were opponents of the Vedanta should become subsequently the supporters and upholders of the Vedanta.

II

This is one riddle of the Vedanta. There is another. The Vedantists were not the only opponents of the Vedas and its doctrine of ritualism as a means of salvations. Madhava Acharya the author of the Sarva Darshana Sangraha mentions two other opponents of the Vaidikas, Charvaka and Brahaspati. Their attack on the Vaidikas was quite formidable in its logic and its

The opposition of Charvaka can be seen from the following quotation which reproduces his line of argument against the Vaidikas²:

"If you object that, if there be no such thing as happiness in a future world, then how should men of experienced wisdom engage

¹ History of Dharmasastra Vol. II. Part I p. 52.

² Sarva Darshan Sangraha (Translated by Cowell) p. 64.

in the agnihotra and other sacrifices, which can only be performed with great expenditure of money and bodily fatigue. Your objection cannot be accepted as any proof to the contrary, since the agnihotra, &c, are only useful as means of livelihood, for the Veda is tainted by three faults of un-truth, self-contradiction, and tautology; then again the impostors who call themselves Vedic pundits are mutually destructive as the authority of the Jnan-kanda is overthrown by those who maintain authority of the Jnan-kanda reject that of the Karmakanda; and lastly, the three Vedas themselves are only the incoherent rhapsodes of knaves, and to this effect runs the popular saying:

‘The Agnihotra, the three Vedas, the ascetic’s three staves, and smearing oneself with ashes, Brihaspati says, these are but means of livelihood for those who have no manliness nor sense’.

rahaspati was far more bold and militant in his opposition to Vaidism. As reported by Madhava Acharya Brihaspati argued¹:

“There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world,
Nor do the actions of the four castes, orders &c, produce any real effect.

The Agnihotra, the three Vedas, the ascetic’s three staves and smearing oneself with ashes,

Were made by Nature as the livelihood of those destitute of knowledge and manliness.

If a beast slain in the Jyotishtoma rite will itself go to heaven, Why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father?

If the Sraddha produces gratification to beings who are dead, Then here, too, in the case of travellers when they start, it is needless to give provisions for the journey.

While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs in debt.

When once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again?

If he who departs from the body goes to another world,

How is that he comes not back again, restless for love of his kindred ?

Hence it is only as a means of livelihood that Brahmans have established here.

All these ceremonies for the dead,—there is no other fruit anywhere.

The three authors of the Vedas were buffoons, knaves and demons.

¹ Sarva Darshan Sangraha p. 10.

All the well-known formulas of the Pandits, jarpahari, turphari,
 And all the obscene rites for the queen commanded in the Aswamedha,
 These were invented by buffoons, and so all the various kinds of presents
 to the priests,

While the eating of flesh was similarly commended by night prowling
 demons.”

Why did the Vedic Brahmans compromise with the Vedantists but
 did not compromise with Charvak and Brihaspati. It is a riddle that
 awaits explanation.

III

A third riddle remains to be mentioned. This is its most appropriate
 place for it has reference to the Vedas and Vedantas, not in their crude
 form but in the philosophical garb which was given to them by two
 masters of the art of systematization whose names are quite well known
 in the history of Sanskrit Literature namely Jaimini and Badarayana,
 the former as the author of Mimansa and the latter as the author of
 Brahma Sutras. To them and to their work a reference has already been
 made in the earlier pages and some idea has been given of their place
 in the formulation of the Vedik beliefs and Vedantik speculations. What
 remains to be done is to compare and contrast the attitude which one
 has towards the philosophy of the other.

Starting on this inquiry one is struck by the parallelism between
 Jaimini and Badarayana in the presentation of the subject matter. As
 Prof. Belvalkar points out the Vedant Sutras are very closely modelled
 upon the Karma Sutras. In the matter of methodology and terminology
 Badarayana very carefully follows Jaimini. He accepts Jaimini rules of
 interpreting the text of the Shruti. He uses Jaimini's technical terms in
 the sense in which they have been used by Jaimini. He uses the very
 illustrations which are employed by Jaimini.

The parallelism shows that Badarayana must have felt that he was
 the exponent of a rival philosophy which was being attacked by Jaimini
 and that in replying to the attack he must follow Jaimini's technique.

Question is did Badarayana take the stand of an opponent of Jaimini ?

That Jaimini was his opponent Badarayana himself admits, the attitude
 of Jaimini towards Vedanta. It is stated by Badarayana in his Sutras
 2-7 and explained by Shankaracharya in his commentary.

Jaimini contends that:

“No one undertakes a sacrificial act unless he is conscious of the fact that he is different from the body and that after death he will go to heaven, where he will enjoy the results of his sacrifices. The Texts dealing with self-knowledge serve merely to enlighten the agent and so are subordinate to sacrificial acts.”

