THE PHILOSOPHY OF
THE ‘PRABODHA-CANDRODAYA’
OR
‘RISE OF THE MOON OF KNOWLEDGE’

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The drama is essentially allegorical in character and lacks the human interest of the plays of Kālidāsa or Bhavabhūti. Its main purpose is to expound in a dramatic form the Advaita school of the Vedanta system of Indian philosophy. Every character in the play, with the exception of the Śūtradhāra or stage-manager and his wife, and two or three attendants belonging to the party of the hero and that of his antagonist, who are merely brought in to accord with the conventions of classical Sanskrit drama, is intended to represent some abstract quality, either good or bad. The dramatist is purely concerned with impressing the mind of the reader with the essential doctrines of the Advaita school of philosophy. It is also to be noted that he has cleverly blended the doctrine of Viṣṇubhakti with this Vedanta doctrine of the Absolute. It is a combination of the Abstract and the concrete, as it were. The one depends upon an external object, though conceived in the mind, the resplendent form of Viṣṇu with His hands and feet; and the other rests upon a purely abstract intelligence which leads to the realisation of self.

The essential elements of the Advaita doctrine as exhibited in the drama are as follows:

Īśvara or the supreme soul is the only entity which is permanent and indestructible and the universe with its variety is false. Its apparent existence is due to the influence of Māyā or Illusion which corresponds to the prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya system. This Māyā is the material cause (parināma upādāna) of the universe. At the disappearance of Māyā, the world also disappears, just as a pot disappears when its material cause, the clay, is destroyed. The contact of the japākusuma or china-rose alone is required to make the white marble red. So also the presence of Māyā alone is required to affect Īśvara or pure consciousness. This Māyā is an entity which has no beginning. It creates the world through the mind by the mere will of Īśvara. Īśvara is still free from the contact of Māyā. He has no qualities, either good or bad, and has no shape of any kind. The essential nature of His Being is Knowledge and transcendent happiness. He shines with His own light and does not require any other light to illuminate Him. He is Svaprakāśa. Even such a transcendental and indestructible entity as Īśvara, who is the supreme Lord of the world, has been deluded by Māyā. Cf.—Veṣāvilāsini iva
māyā asatopi bhāvān upadarśayantī puruśaṁ vañcayati. Īśvara, though He is not susceptible to any kind of change by His very nature, is still made to assume false appearances through the evil effects of this Māyā. cf.—

Spatikamaṇiṣavad bhāsvān devaḥ, pragādhama anāryayā
Vikṛtim anayā nitaḥ Kām apy asaṅgatavikriyāḥ
Na Khālu tadupaśleśād asya vyapaiti rucir manāk
Prabhavati tathāpy eṣa puṁso vidhātum adhiratām (I-26).

The mind, which is the offspring of Māyā or Illusion, has bound this non-dual and non-differenced consciousness, Īśvara, in the human bodies which are unnumbered, and has transferred its own qualities of doing (Karṛṭtvā), feeling (bhokṛṭtvā) and others to this pure consciousness.

Cf.—Eko’pi bahudhā teṣu vicchidyā iva nivesitaḥ
Svaceṣṭitam atho tasmin nidādhāti maṇau iva (I-28)

In this bound state Īśvara undergoes the name of Jīvātman or the individual soul. Now Ahaṅkāra or egoism, which is one of the characteristics of the mind, envelops Him and He is made to feel, to suffer, to do and to enjoy. Cf.—tato’śau ahaṅkāreṇa cittasya jyeṣṭhaputreṇa naprā pariṣvaktāḥ.

He sees many phantoms, being bound in this body by the mind. He imagines that he is born here and dreams of his father, mother, wife, children, lands, money, friends and the like. All these are no more than mere phantoms of the mind.

