CHAPTER NINE

CRITICISM OF THE SHAIVITES

In the fourth Quarter of the first chapter of the Brahma-Sūtras, full one Section, comprising of five aphorisms (23-27) is devoted to establish that Brahman is not only the efficient cause but is also the material cause of the world. Śaṅkara's reasons for the establishment of the same are summarised below.

Brahman has got to be taken as the material cause of the world also because (i) otherwise, the Shruti saying, that Brahman is all this and it is Its Knowledge that makes everything else known, will get contradicted. (ii) The Shruti says that Brahman itself "desired to be many". (iii) The Shruti calls it as the cause of origination, preservation and the dissolution of the world. (iv) The Shruti speaks of Brahman as having projected itself into all this. (v) It is regarded as the source of all.

The whole line of arguments has no value if the authority of Shruti is refused. Realising this, the Śitrakāra felt the need to refute independently those schools of Indian Scholarly Philosophers who maintain that the Lord is only the efficient cause of the world. Consequently, a new section is assigned for its discussion in the Tarka-Pāda of the Brahma-Sūtras.
Shamkara says that there are quite a number of schools of Indian Philosophy who advocate that the Lord is only the efficient cause. This theory appears under many forms.

1. Some of them, taking their stand on the lines of Sāṅkhya-Yoga tradition, say that the Lord merely controls the Pradhāna and the Puruṣas and as such it is the Efficient Cause only. Pradhāna, Puruṣas and the Controller are all three different in nature from each other. The material cause, according to them, is the Pradhāna. Secondly, the school of Maheshvaras recognises five categories: the Effect, the Cause, the Yoga, Rituals and the end of pain. They regard Pashupati as the efficient cause who taught the above five categories for the attainment of liberation. Thirdly, the Vaishēśikas and others of the same class attribute the Lord only the Efficient causality and regard atoms as the material cause.

After mentioning the above hypothesis of the opponent, Shamkara proceeds to refute thus: If the Lord were to be the efficient cause only, the creation of low, middle and the upper classes of human beings and other differences in their nature, would make Him partial and prejudiced. After all this variety can only be attributed to the Creator. Shamkara further points out that this conception reduces God to a mere ordinary man and this goes contrary to what is expected of a Lordly character. If, to avoid this difficulty, it
be said that God does so, considering merits and demerits of the human beings, then, Śaṅkara points out another difficulty to the opponent that actions of the persons and God's Will would have to be regarded as interdependent. God will no longer remain an entity that can act unconditionally. This difficulty may be met by saying that Law of Karman and the Will of God are beginningless and therefore, their interdependence should not amount to a defect. Śaṅkara protests by saying that the difficulty stands as before. Otherwise, adds Śaṅkara, our plight would not be better than that of a row of successive blind men.

Śaṅkara brings out another untenability in the opponent's conception of the Lord. Kanāda has said that defects cause all kinds of activities. A defectless person is never seen to engage himself in any sort of activity. Keeping this standard in view, we can say that even those who outwardly appear to be activated for the sake of others, are in reality motivated by some hidden self-interest. If God too is likewise imperfect, because He also engages Himself in activity, He would no longer be worthy of being recognised as a Lord.

The Yogins believe God to be a peculiar type of Puruṣa. He is characterised by absolute indifference. How

1. Vide Śaṅkara Bhāṣya on 2/2/37.
can then, he engage himself in activity and be the
efficient cause of the world if he is altogether an
undifferent spectator. Thus, the doctrine involves
apparent contradiction. If a thing is to be ruled by
another, it is necessary that both the things should
have the relation of Conjunction between them. This
conjunction can only take place between things that are
made up of parts. Neither the Lord is made up of parts,
nor the Pradhāna and the souls. They are infinite and
partless. Therefore, due to lack of conjunction, they
cannot be ruled by them. This relation between God and
the Pradhāna cannot be due to Inherence, because Inherence
can subsist between entities which are inseparably connected
as whole and part or substance and attribute.

The Vedāntins are saved from this difficulty, because
in the first place, the relation between Māyā and Brahman
is said to be inexplicable and in the second place, they
depend on Shruti while facing a controversial and conflicting
dispute. The verdict of the Shruti is accepted to be final
and beyond doubt. Therefore, they need not base their reasoning
entirely on the observed facts, as the opponent has to.
The opponent may say that the Lord directs and deals with the
Pradhāna as a potter does with clay. Śaṅkara says that
it is practically impossible. The Pradhāna does not possess
qualities and colour like clay and is not the object of
perception, therefore, it cannot be handled by the Lord and
moulded into this world as the clay may be.
It may be urged that Pradhâna may serve the operating basis of the Lord in the same way as the organs of sense, though devoid of colour and quality, and being imperceptible objects also, do serve as the basis for the working of the soul. The Vedântin replies, the soul is to conceived/be happy or sorrowful according as the results of the activities received through the organs of sense. This analogy, if applied in all its bearings to infer rulership of the Lord on the Pradhâna, would make the Lord the experiencer of sorrows and pains, as the soul does. This is obviously not acceptable to the opponent. If the opponent attributes a body to the Lord and says that He can rule the Pradhâna in the same manner as a king governs his kingdom, Shamkara replies that bodies come into being only after creation and not prior to it. So the Lord, whose instructions and planning is to result in the creation of the world, cannot be said to have His body prior to the creation of the world itself. And if the opponent's "request" be granted that the Lord possesses a body that He creates for Himself even before creation, He no longer remains the Lord because He is also like us, the embodied beings, who are subject to pleasure and pain.

