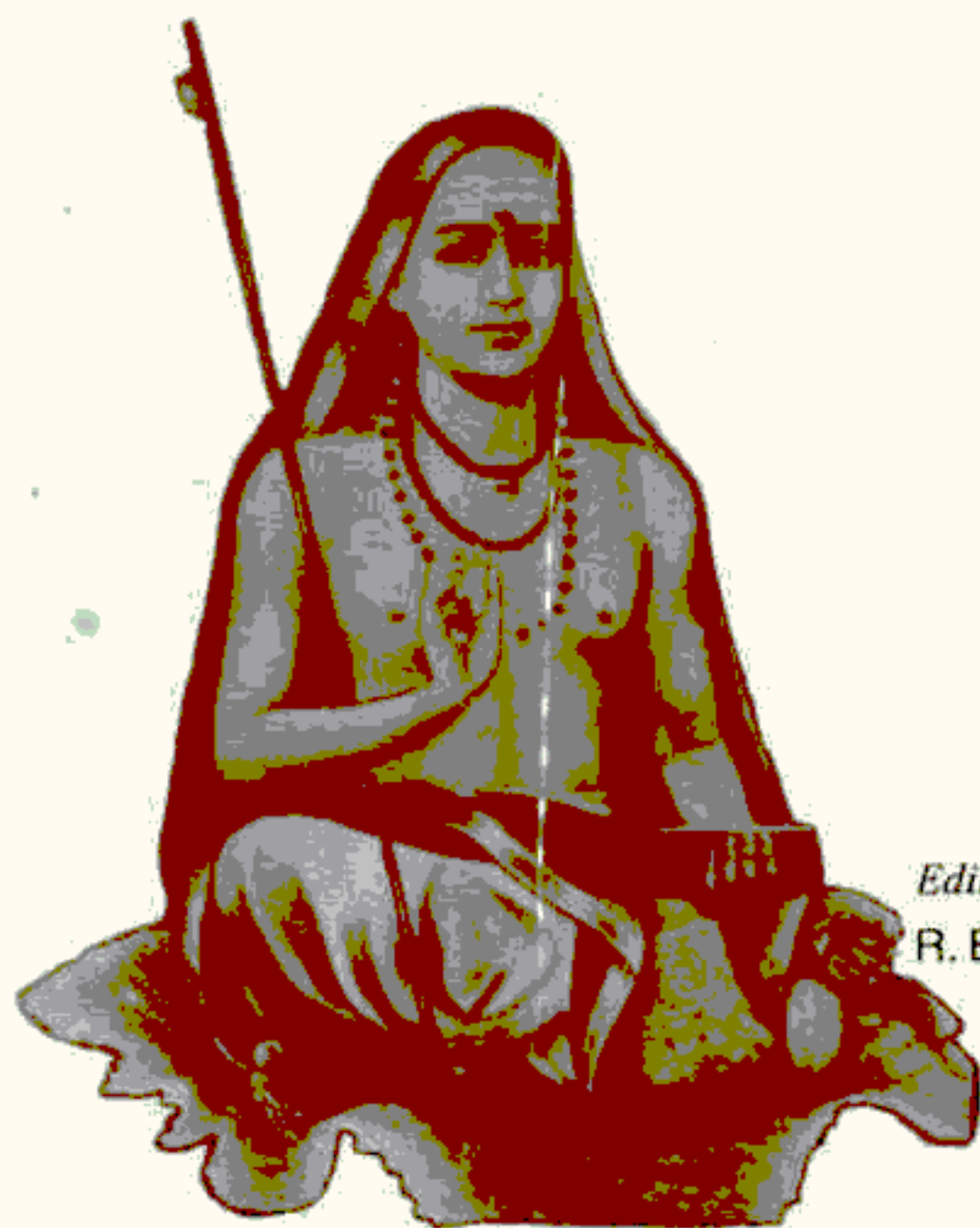


# *The VOICE of* **ŚAṆKARA**

śaṅkara-bhāratī



*Editor*

R. Balasubramanian

**esā śaṅkara-bhāraṇi vijayata  
nirvāṇa-saṁdāyini**

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

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1

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HOMAGE TO ŚAṆKARA

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[181]

वक्तारमासाद्य यमेव नित्या  
सरस्वती स्वार्थसमन्वितासीत् ।  
निरस्तदुस्तर्ककलङ्कपङ्का  
नमामि तं शङ्करमर्चिताङ्घ्रिम् ॥

*vaktāramāsādyā yamevā nityā*  
*sarasvatī svārthasamanvitāsīt*  
*nirastadustarkakalaṅkapaṅkā*  
*namāmi taṁ śaṅkaramarcitāṅghrim.*

I salute Śrī Śaṅkara whose feet were worshipped by all; and on obtaining that exponent, the eternal speech—the Veda—became possessed of its true import; for, from it the fallacious reasoning, metaphorically, the dirt and loose clay, has been removed.

Sarvajñātman in the *Śaṅkṣepaśārīraka*

## THUS SPAKE ŚAṆKARA

This unreal, phenomenal existence created by differentiation is indeed a fact for those who do not believe in things as different from Brahman as well as for those who do believe. But the believers of the highest truth, while discussing in accordance with the Śrutis, the actual existence or non-existence of things apart from Brahman, conclude that Brahman alone is the one without a second, beyond all finite relations. So there is no contradiction between the two views. We do not maintain the existence of things different from Brahman in the state when the highest truth has been definitely known, as the Śrutis say, 'One only without a second,' and 'Without interior or exterior' (II. v. 19; III. viii. 8). Nor do we deny the validity, for the ignorant, of actions with their factors and results while the relative world of name and form exists. Therefore scriptural or conventional outlook depends entirely on knowledge or ignorance. Hence there is no apprehension of a contradiction between them. In fact, all schools must admit the existence or non-existence of the phenomenal world according as it is viewed from the relative or the absolute standpoint.

Commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.5.1



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 ON THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ
 

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Śrī Candrasekharendra Sarasvatī

1. Message of the Gītā

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।  
मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सञ्जय ॥

This is the opening verse of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and it is capable of an interpretation which will convey the central teaching of the *Gītā*. The first line of the śloka can be rendered into the following prose order: *Kṣetre dharma-kṣetre (satī) kuru*. According to the interpretation I have in mind, the meaning of this line is: When the *kṣetra* or the body is *dharma-kṣetra*, that is, strong and fit enough to perform dharmas or virtuous and meritorious deeds, *kuru* perform those deeds. Why should you do them? Here, in the body, are gathered intent on fight, *māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva*. *Māmakāḥ* in this context are *mamakāra* and *ahaṅkāra*, the egoistic sense of “my” and “I”, which is *rājasic* and *tāmasic* in quality. *Pāṇḍavāḥ* are the *sātvic* qualities which are absolutely pure *cittavṛttis* signified by white. This conflict between *māmakāḥ* and *pāṇḍavāḥ* makes a mess of your

being (*kim-akurvata*) and fouls the springs of dhārmic action. Therefore, this is the time when one should act in accord with dharma as prescribed in the *śāstra*. Says the Lord in another place:

तस्मात् शास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।  
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥

The meaning of this advice is: "Let *śāstra* be thy authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Knowing the scriptural law, thou shouldst do thy work in this world according to it."

Secular laws are determined by time, place and circumstances and are liable to modification. They are limited in the duration of their validity and in the extent of their application. But the laws of dharma, enunciated by our ancient seers, are valid for all times, from *śṛṣṭi* to *pralaya*, for this world or for any world. *Śāstra pramāṇam* is unshakable as it has stood firm as a rock, in spite of all vicissitudes. According to the interpretation of the opening verse of the *Gītā* I was referring to, if you perform your duties as prescribed in the *śāstras*, as an offering to God, without attachment, you become *sat* (सत्), noble and pure, and then *jaya* (जय) victory, is yours.

"Jaya" (जय) means victory, and this word consists of two letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, *ja* and *ya*. According to the mnemonic numerology, a code known as *kaṭapayādi saṅkhyā*, "jaya" stands for the number 18. When decoded, *ja* is 8, and *ya* is 1, and so *jaya* is 81. But this rule also says that the numbers should be taken in the reverse order, *viparītakramo draṣṭavyaḥ*. So, in actual interpretation, 81 becomes 18. And this number 18 denotes *jaya* or victory. The



invocation śloka of the *Mahābhārata* contains the word “*jaya*”. The verse is:

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य नरञ्चैव नरोत्तमम् ।  
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

This *jaya*, which means victory, is equivalent to 18. There are also other significant occurrences of the number 18 in the *Mahābhārata*. The *Mahābhārata* consists of 18 *parvas*; the contending armies in the Kurukṣetra war were 18 in number, and the battle itself was waged for 18 days. There are 18 chapters in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which occurs in the middle of the *Mahābhārata*. And 18, when written in code, is *jaya*, victory.

The word “*sat*” is derived from *asti*, and *san* is the nominative singular of *sat* and denotes one who is eminently pure. The last word in the opening śloka of the *Gītā*, सञ्जय, which is, ordinarily, understood as apostrophising the narrator, Sañjaya, is to be split up into *san* and *jaya*. It is also to be noted that the word “*jaya*” occurs in the opening and the concluding verses of the *Gītā*—*kim-akurvata sañjaya*, and in *tatra śrīrviṣṇavo bhūtiḥ* (तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिः).

If a farmer does the various agricultural operations like ploughing, manuring, watering, planting and weeding, when the field is in a fit and proper condition, then he will reap a good harvest. Even so, if one engages oneself in the performance of dhārmic duties while one’s *kṣetra* (body) is a *dharma-kṣetra*, fit for the culture of dharma, then one becomes *sat* and need not exert oneself any more after that. It is only when one acts in the proper way and at the proper time that one can withdraw from all actions later. Action is thus the means for

attaining the state of actionlessness. For, one would have then achieved "That" beyond which there is nothing else to be obtained, and so there will be no need for any further action.

Thus the first *śloka* of the *Bhagavad-gītā* serves as a *maṅgalācarāṇa*, invocatory verse, from the point of view of specification of the subject of the work (*vastu-nirdeśa*), the other forms of *maṅgalācarāṇa* being benediction and supplication, *āśīḥ* and *namaskāra*. The above interpretation of the first verse of the *Gītā* may appear novel, yet it is interesting and significant. The *Gītā* has been interpreted in many ways by earnest students, even as God is approached in diverse ways in accordance with the Lord's declaration:

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।  
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥

Every interpretation as well as every approach finds acceptance and fulfilment both in God and in God's Song.

## 2. Universality of the *Gītā*

The teachings embodied in the *Bhagavad-gītā* possess eternal value and are universal in their applicability. This is the only philosophical work that enjoys the widest currency. It has been translated and annotated into several Indian and Western languages. Its message continues to be as fresh and inspiring today, as it was when the Lord delivered it to Arjuna. Though there are other equally elevating teachings, some of which have also the suffix "*Gītā*", why is that the *Bhagavad-gītā*, alone, the Celestial Song, the message of true knowledge delivered to Arjuna by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, has come to occupy a



supreme place and to possess eternal value? The answer is to be found in the setting in which this divine message was given to the world.

The setting of the *gītopadeśa* is the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, where the two contending armies, the armies of the Pāṇḍavas and the armies of the Kauravas, are arrayed in battle formation and poised to go into action at the given signal. Arjuna is the central figure in this interesting drama. He is seated in his chariot and Lord Kṛṣṇa himself is the charioteer. Arjuna, who, a little while ago, more or less directed Śrī Kṛṣṇa to spur the horses forward and station his chariot between the opposing armies, has humbled himself into the position of a pupil at the feet of the Divine Charioteer, whom he has raised to the pedestal of a teacher. Arjuna surrenders himself unreservedly to the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and implores him to guide him: शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वाम् प्रपन्नम् he says. And what a place to teach and to learn! The situation is so tense that Arjuna is not sure whether the next moment his head will be standing intact on his shoulders, or will be rolling in the dust soaked with the blood of the fighting men. In actual life, we see that a passing shower is enough to melt an audience listening to a discourse on *tattva* (truth). People are more concerned with saving their clothes than hearing advice, however ennobling it may be. But here is a case where a man in the jaws of death is wanting to learn, and the Lord is willing to teach. It is this setting that has endowed the *Bhagavad-gītā* with eternal value and supremacy over all other teachings.

There is also another aspect to the situation. Arjuna has proved himself fit to receive any *upadeśa* (advice or direction) the Lord may choose to give. Hostilities are about to commence, and there is no knowing how many and who all will lose their lives. Arjuna is no coward and does not want to run away from the battlefield, though he



has expressed his unwillingness to fight. His only objection to fight is that the war will entail his killing those whom he regards as his elders and relations. He does not mind being killed by the opponents, without himself raising even his little finger to harm those arrayed in the opposite camp. In fact, he desires this to happen, so that the slaughter inherent in a war may be avoided. That means, Arjuna has overcome all desires and attachment to life. He has attained *vairāgya*, the state of mind which is fit to receive true knowledge. There can be no better touchstone to test the *vairāgya* (complete detachment) of a person than the battlefield. Arjuna is desirous to learn the only thing that matters—jñāna or truth. Seeing that Arjuna has come out successful in the qualifying test and made himself fit to receive knowledge, the Lord teaches him. That is also how the message of the *Gītā* has come to possess eternal and lasting value.

Incidentally, Arjuna has made out a good case for banning all wars. He says that any war is wrong and if one side is foolish enough to resort to arms, it is better to ward off aggression by refusing to retaliate, and thereby bringing about unilateral disarmament. In that case, the casualty will be low. The violence of war is different from the violence of punishment imposed by a judge for a crime. A judge is a disinterested person and punishment is intended to act as a deterrent, to check the tendency to commit crimes or evil deeds. The disgrace attached to imprisonment and the hardship inside jails make people afraid to commit crimes. Even in modern times, when the disgrace attached to imprisonment has been converted into an honour by political convictions, when life within jails is better than the life many people are obliged to lead outside jails, the consequences of punishment still do act as a check to increase in crimes. But war stands on a different footing. It wipes out elders from society, leaving children and

women without any guidance. Consequently there is disruption of family life, leading to deterioration of dharma and the loss of chastity. When women lose their chastity, *varṇa-saṅkara* is the consequence. *Varṇa-saṅkara* results in suffering *naraka* or unmitigated misery, for the persons responsible for it as well as for the families affected. Therefore, argues Arjuna, a war instead of leading one to *mokṣa*, eternal bliss, will lead only to *naraka*, eternal misery. In the general interest of dharma, it is far better to submit bravely and without retaliating to extermination than to retaliate and suffer greater human loss. After expressing this view, Arjuna remains heart-broken.

But how does Kṛṣṇa meet the argument? His reply contains a touch of admonition. "Cast off your mental weakness and arise," says Kṛṣṇa. क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप "If you decide to refrain from fighting, it must not be from a sense of grief over the deaths that will result from it. Your weeping implies that you are affected by egoism and attachment, the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. Fighting is the action that you should do as a Kshatriya. In your present state of mind, you have not attained the qualification to abjure all actions. Activity ceases only in the case of an unattached person. You are attached to your relatives, elders and teachers and bemoan their sure death in the battle. And so, inactivity is not yours now. You have not yet acquired to *siddhi* which will justify that inactivity. To attain that *siddhi*, you should do the karma ordained by your *svadharma*," says the Lord. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa wants Arjuna to achieve personal perfection before he can qualify for this humanitarian attitude of absence from fighting.

The Lord's teachings embodied in the *Gītā* contain the answer to the question often posed, namely, which should have preference, individual salvation or *lokakṣema*. The *Gītā* makes it plain that unless



one is perfect oneself, one is not qualified to engage oneself in acts of public good, *lokakṣema*. A person who weeps or is angry, that is, a person who is himself subject to *duḥkha* or *krodha*, cannot succeed in removing the like ills of others. The man who is subject to delusion (*bhrānti*) is not qualified to rid the world of its delusions.

And if there is a person who has overcome grief and other infirmities that subvert the soul, then his very existence in this world will contribute to public weal. He need not go out to reform the world, he need not strive for *lokakṣema*; the world will learn to reform itself by his example and its consequent conduct will, of its own accord, lead to *lokakṣema*.

The only way to overcome *duḥkha* and other infirmities is through *jñāna*. That is why the Lord proceeds to gradually instruct Arjuna in the truths of *ātma-jñāna*, which ultimately dispels his delusion and makes him exclaim, *naṣṭo mohaḥ*. The *Gītā* begins with the *viśāda* (grief) of Arjuna. The Lord chided him for it at the commencement of his *Gītopadeśa*, but towards the close tells him, "do not grieve", *mā śucaḥ*. The command to fight, *tasmāt yuddhyasva*, shows that even at the cost of the death of many warriors on both sides, one should perform one's *svadharma* as a *kṣatriya*. For, the practice of *svadharma*, without attachment and with resignation, will alone make for *citta-śuddhi* so necessary for *jñāna-prāpti*. Such a *jñānī* becomes a perfect soul, who, by his very presence, brings about *lokasaṅgraha* in the truest sense of the term, and in the most effective manner. Individual elevation will enable one to lift up others.

### 3. Teachings of the *Gītā*

In the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa gives various kinds of *upadeśas* (advice) to Arjuna, which seem to be contradictory. He instructs Arjuna on the

performance of karma (action), in the fulfilment of his duty. We meet with such directions as the following in the *Gītā*: *tasmāt yudhyasva bhārata*; therefore fight, O! Arjuna; *kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam*—therefore do thy karma only; *kāryam karma karoti yah*—he who does his appointed karma; *niyataṁ kuru karma tvam*—do your karma always; *yajñārthāt-karmaṇo'nyatra* — do your karma for the sake of, that is, as a dedication to God. *Yajña* in this context means *Īśvara*. In the last chapter of the *Gītā*, the Lord says: “*sve sve karmaṇy-abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate narah*” and points to the obligation of each person performing his *svakarma*. All these statements will go to show that Bhagavān taught *karma-yoga* to Arjuna. That *karma-yoga* is the main teaching of the *Gītā*, is the thesis of Lokmanya Tilak in his *Gītā-rashasya*.

But we find elsewhere in the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa advising Arjuna to withdraw from action. The Lord says, “*naiva kurvan na kārayan*,” i.e. neither doing nor making another do. There is a direction to retire alone to a secluded place—*rahasi sthitaḥ ekākī*. These instructions indicate conditions which do not make for action. How are these conflicting pieces of advice to be reconciled? In the *Gītā*, where karma is extolled as the primary function, bhakti and jñāna are said to be ancillary to it. When either bhakti or jñāna is sought to be extolled, the other two are made ancillary. The answer for this apparent conflict is to be found in Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya* (commentary) on the *Gītā*. Explaining the second half of the verse:

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।  
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

Śaṅkara observes that *siddhi* referred to here is not immediate *mokṣa*, but *citta-suddhi* and *yoga-siddhi*, which qualify one for jñāna



(*jñāna-niṣṭhā योग्या-लक्षणं सिद्धिम्*). It is only when the mind is purified by karma and is able to concentrate through *yoga*, that it can acquire *Brahma-jñāna*. If the mind is fouled and agitated by desires, it will be distracted and degraded, and the light of *jñāna* cannot penetrate it. Kāma, who may be regarded as Viṣṇu's son, is so respectful towards his father that he will not appear in his presence. "Where there is Rāma, there is no Kāma, and where there is Kāma, there is no Rāma," says Tulsi Das. The Ālvārs have sung that Viṣṇu is having Śiva on his right side, and in the Śaivite literature, there is a reference to Śiva keeping Viṣṇu on his left side—*mādāna mādhanai*. According to the Purāṇas, there are two occasions when Viṣṇu took the form of Mohinī. All this goes to strengthen the fact that there is no difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu and that Paramātmā is the combination of Śiva and Śakti, of both static and creative forces.

Bhakti too, like karma, is ancillary to *jñāna*. The Lord says:

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान् यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।

"One comprehends my limited nature by bhakti." It means that bhakti limits the Supreme in terms of name, form and qualification, such limitations being natural and necessary for bhakti. Such bhakti, at its fruition, elicits the grace of God, who dowers the votary with *jñāna*, knowledge of the true nature of the Supreme (*tato mām tattvato jñātvā*), and then effects merger or *laya* with it (the Supreme). The *Gītā* uses the expression "*viśate tad-anantaram*" getting merged into it and becoming indistinguishable from it, like a block of ice melting and merging with the water in which it is placed, or like rivers losing their individuality when they join the ocean. It is to be noted that the expression "*tad-anantaram*" does not indicate any lapse of time—one thing happening after another—but connotes immediacy or



without *antaram*. Different *upadeśas* prescribing karma, bhakti, and jñāna to different people are based on qualificational differences, and karma, when pursued with constancy, will lead to bhakti, and bhakti to jñāna. Arjuna, who was in a mood of dejection, was first told to do the karma which was appropriate to his station, and this advice was determined by his mental condition at that time. That is why the Lord laid stress on karma in the beginning.

What is our *svakarma* at this juncture? Even under modern conditions of life, every man must make it a point to cook his own food at least once a week and also make his daily diet as simple as possible. If this is done, you need have no worry about your food when you are away from home. No one should use silk for his apparel as silk yarn is obtained only after killing thousands of silk-worms. Domestic economy requires that you should give up the coffee habit. Every one should learn to meditate with the help of the *upadeśa mantra* he has received from a competent guru. Those who are not initiated in any such *mantra*, should at least devoutly repeat the Lord's name and concentrate on it. Let each follow the way of devotion that is traditional in his family (*paramparā prāptam*). Let no one pride himself on his caste or status. We should think only of the duties of our respective castes, without any consciousness of superiority or inferiority. Whatever be one's caste, if one has devotion to God, one can become merged in God. Caste-consciousness can be eradicated only if one is filled with regard for dharma and with bhakti and jñāna. A holy man, a sage, or a wise man, has no consciousness of caste since he is full of bhakti and jñāna. When dharma wanes in the acts of men, bhakti ebbs in their hearts, and jñāna becomes eclipsed in their minds. Then caste distinctions get underlined. When people in high places advocate the abolition of caste, they must also at the same time plead

for an increase in dharma, bhakti and jñāna. By merely stressing that caste distinctions should go, they will only be accentuating the caste distinctions. It will be like asking a child not to think of the monkey when drinking the medicine. When dharma, bhakti and jñāna take deep root, the caste differences will recede to the background. Do we not adore great jñānīs and bhaktas, irrespective of their caste? The greatest and noblest among us look on themselves as the lowest. Arrogance of caste superiority is a sin according to our *śāstras*. Caste indicates duties, and every one ought to do the duties that pertain to his caste with humility and devotion and not pride himself on his caste. Every one, whatever his caste, should regard himself as a *nikṛṣṭa* and not as an *utkrṣṭa*. There is a tradition in Srirangam that when one is called to receive temple honours, one should respond with the words “nāyinen”, meaning one lower than a dog has come. This humility is clearly expressed in the songs of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava saints. Let the Almighty endow us with strength and intelligence to pursue the right path.



## PRAKĀŚĀTMAN\*

B.K. Sengupta

It is as a humble homage to the memory of an Advaita Ācārya Prakāśātman, that I contribute this paper (with special reference to his critique of Mahāyāna Buddhism) on an Advaita theory which has stood the onslaughts of a very challenging school, the Mahāyāna Buddhism. To arrive at the right Advaita conclusion is very difficult, inasmuch as the mess and tangle of logic of the controversy have to be dismembered—in parts and in final analysis.

S.N. Dasgupta says:

Prakāśātman (A.D. 1200) in his *Pañcapādikā-vivaraṇa* raises this point and says that the great difference between the Mahāyānists and the Vedāntists consists in the fact that the former hold that the objects (*viṣaya*) have neither any separate

\* Courtesy: *Preceptors of Advaita*, Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Śaṅkara Mandir, Secunderabad, 1968. Dr B.K. Sengupta, Formerly of the Department of Sanskrit, University of Burdwan, Burdwan.

existence nor any independent purpose or action to fulfil as distinguished from the momentary ideas, while the latter hold that, though the objects are in essence identical with the one pure consciousness, yet they can fulfil independent purposes or functions and have separate, abiding and uncontradicted existence.<sup>1</sup>

Compare: *tattvadarśinastu advitīyāt saṁvedanāt abhede'pi viśayasya bhedenāpi artha-kriyāsāmarthyasattvaṁ sthāyitvaṁca abādhitamastīti vadanti* (*Pañcapādikā-vivaraṇa*, p. 73, Vizianagaram edition). *anuvṛttasya vyāvṛttānna bhedo'nuvṛttatvāt ākāśaghaṭādivat* (Ibid.)

