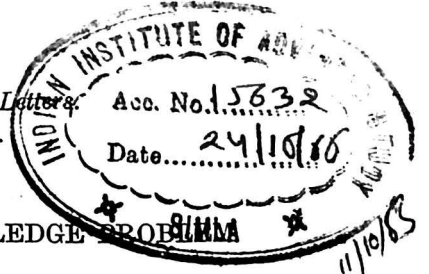


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ADVAITA ANALYSIS OF THE KNOWLEDGE PROBLEM

By ANIL KUMAR RAY CHAUDHURI

In Advaita Vedānta, knowledge, in the ultimate or *pāramārthika* sense, is defined as pure consciousness. It is self-revealing and does not require any external aid. In fact, it is the only reality and there is nothing external nor internal to it. But, from the practical or *vyāvahārika* standpoint, 'vṛtti' or modal transformation of the *antaḥkaraṇa* or the internal organ is also called knowledge in a secondary sense.¹ The 'vṛtti' by itself is unconscious and cannot, therefore, reveal others. The *Sākṣin* or the witness-consciousness informing the 'vṛtti' knows itself and 'shows' others. In fact, the *Sākṣin* means consciousness as reflected in the modification of *ajñāna* or its evolute.² Thus the physical element or the modification of the internal organ and the *Sākṣin* or the psychical principle work together to solve the knowledge problem. The *Sākṣin* never appears by itself but is in association with the *antaḥkaraṇa* in its latent or manifest form. The reverse also is true. No internal organ is conceivable apart from the *Sākṣin*. Thus the blend of the passive *Sākṣin* and the active *antaḥkaraṇa* initiates knowledge in general.³ The one is eternal and the other is contingent.

The *Sākṣin* is the spectator of all things. It is the '*Caitanya*' with necessary reference to things inner and outer. The *Sākṣin* divested of '*sākṣitu*' or sākṣihood is Brahman indeed. The *antaḥkaraṇa*, again, is conceived as '*bhautika*' or material and is constituted by five elements (earth, water, air, fire and the *ākāśa*), the '*tejas*' or the fire-aspect is predominant. It is not '*āhamkārika*' as the Sāṃkhya supposes. Though it consists of the five elements, the '*tejas*' is the predominant factor. It is therefore unstable and like light swiftly moves from one thing to another.⁴ It is always active except in deep sleep when it is merged in its material cause, '*avidyā*'. The jīva or the consciousness circumscribed by *antaḥkaraṇa* is never without some *jñāna* or other.

Knowledge may be either mediate or immediate according as it respectively removes the *ajñāna* which concerns the bare existence of the object (*asattāpādaka ajñāna*) or according as it reveals the essence of the object by removing the '*abhāṇāpādaka ajñāna*'.⁵ Immediate knowledge is not always sense-perception of the object; since the self and the '*avidyā*' are immediately known without any contact with the sense-organ.⁶

Immediate knowledge requires some conditions to be fulfilled, no matter whether the object comes through a sense or not. (1) First the object must be existent at the time of immediate knowledge. Critical realists opine that immediate knowledge or perception is a *salute* and not an *embrace* in respect of objects. They affirm that perception is a three-term process, viz. knowledge, object and the content. But Advaita Vedānta holds that knowledge is a two-term process, viz. perception and

1 Vedānta-paribhāṣā, Kṛṣṇanātha's Ed., p. 19.

2 Advaita-siddhi, N.S. Ed., p. 575.

3 Ratnaprabhā on Brahma Sūtra, 1.1.5.

4 Śikhāmaṇi, Vem. Ed., p. 58.

5 Advaita-siddhi, N.S. Ed., p. 490.

6 'Ātmavidyādaū tadabhāvāt—Vedānta-tattva-viveka, Lazarus Ed., p. 20.

the object, and the contact with the object is direct. (2) Secondly, there must be a direct relation between the subject and the object. It occurs through a 'vṛtti' or modification of the *antaḥkaraṇa* which streams out to an object through a sense-channel and is determined by the external object but remains within the body when perception is of internal objects like pleasure and pain. The internal subject and the external object are situated in different places and the 'vṛtti' brings about an intimate relation between the two in such a manner that the object becomes identical with the subject, i.e. the *being* of the object ceases to be different from *that* of the subject.⁷ The previous existence of the external object is thus necessary for perception and Advaita Vedānta recognizes an epistemological realism in the matter of knowledge. And (3), thirdly the object should be such as can be directly known (*yogyā*). Merit, demerit and the like entities cannot be directly known since they are, by nature, imperceivable.

Mediate knowledge originates when the object lacks some of these conditions. Here the object cannot be identical with the subject. Mediate knowledge cognizes the bare existence of the object. The means of such knowledge is inference, testimony and others.

