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HINDI

कबीर — एक समाजशास्त्रीयविवेचन

— Sri Bimal Chand Jain ...

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TEXTS AND STUDIES

नारदमुनिप्रणीता गजशिक्षा उमापत्याचार्यविरचितन्याक्ति-
टिप्पणीसहिता

— Edited by Dr. F.R. Sreekrishna Sarma ... 1-82

KAMALESWAR BHATTACHARYA

ON THE BRAHMAN IN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

Since T. W. Rhys Davids¹, several scholars have expressed the opinion that 'the neuter Brahman is entirely unknown in the Nikāyas'. Some scholars, in their overenthusiasm to prove the Upaniṣadic character of early Buddhism, have, on the contrary, seen *brahman* where, in reality, *Brahmā* is spoken of. These fantastic theories have justly been condemned, but their critics ignore the numerous texts of the Pāli Canon which mention, beyond doubt, the neuter *brahman*². Some, again, while admitting that the latter is attested in the Pāli Canon, think that it is used in a sense different from that in which it is used in the *Upaniṣads*: 'das Heilige, Göttliche, Gute'. Even Wilhelm Geiger, who contributed so much to the elucidation of this problem, did not admit that the Buddha was using the term *brahman* in the Upaniṣadic sense. On the contrary, he thought that the Buddha gave it 'eine besondere Färbung, eine neue Beleuchtung'. The very term *dharma* / *dhmma* which the Buddha

1. *Dialogues of the Buddha* I (= *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, edited by F. Max Müller, vol. II, London 1899, reprint: (1956) p. 298.
2. Cf. E. J. Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought* (London 1951, reprint: 1953), p. 87; Hajime Nakamura, "Upaniṣadic Tradition and the Early school of Vedānta as noticed in Buddhist Scripture", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18 (1955), p. 77. Cf. also different translations, and *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* (reprint: 1959), p. 336a, 1.20 from bottom.
3. Thus H. Von Glasenapp, *Vedānta und Buddhismus* (= *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz: Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse*, 1950, NR. 11) pp. 12-13 (1022-1023), criticizing J. G. Jennings, *The Vedāntic Buddhism of the Buddha* (London 1947).
4. Paul Horsch, "Buddhismus und Upaniṣaden", in *Pratidānam* (= *Festschrift F. B. J. Kueper*, The Hague-Paris 1968), p. 469.
5. W. Geiger, *Dhamma und Brahman* (*Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Buddhismus* II, München-Neubiberg 1921), p. 4.

borrowed from the past, and with which *brahman* is not seldom equated in the Pāli Canon, has, according to Geiger, a new signification with the Buddha: 'das ehrwürdige Gefäß, das er mit neuem Inhalt füllte'. The Buddha's purpose, thought Geiger, was to replace the idea of *brahman* with that of *dhmma*, i.e. to replace the idea of eternity with that of change⁷.

A preliminary note on this last point seems necessary here. It is indeed usually thought that while the *Upaniṣads* teach the idea of an eternal Being, Buddhism, on the contrary, teaches a perpetual becoming, and that the famous 'eternalism' (*śāśvatavāda* / *sassatavāda*, *śāśvatadrṣṭi* / *sassatadiṭṭhi*), which the Buddha condemns, refers to the Upaniṣadic doctrine. It cannot, however, be overlooked that, according to this 'eternalism', eternity is but the unending continuation of time, whether in this world or in another world⁸; whereas, according to the *Upaniṣads*, eternity is nothing short of timelessness⁹. Whether you call it *brahman* or otherwise, Buddhism also acknowledges a timeless eternal Being: I mean the *Nirvāṇa* / *Nibbāna*. As Buddhaghosa says: *appabhavattā ajarāmarañam*; *pabhavajarāmarañānam abhāvato niccam*¹⁰.

So far as I am concerned, I have no doubt that the Buddha accepted the *ātman* as taught in the *Upaniṣads*. By his famous doctrine of *anattā* he denied, indeed, a certain conception of *ātman*; but that conception has nothing to do with the Upaniṣadic teaching concerning the *ātman*. The *ātman* / *attan* that is denied by the *anattā* concept is the psychophysical individual composed of the five *skandhas* / *khandhas*; and the Buddha condemned this conception of *ātman* because it was the most popular in his time. As a passage of the *Samyutta-Nikāya* clearly states:

6. *ibid.*

7. Cf. M. & W. Geiger, *Pāli Dhamma* (= *Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse*, XXXI. Band I. Abhandlung, München 1920), p. 7.

