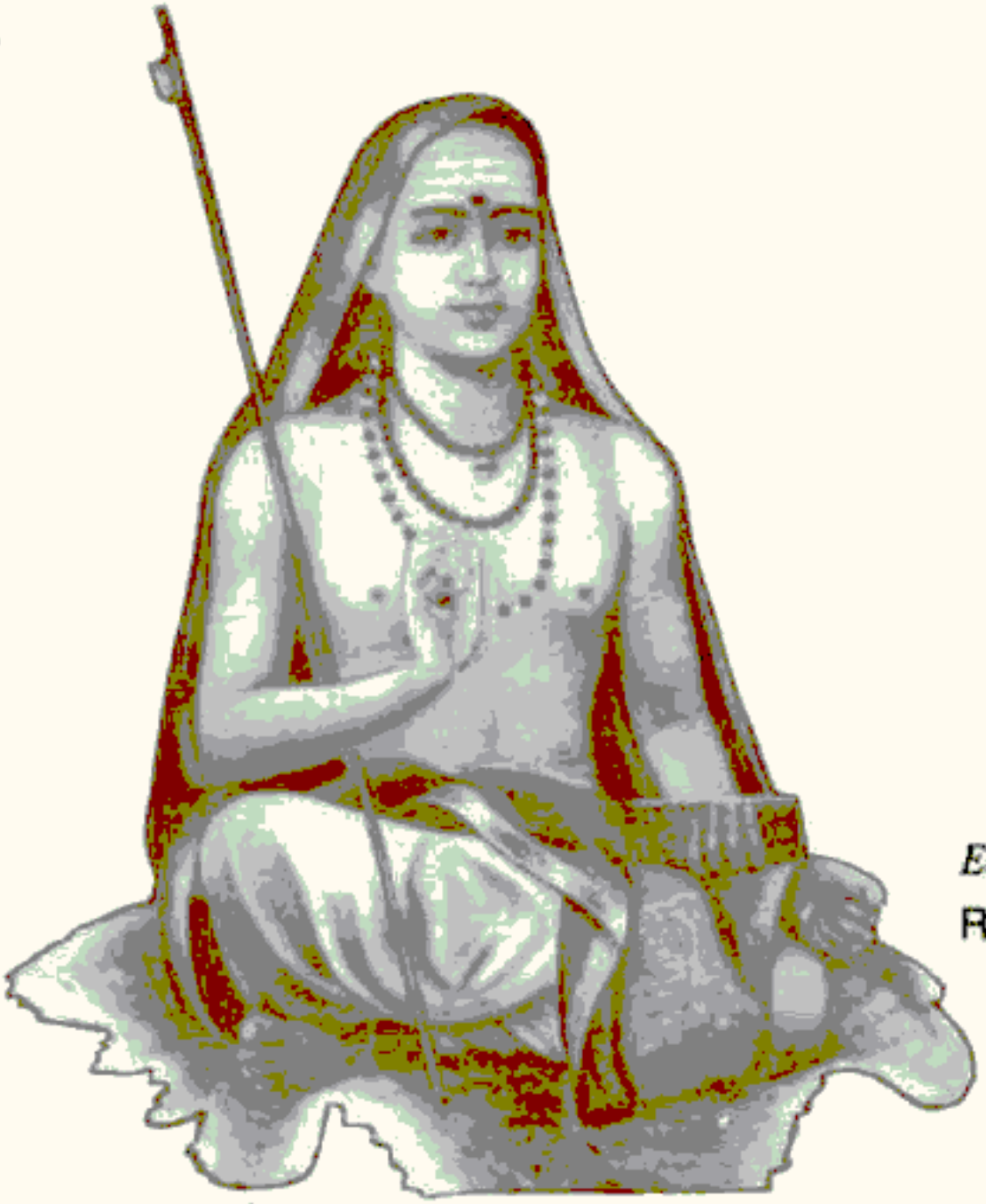
The VOICE of ŚAṄKARA



Editor :

R. Balasubramanian

eṣā śaṅkara-bhāratī vijayate
nirvāṇa-sandāyinī

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

The Voice of Śaṅkara
is published under the guidance of
His Holiness Jagadguru Śrī Śaṅkarācārya
of Kāñcī Kāmakoṭi Pīṭha
by Ādi Śaṅkara Advaita Research Centre.

Subscriptions are to be sent to:

The Administrative Officer
Ādi Śaṅkara Advaita Research Centre
17 (Old No.8A), Bishop Wallers Avenue (West)
Near C.I.T. Colony
Mylapore, Chennai - 600 004
Telephone : 24991147, 24994423, 24990459
Telefax : 91-44-24994510
E-mail : sviswa@md2.vsnl.net.in

Subscription Rates :

	Indian	Foreign
Annual	Rs. 150	US $ 20
For two years	Rs. 250	US $ 36
Life	Rs. 1,500	US $ 200
Single Copy	Rs. 75	US $ 10

The VOICE of ŚAṄKARA

Śaṅkara-bhāratī

Editor

R. Balasubramanian

Volume 30 No. 1, 2005

CONTENTS

1

HOMAGE TO ŚAṄKARA

यद्भाष्य-सागरज-युक्तिमणीन् प्रकीर्णान्
प्राप्याधुना कतिपयान् कवयो भवन्ति।
तस्मै नमो जनमनोब्ज-दिवाकराय
कृत्स्नागमार्थ-निलयाय यतीश्वराय॥

yad-bhāṣya-sāgaraja-yukti-maṇīn prakīrṇān
prāpyādhunā katipayān kavayo bhavanti
tasmai namo jana-manobja-divākarāya
kṛtsnāgamārtha-nilayāya yatīśvarāya.

Salutations to the pre-eminent Ascetic who is the abode of the import of all the Vedas, who is like the sun to the lotuses in the form of the minds of the souls, and by whose gems of reasonings found in the ocean-like *bhāṣyas*, we have become adept in Śāstras.

Bodhanidhi in his *Upadeśa-sāhasrī-vyākhyā*

[197]

कालेे शिवः क्रमवशात् कलिदोषदुष्टे
यः सम्प्रदायरहितं तदपेक्ष्य भूयः।
क्षोण्याम् अवातरदशेष-जगद्धितार्थी
श्रीशङ्कराख्यममलं गुरुमाश्रये तम्॥

kāle śivaḥ kramavaśāt kali-doṣa-duṣṭe
yaḥ sampradāya-rahitaṁ tad-apekṣya bhūyaḥ
kṣoṇyām-avātarad-aśeṣa-jagaddhitārthī
śrīśaṅkarākhyam-amalam gurum-āśraye tam.

Lord Śiva, who is desirous of the welfare of the entire world, who is keen on maintaining the Advaitic tradition—which has been lost gradually during the age affected by the defects of *kali*, incarnated himself upon the earth as Śrī Śaṅkara. I resort to that preceptor who is pure.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa in his *Prapañcasārārthadīpa*

2

THUS SPAKE ŚAṄKARA

R. Balasubramanian

Two Perspectives of Sanātana-dharma

1. Introduction

"Sanātana-dharma" is one of the most frequently used, but least understood expressions in the Indian tradition. Though it is more honoured in our discourse, its impact on our ways of life right from the Vedic times is not fully comprehended. If there is anything which can bring out the depth and diversity of Indian culture, it is the time-honoured concept of Sanātana-dharma. Being an expression of a whole way of life, Indian culture comprises everything that is the outcome of human achievement —science, philosophy, and religion, morals and aesthetics, politics, economics, and sociology. It means that Sanātana-dharma, as understood in the Indian tradition, is an expression as well as an explanation of a whole way of life, scriptural and secular. Since the complexity of the concept has not been properly understood, it has suffered damage and distortion in the hands of both its critics who unscrupulously malign it and its supporters who scandalously misuse it.

To understand the role and significance of Sanātana-dharma in shaping the Indian tradition, we have to view it from two perspectives, relative and absolute. Advaita Vedānta which develops its philosophy from two standpoints, *vyāvahārika* and *pāramārthika*, brings out the full significance of the term "Sanātana-dharma". While the empirical dimension known as the *vyāvahārika* shows Advaita as a rigorous, systematic philosophy which brings out the meaning and truth of the transactional world on the one hand, and the moral and social order on the other, the trans-empirical aspect known as the *pāramārthika* reveals its absolutism and mysticism. Advaita holds that there is no incompatibility between the empirical and the trans-empirical, because Brahman, though totally other than the world including the moral and social order, is the ground of the empirical; and there cannot be any contradiction or incompatibility between the ground and the grounded. The two realms are related in the same way as clay and the pot made out of it are related. It may be noted that the relation between clay and pot is one-sided. The relation between cause and effect is such that the latter is dependent on the former, and not *vice versa*. This is equally true with regard to Brahman and the empirical world. Spiritual transcendence, which is the goal, involves transition from the empirical to the trans-empirical. Advaita emphasizes not only the need for, but also the possibility, of transcendence. "Sanātana-dharma", which is the essence of Advaita Vedānta, takes care of the existential problems of life and shows the way to spiritual transcendence.

2. What Sanātana-dharma means

The full significance of the term "Sanātana-dharma" cannot be brought out through English translation. "Dharma" is usually translated as religion though the term means much *more* than religion. It conveys many meanings in different contexts. Some of the meanings of this term mentioned in the lexicon are duty, a

prescribed ritual, law, custom, justice, moral merit, nature, an essential quality, and so on. The full connotation of the Sanskrit word "dharma" cannot be conveyed through one word or phrase. It must be noted that the meaning of "dharma" is comprehensive enough to cover philosophy, religion, morals, culture, secular and scripture-ordained activities. Etymologically the term "dharma" means that which supports, i.e. *dhāraṇāt dharma ityāhuḥ*. Another derivative meaning of this term is: that by which something is supported is dharma, i.e. *dhāryate anena iti dharmaḥ*. It is the etymological meaning that will help us to appreciate the full significance of the term dharma with reference to the empirical as well as the trans-empirical perspectives. Since dharma supports not only the physical, moral, and social order, but also the entire cosmos, it is necessary to take into consideration the empirical as well as the absolute perspectives for the purpose of bringing out its full significance. The latter perspective is as important as the former in view of the term "sanātana", which is used as a qualification of the term "dharma".

The term "sanātana" means eternal. So the *prima facie* meaning of the expression "sanātana-dharma" is eternal dharma: that is to say, the dharma which supports the entire manifested world comprising physical, moral, and social order is eternal. "Sanātana" is not only a qualification of dharma, but also constitutes the very essence of dharma. When we construe the meaning of the expression in this way, we get the idea that dharma which is the support of everything is eternal; conversely, that which is eternal is dharma. So the expression means, "*sanātanaḥ eva dharmaḥ.*" This way of construing the meaning is similar to the way we construe the meaning of the Upaniṣadic text, "*satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma.*"[1] Though the first three words in this text appear to be the qualifying terms of the word "*brahma*", strictly speaking each one of them conveys the essence of Brahman; also, each one of them may be construed directly with the word "*brahma*"; that is to say, the text means, *satyam brahma, jñānam brahma, anantam*

brahma. Since all these words in the Upaniṣadic text are in grammatical co-ordination (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), they are intended to denote only one entity even though each word has its own meaning; and so we construe the meaning that the real is Brahman, that consciousness is Brahman, that which is infinite is Brahman. In the same way, the usage of the two terms in the expression "sanātana-dharma" is such that we can identify the meanings of these two terms and say that what is eternal (*sanātanaḥ*) is dharma, and that dharma is eternal.[2]

3. The Pāramārthika Perspective of Dharma

There are two ways in which we can explain the support of a thing. If, for example, a pot is kept on a table, we say that the table on which the pot rests is the support therefor. No one will disagree with this explanation which is based on commonsense. One who is familiar with the principle of cause–effect relation may say that clay out of which the pot is made and which is, therefore, its material cause is its support. Even though there is the need for efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) in addition to the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) for the origination of an entity, still it is the material cause that is the support of the thing produced out of it. We say that clay is the support of pot, but not the potter who is its efficient cause. So, if someone says that clay, the material cause, is the support of pot made out of it, we have to admit that his explanation is deeper and subtler than the one given from the commonsense point of view. It is necessary in this connection to bear in mind the relation between the material cause and its effect. Since the material cause constitutes the essence of an object which has manifested as its effect, the latter, which originates from it, cannot exist independently of it, and is not *essentially* different from it. In other words, the effect is non-different from its material cause (*kārya-kāraṇayoḥ ananyatvam*), and has no existence of its own, no status of its own, and no

nature of its own. That is to say, its existence, its appearance, and its attractiveness—all these three which we notice in it as its characteristic features are derived from its material cause which is its substratum. Only name (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa*) are its own; that is why we call it a particular object.

It is well known that every object requires a material cause for its origination. What is true of an ordinary object is equally true with regard to the world, which is the totality of objects. If the material cause is the support of an object which has originated from it, what, then, is the material cause of the world? If we can identify it, then it must be the support of the world. While it is easy to identify the material cause of any object in the world, it is not possible even by means of reasoning to establish the cause of the world. Though the Naiyāyikas have formulated arguments to prove the existence of God, Advaitins and other Vedāntins hold the view that the cause of the world cannot be established by means of reasoning. We can know it only through scripture, as stated in the third aphorism of the *Brahma-sūtra*. There are many Upaniṣadic texts which declare that Brahman is the cause of the world. The second aphorism, "*janmādyasya yataḥ*," brings out the Upaniṣadic view in this regard. In the course of his commentary on this sūtra, Śaṅkara argues that since Brahman, the cause of the world, has no form and other perceivable features, it cannot be grasped through perception; and since it is beyond the scope of perception, other sources of knowledge such as inference will not help us to prove Brahman as the cause of the world. To quote Śaṅkara:

> . . . As Bahman is not an object of the senses, it has no connection with the other means of knowledge. For, the senses have, according to their nature, only external things for their objects, not Brahman. If Brahman were an object of the senses, we might perceive that the world is connected with Brahman as its effect; but as the effect only (i.e. the world) is perceived, it is impossible to decide (through perception) whether it is connected with Brahman or something else. Therefore, the sūtra under discussion is not

> meant to formulate an inference as the means of knowing Brahman, but rather to set forth an Upaniṣadic text. . . "That from which these beings are born; that by which, when born, they live; that into which they enter in the end; try to know that. That is Brahman." There are also other texts which declare the cause to be the almighty Being whose essential nature is eternal purity, intelligence, and freedom.[3]

Brahman which is the support of the world is eternal (*nitya*). Anything that has a beginning and an end is impermanent (*anitya*). While Brahman is the ultimate cause of everything in the world, it itself has no cause. For want of a better expression, it is, therefore, characterized as the First Cause, or Unmoved Mover. Some Western theologians like Paul Tillich speak of God, who is the source of the world, as the Ultimate. Since the cause–effect terminology presupposes time, the Advaitins, instead of speaking of Brahman as the cause of the world, would rather characterize it as the ground (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the world. It is against this background that we have to understand the significance of the term "dharma" from the absolute point of view. The *Bhagavad-gītā* and other texts speak of Brahman not only as eternal but also as "dharma". Consider, for example, the following text of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.17):

> Know That [Brahman] to be imperishable by which all this is pervaded. None can cause the destruction of That [Brahman], the inexhaustible.

Śaṅkara's commentary on this text is illuminating. He says:

> Unlike the unreal objects, *Tat*, i.e. Brahman or Sat, the real, does not vanish; all this world, including ether is pervaded by it, just as pots and other objects are pervaded by ether. Brahman does not increase or decrease, and is therefore inexhaustible. Brahman, the Sat, is exhausted in itself; for, unlike the body, it has no parts. Nor does it diminish by losing anything which belongs to it; for, nothing belongs to the Self... Nobody, not even Īśvara, the Creator-God, can destroy the Self. For, the Self is Brahman itself, and one cannot act upon oneself.

There is another text of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.27) which identifies "dharma" with Brahman. It reads:

> I am, indeed, the abode of Brahman, the immortal and the immutable, the eternal, the Dharma, and the unfailing bliss.

Śaṅkara in his commentary gives three different interpretations for this text. First of all, he says that Lord Kṛṣṇa establishes the identity of the inward Self, Pratyagātman, and the supreme Self, Paramātman, and then sets forth the nature of Brahman by using five adjectives. Brahman is immortal, immutable, and eternal; it is Dharma; and it is also ever-lasting bliss. The point to be noted in this explanation is that Brahman, the supreme reality, is Dharma inasmuch as it is the support (*pratiṣṭhā*) of the entire universe. In the second interpretation he explains Lord Kṛṣṇa as the power (*śakti*) of Brahman in the manifested form. To quote Śaṅkara: "(Using the first person singular Kṛṣṇa says:) I am only that power or *śakti* in manifestation; and I am, therefore, Brahman himself; for, *śakti* cannot be different from the one in whom it inheres." In the third explanation, he construes the meaning of the word "Brahman" which occurs in the text as "conditioned Brahman" who alone can be spoken of by any such word as "Brahman". So the idea that is sought to be conveyed in the text is: "I, the Unconditioned and the Unutterable, am the abode of the conditioned Brahman, who is immortal and indestructible. I am also the abode of the eternal Dharma." Even though fire is of the nature of heat and is nothing but heat, still we speak of fire as the abode of heat as if they are different. In the same way, even though Brahman and Dharma are one and the same, still the former is said to be the abode of the latter. Though the language here is suggestive of duality, there is no difference between them. So Brahman is Sanātana, the eternal, and that which is eternal alone is Dharma (*sanātanaḥ eva dharmaḥ*).

It is necessary to clarify the deeper implications of the material causality as enunciated in the Upaniṣads, as it will help us to appreciate the role of dharma as the support of the entire physical universe. The teaching of the *Śāṇḍilya-vidyā* which occurs in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14, is relevant in this connection.

Śāṇḍilya declares, "All this, indeed, is Brahman" (*sarvam khalu idam brahma*). Śaṅkara in his commentary on this text points out that the entire manifested world consisting of names and forms has originated from Brahman. In order to clarify how the entire physical universe has originated from Brahman, the text itself in an aphoristic way says: "*tajjalān.*" It is difficult to understand the full significance of this expression used in the Upaniṣad without the help of a commentary. Śaṅkara explains this expression as follows:

> How can all this world be Brahman? In order to answer this question, the text says, "*tajjalān.*" Since all creation, through the succession of fire, water, food, and so on is born from that Brahman, it is said to be *tajjam*; it is said to be *tallam* since it gets merged in that very Brahman, that is to say, it is wholly identified with that; and it is said to be *tadanam* since it continues to live, to function in that very Brahman during the state of its existence. Thus, the entire world is non-different from Brahman in all the three states, since it is not perceived apart from Brahman. So this world is undoubtedly that Brahman itself.

The point to be noted here is that the effect, e.g. pot, which has originated from its material cause (here, clay), does not sever its connection with its cause in all the three states—origination, existence, and dissolution—which it goes through. What is true of a pot is equally true of the manifested world. It not only originates from, and merges in, its cause, viz. Brahman, but exists and functions by depending upon the same Brahman. This is how we have to understand Brahman, which is identical with Dharma, the support of the world.

4. The Vyāvahārika Perspective of Dharma

Sanātana-dharma has a bearing on the transactional world which is governed by the principles of space, time, and causality. It is intended to shape, organize, and regulate the total life of the jīva in the context of physical, moral, and social order which it supports through its three important principles. The first one

is that the primal reality which is one is spoken of and viewed as many for the benefit of the people in their secular and spiritual activities. One expression of this principle is the practice of polytheism right from the Vedic times down to the present day. We have the freedom to worship the supreme Godhead in any form as characterized by different qualities and functions. A text of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 4.2, gives an eloquent expression to this ideal:

> That, indeed, is Agni, that is Āditya, that is Vāyu, and that is the moon. That, indeed, is the pure. That is Brahmā. That is the waters. That is Prajāpati.

There is only one God, but there are many forms of God; and the worship of God in any form is as good as the worship of it in any other form. It may be pointed out in this connection that there are two kinds of polytheism, elevating and degenerate. While the former helps the spiritual aspirant to achieve transcendence of the finitude, the latter leads to bigotry and fanaticism. We have inherited the former variety of polytheism from the great tradition of Sanātana-dharma. What is conveyed by the Upaniṣadic text quoted above finds concrete expression in the daily prayer of the Hindus.

