

A HALF-YEARLY JOURNAL OF ADVAITA-VEDĀNTA

The VOICE of ŚĀṆKARĀ

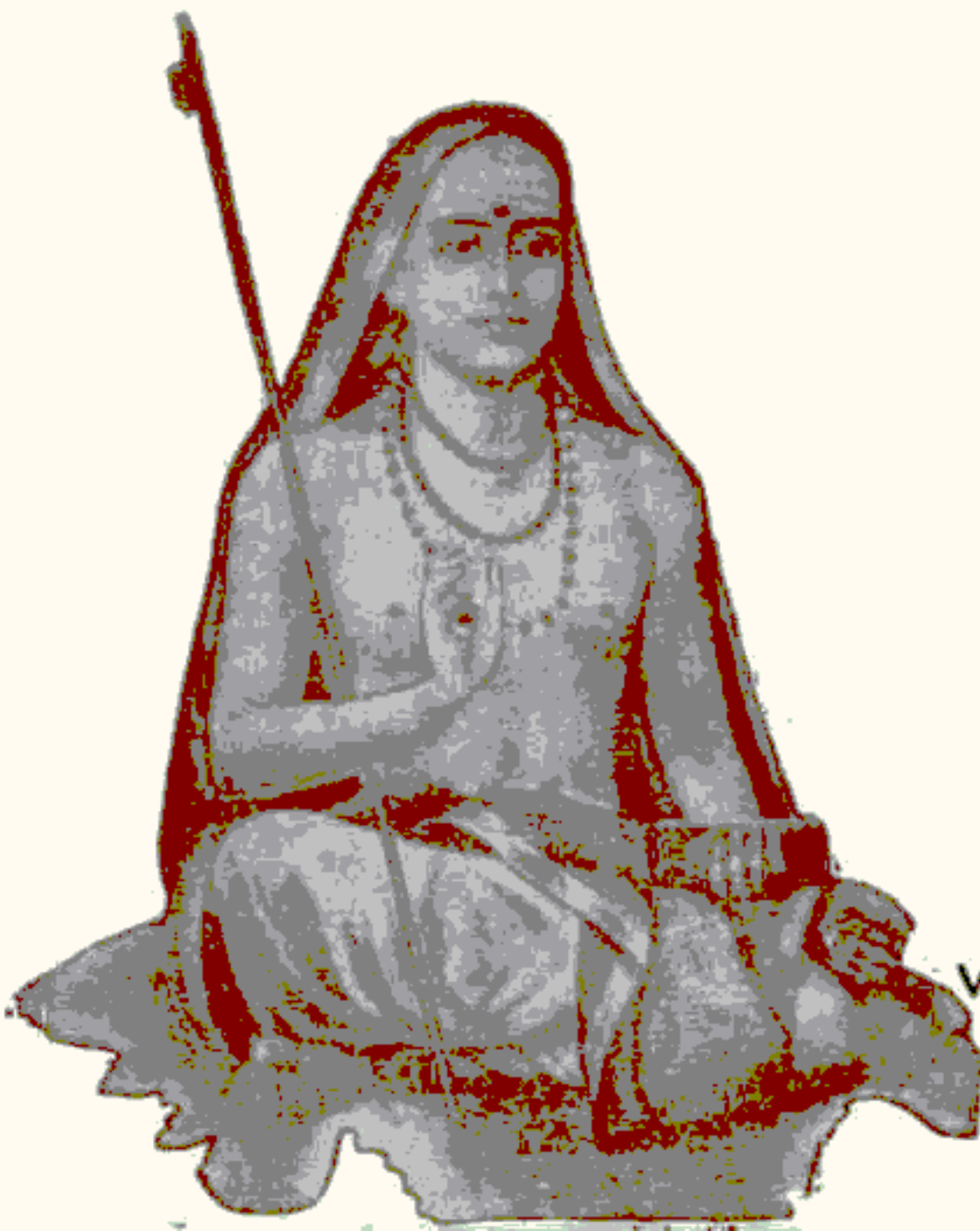
śaṅkara-bhāratī

Chairman, Advisory Board

V. R. Kalyanasundara Sastri

Editor

R. Balasubramanian



Volume 24 No 1

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*eṣā śaṅkara-bhāratī vijayate
nirvāṇa-saṁdāyini*

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

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e-mail : sviswa@md2.vsnl.net.in

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CONTENTS

	1	Homage to Śaṅkara
	3	Thus Spake Śaṅkara
<i>Śrī Candrasekharendra Sarasvatī</i>	8	Advaita Vedānta
<i>Swami Anantānandendra Sarasvatī</i>	22	Vācaspatimiśra
<i>Swami Dayananda Saraswati</i>	34	Tradition of Advaita
<i>Sangam Lal Pandey</i>	56	Vedāntic Social Philosophy-II
<i>R. Balasubramanian</i>	77	The Timeless and the Temporal through Stories and Dialogues in the Upaniṣads
<i>N. Veezhinathan</i>	122	Advaita in the Works of Kālidāsa

HOMAGE TO ŚAṄKARA

[176]

आदौ तु साधनचतुष्टयहेतुभूतं
 पश्चाच्छ्रुतार्थपरिचिन्तनसाधनं च ।
 अन्ते च दृश्यरहितात्मसुखप्रदं ते
 श्रीशङ्करार्यं मम देहि पदावलम्बम् ॥

ādau tu sādhanacatuṣṭaya-hetubhūtaṁ
paścāt-śrutārthaparicintanasādhanaṁca
ante ca dr̥śya-rahitātma-sukhapradaṁ te
śrīśaṅkarārya mama dehi padāvalambam.

Oh! Śrī Śaṅkara! by clinging to thy holy pair of feet
 one inculcates *sādhanacatuṣṭaya* at first, then one
 develops constant recapitulation of what one has heard

(studied) earlier; and at last one gains supreme bliss in the form of Ātman-realisation wherein the experience of worldly life gets annulled. Therefore, Oh! Śaṅkara! prithee, give me the hold of thy holy pair of feet.

[177]

विद्यानिधे विशदितानतचित्तपद्म
 विद्याप्रदाननिरताङ्घ्रिसरोजपूज ।
 विष्ण्वीश-भेदमतिवारण-पञ्चवक्त्र
 श्रीशङ्करार्यं मम देहि पदावलम्बम् ॥

vidyānidhe viśaditānatacittapadma
vidyāpradāna-niratāṅghrisarojapūja
viṣṇvīśa-bhedamativāraṇa-pañcavaktra
śrīśaṅkarārya mama dehi padāvalambam.

Oh! Ocean of supreme knowledge! the Sun that blossoms the lotuslike heart of devotees who have bowed to (you)! the great Preceptor bent upon showering knowledge on those who worship your pair of lotuslike feet! the Lion in destroying the elephant in the form of *bheda* i.e. differentiating Śiva from Viṣṇu! Oh! Śrī Śaṅkara! kindly lend me the hold at the pair of your lotuslike feet.

Jagadguru Śrī Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Nṛsimhabhārati
 in the *Śrī Śaṅkarāryapadāvalambastava*

 THUS SPAKE ŚAṆKARA*

[Towards the end of Chapter 7 called *Vijñāna-yoga*, the Lord tells Arjuna that the Divine worship leads to liberation, and then refers to Brahman, *adhyātmam*, *karma*, *adhibhūtam*, *adhidaivam*, *adhiyajña*, and the thought of the Lord at the time of departure from the body as things to be known. Then Arjuna requests the Lord to explain to him these seven things. Chapter 8 called *Abhyāsa-yoga* gives an account of these seven things.]

Brahman

Brahman is the Akṣara, the Imperishable, the supreme Self (Paramātman); *śruti* says “O Gārgi, it is at the command of this Akṣara, the imperishable Paramātman, that heaven and earth remain, held in their places.” (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.8.9). “Akṣara” does not here mean the syllable “Om”; for, the latter is

* Readings from Śrī Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter 8, compiled by R. Balasubramanian

subsequently specified thus: "Uttering the syllable 'Om', Brahman" (8.13). And the epithet "supreme" applies better to Brahman, the Imperishable, who transcends all (than to the syllable "Om").

Innermost Self

The same supreme Brahman existing as the Ego, as the innermost Self, as the Pratyagātman, in every individual body, is said to be *Adhyātma*: that which first shows itself as the innermost Self in the body and turns out in the end to be identical with Brahman, the supreme Reality, is known by the term "*Adhyātma*".

Karma

The sacrificial act which consists in offering cooked rice, cakes and the like to the gods (*Devatās*) and which causes the origin of all creatures, is known by the term "*Karma*"; for, it forms the seed as it were of all beings; it is in virtue of this act that all beings, animate and inanimate, come into existence, after passing through rain and other regions of life.

Physical Region

The *Adhibhūtam* is that which gathers itself round the whole animated creation and is composed of the whole perishable existence, i.e., of every thing that has birth.

Divine Region

Purusa is, literally, that by which every thing is filled (*pr* to fill), or that which lies in the body (*pur*), i.e., the Hiraṇyagarbha, the universal Soul abiding in the Sun (*Āditya*), the sustainer and the stimulator of the sense organs of all living beings. *Purusa* is *adhidaivam*.

Person Concerned with Sacrifice

The *Adhiyajña* is He who identifies himself with all acts of sacrifice, the Deity named Viṣṇu; *śruti* says: “*Yajña* (sacrifice) is verily Viṣṇu” (*Taittirīya-saṁhitā*, 1.7.4). He is verily Myself. I am the Deity concerned with all acts of sacrifice in the body. As an act of sacrifice (*yajña*) has to be performed by the body, it is said to be inherent in it, and as such it may be said to rest in the body.

Abhyāsa-Yoga

Practice consists in the repetition of one and the same idea, uninterrupted by any other thought, with reference to Me, the sole object of your thought. Such a practice is itself said to be Yoga. With the mind thus solely engaged in Yoga, not passing over to any other object, the Yogin who meditates according to the teaching of the scripture and of the teacher, of the *śāstra* and *ācārya*—reaches the Puruṣa, the transcendental Being in the Solar Orb.

Meditation of the Divine in the Praṇava

Those who understand the teaching of the Veda declare the Imperishable as devoid of any attribute whatsoever. *Śruti* says: “This verily is that (which you wished to know of), the Imperishable, O Gārgi, as the Brāhmaṇas (the knowers of Brahman) declare, not gross, not subtle, ...” (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.8.8). The Sannyāsins, ever controlling themselves, free from passion, enter the Imperishable, on attaining to right knowledge. And desiring to know the Imperishable, they enter on godly life (*brahmacarya*) with a Guru.

[According to Advaita, Brahman alone is real (*satyam*). All the worlds other than Brahman and those who are in charge of all these worlds are not eternal, i.e., they perish, because they are limited by time. But Brahman transcends time, and is eternal. What is limited by the threefold time is *mithyā*; what is not limited by the threefold time is *satyam*. So, those who attain Brahman do not have rebirth; but those who go to *Brahma-loka*, etc., are reborn.]

The World of Brahmā and all Creatures come into Being and Dissolve

With a view to avoid the fallacious implication that a man reaps the fruits of what he has not done, or that he does not reap the fruits of what he has done, with a view to show that the teaching of scripture concerning bondage (*bandha*) and liberation (*mokṣa*) has a purpose to serve, and with a view further to teach detachment from *saṁsāra* by showing that, as the effect of *karma* caused by *avidyā* and other sources of evil, all creatures involuntarily come into being again and again and dissolve, the Lord says:

This multitude of beings comprising those that move as well as those that do not—the same multitude that existed in the preceding *kalpa* or age, and no other—involuntarily comes into being at the coming on of day, (i.e. when Brahmā awakes) and is dissolved again at the coming on of night—at the close of the day (i.e. when Brahmā goes to sleep). Again at the coming on of day, it involuntarily comes into existence.

The Eternal Brahman or Puruṣa

The supreme Para-Brahman is Akṣara. It is unmanifested, imperceptible to the senses. It is distinct from the *Avyakta* mentioned above, which is *avidyā* itself, the seed of the whole multitude of created beings; that is to say, it is of quite a different nature from the *Avyakta*. It does not perish when all beings from Brahmā downwards perish.

Brahman is Puruṣa. Puruṣa is so called because it rests in the body, or because it is full. Than it none is higher. It is attained by exclusive devotion, i.e., by *jñāna*, or knowledge of the Self. All the created beings abide within the Puruṣa; for every effect rests within its cause; and by that Puruṣa the whole world is pervaded.

Yogin Attains Krama-Mukti

Now it is necessary to speak of the *Uttara-mārga*, “the Northern Path” the Path of Light by which the Yogins just spoken of attain to Brahman; those Yogins who meditate here on Brahman as inhering in the *Praṇava*, in the syllable “Om”, and who attain to *mokṣa* later on, at the end of the *kalpa*.

Whatever fruit of merit is declared by the scriptures to be attainable when the Vedas are properly studied, when the sacrifices are performed in all their parts, when austerities are well practised,—beyond all this multitude of fruits rises the yogin who rightly understands and follows the teaching imparted (by the Lord) in His answers to the seven questions, and he then attains to the highest abode of Īśvara—which existed even in the beginning; he attains Brahman, the Cause.

ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

Śrī Candrasekharendra Sarasvatī

1. Advaita

The school of thought or *siddhānta* expounded by Śrī Ādi Śaṅkara, is known as *Advaita*. Great thinkers who lived before the time of Śrī Ācārya have also dealt with it. Wise men who came after Śrī Ācārya have also written profusely about *Advaita* pouring into their writings their own experience (*svānubhava*) of the *Advaitic* truth. There are such works not only in English, but also in Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Marathi and Hindi. Some of them are original works on *Advaita*. Persons belonging to other schools of Hindu religious thought and persons professing other religions have also written on *Advaita*, out of the abundance of their rich spiritual experience. Some of the names that come to mind are Tattuvarāya

* Courtesy: *Ācārya's Call*, Madras Discourses (1957-1960) published by Śrī Kāmakoti Pītham Śrī Śaṅkarācārya Svāmi Math, Kanchipuram - 631 502.

Svāmī, a Mādhva, Mastan Saheb, a Muslim and Vedanāyagam Piḷlai, a Christian. In recent times we have the example of the late A.V. Gopālācārya, who has written a number of treatises and essays on *Advaita*.

It is worthy of note that whatever their mutual differences may be, all thinkers belonging to schools other than *Advaita*, are one in their attack on Ādi Śaṅkara's views. This should be regarded as a tribute paid by them to Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda. Each of them singled out *Advaita*, as expounded by the Ācārya, as the only system worthy of taking notice of for the purpose of criticising. According to *Advaita*, the ultimate bliss is the experience of non-difference between the *Jīvātman* and the *Paramātman*. Ācāryas of other schools of thought would wish to have at least a trace of distinction between the two so that the *Jīvātman*, standing apart, may be able to enjoy the realisation of the *Paramātman*. Thus, the difference between the several systems of Hindu religious thought is slight, as all are agreed upon the ultimate realisation of the Supreme. But when it comes to a question of expounding each system, this difference got magnified to the point of violent opposition. And yet we find that in their ultimate reaches, all of them speak the language of *Advaita*. This shows that the expansive heart of Ādi Śaṅkara accommodated all views on the ultimate reality and all approaches to it. Though other systems quarrel with *Advaita*, *Advaita* has no quarrel with any.

The catholicity of *Advaita* is also evident from the fact that pronounced Advaitins like Vācaspati Miśra, who lived about one thousand years ago, Vidyāraṇya and Appayya Dīkṣita wrote encyclopaedic works on other

systems with a fidelity of exposition rarely equalled and much less excelled by the protagonists of those systems themselves. Appayya Dīkṣita says that as God's grace is required to reach the Ultimate Reality, and as that grace can be obtained only through *bhakti*, he was expounding the other systems which promoted this *Īśvara-bhakti*.

According to Ādi Śaṅkara, no school of thought is foreign to *Advaita*. In the scheme of the path to realise *Advaita-anubhava*, every system contributes an essential step and so Śaṅkara used the truths of each of them and pressed them into his service. By its very name, *Advaita* negates duality and dissension and comprehends every warring sect and system into its all-embracing unity. In fact, the survival of Hinduism is itself due to this *Advaitic* temper, which sees no distinction between *Śaivism*, *Vaiṣṇavam* and other denominations. Ādi Śaṅkara underlined the essential unity of all *sampradāyas* and sects and saved Hinduism from disruption. All denominations have the common *Vedic* basis. By bringing to our minds all the great Ācāryas, we can acquire that peaceful frame of mind and develop that catholic temper and universal accommodation characteristic of Ādi Śaṅkara and of the *Advaita Vedānta* he expounded, which will enable us to live in peace and amity, so essential for securing universal welfare.

2. The Teachings of Vedānta

In some context or other, we constantly come across or hear the word "*Vedānta*". When any person's conversation becomes a little above the average standard or has the tinge of a sermon, we say "You are talking *Vedānta*". In the *Gītā*, the Lord says that He is the origin of *Vedānta*. Literally, *Vedānta* means the end or the

concluding portion of the *Veda*. In any well-written essay, the writer will indicate the subject matter at the beginning and record his conclusions at the end. Therefore, any intelligent person, by reading the *Upakrama* and *Upasamhāra* (beginning and conclusion) of a thesis, will get an idea of what it is about. Similarly, if we take any section of the *Veda* and read its beginning and its end, we will be able to grasp what that section deals with.

The Constitution of any country and its laws are limited by time and place—*kāla* and *deśa*. But the *Vedas* are the eternal laws or *Sanātana Dharma*. That is why when a person asserts a position taken up by him, though a different view is possible, we say, “Are your words the words of the *Veda*?” *Īśvara* is *Veda-svarūpi* or embodiment of the *Vedas*, and one of the *Veda* Mantras says that Maheśvara dwells at the beginning and the end of the *Veda*.

यो वेदादौ स्वरः प्रोक्तो वेदान्ते च प्रतिष्ठितः ।

The *Vedas* frequently use the expression *idam*, *adas*, *tat*, and *etat*. *Idam* refers to that which is near, *adas* to that which is not so proximate, and *tat* to that which is distant. In this context, it is worthwhile noting the existence of an affinity between the various languages of the world, a fact which we can understand when we examine the root or origin of some of the words. Without entering into philological or other controversies, it can be stated that in the distant past one culture and one civilisation prevailed throughout the world. While that old culture decayed and disappeared, or gave birth to a

new culture and a new civilisation in some parts of the world, they continued to exist and flourish in other parts of the world. That culture and civilisation go by the name of *Sanātana Dharma*. There is evidence to show that the Mitra cult, Maitrā-Varuṇa referred to in the *Vedas*, prevailed in certain parts of Europe before the advent of Christianity. In some Far Eastern countries, though the rulers are Muslims, observances prescribed in the Hindu *Śāstras* for coronation are followed when a ruler is put on the throne. Counting from the month of March or Caitra, the first month according to Hindus, it will be seen that September is the seventh month, October the eighth month, November the ninth month, and December the tenth month. For days of the week, the names of planets used in India are adopted in other parts of the world also.

This is a small digression. Now coming back to the subject, it should be realised that the expression *tat* occurring in the *Vedas* refers to *Īśvara*. The Vedāntic *tattvam* is the realisation of the *Svarūpa* of *Īśvara*, or the ultimate Reality. The plain meaning of *tattvam* is truth or reality. The secret of understanding this reality is contained in the word *tat-tvam*, the realisation of *tat* or That as *tvam* or yourself. The *jñāna-mudrā*, or the sign of the hand with the tips of the right thumb and index finger meeting, is an indication that *tat* which appears to be distant is within oneself. When we look at the horizon, we get a feeling that at a distant point, the earth and the sky are meeting. Suppose we decide to proceed to that meeting point. As we go on walking, the supposed meeting point goes on receding further and further and ultimately we will find ourselves back at the point from where we started. In other words, the point from which

we originally looked at the distant meeting point on the horizon is also the point where the earth and the sky meet.

There is an interesting story of a young woman who decided to marry only the greatest person on earth, though her parents had selected a bridegroom for her. She fixed the king as her object and when she approached him for requesting him to take her as his wife, she thought that a *sanyāsi* to whom the king paid homage must be greater than the king. Thereupon she left off the king and went after the *sanyāsi*. So the story goes on and ultimately she came to the starting point and married a common man, who turned out to be none other than the person whom her parents had selected.

While *tat* is the ultimate Reality, the *Upaniṣads* proclaim that *idam*, or that which is in our proximity, cannot exist without a root or origin—*nedam amūlam bhaviṣyati*. A tree sprouts from the earth, is sustained by the earth, and is finally absorbed by the earth when it decays. All the things we perceive with the aid of our five senses are connoted by *idam*. The perceiver within us is the origin of the things perceived. As the same electricity shines in different colours and with varying brilliance according to the colour, size and powers of the bulbs, so too the same *Īśvara* is within all of us and looks through the window of our mind at all things without, which are rooted in Him. The origin of *idam* is *jñāna* and that *jñāna*, though apparently confined to the mind of individuals, is full and all-pervasive. The root of all things with life, whether stationary or moving, is in that all-pervasive *jñāna*, which is that *tat* of the *Vedānta*. That is what the following verse in the *Gītā* (13.16) also tells us :

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् ।
भूतमर्तुं च तत् श्रेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च ॥

The *tat* or That which is the ultimate Reality achieved through *jñāna*, must be understood as the Protector, Destroyer, or Consumer, and the Creator of all *bhūtas* (elements like air, water and fire, and all beings, moving and stationary), who appears divided between these elements and beings, though He is indivisible. This *tat* is seen at the end of the *Vedas* and we realise that all-pervading Truth or God by contemplating on a seeming part of that Truth. This is known as *Īśvara-dhyānam* or devotion for or contemplation of a particular manifestation of God and is a process of learning to be ready to receive with both hands the fruit of *jñāna* and *bhakti* when the time is ripe for the fruit to fall, namely, the Divine grace to descend.

3. Concept of Māyā

In the *maṅgala-śloka* (invocation) to his *Bīja Gaṇita* (algebra), Bhāskarācārya says that the supreme which is Infinite, does not suffer diminution when creating the world out of Himself, or gain addition when the created world attains *laya* (merger) in Him. For, if the addition of even a fraction can make a difference to the infinite, then it could not have been infinite before such addition. Similarly infinite cannot become less than infinite when anything is taken away from it. The Infinite is *pūrṇa*, full and limitless. The *prapañca* (universe) which is infinitely varied, is also limitless. If the limitless *prapañca* is taken

away from the limitless Supreme, the limitless Supreme will remain intact. Therefore, if this *pūrṇam* (the infinitely varied forms of the objective *prapañca*) is taken away from the *pūrṇam* (the subject which is Infinite), that *pūrṇam*, the subject Infinite, alone will remain.

