

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ADVAITA - VEDĀNTA

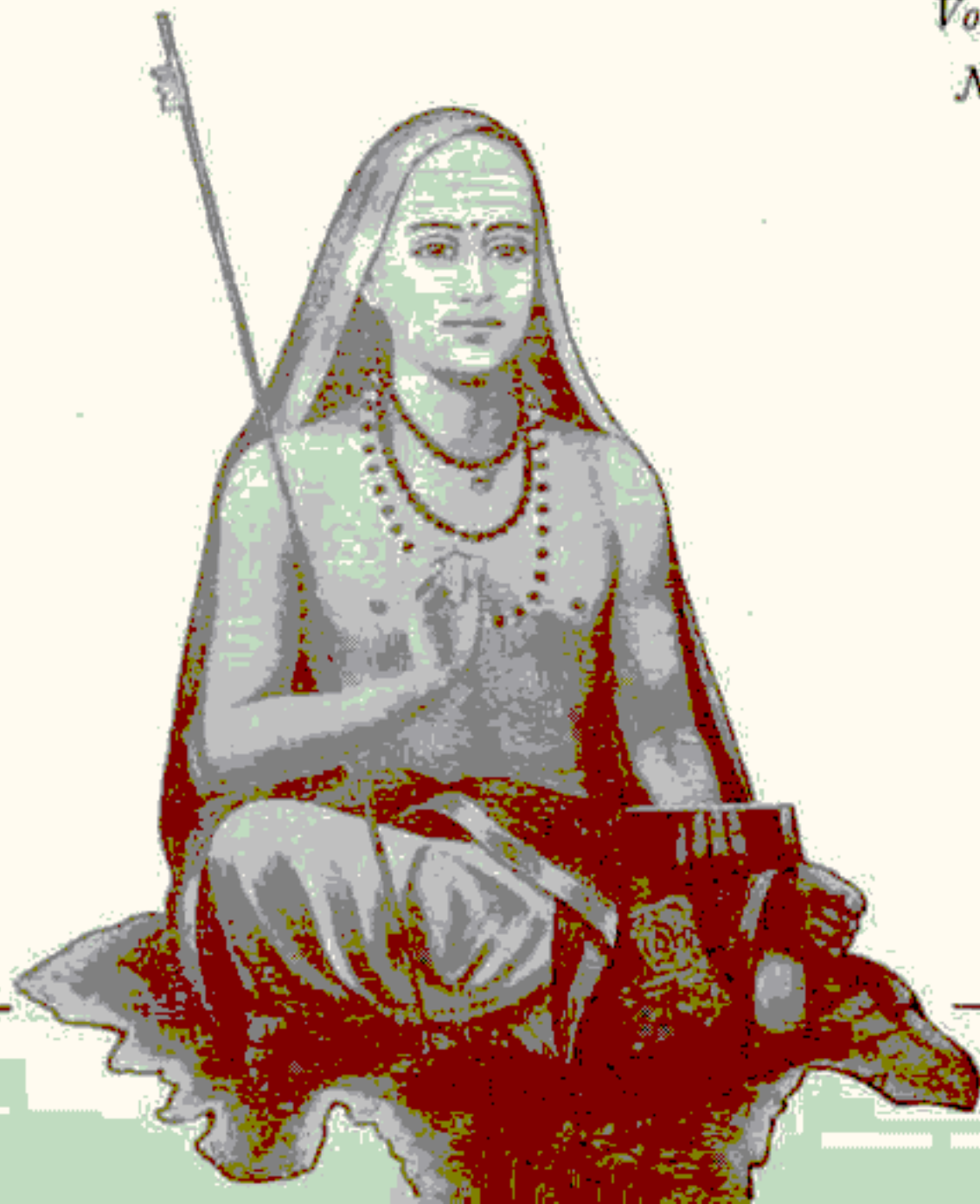
The VOICE of ŚĀṆKARA

śaṅkara-bhāratī

Chairman, Advisory Board
V. R. Kalsanamadara Sastrī

Editor
N. G. Krishna

Volume ELEVEN
Number THREE



Nov.

1986

esā śaṅkara-bhāratī vijagate
nirvāṇa-sandāyini

victorious is the voice of śaṅkara,
leading, as it does, to liberation

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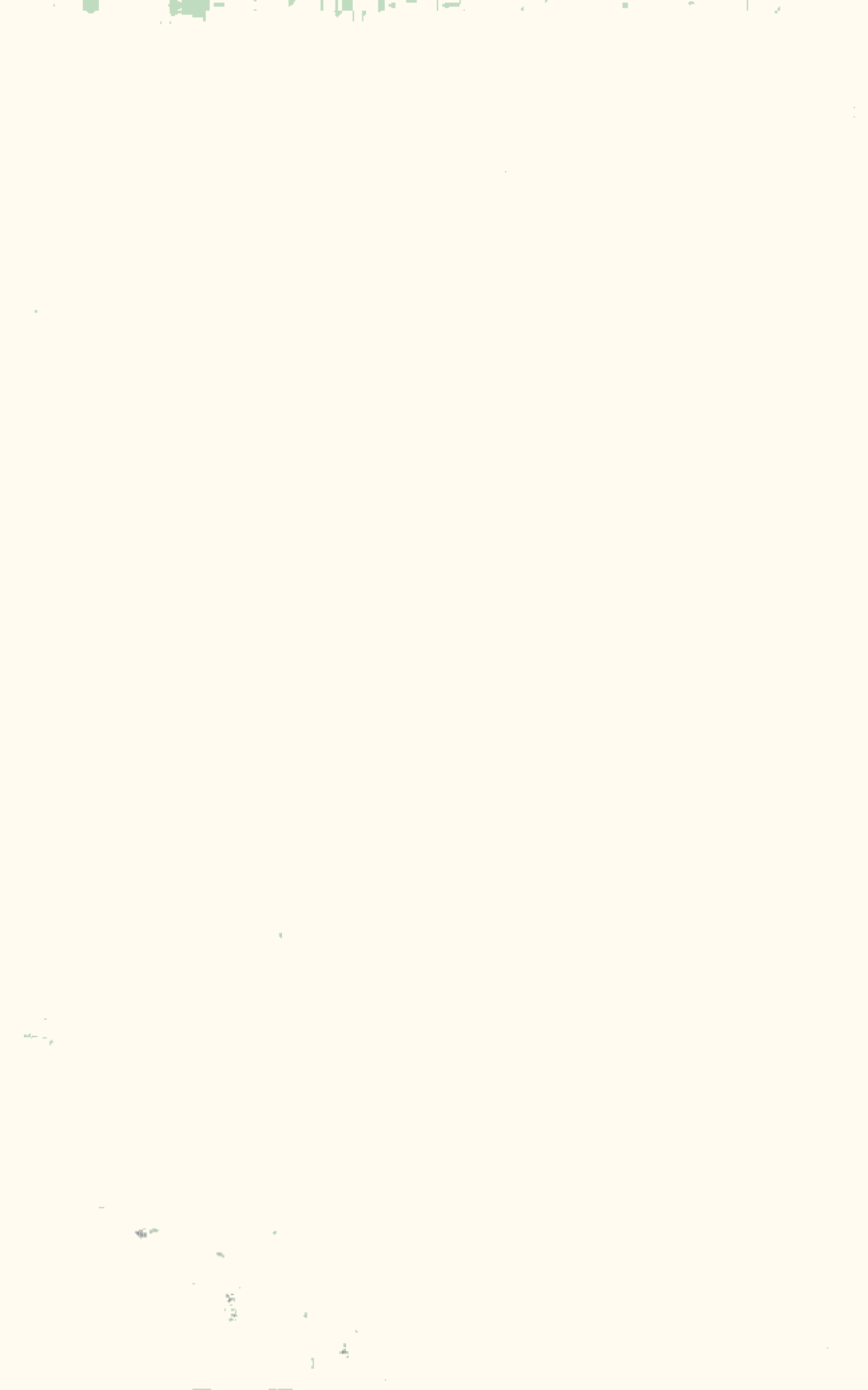
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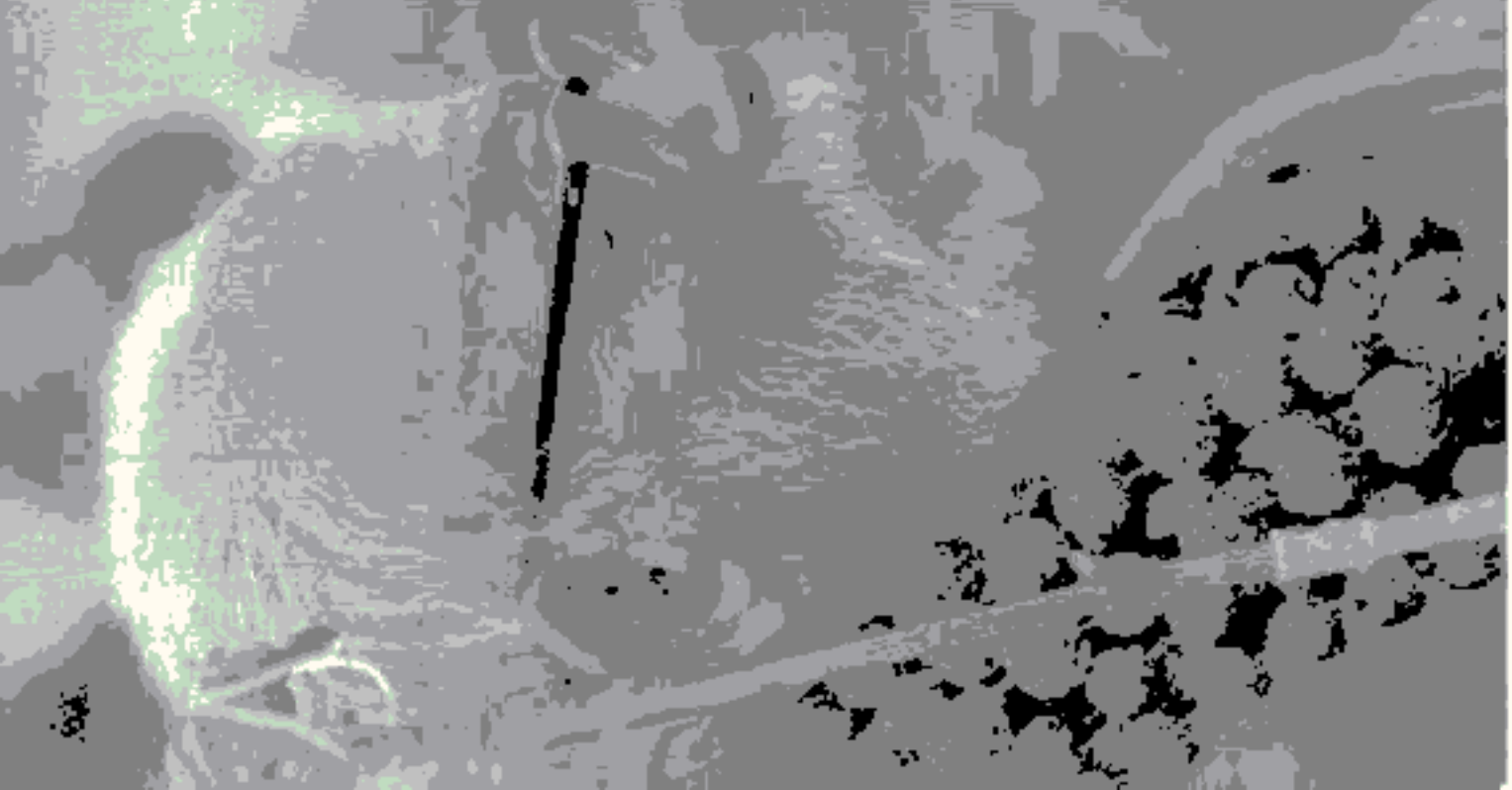
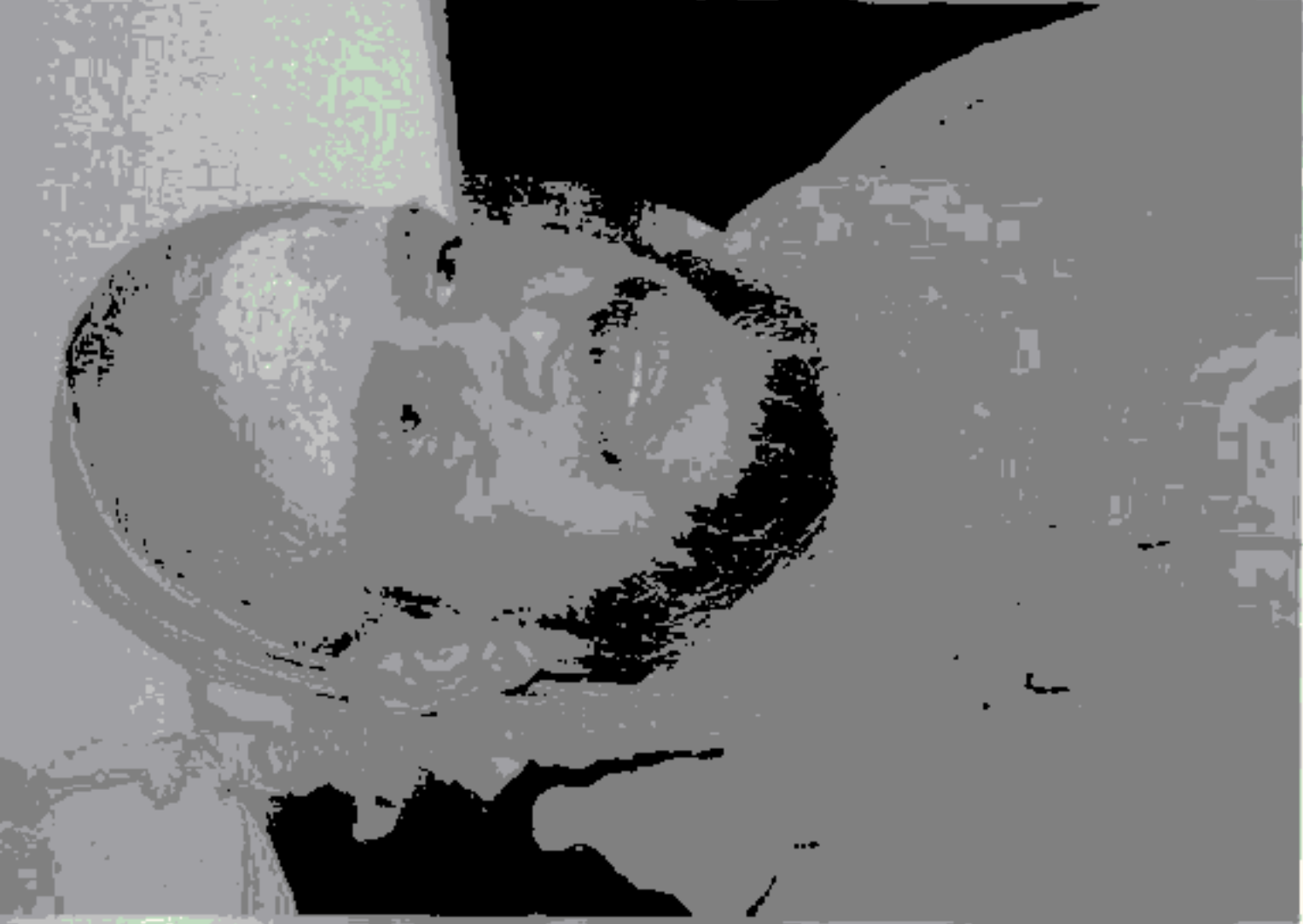
Sri N. C. Krishnan

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SANATHANA DHARMA GURUKULAM LIMITED

HOMAGE TO ŚAṄKARA

[115]

जटाजूटमध्ये पुरा या सुराणां
धुनी साद्य कर्मन्दिरूपस्य शम्भोः ।
गले मल्लिकामालिकाव्याजतस्ते
विभातीति मन्ये गुरो किं तथैव ॥

*ḥatājūṭamadhya purā yā surāṅān
dhunī sāḍya karmandirūpasya śambhoḥ
gale mallikā-mālikāvyaḥataste
vibhātīti manye guro kim tathaiḁa.*

It is my surmise that the river Gaṅgā — who took her abode within the locks of the matted hair of Lord Śiva formerly — adorns your neck in the guise of a jasmine garland now when you have taken the ascetic form of Śrī Śaṅkara, O Master! Perhaps my surmise is quite true, isn't it?

