

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

by

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The problem concerning the exact relationship between Buddhism and the early Vedānta has by no means been yet solved. In the Foreword to his edition of *The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyanottaratantrasāstra* (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 Gaudapāda-kārikā 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:

yathā sarvagataṃ sauṣṣmyād ākāśaṃ nopalipyate /  
sarvatrāvasthitaḥ sattve tathāyaṃ nopalipyate // (I. 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 tathāyaṃ* (Johnston's ed.) in Ratna., the Bh. G. reads *dehe tathātmā* (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 *kārikās* 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 'ślokārthasaṃgraha', makes it probable, that the above stanza was taken by the author,—the somewhat mysterious Maitreya-nātha 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 borrowal 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-

kaṇṭha (9th century A. D.), the author of a commentary, called Sarvatobhadra, on the Kashmirian recension of the Bh. G. (ed. by T. R. Chintamani, Madras, 1941), who, while commenting upon Bh. G. XIII. 32 (*op. cit.* p. 381), quotes in support of his interpretation an old stanza found in the Gauḍapāḍakārikā (cf. *The Āgamaśāstra of Gauḍapāda*, III. 5, p. 51. -ed. by V. Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1943) after introducing it with the words : *tathā cōktam Brahmavidā kenacit*, thus suggesting that the present stanza, i. e., Bh. G. XIII. 32, also had its origin in the literature of the Brahmaavid (or Vedavid, Aupaniṣadika, etc. as the early Vedantists were called). Let it be noted further, that according to the B.O.R.I. ed. of Bh. G. one Devanāgarī codex omits the whole of this stanza, while another Devanāgarī codex is found to omit just the second half of it containing a variant: *dehi* (supported by another Devanāgarī codex and two Malayālam codices), which, perhaps as a *lectio difficilior*, came to be changed later into *dehe*.

To return to the stanza as edited in the Ratna., the reading *sattve* adopted by Johnston against the evidence of his ms. B, which reads *satvo*, is hardly justifiable. Because, although Johnston thinks otherwise, the ms. reading : *satvo*, is found to be very well supported by the Tibetan version. For the second line of the stanza, the Derge ed. of Tenjur (Sems-tsam, Phi, fol. 97 a<sup>o</sup>) reads : de. bshin sems. can thams. cad. la / gnas ḥdi ñe. bar gos. pa med //. The Chinese version does not offer a literal translation; yet we find a word meaning *Buddhatvam* in place of *satvo* (Shanghai ed. fol. 113 a). Besides, if we emend *satvo* to *sattve*, the whole sentence is left only with the pronoun : *ayam* as the subject, with no indication as to what this demonstrative pronoun stands for. And again, as pointed out above, this *satvo* has its remarkable counterpart in *dehi* (supported by some versions of the Bh. g.), which, to suit the needs of a 'Vedantization', may have been later changed into *dehe*, along with the substitution of *ātmā* for *ayam*.

I therefore venture to suggest, that the Ratna. reading : *satvo tathāyam*, which, come as it does in the midst of a description of the *satvadhātu*, fits in with the context, is probably the older one. It is known, that different terms for describing a certain subtle, persistent reality in the universe, like *satva*, *pudgala*, *jīva*, *ātman*, etc., with different shades of meaning, were in vogue among the early Indian philosophers. Ratna. admits according to the context various terms for expressing this reality, like *tathāgatagarbha*, *dharmakāya*, *satvadhātu* or *satva* (as in the present stanza,) while one of the corresponding terms used in the Bh. G. is the Vedantic word : *ātman*. It is the misuse of these terms, which we find echoed in the warning, attributed to the Blessed One : ' *Nāstīha satva ātmā vā dharmās tvete sahetukāḥ* /' (cf. *Madhyamakavṛtti* (Bibl. Bud. IV), p. 355 etc.).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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. XI. 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).