This may be illustrated mathematically as follows: If 2 is divided by 2, the quotient is 1. With 2 as the dividend, if the divisor is progressively reduced as 1, or 1/2, or 1/4 etc., the quotient will respectively be 2 or 4, or 8, etc. Thus as the divisor becomes less and less, the quotient will become more and more. When the divisor is the least, that is infinitesimal, approximating to zero, the quotient will be infinity. This is known as the process of *khahāram*—*kha* standing for *ākāśa*, signifying *pūjyam* (zero), *hāram*, meaning taking away or dividing.

How do we verify the correctness of an arithmetical question in division? We multiply the quotient with the divisor and check whether the resulting is equivalent to the dividend given in the question. In this *khahāram*, or division of any number by zero, the number that is divided stands for the *prapañca* (the pluralistic universe of infinite variety), the divisor, zero or *pūjyam*, which in mathematical language is an undefinable factor, approximating to nothingness, stands for *māyā*, and the quotient is the Infinite, that is *Brahman*. For the purpose of creating the *prapañca*, which is the dividend, *Brahman*, which is the quotient, multiplies itself by *māyā*, which is the divisor. Even as 1 divided by zero, or 2 divided by zero, or 3 divided by zero, will give the same quotient, when the Infinite is multiplied by zero, it is indeterminate, and therefore, it can take the values, 1, 2, 3, etc., which are *bheda-saṅkhyās*, or numbers connoting differences,

standing for the plurality of the world. The *Upaniṣad* says that the One (Absolute) determined to become many, and for that purpose, It associated itself with *māyā*, and became many. When this Absolute (Infinite) multiplied Itself in association with *māyā*, which is tantamount to zero, It appears as 1, 2, 3, 4 etc., the several objects of this *prapañca*. But when any number is multiplied by zero the product is equal to the value of zero, the Infinite multiplied by *māyā*. The dividend, which is the plurality of the *prapañca* is the Infinite in variety. The quotient, which is Brahman, is Real, *akhaṇḍa* and *ananta*. In the *Śānti-mantra*, *pūrṇam adaḥ* is the quotient, Absolute Infinity, and *pūrṇam idam* is the dividend, pluralistic Infinity. *Advaita anantam* multiplied by *pūjyam*, is *dvaita anantam*. If the latter is divested of its plurality, by a process of *kḥahāram*— dividing by *pūjyam* which is *māyā* — we get the *advaita anantam*. *Māyā* multiplies the formless Infinite which is One only without a second, into an infinity of finite forms. The One alone, that is real, has value; the Many, which are products of *māyā*, are like *māyā*, without ultimate value. So *Brahman* is not affected either by diminution from It (creation or *sr̥ṣṭi*) or by addition to It (merger or *laya*) of *prapañca*, which has no ultimate value.

The Divine Mother is the Creative Principle of the universe, the *māyā-śakti* aspect of Brahman, which makes the Infinite One appear as the Infinite Many. She presents the formless Supreme in finite forms. It is only by Her grace that one can transcend the *māyā* and obtain the *advaitic* realisation of the One without a second.

4. Bhagavad Gītā and Advaita

॥ ओम् ॥

पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयं
व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्येमहाभारतम् ।
अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीम् अष्टादशाध्यायिनीं
अम्ब त्वाम् अनुसन्दधामि भगवद्गीते भवद्वेषिणीम् ॥

This is the *dhyāna-śloka* for the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is but appropriate that we should study the *Gītā* on the occasion of *Vyāsa-pūjā*. The *Bhagavad-gītā* occurs in the *Mahābhārata*, composed by Śrī Vyāsa Bhagavān. In the above *dhyāna-śloka*, the *Gītā* is referred to as *Bhagavatī* and *Advaitāmṛta-varṣinī*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa who spoke the *Gītā* is *Bhagavān*. The *Gītā* itself is *Bhagavatī*. The Lord's song is as divine as the Lord Himself. According to the *dhyāna-śloka*, the *Gītā* teaches the truth of *Advaita*. It is *Advaitāmṛta-varṣinī*—that which pours out the nectar of *Advaita*; that is, the central truth of *Advaita* is taught again and again in several contexts throughout the *Gītā*.

Advaita is based on the fundamental distinction between the seeing subject or *draṣṭā* and the seen objects, *drśya*. The *paramātman* is the ultimate Seer; all else is the seen. Likewise, in each person, there is the *draṣṭā*; the rest which is juxtaposed to it is the *drśyam*. *Drk* is *jñāna*. That *jñāna* is the *paramātman* than whom there is no other Seer—*ataḥ draṣṭā anyo na*. This *draṣṭā*

which is the inmost self of each person gets connected with the limitations of the *upādhis* which constitute the body, extending from the internal organ or the *antaḥkaraṇa* to the external organs, from nails of the toes to the hair on the crown (*nakha-śikhā-paryantam*). When these limitations are analysed away, the residue is pure intelligence (*śuddha-jñāna-svarūpaḥ*). In any process of seeing, it is not the bodily organs that see. It is the *draṣṭā* which sees. Generally we speak of the body seeing, but it does so only by virtue of its association with the *draṣṭā*. If an iron pan is said to be hot, it is so only by virtue of the fire which makes it hot. The pan by itself, that is without the aid of the fire, cannot become hot. So also, the body sees only in conjunction with the *draṣṭā*.

The *draṣṭā* is pure *jñānasvarūpa*. It does not act. *Jñāna* does not have the function of doing. It is the limb that can act. The *draṣṭā*, which is *śuddha-jñāna-svarūpa* has no limbs by which it can act or enjoy. So it has neither *kartṛtva*, agency, nor *bhokṛtva*, power of enjoyment. The nature of the *draṣṭā*, according to *Advaita*, is similar to the *Puruṣa* in the *Sāṅkhya* system. But unlike *Advaita*, the *Sāṅkhya* system associates *bhokṛtva* with the *Puruṣa*. According to the *Gītā*, he who thinks that the pure *ātman* is a *kartā* is *durmati*, a person of perverted understanding.

Like the *paramātman*, the *jīvātman* too has neither *kartṛtva* nor *bhokṛtva*. The *ātman* neither acts nor is affected - *na karoti na lipyate*. When the *ātman* is spoken of as acting, it is from a *vyāvahārika* point of view — *kurvannapi na karoti* says the *Gītā*. *Kurvannapi* refers to the *vyāvahārika* state; *na karoti* refers to the *pāramārthika* state. *Na lipyate* means *na karma-phala-lepa*, i.e., not

affected by the fruit of action. That which acts is not the *ātman*. From start to finish, the *Gītā* throughout repeatedly declares that the inner *ātman* who is pure *cit*, never acts. As there is no action, there is no resultant joy or sorrow, *sukha* or *duḥkha*. This repeated declaration of the fact that the *ātman* is not a *kartā* nor a *bhoktā* justifies the description of the *Gītā* as *advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇī*, that which rains the nectar of *Advaita*.

The Lord says:

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।

It is the one *paramātman*, one *cit*, that appears in different bodies as different *jīvas*, like the same electric current glowing in different forms, due to the difference in the bulbs. *Kṣetras* (bodies) are different, the *kṣetrajñā* (the *cit*) is one. This *cit* is the full, the infinite. What is full is one. When what is everywhere is confined within limits, then duality (*dvaita*) ensues. When it is unconfined, it is *advaita*. The confined *cit* too is a *draṣṭā*, like the unconfined *cit*, even as the moon reflected in a basin of water or a pond or a tank, is also bright like the moon in the sky, the original of the reflection.

Arjuna grieves that he has to kill his teachers, kinsmen and friends, and so does not wish to fight. He goes to the extent of declaring that waging war itself is wrong. He looks on it as a *pāpa*, as a sin; for, he argues, the killing of elders in the fight will cause *kulakṣaya* and that in its turn will bring about *dharmanāśa* and *varṇa-saṅkara*. If the elders in society, who are the custodians and preceptors of *kuladharmas* die, then,

there will be none to guide the people on the right path, for, those who survive will be the young and inexperienced people, who, without proper guidance, are likely to become slaves of their *indriyas* and of the promptings of *kāma*. The girls of the families will be without guide or protection and are likely to go astray. When women are unchaste, confusion of *varṇas* will be the result, and, with it, confusion of *dharmas* will also arise. Where there is no clear distinction of *varṇas*, you cannot have distinction of *dharmas* appropriate to each *varṇa*. When *varṇa-saṅkara* and *dharma-saṅkara* (mixture of *varṇas* and *dharmas*) ensue, duty to the gods and to the ancestors, cannot be observed.

In reply to this cogent reasoning, Bhagavān says: "It is only if you do not fight that *varṇa-saṅkara* will arise." Referring to Himself later on, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: "If I do not perform my *dharma*, My appointed duty, even once, mankind will try to imitate Me, and I will become responsible for the resultant *varṇa-saṅkara*."

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।
 मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥
 उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम् ।
 संकरस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥

Varṇa-saṅkara will ensue only if each person fails to do his appropriate *dharma*. And it is the *dharma* of Arjuna, as a *kṣatriya*, to fight. If he fails to do it, then he will bring about *varṇa-saṅkara*, since there will arise, by his

example, a confusion of *dharmas* and consequently, a confusion of *varṇas*.

It is to be noted that the *Gītā* begins with a note of grief on the part of Arjuna. Bhagavān chides him and tells him that he is grieving over what should not cause grief. His final admonition to Arjuna is also "Do not grieve" - *mā śucaḥ*. The *Gītā* is referred to as a *Smṛti*. Every *Smṛti* is based on *Śruti*. And so there must be a source in *Śruti* for the context in which the *Gītā* was given to the world. This source can be traced to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, in the conversation between Sage Nārada and Sanat-kumāra. Addressing Sanatkumāra, Nārada says: "O! Worshipful one, I am plunged into grief. May you carry me to the shore beyond grief, for, I have heard it that he who knows the Ātman overcomes grief." The situation is almost parallel in the *Gītā* and Bhagavān declared :

गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ।

"The wise, those who are *ātmavits*, do not grieve either for the dead or for the living." Bhagavān, therefore, proceeds to instruct Arjuna in *Ātmajñāna*, to enable him to get over his grief.

VĀCASPATIMIŚRA*

Swami Anantānandendra Sarasvatī

In the history of Advaita literature, Vācaspatimiśra stands out as a prominent figure. He is well-known as the author of the commentary—*Bhāmatī* on Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the *Brahmasūtra*. In the concluding verses of the *Bhāmatī*, Vācaspati enumerates his other works. And, they are as follows: the *Nyāyakaṇikā* (a commentary on Maṇḍana's *Vidhiviveka*), the *Brahmatattvasamīkṣā* (a commentary on Maṇḍana's *Brahmasiddhi*), the *Tattvabindu* (a discussion of language in its relation to meaning), the *Nyāyavārtikatātparyatīkā* (a commentary on Udyotakara's *Nyāyavārtika*), the *Nyāyasūcīnibandha* (perhaps written as a supplement to the *Tātparyatīkā*), the *Sāṅkhyatattva-kaumudī* (a commentary on Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṅkhyakārikā*), the *Tattvavaiśārādī* (a commentary on Vyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya*), and the *Bhāmatī*

* Courtesy: *Preceptors of Advaita*, Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Mandir, Secundrabad, 1968, pp. 100 - 108.

(a commentary on Śaṅkara's *Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya*). All the works have been published with the exception of the *Brahmatattva-samīkṣā*.

The *Bhāmatī* itself has been commented on by other Advaitic writers. Amalānanda (13th century A.D.) wrote his *Kalpataru*, on the *Bhāmatī*. The *Kalpataru* in turn formed the subject of two commentaries, the *Parimala* of Appayyadīkṣita (16th century A.D.) and the *Ābhoga* of Lakṣmīnṛsimha (17th century A.D.). Other commentaries on the *Bhāmatī* are: (1) the *Bhāmatīvyākhyā* or *Rjuprakāśikā* by Akhaṇḍānanda, (2) the *Bhāmatītilaka*, and (3) the *Bhāmatīvilāsa*.

Date of Vācaspatimiśra

On the strength of a reference in the *Nyāyasūcīnibandha*, S.N. Das Gupta has come to the conclusion¹ that Vācaspatimiśra must have flourished in the first half of the ninth century A.D.

The *Bhāmatī*-Prasthāna and the *Vivaraṇa*-Prasthāna

The name of the *Bhāmatī* is identified with one of the two main streams of Śaṅkara Advaita. The views of Padmapāda as interpreted by Prakāśātman in his *Vivaraṇa* are known as the tenets of the *Vivaraṇaprasthāna* while the views of Vācaspatimiśra are known as the tenets of the *Bhāmatīprasthāna*. We shall now briefly set forth the differences between the two view-points.

1. Vācaspatimiśra holds that performance of rituals and other duties relating to one's stage and order of life generate in the mind of the aspirant the desire to know Brahman. While commenting on the section known as *Sarvāpekṣādhikaraṇa* (III, IV, 6) Vācaspatimiśra states

that knowledge of Brahman for its rise requires the performance of rituals which generates in the mind of the aspirant the desire to know Brahman; and the Upaniṣadic text '*vividiṣanti yajñena*' states so:

*utpattau jñānasya karmāpekṣā vidyate vividiṣot-
pādadvārā, vividiṣanti yajñena iti śruteḥ.*

This view is reiterated by him in his commentary on Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya* on the aphorism "*sarvathāpi ca ta evobhayalingam*"².

Prakāśātman, on the other hand, maintains that the performance of rituals, etc., are responsible for giving rise to the knowledge of Brahman. In his *Vivaraṇa*³ as well as in his work *Śārīrakanyāyasaṅgraha* he affirms this view.

According to both the views, the performance of rituals and other duties belonging to one's class of life must be given up after the rise of the desire to know Brahman. But, while according to Vācaspatimiśra the utility of *karma* ceases with merely giving rise to the desire to know Brahman, according to Prakāśātman the results of the performed deeds are operative till the rise of the knowledge of Brahman. The former view is known as *vividiṣāpakṣa*; and the latter one, as *vedanāpakṣa*.

2. Vācaspatimiśra holds that the mind is the instrument in giving rise to the knowledge of the identity of *Ātman* and Brahman, while, according to Prakāśātman, the major texts of the *Upaniṣads* give rise to the knowledge of the identity of *Ātman* and Brahman. Vācaspatimiśra states:

*nirvicikitsita-vākyārtha-bhāvanā-paripākasahitam-
antaḥkaranam tvampadārthasya aparokṣasya tattad-
upādhyākāraṇiṣedhena tatpadārthatām anubhāva-
yatīti yuktam.*⁴

Prakāśātman in his *Vivaraṇa* holds⁵ that since Brahman is immediate the Upaniṣadic texts give rise to the immediate knowledge of Brahman. But, owing to the impediments such as *viṣayabhoga-vāsanā*, *pramāṇāsambhāvanā*, *prameyāsambhāvanā* and *viparītabhāvanā*, the immediate knowledge that has arisen appears to be mediate. When the impediments are removed by the cultivation of virtues like control of intellect, external senses, etc., and by *Vedāntic* study, reflection, and meditation, the immediate knowledge that has already arisen becomes effective in dispelling *avidyā*. The point that is of great importance here is that the knowledge of Brahman arises from the major texts of the Upaniṣads and not from the mind. Prakāśātman further holds that in the Upaniṣadic text - "*tam tu aupaniṣadam puruṣam pṛcchāmi*" - the *taddhita* suffix in the word '*aupaniṣadam*' signifies that *śabda* or the Upaniṣadic text is the means of knowing Brahman.

*'tam tu aupaniṣadam' iti taddhitapratyayena brahmāva-
gatihetutvaṁ śabdasya darśitamupapannaṁ bhavati*⁶

At the end of his work *Śabdanirṇaya*, Prakāśātman affirms this view, and there the following verse occurs:

*viṣayotpannataḥ samvidaikyādvā'jñānahānataḥ
svatassiddherataḥ śabdād āparokṣyam-prajāyate.*

3. Another point of difference between the two schools is in respect of injunction regarding *Vedāntic* study, reflection and meditation.

The Vedāntic study is only inquiry into the purport of the Vedānta and its fruit is only the removal of impediment consisting in delusion and doubt as to the import of Vedānta. Reflection is only arguing within oneself as to the validity of the truth learnt, and its fruit is only the removal of impediment consisting in delusion as to the validity of the truth. And, meditation is only concentrated and continuous thinking on the truth of the *Upaniṣads*, and its fruit is only the removal of contrary notions regarding the truth learnt.⁷

That a study of a particular text leads to the ascertainment of the import of the text, and that reflection and meditation lead to the ascertainment of the validity of the truth and to the removal of false notions regarding it are a matter of common experience.

*anvayavyatirekābhyāñca,
śravaṇamanananididhyāsanābhyāsasya svagocara-
sāksātkāra-phalatvena lokasiddhatvāt.*⁸

No other means is established with reference to these results. Hence Vācaspati holds that an aspirant who knows the relation of words to their senses spontaneously engages himself in the Vedāntic study and then in reflection and meditation. The Upaniṣadic declaration that Ātman should be heard, reflected on, and meditated upon is only a restatement of ordinary experience. And restatement is useful in this that the aspirant could have a strong and irresistible attraction toward Vedāntic study, reflection and meditation.⁹ Vācaspati concludes that there is no scope for any injunction at all in respect of Vedāntic study, reflection and meditation.

Vācaspatimiśra comes to this conclusion on the authority of Śaṅkara's text on the *Samanvaya-sūtra*. There Śaṅkara observes: "For what purpose, then, are these texts like 'the self is to be seen, heard,' etc., which have the appearance of injunctions? We say that they are for turning one away from the objects of natural activity."

In all these places, Vācaspatimiśra maintains that there is no injunction at all in respect of Vedāntic study, etc. But in his commentary on some *adhikaraṇas* it seems that he accepts injunction in respect of Vedāntic study, etc. For instance, while commenting on the section known as *Vākyānvayādhikarana* (1.4.6), Vācaspatimiśra says: "ātmaiva draṣṭavyaḥ sāksātkartavyaḥ, etat-sādhanāni ca śravaṇādīni vihitāni śrotavyaḥ ityādinā" (p.328)

Further, while commenting on the section known as *Sahakāryantaravidhyadhikaraṇa* (3.4.14) Vācaspatimiśra says :

apūrvatvāt vidhirāstheyah (p. 828)

From this it seems that Vācaspati admits injunction as regards Vedāntic study, etc., which clearly leads to contradiction. His commentator Amalānanda reconciles this apparent contradictory position by pointing out that the statements which appear to have the sense of injunction are merely restatements of what is a matter of ordinary experience. And they are helpful in this that they give rise in the mind of the aspirant to an irresistible attraction towards Vedāntic study, etc.

Prakāśātman, on the other hand, maintains that there is *niyama-vidhi* in respect of Vedāntic study, etc.

In the ninth *varṇaka* of his *Vivaraṇa* (p. 352) he describes the nature of *śravaṇa*, etc. And in the same *varṇaka* he states that the first aphorism of Bādarāyaṇa has full scope only on the acceptance of injunction in respect of *śravaṇa* strengthened by *manana* and *nididhyāsana*.

*manana-nididhyāsanopabṛhmitasya śravaṇasya
samyagdarśanāya vidheyatvam-aṅgīkṛtya
prathamasūtram pravṛttam.*

This dicussion leads us on to the other one, namely, whether Vedāntic study (*śravaṇa*) is principal among the means that give rise to knowledge, or meditation (*nididhyāsana*) is principal. Vācaspatimiśra holds that *nididhyāsana* is the principal one and the other two are its auxiliaries.¹⁰

Prakāśātman in his *Vivaraṇa* holds that *śravaṇa* is principal and the other two are its auxiliaries.¹¹

4. In accounting for the nature of *jīva* and *Īsvara*, Vācaspatimiśra differs from Prakāśātman. Advaitins maintain that the difference between *Īsvara* and *jīva* is only adventitious and not real. There, one view is that consciousness is delimited by the adventitious conditions such as *avidyā* and *antaḥkaraṇa*; the other view is that it is reflected in these adventitious conditions. The former theory is known as *avaccheda-vāda*; and the latter is known as *pratibimba-vāda*.

Of these, the *avaccheda-vāda* is advocated by Vācaspatimiśra and the *pratibimba-vāda* is refuted by him. While commenting on the *Adhyāsa-bhāṣya*, Vācaspati states that there could not be any reflection of Ātman which is free from any form in the intellect which is also formless. He says that an object having a form

could receive the reflection of some other thing that has also a form. Brahman being free from any form cannot have any reflection in the intellect which also is formless. How could there be any reflection of sound, smell, taste, etc?

While commenting on the section known as *Racanānupapattyadhikaraṇa* (2.2.1), Vācaspatimiśra says:

*avidyopādāna-kalpitāvacchedo jīvaḥ
paramātmaprati-bimbakalpaḥ.*

In the *Vākyānvayādhikaraṇa* (1.4.6), Vācaspati says :

*avidyopādānaṅca yadyapi vidyāsvabhāve param-
ātmani na sākṣādasti tathāpi tatpratibimbakalpa-
jīva-dvāreṇa parasminnucyate.*

In these passages by the word *pratibimbakalpa* he means that *jīva* is not a reflection, but may be *likened* to a reflection for purposes of exposition. We may infer from this that *pratibimbavāda* is not acceptable to Vācaspatimiśra. If it were so he could have very well said *tatpratibimba-jīva* instead of saying *tatpratibimbakalpa-jīva*.

Vācaspati compares¹² the individual soul to the etheric space delimited by jar, pot, etc. Since there could only be delimitation and not reflection of etheric space in jar, pot, etc., and since Vācaspati compares the individual soul to the etheric space confined in jar, pot, etc., we may take that Vācaspati favours only *avacchedavāda*.

Prakāśātman maintains the theory that *jīva* and *Īśvara* are only the reflections of consciousness in *avidyā*

and the intellect. Etheric space which is formless is reflected in water. Similarly consciousness which is formless could have reflection in *avidyā* and the intellect. Prakāśātman advances the theory that *jīva* and *Īśvara* are the reflections, on the authority of the Upaniṣadic texts like—

*rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpo babhūva,
ekadhā bahudhā caiva dṛśyate jalacandravat,*

and on the authority of the *Brahma-sūtra* “*ata eva ca upamā sūryakādivat*” (3.2.18). In the ninth *varṇaka*, he asks: Of what nature is the individual soul? and he answers: Brahman reflected in *avidyā* is the individual soul.¹³ From that it is clear that Prakāśātman favours only *pratibimba-vāda*.

