CHAPTER IX.

MĀGHA'S ERUDITION - PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES.

Very few Sanskrit poets were as learned as Māgha. His versatile scholarship becomes evident from the references he makes to many branches of learning in his poem. He is fully equipped with 'the dozen' mentioned by Rājaśekhara in his Kāvyamīmāmsā[1] viz.

' श्रुतिः स्मृतिः इतिहासः पुराणं प्रमाणविद्या समयविद्या, राजसिद्धान्तत्रयी, लोकोपचारः प्रकीर्णकं च काव्यार्थानां द्वादश योनयः ।

We shall deal here with his knowledge of different systems of philosophy. Our poem abounds in references to the following systems of philosophy and their doctrines.

(a) Vedānta: The poet refers to this school of philosophy and its doctrines at several places in the poem.

(i) He refers to Visnu identified with Brahman with and without attributes. The poet tells us (I. 35) that the greatness of the Supreme Soul is incomprehensible, even when he is incarnated as man; a human being as Krsna is, he has all the transcendental attributes that confer on man final release, and hence not even the gods and demons can make the slightest approach to his greatness. The Supreme Soul whom even the Yogins are not able to realise visually with their ceaseless single-minded meditation on Him, has come down to this earth in a human form to extirpate the oppressors of the

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1. Chap.VIII. p.35 (G.O.S. ed).

world like Kamsa and others. This is the only object of the objectless Supreme Soul (I. 37). Hiranyagarbha is referred to in IV. 4. This Supreme Being has one thousand heads and the same number of legs. He pervades the universe. The sun and the moon are his eyes. This is the echo of the decription of the Supreme Being given in Purusasukta. (RV. X. 90).[1]

The divine and incomprehensible nature of the Supreme Soul is referred to in Śiśu. XIV. 59-62. Kṛṣna is transcendent and omnipresent (XIV. 59). He is beyond the reach of words and thoughts and yet object of meditation and worship. These contradictory attributes are possible in his case because of his inconceivable greatness (XIV. 60). It is he who creates, maintains and destroys the universe (XIV. 61). He has neither beginning nor end. He assumes human form to oblige humanity. He is not bound by actions and hence free from the fruits of actions. He is beyond happiness and misery (XIV.62). He is the creator but not the object of creation; he is the upholder but not the object of upholding and he is the destroyer but not the object of destruction (XIV. 66). He possesses opposite attributes (XIV.70). His attributes such as his brilliance, freedom from fear, sweet speech, etc are referred to in XIV. 86. Again in XX. 32, he is referred to as the creator, upholder and destroyer of the universe and the upholder of 'Māyā' from times immemorial. His watery-nature is spoken of in XX. 66. He has four oceans in his navel, the rivers in the joints and

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1. सहस्रशीर्षाः पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् । स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वा अत्यतिष्ठद्दशाङ्गुलम् । RV.X.90.

clouds in hair. This, again, is the prototype of the description of the Lord given elsewhere.[1]

(b) Account of creation: The doctrine of creation is referred to in III. 65; XIII. 40 and XIV. 67. That all created beings are sprung from the body of Visnu, the Supreme Being is referred to in III. 65. This account of creation given by the poet is based on Taittirīya Upaniṣad II.I. viz. "यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते येन जातानि जीवन्ति यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति।"

In XIII. 40, we are told that the entire creation is withdrawn by Him/at the time of the dissolution of the universe. Again the creation is referred to in XIV. 67. We are told that God created Waters first of all and placed the seed there. It was the cause of the origin of Brahma who, in turn, created the entire universe. Here the poet follows the account of creation given in the Manusmrti.[2]

(c) Māgha refers to the doctrine of the Supreme Soul enveloped by external adjuncts in XVIII. 3. He tells us that (XVIII. 3) it is not possible to distinguish between the individual Soul and the Supreme Soul when both of them are enveloped by external adjuncts.

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1. यस्य केशेषु जीमूता नद्यः सर्वाङ्गसंधिषु।
कुक्षौ समुद्राश्चत्वारस्तस्मै लोयात्मने नमः॥

2. Cf. Manu. I. 8 & 9.

According to the esoteric point of view, the individual soul (Jiva) is Brahman itself in full and total possession of eternity, omnipresence, omniscience etc, but these godly qualities like concealed within it as the fire in the wood, and will appear only after the final deliverance. Exoterically, this concealment of the divine nature is due to the external adjuncts (Upādhis)- the mind (Manas), the sense-organs and the vital airs- which form the subtle body. The whole psychological apparatus together with Karman accompanies the soul in all his migrations, without essentially infecting his godly nature. These external adjuncts form part of Māyā and are due to avidyā which is innate in man.[1]

(d) The doctrine of the non-return of the individual soul is referred to at several places in our poem.

