

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF ŚEṢA

In the Philosophy of Śrī Rāmānuja we find that he calls his system Viśiṣṭādvaita, and further the he considers the nature of the souls and matter to be one of body to the Supreme Divine Being, and also that he prefers to call the soul as śeṣa or dāsa.

Tracing the history for the word Śeṣa we find that it has been derived from the root Śis: śisyate : that is left or that which is progeny, since it is this that is left over after the parent perishes: (Nirukta, III2)¹. Though the Nirukta of Yāska explains Śeṣa as offspring (III.2), in deriving the word Śivam in X. 17 it traces it to the root Big. Meaning obviously that it is happiness, and therefore mangalam, auspicious and śivam.

The BRHAD-DEVATĀ (VIII.50) explains śeṣa as that which remains or the remainder, not in the sense of the Nirukta but generally all that is left over (cf, VII.37)².

The above clearly shows that whatever may have been the general root from which thus word of technical importance has been derived, it later signified that which is left after or

¹ The relationship thus expressed leads to the enunciation of the creator – creature relationship as ground and consequent, as cause and effect. Śeṣa menas a creature, an effect, or attribute or mode or part of the Cause, Creator. Substance or Whole. Cf. Whitney: Roots, Verhb Forms and Primary Derivatives, pp. 173-4.

² BRHADDEVATĀ VIII_50: *Trāyantām vaiśvadevyṛk tu śeṣastvabdaivataḥ paraḥ*

produced. The BRHADĀRANYAKA Upaniṣad¹ clearly uses this word 'śeṣa as that which remains not in the sense of progeny but as that which is left over.

Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇmamevā viśiṣyate

To say that the individuals are the remains or those which have been left over is to affirm that śeṣa has not a root that would play the fundamental role which has been granted to it by later philosophical schools (darśanas).

Thus we have to drop the meaning normally given to śeṣa as almost identical with avaśeṣa,² and seek to give it a meaning that is traceable in the philosophical usage to which it has been put by Jaimini and Rāmānuja.

The evolution of the concept of śeṣa at the hands of Jaimini is that it is considered to be subordinate or auxiliary to the main or the pradhāna. Śeṣa means and amsā, a part of the whole rite, and the several parts are interchangeably parts or mains according to the different kinds of rites. Just this kind of relationship is what is realized in our life. It is not always that a man remains the main or leader in respect of a function or station in society. It happens that under different conditions or circumstances a man may have to be just a part of a bigger situation, in which another person plays the role of the Chief or Leader, however much he may be eminent in his own sphere. It is usually said that an egotistic person is one who would like to be in the limelight all the time, even as a wit remarked, ' in

¹ Śānta mantra of the VĀJASANEYOPANIṢAD (ĪĀVĀSYOPANIṢAD).

² CF. *PARIŚIṢYATE*: KATHA Up., IV 3 and V.4 and *atiśiṣyate*: CHAN. Up. VIII.4.5

the marriage a bridegroom and in the funeral the corpse. Such is the tragedy of fixing up the part *śeṣi* the main as main at all times and circumstances. The bradleyan vie of Ethics as the definition of a man's station and duties, no less than his master Hegel's is to be refuted because they fix the individual into a static scheme of the Absolute, and he dynamic is not taken into consideration, not merely because the main or *śeṣi* is the Absolute.

The dynamic concept of *śeṣa* – *śeṣi* relationship is capable of a wide and interesting application even in respect of contntly canging situations which is the characteristic of the evolving Society. The main-subsidiary relationship is thus a valuable development that departs from the Tehory of Remainderor progeny or Creatureliness. But it is sought sometimes to explain its by saying that the root *śis* could somehow be made to explain this *angāngī-bhāva* since the anga is other than *angī*; thus *śeṣa* is that which is other than the *śeṣi* which alone focuses out attention in any dynamic context. We know that in the example of firing of a revolver or gun we always consider the last term or rather the last overt cause, he pulling of the trigger, as the cause of the firing of the revolver, whilst in fact a host of other co-operating circumstances have gone towards bringing about the effect. Do we say, however, tha the last link in the chain of causes is the main and the others subordinate or subservient to this?

Yet this is precisely the meaning implied in the definition of Jaimni (Pūrvamīmāsā, III.i.2): *śeṣaḥ parāthatvāt-śeṣa* because dependent on or existing for another. Rāmānuja when explaining the relation the individual soul and God goes to the extent of interpreting the para in the above sūtra as God, the Transcendent, the true Other of the individual. In the Vedārtha Samgraha, Rāmānuja writes: *Paragatātiśayaādhānecchayā upādeyatvameva yasya svarūpam sa śeṣaḥ parahūśeṣi*: The definition of he principipla and he subsidiary or the subordinate which is said to exist foor or do action for the sake of that principal or in some way assist it, is not quite clear in Pūrvamīmāmsā and hence what is needed is that we should be able to define the words *śeṣi* and *śeṣa* in such manner that ther cannot and should not occur the reciporcality in the

relationship between the Divine and the human, that is to say, the Divine should never be made an instrument or subordinate of *śeṣa* so far as the human goes, for that is to make God less than the individual. One thing has become clear in the course of our above discussion, namely that *śeṣa* means that which serves or subserves another, and is to be considered to be always dependent upon or existing for and in that Other, and it should certainly not be in respect of other individuals but only to the total. This, of course is very difficult since, considered from the point of society and nature, this individual and unique loyalty to the Other, the Divine, may have to be and indeed is forced to via the other individuals in succession of hierarchy of causes and uses. This will show that ritual philosophy demands the unique direct loyalty to the one Supreme Divine, whilst it may symbolically or exteriorly or objectively be expressed in the indirect way through the other individuals placed to the comprehension of the individual in his spiritual experience as the terms in the hierarchy of temporal manifestation, higher or lower as the case may be. There is thus a supreme demand to understand the truth that the Hegelian system has in objectifying Reason or the Absolute in the State lost grip with the foundational reality of the individual's spiritual nature as demanding the unique revelation of the Divine relationship within itself. This is the true spirituality or living in the Spirit., the Divine the Life Divine.