5. All Advaitins agree that the content of *avidyā* is pure consciousness. But as regards its locus Vācaspatimiśra holds that *jīva* is the locus while Prakāśātman maintains that pure consciousness itself is the locus. While commenting on the section *Samanvayādhikaraṇa* (I.i.4) Vācaspatimiśra observes that *avidyā* has *jīva* as its locus and it is indeterminable. Brahman, therefore, is always pure.

*nāvidyā brahmāśrayā, kintu jīve, sā tu anirvacanīyā
ityuktam tena nityaśuddham brahma.*

The same view is reiterated by him in his commentary on the sections, *sarvatraprasiddhādhikaraṇa* (I,ii, 1), *ānumānikādhikaraṇa* (I.iv.1) and *vākyānvayādhikaraṇa* (I.iv,6).

Prakāśātman in the first *varṇaka* of his *Vivarāṇa* refutes the differentiation between the locus and content

of *avidyā* and holds that Brahman itself is the locus and content of *avidyā*.

*na tāvadajñānam āśraya-viṣaya-bhedāpekṣam,
kintu ekasminneva vastuni āśrayatvam āvaraṇam
ceti kṛtyadvayam sampādayati.*¹⁴

6. The next point of difference between the two schools is as regards the plurality of *avidyā*. Vācaspatimiśra admits the plurality of the primal nescience which is indeterminable and positive in nature. *Avidyā* according to him has *jīva* as its locus. Hence *avidyā* is different in the case of each and every individual soul. He observes:

*na vayam pradhānavadavidyām sarvajīveṣvekā-
mācaksāmahe, yena evamupalabhyemahi, kintu iyaṁ
pratijīvaṁ bhidyate.*¹⁵

Prakāśātman, on the other hand, maintains only one nescience indeterminable and positive in nature. He, however, admits manifold aspects of the one nescience which are called *tūlājñāna* and which serve as the material cause of silver, etc., that appear on nacre, etc.

*mulājñānasyaiva avasthābhedaḥ rajatādyupādānāni
śūktikādiññānair sahadhyāsenā nivartante.*¹⁶

7. The content of the intuitive knowledge, according to *the Vivaraṇa*, is Brahman unenveloped by any *upādhi*.¹⁷ Vācaspatimiśra, however, maintains that Brahman enveloped by the mental state (*upahita brahma*) is the content of the intuitive knowledge. While commenting on the section known as *Janmādyadhikaraṇa* (1.1.2) Amalānanda makes clear the view of Vācaspatimiśra thus:

“vṛittiviṣayatvamapi tasyaiva upahitasya, na nirupādheḥ tanna prasmartavyam.”

It should be borne in mind that according to Vācaspati, Brahman associated with the mental state is the content of the intuitive knowledge, and Brahman unenveloped by any mental state is self-luminous.

The above are a few important differences between the *Bhāmatī* and the *Vivaraṇa* school. The Advaitic thought after Śaṅkara flowed in these two channels, of course, towards the same goal.

*upāyāḥ śikṣamāṇānām bālānāmupalālanāḥ
asatye vartmani sthitvā tataḥ satyam samīhate.*

Various theories have been set forth in order to understand the truth. Although the theories are not ultimately true, yet they are helpful in realizing the ultimate truth. Just as alphabets are useful in understanding the sounds, though they are less true than sounds being mere lines, the theories that are set forth by Vācaspatimiśra, Prakāśātman and others are helpful in leading the aspirant to liberation, though they are less true than the latter. These theories, though different, lead one to the same goal, that is, liberation.

NOTES

1. S.N. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, II, p. 107.
2. See *Bhāmatī*, Nirnayasagar Press, 1909, p. 30.
3. Vide *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa*, Govt. Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, 1958, pp. 37, 543, 554.
4. See *Bhāmatī*, p. 31.
5. *Vivaraṇa*, pp. 403-408.

6. *Vivarāṇa*, p. 408.
7. *Bhāmatī* on iii, iv, 26.
8. See *Bhāmatī*, p. 826.
9. *Bhāmatī*: “*anyataḥ prāptā eva hi śravanādayo vidhisarūpaiḥ vākyair-anūdyante. na cānuvādo' prayojanaḥ pravṛitti viśeṣakaradvāt*” (pp. 84-85).
Vide also: *na ca cintāsākṣātakārayoḥ vidhiriti tattvasamīkṣāyām asmābhiḥ upapāditam.* (pp. 649-650).
10. *Bhāmatī*, pp. 71, 802.
11. *Vivarāṇa*, pp. 29-30.
12. See *Bhāmatī* on Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya* on the *Brahma-sūtra*, 3.2.3, 2.1.4, and 2.3.11.
13. *Vivarāṇa*, p. 760
14. p. 210. Vide also p. 219.
15. See *Bhāmatī* on 1.4.1.
16. See *Vivarāṇa*, p. 99. For more details, see *Brahmānandīyabhāvaṇaprakāśa*, edited by V. Subramanya Sastri and published by The Private Secretary to His Highness The Maharaja of Cochin, 1961, p. 12.
17. See *Vivarāṇa*, pp. 211, 213 and 224.

TRADITION OF ADVAITA*

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

The human struggle stems from a certain dissatisfaction and also from a degree of freedom enjoyed by the human being. The fact that one is dissatisfied with himself, as a person, is itself the basis for the struggle. The judgement that "all is not well with me and I have got to be different" comes from a certain freedom. If I am not free, I cannot even desire to be free from this dissatisfaction. If we really look into the content of a self-conscious being that a human being is, one can arrive at contradictory conclusions.

Occasionally, the human being is happy with himself or herself, and therefore, with the world, and if there is a God, with that God also. If I am happy, it means

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I am happy with myself, and to be happy with myself is to be happy with the set up in which I find myself. If the set up implies Īśvara, God, then I am happy with that God also. I am happy with the *devatās* like Śani, Śukra, Rāhu or Budha also for the time being.

There is another experience which perhaps is the experience predominant in one's life. That experience is: "All is not well with me." This is a sense of dissatisfaction. The reasons for the dissatisfaction are found to be different from individual to individual. However, the fact remains that being what one is, one is dissatisfied with oneself. This dissatisfaction may be imputed to the set up in which one finds oneself.

That you are dissatisfied is a fact. When you are dissatisfied with yourself, you can say that the set up, of course, is responsible for it. You are in a set up. You, as an individual, cannot extricate yourself from the set up. Placed in a given set up, you are dissatisfied. The set up also is a part of this cause. A set up seems to imply a *sr̥ṣṭi-kartā* and hence you are dissatisfied with God also. You are dissatisfied with the *devatās* like Guru, Śukra, and others. It means the whole *jagat* in which you find yourself, including Īśvara and the *devatās*, is not enough to make you happy! You will thus see that the experience that "I am unhappy" is not an ordinary one. It implies that in this set up I cannot be happy. The set up makes me unhappy. If I am not conscious of this set up, I am neither happy nor unhappy. Perhaps I am happy in sleep. I am not conscious of any set up, and therefore, in deep sleep, I seem to be at least free from unhappiness. There is no reason to be happy.

This predominant experience is the basis for the struggle. Therefore, what is it that the human being should conclude? Am I unhappiness or dissatisfaction, struggling to be happy? Or, am I that happy fellow who is struggling to be happy? I cannot say the happy man is struggling to be happy because he is already happy. He need not struggle to be happy. Much less I have to say that I am struggling to be unhappy; that is not the experience. The happy person is not struggling to be unhappy. Therefore, one thing is certain. Only the unhappy person is struggling to be not unhappy; he is struggling to be happy. The *duḥkha-nivṛtti* and *sukha-prāpti*—these human-experience-based pursuits constitute the human life and also the basis for *vicāra* about myself. For, if the self is unhappiness and the happy person is *āgantuka*—one who happens to come now and then, and then go away, so that I can again go after that person, well, that means, I am unhappy by nature and I struggle to be happy. I become happy now and then.

If that is so, the unhappy person is one who is in his native state, natural state because unhappiness is my nature—*svābhāvika*; it is part of my nature. One thing I tell you, “*svābhāvikasya na nivṛtīḥ*” — if it is my nature to be unhappy, I will be happy being unhappy because it is my nature. I cannot even express it out. How will I say that I am happy because of my unhappiness? I cannot laugh and say that “I am unhappiness” unless I am hysterical. I cannot say that I am unhappy by nature, because if that is my nature, I won’t work against myself. On the contrary, when I am happy, I am not a matter for complaint to myself or to others. Nor do others recognize that I am happy, and therefore, I should be consoled! Nobody consoles me, “You are happy today. I do not

know why you should be happy. This happiness should not happen to you. And you are such a good man." Neither can I complain about myself being happy; nor do I want to be different from what I am. So it is very clear for me that happiness seems to be my natural state in which the *jagat* is well done (*sukṛtam*) and Īśvara also is okay. Then Guru and Śukra also are okay. My in-laws also are okay. Definitely when I am happy the *jagat* is okay. *Jagat* includes in-laws also; *jagat* includes my body-mind-sense-complex. When I am happy, the *jagat* is happy. I am happy with the *jagat*. You may say that in the same *jagat* somebody is unhappy. That means he has to be fixed up.

This understanding of the experience is what we say knowledge. Experience is dumb. It does not really say anything. It comes and goes. But then you have to learn from experience. Cognitively you have to recognize. This cognitive recognition is what we call *Ātma-jñāna*. If that is so, I must have a re-look at myself.

Here let us look at the *śāstra*. Some people who have read the *śāstra* say that the experience you go through whenever you are happy is you. That is why you don't struggle against that. That is your nature (*svarūpa*). It reveals at that time that what you experience is just yourself alone. That is the uninhibited you. When you are unhappy, you are the inhibited self. Therefore, this unhappy person is nothing but a misconstrued person who appears when one is happy. This concept definitely makes me seek, or makes me have a re-look at myself. I must have a re-look at myself to understand myself properly because I have the contra experience about myself.

If I have a re-look at myself, I am really in a helpless situation because if I have to look at myself, I have no way of looking at myself, unless I have a reflecting medium. This is how the set up is. My eyes are kept in such a place on my face that I cannot look at my face much less that I can look at my eyes. Lots of people die away without looking at their backs, in India especially. You require cross mirrors for that. People die away without seeing their backs really. But nothing seems to be lost because the back is one part of the body where there are no features; it is a plain surface, and therefore, it is okay! But to die away without seeing the face is really silly because all the features are here. Suppose there is no reflecting medium. We will all die without seeing our face. Bhagavān gave us eyes, ears, and other organs which are all such complex things. Anything intelligently put together is a creation, is *sṛṣṭam*. In its own right it is a functionary. That means it has to play its role. Therefore, the author of them is definitely not any local guy. We make him non-local. That is why we say that God in Heaven created you. But one thing is definite. There must be an all-knowing Īsvara because the whole *jagat* is intelligently put together.

To see my face, of course, a reflecting medium is available. The only way to look at my eyes is to look at the reflecting medium like a mirror. When I look at the mirror, the *tātparyā* of the looking—the commitment—is not in the object, mirror; it is in the one who is looking at it. The onlooker has got the *tātparyā* to look at himself alone, and therefore, here the one who looks at is me, and the one who is to be looked at is me! Look at this. The subject is me and the object also is me.

Amazing. That is the *tātparyam*. Perhaps, when you bought the mirror first, you checked up the mirror by looking at it to see whether it is in good condition or not. Afterwards, once it is hung in the bathroom, everyday when you look at yourself, it is an attempt only to look at yourself. The mirror does not come into the picture. That is not your *jijñāsā viṣaya*; it is not your *sādhya*. You want to know how your face is. That is how you look at the mirror.

The situation here is not in any way different. Now I am unhappy, and now I am happy also. That gives rise to a doubt. And again people say that I am *ānanda*. I find enough reason to believe that, because there is enough logic. If I am unhappy by nature, definitely I cannot become happy at all. That I am happy in spite of my *rāga* and *dveṣa* and in spite of many of them remaining unfulfilled, reveals that I need not fulfil all my wants. That means without fulfilling the wants, I am happy, I need not do anything different to be happy. That proves logically, rationally, that what I am seeking is just myself.

If this is so, I should have a re-look at myself. I am the one to be looked at and I am the onlooker. We are in a helpless situation. When you are in a helpless situation, you have to seek help. That is intelligent living. I found out one thing about what constitutes this intelligent living. I say "seeking help when you know that you are helpless" is an intelligent way of living. Against all evidence, not seeking help is silly; it is foolish; against all evidence, to continue with the situation is foolishness. I have to seek help. Help is not going to come from another human being who has got a similar problem. If another human being is not going to help me, then I have to seek help from *Īśvara*

who is responsible for the *jagat*, for my body-mind-sense-complex. That Īśvara alone has to provide me with the help. This is why we say that help can come to us from Īśvara alone.

I would like to tell you one thing. *Śāstra* is not to be looked at as authority even though it is translated as authority in English. But then the literal translation would be *pramāṇa*. It is *pramāyāḥ karaṇam*. *Pramāyāḥ* means for the sake of knowledge, *karaṇam* is instrument—a means of knowledge.

I need a mirror to look at myself; and this mirror cannot be the physical mirror which can reflect only physical object. If I have to have a re-look at myself and to resolve the confusion, well, then I must have a mirror—a *pramāṇa*, a means of knowing. The Veda has scope only in such areas as are not known to me and cannot be known by me also. What cannot be known by perception and inference is the subject matter of the Veda. That there is *punya* and that it can be gained by *karma*—I do not know. I have no way of knowing that the *punya* will be translated into something very tangible for me, as a pleasant situation later in this life or in the hereafter. That also is not known to me. Similarly, with regard to *pāpa*, which I cannot get away from; it is an act which is unbecoming, which is not proper. Even though one may get away from the laws of the land, the laws of *karma* will make one pay for what one did. That is also not known to me. *Śruti* is the *pramāṇa* to reveal to me that this will produce *punya*, or *pāpa*. I do not know the *vaidika karmas*, *devatās*, *janmāntaras*. All these are talked about by *śruti*. *Śruti* talks about what is *dharma* and *adharma*. It is not just the sense of right and wrong

born of commonsense that is called *dharma*. It is more than that. *Śruti* reveals more about actions and their results than what we normally understand. It says that, if one performs a particular *karma*, one will get *punya* or *pāpa* in addition to the *dr̥ṣṭa-phala*. It thus reveals, *adr̥ṣṭa-phala*, an area that is not covered by perception, inference or other *pramāṇas*. Thus *anadhigata viṣaye śruteḥ prāmāṇyam asti*; the *śruti* has a subject matter, with reference to which a human being definitely has no other access.

So too, Vedānta reveals *anadhigata-viṣaya*. Vedānta is what is at the end of the Vedas. It is a part of the Vedas. It must also have a similar *viṣaya*; only then can it be a part of the Vedas. It is not an appendix to the Veda as the Pūrvamīmāṃsakas consider, though the subject matter is a little different. The *karma-kāṇḍa* has the status of revealing an *anadhigata-viṣaya* because it reveals *viṣaya* such as *punya*, *pāpa*, *agnihotrādi-karma*, *Indrādi devatās*, etc., which are not within the scope of our knowledge. Similarly, what Vedānta reveals is also not within the scope of my perception, inference, and other means of knowledge that I use to conduct my life. Vedānta says “*ātmā is jagat-kāraṇam brahma*”. That is how the set up is. But this is not known to me at all and since this fact cannot be known to me by perception, etc., the Vedāntaśāstra also has a subject matter which is *anadhigata*. *Ātmā* is revealed by the Vedas, like *svarga*, which is nonverifiable. We cannot verify that there is heaven. Most of the religions are like promoters of tourism. They say that you will go to heaven, and they describe heaven in a very attractive manner. This is like tourism promotion. This is true of all religions. But the

Veda tells something more. It says, "Of course it will be very interesting there, but you will have to come back. And the happiness one gains there is not absolute. There are different levels of experience in heaven too according to one's *punya*. There will be *sukha-tāratamya*, gradation of happiness even in heaven according to the position one holds such as *karmadeva*, *deva*, *Indra*, *Bṛhaspati*, and so on."

In the same way as *svarga*, etc., are not known to me and that I come to know about them only from the Vedas, the fact that I am not different from *jagat-kāraṇam brahma* is not known to me. That is known from the Vedāntaśāstra. I know that I am a conscious being, I am *caitanya*. I don't require any *śāstra* for that. More or less I can figure that out. But I cannot really figure out by myself that I am *jagat-kāraṇam brahma*. "I am", that is, "I exist", is not revealed by *sāstra*. "I am" is *nitya-aparokṣa*, always self evident, unlike heaven which is *nitya-parokṣa*, always known indirectly. Here, "*aham asmi*" "I am", is the only thing for which no means of knowledge is necessary. I am sitting here, and I become evident to you. I talk to you because the words become evident to you. There are the sun and the moon; they are evident to you. Either by perception or inference things become evident to you. The power of perception can definitely be increased by adding instruments to your eyes and your ears. But still they are perception alone. Through perception things become evident to you, not by themselves. So too by inference, things become evident to you. But "you" are already existent, because anything that becomes evident to you presupposes your existence since you are the knower, the *pramātā*. That

“I am” is evident to you. It does not require any means of knowledge to know that I can see; the fact that I see is itself the proof. Similarly, here, that I am is evident to me. What I am has to become evident, for which I require a means of knowledge, and that means of knowledge is Vedānta. Vedānta is a part of the Vedas. In the *sampradāya*, the Veda is accepted as a *pramāṇa*. For Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Vallabhācārya and others too, the Veda is a *pramāṇa*. All of them are *vaidikas*. They have great reverence for the Vedas. In all the *sampradāyas* the Vedas are accepted as a *pramāṇa*. Only then can they say that they have a *sampradāya*. The Veda being the *pramāṇa*, its words is Vedānta here. I am looking at myself. The *tātparyā* is only to know myself, not to become a *paṇḍita* in the *śāstra*. I consider the Vedas to be a *pramāṇa*. So naturally I have a certain *śraddhā* in the Vedas. It has to prove itself and not through another *pramāṇa*.

Just because your eyes see me, you cannot say that you don't talk, or that my ears don't hear. Ears hear; eyes see. One is different from the other. To prove that my eyes see, I am the only authority. No ophthalmologist can really say that your eyes don't see. When he is testing you, he does various tests, but he has to keep asking you whether you see or not. Based on your reply alone he makes his diagnosis. If you do not tell him whether you can see or not, he cannot come to any conclusion about your vision. Why? Because you are the only authority, because you are the *pramāṇa*. You have to see that you see. You have to see that you don't see. And, therefore, understand that you see because you see, and you hear because you hear. Each *pramāṇa* has to prove itself. If

Vedānta is a *pramāṇa*, it has to prove itself. The only thing is, the words of Vedānta are not with you. Eyes are with you, ears are with you. Your capacity to infer is with you, whereas this Vedānta is outside. The Veda as a whole is a *pramāṇa*, and the Vedānta which is a part of it is also a *pramāṇa* whose subject matter is Ātmā. The reality of this Ātmā is the subject matter of Vedānta, the last portion of the Vedas. And Vedānta, being a *pramāṇa*, has to prove itself like any other *pramāṇa*. And being a *pramāṇa* from outside, you have to go for it. The *pramātā* can never resolve this confusion about his own *svarūpa* with the help of the *pramāṇas* he has at his disposal such as *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, etc. The *śabda-pramāṇa* in the form of Vedānta alone can resolve the confusion about oneself. One should have *śraddhā in the pramāṇa*. *Śraddhāvān labhate jñānam*, one who has *śraddhā* gets knowledge. What is that knowledge? The knowledge of oneself, not the knowledge of God or the world. The self, being part of this world, being in this world naturally, has carved out of this world a body for itself and a fine set of senses for itself. Therefore he thinks that he is a discrete entity existing in this obtaining scheme called the *jagat* or *viśva*, and concludes that he is small. He looks at the world as different from himself, and isolates himself from the world. Then, what he is not, is big. Then what follows is simple. He has to fend against this world. He has to deal with this world. And it is too much. The forces are too many; people are too many; the objects are too many; contentions are too many; competition is too much and therefore he feels as though he is always at the losing end.

Thus there is a confusion here. The confusion is because of this division between the knower and the

known world, the *pramātā* and the *premeya*. The knower is small and insignificant. The known world which is other than the knower is very big and overwhelming. But in the vision of Vedānta the known *jagat* is not different from the knower. Therefore there is no division. The quantum physicists too have come to the understanding that there is nothing solid in the world and hence no division. All the differences can be reduced to some quantum objects. Differences have already disappeared. Time and space are collapsible. They are not absolute as they were taken to be in classical physics. In fact, they all confirm that *ākāśa*, *kāla*, *saṁvatsara*, and so on are all part of the whole *jagat*. They are not something independent of *jagat*. *Jagat* includes time and space. In fact, there is no *jagat*. Along with time and space they are part of the *śṛṣṭa*. Therefore naturally when I look at myself, I have to look at the whole too. *Śruti* tells me here, “*yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti, yat prayanti abhisamviśanti, tad vijijñāsasva tad brahmeti,*” from out of which everything has come, by which everything is sustained and unto which everything goes back, that is called Brahman and know that Brahman. It is further told, “*brahmavid āpnoti param,*” “*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*”. That *satyam* which is the truth of everything, which is in the form of *caitanyam*, *jñānam*, and which is limitless, *anantam* is Brahman. One who recognises this truth is Brahman. Brahman is, indeed, the *Ātmā*, *jagat-kāraṇam brahma* from which everything has come and by which everything is sustained and unto which everything goes back, that Brahman is you.

How can it be "me"? That Brahman is everything, while I am only this much. Because I am an individual, how can I be told that I am *jagat-kāraṇam brahma*? From that it is very clear that there is a confusion. The *śāstra* tells this with a *tātparya*, an end in view. Therefore there is a big inquiry. The *śāstra* itself does it. In the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, the sage Uddālaka asks his son Śvetaketu, who has just returned home from the *Gurukula*, "Did you ask for that knowledge by knowing which everything is known?" *yena vijñānenā sarvaṁ vijñātam syāt, sarvaṁ aśrutam śrutam bhavati, amataṁ matam, avijñātam vijñātam*. Śvetaketu says, "I don't think my teacher knew that." Perhaps, because his father looked at him with a frown, Śvetaketu corrects himself and asks: "Is there such a knowledge?" His father says, "Yes, it is there," and then Uddālaka teaches him the Self-knowledge.

Take a lump of clay. Out of this clay you make a number of pots. Now you take one pot and understand what the reality of that pot is. The weight of the pot is the weight of the clay. The pot does not exist independently of clay, and all that exists is one clay. When the clay is recognized, one clay plus a million pots is still one. This is Indian arithmetic. Now when we say with reference to all the pots that there is only one clay, there is *advaita*. This does not mean absence of pots. Similarly, when we say with reference to this *jagat* that, all that is here is one *brahma-vastu*, it does not mean absence of *Īśvara-jīva-bheda*. Nor does it mean absence of *jīva-jagad-bheda*, or the absence of the *jīva-jīva-bheda*. It does not mean the absence of the subject-object- *bheda*.