[116]

नखेन्दुप्रमाधूतनम्रालिहार्दा-
 न्धकारव्रजायाब्जमन्दस्मिताय ।
 महामोहपाथोनिधेर्बाडवाय
 प्रशान्ताय कुर्मो नमः शङ्कराय ॥

*nakhenduprabhā-dhūtanamrālihārdān-
 dhakāravrajāyābjamandasmitāya
 mahāmohapāthonidher-bāḍabāya
 praśāntāya kurmo namaḥ śaṅkarāya.*

We adore Śrī Śaṅkara who is serene, who is like the *bāḍabāgni* (submarine fire) that consumes the ocean-like ignorance, who has a pleasant moon-like smile, and whose shining toe-nails remove the darkness (ignorance) found in the hearts of the devotees who come in a queue to prostrate at his feet.

*Jagadguru Śrī Saccidānandasivābhīnava Nṛsiṃhabhārati
 in Śrī Śaṅkarācāryabhujāṅgaprayātaṣṭotra*

INQUIRY INTO THE MAJOR TEXTS*

T. M. P. Mahadevan

1. *Identity of Self and Brahman*

The *Mahāvākyaviveka* (of the *Pañcadaśī*) is an exposition of the purport of the four *mahāvākyas* (major texts) which constitute the quintessence of the Upaniṣadic teaching. According to Advaita, the principal doctrine of the Upaniṣads is that of the identity between the self and *Brahman*; and this doctrine is enshrined in the heart of each of the four Vedas. If the Vedas be compared to a tree and the Upaniṣads to its fruit, then the *mahāvākyas* can be characterized as the juice of the fruit. It is through the "hearing" of the purport of the *mahāvākyas* that *Brahman*-knowledge can be gained. The *avāntaravākyas* or intermediary texts give us knowledge of the *Saguṇa-Brahman* which is the cause or ground of the world. The *mahāvākyas*, on the other hand, reveal to us the *Nirguṇa-Brahman*, which is the same as the Self.

*Courtesy: T.M.P. Mahadevan, *The Pañcadaśī of Bhāratīrtha Vidyārāya*, Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1975 pp.53-56.

2. "Consciousness is Brahman"

The *mahāvākya* that forms the essence of the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* of the *R̥g-veda* is 'prajñānam brahma', 'Consciousness is Brahman'. Here the word 'prajñāna' indicates the consciousness which is conditioned by the internal organ. It is on the basis of that consciousness that the sense-organs function. It is by its power that the sense of sight perceives objects, the sense of hearing hears sounds, the sense of smell perceives odours, the sense of speech performs its function, and the sense of taste discriminates the palatable from the unpalatable. It is the immutable intelligence, *kūṭasthacaitanya*, which is at the back of all experience.

The word 'brahma', signifies the intelligence which is identical in all beings, the gods, men, animals and others. "This Brahmā, this Indra, this Prajāpati, all these gods, these five great elements, earth, air, ether, water, fire and all these small creatures, these others, the seeds of creation and these egg-born, womb-born, sweat-born, sprout-born, horses, cows, men, elephants, and whatever else which breathes and moves and flies and is immovable; all this is guided by intelligence and is supported by intelligence; the universe has intelligence for its guide; intelligence is the basis; intelligence is Brahman."¹ It is declared by the *Upaniṣad* that the intelligence in all the beings is the same. The intelligence is the self. This intelligence is Brahman. And so, the self is Brahman.

3. "I am Brahman"

The *mahāvākya* of the *Yajurveda* which is found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is 'aham brahmāsmi', 'I am Brahman'.² The word 'aham' implies the self which is

by nature infinite and all-pervasive, and which remains as the witnessing principle of the functions of the intellect in all beings such as men, and others. The meaning of the word '*brahma*' is the same reality which is unconditioned by the empirical categories of space-time, etc.; and the verb '*asmi*' indicates the relation of identity between the self and *Brahman*. The self within is the same as the self without.

4. "That thou art"

'*Tat tvam asi*', 'That thou art', is the *mahāvākya* of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* of the *Sāma-veda*.¹ This Upaniṣad declares that prior to creation there was only the *sat*, one only, without a second. But the creation of which the Upaniṣad speaks is neither an origination *de novo* nor an actual transformation. On the contrary, it is only an illusory manifestation. And so, on inquiry we find that the *sat* is even *now* the same as it was prior to creation. It is devoid of differences, is non-dual, and undivided. What is called modification is but a name. The self neither modifies, nor is it modified. It was, is, and will be the same *sat* without a second. The word '*tat*' of the *mahāvākya* implies that *sat* which is the changeless Absolute.

The implied meaning of the word '*tvam*' is the self which transcends the body, senses, and the mind of the one who hears the *mahāvākya*. The eligible person who 'hears' the *mahāvākya* realizes that the self is not the collection of body, sense-organs, mind, etc. The self is neither a physical entity nor a psychical phenomenon. It is the intelligence which transcends both body and mind.

The verb '*asi*' puts the other two words in the relation of opposition and thereby indicates identity

between them. The self which is illusorily seen to be conditioned by body, etc., and *Brahman* which is mistakenly thought to produce the universe, etc., are non-different.

5. "This Self is Brahman"

The *mahāvākya* of the *Atharva-veda* which is declared in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* is 'ayam-ātmā brahma', 'this self is *Brahman*'. The word 'ayam' describes the nature of the self to be self-luminous and immediately cognizable. The 'self' is the locus of the assemblage of factors beginning with egoity and ending with the body. It is the witness-intelligence, the inner ruler, immortal.

The word '*brahma*' indicates the reality which is the substrate of all things. What we see as the world is the work of *māyā*. In reality there is no other entity except *Brahman*. It is the sole and the whole reality. That *Brahman* is the self-luminous self.

6. Identity by Implication

All the *mahāvākyas* declare the same truth, namely, the oneness of *Brahman* and the self. Each of the sentences has two words, at the least, one of them signifying the individual self and the other universal reality. The expressed meanings of the words do not convey the doctrine of identity. The individual self conditioned by the finite intellect and limited by ignorance cannot be the same as the omniscient and omnipresent *Īśvara*. But when we take the secondary implications of the words into consideration we realize that both the words in each of the *mahāvākyas* mean the same reality. When the self and *Īśvara* are stripped of their

extraneous adjuncts, *avidyā* and *māyā*, they are realized to be identical. This is achieved by exclusive-non-exclusive secondary implication. When the qualities of the *jīva* like limited knowledge, etc., and those of *Īśvara* like omniscience, creatorship, etc., are recognized to be mere superimpositions, then both of them are realized to be identical. The self, in truth, is not different from *Brahman*.

NOTES

1. *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, VI.
2. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, I, iv, 10.
3. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, VI, viii, 1.

JÑĀNĀD EVA TU KAIVALYAM*
(LIBERATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE ALONE)

S. S. Suryanarayana Sastrī

The search for release posits the permanence of what is sought; this seems inconsistent with production or attainment; what is produced or attained is finite, is perishable; release must therefore be a manifestation of the ever-existent and infinite. The manifestation is necessary because of the present obscuration, a function of *māyā*. On the sublation of *māyā*, our eternal freedom stands self-revealed. The sublation is also spoken of as destruction or annihilation. Nothing that exists can be wholly annihilated; but *vidyā* is known to annihilate *avidyā*; knowledge destroys ignorance; since the phenomenal world due to *māyā* is annihilated at release, *māyā* is equated with *avidyā*, destructible by knowledge. Since without the destruction of *avidyā* release is impossible and since *jñāna* alone can destroy *avidyā*, *jñāna* is claimed to be the sole means of release.

Certain points are worth keeping in mind. *Jñāna* in the sense of *svarūpa-jñāna*, the consciousness that is Brahman, is identical with release; it is not a means to

*Courtesy: *Collected Papers of Professor S. S. Suryanarayana Sastrī*, University of Madras, Madras, 1961, pp. 239-243.

release, being indeed the substrate of *avidyā*. What is claimed to be instrumental is *ṛtti-jñāna*, a particular cognitive psychosis intuiting the impartite and arrived at by study of the Vedānta, reflection and profound contemplation. It is a function of the internal organ. Though itself a product of nescience, it has the capacity to destroy all lower psychoses such as apprehend the finite, the relational and the diverse, and finally to annihilate itself.

What exactly does this final psychosis do to the lower *ṛttis*? It is said that the latter are destroyed. It is suggested, however, that such a view is inconsistent with the advaitin's own position as to the nature of *avidyā*, that it is a positive entity. The belief that knowledge destroys ignorance is bound up with the superstition that ignorance is just lack of knowledge; since knowledge and the lack of it cannot co-exist, the latter is believed to be destroyed by the former. If, however, nescience is positive, how can this be destroyed, any more than anything else which is positive? True it is knowledge and nescience cannot apparently co-exist. This is, however, not an absolute position; for, apart from the co-existence of *avidyā* and *svarūpajñāna* the Advaitin himself shows the co-presence of knowledge and ignorance in such experiences as "*tvad-uktam artham na jñāmi*". It may be asked whether with development knowledge does not replace ignorance and in that sense destroy the latter. We suggest that it is the ignorance itself which has developed into knowledge, instead of being replaced by the latter. The process is not self-contradictory since both are *āvidyaka*, of the nature of indeterminable *māyā*. The real cannot change; nor can the unreal; but the ignorance that was and the knowledge that now is, both are *anirvācya* as

real or unreal, *sat* or *asat*. Change is inevitable; to the extent that this change unifies instead of dividing, is more inclusive rather than less, manifests harmony rather than discord, it is a case of ignorance becoming knowledge. The *coming into being* of harmony is unintelligible in the last resort, except as a manifestation of the non-difference that is eternal. This when realised immediately (*aparokṣatayā*) constitutes the final psychosis (*caramavṛtti*).

The unintelligibility of the world, on the cognitive side, has been worked out in great detail by Advaita disputants, under the caption, *dr̥k-dr̥śya-sambandhānupapatti*. Because of such *anupapatti*, there comes the realisation, primarily mediate (*parokṣa*), that *seer* and *seen* are alike super-impositions on the *sight* (consciousness). If analysis thus reveals the failure of the relational concept in the field of knowing, does it not, we ask, reveal a similar defect in the fields of conation and emotion? A bare cogniser in front of a barely external object, is helpless to know; a bare agent in respect of a barely external object, is he better off in respect of the capacity to act? And a barely external situation confronting a bare subject, can it more intelligibly cause an emotion? In every case, we have to rely on the concept of relation, and it does not on analysis reveal greater capacities in some cases than in others. If it be said that men do act and feel, it may be retorted that men do also know. If the stress be laid on the analysis that reveals the cloven hoof, it must be remembered that people analyse not merely in knowing, but also in acting and even in feeling. Men do not act unreflectingly any more than they can cognise inactively.* The difference in analysis is one of degree, not of kind. The saintly man in action may conceivably have arrived at a mode of

action which reflects non-difference, not because of a metaphysical discipline, but because of a practical discipline leading to harmony overruling discords, a dharma whose observance promises and gives no reward other than its own realisation, a mode of life radiating sweetness, imbued with love and inspired by sacrifice. Some degree of cognitive analysis we may admit even in this case; that, however, can give only the *parokṣa* starting-point; the discipline that ends in the immediacy of perfection, is it not imprudent to deny it, and idle to call it *jñāna*? The devotee whose heart melts with love, who asks for and takes nothing for himself, whose sole desire is to be with the Lord and one with the Lord that is Love, not lover or beloved, since reflection has convinced him in a remote way that Love alone is the perfection of which loving and being loved are imperfect appearances, is his discipline to be discarded or identified with *jñāna*? Neither course is worth-while.

The truth is one; but we live in a world of truths which are but half true. The good is one; we act in a world of goods, none of which is wholly good. Love is one; we move and suffer in a world of loves, none of which transfigures the whole self. Realisation comprises two stages, the realisation of the partial and imperfect nature of what we have, and the manifestation of the perfection but for which the imperfect would neither be nor be known. The first of these stages requires reflection and analysis, which may, if desired, be treated as cognitive; the subsequent discipline, however, may be cognitive, conative or emotive. The service of the saint and the devotion of the *bhakta* are not necessarily inferior to the wisdom of the sage, if by wisdom we mean a function of the internal organ. If, however,

we mean the wisdom that is *caitanya*, there the need to distinguish will not arise, since all three will have arrived though by slightly different paths. The emphasis on knowledge as the sole means to realisation has been due to (1) an intellectual bias, perhaps due to the fact that metaphysics was the special pursuit of *sannyāsins* who had finished with their duty to society, (2) a defective psychology compartmentalising cognition, conation and emotion, (3) possibly an escapist mentality engendered by conditions of life in general on the one side and an excessive ritualism on the other.

It is often asked whether sages are doing the proper thing by the world by living in retirement. One of the many assumptions underlying the question is that perfection is possible for the sage alone and that if he retires from the world, the world will not have the benefit of his realisation. Even sages may be intelligibly exercising an occult influence over the rest of creation. That apart, they certainly serve as noble exemplars and inspirers to others on the path of *jñāna*; they are specially of service in this way, when they are more or less easily accessible like Bhagavān Rāmaṇa or Sri Aurobindo. Even assuming, however, that sages do not mingle with the world and live as members of it, that is no detraction from the Advaita ideal of perfection, which may be attained by the saint in action as much as by the sage in wisdom. If the latter discipline requires more or less complete withdrawal from the world the former does not; and the saint may do for his fellow-creatures what the sage may not do or do but imperfectly because of the difference in his initial equipment.

On the view that release is possible for all, and that, till the attainment thereof, the perfection of sage

or saint is relative, being but the attainment of *Īśvaratva*, there is a special value attaching to the performance of *karma* by the man of wisdom; for while wisdom illumines the wise man alone, action lightens the load and smooths the path of the ignorant as well; the perfecting of the latter is accelerated, thus bringing nearer the making absolute of the *mukta's* relative perfection, the *Brahmī-bhāva* of him who has but attained *Īśvara-bhāva*. Hence it is that Maṇḍana Miśra wisely advocates *jñāna-karma-samuccaya* holding that the wise man's performance of *karma* accelerates release, just as the use of a horse accelerates one's arrival at one's destination. Much of this, however, has to remain as speculation; for *we* are all too human, while what we discuss is how *Īśvara* will act. Will He function as a great knower or a great doer or a great lover? We know only this much, that it would be the height of presumption to deny Him any or all of these roles, whether simultaneously or in succession.

NOTE

*Advaitins were not unaware of the contention that cognition is itself a mental act. In spite of this, however, they have tried to make a hard and fast distinction between cognition on the one side and both ritual activity and meditation on the other. The usual line of distinction is this: Cognition is objective and of what is; ritual activity is directed towards what is to come into being; it is also optional, depending on the will of the performer; meditation may be of what is; but it may also be of what is not, like the contemplation of the woman as a fire in the *pañcāgnividyā*. The distinction is good as far as it goes; but it is by no means absolute, being only one of degree. This is masked by the assumption that contemplation can be of the unreal, while cognition cannot be. The wholly unreal (*tuccha*) is only a limiting concept; it cannot even be spoken of, much less contemplated. An object,

whether of contemplation or of cognition, is neither real nor unreal. The barren woman's son is not real; it is not unreal, if an object of contemplation, since barren women exist and also sons, while it is only the relationing that fails, as in the *anyathākhyāti* version of error; the difference between the shell-silver and the barren woman's son is that while the former is an immediate presentation, the latter is not. Contemplation may make immediate what is mediate; after imagining it for a long time one may really hold that a person *B* is the son of a woman *A* known to others as barren. Is this not a logical contradiction? Not unless you mean just the combination "barren mother"; and that is not a possible object of contemplation any more than "black white" is a possible object of cognition: the bare words, of course, could be suitable objects in either case. To the Advaitin, more than to all others, the recognition of a class of untouchables should be repugnant; yet that is the class to which he has tended to relegate *karma* and *upāsana*. The Indian philosophers, Advaitins included, seek a purpose even for philosophic pursuits; however, they were not thorough-going purposivists in their psychology; had they been, they would not have sought to confine *jñāna* and *karma* in water-tight compartments, but would have treated them as different inter-penetrating phases of purpose, purpose itself being self-transcended in the eternal.

THE ESSENTIAL DEFINITION OF BRAHMAN
TAITTIRIYA UPANIṢAD 2.1.1.

