

word *atha*, therefore, indicates that *after* acquiring these four, one should enter into an enquiry regarding Brahman]. The word '*atah*' means therefore, 'hence', and declares the reason of such enquiry: the reason will be mentioned hereafter. The *jijñāsū* means *jñatumichchā*, 'the desire to know, the desire to realize'; and consequently discussion or deliberation for that end.

The sense of the sūtra is this: Inasmuch as the ceremonial works, like agnihotra and the rest, are productive of transitory results only, whilst on the contrary, the knowledge of Brahman produces unending results, *therefore* (*atah*) renouncing all (ritual) works, and being possessed with the fourfold qualifications mentioned above, the person desirous of knowledge should enter into an enquiry about Brahman, by means of the six-fold methods of interpretation of the revealed Vedānta texts, in order to obtain direct knowledge of Brahman. As declares the sruti, "try to know that is Brahman (Tait. Up. III. 1. 1.)". The six-fold methods of interpretation have been described by ancient sages; they are, *upa-krama* or introduction, *upa-samhāra* or conclusion, *abhyāsa* or repetition, *apūrva-phala* or an original declaration, *arthāvāda* or descriptive or glorifying passages, and *upapatti* or argumentation, as contained in the following verse:

उपक्रमोपसंहारावम्यासोऽपूर्वताफलम् ।
अर्थवादोपपत्ती च लिङ्गतात्पर्यनिर्णयः ॥

Therefore this sūtra is a *Vidhi* or injunction, declaring that an enquiry should be made. Thus say the modern commentators.

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(To be continued).

RESPONSIBILITY, MAN'S OR GOD'S.

A CERTAIN friend of mine put to me the question, whether the theory that men are not responsible for their good or bad acts, but some Higher Power to whom they owe their existence, &c., is responsible, is tenable. If a Higher Power exists, is it or not responsible? I answered him thus:—

1. Responsibility arises where there is freedom of will to think or act. Thus, it is impossible to disunite responsibility from the agent thinking or acting. If therefore, he should think or act, but disown responsibility therefor he is false to himself. There is no greater delusion than the self-deceit a man of such disposition labours under.

2. It may be the fact that he derives his existence from some Higher Power, but this in itself cannot furnish a ground for vesting all responsibility in that source. With the derivation of existence, comes the derivation of responsibility. If derivation of existence involves the derivation of the capacity to think and act, responsibility goes with him who so thinks and acts.

3. The questions of monism and dualism are involved here. If the thinker and actor is desirous of transferring the responsibility of the thought and act to another Power, he must first think whether he is the same as that Power, or different from that Power. If he is the same, then there is no question of transference of responsibility. For there is not a second between whom and a first there is transfer. Then, the responsibility for thought and act remains with the same one person. If on the other hand, the thinker and actor is different from another Power, there is a division in the entity, there is a division in existence, and therefore a division in responsibility. For one part of a whole therefore to think and act, and another part to bear the responsibility therefor, is a fallacy of reasoning.

4. One may owe his existence to another Higher Power, but that does not entitle one to divest himself of responsibility. His existence may be derived, but with it comes also responsibility as derived. To give an illustration, a minister has powers conferred on him by a king; but this fact cannot justify the minister from not holding himself responsible for how he exercises those powers by his thoughts and acts. The right use of the powers—the *delegated* powers—entitles him to the reward, the wrong use of such powers subjecting him to punishment.

5. Then it stands to reason that if one is ready to resign responsibility to another, he must not think or act. The thought and act constitute the causes from which, as a consequence, comes the responsibility. In the thought, and in the act, inhere the responsibility. And therefore responsibility rests with the person with whom the thought or the act rests.

6. If one disowns thought and act as well as responsibility, then let him either deny himself, or identify himself with the other in whose favor he disowns. If there is denial of one's own self, then for one even to be able to think of the denial and act in accordance therewith is a contradiction of terms and a travesty on reason. So, denying oneself is an impossible operation. If he identifies himself with another, then there is no question of transferring responsibility from one shoulder to another, as already shown.

7. Responsibility for a thought or an act means the liability of the person who thinks or acts, to experience the consequences of the thought or act. To disown sequences, and own antecedents is like the denial of attributes to a substance. The attributes inseparably go with the substance; so does the consequence, *viz.*, the responsibility, of the thought or act go with the thought or act; in other words, the agent is responsible for the thought or act.

8. Thought or act cannot thus be disunited from its effect, responsibility. Responsibility carries with it the enjoyment of reward for a good act done, or the suffering of punishment for a bad act committed. If one is ready to disown responsibility for a bad act, he must be as willing to disown responsibility for a good act. In other words, he

must, if he owns responsibility, as willingly suffer punishment as enjoy reward. But if he is desirous of throwing off the punishment, he must throw off the reward as well. But what does human nature desire? As said in the verse ;

‘ Dharmasya phalam ichchanti
 ‘ Dharmam nechchanti mânavaḥ,
 ‘ Phalam pāpasya nechchanti
 ‘ Papam eva charanti te.’

human nature wisheth for the fruits of righteousness, but wisheth not to practice righteousness ; wisheth to do wickedness but wisheth not to reap the fruits of wickedness.

9 Bhagavad-Gitā and other Vedānta works, teach a man to think and act, but resign the fruits thereof. In this teaching there is no license given to wicked men to think and act wickedly. For the thoughts and acts one is asked to think and act are *good* thoughts and *good* acts. And it is the highest lesson of abnegation that is taught when one is asked to resign the fruits of all his good acts ; and the highest lesson of altruism when he is asked to resign such fruits in favor of another. Bhagavad Gitā or any other Vedānta thus does not accommodate itself to one who would think and act evilly and yet would willingly resign the fruits thereof !!