This description of knowledge refers to the waking state. But there are states of dream and dreamless sleep. The distinction between dream and waking state is that the senses are dormant in the former case, but they are active in the latter. Dreams are not mere revivals of past impressions. They may be described as 'perceptions without sensation'.⁸ In dream we actually experience existent objects that are created for the time. In this state consciousness of the gross body is reduced to a minimum⁹ and the self is practically free in creating objects along with the space and time which hold them within.¹⁰ In waking life the self always appears identified with the body and finds itself sense-bound; but in dream the self is more or less liberated from the shackles of the body. It is shut up within the charmed circle of its privacy and is free enough to conjure up things from within.

There is also a difference between dream and dreamless sleep. The internal organ alone functions in dream, but that also is merged in *ajñāna* in deep sleep. In this state the enduring elements are the *Sākṣin* and the *ajñāna*. There is neither the subject or the 'Caitanya' circumscribed by *antaḥkaraṇa* nor any state of consciousness concerning objects. There is only the *Sākṣi*-realization of the *ajñāna* and of the state of bliss which is inherent in the *Sākṣin* or the pure nature (*svarūpa*) of the self. The consciousness of the subtle body, through which conscious and willing activities are effected, lapses here altogether.¹¹ When a man rises from deep sleep, he says that he had a blissful sleep and that he was conscious of nothing (positive nescience). This knowledge is memory and memory can alone be of a presented datum. Therefore the blissful state and the consciousness of *nothing* must have been experienced before in '*susupti*' or deep sleep.

⁷ Vedāntā-paribhāṣā, Kṛṣṇanātha's Ed., p. 45.

⁸ Studies in Vedāntism by Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, Cal. Univ. Ed., p. 2.

⁹ Siddhāntabindu, Chow. Ed., p. 401.

¹⁰ Bhāmatī, N.S. Ed., p. 21.

¹¹ Pañcadaśī, 1.39 śloka.

A BRAHMOTTARA LAND GRANT OF A MUSLIM LANDLORD

By N. B. Roy

(Communicated by Dr. J. N. Banerji)

In course of a tour of the Malda district in search of old historical documents and English Records, I happened to trace out a number of Bengali *Sanads* at village Kaligram within Kharba Police Station of the above-mentioned district. Kaligram, lying within three miles of Cāncal Rājābāti, is a locality inhabited at present mostly by a cluster of Brahmin families. The Goswami Brahmins of this village maintained until lately a *Catuspathi* (a seminary of Sanskrit learning) and have in their houses images of black basalt and Radha-Kṛṣṇa installed for worship. Before the river Mahananda changed its course into the present bed, it flowed past Kaligram, turning this locality into an important mart with warehouses of foreign merchants, e.g. the Dutch.

The history of this locality in the middle of the seventeenth century is, however, shrouded in utter obscurity. The *Baharistan-i-Ghayebi* of Mirza Nathan testifies to Gaur and Pandua, the ancient capitals of Bengal, having been sunk in desolation. It appears, however, that a number of Muslim landlords were scattered throughout the district in that age, the representatives of whom are still to be found at Nurpur, within Manikchak Police Station and at Kotwali, on the outskirts of the present English Bazar (Malda) town. During Shah Jahan's reign, a Muslim *Jagirdar* was settled at Kaligram and the Brahmin families inhabiting the village have a vague memory of their ancestor having migrated to this village, under the persuasion of this chief, Sabdal Khan. There are certain Muslim families living by the side of the Hindus in Kaligram itself, but none of them claimed Sabdal Khan as having been their ancestor. No clue to this chief, Sabdal Khan, could be supplied by either the Nurpur or the Kotwali Zamindar. The family might be extinct or be surviving in the Muslim families resident in the village, without their knowing it. It is a well-known fact that Srimant Khan was patron of Kavikankan Mukundaram Chakravarty, as vouched for in the verse,

“সহায় শ্রীমন্ত খাঁন চণ্ডীবাটী যার গাঁ”

The Khan's descendants inhabiting at present the village of Damunyā, on the outskirt of Chandibati, had his memory lost in complete oblivion. A tank, however, bearing the name of *Chhemanta Pukur*¹ (ছেমন্তা পুকুর) still preserves his name. A stray verse in Bengali literature or an etymological hit like the above could only yield light upon such an obscure chief as Sabdal Khan. Sri Ramranjan Lahiri, President of the Kaligram Union Board, who kindly handed to me the bunch of *Sanads* could add nothing to the prevailing tradition current among his kinsmen that one of their ancestors was attracted to this village by the liberality of a Muslim landlord.

¹ The word 'ছেমন্তা' is an apabrahmsa for শ্রীমন্ত > হিমন্ত > ছামন্ত, etc.

Three of the *Sanads* now in my possession are *Brahmottara patra*, or deed of assignment of land to a Brahmin, made by the Muslim landlord Sabdal Khan. The present *Sanad* (document), being the oldest in my collection, was issued to Radhika Mohan Sarma, in A.D. 1654-55.