Michael Comans

The second portion of the *Taittiriya* Upaniṣad, the *brahmānandavallī*, contains an essential definition (*svarūpalakṣaṇa*) of Brahman. Śaṅkara considers that this portion of the Upaniṣad : “is begun for the purpose of showing the Self to be freed from the distinctions of all limiting adjuncts so that [as a result of such knowledge] there is the cessation of Ignorance which is the seed of all misfortunes.”¹ The Upaniṣad text is:

ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम् । तदेवाऽभ्युक्ता । सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं
ब्रह्म । यो वेद निहितं गुहायां परमे व्योमन् । सोऽश्नुते
सर्वान् कामान् सह । ब्रह्मणा विपश्चितेति ॥

The knower of Brahman attains the supreme. In regard to that, this is declared: Brahman is real, knowledge, limitless. The one who knows [Brahman] situated in the intellect, in the supreme space, enjoys all desirable things simultaneously, as that omniscient Brahman.²

While the first sentence: “The knower of Brahman attains the supreme” conveys meaning, it evokes a

number of questions. With regard to the meaning, it reveals three things. First, there should be something which is referable by the word "Brahman", for a noun refers to a substantive (*artha*). Secondly, the sentence communicates that Brahman is knowable for it is said that there is a "knower of Brahman" (*brahmavit*). Thirdly, a connection is established between the knowledge of Brahman and the gain of the "supreme" (*param*). The word "supreme" means what is "unsurpassed" (*niratisaya*) and hence it should stand for the highest attainment.

While the sentence conveys such meaning it simultaneously raises a series of questions. First, what is the nature of Brahman? Though the etymological meaning of the word "Brahman" denotes something "vast," we do not know exactly what is referable by the word "Brahman". The second question that arises about how to gain the knowledge of Brahman. Thirdly, the word "supreme" is rather abstract. Perhaps it could refer to a particular blissful experience, or to the attainment of heavenly felicity. To begin with, we shall ascertain what, is meant by the word "supreme".

The experience of any desirable thing in this world cannot be called "supreme" as any experience is intrinsically finite in nature. First, an experience is finite in terms of time because any experience is limited by its own prior and posterior non-existence, For example the experience of eating only exists at the time of eating, a person may subsequently recollect the taste of the food but he cannot again experience the taste. Secondly, an event is limited in terms of space because the attainment of a certain experience at one location is at the cost of an experience at another location

simultaneously. One cannot be in Madras and Delhi at the same time. Again, the nature of worldly experience is intrinsically limited because the experience of any object can only produce happiness as conditioned by the nature of that object. The happiness resulting from sense experience, such as the eating of an ice-cream, is intrinsically conditioned by the nature of the object itself, i.e. the ice-cream and hence it cannot evoke "limitless" happiness. Should the word "supreme" refer to the experience of an object in this world, then the word could only be used in a finite sense and when the "knower of Brahman attains the supreme" he only gains the best among finite things.

If the word "supreme" does not refer to a limited attainment in this world, it should signify something outside of our experience in this world such as the gain of heaven. However, this interpretation would not be free from difficulties because only knowledge is referred to as the means for the gain of the supreme and since only knowledge is mentioned, it cannot be the means for the gain of some thing which is remote. Śaṅkara states in this regard: "There is certainly no attainment of another thing from the knowledge of something else." One could, however, raise the objection that knowledge can be the means to achieve another thing. For example, a person who possesses accurate knowledge of the stock market can attain great wealth, or a scientist who formulates a new theory from his experimental data can attain the highest acclaim. In both cases, the result is initially remote but becomes causally connected through knowledge. If we consider the two examples, however, we can see that while knowledge is a necessary condition, it is not a sufficient condition for the attainment

of the result. For the gain of another thing is contingent upon instrumental causes such as the decision to invest in the first instance and the publicity and critical acceptance of the theory in the second example. In both cases a supplementary action is required. But there is no mention of any supplementary action between the knowledge of Brahman and the attainment of the supreme. Knowledge is the *direct* cause for the gain of the supreme. Because knowledge itself brings about the result, therefore the word "supreme" cannot refer to something remote such as heaven but rather it must refer to something which is not separate from the seeker himself.

What, then, does the word "supreme" signify? Śaṅkara considers that the word "supreme" refers to Brahman itself.⁵ Suresvara, restating the reasoning of Śaṅkara to which we have referred, says.

ब्रह्मैवाऽत्र परं ग्राह्यं तज्ज्ञानं नान्यसिद्धये ।
अन्यज्ज्ञानं हि नान्यस्य क्वचिदप्याप्तये यतः ॥

Brahman alone is to be understood as the supreme here. That knowledge is not for the accomplishment of something else. Because the knowledge of one thing is certainly nowhere [seen to be the means] for the gain of another thing.⁶

If the object of the word "supreme" is the gain of something in the world then it is a limited gain. And whether it refers to a worldly gain or the attainment of heaven, in both cases the knowledge of one thing does not directly produce something else. So we may conclude with Śaṅkara that the supreme is not other than Brahman.

This answers the third of the three questions previously mentioned. The other two questions, with regard to the nature of Brahman and how to know Brahman, remain to be answered. The following *śruti* passage deals with the first of these questions: सत्यं ब्रह्म अनन्तं ब्रह्म “Brahman is real, knowledge, limitless.” This sentence is the logical fulfilment of the expectation generated by the sentence previously discussed. Śaṅkara, supplying the connection between “*brhamavid āpnoti param*” and “*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*”, states that the latter sentence is for the purpose of showing:

- (a) the ascertainment of the essential nature of Brahman — whose particular essential nature has not been ascertained and who has been briefly referred to as knowable by this sentence: “the knower of Brahman attains the supreme” — through stating the definition which has the capacity of presenting the particular essential nature as distinct from all else.
- (b) it is for the knowability of Brahman — the knowledge of whom was spoken of unspecifically and whose definition will be told specifically — as non-different to the inner Self.
- (c) and [it is for showing that] the result of the knowledge of Brahman by the knower of Brahman, which was said as being characterized by the attainment of the supreme, is the state of being the Self of all which is indeed the essential nature of Brahman transcending all worldly attributes. Not anything else [such as heaven, etc].⁷

According to Śaṅkara, the sentence: “*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*” is for the purpose of defining Brahman;

for making known that Brahman is not other than one's own inner Being and for communicating that the result of this knowledge is seeing oneself as the Self of all, which is indeed the nature of Brahman untouched by worldly existence.

The three words: *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam* are for the purpose of providing a definition of Brahman.⁹ Brahman is the substantive in the sentence since Brahman is specified as the thing to be known.⁹ The three words "*satyam*", etc. are in grammatical apposition to the noun Brahman and so they function as adjectives to a substantive.¹⁰ Generally, the function of an adjective is to distinguish a noun from other members of its own class. For example, to say that a lotus is big, blue and fragrant is to distinguish it from other types of lotus which are of a different size and colour and which may not be fragrant. However, since Brahman is not a member of a class, the adjectives *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam* do not serve to distinguish Brahman in the manner of the lotus; rather they serve to *define* Brahman which is to distinguish the nature of the substantive from everything else.¹¹

What is meant by the word "real" (*satya*)? Śaṅkara's definition is this: "When what is ascertained to have a certain nature does not deviate from that nature, then it is real."¹² Conversely, he states: "A thing is false when it deviates from the nature which has been ascertained to be its own."¹³ The conclusion he draws from the above definition is: "Therefore what undergoes change is false."¹⁴ Śaṅkara's conclusion is that the whole world, since it is characterized by change, does not possess the status of being absolutely real according to the reasoning that what is real

must not be subject to negation.¹⁵ Change involves giving up one state for another and in the act of changing there is the negation of the previous state. The fact that change is possible indicates that the present state is liable for negation at a later time. According to Śaṅkara, the word "real" distinguishes Brahman from something which undergoes modification.

If Brahman is free from modification, then Brahman cannot be an effect, since an effect is a modification of its cause; therefore Brahman must have the nature of being a cause. But if Brahman is the efficient cause, then Brahman must possess agentship just as a potter possesses the agentship of being the efficient cause for the creation of pots, etc. Or if Brahman is the material cause, like the clay which is the material of the pots, then Brahman would be insentient just like the clay.

Śaṅkara considers that the word "knowledge" (*jñāna*) removes both of these objections. It can be easily seen that the word "knowledge" negates the idea that Brahman is insentient. The second objection, however, is more difficult; because the word "knowledge" has the literal meaning of cognition such as "I know a pot," "The cloth is seen by me," etc. This would only seem to affirm the objection, because the word "knowledge" denotes that Brahman is an agent with reference to the act of cognition. In other words, Brahman possesses knowership. Śaṅkara does not accept this view. He argues that the word "knowledge" does not denote cognitive activity in this context because it is in grammatical opposition with the words "real" and "limitless". If the word "knowledge" denotes that Brahman is the agent of the act of knowledge,

then Brahman could not be "real" or "limitless". If Brahman possesses knowership then Brahman would change in accord with the cognitions and therefore Brahman could not be real, i.e. free from change. Furthermore, if Brahman possesses knowership then Brahman cannot be limitless because the knower is limited by the object of knowledge and the cognitive act. Therefore, according to Śaṅkara, because the word "knowledge" is used in apposition with "real" and "limitless" it cannot refer to Brahman as the agent of the act of knowledge, and so the word "knowledge" expresses only the abstract sense of its verbal root (*jñā* to know) and means Knowledge as such, or awareness.¹⁰ Suresvara sums up this reasoning:

तस्मात्सत्यमनन्तं यज्ज्ञानं तदिह गृह्यते ।
भावसाधनमेवातः स्यादेतद्युक्तिदर्शनात् ॥

Therefore, knowledge which is real and limitless is what is understood here. So on account of seeing this reasoning, there can only be the abstract sense [of the verbal root *jñā*].¹¹

An objection may be raised here. The words "real", "knowledge" and "infinite" do no more than negate contrary conceptions, i.e. they show that Brahman is not unreal, not insentient and not finite, but they do not distinguish Brahman in any positive manner. And because the word "Brahman" does not denote something known in the world, such as a perceptible object, then it could be argued that Brahman is only a fictitious mental construction having the same degree of reality as the son of a barren woman. In response to this objection, Śaṅkara asserts that the words "real", etc. are for the purpose of defining

Brahman, and if Brahman is a fictitious entity, then a sentence proposing a definition would be meaningless. Moreover, though the words "real", etc. serve to distinguish Brahman from things which are unreal, etc., they do not relinquish their own inherent meanings.¹⁴ Hence they do more than merely negate contrary notions because the inherent meanings of the words "real" and "knowledge" are able to indicate the essential nature of Brahman. We shall now look closely at Śaṅkara's explanation of how Brahman is revealed by the three words "real", "knowledge" and "limitless".

According to Śaṅkara, Brahman is not able to be directly expressed by the words "knowledge" or "real". Because the direct meaning of the word "knowledge" refers only to acts of cognition such as: "I see", "I think", etc. However, Brahman is able to be indicated by the word "knowledge":

[Brahman] is indicated, but not directly said, by the word "knowledge" which directly expresses a semblance of that [knowledge, i.e. pure awareness] and refers to an attribute of the intellect.¹⁵

The word "knowledge" directly expresses an attribute of the intellect, i.e. cognitive activity. However the word "knowledge" is able to indicate Brahman because "knowledge", "real", "limitless" and "Brahman" are all in grammatical apposition.¹⁶ So Brahman is knowledge and the word "knowledge" is in apposition with "real" and "limitless". If the word "knowledge" denotes a cognitive state, then "knowledge" cannot logically be in apposition with the "real" and "limitless" because a cognition is transient and finite. The word "limitless",

in apposition with the word "knowledge", negates the limited meaning from the word "knowledge" so that "knowledge" cannot refer to mental states. The word "limitless" only removes the limited meaning from the word "knowledge" but it does not negate the root meaning of the word. Therefore the word "knowledge", in apposition with "real and "limitless" means unchanging knowledge which is limitless and so the implied meaning of the word "knowledge" is knowledge *as such* or pure awareness. On account of grammatical apposition, the word "knowledge" indicates that Brahman is of the nature of pure awareness.

Similarly, Brahman is not directly expressed by the word "real" which directly denotes some existing object such as: "the pot is" etc. However, Brahman is indicated by the word "real" due to the apposition of "real" and "limitless". The word "limitless" negates the finite sense from the word "real" and means "limitless real". Because of grammatical apposition, the limited meaning of "real" is removed while the root meaning of the word remains intact. And so "real", in apposition with "limitless" indicates that Brahman is existence *as such* or pure "is-ness". Śaṅkara states:

In this way, the words "real", etc., in mutual proximity, and mutually restricting and being restricted by each other, distinguish [Brahman] from the direct denotation of the words "real", etc. and are for the purpose of defining Brahman.²¹

Thus Brahman is able to be revealed through words, not by their direct signification but through their implied meaning on account of the apposition of the

words "real" and "knowledge" with the word limitless". The definition of the essential nature of Brahman, arrived at in this manner by means of implication, is that: Brahman is existence, knowledge, i.e. awareness and limitless.

We shall now proceed to examine the logical possibility of the definition. The truth as to whether or not there exists such an absolute reality whose nature is existence, awareness and limitless is not able to be determined by either perception or inference. The scope of perceptual knowledge is limited to the relationship between sense-data and the respective sense organ and the scope of inferential knowledge depends upon the perceptual data. So if a metaphysical reality exists, its revelation would depend upon a means of knowledge other than perception and inference. The Vedas are considered to be the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) for matters outside the scope of sense perception: specifically the knowledge concerning *dharma* and the knowledge of Brahman.²² The latter portion of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, are meant to reveal the nature of Brahman, the nature of the individual soul and also the nature of the world. As we have seen, the passage "Brahman is real, knowledge, limitless" is intended to provide a definition of Brahman.

At this juncture one could object by saying that if Brahman is not perceptible, and if the existence of such a reality called Brahman can only be known through the scriptures then the very idea of Brahman is no more than a belief. In response to this objection, the use of reasoning which conforms to the scriptural purport can help us ascertain what is intended to be communicated by the scriptural statement.

According to Śaṅkara, the word "real" (*satya*) means what is not subject to change and by means of implication the word was shown to indicate that Brahman is existence *per se* (*sanmātram*). Existence, therefore, must be free from change.

NOTES

1. *Ten Principal Upanishads with Śaṅkarabhāṣya*, Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1st ed. 1974, reprinted 1978, p. 281; *ataḥ aśeṣopadravabījasya ajñānasya nivṛttyartham vidhūtasarvopādhiviseṣāmadarśanārtham ārabhyate*.

2. The translation of this passage is according to the commentary of Śaṅkara.

3. *Vanamālā : A Commentary on the Taittirīyopaniṣad Bhāṣya* by Sri Achuta Krishnananda Tirtha. Chinmaya Foundation of Education and Culture: Madras, 1981. p. 96; *brahmapadena "bṛhi vṛddhau" iti vyutpattibalād vṛddhimad vastu kathyate*.

4. *Ten Principal*, *op. cit.*, p. 281; *na hyanyasya vijñānād anyasya prāptiḥ*.

5. *ibid.*, *tad eva brahma param*.

6. R. Balasubramanian, *The Taittirīyopaniṣad-Bhāṣya-Vārtika of Sureśvara*. Uni. of Madras, 1974. Revised Ed. 1984, Brahmavallī, verse 33.

7. *Ten Principal*, *op. cit.*, p. 282; *brahmavid āpnoti param ity anena vākyena vedyatayā sūtritasya brahmaṇo'nirdhāritasvarūpaviseṣasya sarvato vyāvṛttasvarūpaviseṣasamarpaṇasamarthasya lakṣaṇasya-abhidhānena svarūpanirdhāraṇāya, aviseṣeṇa ca uktavedanasya brahmaṇo vakṣyamānalakṣaṇasya viśeṣeṇa pratyagātmatayā ananyarūpeṇa vijñeyatvāya, brahmavidyāphalaṁ ca brahmavido yatparaprāptilakṣaṇamuktam, tat sarvātmabhāvāḥ sarvasamsāradharmātītabrahmasvarūpam eva, nānyad ity etat pradarśanāya eṣā ṛg udāhriyate*.

8. *ibid.*, *brahmaṇo lakṣaṇārtham vākyam*. Śaṅkara reiterates this statement throughout his commentary on this passage of the Upaniṣad.