8. Cf. K. Bhattacharya, *L' Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien* (= *Publications de l' Ecole française d' Extrême-Orient*, vol. XC. Paris 1973), p. 14, n. 7.

9. Cf. *ibid.* p. 15, n. 1.

10. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* (ed. Warren-Kosambi, *Harvard Oriental Series* 41), XVI, 71. Cf. *Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary*, s. v. *nibbāna*, p. 364. See also Vidhuśekhara Bhattacharya, *Gauḍapādīyam Āgamaśāstram*, (University of Calcutta, 1950), *Avataraṇikā*, pp. 92-93.

*ye hi keci samaṇā vābrāhmaṇā vā anekavihiṭṭam attānaṃ samanupassamānā samanupassanti, sabbe te pañcupādānakkhandhe samanupassanti, estesam vā annataram*¹¹. It is with reference to the five *khandhas* that the Buddha says: *n' etaṃ mama, n' eso 'ham asmi, na m' eso attā*, 'This is not mine I am not this, this is not my *ātman*'. Nowhere does he say: 'There is no *ātman*'. The Buddha condemns, indeed, all theories about the *ātman* (*ātmavāda* / *attavāda*) or rather, all 'clinging' to theories about the *ātman* (*attarādupādāna*); but that is quite in tune with the spirit of the *Upaniṣads*: the *ātman* - the Absolute - is beyond thought and its expression in language (*yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasa saha*)¹²; it can only be spoken of in negative terms: *neti, neti...*, 'Not thus, not thus...'¹³.

It is sometimes said that although the texts that have been used prove that the Buddha did not deny the Upaniṣadic *ātman*, or even that he accepted it, there are others, thousands of others, which prove just the opposite. Well, since the names of those texts have not been revealed so far, I will stick to my position until it is proved wrong. It is true that the scholastic tradition interprets the teaching of the Buddha in this respect in a purely negative sense; but, if a scientific study of the teachings of the Buddha is our ideal, we need not blindly follow this tradition, however venerable it may be¹⁴. Even such a great scholar as E. Frauwallner - who is, I think, beyond all suspicion of heresy, spoke of 'die einseitige negative Formulierung seiner Aussagen'¹⁵. And I do not see why we should give more credence to this negative formulation than to such positive formulations as those given by *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, the authors of the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Nairātmya-paripṛcchā*, and by Vasubandhu, the author of the *Viṃśatikā*¹⁶.

Now to come to our point, the neuter *brahman* is frequently mentioned in the Pāli Canon as the highest goal of spiritual life. In

11. *Samyutta-Nikāya* XXII, 47 (vol. III, p. 46 in Pāli Text Society's edition).

12. *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* II, 4 & 9.

13. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* II, 3, 6; III, 9, 26; IV, 2, 4, ; 4, 22; 5, 15. For a fuller discussion of all this cf. *L' Ātman-Brahman...especially chapter I*.

14. Cf. *L' Ātman-Brahman...pp. 64 ff., 75 ff.*

15. E. Frauwallner, *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* (Berlin 1969) p. 63.

16. *L' Ātman-Brahman...pp. 3ff.; p. 33, n. 4; pp. 66. 68.*

several texts we find this formula: *so anattantapo aparantapo diṭṭhe va dhamme nicchāto nibbuto sītibhūto sukhapaṭisaṃvedī brahmabhūtena attanā viharati*¹⁷. The *Samyutta-Nikāya*, in one passage, says of the Arahants: *loke anupalitta te brahmabhūta anāsava*¹⁸.

There is no doubt here that the *brahman* is equated with the *Nirvāṇa*. If a more explicit proof is needed, it will also be found. A verse attributed to Udāyi-Thera¹⁹ reads as follows:

*manussabhūtaṃ sambuddhaṃ attadantaṃ samahitaṃ |
iriyamānaṃ brahmapathe cittass' upasame rataṃ ||*

Now it is significant that one of the manuscripts of the *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* inserts, after *brahmapathe*, the gloss *amatapathe*. As Geiger already pointed out²⁰, this clearly proves the equivalence: *brahman*=*Nirvāṇa* (*amata*=Sanskrit *amṛta*).