The goal, Brahman with which Visnu is identified, when once attained, is the permanent abode from which the soul does not return to the cycle of birth and death.[2]

Nārada says that Śrī Krsna, who is no other than the Supreme Soul, is the final goal (from which there is no return) of all the high-souled sages who have taken to the path of salvation - a path that is beset with difficulties, viz. the intense attachment to worldly objects and is difficult to pursue (I.32).

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1. Ghate: The Vedānta, p.25.
2. तमेव विदित्वाऽतिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्थाः विद्यतेऽयनाय ।

Mund. Upanisad.

In VII. 42, we are told that the bee in the form of the individual soul drinking the honey in the form of Māyā becomes disgusted with the cycle of birth and death which is mixed with rajas (blood) sukra (vigour) and desires to resort to the path of salvation which is steady with a view to gaining immortality.

With a highly devotional heart, the poet refers to the reward of devotion to the Lord in XIV. 63. The devotees with their sins washed away by the constant remembrance of the Lord go to the end of the drama of the world which is full of misery, and attain immortality.

The same idea is repeated in different words in XIV. 64. We are told that the devotees with a view to giving up this foolish existence enter the Lord who is difficult to be obtained, who is self-controlled and who is one without a second with a mind which is ceaselessly meditating on Him.

Again in XIX. 87, we have the reference to the same doctrine of the non-return of the soul. The Yogins who were meditating on Hari and who were bent on gaining immortality, saw Him. It is well-known that His sight puts an end to the cycle of birth and death. We are told in XIX. 93 that those persons who become endowed with virtues draw near Hari.

Finally, in XX. 79, we find Śiśupāla entering the body of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

As pointed out by Dr.Radhakrishnan,[1] there are two conflicting accounts of the 'summum bonum' running throughout the Upaniṣads: that it is a state of likeness to God, and that it is a state of oneness with God. It appears that Māgha follows the latter view as is evident from XIV. 64; XIX. 87 and XX. 79.

(e) The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul is referred to at two places in our poem.

XII. 55 tells us that when a person dies, the soul immediately migrates to the other body. Vallabhadeva the commentator on Śiśu. quotes[2] from the Bhagavad Gītā while explaining this verse.

XIII. 28 informs us that the individual souls have to take innumerable births according to their action and they, along with five sense-organs, enter new bodies having nine gates at the time of transmigration. This verse is also the exact echo of the verse quoted above from the Bhagvad Gita.

(2) Sāmkhya:

(a) The poem refers at several places to the doctrine of relation between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. This relation is refrred to in I. 33. According to this system of philosophy, the pure spirit (Puruṣa) is merely an onlooker, perceiving and inactive, and appears as

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1. Indian Philosophy, Vol. I. p. 238.

2. Bhagvad Gītā. II. 22.

an active agent merely because of his union with Buddhi etc. and the activities of the Guṇas.[1] The Puruṣas or spirits are many and have absolutely no activity, all activity being due to Prakrti, the material cause of the universe, constituted of the three attributes. Again, Puruṣa is beyond the productions or transformations of the primodial matter. Vikāras are 23 principles, viz. sevenPrakrti-Vikrtis and the sixteen Vikrtis; these are the effects or transformations of Mūlaprakrti. The seven prakrti-vkrtis are Mahat or Buddhi (The Great Principle or Intellect), Ahamkāra (Egotism) and the five subtle rudiments. The sixteen Vikrtis are the eleven senses- five sense organs and five organs of action, Manas (the mind) and five Mahābhūtāni,[2]

Prakrti, the keystone of the Sāmkhya philosophy, is the one rootless Root of the universe, constituted of the three Guṇas, through which it evolves every kind of existence, save, of course, the Puruṣa. The Prakrti, though inanimate, evolves the whole phenomenal world. The Puruṣa, however, is quite distinct from Prakrti, and takes no part in its creation, remaining passive, a mere onlooker of the various developments of Prakrti. The Prakrti acts for the benefit of the Puruṣa and their union takes place like that of the lame and the blind for the Puruṣa's seeing Prakrti and his final

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1. Cf. तस्माच्च विपर्यासात्सिद्धं साक्षित्वमस्य पुरुषस्य।
कैवल्यं माध्यस्थं द्रष्टृत्वमकर्तृभावश्च॥
तस्मात्तत्संयोगादचेतनं चेतनावदिव।
गुणकर्तृत्वे च तथा कर्तेव भवत्युदासीनः॥
-Sāmkhya Kārikā,19 & 20.