In short Jaimini says that all that Vedanta teaches is that self is different from the body and outlives the body. Such a knowledge is not enough. The Self must have the aspiration to go to Heaven. But it can't go to heaven unless it performs Vedic sacrifices which is what his Karmakand teaches. Therefore his Karmakand is the only way of Salvation and that the Jnankand from that point of view is quite useless. For this Jaimini relies on the conduct of men who have believed in Vedanta¹:

“Janaka, emperor of Videha performed a sacrifice in which gifts were freely distributed” (Brih. 3.1.1); “I am going to perform a sacrifice, sirs” (Ch. 5.11.5). Now both Janaka and Asvapati were knowers of the Self. If by this knowledge of the Self they had attained Liberation, there was no need for them to perform sacrifices. But the two texts quoted show that they did perform sacrifices. This proves that it is through sacrificial acts alone that one attains Liberation, and not through the knowledge of the Self as the Vedantins hold.”

Jaimini makes a positive assertion that the scriptures unmistakably declare² “that knowledge of the Self stands in a subordinate relation to sacrificial acts.”

Jaimini justifies it because he says³:

“the two (knowledge and work) go together (with the departing soul to produce the results.)”

Jaimini refuses to give an independent position to Badarayana's Jnana kanda. He takes his stands on two grounds.

First⁴ “Knowledge of the Self does not independently produce any result.”

Second⁵ according to the authority of the Vedas “Knowledge (of Self) stands in a subordinate relation to work.”

This is the position of Jaimini towards Badaryana's Jnanakanda. What is the position of Badarayana towards Jaimini and his Karma Kanda? This is explained by Badarayana in Sutras 8 to 17.

The first position⁶ taken up by Badarayana is that the Self spoken of by Jaimini is the limited self i.e. the soul and is to be distinguished

1. See Badarayana Sutra 3 and Sankara's comment.

2. Badarayana Sutra 4.

3. See Badarayana Sutra 5.

4. Badarayana Sutra 6. Shankar's commentary.

5. See Badarayana Sutra 7. Shankar's commentary.

6. See Badarayana Sutra 8. Shankar's commentary.

from the supreme soul and that the supreme soul is recognized by the Scriptures.

The second¹ position taken by Badarayana is that the Vedas support both knowledge of Self as well as Sacrifices.

The third² position taken up by Badarayana is that only those who believe in the Vedas are required to perform Sacrifices. But those who follow the Upanishadas are not bound by that injunction. As Shankaracharya explains:

“Those who have read the Vedas and known about the sacrifices are entitled to perform work (sacrifice). No work (sacrifice) is prescribed for those who have knowledge of the Self from the Upanishads. Such a knowledge is incompatible with work.”

The fourth³ position taken up by Badarayana is that Karmakanda is optional to those who have attained Bramhadnan. As Shankaracharya explains:

“That some have of their own accord given up all work. The point is that after knowledge some may choose to work to set an example to others, while others may give up all work. There is no binding on the knowers of the Self as regards work”.

His last and final⁴ position is that:

“Knowledge of the Self is antagonistic to all work and so cannot possibly be subsidiary to work.”

And as evidence in support of it he relies⁵ on the scriptures which recognizes Sannyasa the fourth Ashram and relieves the Sannyasi from performing sacrifices prescribed by the Karma Kand.

Many such Sutras can be found in Badarayana indicating the attitude of the two schools of thought towards each other. But the one given above is enough as it is so very typical. If one stops to consider the matter the position wears a strange appearance. Jaimini denounces Vedanta as a false Shastra, a snare and a delusion, something superficial, unnecessary and unsubstantial. What does Badarayana do in the face of this attack? Does he denounce the Karmakanda of Jaimini as a false Shastra, a snare and a delusion, something superficial unnecessary and insubstantial? No. He only defends his own Vedanta Shastra. But one would expect him to do more. One would expect from Badarayana a denunciation of the Karmakanda of Jaimini as a false religion. Badarayana shows no such courage. On the contrary he is very apologetic. He concedes that Jaimini's Karmakanda

1. See Badarayana Sutra 9.

2. See Badarayana Sutra 12.

3. See Badarayana Sutra 15.

4. See Badarayana Sutra 16.

5. See Badarayana Sutra 17.

based on the scriptures and the scriptures have authority and sanctity which cannot be repudiated. All that he insists on is that his Vedanta doctrine is also true because it has also the support of the scriptures.

This is not all. What Badarayana does is to use the term Vedanta to cover these senses. He uses it so as to emphasize that the Upanishads do form a part of the Vedic literature. He used it also to emphasize what Vedanta or the Dnyanakanda of the Upanishads is not opposed to the Karmakanda of the Vedas that the two are complimentary. Indeed this is the foundation on which Badarayana has raised the whole structure of his Vedanta Sutras.

This thesis of Badarayana—which underlies his Vedanta Sutras and according to which the Upanishads are a part of the Veda and there is no antagonism between the Vedas and Upanishads—is quite contrary to the tenor of the Upanishads and their relation to the Vedas. Badarayana's attitude is not easy to understand. But it is quite obvious that Badarayana's is a queer and a pathetic case of an opponent who begins his battle by admitting the validity of the premises of his adversary.? Why did Badarayana concede to Jaimini on the question of infallibility of the Vedas which were opposed to the Upanishads? Why did he not stand for truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. This is a riddle that requires explanation.