Let us remember, in this connection, that the *Bhagavadgītā* (II, 72; V, 24-26) uses the expression *brahmanirvāṇa* and that the same text has (VI, 38): *vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi*²¹.

The expression *brahmabhūta*, often along with *dhammabhūta*, is also found in many other texts of the Pāli Canon. Thus, in the *Aggañña-Sutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya*, the Buddha is called '*Dhammakāya* or *Brahmakāya*', '*Dhammabhūta* or *Brahmabhūta*' (*dhammakāyo iti pi brahmakāyo iti pi, dhammabhūto iti pi brahmabhūto iti pi*)²².

17. *Dīgha-Nikāya* (Pali Text Society's edition) III, pp. 232-233; *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, pp. 341, 411-412; II, p. 159; *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* II, p. 206, *Puggalapaññatti*, p. 56. Cf. *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* I, p. 197. - M. & W. Geiger, *Pāli Dhamma*, p. 77; W. Geiger, *Dhamma und Brahman*, p. 5; K. Bhattacharya, *L' Ātman-Brahman...* p. 79.

18. *Samyutta-Nikāya* (Pali Text Society's edition) III, p. 83. - Cf. *L' Ātman-Brahman...* pp. 73, 79, n. 3.

19. *Theragāthā* 689; *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* III, p. 346.

20. *Dhamma und Brahman*, pp. 4-5. Cf. *Pāli Dhamma*, p. 77.

21. For more details of *L' Ātman Brahman...*, p. 91. n. 2.

22. *Dīgha-Nikāya* III, p. 84, - Cf. *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, p. 111; III, pp. 195, 224; *Samyutta-Nikāya* IV, p. 94; *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* V, pp. 226, 256; *Itivuttaka*, p. 57; *Suttanipāta* 561, 563 (= *Theragāthā* 831, 833); *Paṭisambhidānagga* II, p. 194; *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, pp. 82-83.

The Buddha, we are told, is 'one who has attained the *brahman*' (*brahmapatta*)²³. This is, of course, the same as *brahmabhūta*²⁴, 'become *brahman*'; for attaining the *brahman* (*brahmapatti*)²⁵. And the discipline that leads to it is called *brahmacariya* (= Sanskrit *brahmacarya*)²⁶.

There are other passages also, in the Pāli Canon, where *brahman* is used as a synonym of *dhamma*: for instance, *dhammacakka*: *brahmacakka*²⁷; *brahmayāna*: *dhammayāna*²⁸; *dhammacariya*: *brahmacariya*²⁹.

Against an opinion orally expressed to me by more than one scholar, I should like to note here that the *Brahmavihāras* do not refer to the neuter *brahman* but to the personal Brahmas (according to Buddhism there are several of them)³⁰. Sometimes we also find in the Pāli Canon the expressions *brahmappatta*, *brahmapatti*, *brahmapatha*, which refer to the Brahmas³¹.

23. *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, p. 386. - Cf. *brahmaprāpta*: *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* VI, 18.

24. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* IV, 4, 6. Śaṅkara, in his comment on this passage, uses the expression *brahmabhūta*. Cf. also Śaṅkara on *Bhagavadgītā* XVIII, 54: *brahmabhūta*=*brahmaprāpta*. - The expression *brahmabhūta* is not yet found in the early *Upaniṣads*,—but it is several times found used in the *Bhagavadgītā* (V, 24; VI, 27; XVIII, 54). Cf. *brahmabhūta*: XIV, 26, XVIII, 53. For other references see *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 82, n. 2.

25. *cittaṃ ca susamāhitaṃ vipasannaṃ anāvilam |
akhilaṃ sabbabhūtesu so maggo brahmappattiyaṃ ||* *Samyutta-Nikāya* IV, p. 118. - *maggo brahmappattiyaṃ*; cf. *brahmaprāptimārga* by which Śaṅkara explains *brahmaṇaḥ pathi* in *Bhagavadgītā* VI, 38.

26. *Samyutta-Nikāya* I, p. 169 (*gāthā*). - Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* VIII, 4, 3; 5.

27. *Majjhima-Nikāya* I, pp. 69ff.; *Samyutta-Nikāya* II, p. 27; *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* II, pp. 9, 24 (= *Itivuttaka*, p. 123); III, pp. 9, 417; V, p. 33; *Paṭisambhidāmagga* II, p. 174. - Geiger, *Pāli Dhamma*, pp. 77-78; *Dhamma und Brahman*, p. 6; K. Bhattacharya, *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 91 with n. 3.