> May the Lord of the universe, the remover of evil, whom the devotees of Śiva worship as Śiva, the Vedāntins as Brahman, the Buddhists as Buddha, the followers of the Nyāya philosophy, who are clever in logic, as the Agent, those devoted to the Jaina doctrines as Arhat, the ritualists of the Mīmāṁsā school as Karma—may he grant us all our hearty desires.

That every living being called the jīva is in its essential nature identical with Brahman, the primal Spirit, is the second principle of Sanātana-dharma. Though every living being, high or low in its status, is a jīva, in the present context of the discussion of dharma the focus is on the human being, who is the measure of all things. Śaṅkara highlights the divine nature of the human being when he declares, "*jīvo brahmaiva na aparaḥ*," i.e. the jīva in its

essential nature is Brahman itself, and not something different from it. The logic which holds good for solving the problem of one Godhead and a plurality of gods is also applied to harmonize the relation among the human beings and establish their basic unity or oneness. That there are differences among human beings arising from gender, race, colour, age, and so on, is a matter of common knowledge, which does not require any philosophical defence or justification. Śaṅkara, the best exponent of the tradition of Sanātana-dharma, does not deny these differences as noticed in our day-to-day life. To him the important problem is not about the empirical fact of differences, but about their status and origin. These differences among the jīvas, he maintains, are accidental or conditional (*aupādhika*) and not essential (*svābhāvika*). Though all human beings are *essentially* one, as the same Brahman-Ātman indwells in all of them, differences arise because of the mind–sense–body adjunct which is the conditioning or limiting factor. So all human beings are essentially one though there are differences among them arising from the assemblage of the mind, the senses, and the body (*kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta*). Differences which are *aupādhika*, i.e. *upādhi*-originated and, therefore, are accidental are due to our ignorance (avidyā) of the nature of the Self as one and non-dual. An insight into the nature of the Self will help us to live in peace with others as well as with oneself. The message of the second principle of Sanātana-dharma is that self-integration and social-integration must go side by side. One cannot achieve the one without the other. A text of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, 12.15, is worth quoting here:

> He by whom the world is not afflicted and who is not afflicted by the world, who is free from joy, envy, fear, and sorrow—such a one is dear to me.

The Lord here extols the importance of the harmonious relation between the individual and the society. Further, the essential oneness of all human beings is stressed by the text of the *Śvetaśvatara Upaniṣad*, 4.3:

> You are woman. You are man. You are the youth and the maiden too. You, as an old man, totter along with a staff. Being born, you become facing in every direction.

According to the third principle of Sanātana-dharma, the entire physical world composed of the five elements, though material, is spiritual in character. It is because Brahman-Ātman, which is real, knowledge, and bliss by its very nature, is immanent in it. Advaita holds that every object in the world which is called a *nāma-rūpa* contains five aspects (*aṁśa-pañcaka*), viz. existence, knowability, bliss, name, and form. Of these five aspects, the first three belong to Brahman-Ātman while the last two are the natural characteristics of an object. It means that, though the physical world is material or insentient (*jaḍa*), still it is spiritual in character because of the presence of Brahman-Ātman in it. The hymns of the *Ṛg-veda* emphasize the need for love, respect, and admiration for nature. Life is sustained and nourished by the bounty of the earth and the munificence of the heaven. Between the earth and the heaven there is the mid-region of the wind and the rain, which contributes to the rich resources of the earth. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Vedic people have shown their unwavering love and unqualified reverence for nature. There are many hymns in the *Ṛg-veda* which praise and adore both earth and heaven together not only as phenomena of nature, but also as cosmic God. For example, there is a hymn which says:

> These Heaven and Earth, bestow prosperity on all, sustainers of the region, Holy ones and wise; two bowls of noble kind: between these, the god, the effulgent Sun, travels by fixed decree.
> Widely capacious Pair, mighty, that never fail, the Father and the Mother keep all creatures safe...
> Son of these Parents, he the Priest with power to cleanse, Sage, sanctifies the world with his surpassing power...
> Among the skilfull gods the most skilled is he, who made the two world-halves which bring prosperity to all...
> Extolled in song, O Heaven and Earth, bestow on us, you mighty Pair, great glory and high lordly sway...[4]

Uddālaka Āruṇi and five others requested Aśvapati Kaikeya to teach them the universal Self. Before teaching them, he asked them, one by one, their conception of the universal Self. They answered him by identifying it with the heaven, the sun, air, ether, water, and earth. Their notions, Aśvapati told them, were wrong, because they identified the whole with the parts, just as a blind man would mistake the parts of an elephant for the elephant itself. The heaven and the earth, and other phenomena of nature are parts of the universal Self, and so no one of them can be identified with it. Brahman is the Self of all beings, sentient as well as insentient. If so, the physical world cannot be non-spiritual.

Since the message of Sanātana-dharma—the oneness of the Reality, the divinity of the jīva, and the spirituality of nature—is the message of Advaita, it will not be an exaggeration to say that Sanātana-dharma is Advaita by identifying the two.

Dharma, we said, is the principle which supports or holds together everything at the physical, moral, and social levels. It is necessary in this connection to refer to two other terms which occur in the Mantras. The concept of *Ṛta* as it occurs in the Mantras refers to the physical and the moral orders that prevail in the world. While the former has a bearing on the world of facts, the latter signifies the world of values. The Vedic gods, the Mantras tell us, maintained not only the cosmic order, but also the moral order. For example, Varuṇa is spoken of as the one who fixed the laws of the physical universe and closely watched and supervised the behaviour of the people. *Ṛṇa* is the other concept which has played an important role in shaping and regulating the day-to-day life of the people as members of the organized society. *Ṛṇa* means obligation in a very comprehensive sense connecting an individual with the entire world, past, present, and future. The Hindu ethics lays emphasis on the system of duties rather than on the system of rights. The reason for this is not far to seek. Ethics is concerned with the moral principles of right and wrong for achieving social harmony. The needs and claims

of one person have to be adjusted and reconciled with those of others in society. Certain types of conduct which would contribute to harmony, integrity, and solidarity of society have to be enforced, and those which would endanger them have to be forbidden. It is for this reason that in every social system there are moral codes and principles, the scheme of duties, which must be carried out with moral earnestness. Duty is that which, when properly discharged, upholds society, sustains it, and nourishes it; that is why it is called dharma. The *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.20) has made us familiar with the concept of *lokasaṅgraha*, the maintenance and protection of the world. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that, if he does not do his duty, he would be causing the ruin of the world (*BG*, 3.24). Though rights and duties are said to be relative, still the tradition of Sanātana-dharma has focused its attention on duties rather than on rights. The reason for this is that, when people perform their duties, their rights will be automatically taken care of. Hence, the tradition right from the beginning has laid emphasis on duties and not on rights. The concept of dharma that has been developed in the tradition is comprehensive enough to cover the other two concepts, *Ṛta* and *Ṛṇa*.

That dharma is the regulative principle of the life of the people belonging to different classes is set forth in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It says: "Verily, in the beginning this [world comprising different classes] was Brahman [Viraj in the form of fire], one only. Being one, he did not flourish."[5] Then it goes on to say that he created one after another the different classes for the growth and nourishment of the society. The different classes constitute an organic whole, and each class has a well-defined plan of work for not only the survival, but also for the development of the society. Commenting on the creation of the four classes of society —a classification comparable to the Platonic classes in the ideal state—, Radhakrishnan observes:[6]

> Society requires, in addition to wisdom, power, and wealth, service and work. Wisdom conceives the order, power sanctions and enforces it, wealth

> and production provide the means for carrying out the order, and work carries out. These are the different functions essential for a normal well-ordered society. These distinctions are found among both gods and men.

The creation of different classes alone is not enough. With the view to ensure order and justice in the functioning of the different classes, there is the need for righteousness. The king or the ruler who administers the law must follow the principle of justice, and so he too must be subject to a higher principle which is supreme. That higher principle is called dharma. Therefore, the Upaniṣad says that after creating the different classes he projected dharma.

> This dharma is the controller of the Kṣatriya class. There is nothing higher than dharma (*dharmāt paraṃ nāsti*). So, even a weak man hopes to defeat a strong man by means of dharma as one does through the king. Verily, that which is dharma is truth. Therefore, they say that a man who speaks the truth speaks dharma, or a man who speaks dharma speaks the truth. Verily, both these are the same.

In the course of his commentary on this text, Śaṅkara remarks:

> This dharma is the controller of even the ruler, fiercer than that fierce race even. So, since it is the controller of even the ruler, there is nothing higher than that, for it controls all.

Śaṅkara clarifies why the Upaniṣadic text identifies satyam and dharma and then brings out the pragmatic dimension of dharma. He observes:

> That dharma, which is expressed as conduct and also which is practised by people, is verily truth. "Truth" is that which is in accordance with the teaching of the scriptures. The same thing, when it is practised, is called dharma, and when it is understood to be in accordance with the scriptures, is truth. This being the case, people say that a person who speaks the truth speaks dharma. Conversely also, a person who speaks dharma is said to speak truth (which is in accordance with the scriptures).... These two stated above, viz. that which is known (*jñāyamānam*) and that which is practised (*anuṣṭhīyamānam*), are dharma. So dharma in its dual aspect of knowledge and practice controls all, those who know the scriptures and those who do not.[7]

A few points highlighted by Śaṅkara in his commentary require closer attention. The first point is about the *vyavahāra-lakṣṇa* of dharma: that is to say, what is called dharma should have a bearing on our daily life. Secondly, he speaks about dharma as what is practised by the people (*laukikaiḥ vyavahriyamāṇaḥ*). Thirdly, such being the case with regard to dharma, it deserves to be called "truth" (*satyam*). After identifying dharma with "truth", he further explains what "truth" means in this context. In the context of dharma, what is relevant and should be emphasized is the practical dimension of truth rather than the cognitive dimension, though the former has to follow the latter. If dharma has a bearing on conduct and if it is the same as truth, then "truth" means action which is approved by the scriptures, which is in accordance with the teachings of the scriptures. Finally, one should know the teachings of the scriptures and develop the conviction to put them into practice. Mere talk about dharma is of no use. The logic of discourse should be followed by the logic of action. The life-activity of man which is fully reflective is directed towards the pursuit of values of different kinds. Dharma is not only a value in itself, but also a directive principle. Value and action are closely related to each other. If life is value-oriented, then it is also action-oriented. In fact, to know the values of a person, we have to closely examine his conduct, because the consciously performed actions of a person reveal the values he cares for and pursues. When a person accepts something as a value, he cannot but be engaged in activities conducive to the attainment of the value in question. To say something is a value, e.g. charity, or non-violence, is to accept it as a value and also to commend it for others; and to accept something as a value is not just for the purpose of talking, but for the purpose of doing. That is why Śaṅkara says that dharma is *jñāna-anuṣṭhāna-lakṣaṇaḥ*, i.e. it is characterized by the dual aspect of what is known and practised. Dharma in this sense is *sarva-niyantṛ*, the supreme controller of everyone, the ruler as well as the ruled.

Sanātana-dharma is holistic in its approach towards the problems of life as a whole. Recognizing the organic relation between the individual and society, it formulates the scheme of dharma which will help the individual to achieve spiritual transcendence through a process of self-culture on the one hand, and social service on the other. It is against this background that we have to understand the significance of common duties (*sādhāraṇa-dharmas*) as well as the specific duties (*viśeṣa-dharmas*). It is not necessary to go into the details about the content of these duties. Suffice it to say that these duties contribute to one's own well-being (*abhyudaya*) as well as to the good of all others. The Hindu ethics holds the view that duty by its very nature is other-regarding and that it is not restricted to human society alone. It includes in its purview all beings, sentient as well as insentient. It is necessary in this connection to pay attention to the deeper significance of *pañca-mahā-yajñas*, which are binding on every human being, who is endowed with moral consciousness and is capable of deliberate action. The five kinds of sacrifices—*pitṛ-yajña*, *brahma-yajña*, *deva-yajña*, *nṛ-yajña*, and *bhūta-yajña*—emphasize the need to acknowledge our indebtedness to the fivefold heritage —biological, spiritual, cultural, social, and ecological—that has moulded us and made us what we are.

The Hindu ethics emphasizes the binding character of duty. Like modern deontologists, the Hindu thinkers have argued that such actions as promise-keeping, speaking the truth, and so on, which are self-evident duties have a rightness of their own. Their validity depends *on what they are* and not on any end different from, and outside, the fact of duty. A duty is done just because it is duty. Yudhiṣṭhira tells Draupadī: "I do not, O Princess, follow dharma with an eye for reward. I give simply because it is my duty to give (*dadāmi deyam ityeva*); I sacrifice because it is my duty to do so (*yaje yaṣṭavyam iti*). Be there any reward or not, whatever must be performed by a householder, I do it, O Draupadī, according to my ability."[8] It is necessary to add that the perfor-

mance of duty will result in the good, not necessarily in the utilitarian book-keeping way, but in the sense that it will contribute to the common good from which the individual good is not and cannot be separated.

NOTES

1. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1.
2. For the explanation of "sanātana", see *the Nīlakaṇṭha-vyākhyā* on the *Bhagavad-gītā* text, 2.24, with eight commentaries, ed. Wasudev Laxman Pansikar, Nirnaya-sagar Press, Bombay, 1912:
   सना इत्यव्ययं नैरन्तर्ये ।तच्च देशतः कालतो वस्तुतश्च परिच्छेदराहित्यम् ।...ततश्च सना नैरन्तर्येण त्रिविध-परिच्छेद-राहित्येण भवति अस्तीति सनातनोऽखण्डैकरसो यस्मात् तस्मात् न उत्पत्त्याद्याश्रय इत्यर्थः ।
   So, "sanātana" is Brahman, and Brahman as the support of the world is Dharma.
   I owe this reference to Professor N. Veezhinathan.
3. Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, 1.1.2.
4. *Ṛg-veda*, 1.185.
5. 1.4.11.
6. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* with Introduction, text, translation, and notes, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1953, p. 170.
7. Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.14: तस्मात् सिद्धं धर्मस्य सर्वबलवत्तरत्वात् सर्वनियन्तृत्वम् ।यो वै स धर्मो व्यवहारलक्षणो लौकिकैः व्यवह्रियमाणः सत्यं वै तत् । सत्यमिति यथाशास्त्रार्थता ।स एव अनुष्ठीयमानो धर्मनामा भवति । शास्त्रार्थत्वेन ज्ञायमानस्तु सत्यं भवति ।... एतत् यदुक्तं उभयं ज्ञायमानमनुष्ठीयमानं च एतत् धर्म एव भवति । तस्मात् स धर्मो ज्ञानानुष्ठानलक्षणः ।
8. *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, 31, 2–6.

3

BHAKTI*

Śrī Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī

Amongst the factors that are aids to liberation, devotion (bhakti) is the highest says Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda—*mokṣa-sādhana-sāmagryām bhaktireva garīyasī.*

There should be a power behind all this creation. There should be a power dispensing the fruits of our action. Attuning our mind to that Power, or God, with love is called bhakti or devotion. By bhakti and prayer we do not seek to change what God ordains. They are meant only to remove our impurities and endow us with strength to bear his dispensation with tranquillity.

One of the natural qualities of animate beings is to love. But in this transient world our love too is not permanent. Either our attitude of love towards the beloved changes, or else the beloved himself passes away. There is no greater loss to a human being than the loss of this love. Bhakti comes in to avert this great loss. In bhakti, our natural instinct of love is turned upon the Origin and sustaining power of all the impermanent things that we love. Once we begin to love that Origin, or God, our very attitude of

---

* From the proceedings of the conference on "Śaṅkara and Shanmata" held in Madras, June 1–9, 1969.

love gets purified. Our love of God grows more and more intense, because it is a relationship between the cause and the effect, and with our advance in bhakti we begin to look upon all things as God—they also being effects of the same cause—and therefore love them too as intensely as we love God.

Our past love towards fellow-beings was impure with selfishness, and in fact did not deserve to be called love at all. Now with the consciousness of the one origin common to all, that love itself becomes pure and devoid of any trace of selfishness. Therefore, the possibility of a change in our attitude of love towards the beloved is also removed. Even when the beloved disappears we are not grief-stricken, because our love of the origin of all that are beloved of us remains.

Yet another use of bhakti: God is conceived of as the embodiment of all virtues. When we love a thing intensely we are moved to partake of the qualities of that thing ourselves. So when one loves and worships God, this love and worship produce in him slowly and gradually a thirst to acquire those ideal virtues embodied by God. With the passage of time the devotee, Bhakta, blossoms into the possessor of those ideal qualities.

Bhakti has a supreme purpose behind these. Control of the mind is most necessary for spiritual enlightenment. The mind is checked from wavering towards evil propensities by making it one-pointed on what is good and loving and beautiful. Is there anything more good and loving and beautiful than God? Though ultimately he is beyond good and evil, love and hate, beauty and ugliness, and in that Absolute State can only be realized by oneness with Him—He, in his infinite mercy, also becomes the abode of all good attributes for us to love and meditate upon. In the initial stages the mind cannot dwell on the formless absolute, but it is drawn towards that absolute when conceived of as the Personal God of all good attributes. Concentrating our minds on him is bhakti. When the perfect state of one-pointedness is reached the mind itself vanishes, leaving the Self alone to shine in all its

radiance as one with the attributeless absolute, which is enlightenment and emancipation.

To obtain the peace of the state of the enlightenment which is called mukti, mokṣa or liberation, bhakti is necessary. The mukta, i.e., the liberated one, who experiences the joy and peace of Self-realization (*ātmānubhava*), realizes the non-difference between his self and the Supreme Self. When a person who has obtained the *advaitānubhava* (non-duality) looks at other men and their behaviour and at the world with dualities and distinctions, he sees them all as a grand divine sport, a *līlā*.

When great *jñānis*, who have realized the advaitic absolute, wake up to world-consciousness and contemplate on the beauteous form of the God they had experienced, they wish to linger a little longer in contemplation on that form of the Formless, and are even loth to go back to their *samādhi* state of thoughtless oneness, for attaining which they had all along strenuously toiled. It is to this aspect that Śrī Śuka refers in the *Bhāgavata*, when he says:

ātmārāmāśca munayaḥ
nirgranthā apyurukrame
kurvanty-ahaitukīm bhaktim
itttham-bhūtaguṇo Hariḥ

(Even sages who delight in the experience of their inner Self, though free from all shackles, yet engage themselves, *from no motive*, in devotion to Hari. Such is the excellence of God.)

Such a bhakti is *ahaitukī*, having no motive. The bhakti before God-realization is *sādhana* (step or aid) for mokṣa, and it is motivated by that end. But when having attained the state of mokṣa, such *jñānis* voluntarily revert to contemplation of the Form of God, this bhakti has no ulterior purpose to serve. It is an end in itself. It is pursued for the intrinsic delight it affords. In that sense it is *ahaitukī bhakti*, motiveless devotion.

It is to the same effect that Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, who wrote, the monumental treatise, *Advaita Siddhi*, and who is an advaitin *par excellence*, said when he sang in praise of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the following verse:

Dhyānābhyāsa vaśīkṛtena
manasā yannirguṇaṁ niṣkalam,
jyotiḥ kiñcana yogino yadi param
paśyanti paśyantu te
asmākaṁ tu tadeva locana-
camatkārāya bhūyāściram,
kālindī pulineṣu yatkimapi
tannīlaṁ maho dhāvati.

(Let those who see Thee with their mind under control by the practice of *dhyāna*, see Thy supreme effulgence which is without attributes and without action. But to me the dark blue form which sports in the sands of Kālindī river is alone the source of unending delight.)

To Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, the joy of beholding in his mind's eye the sport of Kṛṣṇa, becomes greater than even the joy of non-dual Self-realization.

When bhakti fructifies into jñāna, the *mumukṣu* (one on the point of mukti) seems to feel a pang over the prospect of jñāna engulfing bhakti. This is analogous to the loving parent who, having made with great enthusiasm all the preparations for giving his daughter away in marriage, feels a wrench and sheds tears at the actual moment of *kanyādāna*, handing over the bride to the bridegroom. A *mumukṣu* seemed to be in a similar plight when about to attain jñāna by the grace of God, he said:

bhasmoddhūlana, bhadramastu
bhavate rudrākṣamāle śubhe,
hā sopānaparampare
girisutākāntālayālaṅkṛite

adyārādhana-toṣitena vibhunā
yuṣmatsaparyā sukhā-
lokocchedini mokṣanāmani
mahāmohe nilīyāmahe.