9. *ibid.*, *viśeṣyaṁ brahma, vitakṣitatvād vedyatayā.*
10. *ibid.*, *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyatvād eva satyādiṁ ekavibhaktyaṁtāni padāni samānādhikaraṇāni.*
11. *ibid.*, p. 283; *samānajātyebhya eva nivartakāni viśeṣaṇāni viśeṣasya lakṣaṇaṁ tu sarvathā eva, yathā avakāśapradātrākāśam iti, lakṣaṇārthaṁ ca vākyam ity avocāma.*
12. *ibid.*, *satyam iti yad rūpeṇa yan niścitaṁ tad rūpaṁ na vyabhicarati, tat satyam.*
13. *ibid.*, *yad rūpeṇa yan niścitaṁ tad rūpaṁ vyabhicarati, tad anṛtam ity ucyate.*
14. *ibid.*, *ato vikāro' nṛtam.*
15. Cf. *Vedāntaparibhāṣā*: valid knowledge is defined as : *abūdhitārtha viśayakajñānatvam.*
16. *Ten Principal, op. cit.*, p. 283; *na hi satyatā anantatā ca jñānakartṛtve saty upapadyate. jñānakartṛtvena hi vikriyamāṇaṁ katham satyaṁ bhavet, anantaṁ ca? Tad hi na kutaścit pravibhajyate, tad anantaṁ. jñānakartṛtve ca jñeyajñānābhyaṁ pravibhaktam ity anantatā na syāt.*
17. *Taittirīyopaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārtika: op. cit.*, verse 60.
18. *Ten Principal, op. cit.*, p. 248.; *viśeṣaṇārthatve' pi ca satyādināṁ svārthāparityāga eva ... satyajñānasabdau tu svārthasamarpaṇenaiva viśeṣaṇe bhavataḥ.*
19. *ibid.*, 285; *tathāpi tadābhāsavācakena buddhidharmaviśayaṇa jñānasabdena tallakṣyate, na tūcyate.*
20. *ibid.*, *śabdapravṛttiheturjātyādidharmarahitatvāt satyānantaśabdābhyāṁ samānādhikaraṇyāt.*
21. *ibid.*, *evam satyādiśabdā itaretarasannidhānād anyonyaniyamyanīyāmakāḥ santaḥ satyādiśabdavācyād nivartakā brahmaṇo, lakṣaṇārthāś ca bhavanti iti.*
22. Cf. Sāyaṇācārya's introduction to the Rg Veda: *vede pūrvottarakāṇḍayoḥ kramaṇa dharmabrahmaṇi viśayaḥ ... tadubhaya-jñānaṁ vedasya sūkṣmāt prayojanam.*

(to be continued)

NEITHER THE KNOWN NOR THE UNKNOWN

R. Balasubramanian

Advaita holds the view that Brahman which is no other than the inward Self (Ātman) of the individual is *nirguṇa* and that the realization of Brahman-Ātman which is release can be attained only through knowledge (*jñāna*). It also holds the view that *jñāna* is different from meditation (*upāsanā*). It further maintains that Brahman-Ātman which is knowledge by its very nature is not an object of knowledge in the sense in which limited, perishable entities such as a table and a chair are objects of knowledge. We shall consider in this paper the standpoint of Advaita stated above in the context of Rāmānuja's position.

Two texts from the *Keṇa Upaniṣad* are relevant for the present discussion. The *Keṇa Upaniṣad* (I,4) says: "That (Brahman-Ātman) is indeed different from the known and also it is above (different from) the unknown." In the sequel the *Upaniṣad* (II,3) declares: "It is known to him to whom it is unknown; he does not know to whom it is known. It is unknown to those who know and well known to those who do not know."

In the course of his interpretation of the latter text, Rāmānuja rejects the view according to which Brahman is not an object of knowledge. According to Rāmānuja, since all *śruti* texts purport to show that the knowledge of Brahman is the means to release, it must be admitted that Brahman is an object of knowledge. He observes: “Knowledge is of the nature of *upāsanā* and Brahman which to be meditated on is *saguṇa*.”¹

Sudarśana, the celebrated commentator on the *Śrī-bhāṣya*, analyses Rāmānuja’s argument against the Advaita position as follows.² When the Advaitin says that Brahman is not an object of knowledge (*jñāna-aviśayam*), “What does he mean by this?” asks Sudarśana. Does he mean that (i) Brahman is not an object of knowledge alone (*jñānamātra-aviśayam*) or that (ii) it is not an object of knowledge which is of the nature of *upāsanā* (*upāsanātamka-jñāna-aviśayam*), or that (iii) it is not an object of knowledge which is of the nature of *saguṇopāsanā* (*saguṇopāsanātmaka-jñāna-aviśayam*)? The first alternative, according to Rāmānuja, is untenable, for it goes contrary to *śruti* texts such as “The knower of Brahman attains the Supreme,” “He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman,” etc., which clearly show that Brahman is an object of knowledge. If Brahman is not an object of knowledge, how can *śruti*s declare that release is attained through the knowledge of Brahman, *i.e.*, through the knowledge which has Brahman as its object (*brhamaviśaya-vedanam*)? Sudarśana remarks that Rāmānuja rejects the second alternative by identifying *jñāna* and *upāsanā*. If Brahman is an object of knowledge, it amounts to saying that Brahman is an object of *upāsanā*, *i.e.* an object to be meditated upon, for *upāsanā* and *jñāna* are identical.

The third alternative also does not hold good. It is wrong to say, according to Rāmānuja, that Brahman which is to be meditated upon is not *saguṇa*. It is Rāmānuja's contention that Brahman which is to be meditated upon is *saguṇa* alone. Since Brahman is unlimited by its very nature and also unlimited in respect of the excellent qualities it possesses (*svarūpato guṇataśca aparicchinnatvāt*), he who knows or understands Brahman "to be such" or "to be so much" in a limited way does not know Brahman.⁵ This, concludes Rāmānuja, is the meaning of the texts from the *Kena Upaniṣad* cited above. We have, therefore, to examine (i) whether Brahman is an object of knowledge, (ii) whether *jñāna* and *upāsanā* are identical, and (iii) whether Brahman which is to be meditated upon must be *saguṇa* alone.

Let us first consider the third of the points raised above. There is no justification to say that Brahman which is to be meditated upon must be *saguṇa* alone, for meditation on *nirguṇa*-Brahman also is possible.⁶ There is no ruling that what is to be meditated upon must be *saguṇa* alone. Just as one can meditate on Brahman which is *saguṇa*, *i.e.* Brahman associated with qualities, even so one can meditate on Brahman which is *nirguṇa*, *i.e.* Brahman which is free from qualities. What the Advaitin emphasizes here is that just as Brahman which is to be known is *nirguṇa*, so also Brahman which is to be meditated upon is *nirguṇa*.

It is no argument to say that it is difficult to meditate upon Brahman which is *nirguṇa*. One who finds it difficult to meditate on *nirguṇa*-Brahman may meditate on *saguṇa*-Brahman. But one who is competent to practise meditation on *nirguṇa*-Brahman may meditate

on *nirguṇa*-Brahman. If so, meditation on Brahman as *nirguṇa* cannot be ruled out. It is no argument to say that meditation on *nirguṇa*-Brahman is not at all possible for any one. If meditation on *nirguṇa*-Brahman were not possible, *śruti* would not enjoin such a meditation. There is, for example, the *śruti* text which says: "It should be meditated upon as the Self alone" (*ātametyeva upāsita*).⁷ So meditation on *nirguṇa*-Brahman, which has the support of *śruti*, cannot be ruled out. One who meditates on *saguṇa*-Brahman attains *saguṇa*-Brahman. In the same way, one who meditates on *nirguṇa*-Brahman attains *nirguṇa*-Brahman. It means that the Advaita conception of Brahman as *nirguṇa* cannot be rejected on the ground that Brahman which is the object of meditation must needs be *saguṇa*.

It may be argued that since release, according to Advaita, is attained through the knowledge of *nirguṇa*-Brahman, there is no need for Advaita to accept *upāsana* and that the scriptural text which enjoins *upāsana* is futile. This argument is untenable. According to Advaita, one who is not competent to come by the realization of *nirguṇa*-Brahman through the discipline of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nidīdhyāsana* may resort to the practice of meditation on *nirguṇa* Brahman, and so the scriptural injunction on meditation is not futile. It is necessary to bear in mind that, according to Advaita, release is attained only through the direct or immediate knowledge (*sākṣātkārarūpa-jñāna*) of Brahman, and not through *upāsana* directly. The practice of *upāsana* is also conducive to the rise of the direct or immediate knowledge of Brahman, and the latter in its turn brings about release.⁸

It may appear that Rāmānuja's position in respect of the means to release is not basically different from

that of the Advaitin, for he too maintains, like the Advaitin, that "release results from knowledge". But this is to take a superficial view of Rāmānuja's position. What Rāmānuja means by *jñāna* is altogether different from what the Advaitin means by it. So statements such as "*jñānāt mokṣa-upadeśaḥ*", "*brahmaviśaya-vedanameva apavarga-upāyam*" made by Rāmānuja⁹ must be carefully understood in the light of Rāmānuja's conception of *jñāna*. And this will take us to the consideration of the issues raised above.

Knowledge is entirely different from meditation, and so Rāmānuja's identification of the two cannot be accepted. Śaṅkara brings out the difference between *jñāna* and *upāsanā* as follows. While the former is object-dependent (*vastutantra*), the latter is person-dependent (*puruṣa-tantra*). With a view to elucidate this point Śaṅkara says that knowledge arises from a *pramāṇa* and that a *pramāṇa* reveals an object as it is. It means that the volitional effort of the individual does not determine the nature of knowledge. There is no scope for the individual to do, or not to do, or do it differently in the case of knowledge. The position, however, is different in the case of *upāsanā* or *dhyāna*, for it is dependent on the individual. It is open to an individual to do *upāsanā*, or not to do it, or do it differently. Though both *jñāna* and *upāsanā* are connected with the mind, there is, declares Śaṅkara, a world of difference between them.¹⁰ So Rāmānuja's view that knowledge and meditation are identical cannot be accepted.

It remains for us to consider the first of the three issues raised above. While Advaita holds that Brahman is not an object of knowledge, Rāmānuja maintains the opposite view. We shall proceed with a

preliminary objection raised by the critic against the Advaita view as it will help us to clarify the problem.

The critic argues that, if the Advaitin on the basis of the *Kena* text, "That (Brahman-Ātman) is different from the known" (*anyadeva tadviditāt*) holds that what is known is not Brahman (or that Brahman is not an object of knowledge), the possibility of the knowledge of Brahman and thereby the attainment of release are ruled out by him. The impossibility of the attainment of release is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Advaita view according to which Brahman is not an object of knowledge. In order to avoid this absurdity, the Advaitin has to say, the critic argues, that Brahman is known and that Brahman is, therefore, an object of knowledge. This argument is untenable. First of all, the objection that has been raised against the Advaita view can as well be raised against the Viśiṣṭādvaita view. Just as Brahman is not an object of knowledge, even so it is not an object of meditation. That Brahman is not an object of meditation is clearly stated in a text of the *Kena Upaniṣad* which says: "Know that alone to be Brahman and not that which is meditated upon as an object."¹¹ According to Viśiṣṭādvaita, meditation on Brahman is the means to release. If meditation on Brahman is ruled out then how can release be attained by meditation? So the Viśiṣṭādvaitin cannot escape from this difficulty so long as he maintains that meditation on Brahman is the means to release.

The real position, according to Advaita, is that Brahman is not what is known, is not what is unknown, and also is not what is meditated upon. Brahman is, indeed, different from all these, because it is knowledge by its very nature.¹² Brahman which is knowledge is

the Self of the knower. The *Māṇḍūkya* says, "This Self is Brahman."¹¹ The Self is one's own nature. In view of the identification of Brahman and the Self, *śruti* speaks of Brahman as what is direct and immediate.¹² By knowing Brahman to be identical with one's own Self, one attains release. Since it is possible to attain this knowledge of Brahman, there is no absurdity involved in the Advaita position as alleged by the critic.

The following is the argument of the Advaitin to show that Brahman is neither the known nor the unknown. The question whether the Self is known or not known may first be taken up. If the Self is known, what is it that knows the Self? The Self cannot know itself, for one and the same entity cannot be both the knower and the known in the same act of cognition. Nor can the Self be known by some other entity different from it. Anything other than the Self is insentient (*jaḍa*); and what is insentient cannot know the Self. Since we cannot say that the Self is known, does it follow that the Self is unknown? While other entities are mediate (*parokṣa*), one's own Self is immediate (*aparokṣa*), and so the Self cannot be unknown. Since the Self cannot be said to be either known or unknown, the Advaitin says that it is different from the known and the unknown. To say that the Self is different from the known and the unknown is to say that Brahman is different from the known, and the unknown, because the Self is no other than Brahman. Since the knowledge that Brahman which is identical with the Self is neither the known nor the unknown can be obtained only through *śruti*, the latter is necessary.

The usefulness of *śruti* may be stated in a different way. The purpose of *śruti* is to help us overcome *avidyā*

which projects the world of plurality by concealing Brahman-Ātman. *Śruti* does not purport to teach what Brahman-Ātman is.¹³ *Śruti* which is in the form of *śabda* cannot say what Brahman-Ātman is, because the highest Reality which is trans-empirical is also trans-linguistic. An empirical entity which belongs to a class (*jāti*) or which possesses qualities (*guṇa*), or which is in relation (*sambandha*) with some other entity, or which is involved in action (*kriyā*) can be denoted by a word. But Brahman-Ātman is not an empirical entity, and so there is linguistic break-down when one tries to refer to Brahman-Ātman by means of words.¹⁴ Though Brahman-Ātman cannot be brought under the category of the known, it should not remain unknown to us because of *avidyā*. The veil or covering of *avidyā* has to be removed if Brahman-Ātman should not remain unknown. Dis-covering Brahman-Ātman, *i.e.*, the removal or the lifting of the covering of *avidyā* on account of which Brahman-Ātman remains unknown, is the goal to be achieved. One who succeeds in the act of dis-covering the highest Reality attains release. The process of dis-covering Brahman-Ātman, which is otherwise called Brahman-realisation, can be successfully gone through by following the discipline of *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana* or by the discipline of meditation on *nirguṇa*-Brahman. While the former discipline is called the path of *sāṅkhya*, the latter, the path of *yoga*. *Śruti* and *smṛti* speak of these two paths for the purpose of dis-covering Brahman-Ātman. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says: "That cause is to be apprehended by *sāṅkhya* and *yoga*..."¹⁵ Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavadgītā*: "In this world a twofold path was taught by me at first, O sinless one — that of *sāṅkhyas* by devotion to knowledge, and that of *yogins* by devotion to action."¹⁶

It must be emphasized here that “dis-covering” Brahman-Ātman is not “knowing” Brahman-Ātman. We have already said that, since Brahman-Ātman is not an object of knowledge, there is no “knowing” of it. Further, if there is “knowing” of Brahman-Ātman, there must be something which knows it; and this question, “What is it that knows Brahman?” does not, as already stated, admit of any answer.¹⁴ When the covering of *avidyā* is removed, Brahman-Ātman which is self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) shines in its true form; and this “shining” of Brahman-Ātman is spoken of as “knowing” Brahman-Ātman.

We can now sum up the meaning of the *Kena* text: “*anyadeva tat veditāt...*” Since Brahman is not an object of knowledge, the *Upaniṣad* says that it is different from the known (*anyadeva tat veditāt*). Being no other than the Self of the individual, it is always immediate and direct, and what is immediate and direct cannot be unknown. And so the *Upaniṣad* says that it is different from the unknown (*aviditāt adhi*). If a person says that the Self is unknown, it is due to *avidyā* which has concealed it. The meaning of the subsequent *Kena* text, “*yasya amatam tasya matam...*” has to be brought out in the light of the above explanation of the earlier text, “*anyadeva tat veditāt.*” This text means that one to whom the Self is known as an object of knowledge does not know it, and that one who does not know it (as an object of knowledge) knows it.

