

CHAPTER XXV.

THE METAPHYSIC OF KRIYĀ IN PRACTICE.

Existence and Non-Existence.

Resumé?—Distinction between *kriyā* and *karma*.—*Karma*, the manifestation of the strongest desire.—Strongest desire makes character, *sva-bhāva*, for the time.—*Sva-bhāva*, not a pure unity, but a unity in diversity, in the individual as well as the Universal.—Metaphysical considerations.—Their application to practice.—*Vārtā*, mutual commerce, the embodiment of the constant endeavor of the one to encompass the all.—Knowledge and speech as action and reaction.—The Science of *Brahman*, the final and all-comprehensive 'commerce'.—Even the unbeliever unconsciously believes in this Thread of Continuity, of unity in diversity, the Universal Self or Consciousness.—Metaphysical reconciliation of change and changelessness, motion in motionlessness, action out of the actionless.—Existence and non-existence, plenum and vacuum, ever and never, inseparable in the Absolute.—Nature of the illusion of succession, growth and decay.—Growth and activity of *Mahā-Viṣṇu*.—The meaning of omniscience.—The destined progress of all *jīvas* to the status of *Mahā-Viṣṇu*.

THE METAPHYSIC OF KRIYĀ IN PRACTICE. 327

In the preceding chapters we have examined the nature of *kriyā* and of *karma*. It may be repeated here that that which is most desired of the Self—that is *karma*. In other words we do only that which we most desire to do. The strongest motive, the most powerful desire, pushes the others aside and finds vent for itself in outward act. Therefore the essence of *karma* is *sva-bhāva*, 'own-being,' nature, character. (Our character, at any given time, is constituted by our deepest desire).¹ But to this it

¹ See *The Science of the Emotions*, chapter vii. The student who examines these sentences closely will make a pleasant discovery of how the opposed views, 'antinomies of the reason,' regarding predestination and free exertion, ingrained character and ability to change it, ruling passion and overruling will, merge into each other, as usual, and are reconciled, along the lines of psycho-philology. The word *karma*, it will have been noticed, is used in various senses, of course allied with each other. Any particular action of a living being is a *karma*. Any movement of a piece of apparently inanimate matter, is also a *karma*. The 'fruit'-bearing deeds of responsible human or other beings, deeds which are invested with an ethical value, and, as meritorious or sinful, have a future reactive consequence for the doer, in pleasure or pain, are also *karma*. *Kriyā* is also used in

may be objected that the activity in or of sva-bhāva is one, unique, uniform; there is no duality in it; it all svayaṁ bhavaṭi, 'itself becomes'; it is the becoming, the unfolding of one character, the development of one inner nature; it 'maintains itself'; and so on. Whence then the duality (or rather the multiplicity, the change, which is essentially opposed to unity? The answer is that the duality bases on the One and the One on duality, and *both together*, as included in Universal Being, make up and are designated as svabhāva (for pure unity without any change were devoid of character, character being nothing else than a fixed way of becoming, bhavana, manifestation, action). This that we see as a duality is unity, and *vice-versa*.¹ (The

varying senses, but almost never in the last sense, seldom in the second, and more often in the first. In the two triplets, jñāna-icchā-kriyā and dravya-guṇa-karma, the distinction is obvious between kriyā and karma. And that distinction seems to underlie all the shades of meaning of each in use, viz., that the psychic or conscious aspect goes most with kriyā and the material one with karma. The root of both is the same, philologically and metaphysically.

¹ All this only rings ever new changes on the ultimate and crucial metaphysical problem, the why

'unity' of character consists in acting in one fixed way, under the dominance of one fixed desire or idea, in varying circumstances; and because the unity and fixity of any desire are only pseudo-unity and comparative-fixity, an imitation or reflexion of the True Unity and Fixity, therefore these change also, more slowly). In their dharma, functioning, the two are one. (Duality in unity, unity in duality, similarity in diversity, make up a new synthesis or uniformity). And, in accordance with this unity, all this endless appearance and disappearance, existence and non-existence—all 'becomes' a matter of Sva-bhāva. Hence has it been said: There is no duality, no unity, no manyness—All is Sva-bhāva and Sva-bhāva only.