This Śivabhakta, who is on the threshold of mokṣa (liberation) and who has no longer any use for smearing of sacred ashes, or the wearing of *rudrākṣamālā*, or other steps of the path of bhakti, taking leave of these erstwhile adjuncts to devotion exclaims: "May it be well with you all. By the grace of all-pervasive parameśvara, who is now pleased by my devotion, I am about to pass on to the *great moha* which is called mokṣa (liberation), and which will cut me away from the delights of my association with you all."

Thus bhakti has a double place in the scheme of spiritual life. It leads the aspirant to mukti and the mukta (freed one) loves to dwell in the realm of bhakti, laying aside for a while the inarticulate bliss of *samādhi*. Therefore, none of us need pray straight away for mukti. We should ask for bhakti which will lead to mukti.

True bhakti or devotion is that condition of a devotee's mind when it is unable to bear even a moment's separation from the shelter of God, and when even if it is forcibly withdrawn from that shelter, by force of circumstances, it struggles and rushes back and attaches itself to God, like a needle to a magnet.

Aṅkolaṁ nijabīja santati-
rayaskāntopalam sūcikā
sādhvī naijavibhuṁ latā
kṣitiruhaṁ sindhussarridvallabham /
prāpnotīha yathā tathā
paśupateḥ pādāravinda-dvayaṁ
cetovṛttirupetya tiṣṭhati sadā sā
bhaktirityucyate //

The verse occurs in the *Śivānanda Laharī*, and in it, Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda has explained what real bhakti is. The relationship between the devotee and Īśvara is explained with reference to five examples. They are: the tree known as *aṅkolam* and its seeds; the lodestone and the needle; the chaste woman and her husband; the creeper and the tree; and the river and the ocean. The *aṅkola* tree is found in the forest. It is said that when its fruit falls to the ground, the seeds, liberated from the fruit by some compelling force within, move close to the trunk of the tree itself, gradually climb up, and get inseparably attached to the tree. When a needle is brought near a lodestone, it rushes towards the stone and gets itself attached to it. Similarly, the mind of a devotee rushes towards God and finds a haven there. The next example is that of a chaste woman and her husband. The term *vibhuḥ* used in this verse to denote husband, is significant. The literal meaning of *vibhuḥ* is, one who pervades everywhere. The idea Śaṅkara wants to convey by using the term *vibhuḥ* is that a true *pativratā* is so saturated with the thought of her husband that her mind sees her husband alone whichever way it turns. So also the man of devotion, bhakta sees only God in everything around him.

The example of creeper and tree is next given to indicate the mind's frantic efforts to get itself attached to Īśvara like a creeper to a tree. As a creeper grows, its shoots go away hither and thither, in an attempt to get a hold on something to which they can attach themselves. The moment the shoots come into contact with a neighbouring tree, the creeper winds itself around that tree, as if hugging it with affection. Even if we detach the creeper from the tree, it will again, without much loss of time, get itself entwined to the tree. The mind of the devotee is constantly in search of Īśvara, and the moment he is realized, it attaches itself to him inseparably.

The last example is that of the river and ocean. A river has a small origin on a mountain. In the initial stage of its course, which can be compared to our own childhood, the river is noisy, plays

about by jumping from one rock to another, and is restless and so flows fast. Its speed reflects its anxiety to join the ocean. When nearing the sea, the river becomes calm and placid. This state can be compared to a woman's humility, shyness, and serenity in the presence of her husband. The ocean, being a loving husband, rushes forward to receive the river in its arms. That is why the river water is saltish for some distance inland from its mouth. Similarly, the restless soul finds serenity when it reaches the proximity of God, and finally gets engulfed in that ocean of supreme Bliss.

Śaṅkara has expounded *advaita-tattva* (non-dual merger with the supreme Soul) both in the main theme of the verse and in the illustrating similes. Water from the sea evaporates into cloud and returns to the earth as rain. The rain water goes back to the sea as rivers. In that way a cycle is completed. The river and the sea, though apparently two, are in reality one. By the process of evaporation the volume of the sea is not reduced; neither is its volume increased by the inflow of river waters. In the same way, everything in this universe is part of God. He is everything and everything ultimately merges in him. He is full always, and his fulness is in no way affected either by creation or by the merger in him of the crated beings. the human soul, jīvātman, is restless like a creeper, in search of a support to sustain it, and eager to rejoin its source, like the river is to rejoin the ocean, its ultimate source. As the jīva gets to be more and more proximate to God, it obtains serenity, like that which the waters of a river attain near the confluence with the sea. The bhakta (man of devotion), who eventually becomes a jñānī (man of knowledge) sees only Īśvara in everything, even as a *pativratā* thinks only of her husband and lord. When the soul finally finds its haven in the Paramātman, it unites with the Paramātman, like a creeper hugging a tree, or a needle flying to and getting attached with a magnet. Just as the needle also gets the properties of the magnet on being attached to it, so also the devotee on attaining the supreme Soul gets identified

with it. If, for any reason, the jīva is forcibly detached from Īśvara, it becomes restless, struggles, and eventually gets back to Īśvara.

When our devotion to God is motivated by a desire to secure some earthly benefit, it ceases to be real bhakti; it becomes a barter. But when our bhakti is for our spiritual elevation, we attain the peace of the river when it is near its lord, the ocean. The devotee begins his quest for bliss with devotion to one, who, he thinks is outside him. When the devotion is selfless, that is, when the quest is a quest of his own real Self, the *dvaita-bhāva* (the duality of God and himself) changes into *advaita-bhāva*, the oneness of himself and God. He surrenders himself absolutely and unreservedly to the Paramātman, and becomes one with that only one.

Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita are one in the emphasis on bhakti to obtain God's grace. The fact that man alone, among the creatures of the world, grows vertically, whereas the other creatures grow horizontally, indicates that he should also strive to grow taller in spiritual stature. Such an eminence in stature comes from jñāna which alone gives abiding peace or *śānti*. Man undergoes troubles and pains in a greater measure than other animals; but that is compensated for by his capacity to acquire jñāna, which makes for the realization of truth and the experiencing of the joy of oneness with that truth. Jñāna itself begets this joy or ānanda. Īśvara is of the nature of this jñāna-ānanda. He is the Paramātman in whom all auspicious qualities are fully affirmed in a superlative measure. Even as the ocean is the repository of all waters, Īśvara is fulness, the All. There is no other to him. He is the all without a second. That is advaita "*idaṁ sarvam-puruṣa eva*," all this is the Paramātman, says the Veda. Śaṅkara expounds this truth with yukti (logic) and anubhava (experience).

But mere intellectual comprehension of it is not enough. It must be realized as a fact in one's own experience. For such realization grace of God is a pre-requisite "*īśvrānugrahādeva puṁsām-advaita-vāsanā*."

We begin with a feeling of distinctness from God. The predicament of worship is said to be one of duality of deity and devotee. But even then the devotee does not feel that God is external to him and to the universe; he has the consciousness that God is immanent in himself and in every particle of the world, indwelling everywhere and in every thing, however minute. Our duty is to worship him in this way with devotion, and if we do so, he reveals his true nature to us. Bhagavān says in the *Gītā*:

bhaktyā mām-abhijānāti
yāvān yaścāsmi tattvatah:

The word, *bhaktyā*, meaning "through devotion," shows that bhakti is the means for the realization of the truth of God's nature. Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita are one in this emphasis on bhakti to obtain God's grace. To whatever school we belong, we should invoke his grace through bhakti, leaving it to him to reveal the truth of his nature. All Ācāryas have stressed this need for bhakti.

Bhakti alone will keep our minds away from sin. The heart has to be kept clean through bhakti so that the full effect of his presence there may be realized. In the ultimate analysis, self-surrender and Self-realization are the two facets of the same thing.

Much is said about the personal God and the impersonal absolute; about God with attributes and without attributes. It is only when all the colours in the light mix together that we get the colourless rays of the sun. Similarly, by the very virtue of being the abode of attributes, God becomes "nirguṇa," attributeless. Even people who have realized their oneness with the impersonal God, still like to contemplate on God with form and attributes. Even when they have experienced the bliss flowing from the realization of the identity of the jīvātman and the Paramātman, and have also realized that God is in everything and everything is in god, they prefer to put aside, for a little while, the experience

of this oneness with God, and to contemplate on him as one slightly different from themselves, like the apparent difference between the waves and the ocean, and to enjoy the divine form.

As a spiritual discipline, the worship of one's chosen form of the Godhead—which is the concept of Īṣṭa-devatā—is indispensable for one's progress towards enlightenment. The best prayer is that which asks God to dower the entire world with his blessings; for the devotee should look upon all mankind as one.

As a term of daily worship our ancients have prescribed for us what is known as *pañcāyatana-pūjā*. This consists in the worship of the five forms of deities,

ādityam-ambikāṁ viṣnuṁ
gaṇanāthaṁ maheśvaram

viz., Sūrya (Sun-God), Śakti, Viṣṇu, Gaṇapati and Śiva.

Though even the layman in India knows the beautiful personal marks of each of these divinities, in the *pañcāyatana* the divinities are not usually worshipped in those forms, but are worshipped in symbols. As though taking the mind of the devotee from the forms to the formless, while at the same time giving full scope to his devotional feelings, certain symbols are worshipped in place of the *mūrtis*. This is an intermediary stage between form and formless—because the symbols are certain kinds of rockous formations and therefore have a form; yet they are formless in that they have no parts like face, eyes, body, hands, feet, etc.

In this *Pañcāyatana* scheme, Śiva is worshipped in the *bāṇa-liṇga*, which is found in plenty in the Omkārakuṇḍa of the river Narmada (Central India). Viṣṇu is worshipped in the *sālagrāma*, which can be had in the Gandaki river in the Himalayas. Crystals, in which Sūrya is worshipped, are found in Vallam in Tamilnadu. The *svarṇamukhī* stone representing the Divine Mother Śakti is found in the bed of the river of that name in Andhra. The river "Soṇā" flowing into the Ganga abounds in the red *soṇabhadra* stones representing Gaṇapati.

So a house having this *pañcāyatana*, with the stones from the different parts of India, is as though having the whole national consciousness frozen in it.

It is but meet that in addition to these, Kumāra is also included in the *Pañcāyatana*, as he is the presiding deity of the one remaining faith of Shan-matas.

Foreign critics of our Vedic religion fling at us the cheap gibe, "what a host of God and goddesses you worship!" This charge of polytheism levelled against our religion is entirely wrong and is born out of ignorance of the fundamental teachings of the Vedas. This is what Bāṇa says on this subject:

rajojuṣi janmani sattva-vṛttaye
sthithau prajānām pralaye tamaspṛśe
ajāya sargasthitināśa-hetave
trayīmayāya triguṇātmane namaḥ

In this verse Bāṇa says that the One God appears in the three forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, for a three-fold purpose, namely, creation, protection and dissolution. That one is the unborn (*aja*) and is the cause of these triple process.

Kālidāsa expresses more or less the same idea when he says:

ekaiva mūrtir-bibhide tridhā sā
sāmānyameṣām prathamāvaratvam

One *mūrti* (manifestation in form) appears as three, and there is no question of any one of the three being superior or inferior to, the other two, says Kālidāsa. If Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva are one in essence, then, by the same token, all the gods of the Hindu pantheon are also one in the ultimate analysis. Then why this wrangling that one god is superior to the rest? Some assert that the deity they worship is alone the highest. To a man standing under the arch at one end of a bridge, all the other arches will appear smaller than the one under which he is standing. But we

are aware that all the arches of a bridge are of the same span. Similarly, to the votary of a particular deity, all the other deities will appear inferior on account of his attachment to the deity of his choice. But the truth is that all deities are manifestations, in particular ways, of one God.

Parabrahman, which is without attributes, without form, becomes the personal God or Īśvara to perform these three functions of creation, protection and dissolution. The forms may appear different, the names may be different, but the truth is one. It is the one that becomes three, and then thirty-three, and then thirty-three crores, according to the numberless varieties of the functions of divinity.

4

GURVAṢṬAKAM

Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda

शरीरं सुरूपं सदा रोगमुक्तं यशश्चारु चित्रं धनं मेरुतुल्यम् ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Though your body be attractive and ever remain in perfect health,
Though your name be unsullied, and mountain-high your
hoarded gold,
Yet, if the mind is not absorbed in the guru's lotus feet,
What thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

कलत्रं धनं पुत्रपौत्रादिसर्वं गृहं बान्धवाः सर्वमेतद्धि जातम् ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Even if you are blessed with riches and a virtuous wife,
With children and grandchildren, with friendship and
the joys of home,
Yet, if the mind is not absorbed in the guru's lotus feet,
What thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

षडङ्गा दि वेदो मुखे शास्त्रविद्या कवित्वादि गद्यं सुपद्यं करोति ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किः ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Though the lore of the Vedas takes up its dwelling on your tongue,
Though you are learned in scriptures, gifted in writing prose
and verse,
Yet, if the mind is not absorbed in the guru's lotus feet,
What thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

विदेशेषु मान्यः स्वदेशेषु धन्यः सदाचारवृत्तेषु मत्तो न चान्यः ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किः ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Even if you are honoured at home and famed in foreign lands,
Given to pious deeds, and ever averse to wickedness,
Yet, if the mind is not absorbed in the guru's lotus feet,
What thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

क्षमामण्डले भूपभूपालवृन्दैः सदा सेवितं यस्य पादारविन्दम् ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किः ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Though you become, at last, the emperor of the universe,
Though you possess for servants the mightiest of the kings of earth,
Yet, if the mind is not absorbed in the guru's lotus feet,
What thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

यशश्चेद् गतं दिक्षु दानप्रतापात् जगद्वस्तु सर्वं करे यत्प्रसादात् ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किः ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Even if every nation resound with your beneficence,
Yet, if the mind is not absorbed in the lotus feet of him,
By grace of whom, alone, everything in this world is won,
What thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

न भोगे न योगे न वा वाजिमेधे न कान्तासुखे नैव वित्तेषु चित्तम् ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Though you pursue no pleasures, derive no joy from wealth or wife,
Reject the powers of Yoga, and scorn the fruits of sacrifice,
Yet, if the mind is not absorbed in the guru's lotus feet,
What thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

अरण्ये न वा स्वस्य गेहे न कार्ये न देहे मनो वर्तते मे त्वनर्घ्ये ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Even if you are ready to dwell in the forest as at home,
No more attached to work, untrammelled by an ugly form,
Yet, if the mind is not absorbed in the guru's lotus feet,
What thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

गुरोरष्टकं यः पठेत्पुण्यदेही यतिर्भूपतिर्ब्रह्मचारी च गेही ।
लभेद्वाञ्छितार्थं पदं ब्रह्मसंज्ञं गुरोरुक्तवाक्ये मनो यस्य लग्नम् ॥

Of novices and monks, of rulers and of worldly men,
That noble person who ponders these verses in the guru's praise,
And to the guru's teaching applies his mind with constant zeal—
He will attain to Brahman, the treasure coveted by all.

5

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

R.C. Pradhan*

Advaita Vedānta, one of the well-known Indian philosophical systems, represents the climax of the Vedāntic philosophy. It represents the highest development of the basic principles of Vedānta as enshrined in the *Brahma-sūtra*, the *Upaniṣad* and the *Bhagvad-gītā*. It is well-known for its metaphysics of non-dualism. Advaita is not only a philosophical system, but also a religion with a spiritual message.[1] However, the social dimensions of this great philosophy are little known outside the circle of the Advaitins. It is primarily because it has been believed, though falsely, that Advaita has no concern for the social life of man and that it has little to offer to the man of the ordinary life not pursuing the spiritual path.

In this paper I would like to argue that Advaita is committed to a philosophy of social action resulting in the establishment of an egalitarian society. Though its emphasis is on the path of renunciation, it does not propagate the philosophy of inaction, world-negation, and withdrawal from the worldly affairs.

---

* Professor of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad - 500 046.

It is a philosophy of spiritual action imbued with the high ideal of social development and the moral and the spiritual regeneration of the human race.[2]

From Multiplicity to Non-Duality:
The Advaitic Dissolution of Differences

Advaita Vedānta dissolves all differences in the spirit of accommodating everything within its metaphysical horizon. It acknowledges the differences, but only at the level of the *vyavahāra* or the ordinary experience. *Vyavahāra* symbolizes the lower level of human existence that is circumscribed by the limitations of the physical, the biological, and the vital principles. For Advaita, this level of existence is lower, not because it is devoid of reality, or because it has no hope of getting rid of its low status. It is lower because it is apparently circumscribed by its own limitations and is steeped in ignorance (ajñāna) of what the highest reality, viz. Brahman is. But this ignorance can be removed by the knowledge of Brahman. *Vyavahāra,* therefore, is a stepping stone to the *paramārtha* or the transcendental reality and is not completely cut off from the latter.[3]

What matters most to the Advaitin is not whether there are differences or not, but whether they can be overcome or not. Differences are not final for the Advaitin as they are for the dualists and the pluralists. They are due to ignorance or non-realization of the basic oneness of reality, according to Advaita. One who knows the one and non-dual reality, the Brahman, knows no differences, says the Upaniṣad.[4] The differences arise only when we do not see that the different phenomena in the world are the manifestations of the one reality. It is the one reality that appears as the many. This is the *vivarta-vāda* of the Advaitins according to whom the multiplicity of phenomena is the *vivarta* or the appearance of Brahman.[5]

The effort of Advaita to dissolve the differences at the *pāramārthika* level is a part of its effort to give due recognition

to it at the empirical–practical level, and then to dissolve it at the transcendental level. This dual move has its own merits. It, first of all, accepts the empirical world with all its multiplicity, that is, the varieties of phenomena, physical, mental, and social. Secondly, it cancels this multiplicity at the trans-empirical level by reinterpreting it in terms of a higher reality. At this level the multiple phenomena are seen as the appearances of the one reality. Reality in its pristine oneness is realized so that the apparent multiplicity is found to be unreal. The multiplicity is ultimately absorbed in the oneness of the reality.

The Human Phenomenon: The Search for the Universal

It is the human phenomenon that attracts the attention of the Advaitin because of the fact that man alone is capable of realizing the oneness of reality. Man is capable of removing avidyā (ignorance), because he is basically one with the ultimate reality, i.e. Brahman, though he is oblivious of this truth because of ignorance. According to Advaita, all men are the manifestations of the one non-dual Brahman. Though the individual men and women are different, they have a universal essence which is called Ātman. Ātman is the same as Brahman as there is one and only one reality,[6] that is, Ātman or Brahman.

It is one of the greatest discoveries of Advaita that all men are ultimately the manifestations of the one reality called Ātman or Brahman. Men are different in their colour, gender, race, mental capacity, and so on, and yet are perceived to be the same Ātman. This is a great truth about man, because it nullifies all the so-called empirical truths regarding the differences of race, gender, and social stratification. Society, class, and the distinctions of caste—all are based on the principle of difference. It is these differences that mark the social existence of man. However, Advaita presents a different picture of man in which men are not ultimately different and that they share the same ultimate reality. The men and women are, as it were, sparks of the same Divine[7]

and that they are each of them Brahman or Ātman. Advaita thus excludes all distinctions based on gender, class and caste. It acts as the great dissolver of all distinctions.

Advaita does not take the human phenomenon as the ultimate reality. Man is in fact a divine reality because he partakes of the divine essence. Men are declared to be the sons of immortality (*amṛtasya putrāḥ*). The distinction between the human and the divine is given up for the reason that what is apparently human is really divine. For Advaita, the humanness is derived from the Divine, because the Divine is the fundamental reality and humanness is imposed on it. There are two important insights here: first, the biological and anthropological man is bracketed as belonging to the lower plane of reality and thus it is proclaimed that the natural man is not the final man. Second, the divine man, that is, the man as Ātman is declared to be the real man. The Advaita dialectic shows that the man–divine duality is to be subsumed under the man–divine unity so that there is only one truth about man—he is no other than Brahman. The Upaniṣadic saying "That Thou Art"[8] (*Tat tvam asi*) signals this oneness of man and Brahman.