Rāmānuja’s interpretation of the *Kena* text, II, 3, (*yasya amatam tasya matam*), which sums up the position stated in the earlier text I, 4, (*anyadeva tat veditāt*) is not convincing. Rāmānuja says that the infinite Brahman which possesses unlimited excellences should not

be known as only "so much" by limiting it. He holds the view that the *Kena* text "*yasya amatam tasya matam*" conveys the idea that Brahman is not known to one who understands it to be of a *definitely limited nature*. The basic objection to this interpretation of the text is that the infinitude of Brahman which Rāmānuja is anxious to affirm here cannot be reconciled with his admission of two other real entities, *viz.*, *cit* and *acit*. The objection may be elucidated in this way. Let it be that one who knows Brahman to be of a limited nature does not know it because Brahman is infinite. That is infinite which is not limited by space, time and other objects.²⁴ Judged by this criterion of "infinite", Rāmānuja's Brahman cannot be infinite. While Rāmānuja affirms the infinitude of Brahman, he also denies it by making *cit* and *acit* co-exist with Brahman. How is it possible for one, in the context of the Viśiṣṭādvaita system, to know Brahman as infinite when in addition to Brahman two other entities, *cit* and *acit*, which are real and different from it are admitted? It, therefore, makes no sense to say in the context of the metaphysics of Viśiṣṭādvaita that one who knows Brahman as something limited does not know it. One cannot help knowing Brahman as limited when its infinitude has been compromised by Rāmānuja.

NOTES

1. Rāmānuja, *Śri-bhāṣya* Ed. T. Srinivasa Sarma (Nirṇaya-sakar Press, Bombay, 1916), p. 129: "*ato brahmaviśaya-vedanameva apavarga-upāyaṁ sarvāḥ sruṭayo vidadhātī. Jñānaṁ ca upāsanātmakam, upāsyam ca brahma saguṇam ityuktam.*"

2. Sudarśana, *Śrutaprakāśikā*, *Ibid.*, p. 129.

3. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II, i, 1.

4. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, III, ii, 9.

5. Rāmānuja, *Śrī-bhāṣya*, p. 129: "Yato vāco nivartante, aprāpya manasā saha iti brahmaṇo anantasya aparicchinnaguṇasya vān-manasayorelavaditi pariccheda ayogyatoaśravaṇena brahma etāvaditi brahma-pariccheda jñānavatām brahmāvīyñātam, amatam ityuktam, aparicchinnatvāt brahmaṇah."

6. See Vidyāraṇpa, *Pañcadasī*, "Dhyānadīpa-prakaraṇa".

7. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, I, iv, 7.

8. See Rāmarāyakavi, *Śrī Śaṅkarāśaṅkara-bhāṣya-vimarsah* (Guntur, 1953:) "...brahma upāsanārūpa jñāna-abhyāsajanya brahma-sākṣātkārarūpa jñānādeva muktiḥ, na tu upāsanāditi. tasmāt śravaṇī-dinā, nirguṇabrahma-upāsanena vā, yathāvasthita-nirguṇābrahma siddham."

9. *Śrī-bhāṣya*, p. 129.

10. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, I, i, 4. Śaṅkara says: "dhyānam cintanam yadyapi mānasam tathāpi puruṣeṇa kartum akartum anyathā vā kartum śakyam, puruṣa-tantratvāt. jñānam tu pramāṇajanyam. pramāṇam ca yathābhūtavastuviṣayam, uto jñānam kartum akartum anoyathā vā kartum aśakyam. kevalam vastutantrameva tat. na codanā tantram, nāpi puruṣa-tantram tasmāt mānasatvepi jñāna-sya mahadvāilakṣaṇyam."

11. I, 5. The *Upaniṣad* says in I, 5-9 that Brahman is not uttered by speech, but is that by which speech is revealed; that Brahman is not comprehended by the mind, but is that by which the mind is encompassed; that Brahman is not seen by the eyes, but is that by which the activities of the eyes are seen; and that Brahman is not comprehended by the organ of smell, but is that by which the organ of smell is impelled. In each of these cases, it declares that what is meditated upon as an object by the people is not Brahman.

12. Rāmarāyakavi, *Ibid.*, p. 164: "viditam brahma na bhavati, aviditam brahma na bhavati, upāsitam ca brahma na bhavati; kiṅtu viditādi-bhinnaṃ vedanameva brahma. tacca vediturātmanassvarūpabhū-tameva."

13. II.

14. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III, iv, 1.

15. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, I, i, iv:

"*avidyākalpitabhedanivṛtti-parato'it sūstrasya. nahi sāstram idamtayā viṣaya-bhūtam brahma pratipipādayiṣati. kim tarhi, pratyagātmatvena aviṣayatayā. pratipādayat avidyakalpitaṃ vedyā-veditṛ-vedanādi bhedaṃ apanayati.*"

16. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, XIII, 12.

17. VI, 13.

18. III, 3.

19. See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III, iv, 2 and Śaṅkara's commentary thereon. Yājñavalkya says: "You cannot see that which is the witness of vision; you cannot hear that which is the hearer of hearing; you cannot think that which is the thinker of thought; you cannot know that which is the knower of knowledge. This is your Self within all .."

20. See Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid.*, p. 165:

"*aparicchinnatvaṃ deśā-kāla-vastutrayakṛta-paricchedābhāvaḥ.*"

THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF KARMA ACCORDING TO ADVAITA

T. P. Ramachandran

The ethical training for the student of Advaita and of Vedānta in general utilizes for its material the code of conduct prescribed for the common man. Common ethics has its own distinctive role to play. Man has to be enabled to distinguish between good and bad in action and trained to choose the way of goodness in particular situations. It is not that it is possible to say in advance of concrete situations what particular action is good and what bad. But the standard of goodness could be defined, in terms of which fundamental principles of moral action rendering general guidance could be formulated. There is no doubt that if the human being is worth his name, he ought to be able to differentiate the good from the bad. But in the life of each person there comes a time when this stage is to be transcended. It has been said that even *dharma* is a sin in the case of him who seeks liberation inasmuch as it causes bondage.¹ This does not mean that good actions are to be given up. That would be a relapse to the life of mere impulse. Good actions must continue to be performed and bad avoided, but ethical conduct must reflect a new spirit.

Hitherto the concern of ethics is with the 'what' of action, that is to say with determining what is the most desirable course of action in a given situation. But one who has undergone the discipline of this level for sufficiently long would be able to choose the good as though by instinct. Good actions would have become a matter of habit to him. Henceforward the concern should be with the 'how' of action, the motive of it, the spirit in which it is to be done. In practising virtuous conduct, it is natural for man to desire personal, i.e. worldly, rewards, things of pleasure (*preyas*). This natural tendency is given free latitude in the earlier stage. But when one has been sufficiently put in the way of goodness, one ought to learn to practise virtue for the highest end of man, *mokṣa*. This is the higher ethical discipline taught by the Vedānta.

As we have said, common morality has its own place, and its value is in no way underestimated in Vedānta. See for instance the following statement from Śrī Śaṅkara. "Our theory, moreover, does not drive us to the conclusion that the *śruti* teaching works proves useless; for by restraining the first natural activities one by one and thereby gradually inducing fresh and higher activities, it serves to create an aspiration to reach the Innermost Self. Though the means is *mithyā*, or illusory, still it is true, because the end is true, as in the case of the arthavādas, or explanatory statements subsidiary to a main injunction. And even in ordinary affairs, when we have to induce a child or a lunatic to drink milk or the like, we have to tell him that thereby his hair will grow, and so on." (*na ca evam karmavidhi-śruteḥ aprāmānyam. pūrva-pūrva-pravṛtti-nirodhena uttarottarā-pūrva-pravṛtti-jananasya pratyagātmābhīmukhyena pravṛttyutpādanārthatvāt. mithyātve api upāyasya upeya-*

*satyatayā satyatvam eva syāt, yathā arthavādānām vidhi-
śeṣāṇām, loke api bālonmattādīnām payādau pāyayitavye
cūḍāvārdhanādi vacanam: BhGB, XVIII,66.)*

It is, therefore, wrong to charge Vedānta with being unconcerned with common ethics. If we do not find any mention of the codes of common morality in Vedāntic works, it is not because the subject is considered unimportant, but because it is well-trodden ground. The literature on common ethics is sufficiently vast. The Saṁhitas and Brāhmanas as well as the Dharma-sāstras provide us with a code of conduct. Then there are the Purāṇas and Itihāsas, which through charming narrative serving to glorify virtue and condemn vice, induce in us the spirit of moral rectitude. Vedāntic works have, therefore, only to take common morality for granted. They cannot afford to be indifferent to it. In fact the higher morality of Vedānta would have no meaning if the whole course of common morality is not gone through.

According to Advaita, *karma* cannot be a direct means to release. *Karma* is characterized by novelty and distinctions. We perform actions for the attainment of something unattained. And action depends on the distinction between agent and action, means and end, and enjoyer and result enjoyed. But release, according to Advaita, has neither of these features.

(1) If release were something to be newly achieved, like the result of an action, it will not be permanent.² What comes into existence at any time will also cease to exist after a time. What is produced cannot be eternal. Hence, if we are to maintain the eternality of release, we have to concede that action, which is the

means of achieving that which is unachieved, can have no direct relationship with *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is not newly attained, but an ever-present reality. Hence it is not a matter of injunction like something to be attained through action. Passages relating to Brahman such as "The Self is to be seen, to be heard about" which have the appearance of injunction are intended only to divert men from the objects of natural activity (*svābhāvika-pravṛtti-viśaya-vimukhī-karaṇārthāni*: BSB, I, 1, 4.). The state of bondage is not real. It is ignorance that makes us think ourselves bound. Release consists simply in the removal of this ignorance. But knowledge alone can remove ignorance. Hence *jñāna* is the only direct means to *mokṣa*.

(2) What is bondage? Bondage consists in perceiving distinction and diversity. In truth, there are no distinctions whatsoever, for instance, as are implied in the idea of *karma*. It is ignorance that is responsible for our notion of distinctions. To be released is to transcend all distinctions.⁸ The concept of *karma*, therefore, is born of and sustained by ignorance. How, then, can it remove ignorance, by the removal of which alone is our native freedom to be realized? For this reason also *karma* is in no direct relationship with *mokṣa*.⁹

This does not, however, mean that *karma* is not in any way useful with reference to *mokṣa*. No doubt, it is not a direct means to release. *Jñāna* alone can effect release. But *karma* is of use in the arising of knowledge.¹⁰ Knowledge itself can arise only if certain conditions are fulfilled.¹¹ These conditions are the possession of virtues like *śama* (tranquillity) and *dama* (self-control) which indicate the absence of egoism — the ego is the obstacle to pursuing knowledge.¹² In the

production of these virtues *karma* is useful. Hence these virtues are described as proximate (*pratyāsannāni*) and actions as remote (*bāhyatarāṇi*) means to the arising of knowledge (*vidyā-sāadhanāni*),⁹ (though *karma* is not the only means of producing these indispensable qualifications for knowledge).¹⁰ Thus, through preparing the ground for *jñāna*, *karma* may be regarded as an indirect means to *mokṣa*. Śrī Śaṅkara says: "Works subserve final release mediately; for in so far as furthering knowledge, work may be spoken of as an indirect cause of final release." (*ārādupakāraivat karmanah jñānasyaiva hi prāpakam sat karma praṇādyā mokṣa-kāraṇam iti upacaryate*: BSB, IV, I, 16.) Again, "Devotion to action is a means to the end, not directly, but only as leading to devotion to knowledge; whereas the latter, which is attained by means of devotion to action, leads to the goal directly without extraneous help." (...*karmaniṣṭhāyā jñānaniṣṭha-prāpti-hetutvena puruṣārtha-hetutvam na svātantryeṇa, jñānaniṣṭhā tu karmaniṣṭhōpāya labdhātmikā sati svātantryeṇa puruṣārtha-hetuḥ anyānapেকṣā...: BhGB, III, 3.*)

To say that *karma* is helpful to *jñāna* is, however, not to mean that it acts in conjunction with *jñāna*.¹¹ There can be no combination of *jñāna* and *karma* (*jñāna-karma-samuccaya*). *Jñāna* in Advaita is the knowledge of the non-difference of the self from Brahman and of the non-existence of the world apart from Brahman. It is diametrically opposed to the standpoint of difference. There can, therefore, be no conjunction as *jñāna* and *karma* even as there can be none between light and darkness.

The natural corollary of the notion of difference so far as *karma* is concerned is for one to think that one

is an agent and an enjoyer. The sense of agency and enjoyership is born of attachment to the body-mind organism. The self in its essential nature is non-different from Brahman. There being nothing other than Brahman, or Ātman, there is nothing to be achieved by action and nothing to be enjoyed. Hence in its true nature the self is neither an agent nor an enjoyer. In short, there is no question of activity with reference to the self. All activity is in the non-real material world and takes place by the superordination and subordination of its constituents, viz. the *gunas* : *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. When, however, the self, through *avidyā*, comes to identify itself with that part of the material world which is the body-mind organism, it imagines that activity belongs to it, and thus comes about the notion of agency and enjoyership,¹¹ on which notion rests our whole scheme of actions, secular and religious.

The standpoint of *karma* is represented by agency and enjoyership and that of *jñāna* by non-agency and non-enjoyership. The two standpoints have been called *yoga* and *sāṅkhya*, respectively, by the Lord of the Gītā.¹² The *sāṅkhya* is one who, as a result of the study of the texts teaching the real nature of the self, is intellectually convinced that the self is not an agent and enjoyer owing to the absence in it of such changes as birth. The *yogin* is one in whom such a conviction has not yet arisen and, therefore, thinks that the self is the doer and enjoyer, and so thinking, engages in action with a knowledge of the distinction between virtue and sin in the hope of thereby attaining *mokṣa*.¹³

Hence one and the same person cannot, strictly speaking, be a *sāṅkhya* and a *yogin* a pursuer of knowledge and a practiser of action, a *jñānin* and a *karmin*,

one who knows the true nature of the self and one who does not. On the contrary, once the conviction that the self is no agent and no enjoyer has arisen, one would want to renounce actions. Hence the two disciplines are meant for two different stages in the life of an aspirant. There can, however, be no sudden transition from the one stage to the other. The transition is gradual. Intellectual conviction is a gradually developing phenomenon. The more the conviction regarding the non-agency and so on of the self, the more is one established in the path of *jñāna* and the less does he take his stand on action. It is with a view to facilitating the transition from attachment to action to renunciation of action that the Vedānta teaches the technique of renunciation *in* action—a subject to which we shall turn shortly. What we have sought to emphasize at this stage is that, the standpoint of *karma* being opposed to that of *jñāna*, *karma* cannot enter into any direct relationship with *jñāna*. If we have said that *karma* aids *jñāna*, it is not in any sense of augmenting or supplementing the results of knowledge, but simply in the sense of preparing the ground for the arising of knowledge.¹¹

Karma is not complementary to *jñāna* but subordinate to it. Its utility consists in removing the obstacle that lies in the way of knowledge, viz. egoism. The work of *karma* may be described as negative in as much as it serves to clear the path for *jñāna* and the work of the latter as positive inasmuch as it introduces one to the true nature of reality. Hence Śrī Śaṅkara says: "All works of permanent obligation, such as the *agni-hotra*—whether joined with or devoid of knowledge—which have been performed before the rise of true knowledge, either in the present state of existence or a

former one, by a person desirous of release with a view to release: all such works act, according to their several capacities, as means of the extinction of evil desert which obstructs the attainment of Brahman, and thus become causes of such attainment, subserving the more immediate causes such as the hearing of and reflecting on the sacred texts, faith, meditation, devotion, etc. They, therefore, operate towards the same effect as the knowledge of Brahman." (*tasmāt vidyā-sainyuktam nityam agnihotrādi vidyā-vihinaṁ ca ubhayaṁ api mumukṣuṇā mokṣa-prayojanoddeśena iha janmani janmāntare ca prāk jñānotpatteḥ kṛtam yat tat yathāsāmarthyam brahmādhigama-pratibandha-kāraṇopātta-durita-kṣaya-hetutva-dvāreṇa brahmādhigama-kāraṇatvam pratipadyamānam śravaṇa-manana-śraddhā-tātparyādyantaraṅga-kāraṇāpekṣam brahma-vidyayā sahaika-kāryam bhavati iti sthitam: BSB, IV, 1, 18.*)

The subordinate role of *karma* becomes clearer when we consider the fruits of *karma*. Every action tends to produce for the agent results in two directions, objective and subjective. We shall refer to the subjective effects later on.