2. Cf.Sām.Kār.3:
मूलप्रकृतिरविकृतिर्महदाद्याः प्रकृतिविकृतयः सप्त।
षोडशकस्तु विकारो न प्रकृतिर्न विकृतिः पुरुषः॥

emancipation. The Puruṣa stands in need of Prakrti ultimately for his emancipation, though primarily their relation is for enjoyment only.[1]

Kṛṣṇa is called such a Puruṣa who is indifferent, who is beyond the transformations of the primodial matter, who is distinct from Prakrti and who is beginningless (I. 33).

(b) The poet refers to the Sāmkhya principle of Buddhi in II. 59. According to the Sāmkhyas, all the experiences through which the Soul goes, all the sensations of pleasure, pain etc. he feels, belong really to Buddhi, and the Soul, who is really beyond all the emanations of Prakrti, who is quite unaffected by them, and who is merely a passive looker-on, only fancies himself to be the enjoyer (Bhokta and Phalabhak) i.e. going through all worldly experiences and enjoying the fruits of his fancied action. He is to be called the enjoyer, simply on account of his connection with Buddhi and all its emanations for his final liberation.[2]

Here (II. 59) Balarāma advises Kṛṣṇa to have no fear that the proposed war would involve a great strain on him; for with an efficient army as he has under his command, victory is so certain

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1. Cf. Sam. Kar. 21:

पुरुषस्य दर्शनार्थं कैवल्यार्थं तथा प्रधानस्य ।
पङ्ग्वन्धवदुभयोरपि संयोगस्तत्कृतः सर्गः ॥

2. Sāmk. tat-Kaumudi on Sāmkh Kā. 21:

भोग्येन महदादिसर्गेण संभिन्नः पुरुषस्तद्गतं दुःखत्रयं स्वात्मन्यभिमन्यमानः कैवल्यं प्रार्थयते ।

that Krsna may very well play the part of a mere spectator, while the fighting is going on. The army would gain victory for him, a mere spectator, just as the Buddhi (Intellect) brings to the Ātman (the Soul- the Puruṣa) all the worldly experiences, the Ātman, however, remaining a mere passive looker-on. Krsna is compared to Ātman of the Sāmkhyas and his army to the Buddhi.

The reference to the same principle is made in XIV. 19. King Yudhiṣṭhira is compared to the Ātman of the Sāmkhyas and his priests to the Buddhi.

We are told in the second of the thirty four verses in canto XV interpolated according to Mallinātha that Puruṣa (Krsna) is beyond the twenty four principles of the Sāmkhyas (XV.2).

Again the principle of Buddhi is referred to in XV. 7 (interpolated according to Mallinātha). Krsna is merely a looker-on, he is inactive. Everything is experienced by Buddhi and not by Puruṣa. XV. 8; 14, 15 and 16 repeat the same idea about the passive nature of Ātman.

(c) The reference is made to the principle of the creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe by Him.

In XV. 10, we are told, though the force of 'double entendre', that God, assuming the form of a child and destroying the universe, sleeps in water for a long time as the entire universe

is filled with water.[1]

XV. 13, again, through the force of 'double entendre' refers to the three aspects of godhood. He creates the universe under the influence of Rajas, maintains it under the influence of Sattva and withdraws it under the influence of Tamas.

(d) Hari can be realised only by means of single-minded devotion. He is neither to be gained by sacrifices, nor by penance, nor by gifts. He is to be gained by devotion alone (XV. 4).

His devotees are freed from this mundane existence and never return to the cycle of birth and death (XV. 9).

(3) Vaiśeṣika:

The reference is made in II. 91 to the doctrine of Ākāśa of the Vaiśeṣika system of philosophy. Just as the production of sound, though it is generated by various agencies, is attributed to the ākāśa which is an inert substance, so all the ends achieved by other kings allied with the overlord only serve to enhance his power and prestige, though he himself may remain inactive (II.91).