The Advaitic search for the universal man is noteworthy for the reason that in the ideal of a universal man does it conceive of the perfection of man. The perfect man who is the ideal man of Advaita is not the same as the individual empirical man who is a limited reflection of the universal man. The individual self or the jīva is a mere distortion of the ideal man. The concept of jīva is very important for understanding the Advaita concept of man, since the jīva is essentially one with Ātman and is yet different from it. Thus there is a duality in the nature of the jīva as it belongs both to the realm of the world and the world beyond. Advaita asserts that man is not merely the individual and empirical self, but also the transcendental self. It is the transcendental self that embodies the higher consciousness which is nothing other than Brahman.

The universal man is not just an abstract man, but is concrete in the world, because the individual man alone realizes the universality of his nature. The individual man is Ātman in his essence and, therefore, there is no reason to believe that Ātman is far away from the individual man. Advaita is right in telling us that the nature of Ātman is very much present in the nature of the individual man. Man is himself divine if he realizes it so and surrenders his own little ego. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

> That which surrenders here is the jīva, the essential soul, the original central and spiritual being of man, individual Puruṣa. It is the jīva delivered from the limiting and ignorant ego-sense who knows himself not as a separate personality, but as an eternal portion and power and soul-becoming of the Divine, *aṁśa sanātana*, the jīva released and uplifted by the passing away of ignorance and established in the light and freedom of his true and supreme nature which is one with that of the Eternal.[9]

The jīva is one with Brahman as it partakes of the same divine nature as the latter. Only when the ego-sense of the jīva is surrendered, his true nature is manifested.

Self and the Other

It may appear as if Advaita is interested in the individual self and not in the other. By the other is meant the other selves than myself. If that were the case, then Advaita would have been solipsistic and would have denied the other selves. This would have made the notion of the other unintelligible. But this is not the case. Advaita keeps open the possibility of interpersonal dialogue and communication among all human beings. This is evidenced in the Advaitic saying that the realized person sees everybody in himself, that is, one soul feels affinity with every other soul.

The idea that others are identical with myself is the acknowledgment of the fact that others exist besides myself. I cannot be the sole reality so far as I am an individual self. Other selves are equally selves like myself. For all practical purposes, Advaita

admits the existence of the other. However, the realized souls are all one with Brahman. But that does not necessarily cancel the fact that we are all souls in the sense that we distinguish ourselves from others. The empirical sense of the other is implicit in our admission of plurality of selves. The transcendental fact that we are one with Brahman does not contradict the fact that we are all real as the individual selves.

The sense of the other is implicit in the *Gītā* concept of the *loka-saṅgraha*.[10] The concept of *loka-saṅgraha* means the solidarity of the *loka* or the world. It may also mean the welfare of all beings in the world, that is, of the other selves so far as "the other" constitutes the collectivity. In this sense the *loka* or collectivity includes all beings who are part of the cosmic existence. Thus, each individual is connected with the universe by his spiritual and moral links with the latter. This is described by Advaita as the cosmic unity which is pervaded by Brahman. The idea of a cosmic self or the cosmic consciousness is implicit in the idea of Brahman which is the source of all beings. The *Gītā* expresses the cosmic unity in the concept of God, the Parameśvara, the Akṣara-Brahman. In this framework the cosmic Self is all-inclusive, because all the selves are placed in the vast existence of this supreme Self. Sri Aurobindo writes:

> But the Lord is there, not only in that self but in Nature. He is in the heart of every creature and guides by his presence the turnings of this great natural mechanism. He is present in all, all lives in him, all is himself because all is a becoming of his being, a portion or a figure of his existence.[11]

In other words, the other is as much a part of the eternal cosmic Self as myself and, therefore, there is no real gap between me and the other.

Śaṅkara does not rule out the possibility of the real world with its multiple individual beings, while he admits that all individuals are only limitations of the cosmic Self.[12] He admits that it is by māyā that we are differentiated from one another, but that does not prevent us from seeking the welfare of others by our moral

actions. In fact, the more realized we are, the more we are devoted to the welfare of all. In the realization of the unity of the Self is rooted our moral attitudes of compassion and non-violence. This point is emphasized by Śaṅkara's pro-attitude towards social actions embodied in the service of others.

The Advaitic Notion of Moral Actions

Advaita defines moral life within the framework of the unity of self. It rules out the negative attitude of the Buddhists who deny self as a metaphysical reality. The Buddhists deny that there is any soul, because that will be a hindrance to the possibility of morality. Morality presupposes egolessness in the Buddhist framework. But Śaṅkara reverses this position by insisting that the admission of a higher Self can alone ensure morality. For Śaṅkara, morality requires the self that can aspire for a moral life. The self of the moral agent is the foundation of the concepts of freedom and responsibility. Who can be free and responsible if there is no self?

Advaita does not rule out morality[13] as it is mistakenly argued that there is no place for morality in Advaita on the ground that it denies the reality of the world and the moral agent. But the argument is faulty, because there can be no Advaitic spiritual life if there is no moral foundation for it. All Advaitic thinkers are unanimous in this that the higher life is impossible if there is no moral consciousness of the kind needed by moral life. Mokṣa will be empty if there is no moral content in it. Mokṣa is not only freedom from bondage, but also positive involvement in selfless actions. It is by selfless action that we can reach the state of freedom from bondage. Bondage is not involvement in the world as such; it is the attitude to the world that creates bondage. Radhakrishnan writes:

> The emphasis in Śaṅkara is not on retirement from the world, but on the renunciation of the self. It is easier to flee from the world than from the self. Śaṅkara asks us to suppress our selfishness, and, if that requires solitude and

retirement, these are advised as means to an end... His attitude will not be world-seeking or world-fleeing, but world-saving. The perfect man lives and dies, not for himself, but for mankind.[14]

This makes it clear that Śaṅkara's Advaita which is charged with world-negation and denial of the possibility of moral life allows for the possibility of perfection of man in the world.

The Advaitic theory of morality places the moral good in the total scheme of freedom from bondage. The life of bondage is the fallen state of man since it distances man from his spiritual roots. It is the state of existence which issues from ignorance of the spiritual roots of all existence. This ajñāna is not just the intellectual defect of not understanding reality, but the spiritual defect of not being in tune with the reality. That is, the ignorant man is spiritually bankrupt rather than intellectually dwarf. Therefore, the Advaitic notion of ajñāna has deeper meaning than the one suggested by the English term "ignorance".

Now the question arises: Can there be freedom of man while he is in the world in the embodied state? This question has puzzled Advaitins more than anyone else, because they have expounded a radical theory of the Self. Those who believe that the Self is necessarily embodied do not worry about freedom at all, because there can be no complete release from life in the world. But Advaita does not accept that the Self is necessarily embodied, because the Self is the pure consciousness, the Ātman. Therefore, it appears as if Advaita cannot explain how freedom is possible in the world. But mukti has been admitted in this life by Advaita. This state is called the state of *jīvan-mukti* which means freedom in this life itself. This concept has profound implications for Advaita, because it has to admit the possibility of freedom in this life itself, that is, in this world while one is alive. This negates the impression that mukti is a distant goal which is beyond the reach of the man in the world. Besides, this implies that mukti has nothing to do with death and after-life. It is a state of existence which ensures an eternal life within the temporal world. Eternity

is not infinite temporal existence; it is timelessness.[15] The idea of *jīvan-mukti* implies this timelessness.

The actions of a *jīvan-mukta* are the moral actions which generate the conditions of freedom. The actions of this person are to be taken as the moral actions which are without the taint of egoism. The egoistic actions are condemned by the *Gītā* in so many words as those which breed bondage to the world.[16] These actions are such that the agent believes that they are his own actions and that he is the recipient of the fruits of those actions. This sense of the "I" or the doer is the source of the bondage. The *Gītā* suggests that moral actions be performed with utmost selflessness and be surrendered to God who is the true agent of actions.[17] Sri Aurobindo puts it as follows:

> To work impersonally, desirelessly and without attachment to the fruits of our work, for the sake of God and the world and the greater self and the fulfilment of the universal will,—this is the first step towards liberation and perfection.[18]

That is to say, the *Gītā* emphasizes the importance of the selfless and God-dedicated actions as the moral actions that lead to freedom

It is wrong to believe that Śaṅkara gives no importance to karma or action, because it is the source of bondage rather than of freedom. The karmas which amount to bondage are to be shunned, because they are the actions that are done against the free will of the agent. Free will is the deeper will of acting in order to rise above the life of bondage. Śaṅkara, like any other Advaitin, believes that the life of action cannot be run down, because it is the life of any worldly being who searches for freedom. One cannot escape action in life as the *Gītā*[19] says. Radhakrishnan writes:

> Śaṅkara admits that there is no objection to the performance of work until one reaches death, even after the attainment of wisdom. Such a one is said to be above all duties only from a theoretical standpoint. This means that in principle there is no contradiction between spiritual freedom and practical work.[20]

The Ideal of Social Welfare

The Advaitic morality ensures social welfare of the highest order precisely because it includes the well-being of everybody in its goal of social welfare. Social welfare in the widest sense is the universal welfare in the vocabulary of Advaita. It is the welfare of the cosmos, the whole of humanity, and the world of all living beings. It is this total happiness of the total world that is the goal of Advaita. This may seem utopian to those who believe that happiness comes in parts, that is, it comes through acquisition of wealth and power. But this is an illusion, because happiness of this kind is limited and short-lived. It is, therefore, impossible to attain real happiness through the means of wealth and power. The Upaniṣad says, man is never satisfied by wealth (*na hi vittena tarpaṇīyaḥ manuṣyaḥ*).[21] That is because wealth is limited, and the pleasure coming out of it is finite. Hence Advaita asks us to transcend this limited pleasure and search for the true happiness which lies in the realization of the infinite Self.

The genuine welfare of mankind lies in reaching the state of happiness on a global scale. Happiness is a multi-dimensional state of human existence that brings about all-sided development —physical, mental, and spiritual. This ideal of global happiness is not utopian, because collective happiness is a goal followed by many systems of moral and social ethics. The Utilitarians and the Pragmatists among the ethicists seek the greatest happiness of the greatest number. So do the idealists and rationalists who believe that happiness lies in the harmonious development of the Self. But this goal of the greatest happiness pales into insignificance before the goal of total happiness of the total number of the Advaitins. What the Advaitins call ānanda or bliss is the total happiness in the sense that it is the highest happiness that we can conceive of. What we call social happiness is not cut-off from the total happiness called ānanda. Social welfare is only a fragment of the total happiness.

Social welfare is achieved by the selfless actions of the wise and the learned. It is the people like Buddha, Śaṅkara, and Vivekananda who seek the social welfare of all. They do not take the individuals in isolation and therefore for them the individual's happiness is a part and parcel of the happiness of the collectivity. Buddha went to the extent of asking for the total liberation of mankind, which, according to him, is the Nirvāṇa for all. Vivekananda called for the freedom of all (*sarva-mukti*), because he thought that there is no freedom of the individual unless there is freedom of all. Vivekananda says:

> The Vedānta teaches that Nirvāṇa can be attained here and now, that we do not have to wait till death to reach it. Nirvāṇa is the realization of the self. . .[22]

This realization of the Self is possible for everybody and all can attain it provided they strive for it. This guarantees the liberation of all irrespective of caste, creed, and gender.

Like Buddhism, Advaita spreads the message of social unification and spiritual unity of mankind. Buddhism made it its social goal to reach the lowly and the down-trodden with its message of unity and love. Advaita follows Buddhism in this respect by its declaration of the unity of all men. The spiritual message of oneness which is the unique contribution of Advaita is the new foundation of social ethics. There is no genuine alternative to this system of ethics which eliminates all sorts of distinction. Advaita tears asunder all systems of society based on discrimination of some kind or other. The social distinctions are contingent on some accidental fact or other and therefore there is no logical foundation for them. Advaita removes all distinctions as the products of māyā. The real social existence is the existence of the community of knowers free from ignorance. Sri Aurobindo calls this the community of the Gnostic Beings.[23] The Gnostic beings are engaged in the worldly affairs no less than the worldly men. Sri Aurobindo sees compatibility between the two sides, that is, between Nirvāṇa and action in the world. He observes:

Thus Nirvāṇa is clearly compatible with world-consciousness and with action in the world. For the sages who possess it are conscious of an intimate relation by works with the Divine in the mutable universe; they are occupied with the good of all creatures, *sarvabhūta-hite*.[24]

The Community of Knowers

The Advaitic community is the community of knowers, that is, it is the community of self-realized souls. The knowers are the ones who are the elevated souls having attained the mukti or freedom from bondage. They live in the light of wisdom and the highest moral perfection. In the words of Radhakrishnan:

The liberated soul is eternally free like Kṛṣṇa and Janaka. Janaka carried on his duties and was not perturbed by the events of the world. The freed souls work for the guidance of men who follow the standards set by the thoughtful. They live in the world but as strangers.[25]

The community of knowers is also the community of the doers in the sense that those who know Brahman also engage themselves in the world, because they are morally impelled to do it. The artificial distinction between knowledge and action does not hold good in the state of realization. Advaita does not admit this distinction in the ultimate sense, though for pragmatic purposes *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* are distinct ways or means of realization of Brahman.

Advaita suggests that knowledge is primary for the reason that man's intellectual understanding precedes his actions and the emotional states. Karma and bhakti pave the way to jñāna because the former precede the latter in the order of man's nature. But this does not entail a fundamental distinction between the three as it is suggested by the popular belief. Advaita is a cementing force in the sense that it does not allow differences in the different modes of worship and realization of Brahman. Śaṅkara is well-known for his emphasis on *jñāna-mārga*, but he does not deny the role of karma and bhakti in the scheme of discipline leading to the realization of Brahman.

The Advaitic society is not such that in it people do not work or do not show bhakti to the supreme Godhead. It is not a purely

intellectual society as it may be believed. It is definitely a jñāna-based society, but jñāna here does not exclude action and emotion. The Advaitic workers are not blind followers of superstition or the rituals. They work for the welfare of the universe in a selfless way; they are the *sthitaprajñas*[26] as depicted in the *Gītā*. They work for the welfare of all, and yet do not work in the ordinary sense of the term. Work is transformed in the light of the knowledge of Brahman. So is bhakti, which is not mere blind emotionalism, but the enlightened surrender to the Divine. Bhakti is the supreme state of identification with the Divine in the intuitive awareness of the oneness of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo very aptly describes the supreme state as one of surrender to the Divine, which encompasses the integral nature of the Self-realization.

Now the question may arise: What is the status of the society in the Advaitic scheme of the social order? Is it a construction of the human individuals, or is it a naturally evolved process? Advaita does not admit that individuals have consciously or unconsciously constructed a society. It is there before the individual is born. It is a part of the divine order of things. Men by nature, by virtue of their spiritual affinity, come together and live together. What brings them together is their spiritual affinity and their being part of the larger divine order of things. The *Gītā* presents the blue print of such a society which is spiritually founded on the principle of equal participation in the process of the universe.[27] The social process is part of the larger universal process which is informed by equal and obligatory participation. This process is presided over by the supreme Godhead who is the source of the processes which constitute the universe. Human beings are the moral participants in the universe and are not the individual action-centres. There is only one centre of the universe which is located everywhere. That centre is the divine Reality which is located in every individual. Every individual is a divine representative and is obliged to do the bidding of the divine Being for the sake of the universe. The society is a part of the universe and is propelled

by the same divine forces which propel the universe. Such a conception of society is unique in the sense that in this perspective society is not founded on human greed and love for power; nor is it based on the protection of our life and property. Society is the centre of social obligations or dharma.

Principles of Equality and Justice

Now we can ask whether there is scope in Advaitic society for the principles of equality and justice, which are dear to the modern man and society. It may be said in appreciation of Advaita that it is the first philosophical system to have discovered the principles of equality and justice. It is declared for the first time that all men are equal in a very fundamental sense, i.e. that they are all spiritually one. This truth can never be found in any other great system of the West including those of Plato and Aristotle. Advaita does not accept class hierarchy nor does it recognize caste distinctions. It advocates a radical form of equality which goes beyond the modern sense of equality. Equality in the modern sense means equality in the matters of enjoyment of social goods and opportunities and being treated as equal before law.[28] But Advaita advocates the equality of men and women irrespective of caste, creed, and gender, because they are born spiritually equal. The differences are the differences of name and form. In this sense, equality is derived from identity which denies all differences. The Advaitic concept of equality is not either economic or political; it is spiritual and moral since morally and spiritually all men are born equal. All social satisfactions are the products of ignorance of the human nature. Human beings do not know that they are equal in the deeper sense of being Brahman-Ātman, which underlies all surface differences.

The Advaita concept of classless society is unique in the sense that it not only does not accept the validity of the system of class and caste, but also repudiates it as a product of avidyā or ignorance.

It invests this system with negative moral and spiritual meaning. Advaita, like Buddhism, has protested against this morally degenerate system as it has harmed the spiritual progress of the human society. Many Advaitic thinkers have led social movements in India for the removal of untouchability and other social evils inspired by the ideal of equality and spiritual oneness. It is a sad fact of Indian society that, despite this protest, our society suffered from the ill effects of the caste system. As a theory, the Advaitic ideal of social equality is the most radical and rational form of social relations.

A just society needs to be based on the principle of equality, because justice secures equal treatment of all irrespective of their social status. In all social matters, a just society brings all of its members on a common platform without any discrimination and unfairness. Justice is fairness as Johna Rawls puts it.[29] This fact has been realized by Advaita long before the modern social theorists came upon this idea. For Advaita, all men are born equal as they are the manifestations of the same Ātman. Therefore, they are equal in every respect except in their outward appearances. The latter do not matter so far as they are the same moral and spiritual agents everywhere. The individuals as the spiritual agents are united by the principle of spiritual oneness, and so there is perfect justice in the community of the spiritually realized persons. Justice is not available on the plane of ignorance, because in ignorance the principle of oneness is forgotten. Only when knowledge arises, can we realize that nobody is high or low and that nobody is inferior to any other. Advaita opens up the path of knowledge which ensures the knowledge of our oneness. The "veil of ignorance"[30] cannot guarantee justice, because ignorance cannot breed justice; only it can breed conditional justice, because our ignorance of the other's status is no guarantee that we will treat him as equal under all circumstances. Advaita tears up this veil and places justice in the full knowledge of our equality. Justice is possible only in the community of knowers.

Dharma and Mokṣa

Advaita defends dharma as the foundation of society, since it believes that society cannot thrive except on the principles of morality such as duty for others, obligation towards all beings, truth and ahiṁsā, etc. Thus dharma leads to the establishment of the just and harmonious society. Advaita makes it clear that the moral law is the source of all moral virtues and actions. The social actions taken together make up the sphere of moral actions where the moral law operates. There is no moral action which does not derive itself from the moral law. Moral law is the supreme principle.

Dharma has many connotations in different contexts. It means the general moral virtues (*sādhāraṇa-dharma*) and also the virtues specific to the individual's social position (*varṇa-dharma*). But on the whole dharma stands for the most general moral principles. Advaita accepts the validity of the moral laws in the world of action. But it does not accept that these laws are absolutely binding on the self-realized souls, because the latter transcend the social sphere and work for the welfare of the people. They are not necessarily chained by the social obligations which are true of the members of the society. The men who have attained mokṣa do not belong to one particular society, but to the whole universe. The entire universe is their home, and so they work for the welfare of all. Therefore, they have no particular obligation; on the contrary, they have obligation to all beings to bring happiness to all.

The *Gītā* gives a justified configuration of the nature of dharma when it describes dharma as the universal law of action in which God himself is bound.[31] God, though outside the scope of the operation of the law, voluntarily accepts the law for the welfare of all. The *mukta-puruṣas* also submit themselves to this universal law of dharma and work for the universe. Thus mokṣa does not cancel dharma, but absorbs it with its extended meaning. What the *Gītā* projects as the ideal of a free man (*mukta-puruṣa*) is that of a man dedicated to the goal of ceaseless selfless action. It is not non-action that constitutes the ideal, but the selfless action

for the universal good of mankind. In this action, there is no distinction between my action and the action of others; there is only universal action flowing through endless time.[32]

The life of the liberated person is as much involved in the world as the life of one in bondage, but with a difference. The liberated person is not really involved in the world, though he does all the actions in the world. But one in bondage is really involved in it with attachment and is, therefore, is chained to it. The *Gītā* suggests that both the men appear to be similar on the surface, but are very different in reality. Thus, social life is not denounced by the Advaitic teaching of the *Gītā*. A refined social life with spiritual enlightenment is recommended as the ideal life. In the words of Radhakrishnan:

> Liberation is not the isolation of the immortal spirit from the mortal human life, but is the transfiguration of the whole man. It is attained not by destroying, but by transfiguring the tension of human life. His whole nature is subdued to the universal vision, is wrought to splendour and irradiated by the Divine Light, and he becomes his own masterpiece.[33]

Such is the vision of the liberated individual in the *Gītā* which reconciles the demand of the world and society with the higher call of the divine Spirit. It excludes nothing including the body and its demands, but transforms everything into divine freedom and joy. Social life itself becomes the expression of the divine life.