All the *bhedas* exist. Pots, vases, jars, cups, all of them exist; but Vedānta counts them differently. That is all.

Just imagine, if the pot were given a human mind, then all the problems would start. The pot would say, "I am only a pot; when will good *daśā* come? I have no job satisfaction, I must go to the astrologer, that pot is smarter," etc. Also, imagine a counsellor pot who will say, "Hey! Don't look at the bigger pots; look at the smaller pots." So the pot looks at the smaller pots. It sees that some of them don't have ears and that some others are broken. Some also have holes. Then the counsellor pot says, "You are at least together, whole, even though you may be small. Don't look at the big ones. They are all uncouth. You are small and beautiful. Chant, 'I am small and beautiful.' Then you will be fine." Thus, the small pot was made to think positively in the presence of the counsellor. When the counsellor went away, the pot again came back to the same mode of thinking, because its conclusion, "I am a small pot," did not change.

Now the only way for the pot to free itself from the problem of being small is to understand that its existence in the form of the pot is a reality, but that reality is not *satyam*. It is not *tuccham* either. There is something in between. If it was *tuccham*, it cannot exist at all like the horns of a human being; and there will be no problem at all. If the existence in the form of the pot is *satyam*, then of course we have to account for the clay. If the "pot" is *satyam*, then, what is clay? The weight of pot is the weight of the clay. If you don't understand this, consider the following example. The weight of your golden chain is the weight of the gold. You know that very well. Thus,

the weight of the pot is the weight of the clay. The pot is not “of clay”, neither is it “in clay”, nor is it “on clay”. In fact, the pot is clay. Where is the pot now? In fact, there is no pot; there is only clay. All that exists in the pot is clay. But still it is a pot. That is the miracle. What is a miracle? If it is explainable, it is not a miracle. And if Bhagavān is not a miracle maker, He is not Bhagavān; he is an ordinary, common person. Who is a big man? One who makes what cannot be made, He alone is Bhagavān.

If you analyse what is not real, it just disappears. There is no pot. But still when we want to fetch water, we use the pot. It holds water. And therefore if you say pot is *tuccham*, totally non-existent, the pot cannot hold water. “*Tuccham*” does not hold water. But the pot holds water. So it means there is a *vyāvahārika* pot. That *vyāvahārika* pot is neither *satyam* nor *tuccham*. It is *mithyā*. Pot is nothing but clay. Clay is nothing but atoms. Atoms are nothing but particles, quantum objects. At the level of quantum objects, the observer’s presence is a must along with the quantum objects. What is said as *satyam jñānam anantam brahma* is consciousness, and that is you, and that is what you experience whenever you are happy. This is called *advaita*.

The subject and the object are in reality one and the same, but for the time being during *vyavahāra*, they appear as distinct entities. It doesn’t mean we are shy of facing the object distinct from the subject. The enlightened pot can face all other pots and tell, “Hey! You are not born, you are unborn clay. Pot is ‘as though’ born, ‘as though’ gone. Therefore as long as you live, live ‘as though’ and enjoy that life because you are one clay.” One clay plus one million pots is one. It is not one

plus million. Similarly, one *vastu* plus the entire *jagat* is still one. The one *vastu* plus your mind, it is still one. The one *vastu* plus the *jīva*'s senses, etc., it is still one. The one *vastu* plus all the *sthūla-śarīras*, it is still one. In fact it is always one. It is non-dual and one, because there are two orders of realities: one is *satyam* like clay, and the other is *mithyā, nāma-mātram (vikāro, nāmadheyam)*. *Nāma-mātram* means, it is *mithyā*; there is no *vastu* there. Thus, one plus *mithyā* is still one.

In the light of this fact, one's religious life is also accepted in the *sampradāya*. Advaita is not against religious life. Your daily *pūjā* is accepted. For the unenlightened, of course, the *jīva-Īśvara-bheda* is very real. For the enlightened also, the *vyāṣṭi-samaṣṭi-bheda* continues for *vyavahāra*, as the physical body continues to live; but one knows that it is not real. The pot continues to live its small pot-life; but it knows that it is clay. Hence the limitations of the pot do not matter anymore. And therefore naturally it is going to relate itself in an entirely different way with the world.

The example of the wave and the ocean is easier to understand. The wave is the individual, *vyāṣṭi*, while the ocean is the total, *samaṣṭi*. In terms of reality, the wave and ocean are one and the same; both are water. If this is not understood, one person could say, "Wave is different from the ocean." Another person could say, "Wave is a part of the ocean." That is also fine. Another person could say, "That's true. As long as you are a wave, you can be a devotee of the ocean. But you can never give up your smallness. You will still be a wave alone. You will be a permanent worshipper." This is how the reality of the individual, the *jagat*, and *Īśvara* is not understood and

different schools of thought are born. And therefore if the wave thinks, "I am small and insignificant, I will perish in a moment, the mighty ocean is my creator," etc., it has to be taught that in reality the wave and ocean are both nothing but water. It has to be told, "Hey! You are but water. Ocean is but water. All that is there is but water. Water, water everywhere. But as a wave you are, of course, facing the almighty ocean. It includes the name and form of the wave. The total is what is called ocean." Therefore, at the level of the enlightened wave one can still appreciate the might, the glory, the depth, and vastness of the ocean. Similarly, an enlightened individual can appreciate the glory of Īśvara.

The religious life is very important for enlightenment because the *jīva* has to settle accounts with the world, and the world is Īśvara. So we have to settle account with Īśvara. This means that you have to recognize more and more Īśvara in your life. That's why in the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Bhagavān says that anywhere any *vibhūti* one sees is the Lord Himself. That recognition of Īśvara brings more Īśvara in your life and less of you. This means less problems and more *ānanda*. It is such a mind which can discover that "I am *ānanda*."

It is said that the same Parameśvara becomes *bhaya-kāraṇam*, a source of fear if you don't understand that He is not separate from you essentially. When the wave discovers that "I am the water," the ocean cannot be *bhaya-kāraṇam*. Ocean is the *vibhūti* of the *Vastu*; that is what we call *māyā*. There is no ocean. There is only water.

It is essential to understand very well that in our example the ocean is the Lord and the wave is the *jīva*. The wave doesn't want to be a wave, i.e. it does not want to be small. Therefore as long as the wave thinks, "I am small," it will have problems and struggles. Whenever the wave forgets for the time being that "I am a small wave", then it is happy. The smallness is forgotten, and there is *ānanda* because that is its essential nature. Therefore, nobody is interested in *dvaita*.

Everybody starts as a *dvaitī*. You don't require a philosophy for that. Before beginning to study the *Vedāntaśāstra* the fellow said, "I am different, the world is different, God is different." And after the study if he says the samething, then he has not gained anything from the study. This is illustrated by the following story.

There was a great teacher who taught: "Everything is one. We don't say that there is no *Īśvara*; but we say, all that is here is *Īśvara*." When he told a person: "You are *Nārāyaṇa*," the latter got really upset and said, "How can I be *Nārāyaṇa*?" He went to another teacher in the same street, who told him: "No. You are not *Nārāyaṇa*" and taught him for twenty-four years that he was different from *Nārāyaṇa*. Then this man wanted to prove that fact to his former guru who was teaching *Advaita*. He went to him for a *vāda-bhikṣā*. The Swami was having a long beard which had become unmanageable over the past twenty-five years. He wanted to get rid of it. He called *Murari*, the local barber, and asked the latter to shave him. At that time this fellow came and said, "I want to have a discussion with you." The Swami said, "Yes, I will have a discussion with you. But first let me have a shave. *Murari* is waiting for me. You please wait. After

the shave I will have a bath and then we can have the 'discussion.' So Murari went ahead with the shaving. And when the shaving was over, Murari showed a mirror in front of the Swami as was his custom. The Swami was dumbfounded. He had not seen himself in a mirror for the last twenty-five years. He saw himself in the mirror and exclaimed, "What a *tejas* you have given me, Murari! With a few strokes you have given me so much effulgence. My God! you are not an ordinary Murari; you are Murari, the Lord Nārāyaṇa himself." Saying thus, the Swami fell at the feet of Murari. That old barber was shocked. He exclaimed: "No! no! no! you are a *mahātmā*. You should not fall at my feet!" Saying this, he pulled his feet away. The Swami replied, "No, you are too humble," and fell at his feet once again. And then out of desperation Murari appealed to the other guy who was waiting for the *vāda-bhikṣā* and watching the whole show. Murari told him: "Sir, please tell him that I am not that Murari, the Lord Nārāyaṇa." Thus, when addressed by the barber, the former student of the Swami told the Swami, "Are you crazy? he is not Murari, the Lord Nārāyaṇa." To this the Swami replied, "Oh! is that so?" and went away for his bath. After the bath when he came back, he found that Murari had gone away and the other man had also gone away. Again, after half an hour the former student came back with a tray full of fruits and flowers and placing them at the feet of the Swami requested him: "*adhīhi bhagavo brahmeti*. O! Lord! Please teach me Brahman." Why? What made the difference now? Previously he wanted to have a *vāda*, now he wants to have a *saṁvāda*. Why? Because he understood that Murari, without any schooling, without any study of grammar or logic, or any *śāstra*, knows so

well that he is not Lord Nārāyana! He has no doubt about it. And he himself after studying for twenty-four years had not arrived at a different conclusion. He was really not much better off than Murari, the barber.

The story reveals the truth that *dvaita* is what is already felt; there is nothing there to think and study about it. *Siddha-viṣaye na vicāraḥ syāt*. Therefore nobody is interested in *dvaita*. Even when I ask the Dvaitin, "What are you going to get finally?" his reply would be, "I will go to *Vaikunṭha*." What is sought after in the seeking of *Vaikunṭha*? The coming together of the seeker and the sought. This is Advaita. In the fusion of Advaita alone there is *ānanda*. But the result of *dvaita* is fear, *dvaitād hi bhayaṃ bhavati*.

So, everybody, all the *ācāryas* of all the schools of thought, ultimately talk about the grace of Īśvara being with you. And that means you have to resolve yourself and say, "I am part of Bhagavān." That is also Advaita to an extent. When one says "I am in the vicinity of Bhagavān," that is also Advaita in a way. In fact, everybody is seeking Advaita all the time; because in fact nobody wants separation from anything desirable. Even between the husband and the wife, when there are some conflicting views and there is a distance, all they have to do is to say to each other, "You have the freedom to think the way you do." That's enough. That freedom brings them together. And then even though they have different views, the views do not really conflict because there is basic love and understanding. Advaita is not founded by Śaṅkara at all. Śaṅkara was an *ācārya*. He was not a *sampradāyakṛt*, but a *sampradāyavit*. He did not create a *sampradāya*, he was only a link in the

sampradāya. In fact, he himself says: *asampradāyavid mūrkhavad upekṣaṇīyaḥ*. If there is someone who does not know the *sampradāya*, he has to be shunned like a *mūrkha*, a fool. So far as learning is concerned, you don't learn for him. *Sampradāya* has another meaning—that which is well given to you, *samyak prakarṣeṇa diyate*, that which is given to you properly as it is.

In the *sampradāya* naturally there are certain things which are very important, that Vedānta is a *pramāṇa*, that has to be learnt from a teacher who himself is a *sampradāyavit*, etc. Only then it is *sampradāya*. *Sampradāya* helps one to understand the meaning of a word and a sentence properly and how to handle the paradoxes, etc. Therefore, the whole teaching is a methodology. It is said, *adhyāropa-apavādābhyām, anvaya-vyatirekābhyām*, the *vastu* is revealed, the truth about yourself is revealed. That everybody wants to be happy is an accepted fact. What is the meaning of the word "happiness" here? Happiness means fullness. That is, when you have a sense of completeness, you are happy with yourself, you are happy with the world, you are happy with God, you are happy with all odd things. That means you are the whole. In fact, you are "the whole", "*Pūrṇam brahma*". Without mind and senses, you are the whole; with mind and senses also, you are the whole. So, without everything you are the whole; and everything and you are whole. Your wholeness is all that you want. There cannot be two 'wholes'. *Śruti* says, "*Pūrṇamadaḥ, one 'whole' there; pūrṇamidam, one 'whole' here*". It looks as though there are two "wholes". How can that be? How can there be two "wholes"? How can there be two things that are limitless? It is impossible, because one will limit the other. Thus, all that is here is "the one whole." You can't think of two limitless things. "*Ananta*"

means limitless. Bhagavān is *ananta*. He includes me; he includes my mind and senses and everything. Therefore, all that is here is Bhagavān. When you say that, then, you are not separate from Him. Any separation is only *mithyā*, unreal in the same way as the separate existence of two pots is *mithyā*. Because pot itself is *mithyā*, the difference between pot and pot is also *mithyā*. This is *sampradāya*. This understanding is not against any religion, not against any prayer, not against anything else like values, *dharma*, etc. This *sampradāya* is, therefore, precious. It is something that every human being wants. It is not something that belongs to us Indians, or to anybody in particular. We are fortunate that we happen to be the inheritors of this *sampradāya*, the *vaidika-sampradāya*. We can all claim that we are *vaidikas*. That is a privilege in itself. We are privileged to have this *sampradāya* which contains the solution to the problems that the entire humanity faces. It is not a solution to a Hindu-problem alone. On the contrary, it is a solution to the human problem. If there is Indra-deva who has a similar problem, then he too has to study Vedānta to get rid of it. He will study from Brhaspati, of course, and if there is nobody to teach him in the *Indraloka*, he has to come here to this earth and study. It is said in the Purāṇas that Indra is also insecure about his own *indratva* because it might go away. He also has his own problems. That is, he looks upon himself as small. He looks at himself with reference to his position. Therefore, he is going to feel insecure and suffer on account of it. If he feels this way, he will also need this *upadeśa* to be free of his problems. He will also need this teaching which will tell him, "You are the whole." Thus, this teaching is universally applicable. This is the *sampradāya*.

VEDĀNTIC SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY - II*

Sangam Lal Pandey **

III. Lokayana Social Philosophy

1. The Meaning of Lokāyana

By Lokāyana is meant a view of human society or a system of social philosophy that is derived from two positions, i.e. (i) moral values constitute the foundation of human society and (ii) they are not reducible without a remainder to non-moral facts. Lest it should be confused with Lokāyata, it is necessary at the very outset to distinguish between them. It is true that so far as the welfare and happiness of this *loka* is concerned, both Lokāyata and Lokāyana claim to endeavour for it. But

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** Formerly Professor of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

the claim of the one is stoutly refuted by the other. Hence there is an ideological opposition between them.

But despite this opposition there is also an identity between them. That identity is not confined only to the acceptance of the object of their study but also goes a little deeper; for Lokāyata is a *prima facie* view while Lokāyana is the final view. This does not mean that Lokāyana is meant only for criticism and rejection as the modern exponents of Lokāyana have understood. Rather it means the Lokāyata is the first formulation of a true social philosophy, the first formulation of the common-sense view of society. All social philosophies, if not all philosophies, begin with a common-sense view of this *loka*, but they do not end with it and extrapolate many theories from their understanding of the common-sense of society. Even the Lokāyata philosophies do this. So Lokāyata should not be confused with the philosophy of common-sense. It is, on the contrary, the first philosophy or rather a rough philosophy of common-sense. Lokāyana does not discredit common-sense although it rejects the Lokāyata view of common-sense. It must be noted by all careful thinkers that common-sense is not the monopoly of Lokāyata philosophies. It is, on the contrary, the *terra firma* of all philosophies. No doubt, Lokāyata is projected these days, "as not only *the* philosophy of the people but also the philosophy of this-worldliness or materialism."¹ But this claim is an over-estimate and takes an undue advantage of the linguistic confusion created by the article 'the', because Lokāyata, at best, is only a philosophy of this-worldliness and there are other philosophies of the people and also other philosophies of this-worldliness.

If we leave aside Indian traditions and consider only the western traditions of social philosophy, the hollowness of the above claim becomes patent, for most of these traditions are the philosophies of this-worldliness and of the people which do not believe in Lokāyata or materialism at all.

Again in Indian traditions there are several philosophies of the people and of this-worldliness. Indian pantheism, for example, is one such philosophy while early Buddhism and Mādhyamika Buddhism are other examples of this philosophy. All these philosophies are *Sāstras* in the sense that they subdue our enemies like passions etc. (*śāsti*) and save us from moral degradation in this world (*trāyate*). They are the competitors of Lokāyata system. So the materialistic interpretation of the people's common-sense is not correct. It is just a *prima facie* view. Philosophizing begins with it and need not, necessarily, end with it. The view of Śāṅkara in the *Sarva-siddhānta-saṅgraha* and of Mādhava in the *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha* is basically correct, in as much as they consider the development of philosophy from a rough formulation of common-sense to an indepth analysis of it. The charge of Deviprasad Chattopadhyaya that Mādhava's presentation of Lokāyata is doubtful, fanciful and biased, is completely baseless and can be replied by a *tu quoque*. The history of Indian development of philosophy perfectly justifies the position of Śāṅkara and Mādhava. To take Lokāyata as the people's view is nothing but an example of the psychologist's fallacy of description. The psychologist's description of the sensation of a child is not the child's own description of that sensation. Most importantly, all the systems of Indian

Philosophy other than Lokāyata, really contribute to a system of social philosophy that can rightly be termed as Lokāyata. It is the social *Rāmāyana* that is always taking place or that is enacted in the life of social groups. Tulsīdāsa has called both the *Nirguṇa Brahman* and the *Saguṇa Brahman* as Rāma and conceived his Rāmāyana as the *Nirguṇa Brahman* becoming *Saguṇa Brahman*. Replacing the word “Rāma” by the word “loka” we get the social Rāmāyana in the form of Lokāyana, the amorphous *loka* becoming a fully formed society, the life-force of this world becoming a rational social order. This *loka* is certainly more important than the Brahman of Vedānta philosophy or the Rāma of Tulsīdāsa, because the latter is known herein.

Now this *Loka* can be considered from several points of view. First, *kāma* or libido may be regarded as the main driving force of the people. Secondly, *artha* or the mode of economic production may be regarded as the main driving force of the people. Thirdly, both *artha* and *kāma* may be taken to be equally powerful forces that drive the people. Fourthly, *dharma* or the moral law may be considered as the main driving force of the people. Fifthly *kāma* and *artha* as subordinated to *dharma* may be taken to be the main driving forces of the people. Lastly it may be said that *moksa* or a direct apprehension of the self controls *dharma* which further controls *artha* and *kāma*. In this way it is *mokṣa* that is the main driving force of the people. The last view is held by the Vedāntins. Lokāyana tries to develop it further. It is the extension of the Vedāntic theory of this *loka*. It agrees with the *lokāyata* that there is no social world other than this *loka*. But it differs from Lokāyata inasmuch as it

proves that this *loka* is based upon the self whereas Lokāyata believes that it is baseless and supportless. Further the ancient Vedānta goes beyond *dharma*, in a sense leaves it behind and attaches more importance to *mokṣa*; but Lokāyana believes that the importance of *mokṣa* lies only in strengthening and reinforcing *dharma* and not in undermining it or going beyond it. So although Lokāyana goes beyond the theory of *trivarga* (*dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*) and accepts the fourth value of *mokṣa*, it does not find *mokṣa* as in any sense detrimental to the observance of *dharma*.

In fact *lokāyana* means the 'ayana' or movement of this *loka* in thought and reality from its natural state of affairs to its perfectly rational state of affairs, to the well-settled state of affairs. In its movement which is multi-spiral rather than rectilinear and is both progressive and regressive, it goes on changing its outward forms and replacing its contents, but it always retains its inner reality that is the basis of all of its forms and contents. It is for the social sciences to study in detail the changing forms and contents through which the inner reality of this *loka* manifests itself, but it is the special privilege of philosophy to study its inner reality and the relations that obtain between this reality and all of its multiple forms and coming and going individuals that are foci of all the constituents or components of this *Loka*.

2. Social Explanation

Despite the exhortation of Karl Marx that, "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point, however is to change it"² the function of social philosophers and social scientists is still regarded to be nothing more or less than to explain the social world

or rather society as it is. Marx himself simply interpreted the world or human society according to his own pre-conceived ideas. His interpretation is no doubt used to change existing social order here and there on this earth. But it is not a peculiar feature of his explanation only. Every explanation of society aims at changing the existing social order here and there, reforming it a little and removing its contradictions. Looked at from this point of view there is no scope of total revolution. Society cannot be changed to the extent mustard oilseeds are changed into mustard oil or a piece of coal is changed into nylon. So far as the existence of society is concerned it remains unchanged although its forms and contents go on changing for ever. Those who do not see it are called social sceptics. Their scepticism is more dangerous than the philosophical scepticism concerning the objects of the world; for it does not give peace of mind and happiness to them and leads them to the hallucinatory world of lunatics. Marx himself confessed, "Men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please. They do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."³ What men do in society falls under the categories of the code and the role. They follow certain rules that are prevalent in their society and are called as its code. Again as free men they invent or discover something in society and act upon it. This behaviour of theirs is called their roles in society. As a matter of fact society is a system of codes and roles and is not just a mere gathering of individuals. So every individual has his own role to play in society. The question is only to discover the role that he can or should play. The *Bhagavadgītā* calls it the

svadharma of a man.⁴ *Svadharma* or one's own duty must be performed and *para-dharma* or the duties of the others, though alluring, should be avoided. But the discovery of *Svadharma* requires a proper understanding of society, its history and functioning besides that of the psychological make-up of the individual and his place in society and history. So before trying to change the world or society there is a need to explain society and before explaining it there is a greater need to understand it aright. If the understanding of society is inadequate the contemplated explanation and change of society will not be only inadequate but also harmful to society. The Marxist understanding of society is shown to be inadequate by the advocates of free and open society⁵ inasmuch as the Marxist theories of social explanation and social change are found ill-based, wrongly motivated and misdirected. Lokāyana agrees with all those theories that take human society as free and open and accept that it is as much given, encountered and transmitted as reconstructed.

3. Societal Facts

The first question that comes up in the way of the understanding of society is: what is society? But as we have called society *loka*, so our question is: what is *loka*? Before answering this question, a little digression may be allowed here, inasmuch as society is generally called *samāja* while we have called it *loka*.

The common-sense use of the word 'society' is highly ambiguous. It is used in the sense of (i) mankind, (ii) community, (iii) the original cause of present-day society, (iv) present society, (v) social group, (vi) company, (vii) association of some persons for a certain

purpose, and (viii) masses. If a conceptual analysis of this term is made it will be clear that society has mainly two aspects, a natural and traditional aspect and a man-made aspect. We must distinguish between these two aspects. So we shall use the word '*loka*' for the former and the word '*samāja*' for the latter. To reduce the one to the other is a sociological *adhyāsa* or mistake.