Because this duality is always founded on a unity, there is not a single atom which is not and which does not behave as dual. And where and the how of the World-process, the reconciliation of change and changelessness, endless movements and motionlessness, permanent substratum and fleeting attributes—as spoken of at the end of the last chapter. To solve that problem is to solve all else. To leave that unsolved, is to leave all perplexed and ununderstood. See *The Science of Peace*, ch. vi, 78–82. The text here will throw much light on the word sva-bhāva (Svabhavat) so much used in *The Secret Doctrine*.

there are two, there is always a third, as the M. Hence we find that all *ḍharma*, all function, or the functioning of the all, is in operation everywhere.¹ The very root of all *karma* is therefore the duality of unity (the binding up of the Self and the Not-Self in the Self).

The Self is unlimited, inseparate from all, containing and contained in all, all-transcendent. The This, on the other hand, is limited and limited in every way, by its opposition to the Unity of the Self. Limitation is the having of a beginning and an end. And such beginning and end belong to and are in the This only. The Self is beyond them. How then may the 'work' of the Unlimited be effected in the Limited? Thus, *viz.*, the *eṭaṭ* becomes endless, in an unlimited 'becoming' of pseudo-infinite beginnings and endings. Its 'becoming,' as one general or universal activity, is endless; but each particular 'become' is limited. Itself essentially limited, yet by its tie with the Self, the *eṭaṭ* acquires the appearance of unlimitedness, end-

¹ Another way of putting the principle that all is everywhere and always. Various aspects of the fact stated as that 'every atom is dual' may be regarded as 'male-and-female,' 'soul-and-body,' 'core-and-crust,' 'inner-and-outer,' 'subtler-and-denser,' etc.

lessness. The 'many' are endless, unlimited, pseudo-infinite in number, and yet they are also a one each—without any inconsistency. Such is the oneness, unity, union, of the I and the This. Everywhere are they together, (inseparable though distinguishable). Never, nowhere, nowise is the one without the other. Because of this indefeasible fact, the Many This, in imitation of the One Self, also assumes endlessness. But at the same time is it always Not. And so we have the whole reduced to unity again. And he who realises this unity—he is the true *paṇḍita*, he only is dutiful, he is good, he is wise, he is free, he knows the true knowledge, he is fit for the highest offices.¹

But how can we talk at all about the Endless and the Transcendent? The *eṭaṭ* is limited

¹ The members of the spiritual hierarchies which guide and govern the affairs of a world-system are recruited from the ranks of those who have attained the due qualification of this most vital of all acquirements, *viz.*, Self-Knowledge. Hence, in the system of *Sanātana Dharma*, is so much stress laid on the attainment of right knowledge, and the craving after superphysical powers so much condemned. The *jīvas* who least want powers are those best fitted to be invested with them, in these regions especially; for they only can be trusted to wield them altruistically.

and should not we (who are, to all appearance, so very limited in every respect, size, lifetime, powers) should talk only about the limited? The reply is that we may rightly make inferences about the unlimited (*i.e.*, numberless possible future and as yet unknown situations, with reference to *kriyā*) from the data we have about the limited (because we are, *i.e.*, the I in us is not Limited but veritably the Unlimited). Regarding one-self as similar, indeed the same, (in all situations as in any one), every one ought to carry on his work. Such a statement, however, it should be kept in mind, only enables us to find the peace of rest in the knowledge of the main principles underlying the World-process. Otherwise, indeed, as often said before, the full knowledge of *all* details being unavailable to *any one* individual, all speech (affirming any fact or recommending any course, or the opposite) must be held to be defective, vitiated by ignorance and therefore reprehensible. This is not so, however; and *vārṭā*, the 'happening,' the mutual converse and commerce of the world, is an invincible and most justifiable fact, without which there were only *pralaya* and universal dissolution. So long as the World-system exists, so long must there be *vārṭā*,¹ *i.e.*,

¹ This word means converse, commerce, intercourse by language as well as by trade, in words

anvādeśha, the repeated reiteration of an utterance. The description in words of a work undertaken (or desired) is the result of *vārṭā*. And such conversation to and fro is the result of the operations of action and reaction. Some accomplish this intercourse with labor and effort, others naturally and with ease. But the difference is only one of manner. All have to perform it in some way or other.