The Yogi as the Social Leader

The ideal man of Advaita is the yogi who is involved in social actions that lead to the highest good of mankind. Such an ideal is a reconciliation of the ideal of renunciation with that of active participation in the world. Renunciation does not go against the action in the world. Advaita never views renunciation as the only ideal of life. Even if it appears to do so, it never actually regards the worldly life as of inferior quality. Social leadership can alone come from a yogi committed to the Advaitic idea of oneness of mankind.

Śaṅkarācārya himself was the ideal yogi who renounced the world, and yet engaged himself in the uplift of the world. He embodied the ideal of renunciation with active participation in the world. All ācāryas in the Śāṅkarite tradition have been the embodiments of this spirit of yoga. The oft-repeated charge that Advaita is against the life in the world is a misnomer, because Advaita encourages life in the world, which Vivekananda calls practical Vedānta.[34] Advaita Vedānta is the most practical philosophy ever developed by mankind. Radhakrishnan writes:

> The Yogi and the Commissar are not exclusive of each other. The Yogi acts in the world while remaining a reflective witness of it. He will do his duty in the world without neglecting his higher loyalty. Civilization will justify itself only when men of the world become seers and seers become actors in the world.[35]

This truly reflects the Advaitin's practical vision of life. It is not incidental that this is the aspiration of all spiritual traditions, and Advaita is the torch bearer in this regard.

NOTES

1. See Swami Vivekananda, "Practical Vedānta and Other Lectures" in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2 (Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1989).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.1.10–11.
5. Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (Allen and Unwin, London, 1923; eighth impression, 1966), Chapter VIII.
6. Ibid.
7. Swami Vivekananda, op. cit.
8. *Chāndogya Upanishad*, VI. 11.3, 12.3.
9. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita* (Sri Aurobindo Ashrama, Pondicherry, 2000), p. 542.
10. *Bhagvad-gītā*, 3.20.
11. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gītā*, p. 457.

12. Śaṅkara, *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, 2.3.40. See also Śaṅkara, *Upadeśa-sāhasrī*, 1.2.50.
13. See Radhakrishan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, Chapter VIII on the nature of morality in the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara.
14. Ibid., p. 633.
15. Cf. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F.Pears and B.F. McGuinness (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1961), 6.4311.
16. *Bhagvad-gītā*, III-VI.
17. Ibid.
18. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 458.
19. *Bhagvad-gītā*, 3.8.
20. Radhakrishnan, "Introductory Essay" in *Bhagvad-gītā* (Allen and Unwin, Bombay, 1971), p. 77.
21. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.1.27.
22. *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda*, (Advaita Ashrama, Clacutta, 1987), p. 80.
23. See Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Book Two (Sri Aurobindo Ashrama, Pondicherry, 1973) Chapter XXVIII.
24. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gītā*, p. 237.
25. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagvad-gītā*, pp. 72–73.
26. *Bhagvad-gītā*, 2. 55–72.
27. Ibid., III–VI.
28. Cf. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1972), Chapters I and II.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., Chapter III.
31. Cf. *Bhagvad-gītā*, III-V.
32. Ibid.
33. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagvad-gītā*, p. 76.
34. Swami Vivekananda, "Practical Vedānta and Other Lectures" in *The Complete Works*.
35. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith* (Hind Pocket Books (P), Ltd., Delhi, 1955), p. 163.

6

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY*

S. Radhakrishnan

I

Philosophical Development

Throughout the history of Indian thought, the ideal of a world behind the ordinary world of human strivings, more real and more intangible, which is the true home of the spirit, has been haunting the Indian race. Man's never-ceasing effort to read the riddle of the Sphinx and raise himself above the level of the beast to a moral and spiritual height finds a striking illustration in India. We can watch the struggle for four millenniums (or longer, if the recent archaeological finds in Sind and the Punjab, which are withdrawing the shroud that hid the remote past, are to be taken into account). The native belief that the world is ruled by the gods of Sun and Sky, who watch from on high the conduct of men, whether it is straight or crooked; the faith that the Gods who can be persuaded by prayer or compelled by rites to grant our requests are only the forms of the one Supreme; the firm

---

* Courtesy: *The Heart of Hindusthan*, G.A. Natesan & Co., Chennai, pp. 131–151.

conviction that the pure stainless spirit, to know whom is life eternal, is one with the innermost soul of man; the rise of materialism, scepticism and fatalism, and their supersession by the ethical systems of Buddhism and Jainism, with their central doctrine that one can free oneself from all ill only by refraining, from all evil, in thought, word and deed—God or no God; the liberal theism of the *Bhagavad-gītā* which endows the all-soul with ethical in addition to metaphysical perfections; the logical scheme of the Nyāya, which furnishes the principal categories of the world of knowledge which are in use even to-day; the Vaiśeṣika interpretation of nature; the Sāṅkhya speculations in science and psychology; the Yoga scheme of the pathway to perfection; the ethical and social regulations of the Mīmāṁsā and the religious interpretation of the supreme Reality, as put forward by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva and Nimbārka, Vallabha and Jīva Gosvami—form a remarkable record of philosophical development in the history of the human race. Type succeeds type, school follows on school, in logical sequence. The life of the Indian was ever on the move, shaping itself as it grew, and changing from time to time in relation to its physical, social and cultural contexts. In the early stages the ancient Indians were doing everything for the first time. They had practically no wisdom of the past to fall back upon. They had, moreover, enormous difficulties to contend with, which are now almost things of the past. In spite of these, their achievement in the realm of thought and practice is a considerable one. But the cycle is not complete, and the range of possible forms is not exhausted; for the Sphinx still smiles. Philosophy is not in its infancy.

The survey of Indian thought, as of all thought, impresses one with the mystery and the immensity of existence as well as the beauty and the persistence of the human effort to understand it. The long procession of thinkers struggled hard to add some small piece to the temple of human wisdom, some fresh fragment to the ever incomplete sum of human knowledge. But human

speculation falls short of the ideal which it can neither abandon nor attain. We are far more conscious of the depth of the surrounding darkness than of the power to dispel it possessed by the flickering torches that we have the privilege to carry as the inheritors of a great past. After all the attempts of philosophers, we stand to-day in relation to the ultimate problems very near where we stood far away in the ages—where perhaps we shall ever stand as long as we are human, bound Prometheus-like to the rock of mystery by the chains of our finite mind.[1] The pursuit of philosophy is not, however, a vain endeavour. It helps us to feel the grip and the clanging of the chains. It sharpens the consciousness of human imperfection and thus deepens the sense of perfection in us, which reveals the imperfection of our passing lives. That the world is not so transparent to our intellects as we could wish is not to be wondered at, for the philosopher is only the lover of wisdom and not its possessor. It is not the end of the voyage that matters, but the voyage itself. To travel is a better thing than to arrive.

At the end of our course, we may ask whether the known facts of history support a belief in progress. Is the march of human thought a forward movement, or is it one of retrogression? The sequence is not capricious and unmeaning. India believes in progress, for, as we have already said, the cycles are bound together by an organic tie. The inner thread of continuity is never cut. Even the revolutions that threaten to engulf the past help to restore it. Backward eddies serve rather to strengthen than retard the current. Epochs of decadence, like the recent past of this country, are in truth periods of transition from an old life to a new. The two currents of progress and decline are intermingled. At one stage the forces of progress press forward with a persistent sweep, at another the line sways to and fro, and sometimes the forces of retrogression seem to overwhelm those of progress, but on the whole the record is one of advance. It would be idle to deny that much has perished in the process. But few things are more futile

than to rail against the course which the historical past has taken or to weep over it. In any case, some other kind of development would have been worse. The more important thing is the future. We are able to see further than our predecessors, since we can climb on their shoulders. Instead of resting content with the foundations nobly laid in the past, we must build a greater edifice in harmony with ancient endeavour as well as with the modern outlook.

II
The Unity of all Systems

The twin strands which in one shape or another run through all the efforts of the Indian thinkers are loyalty to tradition and devotion to truth. Every thinker recognizes that the principles of his predecessors are stones built into the spiritual fabric, and, if they are traduced, one's own culture is defamed. A progressive people with a rich tradition cannot afford to neglect it, though it may contain elements which are not edifying. The thinkers try hard to explain, allegorise, alter and expurgate the traditional lore, since men's emotions are centred round it. The later Indian thinkers justify the different philosophical interpretations of the universe advanced by the earlier ones and regard them as varying approximations to the truth as a whole. The different views are not looked upon as unrelated adventures of the human mind into the realm of the unknown or a collection of philosophical curiosities. They are regarded as the expression of a single mind, which has built up the great temple, though it is divided into numerous walls and vestibules, passages and pillars.

Logic and science, philosophy and religion are related organically. Every fresh epoch in the progress of thought has been inaugurated by a reform in logic. The problem of method, involving as it does an insight into the nature of human thought, is of great value. The Nyāya points out that no stable philosophy can

be built except on the foundations of logic. The Vaiśeṣika warns us that all fruitful philosophy must take into account the constitution of physical nature. We cannot build in the clouds. Though physics and metaphysics are clearly distinct and cannot be blended, still a philosophic scheme must be in harmony with the results of natural science. But to extend to the universe at large what is true of the physical world would be to commit the fallacy of scientific metaphysics, and the Sāṅkhya asks us to beware of that danger. The resources of Nature cannot generate consciousness. We cannot reduce Nature and consciousness the one to the other, as scientific and psychological metaphysics attempt to do. Reality appears not only in science and in human life but in religious experience which is the subject matter of the Yoga system. The Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā and the Vedānta lay stress on ethics and religion. The relation between Nature and mind is the supreme problem of philosophies also. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realism, the Sāṅkhya-Yoga dualism and the Vedānta monism do not differ as true and false but as more and less true.[2] They are adapted to the needs of the slow-witted (*mandādhikāri*), the average intellect (*madhyamādhikāri*) and the strong-minded (*uttamādhikāri*) respectively. The different views are hewn out of one stone and belong to one whole, integral, entire and self-contained. No scheme of the universe can be regarded as complete if it has not the different sides of logic and physics, psychology and ethics, metaphysics and religion. Every system of thought developed in India offered its own theory of knowledge, interpretation of Nature and mind, ethics and religion. Our knowledge of the universe has grown enormously under the guidance of the natural sciences, and we cannot afford to be satisfied with any restricted outlook on life. The future attempts at philosophic construction will have to relate themselves to the recent advances of natural science and psychology.

III
Philosophy and Life

Philosophy has for its functions the ordering of life and the guidance of action. It sits at the helm and directs our course through the changes and chances of the world. When philosophy is alive, it cannot be remote from the life of the people. The ideas of thinkers are evolved in the process of their life history. We must learn not only to reverence them but to acquire their spirit. The names of Vasiṣṭa and Viśvāmitra, Yājñavalkya, and Gārgī, Buddha and Mahāvīra, Gautama and Kanāda, Kapila and Patañjali, Bādarāyaṇa and Jaimini, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, are not merely themes for the historian but types of personality. With them philosophy is a world-view based on reflection and experience. Thought, when it thinks itself out to the end, becomes religion by being lived and tested by the supreme test of life. The discipline of philosophy is at the same time the fulfilment of a religious vocation.

IV
The Decline of Philosophy in the Recent Past

The evidence brought together in this work does not support the general criticism that the Indian mind has a fear of thinking. We cannot dismiss the whole progress of Indian thought with a sapient reference to the Oriental mind, which is not sufficiently dry and virile to rise above grotesque imagination and puerile mythology. Yet there is much in the thought-history of the last three or four centuries to lend countenance to this charge. India is no longer playing her historic role as the vanguard of higher knowledge in Asia.[3] It seems to some that the river that has flowed down the centuries so strong and full is likely to end in a stagnant waste of waters. The philosophers, or rather the writers on

philosophy, of this period of decadence profess to be votaries of truth, though they understand by it merely the pious sophistries or the sacrosanct hair-splittings of this or that school of dogmatics. These professional dialecticians imagine that the small brook by their side, trickling away in the sand or evaporating in the fog, is the broad river of Indian philosophy.

A variety of causes have contributed to this result. The political changes brought about by the establishment of the Mohammadan supremacy turned men's minds into conservative moulds. In an age when individual self-assertion and private judgment threatened at every point to dissolve into anarchy the old social order and all stable conviction, the need for authoritative control was urgently felt. The Mohamadan conquest, with its propagandist work, and later the Christian missionary movement, attempted to shake the stability of Hindu society, and in an age deeply conscious of instability, authority naturally became the rock on which alone it seemed that social safety and ethical order could be reared. The Hindu, in the face of the clash of cultures, fortified himself with conventions and barred all entry to invading ideas. His society, mistrusting reason and weary of argument, flung itself passionately into the arms of an authority which stamped all free questioning as sin. Since then it has failed in loyalty to its mission. There were no longer any thinkers but only scholars who refused to strike new notes, and were content to raise echoes of the old call. For some centuries they succeeded in deceiving themselves with a supposedly final theory. Philosophy became confused with the history of philosophy when the creative spirit had left her. It abdicated its function and remained wrapped up in its illusions. When it ceased to be the guide and the guardian of the general reason, it did a great wrong to itself. Many believed that their race had travelled long and far towards a goal at which it had at length arrived. They felt rather tired and inclined to rest. Even those who knew that they had not arrived and saw the large tract of the country stretching into the future, were afraid of the

unknown and its ordeals. The silences and the eternities cannot be questioned without peril by the weak of heart. The dizziness of the inquiry into the infinite is a vertigo which even mighty minds try to avoid if they can. The strongest of human forces are subject to intervals of lethargy, and the philosophic impulse has had in these three or four centuries an attack of lethargy.

V
The Present Situation

To-day the great religion of the world and the different currents of thought have met on Indian soil. The contact with the spirit of the West has disturbed the placid contentment of recent times. The assimilation of a different culture has led to the impression that there are no official answers to ultimate problems. It has shaken the faith in the traditional solutions, and has, in some degree, helped to a larger freedom and flexibility of thought. Tradition has become fluid again, and while some thinkers are busy rebuilding the house on ancient foundations, others want to remove the foundations altogether. The present age of transition is as full of interest as of anxiety.

During the recent past, India was comfortably moved in a backwater outside the full current of contemporary thought, but she is no longer isolated from the rest of the world. The historian of three or four centuries hence may have much to say on the issues of the intercourse between India and Europe, but as yet they lie hidden from our view. So far as India is concerned, we notice the broadening of men's range of experience, the growth of the critical temper and a sort of distaste for mere speculation.

But there is another side to the picture. In the field of thought as well as in that of action, the spirit of man is doomed to decay as much in anarchy as in bondage. There is not much to choose between the two so far as culture and civilization are concerned. Anarchy may mean material discomfort, economic ruin and social

danger, and bondage may mean material comfort, economic stability and social peace. But it would be incorrect to confuse the standards of civilization with economic welfare and maintenance of social order. It is easy to understand the feeling of the Indians of the beginning of the nineteenth century, who, after generations of public strife and private suffering, welcomed the British rule as the dawn of a golden age; but it should be equally easy to sympathize with the Indian feeling of the present day that the spirit of man craves, not comfort, but happiness, not peace and order, but life and liberty, not economic stability or equitable administration but the right to work out one's own salvation even at the cost of infinite toil and tribulation. Even non-political virtues do not thrive in the absence of political autonomy. British rule has given India peace and security, but they are not ends in themselves. If we are to put first things first, then we must admit that economic stability and political security are only means, however valuable and necessary, to spiritual freedom. A bureaucratic despotism which forgets spiritual ends cannot, for all its integrity and enlightenment, invigorate the peoples beneath its sway and cannot therefore evoke any living response in them. When the founts of life are drying up, when the ideals for which the race stood for millenniums, the glow of consciousness, the free exercise of faculty, the play of life, the pleasure of mind and the fulness of peace, *prāṇārāmam*, *mana-anandam*, *śāntisamṛddham*, are decaying, it is no wonder that the Indian is conscious only of the crushing burden and not of the lifted weight. It is no use speaking to him of the magnitude of Britain's work, for the verdict of history is passed on the spiritual quality of the achievement. If the leaders of recent generations have been content to be mere echoes of the past and not independent voices, if they have been intellectual middlemen and not original thinkers, this sterility is to no small extent due to the shock of the Western spirit and the shame of subjection. The British are aware of the deep-rooted causes of the present attitude of India, whatever it may be called, unrest,

revolt or challenge. They tried to bring their civilization, which they naturally regard as higher, to touch the Indians, and they felt that they should press on in the task of enlightenment and education, good in themselves, without any hesitation or cessation of effort. But India has no sympathy with this policy of cultural imperialism. She tenaciously clings to her ancient customs which helped her to check the swell of passion, the blindness of temper and the thrust of desire. One who is acquainted with the history of her past can sympathise with her anxiety to dwell in her own spiritual house, for "each man is the master of his own house."[4] Political subjection which interferes with the inner freedom is felt as a gross humiliation. The cry for *swaraj* is the outer expression of the anxiety to preserve the provinces of the soul.

Yet the future is full of promise. If India gains freedom within, then the Western spirit will be a great help to the Indian mind. Hindu thought never developed a Monroe doctrine in matters of culture. Even in the ancient times when India grew enough spiritual food to satisfy her own people, there is no recorded age when she was not ready and eager to appreciate the products of other people's imagination. In her great days, India conformed to the wisdom of the Athenians of whom Pericles said: "We listen gladly to the opinions of others and do not turn our faces on those who disagree with us." Our fear of outside influence is proportioned to our own weakness and want of faith in ourselves. Today, it is true, we bear lines of sorrow in our face and our hair is grey with age. The thoughtful among us have a brooding uneasiness of soul, some are even steeped in pessimism and so have become intellectual hermits. The non-co-operation with Western culture is a passing episode due to unnatural circumstances. In spite of it, there are attempts to understand and appreciate the spirit of Western culture. If India assimilates the valuable elements in the Western civilization, it will be only a repetition of parallel processes which happened a number of times in the history of Indian thought.

Those who are untouched by the Western influence are for a large part intellectual and moral aristocrats who are indifferent to political issues, and adopt a gospel not of confident hope but of resignation and detachment. They think that they have little to learn or to unlearn, and that they do their duty with their gaze fixed on the eternal *dharma* of the past. They realize that other forces are at work which they cannot check or control and ask us to face the storms and disillusionment of life with the unruffled calm of self-respect. This was the class which in better times was more elastic and was ever renewing the attempts to reconcile rational philosophy with revealed religion. It has always explained and defended the faith in the face of heretics and unbelievers and had recourse to the allegorical method as the instrument of theological interpretation. ...

The thinkers of India are the inheritors of the great tradition of faith in reason. The ancient seers desired not to copy but to create. They were ever anxious to win fresh fields for truth and answer the riddles of experience which is ever changing and therefore new. The richness of the inheritance never served to enslave their minds. We cannot simply copy the solutions of the past, for history never repeats itself. What they did in their generation need not be done over again. We have to keep our eyes open, find out our problems and seek the inspiration of the past in solving them. the spirit of truth never clings to its forms but ever renews them. Even the old phrases are used in a new way. The philosophy of the present will be relevant to the present and not to the past. It will be as original in its form and its content as the life which it interprets. As the present is continuous with the past, so there will be no breach of continuity with the past.

