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A NOTE ON RATNAGOTRAVIBHĀGA I. 52 = BHAGAVADGĪTĀ XIII. 32

by

V. V. GOKHALE

Ferguson College, Poona

The problem concerns the exact relationship between Buddhism and the early Vedānta. As has been no means been yet solved. In the Foreword to his edition of The Ratnagotrabhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra (Patna, 1950), Johnston has pointed out the close parallelism existing between the Tathāgatagarbha theory, propounded therein at great length, and the ātman theories of the Gaudapādākārikā and other Vedantic works (p. xii). In this connection, I may call special attention to the stanza: Ratna. I. 52, whose identification with Bhagavadgītā XIII. 32, perhaps yet unnoticed, may throw some additional light on the subject. This stanza in Ratna. (p. 42) runs as follows:

yatā sarvagatam saukmyād ākāśam nopalipayate / sarvatrāvasthitah sattve tathāyam nopalipayate // (f. 52)

Here the first line is identical with the uniform version of the Bhagavadgītā (Bh. G.); the second line, however, contains a significant variant, which deserves to be closely examined. Instead of sattve tathāyam (Johnston’s ed.) in Ratna., the Bh. G. reads deha tathātma (according to the critical text, accepted by the B.O.R.I., Poona, 1945).

The fact noted by Johnston (op. cit. p. x), viz., that we have in the Ratna. a certain number of karitas supplemented by other verses, either explaining them in detail or illustrating them by similes from the sūtra literature, combined with the commentator’s characterization of the main text as a ‘ślokāsthāsamgraha’, makes it probable, that the above stanza was taken by the author, —the somewhat mysterious Maitreyanātha to whom the work has been attributed,—from some Buddhist canonical source. We find the meaning of this stanza couched in different phraseologies in Ratna. I. 49 (p. 41) and again in another stanza quoted from an older source by the commentator while explaining I. 146—147 (p. 71). We therefore need not assume here any direct borrowing from a non-Buddhistic source like the Bh. G.

On the other hand, Bh. G. XIII. 32 has already been picked out by R. Garbe (Die Bhagavadgītā, Leipzig, 1905, p. 132) as a sign of the later ‘Vedantization’ of the original Gītā. Garbe’s suspicions seem to be confirmed by Rāma-

1 Besides the stanza discussed in the present note, we find several other instances of identical phraseology, as between Ratna. and the Bh. G., out of which the one between Ratna. II. 38 (p. 85) and Bh. G. X.19 (by the way, also fallen under Garbe’s suspicion) may be noted specially for a similar metrical peculiarity (See Johnston, op. cit. p. x).