28. *Samyutta-Nikāya* V, p. 5.

29. *Suttanipāta* 274. Cf. *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 92.

30. Cf. *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, pp. 80, n. 5 (p. 81), 150, n. 8 (p. 151). Cf. also *Brahmā ti mātāpitara* (*Āṅguttara-Nikāya* I, p. 132) with Buddhaghosa's explanation in *Manorathapūraṇi* II, p. 204.

31. *ibid.* p. 90, nn. 4, 6, 8.

I must confess that I fail to understand why the Buddhist usage of the term *brahman*, as outlined above, should be regarded as different from the Upaniṣadic usage of it. If the reason is the equivalence *brahman*=*dharmā*, then it will be observed that this equivalence has its antecedents in the *Upaniṣads*³². Geiger saw an opposition between the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism in the *Samyutta* verse³³:

*etad attaniyam bhūtaṃ brahmayānaṃ anuttaraṃ |
niyyanti dhirā lokamhā aññadatthu jayaṃ jayaṃ ||*

But Geiger's arguments³⁴-questionable in themselves-are contradicted today by the correct reading: *attani sambhūtaṃ* instead of *attaniyam bhūtaṃ*. The 'brahman-vehicle' (*brahma-yāna*), i.e. the vehicle that leads to the *brahman*, the highest goal, 'has its origin in the *ātman*' (*attani sambhūtaṃ*); in other words, there is no 'vehicle' that leads to the *brahman*, as if it were something beyond and above ourselves. We have here the pure Upaniṣadic idea of the identity of the *ātman* and the *brahman*³⁵. This is also the idea behind the formula quoted above: *brahmabhūtena āttanā viharati*. It is not, indeed, the individual *ātman* (which is, in reality, non-*ātman*, *anātman*³⁶) that is identical with the *brahman*; here individual consciousness is transcended in the universal and infinite consciousness, in which there is no "I", as is clearly stated by some texts of the Pāli Canon also, true to the spirit of the *Upaniṣads*³⁷.

Now if we turn to the scholastic interpretation, we find that it is of no avail. The neuter *brahman* is completely ignored by Buddhaghosa and his followers. It is true that they explain *brahman* by *seṭṭha* 'the highest'. But we should not think, with Geiger³⁸, that by 'the highest'

32. See *ibid.* pp. 92-93, 95, n. 4.

33. *Samyutta-Nikāya* V, p. 6.

34. *Dhamma und Brahman*, pp. 6-7; cf. *Pāli Dhamma*, pp. 78-79.

35. See on this point *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 91, n. 4.

36. In this sense, the term *anātman* is used in Vedānta. Note that, according to the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* (II, 7), the *brahman-ātman* is *anātmya*, and that according to the *Maitrī* (II, 4; VI, 20, 21, 28), it is *nirātman*, *nirātmaka*. In all these texts, the term *ātman* designates the psychophysical individuality whose negation is the true *ātman*. The *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra* and the commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* have the same idea. See *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, pp. 69-70. See also pp. 72-73.

37. *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, pp. 53-54. See also p. 73.

38. *Pāli Dhamma*, p. 77, n. 3; *Dhamma und Brahman*, p. 8.

they understand the neuter *brahman*, which is really the highest; by this term they understand the personal Brahmas, as is clearly evidenced, for instance, by *Visuddhimagga* IX, 106 (= *Atthasālinī* §428)³⁹. And this is not the only aberration that we notice in the commentaries of Buddhaghosa⁴⁰.