Cf.—tataś ca asau īśvaraḥ
Jato’ham janako mama eṣa janani Kṣetraṁ Kalatraṁ Kulam
Putrā mitram arātayo vasu balaṁ vidyā suḥṛd bāndhavaḥ
Cittaspanditakalpanām anubhavaṁ vidvān avidyāmayīṁ
nirdrām etya vighūrṇito bahuvidhān svapnān imān paśyati (I-29)

These are not the properties of the soul, the non-dual and non-differenced consciousness, but the qualities of the mind. What appear to be the properties of Īśvara or Puruṣa or the soul really belong to the mind. It is the contact of the mind with Īśvara or puruṣa which makes us think that what really belongs to the mind belongs to Īśvara. Thus it is obvious that in the Advaita system there is no difference between the Supreme soul (Īśvara) and the individual soul (Jīva). They are one and the same. But the mind is different from this puruṣa. Now the emancipation for this bound Īśvara from His imprisonment in the body has to be achieved and it comes to Him the very moment He realises Himself. Cf.—

Baddhā eko bahudhā vibhajya jagatāṁ adīḥ prabhuh śāśvataḥ
Kṣiptvā yaiḥ puruṣaḥ puruṣaḥ paramo mṛtyoḥ padaṁ prāpitaḥ
The special feature of the Advaita system as opposed to the rival Indian philosophical schools of Dvaita and viśiṣṭādvaita is that it wins salvation for the soul, even while man is living, not necessarily after the destruction of the body in which He is bound. The type of salvation here is Jīvanmukti. The world which is the result of Illusion through the mind disappears when the soul achieves self-realisation. Self-realisation is possible for the soul only when the mind applies itself with discrimination to the understanding of the true nature of the soul by means of the sacred upanishadic lore. But there is a great obstacle to the realisation of this end. The mind can never acquire discrimination unless it frees itself from the various activities of the world in which it is hitherto absorbed; until the external objects of sense cease to affect the soul through it. The mind should first of all conquer the great evil, namely, Infatuation, which is fostered by love, anger, greed, vanity and other passions. This great evil of Infatuation is further supported by such heretical schools as materialism, Jainism, Buddhism and Somism.

In the first place, Cārvāka is the exponent of Materialism or rather Atheism. He says that there is no such entity as the soul with a separate existence from the body and that consciousness in the body is the result of a certain combination of the elements. Consciousness is only a result of chemical process to Cārvāka. Just as the chemical combination of oxygen and hydrogen gives rise to a new matter in the form of water, so also the chemical combination of the elements, earth, water, light and air in such a way as to manifest consciousness gives rise to the living body. Cf.—

Haṁho paśyata tattvato yadi punaś chinnād ito varṣmaṇo dṛṣṭaṁ kim parināmaruṣitaciter jīvah pṛthak tair api (II-17).

This outright exclusion of the soul from the system of Cārvāka leads him to the conviction that there is no life after death, that salvation is extinction of the body and that, therefore, the only ends of human existence are ‘artha’ and Kāma’. Acquisition of money and gratification of sensual desires are the end and aim of such a life. There is no distinction of caste, no idea of morality and all is chaos. There is no distinction between the wife and wealth of one man and those of another. Cf.—

Tulyatve vapuśaṁ mukhādyavayavair varṇakramaṁ Kidrśo
Yoṣa iyaṁ vasu vā parasya tad anumāṁ bhedāṁ na vidmō vayam
(II-18).

Perception is the only instrument of right cognition in the Cārvāka system. The injunctions of the vedas are all foolish since they aim at securing Heaven which is non-existent. Cf.— Sarvathā lokāyatam eva śāstram; yatra pratyakṣam eva pramāṇam, pṛthivyāptējovāyas
lattvāṇī, arthakāmaū purusārthau, bhūtāny eva cetayante, na asti para-
lokāḥ, mṛtyur eva apavargāḥ, dhūrtapralāpas trayī.

Svargāḥ kartṛkriyādravyavināśe yadi yajvanām
tato dávägnidadgḥānām phalāṃ syād bhūri bhūrūhām (II-19).