Two kinds are distinguished in *vārṭā*, *viz.*, *sat* and *asat*, true and false or good and evil. But both are matter of necessity; (*i.e.*, the distinction arises out of considerations of necessity, both are necessary, and yet in this way that) when in any particular situation, in view of the need of the moment, any talk happens to be not immediately necessary, then it is said to be false or useless and advice is given against indulging in it; and when, on the other hand, the conversation is relevant and appropriate to the time, and of interest to both the parties concerned in it, it is said to be good and true, and is recommended and promoted instead of being forbidden.

and in merchandise. Its root *vṛt*, to exist, to come forth, to circulate, is probably the same from which come the English words, converse, perverse, reverse, inverse, etc. It should be remembered that language indicates the needs of living beings to each other, and trade and commerce fulfil them.

By means of such commerce (intellectual and economical) are mutual needs fulfilled or defeated, friendships or hostilities created, depression or elation, joy or sorrow experienced in the way of action and reaction. As the *Brahma-sūtra* says: Vārṭā derives its vibhūti, richness, wealth, from action and reaction. And the *Mīmāṃsā*: Vārṭā arises and appears out of cognition, action and desire. And the *Vēda*: Vārṭā is defined or pointed out by kriyā and praṭi-kriyā.

We may understand the significance and propriety of advice, admonition, expostulation, etc., by reference to these facts. Otherwise, indeed, it may well be said that all things happen by destination and necessity, and counsel is useless—though to that too could be given the reply in coin that instruction and direction and remonstrance are also part of the same destiny.

Whatever happens, has happened, or will happen—the accurate description thereof is vārṭā. The pointing out of consequences, by means of such description, is advice or instruction. The duty, responsibility, office, adhikāra, of giving such instruction, without any personal and selfish motive, and without any consideration of whether anyone listens to and follows it or does

not, but solely from a recognition of the fact of the unity of all and the consequent need and propriety of each helping all else to the best of his ability—such duty is imposed upon every one who is invested with the right, the privilege, the power of discoursing or of composing works, wherefrom all jīvas may learn the vārṭā of the World-process. He who fails to fulfil the duty, having the power—he opposes the ‘to-be,’ the law, and incurs sin and penalty.¹

¹The reader will have noted how the thought, beginning with universal Kriyā, an all-embracing universal and incessant movement, in a semi-mechanical aspect, has gradually passed on to more ‘conscious’ intercourse and has now arrived at considerations of fully ‘conscious’ human relations with each other in an ethical sense. As pointed out in a previous note, the difference between ‘mechanical’ or ‘automatic’ and ‘conscious’ or ‘initiative’ is the difference between the ‘Absolute Consciousness or Unconsciousness,’ just as we like to call it, and ‘individualised consciousness’. A few words may be said here on Thought passing along words. Any one who will examine any series of controversial debates and critiques will find over and over again that the whole dispute turns upon the significance of one or two important words. If the disputants would look back into their own minds and ask themselves, ‘What do I really understand by such and such words and what does my