The implications of this approach, as pointed out by Dasgupta, are manifold. First, there is the logical question of the separateness of the object and its knowledge. This question has further to be dependent on an ontological approach and, therefore, the two schools have to face each other. But the second, and more important, question will be about the real crux in the matter of the analysis and approach, which we find in the reality of all existence, apart from its epistemological analysis.

Prakāśātman wrote the famous sub-commentary *Pañcapādikā-vivaraṇa*, on the *Pañcapādikā*, a commentary by Padmapāda on the *Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya* of Śaṅkara. Coming to the *Pañca-pādikāvivaraṇa* of Prakāśātman, we land ourselves in the epoch-making period of this school, and hence forward move towards a history of dialectical literature of Advaita philosophy, which bases itself solidly upon the conclusions arrived at in clear terms by Prakāśātman. From the colophon of his work we know that his real name is Svaprakāśānubhava-bhagavat, or simply Svaprakāśānubhava, and he was the disciple of



Ananyārubhava.<sup>2</sup> But the more commonly known name of the author of the *Pañcapādikāvivarana* is Prakāśātmayati or Prakāśātman.<sup>3</sup>

The Advaitin's stand-point regarding the awareness of the object is distinct from the view of Mahāyāna Buddhism, specially in the Yogācāra school. When two objects are perceived, they are perceived as distinct from each other where the distinctness is perceptible. Supposing, according to the Mahāyānist, we perceive a "nīla" (blue) and "pīta" (yellow) substance (which is itself an object of perception as this or that). The Yogācāra view will lead us to the unity of consciousness and the substance. But we should also remember that as "nīla" is distinct from another as "pīta", and the distinctness *ought* to be perceived, though that is somewhat inexplicable in the subjective idealism of this particular school. Still the distinctness is also one with consciousness and hence cannot be evaded. Therefore, though unwarranted, this position has to be willy-nilly accepted by the Yogācāra idealist. In the school of Advaita however, as Padmapāda, and following him, Prakāśātman very clearly bring out, that there is no necessity of the distinctness in the direct awareness of this or that object. Even in the awareness of a distinctness regarding this object or that object, the awareness remains the same in regard to the directness. It does not change from object to object, as required to be known in every case of the knowledge of a given object. Hence direct awareness is the very basic propaedeutic in our knowledge-situations regarding the objective universe. The Mahāyānist is defeated by the Advaitin in respect of this very significant theory of direct cognition of the given objects.

In the Mahāyāna theory of idealism, again, the consciousness of the object as "nīla", "pīta", etc., as in its own nature of pure subjectivity (*viññānamātra*), is inexplicable. The consciousness of the



“*nīla*” cannot be said to be “knowable” (*grāhyarūpa-nīlasamvit*) as distinct from the pure subjectivity (*grāhakarūpa-vijñānamātratā*). Padmapāda has shown that the nature of consciousness, according to this school, should be of the intrinsic nature of its own subjectivity, without any reference to the “*nīla*” as coming into that nature as a distinct awareness of objectivity, as that is logically and even epistemologically, if not metaphysically, unwarranted. The bifurcation of consciousness as subjective and objective in one epistemological activity is purely an ultimate question of subject and object, and not an epistemological, or even psychological, one.

It should be clearly understood by all students of epistemology that it should stand apart from any ultimate system of reality. To know an object by some valid processes involves the question whether there should be any idealistic approach to the theory of knowledge (as the Mahāyānist accepts, and as the Advaitin also advocates) or merely an empirically backed hypothesis. Hence the Mahāyānist cannot but accept uniform nature of consciousness in our direct awareness of an object, however much he may explain the status of the object as grasped by the consciousness. If it be argued by the Mahāyānist that the different pieces of consciousness as “*aham*” (I, myself), “*idam*” (this, object), “*jānāmi*” (know) are distinctly revealed in a direct manner, it should be stated in the opposite way by the conscious objector that there is no warrant to join together the distinct pieces in one single relation of direct awareness. The idealistic theory of knowledge propounded by the Buddhist regards the consciousness of the knower as passing through four stages.<sup>4</sup> If it is said that the relation is joined to the subjective consciousness of the second (*samanantara*) stage, the objection will be that the resultant consciousness will be of the nature of a whole, which is again a distinct consciousness, and hence the



relation will not be adhering to that consciousness which the subject will have for itself. This unpracticable relation of the subjective consciousness, according to the Buddhists, would never have been achieved even on their own showing. If the knowing activity is to be "a relation", then it should be shown that the activity involved cannot pertain to the momentary pieces of consciousness. Therefore, the subjective consciousness should depend on a permanent object of experience as "*nīla*" to be the permanent seat of that knowing activity. But when an activity engenders the direct awareness of "*nīla*", etc. there is no meaning in the permanence of the consciousness regarding the object, i.e. the permanent object of experience on which the consciousness is based. Every knowing activity should, therefore, pertain to the present consciousness as distinct from the non-present one, according to this Buddhist view. That is to say, every object should be bound to the limits of the present consciousness as a distinct individuality, as Padmapāda analyses: *ahamiti saṁvidah pratikṣaṇaṁ svalakṣaṇabhedenā bhāvyaṁ*. But that is going too far into the epistemology of perception where the actual experience is split into logical bits. Even if it is argued that all these logical bits of experience are very much identical, and hence no distinction is apparent amongst them, still a greater epistemological difficulty will arise. All our experience will have no footing if the real distinction of the actual experiences, one from the other, is not known and the stream becomes a bundle of disjointed moments of a single experience. The idea of similitude is again unwarranted and unmeaningful when there is real unity of consciousness. Unless the idea of unity be false, the idea of similitude cannot arise at all. But the question of the falsity of unity of consciousness is forthright rejected by the Advaitin. Still the Mahāyānist may argue that any fallacy applicable to his theory may well apply to the Advaitin. For example, the fallacy of mutual dependence



(*itaretarāśrayatva*), is levelled against the Yogācāra idealist. For, according to his theory, there is the similitude possible due to the falsity of the unity (of consciousness). Difference amongst bits of consciousness is, according to his school, nothing but the nature of consciousness (*saṁvitsvarūpa*), as the difference cannot be otherwise grasped or explained between the one as *dharmin* (the one having the difference) and the other as *pratiyogin* (that from which there is a difference in the former). But difference in this way being the nature of *saṁvit* will mar the very nature of *saṁvit* as self-revealing. Thus the similitude amongst different *saṁvits* becomes unjustified, as practically difference is unestablished in the *unity of nature* of all *saṁvits*. But when the Yogācāra says that the knowledge of unity itself is false, then the fallacy of mutual dependence will arise. If there is false knowledge in the unity (of consciousness), then, according to his school, the knowledge of similitude is not *either* ungrounded *or* opposed to proof. But it is here that *itaretarāśrayatva* will come in and vitiate the hypothesis of this school, viz. that there is false knowledge (*vyāmoḥa*) in the unity of consciousness. For, it will come down to non-establishment of similitude itself as dependent on the falsity of unity (of consciousness); the falsity of unity being the basis of establishing similitude as not opposed to proof, will not be so when similitude being an established fact will make for the falsity in the unity of consciousness. Thus the Yogācāra's theory of the establishment of similitude as not opposed to proof, will not be so when similitude amongst bits of consciousness in an experience is unwarranted; for it is unity which should be taken as the only valid experience, not depending on the idea of similitude at all. The Mahāyānist's apprehension that the Advaitin's position also warrants an *itaretarāśrayatva* (mutual dependence) is also to be forthright rejected. The apprehension arises from an argument that the idea of similitude being



ungrounded (*aprāmāṇikatva*) and opposed to proof (*pramāṇavirodha*), the reality of the knowledge of unity (of consciousness) is established, and, inversely, the idea of similitude is ungrounded and opposed to proof when the knowledge of unity becomes established as real. This argument loses all sting to the Advaitin who holds that the knowledge of unity is self-established and not dependent, in any way, on the idea of similitude. It is realized as real on its very nature which is one. It is the intrinsic character—and not an extrinsic characteristic like the falsity of similitude,—that is known as real on its own merits. Hence the knowledge of unity is intrinsic and, therefore, self-established. But not so the idea of similitude. That is extrinsic to the nature of consciousness. It is established not on its own merits but on the borrowed merit of the unreality of consciousness which is an ungrounded hypothesis. Unreality is ungrounded as a false character imposed on consciousness, and the idea of similitude is born out of this false knowledge. Hence it is equally ungrounded. There is no question of positing a similitude amongst various bits of knowledge when this itself is so ungrounded. There is only unity and no heterisation of experience. Nor can the idea of similitude be established by inference, based on the experience of destruction of the succeeding bit of experience in one single knowledge, as the Buddhist upholds. The penultimate bit of experience, say, of a jar, is no more existent when the knowledge of the object is ultimately destroyed. Thus all the preceding bits of experience are inferred to be non-existent at the successive stages of their destruction. Hence, the Buddhist dialectician would say that all existent beings are but momentary (*yat sat tat kṣaṇikam*) based on the inferential proof as his argument is. But against this argumentation, the Advaitin equally advances the opposite inference to prove that existence does not posit momentariness, but continuity of unity. The Buddhist cannot also

argue that as our experience of the ultimate moments is necessarily of destruction (i.e. negation), we cannot posit any existence with regard to the same. For, the opposite argument from the Advaitin's stand-point would again equally apply that our experience of re-perception or re-cognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of the previous moments would posit their continuity of unity, and not successive destruction or negation. In fact, re-cognition (*pratyabhijñā*) has been accepted as a proof by the Advaitin, *contra* the Buddhist and, to some extent, *contra* the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsaka as regards the status of the self in such experience.

The arguments set forth here from the Buddhist standpoint regarding the momentariness of the *existent* entity, which have been controverted by the Advaitin, are very clearly set forth in the *Sarvadarśanaśaṅgraha* by Mādhavācārya (circa 14th cent. A.D.). Mādhavācārya has detailed all these arguments of the Buddhist hypothesis that whatever is existent is momentary and that existence (*sattva*) means potentiality of action (*artha-kriyā-kāritva*). All these arguments of the Buddhist dialecticians have been analysed by Mādhavācārya in his work on the chapter *Saugatadarśana*. Mādhavācārya has quoted from Jñānaśrī, a Buddhist philosopher (circa 9th cent. A.D.), who flourished before Udayana, and who in his *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi* has enumerated all these arguments of the Buddhist dialectics to establish momentariness by existence *qua* potentiality for action.

The Buddhist theory of existence *qua* potentiality for action is, however, open to serious objections. This potentiality for action may be said to be the origination of the knowledge of itself as the object (*saviśaya-jñāna-janana*) but that is true of external object only. For, the internal bits of consciousness are never the objects of



knowledge of themselves, as they are never objectified by the knowledge-process being unique (*svalakṣaṇa*) as self-revealed in their own nature. Objectivity would make for this other-revealedness. Thus the unique characteristic of the external object (*viṣaya-svalakṣaṇa*) and the unique characteristic of the internal consciousness (*saṃvit-svalakṣaṇa*) are totally different in nature. Hence according to the Buddhists' own acceptance of potentiality for action, it would apply to only the external objects, which alone would be existent. Nor can it be argued by the Buddhists that the internal bits of consciousness also are objectified by the consciousness of a different subject (person as *perceiver*). For, such kind of objectivity will attach an indirect character to the *perceived* consciousness, which is undesirable epistemologically, if not also ontologically. The Buddhist dialectician would not condescend to accept an indirect or inferred character in the consciousness which is only *perceptible*, i.e. self-revelatory. Even in an external perception of an object there is the possibility of inference through an indirect method of positing *arthakriyā-kāritva*, which is a unique characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*) in that case. But in the case of the unique characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*) of consciousness it is only direct, being non-objectified and self-revelatory.

### NOTES

1. S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1961), Vol. II, p. 30.
2. *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa*, Introductory verse, 6.
3. Ibid., 7.
4. *Prabodhapariśodhinī* (Madras Government Oriental Series, No. CLV), p. 105.

S.L. Pandey

## The Future of Human Consciousness

At present there are, by and large, four views about human consciousness that are widely held all over the world. First, a number of psychologists, biologists, anthropologists, sociologists and philosophers believe that there is no numerical identity of consciousness and it is simply a name for a network of human behaviour. They do not believe that consciousness is a new category something *sui generis* and explain every human behaviour without the assumption of the category of consciousness. Their view is generally referred as behaviourism. Secondly, there is a belief that soul is a substance and consciousness is its distinctive attribute. There are further a variety of perspectives on the relation that obtains between the soul and consciousness. These range from monism that makes no distinction between soul and consciousness to dualism that draws

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\*Courtesy: *Vedāntic Social Philosophy*, Allahabad Philosophical Series, Darshana Peetha, Allahabad, 1988. S.L. Pandey, Former Professor of Philosophy, University of Allahabad.



a sharp distinction between them. Within dualism also there are several schools which have their own formulations of the relationship of the soul and consciousness. Thirdly, there is a school of philosophy that believes that consciousness is something *sui generis* and it is neither a substance nor an attribute nor a mode. As every category of thought is defined in and through consciousness, consciousness itself cannot be defined. This school is called absolutism. Fourthly, there is a school of philosophy, chiefly advocated by Sri Aurobindo, the sage of Pondichery, that maintains that human consciousness is a bridge between the vital and the spiritual and as such it can be left over and its essential function can be taken over by a new consciousness which is in the process of evolution. This new consciousness is called super-consciousness or super-mind. According to this school of thought, the next millennium will see the full development of supermind that will descend upon almost all human beings. In other words, almost all human beings will ascend to the level of supermind in the next millennium.

It is remarkable that the present century is witnessing two opposite trends in the field of research on human consciousness. First, there is a good deal of research, psychological and analytic philosophical, that has shown that the concept of consciousness is vacuous. It has been gradually downgrading human consciousness from soul to mind to awareness and then finally to behaviour. Consequently, now-a-days there is a complete erosion of the meaning of consciousness. But almost parallel to this trend, there is also developing a counter-trend. A large number of theologians, mystics, yogins, moralists and philosophers are maintaining to-day that human consciousness is passing through a period of revolutionary changes. They are discovering new meanings of consciousness and articulating its modalities,

formalities and intentionalities that were hardly known to the earlier generations. A few of them are also showing that human consciousness is becoming slowly and gradually divine, or super-human at least. They are, thus, upgrading it as the others are downgrading it.

But both upgrading and downgrading are not ordinary activities. They are higher mental operations and need, *inter alia*, the tool of consciousness itself for their functioning. Consequently, they suffer from a contradiction; they try to be the modes of self-categorization but result into the categorization of the behaviour of human consciousness that is perceived in other minds. Moreover, downgrading is analogous to descent of human consciousness whereas upgrading is obviously its ascent to a higher level. So when Sri Aurobindo says that descent and ascent are the two simultaneous modes of consciousness at the present stage of its evolution, he really points out that these opposite trends have a common ground which is neither upgraded nor downgraded. That is the real self, the authentic existence of human consciousness that goes neither up nor down. As we shall see in the sequel, all concepts concerning up and down are spatio-temporal and so they are not the appropriate characterization of human consciousness that is beyond space and time and their modes. Both analytic philosophy and evolutionary philosophy make an abuse of grading when they apply it to determine the nature of human consciousness. But what is emphasised by either of them is the issue of human freedom. The irrepressibility of human consciousness is very rightly identified with the irrepressibility of human freedom. It is nothing but the spontaneity of consciousness. Both the behaviourist and the spiritualist meet with each other on the plane of human freedom and become its advocates. What they really mean is the view that human consciousness is more



valuable than anything else, for human freedom is not the characteristic of anything that is non-human, sub-human, or super-human. But is there no higher value than human freedom? Isn't human consciousness evolving?

Now, since the philosophy of evolution, many philosophers and scientists have talked of the evolution of human mind and shown the various stages of its growth and development. But as a matter of fact, they have demonstrated the growth and development of human concern, and not that of human consciousness itself. It is unfortunate that no neat and clean distinction has been drawn between human concern and human consciousness. Consequently, the evolution of human concern has been *mutatis mutandis*, attributed to human consciousness as well. But as consciousness is sharply to be distinguished from space, time, matter and life, the categories that describe space, time, matter and life cannot be ascribed to consciousness. The implication of this distinction, however, is seldom realized by the advocates of evolution. So we shall show the mistakes that they have committed in this context.

First, it is well known that time is conceived as succession. It is the idea of 'before' and 'after'. Now when the evolutionists conceive the development of consciousness as pre-social, social and post-social, as pre-historical, historical and post-historical, as pre-national, national and post-national, as pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial, or as pre-scientific, scientific and post-scientific, they commit the mistake of ascribing temporal attributes to consciousness. All talks of 'pre' and 'post' are impregnated with time-concept and therefore they cannot be applied to consciousness that is *ipso facto* different from time.

Secondly, consciousness is different from space. When the evolutionists say that consciousness develops from outward to inward, from downward to upward or it develops from sub-consciousness to supra-consciousness or super-consciousness through consciousness, or mind develops from a lower position to a higher position, from lower mind to over-mind to super-mind, they use a scale of spatial images to describe a fact that is beyond space *ex hypothesi*. Hence they commit the mistake of using spatial gradation for consciousness. Similarly, psycho-analysis is vitiated with this mistake inasmuch as it talks of the depth of consciousness. But in fact, consciousness has no depth as it has no length and breadth. These are physical dimensions and so they are not applicable to the non-physical that is consciousness. At best, they are analogies and metaphors to point out the all-pervasiveness of consciousness.

Thirdly, most of the evolutionists use a scale of materialistic images to describe consciousness and talk of its grossness and subtlety. They show the development of mind from its gross state to its subtle form, from disorder to perfect order or from unsettlement to perfect settlement. But all these images cannot be applicable to consciousness inasmuch as it is the presupposition of these images themselves. It is immaterial in its nature. Most significantly, it is this characteristic of consciousness that has become the *credo* of perennial philosophy all over the world. If its implication is properly understood, every attempt to seek the development of consciousness will be found as fraught with a *hysteron proteron*.

Lastly, vitalists have tried to identify consciousness with life or *elan vital* and sought its development from touch sensation to verbal cognition. They have scanned the categories of plant life, microbe life, insect life, bird life, animal life and human life on a rising scale and



demonstrated how the various sense-organs and their functions have developed in the course of natural evolution. The human beings are endowed with the five sense-organs. There is, further, the talk of a sixth sense that is supposed to be growing in fully developed human beings. This sense is, by and large, identified with the power of intuition. The evolutionists emphasise that it will be fully actualized in almost all human beings during the next millennium. Similarly, some people talk of the opening of the third eye that will see everything in its eternal essence and will not be conditioned by the three divisions of time past, present and future. But the development of these sense-organs need not be identified with that of consciousness itself inasmuch as consciousness is the only vehicle by means of which all concepts of development are formed. Hence it remains beyond the scope of development. All that has a history or development belongs to the realm of objects of knowledge whose model is the order of birth, growth, development, decay and destruction. But consciousness that is the architect of all models is not subject to them. It is, further, revealed not psychologically but logically, for, it is above all the principle of self-evidence upon which the validity of every model is based. Hence, even the vitalist conception of the growth and development of consciousness does not indicate any new development or mark for consciousness.

In fact, the realm of objects of knowledge has grown enormously with the advent of modern science and technology. Powerful telescopes and microscopes have enhanced the power of vision and revealed many objects which were not visible by naked eyes in earlier times. Similarly, the development in communication media has improved the verbal and visual cognition of man and today he can see and hear what is happening far away from him. But all these developments have not

altered the nature of the subject and the object in knowledge situation. They have not succeeded in making the subject into an object or turning up an object or totality of objects in the subject. The Existentialists are, therefore, right when they maintain that scientific developments do not improve upon the nature and quality of consciousness that is subjectivity. The realm of subjectivity remains today in the same logical position in which it has been lying ever since the Upanishadic view of Ātman *qua* consciousness was formulated in India. The scientific and technological developments have undoubtedly augmented, strengthened and widened the capacities of sense-organs and motor-organs of man, but they have thrown no new light on the nature of consciousness. So the enormous development in the fields of natural and biological sciences that has taken place in the twentieth century is virtually irrelevant and unrelated to the typical nature of consciousness. What the past masters of philosophy have said on this issue is still irreplaceable and perfectly relevant to human situation. To talk of new consciousness or development of consciousness is, therefore, absolutely meaningless and absurd. It has no bearing on the logical value of consciousness at all.

Moreover, as Śaṅkara has held, there is no degree of consciousness at all. It is invariably uniform and self-same. The Upaniṣads have described it as *ekarasa*, i.e., undifferentiated identity of awareness which is devoid of all differences external or internal. Analogously Parmenides held that there is no degree of being, Stoics said that there is no degree of virtue, and Bradley maintained that there is no degree of truth. All these statements means that there is no degree of the Absolute which is alternatively viewed as awareness, being, virtue or truth. Surprisingly enough, Śaṅkara has put together all these statements and advocated the view that awareness, being,



virtue and truth are each the adequate description or characterization of the same Absolute. To talk of its degrees, developments and dimensions is nothing but an instance of the ontological distortion of the fact that consciousness is opposed to all sorts of objects. Each of the above alternatives is a self-sufficient pathway to the *summum bonum* of man.

Furthermore, when Sri Aurobindo says that human consciousness is evolving, he does little justice to his own over-all view that consciousness as such is unborn and immortal. What is not an earthly or mundane object does not undergo evolution. It has its home in the Divine from where it comes and where it ultimately goes. Its coming and going are not descent and ascent respectively. Rather it is a metaphorical way of stating the fact that consciousness is non-dual. The immortality of soul is in sharp contradistinction to the evolution of soul. The former can, therefore, be maintained, only when the latter is rejected and *vice versa*. Both of these doctrines cannot go together. So those who advocate the evolution of consciousness are, in fact, materialists in disguise.

Here, a question may be raised: What will happen to human consciousness if the third world war breaks out or if the nuclear war is started by either of the two super-powers? There are pessimists who believe that this war will bring total ruin to human civilization and no man is likely to survive. But this is a too bold statement which cannot be verified. Those who believe in consciousness do not think that human race will ever be extinct. The *Bhagavad-gītā* has said very admirably that "no weapon can cut it down, no fire can extinguish it, no water can decompose it, and no wind can dry it up." The war that will take place will use some form of weapon, fire, water or wind. So

the *Bhagavad-gītā* statement must be interpreted with reference to all wars, nuclear or conventional, and its position that consciousness cannot be annihilated in any war is ever unassailable. Consciousness is really immortal and universal. Although it is reflected in human beings, it goes far beyond the human body and its organs and encompasses the whole universe within it. This nature of human consciousness will always last and remain intact, even if there be a few human beings in the world. At any rate, no war is going to annihilate the whole mankind. As it naturally happens, at every deluge or great annihilation of the world, some creatures including human beings invariably survive and start their work of reconstruction afresh in the light of their past experiences. Thus there is no loss of the seed or creativity in nature. Hence consciousness will be reflected in future as it is ever reflected. As there is no beginning of it so there is no end of it.

Further, nature itself is not inert and inactive. Nor is it only destructive. It is, on the other hand, more creative than destructive. Hence it will always preserve itself and go on balancing its destructive role to the advantage of its constructive role. The Indian myth of "Hari-Hara," the combination of the power of creation personified as Hari and that of destruction personified as Hara in a single personality is the model of reality that is nature. It means that nature has two inseparable aspects, creation and destruction, *sr̥ṣṭi* and *pralaya* which jointly constitute its reality. So there is no danger to consciousness which is concealed in the dual aspects of nature itself. Moreover, the idealistic theory that nature is not anti-spiritual but pre-spiritual has not been falsified. Nor it is meaningless. It reinforces the view that consciousness which is latent in nature cannot be annihilated. In other words, mankind which is a medium of consciousness, although not the only medium, is immortal. Man is not the highest primate. He is essentially and characteristically different from all primates.



But from the foregoing analysis it does not follow that the present control of human consciousness over nature or human concern will not change. In fact, it has always been changing and will definitely change in the next millennium to an extent that can hardly be visualized at present in its complete form. Nevertheless, an attempt in this direction is worth trying inasmuch as consciousness *qua* knowledge is essentially predictive. But it must be noted that a change of human concern is not a change of consciousness but a change in consciousness.

## II

Human concern changes from age to age. It is relative to the control of human consciousness over nature and the consequential variety of social functions. Man has to pattern his life after his idea of consciousness. If he identifies consciousness with something material, his life becomes a pursuit of the material values. But if he identifies it with something material then he becomes disinterested in that pursuit and tries to lead a life of the renunciation of material values. Further, if he identifies it with the principle of creativity in nature, he becomes a creative author of arts, crafts or sciences. As human creativity is highly differentiated and distributed in quantity and quality, everyman's creativity is confined to a small sphere of his concerns. Hence some men become scientists or philosophers, a few become literary figures, a large number of them become men of action and the others become the devotees of God. Finally if one understands consciousness as the Absolute, then one does what one's status in society demands and determines, for one identifies oneself with one's social function and gets happiness from the performance of one's duties disinterestedly.