(If Heaven be obtained through the officiating priest, sacrificial
rites, and the destruction of the substances employed, why is not abun-
dance of excellent fruit obtained from the ashes of a tree which has been
burnt up by the fire of forest?)

‘If the victims’, says Cārvāka, ‘slain in sacrifice ascend to heaven,
why are not parents offered up in sacrifice by their children? If
funeral oblations nourish the deceased, why is not the flame of an extin-
guished taper renovated by pouring on oil?’ Cf.—

Mṛtānām api jāntūnāṃ śrāddhāṃ cet trptikāranām
nirvāṇasya pradipasya snehāḥ samvardhayaḥ śikhām (II-20).

Secondly, the other three schools, Digambara Jainism, Buddhism
and Somism or Soma Siddhānta are far better than this thoroughly
atheistic creed of Cārvāka. They all accept the existence of the soul
and recognise the necessity for its salvation in some form or other.
According to Jainism, the soul is placed in the heart of the body, like a
chandl in the midst of a vessel or a house. It is imprisoned in the body
to enjoy or to suffer according to its Karma. It can attain freedom from
this bondage by observing the duties enjoined by Arhat or Jina, such as
pulling the hair (Keśaluṇcana), standing on burning stones (taptaśilādhirohaṇa) and the like. Though the soul is self-luminous (svaprakāśa),
like that of the Advaitin, it cannot illuminate the world, since it is cir-
cumscribed by the body; even as the flame of a candle placed in a vessel
cannot illuminate the objects outside the vessel. Thus its capacities are
limited in comparison with those of the soul of the Advaitin. The
nature of the soul should be understood by serving the Jain sages assi-
duously and one should not object to a Jain ascetic loving a woman.
It should be noted here that, according to Jainism, the soul cannot under-
stand the world, since it is circumscribed by the body and since there is
no medium of understanding between the world and itself.

According to Buddhism, all objects of the senses are ephemeral and
therefore unreal. Whatever we see, hear or feel is false. And the
Buddhistic conception of salvation consists in the total extinction of the
current of thought. When the intellect has ceased to conceive any sen-
suous object and has broken the fetters of every kind of impression left
on it by past actions, good or bad; when it attains to such state of passi-
vity that the objects of senses received by it appear to lie outside without
producing any kind of impression upon it, then, the soul may be
said to have attained its salvation. This is the Jivanmukti of the
Buddhist.
Cf.—Sākṣāt kṣanakṣayina eva nīrātmakāsca
Yatra arpitā bahir iva pratibhamti bhāvāḥ
Śā eva adhunā vigalitāḥkhalavāsanatvāt
dhīsantatiḥ sphurati nirvīṣayoparāgā (III-8)

We here see some similarity between the Buddhist and the Advaitin. Both recognise the falsity of the material world. For the Advaitin, Jīvamukti is the self-realisation of the soul; and the Buddhist also has his Jīvanmukti, though in a different way. It is sometimes remarked that the Advaitin is a Buddhist in disguise. But the Buddhist differs from the Advaitin in this respect that, in his system, the soul is not permanent. Like the Digambara Jain, he also has no objection to the Bhikshu loving a woman. Cf.—Kṣanikāḥ sarve samskārāḥ; na asty ātmā sthāyī; tasmād bhikṣuṣu dārān ākramatsu nā īrsitavyam. It is curious to note that the Buddhist monk believes that he has put on the yellow robe, not to save his own soul, for that would involve him in trouble since, according to his own theory, his existence is unreal the very next moment, but with the hope that somebody in his family would attain salvation in future by his penance now. Cf.—Asmatsatapitītah Kaś cid vijñānalakṣaṇah samucchinnavāsano mokṣyate. It is also to be noted that both the Buddhist and the Jain recognise the vital importance of Ahimsā as against the cruel duty of the Kāpālīka, the follower of Somism or Somasiddhānta.