Only because all *jīvas* are one is it possible for any one to seek fulfilment of his needs at the hands of another, by mutual communication, in the way of *vārṭā*, conversation, of one another's requirements and the information which will bring about their satisfaction. Otherwise, each individual were entirely self-contained, walled in by his own direct particular cognitions and forced to seek satisfaction of his needs with the help of these few cognitions only, without asking of others and without hearing from others, (indeed without being able to imagine and believe that there were any conscious beings like himself, and therefore without being

adversary *mean* by *them*'—the dispute would speedily terminate in agreement, to the great saving of the world's time and temper. Socrates is instinctively recognised as one of the wisest of men—because he made it his one mission in life to induce others to clear up their own ideas, by a process of continual cross-examination. Some people believe that this habit of his was so annoying to his compatriots who did not like to have their ideas cleared, and felt ashamed to have their hollowness exposed in the process, that they got him poisoned for this very reason! Because of this real and practical value of words, is so much stress laid in the Samskr̥t 'circle of learning' on *Vyākaraṇa* and allied sciences.

able to exchange thoughts with any such).¹

When we look upon *jñāna*, *cognition*, *know-ing*, as an aspect or mode of *kriyā*, then speech, the utterance and expression of that knowledge is to be looked upon as the reaction thereof, its *praṭi-kriyā*. (Knowledge is taking in information; speech is giving out the same.)

Works on sciences and arts, books and treatises of all kinds, come to be composed in accordance with these facts, with reference to special cyclic needs and conditions. When by lapse of time and change of conditions, the sense of any particular treatise becomes unintelligible or doubtful, then the hierarchs, the rulers of the epoch concerned, cause commentaries to be written and explanations given. It is true that sometimes such commentaries, etc., may be written out of mere pride and conceit, or a desire for praise and honor or other such worldly motive or purpose. But even so they are part of the general scheme of the World-process. The good in such books too lasts and helps others; and the author, after receiving honor receives contempt, and, forced back

¹See the *Science of the Emotions*, 2nd edn., chap. xii., pp. 215-216; also the *Science of Peace*, ch. iv., p. 24.

into reflexion within himself, into introspection, sooner or later finds correction of the false and evil elements in his thought and motive, (which inevitably evoke the contempt, in obedience to subtle psychological laws) and his illusion too is dispelled after having had its day, for it too has a place in the universal scheme.¹

¹ What a lofty conception of the high mission of authorship, the beneficent purpose of literature, this paragraph embodies! How much in contrast with the conditions of to-day when everyone thinks his thoughts good enough to 'rush into print' with, regardless of the terrible waste of time and vitality involved to all concerned in the production of a work that is not really good! And yet how patriarchally tender to even this feverish rush to display before the public, as of little children all crying 'I' and 'I' and 'I'! And not only tender but true, for, after all, the children too are *jīvas*, have occupied in the past, and will occupy again, in the future, stages of the highest knowledge; and every thought of any one has an element of truth in it! And not only true as a present fact, but true as a fact influencing future evolution—for all this feverish activity of the individualised egoistic intelligence, the fifth principle, when cured by the 'contempt' and frustration that comes without fail, itself becomes chastened into the sixth principle, loving and humble wisdom, out of

In its highest, most complete and ultimate form, this *vārṭā* is *Brahma-vidyā* itself, wherein is no illusion. And it is a secret science, a science that ought to be kept secret; that is to say, should be imparted only to the deserving, the well-qualified, those that have the *ādhikāra*, the right and title to it. The Science of Brahman is regarded as thus specially reserved only because, for the comprehension of this all-inclusive science, an intenser longing after knowledge than is needed for the other partial sciences is an indispensable requisite as preparation. Otherwise, and in a general sense, verily every science is useless for and should be withheld from everyone who has no desire for it, and hence the express

which shall grow the new and happier race! The sage *Gārgyāyana* must have cast a glance at the then future conditions of to-day, and seen its virulence of mutual criticism, when he recorded the 'contempt'!

By introspection, self-examination, and the discovery of the common sense of words, in the light of the Common Self only, may this fever of egoistic self-opinionatedness, which looks but at the outside surface of words and things, be finally remedied, the preliminary medicine being the 'contempt' received from others and the resulting frustration of conceit, and pain and *vairāgya*.

injunction upon all teachers to commence teaching only after a due investigation of what the would-be student wants to learn and what his mental and bodily habits and conditions are.

