

DAYĀNANDASARASVATI'S REFUTATION OF ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

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The march of advaita vedānta to its esteem was not unopposed. From the earlier days it faced attacks from different corners. Bhāskara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vedāntadeśika etc were the prominent figures among its critics. Modern era saw a new group of scholars attacking advaitavedānta. They were Swāmi Dayānanda Saraswati, Aurobindo, P.C. Ray and Marxist thinkers. The criticism of Dayānanda Saraswati and Aurobindo was philosophical while the view of Ray and Marxists was based on social and historical conditions. Dayānanda Saraswati never rejected Advaita Vedānta outright. He accepted Śankara and rejected the philosophy propagated by the disciples of Śankara. He divided Vedānta as pracīnavedānta and navīnavedānta and rejected the later. There was a trend among Indian scholars to treat the system of Śankara and his followers as different ones.¹ Here, an attempt is made to find out the exact views of Dayānanda on Advaita vedānta and an examination of his criticism of its tenets.

Dayānanda Sarasvati

Dayānandasarasvati is well known as religious reformer. He was the founder of āryasamāj. He fought against the Hindu orthodoxy. He rejected the caste system and the discriminations attached to it as non-Vedic. He was an advocate of Vedas. His philosophy and religious views were based on Vedas. He rejected all ancient interpretations of Vedas as unauthentic and misinterpretations. He strongly opposed temple worship, sacrifice of animals, witchcraft, astrology etc. He was a theist

and accepted all the good elements from traditional Indian Philosophy.² He defended Hinduism against Islam and Christianity and rejected the Christian and Islamic theology.³

Philosophy of Dayānandasarasvati

The philosophy of Dayānandasarasvati is known as 'traitavāda. He accepted the real existence of God, prakṛti and jīva. His philosophical teachings were dealt mainly in his book 'Satyārthaprakāśah' which contains different topics like, interpretation of Vedic hymns, education, family, social customs, criticism and refutations of rival schools of thought and religious sects.

Īśvara

Īśvara is the Supreme Being. He is one and non-dual. As there is no other Īśvara apart from Brahman, 'advaitam' becomes his name.⁴ Since he being untouched by there guṇa he is 'nirguṇa'.⁵ For being the abode of auspicious attributes he is saguṇa.⁶ He has no physical body.⁷ He is the inherent controller of all beings.⁸ Being Sat, he is beginningless and immutable. He illuminates the minds of yogins and allows them to realise his nature; hence he is cit. He is parabrahman. He is bliss as he provides pleasure to all beings and all the liberated souls find pleasure in him.⁹ To Dayānanda, Īśvara is omnipotent. But Dayānanda did not follow the conventional idea of 'omnipotence'. His view is that god does not need the help of any other agency to carry out his duties¹⁰. The devotion can change a devotee to a great extent. It destroys his ego, makes him pleasant and helps to realise parabrahman. Īśvara is able to carry out the functions of organs, though he does not have body and organs.¹¹ He is the efficient cause of universe. He cannot be the material cause as it make Īśvara mutable.¹² Further śvetāśvataraopaniṣad declares that material cause of the universe is pradhāna.¹³ Īśvara never

takes avatāra as he is free from birth death etc.¹⁴ He does never forgive the sins of his subjects or devotees as it may encouraging to them. Hence he gives the returns of their karma to men accordingly.

Jīva

Jīva is also beginning less. Īśvara creates the body and organs of jīva and leaves it to him. Jīva is the controller of his body and organs. He enjoys the fruits of his puṇya and pāpa.¹⁵ Īśvara never compels any Jīva to do any thing right or wrong. Jīva have freedom of choice. Both Īśvara and jīva are sentient, pure and immutable. But Īśvara is the creator, cause of sustenance and dissolution of universe. The nature of jīva is limited due to his body.¹⁶ Īśvara and jīva have individual real existence.¹⁷

Prakṛti or Pradhāna

The third concept in traitavāda is prakṛti. Dayānanda follows the traditional concept prakṛti followed by Sāṃkhya and Yoga. His definition of pradhāna was quoted from sāṃkhyasūtra.¹⁸

Avidyā , bandha and Mokṣa

Dayānanda accepted the view of yogadarśana regarding avidyā.¹⁹ Avidyā is the cause of bondage. Jīva who is involved in adharma and ajñāna is baddha. Both bondage and liberation have causes.²⁰ Liberation is the escape of Jīva from sorrows and his realisation of Brahman. Jīva never loses his identity in mukti. He leaves aside his body and finds solace in Brahman²¹. Though mukta have no organs, for being pure, he can enjoy ānanda.²²

Arguments against Advaitavedānta

He rejects advaitic concept of adhyāropa. To substantiate the unreality of universe, adhyāropa or adhyāsa is essential to advaitins.