Somism is repulsive and disgusting in its conception of duty. The appearance of the Kāpālīka, its devotee, is awful. His ornament is a necklace of human bones and skulls; he lives in the cemetery, eats in a human skull, drinks wine and offers human sacrifices to his god Śiva.
Cf.—Narāsthīmalakṛta-cārubhūṣaṇah
Śmaśānavāsī nṛkapālabhojanaḥ (III-12)

He has magical powers and thereby he can bring down the gods, can stop the movements of the stars in the sky and, having filled the earth with water, can again drink it in a moment.
Cf.—Hariharasurajyestha-raṣṭhān surān aham āhare
viyati vahatām naksatrāṅam runadhmi gatir api
sanaganagarim ambhaḥpurṇāṁ vidhāya mahīm īmām
Kalaya sakalam bhūyas toyam kṣanena pibam tat (III-14)

To him the world is not different from Iṣvara, though it is mutually different, just as a gold bracelet and a gold ring are not different from gold, though they are different from one another. Cf.—

Jagan mitho bhinnam abhinnam iṣvarāt.

He is opposed to the Advaitin’s conception of salvation which consists in a state of absolute stone-like passivity for the soul. He says that no form of happiness can ever be separated from sensual desire and that, therefore, one who attains salvation sports with one’s wife, resembling
Pārvaṭī in form, himself assuming the form of Śiva. His is sārūpyamukti.

Cf.—

Drṣṭam Kva api vinā na viṣayair ānandabodhojjhita jīvasya sthitir eva muktir upalāvasthā katham prārthythe pārvatyāḥ pratirūpayā dayātayā sānandam ālingito muktāḥ Kṛḍaṭi candracūḍavāpur ity uce mṛḍāṇīpatiḥ (III-16)

It should be noted here that Jainism and Buddhism differ slightly from each other in point of doctrine. They are kindred sects having a fundamental basis in common with each other. Somism differs very much from both these and the Advaita is antagonistic to all of these heretical sects.

All these heretical doctrines are likely to lead the mind away from the path of self-realisation and, therefore, they should be destroyed before one applies oneself to the study of the sacred lore (upanishad). Next, Love (Kāma) should be conquered by always contemplating the abhorrence of the body of a woman and by living in places where tranquillity reigns. Cf.—

Pariṇātivirasaṭval dehabhātsatāṁ vā pratipadam anucintya unmulayiśvāmi Kāmam (IV-11)
pratyakṣaśuciputrikāṁ striyam aho mohasya duṣceṣṭitam (IV-8)
bāhyāntāḥ paripāṣyatāṁ tu nirayam nāri iti nāṁ Kṛṭam (IV-9)

Cf. also
Vipulapulināḥ Kallolinkyo nirantaraniṭhari
maṣṭitaśilāḥ sālaḥ sāndradrumā vanarājayāḥ
yādi śamagiro vaiyāsikyo budhais ca samāgamaḥ
Kva piṣītavasāmayyo nāryas tadā kva ca manmathaḥ (IV-12)

Patience (kṣamā) is the only quality by which anger (krodha) may be curbed.

Cf.—

Krodhāṇḍahakāraṇāvikaṭabhrukūṭitaranga
bhīmasya sāndhyakirāṇarunaghoradrṣṭeḥ
niśkampanirmalagbhārapayodhidhirā
dhīrāḥ parasya parivāda-girāḥ kṣamante (IV-15)

Again, contentment (santoṣaḥ) is the only means by which greed (lobhaḥ) has to be subdued. Cf.—

Mṛtyur nṛtyati mūrdhni śāsvad uraṇī ghorā jāraṇūpiṇī
tvāṃ eṣā grastasya parigrahāmayayā grdhair jagad grasyate
dhūtvā bodhajalaṁ abodhabahuḥal tam lobhajanyam rajah
santoṣāṁrtaśāgarāmbhāsi punar magnāḥ sukham jīvati