In such considerations as these we realise how practice depends on theory and metaphysic, how all the World-process hangs on the Praṇava, how it threads together the Many and the One, and how desirable it is for all most earnestly to try to understand it. The final proof—if it were wanted—of this is that even the nāstika, the all-denier, the all-sceptic and unbeliever, utters discourses and writes treatises. Believing not in Brahman, not in the Self, nor in the Not-Self, nor in the Negation, he still wishes others to accept his views! If indeed it be, as he thinks, that there is no nexus, no relationship, no bond or thread of continuity, no unity in diversity, amidst things, nothing behind and beyond the immediate presentation of a sense, the immediate sensation, if all are disjointed and independent, why and with hope of what fruit this eagerness of his to instruct others? The truth is that the Self in such an one forces Itself forth in his life and makes the outer man instinctively act upon the sense of the indefeasible unity of himself with other jīvas—

the stage of all-denying also being part of the scheme of the World-process like all things else.

We thus see also that, of an exposition of the Praṇava, a brief description of the main principles of the World-process (as well as of the main outlines of a single world-system), in terms of the limited, is but an essential part. (The general principles are identical, for all world-systems, for every part of the World-process; the type is the same, the law is one; the details are endless.) The understanding of one helps us to understand all and to see that the Limited is Not.

How can 'is' and 'not' be combined in one expression? We can understand this only by following very closely the Science of the Praṇava. Even the 'unbelievable' is 'believable,' for the time being, for the full understanding of its nature as 'unbelievable' and of that of the opposite as 'believable'. A wrong hypothesis has to be 'held'—'let us assume for the moment,' 'suppose'—before it can be and till it is refuted. Those who have to expound the why and wherefore of the World-process have to lead thought along some such lines as these: All this that is praṭya kṣ ha, there before our senses, directly perceptible—if all this were not, were abolished and annihilated,

what would happen then; and when it was not, if ever it was absent, what was the condition of affairs then? Let us suppose that there was nothing at first; only emptiness, like ākāśa, space, no appearance, a nūbhāsa, of darkness, none of light, not even the 'appearance' of space, but only *like* it. (Then, after making this supposition, we as the next step begin to examine it.) It may be said that in the Endless and Transcendent, activity is always going on, and nothingness cannot be assumed at any time. Yet, on the other hand, it may also be said that as prabhava, manifestation, emanation, existence, becoming forth, (plenum) is endless, in the same way shūnya, vacuum, is also endless, (as an indispensable counterfoil and background). For if we say that only 'is' (plenum) is fact and never the 'is-not,' (vacuum), then *where* would all these pseudo-infinite manifestations throughout pseudo-infinite time find standing-place? They indispensably require a vacuum, an empty place and space, a 'non-existence,' to 'exist in'. And because of this, for practical purposes of description, the endless and uniform vacuum of space and nothingness is assumed as pre-existent, *in* which created things may exist. Gradually we see that there is no precedence and subsequence (between container and contained, vacuum and plenitude

of content), but that both are infinitely simultaneous. In the same fashion, that which we call the Samsāra, the World-process, in the sense of the unravellable complexity of infinite happenings and proceedings—that is only the measureless and countless stretch and expanse of details beyond the circumscribing line of our mental horizon, at which line our fatigued intelligence comes to a full stop, and takes rest, unable to go any further, for the time being.

The considerations in respect of time are exactly similar to those in respect of space. We first think: This that is existing now before us, it surely has limits in time. When was it born; how long will it stay; what was its condition before it assumed its present shape, etc? Then we think: Existence surely belongs to all time. And so the element of existence in all this that we see around us must also belong to all time. So too must the element of non-existence in them. And in this sense dissolution as well as emanation is incessant. Day, night, sleeping, waking, birth, death, love, hate, joy, sorrow—all are incessant and endless.