On the objective side, each action produces for the doer a specific reward or punishment according as the action is good or bad. The possibility of rewards for good actions easily appeals to the selfish nature in man. No ordinary man would perform a good deed without expecting some reward for it like name and fame, money, comfort, power, or enjoyment in heaven. But it is the nature of desire to necessitate enjoyment of the result desired. To desire a thing is to put oneself under an obligation to enjoy it. The object of a desire may be attained immediately if there are no

obstructions to its attainment. The obstructions are the appearance of the result of some other desire which, by virtue of superior strength or the greater suitability of the circumstances to its manifestation, claims priority over the results of other desires.¹⁵ If the attainment of the object of a desire is delayed such that it is not secured within the brief span of a single life, the condition for its enjoyment will have to be forged by a new life. And so one is obliged to be born again.¹⁶ But, then, enjoyment of the fruits of desire only strengthens desire. A new life is thus only a renewal of opportunities for the play of desires which, as in the past, lead to further births. Thus, desire leading to enjoyment and enjoyment to greater desire, the soul is obliged to pass from birth to birth. In this way, actions as they are ordinarily performed, i.e. with desires for the specific worldly rewards, lead to bondage. It is desire and not action as such that leads to bondage.¹⁷ For this reason, both theistic and absolutistic Vedānta ask us to renounce desires for worldly rewards and redirect action towards the one really desirable goal of *mokṣa*. *Niṣkāma karma* does not imply the mere absence of desire for enjoyment of pleasures; it implies also the presence of desire for liberation. It denotes the substitution of *śreyas* for *pyeyas* as the motive to action.

Although *mokṣa* should be the end in view, it cannot be brought about directly by *karma*. Hence we have to conceive of an immediate end also, that which is a necessary preliminary to release, viz. the absence of egoism. *Mokṣa* is only the ultimate end of action, the proximate goal being self-purification (*citta-suddhi*).

Every action, in addition to its own objective result, influences the character of the agent himself.

It produces in the mind of the doer a tendency (*samskāra*) for similar action. A bad action develops a tendency to be anti-social, the characteristics of which are narrow love (*rāga*) and hate (*dveṣa*). This tendency is known as *durita*. A good action by cultivating the counter tendency helps to remove the *durita*. In the removal of *durita* (*durita kṣaya*) consists the purification of the mind (*citta suddhi*). *Citta suddhi* is the general effect of all good actions on the agent as distinguished from their specific objective benefits to him.

Desire for objective rewards is always apt to vitiate the subjective effect of a good action. So long as the objective reward expected from action is something pleasing (*preyas*), the desire for it will confirm the sense of ego by reinforcing desires and causing rebirth. Hence the aspirant is to renounce desire for *all* objective results of action including celestial enjoyment and make self-purification the only immediate aim of action. Such a reorientation can be secured by dedicating all actions to the Lord. Thus Śri Śaṅkara says: "Though the religion of works — which as a means of attaining worldly prosperity is enjoined on the several castes and religious orders — leads the devotee to the region of the devas and the like, still, when practised in a spirit of complete devotion to the Lord and without regard to the (immediate) results, it conduces to the purity of the mind (*sattva-suddhi*). The man whose mind is pure is competent to tread the path of knowledge, and to him comes knowledge; and thus (indirectly) the religion of works forms also a means to the Supreme Bliss." (*abhyudayārthāḥ api yāḥ pravṛttīlakṣaṇāḥ dharmāḥ varṇān-āśramāṁśca uddiśya vihitāḥ saḥ devādi-sthāna-prāpti-hetuḥ api śan īśvarārpaṇa-buddhyā-nuṣṭhīyamāṇāḥ sattva-suddhaye bhavati phalābhi-sandhi-*

*varjitaḥ. śuddha-sattvasya ca jñānaniṣṭhā-yogyatā- prāpti-
dvāreṇa jñānotpatti-hetutvena ca niḥśreyasa-hetutvamapi
pratipadyate: BhGB, Prefatory note on slokas begin-
ning with, I, 1.)*

NOTES

1. *dharmah api mumukṣoḥ kilbiṣameva bandhāpādakatvāt :
BhGB, IV, 21.*

2. *tat yadi kartavya-śeṣatvena upadiśyeta, tena ca kartavyena
sādhyaḥ cet mokṣaḥ abhyupagamyeta antiya eva syāt, tatra evaṁ sati
yathoktakarmaphaleṣu eva tāratamyāvasthiteṣu anityeṣu kaścit atīśayaḥ
mokṣaḥ iti prasajyeta : BSB, I, 1, 4.*

3. *.. yatra dharmādharmau saha kāryeṇa kūlatrayaṁ ca na upā-
vartete. tat etat śarīratvaṁ mokṣākhyaṁ : BSB, I, 1, 4.*

4. *vide BSB, I, 1, 4.*

5. *yathā ca yogyatāvasena aśvaḥ na lāṅgalākarṣaṇe yujyate
rathacaryāyāṁ tu yujyate. evaṁ āśramakarmāṇi vidyayā phalāsiddhau
na apekṣyante utpattau ca apekṣyanta iti : BSB, III, 1, 26.*

6. *utpannā hi vidyā phalāsiddhiṁ prati na kiñcit anyat apekṣate
utpattiṁ prati tu apekṣate : BSB, III, 4, 26.*

7. *...sama-damādy-upetaḥ syāt vidyārthi ... : BSB, III, 4, 27.*

8. *BSB, III, 4, 27.*

9. *...yajñādy-anapekṣāyām api samādini apekṣitavyāni : BSB,
III, 4, 27.*

10. *cf. Bṛh., III, 5.*

11. *BhG, III, 27.*

12. *BhG, II, 1-10.*

13. *asocyān ityādinā granthena bhagavatā yāvāt 'svadharmamapi
āvekṣya' ityetaḥ antena granthena yat paramārthātma-tattva-nirūpaṇaṁ
kṛtaṁ tat sūnikhyaṁ. tadviśayā buddhiḥ ātmanaḥ janmādi-śaḍvikriyā-
bhāvāt akartā ātmeti prakaraṇārtha-nirūpaṇāt yā jūyate sā sūnikhya-bud-
dhiḥ. sā yeṣāṁ jñānīnāṁ ucitā bhavati te sūnikhyāḥ. etasyā buddheḥ
janmanaḥ prak ātmanaḥ dehādi-vyatirikṭasya kartṛtva-bhokṛtvādyapek-
ṣaḥ dharmā-dharma-viveka-pūrvakaḥ mokṣasādhanaṁnuṣṭhāna-lakṣaṇaḥ*

yogaḥ. tadviṣayā buddhiḥ yoga-buddhiḥ. sā yeṣāṃ karmināṃ ucitā bhavati te yoginaḥ : BhGB, commentary following II, 1-10.

14. *...utpatti-sādhanaṭve eva eṣāṃ sahakāritva-vācoyuktiḥ : BSB, III, 4, 33.*

15. *...viruddha-phalasya anakasya karmaṇaḥ yugapat phalāraṇi-bhāsaṃbhavaṭ... : BSB, III, 1, 8.*

yathā hi pradīpaḥ samāne api sannidhāne sthūlaṃ rūpaṃ abhivyanakti, na sūkṣmam, evaṃ prayāṇaṃ samāne api anārabdha-phalasya karma-jātasya prāptāvāsaratve balavataḥ karmaṇaḥ vṛttiṃ udbhāvayati, na durbalasya ita : BSB, III, 1, 8.

16. *yadā karmaphale tṛṣṇā te syāt tadā karma-phala-prāpteḥ hetuḥ syāḥ, evaṃ mā karma-phala-hetuḥ bhūḥ. yadā hi karma-phala-tṛṣṇā-prayuktaḥ karmaṇi pravartate tadā karma-phalasya eva janmanaḥ hetuḥ bhavet : BhGB, II, 47.*

17. *...avidyā-kāma-kleśa-bīja-nimittāṇi hi karmāṇi janmānta-rāṅkurāṃ ārabhante : BhGB, XIII, 23.*

ON WORLD CREATION*

Śrī Sureśvarācārya

[1]

मत्ताः सर्वमिदञ्जातं मय्येवान्ते प्रलीयते ।
अहमेको विभर्मीदमित्येवञ्च प्रसिद्धयति ॥

“From me all this came into existence; in me alone it will be dissolved in the end; I alone support this world” — thus (from this statement) also (the identity of Brahman and Ātman) is established.

The Upaniṣads refer to Brahman as the cause of the world. There is for example, the *Taittirīya* text (III, i, 1) which says: “Crave to know that from which all these beings are born, that by which they live after beings born, that towards which they move and into which they merge. That is Brahman.” The Self too, is said to be the cause of the world. There is, for instance, the *Aitareya* text (I, i, 1): “The Self, verily, was all this, one only, in the beginning.” From this one may think that the world has two causes, viz., Brahman and the Self. But inasmuch as there cannot be two causes for one and the same effect, it must be understood that one and the same cause is spoken of as Brahman in some places and also as Ātman in some other places with a view to emphasize the non-difference of Brahman and Ātman.

*From *Taittirīyopaniṣadbhāṣyavārttika*, Brahmavallī vv. 139-148 (Translation and notes by Dr. R. Balasubramanian).

[2]

सर्वानन्याविकार्येकमकार्यकारणम्परम् ।

ब्रह्मस्वभावमालम्ब्य सृष्टिर्वक्तुं न शक्यते ॥

It is not possible to explain creation by depending on the nature of the supreme Brahman which is non-different from all, immutable, one, and which is neither an effect nor a cause.

Since the *Upaniṣad* says that from the Self which is Brahman ether came into existence, it may be argued that creation is real. But this is wrong. The nature of Brahman is such that it cannot be the cause of anything.

[3]

ब्रह्मणोऽन्यदतः सर्वं कार्यत्वेन विवक्ष्यते ।

ब्रह्मणोऽकारणत्वाच्च सृष्टौ हेतोरसम्भवः ॥

All things other than Brahman should, for that very reason, be regarded as effects. And, since Brahman is immutable, there can be no cause for creation.

It may be, the critic may urge, that the nature of Brahman is such that it cannot be the cause of the world. But this is no reason for denying the existence of a cause for the world. The world, being an effect, must have a cause. And so the creation of the world, it may be argued, cannot be set aside as unreal.

This argument does not hold good. The difficulty which arises here is that there is no object which could be considered to be the cause of the world. Two possibilities may be thought of here, but neither of them is tenable. Either something other than Brahman is the cause of the world or Brahman itself is the cause of the world. It cannot be said that something other than Brahman is the cause of the world. We are in search of the root

cause (*mūla-kāraṇa*) of the world. Since all objects other than Brahman are effects, none of them could be thought of as the root cause. Nor does the other alternative hold good. Being immutable (*kūṭastha*) Brahman cannot be the cause of the world. There is no effect in the absence of a cause (*kāraṇābhāve kāryābhāvāt*). Since there is no cause for the world, it cannot be said that the world really exists or that the creation of the world is real.

Anandagiri explains the word *akāraṇa* which occurs in the second line of the verse as *kūṭastha*.

[4]

ब्रह्मस्वभावो हेतुश्चेत्सृष्टेस्तत्सन्निधेः सदा ।

सर्वदा ब्रह्मवत्सर्गो न च देशाद्यसम्भवात् ॥

If it be said that the nature of Brahman is the cause of creation, its proximity being always there, the universe must always exist like Brahman. But this cannot be, since space, etc., cannot take place.

It may be, the critic argues, that Brahman by its very nature is immutable (*kūṭastha*). Nevertheless, it could be the cause of the world in the same way as a magnet, remaining where it is and without undergoing any change, is the cause of the movement of the iron filings just by its proximity to them.

This argument cannot be accepted. The basic difficulty here is that since the infinite Brahman is ever-existent, its proximity to the world is also ever-existent, and this would mean the creation of the world, the existence of the world, all the time. This is not acceptable. Creation and dissolution alternate like day and night. Creation (*sṛṣṭi*) is followed by dissolution (*pralaya*) and dissolution is followed by creation. The idea of eternal creation is unacceptable.

There is also another difficulty. Every object which is created comes into being at a particular time and space. Then, what

about time and space themselves? While the occurrence of a thing is explained in a particular space-time context, the same thing cannot be said of both space and time. The occurrence of space is not explained by presupposing another space. Similarly, the occurrence of time is not explained by presupposing another time. There is strictly speaking neither plurality of space nor plurality of time. Therefore, the occurrence of space and time cannot be thought of in the context of another space and time, for there is no "other space", nor "another time" (*deśasya deśāntarābhāvāt, kālasya ca kālāntarābhāvāt*). The explanation of the occurrence of an object in terms of space and time breaks down when we attempt to explain the occurrence of both space and time.

Further, to think of another space and another time with a view to account for space and time of the first level will lead to the fallacy of infinite regress (*anavasthā*), for both space and time which are posited at the second level would in their turn require another space and time at the third level, and these in their turn would require another space and time at the fourth level, and so on. It is, therefore, impossible to subscribe to the idea of eternal creation or the eternal existence of the world.

[5]

नाभूत्सृष्टिरभूत्त्वादभूतं कालहेतुतः ।

न भविष्यत्यभाव्यत्वादभाव्यञ्चाक्रियोत्थितेः ॥

It cannot be said that there was creation (by Brahman) because Brahman is not of the past; and Brahman is not of the past, because it is the cause of time. Nor can it be said that there will be creation (by Brahman), because Brahman is not of the future; and Brahman is not of the future, because it is not an effect.

If it be said that Brahman is the cause of the creation of the world, it is necessary to explain the occurrence of creation in res-

pect of time; that is to say, it must be stated whether the creation of the world by Brahman took place in the past, or whether it will take place in the future, or whether it takes place now. But none of these alternatives is acceptable. The untenability of the first two alternatives is shown in this verse.

It cannot be said that Brahman created the world in the past. Two reasons are given here in support of this contention. (1) Without assuming Brahman's relation with time, it cannot be said that Brahman created the world in the past. But Brahman is unrelated (*asaṅga*) to anything whatsoever. So Brahman is not of the past. (2) To say that something is of the past is to say that it is limited by the temporal dimension called the past. Inasmuch as Brahman is the cause of time, it cannot be said to be limited by time. And so, Brahman is not of the past.

Though Brahman is said to be the cause of time, it has no real relation with time. Its relation with time by virtue of its being the cause is due to *māyā* (*kāraṇatvena kālānvayasya māyātmatvāt*). By itself, Brahman is neither a cause nor an effect. It is what transcends the cause-effect relation. If it comes to be looked upon as a cause, it is due to its apparent association with *māyā*.

Similarly, it cannot be said that Brahman will create the world in the future, because (1) it is not limited by the temporal dimension called the future, and also because (2) it is not an effect, that is to say, no change can ever arise in Brahman.

[6]

नेदानीमद्वितीयत्वात्कौटस्थ्यादात्मनः सदा ।
भविष्यत्यस्त्यभून्नातो वस्तुवृत्तामपेक्ष्य तु ॥

Creation is not now, because the Self is always non-dual and immutable. So considering the real state of things, there never was, nor is yet to be, (the creation of the world by Brahman).

It cannot be said that the creation of the world takes place

now. Creation involves duality. If the world is created now by Brahman, it means that the created is different from Brahman, the creator. Since *śruti* says that Brahman is non-dual, it is absurd to think of creation in the real sense of the term. There is also another reason to show that Brahman cannot be the cause of creation. Brahman is immutable; it is not a factor involved in any action. So, Brahman cannot be said to create the world in the present.

To sum up: creation was not in the past; nor is it in the present; nor will it be in the future.

[7]

भविष्यत्यस्त्यभूच्चेति यतो बन्ध्यं विशेषणम् ।
उष्ट्रादिवदणोस्तस्माद्विद्यैवात्र कारणम् ॥

Since the use of qualification (in respect of creation with a view to specify) that it will be, or that it is, or that it was, is meaningless like (the use of qualification such as) camel, etc., to an atom. Hence here *avidyā* alone is the cause (of creation).

It is meaningless to apply any qualification (*viśeṣana*) to an atom, the minutest particle. No one would try to specify what an atom is by using words such as camel. Likewise, it is meaningless to specify creation as of the past or of present or of the future. Creation is, therefore, the work of *avidyā*.

[8]

असतः कारणं नास्ति सतोऽनतिशयत्वतः ।
कौटस्थ्याज्जन्मनाशानामनवस्था जनेर्जनौ ॥

For the non-existent, there is no cause. For the existent there is no new state (as origination). Since origination, destruction, etc., (do not have origination,

destruction, etc.), and since they are (for that reason) immutable, (creation is not real). If there is origination for origination, it will result in infinite regress.