The opponent assumes the Lord to be omniscient as well as infinite. In the same breath, he declares the character of the Pradhâna and the Puruṣas as infinite and differing from each other. To such a position Shamkara contemplates two alternatives. Either the Lord has measured the extents of the Pradhâna, Puruṣas and also of Himself or He did not measure
them. Sāmkara then shows that both these positions get contradicted in the light of the tenets of the opponent as narrated above:-

We see in our day-to-day life that all measured things are non-eternal, just as the jars etc. are. Hence there arises the defect of making the Pradhāna and the Puruṣas impermanent because they would be limited by measurement. Though the number of souls is innumerable, but still it is limited from the point of view of the Omniscient Lord. Its proof is that the souls are released gradually turn by turn. Thus a time will come when all of them are released, the Sansāra will no longer exist. Consequently, Pradhāna etc. who had modified themselves in the form of this world would also come to an end. Then there remains nothing for the Lord to rule! Poor God is rendered jobless by these over-rationalists! It is as good as saying God has also met his fatal end! If our friend, the opponent, becomes unhappy over these unpleasant conclusions and suggests not to suppose that God measured Pradhāna etc., then it may be pointed out to him that God will be deprived of his characteristic of Omniscience.

Thus the Section, comprising of the 37 to 41 Aphorisms of the Tarka-Pāda is mainly directed against the Mahāshāvaras. One gets interested why the Sītrakāra thought to put the criticism against the Shaivite systems immediately after the criticism of the Jainas? Ratnaprathā makes an
It may be noted in passing that Śaṅkara's attack does not apply to the Dravidian and Kashmirin Schools of Shaivism. Śaṅkara criticises only those schools of Shaivism which do not recognise monism. Earlier Āgamas give more prominent place to Shakti, the wife of Shiva, than to Shiva himself. This tendency was taken to the extreme, with the result it led to the origin and development of some compromised state where Shiva and his "consort" denote one and the same thing. The Dravidian and the Kashmirin schools are mainly of this type.

In the light of reasons narrated above, the doctrine of argumentative philosophers who maintain that the Omniscient Lord is the operative cause of the world, is untenable.

It will be observed that the refutation is not exclusively devoted towards the criticism of the Pashupatas. For example, the point pertaining to the nature of Puruṣas is clear criticism of the Sāṅkhya which believes in the existence of God.

Śaṅkara's refutation of "Sānyoga" does not seem to be connected with the criticism of the Pashupatas. Sānyoga is primarily a Nyāya concept. This may probably be the reason why the concerned Śūtra is not given in the Śītrapātha as maintained by Rāmānuja, Śrīkantha and Bhaṭṭāraka. In fact,
Srikantha has even said that the refutation covering this Section should not be taken to be employed against the Pāshupata system. It is rather directed against the Seshvara Yoga as propounded by Hiranyagarbha. But Śaṅkara seems to have thought of this criticism as to be applicable to all those schools of Indian Philosophy which unanimously hold Lord to be the Efficient cause only and not the material cause too. To quote S.K.Belvalkar's amusing words: "Śaṅkarācārya himself makes it a rather general refutation, so that anybody may wear the cap whom it fits".

The arguments of the present refutation are not quite sound. At some places, they may even be shown to be fallacious. The inference of smoke and fire may be taken as its illustration. We may have used a fan to kindle the fire in the kitchen. For that reason, we cannot infer that the fire inferred on the mountain (due to the perception of the smoke) must have a fan. The Kalpataruparimala explains this fact in such a manner as it does not bring any discredit to Śaṅkara. That the system cannot meet even these weak arguments shows that the system in itself is very weak and immature.

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The Shaivas give a very important place to their Agamas. They accord equal status to the Agamas and the Vedas. They substantiate their view thus: The Vedas are general in nature, but the Agamas are works suited for particular cases. Therefore, the authority of the Vedas has to be subordinated if there is a conflict between the verdicts of the Vedas and the Agamas. That Śaṅkara is silent over this issue may be justified by saying that such a belief might not be prevalent in Śaṅkara's times.

1 Vide Śrīkantha on 2/2/36.