With this we come back to the statement that action arises in and out of actionlessness,¹

¹ I have endeavored, in what follows, to reproduce as exactly as possible the peculiarity of the author's

change in changelessness. How is it possible? It is the very nature, the Svabhāva, of the Self. An omission (of special observation), by an individualised consciousness, of a part out of the Totality of parts which is the Whole, appears as the existent passing into the non-existent, and *vice versa*. I-This-Not is Brahman. Whatever is understood by this collocation of three words is Brahman. And it always has aṣṭiṭva, existence, 'is-ness'. Because of this existence, activity is unavoidable within it. Whatever *is*, inevitably *does* something also. Or if it does not itself directly do anything, then something becomes, occurs, takes birth *from* it, because existence must have a result; otherwise the existence would be null and nil, the same as if it were *not*. Nor, on the other hand, can pure non-existence be affirmed exclusively, and existence denied altogether. The multitudinous world is a fact not to be ignored. From its insistent pressure upon our senses we must infer that it is, and that there is same maker of it, some root and source of it. And, in this wise, from the obtrusive presence of elements of both existence and non-existence all about us in the

argument. The same conclusions are led up to, by what to some readers may be perhaps a somewhat easier phrasing and way of thinking, in chapters viii. and x. of *The Science of Peace*.

world, we further infer that the root and source of it must also contain both these elements. In other words, we argue on the one hand, that the nature or form, the svārūpa of all this that appears to us 'is-not' that of its root-source, because of the patent differences and transformations and passings into 'non-existence'. On the other hand, we argue that some root there must be, because it 'is' not a case of pure non-existence. This root, whatever it is, combining in itself existence and non-existence, being and non-being, is Brahman, best described and defined as I-This-Not. This description by three words is necessary because it is not possible to describe adequately by any one sound or word a thing that includes within itself two distinct factors. When regarded as a unity containing within itself all diversity, then the one word that describes Brahman is the AUM which is also a unity including all diversity. Corresponding to this sacred sound-word there are words in every language. Indeed, in a sense, all words whatsoever are but forms of the *Praṇava*, for each is a modification of that primal sound and each indicates one mood, one aspect, or another, of the Supreme Brahman; and truly the name of each atom is only a name for Brahman.

(When we apply the general theory of the initiation of action in actionlessness to a concrete case, a particular world-system, what do we see?) A *jīva*, having attained to the state of Mahā-Viṣṇu, creates a *samsāra*. His ability to do so, however, depends on his finding vacant *space* wherein to do so. And, in yet another aspect, at the *time* he attains his Mahā-Viṣṇu-ship, his action, his work as such, is yet non-existent, is latent still, is yet in the future. In this condition of actionlessness, he initiates action. We may see examples of this in daily life around us. A baby is born; following the laws of his own constitution he grows to man's estate and founds his business, a household, where there was none before. The one, the solitary, is married to another; whence many new relationships, and the birth and 'finding' of children. In exactly the same way does Mahā-Viṣṇu 'find' Brahṁā, Viṣṇu, etc., and 'found' his business, his *samsāra*, in *sheṣha-ḍeśha*,¹ remaining space, space which is not occupied by others. In this space and time he spreads out his ideation. The totality of his *pra-sāraṇas*, spreadings out, expansions, and *pra-sāriṭas*,

¹ In Purāṇic lore *Sheṣha* is the thousand-headed serpent on whose coils Mahā-Viṣṇu sleeps during *pralaya*. The word *sheṣha* also means the 'remainder'.

the things spread out, is his *sam-sāra*.

By great striving indeed has Mahā-Viṣṇu, beginning as an atom, attained to his present estate, adding knowledge to knowledge, little by little. Whoever has attained to any condition obviously knows all about all preceding conditions. Hence Mahā-Viṣṇu is omniscient of all that intervenes between the atom and himself. Having arrived at his present condition he 'feels' his actionlessness and so thinks of action. And this thought of his inspires (or is felt in, or is the same as the natural life-activity of) every atom.

And even as Mahā-Viṣṇu has attained his present status, so is all and every one destined to do.