Thus the mind is now free from all the mighty sources of Infatuation and from all the various activities of the world. It now applies
itself diligently to the study of the sacred upanishadic lore. When the soul understands the true nature of Himself through the mind, He sees that He is no other than the supreme Lord, the one non-dual and non-differenced consciousness. Now, the world which is the result of Illusion disappears for Him and there remains nothing but pure consciousness (suddha-Brahman). This is the nature of Jivanmukti to the Advaitin. Now, the puruṣa mixes with nobody, has nothing to ask any one and is free from fear, sorrow or any other passion. The place where he happens to be in the evening is his home and he takes the quarters at random in peace without any aim.

cf.—
Saṅgamna kena cid upetya Kam apy aprccchan
gacchann atarkitaphalam vidiśam diśam vā
śānto vyapetabhayaśokakāśayamohah
sāyaṃgrho munir aham bhavitāmi sadayāh (VI-31)

Here it should be observed that the various darśanas, such as the Saṃkhya, Nyāya, vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā and others unite together in a common cause against the heretical doctrines of Cārvāka, Buddha and others, in order to support the Vedas, though they are at variance with each other. The source of their teachings being the Vedas, they have a common origin. Even while we see that the Vedas themselves and their different parts seem to disagree with one another, we should not suppose that they lack unity. The disagreement we see between the several parts of the Vedas is only apparent, not real. There is only one entity, the Supreme Being and it is marked by different names, such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Siva by the different parts of the Vedas. Cf.—

tenā vedaprasūtānām
teśām avāntaravirodhe’ pi vedasamrakṣanāya
nāstikapaksapratikṣepanāya ca sāstraṅām
sāhityam eva; āgamanām tu tattvam
vicārayatām avirodha eva. tathā hi—
Jyotiś śāntam anantam advayam ajam tattad guṇonmīlanād
brahmā ity acyuta ity umāpatir iti prastūyate na ekadhā
tais tair eva śadāgamaś śrutisakhair nānāpathaprasthitair
gamyo’ sau jagadīśvaro jālanidhir vārām pravāhair iva (V-9)

It is also important to note that dharma or merit is as much an impediment to self-realisation as adharma or demerit or sin. Hell is the result of sin and Heaven of dharma. Both of them are the result of Karma and as such Heaven is as much to be despised as hell by one who aims at salvation, since it is also ephemeral like any other thing. Cf.—
Sa naraṅgād iva pāpaphalād bhayam bhajati punyaphalād api nāśināh
iti samujjhitaḥkāmasyasamanvayam sukṛtakarma kathaṅ ca na manyate
(VI-4)
Here it is worth while to note the point of difference between the Vedanta and other orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, such as Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya and Sāmkhya. In the first place, there is a wide gulf of difference between Vedanta and the sacrificial lore (yajñavidyā). The upanishadic doctrine, the vedanta system, extols the Supreme Being, whose knowledge alone is the means of salvation. The sacrificial lore rejects an Īśvara on the ground that a Being who is not a doer cannot be an Īśvara. It says that the performance of sacrifices such as Jyotiṣṭoma and others is the only means of breaking the bonds of worldly existence, not the knowledge of the Supreme Being. How can a Being, who is not a doer, be called an Īśvara?

Cf.—

pumān akartā Katham īśvaro bhavet
Kriyā bhavocchedakari na vastudhiḥ
Kurvan Kriyā eva naro bhavacchidah
Śatam sāmāḥ śāntamanā jijīviṣet (VI-15)

It is easy to answer this. Though Īśvara is not a doer, Māyā or Illusion, actuated by a mere wink of His, moves to create the world, just as a piece of iron moves under the influence of a magnet. This is the reason why we call the Supreme Being an Īśvara, though He is a non-doer. Cf.—

Ayās svabhāvād acalām balāc calaty
acetanaṁ cumbakasamidhau iva
tanoti viśveśitur ikṣiteritā
jaganti māyā īśvarateyam iṣītuḥ (VI-16)

Karma does not remove ignorance, which is the source of worldly existence, but only a Knowledge of the Supreme Being. There is no antithesis between Karma and ignorance but only between knowledge and ignorance.