The next step has been taken by some writers the *śeṣa* must be interpreted as *viśeṣaṇa*, particular attribute of a substance and not mere as *śeṣa* – a dependent or subsidiary. It would mean that *vi-śeṣa-ṇa* is that which is not the *dravya* or substance as such, but only its invariable and indispensable attribute through which alone we can know the substance but which is not the substance itself. This relation will represent the *apṛthaksiddha-sambandha* between the particular parts and the Whole or Organism. The usage above stated is possible according to some because they hold that affixes, though they alter the meaning of the roots to which they are affixed, can in some cases be dropped in respect of meaning whilst the root itself will shoulder the meaning of the elided affixes. Thus we have pointed out the word *śeṣa* in Vedic usage really expresses the meaning of *avaśeṣa*, whilst in the Sūta-period it denoted the

meaning of the subordinate or auxiliary and anga or part, integral with the whole or the principal or the main.

The next development shows that the meaning of the word underwent a further orientation in so far as it was made to stand for or express the relationship of creature, effect attribute, mode, and servant or slave all in one complex structure. There seems to have resulted even a confusion due to the root *śaṣ*: to control and ordain, and both the meanings were incorporated in the concept *śeṣa*.

Thus we find that in the concept of *śeṣa* there has occurred a gradual importation of more than one meaning¹, till finally we have the concept of the Organism versus its self. It is the soul or *puruṣa* that endows the individual's body with growth, adaptation and mutational possibilities, whose 'why' has not been answered by any theory of Nature or outer evolution or law or chance. Nor is there any possibility of determining the 'wherefore' of these growths and manifestations or mutations arriving at any end, if the end is something of which these organisms and organs are not aware of unconsciously or subconsciously or super consciously. The theory of Unconscious is fertile only to a limited extent as in the case of perpetuation and self-preservation through the structural memory; but it is incapable of leading to the assertion of human evolution into the vaster and wider consciousness of the integral whole, even if indeed this

¹ One more importation into this term has to be mentioned. This is the meaning that is derived from the root *śi*: to lie, which is used to denote that *śeṣa* is that which is lying; Indian Mythology calls the Supreme Divine as *śeṣa* and also the *Adiśeṣa* is the serpend – couch of the Divine : RV.I.174.4 *śeṣān nut a indra sasmān yonāu*; VIII 60.15; AV XVIII.2.10. etc Cf. VEDIC CONCORDANCE, Bloomfield, p.935: and ROOTS, VERB-FORMS AND PRIMARY DERIVATIVES, Whitney, p.174.

cf. *Notes on the Kaṭhapaniṣad* : Ananda K. Coomaraswami, N.I.Antiquary, Vol.I.p.47, note 3. He writes: 'We have shown elsewhere that is by no means

accidentally the *śeṣi* and Ananta are designations both the World-serpent and of the Brahman.

Unconscious be, as Von Hartmann and C.G. Jung held it to be, universal. It is the universal lower rather than the universal higher. As to the doctrine of subconscious awareness, it is only a feeling again of the presentiment of the future, anticipation of the future organized on the principle of biological memory even like the Unconscious, and it cannot help very much except in so far as it might happen to be the field in which the super consciousness erects itself in some measure. But it rather as thin field for such a vigorous manifestation as the Superconscious. The true and divine ends of man are beyond his present apprehension and yet he has faint gleams of the great future – his goal or end through it in his most intelligent moments of anticipation; there is at the back of his consciousness another light that guides him to his own superb destiny, his true self, his super conscious existence, of which this waking life of his is but a remainder, however full it may appear comparatively speaking. That does not lose itself in the appearance of the unconsciousness, so as to become an automatic process, which *śeṣi* precisely what we should call the remainder in a consciously executed act. Comparing for the sake of clarity the expression of Bergson in this context we may say that matter is that which is left behind by the process of change, is that which is registering its uniform beat of fugitive experiences, is that which does not permit the full manifestations of the Spirit having become an obstructive medium through which it has to pierce thought. Equally the individuals are remainders in a sense caught up as diverse foci of Consciousness made fugitive in matter as possible forces, when so required to break through into the open life of the Supermind, or manifest themselves with increased power and light that belong to it. Then when Rāmānuja stresses the identity of *viśeṣaṇa* and *śeṣa* (*śarīra*), where the *viśeṣaṇa* is *apṛthaksiddha*, the meaning of the organic conception becomes clear. Not only that *śeṣa* becomes a general concept which embraces both the inconscient matter and conscient soul, though the name 'dāsa' becomes more appropriate in the case of the conscient

soul, according to Śrī Venkaṭanātha. Thus the word śeṣa becomes essentially a technical term denoting the body that cannot exist apart from the Self or the Divine, who is the ultimate Self of all souls and bodies.