One of the arguments of the conservatives is that truth is not affected by time. It cannot be superseded any more than the beauty of the sunset or a mother's love for a child. Truth may be immutable, but the form in which it is embodied consists of elements which admit of change. We may take our spirit from the past, for

the germinal ideas are yet vital, but the body and the pulse must be from the present. It is forgotten that religion, as it is today, is itself the product of ages of change; and there is no reason why its forms should not undergo fresh changes so long as the spirit demands it. It is possible to remain faithful to the letter and yet pervert the whole spirit. If the Hindu leaders of two thousand years ago, who had less learning and more light, could come on earth again after all these centuries, they would seldom find their true followers among those who have never deviated from the most literal interpretations of their views.[5] To-day a great mass of accretions have accumulated, which are choking up the stream and the free life of spirit. To say that the dead forms which have no vital truth to support them are too ancient and venerable to be tampered with, only prolongs the suffering of the patient who is ailing from the poison generated by the putrid waste of the past. The conservative mind must open itself to the necessity of change. Since it is not sufficiently alive to this need, we find in the realm of philosophy a strange mixture of penetrating sagacity and unphilosophical confusion. The chief energies of thinking Indians should be thrown into the problems of how to disentangle the old faith from its temporary accretions, how to bring religion into line with the spirit of science, how to meet and interpret the claims of temperament and individuality, how to organize the divergent influences on the basis of the ancient faith. But unfortunately some of the *parishads* are engaged not with these problems, but those suited for the society of antiquarians. It has become the tilting-ground of the specialists. The religious education of the nation is not undertaken on broad lines. It is not seen that spiritual inheritance cannot be any longer the monopoly of a favoured few. Ideas are forces, and they must be broadcasted if the present ageing to death is to be averted. It would be, indeed, strange if the spirit of the *Upaniṣads*, the *Gītā* and the Dialogues of Buddha, that could touch the mind to such fine issues, should have lost its power over man. If, before it is too late, there is a reorganization

of national life, there is a future for Indian thought; and one cannot tell what flowers may yet bloom, what fruits may yet ripen on the hardy old trees.

While those who have not yet been subjected to the influence of Western culture are conservatives in all matters of thought and practice, there are some among those educated in Western ways of thinking who adopt a despairing philosophy of naturalistic rationalism and ask us to get rid of the weight of the past. These are intolerant of tradition and suspicious of the alleged wisdom of age. This attitude of the "progressive" is easily understood. The spiritual heritage of the race has not protected India from the invader and the spoiler. It seems to have played her false and betrayed her into the present state of subjection. These patriots are eager to imitate the material achievements of Western States and tear up the roots of the ancient civilization, so as to make room for the novelties imported from the West. Till the other day Indian thought was not a subject of study in the Indian universities, and even now its place in the philosophical curricula of the universities is insignificant. Suggestions of the inferiority of Indian culture permeate the whole educational atmosphere. The policy inaugurated by Macaulay, with all its cultural value, is loaded on one side. While it is so careful as not to make us forget the force and vitality of Western culture, it has not helped us to love our own culture and refine it where necessary. In some cases, Macaulay's wish is fulfilled, and we have educated Indians who are "more English than the English themselves", to quote his well-known words. Naturally some of these follow the hostile foreign critic in their estimate of the history of Indian culture. They look upon India's cultural evolution as one dreary scene of discord, folly and superstition. One of their number recently declared that, if India is to thrive and flourish, England must be her "spiritual mother" and Greece her "spiritual grandmother". Albeit, since he has no faith in religion, he does not propose the displacement of Hinduism by Christianity. These victims of the present age of

disillusion and defeat tell us that the love of Indian thought is a nationalist foible, if not a pose of the high-brows.

It is a bewildering phenomenon that, just when India is ceasing to appear grotesque to Western eyes, she is beginning to appear so to the eyes of some of her own sons. The West tried its best to persuade India that its philosophy is absurd, its art puerile, its poetry uninspired, its religion grotesque and its ethics barbarous. Now that the West is feeling that its judgement is not quite correct, some of us are insisting that it was wholly right. While it is true that it is difficult in an age of reflection to push men back into an earlier stage of culture and save them from the dangers of doubt and the disturbing power of dialectic, we should not forget that we can build better on foundations already laid than by attempting to substitute a completely new structure of morality, of life and of ethics. We cannot cut ourselves off from the springs of our life. Philosophical schemes, unlike geometrical constructions, are the products of life. The heritage of our history is the food that we have to absorb on pain of inanition.

The conservatives are convinced of the glory of the ancient heritage and the godlessness of modern culture; the radicals are equally certain of the futility of the ancient heritage and the value of naturalistic rationalism. There is much to be said for these views; but the history of Indian thought, when rightly studied, will lead us to regard the two as equally defective. Those who condemn Indian culture as useless are ignorant of it, while those who commend it as perfect are ignorant of any other. The radicals and the conservatives, who stand for the new hope and the old learning, must come closer and understand each other. We cannot live by ourselves in a world where aircraft and steamships, railways and telegraphs are linking all men together into a living whole. Our system of thought must act and react on world progress. Stagnant systems like pools breed obnoxious growths, while flowing rivers constantly renew their waters from fresh springs of inspiration. There is nothing wrong in absorbing the

culture of other peoples; only we must enhance, raise and purify the elements we take over, fuse them with the best in our own. The right procedure regarding the fusing together of the different elements tossed from outside into the national crucible is indicated roughly in the writings of Gandhi and Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh and Bhagavan Das. In them we see the faint promise of a great future, some signs of a triumph over scholasticism as well as response to the discovery of a great culture. While drawing upon the fountains of humanist idealism in India's past, they show a keen appreciation of Western thought. They are anxious to re-seek the ancient fountain-head and direct its waters to irrigate, through pure and uncontaminated conduits, lands which hunger and thirst. But the future which we wish to see is practically non-existent. With the slackening of the political excitement which is absorbing the energies of some of the best minds of India, with the increasing insistence on the study of Indian thought in the new universities, which the old ones are following most reluctantly, the dawn may break. The forces of the conservatism which prefers the life that was to the life that will be are not likely to gain any strength in the days to come.

The problem facing Indian philosophy to-day is whether it is to be reduced to a cult, restricted in scope and with no application to the present facts, or whether it is to be made alive and real, so as to become what it should be—one of the great formative elements in human progress by relating the immensely increased knowledge of modern science to the ancient ideals of India's philosophers. All signs indicate that the future is bound up with the latter alternative. Loyalty to the spirit of the previous systems of thought as well as to the mission of philosophy requires us to possess an outlook that always broadens. Indian philosophy acquires a meaning and a justification for the present, only if it advances and ennobles life. The past course of Indian philosophic development encourages us in our hope. The great thinkers,

Yājñavalkya and Gārgī, Buddha and Mahāvīra, Gautama and Kapila, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, Madhva and Vallabha and scores of others are India's grandest title to existence, a clear testimony of her dignity as a nation with a soul, the proof that she may yet rise above herself and the pledge of this supreme possibility.

NOTES

1. "No one," exclaims Xenophanes, "has attained complete certainty in respect to the gods and to that which I call universal nature, nor will anyone ever attain it. Nay, even if a man happened to light on the truth, he would not know that he did so, for appearance is spread over all things."—Gomperz's *Greek Thinkers*, Vol. I, p. 164.
2. Madhava S.D.S.; Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's *Prasthāna-bheda*; Vijñānabhikṣu's introduction to S.P.B. Cp. Kant: "We are in a way maintaining the honour of human reason when we reconcile it with itself in the different persons of acute thinkers and discover the truth, which is never entirely missed by means of such thoroughness even if they directly contradict each other," quoted in J. Ward's *A Study of Kant*, p. 11, n. 1.
3. Regarding China's debt to India, Professors Liang Chi Cho says: "India taught us to embrace the idea of absolute freedom, that fundamental freedom of mind which enables it to shake off all the fetters of past tradition and habit as well as the present customs of a particular age—that spiritual freedom which casts off the enslaving forces of material existence. . . India also taught us the idea of absolute love, that pure love towards all living beings which eliminates all obsessions of jealousy, anger, impatience, disgust and emulation, which expresses itself in deep pity and sympathy for the foolish, the wicked and the sinful—that absolute love which recognizes the inseparability between all beings." He goes on to explain the contributions of India to Chinese literature and art, music and architecture, painting and sculpture, drama, poetry and

fiction, astronomy and medicine, educational method and social organizations. See *Visvabharati Quarterly*, October 1924. The influence of India on Burma and Ceylon, Japan and Korea, is well known.

4. *Sarvas sve sve gṛhe rājā*. Every man is the lord in his own house.
5. Cp. Aurobindo Ghosh: "If an ancient Indian of the time of the Upaniṣad, of the Buddha, or the later classical age were to be set down in modern India... he would see his race clinging to forms and shells and rags of the past and missing nine-tenths of its nobler meaning. . . he would be amazed by the extent of the mental poverty, the immobility, the static repetition, the cessation of science, the long sterility of art, and the comparative feebleness of the creative intuition.—" *Arya* v. p. 434.

7

A GARLAND OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Selections from Śrī Śaṅkara's *Praśnottara-ratna-mālikā*)

Question—Which is it that is worthy of being learnt?
Answer—The words of the preceptor.
Q—Who is the preceptor?
A—He who has known the truth and who cares for the spiritual welfare of his disciples.
Q—Which is it that should be done quickly?
A—The cutting of the bond of the chain of life and death.
Q—Which is the seed for the tree of spiritual salvation?
A—The understanding of things in their true perspective and the exhibition of that understanding in action.
Q—Which has a soothing effect?
A—Dharma or the performance of righteous deeds.
Q—Who is the pure man?
A—He whose mind is free from blemish.
Q—Who is the learned?
A—He who has knowledge.
Q—Which is poison?
A—The disregarding of the advice of elders.

Q—Which is it that interests in life?
A—Meditation on the question whether there is really anything at all to interest us in life.
Q—Which is it that should be desired?
A—A life dedicated to the good and welfare of one's self as well as others.
Q—Who are the real thieves?
A—The objects which allure the senses.
Q—Which is the binding cord of life?
A—Desire.
Q—Who is the real enemy?
A—Laziness.
Q—Who is blinder than the blind?
A—He who has desires.
Q—Who is the valorous one?
A—He who guards himself against vices.
Q—Which is it that forms proper food for the ears?
A—The teachings of the sages.
Q—How can respect be commanded?
A—By asking for no favours.
Q—What is poverty?
A—Discontent.
Q—Which is the highest living?
A—A life without blemishes.
Q—What constitutes lack of knowledge?
A—Learning which is not put into practice.
Q—Who is the wakeful?
A—He who has knowledge.
Q—What is sleep?
A—Ignorance.
Q—Which is unstable?
A—Youth, wealth and age.
Q—Whose life is as soothing to others as the cool rays of the moon?
A—The life of good men.

Q—Which is hell?
A—To have to live under the patronage of others.
Q—What is happiness?
A—Renunciation for the sake of others.
Q—Which is worthy of being achieved?
A—Being of help to others.
Q—What results in dire consequences?
A—Pride.
Q—What brings about real happiness?
A—The company of good men
Q—Who is supreme in getting rid of sorrow?
A—He who renounces all.
Q—Which is worse than death?
A—Foolishness
Q—Which is priceless?
A—A timely gift.
Q—Which is it that pricks one's conscience till death?
A—A sin committed on the sly.
Q—For what is endeavour worthwhile?
A—Education, charity, and health.
Q—Which should be made the object of endearment?
A—Mercy towards the helpless and the friendship of good and pious men.
Q—Who cannot turn their minds into the right path?
A—The scoundrels, the ever-doubting, the pessimists and the ungrateful persons.
Q—Who is the pious one?
A—He who is of good conduct.
Q—Who can conquer the world?
A—Whoever has truth and patience.
Q—Who is worshipped even by the gods?
A—He who is merciful.
Q—By whom can living beings be subjugated?
A—By him whose words are full of truth and affection.

Q—Which is the proper way for earning riches?
A—The path of virtue and justice.
Q—Who is the blind man?
A—One who, though learned, does bad deeds.
Q—Who is the deaf man?
A—Whoever does not listen to good advice.
Q—Who is the dumb man?
A—Whoever cannot utter good words at the proper moment.
Q—Which is a gift?
A—That which is given unasked for.
Q—Who is a friend?
A—Whoever prevents us from committing sin.
Q—Which is beauty?
A—Good character.
Q—What constitutes the beauty of the tongue?
A—Speaking the truth.
Q—Which is as rare as a precious gem?
A—The four qualities collectively known as the *caturbhadra*, viz. gift followed by soothing words, knowledge without pride, valour with mercy and forgiving, and wealth with sacrifice.
Q—Which is to be pitied?
A—Selfish miserliness.
Q—Which is praiseworthy?
A—The quality of being merciful towards other beings.
Q—Whom do the wise men worship?
A—The naturally humble men.
Q—At the sight of which sun will the lotus of our life bloom?
A—Real humility.
Q—Who can conquer this world?
A—He who speaks gently and does good deeds.
Q—Whom can disaster not overtake?
A—One who listens to the words of elders and one who is humble in behaviour.

Q—Which is the fittest place to dwell in?
A—The neighbourhood of good men and the holy city of Benares.
Q—Which is the place not fit to be lived in?
A—The neighbourhood of low people and the kingdom of a miserly ruler.
Q—What can free a man from misery and sorrow?
A—A dutiful wife and wealth that can endure.
Q—Who deserves to be miserable?
A—He who has, but will not give.
Q—Which is despicable?
A—To beg of the lowly.
Q—Who is more valorous than Rama?
A—One who is unaffected by Cupid's arrows.
Q—Which should be contemplated upon both during day and night?
A—The holy feet of the Almighty, not this world and our life in it.
Q—Who can be called blind, though possessing eyes?
A—The *Nāstikas* or those who do not believe in the Vedas.
Q—Which is the holiest among the sacred waters?
A—That which cleanses us of the dirt surrounding the mind.
Q—What cannot be uttered by a good man?
A—Whatever is not truth and the faults of others.
Q—Which is worthy of being acquired?
A—Learning, wealth, valour, fame and good deeds.
Q—Which destroys all good qualities?
A—Miserliness.
Q—Who is the real enemy?
A—Lust.
Q—Which assembly should be avoided?
A—An assembly devoid of old and experienced councillors.
Q—In what matters should one be careful in this world?
A—In regard to the service of the king.
Q—Which is dearer to us than life?
A—The duties prescribed by heredity and the company of good men.

Q—Which should be preserved?
A—Fame, chastity and one's own knowledge.
Q—Which is like the mythological creeper of plenty in this world?
A—The knowledge imparted to a good and deserving disciple.
Q—What is the weapon which everyone possesses?
A—Reasoning.
Q—Who is the mother of all?
A—The cow.
Q—Which is the army?
A—Bravery.
Q—Who is the God of Death?
A—Indifference.
Q—Which is the abode of poison?
A—Vicious men.
Q—Which is the worst of all pollutions?
A—Debt.
Q—Which is the state of fearlessness?
A—Renunciation.
Q—What begets fear?
A—The possession of wealth.
Q—Which is rare to achieve?
A—Devotion to the Lord.
Q—What is sin?
A—Cruelty to others.
Q—Who is the most beloved of the gods?
A—He who does not feel injured in his mind and does not injure others.
Q—What can enable a man to accomplish whatever he aims at?
A—Penance.
Q—What produces penance?
A—Enlightenment.
Q—Where does enlightenment reside?
A—With the person of knowledge.

Q—Which is real enlightenment?
A—That which is attained through devotion and service to a teacher.
Q—Who are the elders?
A—Those who have understood the correct import of the scriptures—though they may be young in age.
Q—To one who is renowned, which is worse than death?
A—Scandal.
Q—Which is the root cause of happiness?
A—The performance of good deeds.
Q—Which is the root cause of misery?
A—Sin.
Q—Who gets to the supreme state?
A—One who worships the Lord Śaṅkara with devotion.
Q—When is lying not a sin?
A—When it is uttered in due performance of one's duties.
Q—What is one's duty?
A—Following the virtuous ones who excel in the traditional prescriptions.
Q—Which is the strength of the pious men?
A—God.
Q—Who is the pious man?
A—The ever-satisfied person.
Q—Which is god?
A—Our own good deeds.
Q—Who is the rich?
A—The ascetic.
Q—Who is worthy of being served upon?
A—The giver.
Q—Who is the giver?
A—He who gives to the receiver's heart's content.
Q—Which is the greatest enjoyment?
A—Health.
Q—Who enjoys the fruit of labour?
A—One who endeavours.

Q—Who will not be affected by sin?
A—One who always meditates on God.
Q—Which is difficult to perform?
A—The subjugation of the mind.
Q—Who is the god of all the Universe?
A—Śakti in Her aspect as the *Jñānāmbikā* or the Goddess who is the embodiment of knowledge.
Q—Who is the protector of this Universe?
A—The Sun-God, *Sūrya*, as he is the giver of food to all the created beings in this world.
Q—Who is the valiant man?
A—The protector of one who fears.
Q—Who is a protector?
A—The true preceptor.
Q—Who is the teacher of all the worlds?
A—The Lord Almighty.
Q—Whence does knowledge come?
A—From Him, our Lord.
Q—How can salvation be attained?
A—By devotion to Lord Mukunda.
Q—Who is Mukunda?
A—He who helps us to overcome ignorance.
Q—What is ignorance?
A—That which makes us forget the real nature of the Self.
Q—Who is free from sorrow?
A—One who has quelled anger.
Q—Which is real happiness?
A—The inner laugh—not the visible outer one.
Q—Who is the king?
A—He who has none else to equal him.
Q—Who is a dog among men?
A—He who serves the lowly persons.

Q—Who is the conqueror of *māyā* or the great illusion of this Universe?
A—The Lord Parameśvara.
Q—Which is magic?
A—This very world.
Q—Which is dream?
A—The affairs of this world
Q—Which is the ultimate Truth?
A—The Parabrahman or the Supreme Absolute.
Q—Which is destroyed by knowledge?
A—Untruth.
Q—Which is it that cannot be stated as either true or false?
A—Māyā or the *appearance* of this world.
Q—What lesson does māyā teach?
A—Dvaita or the dualistic nature of things.
Q—Which is the real Truth?
A—Advaita or non-dualism.
Q—What feeds the body?
A—Karma or our own past actions.
Q—Who is the giver of food?
A—Age.
Q—Whom should the brahmin worship?
A—The Lord who resides in the *Gāyatrī*, in the Sun-God and in Fire.
Q—Who is our visible God on earth?
A—One's mother.
Q—Which is it that destroys one's good pedigree?
A—Anything likely to cause anger in the minds of good and pious men.
Q—Whose words will come true?
A—The words of one who observes truth and silence and is merciful.

Q—What is the cause of this life?
A—Attachment to the objects of this world.
Q—Who is worthy of being fed?
A—The hungry one.
Q—Who is to be worshipped?
A—The incarnations of the Lord.
Q—Who is the supreme God?
A—He who is both Śaṅkara and Nārāyaṇa.
Q—Which is the fruit of devotion to God?
A—Attainment of heavenly Bliss.
Q—What is liberation?
A—The destruction of ignorance.
Q—Which is the origin and end of all the Vedas?
A—The Praṇava *OM*.

8

ŚAṄKARA ON JÑĀNA-YOGA

V.R. Kalyanasundara Sastri

I

The *Bhagavad-gītā* which is included in the *prasthānatraya* is a *mokṣa-śāstra*. Its central teaching is in agreement with that of the Upaniṣad, and so though it is a smṛti, it is as authoritative as the Upaniṣad which is śruti. Enjoying the status of scripture, the *Bhagavad-gītā* sets forth the nature of the highest end as well as the means thereto. It is necessary to make a few preliminary observations about the means taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā* before considering the nature of the highest end.

I invite your attention to the following verses in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, III, 1-3, which serve as the basis for the observations which I propose to make. Arjuna asks Lord Kṛṣṇa: "If it be thought by Thee that knowledge is superior to action, Oh Janārdana, why dost thou, Oh Keśava, direct me to this terrible action?" He then requests Lord Kṛṣṇa as follows: "Tell me with certainty that *one way* by which I may attain the good." The following is Lord Kṛṣṇa's reply to Arjuna's question: "In this world a twofold path was taught by me at first, Oh sinless one—that of the Sāṅkhyas

by devotion to knowledge, and that of the Yogins by devotion to action." (III, 1–3).