Now, as these types of human beings are found in every age, they will also be available in the coming millennium. Nonetheless the

majority of a particular type of human beings in a particular age do become dominant. For example, there was a time when most of human beings were the devotees of God and preferred to lead the life of love for God. So a question arises, what is the type of the dominant majority of people in the coming millennium?

This question is very complex, because its answer depends upon a large number of conditions which can hardly be foreseen today. For example, suppose there is a third world war. Now what will happen after it? I believe a few people will survive and they will carry on the torch of human civilization to their posterity and because all of them will have witnessed a great catastrophe and annihilation, the majority of them will turn to God and become His devotees. Whenever a great calamity befalls the people, they turn towards God and pray for His grace and help. This has happened so far in the history of mankind and it will also happen in future. A man can forget God and declare Him dead or non-existent, but the whole mankind can never forget Him and will go on praying to Him. For, God, as Plato has said, is the same as Good. Moreover, the religious instinct of man is invariably aroused by calamities and reminds him of the universal presence of God. It compels him to pray to God.

But in case the third world war is avoided, what will happen to human civilization in the coming millennium? As wisdom is the better part of man and the social control over the authors of war is increasingly being built up to avoid it, there is a high probability that there will be no nuclear or third world war. So there is no danger to mankind in these conditions.

But the question still remains, what will happen to the future of human civilization? Will it be the same as it is today?



Now it is almost certain that the human civilization of the coming millennium will not be the same as it is today. A thousand years may not have a meaning in the history of galaxies but they have definitely a great meaning in the history of mankind. So let us anticipate what is going to happen to human civilization. It is clear to everybody who has got a normal perception of the present problems of the world that modern science and technology have badly disturbed the ecology of the world and exposed it to great dangers. They have created imbalances that have made the world vulnerable, but a new thinking has started to contain them as far as possible. In the coming millennium they are likely to be removed. In this context the role of the Humanities appears to be more meaningful and creative than that of science and technology. Language, Arts, Ethics and Religion are likely to shape the general trends of the civilization of the coming millennium. They are likely to mould the future course of science and technology and prevent their present pernicious uses. A movement of universalization or internationalization of every religion is going on and all religions are meeting together in multi-religious societies for dialogues all over the world. Their scriptures are seriously and critically being studied by both the faithfuls and their critics. A new discipline called Comparative Religion which has been developing since the second half of the nineteenth century has narrowed down, if not bridged, the gulf that was traditionally created among the various religions. Dogmatism, fanaticism, chauvinism and racism are on the decline and will be extinct ideologies in the near future. Today they are identified as social evils. Tomorrow they will be uprooted to a great extent.

In fact, the course of human life is never determined by a fixed ideology; *a fortiori* the future is not determined by the past. Openness of mind and heart, however, will be the characteristics of

the future generations as they will be better informed and more enlightened than the present generation. But the whole pattern of future culture and civilization will be formed by the *praxis* of the people concerned. They will attach greater importance to *praxis* than to ideology. So they will extrapolate not from books and abstract concepts, but from the concrete experiences of their life. The future will be the age of Karmayoga which has already begun in the twentieth century. The working conditions, their conflicts and consequences will seriously affect the way of human life in future. The people will be judged by their virtues and actions (*guṇakarma-vibhāgaśaḥ*), and not by their birth, status, nationality and community. They will discover the ways that will remove their strains and stresses and enable them to lead a peaceful life.

In short, humanism in pure form is emerging now and will take a definite form in the next millennium. No adjective to it will be added. The adjectives like Hindu, Islamic, Christian, scientific, existentialist, religious, spiritual, etc. which modify it to-day will be dropped, for, they deflect it slightly from its universal and objective model. Paradoxically enough, man is yet to be man; uptill now he is, in fact, not a man or human in the true sense of the word, because he is understood and moulded in the models of his community, religion and language. The opportunities to be a man were meagre in the past. Now they are immensely and profusely increasing. So every man will necessarily learn to be nothing but man. He will not, in my opinion, become a superman or divine. For, man is more valuable than a superman or god. The classical Indian tradition has already placed before it the ultimate ideal of man and made him greater than a god. Even gods aspire to be human. Man is thus the highest creature. He is not a bridge between the vital and the spiritual. This truth will be realized in future and all



ideologies that put forward the hypothesis of the coming of a god or superman will be thrown in the limbo. Mankind does not need a colossus. Nor is there any *raison de tre* for its existence either. It is all in the imagination of frustrated minds and is hypostatization of an abstract idea that is loosed from reality. The small is beautiful. *Homo sapiens* is better than a colossus, for a fact is more justified than a fiction. Man *qua* unity is more valuable than the so-called trinity of God, Son and the Holy Spirit or Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. Deification of man is a fallacy and divinization of man is a figment of the human mind. Man is more valuable than these concepts.

Now what is true of a man is equally true of his organizations. The colossal organizations, especially the modern gigantic nation-states, totalitarian super powers and huge factories will undergo a sea-change in the next millennium. Whether there is a modern war or not, their present form and function will be replaced, for, a process of decentralization has already started and the practice of participating democracy is slowly destroying the superstructure of totalitarianism. Man is learning to live in small societies and organizations. The world organizations will, therefore, depend on the grass-root organizations in future and they will not try to uproot them as they are doing at present. A social ecology will be established that will bring harmony among all gross-root organizations. Every organization will nurture humanism and put a reasonable limit on its horizontal expansion and vertical growth voluntarily. As man has been sacrificing himself for the sake of his fellow men, so every organization will learn the value of self-sacrifice for the sake of the other organizations. For they alone can make them humanitarian. Organizations are for man, but man is not for organizations. So human ecology and ecosystem of all organizations will create a new social order which may be sane, just,

good or perfect. In all cases, however, it will be humanitarian and assuredly better than the present social order and will uphold the unity and Brotherhood of all men on the basis of the unity and freedom of consciousness.



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AN AXIOLOGICAL VIEW OF AVIDYĀ

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R.L. Singh\*

It is argued by some critics of Advaita that Śaṅkara's doctrine of māyā gives a very wrong account of the objective world and the individuals. They maintain that the doctrine of māyā has reduced all morality to a mockery. According to them, it is anti-religious or even atheistic. Although no attempt is being made here to show that Śaṅkara is infallible, most of the critics of Śaṅkara's doctrine of māyā have mistaken him. Here an attempt is made only to remove the misplaced criticism of his views. What is the nature of the mistake about Śaṅkara's doctrine of māyā? Perhaps most of the adverse critics of Śaṅkara have understood the doctrine of māyā as meaning that the world of objects does not have an existence, and individuals like you and me also do not have any real existence. So the most serious objection against Śaṅkara's doctrine of māyā would be that it resolves to effect individuals. The critics forthwith begin to say in some such

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manner: Is your eating *māyā*? Is your waking *māyā*? When it is all *māyā*, why do you seek shelter against heat and cold? I consider this criticism of the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara to be vulgarisation of one of the loftiest philosophies. It is a rebuke to Vedāntic acumen and understanding. If this vulgarisation, this misrepresentation of Śaṅkara's doctrine of *māyā* were due to ignorance only, it could be excusable and the untutored and the ignorant could be instructed; but, if this vulgarisation and misrepresentation were deliberate, it may be viewed not as a criticism but as an emotional outburst of some deep-seated prejudice and bias which hardly need any philosophical notice. Coming to the main point, it may be submitted that Śaṅkara and his followers never say that the world is non-existent (*asat*) or that it is an existent of the order of dreams. Śaṅkara informs us that negation (*abhāva*) of the world is not a presented datum (*upalabdha*). The experience of the world stands affirmed. So, to say that it is nothing, would be absurd. At the same time, we find Śaṅkara telling us that *vaidharmya* or the 'nothingness' or the 'no-factness' of the world is not of the order of dreams. So this much stands well attested that in Śaṅkara's philosophy it has not been maintained that the world does not exist or the world is of the nature of dreams, the creation of fancy or imagination. So it does not mean that I do not exist or you do not exist, or the environment in which I and you move, or the station of life at which I and you are situated, does not exist. Nevertheless the illusoriness of the world defined as *mithyātva* and the ultimate reality of Brahman constitute the central core of Śaṅkara's philosophy. The world is illusory and Brahman alone is real. Further, one more proposition is to be added and you (the individual) are non-different from or identical with Brahman. All this has to be understood against a certain background—this background is the background of the attitude to which Śaṅkara's philosophy is tuned or oriented. What is



this attitude? What is the goal of philosophising? The answer is given in almost all the works of Śaṅkara. We are told that the be-all and end-all of all philosophising is the quest of the enduring as distinguished from the fleeting and evanescent. Śaṅkara's philosophising is tuned to *nityānitya-vastu-viveka*. The problem is not merely the problem of assortment of things in terms of their duration. The problem is essentially and really the problem of seeking. The problem is: Is that which you are seeing such as an intended object like pleasure will give you the happiness you are striving to obtain? The answer is: All that you are seeking as an other of your self for the sake of fulfilment is an illusion. Seeking yourself for nothing other than your own self shall give you the satisfaction you seek. And yourself is the fullness of bliss. There is no want in it, no care in it, no fear in it. All otherness is illusory but an illusion which is so enduring and which is so easily apt to be forgotten as an illusion. The sense of otherness creates want, it creates care, it creates sin. The value you are seeking is freedom from want, freedom from care, freedom from fear, freedom from pain, from suffering, from misery. The Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara tells us that you are yourself this freedom supreme. In vain and deluded you seek this freedom outside of you. You are all the time under the impression that you will be free by seeking an object of your desire. This is the grand illusion. A dissipation of this illusion of non-fulfilment is the thing needed. The illusion of non-fulfilment has to be dissipated and dissolved. How? Through the hearing of the Vedāntic texts, through a process of argumentation and dialectic and through a process of constant meditation. This will generate an intuition for the real and the enduring against the unreal, the ephemeral, the transitory and the fleeting. The Advaita philosophy is a philosophy of value and its attitude is clearly axiological. The clue to this axiology lies through knowledge—the knowledge of what is enduring against what is not enduring. The



realization wished for is the realization of *bodha* or intuition that I myself am freedom. The Advaita Vedānta has nowhere denied you the right to live and to cherish your friends and your environment. Everything is real and so are you; but, if you think that a hankering attitude and toiling to seek what you hanker after shall give you the happiness everlasting, you are mistaken.

The misunderstanding which has caused this unjust criticism is due to some analogies and illustrations used by the Advaita philosophers. The world is *mithyā* like the snake seen in the rope. The snake is a no-fact. The world is not factually a nought. Here snake and rope—both are metaphors. They stand for values. Rope symbolises an enduring value. Snake symbolises a value fleeting, flimsy and evanescent. This subtle symbolism shall explain the Advaitic position better. The Advaita philosophy is thus an exhortation to look at everything in the light of this attitude. This attitude is the attitude of Ātman as freedom. Free subject does not mean freedom as the attribute but subject as freedom.

In this context, a controversy, whether Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara is an idealistic or realistic philosophy, may be considered. What has been said above implies that Advaita Vedānta may be regarded as idealistic or realistic, though not in the usual sense of these terms. The question regarding idealism and realism arises specifically in relation to the problem concerning the existential nature and status of the objective world. Ordinarily idealism thinks of the objective world as dependent on mind and realism thinks of the objective world as independent of mind. The idealist describes it as will or as idea. The realist maintains that the real world is not will, it is not idea. The mind may know the real world, but it does not constitute it or determine its



nature. From the criticism given by Śaṅkara of the Vijñānavāda of Buddhist philosophers, Śaṅkara is not prepared to identify the objective world with idea or with dream. So Śaṅkara's position, in this respect, must necessarily be considered realistic. But these labels do not give any indication of Śaṅkara's real philosophical position. The world in the last analysis is pronounced to be *mithyā* or false, and so is the empirical individuality also with its mental apparatus. So idealism and realism both are inadequate labels to express the metaphysical position of Śaṅkara. It is well known that Śaṅkara makes a very significant distinction between *vyavahāra* and *paramārtha*. The mind as well as objects belong to the level of *vyavahāra* only. But *vyavahāra* level is ultimately *mithyā*. All these distinctions are within *mithyātva*. But if they have any meaning at all, the Advaita philosopher would say, the objective world is not a product of the mind. It is simply revealed to the mind and not made or constructed by it. Its cause is Īśvara, which is Brahman qualified by *māyā*. This position of Śaṅkara is to be distinguished clearly from the position of Vijñānavāda philosopher, for whom the world is the projection of mind, which has been identified by him with pure act or will. The Advaita Vedānta, however, can be understood as an idealism of a special order. It may be described as value-centric idealism. Some kind of value is ascribable to everything in the objective world. In the attitude of infatuation or *moha*, it is likely to be thought that happiness lies in seeking one's self-fulfilment objective attitude and it does impart a colouring to the objects. There is another attitude too—the attitude of freedom. I am freedom itself and so I am self-fulfilling and self-fulfilled. All seeking in the objective attitude is self-alienation. When this attitude dawns, nothing from the world has disappeared, nothing from the objective world has been taken away. But in this attitude everything right from



the stars to the dust heap acquires a new meaning, a new import, a new significance. The bare existence of objects is not in dispute. It is a barren problem. Existence of objects cannot be dissociated from the value they portend. And if this is so, I do not find that there is even an escape possible for us from the idealism of the value-centric type.

So the illusoriness of the world that is taken as a corollary of Vedāntic axiology is to be considered in its proper placement. In this respect three views available in contemporary Indian philosophy may be examined. First, S. Radhakrishnan thinks that illusion is that which is imaginary or rooted in fancy, e.g. the snake in the rope. At the same time, of two persons, one may see the rope as rope, and the other may see the rope as a snake; so, that which has no objective reality and subsists simply in the fancy or the imagination of somebody is illusory. The Sanskrit equivalent for it is *prātibhāsika*, which according to Radhakrishnan is essentially different from *vyāvahārika*. The world, according to Radhakrishnan, may be unreal because contradicted by the experience of the highest, but it is not illusory. The existence of the world is nowhere subjectively determined. So when we say that the world is *māyā*, it does not mean that the world is illusory. It cannot be produced by us at will, nor can it be withdrawn. It is also not subjective, it is commonly shared. So he would say that "unreal the world may be, but illusory it is not." Secondly, according to D.S. Sarma (*Hindu Renaissance*), illusory does not mean that which is subjective in essence. It simply means that which has no real substratum or that which is without a substratum, e.g. a dream content. According to him the snake having a substratum in the rope is not an illusion, because it is not without a support. So when Śaṅkara says that the world is like a snake in the rope, he does not mean to identify it with a dream content, like a thing



which has no substratum in reality. Because the world has Brahman as its substratum, it cannot be illusory. Thirdly, K. C. Bhattacharya in his *Concept of Māyā*, as also in his *False and the Subjective* gives an illuminating analysis of illusion. According to him the world is an illusion entirely in the sense in which the snake in the rope is an illusion. The snake is merely a believed content, though actually of the nature of no-fact. The rope is a knowledge content and is actually of the nature of fact. What happens in the state of illusion is the non-discrimination of two subjective functions—belief and knowledge. Under the spell of ignorance belief passes for knowledge. So the illusory is that which even while it is merely the content of belief, passes for content of knowledge. It is actually a no-fact, which appears to be a fact. It is a no-fact covering a fact and at the same time appearing as a fact.

The world is an illusion, even when it is not a product of fancy, or is such a stuff as dreams are made of. Radhakrishnan's interpretation may not be acceptable because he restricts it to a product of the imagination. The snake in the rope is no product of imagination and is yet an illusion. D. S. Sarma appears to be too restrictive in confining illusion to such substratumless contents as dreams are, and comes to the rescue of the snake in the rope, because it has a real substratum. K. C. Bhattacharya's definition of illusion as a confusion of subjective functions may be found more acceptable than the afore-mentioned two definitions. No doubt Śaṅkara does make a distinction among three grades of existence: (i) *pāramārthika*—the ultimately real, (ii) *vyāvahārika*—the pragmatically or empirically real, and (iii) *prātibhāsika*—the deceptively real or illusory. But what *prātibhāsika* is to *vyāvahārika*, that *vyāvahārika* is to *pāramārthika*. If *prātibhāsika* is illusory in relation to *vyāvahārika*, then *vyāvahārika* is also illusory in relation to *pāramārthika*. If the snake is a no-fact in

relation to the rope, then the world, on exactly the same analogy, is no-fact in relation to Brahman. The snake is a content of belief passing for a content of knowledge. So is the world a content of belief passing for a content of knowledge. The world of *vyāvahārika* experience is so much cancellable in its substratum as is the snake, but the latter endures for a much shorter period of time than the former. Here an objection may be raised. The world of *vyāvahārika* is shared by all of us, but the snake in the rope is not so shared. So the world of *vyāvahāra* is public and snake in the rope is private. So Radhakrishnan may be right. But the objection may be answered like this. We ask: Cannot there be a republic of persons suffering from a stigmatism like all of us seeing the moon as no bigger than a silver plate? The distemper can be both endemic and epidemic. Therefore we submit that we could use the analogy of subjective distemper for explaining a cosmic distemper also. Avidyā is avidyā, its occurrence in one person or in all the persons does not mean that two different analogies have to be made of it.

Most importantly *māyā*, is the other side of Brahman and *ajñāna* or *avidyā* is the other side of the embodied self (*jīva*) who is seeking his self-fulfilment through all his aspirations and cogitations. As he progresses in his goal, the influence of *avidyā* or *ajñāna* diminishes. Finally, he realizes that his nature is the same as Brahman and so at the stage of his experience, his *ajñāna* also becomes identified with *māyā*. So it can be said that although *ajñāna* is eradicable, *māyā* is not so. But if *māyā* is taken as containing the seed of *ajñāna*, some sort of *ajñāna* called *avidyāleśa* may be regarded as co-extensive with *māyā*. But this should be clear to every student of Vedānta of Śaṅkara that *jīva* has no control over *māyā* although he has some control over *ajñāna*. But what is significant for Vedāntic concept of liberation is



the view that *māyā* or *ajñāna* is to be understood as an axiological category which is necessary for the attainment of liberation or freedom. If this is accepted, then most of the controversies over *māyā* or *ajñāna* can be dissolved from the axiological point of view.

Basically the controversy, whether *avidyā* is *bhāvarūpa* or not, is the most relevant one in so far as the axiology of Vedānta is concerned, for all statements about *avidyā* are value-judgements, made in the light of *jñāna* that is most valuable. *Avidyā* means ignorance. In the first instance it means the concealment of that which has to be known and secondly, it means to know as that which it is not. *Avidyā* or ignorance, thus, performs three functions: (i) *āvaraṇa*, which consists in concealing the that, i.e. the object of knowledge, (ii) *vikṣepa*, which consists in making the object of knowledge appear or to be cognised as that which it is not, (iii) as *mala*, which makes every product of *avidyā* as an evil. As for example, when I say, "This is a snake," I am ignorant of the real object 'rope', in so far as the rope is concealed from my vision. I am simply not knowing it. This is what ignorance implies in the aspect of its immediacy. But either the matter ends here or I may by some circumstance be made to investigate further into the matter. And I may say my ignorance of the rope of the rope is the absence in my consciousness of the knowledge of the rope as rope, and may further say that in the present case the non-knowledge or the absence of knowledge of the rope as rope is filled in as the cognition of a snake. But this is not the whole story. My knowledge of the snake generates fear which causes many other evils in its train. The need is not only to remove the appearance of the snake but also to get rid of all its effects which may survive even after the disappearance of the snake.

Avidyā or ignorance is *bhāvarūpa*, the meaning of this statement can be understood only by contrasting it to the view that avidyā is *abhāvarūpa*. Those who maintain that avidyā is *abhāvarūpa* simply mean that avidyā has no positive import or positive status. To say that I am ignorant about the rope would make sense only if I were to transcribe the proposition by saying that when I am ignorant about the rope, there is in my consciousness non-presence of the knowledge of rope. The point simply is this: my ignorance of the rope would make sense only if it were understood as mediated by the consciousness of the absence of the knowledge of the rope. My ignorance of the rope would make sense only when this consciousness were to be understood with reference to the absence of the knowledge of rope. Or negation of the knowledge of the rope is the *sine qua non* of any statement of mine about my ignorance of the rope. Ignorance has, thus, a mediated necessity about it. It is a contingent situation, intelligible only as the negation of knowledge of something.

The Advaita philosophers urge that the situation is not like this. I can meaningfully say that I am ignorant about 'tāja' my awareness would be of this and this description and because I find the non-presence of such an awareness in me, I am ignorant about 'tāja'. To take another example, "I am ignorant of my self," the opponent would say—"This statement would make sense only when you were to know the import of 'tattvamasi' and that the meaning of this proposition would make sense only if it were understood as an antecedent negation of such an understanding as is supposed to be the experiential import of the *mahāvākya*, "tattvamasi". The Advaita philosopher is of the opinion that this interpretation of avidyā or ignorance is too far-fetched and adventitious. My ignorance implies the non-presence of such a knowledge as would negate my ignorance,



but it does not mean that ignorance as a situation in which I am immediately placed has to be understood as *abhāvarūpa*. Ignorance is a situation characterized by immediacy. Its negative description in terms of the absence of that knowledge which removes it may be tenable. But this description of it does not make it existentially negative. It is positive in the aspect of acquaintance, but negative in the aspect of description. If we may say that avidyā is *abhāvarūpa*, we presuppose that it could not have an essence of its own. That in terms of the essence of which we describe it is its other knowledge which means knowledge of reality. It means that ignorance could be described only with reference to knowledge. If this is so, we should have knowledge first and then negate it and then take this negation as the function of ignorance. This is plain non-sense for if I were to know before I could be ignorant, I could never be ignorant. Ignorance implies knowledge as its necessary implicate but knowledge does not imply ignorance as its necessary implicate. The passage is "from ignorance to knowledge" (*tamaso mā jyotirgamaya*) and not from knowledge to ignorance.

The entire situation appears to be in a state of muddle. How? We shall see the crux of the situation which lies in this: I may be ignorant of the correct answer to the question you are putting to me and that is warrant enough for me to say that I am in ignorance. Thus my ignorance is a positive situation considered ontically. At the same time when you say, "you confess you are in ignorance," do you know the precise nature of your ignorance? And point to me the correct answer that liquidates my ignorance. You are attempting to present to me an epistemological analysis of the situation of my ignorance, and by your telling me the nature of epistemology or logic of my ignorance, you are making me feel in my awareness the absence of a cognition of a

particular description. Avidyā can be looked at in two different situations: (i) cosmological and (ii) logical. In the first situation it is *bhāvarūpa* and in the second situation *abhāvarūpa*. Again we can express the same thing in another form of words. Denotatively it is *bhāvarūpa* and connotatively it is *abhāvarūpa*. If the Vedānta philosopher asks me—Do you know Brahman? I reply, “I am ignorant, I do not know.” But if he again asks me—“What is the nature of the content of my ignorance?” and without stopping for an answer from me, he tells me that such and such is the nature of the knowledge of Brahman, and it is the absence of such a knowledge which fills the content of my ignorance, I would know the nature of my ignorance by knowing the privation in my awareness of the cognition of a specific nature. Thus it would be *abhāvarūpa*.

Thus far, the positive character of avidyā has been explained existentially, but the question is: “What is this existential standpoint?” The Vedāntic position may be put in a nutshell that what is existential is an immediate experience of the reality that transcends both the subject and the object. This reality when realized in its full splendour is the *summum bonum* of human life. Therefore this reality is the core content of value that pervades the entire gamut of cosmological and logical discussion about avidyā that has been mentioned above. On deeper analysis it is discovered that no logical or cosmological category is value-neutral, although *prima facie* it appears to be unconnected with value-judgements.