Now it will be obvious that *loka* is more fundamental than society. Societies are formed and abolished. They have certain specific purposes to serve and have certain specific functions to discharge. One society is opposed by another society. All these descriptions of society are not applicable to the *loka*. As a matter of fact societies are in the *loka*. They are formed in it and abolished in it. The *loka* is neither formed nor abolished. It is the mother of all societies and in a measure serves all purposes and functions that are attributed to societies. The *loka* is the basic societal fact that is given to us. It is amorphous; but it can receive all forms that societies have and give to it. There are several forces acting and reacting upon it. Some of them are *dr̥ṣṭa* or empirically known while the others are *adr̥ṣṭa* or not empirically known. Further, some of them are the consequences of the *pravṛtti* or practical will-to-do whereas others are the results of the rational will to withdraw or *nivṛtti*. So the social philosopher and scientists who take into consideration only the *dr̥ṣṭa* elements and the functions of the *pravṛtti* really fail to take a complete and adequate view of society.

The Sanskrit word '*loka*' is further clarified when a qualification is added to it like *jīva*, *manuṣya*, *mṛtyu* and *karma*. It is *jīvaloka*, i.e., it is inhabited by living

creatures. It is called *manuṣya-loka*, as it is chiefly meant for human beings. Both *jīvaloka* and *manuṣyaloka* combinedly imply that there is a continuity of life among all creatures including human beings. There is no gap or vacuum in the world of living creatures. The phenomenon of life is thus inherent in this *loka* and is not derived from any inanimate materials. It is a special feature of this *loka* and as such it has certain rule-governed behaviour that is found in the life of all creatures. Life-situations like birth, growth, decay and death are the general characteristics of creatures. Out of all these characteristics death has a deeper significance in this *loka*. It has its own constraints and controls and influences the judgements, emotions and actions of all men. In the case of many men it has moulded their life to a degree no other factor of their life has done. But finally this *loka* is called *karmaloka* and is defined as a texture of actions (*karma-bandhana* or *karma-nibandhana*). The *loka* is *karma-samavāyi*, i.e. *karmas* are inherent in it. These *karmas* are classified as purely secular (*laukika*) and secular-cum-religious. Among the former are included *iṣṭā* (works of personal piety), *pūrtta* (works for the benefit of the others), and *datta* (charity), while in the latter are counted *yajña* (sacrifices), *tapas* (penances) and *dāna* (charity). That these religious *karmas* are justified as they promote the good of the people or *loka* is a fact that is denied by the Lokāyatas. But their prevalence and observance in the *loka* are as important as those of the secular *karmas*. Not only this. In a sense they are more significant than the secular *karmas* which ultimately originate from, lead to or result into them. When a secular *karma* is accomplished it gives pleasure, rest and peace, which further produce a unique experience of the

reality that is in the *loka*. This experience gives rise to the idea of renunciation (*vairāgya*) of passions which are the springs of all actions. This idea of renunciation puts constraints and controls over passions, curbs egoism and promotes altruism. So it goes to constitute the very foundation of all social groups that are found in the *loka*. It is significant to note that Jainism, Buddhism and Vedānta seek the welfare of this *loka* through the path of renunciation. Rṣabha taught renunciation for maintaining the order of the *loka* (*lokānuśāsana*).⁶ Lord Buddha asked his devotees to renounce the world for the sake of the welfare and happiness of the majority of the people and for upholding the solidarity of the *loka* (*lokānugraha* or *lokānukampā*).⁷ Śaṅkara and his followers preached renunciation to preserve *loka-saṅgraha* or the solidarity of the *loka*.⁸ So like actions and passions, renunciation and control of passions are also the basic and ultimate facts of society. Further the religious *karmas* are based upon the proper understanding of the *loka* itself inasmuch as the *loka* is not supportless and baseless. Its support or base is called Brahman, or God or Self. When Lokāyatas say that there is no Brahman, God or Self beyond this World, or for that matter, there is no *loka* other than this *loka*, their statement, though unscientific, is not as dangerous as their statement that there is no Brahman, God or Self at all. The order and purposiveness of the *loka* reveals that this *loka* is caused by the self (*san-mūla*), is housed in the self (*sadāyatana*) and is supported by the self (*satpratiṣṭha*).⁹ So the life-principle of this *loka* is not a purely biological principle. It has its sociological dimension also. But more than this, it has a transcendental dimension which is called the spiritual principle of this *loka*. As man is a true representative of

this *loka*, he is the meeting place of all these three principles—biological, sociological and transcendental. The transcendental principle is called the self or the *Puruṣa* or *Ātman*, and the other two principles are called its *parā* and *aparā prakṛti*. The biological is *aparā prakṛti* (inalienable nature) and the sociological principle is *parā prakṛti* (altruistic nature). As *prakṛti*, these principles are the equilibrium of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* is the wisdom of the people, *rajas* is the activity of the people and *tamas* is the *artha* or object of the people. The development of this *loka* or the people can thus be understood in terms of the metaphysical principle of *prakṛti-pariṇāmavāda* that is advanced by Sāṅkhya philosophy. The transcendental principle according to the *Upaniṣads* and Śāṅkara is the ultimate reach of this *loka*.¹⁰ Every creature is situated in it. That is why these creatures are called *Brahma-saṁsthā*, and Brahman or the transcendental principle is regarded, though metaphorically, as the ultimate institution (*saṁsthā*). Whenever a man gets leisure and rest from the performance of his duties, he gains a capacity to return to Brahman and realize that he himself is Brahman.¹¹

The above analysis of the concept of “this *loka*” (*iha-loka*) may be confused with a view of society that is known as holism. But, as a matter of fact, it is neither holism nor its opposite, *i.e.*, individualism or social atomism. Holism believes that *loka* is a collective entity and is prior to its members or individuals whereas individualism or social atomism believes that this *loka* is nothing but a configuration of individuals. As against these views the Lokāyana view is that this *loka* consists of individuals as well as social groups, norms, customs,

rules, roles and status. These are the specific societal facts. Individuals, according to Lokāyana, are not isolated facts inasmuch as they are always found interrelated not only in their interpersonal kinships but also in their inter-group relations. The ambiguity of the word '*loka*' contains a philosophical truth, for *loka* means both an individual and a social group. To reduce the social groups to a mere configuration of individuals is as dangerous as to treat the individuals as the cogs of the social mechanism or machinery. Holism and social atomism are like the realist and nominalist theories of universals respectively, whereas Lokāyana is like the conceptualist theory of universals. Individuals and social groups are copresent. The one cannot be reduced to the other. This view of society further rules out methodological individualism that maintains that all statements about social groups or society can be reduced to the statements about individuals. Societal facts can be explained only by an intuitive understanding that sees not only that which lies before it but also goes to penetrate all that lies behind or beneath it, that sees not only the trees but also the wood.

4. The Moral Order

As our foregoing analysis has shown, the basic fabric of our social order is given, encountered and transmitted from the past. It is really beginningless and endless. Now the question arises: What is this social order? To this we can reply that the social order is a moral order. The *Vedas* have called it as *ṛta*. It is manifested in the heirarchy of three values, that are called *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*. Lokāyana believes that this very *loka* is the foundation and ground of all the values and that there

is an order or gradation among them to the effect that *dharma* is better and higher than *artha* and *artha* is better and higher than *kāma*. Further, according to Lokāyana, *kāma* should not be pursued to the extent that its pursuit may become detrimental to *artha* and *dharma* and likewise *artha* should not be pursued to the extent that it becomes detrimental to *kāma* and *dharma*. Again it is *dharma* or the moral value that generates the competence for achieving *artha* or the economic value on the one hand, and *kāma* or the psycho-biological value on the other. Without *dharma*, there can be no social order and *dharma* cannot be deduced from *artha* or *kāma*, because it belongs to a higher order of values and is the presupposition of all values. If any single value is to be cultivated then it can be only *dharma*, and at no cost can it be *artha* or *kāma* alone. As regards the cultivation of the value of *artha* or *kāma*, the golden rule is that none of them should be cultivated in a way that is detrimental to the cultivation of the remaining two values.¹²

A debatable point, however, is the dominance of *artha* over *kāma* or of *kāma* over *artha*. Marx has taken the first view, while Freud, the second one. Both Marx and Freud maintain that there is a single motive force of this *loka*. They take man as one-dimensional only. Their difference is only over the nature of this motive force. Marx calls it the economic pursuit and Freud calls it the sexual pursuit. But Lokāyana finds them not only lopsided but also divorced from the reality, for man like *loka* is multidimensional and there is a deeper and more significant motive force than *artha* and *kāma*. That force is *dharma*.¹³ Again both Marx and Freud are reductionist in the sense that they reduce *dharma* to *artha* and *kāma*.

respectively. But as our analysis of *loka* has shown, no explanation of *artha* and *kāma* can do so, for all of such explanations presuppose the social groups and the laws binding on them—the societal facts that are intrinsically valuable and must be preserved at all costs. Every explanation of *dharma* or the moral value in terms of the economic value (*artha*) or psycho-biological value (*kāma*) is vitiated by the fallacies of *generatio equivoca* and *hyster on proteron*. The *Hitopadeśa*¹⁴ which is a work of secular ethics and politics states:

Virtue or value is that by means of which *vṛtti* or the economic mode of life is cultivated and at the same time by means of which the people are praised by the men of good conduct. It is this value that makes man the locus of values. This value should be protected and increased.

In this way *vṛtti-kalpana* or the production of economic mode of living is not the sole determinant of the values of life. The values mainly depend upon the people's sense of values, their ways of approval and disapproval, praise and blame, commendation and condemnation. This valuation is a *sine qua non* of the system of values and is not derived out of anything that is not valuable. What is significant to note in this context is the societal fact that both the people's moral judgements and economic pursuits are the foundation of values. Moreover, it can also be said that economic pursuits are also judged morally or subjected to moral tests. So they cannot be the cause or determinant of the values. The axiological trinity of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* has its psychological counterpart which is known as *lokaisanā* (love for reputation), *vittaiṣaṇā* (interest in

money) and *putraīṣaṇā* (interest in progeny). The psychological trinity points out that *lokaiṣaṇā* is associated with altruism which is regarded as the essence of *dharma* and that it is independent of *artha* and *kāma*. Now ignoring these foundations of values, Marx says:¹⁵

The mode of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness.

No doubt he is right when he says that the social existence of men determines their consciousness. But his analysis of the social existence is vitiated by the genetic fallacy. He tries to show that social existence is conditioned by the production of the material means of existence and forgets to see that the production of the material means of existence is possible only in a society or when there is a prior social existence. Social existence is thus prior to the production of the material means of existence. Therefore, it cannot be logically or practically derived from the material means of existence. A new means of production does not exterminate the old means of production. It simply refines them and/or adds some other means to them. This is the reason why new economic modes of production have simply added a number of new classes in society and/or refined many old classes. They have not transformed all the existing classes of society into quite new and different classes. Nor are they likely to abolish all classes and make society classless.

So at any rate, the relation of *artha* and *dharma* is very much intriguing in the philosophy of Marx. It is further confused by Deviprasad Chattopadhyaya when he identifies *artha* and *kāma* and blends *tantra* with *vārtā* or the science of sexual indulgence with economics,¹⁶ inasmuch as he amalgamates vulgar materialism with the dialectical materialism of Marx. His interpretation of Tantra is more Freudian than Marxian. His thesis that "Tantrism has its sources in the agricultural ritual,"¹⁷ is an example of the genetic fallacy inasmuch as it does not explain the Tantra as it is but as it was in its primitive stage. Moreover, to identify the Freudian interpretation of Tantra with the scientific structure of Lokāyata and associate it with women, is going against Marx who says that the philosophy of pleasure was never anything else but the clever language of certain privileged social classes.¹⁸ So Chattopadhyaya attributes to Lokāyata a view which he himself wants to refute, he makes it a philosophy of the vulgar people or of sexual pleasures. Most probably it is the destiny of the Lokāyata way of thinking that it culminates into a philosophy of pleasures. The philosophy which can save Lokāyata from this degeneration is Lokāyana alone, for it develops it into a philosophy of altruism by supplementing it with the spirit of renunciation.

5. Lokasaṅgraha

Almost all traditions of Indian Philosophy maintain that human life is a very rare attainment and is the means of all values. These traditions of India were built up for the preservation and solidarity of this *loka*. Even the spiritualist traditions, as Śaṅkara says, are not against

the experience of the common people inasmuch as they are the ramifications and development of the experiences of this *loka* itself. The values which these traditions place before the people are generally called *Dharma*, *Bhakti*, *Yoga* and *Mokṣa*. The foundation of these values is the constitution of the *loka* itself. The source of *kāma* and *artha* are not isolated from, or contradictory to, the values of *dharma* and *Mokṣa*. Hence the correct understanding of the *loka* must be based on the community of values that determine the *loka*. Any partial or abstract view of values can give only a truncated picture of the social world which, by and large, does more harm than good to the solidarity of the *loka* because it destroys its multi-faced foundation and base.

Lokāyana thus points out that the Lokāyata view of society is destructive of the *loka* inasmuch as it annihilates the qualitative variety of the behaviour that is the characteristic of this *loka*. The annihilation of this variety and the destruction of the social world are the greatest evils that have got to be avoided by every school of social philosophy. These evils are produced and aggravated by violence which takes numerous forms in society. They are further removed by non-violence which again takes many forms in the behaviour of the people. This is the reason why non-violence or *ahimsā* is called the greatest law (*parama-dharma*). It holds together all the societal facts that constitute this *loka*. Social progress is possible only through the consolidation and strengthening of the forces that promote non-violence in society. Every act that detracts society from the path of non-violence may appear to further the pace of social progress, but in reality it ultimately leads to violence and is harmful to society.

When the pursuits of *kāma* and *artha* are bereft of *dharma*, they lead logically to violence. This is the reason why some limitations, constraints and controls must be imposed on them by *dharma*. Such an imposition is called *loka-maryādā* or the ceiling on the pursuits of *kāma* and *artha*. Every school of social philosophy makes provisions for this ceiling. Dialectical materialism envisages the state control and the philosophy of free and open society, the progressive rate of taxation over the pursuit of *artha* and the strict observance of monogamy over the pursuit of *kāma*. But both these philosophies empower the state to lay down this ceiling and do not use the moral and spiritual forces of society for this purpose. Lokāyana finds them insufficient and so it additionally tries to impose a double restriction. First, it makes every individual self-disciplined and trained more in self-abnegation than in self-gratification. Secondly, it tries to build up social sanctions against the excessive gratification of *artha* and *kāma* and to impose social controls over their pursuits. These social controls are the voice of the conscience of various social groups that constitute the *loka* or the voice of the people themselves. They can be established by propagating the systematic order of the values of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* and by arranging mass feasts, mass charities, mass education and other similar acts of mass services at a large scale. In ancient times, these acts of mass services were called *yajñas* which are now either forgotten or degenerated. Gandhi called them as acts of social service or altruism and rejuvenated and modernized them a little. But they are still looked down upon as the acts of primitive society and superstition. The spirit of modernization of *yajña* is to be revived in the way Gandhi had visualized. Instead

of going back to the past for the performance of the Vedic *yajñas*, we should live at the present, look forward to the future and make provisions for new altruistic acts, such as free medical service, free education and job insurance. These acts can be organized by social groups, individuals and the state.

But in addition to these important works of social service, there are two other works that are important for the welfare of the people. They are the performance of one's own duties and prevention from going astray. The masses should be prevented from resorting to a wrong path and persuaded to do their duties. The former is the *nivṛtti* and the latter *pravṛtti* that should be practised by the people themselves. The state measures including legislation and administration of justice are not sufficient for these practices. They must be supplemented by some measures that individuals and their social groups take at their own initiative or under the force of their traditions. Unless individuals, social groups and the state co-operate with one another, there can be no preservation and consolidation of the *loka*, and there can be no social peace and well-being at all.

If any of these factors becomes so powerful that it will dominate and subdues the other two to the extent that their independent functioning is hampered, a critical situation is created in this *loka* and the subdued factors start a revolt against the dominant factor. This revolt goes on and crises after crises continue to grow unless a harmony is established among these three factors. The greatness of an individual, a social group or a state does not consist in trampling down the independent func-

tioning of the other two factors, but in reinforcing the inherent bonds of harmony among them.

Social harmony that is the ideal of a man, a social group or a state, is, however, not necessarily a static equilibrium of all factors of society. Although in the history of mankind most of the societies have more or less a fixed or static pattern or form and there have been only a few epochs of social upheavals, disharmonies, or revolutions, social harmony can coexist with a dynamic or changing pattern of society. Change and permanence are relative terms and this *loka* can absorb both of them in a harmonious manner. To work for this harmony is a natural instinct of every member of this *loka* and the most important task of all social engineers and workers.

NOTES

1. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1959, p.3, (italics mine)
2. Karl Marx and Frederic Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1946, p. 354.
3. Quoted in *The Philosophy of Social Explanation*, A. McIntyre, Allan Ryan, Oxford, 1973, p. 182
4. *Bhagavadgītā*, 2.31, 3.35, 18.35.
5. See *New Leviathan*, R.G. Collingwood, London, 1942 and *The Poverty of Historicism*, Karl R. Popper, London, 1957 and *Contemporary Sociological Theories*, P.A. Sorokin, New York, 1964.
6. lokānuśāsanārthaṁ mahānubhāvāḥ paramasuhṛd bhagavān ṛṣabhopadeśaḥ—*Bhāgavata*, 5.5.28.

7. caratha bhikkhave cārikā bahujanahitāya bahujana-sukhāya lokānukampayā-*Vinayapīṭhaka, Mahāvagga, 1.2.5.*
8. Śāṅkara on the *Bhagavadgītā*, 9-33 and 3-20.
9. sanmūlāḥ somyemāḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ sadāyatanāḥ satpratīṣṭhāḥ
—*Chāndgyopaniṣad, 6.8.4.*
10. Śāṅkara's Commentary on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 1.9.1
11. sarvakarmacchide ca brahmasaṁsthatāyām sāmartyopapatteḥ-
Ibid. on 2.2.31
12. "na caikārtham dvibādhakam"
Quoted by Ānandagiri in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad-
Bhāṣya-Vārtika, 4.4.49*
13. "dharmad-arthaśca kāmaśca sa dharmāḥ kiṁ na sevyate"
Mahābhārata, Svargārohaṇa Parva, 67.59
14. kalpayati yena vṛttim yena ca loke praśasyate sadbhiḥ
sa guṇastena ca guṇinā rakṣyaḥ saṁvardhaniyaśca—
Hitopadeśa, 2.65
15. Karl Marx, *The Critique of Political Economy*, Chicago, 1904.
16. See Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata*, chapters 5-7.
17. *Ibid*, p.273
18. Quoted by Chattopadhyaya, *op.cit.* p. 30

THE TIMELESS AND THE TEMPORAL
THROUGH STORIES AND
DIALOGUES IN THE UPANIṢADS*

R. Balasubramanian

I

Spiritualscape of the Upaniṣads

The Upaniṣads are not only the concluding portion, but also the consummation, of the Vedas. There are four Vedas, and each Veda has four sections which are called Mantras, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads. The Mantras are hymns in praise of gods and goddesses. The Brāhmaṇas deal with sacrificial rites. The Āraṇyakas

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contain meditative practices. The Upaniṣads are philosophical treatises dealing with Being and beings of all kinds. Though we speak of the different sections of the Vedas, each section having a specific theme, the Vedas have thematic unity and help the spiritual aspirant to achieve the final goal of liberation through prayers and rituals, meditative practices and philosophical investigation. The transition from the Mantras through the Upaniṣads is comparable to the change from the twilight to the bright and brilliant sunlight of the day. What is implicit or suggested in the hymns becomes explicit through rigorous explorations in depth in the philosophical tracts. The Upaniṣads discuss the most fundamental question of metaphysics—the nature of Being and how beings, both living and non-living, are related to it. “Brahman”, “Ātman”, and “Sat” are the terms which the Upaniṣads use for referring to the ultimate reality which is the source, support, and end of everything. Brahman is that which is big, infinite. What is all-pervasive, what fills and penetrates all bodies, is called Ātman; the word “Ātman” also means that which is the source, support, and end of everything. Sat is Being, mere existence; it is that which is subtle, without distinction, all-pervasive, one, pure partless consciousness. Though contextually we use the word “Brahman” when we refer to the source of the world and the word “Ātman” when we refer to the inward Self of the individual, the two words signify one and the same reality. Brahman or Ātman is Being which exists on its own whereas beings of the manifested world have dependent existence for they originate from, and exist in, Being.

II Fundamental Questions

The Upaniṣads, which are assigned to 2500 BC, are extra-ordinary philosophical texts. They are extraordinary for two reasons. First of all, the subject matter they deal with is extra-ordinary. They are not concerned with stocks and stones, which can be known through perception and other sources of knowledge. On the contrary, they are concerned with Brahman or Ātman which is trans-empirical, trans-relational, and trans-linguistic. They are not interested in the analysis of the different categories of knowledge such as substance, qualities, and action, the universal and the particular, and so on. Not that such an analysis is unimportant. There are philosophical systems and positive sciences which give us a lot of information about them widening the frontiers of our knowledge. There are two kinds of metaphysics, descriptive and transformative. Descriptive metaphysics has its own value; but it has its own limitations. Its major limitation is that it does not deal with Being, which transcends the space-time-cause framework, even though Being is the ground of the world. It does not tell us about the inward Self in every one of us, which remains covered or enveloped by the mind-sense-body complex which is material. The fundamental questions of metaphysics are: "Who am I? What is my relation to Being? How am I related to the external world?" A little reflection tells us that, endowed as we are with the mind whose emergence in the process of evolution has heightened the evolutionary course, our purposive life cannot be confined to the bodily, vital, and mental levels and that we must seek the inner reality,

the Self in us, which is the source and support of all our mental, vital, and bodily activities. Through a systematic analysis of our experience the Upaniṣads help us to discover the Self in us by removing the veils which cover it and realize that it is no other than Brahman which is said to be the source and support of the world. The teaching of the Upaniṣads is that Brahman or Ātman is the source of the manifested world, that it is immanent in all beings, sentient as well as non-sentient, that humans and other living beings are divine, and that nature is essentially spiritual. The metaphysics of the Upaniṣads is not descriptive, but transformative. The subject matter of the Upaniṣads is, therefore, extra-ordinary.