If we pay attention to the verses quoted above in the context of the entire teaching of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the following points which emerge deserve careful consideration. (1) There are two distinct paths, the path of action and the path of knowledge, for the attainment of the highest goal. (2) What is called *bhakti-yoga*, the path of devotion, is only a variation of *karma-yoga*, the path of action. (3) The path of knowledge is superior to the path of action. (4) The two paths of *karma* and *jñāna* cannot be combined at the same time by the same individual. (5) Nevertheless, the two paths are related, the path of action serving as a preliminary discipline to the path of knowledge.

II

The five points mentioned above may be explained briefly for the purpose of bringing out the significance of *jñāna-yoga*, the path of knowledge.

(1) In the introduction to his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* Śaṅkara speaks of the twofold Vedic religion of works and renunciation as maintaining the order of the universe. In another context in the same introduction, Śaṅkara observes: "The *Gītā-śāstra* expounds the twofold religion whose aim is the supreme good."

What is called *pravṛtti-mārga* is *karma-yoga*, and what is known as *nivṛtti-mārga* is *jñāna-yoga*. The former consists in the performance of one's duties as an offering to the Lord without any concern for the fruits thereof, while the latter consists in the renunciation of all action leading to the pursuit of knowledge after having attained the purification of the mind. It is these two paths that Lord Kṛṣṇa refers to in his reply to Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa says that the Sāṅkhyas pursue the path of knowledge and that the Yogins, the path of action. In his commentary on these verses, Śaṅkara points out that "*jñāna-yoga* is suited to the Sāṅkhyas,

who possess a clear knowledge of the Self and the not-Self, who renounce the world from *brahmacarya*, who determine the nature of things in the light of the Vedāntic wisdom, who belong to the highest class of *sannyāsins* known as the *paramahaṁsas*, and whose thoughts ever dwell on Brahman only." The Yogins, on the contrary, are those who are inclined to action.

(2) Ordinarily, we speak of three paths or disciplines, viz. *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*. How is it, then, that Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks of only two paths—*karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*? Why is it that *bhakti-yoga* is not mentioned even though the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is about *bhakti-yoga*? The answer is that *bhakti-yoga* is only a variation of *karma-yoga* and so it is not mentioned as an independent path. Meditation on the universal form of the Lord as endowed with qualities is intelligible only in the case of one who pursues the path of action. Lord Kṛṣṇa says at the end of Chapter XI: "He who does work for me, who looks on me as the Supreme, who is devoted to me, who is free from attachment, who is without hatred for any being, he comes to me, Oh Pāṇḍava." (XI, 55). This declaration of the Lord is certainly not applicable to one who, renouncing every action, seeks to realize the Supreme which is *nirguṇa*. One who is not devoted to the Lord will not do any action as an offering to the Lord. Again, one who pursues the path of knowledge after having attained the purification of the mind will not be engaged in agency-rooted action. It follows, therefore, that a devotee cannot be but a *karma-yogin*. So *bhakti-yoga* can be subsumed under *karma-yoga*. And it is for this reason that it is not mentioned as a separate path.

(3) Arjuna understood that Lord Kṛṣṇa has taught him that the path of knowledge is superior to the path of action.

(4) He also understood that the two paths cannot be combined. If the two paths could be combined, he would not have requested Kṛṣṇa to tell him with certainty that one path by which he may attain the supreme good. The path of knowledge is considered to

be superior in so far as it is the direct means to the realization of the highest good. *Karma-yoga* is a preparatory discipline. It is conducive to the attainment of the highest good, not directly, but only indirectly. And the two paths cannot be combined at the same time by the same individual, because the conditions of the eligibility in the two cases are quite different. One has to practise *karma-yoga* for the purpose of attaining the purification of the mind. This is the preliminary discipline, the ground work for spiritual progress. After attaining the purification of the mind, and after renouncing all karma, one treads the path of knowledge.

(5) It follows from what has been said that the two paths are related: *jñāna-yoga* presupposes *karma-yoga*, and *karma-yoga* must lead on to *jñāna-yoga*. There is a clear statement in the *Bhagavad-gītā* itself stressing the importance of the performance of karma for the purpose of the purification of the mind. "By the body alone, by the mind alone, by the intellect alone, by mere senses also, Yogins perform action without attachment, for the purification of the mind." (V, 2)

It may be noted here that an action which a person performs may be bodily action or mental action. If so, *bhakti* or devotion is undoubtedly *karma* which is mental, as distinguished from bodily action. And every *karma*—whether it is bodily or mental—when performed without attachment to the results is conducive to the attainment of the purification of the mind which is necessary for the pursuit of the path of knowledge through the threefold discipline of guided study (*śravaṇa*), rational reflection (*manana*), and repeated contemplation (*nididhyāsana*).

The sequential relation between the two paths and the attainment of the highest good through knowledge may be stated as follows: From *karma-yoga* there arises the purification of the mind; and from that, mediate knowledge; and therefrom renunciation of all action; and after that, establishment in immediate knowledge which is known as *jīvan-mukti*; and finally release from the body known as *videha-mukti*.

III

The expression "*jñāna-yoga*" means, according to Śaṅkara, that knowledge itself is yoga (*jñānameva yogaḥ*). The word "yoga" means that which unites (*yujyata iti yogaḥ*). Or, the word *yoga* may be explained as that by which union is attained (*yujyate anena iti yogaḥ*). The idea is that knowledge is the means through which Brahman, the supreme reality, the supreme good, is realized. If knowledge is the means to the realization of the supreme reality, it is necessary to know: what is knowledge? And it is equally necessary to know: what is ignorance? To know the distinction between *kṣetrajña* and *kṣetra*, is knowledge; and to know anything else is ignorance. This is clearly stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (XIII, 2) by the Lord as follows: "Do thou also know me as *kṣetrajña* in all *kṣetras*, Oh Bhārata. The knowledge of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña* is deemed by me as the knowledge." *Kṣetrajña* is the Self, and *kṣetra* which means the body is the not-Self. The Lord elucidates the nature of the not-Self, *kṣetra*, by mentioning the elements which are all modifications of matter as well as the internal organ and its different forms and characteristics. He says: "The great elements, *ahaṅkāra*, the intellect, the *avyakta*, the ten senses and one, and the five objects of the senses, desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the aggregate, intelligence, courage—thus the *kṣetra* has been briefly described with its modifications." (XIII, 5–6) What is the Self or *kṣetrajña*? *Kṣetrajña* is explained as follows: "That which knows the body is designated as *kṣetrajña* by those who know them." (XIII, 1)

So according to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, it is necessary to know the distinction between the Self and the not-Self, *kṣetrajña* and *kṣetra*. To know anything else is indeed ignorance; and to be in possession of those qualities which are not conducive to the attainment of the right knowledge, is to be under the sway of ignorance. The *Gītā* says, distinguishing knowledge from ignorance: "This is declared to be knowledge, and what is opposed to it is ignorance."

There is a close link between metaphysics and the ethical discipline. Śaṅkara's insistence on the importance of *jñāna-yoga* as the means to the attainment of Brahman-realization is based on a very simple, but a profound truth with which we are familiar in our day-to-day experience. But it was given to a great mastermind like Śaṅkara to formulate from it a theory of great metaphysical significance taking his stand on the authority of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. In all his numerous writings—whether they be his commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Brahma-sūtra*, or his celebrated minor works—Śaṅkara sticks to this basic position with unswerving conviction. It is a matter of common knowledge that, when we are ignorant about something, we endeavour to remove that ignorance by gaining the true knowledge of that object. Take the familiar case of mistaking a rope which is in front for a snake. Not knowing the real nature of the object in front, a person thinks that it is a snake and begins to run away in fear. Ignorance of the real nature of the object is the cause of his thinking of it as a snake and the subsequent reactions in him like sweating, running away in fear and so on. It is not enough if he is told that the object in front is not a snake. The statement that it is not a snake does not serve to remove his ignorance of the object in front. Perhaps he has known to some extent what it is not. But this does not mean that his ignorance has been removed. His ignorance can be removed only by attaining the knowledge of the object in front, viz. the rope. In short, it is knowledge and knowledge alone that removes ignorance in the same way as light removes darkness.

Śaṅkara's contention that *jñāna-yoga* is the direct means to the attainment of Brahman-realization, which is release, is thus based upon what we experience in our day-to-day life. He has shown that this basic principle, viz. that knowledge is the antidote to all ignorance holds good not only with regard to removing our ordinary ignorance as exemplified in our mistaking a rope for a

snake, but also in overcoming the metaphysical or foundational ignorance from which we suffer.

Man finds himself in the ever-revolving wheel of activity which makes him sick at heart. Not being able to escape from it, he plunges deep into it developing time-consciousness. Everything that he does is according to the time-schedule. Even the relation which he is supposed to have is according to the time-schedule. All the time, he is involved in action whether outward or inward. In the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa: "None verily even for an instant ever remains doing no action; for everyone is driven helplessly to action by the energies born of Nature." (III, 5)

It is desire that is the cause of all action, good or bad. It does not matter whether we do an action enjoined by scripture or prohibited by it. In every case there is the desire to attain some end or other; and it is desire which prompts one to do some action through deed, speach or thought. What, then, is the cause of desire? According to Śaṅkara, desire arises due to the ignorance of the real nature of the Self. Desire relates to the non-Self. When a person attains the knowledge of the Self, when a person realizes that there is only the Self and nothing else separate from it that can be desired, he becomes one without desires (*akāmaḥ*), one who is free from desires (*niṣkāmaḥ*). Since a man who has realized his identity with all has nothing to desire, he cannot perform the rites. Ignorance of the real nature of the non-dual Brahman-Ātman is the root cause of bondage; and this ignorance is, therefore, characterized as foundational or metaphysical ignorance. The attainment of Brahman-knowledge removes ignorance, and the removal of ignorance results in the overcoming of bondage. The causal chain, therefore, proceeds from ignorance to desire, from desire to action and so on.

A complete enumeration of the several links of the causal chain will be as follows: From ignorance arises the defect (*doṣa*) in the form of desire and aversion; from these there arises action (*pravṛtti*) towards the *dharma* and *adharma*; and from action there

results birth (*janma*), and consequent on birth there is misery (*duḥkha*). Liberation consists in the removal of avidyā and its results. The *Nyāya-sūtra*, I, 1, ii, which Śaṅkara quotes, sets forth the causal chain starting from avidyā and ending in *duḥkha* as follows: "*duhkha-janma-pravṛtti-doṣa-mithyā jñānānām uttarottarāpāye tadanantarāpāyāt apavargaḥ.*"

In order to appreciate that *jñāna* is the direct means to the attainment of Brahman-realization, it is necessary to keep in mind the means-end relation. The means that we choose must be suitable and appropriate to the end which we want to attain. It is not the case that through any means any end can be attained. The means to be chosen must be appropriate to the end. The choice of the means is determined by the end. This point must be borne in mind in understanding the significance of *jñāna-yoga* as explained by Śaṅkara.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (IV, 37–38) points out that knowledge is the means by which the fetters of bondage are broken and that there is nothing equal to knowledge. It says: "As a kindled fire reduces fuel to ashes, Oh Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes. Verily, there exists here no purifier equal to wisdom. He who has perfected by yoga finds it in time in himself by himself."

It is the same idea that is brought out in the Upaniṣad. The *Chāndogya* (VII, 1, ii) declares: "The knower of the Self goes beyond grief." The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II, 1, i,) says: "The knower of Brahman attains the highest." That knowledge is the only means to realize Brahman and that there is no other means for realizing it, is clearly stated in a text of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (III, 8): "I know the Supreme person of sunlike colour, beyond the darkness. Only by knowing him does one pass over death. There is no other path for going there." In the introduction to his commentary on the *Gītā*, Śaṅkara observes that "the aim of this famous *Gītā-śāstra* is briefly the supreme good, the complete

cessation of bondage and of its cause. This results from a state of devotion to the knowledge of the Self preceded by a renunciation of all works." The illusory serpent cannot be destroyed by means of a stick. It can be destroyed only by knowing the truth that the object in front is only a rope. The fear caused by the illusory serpent can be removed, not by medicine, not by *mantra*; it can be removed only by the knowledge of the object in front. In the same way, one can be cured of the bite of the serpent of *ajñāna* only by the knowledge of Brahman, and not by the *Vedas*, not by the *śāstras*, not by the *mantras*, and not even by herbs.

What is the means by which Brahman-knowledge can be obtained? This question is answered in the *Bhagavad-gītā* in XIII, 7–11. The possession of the following virtues is conducive to the attainment of Brahman-knowledge: (1) humility, (2) modesty, (3) non-violence, (4) patience, (5) uprightness, (6) service to the teacher, (7) purity, (8) steadfastness, (9) self-control, (10) dispassion, (11) absence of egoism, (12) perception of evil in birth, death, old-age, sickness and pain, (13) unattachment, (14) absence of attachment for son, wife, etc. (15) equanimity, (16) devotion to God, (17) resort to solitude (18) avoiding the company of the unenlightened, (19) constancy in self-knowledge, and (20) contemplation on *mokṣa*, which is the end to be attained by knowledge.

The fourfold condition of eligibility formulated by Śaṅkara for the study of the Upaniṣads sums up all these twenty virtues listed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. In the course of his commentary, Śaṅkara remarks that the full development of virtues such as humility leads to knowledge.

While Śaṅkara fully recognizes the importance of *karma-yoga* in its own way, he is emphatic that the attainment of liberation which is the highest good falls directly within the scope of *jñāna-yoga* alone, and that nothing can vouchsafe for us this goal excepting the immediate and direct knowledge of Brahman-Ātman.

IV

The Mīmāṁsā view that liberation can be attained by means of karma alone, or by means of the combination of karma and *jñāna* is not acceptable.

Let us first consider why liberation cannot be attained by means of karma. Liberation consists in realizing the true nature of the Self as the eternal non-dual reality. It is a matter of common knowledge that anything which is produced by action is impermanent (*anitya*). If liberation were the result of karma, then it will be impermanent, and such a state is not really desirable. As Sureśvara puts it: "Since release is unalterable, eternal, karma is not a means to that. If it were the result of karma, like heaven etc., it will not be eternal:" (*Taittirīya-vārtika*, I, 24).

There is also another reason for rejecting this view. Karma involves duality in the form of means and end, doer and deed. The perception of duality is ignorance. Further, it is only a person who has desire performs karma. Since he is ignorant of the non-dual Self, he thinks that there are objects other than the Self which he should strive for. In short, karma presupposes desire, involves duality, and is therefore a product of avidyā. If so, how can it destroy avidyā, the root cause of bondage and thereby bring about liberation?

The futility of karma in respect of attaining release can be shown in another way. Whenever we do any action, it is for the sake of production (*utpatti*), or purification (*saṁskāra*), or transformation (*vikāra*), or attainment (*āpti*). That is, karma can produce, or perform, or transform, or bring within reach something. Apart from these four, a fifth use of karma cannot be thought of. From the point of any of these four uses, karma is of no use for attaining liberation. Remaining in one's own true form is release; that is, realizing the true nature of the Self which is ever-existent is release. So release is not something to be produced, for it is eternal (*nityatvāt*). It is not something to be purified, for

it is bereft of all qualities and impurities (*nirguṇatvāt, nirdoṣatvāt ca*). There is also another reason here. It cannot be purified since it is not a means (*asādhana-dravyātmakatvāt*). Only a thing that serves as a means can be purified as a sacrificial vessel or clarified butter by sprinkling water and so on. It is not something to be transformed, for it is immutable (*kūṭasthatvāt*). It is not something to be attained, for it is already existent as the Self of everyone. Attainment is possible only with regard to something which is different from us, which is outside us, which is not within our reach. Since liberation consists in being identical with the Self, which is non-dual, there is no question of attainment in this sense.

Reference has already been made to the problem of the combination of karma and knowledge. From the way in which Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to tell him the one path by means of which he can attain the highest goal, it is obvious that the combination of karma and knowledge at the same time has to be ruled out. Karma and knowledge are opposed to each other like light and darkness. Śaṅkara says that the antithesis between knowledge and karma is irremovable like a mountain. From the very distinction that is made between the two paths it is unmistakably clear that the two are quite different and that they cannot be combined at the same time. There is a special excellence about the path of knowledge; and so the *jñānī*, the enlightened man, is rated very high, when compared with other devotees. Reference is made to four kinds of devotees who worship the supreme God—the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and the wise man (VII, 16). Of these four kinds of virtuous men, the Lord says (VII, 17) that the wise man is the best, even though all the other three kinds of men are great. The enlightened man is the best of the whole lot, is excessively dear to the Supreme, because he is the very Self; by his knowledge, he remains as the Self, and not as different from the Self. (VII, 18).

Release or perfection is not something to be attained in a distant future in some other life. It is not a prophecy of the future, making

its attainment doubtful. On the contrary, it is what can be achieved here and now, provided a spiritual aspirant makes himself eligible for that by fulfilling the requirements therefor and pursues the path of knowledge. In other words, *jñāna* gives us *dṛṣṭa-phala*, a perceptible result now itself. This is one noteworthy feature which brings out the great excellence of *jñāna-yoga*. *Jñāna-yoga* leads to perfection, which is otherwise called release or mokṣa. For one who has attained this goal, viz. perfection, here and now, there is nothing else to be done; for he has realized Brahman-Ātman; he remains as Brahman-Ātman which is immutable, and which is, therefore, free from action. Such a one is spoken of as a man of wisdom (*dhīraḥ*), one who has given up all actions (*sarva-ārambha-parityāgī*), one who has transcended the three *guṇas* (*guṇātītaḥ*), one who is steady in knowledge (*sthitaprajñaḥ*). For such a person who rejoices in the Self, who is satisfied with the Self, who is content in the self alone, there is nothing to be done (III, 17). Such a person who is a *jīvan-mukta*, who is a personality without frontiers, is, by his mere presence in society, a solace to the suffering mankind, a beacon light for guiding others in darkness; he is, to use a significant expression of T.S. Eliot, "the still point of the turning world". In himself he is "the still point"; and we who are the sons of Martha and who constitute the turning world, go around him. The concept of *jīvan-mukti* which forms an integral part of the theory of *jñāna-yoga* is another noteworthy feature of *jñāna-yoga*.

9

VEDĀNTA IN TEN VERSES*
Daśaślokī of Śaṅkara

T.M.P. Mahadevan and N. Veezhinathan

[3]

न माता पिता वा न देवा न लोका
न वेदा न यज्ञा न तीर्थं ब्रुवन्ति ।
सुषुप्तौ निरस्तातिशून्यात्मकत्वात्
तदेकोऽवशिष्टः शिवः केवलोऽहम् ॥

Neither mother, nor father, nor the Gods, nor the worlds, nor the Vedas, nor the sacrifices, nor place of pilgrimage are there, they say, in sleep. Because (in sleep) there is not absolute void either, that one which remains (after the sublation of all else)—that auspicious absolute (Self) I am.

It was stated in the second verse that the notions such as 'I am a Brahmin', etc. are born out of mutual superimposition of the Self on the one hand, and the senses and the body on the other; and as such they are not real, and that the Self is pure consciousness without any attribute. In order to emphasize this point, Śaṅkara says in the present verse that in the state of deep-sleep

* Continued from the previous number.

the senses and the body merge in their cause, avidyā, and so there is no mutual superimposition of the Self on the one hand and the senses and the body on the other. Śaṅkara further points out that there is the absence of notions such as 'I' and 'mine'. Consequently we do not have any experience involving such usages as 'I am a Brahmin', 'my father', 'my mother', etc.

The Upaniṣadic text—'There a father ceases to be a father, a mother ceases to be a mother, the heaven and other worlds cease to be heaven and other worlds, the Gods cease to be the Gods, the scriptures cease to be scriptures', etc. (*BU*, 4.3.32), which refers to the state of deep-sleep affirms the absence of notions such as 'my father', etc.

The word '*Devāh*' in the text means 'Indra and other Gods who are to be propitiated'. The word '*lokāh*' means the heaven and other worlds which are the fruits of the worship of the Gods. The word '*Vedāh*' means the Vedic texts which instruct the means to heaven and other desired ends, and indicate the nature of evil that leads to unwelcome results in the next world, and also the Upaniṣadic texts which teach the nature of Brahman. The word '*Yajñāh*' means sacrifices like *jyotiṣṭoma* which are the means to heaven and other desired ends. The word '*tīrtha*' means sacred places like 'Kurukṣetra', which are the centres for the performance of sacrifices.

