

THE

70-370

PHILOSOPHY OF ANCIENT INDIA

BY

RICHARD GARBE

PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TUEBINGEN

CHICAGO

THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING COMPANY

(LONDON: 17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET ST., E. C.)

1897

one has within him, the absolute Being, which at the same time is identical with abstract thought, was recognised, therefore, as the only reality. The whole fluctuant multiformity of the world of phenomena is, on the other hand, a deception, an illusion (Mâyâ), a creation of ignorance. We see, it is the most consistent Monism that is here taught in the Upanishads. To have been the first in the world to proclaim this is a service that can scarcely be overestimated. But whether the merit of this belongs to the Brahmins, or is ascribed to them incorrectly, that is the question which is to be answered in the following paragraphs.

To begin with, be it observed that the closer circle of specialists : Weber, Max Müller, Deussen, Regnaud, Bhandarkar and others have for some time been pointing out evidence which suggests that another portion of the Indian people were the dominant factor in the development of the monistic doctrine in the elder Upanishads. But so far as I know the subject has not been presented to the general educated public in a popularly intelligible form.

In the second book of the Bṛihadâraṇyaka Upanishad, from which I have already quoted two specimens, occurs the following narrative, of which another and only slightly different version is preserved in the fourth book of the Kaushîtaki Upanishad :

The proud and learned Brahman Bâlâki Gârḡya comes on his wanderings to Ajâtaçatru, prince of Benares, and says to him : “ I will declare to you the

Brahman¹." The king is rejoiced, and promises to reward him for it handsomely, with a thousand cows. And now the Brahman begins to deliver his wisdom : " I worship the spirit (i. e., the power) in the sun as the Brahman " ; but he is interrupted by the king who tells him he already knows that and needs not to be told of it. Then the Brahman speaks of the spirit in the moon, in the lightning, in the ether, in the wind, in fire, water, and the regions of earth ; but the king rejects all this as being already familiar to him. And whatever else Gârgya presents, it is nothing new to the king. Then, the story goes, the Brahman was dumb. But Ajâtaçatru asked him : " Is that all ? " and Gârgya answered : " Yes, that is all. " Then the king exclaimed : " These trifles do not amount to knowing the Brahman, " whereupon Gârgya declares that he will become a disciple of the king and learn of him. And Ajâtaçatru replies : " It is contrary to the natural order that a Brahman receive instruction from a warrior and expect the latter to declare the Brahman to him ; however, I will teach you to know it. " Then the king took the Brahman by the hand and led him to where a man lay asleep. The king spoke to him ; but he did not arise. But when Ajâtaçatru touched him with his hand, he rose. Now the king asked the Brahman : " Where was this man's mind, consisting as it does of knowledge, while he was asleep, and whence has it just returned ? " But Gârgya could

¹ See note, p. 70.

make no reply. Then Ajâtaçatru explained to him how the mind, or the Self, of the sleeper roves in the dream, how all places belong to him, and he can be at will now a great king, now a great Brahman ; but how there is then a still higher and happier state, namely, when one has fallen into a dreamless sleep, and no longer has any consciousness of anything. This is the condition in which the Self of man, unaffected by the world of phenomena, rests in its true nature, in which there is no difference between the Âtman and the Brahman.

More significant perhaps than this story is another which is reported both in the fifth book of the Chândogya Upanishad, and in the sixth book of the Bṛihadâraṇyaka Upanishad :

The young Brahman Çvetaketu comes to an assembly, and is there asked by the Prince Pravâhana Jaivâli: “Young man, has your father instructed you?” —“Yes, sir.”—“Do you know, then,” the prince goes on, “whither creatures go from here when they die? Do you know how they return hither?” And three other questions he addresses to the Brahman youth, who is obliged to confess in confusion that he knows nothing of all these things. And so Çvetaketu returns dejected to his father, who here appears under the name of Gautama, and reproaches him: “Although you have not instructed me, you told me that you had. A simple king has addressed five questions to me, and I was unable to answer a single one.” Thereupon the

father answers: "My son, you know me well enough to know that I have told you all I know. Come, let us both go and become disciples of the prince." The prince receives the old Brahman with all honor, and permits him to ask for a gift. But Gautama refuses all earthly possessions, gold, cows, and horses, female slaves and robes, and desires of the prince the answers to the questions which had been addressed to his son, saying: "I come as a disciple of the revered one." Pravâhana is at first disposed to put him off, but finally consents to fulfil the wish of the Brahman, and says that *no one in the world outside of the warrior caste can explain these matters*. And the following words are also significant: "*I would that neither you, O Gautama, nor any of your ancestors had part in that sin against us because of which this knowledge has until now never set up its residence among Brahmins*. To you I will reveal it; for who could refuse one who makes such an appeal?" And thereupon the king imparts to the Brahman all he knows.

The same story in all essentials is found in the beginning of the Kaushîtaki Upanishad, save that the prince has a different name, to wit, Chitra.

Passing over evidence of less importance, I will only give in condensed form the contents of the eleventh and following chapters from the fifth book of the Chândogya Upanishad, where again a man of the warrior caste, Açvapati, prince of the Kekaya, appears in possession of the highest wisdom. The book tells

us that a number of very learned Brahmins, referred to by name, are meditating on the question: "What is our Self? What is the Brahman?" and they decided to go to Uddālaka Âruni, of whom they knew that he was at the time investigating the "omnipresent Self." But he said to himself: "They will question me, and I shall not be able to answer all their questions," and therefore he invited his visitors to go with him to Açvapati, prince of the Kekayas, to request instruction from him. The king receives the visitors with honor, invites them to tarry with him, and promises them presents equal in amount to the sacrificial fees. But they said: "A man must communicate what he is occupied with. You are at present investigating the Omnipresent Self. Reveal it to us." The king replied: "I will answer you to-morrow morning." And the next forenoon, without having accepted them as disciples, i. e., without going through the formalities customary on such an occasion, he asked them one after the other: "As what do you revere the Self?" And the Brahmins made answer one after another: "As the sky, as the sun, as the ether, as water, as earth." Then the king calls attention to the fact that they are all in error, because they regard the Omnipresent Self as a single thing, existing by itself; whereas in truth it is the Infinite,—at once the infinitely small and the infinitely great.

The significance of these stories is evident. Whether real occurrences underlie the separate ac-

counts, or whether they are to be regarded as legendary deposits of a conviction widely current at the time, cannot be determined; moreover, the question of the historical basis of these stories is of no importance for us. The fact that such tales are contained in genuinely Brahman writings which are regarded in India, and rightly so, as mainstays of Brahmanism, speaks to us in a language not to be misunderstood. It shows that the authors of the elder Upanishads did not try, or did not dare, to veil the situation that was patent in their time, and claim the monistic doctrine of the Brahman-Âtman as an inheritance of their caste; perhaps, even, that they did not consider the establishment of this doctrine as a service of such far-reaching importance as to care to claim it for the Brahman caste. In later times, it is true, this philosophy became in the fullest sense the property of the Brahmans, and has been cultivated by them for twenty-five centuries, down to the present day, so that it is still regarded as the orthodox doctrine of Brahmanism. But this does not alter the fact that it took its rise in the ranks of the warrior caste. To this caste belongs the credit of clearly recognising the hollowness of the sacrificial system and the absurdity of its symbolism, and, by opening a new world of ideas, of effecting the great revolution in the intellectual life of ancient India. When we see how the Brahmans, even after they had adopted the new doctrine, continued to cultivate the whole ceremonial system—the great