Another issue that has been traditionally raised about avidyā is concerning its locus and objectivity. It has been asked—What is the locus of avidyā? Over this problem there has been a sharp difference among the Advaita philosophers after Śaṅkara. The philosophers of



the Vārttika sub-school of Padmapāda, Prakāśātman, Govindācārya and Vidyāraṇya are emphatically of the opinion that Brahman is the locus as well as the object of avidyā. The philosophers of the *Bhāmatī* sub-school of Vācaspati followed by Amalānanda and also Appaya Dīkṣita echoing in a considerable manner the opinions of Maṇḍana Miśra, are of the view that jīva is the locus of avidyā and that Brahman the object of this avidyā. Though on the three basic propositions both the parties are agreed, "Brahman is real, the world is mithyā, jīva is ultimately Brahman," their sharp division on this point is the cause of a lot of controversy, most of which does not pertain to the elucidation of the the world and the nature of the reality. The philosophers of the Vārttika and Vivaraṇa sub-schools have aptly asked the philosophers of *Bhāmatī* sub-school: You are well within your rights to say that avidyā has its locus in jīva but it may be asked—from where did jīva come and in what is it rooted? And the answer given by you is—jīva is rooted in avidyā. And the philosophers of the Vārttika and Vivaraṇa sub-schools may well remark: "Is it not a piece of circular reasoning—avidyā rooted in jīva and jīva rooted in avidyā?" The philosophers of the *Bhāmatī* sub-school might reply by saying that there is nothing wrong in such a reasoning. Both being beginningless the *cakraka* or circularity in argument does not apply as a charge. The philosophers of the *Bhāmatī* sub-school may well ask the philosophers of the Vārttika and Vivaraṇa sub-schools: How can *svayam-prakāśa* Brahman be ever covered by avidyā? Brahman being *vidyārūpa* there is no question regarding Brahman providing an accommodation to avidyā. And this school might well find a way out by saying that avidyā is such a negation of Brahman as it is itself mithyā in the last analysis. So they would say that the locus of *mithyātva* is Brahman, but *mithyātva* itself is mithyā. So there is no harm in speaking about Brahman as the locus of avidyā.



The best thing to do in this situation, according to us, would be to ask the interrogator or the person questioning: "Are you questioning in the capacity of a follower of the school, or in the capacity of an opponent, or in the capacity of a person who has heard someone putting this question, so in the capacity of a casual interventionist only?" If you are a follower of the school, you know the nature of Brahman as all-encompassing reality and truth. Where there is Brahman, there is no *avidyā*, there is no *jīvatva*. So to you our only remark is—at least you should not have put this question, or you are misleading me by putting such a question. If you are only an opponent, you do not understand the Advaita situation and in asking this question, you are presupposing something you cannot, you are biting more than you can chew. You are presupposing a triplicate ontological situation, consisting of Brahman, *jīva* and *avidyā* and you are posing as if you know all about the Advaita Vedānta except this that you are not able to find the locus of *avidyā*. To you, I must say—you are entirely ignorant of the Advaita situation and your question presupposes more than it should. If, however, you have simply heard someone putting this question to someone, I would humbly submit that you have no need of an answer. Since the question is not yours, you would not understand the answer too. And if the question was really and genuinely yours, you would get the answer yourself sooner or later.

Our considered reply would be that *avidyā* is like a malignant disease, it is detected at one spot but its roots are everywhere. *Avidyā* is an attitude which is detected in me, but in so far as I am not ultimately different from Brahman, it spreads out to Brahman also. *Avidyā* is a total situation which obscures my true nature to me by making it appear as something different from what it is. In this total situation I see my real self as my body which is a part of the external



world and consider myself as a sentient centre different from absolute consciousness. But the entire situation is all too intriguing and complicated to admit of a categorically clear and singularly acceptable answer. I think for a correct answer one may turn to the *vāṇī* of the saints like Tulasīdāsa: "O Keśava, it is very difficult to speak about your creation or *māyā*, so it is better to be silent and restrained in speech. On the void of its canvas (wall) some handless painter having no colour with him has painted this picture of the world. Nothing in the world can ever wash out this wall, this void as the canvas on which this painting has been done. And the real centre of 'duḥkha' is inside your own self. This avidyā, which like the alligator resides inside and devours those who come to drink of this illusory stream."

The entire philosophical position, in respect of Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara can be expressed in three basic propositions: (a) Brahman alone is real. (b) *Jagat* is *mithyā*. (c) There is in the last analysis a perfect identity of *jīva* (the individual) and Brahman (the absolute). As a matter of fact the whole of Vedāntic philosophy could be expressed by saying that Brahman alone is real. When Brahman alone is real, the other two propositions are apparently redundant. Insofar as all philosophising has to take its rise in my experience and the contents of my experience, I must also give an adequate account of myself and my world. And the answer is: Brahman is ultimately real; the world is *mithyā* (false), and the *jīva* is identical with Brahman. So how are we to understand Brahman and then the empirical individuality and *jagat*. What harmonizes these three statements is the doctrine of *māyā*. So the doctrine of *māyā* is that all-comprehensive formula in terms of which we can understand the situation in respect of the world.

Of the three propositions only two need to be considered in this context: (a) Brahman alone is real, and (b) *jagat* is *mithyā*. The third

is out of question because it has been said that *jīva* is non-different from Brahman. So the question arises: If Brahman alone is real, what is the metaphysical position of *jagat*? And the answer is: it is of the nature of *māyā*. If we translate the term 'real', in the proposition, Brahman alone is real, as 'fact', then the term, *mithyā* or false would be translatable as 'no-fact'. There are three stages through which this no-fact passes and these three stages are the three stages of *māyā*. Under the spell of ignorance or *avidyā* that which is really of the nature of no-fact and which at best could only be spoken of as indescribable datum, passes for a fact or is believed to be a fact. So under the spell of ignorance, I believe a no-fact to be a fact. The situation is best described by means of the commonplace illustration, chosen by the Advaita philosopher, that of a rope appearing as a snake. Till I have not seen that *this* is a rope, I take *this* as a snake. The three stages are: (i) This is a snake (*vāstava*). (ii) This is indescribable (*anirvacanīya*). (iii) this is a rope, which could never have been a snake (*tuccha*).

Even a casual view of the afore-mentioned description will indicate that the progress from the real (*vāstava*) to the worthless (*tuccha*) through semblance (*pratibhāsa*) is axiological in its nature. That which was taken to be valuable becomes on the criterion of logical judgement a disvalue that is called worthless. So the search for value encompasses the whole phenomenology of *avidyā*. It is, therefore, to be discovered by everyman in his own manner to realize the highest value of self-attainment. Thus the three stages in the phenomenology of *avidyā* are in fact the perennial features of value-experience and value-realization. The world of *māyā* is a phenomenon of relative value that points out to the absolute, i.e. *sat-cit-ānanda*.



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## THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE TAMIL SIDDHAS AND ADVAITA: A STUDY IN PARALLELISM\*

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T.N. Ganapathy

In this article an attempt is made to find out and study the parallel viewpoints of both Advaita and the philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas. By using the term “parallelism”, it is suggested that there has been no known interaction between the two ways of thought and that neither has influenced the other. This parallel study is an unexplored field hitherto, and in this adventure of ideas I am conscious of the fact that I am treading on a slippery ground for two reasons.

(1) While Advaita is a systematic exposition of its tenets, there is an absence of system in the thoughts of the Tamil Siddhas. The Tamil Siddhas are not system-builders. Their philosophy cannot be made to fit into any “ism” or “ology”, for it lacks a constant doctrinal referent. One can discern certain common characteristics among the Tamil

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Siddhas, which make them distinct from any school of philosophy. Their philosophy is enlightenment as distinct from doctrine; their technique is to jolt people out of their intellectual ruts and their conventional, barren morality. They are the untethered, non-conformist spiritual aspirants, yearning for a direct and natural approach to, and a more intense experience of, the Absolute truth. They rely on the individual's efforts for his attainment of liberation. Their characteristic attitude is: Come and find out for yourself. As Śivavākiyar says, their experience is a case of “பேர்தியுதமற்  
தம்முளே பெற்றுணர்ந்த ஞானம்”.<sup>1</sup> What the philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas is may be suggested more by saying what it is not, somewhat as a sculptor reveals an image by the act of removing pieces of stone from a block. It is said that when a Baul of Bengal was asked why the Bauls had not left any philosophical system for posterity, he replied: “Do the boats that sail over the river leave any mark?” The same would have been the reply by the Tamil Siddhas.

(2) The basic philosophy of Advaita is written in a systematic language, i.e. in Sanskrit based on the rules of grammar and syntax. The basic source of Tamil Siddha philosophy is in the spoken language of the people, a claim which no other philosophical system can make. The Siddha poems are written with an entire disregard for grammatical or elegant expression. The Siddha poetry is an unwritten one, and has been handed over from generation to generation in the form of oral transmission called *vāymoli* or *eḷudākkiḷavi*. To facilitate oral transmission the Tamil Siddhas used only the common words spoken by ordinary people—unpolished, crude, offensive, indecent and colloquial expressions—which made Veḷḷaivāraṇar call the language of the Tamil Siddhas as “slum language”—சேரிமொழி எனப்படும் பேச்சுவழக்கு.<sup>2</sup>



Although the Siddha poems are in the common language of the people, the meaning of the poems operates at two levels—one, the exoteric and linguistic, and the other, the esoteric and symbolical. This has led many, due to superficial reading, to interpret the Siddha poetry with a highly one-sided interpretation. In the *Jñānabodhakam*, a palm leaf manuscript available in the Kerala University Mss. Library, Thiruvananthapuram, it is said that some who have made an attempt to study Siddha poetry have left it as a “nuisance”, because they could not decipher the meaning properly.

In the poems of the Tamil Siddhas, we find a dominant tendency to reinterpret and spiritualize the *tāntric kuṇḍalinī yoga*. As yogins, the Siddhas are said to have the triple control—the control of breath, the control of the seminal fluid (i.e. the control of all passions and achievement of desirelessness), and the control of mind. The successful control of the three is called *yuganaddha*. A Siddha is one who has succeeded in stabilizing these controls in oneself, and maintains equanimity and a sense of equilibrium. This *tāntric yoga* method was not considered to be a sure method of obtaining liberation by orthodox circles. In the commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*, Śaṅkara says that the highest truth cannot be obtained by the road of yoga.<sup>3</sup> In a manuscript entitled *Yoga-kaṇṇāḍipprakaraṇam* available in Tamil in the Mysore Oriental Research Institute, Appaya Dīkṣita says that *tāntric kuṇḍalinī yoga* will not lead one to *kaivalya mukti*.<sup>4</sup> Further, there was a popular belief that *tantra* was an unsavoury mixture of mysticism, occult pseudo-science, magic, and erotics couched in strange and often filthy language. To add to all these, Śiva worship was considered to be a worship of *śiśnadevatā* (phallic god) in a degrading tone in the Vedic tradition. There has been a strong prejudice that *tantra* was meant for the degenerate and the fallen and

that it was considered to be in vogue among the low class people. To add to all these, the science of healing to which a number of Tamil Siddhas are devoted was relegated to the class of questionable knowledge. What is the need of medicine when disease is caused by the karma of one's past life? This was the argument put forward by the upholders of the karma theory. All the orthodox systems suspected the Siddhas, because they advocated the theory that one could attain mokṣa now with the body, i.e. *kāya-siddhi*. Orthodox Śaiva Siddhāntin treated the Siddhas as outcastes, and had excluded the Siddha view from both their vast canonical corpus and socio-philosophic theories. In the *Tirunānmarai Viḷakka Ārāycci*, the Tamil Siddhas are referred to as "fifth station", or untouchables or religious *pañcamas*.<sup>5</sup> Śivavākkīyar reports that the Vaiṣṇavites and the Śaivites stoned the Siddhas while they were walking on the streets.

தாதரான தாதரும் தலத்தில் உள்ள சைவரும்  
வீதி போகும்... ஞானியை விரைந்து சுல் எறிந்ததும்.<sup>6</sup>

The symbolic and secret language used by the Siddhas called the "twilight language" has been one of the causes of deep mistrust of their doctrines by the other classical systems of philosophy and religions in India. The *Jñāna-bodhakam* calls the dual meaning of the language of the Siddhas as "the treachery of the Siddhas". It calls the language of the Siddhas as a "merciless language" since in it they conceive one thing and express another thing. If one takes the Siddha language at its face value, it will be like a farmer who wanted to plough his fields trusting the mist formation. The aim of rendering great truths in symbolic, yet in simple language is: (1) to prevent the uninitiated from being satisfied with the superficial meaning; (2) to preserve the real message intact by making people sing them in the form of popular folk



songs; and (3) to make the message reach anyone interested in it without any discrimination of sex or caste. People who opposed the Siddha doctrines have highlighted only the seemingly obscene and obscure elements of language used by the Siddhas without going deep into their purport.

In *tāntric* literature we come across the path of *pañca-tattva* called the five Ms (*pañca-makāras*). The five Ms are: *madya*, *matsya*, *māmsa*, *mudrā* and *maithuna*. In ordinary language, these terms refer to their literal meanings, i.e. wine, fish, meat, parched cereal, and sexual union respectively. In a deeper sense, these terms are intended to convey a progressive course of *sādhana* leading to liberation. (1) *Madya* becomes the symbol for intoxicating knowledge. It stands for the nectar that is said to ooze from the thousand petalled lotus in the *brahmarandhra*. Almost all people in Tamil Nadu know and sing the following song from Kudambaiccittar.

மாங்காய்ப்பா லுண்டு மலைமேல் இருப்போர்க்குத்  
தேங்காய்ப்பால் ஏதுக்கட? குதம்பாய் ! தேங்காய்ப்  
பால்ஏதுக்கட? 7

This nectar has been referred to in the Tamil Siddha literature as:

உச்சிப்பால் கரவாப்பால் மாங்காய்ப்பால் காயாப்பால்  
பஞ்சாமிர்தம்

The effort of the yogins to get at this nectar is called “begging at the top” by the Tamil Siddhas (உச்சியிலே பிச்சை எடுத்தல்). (2) *Matsya* is symbolic of *prāṇāyāma*. *Matsya* which means “fish” symbolically signifies the inhalation and exhalation of breath. It has been said that the two *nādis*, *idā* and *piṅgalā*, have two fish, viz. inhalation and exhalation, moving constantly up and down. The *sādhaka* should stop this erratic movement by performing *prāṇāyāma* to facilitate the

ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī*. (3) *Māṁsa* does not signify the physical flesh which the aspirant should eat. It is the symbol of the flesh of the ego which must be cut with the sword of knowledge. Freedom from “I” and “mine” is *māṁsa*. The Siddha should kill the beast of ego in him and devour its flesh. (4) *Mudrā* signifies the yogic state of concentration and disinterested attitude. According to ivavākkiyar, even when a Siddha is touching the breasts of a woman, because of his detached attitude, he cuts asunder the knots of karma and becomes one who does not suffer rebirth.<sup>8</sup> Bhadragiriyār also laments: வம்படிக்கும் மாதருடன் வாழ்ந்தாலும் மன்னுபுளியம் பழமும் ஓடும் போல் ஆவதினி எக்காலம்?<sup>9</sup> (5) *Maithuna* is the merging of the *sādhaka* (aspirant) with the ultimate reality: that is, the aspirant has no more a separate existence other than the all-embracing reality. Bhadragiriyār speaks of this state as “என் வடிவு நின்வடிவாய்... உனைக் கண்டிருப்பது...”<sup>10</sup> In the *maithuna* state, “we” becomes one; multiplicity becomes singleness.

Further, in Tamil Nadu the Siddhas are identified with the alchemists. In describing the spiritual techniques, the Tamil Siddhas freely use metaphors taken from old alchemical writings. For the Tamil Siddhas, alchemy is a code or outer cover for something more profound, and it is a sort of protection against unwary intruders into their spiritual *sādhana*s. If we analyse further, we shall understand the analogy between the alchemist and the Siddha. Just as the alchemist works on base metals and turns them into gold, the Siddha transmutes his psycho-physical body into a free autonomous spirit. In India, gold symbolizes immortality. Viewed in the above sense, every Siddha is a spiritual alchemist *par excellence*, and his *sādhana* is *kāya-sādhana*, i.e. cultivation of the body, or transformation of the body into immortal essence. In Tamil language, since the alchemist



turns brass (பித்தளை) into gold (ஆடகம்), he is also called a “*pithalāṭṭakkāran*”. This term also means a trickster in Tamil. Unfortunately, as a Siddha is compared to a spiritual alchemist, he gets the unsavoury epithet that he is a trickster not to be depended upon. Thus, the seeming vulgarity of the Siddha poems, their esoteric teachings, their intentionally obscure language and symbolism, their alchemic physiology and the asceticism practised on their own body—all have contributed to a lack of coordinate approach to the sources and their philosophy till this date. In contrast to all this, whether one agrees with it or not, the Advaita system enjoys a status and an elite position among the *darśanas*.

The Advaitins differ from the Tamil Siddhas with regard to scriptural authority. To the Advaitins, the Upaniṣads, the *Brahma-sūtra* and the *Bhagavad-gītā* constitute the triple source of authority. But the Tamil Siddhas may be considered as “scriptureless” or “bookless” and so belonging to the *nirgrantha* school of philosophy, as they are detached from any scriptural authority. They reject the authority of the scriptures, the privilege of the few. The *Agastiyar Jñānam-2* says: “A Siddha is one who has burnt the *Śāstras*.”<sup>11</sup> Bhadrāgiriyaṛ also laments:

சாத்திரத்தைச் சுட்டுச் சதுர்மறையைப் பொய்யாக்கிச்  
சூத்திரத்தைக் கண்டு துயர் அறுப்பது எக்காலம்?<sup>12</sup>

This is to be interpreted in the sense that for a *jñānin* “the Vedas are not Vedas”. To quote Bhadrāgiriyaṛ again:

வேதாந்த வேதமெல்லாம் விட்டேறியே கடந்து  
நாதாந்த மூல நடு இருப்பது எக்காலம்?<sup>13</sup>

As Tirumūlar asks: “When one has realized the ‘That’ which has gone beyond worship, what is the earthly use of spiritual education

and śāstras?"<sup>14</sup> According to the Tamil Siddhas, all śāstras, Vedas, Purāṇas, and indeed all sectarian religions turn humans into conditioned animals. Truth, which is experience, cannot be translated fully in any śāstra. It remains to be truth, when the experience for which it stands has been realized by the speaker or the hearer as his immediate, felt experience. A Veda is like a finger pointing to the moon of liberation; it would be a calamity if one took the finger for the moon. A description can never in itself transmit experience. Kārai Siddhar in his *Kanaga Vaippu* draws a distinction between a Siddha and a non-Siddha by saying that the former points to the path of experience, whereas the latter points to the path of scriptures.<sup>15</sup>

The Tamil Siddhas belong to a non-conformist "counter tradition". What is meant by "counter tradition" is not "that which opposes tradition" but "the tradition which opposes". The anti-authoritarian and the anti-ritualistic trends that we find in the Tamil Siddhas constitute a tradition of India, "a tradition that opposes" which has an unbroken history for centuries from the earliest times to the present day. It means that the Tamil Siddha tradition is out and out an Indian, Hindu tradition. In a sense, the Tamil Siddhas are rebels inside the field of Hindu religion; they are "pious rebels".

In this connection what I say now may seem to be controversial. The Tamil Siddhas followed the *tāntric kuṇḍalinī yoga* method. There is a misconception that Tantras are non-Vedic. All Tantras do not reject the authority of the Vedas, but only consider certain sociological viewpoints expressed in the Vedas to be obsolete and irrelevant. Further, tāntric knowledge is open to all, irrespective of caste, creed or sex. In this sense it may be said that the Tantras do not follow the Vedic tradition. This does not mean that the Tantras are non-Vedic. The view that Tantras are non-Vedic draws its support from



another view regarding the non-Indian origin of Tantras. Scholars like P.C. Bagchi and H.P. Sastri believe that the tantric tradition has its origin in Tibet and China, and that it was introduced into India through Vajrayāna Buddhism. The terms such as “cīnācāra”, “cīna-tantra” lend support to this view. This view of the non-Indian origin of Tantra has been termed “graft” or “back water theory”. This view is merely a hypothesis without any corroborative evidence. We can safely say that Tantras are of Indian origin and are not non-Vedic. We can trace the Tantra tradition to the Upaniṣads. Some Upaniṣads clearly mention some kinds of secret knowledge such as *dahara-vidyā*, *madhu-vidyā*, *haṁsa-vidyā*, etc. which establish the existence of tāntric tradition. The great Sanskritist, Kullūkabhaṭṭa, the illustrious commentator of Manu, considered Tantras as part and parcel of Śruti. Further, the philosophy underlying the Tantras is a modification of the Sāṅkhya and Vedānta systems. Again, the Tamil Siddhas directed their criticisms against the *karma-mārga* and the *bhakti-mārga* of the Vedic lore. They are in full agreement with the *jñāna-mārga* of the Upaniṣads, which we shall see in due course.

Śaṅkara, in his *Ātmabodha*, says that caste is an *upādhi* super-imposed on Ātman. In the *Maniṣā-pañcaka*, Śaṅkara says: “Whether he be an outcaste or a brahmin, the soul has no distinction at all. This is the established truth that I have realized.” The Tamil Siddhas also view caste as a hindrance to liberation, and do not accept caste distinctions in society. They have criticized caste system very strongly so that people will once for all do away with it. Bhadrakīrīyār dreams of a future age when there would be no caste and refers to the *Kapilar-ahaval* as an Āgama for a casteless society.<sup>16</sup> Śivavāḱkiyar scoffs at the upholders of caste system and violently opposes the practice of

untouchability by raising a pertinent question whether the bones, flesh and skin of an upper-caste woman and those of a lower caste woman are distinguishable on the basis of caste. He asks angrily: "Are they numbered on the basis of caste?"<sup>17</sup> Tirumūlar defines a brahmin as one who has relinquished all desires and says that the sacred thread (of the brahmin) symbolizes Vedānta, and his tuft symbolizes true jñāna.<sup>18</sup> He goes to the extent of defining Vedānta as a process of achieving desirelessness.<sup>19</sup> Casteism is perpetuated through the theory of rebirth, and the common man believes that those who do right actions in a birth are reborn in a higher caste in the next birth. In order to have a dig at casteism, Śivavākkiyar goes to the extent of denying rebirth. The denial of rebirth is just to show that caste is not determined by birth. The aim of the Tamil Siddhas is to make every human being a *sannyāsin*. A *sannyāsin* is an individual who has transcended all distinctions and diversities of class, race and colour. He is a *vairāgī*, an individual who belongs to no order. As Ananda Coomaraswamy has said, he belongs to the "order of nobodies". He is truly a classless individual. According to the Siddha ethics, a classless society can be brought about only through classless individuals. The test of a classless society is whether it has created classless individuals.

We may discern an agreement between the Tamil Siddhas and Advaita; both are opposed to ritualism for different reasons. While Advaita criticized the ritualism of the Mīmāṃsakas, the Tamil Siddhas criticized ritualism lock, stock and barrel. The Mīmāṃsaka looks upon the Veda as essentially a book of rituals and seeks to explain and justify the rites and the ceremonies taught in the Vedas. The central problem of the Mīmāṃsaka is ritual and the performance of Vedic rites. Jaimini holds that ritual is the mainstay of the Vedas. According



to him, the Vedic injunctions hold out promises of reward to be enjoyed in another world. The performance of ritual is regarded as the most essential thing. Advaita protests against the Mīmāṃsaka doctrine of mechanical ceremonialism. In the *Ātma-bodha*, Śaṅkara says: "Action cannot destroy ignorance, for it is not in conflict with ignorance." It is unfortunate that being an uncompromising critic of the rituals and ceremonies found in the Vedas, the Tamil Siddhas are dubbed as *nāstikas*, i.e. non-Vedic, while Advaita is not.

A common point of agreement between Advaita and the Tamil Siddhas is that both speak of the importance of jñāna. According to both, knowledge, in its purest form, is the only way that leads to final emancipation. It has emphatically been asserted that liberation is attainable only by jñāna and not by bhakti. In bhakti, the heart weeps for what is lost, whereas in jñāna the spirit delights in what it has found. Bhakti gives us fellowship, but jñāna gives us oneness. According to the Tamil Siddhas, genuine knowledge is obtained by yogic techniques. Emphasizing the distinction between bhakti and jñāna, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in the *Bhagavad-bhakti-rasāyana* says that the difference manifests itself in (1) essence (*svarūpa*), (2) means (*sādhana*), (3) fruit (*phala*) and (4) subject (*adhikārin*) of each of the two. Item-wise the difference is explained as follows: Though both are modes (*vṛtti*) of the mind, bhakti, being of divine form, is determinate in character (*savikalpaka*) and is preceded by the melting of the heart, but jñāna is indeterminable (*nirvikalpaka*) in character in which the absolute Self is revealed as formless, and hence has no power to affect the heart. The means of bhakti, that is, *sādhana*, is knowledge of God's glory inspired by reading or listening to the sacred works wherein the divine glory is described, but the means to Brahma-jñāna is the oral reception of the *mahāvākyas* which

inculcate the identity of the individual self and Brahman. The *phala*, immediate fruit of bhakti, is the deep love of god and that of jñāna, the destruction of ignorance which is the root of all evil. The *adhikārin*, the subject of bhakti, may be any human being irrespective of any qualification, but the subject of jñāna is one who has achieved perfect detachment and is endowed with the fourfold qualifications, viz. discrimination (*viveka*), renunciation (*vairāgya*), possession of the six virtues (*sādhana*s), and desire for liberation (*mumukṣutva*).