Like the subject matter, the method of inquiry pursued and practised by the Upaniṣads is extra-ordinary. It is true that they employ the tools of analysis and synthesis which are usually employed in philosophy. What is significant in the case of the Upaniṣads is that they employ these tools for deconstruction and reconstruction. Though it may appear that deconstruction is a new mode of philosophizing, the truth is that it is not really new. The technique of deconstruction has been used in the past by great masters, both in the East and the West, in their creative writings. Since philosophical thinking does not take place in a vacuum, every creative philosopher has to undo, sometimes partially, sometimes radically, what has been done by his/her predecessors in order to build a new structure. Aristotle has to deconstruct what he inherited from Plato for constructing his philosophical system. Rāmānuja has to demolish the solid structure of Advaita for reconstructing his philosophy on the basis of the traditional sources.

In recent times Sri Aurobindo, the great mystic-philosopher-poet, created a magnificent philosophy of synthesis known as Integral Philosophy by resorting to deconstruction followed by reconstruction. So is the case with Martin Heidegger.

III

Deconstruction and Reconstruction through Stories and Dialogues

To the Upaniṣadic thinkers philosophy in an important sense is anthropocentric. It does not follow from this that theocentric and cosmocentric discourses are absent in the Upaniṣads. Though all the three dimensions of philosophy—anthropocentric, cosmocentric, and theocentric—are found in the Upaniṣads, the fact remains that philosophy is for the sake of man. God does not need philosophy. Nor do animals and nature require philosophy. But it is only humans who require the benefit of philosophy for the transformation or regeneration of their life, for overcoming the foundational ignorance they suffer from and thereby discovering the Self in them, which is no other than Brahman. Śaṅkara tells us that, owing to the foundational or spiritual ignorance, human beings are engaged in their day-to-day activities purely at the bodily, sensory, and mental levels as if they were no more than the mind-body complex forgetting the spiritual reality in them.¹ What is uppermost in our daily life is body-consciousness, or sense-consciousness, or mind-consciousness, and not Self-consciousness. It means that there is identification of oneself with the body, or the senses, or the mind,

leading to the superimposition of the characteristics of the body, the senses, and the mind, all of which are material, on the inward Self which is non-material. For example, we say, "I am stout/thin," "I am blind/deaf," "I am happy/miserable," and so on. Stoutness and thinness are the characteristics of the body; blindness and deafness are the characteristics of the senses; happiness and misery are the characteristics of the mind. Though the "I" which stands for the Self does not possess bodily, or sensory, or mental characteristics, these features, due to a wrong identification of the Self and the not-Self arising from ignorance, are superimposed on the Self. What is called existential predicament is a condition in which human beings do not have harmony of spirit, mind, and body at the personal level and harmony with others including nature at the trans-personal level. Absence of harmony is suffering; and the cause of suffering is spiritual ignorance, which can be removed only by knowledge. The aim of the Upaniṣads, according to Śāᅅkara, is to help human beings dis-cover the Self which is Brahman and overcome the existential predicament. This goal can be achieved only by means of a new thinking, a radical questioning of the given, a rigorous inquiry into the life-world, which is bound to lead to a tranvaluation of all values, through deconstruction and reconstruction. This is what the Upaniṣads have done. The work of radical thinking, which the Upaniṣads pursue in quest of the primal Spirit (called Brahman or Ātman), is echoed by Heidegger, who beautifully summarizes it as follows:

What philosophy essentially can and must be is this: a thinking that breaks the paths and opens the

perspectives of the knowledge that sets the norms and hierarchies, of the knowledge in which and by which a people fulfills itself historically and culturally, the knowledge that kindles and necessitates all inquiries and thereby threatens all values.²

The Self is timeless; all other things than the Self are temporal. Philosophy investigates the timeless. While the Self can easily be distinguished from the body and the senses, there is great difficulty in separating the Self from the mind. According to the Upanisads, the mind, like the senses and the body and the things of the external world, is material. The Self, which is spiritual or non-material, should not be identified with the mind and the intelligent functions it performs being inspired by the Self. Heidegger warns us against the wrong interpretation of the Self or Spirit as intelligence, as a tool in the service of others, as an entity in the realm of culture.³ The neglect and misinterpretation of the Spirit, according to him, results in "the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the transformation of men into a mass, the hatred and suspicion of everything free and creative."⁴

Though the Upanisads are inspiring philosophical texts *par excellence*, they do not present their teachings in the form of a coherent system with premises and conclusions supported by lengthy arguments. Sometimes the Upanisadic statements are suggestive. We also come across declarations in them which are conclusive. There are texts which not only complement, but also contradict each other. It is not the case that logic is totally absent in them. When the Upanisads themselves suggest the need

for the triple discipline of hearing, reflection, and contemplation, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* as they are called, for realizing the truth, it is wrong to conclude that they contain only insights without investigation.⁵ Just as the philosophical ideas are scattered in them, even so the supporting arguments, though meagre but not flimsy, are scattered in them. It must be borne in mind that the Upaniṣadic thinkers were fully aware of the limitations of both logic and language in comprehending the ultimate reality. As Heidegger says, all thinking which solely follows the laws of thought formulated in traditional logic is incapable of understanding the fundamental question of metaphysics, "let alone actually unfolding the question and guiding it towards an answer."⁶ As for language, it operates in the realm of duality involving all kinds of distinctions such as subject and object, substance and qualities, cause and effect, and so on. Brahman or the Self, which is one and non-dual, which is free from distinctions and relations, cannot be brought within the scope of language like an empirical object. One should not, therefore, read the Upaniṣadic texts as one would read Aristotle and Aquinas, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. Notwithstanding these difficulties, one will not fail to notice what Radhakrishnan calls "the consistency of intuition" in them.⁷ The message which they intend to convey is clear: there is nothing greater than the Self, which is immanent in everything, sentient as well as insentient, and to know the Self is to be free.

The Upaniṣads make use of stories and dialogues to convey their teachings which are the product of radical thinking. What is difficult to be conveyed through a

philosophical system packed with premises, conclusions, and corollaries can easily be conveyed through stories. First, it is easy to understand the moral of a story even though it is not explicitly stated. Secondly, by providing a background we are familiar with, it catches the attention of the hearer or reader. Just to give a few examples drawn from the Upaniṣads: the background of a story may be the problem which a son faces arising from the action of his father as in the case of Naciketas and Vājaśravasa, or a decision taken by the husband which provokes one of his wives as in the case of Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī, or the philosophical debate among scholars in the court of Janaka, the enlightened emperor, and so on. In all these cases one reads or listens to the story with rapt attention. Thirdly, when the narration of a story is interspersed with dialogue, it sustains the attention of the reader or the listener. In almost all the Upaniṣads we come across stories and dialogues. In some cases the problem which is presented through a story and dialogue is further developed in a narrative form. In some other cases what is conveyed through a narrative is concluded in a dialogue. It must be borne in mind that the Upaniṣadic seers about whom we know very little did not set forth their ideas as their personal views. As Radhakrishnan observes, "So careless were they of personal fame and so anxious for the spread of truth, that they fathered their views on the honoured deities and heroes of the Vedic period."⁸ We are naturally, interested in the narratives connected with the haloed personalities like Prajāpati, Indra, and Nārada, with Janaka, Yājñavalkya, and Maitreyī, with Uddālaka and Śvetaketu, and many others. The stories and parables, dialogues and discussions, which we find in most of the Upaniṣads, are concerned

with the central problems of philosophy, which are mentioned in the very beginning of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*:

What is the cause of the universe? Is it Brahman? Whence are we born? By what do we live? On what are we established? O ye who know Brahman, please tell us at whose command we abide here in pain and pleasure...⁹

The light of the Upaniṣads is neither dimmed by time nor blurred by the developments in philosophy and science because it illumines the timeless vis-à-vis the temporal.

IV

Death and Deathlessness

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* begins with the story of a young boy by name Naciketas who had the good luck to meet and question Yama, the god of death, about the phenomenon of death, its cause and consequence. Philosophers and laymen, the young and the old, are interested in knowing about the phenomenon of death. "What is it that dies? What is it that survives death?" are the questions that we ask. There is an interesting discussion on the problem of freedom from the bondage of the body in Plato's *Phaedo*. Socrates says that a philosopher, who is not a lover of the body, is engaged in training for dying, in dissociating himself from the body, for the purpose of attaining the highest knowledge. The important question here is whether it is possible to overcome the cycle of birth and death, and if so, how. This question can be answered only if one knows the cause of birth, which leads to death and the consequence

thereof. Drawing a distinction between "perishing" and "dying", Heidegger says that Dasein never simply perishes as do other animals, but it can end without authentically dying; this ending is called its "demise" (Ableben), which is different from "dying" (Sterben). According to Heidegger, a person who thinks of his existence as a Being-towards-death will act differently from one who lives only for the present moment. One who is successful in living an authentic life knows the art of dying authentically. As a young boy of seventeen, Ramaṇa Marharshi presented himself in a situation of dying in order to find out what death is and what happens after death. Nothing is so common and also baffling at the same time as death.

The story goes that Vājaśravasa, the father of Naciketas, performed Viśvajit sacrifice and gave away all his possessions as gifts. Naciketas was terribly unhappy with his father for giving worthless things as gifts. In sheer disgust, but with all seriousness, he asked his father: "Sir, to whom will you give me as a gift?" When he asked this question again and again, his father replied in anger: "To Death I shall give you." In order to fulfil his father's wish Naciketas went to Yama's abode. It so happened that Yama, the god of death, was away at that time. Naciketas waited for him for three nights without food and water; and when Yama returned, he learnt that a guest had remained uncared for in his home. Since Naciketas remained in Yama's house without food for three nights, Yama as a recompense offered him three boons, one in respect of each night. The first boon that Naciketas prayed for was that his father should recognize and accept him when he went home. Then for the second

boon he requested Yama to teach him the Fire-sacrifice by which one reaches heaven. Yama granted the young boy the two boons he requested and told him to ask for the third one. This time Naciketas requested Yama to instruct him about the secret behind death, that which survives death. The dialogue between Yama and Naciketas is quite interesting. To start with Yama was not willing to reveal the secret behind death. He said: "Even the gods of old had doubt on this issue. Also, this truth is subtle and not easy to understand. O Naciketas, choose another boon."¹⁰ As Naciketas was desirous of knowing the nature of the entity that survives death, he insisted on knowing the truth from Yama as no other boon was comparable to this and also as no one else was competent to reveal the knowledge about the reality which does not die. Yama tempted Naciketas with other offers—wealth and women, land, long life and all kinds of material comforts. Without yielding to any of these temptations Naciketas said: "The things you promised are transient. They wear out, O Yama, the vigour of all the senses of human beings. All life, moreover, is brief. Keep yourself the vehicles, dances, and songs. Man is not to be satisfied with wealth. The boon that is worth praying for by me is that alone which I asked."¹¹ Being convinced that Naciketas was fit for receiving instruction about the immortal Self, Yama explained to him the great secret.

Before considering Yama's instruction to Naciketas it is necessary to make two observations about the moral of the story. Both the observations are related to Naciketas' reaction to his father's external ceremonialism on the one hand and his refusal to accept perishable

material benefits offered by Yama in lieu of the knowledge of the immortal Self on the other. Naciketas was annoyed at the pseudo-orthopraxis of his father who was only mindful of the external formalism of the ritual without caring for the inner spirit of the ritual action. It should be noted first of all that the Upaniṣad suggests the need for a change from the outward formalistic ritualism of the orthodox religion to the inward spiritual wisdom, which calls for a radical thinking into what we are, what we should do, and also how we should act. Secondly, human beings should lead a purposive life which should reflect their spiritual nature. Their life is at two levels—organic and hyper-organic. At the organic level their activities, like those of animals, are in pursuit of the basic needs of life such as food, water, shelter, and sex. But their life-activities should be fully reflective of their species character. Equipped as they are with the mind, they are capable of reason and will. While reason helps them to think of the higher values of life, will provides them the necessary energy to translate their ideas into action. Discrimination and dispassion are required to go beyond the organic level. The Upaniṣad tells us through Naciketas that human aspiration cannot be satisfied with worldly prosperity and earthly pleasures, which are ephemeral. It projects the ideal of the realization of the eternal Self which alone can provide abiding satisfaction. While the mind-sense-body outfit of a human being is perishable, the Self is beyond the clutches of death.

The fascinating dialogue is followed by the exposition of the nature of the Self which is the central theme of the Upaniṣad. Excepting for a few questions

asked by Naciketas here and there, the rest of the Upaniṣed is merely narrative exploring the interior of the spirituelscape, Yama playing the role of the instructor to the young boy. Issues connected with the Self such as the proper mental frame for discriminating the eternal from the ephemeral, the empirical distinction between the individual self and the supreme Self, the parable of the chariot to highlight the ultimacy of the Self, the imagery of the fabulous world-tree to explain the relation between the world and Brahman, and the problem of rebirth for those who have not attained the saving knowledge, are discussed.

There are two approaches to metaphysics, epistemological and axiological. It is usual to make the transition from epistemology to metaphysics. A systematic and rigorous inquiry into the nature of truth in epistemology takes us to the absolute truth, eternal and unchanging, which is the core of metaphysics. One may also, as Yama does, proceed to metaphysics from the axiological side and show that the ultimate good is the absolute reality. Drawing a basic distinction between the good (*śreyas*) and the pleasant (*preyas*), Yama tells Naciketas:

Both the good and the pleasant approach a man. The wise man, pondering over them, discriminates. The wise chooses the good in preference to the pleasant. The simple-minded, for the sake of worldly well-being, prefers the pleasant.¹²

He adds :

Widely apart and leading to divergent ends are these, ignorance and what is known as wisdom.

I know you, Naciketas, to be eager for wisdom, for even many kinds of enjoyable things did not tempt you.¹³

The good which Yama speaks about is not just moral goodness, but the highest good, the ultimate value, which is the Self, ever free and never bound. It can be realized only by the wise and not by the ignorant. Naciketas is interested only in the Self, the highest good which transcends the space-time-cause world. He asks Yama:

Tell me that which you see beyond right and wrong, beyond cause and effect, beyond past and future.¹⁴

In response to this Yama describes the nature of the Self, which is lodged in every being, as follows :

The intelligent Self is neither born nor does it die. It did not originate from anything nor did anything originate from it. It is birthless, eternal, unchanging, and ancient. It is not slain even when the body is slain.¹⁵

The Self is eternal, one, and infinite. There is nothing like or unlike it. It is homogeneous, partless, and indivisible, and so it does not admit of internal differentiation. It is of the nature of consciousness. Though infinite, it appears to be individuated and finite because of its association with the mind-sense-body material outfit. Not knowing the real nature of the Self, the birth and death of the mind-sense-body adjunct is wrongly superimposed on it; and so we speak of it as though it has birth and death. Though it is one, it appears to be many because of the plurality of the mind-sense-body adjuncts. It means that, though the Self (Ātman) is one, the individuated selves (jīvas) are many. The individuated

self, because of its material adjunct, functions as the subject of knowledge (*jñātā*), the agent of action (*kartā*), and the enjoyer of the consequences of action (*bhoktā*) in the empirical life. It is, therefore, subject to pleasure and pain; in the day-to-day life it has to make a choice between the right and the wrong exercising its freedom, accept responsibility for the choice it makes, and the resultant action it performs. In short, the individuated self finds itself in the existential predicament. In the context of the existential constraints of the individuated self in the day-to-day life, the Upaniṣad draws a distinction between the Self-in-itself and the Self-in-the body. The former is absolutely free while the latter is totally bound; the former is untouched by pleasure and pain while the latter is affected by both of them. The suffering of the latter is because of the mind-sense-body adjunct with which it identifies itself forgetting its essential nature. When Yama speaks of two selves,¹⁶ the one enjoying the fruits of life and the other remaining as a passive spectator of the happenings of life, he is referring to the conditioned self, i.e. the Self-in-the-body, and the unconditioned Self, i.e. the Self-in-itself. The two selves are popularly known as *jīvātman* and *paramātman*.

Yama introduces the parable of the chariot for the easy comprehension of the nature of the Self as different from the mind, the senses, and the body. The following is the description of the Self riding the chariot which is the psycho-physical vehicle:

Know the Self as the lord of the chariot and the body as, verily, the chariot; know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as, verily, the reins. The

senses, they say, are the horses; the objects of the senses are the roads; the Self associated with the body, the senses, and the mind, the wise declare, is the enjoyer.¹⁷

The moral which the parable seeks to convey is obvious. The choice is between the inward and the outward life. One whose mind is drawn towards external things by the uncontrolled and ever-outward-going senses is always caught up in the existential predicament. On the contrary, one who keeps the mind and the senses under control will go inward towards the Self, realize it, and become free. For such a person there is no more bondage. He becomes liberated-in-life (*jīvanmukta*). Concluding the parable of the chariot, the Upaniṣad says:

The person who has understanding, who has control over his mind, and is ever pure, reaches the goal from which he is not born again.¹⁸

The Upaniṣad suggests a method of inquiry, which may be characterized as regressive, for reaching the Self. We have to proceed from the gross to the subtle, from the outward to the inward, until we reach the Self or the Puruṣa than which there is nothing higher or subtler. One has to give up stage by stage the things which are not-Self—the senses and their objects, the intellect and the mind till one reaches the Self. This method of transcendence from the gross to the subtle, from the subtle to the subtler, and then to the subtlest is the way of mystical contemplation. We cannot go beyond the Self. The Self is the limit of transcendence.

The Upaniṣad presents the imagery of an unusual peepul tree (*aśvattha*) whose roots are above and branches below. The description of the tree is as follows:

This is the beginningless peepul tree that has its roots above and branches below. That (which is its root) is pure; that is Brahman; that is called immortal. In it all the world rest and no one transcends that. This, verily, is that.¹⁹

The tree with its roots and branches represents Brahman or the Self in its manifested form. The concept of the tree suggests that the things of the world, like a tree, are subject to change, that they come into existence, develop, decline, and finally disappear. It is the root system that supports a tree, and it remains concealed as it is covered by the earth. Like the roots, it is Brahman that supports the world-tree. Though Brahman, the cause of the world, cannot be seen in the way in which an empirical object is seen, still we conclude that it exists as the source and support of the world. Brahman, the root of the tree of the world, is pure (*śukram*) as it remains the same all the time untouched by anything, good and bad. It is immortal (*amṛtam*). How the timeless and the temporal are related is a mystery.

The Upaniṣad, through Yama who is its spokesman, assures us that a person who successfully controls the mind and the senses and is free from desires becomes immortal here itself. In the words of the Upaniṣad:

When all desires clinging to one's heart fall off, then a mortal becomes immortal (and he) attains Brahman here. When all the knots of the heart are destroyed, even while a man is alive, then a mortal becomes immortal. This much alone is the instruction (of all the Upaniṣads).²⁰

We have all kinds of desires. It is not enough to be free from desires by controlling the mind and the senses. One should also remove the "knots" of the mind (*hṛdayasya granthayaḥ*.) Śaṅkara in his commentary on the above text says that a "knot" is a wrong idea that we entertain and act on and that it binds a person fast like knots. On account of ignorance we have the wrong ideas such as "I am a man," "This wealth is mine," "I am happy," and so on. In all these cases, as pointed out earlier, there is a wrong identification of the Self with the mind, the senses, and the body resulting in the superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of the qualities of the not-Self on the Self. "When the bondages of ignorance," explains Śaṅkara, "are destroyed by the rise of the opposite knowledge of the identity of the Self and Brahman in the form, "I am Brahman indeed, not the transmigrating self," then the desires originating from the knots get totally eradicated."

V

Inquiry into Man and the World

Philosophy is a thinking consideration of things. There is a widely and strongly prevalent view that the Vedānta system which invokes scriptural authority in support of its position is not philosophy at all as it has dispensed with reason in the formulation and justification of ideas. This is anything but truth. Such a view betrays a lack of understanding of the spirit of Indian philosophy in general and of Vedānta philosophy in particular. Even though Vedānta accepts scripture as the source of knowledge of Brahman or the Self, which is trans-empirical, it accepts perception and other sources of knowledge in matters empirical. Also, it makes use of

reason in the analysis, explanation, and justification of the scriptural position. It is neither irrational in accepting scriptural authority nor dogmatic in exposing the limitations of reason. Moreover, it maintains that there is no conflict between scripture, which deals with the trans-empirical, and other sources of knowledge, whose scope is restricted to things empirical. A text of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says that what is known through scripture should be investigated through reasoning (*manana*) and then should be repeatedly contemplated upon.²¹ What is accepted without proper inquiry, says Śāṅkara, will not be conducive to the good. Consider the opening aphorism (*sūtra*) of the *Brahma-sūtra* which systematizes the various ideas of the Upaniṣads for the purpose of inquiry into them. The opening *sūtra* says: "Now, therefore, the inquiry into Brahman." According to the traditional commentators like Śāṅkara, this brief statement not only says the Brahman, the subject matter of the Upaniṣads, should be inquired into, but also points out *when* and *why* this subject matter should be taken up for inquiry.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* narrates the story of the universe from its origin till the emergence of the human being and then gives an in-depth analysis of the constitution of the human being in order to show through the parallelism between the individual and the cosmic being that Brahman is the source and support of everything. This narrative is followed by the celebrated dialogue between Bṛgu and his father, Varuṇa, which reiterates the epic of the universe narrated earlier. The dialogue conveys, among other things, that philosophy by its very nature is inquiry and that the truth about the

ultimate reality can be known only through inquiry. There is a thematic unity among the three sections of the Upaniṣad. The first section explains scriptural rites and meditations which are remote aids to the attainment of Brahman-knowledge. While the performance of scriptural rites in a spirit of dedication to the Lord purifies the mind, the practice of meditation leads to the concentration of the mind. Only a person whose mind is purified and who is capable of concentration is eligible for the study of the Upaniṣads. The second section of the Upaniṣad explains the nature of Brahman to the eligible person. What is known through the study (*śravaṇa*) must be inquired into through reasoning (*manana*), and so the third section of the Upaniṣad teaches the method of inquiry into Brahman. Eligibility for study, then actual study, and thereafter inquiry—this is the sequence, chronological as well as logical, as we move from the first through the third section of the Upaniṣad. Philosophy is a serious study. It requires the right frame of mind which is the *sine qua non* for both understanding and inquiry. It is against this background that one has to hear the narrative and follow the dialogue.

