

G.R. MALKANI'S CONCEPT OF METAPHYSICS OF ENERGY

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[Philosophers, like scientists consider energy to be an essential concept. G.R. Malkani, a contemporary Indian philosopher, who is a stern supporter of Advaita Vedānta, in his book '*Metaphysics of Energy*' has dealt with the different views of the scientists regarding energy and has also pointed out the philosophers' specially Advaita Vedāntin's deviation from the scientific view of energy.

In this write-up an humble attempt will be made to show how philosophers, specially Advaita Vedāntins differ from the scientists regarding the concept of energy.]

Energy is a concept which is elaborately discussed by the scientists specially by the physicists. Energy is an essential concept for the philosophers also. Energy which is regarded as the moving power is elaborately discussed by them.

G.R. Malkani, a contemporary Advaita Vedantin, in his book '*Metaphysics of Energy*' has dealt with the different views of the scientists regarding energy and has also pointed out the philosophers' specially Advaita Vedantin's deviation from the scientific view of energy. Both the scientists and the philosophers are concerned with the questions of what is energy, how can it be known, what is the status of energy etc. In course of our discussion, of the present topic we shall show Malkani's view that while the scientists have taken an external view of energy, the Philosophers do not regard energy or power to be external. They have given a spiritualistic status of energy.

Malkani says that the scientists discuss the phenomena of change by the concept of energy. They regard that without energy variation is not possible. They maintain that energy is not found as existent in space so it is not an object of direct perception. According to them succession of phenomena is the ground of presupposition of energy. They take an external view of energy. To them nature is endowed with the essential power called energy.

So far as the physical science is concerned we find that mechanics primarily deals with the notion of matter. Matter is moved by force. As a result they postulate force as the moving power of matter. So far as their view is concerned matter is nothing but a mass. They are not concerned with the physical properties of matter. One mass is relative to another mass. There is no absolute mass. Mass is determined by force. According to them two masses are equal, if equal forces, in equal time, produce equal change of velocity. Thus it appears that force is only a name for mass acceleration.

Malkani argues that the mechanics have discussed one idea i.e., mass in terms of other i.e., force in order to explain motion. They, thereby, avoid specific qualities of each of the idea. According to him, "such correlative conceptions are both meaningless as correlatives."¹

According to the scientists, the conception of energy is relative to man's use. In the field of work or activity energy has meaning. They made a distinction between two kinds of energy on the ground of its function. One is kinetic energy and the other is potential energy. Kinetic energy is that which causes motion. It helps something to change its positions. Potential energy, on the other hand, is the positional energy. Potential energy is that which a system possesses in virtue of the relative positions of its parts or its configuration. But in Malkani's opinion this potential energy which is equivalent to a state of rest cannot be regarded as energy at all. Energy can be conceived only when it shows some activity or motion.

It may be argued from the scientist's point of view that every state of equilibrium is actually a real war between counter forces. So political energy, though appears as a state of rest is in a continuous effort. For example, stone on the wall is always pressing against the wall, which appears to fall. They maintain that energy is in a continuous effort. Malkani says that elements can bestow pressure only when they are free to move in space. Now, in the case of stone-wall example neither the stone nor the wall are free. Wall and stone form a compact system where they are only parts to make the compact system. When this compact system will be destroyed then only they become free. Within the compact system they cannot produce any pressure. Again, when they can produce pressure then only they are free to move. The concept of

movement is inconsistent with potential energy. So, Malkani maintains that, "the expression 'potential energy' is a strange combination of meanings, if we retain the conception of energy, we can only conceive it as struggling and doing, and yet when we say that it is potential, we have allowed it to lapse into a slumber and thereby cease to be energy in any sense."²

Scientists are of the view that energy is required for mechanical work. Mechanical work can be about multifarious physical changes viz., thermal, electrical, chemical and so on and so forth. When such alterations are reversed they yield a new mechanical work in the exact quality which was required for the production of the part reversed. And this is regarded as the principle of the conservation of energy. It means that no part of energy is lost. So energy is the indestructible something of which the measure is the mechanical work, which implies that the conservation of energy is the measure of mechanical work. From this it follows that energy is a measurable quantity but has no form or qualities. Further measurement is possible only in case of homogeneity. Malkani opines that it is as such meaningless to say that energy which has no forms changes its forms in doing work. He opines that the law of conservation is meaningless. The conception of energy is the conception of work. But pure energy free of all formal associations, and as pure activity itself, can do no work, so it is not energy at all. According to him there is a fundamental blunder in the scientific conception of energy as something real in the world outside.³

So far as the view of the scientists is concerned it becomes clear that energy is that which produces particular movement or activity. Energy is the cause of motion and motion is the result of energy. Malkani is of the view that such a conception is acceptable only when there is found a distinction between energy and inertness. Motion is produced by the conjoining of energy and inertness. He does not accept such separation and consequent union. He says that such kind of relationship is inconceivable since energy cannot remain by itself as it is not a substance. For in that case energy will be inseparable from inertness.

According to Malkani, all power outside can be power in no sense. He is also against the view that one thing can move another thing. So far as perception is concerned there are only things no power of initiation. The fact is that when one thing moves another thing, the

moving agent cannot be conceived excepting as being moved, it only communicates an impulse which it itself but passively receives from outside. Malkani then opines that man perceives object after object but no power or initiative force any where is perceived. For example, one can perceive the steam engine and its movements but the power of the steam engine cannot be perceived.

According to Malkani, man is directly conscious about the power in his actions. It cannot be found outside in the world. How can power which is not found in space effect something in space since an unspatial reality can have no point in contact with the spatial through which it can exert influence. In case of action, again, power cannot be understood. According to him the period between the two events, i.e., to think to do an action and actual doing the action is significant. In this point the feeling of 'can' takes place. Can indicates the power which will enable the person to do the action. So far as Malkani's view is concerned we find that he regards 'can' as man's spiritual nature. He says that can indicates man's spirituality. Some may argue that man is not only conscious about his 'can' but also of his cannot, i.e., inability to do something. As a result question maturely arises that how the spirit is controlled by the circumstances i.e., in certain circumstances spirit can do something and in other circumstances be cannot. Question may still be raised that whether this inability is quantitative inability. Malkani maintains that in case of quantitative inability one cannot make the negative assertion, since the agent of limited capacity is given to work only within his limitations. He is of the view that when one says that he cannot do this or that it implies that he is greater than that inability for which he can express his incapacity to do the work. He says that, "we are truly unlimited and absolute, there is nothing to prescribe our nature or our power; for every such prescription is known to us."⁴

The real fact is that the spirit is unlimited there is no doubt. The limitation is due to the instrument through which it is working.

Notes and References:

- 1 G.R. Malkani, *Metaphysics of Energy*, p.23
- 2 *Ibid*, p.37
- 3 cf. *Ibid*, p.42
- 4 *Ibid*, p.175