The Siddhas of Tamil Nadu do not adopt bhakti as the method of realization. In Advaita, Śaṅkara admits the phenomenal character of Īśvara. Īśvara is an object of worship, distinct from the worshipper. The concept of Īśvara is in consonance with the ideas of personal God and idol worship, which are being criticized by the Tamil Siddhas. Appaya Dīkṣita, in one of his poems, *Śivāparādha-kṣamāpana-stotra*, says that an idol worshipper commits three mistakes. He reduces the formless by giving it many forms. He limits the limitless by singing its praise in words of prayer. He confines the Infinite by thinking that it resides in certain sacred places such as temples, etc. The views of the Tamil Siddhas totally agree with these ideas. Among the Tamil Siddhas, we find Śivavākkīyar, in particular, condemning idol worship tooth and nail.<sup>20</sup> Agappeyccittar is emphatic that the performance of pūjā is a form of bond (*pāśa*), and Īśvara, the recipient of pūjā is a form of māyā.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, going on pilgrimages and taking bath in sacred tanks and rivers are also condemned by the Siddhas. According to the Tamil Siddhas, there are many stations in the form of either the lotuses or cakras within the body. These stations are compared to places of pilgrimage. The real Benares is the junction of the brows and the nose. The Prayāga is the lotus of the heart, the Cidambaram is the



middle of the heart; the Trivenī is the confluence of *idā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā* at the *ājñā-cakra*.

The Tamil Siddhas are against the idea of a personal God. Śivavākkiyar says that the distinction between 'my God' and 'your God' is a distinction made by 'you people', and in reality there is no duality in Godhead. He goes to the extent of cursing people that they will die of mouth cancer if they make or speak of any such distinction between 'my God' and 'your God'.<sup>22</sup> In Tamil Siddha literature, there is almost a total absence of any local cult of the deity. No genuine Siddha in Tamil literature, including Tirumūlar, has sung in praise of any local God or deity. One of the chief characteristic features, the differentia, to determine a genuine Siddha is to find out whether he has sung in praise of any local God or deity. According to Śivavākkiyar, a Siddha never worships any deity in a temple.<sup>23</sup> Pāmbāṭṭiccittar also holds a similar view.<sup>24</sup> Tirumūlar departs from the practice of the great religious teachers and saints of South India, especially Tamil Nadu, i.e. the Nāyanmārs and the Ālvārs, for he does not seem to have sung poems in praise of the gods and goddesses of temples. He does not generally refer to individual temples or worship in such temples of idols through mantras and Āgamic rituals. This is a very significant feature. The concept of a theistic God (or shall we say Īśvara) has given rise to two conceptions—the concept of a personal deity and the concept of a creator forever distinct from his creation. The Siddhas feel that rigid theism has been responsible for a good deal of unnecessary controversy and hostility among the followers of different religions. Iḍaikkāṭṭuccittar is of the view that the existence of various religions is a falsehood.<sup>25</sup>

The idea of Brahman-Ātman equation of Advaita finds a place in the Tamil Siddha tradition. A Siddha is one who has realized the

non-duality of jīva and Śiva. He is one who has attained *Śivānubhava*, a state of experience where there is non-dualism between the experiencing jīva and Śiva, (*jīva-śiva-aikya*). "*Śivamāna śindaiyir-cīvan sidaiya*" is Tirumūlar's expression.<sup>26</sup> It is a unitive experience where there is no distinction between "I" and "Thou". Śivavākkīyar's expression for seeing differently is "நோக்கொணாத நோக்கு".<sup>27</sup> Even Tirumūlar says: seeing Śiva in every jīva is a state of "I am Thou".<sup>28</sup> In this sentence, the copula 'am' is not a logical copula, but a mystical copula. To use Rudolf Otto's expression, mysticism has its own wonder logic where "I-am-ness" is the "one-selfness", where the Ātman lives in its infinite surplus and where a completely "new point of view" has been found. According to this "new point of view", the world is not *tucca*, but is given a new significance in its totality. Siddha philosophy may be called spiritual monism where matter is also one of the aspects of the Spirit, where the Absolute reveals itself as a third person, "that" (the world), or as a second person, "thee" (the Absolute), or as a first person "I" (the Ātman). As Śivavākkīyar says:

சித்தம் ஏது சிந்தை ஏது சீவன் ஏது சித்தரே  
சத்தி ஏது சம்பு ஏது சாதி பேதம் அற்றது,  
முக்தி ஏது மூலம் ஏது மூலமந்திரங்கள் ஏது,  
வித்தில்லாத வித்தில்லே இன்னதென்று இயம்புமே.<sup>29</sup>

Tirumūlar makes a mystical equation between the 'I' and the 'He', between the 'self' and the 'Absolute'.<sup>30</sup> Śivavākkīyar defines "*Śivāyam*" as a state of oneness between the self and the Absolute.<sup>31</sup> The mystical equation does not refer to a numerical or logical identity of the self and the Absolute. It is a case of non-dualism of the two. It is an assertion of a meta-logical identity. The identity or oneness between jīva and Śiva belongs to experience and not to the interpretation. The "oneness" is an experienced certainty. It is an



experience of the dissolution of the separate personality, a fading of the 'I' into the boundless Being. The "oneness" between the "I" and the "Absolute" is of an extraordinary character. It does not add anything, even as nothing can be subtracted. For want of a better expression, the "oneness" is termed as super-union or yoga. Yoga in essence is oneness. In Siddha literature, this "oneness" is referred to as *advaya* (non-duality), *samarasa* (same essence), *yuganaddha* (a state of union). The jīva is a newly discovered Self with a capital 'S'. The mystical oneness or the unity between the self (jīva) and Self (Absolute) is an undivided oneness; it is not parted and then related; it may be called an original pre-biographical unity or 'oneness'. Due to ignorance, this "oneness" between Brahman and Ātman is not known. We are Brahman, but we do not know that we are.<sup>32</sup> To use Pattinattār's expression:

ஆற்றில் கிடந்தும் துறையறியாமல் அலைகின்றேம்.

Self-realization, according to the Tamil Siddhas, as in Advaita, is a realization of one's identity or "oneness" with Śivam or the Absolute. Tirumūlar calls this as "தான் அவனாகும் சமாதி".<sup>32</sup> It is a state where the sense of otherness disappears. Self-realization reveals that what we call the Absolute is inside one's own self. This should be interpreted, according to Śivavākkiyar as an insight of not "my" awareness, but the Being's awareness of itself in "me".<sup>34</sup> Mokṣa is self-realization, an inner awareness. Agappēyccittar says that Śivam is only for those who have attained self-realization.<sup>35</sup> It is a state of spiritual impersonality. Pattinattār says that he has become an "individual" the moment he realized his self.<sup>36</sup> He uses the term "*tanikkumari*" which may be translated as individuality. He also uses the term "*tanimudal*" for individuality. We may safely say that Brahman or the Absolute is an individual, whereas Īśvara is a person.

Tirumūlar calls self-realization as knowledge, which knows the self.<sup>37</sup> Bhadragiriyār says that self-realization is ‘knowledge which knows knowledge through knowing knowledge.’<sup>38</sup> Śaṅkara’s intuitional consciousness and the Tamil Siddhas’ mystic experience connote the same.

In Tamil Siddha literature, this “oneness” or true liberation of the self is referred to as “*veṭṭaveḷi*” which is transcendental awareness. As Pattinattār says, it is “*avattai aindum viṭṭērippōṇaveḷi*.”<sup>39</sup> It stands for the absence of subjectivity and objectivity. In that vast realm of *veṭṭaveḷi*, which is eternal now-ness, which is always an instant eternity, and which is time rediscovered, the small pronouns “I”, “mine” and “thine” become meaningless. It is “is-ness” everywhere. It is an empty expanse called *śūnya* by a few Tamil Siddhas. *Śūnya* means absence of things; it is not thinghood with attributes and qualifications. If we scan the pages of Indian spiritual thought, we can find direct or indirect references to *veṭṭaveḷi* or *śūnya*. In the *Rg-veda*, it is said that in the beginning “there was neither existence nor non-existence”. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, we find the statement, “That Unalterable... is the negation of all attributes.” *Śūnya* is not emptiness, it refers to unsubstantiality; it is an open dimension not bound by concepts and precepts. It is the noumenon. It is not the negation of “is-ness”, but a negation of all determinations. *Śūnya* is not a theory advocated by the Tamil Siddhas; rather, it is the end of all theories about reality.

*Veṭṭaveḷi* is referred to by Tirumūlar as *yoga-nirvāṇa* or *jñāna-nirvāṇa*. The term “*nirvāṇa*” is significant, because to call that state as existence, or non-existence, or even a stage of bliss, would impose a limitation. *Veṭṭaveḷi* in Tamil Siddha literature stands for the indescribability of the mystic experience. It is *anirvacanīya*, to borrow an expression from Advaita. Śivavākkiyar uses two rare



expressions, "that which has no grammar" and that "which has gone beyond the pure Tamil Word", to refer to the indescribable nature of mystic experience.<sup>40</sup> We come across several such rare expressions in Tamil Siddha poetry. *Vettaveli* then is a state of silence which, in Tamil literature, is called *summā*. That is known as a state of choiceless awareness, to use J. Krishnamurthy's expression. It is what the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* calls "Turiya". As Tirumūlar says, it stands for speechless liberation, "*pēccarṇa pērinbam*".<sup>41</sup> It is a state of "sleepless sleep" according to Bhadrakīrīyār.<sup>42</sup> It is a state of *arituyil*, "restful alertness". It is the still point to which T.S. Eliot refers in his poem, *Four Quarters*. The Tamil Siddhas call this state "*sōmbar*" which means actionless action, as Tirumūlar says: "*seyalarṇu iruppavarkkē seydi uṇḍāmē*".<sup>43</sup> The Zen expression for this state is "thunderous silence." One keeps quiet in the state of *summā*: "*summā iruppadē sukham*". The Tamil Siddhas prefer to express the state of silence as a state of "beyond the beyond". Śivavākkiyar calls it as "*appurattil appuram*."<sup>44</sup> The Term "beyond the beyond" also suggests the nature of reality as understood by the Tamil Siddhas. It means wider than relations. Reality includes all relations, but it is not exhausted by any one of them or their sum total. It is beyond all these relations. Whereas 'you' and 'I' as persons have sets of relations, Reality does not have such a set. In this sense, reality is "alogical whole," not determined by any set of relations, even though all sets of relations are contained in it. If the Absolute is beyond relations, it must be a state of "not-twoness", i.e. it must be one; but it is not a one of the many. Since Reality is beyond relations, one cannot even speak about it. If the Absolute is beyond all relations, it cannot be the God of religion, for God implies a relation between the worshipper and the worshipped. This relation creates a rupture in the oneness of God. As the Sufi mystics say, "There is no God but God."



As in Advaita, references are there in Tamil Siddha poetry regarding the three kinds of experience (*avasthātraya*)—waking, dream and sleep. The fourth state, *Turīya*, is also spoken of in Siddha poetry. In Advaita there is an enquiry into five sheaths (*pañca-kōśa*) for the purpose of bringing out the real nature of the *jīva*. The Tamil Siddhas also speak of the *paru uḍal* (*annamaya kōśa*), *vaḷi uḍal* (*prāṇamaya-kōśa*), *mana uḍal* (*manomaya-kōśa*), *aṟivu uḍal* (*viññānamaya-kōśa*) and *inba uḍal* (*ānandamaya-kōśa*). Further, there is a reference to *sthūla-pañcikaraṇam* in Siddha literature.<sup>45</sup> The Siddha conception of body is unique; it is not accepted by any Indian system of philosophy. *Kāya sādhana* implies a change of perspective where the physical existence is not denied, but replaced by a permanent spiritual existence, where the gulf between the physical and the non-physical is bridged over in a blissful existence. The Tamil Siddhas understood the human body as a threshold—a sacred passage, to the ultimate Reality just as sacred rivers, temples, mountains, etc. are. Śivavākkiyar is fond of using the expression “*vāsaḷ*”, i.e. threshold, and he calls the human body as a threshold where God exists. Karuvūrār also uses the expression “*vāsaḷ*”. The concept of “threshold” is a mystical one, and the body is one such mystical threshold, the other threshold being the guru. In Tantra the threshold is a mystical thing. It is a boundary between two worlds—the ordinary, profane world and the sacred world beyond. It is a point where we pass from one mode of being to another, from one level of consciousness to another. The term “*vāsaḷ*” stands for a moment when we ourselves open up to new depths of our being.

In Siddha literature we come across the following types of bodies—the *sthūla-deha*, the *yoga-deha*, the *siddha-deha*, the *praṇava-* or *mantra-deha* and the *jñāna-* or *divya-deha*. Turning



the *sthūla-deha* into *divya-deha* is what is termed *kāya-sādhana*. Śivavākkīyar explains the transformation of the physical body into a divine body on the analogy of a worm turning itself into a butterfly. When the other schools of Indian philosophy regard the ultimate dissolution of the body as a key to mokṣa, the Siddhas seek liberation in a transformed or transmateralized body, which they call *divya-deha*. In Siddha philosophy there is no *videha-mukti* (post-mortem liberation), but only *jīvan-mukti*. Verse 1624 of the *Tirumandiram* gives a description of the characteristics of a *jīvan-mukta*. A *jīvan-mukta* does not possess a personal consciousness, but a witnessing consciousness. Even though he acts in the world, he does not have the sense of "I act". As a Taoist thinker has said, "The perfect man employs his mind as a mirror. It grasps nothing; it rejects nothing. It receives, but does not keep." This idea of a *jīvan-mukta* of the Tamil Siddhas fits in with Advaita according to which he is one who attains liberation while being alive, the liberated in life. While in Advaita the condition of a *jīvan-mukta* is described as the disembodied state, i.e. *aśarīratvam*, in Siddha philosophy a *jīvan-mukta* does not die to attain liberation, but is transformed into the very mode of liberation, viz. the *divya-deha*, a body of light and bliss which is none other than the state of being one with the eternal consciousness. In the *divya-deha*, the sense of egoity is lost, and there is mere experience, consciousness, not an experience of the "this" and the "what", nor of the "I and Thou" relation.

The place of guru is an important aspect in both Advaita and the Tamil Siddhas. According to the Tamil Siddhas, the "guru" is the primary threshold in the ascent of the staircase to liberation. In Tantric literature, there are two types of *dīkṣā* or initiation, called *madhura* and *haṭha pāka*. *Madura pāka* is the usual ritualistic process of

initiation. *Haṭha pāka* is threefold—*sparśī* based upon touch (like a bird), *cākṣuṣī* based upon sight (like a fish), *mānasī* (like a tortoise). All these three types are referred to in Gaṇapatidāsar's *Neñjaṛi viḷakkam*.<sup>46</sup> Tāyumanavar goes a step forward and suggests that the mere presence of the guru is enough to initiate a man for liberation. He compares the guru to a ripe plantain fruit in the midst of the cluster of unripe plantain fruits. The very contiguity of the ripe plantain fruit changes the unripe ones into ripe fruits.<sup>47</sup>

An Advaitin and a genuine Tamil Siddha are both beyond atheism and theism. The Nirguṇa-Brahman of Advaita is not the God of religion. Similarly, the Śiva of the Tamil Siddhas is a reality without any limitation or attributes. In this sense, both Advaita and the Tamil Siddhas are beyond theism. Nor can we call them atheists, because they believe in God as the Absolute, but not a God of this or that religion. The “theology” of both Advaita and the Tamil Siddhas is not a popular theology, but an ideal theology, if we may use the term “theology” to refer to their views of Godhead. The conception of Śiva of the Tamil Siddhas or the idea of Brahman of Advaita is grammatically and philosophically an impersonal conception. The real term for “Śiva” in the poems of the Tamil Siddhas is “It”, or “Atu”, or “Thatness”, or “Suchness”, or “Parāparam”. To quote Kārai Siddhar:

அரனைப்பாடி உயர்ந்திட்டார் அறுபத்திமூவர்,  
அருளைப்பாடி மிகுந்திட்டார் அருட்பெருஞ் சோதி,  
அரியைப்பாடி சிறந்திட்டார் ஆறிரண்டு ஆழ்வார்  
அதனைப்பாடி நிறைந்திட்டார் அறுமூன்று சித்தர்.<sup>48</sup>

We have noted so far a parallelism of the viewpoints between Advaita and the Tamil Siddhas in that both affirm the non-duality of the ultimate Reality and the non-difference between Ātman and



Brahman. But the Siddhas do not accept the Advaita doctrine of the non-reality or falsity of the world. According to the Tamil Siddhas, whatever is in the macrocosm (*aṇḍa*) is in the microcosm (*piṇḍa*). It is called the macro-micro symmetry. They use the terms “Ciṇṇambalam” and “Pērambalam” for Śiva, the microcosm, and for Śiva, the macrocosm. Valaichāmi, in his *Jñānakkummi*, refers to Tāntric yoga as a method that has been nurtured by mixing the micro (the world) and macro (the infinite).<sup>49</sup> Tirumūlar expresses the same idea by saying that, if you see deeply into a tender leaf, you can see the entire universe.<sup>50</sup>

Though the term “māyā” has been used by a few Tamil Siddhas to refer to the world, generally all the Tamil Siddhas equate the universe with the divine reality itself. If there is delusion, it is not the universe itself, but our perception of it that constitutes the delusion. Kākapuṣuṇḍar says: the universe is an expression of the absolute Reality.<sup>51</sup> The term “kūttu” is significant in that it brings out the *līlā* concept of creation of the universe. Their theory of causation is: “uḷḷadu tān pōmō marṇillādadu varumō.” And as such, the Tamil Siddhas tend to view the universe in terms of *pariṇāma-vāda* rather than *vivarta-vāda*. According to the Tamil Siddhas, the universe is the material and the field of sādhana. Rightly perceived, the universe reveals, not veils, Brahman.

The social concern of the Tamil Siddhas has provided them with one more path for the discovery of the self. The “*Āṇṇappaḍai*” concept that we find in Tamil literature has acquired a socio-philosophical meaning at the hands of the Tamil Siddhas. Their songs are indicators of the path of self-realization for the seeker after truth. The Siddhas wanted everyone to enjoy what they themselves have enjoyed.<sup>52</sup> Hence the poems of the Siddhas contain in them

the elevated concept of showing the path to one and all. The “*Ārṛuppaḍai*” concept, that is showing the path to the people, has two aspects in the philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas—one positive and the other negative. In the negative aspect the Tamil Siddhas emphasize what one shall not do in order to achieve realization. To achieve self-realization, the Siddhas exhort people not to take rest in half way houses like caste, scriptures, rituals, ceremonies, pūjās, etc. According to the Siddhas, the cause of the prevalence of delusion in our lives is institutional rather than personal. The method of *kunḍalinī-yoga*, their ethical precepts and their system of medicine form the positive aspect of the “*Ārṛuppaḍai*” concept. This is the *loka-saṅgraha* of the Tamil Siddhas.

In conclusion, we may safely say that the philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas is one variety of Advaita. The non-dualism of the Tamil Siddhas is not a negation of manifestation, but the fullness of manifestation. Valmīgar says that one who sees the entire universe as Śiva is a Siddha.<sup>53</sup> We may call this philosophy “Siddhādvaita” according to which the Absolute reveals itself not only as the Absolute or as Ātman, but also as the world. In Siddhādvaita the *mahāvākya*, “*tat tvam asi*” is an expression of the macro-micro unity.

## NOTES

1. Śivavākkīyar, 211. The references to the Tamil Siddha songs are from Aru. Ramanathan, ed., *Siddhar Periya Jñānakkōvai Eṇa Vaḷaṅgum Pāḍalgaḷ*, 2 Volumes (Madras: Prema Prasuram, 4th edition, 1984).
2. Refer his introduction to Ci.Ko. Deivanayagam's *Siddhar Sindanaigal* (Tanjore: 1979), p.ii.
3. Śaṅkarācārya, *Vedānta Sūtras*, George Thibaut (tr.) part I, pp. 223, 298.



4. Refer Mss No.B 1021/1, Oriental Research Institute, Mysore; this Mss is placed under the title *Yoga Darpaṇam*; but *Yogakannāḍipprakaraṇam* is the actual title found in the Mss.
5. V. Chidambara Ramalingam Pillai and M. Sambasiva Pillai, *Tirunānmaṇḍai Viḷakka Ārāycciai* (Madras: Pari Nilayam, 1969).
6. Śivavākkiyar, verse 166. (Vol. I)
7. Kuḍambaiccittar, verse 28. (Vol. I)
8. முலைத்தடத்திருக்கினும் பிறப்பறுத்து இருப்பரே.  
Śivavākkiyar, verse 182. (Vol. I)
9. Bhadragiriyār, verse 53. (Vol. I)
10. Ibid., verse 186. (Vol. I)
11. Agastiyar Jñānam - 2, verse 5. (Vol. I): சாத்திரத்தைச் சுட்டெரித்தால் அவனே சித்தன்.
12. Bhadragiriyār, verse 155. (Vol. I)
13. Ibid., verse, 147. (Vol. I)
14. *Tirumandiram* verse 3052 (References to *Tirumandiram* are from the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam publications, 1940.
15. Kārai Siddhar, Golden Lay (Kanaga Vaippu) (Nungambakkam:Siddha Asram, n.d) verse 205.
16. Bhadragiriyār, verse 125. (Vol. I)
17. Śivavākkiyar, verse 38 (Vol. I):  
பறைச்சியாவதேதடா பணத்தியாவதேதடா...  
இறைச்சி தோல் எலும்பினும் இலக்கமிட்டு இருக்குதோ?
18. *Tirumandiram*, verse 230.
19. Ibid., verse 229: வேட்கை விடும் நெறி வேதாந்தம்.
20. Śivavākkiyar, verse 496 (Vol. I):  
நட்ட கல்லை தெய்வமென்று நாலு புட்பம் சாத்தியே  
சுற்றி வந்து முணமுணென்று சொல்லும் மந்திரம் ஏதடா  
நட்ட கல்லும் பேசுமோ நாதன் உள்இருக்கையில்  
கட்ட சட்டி சட்டுவம் கறிச்சுவை அறியுமோ?
21. Agappēyccittar, verse 72. (Vol. I)

22. Śivavākkiyar, verse 128. (Vol. I)
23. Ibid., verse 250 (Vol. I): கண்டகோயில் தெய்வமென்று  
கையெடுப் பதில்லையே.
24. Pāmbāṭṭiccittar, verse 94 (Vol. I): நாட்டுக்கொரு கோயில்  
கட்டி நாளும் பூசித்தே நாதன் பாதம் காணார்கள் என்று ஆடு  
பரம்பே!
25. Idaikkāṭṭuccittar, verse 84 (Vol. I):  
பலமதம் பொய்மையே என்று ஒது குயிலே.
26. Tirumandiram, verse 2539.
27. Śivavākkiyar, verse 288. (Vol. I)
28. Tirumandiram, verse 2660:  
உள்ளே அமர்ந்திருக்கும் அண்ணலை  
காணில் அவன் இவன் ஆமே.
29. Śivavākkiyar, verse 43. (Vol. I)
30. Tirumandiram, verse 1011:  
தான் அவனாக அவனே தானாயிட.
31. Śivavākkiyar, verse 285 (Vol. I):  
எம்பிரானும் நானுமாய் இருந்ததே சிவாயமே.
32. cf. Paṭṭinattār Podhu, verse 40 (Vol. I)
33. Tirumandiram, verse 2320
34. Śivavākkiyar, verse 255 (Vol. 1):  
என்னகத்தள் என்னை நான் எங்கு நாடி ஒடினேன்,  
என்னகத்துள் என்னை நான் அறிந்திலாதாகையால்,  
என்னகத்தள் என்னை நான் அறிந்துமே தெரிந்தபின்,  
என்னகத்துள் என்னை அன்றியாதுமொன்றும் இல்லையே.
35. Agappēyccittar, verse 55 (Vol. I): சைவம் ஆருக்கடி அகப்  
பேய் தன்னை அறிந்தவர்க்கே.
36. Paṭṭinattār, Arulpulambal, verse 23 (Vol. I)  
தன்னை அறிந்தேனடி தனிக்குமரி ஆனேனடி.
37. Tirumandiram, verse 2355.
38. Bhadrāgiriyaṛ, verse 156 (Vol. I): அறிவை அறிவால் அறிந்தே.
39. Paṭṭinattār Podhu, verse 25 (Vol. I)



40. Śivavākkīyar, verse 90 (Vol. I): “என்ன என்று சொல்வேன்  
இலக்கணம் இல்லாததை பன்னுகின்ற செந்தமிழ்பதம் கடந்த  
பண்ப!”
41. *Tirumandiram*, verse 2635.
42. Bhadragiriyār, verse 1 (Vol. I): ஆங்காரம் அடக்கி  
ஐம்புலனைச் சுட்டறுத்துத் தூங்காமல்  
தூங்கி சுகம் பெறுவது எக்காலம்?
43. *Tirumandiram*, verse 2319.
44. Śivavākkīyar, verses 9, 12, and 211. (Vol. I)
45. Nijānandabōdham, p. 243. (Vol. II)
46. Neñjaṇivīḷakkam, verses 14, 16 and 12. (Vol. I)
47. Tāyumānavar, *Thanippādal Thirattu*:  
தானே கனிந்த கனி கனிவிக்க வந்த கனி போல.
48. Kārai Siddhar Kanaga Vaippu 78: விண்ணையும் மண்ணையும்  
கூட்டி பயிர் செய்த மார்க்கம்.
49. Valichamy, verse 10 (Vol. 1)
50. *Tirumandiram*, verse 1769: கொழுந்தினைக் காணில் குவலயம்  
தோன்றும்.
51. Kākapuṣuṇḍar, verse 32 (Vol. II): ஒன்றான பிரம்மமே  
வெவ்வேறாக உலகத்தில் அனந்தமடா கூத்துமாச்சு.
52. யாம் பெற்ற இன்பம் பெருக இவ்வையகம்.
53. Valmīgar, verse 2. (Vol. I)

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## ON THE CAUSE OF THE WORLD

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N. Veezhinathan

The Upaniṣads identify Brahman as the cause of the world. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* describes Brahman as that from which these beings originate, by which they are sustained and into which they lapse at the time of dissolution.<sup>1</sup> The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in a section designated *Śāṇḍilya-vidyā* defines Brahman as that (*tat*) from which the world arises (*ja*), by which it is supported (*an*) and into which it is reabsorbed (*li*).<sup>2</sup> The same Upaniṣad elsewhere states that these things originate from *ākāśa* alone, i.e. Brahman which is manifest everywhere, and are absorbed in it.<sup>3</sup> Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*<sup>4</sup> points out that an entity from which a thing comes into existence and into which it is reabsorbed is well known to be its material cause, as for example, earth is of paddy, barley, etc. An effect is not noticed to be absorbed into anything other than its material cause. That from which the world emerges is its material cause, and since the world originates from Brahman, the latter is its material cause. In other words, the state of being the material cause of the world constitutes the definition of Brahman.