The second section of the Upaniṣad makes a dramatic beginning. Without saying anything about the person who knows and the object to be known, it announces all on a sudden the fruit that accrues to the knower of Brahman. Its declaration is in a lapidary style. "The knower of Brahman," it declares, "attains the Highest."²² After defining Brahman as real, knowledge, and infinite, it proceeds to show that from Brahman, which is the same as the Self, ether and other elements came into existence, and finally the human being

emerged. The Upaniṣad goes on to say that the Self in the human being is covered by five sheaths (*pañca-kośa*)—the sheath of matter, the sheath of vitality, the sheath of mind, the sheath of intellect, and the sheath of bliss—which are arranged in a telescopic manner one inside another, the outer sheath deriving its being from the inner. The sheaths constitute the gross, the subtle, and the causal bodies of the individual and the cosmic being. What is true of the human being is true of the cosmic being. That which is real in the human being and that which is real in the world—they are the same, though they are spoken of respectively as the Self and Brahman for the purpose of conceptual analysis.

The dialogue between Bhṛgu and Varuṇa, which occurs in the third section, highlights the need for, and the method of, metaphysical inquiry. The highest metaphysical truth cannot be revealed at once even to the earnest seeker of truth. Instruction has to proceed from what is obvious and easily comprehensible to what is subtle and difficult to understand. In this dialogue the father himself plays the role of a teacher. Bhṛgu requested his father, Varuṇa, to teach him Brahman. Varuṇa did not describe Brahman as such-and-such. After stating that matter, life, etc. are the gateways to the knowledge of Brahman, Varuṇa, without telling what Brahman is, gave him a definition of Brahman. He said:

That, verily, from which these beings are born, that by which they live, that into which they finally enter—that, seek to know. That is Brahman.²³

It was difficult for Bhṛgu to make out the nature of the thing defined from this definition. He felt that the

instruction given by his father was incomplete inasmuch as he had to find out Brahman by applying the definition. So with a view to inquire into this definition he performed *tapas*, which in this context means reflection on the subject matter. Reflecting is reasoning. The kind of reasoning which Bhṛgu employed is called the logic of *anvaya-vyatireka*, i.e. the method of agreement and difference. Though inquiry helped him to realize the truth, he had to go a long way in his metaphysical exploration correcting himself and improving from stage to stage as his findings were partial and incomplete. After performing *tapas*, matter (*annam*), he thought, is Brahman, for everything seems to originate from matter, is sustained by it, and finally becomes matter. But he was not sure about his conclusion. So he approached his father with the request, "Venerable Sir, teach me Brahman." Once again his father asked him to do further inquiry for knowing Brahman. Next he thought that life (*prāṇa*) is Brahman and wanted to know from his father whether he was right in his finding. The father again advised him to pursue his inquiry. As a result of further investigation under the guidance of his father, Bhṛgu thought that mind (*manas*), and then intelligence (*vijñāna*) answered the definition of Brahman. Finally, he realized that bliss (*ānanda*) is Brahman.²⁴ So the method of inquiry that Bhṛgu pursued led him from matter to life, from life to mind, from mind to intelligence, and from intelligence to bliss; and his inquiry came to an end when he realized that bliss was Brahman. The Self is bliss; and so Brahman and the Self are identical.

A few comments are relevant at this stage. First, revelation and reason supplement each other. What

scripture reveals is made intelligible by means of reasoning; and reasoning is guided by scripture. Second, inquiry (*vicāra*) which is indispensable for knowing the truth comes to an end only when the goal is reached. Third, one will be able to follow the logic of the dialogue between Varuṇa and Bhṛgu only when it is closely examined against the background of the narrative contained in the previous section of the Upaniṣad. Fourth, matter, life, mind, and intelligence through which Bhṛgu moves in his metaphysical exploration are aspects of reality. Many of us are tempted to say on *prima facie* consideration that matter is the reality. There are philosophers who hold the view that everything can be explained in terms of matter and motion. Further inquiry reveals that life which shows a higher organizational complexity cannot be explained in terms of matter. So is the case with mind and intelligence, each of which functions as an organizing principle at higher levels. To abstract any of these principles out of the whole and consider it by itself will amount to have a fragmented view of the reality. Matter, life, mind, and intelligence—all these are the manifestations of the reality; they constitute a hierarchy with matter, which is gross, at the bottom and the Spirit, or the Self, which is subtle, at the top.

The analysis of the grades of existence, or levels of reality, from matter to Spirit is from the metaphysical perspective. We can also view them from the axiological side. The life of human beings is at different levels—material, vital, mental, intellectual, and spiritual, because they are endowed with matter, life, mind, intellect, and Spirit; and the different values they pursue constitute a hierarchy. Bodily values are the lowest while

spiritual value is the highest. The higher value, it is necessary to emphasize, does not annul the lower value, but fulfils it. The Upaniṣad says that the wise one, who has realized Brahman and who remains as Brahman, attains all desires. The liberated person is in harmony with himself and also in harmony with all. Commenting on the life of a *jīvan-mukta* (the liberated-in-life), Radhakrishnan observes:

The enlightened one attains unity with the All. He expresses wonder that the individual with all limitations has been able to shake them off and become one with the All. To get at the Real, we must get behind the forms of matter, the forms of life, the forms of mind, the forms of intellect. By removing the sheaths, by shaking off the bodies, we realise the Highest. This is the meaning of *vastrāpaharaṇa*. "Across my threshold naked all must pass."²⁵

VI

"Everything is Dear for the Sake of the Self"

The *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* is the greatest of the Upaniṣads—greatest not only because of its voluminous size, but also because of its declarations and dialectics, *upadeśa* and *upapatti*. This Upaniṣad presents us with Yājñavalkya, the greatest champion of non-dualism, who strode the philosophical stage like a Colossus. A scholar and debater without par, he had as his patron and pupil, King Janaka. He had two wives, Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī by name. Maitreyī was a meet companion of this great master of metaphysics. She was responsible for eliciting from her husband some rare passages elucidating the

nature of the Self. Yājñavalkya's dialogue with Maitreyī, which occurs in the second chapter of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, highlights three points—the nature of the Self as the ultimate value, the distinction between absolute and relative standpoints called respectively *pāramārthika* and *vyāvahārika*, and the importance of the spirit of renunciation in the scheme of life for realizing the Self.

Announcing his decision to become a *sannyāsin*, Yājñavalkya told his wife, Maitreyī that he would leave his entire property to be shared by her with Kātyāyanī, his second wife. Maitreyī was a perceptive thinker with philosophical orientation, and so she did not quietly receive Yājñavalkya's announcement.

She wanted to know from Yājñavalkya: "Venerable Sir, if this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, could I become immortal through that?"²⁶

"No," replied Yājñavalkya, "your life will be like that of the rich. There is no hope of immortality through wealth."

Then Maitreyī said: "What should I do with that wealth by which I cannot become immortal? Please tell me, Venerable Sir, the means to immortality."

Being pleased with this question Yājñavalkya said: "O, you, who are dear to me, now speak dear words. Come, sit down, I will explain to you the means to immortality. Even as I explain, carefully reflect on what I say."

Following this dialogue he started his explanation of the nature of the absolute Self. "Nothing is dear for its own sake, he declared, but everything is dear for the sake of the Self."²⁷ Referring to the love we have for

someone as husband, wife, son, and so on, he says that the husband is dear to the wife not for the sake of the husband, but for the sake of the Self. Similarly the wife, or the son, is dear not for the sake of the wife or the son, but for the sake of the Self. One has to extend the logic involved here to other things. His conclusion is that everything is dear, cared for, and loved not for its sake, but for the sake of the Self. It means that the Self which is bliss by its very nature is primary, that other things, whatever they may be, are secondary in relation to the Self, and that the knowledge of the Self is the means to immortality. After explaining the nature of the Self, Yājñavalkya exhorts Maitreyī:

The Self, my dear Maitreyī, should be realized—should be heard of, reflected on, and meditated upon. By the realization of the Self, my dear, through hearing, reflection, and meditation, all this is known.²⁸

It will be helpful to review and reflect on the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī at this stage. First, it is necessary to mention in this connection that Maitreyī was not the only woman with whom Yājñavalkya discussed the highest philosophical truth. There was another woman philosopher by name Gārgī, bold and stubborn, who dialogued with Yājñavalkya in the court hall in which there were many scholars. This shows that women during the Vedic period were as learned as men and that they participated in the philosophical debates and deliberations on a footing of equality with men. As Radhakrishnan remarks, the subjection of women as well as their exclusion from Vedic studies, which was a later development, was not

prevalent during the Upaniṣadic period. Second, when Yājñavalkya says that through wealth one cannot attain immortality, he makes an indirect comment on the utility of scriptural rites as means to liberation. Śaṅkara in his commentary points out that for the performance of rites wealth is needed and that, if wealth is not the means to liberation, rites too for whose performance wealth is needed cannot be the means for attaining liberation. Third, the Self which Yājñavalkya is speaking about in his discourse is not the individuated self identified through the mind-sense-body complex as David or Devadatta. On the contrary, it is the universal Self, the sole reality identical with Brahman, which is the source, support, and end of the entire manifested world. Fourth, interest in, and the pursuit of, the Self should not be construed as selfishness, because the Self which one pursues is the Self of all. Fifth, it is a matter of common experience that in our daily life we not only make all kinds of distinctions, but also evaluate the worth of things in terms of their relation to oneself. Our children are nearer to us than our property. One's spouse is nearer to one than one's children. One's body is nearer to one than one's spouse. The priority of enumeration in respect of these objects, Śaṅkara observes, is in the order of their closeness to us as sources of joy. The hierarchy among these objects is determined by the degree of attachment to them. The closeness or distance of an object depends upon the intensity of our attachment to it. The more the attachment to an object, the closer it is; the less the attachment, the greater is its distance to us. It may be noted that the problem of nearness or distance of an object is mental and not physical. Sixth, though we consider wealth, children, and spouse as sources of joy,

the real source of joy is the Self, because the Self by its very nature is bliss; and all worldly objects, kith and kin, husband and wife, are only manifesters of happiness derived from the Self. The empirical evidence for this is the state of sleep (*susupti*) in which one experiences happiness in the absence of any of these external things—one's spouse, children, wealth, and so on. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* discusses this point at great length in its celebrated calculus of pleasure.²⁹ Seventh, Yājñavalkya's teaching is not intended to show that the things of the world have no value. All of them are valuable to the extent that they help the individual to realize the Self. No object in itself is valuable, but every object is valuable in relation to the Self. Eighth, the inward journey to the Self will be possible only if there is progressive renunciation of the things of the world for the sake of the Self. And finally, the spiritual discipline is so structured that its pursuit and practice presuppose the threefold division of time, one following another. There are three stages in spiritual discipline. Hearing (*śravaṇa*) of scripture is followed by reflection (*manana*) which, again, is followed by contemplation (*nididhyāsana*).

After explaining the nature of the Self, Yājñavalkya gives illustrations to show how the Self is everything in the manifested world. The various objects in the world are differentiations of the one underlying reality which is not usually noticed; however, they do not exist apart from the underlying reality just as the particular notes of a drum, which are but differentiations of the one sound of the drum, are not heard apart, and does not exist separate from the whole sound of the drum. Just as all objects originate from the Self, even so all of them merge in the Self. As the ocean is the one goal of all waters, even so,

argues Yājñavalkya, the one primal reality is the goal of all objects. When the river merges in the ocean, it loses its identity, i.e. its name and form; in the same way when all the objects of the world go back to the source from which they came, they lose their identity, i.e. their name and form. In order to drive home his point to Maitreyī, Yājñavalkya gives another example:

As a lump of salt thrown in water becomes dissolved in water and there would not be any of it to seize forth as it were, but wherever one may take it is salty indeed, so, verily, this great being, infinite, limitless, consists of nothing but knowledge. The Self comes out as a separate entity through these elements, and its separateness is destroyed with them. After attaining this oneness, it has no more [particular] knowledge. This is what I say, my dear.³⁰

A brief explanation is necessary in order to correctly understand what Yājñavalkya means when he says that one who has become identical with the Self, i.e. one who has realized the Self, has no more particular knowledge or consciousness. We carry on our daily life thinking that I am a Brahmin or Kṣatriya, that I am a celibate student or a householder, that I am stout, or blind, or happy, and so on, on the basis of what Śaṅkara calls *adhyāsa*, which is due to spiritual ignorance. We transact all kinds of business in our daily life on the basis of the different kinds of cognitions we have. Cognition, desire, and action constitute a causal nexus. We cognize something; we like it or dislike it; and then according to our mental frame we engage ourselves in appropriate action to attain or avoid it. Every cognition that we have, every mental

episode that takes place in us, is a particular cognition (*viśeṣa-jñāna*). Every cognition has a cognitum. On the basis of the plurality of cognitions we say that there is a plurality of objects. It means that our daily life is based on distinctions such as cognizer, cognition, and cognized. Yājñavalkya says that when the Self, the plenary reality, is realized through knowledge, there is no more plurality, the reason being that the foundational ignorance (*avidyā*) which is the cause of plurality disappears at the dawn of knowledge just as darkness disappears at the onset of light. In other words, Yājñavalkya points out that there is a basic distinction between the state of ignorance and the state of knowledge, a distinction of far-reaching importance to Advaita. The following is his explanation to Maitreyī:

Because when there is duality, as it were, then one smells something, one sees something, one thinks something, one speaks something, one knows something. [But] when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should one smell and through what, what should one hear and through what,... what should one know and through what? Through what should one know That owing to which all this is known—through what, O Maitreyī, should one know the knower.³¹

The man of wisdom transcends the world of plurality. The distinction between the state of ignorance and the state of wisdom is intended for the purpose of highlighting the spiritual ascent from the empirical to the trans-empirical.

VII

The Light of Lights

The two basic epistemological questions which we raise are: "How do we know?" and "What do we know?" While the first question is about the sources of knowledge, the second one is about the objects of knowledge. The dialogue between Janaka and Yājñavalkya helps us to identify the basic principle of all knowing, what Husserl called the principle of principles. King Janaka himself sought instruction from Yājñavalkya on one occasion in fulfilment of a boon granted to him by the latter. The focus of the dialogue was on the self-luminosity of the Self, the light of lights.

The king started the discussion by asking the question, "What serves as the light for a man?"³²

Yājñavalkya replied, "It is the light of the sun, for with the help of the sun he moves about and transacts his business."

"When the sun has set, what provides the light?"

"The moon," Yājñavalkya said, "is his light, for he can do his work with the help of the light of the moon."

"In the absence of the sun and the moon, what provides the light?"

"The fire," replied Yājñavalkya.

"When there is no fire, what serves as the light for a man?"

"Speech, indeed, is his light."

"When the sun and the moon are set, when the fire has gone out and speech has stopped, what provides the light for a man?" asked King Janaka.

“The Self, indeed, is his light, for with the help of the Self one carries on with his work.”

Before we proceed further with the dialogue, it is necessary to bring out the epistemological significance of Yājñavalkya's final reply. Sun no doubt is the primary source of light for us; other luminaries like the moon shine and give us light through the light borrowed from the sun. Moon, fire, and speech do help us as light in some situations. When Yājñavalkya says that the Self is the light through which we know things and get involved in actions, he is highlighting the nature of the Self as pure consciousness which is the presupposition of all kinds of knowing. Usually we say that we know things through the sense organs and the mind. The sense organs by themselves cannot reveal anything unless they are helped by the mind. The mind also by itself cannot reveal anything unless it is helped by the light of the Self. No material object can reveal anything. Since the senses and the mind are material, they cannot reveal anything. The mechanism of the process of knowing is as follows: the Self which is consciousness is reflected in the mind; the mind which carries the reflection of the Self is able to inspire the senses through the borrowed illumination from the Self; thus we are able to cognize things through the senses and the mind. It does not follow from this that the Self always requires the help of the mind and the senses for the purpose of revealing things. The Self is eternal seeing. It can reveal things through the medium of the mind, which is called the internal organ; it can also reveal things directly without any medium. Drawing a distinction between the seeing of the Self and the seeing of the Self through the mind, Śaṅkara observes:

Seeing is of two kinds, ordinary and real. Ordinary seeing is a function of the mind as connected with the visual sense; it is an act, and as such it has a beginning and end. But the seeing that belongs to the Self is like the heat and light of fire; being the very essence of the Witness (Self), it has neither beginning nor end. . . . The ordinary seeing, however, is related to objects seen through the eye, and of course has a beginning. . . . The eternal seeing of the Self is metaphorically spoken of as the Witness, and although eternally seeing, is spoken of as sometimes seeing, and sometimes not seeing.³³

So the Self which is of the nature of consciousness is the presupposition of all knowledge; it is the light of lights (*jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*).

At this stage Janaka wants Yājñavalkya to clarify a doubt. So he asks Yājñavalkya, "Which is the Self?"

"This infinite entity that is identified with the intellect and is in the midst of organs, the light within the intellect, is the Self. . . .," so answered Yājñavalkya.³⁴

Yājñavalkya tells Janaka that the Self which is identified with the intellect or the mind and which exists in the midst of the organs should be distinguished from all of them. Though in our day-to-day life the Self gets involved in waking and dream experience, it remains unaffected by the happenings therein. It moves as it were from waking and dream to deep sleep state, in which it remains quiet, and once again returns to waking and dream states; and this process of action and rest goes on. Yājñavalkya explains this idea with two examples.

As a great fish swims alternately to both the banks (of a river), eastern and western, so does this infinite being move to both these states, dream and waking.

As a hawk or a falcon flying in the sky becomes tired, and stretching its wings, is bound for its nest, so does this infinite being run for this state, where falling asleep he craves no desires and sees no dreams.³⁵

The point to be noted here is that the objects experienced in waking and dream states do not alter the nature of the Self, which is unattached. But in sleep the Self does not experience anything; it has neither desires nor dreams; in this state a father becomes a non-father, a mother, a non-mother, the worlds, non-worlds, the gods, non-gods, and the Vedas, non-Vedas.³⁶ All distinctions vanish, but consciousness remains; for consciousness which is the Self can never be lost; it is indestructible. There is nothing which it can see in that state, for there is no other than it.

Yājñavalkya includes his elucidation of the nature of the Self by pointing out that a person who does not attain the saving knowledge will be reborn. One's *karma* will determine one's future birth. "The doer of good," declares Yājñavalkya, "becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action."³⁷ While a man of desires cannot escape the cycle of birth and death, one who becomes free from desires becomes immortal, attains liberation, here itself. So in conclusion Yājñavalkya says:

The man who does not desire, who is without desire, who is freed from desire, whose desire is satisfied, whose desire is the Self—his breaths do not depart. Being but Brahman, he is merged in Brahman.³⁸

VIII

From the Knowledge of the One to the Knowledge of All

The sixth chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* contains a good introduction to metaphysics. Instead of starting with the definition of metaphysics, the nature of Being and beings, and so on, which we usually find in a text book on metaphysics, the Upaniṣad provides a family background of a concerned father and his conceited son engaged in a dialogue on metaphysical issues. The dialogue starts with the familiar examples which reveal metaphysical principles of great significance. It proceeds from what is ordinary to the extra-ordinary. Though the presentation is simple, the analysis of the issues is sophisticated. It covers the entire range of metaphysics with the view to bring about a transformation of a far-reaching character in the individual. Being an adept teacher, Uddālaka gradually prepares the ground for the surprising denouement, and with a dramatic swiftness makes the great declaration "That thou art" (*tat tvam asi*) at a time when neither Śvetaketu, his son, nor the reader of this Upaniṣadic text is ready for it. He assures Śvetaketu that there is something which is worth knowing by knowing which everything is known; and after giving a few examples by way of illustration he formulates

the thesis that Being (Sat) of which the world is a manifestation is one only without a second (*ekam eva advitīyam*).

According to the story Uddālaka sent his twelve-year old son Śvetaketu to school for studying the Vedas. Śvetaketu returned home after twelve years of study, greatly conceited, thinking himself well read, and arrogant. Naturally Uddālaka was not happy with his son. He asked his son: "Do you know that through which the unheard of becomes heard, the unthought of becomes thought of, the unknown becomes known?"³⁹

"How, venerable Sir, can there be such teaching?" inquired Śvetaketu.

"Just as, my dear, by one clod of clay all that is made of clay becomes known, the modification being only a name arising from speech, while clay alone is real. . . ." answered Uddālaka.

"Verily those venerable teachers," said Śvetaketu, "did not know this; for, had they known, they should have taught me. Venerable Sir, please teach me that."

Uddālaka said: "In the beginning, my dear, this world was Being alone, one only without a second."⁴⁰

Thereafter Uddālaka gave an account of the manifestation of the world from Being. First of all, fire came into existence from Being, from fire came water, and from water came earth. It is not necessary in this context to go into the details about the threefold development narrated by him, thereafter his explanation of sleep, hunger, and thirst, and finally of death. Uddālaka told Śvetaketu that one who does not realize the Self has to die only to be reborn.⁴¹

Having prepared the ground for the final teaching Uddālaka tells Śvetaketu: "That which is the subtle essence (the root of all), this whole world has for its Self. That is the true. That is the Self. That thou art, Śvetaketu."⁴²

While explaining the nature of sleep, Uddālaka said that, when a person is asleep, he is merged in the Self, i.e. he attains his own Self, though he does not know it. Śvetaketu requested his father to instruct him still further as he could not understand how a person in the state of sleep gets absorbed in the Self. Also, if the individual self gets absorbed in the supreme Self for a little while during sleep, how is it that the individual concerned does not know it? Uddālaka helps his son to understand the problem by means of examples. Just to quote one example: "Just as, my dear, the bees prepare honey by collecting the essences (juices) of different trees and reducing them into one essence. Having become one essence, they do not have such distinctive ideas as 'I am the essence of this tree, I am the essence of that tree,' even so, my dear, all these creatures, though they reach Being, do not know that they have reached Being."⁴³ The merger in Being during sleep is only temporary. When these creatures wake up, they become what they were earlier.

There is yet another difficulty faced by Śvetaketu. He was wondering how from Being, which is pure existence devoid of name and form, the differentiated world could come into existence. This time Uddālaka resorts to the example of the banyan (*nyagrodha*) tree in order to explain the point.⁴⁴

He ordered Śvetaketu, "Fetch a fruit from this banyan tree."

"Here it is, Sir."

"Break it."

"It is broken, venerable Sir."

"What do you see in it?"

"Sir, I see these extremely fine seeds."

"Dear son, break one of them."

"Sir, I have done it."

"What do you see in it?"

"Nothing whatsoever, Sir."

Then he told Śvetaketu, "My dear, that subtle essence which you do not perceive inside the seed is the source and support of this great banyan tree. Believe me, my dear." Once again Uddālaka reiterated what he said earlier, namely that Being is the essence or the Self of the entire manifested world and that it is also the Self of Śvetaketu. In other words, Being is the reality of all beings, living as well as non-living.