That creation of the world is not real is now argued in a different way. The world must have been existent or non-existent as such before its origination. It cannot be said that what is non-existent (*asat*) comes into being. The non-existent, just because it is non-existent, cannot have relation with cause. In the absence of its relation with cause, how could it be said that what is non-existent comes into being? Nor is it possible to say that what is existent (*sat*) comes into being. Since it is already an existent, it cannot have origination. If neither the existent, nor the non-existent comes into being, to speak of the creation of the world does not make any sense.

The question of the creation of the world may be examined from another point of view. The things of the world are subject to the sixfold change (*ṣaṭ-bhāva-vikāra*) such as origination (*janma*) destruction (*nāśa*), etc. Is there origination for origination? Is there destruction for destruction? The admission of origination for origination, destruction for destruction, involves the fallacy of infinite regress (*anavasthā*). If there is no origination for origination, destruction for destruction, etc., it must be said that they are immutable. We proceed on the assumption that there is sixfold change, though in truth it is illusory (*bhāvavikāras' sarve'pi kalpitā eveti paramārthah*).

[9]

कालत्रयस्याविद्यायाः समुत्थानादहेतुता ।

कर्मदेवेश्वरादीनामत एवानिमित्ताता ॥

Time which is threefold cannot be the cause (of the world), because it comes into being from *avidyā*. For the same reason, *karma*, deity, *Īśvara*, etc., cannot be the cause.

There are various views about the causality of the universe. But only four of them are mentioned in this verse.

There is the view that there is no cause for the world (*kāraṇam nāsti*). There are those who think that non-being (*abhāva*) or the void (*śūnya*) is the cause of the world. The Cārvāka explains the world in terms of naturalism (*svabhāvavāda*). Some others who subscribe to accidentalism (*yadr̥cchivāda*) say that the existence of the world is an accident. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher holds the view that the constituents of the natural world are composed of material atoms and that God (*Īśvara*) is the prime mover of these atoms. According to the Sāṅkhya, *Prakṛti* is the cause of the world. The Yoga holds the view that God who is one of the Puruṣas and who is not related to anything, brings about the connection of *Prakṛti* with *Puruṣa* which is necessary for the evolution of the world from *Prakṛti*. The Mīmāṃsaka maintains that *karma* or *adr̥ṣṭa* is the cause of the world. Some schools of Vedānta hold that God is the efficient cause of the universe and that *Prakṛti* is the material cause. Those who accept the reality of time say that time (*kāla*) is the cause of the world. Others who are the worshippers of *Prajāpati*, *Gaṇapati*, and other gods (*prājāpatyagāṇāpatyādayaḥ*) consider these gods as the cause of the world.

None of the views stated above is satisfactory. If there is no cause for the world, one could argue by the same logic that even a pot comes into being without a cause. This is absurd. So the view that the world exists without a cause cannot be accepted as it goes against the evidence of perception. Non-being (*abhāva*) cannot be the cause of anything; but only a positive entity can be the cause of some object. The view that a positive something comes out of non-being is contradicted by perception (*abhāvāt bhāvotpattiriti pratyakṣavirodhaḥ*). The view that the void (*śūnya*) is the cause of the world is no more intelligible than the assertion that a plant comes into being without a seed. The variegated and the intelligently ordered universe cannot be an accident or a chance; nor could it be said that it comes into being of its own accord. Neither the atoms, nor *Prakṛti*, nor *karma*, nor *kāla*, can account for the universe, for they are all non-intelligent. If God (*Īśvara*) being only an efficient cause were to create the

world out of some primordial matter which is different from, and external to him, he would be conditioned thereby. God who is *one of the Puruṣas* and who is not related to anything cannot be the cause which brings about the connection between *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*.

Since it is not possible to account for the world in any of the ways stated above, Advaita concludes that the world is an illusory appearance of Brahman due to *māyā*.

[10]

जनिस्थित्यप्यया ह्येते जगतः स्युः प्रतिक्षणम् ।
धिया जनयते कर्ता कर्मभिश्चेति हि श्रुतिः ॥

These three states of origination, existence, and dissolution occur, indeed, to the world every moment. *Śruti*, indeed, declares that the Creator creates (the world) through (i.e., in conformity with) knowledge and works.

Neither *kāla*, nor *karma*, nor *Īśvara*, nor anything else, can be the cause of the world. Brahman which is immutable cannot also be the cause of the world. The creation of the world must, therefore, be the work of *māyā*. The world is *anādi*. So long as the knowledge of Brahman is not attained, the *jīva* is subject to worldly existence and goes through the cycle of birth and death. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II, ii, 7) says that the creatures are reborn in accordance with their work and in conformity with their knowledge (*yathā karma yathā śrutam*).

देवदासगुरुदासौ

भाष्यभावज्ञः वरहृर् कल्याणसुन्दरशास्त्री

[पात्राणि - देवदासगुरुदासौ । स्थलं - देवदासगोहः,
समुद्रतीरञ्च । कालः - अपराह्णः]

देवदासः — (दूराद्दवलोक्य सावमर्शं) अये मित्रं गुरुदास इव ।
(प्रत्युद्गम्य कियद्दूरं गत्वा) आं स एव । (साश्चर्यम्) अयि सखे
गुरुदास, चिराद्दृष्टोऽसि । अस्तु ते स्वागतम् । दिष्टव्याद्य त्वम-
कस्मादुपस्थितो दृष्ट इति अतिवेलमानन्दमनुभवति मे स्वान्तम् ।

गुरुदासः — सखे! तथैव त्वमपि दृष्टोऽसीति नितान्तमद्य प्रसीदति
ममापि चित्तम् ।

(अंसेनांसमागृह्योभौ देवदासगोहाभिमुखं प्रचलतः ।)

दे — अये! अयं मे गोहः । पृह्यन्तः । (इति हस्तेन हस्तं उपगृह्य
गृह्यान्तरानीय यथोचितमुपचरति ।)

गु — (सस्मितम्) अतिमात्रमेवाहं अद्य सभाजितः । प्राचीनोऽपि
न प्रस्मृतः प्रणयः ।

(उभौ परस्परं कुशलवार्तां पृच्छतः ।)

गु — अये देवदास । किमद्यावां कुर्याव ?

दे — कालोऽयमपराह्णः । सोल्लासमद्य बहिर्निष्क्रम्य समुद्रतीरं
गच्छामः ।

गु — मदीय एवाशयः त्वयि प्रतिफलितः इव । तथैव कुर्वः ।
(उभौ समुद्रतीरं गत्वा समर्दं परिहृत्य एकान्ते उपविशतः ।)

दे — मित्र! चिरादस्ति मे मनसि कुतूहलं किञ्चिद्धिज्ञातं प्रष्टुं च ।

गु — किं तत् ? यदि निवेद्यं निवेदय मह्यम् ।

दे — किं यदीत्युच्यते । त्वय्येवेदं निवेद्यम् । विविक्तश्चायं प्रदेशः ।
चित्तं चाद्योः प्रसन्नम् । पृच्छामि त्वां, देवगुरुभक्तयोः का वा
गरीयसी ? चिरादयमनिश्चयः शल्यमिव मां बाधते ।

गु — (साकृतं) किमत्रास्ति दुरवगाह्यम्, देवदासानां दैवी भक्तिः,
गुरुदासानां च गुरुभक्तिः परस्परतो गरीयसी ।

दे — इत इयं गरीयसीति अन्यतरगरीयस्त्वनिर्धारणार्थमेव पृच्छामि

गु — (सोपहासं) त्वं हि देवदासः, अहं तु गुरुदासः, कथमत्र
निर्धारणं ? मध्यस्थः कोऽप्यन्वेष्टव्यः । सोऽपि चेद्देवदासः,
त्वदीय एव पक्षः निर्णीतस्स्यात् । अथ स गुरुदासः, मदीय एव
पक्षः निर्णीतस्स्यात्, अथवासावन्यदासः, तदीय एव पक्षः निर्णीत-
स्स्यात् । किमनेन विचारितेन । अत एव यस्मै यदोचते तत्तस्य
गरीय इति सर्वाविरुद्ध एव मयाश्रितः पक्षः । अभियुक्तैरप्युक्तम् —

स्वभावो नोपदेशेन शक्यते कर्तुमन्यथा ।

सुतप्तमपि पानीयं पुनर्गच्छति शीतताम् ॥

इति ॥

दे — (सशिरःकम्पम्) सत्यमभिधीयते त्वया । वर्तते एवायं
अशक्यप्रतीकारः अखिललोकसाधारणः अनादिकालप्रवृत्तो दुर्यहः ।
तथापि न मां तादृशमवेहि । विनैवेकत्र पक्षपातं, विनापि च
मध्यस्थं विषयमिममावामेव सोपपत्तिं विचार्य अन्यतरं पक्षं निर्णे-
ष्यावः । अलोकसामान्यां कामपि पद्धतिं च प्रकट्यावः ।

गु — एवं तर्हि तावकं तावत्पक्षं उपस्थापय ।

दे — प्रथम एवात्र पक्षो मयाऽवलम्ब्यते देवभक्तिरेव गुरुभक्तितो गरीयसीति ।

गु — प्रतीक्षितः खल्वयं मया प्रथमत एव । देवदासो हि त्वम् ।

दे — सखे ! नहि नहि । प्रामाणिकत्वादेवायं पक्षो मया पक्षीकृतः ।

गु — एवं तर्हि वद प्रथमतः, किमस्ति देवः ? अस्ति चेत्तत्र किं मानं ? न तावदसौ केनापि कुत्रापि कदापि प्रत्यक्षीक्रियते ।

दे — (साश्चर्यम्) किमिदानीं त्वं नास्तिकः संवृत्तः ? विवाद एव तर्हि आचर्योर्न शोभते । श्रूयते हि

“विवाहश्च विवादश्च समयोरेव शोभते”

इति ।

गु — सखे ! मा कुप्य । विवादपरिशुद्धिमभीप्सतैव मया एव-
माक्षिप्यते । प्रमाणान्तरं चेदस्ति । ब्रूहि । अभ्युपैमि ।

दे — (साश्वासम्) अस्त्येवात्रानुमानं मानम् । यथा हि लोके घट-
पटादयोऽर्थाः अतिस्थूला अपि कुलालकुविन्दादिभिरेव क्रियमाणा
दृष्टाः दृश्यन्ते च एवमस्सदादिभिः मनसाप्यचिन्त्यरचनः अतिवि-
चित्रोऽयं प्रपञ्चोऽपि केनचित्कृत एव स्यादिति । सोऽपि सर्वज्ञः
सर्वशक्तः समस्तगुणसंपूर्णः सर्वनियन्ता सर्वान्तर्यामी चेति स एव
देव उच्यते । अस्ति चात्र श्रुतिरपि मानम् —

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते ।

यस्सर्वज्ञः सर्ववित् ।

एको देवस्सर्वभूतेषु गूढः ।

एष सर्वेश्वरः ।

परास्य शक्तिः विविधैव श्रूयते ।

इत्यादिका ।

गु — अस्त्वेवं । तस्मिन्नेव भक्तिः कर्तव्या । सैव गरीयसीति च कस्तवाग्रहः ?

दे — नहि नहि आग्रहः । किमयमाभागकस्त्वया न श्रुतः ? "तेन विना तृणमपि न चलती" ति । विशिष्य चोच्यते —

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतद्देवानुग्रहहेतुकम् !

मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥

इति । तद्देवानुग्रहमन्तरा नास्मादशानां महदल्पं वा कार्यं सिद्ध्येत् । तदनुग्रहश्च तद्भक्तिमन्तरा न सिद्ध्यतीति दैवी भक्तिः सर्वदा सर्वैः कर्तव्यैव । सैव च गरीयसीति । किमितोऽप्यधिकं तवास्ति वक्तव्यम् ? मादृशा एव हि गुरवोऽपि नाम ।

गु — (सस्मितं) एवं चेत्, सखे देवदास ! कुरु इतोऽप्यत्यधिकां दैवीमेव भक्तिम् । मा प्रमदः ।

दे — किं कुर्वित्युच्यते । करवाणीति ब्रूहि । अथवा कुर्याविति ।

गु — नहि नहि । त्वदीयः खलु स पक्षः । मदीय एव पक्षो मया-
श्रयितव्यः ।

दे — सखे ! मा वद त्वदीय इति । प्रामाणिक इति ब्रूहि । (विचिन्त्य)
भवतु भवदीयं पक्षमद्योपस्थापय ।

गु — किमप्राणिकेनोपस्थापितेन ?

दे — नहि नहि । अस्ति मे शुश्रूषा । उपस्थापय ।

गु — यद्यस्ति ते महती शुश्रूषा उपस्थापयामि । द्वितीय एवात्र पक्षो मयावलम्ब्यते प्रामाणिकत्वाद् । गुरुभक्तिरेव दैवभक्तितो गरीयसीति । यो ह्यादरेणास्मभ्यं सद्विद्या उपदिशति स एव हि गुरुः । स चास्माकं प्रत्यक्षसिद्ध एवेति नात्र प्रथमप्रमाणसत्त्वा-
सत्त्वशंकाया अपि अवसरः । मानान्तरमपि क्रमशो वेत्स्यसि ।

दे — (साशंकम्) सखे ! इदं तावत्प्रथमतो जिज्ञासे । कुतस्स गुरु-
रित्यभिधीयते ? जानासि चेत् ब्रूहि ।

गु — गुरुदासोऽपि सन् कथमहं न जानामि । जानाम्येव । ब्रवीमि ।
सावधानः शृणु ।

गुशब्दस्त्वंधकारः स्यात् रुशब्दस्तन्निरोधकः ।

अन्धकारनिरोधित्वात् गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥

दे — एवं वा । भवतु । किं तन्मानान्तरं? यत्कमशो वेत्स्य-
सीत्युक्तम् ।

गु — (विद्वस्य) प्रत्यक्षसिद्धेऽप्यर्थे किं मानान्तरमन्विष्यते? न हि
घटमव्यक्षीकृत्य किमत्र मानमित्यन्विच्छति लोकः । भवतु ।
तथापि शृणु मानान्तरम् ।

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् ।

आचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद ।

आचार्याद्वैव विद्या विदिता साधिष्ठं प्रापत् ।

इत्यादि ।

दे — कोऽसावाचार्यः? किमयं गुरुरेव उतान्यः?

गु — (स्वगतं) अहो बलवती अस्य भेददृष्टिः । (प्रकाशम्) सखे!
गुरुरेवाचार्यं उच्यते । यो हि शास्त्रार्थं सम्यक् विजानाति । स्वय-
मनुतिष्ठति । अन्यांश्चानुष्ठापयति स एव च गुरु उच्यते । स्वयं
कृतार्था भेदाविनोऽपि गुरुभक्तिमेव परामभिमन्यन्ते । शृणु
चान्यत् महद्गहनं —

गुरूपदेशं शृण्वन्तः क्षेमं यान्तीह बालकाः ।

गुरूपदेशादभवत् सर्वज्ञः कमलाकरः ॥

ब्राह्मणो द्विपदां श्रेष्ठः गौर्गृष्टा चतुष्पदाम् ।

गुरुर्गरीयसां श्रेष्ठः पुत्रः स्पर्शवतां वरः ॥

इत्यादि ।

- दे — (साश्चर्यम्) किमेतावत् । अन्यदप्यस्ति गुरुमहिमावेदकम् ?
- गु — बह्वस्ति । यदि ते श्रवणकुतूहलं वक्ष्यामि । यथा हि लोके चन्दनवृक्षः सन्निधिमात्रेण स्वसमीपस्थान् विजातीयानपि वक्षान् सर्वतः प्रसृमरेण स्वीयेन परिमलेन सौगन्ध्यभाजः कुर्वन् तन्मूलगतानामपि स्वमूलगतानामिव तापमपकरोति, तथैव ह्ययम् लब्धबोधः परमकारुणिकः आचार्योऽपि स्वीयाभिः सूक्तिभिः स्वपरिसरवर्तिनश्शिष्यान् स्वसमानेषु कुर्वन् तेषामिव तन्मूलमुपगतानामपि तापमपाकरोतीति किमन्यद्वाधिकमाश्राव्यम् तव वर्तते ?
- दे — (सहर्षम्) सखे गुरुदास ! तावकमिदमद्य वचनं रोगार्तमिव रोगशमनौषधं उज्जीवयति मां । उन्मीलयति च मामके लोचने । वर्धयति च भूयोऽपि मे श्रवणकौतुकम् ।
- गु — कौतुकं चेत् अन्यदपि किञ्चित् शृणु । निरुपमो ह्ययं परमकारुणिकः सद्गुरुः । त्रिभुवनजठरेऽपि नास्ति कश्चिदस्य दृष्टान्तः । ईश्वरोऽपि नास्य सदृक् भवति । किमन्यः ?
- दे — (सरोषम्) नहि नहि तथा वक्तव्यम् । अस्ति हि स्पर्शाख्यो मणिविशेषः । स हि स्वसंबद्धं अश्मसारमपि स्वर्णतां नयतीति प्रसिद्धं लोके । सोऽप्यस्य भवति दृष्टान्तः । किमीश्वरेण ?
- गु — भ्रान्तोऽसि । स्वर्णतामेव हि नयत्यश्मसारं स्पर्शमणिताम् । किं स्वर्णभावमुपनीतः अश्मसारः स्वमिव स्पर्शमणिः, अश्मसारान्तरं स्वर्णभावमुपनयति ? ईश्वरोऽपि वा किमस्माकम् प्रत्यक्षमुपदिशति ?
- दे — (विचिन्त्य) नहि नहि ।
- गु — कथं तर्हि स च सोऽपि वा सद्गुरोः दृष्टान्तभावं उपगमिष्यति ।
- दे — अये पराजितोऽसि भवता । परिगृहीतो भवत्पक्षः । भवानेवाद्य मम गुरुस्संजातः । भवद्भक्तिरेव च मे गरीयसी जाता ।

गु — (सखितम्) तत् किमिदानीं त्यज्यते देवभक्तिः?