According to Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the Ākāśa is subtle and ethereal fluid pervading the whole universe. It is one of the nine Dravyas, primary substances.[2] Sound is held to be its special

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1. Cf. संहृत्य सर्वभूतानि कृत्वा चैकार्णवं जगत् ।
कालः स्वपिति यश्चैकस्तस्मै मायात्मने नमः ॥

2. Cf. शब्दगुणमाकाशं तच्च विभु नित्यमेकं च ।

-Tarkasamgraha.

quality. According to the Vaiśeṣakas Guṇa (quality) is the characteristic or property of all substances (Dravyas) and one of the seven categories (Padārthas).[1]

" Ākāśa is a simple, continuous, infinite substance, and is the substratum of sound. The qualities of colour, taste, smell and tangibility do not belong to it. By the process of elimination sound is proved to be the distinguishing quality of Akasa. It is inactive (niṣkriya). All corporeal objects are found conjoined with it. The atoms which are infinitely small cannot make up a magnitude by coming together or touching each other. If they stand apart from one another and yet are joined somehow so as to constitute a system, it can only be through the medium of ākāśa. The atoms unite but not continuously. That which binds together the atoms, though not itself atomic, is the ākāśa.[2]

4.Nyāya XII. 69 refers to 'Anumāna' or inference. 'If Anumāna is stronger than Agama, it was the Yamunā which filled the ocean with her waters and not the Ganges. Otherwise how can the colour of the waters of the ocean be black like the throat of Lord Śiva devoid of ashes ?"

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1. Vaijayantī - गुणस्त्वावृत्तिरारब्धादिज्येन्द्रियामुरथतन्वयु ।

2. S.Radhakrishanan: Ind. Philosophy,Vol.II. pp.192-3.

The word 'Anumāna' (inference) is to be taken in a comprehensive sense, as including both deduction and induction. Anumāna is sometimes defined as knowledge which is preceded by perception. Vatsyayana holds that 'no inference can follow in the absence of perception."[1]

(4)[a]/Yoga:

This system of philosophy is referred to at two places in the poem.[2]

In IV. 55, we are told that on the mountain Raivataka, the yogins absorbed in contemplation, who employ the means of purifying the mind such as Maitrī (Goodwill) etc, and who, having brought about the destruction of Kleśas (sources of pain in the world), have attained the Sālambana Yoga,[3] desire to keep off even the knowledge of the Puruṣa being different from Prakrti, although they have attained it already.

Here several technical terms such as 'Maitrādi', 'Kleśas', Sabījayoga' and Sattwapuruṣānyatayā Khyāti' are employed by the poet exhibiting his knowledge of Yoga Śāstra.

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1. Ibid, Vol.II. p.72.
2. IV. 55 and XIV. 62.
3. A form of contemplation in which a Yogi tries to bring before his mind the gross form of the Eternal.

According to the Yoga philosophy, the cultivation of four emotions (bhāvanāḥ), viz., Maitrī, Karuṇā, Muditā and Upekṣā, purifies the mind and facilitates the progress of the aspirant on the path of Yoga. Maitrī is friendship with meritorious, Karuṇā is compassion on the distressed, Muditā is giving joy to others and Upeksa is indifference to the sinners. When the mind is purified by the cultivation of these emotions (bhāvanāḥ), the aspirant is freed from the Kleśas, i.e., the sources of miseries that beset the soul in this world.

The Kleśas are five, viz; (1) Avidyā i.e. ignorance by which one believes the intransitory objects to be eternal, and mistakes the body, organs of sense etc. for the soul; (2) Asmitā, i.e., egotism; (3) Rāga, i.e., attachement to worldly objects; (4) Dveṣa, i.e., hatred and (5) Abhiniveśa, i.e., an instinctive clinging to worldly life and bodily enjoyments, and the fear of being cut off suddenly from them by death.

The Yogins try to bring before their minds the gross form of Eternal, that they may concentrate on it their minds which have not yet been developed enough to be fixed on the Parabrahman. This form of contemplation is called Sabīja or Sālambana Yoga.

According to the Sāmkhya philosophy with which the Yoga philosophy is intimately connected, the Purusa or soul is emancipated from the bonds of worldly existence by attaining correct knowledge of the twenty-four principles which are developments of the Prakrti and by correctly discriminating them from Purusa who is altogether

passive, a mere looker-on. The knowledge that the Puruṣa and Prakrti are distinct from each other is called'Sattvapuruṣānyatayā Khyāti'.

Even this knowledge of the distinction between Puruṣa and Prakrti, the Yogins on this mountain wish to keep off, for, to possess this knowledge means to have the mind working; and as long as the working of this mind has not ceased, there is no real emancipation of the soul.