The thesis which Uddālaka formulates on the basis of the illustrative examples such as clay and the objects made of clay brings out not only the relation between Being and becoming, but also their ontological status. This world of becoming was Being alone in the beginning. It means that Being has assumed the form of becoming; but at the same time it remains "one only without a second." Though Uddālaka's thesis is apparently simple, it contains the problematic which has engaged the attention of philosophers from the beginning. Heraclitus and Parmenides were concerned with the problem of Being and becoming. In recent times Heidegger has examined this problem. The Upaniṣadic thinkers have discussed this problem at great length. A careful reading

of the thesis formulated by Uddālaka in the light of the examples given by him will show that Being is real while becoming is an appearance. The expression "one only without a second" (*ekam eva advitīyam*) is intended to show that there is nothing else besides Being, similar or dissimilar to it, and that it is also free from internal differentiation. There are three kinds of difference—difference between two objects belonging to the same class as in the case of two mango trees, difference between two objects belonging to two different classes as in the case of a tree and a stone, and internal difference as seen in a tree consisting of various parts such as the root system, the trunk, the branches, and so on. These three kinds of difference are known as *sajātīya-bheda*, *vijātīya-bheda*, and *svagata-bheda*. The three words in the expression "*ekam eva advitīyam*" are intended to show that Being is free from all the three kinds of difference. If so, there cannot be the world of becoming. The fact is that we do experience the world of becoming, what is frequently referred to as the world of name and form (*nāma-rūpa-prapañca*). What is experienced cannot be denied. At the same time the world of becoming cannot be real, because Being is the sole reality, one only without a second. The Upaniṣad tackles the problem of Being and becoming by holding that, while Being is real, becoming is an appearance. Being and becoming do not have the same ontological status because both are not real; and so there is no possibility of conflict between them. It is not a case of *either* Being *or* becoming, or of *both* Being *and* becoming; but it is a case of Being appearing as becoming. This will become evident if we consider the illustrative examples given by Uddālaka.

Take the case of clay and the objects made out of it. Uddālaka tells that clay which is the material cause of pot, pan, and so on is real, whereas its modifications (*vikāras*) such as pot, which are effects, exist only in speech and are, therefore, not real. Every object of our experience has name and form; and what strikes us most when we see an object is its form and not its essence. While the former is perceptible, the latter is not with the result that we are forgetful of the essence or the reality of the object. In this respect we are no better than children. Being fascinated by the beautiful form of an elephant made of clay, a child gets absorbed in it without knowing its reality. To it the "elephant", the plaything having a form and a name, is real and not the clay out of which it is made. In the same way we get absorbed in the pluralistic universe without knowing the reality, which remains concealed by it, due to our foundational ignorance. It is now easy for us to understand the promise or the assurance with which the dialogue between Uddālaka and Śvetaketu begins. A person who knows clay can claim that she knows all the objects made out of clay, because all of them, whatever be their names and forms, are clay and nothing but clay. It is the clay that appears as pot, pan, elephant, and so on. Likewise, it is Being (Brahman/Ātman) that appears as the world of becoming. Just as clay alone, which is the cause, is real, even so Being alone which is the final cause or ground of the world is real. It follows that to know Being is to know everything. That is why Uddālaka asks his son whether he has known that "thing" by knowing which he could say that he knows everything.

The analysis of the three states of experience, waking, dream, and deep sleep, finds an important place in the teachings of the Upaniṣads. It brings out the nature of the Self vis-à-vis the mind and the senses. In our normal waking state we experience objects through the functioning of the mind and the senses. Of course, the Self which is the revealing principle supports the work of the mind and the senses. As distinguished from the waking state, the dream state is a condition in which the senses do not function, but the mind is active getting the support of the Self. But in the state of deep sleep both the mind and the senses do not function; only the Self is present as the revealing principle even though there is no object, external or internal, to be revealed by it. It is quiet and peaceful as it is not disturbed by the mind. According to the Upaniṣads, the states of dream and sleep provide us with great metaphysical and epistemological insights. The Upaniṣads make use of the dream experience for establishing the unreality of the objects of waking experience. Just as the objects perceived in dream are unreal, even so the objects perceived in the waking state are unreal. It is not necessary to go into the details about the similarity between dream and waking states. Again, the Upaniṣads make use of the state of deep sleep in order to show how we have access to the Self-in-itself in sleep and enjoy happiness without knowing it. In the state of sleep we remain as the Self losing all distinctions because of the absence of the functioning of the mind and the senses. It is to this experience that Uddālaka refers when he says that, even though we get absorbed in the Self in sleep, we do not know it. The moment we wake up, all kinds of distinctions such as colour, caste, gender, and so on arise because of the

functioning of the mind and the senses. The moral that is suggested by this analysis of the triple states of experience is obvious. The happiness that we enjoy in sleep is only temporary; it has been possible only because of the absence of the functioning of the mind and the senses. One who controls the mind and the senses through moral discipline and transcends the empirical life with the help of knowledge attains eternal bliss, which is characterized as the state of liberation.

There are two kinds of texts in the Upaniṣads: they are called subsidiary texts (*avāntara-vākyas*) and major texts (*mahāvākyas*). The Upaniṣads purport to teach the identity of the individual self and the supreme Self, what is called *jīva-brahma-aikya*. The role of the subsidiary texts is to explain the nature of Brahman, the cause-effect relation between Brahman and the world, the condition and constitution of the *jīva*, and so on, and prepare the ground for the work of the major texts, which directly teach the identity of the *jīva* and Brahman. There are four major texts representing the four Vedas: "Consciousness is Brahman" (*prajñānam brahma*),⁴⁵ "This Self is Brahman" (*ayam ātmā brahma*),⁴⁶ "That thou art" (*tat tvam asi*),⁴⁷ and "I am Brahman" (*aham brahmāsmi*).⁴⁸ The *mahāvākya*, "That thou art" occurs nine times in the sixth chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. The Upaniṣad adopts the same technique which we follow in our discourse. We repeat an idea in order to reinforce it; and this is a well known experience. Likewise, the repetition of the text is for the purpose of emphasizing its importance. Uddālaka instructs his son how from Being (Sat), one only without a second, the world came into existence. After describing in detail the process of

the objective manifestation of the Self of the universe, Uddālaka turns with a dramatic swiftness and says that the universal Self is identical with the Self of Śvetaketu, his son. There is only one Self. The Self in the jīva is no other than the Self of the manifested world. Uddālaka expects his son to realize that he is not a finite being limited by the mind-sense-body outfit, but the immortal and infinite Self. He should dis-cover the Self in him by transcending the mind-sense-body complex. To know the Self is to be the Self. Since one can attain the knowledge of the Self in this life itself, the Upaniṣads hold the view that liberation, which is the ultimate goal, can be attained in this life itself.

NOTES

1. See his introduction to the *Brahma-sūtra*.
2. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p.10).
3. *Ibid.*, pp.46-49.
4. *Ibid.*, p.38
5. See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (hereafter *BU*), 2.4.5.
6. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p.25.
7. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, seventh impression), vol. 1, p. 141.
8. *Ibid.*, p.143
9. 1.1.
10. *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.1.21.
11. *Ibid.*, 1.1.26.
12. *Ibid.*, 1.2.2
13. *Ibid.*, 1.2.4.
14. *Ibid.*, 1.2.14.
15. *Ibid.*, 1.2.18.
16. *Ibid.*, 1.3.1.

17. Ibid., 1.3.3.
18. Ibid., 1.3.8.
19. Ibid., 2.3.1.
20. Ibid., 2.3. 14-15.
21. 2.4.5.
22. *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1.
23. Ibid., 3.1.1.
24. Ibid., 3.2-6.
25. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 561.
26. *BU*, 2.4.2.
27. Ibid., 2.4.5.
28. Ibid.
29. 2.8. 1-4.
30. *BU*, 2.4.12.
31. Ibid., 2.4.14.
32. Ibid., 4.3.1-6.
33. Ibid., Śaṅkara's commentary on 3.4.2.
34. Ibid., 4.3.7.
35. Ibid., 4.3. 18-19.
36. Ibid., 4.3.22.
37. Ibid., 4.4.5.
38. Ibid., 4.4.7.
39. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.1.3-7.
40. Ibid., 6.2.1.
41. Ibid., 6.2-8.
42. Ibid., 6.8.7.
43. Ibid., 6.9.1-2.
44. Ibid., 6.12.
45. *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, 5.
46. *Māndūkya Upaniṣad*, 2.
47. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.7
48. *BU*, 1.4.10.

ADVAITA IN THE WORKS OF KĀLIDĀSA*

N. Veezhinathan

Every system of religion and philosophy has to deal with three concepts of God, soul and the world. While the pluralistic and the theistic schools maintain that these three are distinct realities, the Advaita Vedānta maintains that they are seeming diversifications through *māyā* or *avidyā* of a transcendental entity designated as Brahman or Ātman which is attributeless and absolute consciousness. God is a complex of consciousness and *avidyā* and the soul is a complex of consciousness, *avidyā* and the psycho-physical organism. The true nature of God and soul, therefore, is pure consciousness. Of these two, God is ever-released while the soul, owing to its false identification with the psycho-physical organism has lost sight of its identity with its true nature and undergoes transmigration. It is to attain liberation; that is, it is to remain in its true nature and it is possible by overcoming

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avidyā. The latter could be overcome by self-realization. This, according to the preceptors of Advaita, is the view of the *Upaniṣads*.

Kālidāsa embodies some of these doctrines in his works. The ultimate reality according to Advaita cannot be *known*. There is an apparent contradiction in the *Upaniṣad* itself as regards this position. The text—

*taṁ tu aupaniṣadam puruṣam prcchāmi*¹

which means “I ask about that Brahman which could be known only from the *Upaniṣads*” is specific in stating that the *Upaniṣads* are the sole means of knowing Brahman. Another text—

*yato vāco nivartante, aprāpya manasā saha*²

states that Brahman transcends both speech and mind. This apparent contradiction is resolved by the Advaitin in the following manner. Knowledge is only a mental state or modification of mind in the form of a particular object when there is an interaction of sense of sight with an object—pot; mind also comes out through the sense-organ, reaches the place of the object and undergoes modification in the form of that object. This modification is known as *vṛtti*. And consciousness which is the reality is reflected in it. It is the *vṛtti* that is inspired by the reflection of reality in it that is known as empirical cognition. This *vṛtti* removes the ignorance veiling the object and the reality reflected in it manifests the object. Thus the object becomes *known*. The Upaniṣadic texts, on the other hand, give rise to the mental state in the form of the ultimate reality. The latter is reflected therein. And it is known as the knowledge of reality. Here the *vṛtti* arising from the *Upaniṣads* removes

the ignorance veiling the reality. And the reality, being self-luminous, manifests of its own accord. As in the case of pot etc., it need not be manifested by the reflection of the reality in the mental state. Thus since the reality is not manifested by its reflection in the mental state, it is said to be unknown (*avijñāta*). Since in order that reality may be manifested by its own accord, the removal of ignorance is essential, and since in order that ignorance may be removed, mental state is necessary, and since that mental state is produced by the *Upaniṣads*, it is said that the *Upaniṣads* are the means of knowing the reality. Thus the apparent contradiction in the *Upaniṣads* that the reality is known through the *Upaniṣads* and that it transcends speech in the form of *Upaniṣads* and hence *avijñāta*, is resolved.

The reality is pure consciousness without any attributes. It is *nirviśeṣa*. But the text—

yaḥ sarvajñāḥ sarvavit³

speaks of it as omniscient, that is, as one having omniscience or all-comprehending knowledge. Thus according to this *Upaniṣad*, Brahman is *saviśeṣa*. The Advaitin resolves this contradiction by stating that all-comprehending knowledge is only the modification of *māyā* or *avidyā* present in the reality. The latter associated with the modification of *māyā* which is omniscience is referred to as omniscient. Thus omniscience is falsely presented upon the reality which is attributeless.

Kālidāsa in the *Raghuvamśa* describes Lord Viṣṇu as *sarvajña* and *avijñāta* in the following passage:

sarvajñastvam avijñātaḥ⁴

The *sadvidyā* section of the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* commences with the following statement—

*sadeva saumya idam agra āsīt ekam evādvitīyam.*⁵

This text means that prior to creation this world existed as *sat* which is like nothing, unlike everything and is free from any internal division.

This idea is foreshadowed in the *Ṛgveda* passage:

*na mṛtyurāsīd amṛtaṁ na tarhi
na rātryā ahna āsīt praketaḥ
ānīdavātaṁ svadhayā tadekaṁ
tasmāddhā anyam na paraḥ kiṁcana āsa.*⁶

This *kevalātman* assumes a threefold form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. This conception of a threefold distinction first finds expression in the *Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad*⁷ according to which the reality associated with the *rajas-aspect* of *māyā* is Brahmā, *sattva-aspect* is Viṣṇu and *tamas-aspect* is Śiva. These three aspects are respectively associated with the functions of creation, sustentation and destruction of the world. The predominance of one form of the reality over the other is only based upon the functions of creation, sustentation and destruction.

Kālidāsa embodies these views in the following verses :

*namastrimūrtaye tubhyaṁ prākṣṛṣṭeḥ kevalātmane
guṇatrayavibhāgāya paścād bhedaṁ upeyuṣe.*⁸

and in

*ekaiva mūrtir bibhīde tridhā sā
sāmānyam eṣā prathamāvaratvam*

*viṣṇor harastasya hariḥ kadācit
vedhās tayos tāvapi dhāturādyam.*⁹

The Advaita view is that the world is only a manifestation of Brahman and it has no independent existence apart from Brahman. The text—

*sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma*¹⁰

does not speak of the identity between the world, the insentient one, and Brahman, the sentient principle. For, identity between an insentient entity and a sentient principle is not possible. Hence this text must be taken as saying that Brahman is that which is free from the world. This is analogous to the expression—*yaḥ coraḥ saḥ sthāṇuḥ*.

One who has mistaken a post for a thief later on realizes that it is a post only. His experience and the corresponding expression assume the above form—*yaḥ coraḥ saḥ sthāṇuḥ*. Here the identity between the thief and the post is not intended to be conveyed. On the other hand, what is conveyed is that it is only a post characterized by the absence of thief. In the same way, the above Upaniṣadic text also must be taken to mean that Brahman is characterized by the absence of the world. In other words, it is acosmic. The logical corollary of this view is that the reality is one and that it appears to be many. Kālidāsa refers to this in the text—

*ekastvaṁ saravarūpabhāk.*¹¹

Elsewhere he says :

*tvam eva havyaṁ hotā ca bhojyaṁ bhoktā ca śāśvataḥ
vedyaṁ ca veditā cāsi dhyātā dhyeyaṁ ca yat param.*¹²

The reality is spoken of here as the world of objects and as the soul.

We had already referred to the Advaita position that the true nature of God is only consciousness and that it is the substratum of *avidyā* or *māyā*. This, Kālidāsa refers to in the following verse:

*sa hi devaḥ param jyotiḥ tamaḥ pāre vyavasthitam.*¹³

The expression *tamaḥ pāre* is very significant. This phrase occurs in the text—

*tasmai mṛditakaṣāyāya tamasah
pāram darśayati bhagavān sanatkumārah.*¹⁴

The word *pāram* means *adhiṣṭhāna* or substratum and the expression *tamasah pāram* means the substratum of *avidyā* or *māyā*. In the passage cited above, namely, *sa hi devaḥ*, etc. Kālidāsa not only refers to the transcendental form of the Lord as pure consciousness but speaks of it as the substratum of *avidyā*. It is in this light only that the other passage of Kālidāsa—

*yam akṣaram kṣetravido vidustam
ātmānam ātmanyavalokayantam*¹⁵

must be understood.

Another important concept of Advaita is that of *sākṣī*. The latter is the witness of *jīva* and its activities. It is free from any activity. The soul is pure consciousness that is immanent in the mind. *Sākṣī* is admitted to be the pure consciousness that transcends the mind. It is identified with God in the text—

*eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ
sarvavyāpī sarvabhūtāntarātmā*

*karmādhyakṣaḥ sarvabhūtādhivāsaḥ
sākṣī cetāḥ kevalo nirguṇaśca*¹⁶.

God is thus the *sākṣī* or the witness of the souls and their activities. We find this view echoed in the following passage of Kālidāsa:

*sa te duhitaram sākṣāt sākṣī viśvasya karmaṇām
vṛṇute varadaḥ śambhuras matsamkrāmitaiḥ padaiḥ.*¹⁷

We referred to the Advaita position that the soul has to realize its identity in order to attain liberation. In other words, knowledge of reality is the means to liberation. Kālidāsa refers to such a view when he describes the confluence of the two holy rivers—Gaṅgā and Yamunā, by saying that even without the knowledge of reality a holy bath in the confluence of the two rivers would lead to liberation:

*samudrapatnyor jalasamnipāte
pūtātmanām atra kilābhiṣekāt
tattvāvabodhena vināpi bhūyas-
tanutyajām nāsti śarīrabandhaḥ.*¹⁸

Kālidāsa, it is seen, does not make any distinction between Śiva and Viṣṇu—the two forms of God based upon which the two creeds of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism have brought about two distinct sects within the fold of Hinduism and thereby created needless sectarian controversies. It will be instructive at this stage to note that in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Bharata makes a reference to this sectarian controversy. He says:

“Let that person, by whose influence Śri Rāma had gone to the forest, be associated with the sin that would ensue as a result of carrying on disputation,

on the basis of mistaken conception of one's duty whether Lord Śiva is great or Viṣṇu."

*bhaktyā vivadamāneṣu mārgam āśritya paśyataḥ
tena pāpena yujyeta yasyāryo 'numate gataḥ.*¹⁹

The *Advaita-bhāva* envisaged by Kālidāsa between Viṣṇu and Śiva is his greatest contribution to the Hindu religion in general and to Advaita in particular. Śaṅkara in one of his hymns to Mother Gaṅgā prays that he be endowed with devotion involving identity between Śiva and Viṣṇu:

*mātaḥ jāhnavi śambhusaṅgamilite maulau nidhāyāñjalim
tvattīre vapuṣo 'vasānasamaye nārāyaṇāṅghridvayam
sānandaṁ smarataḥ bhaviṣyati mama prāṇaprayāṇotsave
bhūyād bhaktiḥ avicyutā hariharādvaitātmikā śāsvatī.*²⁰

Although no distinction is allowed to be made between one form of God and another form of it, yet one could choose a particular form for worship. In short, we are allowed to have preferences but definitely no exclusions. It is in this spirit that Kālidāsa in the last verse of *Śākuntala* prays to that form of God, namely, Śiva, to grant him liberation—

*mamāpi ca kṣapayatu nīlaloḥitaḥ
punarbhavaṁ parigataśaktirātmabhūḥ.*²¹

Here the expressions *nīlaloḥitaḥ*, *parigataśaktiḥ* and *ātmabhūḥ* are highly significant. These three respectively stand for the *sakala*, the *sakala-niṣkala* and the *niṣkala* aspects of the reality. The *sakala* aspect is the embodied form of the reality. The second one is the conditioned form of reality but it is unembodied. It is associated with the primal cause *māyā* which is designated as *śakti*. *Niṣkala* is the acosmic form of the reality. By the expression

nīlaloḥitaḥ, Kālidāsa refers to the *sakala*-aspect. The expression *parigataśaktiḥ* etymologically means *parigatā militā śaktiḥ śivā yasya* and it refers to the *sakala-niškala*-aspect. The expression *ātmabhūḥ* (*ātmā cāsau bhūśca*) stands for the *niškala*-aspect.

Śaṅkara in his *Saundaryalaharī* speaks of the three aspects of the reality as *saguna* but *nirākāra*, *saguna* and *sākāra*, *nirguna* and *nirākāra* in the verse:

*girāmāhur devīm druhiṇagrhiṇīm āgamavidāḥ
hareḥ patnīm padmām harasahacarīm adritanayām
turīyā kāpi tvam duradhigamanissīmamahimā
mahāmāyā viśvam bhramayati parabrahmamahīṣī.*

It is evident from the above that the two aspects of reality, one associated with attributes and forms and another associated with attributes but formless are the illusory manifestations through *māyā* of the ultimate reality—Brahman. Kālidāsa is thus quite conversant with the traditional interpretation of Advaita.

Our land is called Bhārata, not because as it is commonly understood that it was ruled by the king Bharata, but because it has been inhabited by those who revel in Brahman—the self-luminous consciousness:

bhāsamāne brahmaṇi ratāḥ bhāratāḥ.

And Kālidāsa truly represents this tradition. The prerogative of a poet is to help us to see aright both within and without. It is his privilege to create a society which is religiously coherent, aesthetically beautiful and spiritually integral. Kālidāsa has accomplished this and it is his greatest contribution to Hindu religion and philosophy.

NOTES

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 3.9.26.
2. *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 2.4.
3. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 1.1.9.
4. *Raghuvamśa*, X.20.
5. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 6.2.1.
6. *Rgveda*, 10.129.2.
7. *Maitrāyaṇyupaniṣad*.
8. *Kumārasambhava*, II. 4.
9. *Ibid.*, VII. 44.
10. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 3.14.1.
11. *Raghuvamśa*, X.20
12. *Kumārasambhava*, II. 15.
13. *Ibid.* II. 58.
14. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 7.26.2.
15. *Kumārasambhava*, III. 50.
16. *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 6.11.
17. *Kumārasambhava*, VI. 78.
18. *Raghuvamśa*, XIII. 58.
19. *Rāmāyana*, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, LVII. 58.
20. *Gaṅgāṣṭaka*.
21. *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, VII. 35.

From *Gurubhujāṅgastotra*

O Lord! if I remain with the consideration for my body, then I become your humble servant. If I consider myself as a personal Soul, then I become a part of Yours. But if I view myself as Soul (pure, with all attributes rejected), then I become none but Yourself. Yet, O Lord! day after day, I remain with the consideration for my body; and I offer my homage to you. Be merciful please.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

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संसाराध्वनि तापभानुकिरणप्रोद्भूतदाहव्यथा-

खिन्नानां जलकाङ्क्षया मरुभुवि भ्रान्त्या परिभ्राम्यताम् ।

अत्यासन्नसुधाम्बुधिं सुखकरं ब्रह्माद्वयं दर्शय-

न्त्येषा शङ्करभारती विजयते निर्वाणसन्दायिनी ॥

samsārādhvani tāpabhānukiraṇaprodbhūtadāhavyathā-
khinnānāṃ jalakāṅkṣayā marubhuvi bhrāntyā

paribhrāmyatām

atyāsannasudhāmbudhiṃ sukhakaram brahmādvayaṃ

darśayant-

yeṣā śaṅkarabhārati vijayate nirvāṇasandāyini.

To those who are afflicted, in the way of the world, by the burning pain given rise to by the scorching sun-shafts of misery, and who through delusion wander about in the desert (of worldliness) seeking water — showing the felicitous ocean of nectar, which is very near, the non-dual *Brahman*, this — the Voice of Śaṅkara — is victorious, leading, as it does, to liberation.