A doubt may arise at this stage that the above definition of Brahman is also applicable in the case of *pradhāna* of the Sāṅkhya school. The latter admits *pradhāna* as the cause from which the world arises and into which it returns at the time of dissolution. During the time of its existence after its creation and before its dissolution, the world is supported by *pradhāna*, just as a pot, for example, during the time of its existence is sustained by its material cause, viz. clay. Thus, the definition of the material causality of the world holds good in the case of *pradhāna* too.

The Upaniṣads, however, define Brahman not only as the material cause of the world, but also as its efficient cause. An efficient cause is an intelligent being who makes his choice, resolves it into an intention and puts that intention into effect. *Pradhāna*, being an insentient principle, cannot have these features. Hence the definition of the material and the efficient cause of the world is an exclusive one for Brahman.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says that "the Self (Brahman) desired 'let me be many, let me be born'."<sup>5</sup> The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, while referring to the creation of the world from Brahman (*sat*), states that "It deliberated, 'I shall become many, I shall be born'."<sup>6</sup> Śaṅkara explains the import of these texts by pointing out that in these texts Brahman is known to be the efficient cause or the agent by virtue of independent action proceeding from deliberation. And it is understood that Brahman is the material cause as well, since the will to become many as expressed in "I shall become many" relates to Brahman itself.<sup>7</sup> Further, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* states that prior to creation this world with the distinctions of name and form remained in Brahman in such a subtle form that it may be viewed as non-existent;

and from Brahman emerged this world in the manifested form. Brahman created itself by itself.<sup>8</sup> Śaṅkara remarks that, when it is said that "Brahman created itself", it is known that it is the material cause of the world. And when it is said that Brahman created itself by itself, it is known as the efficient cause too of the world. It is both the object and the subject of creation. It is thus both the material and the efficient cause of the world.<sup>9</sup>

There are certain difficulties in viewing Brahman as the material and the efficient cause. A material cause is that which undergoes modification into the form of effect. This implies that it must be composed of parts. But since Brahman is free from any parts, it cannot undergo modification into the form of the effect, and so it cannot be considered as the material cause. In the same way, it cannot be viewed as an efficient cause; for, an efficient cause, as we have said, is the one who makes a resolve and puts that resolve into effect. Brahman is attributeless consciousness, and so it cannot have these features. The result of this argument is that Brahman cannot be taken as the material and the efficient cause of the world.

The Upaniṣads, however, which affirm that Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the world, introduce the principle of *māyā*, identical with *avidyā*, to explain the material and the efficient causality of Brahman.<sup>10</sup> The latter as associated with *māyā*, which is indeterminable either as real or as an absolute nothing, becomes the material and the efficient cause of the world. *Māyā* which is present in Brahman is inspired by the reflection of the latter as it undergoes modification into the form of the world; and so Brahman, by being the substratum of *māyā* whose transformation is the world, is viewed as the transfigurative material cause.



Similarly, the modes of *māyā* (*māyā-vṛtti*) inspired by the reflection of Brahman in it are known as desire and resolve, and Brahman associated with these modes of *māyā* is viewed as the efficient cause of the world.

That Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the origination of the world, is known from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. "That (Brahman) created itself by itself."<sup>11</sup> This text we have explained earlier. There are three Upaniṣadic passages which respectively convey Brahman to be the efficient cause of the origination, sustentation and dissolution of the world. We shall now explain these texts.

The view that Brahman is the efficient cause of the origination of the world is set forth in the fourth section of the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad*. It is in the form of a dialogue between Bālāki and the king, Ajātaśatru. Bālāki offered to instruct Ajātaśatru on Brahman.<sup>12</sup> When he identified the sun, the moon, the lightning and the like as Brahman, Ajātaśatru rejected, on valid grounds, the contention of Bālāki.<sup>13</sup> When Bālāki became silent, Ajātaśatru told him, "Falsely indeed you promised me 'I shall tell you fully of Brahman'," and proceeded to instruct him on the nature of Brahman by stating that the Self (Brahman) is the one who is indeed the creator (*kartā*) of the beings, which Bālāki has identified as Brahman, or rather of whom this entire world is the effect (*karma*). The king concluded by saying that it is Brahman of such nature that is fit to be realized.

*yo vai bālāke eteṣāṃ puruṣāṇāṃ kartā yasya vā  
etat karma sa vai veditavyaḥ puruṣaḥ.*<sup>14</sup>

According to Śaṅkara, the state of being the creator of the entities pointed out as Brahman by Bālāki cannot be thought of as

belonging exclusively and independently to any being other than Brahman. And the word "*karma*" in the text does not refer to either movement, or merit, or demerit; for, neither are they under discussion, nor are they mentioned in the Upaniṣad by name. It means etymologically that which is created or originated (*kriyate iti karma*) i.e. the world.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in the Upaniṣad the fact of Brahman being the efficient cause of the origination of the world is specifically mentioned. This is the subject-matter of discussion under the *Vedānta-sūtra*, "Because of the indication of the world (by the word *karma*, it—of which this world is the effect—must be Brahman)."<sup>16</sup>

That Brahman is the efficient cause of the sustentation of the world is referred to in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in the section entitled *antaryāmi-brāhmaṇa*. It begins by making reference to the one who controls this world and all beings from within,<sup>17</sup> and proceeds to state that "He who is immanent in the earth, whom the earth does not identify, who controls the earth from within, and for whom the earth is the body, He is your Self, the internal ruler, and He is immortal."<sup>18</sup> In the same way, the Upaniṣad says that the internal ruler who is immortal is the controller of water, fire, sky, air, heaven, sun, the *jīva*, etc. by being immanent in them.<sup>19</sup> It is clear from this that Brahman is the controller of the entire world. The state of being the controller is only the state of being the efficient cause of the sustentation of the world. The Upaniṣadic texts referred to here form the subject-matter of the *Vedānta-sūtra*: "The internal ruler of the celestial beings and other factors (is Brahman), since the characteristics of that (that is, Brahman) are referred to (in the Upaniṣads)."<sup>20</sup>

That Brahman is the efficient cause of the destruction of the world is referred to in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. Here it is said: "That to which the classes of Brahmins and Kṣatriyas become food and the Lord



of Death is condiment, who can know it, thus, where it is?"<sup>21</sup> The significance of this text is: just as for food that is eaten, curd, etc., serve as condiments, in the same way the classes of Brahmins and Kṣatriyas who are eaten by a Being, the Lord of Death serves as a condiment. A condiment—curd, for example—is known to be that which is eaten and which also serves as the means to eat something else, rice (say) with which it is mixed. The condiment along with the food with which it is mixed is consumed. Similarly, when it is said that the Lord of Death serves as the condiment for the food—the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas—, it is known that the Lord of Death also is eaten and is the means of eating the classes of Brahmins and Kṣatriyas. The Upaniṣad mentions Brahmins and Kṣatriyas to represent the entire world as they support all order and the protectors of all.<sup>22</sup> And the relation between the Lord of Death and the world is similar to the one that destroys and the one that is destroyed. When it is said that the Lord of Death is the condiment of eating, i.e. destroying the world, it is known that the world along with the Lord of Death is consumed, just as the condiment, e.g. curd, is consumed along with the food with which it is mixed. The Being that consumes the world along with the Lord of Death cannot be anything other than Brahman. Thus, Brahman is said to be the efficient cause of the destruction of the world. The Upaniṣadic passage under reference forms the subject-matter of discussion under the *Vedānta-sūtra*: "The one who consumes (is Brahman), because both the movable and immovable (that is, the entire universe) are taken (as its food)."<sup>23</sup>

We have said that the characteristic of being the material and the efficient cause in the case of Brahman is due to *māyā*, and so it is only an accidental feature to explain Brahman. The essential nature of Brahman is consciousness and bliss.<sup>24</sup>

## NOTES

1. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (hereafter *TU*), 3.1.
2. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (hereafter *CU*), 3.15.
3. *Ibid.*, 1.4.1.
4. *Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya* (hereafter *VSB*), 1.4.25.
5. *TU*, 2.5.2.
6. *CU*, 6.2.3.
7. *VSB*, 1.4.24.
8. *TU*, 2.7.
9. *VSB*, 1.4.26.
10. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 1.3.
11. *TU*, 2.7.
12. *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad*, 1.3.
13. *Ibid.*, 4.2 - 18.
14. *Ibid.*, 4.19.
15. *VSB*, 1.4.16.
16. *Vedānta-sūtra* (hereafter *VS*).
17. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (hereafter *BU*), 3.7.1.
18. *Ibid.*, 3.7.3.
19. *Ibid.*, 3.7.3 - 23.
20. *VS*, 1.2.18.
21. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.25.
22. *Ibid.*, Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on it.
23. *VSB*, 1.2.9.
24. *VSB*, 1.1.2.



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A NOTE ON THE DEFINITION OF VALID  
KNOWLEDGE  
ACCORDING TO DHARMARĀJA

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S. Revathy\*

Dharmarājādhvarin in his *Vedānta-paribhāṣā* defines valid knowledge (*pramā*) as the one that has for its content an entity which is unknown prior to the functioning of sense of sight (say) and which is not sublated by a subsequent cognition. This definition has two distinguishing features, namely, unknownness (*anadhigatatva*) and unsublatedness (*abādhitatva*) of the content.<sup>1</sup>

Unknownness of an object consists in the consciousness conditioned by the latter being veiled by modal ignorance (*tūlājñāna*), the derivative of primal nescience (*mūlājñāna*). According to the fundamental position of Advaita, every object is located in the consciousness conditioned by it. And the latter is veiled by the modal ignorance, and hence there is the experience and the corresponding expression of the form, "The object does not exist; it is not manifest."

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When the sense of sight comes into contact with the pot (say), mind too comes through the sense of sight, reaches the place of pot and undergoes modification in the form of pot. This modification of the mind in the form of pot is known as *vṛtti*. It is inspired by the reflection of consciousness in it and is known as the cognition or knowledge of pot. It removes the modal ignorance veiling the consciousness conditioned by the pot. The latter now is in direct contact with its underlying consciousness which is in coincidence with the consciousness reflected in the mind, i.e. the *jīva*. The latter thus acquires the cognition of pot.

This cognition of pot is valid in the sense that the pot which is its content is unknown (*anadhigata*), i.e. its underlying consciousness is veiled by modal ignorance prior to the functioning of the sense of sight. Further, the pot which is the content of cognition is not sublated by any subsequent cognition. Thus the distinguishing features of valid knowledge, viz. prior unknownness and subsequent unsublatedness of the content are present in the cognition of pot, and hence it is valid (*pramā*). It should be noted here that it is only the object which exists independent of being perceived (*ajñātasattāka*) that could be viewed as *anadhigata* or unknown prior to the functioning of sense-organs.

The term "unknownness" (*anadhiḡatatva*) is introduced in the definition in order to overcome the defect of over-pervasion (*ativyāpti*) of the definition in the case of recollection (*smṛti*), which is also a form of knowledge. The Prābhākara school treats *smṛti* as valid knowledge (*pramā*) for according to them, all knowledge is valid and is classifiable either as experience or as recollection. But recollection is to be ruled out from the purview of the definition according to the Advaitin as its content is already known.



If unknownness of an object is insisted on for treating a cognition to be valid, then a difficulty arises in the case of a continuous stream of cognition of one and the same object (*dhārāvāhika-jñāna*). The latter consists of several cognitive units, and it is valid. But, according to the definition of valid knowledge, the constituent of which is unknownness of the content of knowledge, it is only the cognitive unit during the first instant that could be taken as valid; for, the object to which it refers satisfies the condition of unknownness. But the cognitive units in the second and the subsequent instants cannot be taken as valid as they refer to the object known by the cognitive unit of the first instant, and not to the object unknown. Hence the cognitive units in the second and the subsequent moments cannot be treated as valid. Thus the definition of valid knowledge will not be inclusive of the continuous stream of cognition and thereby is exposed to the defect of *avyāpti*.<sup>2</sup>

This difficulty is overcome in two ways. One is that the temporal content of each cognitive unit in the continuous stream of cognition is different. Time is treated as *perceptible*, and so the cognitive unit of the continuous stream of cognition during the first instant refers to the object as conditioned by the first instant, and the cognitive unit during the second instant refers to the object as related to the second instant. It is valid since its content, as associated with the second instant, is not comprehended by the cognitive unit of the first instant, and hence it is unknown. Similar consideration applies to the cognitive units of the third and the subsequent instants. The continuous stream of cognition, therefore, comes under the purview of the definition of valid knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

The second way the objection is met is by not dissecting the continuous stream of cognition into discrete instants. This cognition is



taken to be a single unit. As long as there is the presentation of one entity—pot (say), there is a single mental state having the form of pot. It is admitted according to this view that there persists a single mental state in the form of an object till there arises another mental state of a different object. And the single mental state inspired by the reflection of consciousness in it is a continuous stream of cognition, and it is valid as it refers to the entity that is unknown.<sup>4</sup>

So far the discussion was on the need for the term “unknownness” (*anandhigatatva*) in the definition of valid knowledge. Another term in the definition is “unsublatedness” (*abādhitatva*). This is introduced in order to obviate the defect of over-pervasion (*ativyāpti*) of the definition of valid knowledge in the case of the erroneous cognition of shell as silver. Without this qualifying attribute, the definition of valid knowledge would be that which has for its content an entity that is not known already. The silver superimposed on a shell is not known prior to its being cognised, and so the cognition of shell as silver might have to be treated as valid knowledge. But it is not so. Its object is sublated subsequently by the cognition of the form, “This is shell only.” Since the term, “unsublatedness” of the content is absent in the case of the cognition of shell as silver, the latter is not to be treated as valid. In other words, the definition of valid knowledge is not inclusive of the erroneous cognition of shell as silver.

An analysis of the nature of the content of the erroneous cognition of shell as silver would show that the definition of valid knowledge even without the term “unsublatedness” of its content would hold good. We have said that the “unknownness” of an object would pertain to that object alone which could exist independent of being perceived by the percipient (*ajñāta-sattāka*). When viewed in this



light, the silver that appears in a shell does not exist independent of being perceived. It is *jñātaika-sattāka*, that is, its origination is coeval with its perception. Hence there is no valid reason to hold that it exists prior to its being perceived and is veiled by modal ignorance. It is not *anadhigata*. And its knowledge does not have for its content the entity that is unknown or *anadhigata* prior to its being perceived. Hence it is not valid. In other words, the definition of valid knowledge as one that has for its content an entity that is unknown will not be applicable to the cognition of shell-silver. The result of this argument is that the term, "unsublatedness" of the content need not be introduced in the definition of valid knowledge to obviate the over-pervasion of the definition of valid knowledge in the case of the erroneous knowledge of shell as silver; for, the "unknownness of the content" itself excludes the erroneous knowledge of shell-silver from the purview of the definition of valid knowledge. It comes to this that in the definition of valid knowledge the introduction of the "unsublatedness of the content" is quite unwarranted. Madhusūdana Sarasyatī in his *Advaita-ratna-rakṣaṇa* states:

According to our view, validity of knowledge is of the nature of ascertainment of an object unknown hitherto; it is applicable to all genuine cases of valid knowledge, and the knowledge of Brahman too is valid when viewed under this criterion. This definition will not be applicable to erroneous cognition; for, the content of erroneous cognition being coeval with its perception is not unknown prior to its perception.<sup>5</sup>

To sum up: the definition of valid knowledge by Dharmarājādhvarin involving reference to unsublatedness of its content is not sound.

## NOTES

1. *Vedānta-paribhāṣā* (hereafter *VP*) edited with English translation by S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri (The Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai, 1984), p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Advaita-ratna-rakṣaṇa* (Appended to the edition of the *Advaita-siddhi* with *Laghu-candrikā* (Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1917), p. 32.



## ADVAITA VEDĀNTA: ITS UNITY WITH OTHER SYSTEMS AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

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R. Balasubramanian

### 1. The Background

Since the philosophical systems in India evolved from the religio-philosophical ethos of the Vedic tradition, they share many features without prejudice to the identity of each one of them. Six of these systems which accept the authority of the Vedas are called orthodox (*āstika*), while three systems which repudiate the Vedic authority are called heterodox (*nāstika*). Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and Yoga, Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta belong to the former category, while the Cārvāka, Jaina, and Bauddha schools belong to the latter category. One should not think that a system which is labelled 'orthodox' is necessarily theistic. A system can be

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orthodox and also atheistic, as there is no incompatibility in accepting the authority of the Vedas and in rejecting the existence of the Creator-God. The orthodox category includes two systems, viz. Sāṅkhya and Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, which are not theistic, as they do not accept the Creator-God. Though the Cārvāka, Jaina, and Bauddha systems are grouped together as heterodox, the spiritual outlook of Jainism and Buddhism, notwithstanding their atheistic stand, stands in marked contrast to the materialism, both vulgar and sophisticated, of the Cārvākas. The Cārvāka system, in so far as it undertakes epistemological, metaphysical, and axiological inquiry, deserves to be accorded a place along with other systems, which perform a similar exercise, even though it is not spiritualistic and orthodox. That is why the Cārvāka system is set forth and discussed along with other systems in commentaries and manuals. For example, the *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha* of Sāyaṇa-Mādhava begins with the Cārvāka system. If we look at the philosophical standpoint of the systems ignoring their acceptance or rejection, as the case may be, of the Vedic authority, we find quite a variety of philosophical positions in the Indian tradition—empiricism, phenomenism, realism, and idealism in epistemology; monism, dualism, and pluralism in metaphysics; and also many kinds of monism and pluralism. In spite of differences in epistemology and metaphysics, these systems have many features in common which bring them together.

The focus of this paper is on Advaita Vedānta. Closely connected as it is with the ethos of the Vedic tradition, it has many features in common with other systems, Vedic as well as non-Vedic. It may also agree with a particular system on some issues. At the same time it retains its own identity in epistemology, metaphysics, and soteriology.



Though it is as old as the Vedas, it appears as if it is in the prime of youth with its doctrines and arguments, which are as relevant today as they were in earlier times.

## 2. Philosophico-ethical Ethos of Advaita and Other Systems

### *Unity of Theory and Practice*

First of all, like other philosophical systems in India, Advaita holds the view that philosophy is not only a view of life, but also a way of life. In other words, Advaita and other systems subscribe to the view of the unity of theory and practice. What is the justification for the principle of the unity of theory and practice to which Indian philosophy is committed? Philosophy is inquiry into God, man, and the world. It gets itself involved not only in epistemological and metaphysical, but also in ethical and axiological analysis when it attempts to investigate into the nature and existence of God, the origin of the world, and the nature and destiny of man. Such an inquiry, one might remark, is only theory without practice. How are we to justify the principle of the unity of theory and practice to which Advaita and other systems are committed? We can answer this question in terms of the quest after the ultimate value by the Indian philosophical systems.

Philosophy in the Indian tradition is value oriented. Excepting the Cārvāka school, all other philosophical systems in India consider liberation (*mokṣa*) as the highest value. There are different ways in which values can be classified. If we classify values into secular and spiritual, wealth (*artha*) and happiness (*kāma*) can be brought under the former category, while righteousness (*dharma*) and liberation (*mokṣa*) can be subsumed under the latter category. In the Indian tradition *dharma* which is recognized as a spiritual value plays the

role of a regulative principle. The pursuit of wealth and happiness must be in accordance with *dharma*. By regulating the secular life in accordance with the principles of scripture, *dharma* helps a spiritual aspirant to attain liberation which is the highest value, and so *dharma* too, like *artha* and *kāma*, is a means to *mokṣa*. Philosophy is for the sake of man; and so it is concerned with the life of man. Though it deals with God, man, and the world, it is, in a very profound sense, man-centred. Its concern with God and nature is for the sake of man—for the understanding of man in the context of both God and nature so that it can help him to attain liberation from bondage. That is why every philosophical work, be it Vedic or non-Vedic with the solitary exception of the Cārvāka, is characterized as a *mokṣa-śāstra*, an authoritative treatise on liberation. If philosophy is value oriented, it is also action oriented, because there is a close link between value and action. If one believes that something is a value, then one cannot but be committed to it. For example, if I believe in charity, then I have to practise charity on the appropriate occasion. Only a hypocrite will say that he believes in charity, but will not practise it when the occasion demands it and when he is in a position, physically and mentally, to practise it. If 'value' or 'good' is used in the commendatory sense as argued by R.M. Hare, it involves a commitment on the person concerned who commends it as a value. What I commend as a value or good to others is equally applicable to me, and I commend it because I believe in it. The logic of moral discourse is not, as Hare would put it, a lesson in talking, but a lesson for doing.<sup>1</sup> There is thus the link between value and action. So, since philosophy is value oriented, it is also action oriented, and this link between value and action provides the justification for the oft-repeated statement that Indian philosophy is not only a view of life, but also a way of life.



*From Bondage to Freedom*

Secondly, the problem of human existence calls for an explanation from every philosophical system. The approach as well as the answer to this problem from Advaita and other schools is the same. That empirical existence is full of suffering, that the present life of the *jīva* is not the first, that the empirical existence of the *jīva*, which is characterized as *anādi* as its beginning cannot be ascertained, can be terminated by the attainment of liberation, are the basic presuppositions of all these philosophical systems. If liberation is the state of perfection, then the empirical existence of the *jīva* which is subject to the threefold suffering—*ādhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika*, and *ādhidāivika*—can be characterized as the state of ‘fall’ with the implication that the state of ‘fall’ presupposes the state of freedom or perfection which must be native to the Self or Spirit (*ātman*) and that the liberation or perfection which the *jīva* attains is only a recovery of its own natural state. Like Advaita, other systems also insist that the *jīva* can overcome its fallen condition and regain its freedom by developing proper epistemological and metaphysical perspective followed by moral and spiritual training. It may be noted that, unlike other systems, Advaita does not hold that the empirical existence of *jīva* which is bondage is real. If bondage is not a real state of the Self, liberation too cannot be real.<sup>2</sup> Though this is the real position, Advaita like other systems speaks of the states of bondage and liberation as if the one is followed by the other from the *vyāvahārika* standpoint.

*Law of Karma*

Thirdly, the belief in the series of empirical existence in the form of the cycle of birth and death which goes on until liberation is attained is connected with the belief in the law of *karma*. Though all the systems including Advaita accept the law of *karmā* for the purpose of



explaining the kind of life that a particular jīva leads as well as the differences among the jīvas, they differ in the interpretation of the operation of this law. Systems which do not believe in the existence of God as the creator and controller of all beings, sentient as well as insentient, e.g. Buddhism in the non-Vedic group and Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā in the Vedic group, to mention only two systems, maintain that the law of *karma* functions on its own in the absence of God. But Advaita maintains like other theistic systems, e.g. Nyāya or schools of Vedānta, that the law of *karma*, being an unintelligent principle presupposes a sentient being, to control and direct it and that such a sentient being is no other than the omniscient and omnipotent God.