In XIV. 62, Māgha tries to define God of Patanjali. He is omniscient and unlimited by time. He in his mercy enters into the scene of change by assuming the quality of Sattva. Since he does so voluntarily for the sake of the struggling humanity, he is not bound by the law of Karma. He is ever free. He is said to be a special kind of self (Punviśeṣa) untouched by the taint of imperfection, free from all entanglement in worldly existence and unaffected by the weight of suffering (Kleśas) with which the living beings are burdened. The Yoga Śāstra defines him as क्लेशकर्मविपाकाशयैरपरामृष्टः पुरुषविशेष ईश्वरः। (पातञ्जलयोगसूत्र I.1.24).

(5) Pūrva Mīmāmsā:

Māgha, while referring to this system, deals more with the purificatory aspect of the sacrifice rather than the technical one. He also deals with the ethics of the system.

We have a beautiful pen-picture of the Rājasūya sacrifice in canto XIV. 18-42. The ritual of the Rājasūya is described in XIV. 20. The sacrificial priests, invoking Indra and other gods by the

pure and loud recitation of Vedic mantras, started making offerings to the fire on account of these gods (XIV. 20). The Sāma Vedins sang the Sāman ṛcs and the Hotṛs and Adhvaryus sang the ṛcs from the Ṛgveda and the Yajurveda respectively (XIV. 21).

According to the Mīmāmsakas, to gain salvation one has to perform nitya karmas like sandhyā etc., and naimittika karmas when the proper occasion arises. These are unconditional obligations. One performs Kāmya Karmas to gain special ends. Yudhiṣṭhira was performing Rājasūya - a Kāmya Karma- to gain special end, viz., sovereignty of the world. One need not perform Kāmya Karmas if one does not want to gain these ends. By avoiding forbidden (niṣiddha) courses of conduct we avoid hell, and if one keeps clear of Kāmya Karmas one will free himself from selfish ends and if one keeps up the unconditional duties one attains salvation. This is the simple ethics of Pūrva Mīmāmsā.

Again in XI. 41, we have a charming description of the Agnihotra sacrifice. The ever-kindling fire in the houses of the Agnihotrins consumes the offering called "Sannāyya" offered by the priests in the most proper way as laid down in the scriptures.

(6) Buddhism:

Magha refers to Buddhist philosophy at three places -II.28; XV. 58 and 2nd verse (epilogue stanzas)- in the poem.

In II. 28, a secret deliberation in a council (Mantraḥ) is compared to the so-called Ātman of the Buddhists. Just as to the Buddhists, in all created bodies, there is no soul as an entity separate from

the five forms of mundane consciousness (Skandhas), so to the kings, in all projects, all deliberations, there is nothing else than a careful consideration of the five constituents of polity (aṅgapañcakam) (II. 28).

According to Buddhism which denies the existence of Ātman as a separate entity, human consciousness (which corresponds to what is called Ātman, the soul), is made up of five elements called Skandhas, viz., (1) Rūpaskandha, the phenomenal world, as apprehended by the senses; (2) Vijnānaskandha, the stream of consciousness consisting in self-consciousness and apprehension of form and colour, i.e., consciousness of self and the phenomenal world; (3) Vedanāskandha, the stream of the feelings of pleasure, pain etc. produced by two abovementioned forms of consciousness; (4) Saṅjnāskandha, the stream of cognitions conversant about words, leading to nomenclature of the objects perceived; (5) Saṁskāra-skandha, the faculty of impression leading to the formation of ideas and experience.

The Buddhist do not recognise Ātman as a separate entity; their five skandhas which constitute the mundane consciousness of man, correspond to what others recognise as the Ātman or soul.

The poet tells us that just as the Ātman of the Buddhists is nothing else than the aggregate of the five skandhas, so that mantra of the kings is nothing but the pentad of constituents of state polity (aṅgas).

The poet refers (XV. 58) to the Lord Buddha and his victory over the army of Cupid. Just as the angry army of Cupid was defeated by the Lord Buddha rapt in meditation, in the same way the angry army of Śiśupāla met the same fate at the hands of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Finally a reference is made to the fruitful teaching of the Great Master in the second of the five epilogue stanzas at the close of the poem. Just as the wise follow the teachings of the Lord Buddha, in the same way King Varmalāta followed the wise words of the minister Suprabhadeva.

(7) Jainism:

There is only one reference to this school of thought. Mahavīra is referred to in XIX. 112. Not only the poet has shown his respect towards him here but he has accepted him as one of the incarnations of the Lord Viṣṇu.

It is surprising that Māgha does not refer to the school of the Cārvākas anywhere in the poem.

We thus find that the philosophical knowledge of Māgha was very comprehensive. He was in fact proficient in all branches of philosophy - orthodox as well as heterodox.