In later Sanskrit Buddhist literature, the neuter *brahman* is hardly mentioned. Remarkable, however, are *Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra* III, 26, and *Mañjuśrī-Nāmasaṃgīti*⁴¹. A passage from the commentary on the *Arthaviniscaya-Sūtra*, recently edited by N. H. Samtani⁴², is worth considering here. On page 81 of this text we read: *brahmacaryaṃ nirvāṇa-prāpako 'nāsrāvo mārgaḥ. nirvāṇaṃ brahmocyate, paramapradhānatvāt. kuta etat? 'ity api sa bhagavān śāntaḥ śitibhūto brahmībhūta', iti sūtrāt*. Here *brahmacarya* is called 'the pure path that leads to *Nirvāṇa*' an idea that we have already noticed above. And, in support of this idea, our text cites a *sūtra* which recalls the formula that is found in several texts of the Pāli Canon⁴³. But, when it says: *nirvāṇaṃ brahmocyate, paramapradhānatvāt*, does it mean the neuter *brahman*? The editor writes: "Expl. of *brahma* as *nirvāṇa* is remarkable. In Buddhaghosa's various interpretations, identity of *brahma* and *nirvāṇa* is not clearly stated, although *brahma* is considered to be something 'highest' (*seṭṭhatṭhena*) ...". Evidently the same confusion is made here as that which Geiger made, being misled by the word *seṭṭha*. And nothing, it seems to me, indicates that the author of our text has in mind the *brahman* rather than Brahman: his *parama* seems to designate the same thing as Buddhaghosa's *seṭṭha*.

39. *L' Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 80. (In a future article I propose to study the different interpretations of *Brahma* given in the Pāli commentaries).

40. See *ibid.* pp. 123 ff.

41. *ibid.* pp. 95, n. 3. and 150, n. 1. - In Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* V, 15 (*cittasya brahmatādikam* [= *brahmabhūyadikam*, *Pañjikā*] *phalam*), Brahman seems to be meant.

42. *The Arthaviniscaya-Sūtra & its commentary (Nibandha)*, Patna, K. P. Jayswal Research Institute, 1971 (*Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series XIII*).

43. The form *brahmībhūta* (besides *brahmabhūta*) is sometimes found in Vedānta literature also; thus Śaṅkara, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* I, 3, 15.

This is, then, the fate of *brahman* in Buddhism. As it has been pointed out⁴⁴, in contradistinction to the *Upaniṣads* themselves, the Pāli Canon is free from the confusion between *brahman* and *Brahmā*⁴⁵. But, in later literature, *brahman* becomes, in general, *Brahmā*!. And, for modern times, A. Barth recorded long ago: “*Il est, je crois, à peu près certain que la confusion que fait M. Leclère entre le brahman impersonnel; l’Être absolu de la philosophie hindoue et les Brahmās des mondes célestes...est faite au Cambodge par les budhistes eux-mêmes, par les bonzes les plus lettrés et, à d’autres égards, parfaitement orthodoxes*”⁴⁶.

44. *L’Ātman-Brahman...*, p. 151.

45. On Buddha = *Brahmā*, cf. *ibid.* pp. 149 ff.

46. *Oevres de Auguste Barth II* (Paris 1914), p. 372.

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INDIA’S NAME IN EARLY FOREIGN SOURCES*

The earliest preserved name of ‘India’ is very probably the Sumerian toponym *Me-luh-ha*, originally perhaps read *Me-lah-ha*¹. In the cuneiform texts of the late third and early second millennia B.C. *Meluhha* denotes the farthest off foreign country known to the Mesopotamians of those times. The geographical hints to its location, the references to *Meluhhan* ships coming to Mesopotamia, as well as the nature of the trade goods mentioned all combine to suggest the identity of *Meluhha* with the Indus civilization: some 30 seals inscribed with the Indus script found at various Western Asiatic sites—including the islands of Bahrain and Failaka in the Persian Gulf—prove beyond any doubt that the Harappans played an active role in the international maritime trade in that period. By contrast, no evidence of this kind is available in these early times for Mesopotamian contacts with Nubia, which is called *Meluhha* in the cuneiform sources of the second half of the second millennium and later. The majority of scholars involved in the study of the *Meluhhan* problem nowadays regard the Harappan solution most likely: with the collapse of the Indus civilization the Indian trade stopped, and the location of the original *Meluhha* was forgotten. Later, the name was transferred to a different country (Nubia) reminiscent of the ancient descriptions of *Meluhha*, such as its being the source of ivory imported to Mesopotamia, etc.²

C. J. Gadd proposed that Sanskrit *mleccha* ‘(non-Vedic-Aryan) barbarian’ may be a survival of the original Indian name from which Sumerian *Meluhha* was derived. On the basis of the meaning and geo-

* I am much obliged to my brother, Dr. Simo Parpola, for his kind help with regard to the Near Eastern material.

1. See A. & S. Parpola, “On the relationship of the Sumerian toponym *Meluhha* and Sanskrit *mleccha*”, *Studia Orientalia* 46, 1975, 205–238: 223 f.

2. For a select bibliography see *ibid.* 207.