### *Knowledge v. Ignorance*

Fourthly, like Advaita other systems also hold the view that ignorance is the cause of bondage and that it can be removed only by knowledge. Ignorance, the root cause of empirical existence, is variously called *avidyā*, *ajñāna*, *aviveka*, and so on. According to Jainism, passions which are collectively called *kaṣāya* lead to the bondage of the soul, and ignorance of the nature of the soul and other things is the cause of passions. Since knowledge alone can remove ignorance, Jainism insists on the need for right knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*) along with right faith (*samyag-darśana*) and right conduct (*samyag-cāritra*) for the purpose of overcoming bondage. The scheme of the eightfold path formulated by Buddhism includes right concentration as the last step for attaining *nirvāṇa*. According to Buddhism, right concentration has to be achieved through, reasoning (*vitarka*) and inquiry (*vicāra*) into the fourfold truth.<sup>3</sup> The Nyāya system also maintains that knowledge is the means to liberation. It is relevant in this context to



refer to one of the *sūtras* (1.1.2) of Gautama, which Śaṅkara quotes approvingly in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*.<sup>4</sup> This *sūtra* is significant as it mentions the several links in the causal nexus connecting erroneous cognition (*mithyā-jñāna*) at the one end and suffering at the other. Śaṅkara characterizes this *sūtra* as one full of reasoning and speaks of Gautama reverentially as 'Nyāyācārya'. Gautama says that when the knowledge of the truth (*tattva-jñāna*) dawns, erroneous cognition goes away, and with the removal of erroneous cognition, the other links, viz. *doṣa* (defect in the form of desire and aversion), *pravṛtti* (action), *janma* (birth), and *duḥkha* (suffering) get snapped one after another. According to Sāṅkhya, ignorance in the form of non-discrimination (*aviveka*) between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is the cause of suffering, and knowledge of the distinction (*viveka-jñāna*) between the two removes ignorance. Also, the theistic Vedānta schools such as Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita as well as Śaiva Siddhānta hold the view that knowledge is the means, penultimate or final as the case may be, to liberation.

### 3. Advaita in Relation to Some Systems

#### *Liberation-in-life*

So far we considered four important features common to Advaita and other systems. Let us now consider some features which it shares with some systems alone. The doctrine of *jīvan-mukti* which Advaita formulates is similar to the one advocated by Sāṅkhya. Liberation may be explained in two ways—liberation-in-life (*jīvan-mukti*) and liberation-from-the-body (*videha-mukti*). It must be noted that there is only one liberation in the sense of freedom from bondage, though it may be viewed in two perspectives in the context of the continuation or cessation of the body. As soon as the saving knowledge arises, ignorance, the root cause of bondage, gets



destroyed, and with the cessation of ignorance a person gets liberated from bondage even though the body may persist for some time due to *prārabdha-karma*. Liberation here and now with the body is called *jīvan-mukti*. *Prārabdha-karma* which has started bearing fruit will come to an end when it is exhausted through enjoyment, and so the body of the enlightened man (*jñānin*), which is the fruit of the *prārabdha-karma*. According to Advaita, there is no incompatibility between liberation and the presence of the body. It is not the continuation of the body that is bondage, but only a false identification with it (*dehābhimāna*). When the body too falls off at the time of the exhaustion of *prārabdha-karma*, the enlightened man is spoken of as having attained liberation-from-the-body (*videha-mukti*). It must be borne in mind that the metaphysical difference between Advaita and Sāṅkhya has its bearing on the status of the body,<sup>5</sup> an evolute of *māyā* or *prakṛti* as the case may be, resulting in some important differences between the two schools in the explanation of *jīvan-mukti*. That is why Vijñānabhīkṣu thinks that *videha-mukti* alone is real liberation, since the *puruṣa* cannot be free from the influence of the body so long as it is embodied.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, it is of great significance that these two schools hold the view that liberation is not a post-mortem state, but one which can be attained by any person here and now provided the necessary requirement therefor is fulfilled.

### *Empirical and Trans-empirical Standpoints*

Advaita may be characterized as the philosophy of standpoints. The distinction that it makes between the *vyāvahārika* and the *pāramārthika* standpoints is pervasive in its entire philosophy. It is the distinction between the empirical and the trans-empirical, the relational and the trans-relational, the rational and the trans-



rational. The epistemological distinction between the subject and the object, the metaphysical distinctions between substance and attribute, whole and part, cause and effect, etc., the ethical distinction between the right and the wrong, the axiological distinction between secular and spiritual values—all these distinctions are meaningful and justifiable at the *vyāvahārika* level. Advaita, like other systems, undertakes philosophical inquiry into epistemological principles, metaphysical categories, ethical distinctions, and axiological hierarchy. But these, Advaita holds, must be consigned to the *vyāvahārika* realm. By contrast to this, there is another order, the *pāramārthika*, where distinctions and relations are totally absent. It is the realm of Being, the absolute truth, which is trans-linguistic, as it is trans-relational and trans-rational. Philosophy which begins with *pramāṇa-prameya-vyavahāra* comes to an end in respect of the *pāramārthika*. Making use of the distinction between philosophy and non-philosophy which is prevalent today in Continental philosophy,<sup>7</sup> we could say that, while the *vyāvahārika* falls within the scope of philosophy, the *pāramārthika* is taken care of by non-philosophy. If we accept the view that the Mādhyamika system is not nihilism on the ground that Śūnya, as interpreted by the best exponents of this system, stands for the trans-empirical reality, like Brahman of Advaita, then the Advaita distinction between the *vyāvahārika* and the *pāramārthika* is comparable to the Mādhyamika distinction between *saṃvṛti-satya* and *paramārtha-satya*.<sup>8</sup> It will be of interest to note that, even according to Buddhism, when a spiritual aspirant has come up to the last step, viz. right concentration, in the eightfold path leading to *nirvāṇa*, a stage comes in when reasoning and investigation will become unnecessary.<sup>9</sup> This is the stage of non-philosophy.



### *Realistic Epistemology*

There is no incompatibility between epistemological realism and metaphysical monism/non-dualism. Advaita which is non-dualistic in its metaphysics is realistic in its epistemology. The realism of Advaita is comparable to the realism of Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā. On the basis of the three factors (*tripuṭī*) of knowledge, Advaita maintains, like Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā, that the object known is different not only from the knower, but also from knowledge. In fact, Advaita is more realistic than realism itself in so far as it maintains that anything that is perceived, be it a rope-snake or a dream-lion, must be admitted to have existence like a table or a tree of our normal waking consciousness. The principle it follows in this regard is the opposite of the Berkeleyan principle. Instead of saying that what exists must be perceived, it holds that what is perceived must exist: the object perceived must be accorded, that is to say, some reality, for what is totally non-existent like a sky-flower can never be perceived by anyone at anytime. A rope-snake which is perceived exists at that time in that place to the perceiver concerned. It is an object of 'private' experience to be contrasted with an object of 'public' experience such as a table or a tree. While the former is said to have phenomenal reality (*prātibhāsika-sattā*), the latter is said to have empirical reality (*vyāvahārika-sattā*). Both of them which suffer sublation (*bādha*) and which are, therefore, *mithyā* can be contrasted with Brahman or the Self which has absolute reality (*pāramārthika-sattā*), as it is not subject to sublation at any time. Advaita, therefore, formulates the doctrine of three levels of reality (*sattā-traya-vāda*), even though it is committed to the thesis that ultimate reality is one and non-dual. It develops a realistic epistemology by following the evidence of consciousness, the ultimate revealing principle for knowing anything, 'the light of lights' (*jyotiṣām-jyotiḥ*) in the



language of the Upaniṣad,<sup>10</sup> 'the principle of principles' as Husserl would put it. Again, it is more empirical than empiricism itself, for it does not restrict experience to sense-experience alone as empiricism does. According to Advaita, experience is comprehensive enough to cover not only normal waking experience (*jāgrat*) in which the senses play their role, but also dream experience (*svapna*) in which the senses do not function, and deep sleep experience (*susupti*) in which the senses and the mind do not function. Any epistemological claim that we make in our analysis of experience at all levels is grounded, according to Advaita, in consciousness, the ultimate revealing principle. It must be borne in mind that this realistic and empirical approach is meaningful and valid only from the *vyāvahārika* standpoint. As there is the saying, "*vyāvahāre bhāṭṭanayaḥ*," Advaita by and large follows the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā school in its epistemology. For example, it accepts the six *pramāṇas* of the Bhāṭṭas; it also subscribes to the theory of intrinsic validity of knowledge followed by the Bhāṭṭas and other Mīmāṃsakas. This, however, does not mean that Advaita does not have its own standpoint in its realistic epistemology.

#### 4. Contemporary Relevance of Advaita

##### *Central Teaching of Advaita*

The central teaching of Advaita may be summarized in three propositions: Brahman is real; the world which has only a dependent existence is *mithyā*; and the *jīva* in its essential nature is no other than Brahman. A brief explanation of these three propositions will be helpful to appreciate the relevance of Advaita.

Making a distinction between Brahman-in-itself and Brahman-in-relation-to-the-world, Advaita maintains that, while the former is devoid of attributes and specifications, i.e. *nirguṇa* and *nirviśeṣa*, the



latter is endowed with attributes and specifications, i.e. *saguṇa* and *saviśeṣa*. It is the distinction between the Absolute (Brahman) and God (Īśvara) on the basis of two standpoints—acosmic and cosmic. One and the same reality is called by two different names—Brahman from the acosmic point of view and Īśvara from the cosmic point of view. The distinction between Brahman and Īśvara arises because of the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*). When the non-relational Brahman is associated with *māyā*, the creative principle which serves as the adjunct, it is called Īśvara. In short, Brahman with *māyā* is Īśvara; and Īśvara devoid of *māyā* is Brahman. Though Īśvara is one, it may be in many forms and with many names for the purpose of meditation and worship.

The *jīva* is a complex entity consisting of the Self (*ātman*) and the material adjunct, viz. the mind-sense-body complex, which is a product of *māyā*. The Self is one and non-relational. It is real (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*) by nature. Though non-relational, it appears to be related to the mind-sense-body complex. Though *māyā* and *avidyā* are essentially the same, still making a distinction between the two for the purpose of analysis,<sup>11</sup> Advaita says that, while *māyā* is the *upādhi* of Īśvara, *avidyā* is the *upādhi* of *jīva*. The Self of the *jīva* is no other than Brahman; however, because of the limiting adjunct, it appears to be different. As a result of *avidyā*, the limiting adjunct, the *jīva* becomes finite, i.e. limited, in knowledge, power, and other respects, is subject to pleasure and pain, and is caught up in transmigratory existence till it overcomes *avidyā* and realizes that it is no other than Brahman as taught in the principal text (*mahāvākya*) of the Upaniṣad such as “That thou art” (*tat tvam asi*). This, in short, is the nature and destiny of the *jīva*. It must be borne in mind that, since each *jīva* has its



own mind-sense-body complex, there is difference between one jīva and another—a distinction that is caused by the mind-sense-body complex, the material adjunct—though essentially as Self there is no difference at all. In other words, though there is one Self, that is to say one Brahman, there is a plurality of jīvas. The jīva is Brahman in empirical dress. Just as Brahman appears as Īśvara, even so does it appear as jīva. Though Īśvara and jīva are essentially Brahman, they are not identical, since each has its own *upādhi* which serves to differentiate the one from the other.

Since māyā is not ultimately real, the world which is a projection of māyā is also not ultimately real. It is, however, real enough for practical purposes; and so it is empirically real. Since it suffers sublation at the time of enlightenment, i.e. Brahman/Self-realization, it is not ultimately real. In the Advaita parlance, what is empirically real is *mithyā*.

### *Vedānta for All*

It should be borne in mind that Advaita is not an abstruse philosophy intended only for the practice of ascetics and the intellectual exercise of academics. On the contrary, it is a philosophy and religion for everyone. It must find expression in the every-day life of all. That is why Swami Vivekananda wanted to carry it to the people. Swami Vivekananda declared:

Knowledge of Vedānta has been hidden too long in caves and forests. It has been given to me to rescue it from its seclusion and to carry it in the midst of family and social life.... The drum of the Advaita shall be sounded at all places—in the bazaars, from the hilltops and in the plains.<sup>12</sup>

If Swami Vivekananda wants to take it to the common man, it is because of the fact that it provides an answer to the major problems which confront us today. The major problems can be identified as follows: *first*, there is the problem of religious harmony in a pluralistic society; *second*, there is the problem of integration at the national and international levels; *third*, there is the problem of alienation—alienation from oneself, alienation from fellow-beings and nature, and alienation from God; *fourth*, there is the problem of orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Let us consider one by one these problems in the light of the central teaching of Advaita.

*The Problem of Religious Harmony in a Pluralistic Society*

Religion *per se* does not lead to sectarian conflict and religious disharmony. Forces outside religion exploit the ignorance and the gullibility of the common man and generate in the name of, but abusing, religion sectarian quarrels and religious conflict, which go under the name of 'communal disturbances'. At the religious level, Advaita holds the view that, though there is only one God or Īśvara, there are many forms of it. It must be borne in mind that Advaita is only reiterating here the ancient wisdom revealed by the Vedic seer: "What is but one, wise people call it by different names—as Agni, Yama, and Mātariśvan."<sup>13</sup> In a celebrated passage in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, Śaṅkara observes that Brahman, the supreme reality, is known in two ways—as associated with the distinctions of name and form and also as devoid of these distinctions.<sup>14</sup> While the former which is called Īśvara or Saguṇa-Brahman will accommodate the different forms of God as Śiva, Viṣṇu, and so on, as worshipped by the followers of the different sects, the latter which is called Nirguṇa-Brahman transcends theistic and sectarian outlook. There is no justification for a follower of Śiva to quarrel with a follower of Viṣṇu,



because both of them, according to Śaṅkara, worship the same God, though in different forms and with different names. The implication here is that the logic which holds good in respect of the different sects of Hinduism also holds good with regard to the different religions such as Christianity, Islam, and so on. One and the same God is worshipped in different ways by the followers of different religions. There is, therefore, no reason why a Hindu should quarrel with a Muslim, or a Muslim with a Christian, and so on. It may be stated here that Advaita operates at two levels—theistic and trans-theistic—and is, therefore, able to show how the one, supreme reality which has no name and form, no attribute, gender, and habitat, is viewed at the theistic level as characterized by the distinctions of name, form, etc.

What was affirmed by Śaṅkara during the classical period was vindicated by Ramakrishna Paramahansa in our own times. In his own characteristic way Sri Ramakrishna elucidated with striking examples the distinction between God with and without form. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna:

God with form and God without form are not two different beings. He who is with form is also without form. To a devotee God manifests himself in various forms. Just think of a shoreless ocean—an infinite expanse of water—no land visible in any direction; only here and there are visible blocks of ice formed by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to say of the deep devotion of his worshipper, the infinite reduces himself (itself) into the finite and appears before him as a being with form. Again, as, on the appearance of the sun, the ice melts away, so on the appearance of the sun of knowledge, God with form melts away into the formless.<sup>15</sup>

Since all religions, being the pathways to God, are equally valid, there is no question of superiority or inferiority among them. To quote again Sri Ramakrishna:

As one can ascend to the roof of a house by means of a ladder, or a bamboo, or a staircase, or in various other ways, so diverse are the ways and means to approach God. Every religion in the world is one of the ways to reach Him.<sup>16</sup>

Why, then, should we fight with one another in the name of God and religion?

### *The Problem of Integration*

Though the problem of integration is primarily social as it arises in the social context, it can never be solved merely at the social plane. It is well known that all social problems are ultimately individual problems. Though they originate at the individual level, they do not and cannot stop with the individual for the simple reason that the individual is a member of the social organism and that whatever affects him has its repercussion on the social organism of which he is a member. In other words, the problem of integration, like any other social problem, has two dimensions—individual and social. Man undoubtedly is a social animal. He requires society as he can develop his social self only through others in society. However, being endowed with opposite tendencies, he functions in such a way as to harm society and thereby himself. For example, while his gregarious instinct pulls him in one direction, his egoism which functions through lust (*kāma*), wrath (*krodha*), and greed (*lobha*), the triple gate to hell as the *Bhagavad-gītā* would put it,<sup>17</sup> propels him in the opposite direction. Hence, he is not at peace with himself, also, he is not in



harmony with society. In other words, he has neither self-integration nor social-integration. The difficulty here is that he cannot achieve the one without the other. Without self-integration there is no social integration, and without social integration there is no self-integration. Socialization plays an important role in moulding an individual to achieve the twofold integration, as it is a learning process by which an individual develops an awareness of himself as a person in relation to others with all the rights and obligations such a relation involves. Apart from the physical and psychological heritage of the individual, the cultural tradition of the society in which the individual is brought up plays a significant role in socialization. For example, the way in which a child is moulded into a social self in the Indian society will be different from that in the North American or African society. Socialization involves interaction between the individual and other members of the society. There are four factors in social action—the agent or the actor, the end, the means, and the conditions. The agent has no control over the conditions which are given to him. However, he has control over the means and the end. He has choice with regard to the end; and he has to choose the means appropriate to the end in the given situation in which he is called upon to act. The cultural tradition which functions through family, which is the primary and immediate social unit for the individual, and other groups has a tremendous influence on the individual in respect of the choice of the end as well as of the means. It is against this background that we have to consider the relevance of Advaita for helping an individual to achieve self-integration and social integration.

The nature as well as the status of the social self is the really important issue here. Normally the concept of the social self involves the distinction between 'I' and 'mine' on the one hand, and 'you' and



'yours' on the other. The self-consciousness which every one has points to such a distinction in the absence of which everyday life based on social and other distinctions as well as interaction of various kinds will be impossible. There are two dangers inherent in the development of the social self, which are detrimental to the twofold integration. First of all, the rigid distinction between 'I' and 'you', which is unavoidable in the formation of the social self, leads to egoism and false individualism. To borrow the 'looking glass' metaphor used by Cooley, one sees only oneself in the mirror and not others. Also, the individual begins to think and act as if he were the sole reality. This abstract individualism along with egoism prevents the achievement of both self-integration and social integration. In short, the formation of the social self, unless properly guided and controlled through a right value system, results in the development of demoniac disposition which can be identified by qualities such as ostentation, arrogance, self-conceit, and so on—qualities which are not conducive to self-integration and social integration. That is why Advaita declares that the social self is not the real Self, but only the pseudo-self, that it is a mask which the individual wears not knowing that it is a mask put on to act in the drama of life, and that the only way by which one could overcome the dangers of egoism and individualism is by the assiduous cultivation of the divine disposition (*daivī-sampat*) as against demoniac disposition (*āsurī-sampat*).<sup>18</sup> Secondly, the formation of the social self is not conducive to the realization of the real Self. According to Advaita, one develops the social self by a false identification (*abhimāna*) with the mind-sense-body complex. When a person says, "I am such-and-such," "I am the husband of so-and-so," and so on, he identifies himself with the mind-sense-body complex—a false identification which produces the social self. At the level of the social self, neither self-integration nor social integration is possible. On the contrary, one must transcend the social



self and know the real Self as the reality behind it. It is only when a person knows that the Self is the sole reality and that one and the same Self is the indwelling reality in all, he will realize that other persons are not unconnected with him. It is this awareness of the basic oneness as the truth behind the social diversity that is really conducive to self-integration and social integration, national integration and international integration.

### *The Problem of Alienation*

Alienation assumes different forms—alienation of one's product, alienation of labour, alienation from one's fellow beings, alienation from oneself. In the present context, the last two kinds of alienation are relevant. The Advaita answer to the problem of alienation from one's fellow beings has already been given while discussing social integration. Alienation from oneself is the greatest tragedy of man. Absorbed in the things of the world and overwhelmed by a busy schedule of daily life, the modern man is forgetful of the Self which is not only closest to him, but also his essence. As stated earlier, the human being is a complex entity consisting of the Self and the material adjunct. Under the spell of ignorance, not only does he not know the Self, but also thinks of the not-Self as the Self, identifies himself with it, and carries on his daily life as the subject of knowledge, the agent of action, and the enjoyer of the consequences of his action. Never inquiring into the 'I' which points to the Self, he identifies the 'I' with the body when he says, "I am stout", and so on; with the senses when he says, "I am blind," and so on; and with the mind when he says, "I am happy," and so on. Not only does he say so, but also acts on that basis. The Self, for which the 'I' stands, remains untouched by stoutness, blindness, and happiness which are the qualities respectively of the body, the sense-organs, and the mind. Ignorance

of the Self leads to alienation from it, which in its turn is the cause of the manifold suffering. To overcome this alienation, it is first of all necessary to know that the Self is different from the mind-sense-body complex. And this discriminative awareness is the first step towards sanity. Intellectual conviction about the Self arising from its mediate knowledge is not enough to regain the Self. Mediate knowledge must be transformed into immediate knowledge through spiritual discipline in order to regain the Self. It will, indeed, be a transition from philosophy to non-philosophy, from the sphere of reason to the realm of intuition.

### *The Problem of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis*

While there is no problem of orthodoxy in a society which does not have a tradition based on scripture, such a problem does arise in a society like that of the Hindus whose long tradition is rooted in scripture. In the Hindu context the problem becomes more complicated because of the acceptance of two kinds of scripture, primary and secondary, whose authority is not on a footing of equality. While *śruti* is primary scripture, *smṛti* is secondary scripture. Since the authority of the latter is derived from the former, *śruti* holds good in case of conflict between the two. Orthodoxy means right view or opinion; and in the context of scripture-based tradition, it means the scriptural view. Orthopraxis presupposes orthodoxy; and hermeneutics plays an important role in deciding the rightness of the view. While orthodoxy was not a problem to a person like the Buddha who revolted against the Vedic authority, it was a challenge to one like Śaṅkara who, though willing to remain within the orthodox fold, questioned the views said to be *orthodox* and the *praxis* based thereon.



Advaita, though orthodox, challenges orthodoxy by reinterpreting the scope, validity, and presupposition of the ritual section of the Veda. Though the ritual-section (*karma-kāṇḍa*) and knowledge-section (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*) are parts of the Veda, there is a world of difference between them. The two radically differ in respect of *adhikārin* (eligible person), *viśaya* (subject matter), and *prayojana* (result). First of all, a person interested in worldly prosperity (*preyas*) is eligible for following the ritual section, whereas one who is interested in the highest good (*śreyas*) and who has developed detachment and dispassion is eligible for the pursuit of the knowledge section. Secondly, while the ritual-section deals with *karma*, the deities to whom offerings have to be made, etc., the knowledge-section is concerned with the ever-existent Brahman-Ātman. Thirdly, whatever is produced through scripture-ordained *karma* is perishable; but the result, viz. liberation, obtained through the knowledge section is eternal. For these reasons Advaita wants to keep the two sections of the Veda separate. The bifurcation of the two sections of the Veda is the first stage in the hermeneutic revolution ushered in by Advaita.

In the next stage it examines and questions the presupposition involved in the practice of scripture-ordained *karma*. Any person is not eligible to perform any *karma* because of the eligibility restriction. For example, while a householder is eligible to perform certain *karman*, a celibate student is not qualified to perform them. What a *kṣatriya* is eligible for, a *brāhmaṇa* is not. The ritual-section, therefore, operates on the basis of distinctions and special requirements in respect of these distinctions. These distinctions do not operate at all in the pursuit of the highest value by the spiritual aspirants.

In the third stage, Advaita highlights the role of *adhyāsa* which is implicit when a person considers himself a *brāhmaṇa* or a *kṣatriya*, a

*brahmacārin* or a *grhastha*. These distinctions are not possible, says Advaita, in the absence of *adhyāsa*. The first two distinctions mentioned above are connected with birth, while the last two are based on stages of life. These distinctions are made with reference to the body; they have nothing to do with the Self. *Adhyāsa* is due to ignorance. Not knowing the Self, one identifies oneself with the mind, or the sense-organ, or the body; and without such identification no *karma* can be performed. Therefore, a person in his quest after liberation should go away from the ritual-section which operates on the basis of distinctions presupposing *adhyāsa*, which, again, is due to *avidyā*. It must be stated here that Advaita is not against ritual. On the contrary, it exposes the limitation of ritual whose sphere of operation is restricted to producing, or attaining, or modifying, or purifying, something which is perishable. Advaita which advocates the theory of equality is opposed to the theory of privileges based on distinctions. It is anti-hierarchical. In the words of Swami Vivekananda: "None can be Vedāntists and at the same time admit of privilege to anyone, either mental, physical, or spiritual—absolutely no privilege for any one."<sup>19</sup> This attitude of Advaita is extremely relevant today.