10. Granting that it is possible to fasten on to another, responsibility of acts done by one, he must be asked that when punishment for an evil act accrues to him either through the agency of man or of a Higher Power, whether he is prepared to suffer and at the same time believe that he is not the real sufferer, but the sufferer is the power with whom responsibility lies. If one has mentally risen to such a pinnacle of spiritual illumination that he never feels the tribulation which an evil act necessarily inflicts on him, then might he well exclaim, that inasmuch as *he* does not suffer, his responsibility for an evil act might rest in another.

11. Similarly, when a person does a good act, he must, while placing the responsibility therefor to the credit of another person, resign also the reward that follows the good act. Not only this, but that when happiness, as the result of a good act may happen to fall to his own lot, he must be able to say that he does not enjoy it, but only another is the enjoyer whom he thinks to be the bearer of the responsibility for an act which he has done.

12. The conclusion therefore is that as long as one thinks and acts, he cannot disavow responsibility which is inherent in the thought and the act. But if he would seek exoneration from all responsibility, let him be prepared neither to be rewarded for a good act, nor punished for a bad act. Only that saint can claim to assign responsibility to a Higher Power from whom he derives his origin, when he (the saint) is neither capable of enjoying under the smiles of fortune, nor capable of suffering under the strokes of misfortune. Till then, he would be a fool who

would disclaim responsibility, and yet would think and act according to his own individual whim.

13. Who those are whose interests are bound up with the Higher Power, and how far, commensurate with his spiritual progress, the reader is referred to the articles on Predestination and Free-will, contributed to the pages of the *Theosophist*, vol. 13, according to which, responsibility between man and the Higher Power—to whom he belongs—becomes divided in such proportions as the limit to which the man thinks he is capable of exercising his freedom of will, and beyond which he is not capable of exercising the same. There are thus two poles for responsibility. The one is the extreme where a man may consider himself absolutely free, and where therefore there is no question of any division of responsibility, inasmuch as the absolution of freedom in the man precludes the assumption of another Being, with whom his freedom can be in relativity, in other words, with whom responsibility is in shares. The other is the extreme where a man declares himself as entirely resigned to another Being, with whom will then rest absolute freedom, and therefore all responsibility. Between these two poles range all the variety of divisions of responsibility between man and another Higher Power. Some of these stages are mentioned in theological works as illustrations, or as illustrating the several stages in the journey between man absolute and God absolute. One of them is where a man thinks that it rests with him to try six times, in any endeavour, and leave the seventh to God:—

' Shadbhir Manushya Chintānam
' Saptamam Daiva-Chintanam.'

Another is where Bhagavad-Gītā for example, tells us there are the four causes required to produce an effect, viz. ;

- (1) *Adhishtānam* (the seat or field or material).
- (2) *Kartā* (the actor or agent).
- (3) *Karanam* (instrument).
- (4) *Oeshatā* (action).

and a fifth, above all, *Daivam* (The Unseen Power).

Another stage is what the Upanishad (†) tells us, that nothing, not even a blade of grass, can stir without him:—

' Tena vinātrinam apinachalati.'

14. Between man and God there is thus a gradation of responsibility; and between the most worldly man and the saint, there is a wide gulf. The amount as well as the kind of responsibility varies as the man progresses from worldliness to saintship. The highest saint is characterised by the quality of absolute resignation and surrender to God, in which his self is reduced to the utmost possible maximum of nothingness; whereas the atheist to whom God has no existence, is characterized by the quality of absolute egotism, and arrogation to himself of Godship, in which his self is all in all. Between these two poles can

be ranged all systems of philosophy, each assigning different degrees of responsibility between man and a Higher Power.

15. Leaving alone the saint and what his responsibilities are, it concerns us for the present to have a correct conception of responsibility so as to act as a moral guide in all our dealings with the world. Here we see that no one can divest himself of personal responsibility for an act originating from himself. Where an act is directed by another, the person being a mere agent or instrument of that act, becomes irresponsible. Take the case of a master and servant. If a servant acts on his master's account, the responsibility rests with the master. Take now the case of a father in a family and his children. The children have each a certain latitude of action, and yet the father is within certain limits responsible for their action. And yet, a bad son, cannot by an evil act of his, lay the responsibility thereof on the head of the father. So in a Government; where the Governor and the governed have each both independent responsibility and relative responsibility. The Governor is held primarily responsible for the acts of the governed, while the governed may be said to be secondarily responsible. The lower is judged by the higher, the higher in turn stands responsible to a higher still. So stretches the chain of responsibility. While each of the links has a divided responsibility of its own, it has a collective responsibility as a chain and a relative responsibility as between link and link. The Vedânta put to itself the question whether man has absolute freedom of will, and answered from a sruti, the Brihâdaranyopanishad, that man has freedom, but it is freedom subject to a Higher Power. This is the question discussed in the Brahma-Sûtra.

'Parât tu tachchruhe' (II-3-40),

and the passage of the Upanishad forming the subject-matter of this Aphorism is,

'Ya âtmânam antaro yamayati', or,

He who rules in the interior of the soul, meaning the Immanent Spirit who rules and guides all creatures. Orders are given by a Higher Power. It rests with creatures to carry them out. Either to carry out in accordance with orders, or to resist them, is given to the free-will of man. In the one case he is rewarded, in the other he suffers. According to the use he puts his given powers to, and in consonance with the code of directions given to him, he enjoys or suffers, and that is his responsibility, which he can neither shirk off from himself, nor throw on another.

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