Dayānanda considers both *āropya and āropaka* as real objects. To the Advaitins, only substratum is real. The object imposed on substratum is unreal as it is materially absent at the moment on that particular location.²³ Dayānanda maintains that its absence at that particular location is not its non-existence since it exist elsewhere. The impressions of the object, in the form of memory, exist in the mind. Hence the definition 'vastunyavastvāropanam adhyāsaḥ' is not valid.²⁴

Dayānanda rejects the advaitic doctrine that the locus of avidyā is Brahman. Accepting Brahman as the abode of avidyā can destroy the śuddhajñānasvarūpa of Brahman. Further describing avidyā as indescribable is untenable.²⁵

He refutes the six beginning less concepts accepted by advaitins.²⁶ He argues that advaitins can substantiate only two concepts as beginning less; Brahman and avidyā. Without the union of Brahman with māyā and avidyā, the origin of Īśvara and jīva cannot be established. Hence Īśvara and jīva could not be considered as beginning less. Establishing the origin of Īśvara and jīva from kāraṇopādhi and kāryopādhi will put stains of ajñāna on Brahman and Brahman loses its śudhamuktasvarūpa. Further acceptance of the association of upādhi with Brahman limits its nature. In turn Brahman loses his pure and non-dual nature, gets in contact with body etc, and undergoes experience.²⁷

Brahman and jīva have different identity. Yet advaitins tried to establish their unity by interpreting upaniṣads. The upaniṣadic texts²⁸ used for this does not have such meanings; argues Dayānanda. 'Prajñānam Brahma' etc are really brāhmaṇavākyas. Nowhere in satyaśāstra they were called mahāvākyas²⁹. The meaning of 'Prajñānam Brahma' is that Brahman is prakṛtajñānasvarūpa. The meaning of

'Aham Brahmāsmi' is that my mind is absorbed in Brahman. Tattvamasi teaches that paramātman is the minutest and he is the soul of whole universe and jīva. That paramātman is dwelling within you as your soul.³⁰ During samādhi when Īśvara appear before the devotee he realizes that Brahman dwelling in him is all pervasive; is the meaning of 'Ayaṁātmā Brahma'. The self styled vedāntins who maintain the unity of Brahman and jīva do not know vedānta.³¹

Dayānanda's view regarding the life and philosophy of Śankara

Dayānanda presents a different view about the life and death of Śankarācārya. He presented Śankara as an intelligent Vedic scholar who tried to refute the atheist philosophy of Jains. He converted Sudhanvā , the Jain king of Ujjain, after a defeat in debate and the transformed all Jain temples into places of Vedic learning and teaching. Two Jains living in one of these centers as inmates gave him poisoned food. This slowly destroyed the health of Śankarācārya and ultimately resulted in his death.³² After his death his disciples propagated the philosophy that Śankarācārya used to refute Jains for their personal benefits and fame.³³ Dayānanda observes that if the philosophy that Śankara had used to refute the Jaina philosophy be his true philosophy, it is not a good philosophy. If Śankara used that view only to refute the doctrines of Jains and convert them to Vedism and if it does not reflect his real intension it have some merits³⁴. The intention of Dayānanda is very clear here. The refutation of atheist Jains, who spread idol worship and disturbed the life of Vedic Hindus, was a necessity. Śankara's efforts to establish the authority and supremacy of Vedas above all were also

acceptable to Dayānanda. But his philosophy of non-dualism propagated by his disciples from the four pīthas was not acceptable to him.

He divided Vedānta as Prācīna and Navīna³⁵. The Navīnavedāntins are followers of Śankara. He quotes from Brahmasūtra to substantiate some of his arguments.³⁶ Hence we can realise that prācīnavedānta is the view followed by Bādarāyaṇa. He considered post-Śankara advaitins for refutation alone. But to which group Śankara belongs to? Since the philosophy of navīnavedāntins have seldom or no difference with the view of their master, Śankara also belong to the group of navīnavedāntins.

Śankara attacked not Jains alone. Bauddha, Jaina Sāmkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Pāñcarātra, Pāsupata etc were also refuted by Śankara. As far as the internal evidences from his texts are considered the prominent opponent is Sāmkhya. Dayānanda indicts Jains as the propagators of idol worship.³⁷ Though philosophy of Śankara gives no ultimate scope to idol worship he was not against idol worship. The only conclusion that we can draw here safely is that Śankara's refutation of Jains was acceptable to Dayānanda but not his philosophical tenets. The views of Sāmkhya, yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Prācīnavedānta were acceptable to him. Hence the refutations of these schools were not acceptable to him.