This *Sanad* bears the stamp of the Dinajpur Collectorate dated 1795 and is unquestionably as old as that date. A proof of its authenticity is the mixed vocabulary with which it is made up. Sanskrit words, words of Sanskrit origin, Persian and Arabic words are juxtaposed with each other¹ and a syntactical relation is set up between them. This hybrid character was the main characteristic of the Bengali literary style as found in documents during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This would be evident from random illustrations, Nos. 151, 472, 505, 582, from the *Chithipatre Samajchitra* by Sree Panchanan Mandal, published by the Visva-Bharati University.

Such a symbol as *āñji* and a combination of Hindu and Muslim supplicatory words are common in old Bengali letters. A similar grant of land made by a Muslim to a Brahmin is in the collection of Sri Panchanan Mandal of the Visva-Bharati University and in this document the donor solicits the Brahmin's benediction. This letter has been incorporated in the first volume of the *Chithipatre Samajchitra*, now in printing.

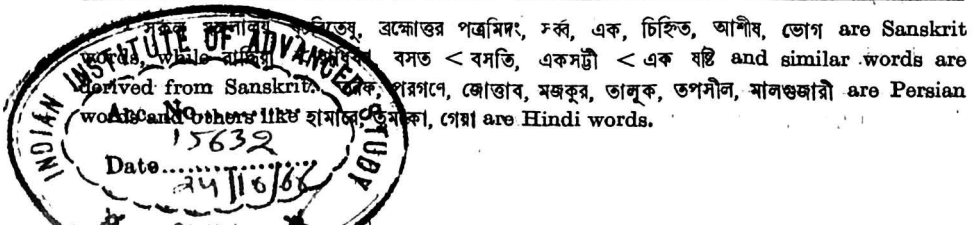
Any doubt as to the authenticity of this document should be dissipated by a comparison of this *Sanad* with letter No. 472 of *Chithipatre Samajchitra*, op. cit. Vol. II, which is so far the oldest land grant discovered in Bengal. The grant was made to Sivarām Chakravarty, son of Mukundarām Kavikankan. The features common in both are (i) the *Anji*, (ii) the absence of the name of the donee's father, (iii) the word 'Sree' before Shāhin Shāh and (iv) the use of Sanskrit and Persian words.

The importance of the document lies in its nature and content. It is a rare record of a Muslim chief granting land to a Brahmin in which the donor signs his name with the Sanskrit inflexion—*Sabdal Khānasya*. The document bears on the top the supplicatory words of *Sri Sri Ram*, while the word *Pādishāh-Jieu* shows the high honour paid to the ruler of the land.

Such a literary style blending harmoniously the Sanskrit with Persian words indicate, though very faintly, a type of composite culture that was built up in that age by Hindu-Muslim collaboration.

শ্রীশ্রীরাম:—

৭ সকল মঙ্গলালয় শ্রীরাধিকিয়া মোহন শর্মা যুচরিতেনু। ব্রহ্মোত্তর পত্রমিদং লিখনং কার্যকাগে তরফ কলীগ্রাম পরগণে বাকুলপুর জোত্তাব মালদহ সরকার জন্মতাবাদ পরগণে মজকুর হামারে তালুক ইসমে—তরফ মজকুরমে বসতবাষ সর্ব মবলগে—১/ এক বিঘা জমী তুমকো ব্রহ্মোত্তর দিয়া গেয়া ময়াফীক তপসীল চিহিত লে করকে আবাদনসে শ্রীশ্রীপাতসাজীওকো আশীষ করকে পুত্র পৌত্রাদীসে ভোগ করগে ইফা মালগুজারীসে এলাকা নাই এতদর্থে ব্রহ্মোত্তর পত্র দিয়া ইতি সন ১০৬১ এক হাজার একসত্তী সাল তারিখ ১৭ই চৈত্র ।



Sree Sree Ram

In the name of the Source of all Bliss.

To Radhya Mohan Sarma, bearing a good character. This is a document assigning grant of land in perpetuity to a Brahmin (Brahmottara-patram). I hold in proprietary right the *taraf* (circle) of Kaligram within the *pargana* (subdivision) of Bakulpur alias Malda lying in the *Sarkar* (district) of Jinnatabad and I grant you a total of one bigha of land in the above *taraf* as *brahmottara* for habitation and settlement. Have the plot marked out according to the schedule of record and let you, your sons and grandsons enjoy this land in hereditary succession, having asked for benediction to the ruler of the land (Padishah). Be it known that this land is rent-free. This deed of assignment of land to a Brahmin (Brahmottara-patram) is drawn to this effect, on the 17th day of Chaitra, San 1061/ April, A.D. 1654-55.