## NOTES

1. R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 150: "The remedy, in fact, for moral stagnation and decay is to learn to use our value-language for the purpose for which it is designed; and this involves not merely a lesson in talking, but a lesson in doing that which we commend; for unless we are prepared to do this we are doing no more than pay lip-service to a conventional standard."
2. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, 13.2.
3. According to Buddhism, right concentration (*samyag-samādhi*)



consists of four stages. In the first stage there is the joy of pure thinking following *vitarka* and *vicāra*. The spiritual aspirant enjoys the joy of tranquillity in the second stage of concentration when reasoning and investigation become unnecessary. In the third stage there is indifference to the joy of tranquillity. And in the last stage of perfect equanimity, one attains *nirvāṇa*.

4. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, 1.1.4.: "*tathā ca ācārya-praṇītaṁ nyāya-upabṛ̥hitaṁ sūtram — duḥkha-janma-pravṛtti-doṣa-mithyājñānānām uttarottarāpāye tadanantarāpāyāt apavargaḥ.*"
5. Sāṅkhya is dualistic in its metaphysics, whereas Advaita is non-dualistic. According to Sāṅkhya, *prakṛti* is not only an independent principle, but also real; and so all the evolutes of *prakṛti* including the body are real. Since *māyā*, according to Advaita, is *mithyā*, the body too, a product of *māyā*, is *mithyā*.
6. See his *Pravacana-bhāṣya*, 3. 76-84, 5. 116.
7. See Hugh J. Silverman, *Philosophy and Non-philosophy Since Merleau-Ponty* (Routledge: New York and London, 1988). Non-philosophy is negative philosophy in the sense of negative theology. It transcends the usual modes of thinking and reasoning practised in philosophy. Merleau-Ponty, for example, observes: "Negative philosophy' has access to the absolute, not as 'beyond', as a positive second order, but as another order which must be on this side, the double—inaccessible without being passed through. True philosophy scoffs at philosophy, since it is a philosophical," Ibid., p. 9.
8. See Nāgārjuna, *Mādhyamika-sāstra*, 24.8-9.
9. See the explanation given in (3) above.
10. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.9.
11. Both of them are *jada*, *triguṇātmaka*, and *mithyā*. However, a distinction between the two is made as follows: *māyā* is *śuddha-sattva-pradhānā*, while *avidyā* is *malina-sattva-pradhānā*.

12. Quoted by Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*, p. 162.
13. *Rg-Veda*, 1.164.46.
14. See his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, 1.1.12: “*dvirūpaṁ hi brahma avagamyate, nāmarūpa-vikārabheda-upādhi-viśiṣṭam, tadviparītaṁ ca sarva-upādhi-vivarjitaṁ.*”
15. See Swami Brahmananda (ed.), *Words of the Master* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office), pp. 8-9.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
17. *Bhagavad-gītā*, 16.21.
18. *Ibid.*, 16.5.
19. See Swami Vivekananda, *What Religion Is*, edited by Swami Vidyatmananda (Advaita Ashram, Calcutta, 1978), p. 69.



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## JAGAT, JĪVA, AND BRAHMAN: ADVAITA VIEW

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B.R. Shantha Kumari\*

The philosophy of Advaita which declares that Brahman alone is real, that the world is illusory, and that the Self is no other than Brahman (*brahma satyam jagan-mithyā jīvo brahmaiva na aparah*) can be described as a metaphysics of standpoints or a phenomenology of experience. Advaita which is radically empirical in its epistemology and idealistic in its metaphysics is a critique of experience based on an inquiry into the three states of experience (*avasthā-traya vicāra*), and the reality (*sattā*) of the phenomena cognised therein. According to Advaita: the real (*sat*) is that which cannot be contradicted at all times (*trikāla-abādhita*)—past, present, and future; the non-real (*asat*) is that which cannot be perceived (*pratīti*) at all times; in addition to these two mutually opposed categories, Advaita admits a third category—that which is neither real (because it is sublated) nor non-real (because it is

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sublated) nor non-real (because it is perceived). This category, which is different from the real and the non-real (*sadasad-vilakṣaṇa*), and is indescribable (*anirvacanīya*), is called illusory (*mithyā*). Using the forceps of reasoning (*yukti*) having sublatability and perceptibility as its two arms, Śaṅkara isolates the gem—the Self-embedded in the three states of experience. A rational examination of the three states of experience reveals that, while the body, senses, mind, their objects, and activities are sometimes present and sometimes absent, the self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) Self alone as undifferentiated pure consciousness (*nirviśeṣa-cinmātram*) is present at all times as a witness to the presence and absence (*bhāvābhāva-ubhaya-sākṣin*) of the body, senses, mind, and the phenomena cognised by them. Since the Self is invariably present with the body, senses, and mind, but not vice-versa, in all the three states of experience, it alone is real, and everything else—not-Self (*anātman*)—is illusory. According to Advaita, the not-Self encompasses all phenomena perceived as “this” (*idam*) through the six means of knowledge (*pramāṇas*) by the knowing Self—the “not-this” (*anidam*). While the Self reveals everything and also itself, it cannot be likewise revealed by anything else (*avedyatve sati sva-īlara-avabhāsatatvaṁ svaprakāśatvaṁ*).

Although Advaita proclaims that ultimately, viz. from the transcendental standpoint (*pāramārthika*), Brahman is one only without a second (*ekam eva advitīyam*), and that there is no plurality whatsoever (*na iha nānā asti kiñcana*), yet, at the empirical level (*vyāvahārika*) it has to satisfactorily account for the variety (*vaicitrya*): the material world or jagat, and the spiritual selves or jīvas perceived therein. According to Advaita, Brahman alone is not the cause of the world, because it is perfect (*pūrṇa*); nor is māyā alone the cause,



because it is material (*jada*) in nature; but Brahman as the transfigurative material cause (*vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*) conditioned by *māyā* functioning as the transformative material cause (*pariṇāmi-upādāna-kāraṇa*). *Māyā* has two powers: through its concealing power (*āvaraṇa śakti*), it veils the existence, knowledge and bliss nature (*sat-cid-ānanda*) of Brahman; and through its projecting power (*vikṣepa-śakti*) it projects the non-real as the real. Just as a prism splits a ray of light to display a spectrum of colours, so also *māyā* projects the non-dual Brahman as the pluralistic material and spiritual/conscious phenomena of the empirical realm. But like pictures painted on a canvas which have no reality of their own independent of the substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*)—the canvas—on which they are painted, so also the varied empirical phenomena have no independent reality and are mere name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) superimposed on Brahman. According to Advaita, the projection and perception of these do not affect Brahman just as the water perceived in a mirage does not moisten the ground, because they belong to two different, unequal orders of reality (*viśama-sattā*). Advaita employs: (1) the rope-snake analogy (*rajju-sarpa-nyāya*) an unconditioned error (*nirupādhika-bhrama*) to explain how Brahman appears as the material world, i.e. jagat, and (2) the crystal-red flower analogy (*japā-kusuma nyāya*), a conditioned error (*sopādhika bhrama*), to explain how Brahman appears as the spiritual selves, i.e. jīvas.

Advaita upholds that one and the same Brahman appears as two in relation to the world of phenomena while by itself it is one only without a second. In the words of Hiriyanna, Brahman is God or Īśvara from the cosmic standpoint (*saprapaṇcadṛṣṭi*), and God is Brahman from the acosmic standpoint (*niṣprapaṇca-dṛṣṭi*). Vidyāraṇya in his *Pañcadaśī*<sup>1</sup> says that the jīva and Īśvara are creations of *māyā*, being

reflections of Brahman in it. Īśvara is like the reflection of the sky in the cloud (*meghākāśa*) whereas the jīva is like the reflection of sky in water (*jalākāśa*). Making a subtle distinction between māyā (in which *sattva* is preponderant) and avidyā (in which *tamas* is preponderant), Advaita affirms that the jīva qualified by avidyā, and Īśvara qualified by māyā, are both illusory, because they are conditioned phenomena (*sopādhika-tattvas*). Since māyā is *sattva*-preponderant, it does not delude Īśvara or make him parviscient as avidyā does the jīva, because of a preponderance of *tamas* in it. Like a spider which weaves a web from its own saliva and remains unaffected by its creation, Īśvara wields māyā and creates the material world for the jīvas to experience the fruits of their actions (*karma-phala*), overcome bondage and attain liberation. At the empirical level, God is the creator of the world, the dispenser of the fruits of justice, and the object of devotion whose grace is indispensable for the jīva for attaining liberation. By accepting God, Śaṅkara does not become a pious conformist, and his philosophy, theistic, or by rejecting God as the ultimate reality, he does not become an irreligious heretic, and his philosophy, atheistic. The fact is that Advaita is ultimately neither theistic nor atheistic, but trans-theistic. According to Śaṅkara, the worship and grace of God are only instrumental to the attainment of the transcendental Nirguṇa-Brahman. Therefore, Śaṅkara established six modes of worship, and is hence known as *ṣaṇ-mata-sthāpanācārya*.

### Jagat

According to Advaita, since the supreme reality i.e. Brahman is trans-empirical, trans-rational, and trans-linguistic, Śaṅkara proceeds from the known cosmic phenomena to the unknown cosmic reality. His methodology involves knowing the unknown through the known



by the technique of superimposition and subsequent denial (*adhyāropa-apavādābhyām niṣprapañcam prapañcyate*).

Śaṅkara adopts the theory of apparent creation (*vivarta-vāda*) for explaining and exposing the illusory nature of creation. Like the "snake" seen in a rope, the world is only an appearance (*vivarta*) to Brahman. What the rope is to the "snake", Brahman is to the "world". From Brahman conditioned by *māyā* arise in succession the five great elements (*pañca-mahābhūtas*), viz. ether, air, fire, water, and earth respectively, and then the elementals which are the effects (*kārya*) of the combination of the five elements. Since all the existents of the world are products of Brahman and *māyā*, they possess five qualities which constitute the nature of their causes. The five qualities are existence (*asti*), manifestedness (*bhāti*), and desirability (*priyam*) belonging to Brahman; and name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) belonging to *māyā*. Due to *avidyā*, there is mutual superimposition of the nature of Brahman on *māyā*, and vice-versa. Like the "snake" seen in a rope, the world is only a super-imposition on Brahman. The rope at all three times—before the "snake" was perceived, while it is being perceived, and after its apparent reality is sublated—remains the same without undergoing any transformation. Similarly, Brahman too remains unaffected by the perception of the phenomenal world of name and form superimposed on it. All changes, e.g. seeing the "snake", fearing it, experiencing relief on seeing that it is only a rope, etc. take place only in the mind of the perceiver and not in Brahman. The reality (*sattā*), existence (*sthiti*), and cognition (*pratīti*) of the illusory snake are appropriated from the substratum on which it is superimposed (*kalpitasya adhiṣṭhānameva svarūpam*); so also all phenomena of the world derive their reality, existence, and cognition from Brahman, the ultimate substratum.



Vidyāraṇa in his *Pañcadaśī* discusses two kinds of creation:<sup>2</sup> (1) creation of God (*Īśvara-sṛṣṭi*), and (2) creation of the jīva (*jīva-sṛṣṭi*). Material objects of the external empirical world cognised by the mind and senses, which are effects of māyā constitute the phenomena created by God whereas a cogniser's mental response to the God-created material phenomena experienced by the modifications of the mind (*citta-vṛttis*) constitute the phenomena created by the jīva. According to Vidyāraṇa, the external material world of māyā can be viewed in three different ways. The world is real (*vāstavi*) to an ignorant person (*ajñānī*), neither real nor non-real (*anirvacanīya*) to a philosopher, and non-existent (*tuccha*) to a realized person. Through knowledge (*jñāna*), action (*karma*), and experience (*bhoga*), the jīva transforms the material phenomena of *Īśvara-sṛṣṭi* into mental phenomena of *jīva-sṛṣṭi*.<sup>3</sup> The *Saptānna-Brāhmaṇa* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* lists seven kinds of food/objects "created" by the jīva:<sup>4</sup> new moon and full-moon sacrifices (*darśa-pūrṇamāsa*) for the gods (*deva*); grains (*vṛhi*) for human beings; milk (*kṣīra*) for animals; and mind (*manas*), speech (*vāk*), and vital airs (*prāṇa*) for the Self. Happiness, disappointment and indifference represent the varying mental responses of an individual towards the material objects created by God.<sup>5</sup> Having created these mental categories, the jīva gets deluded by its own creation like a silk-worm which spins a cocoon around itself, remains imprisoned in it and suffers bondage. The jīva's mental domain can be classified under two heads: (1) those not conforming to scripture (*aśāstriya*) which include phenomena inciting violent (*tīvra*) emotions, e.g. lust (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), etc. and including dullness (*manda*), e.g. day-dreams (*manorājyam*); and (2) those conforming to scripture (*śāstriya*), which must be practised until Brahman-realization is attained, e.g. inquiry into the nature of the Self and Brahman.<sup>6</sup>



According to Advaita, although the world is illusory, it nevertheless has practical value (*artha-kriyā-kāritva*) in that the teacher or guru and the text or śruti, which are a part of the world, help the jīva attain liberation. Just as a dream-lion wakes up a sleeping person and makes one aware of the illusory nature of the dream and the “reality” of the world around oneself, so also scripture wakes up individuals from the nightmare of bondage caused by avidyā by awakening one to a certitude about the illusory nature (*mithyātva-niścaya*) of the world and an apodictic awareness of the jīva’s identity with Brahman (*jīva-brahmaikya-jñāna*).

### Jīva

“Jīva” literally means a living being, i.e. a sentient being conducive to the functioning of vitality. Hiriyanna describes the “jīva” as “Brahman in empirical dress”. The “empirical dress” is constituted of the five sheaths (*pañcakośas*) or the three bodies (*śarīra-traya*), viz. the food-sheath (*annamaya-kośa*) or the gross body (*sthūla-deha*); the vital air-sheath (*prāṇamaya-kośa*), the mind-sheath (*manomaya-kośa*), and the intellect-sheath (*viññānamaya-kośa*), which together comprise the subtle body (*sūkṣma-deha*); and the bliss-sheath (*ānandamaya-kośa*) which is the causal body (*kāraṇa-deha*). Advaita makes a distinction between the transcendental Self of the nature of pure consciousness, and the empirical individual self or the jīva, i.e. pure consciousness conditioned by the body-sense-mind complex, an effect of avidyā. The jīva is real, because it is no other than the infinite Brahman, but its finite *jīvabhāva* is false, because it is an illusory limitation caused by avidyā. Just as the “red colour” of a crystal is due to its proximity to a red flower, so also the finitude of the Self is adventitious (*anupādhika*), caused by the



internal sense-organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*)—an evolute of avidyā—functioning as the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*).

Admitting the non-duality of Brahman and a plurality of jīvas (*ekātma-vāda* and *nāna-jīva-vāda*), Advaita puts forward three theories: (1) the reflection theory (*bimba-pratibimba-vāda*) advocated by Padmapāda and others of the Vivaraṇa school; (2) the limitation theory (*avaccheda-vāda*) advocated by Maṇḍana, Vācaspati Miśra, and others of the Bhāmati school; and (3) the semblance theory (*ābhāsa-vāda*) advocated by Sureśvara, Vidyāraṇya, *et al* to explain how Brahman appears as the jīvas. According to the semblance theory, the jīva is an aggregate of three phenomena—the Self of the nature of pure consciousness (*cit*); the mind (which is material and not-Self), functioning as the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) and reflecting medium; and a reflection of the consciousness of the Self in the mind (*cidābhāsa*).<sup>7</sup>

Sureśvara views the Self in three ways for understanding its nature as: (1) the jīva, i.e. pure consciousness qualified by the internal organ as its essential attribute (*antaḥkaraṇa-viśiṣṭa-caitanya*). According to Advaita, although the Self is not the knower (*jñātā*), doer (*kartā*), and enjoyer (*bhoktā*), due to avidyā it appears to be these, because of mutual superimposition (*itaretara-adhyāsa*) of the attributes of the body-sense-mind complex on the Self and vice-versa. By applying the rational method of agreement in presence and agreement in absence (*anvaya-vyatireka*) to the three states of experience, it can be seen that there cannot be any real relation between the Self and the material body-sense-mind complex; and that it is the empirical self, i.e. Self qualified by the mind which is the knower, doer, and enjoyer; whereas the noumenal Self is devoid of all these aspects; (2) the *sākṣin*, i.e. pure



consciousness qualified by the internal sense-organ as its adventitious attribute (*antaḥkaraṇa-upahita-caitanya*). The noumenal Self which is one only without a second becomes contextually at the empirical level a witness to the phenomena perceived by the mind and its modifications (*vikāras*). But the Self is not a witness, because there is nothing other than it to be perceived; (3) the *kevala*, i.e. pure consciousness or the non-dual Brahman alone; this definition denies what was initially wrongly affirmed of the Self. Therefore, the Self is neither the *jīva* nor *sākṣin*, but the attributeless reality—Nirguṇa-Brahman—because there is nothing other than it to function as its attribute—essential or adventitious.

Sureśvara in his *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*<sup>8</sup> describes the stages through which the blissful and infinite Brahman becomes the suffering and finite *jīva*. The empirical journey of the Self which is a spiritual fall from its Brahman-nature takes place in two stages. In the first stage, the Self gets limited by *avidyā* and comes to be known as *cidābhāsa*. The I-notion emerges. In the second stage, the *cidābhāsa* identifies itself with the “I” (*ahaṅkāra*) and develops a pragmatic attitude towards the objects of the world as “mine” (*mamakāra*). Thus, identification with the “I” transforms the transcendental Self, which is the non-knower, non-doer, non-enjoyer, etc. into the empirical self which is the knower, doer, enjoyer, etc.

### “Attaining” Brahman

Although the *jīva* in its essential nature is identical with Brahman, since its bondage is caused by wrong identification with the body-sense-mind complex, because of ignorance of its real nature (*svarūpa-ajñāna*), Advaita declares that right knowledge of its identity with

Brahman alone can terminate its misery. According to Advaita, action (*karma*), devotion (*bhakti*), meditation (*dhyāna*), etc. either by themselves or together cannot result in liberation, because they operate on the basis of difference (*bheda*), confer impermanent fruit (*anitya-phala*) at a later date (*adr̥ṣṭa*) and necessitate body-consciousness (*dehābhimāna*) implying the presence of avidyā, which is radically opposed to Self-realisation or the attainment of liberation. Moreover, they are conducive to the attainment of only Saguna-Brahman and can bestow non-eternal liberation (*aparā-mukti*) and not eternal liberation (*parā-mukti*). But these means instil discrimination (*viveka*), dispassion (*vairāgya*), mental purity (*cittasuddhi*), and one-pointed concentration (*ekāgratā*) and thereby enable the mind to intuit the Self.

The Advaita praxis for liberation involves: (1) initially equipping oneself with the right mental set through the fourfold qualification (*sādhana-catustaya*), consisting of a capacity to discriminate the real from the non-real (*nityānitya-vastu-viveka*), dispassion (*vairāgya*), six treasured virtues, viz. sense-control (*śama*), mind-control (*dama*), equanimity (*titikṣā*), forbearance (*uparati*), faith (*śraddhā*), and one-pointed concentration (*samādhāna*), and a yearning for liberation (*mumukṣutva*). Thereafter, the seeker undertakes the final trifold discipline involving: (1) guided study of texts (*śravaṇa*) which eliminates doubts about scripture as a means of knowing Brahman (*pramāṇagata-sandeha*), (2) rational reflection (*manana*) which eliminates doubts about the Self's identity with Brahman (*prameyagata-sandeha*), and (3) contemplation (*nididhyāsana*) which prevents the recurrence of doubts (*saṁśaya*) and wrong ideas (*viparīta-jñāna*) about the Self, i.e. that the Self is knower, doer, enjoyer, etc.; and



reinforces its awareness of Self-Brahman identity. The triple discipline transforms mediate and intellectual knowledge (*parokṣa-jñāna*) of the Self's identity with Brahman into immediate and intuitive knowledge (*aparokṣa-jñāna*).

The attainment of liberation can be described: negatively, as the destruction of ignorance (*avidyā-nāśa*); and positively, as the attainment of the bliss of Brahman (*brahmānanda-prāpti*). According to Advaita, the jīva's bondage is caused not by the presence of the physical body, but by its wrong identification with it, due to *avidyā*. Therefore, once *avidyā* is negated through reason which is in conformity with scripture (*śrutyānu grihīta tarka*) i.e. through logic which is dependent on, explains the purport of, and is not opposed to scripture—and whose aim (*tātparya*) is to teach the dissolution of the world (*prapañcasya pravilayaḥ śabdena pratipādyate*) the self-luminous Self reveals itself. Sureśvara in his *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*,<sup>9</sup> identifies two kinds of negation, and two kinds of attainment. The two kinds of negation are: avoiding what is to be avoided, e.g. threat to one's life by beasts; and avoiding what is already avoided, e.g. mistaking a shadow for a ghost and avoiding it, although there is no ghost at all. The two kinds of attainment are: attaining what is unattained, e.g. procuring objects not in one's possession; and attaining what is already attained, e.g. due to forgetfulness a person searching a gold chain locates it on one's own person. In the case of liberation, according to Advaita, the negation of *avidyā* is a negation of what is already negated; and the attainment of Brahman is attaining what is already attained, because the Self is no other than Brahman.

Sureśvara upholds that the realized are free from the limitations caused by the three bodies, because they do not identify themselves

with: the gross body; the changing mind, an important constituent of the subtle body; and the causal body which gets destroyed through Self-knowledge.

Citing the *Laghu-Yogavāsiṣṭha*<sup>10</sup> Vidyāraṇya in his *Jīvan-muktiviveka* says that the liberated-in-life passes through the path of knowledge, seven stages from bondage to liberation and abides in the Self. In the first stage, due to dispassion, the seeker studies scripture and resorts to the company of the realized souls to get knowledge. In the second stage, as a result of the first stage, the seeker inquires into what is real. In the third stage, due to inquiry and constant contemplation, attachment to worldly phenomena gets attenuated. When metaphysically interpreted, the first three stages which are only means to knowledge, can be compared to the waking state (*jāgrat*), because difference is not eliminated and plurality is present.

The fourth stage, is the state of a knower of Brahman, i.e. a realized soul (*brahmavid*), wherein the mind enjoys the bliss of *sattva*, as a result of the preceding three stages. This state, which is comparable to the dream state (*svapna*) from the standpoint of the waking state, is characterized by certitude about the illusory nature (*mithyātva-niścaya*) of the phenomenal name and form superimposed on Brahman and an apodictic awareness of the Self (*ātma-niścaya*).

The succeeding three stage are sub-divisions of liberation-in-life based on the realized soul's capacity to remain absorbed in distinctionless concentration (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*). In the fifth stage of indifference, comparable to the state of sleep, the realized soul known as *brahmavidvara* avoids contact with the material



world as a result of the earlier four stages, and is able to emerge from distinctionless concentration by oneself. In the sixth stage, comparable to deep sleep, to the realized soul known as *brahmaavidvariya*, the difference between the known object and the knowing subject vanishes, and one perceives only Brahman everywhere (*sarvam khalvidam brahma*). The realized soul emerges from distinctionless concentration and does not emerge from it at all, until the physical body drops off through exhaustion of the karma-in-action (*prārabdha*). Thus, through the above seven stages when the not-Self—*jagat* and *jīvabhāva*—are negated, the Self-alone which is Brahman remains.<sup>11</sup> A knower of Brahman “attains” Brahman and revels in the bliss of Brahman, here and now in this world itself, even when alive, and hereafter.

### NOTES

1. *Pañcadaśī*, 6. 155.
2. *Ibid.*, 4. 17.
3. *Ibid.*,
4. *Ibid.*, 1.5.1-3.
5. *Ibid.*, 4. 22.
6. *Ibid.*, 4. 49.
7. *Ibid.*, 4. 11.
8. *Ibid.*, 3.60.
9. *Ibid.*, 1.31-34.
10. *Ibid.*, 13.113-4, 116-23.
11. *Ibid.*, 6. 12.





## ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

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संसाराध्वनि तापभानुकिरणप्रोद्धूतदाहव्यथा-

खिन्नानां जलकाङ्क्षया मरुभुवि भ्रान्त्या परिभ्राम्यताम् ।

अत्यासन्नसुधाम्बुधिं सुखकरं ब्रह्माद्वयं दर्शय-

न्त्येषा शङ्करभारती विजयते निर्वाणसन्दायिनी ॥

*saṁsārādhvani tāpabhānukiraṇaprodbhūtadāhavyathā-  
khinnānām jalakāṅkṣayā marubhuvi bhrāntyā  
paribhrāmyatām  
atyāsannasudhāmbudhiṁ sukhakaram brahmādvayaṁ  
darśayant-  
yeṣā śaṅkarabhāratī 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.