Evaluation of Dayānanda's Criticism of Advaitavedānta

Dayānanda's approach towards the philosophy of Śankara is very conscious. He did not attempt to reject Śankara outright. Instead he cleverly built a background for the philosophy of Śankara and accepted him as a great champion of Vedism. He appreciated Śankara's efforts to overcome the influence of Jains in the domestic and social life of Hindus.

It is true that Śankara enriched the Vedic learning and propagated the message of Vedas through his commentaries on upaniṣads, Brahmasūtra and Bhagavad-Gīta. His peculiar stand on Śankara helped him to reject the philosophy of Śankara and to accept him as a champion of Vedism. An interesting fact is that Dayānanda was initiated to the Advaita monastic order and he received the name Dayānandasarasvatī³⁸. Though he left his association with advaita and its monastic order he never gave up his new name, and remained as a saint in his whole life.

All eminent critics of advaita started their career as advaitavedāntins. In the case of Dayānanda also it was not different. He shares his uncompromising attitude towards advaitavedānta along with his great predecessors like Rāmānuja, Madhva etc. He borrowed many ideas from these Vedāntins. All his arguments were developed from the views of Viśistādvaita and dvaita. His concept of Īśvara has the qualities of the parabrahman of Advaitavedānta. i.e. he is impersonal, have no body, organ etc. But he has all the qualities that Rāmānuja and Madhva had given to their supreme concepts Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu. His only difference with them was his uncompromising attitude towards idol worship, which is an essential character of both Vaiṣṇovite schools.

His refutation of adhysa, avidya and other concepts are not sound. Brahmasūrabhṣya provides excellent description of the process and nature of adhysa and all possible defenitions³⁹. Bhāmati clears all doubts regarding adhysa⁴⁰. While considering six beginning less categories he misinterpreted the concept of advaita.

Conclusion

Dayānanda was an ardent follower of Vedas. He accepted all the elements that are useful from different systems of thought and incorporated them in this philosophy. The ideas of a later philosopher like Vijñānabhikṣu also can be found in his works. Yet his criticism of

Advaita Vedānta is very weak. There are no new arguments other than the classical ones composed by Rāmānuja and Madhva. Though he follows the classical method of discussion and presentation, they are not conclusive as far as Advaita Vedānta is concerned. As a critic of Advaita Vedānta, Dayānanda's position is rather inferior.

Notes and References

1. Satcitānandadasarasvati, who wrote mūlavidyānirāsa follows such a view. Nāgeśabhatta also maintained such a view.
2. Insight into Modern Hinduism, Hrvay De Witt Grisswold, Aryan books international, New Delhi, 1996 P.123.
3. Ibid. p. 116-117.
4. Satyārthaprakāśa, Dayānandasarasvati, Arshasāhitya pracār trust Delhi 2003. p. 17
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Ibid. p. 16
8. Ibid p. 15
9. ibid p.15
10. Ibid p.119
11. Ibid p. 124
12. Ibid p. 125
13. Śvetāśvataropaniṣad IV- 5
14. Satyārthaprakāśa P. 126
15. Ibid.p. 127
16. Ibid. p128
17. Ibid p.128
18. Ibid. p.140 also see Sāmkhya sūtra 1-61
19. Ibid p.158 also see Yoga sūtra 2-5
20. Ibid.p. 158

21. Ibid.p. 161
 22. Ibid.p. 162
 23. BrahmasūtraŚāṅkarabhāṣya, adhyāsabhāṣya
 24. Satyārthaprakāśa p. 197
 25. Ibid p.198
 26. Ibid p.11
 27. Ibid p.132
 28. Prajñānam Brahma, aham Brahmāsmi, Tattvamasī, Ayamātmā Brahma.
 29. Satyārthaprakāśa. P.129
 30. Ibid 129
 31. Ibid 130
 32. Ibid P. 195-96
 33. Ibid. 196
 34. Ibid p. 197
 35. Ibid p. 197
 36. Ibid. P. 202
 37. Ibid. P. 165
 38. Op.cit. Modern Hinduism P. 113
 39. BrahmasūtraŚāṅkarabhāṣya, Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, Delhi, 1988, P.1 (adhyāsabhāṣya)
 40. Bhāmati, Vācaspatimiśra, Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, Delhi, 1988; P. 9, 10-21 .
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