दे — त्यज्यत एव, यदि भवानाशापयति । एवं हि श्रूयते —
आज्ञा गुरूणामविचारणीया ।

इति ।

गु — यद्येवं, आशापयामि त्वां, नैव सा त्याज्येति । प्रयन्तसंपाद्या हि सा । एवं हि श्रूयते —

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।
तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥

इति ।

दे — (सन्दिह्य) एवं हि देवगुरुभक्त्योः तुल्यतैव संपन्नेति घट्टकुट्यामेव प्रभातस्संजात इव ।

गु — नैव । यतो ह्येवमपि श्रूयते —

दैवे रुष्टे गुरुस्त्राता गुरौ रुष्टे न कश्चन ।

इति ।

गुरोरनुग्रहेणैव पुमान् पूर्णः प्रजायते ।

इत्यादि च ।

दे — (सानन्दम्) अथे गुरुदास ! (सभयं) नहि नहि । गुरुप्रवर !
नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयानघ ।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसंदेहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥

गु — एवं चेत् इदमेव मम परमार्थं वचनं अनुदिनमनुस्मर ।
जन्मानेकशतैः सदादरयुजा भक्त्या समाराधितः
भक्तैर्वैदिकलक्षणेन विधिना संतुष्ट ईशः स्वयम् ।

साक्षात् श्रीगुरुरूपमेत्य कृपया दृग्गोचरस्सन्प्रभुः
तत्त्वं साधु विबोध्य तारयति तान् संसारदुःखार्णवात् ॥

दे — (साश्चर्यं) किमीश्वरो गुरुश्च एक एव ?

गु — सत्यं । ईश्वरो गुरुश्च एक एव । अत एव च मया ईश्वरोऽपि
न सद्गुरोस्सदृक् इत्युक्तः । विभिन्नो हि नाम दृष्टान्तो भवति ।
सखे ! न केवलमियत् । यावता त्वं च ईश्वरश्च गुरुश्चेति त्रयोऽप्येक
एव । शृण्वन्नापि गाथाम् —

ईश्वरो गुरुरात्मेति मूर्तित्रयविभागिने ।
सच्चिदानन्दरूपाय नमो लोकैकसाक्षिणे ॥

इति ।

दे — (सानन्दम् करावच्छिरसौ कृत्वा नृत्यन्)
अहो शास्त्रमहो शास्त्रमहो गुरुरहो गुरुः ।
अहो ज्ञानमहो ज्ञानं अहो सुखमहो सुखम् ॥

॥ निष्क्रान्तौ ॥

DEVADĀSA AND GURUDĀSA*

Bhāṣyabhāvajña V.R. Kalyāṇasundara Śāstri

(This is a dialogue between Devadāsa and Gurudāsa. The dialogue takes place at the house of Devadāsa and on the sea-shore in the afternoon).

Devadāsa: (Looking at a distance and surmising) Oh, it seems, there comes my friend Gurudāsa. (Walking a few steps) Yes, he is. (With wonder) O friend, Gurudāsa, I am seeing you after a long time. I welcome you. I feel immensely pleased to see you who have come today luckily.

Gurudāsa: Oh friend! similarly, my mind also feels jubilant today, having seen you. (Clasping shoulder to shoulder, both of them go towards the house of Devadāsa.) Oh! this is my house. Get in. (Then Devadāsa, taking hold of Gurudāsa's hand, leads him to his house and honours him properly.)

D.: (With smile) Indeed, I am exceedingly honoured by you today. Though our friendship is old, you have not forgotten me. (Both of them enquire about the welfare of each other.)

*Translated by V.K.S.N. Raghavani

G. : O Devadāsa! What shall we do today?

D. : It is afternoon now. Let us now happily go out towards the sea-shore.

G. : Indeed, you have just thought what I wanted to tell. Let us do so.

(Both of them go to the sea-shore and avoiding crowd, sit together in a lonely place.)

D. : Friend! since a long time, I was eager to enquire you something.

G. : What is it? If you want my reply, please ask me.

D. : Why do you say 'if'? Yes, you please reply me. This place is lonely. Both of us are happy. I ask you "Between the devotion to God and the devotion to teacher, what is superior?" As I have this doubt for long, I feel highly perturbed, as though, shot by an arrow.

G. : (Merrily) Is there anything not known about this? Devadāsas have devotion to God, and Gurudāsas have devotion to teacher. Mutually each one is superior to the other.

D. : (Laughing) You told quite right. Indeed, you are quite clever. This answer is known to me as, "To one who loves one thing more, the devotion to that thing is, indeed, superior."

G. : (Smiling) If you know this answer already, why are you asking me this now?

D. : I have asked this to decide which one is superior to the other.

G. : (Jokingly) You are, indeed, Devadāsa; and, I am Gurudāsa. How can we decide? We should find out a mediator. If he is Devadāsa, your position will be considered right; if he is Gurudāsa my position will hold good; or if he is *anyadāsa* (devotee of someone else), then his position will be different, and that would hold good. What is the use of making enquiry (further)? So I have satisfied with the unopposed view of all that the thing that is liked by a person appeals to him to be the best. Indeed, the learned men have said thus: "The innate nature of a person can never be changed by the use of advice. Even though the water is boiled very much it becomes cool again."

D. : (With the nodding of head) What you say is true. Men are so stubborn that none can cure them; it is a beginningless disease and quite rampant. But do not consider me to be so stubborn. Without any bias, and also without any mediator, let us both enquire into this topic properly; and then let us come to a decisive conclusion. Let us both show to the world an extraordinary novel path.

G. : If it is so, then you put forth your view first.

D. : I am holding the first view that devotion to God is superior to devotion to the teacher (*guru*).

G. : I expected only such a view of yours even earlier, for you are Devadāsa.

D. : Friend! it is not such as you presume. Only because of authority, I am holding this view.

G. : If it is the case, then answer these questions: first, does God exist? If He exists, what is the evidence? No one, indeed, has yet perceived (*pratyakṣa*) God anywhere at any time.

D. : (Astonished) Have you now become an atheist? Then, it is not good to argue at all. We have heard it said that: "Alliance of marriage and argument shine only between people of equal status."

G. : Friend! don't be angry. As I want to have clear arguments, I have made these queries. If there is any other means, pray, tell me; I will accept it.

D. : (With a sigh of relief) Indeed, here is inference as means. Just as there are gross objects like pot, cloth, etc. made by potter, weaver, etc., even so (we can infer that) someone has created this very strange world which people like us can never create even through our thought-process. That 'someone' is the all-knowing, all-powerful supreme person; He is endowed with all auspicious qualities! He is the controller and indweller of all; He is, indeed, called God (*devaḥ*). Many of the following scriptural texts support this view.

"From whom all these beings have originated..."
(*Taittirīyopaniṣad*, III, 1)

"He who is omniscient and all-knowing..."
(*Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, II. ii, 7)

"The one God who dwells within all *bhūtas*..."
(*Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, VI, 11)

"This is the supreme Overlord..."
(*Bṛhadāraṇyakoṇiṣad*, IV, iv, 21)

"His power is supreme and is heard to be manifold..."
(*Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, VI, 8) etc.

G. : Let it be so. Then one must be devoted to such a God alone. And so, are you adamant in holding that devotion to God alone is superior?

D. : No, no; I am not adamant. There is the proverb: "Without the power of that Lord, even a blade of grass cannot move." Have you not heard this proverb? Moreover it is said especially: "God's grace alone is the cause of these three benefits, *viz.*, human birth, desire for liberation, our resorting to holy persons." Without God's grace, we cannot achieve success in any task, big or small. Without devotion to God, none can get His divine grace. So everyone should ever be devoted to God. So devotion to God alone is superior. Do you want me to tell you more than this? Even teachers are only persons like us.

G. : (Smiling) Dear friend Devadāsa! if it is so, then let you have more devotion to God. Don't swerve from your path.

D. : Why do you ask me alone to do so (to be devoted to God)? Proclaim that "let me be (devoted to God)." Or else, you can say, "Let both of us shall be (devoted to God)."

G. : No, no. It is, indeed, your view. I would cling to my view only.

D. : Friend! don't refer it to be "your view". Rather call it as authoritative. (Thinking over for a while) Let it be; put forth your view now.

G. : What is the use of presenting unauthoritative view?

D. : No, no. I do desire to hear. Present it.

G. : If you desire to listen to me, then I am presenting it. I hold on to the second view because of its authority. Indeed, devotion to teacher is superior to devotion to God. He is *guru* (teacher) who instructs us the great learning (*sadvidyā*) earnestly. That teacher

(*guru*) is established for us through our perception itself; and so, there is no chance of doubt in respect of the presence or absence of prime authority (with regard to the superiority of devotion to *guru*). You will know other testimonies also in due course.

D. : (Along with a sense of doubt) Friend! I would like to know this first of all. Why is it that a teacher is known as *guru*? If you know it, then tell.

G. : Being already Gurudāsa (devotee of *Guru*), how is it that I do not know it? I know it; let me tell; listen attentively. “*Gu* stands for darkness (ignorance) and *ru* for its removal; since a teacher wards off ignorance, he is known as *guru*.” (*Dvayopaniṣad*, 5)

D. : Is it so? Let it be. What is the other testimony? You said that I could know it in due course.

G. : (Laughing) Does anyone seek another testimony when a truth is already established by perception? After perceiving a pot, none, indeed, seek another testimony for its validity. Let it be. Nevertheless, listen to another testimony. There are scriptural passages such as: (1) “To obtain that knowledge of the Real, one should approach only a *guru*.” (*Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, I, ii, 12) (2) “One who has a good *ācārya* attains the knowledge of the supreme person.” (*Chāndogyopaniṣad*, VI, xiv, 2) (3) “Only the learning acquired from an *ācārya* leads one to success.” (*Ibid.* IV, ix, 3)

D. : Who is an *ācārya*? Is he same as *guru* or someone else?

G. : (Speaking to himself) How strong is his perception of difference! (Aloud) Friend! Indeed, *guru* himself is called *ācārya*. He — who knows clearly the purport of the *śāstras*, follows the *śāstras* himself, and

makes others follow the same — is, indeed, an *ācārya* and is himself the *guru*. Though the wise men have achieved already the purpose of their life, they consider that “the devotion to *Guru*” alone is the supreme one. Listen also the following great sayings: “Students attain here great happiness by listening to the instructions given by a teacher; Brahmā, the Lotus-born, became omniscient by hearing his *guru’s upadeśa*.” “Brahmin is the best among bipeds; cow, among quadrupeds; *guru* is the greatest among all great persons; and son among *sparśavats* (tangibles).”

D. : (Astonished) Is it so much? Are there some more texts explaining the greatness of *guru*?

G. : There are many texts. If you want to hear, I shall tell. Just as a sandalwood tree, by its mere presence, makes the other neighbouring trees full of fragrance, and also relieve the fatigue of persons who resort to the shade of those trees, like its relieving the fatigue of those who resort to its own shade — in the same way, an enlightened *ācārya* of supreme compassion also makes his disciples who surround him become equal to him through his good teachings. The *ācārya* also removes the misery of ignorance of those who resort to his disciples similar to the removal of ignorance of those who resort to him. What else, indeed, do you want to hear more?

D. : (Joyful) Friend! Gurudāsa! Just as a proper medicine cures the malaise of a sick person, even so, this your chosen advice, enlivens me; it has rendered my pair of eyes opened; it has again, kindled my appetite to hear.

G. : If you are eager, then listen something more. The *sad-guru* (great teacher) is unexcelled and of sup-

reme compassion. There is none who is comparable to great *guru* within the vast expanse of all the three worlds. Even *Īśvara* (God) cannot be said to be similar to a *sad-guru*. Then who else is there (to compete him)?

D. : (Angrily) No. No, you cannot say that. There is a particular gem as '*sparśa*' (philosopher's stone). It is well known in the world that this gem, by its mere contact, turns even a piece of iron to become gold. So, this *sparśa*-gem is similar to a *sad-guru*. Why at all to speak of God?

G. : You are, indeed, deluded. *Sparśa*-gem makes a piece of iron only gold, and does not turn it to become a philosopher's stone. Whether a piece of iron — that is turned into gold — can change another piece of iron to become gold? And, does God (*Īśvara*) teach us directly?

D. : (Thinking over for a while) No, not at all.

G. : Then how is it that the philosopher's stone or *Īśvara* would be similar to a *sad-guru*?

D. : Oh! I have been defeated by you. I accept your view. You have, indeed, become my teacher (*guru*). I hold that the devotion to you, the teacher, is superior.

G. : (Smiling) Then, do you now abandon the devotion to God?

D. : Yes, I abandon it if you command. Thus has it been heard: "One should never disobey (probe into) the order of elders." (*Raghuvamśa* XIV, 46)

G. : If you say so, I ask you not to abandon the devotion to God. It is extremely hard to acquire the devotion to God. Thus do we hear: "The devotion to

God is supreme; the devotion to *guru* also is similar. That great man who has supreme devotion to God, and to *guru* learns many subtle teachings of *śāstras* clearly." (*Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, VI, 23)

D. : (Doubting) If it be so, then it leads to the equality of the devotion to God with the devotion to *guru*; and so, again, we come to a dilemma, as the maxim of '*ghaṭṭakutyām prabhāta*' (daybreak near a toll-station) (*i.e.* we have come to such a position which we intended to avoid).

G. : Not at all, since there are many texts like "When the God is angry, the *guru* saves us, and when the *guru* is angry none can protect us," and "Only by the grace of *guru*, a person becomes complete in himself."

D. : (Happily) Oh! Gurudāsa! (with fear) no, no — Oh best among *gurus*! "My delusion has vanished. Oh sinless Master! by your grace, I have got enlightenment. My doubts have been cleared. I shall abide by your words." (*cf.* the *Gītā*, XVIII, 73)

G. : If it is so, do remember daily the following truth which I teach you now. "Throughout their innumerable births, the devotees of God worship God with an ardent devotion and great veneration. Their devotion to God is according to the Vedic tenets. By such an ardent worship, God Himself becomes pleased. Then God, out of his immense grace assumes the form of a good teacher (*sad-guru*) and descends to this world. Then this teacher, being within the purview of the devotees' eyesight, instructs the immortal teaching to the devotees and lifts them up from the ocean of misery which is in the form of transmigratory births and deaths."

D. : (Excited) Whether God and *guru* are one and the same?

G. : True. God and teacher are one and the same. Therefore, I have told you earlier that even God is not similar to a *sadguru*. Only a thing which is different from another can be an example. Friend! it is not only this much. (To stretch this further:) even yourself, God and *guru* — all the three are *one* only. Listen to the (meaning of the) following *śloka*: “We bow to the only witness of the whole world who is of the form of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* and who divides himself into the three forms of God, *guru* and Self!”

D. : (Happily, folding the pair of his hands above his head and dancing) “What a great wonder! How supreme is the *śāstra*! How supreme is the *guru*! How supreme is the knowledge! And, how supreme is the great bliss!”

(Exit both)

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darśayaty-
eṣā śaṅkarabhārati vijayate nirvāṇasandāyini.

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