Secondly, there are two schools of pūrvamīmāṃsā, the prābhākara school and the Bhāṭṭa school. Here it is important to remember that the Prābhākara school agrees with the Advaita vedanta in recognising only one puruṣa and differs from it in saying that this puruṣa is a doer and reaps the fruits of His Karma. Kumārila, the champion of the Bhāṭṭa school, agrees with the Advaitin in saying that puruṣa is a non-doer and a non-enjoyer; but differs from him in that he recognises two different entities, the Supreme Soul and the Individual Soul. He does not recognise the identity of the two. He says that one is omniscient and the other blinded by infatuation; that one reaps the fruits of his deeds whereas the other gives them to him and that one is employed in doing Karma whereas the other bids him do it.

Cf.—

Ekaḥ paśyati ceṣṭitāni jagatāṃ anyas tu mohāndha dhir
ekaḥ Karmaphalāṇi vānchati dadātyanyas tu tāny arthine
ekaḥ karmasu śisyate tanubhṛām sāstā eva devo' paro
nissāngah puruṣah Kriyāsu sa Katham kartā iti sambhāvyate (VI-19)
Dvau tau suparaṇau sayujau sakhāyaun
samānavrksaṁ pariṣasvajāte
ekas tayoḥ pippalam atti pakvam
anyas tv anāśan abhīcākaśītī (VI-20)

Lastly we shall note the difference of Nyāya and Sāmkhya from the Advaita. The Sāmkhya system distinguishes prakṛti from Puruṣa and recognises twenty-five entities beginning with Mahat, Ahaṅkāra and others.

The Nyāya system differs from the Advaita in that it says that the atoms (paramāṇu) are the material cause (upādāna-Kāraṇa) of the world, not Īśvara, as admitted by the Advaita. Īśvara is only an instrumental or efficient cause (nimitta-Kāraṇa) of the universe, just as the potter is for the pot. The Sāmkhya system, in its turn, disagrees with the Advaita in that it accepts prakṛti, not Īśvara, as the material cause of the universe. It says—'There is a great trouble involved in saying that Īśvara is the material cause of the universe; for, then we will have to accept Him to be liable to change and hence perishable, even as the clay, which is the material cause of the pot, is perishable and susceptible to change in the forms of a pot, a dish and the like. Hence prakṛti is the material cause of the world'.

The Advaita philosophy says that Īśvara alone is the material cause (vivarta-upādāna as distinguished from Māyā, the pariṇāma-upādāna) of the universe, neither atoms nor prakṛti, since whatever is discernible or measurable (meya) is made (Kārta) and therefore false (asatyata) and since paramāṇu (atoms) and prakṛti are ‘meya’

Cf.—
Ambhaśītakarāntarikṣanagarasvapnendrajalādīvat
Kāryam meyam asatyam etad udayadhvasādīyuktam jagat
śuktau rūpyam iva sraji iva bhujagas svātmāvabodhe harau
ajñāte prabhavaty atha astam ayate tattvāvabodhayat (VI-22)

And the supposition that we will be forced to recognise Īśvara as liable to change if we admit Him to be the material cause of the universe is merely foolish; for, how can Īśvara who is self-luminous and who is not susceptible to any change by His very nature, undergo transformation when the world is created? Is there any change in the sky when black clouds gather in it?

Cf.—
Sāntaṁ jyotiṁ Katham anuditānastanītyaprakāśaṁ
viśvottattau vrajati vikṛtim niṣkalam nirmalam ca
śaśvan nilotpaladalarucām ambuvāhāvalinām
prādurbhāve bhavati viyataḥ kīḍrśo va vikāraḥ (VI-23)