The notions such as 'my father', 'my mother', etc. are based on the notions of 'I' and 'mine' which are the outcome of the mutual superimposition of the Self on one side and the body and the senses on the other. This mutual superimposition ceases to exist provisionally at the time of deep-sleep and permanently after the rise of the intuitive knowledge of the true nature of Brahman. Hence there does not arise the notions of 'I' and 'mine', and consequently there arise no experiences such as 'my father', 'my mother', etc. The Self, therefore, is devoid of any attribute; and it remains as pure consciousness.

Now, it may be objected that if all the distinctions such as father, mother, etc. are denied in deep-sleep state, then there would result only a void. To this Śrī Śaṅkara replies that the nature of being complete void is denied in the case of deep-sleep state (*nirastātiśūnyātmakatvāt*). If the deep-sleep state were to result in the nature of void, then the fact that one gets up again from the deep-sleep state cannot be accounted for. There are śruti texts like the following which point out that the Self which is pure consciousness is not reduced to a void in the deep-sleep state: 'Imperishable, verily, is this soul and of indestructible nature' (*BU*, 4.5.14).

There is another interpretation of the said reason '*nirastāti-śūnyātmakatvāt. Nirastam*—that which is beyond hunger, etc. *atiśūnya*—the secondless. These epithets refer to Brahman. In the deep-sleep state, the Self attains the nature of Brahman. And the following śruti text refers to the same—'When a person here sleeps, as it is called, then, my dear, he has reached Being'. (*CU*, 6.8.1). So the Self is not reduced to a void in the deep-sleep state. Thus the Self is devoid of any attribute. It is of the nature of supreme bliss and consciousness, and it is absolute.

[4]

न साङ्ख्यं न शैवं न तत्पाञ्चरात्रं
न जैनं न मीमांसकादेर्मतं वा ।
विशिष्टानुभूत्या विशुद्धात्मकत्वात्
तदेकोऽवशिष्टः शिवः केवलोऽहम् ॥

Neither the Sāṅkhya, nor the Śaiva, nor the Pāñcarātra, nor the Jaina, nor the Mīmāṁsā, etc. (are valid doctrines); for, by unique experience (it is shown that) the Self is extremely pure. That one which remains (after the sublation of all else)—that auspicious absolute (Self) I am.

In the first three verses, the meaning of the term 'thou' in the 'major' text—'that thou art' was explained. The sense of the term 'that' is explained in this and the following two verses.

The term 'that' refers to Brahman—the ground of the universe. The Sāṅkhya system holds that the universe is derived from a single substance which is assumed to be complex, all-pervasive and insentient, and prakṛti or pradhāna is the name which it gives to that principle.

This view is wrong. The insentient principle, *pradhāna*, cannot be the cause of the universe for the following reasons:

(a) The śruti text—'It bethought itself, would that I were many, let me procreate myself' (*CU*, 6.2.3) says that creation was preceded by reflection on the part of the cause of the universe. And *pradhāna* accepted by the Sāṅkhyas cannot have any reflection as it is said to be insentient.

(b) The śruti text, 'Having entered these elements with this living Self, let me reveal names and forms' (*CU*, 6.3.2), affirms the identity between the individual soul and the source of the universe. As the individual soul is the sentient being, the source of the universe with which its identity is affirmed should also be sentient. On this ground also, an insentient entity, *pradhāna*, cannot be the source of the universe.

(c) The śruti text, 'Through knowing which does all this world become known' (*MuP*, 1.1.3), affirms that by knowing the material cause of the universe everything else in the universe becomes known. Now, if *pradhāna* is held to be the source of the universe, then by knowing it, it is not possible to have the knowledge of the individual souls as the latter are not the manifestations of *pradhāna*. So the statement that, by knowing the material cause, everything becomes known would become contradicted. On this ground also the insentient *pradhāna* cannot be the source of the universe.

(d) The śruti text, 'This whole world has that as its soul; That is Reality; That is Ātman; That thou art' (*CU*, 6.8.6), states that

the individual soul of which we are conscious is not in any way different from Brahman from which this universe has originated. And another text, 'From this soul, space arose', etc. (*TU*, 2.1.1) states that the source of the universe is Brahman. Moreover, if something insentient were the cause of the universe, then the orderly creation that we find in the universe cannot be explained. On these grounds, the insentient *pradhāna* accepted by the Sāṅkhyas is not the source of the universe. Hence, Śrī Śaṅkara says—'*na Sāṅkhyam*'. The Sāṅkhya view regarding the source of the universe does not stand to reason.

Śrī Śaṅkara next proceeds to refute the views of Pāśupatas, Jainas and Pāñcarātrikas regarding the source of the universe.

The followers of the Pāśupata system hold that Paśupati is the source of the universe. He is sentient; yet he is different from jīva which is also conscious. And Paśupati is to be worshipped by it. This view is wrong as it is contrary to the import of the major text, 'That thou art,' that the individual soul is identical with Brahman, the source of the universe.

The followers of the Pāñcarātra school hold that Vāsudeva is the supreme Lord and He is the source of the universe; jīva is produced from the Lord and being an effect, it is not completely non-different from its cause, Lord Vāsudeva. This view also is wrong as it is against the teaching of the Upaniṣadic text (*KU*, 2.18) which declares that the individual soul is eternal.

The adherents of the Jaina system hold that the source of the universe, though eternal, transforms itself in the form of the individual souls and the universe. It is omniscient and it is different from and at once identical with jīvas and the universe. [vide *Siddhāntabindu*, p. 321, Kāśī Sanskrit Series Edition.] This view is stultified by the import of the Upaniṣadic text that Brahman which is the source of the universe is immutable. (*BU*, 3.8.8.)

Śrī Śaṅkara next refutes the view of the Mīmāṁsākas. They hold that the vedic texts in their entirety have their import in action and hence only those texts which directly signify action

are authoritative and not others. The Upaniṣadic texts, if they should point to Brahman, could convey Brahman only as subordinate to ritualistic injunction by revealing the nature of the agent in the ritualistic act and of the deity invoked in the ritual. Brahman, therefore, is conveyed by the Upaniṣadic texts only as associated with action and not as absolute pure consciousness.

This view is wrong because the Upaniṣadic passages are self-valid in that the knowledge of Brahman arising from them removes avidyā and thereby the jīva realizes its identity with Brahman which is liberation, the supreme human end. And so the Upaniṣadic passages convey Brahman independently of action. Thus the view of the Mīmāṁsākas that the Upaniṣadic passages could convey Brahman as associated with action only stands discredited.

By the word '*ādi*' in the text we should understand that the view of the Naiyāyikas also regarding the source of the universe is not reasonable. The Naiyāyikas hold that God, the source of the universe, is different from the individual soul and has knowledge as His attribute. Their view is unauthoritative owing to its being opposed to the import of the Vedic texts—'That thou art', 'Brahman is truth, knowledge and infinitude', that the individual soul is identical with Brahman and that Brahman is of the nature of consciousness.

The one reason which may be adduced to declare that all the points of view as regards the nature of the source of the universe are wrong is that the source is *viśuddhātmaka*, absolute consciousness. And that the source of the universe is absolute consciousness is proved on the basis of the intuitive experience of Brahman of such nature—the experience which arises from the major texts like—'That thou art'.

Hence Brahman, the source of the universe, is absolute, and of the nature of bliss. It has already been shown in the first three verses that the Self (jīva) also is absolute and of the nature of bliss. Hence, the two are not different.

[5]

न चोर्ध्वं न चाधो न चान्तर्न बाह्यं
न मध्यं न तिर्यङ् न पूर्वापरा दिक् ।
वियद्व्यापकत्वादखण्डैकरूपः
तदेकोऽवशिष्टः शिवः केवलोऽहम् ॥

Neither above, nor below, nor inside, nor outside, nor in the middle, nor athwart, nor in the eastern nor in the western direction (am I). Since I am all-pervading like ether, I am impartite by nature. That one which remains (after the sublation of all else)—that auspicious absolute (Self) I am.

In the fourth verse it was stated that Brahman, the source of the universe, is unconditioned absolute consciousness. Now, it may be objected on the basis of some śruti texts that Brahman is not absolute. The śruti text, 'More minute than the minute' (*KU*, 2.20), declares that Brahman is atomic in size. Brahman, therefore, is not absolute.

Śrī Śaṅkara answers this objection by pointing out that the śruti texts like 'This Brahman is without an earlier and without a later, without an inside and without an outside' (*BU*, 2.5.19) prove the absolute nature of Brahman. He says: Brahman is neither above, nor below, neither inside, nor outside, neither in the middle, nor athwart. It is not in the eastern or western direction. The reason is that it is absolute by being *viyadvyāpaka*. The word *viyad-vyāpaka* may be taken to mean *viyadvad-vyāpaka*, pervasive like ether, on the basis of the śruti text, '(Brahman) is all-pervading and eternal like ether'. Or, the word may be taken to mean, '*viyato vyāpaka*', 'more pervasive than ether', on the basis of the śruti text—'Brahman is greater than the ether' (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 10.6.3.2).

It is declared on the basis of the śruti text, 'more minute than the minute' (*KU*, 2.20), that Brahman is atomic in size. This text is intended to point out the subtle nature of Brahman which is absolute.

[6]

न शुक्लं न कृष्णं न रक्तं न पीतं
न कुब्जं न पीनं न ह्रस्वं न दीर्घम् ।
अरूपं तथा ज्योतिराकारकत्वात्
तदेकोऽवशिष्टः शिवः केवलोऽहम् ॥

Neither white, nor black, nor red, nor yellow, neither small, nor large, neither short, nor long (am I); likewise (I am) without form; for I am of the nature of light. That one which remains (after the sublation of all else)—that auspicious absolute (Self) I am.

An objection is raised: Brahman is held to be the material cause of the universe which is of the form of misery. As the effect is always identical with the cause, it would follow that Brahman which is the cause must be of the same nature as the universe which is the effect and which is of the form of misery. Brahman, therefore, would be of the nature of misery. Further, jīva cannot attain the supreme human end by realizing its identity with Brahman, as the latter is of the nature of misery.

This objection is answered thus: Brahman is self-luminous and is of the nature of supreme bliss. It is the substrate of the appearance of the universe, and when viewed thus, it is, by courtesy, spoken of as the material cause of the universe. Brahman is the substrate; and the universe is superimposed on it. There is no real relation, but only a superimposed relation between the substrate and the superimposed. The universe and the attributes present in it do not in any way affect the substrate, Brahman. Hence the objection that, since Brahman is identical with the universe, it must be of the nature of misery is pointless.

The word '*kubja*' in the text means 'small' and '*pīna*' means 'large'. The word '*hrasva*' means 'short' and the word '*dīrgha*' means 'long'.

A substance has any one of the sizes mentioned here. As all these sizes are rejected in the case of Brahman, the latter is not a substance. The word '*arūpa*' means that Brahman is not an object of cognition, because it is of the nature of self-luminous consciousness (*jyotirākārakatvāt*). If Brahman were an object of cognition, then it would be insentient like a pot. Brahman, therefore, is not an object of cognition. Brahman, in truth, does not belong to any of the categories, namely, substance, quality, action, etc. Hence, Brahman is pure self-luminous consciousness, and it is free from all the defects or excellences present in the universe. This view is in consonance with the import of the śruti texts, 'It is not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, not glowing' (*BU*, 5.8.8), and 'It is free from sound, touch, form, destruction, taste, etc.' (*KU*, 5.5).

10

ADVAITA AS THE FOUNDATION OF MORALITY

Srinivasa Rao*

Morality may be defined as the convention of prescribing a standard or norm in any society to judge the behaviour of its members towards one another as being either good or bad, right or wrong. Such judging will be possible only if the members of that society are indeed really free to choose to act in the ways they do in fact act. Moral blame or praise can be attached only to voluntary actions of individuals. That is why, if a person is forced to kill another in self-defence, such killing is not blamed as morally wrong. It is also the reason why when one animal kills another for food, such killing is also not considered as falling within the purview of morals. No living creature is supposed to possess the kind of will normally found in all humans and therefore the actions of such living creatures are not regarded as voluntary in the moral sense, i.e., done as a result of the conscious exercise of the will power. It is universally admitted in all societies that

* Formerly, Professor and Head, Department of Philosophy, Bangalore University, Bangalore.

the freedom of the human will is a precondition for applying moral codes.

The existence of more than one individual, i.e., the existence of a group of several individuals is also a prerequisite for any framing and implementation of any kind of moral code. Moral codes hold only in a world of plurality. A Robinson Crusoe living on an isolated island is not required to follow any moral code, because his actions do not harm the interests of other persons for the simple reason that there are no "other persons" on that island. If morality thus requires numerical plurality of individuals, there may arise a valid-looking objection as to how morality is a relevant issue in Advaita which refuses to grant legitimacy to plurality. This objection is only "valid-looking" and not actually valid, because Advaita does indeed concede the legitimacy of plurality at the empirical level and refuses to admit plurality only at the highest level. Therefore there is a level at which Advaita can quite legitimately discuss moral issues just like any other system. Though it may seem strange to many, Advaita is in fact capable of providing the strongest, the most natural and the most reasonable foundation for morality. This is what is going to be explained in the rest of this paper.

Before pointing out why Advaita alone should be regarded as the soundest, the most natural and the most reasonable foundation for morality, it is necessary to look at all other major alternative foundations offered for morality and also to take note of their weaknesses in comparison to the strengths of Advaita. If these alternative foundations are found to possess certain weaknesses which can be shown to be capable of being eliminated by adopting Advaita as the new foundation, then we will have prepared the ground for adopting Advaita as *the* foundation for morality. Therefore, we begin with an examination of some of the most prominent and widely accepted alternative foundations for morality.

One of the most popular and most widely spread foundations for morality accepted all over the world is God and/or His command or word. Since almost all religions are centred around the concept of God, the above foundation is in fact a religious foundation. The connection between religion and morality is very ancient, and all Semitic religions serve as the foundations for moral codes. The Ten Commandments which are said to have been received by Moses from God on Mount Sinai serve as the foundations of both the Jewish and the Christian moral codes. The revelations received from Allah by Prophet Mohammed together with the account of the Prophet's own precepts and conduct serve as the foundations of Islamic morality. A considerably large section of the total human population consists of Christians, Muslims and Jews. Even in India, there are very many theistic schools and sects. Thus, the number of people who invoke God's support in some form or other for the moral codes they are willing to accept, is indeed substantially large.

There are several problems associated with moral codes embedded in some of the religions based on a belief in God, i.e., the theistic moral codes. The most serious problem is that the moral codes, though rooted in God, are not either necessarily or consistently practised all over the God-believing world. If we make a micro-study of various sects even among the followers of the same religion, it is not difficult to come across contrary opinions concerning the morality of the very same action. The cases of actions regarded as moral by the practitioners of one religion being considered thoroughly immoral by the practitioners of another religion are also easy to find. Even within the community of the practitioners of the same religion, the opinions on moral matters many times differ very considerably among its ultra-orthodox, orthodox and liberal sections. Sometimes these sections maintain completely contrary opinions on the same moral issues. The differences of opinion on some moral issues between the practitioners of different theistic religions also very much exist.

Thus, there is no unity among various theistic religions on the matter of what exactly constitutes unquestionable moral behaviour in the eyes of God.

It is common knowledge that immoral behaviour is rather more common in the world than moral behaviour. In fact, among the very large number of people who openly exhibit their devotion to various kinds of Gods all over the world, we can readily spot quite a few who are most definitely corrupt and immoral. In most cases, it may also be equally readily observed that greater the degree of moral corruption, greater too happens to be the degree of devotion. Therefore, the curious objection arises: why is it that in this God-created and God-controlled world, immoral behaviour is so much more prevalent and common in comparison to moral behaviour?

In fact, this question has been asked and answered quite long ago in many of the theistic traditions. One typical answer is that God has given a free will to man, and all corruption, immorality and sin are due to the misuse of will power on the part of men, for which God is not to be held responsible. It is also argued by some theists and theologians that, had God tried to control the wills of men in such a way that they all did only good things, he would have effectively made men less free beings insofar as they all lacked any capacity to do any evil. Man is truly free only when he can very well choose to do evil, but will eschew that temptation and do only good. But, in that case, God's role gets limited to creating humans with a will that is truly free to do good or evil, and also giving them a code of good conduct like the Ten Commandments as, for example, Christianity does. Is this a proper solution to the problem of morality or, rather, to the problem of immorality? If doing good or evil is left entirely to the willing choice of men, then why at all this choice is to be interfered with by the advice of God in the form of the Ten Commandments? After all, men do possess the power of reason that enables them to see the difference between good and evil and also foresee the

consequences of their choosing between good and evil actions. Thus, it turns out that any moral code emanating from God is either unnecessary or ineffective. Being endowed with the power of reason, man alone can decide the difference between good and evil and choose between them at will. God is not at all logically required in all this.

Some of the theists of India who accept the doctrine of *karma* argue in a slightly different way. The good or evil in the world and its quantum are directly due to the individual and collective actions (*karma*) of human beings, and God merely presides over the operations of the law of *karma* (*karmādhyakṣa*). In this kind of a scheme, the laws of morality can in no significant way be linked to God. Human beings themselves are perfectly capable of acting morally or immorally, and which way they are going to act depends on the kind of *karma* that is operating at that time together with the impressions (*saṁskāra*) associated with them. All actions lead to the formation of tendencies (*saṁskāra*) that have the potential to determine the kind of good or bad actions one may perform. These tendencies are under the control of the individual and therefore, the individual is really the master of all actions, good and bad. God is in no way responsible for the moral or immoral actions of humans, and there is no link between God and the moral codes as in Christian theism. Man is not entirely a very passive being totally led by his nose by his past deeds. He has considerable freedom of, and control over, his own actions. Therefore he is very much subject to moral codes. Man's morality is entirely determined by the codes of *dharma* and even in the systems where a God is admitted in India, *dharma* is not subject to any regulation by God. In fact, there is even this curious fact about India where the systems that give the highest place to *dharma* like Buddhism, Jainism and Pūrva Mīmāṁsā have no place at all for a God in their world-view.

Though seeking the foundation of moral codes in *dharma* is far more satisfactory than seeking it in forms of theism, the

autonomy and the universality of *dharma* pose some difficult problems. However sharp a distinction may be made between *dharma* and *adharma* and however greatly the dhārmic virtues like charity, kindness, compassion etc., may be praised as morally desirable qualities, the basic question "Why at all be moral?" still remains not very satisfactorily answered. Even in the non-theistic religions like Buddhism and Jainism in which the following of the moral code (*dharma*) is primary, there is no fully satisfying answer to the question "Why be moral?" because the moral code is exhorted on eschatalogical grounds (like, if you do not follow *dharma*, there is no *mokṣa* for you) and such ground has no appeal to anyone who rejects it as extravagant or empirically unverifiable. Also, since both Buddhism and Jainism accept difference as a category, they both cannot give a fully satisfactory answer to the question: "why one person who is different from all the others, is morally obligated to treat all others with love, kindness and compassion?" In other words, the original basic question "Why be moral?" now turns into another basic question: "Why be loving, kind and compassionate?" Neither Buddhism nor Jainism seem to offer a theoretical framework within which this question can be answered even fairly reasonably.

Returning to the question of the soundness of theistic moral systems, we may see that yet entirely new kinds of problems arise for the theists seeking to base moral codes on God, when the atheists refuse to concede the very existence of God. The existence of God has of course been repeatedly questioned all over the world on what appear to be very reasonable grounds and, therefore, such actual questioning and even the very possibility of such questioning makes it impossible to provide in God any firm and absolutely secure foundation for morality.

In conscious opposition to basing morality on God, some philosophers have provided an alternative foundation for morality in a system of thought known as "humanism." In the west, almost all those who reject the religious and moral authority of the Church

are found to be the major supporters of humanism. Humanism rejects all supernatural entities like God, etc., and also rejects materialism which chooses to treat man just like any other material object in the universe. Therefore, it summarily refuses to accept the idea of moral codes derived from God. With such stout refusal, it is left with no alternative but to locate the source of moral codes in man himself. This is accomplished in humanism by not only marking off human beings from all other beings and things in our universe but also by conferring some very special and unique status on them. Thus the humanists seek the foundation for morality in this very special status given by them to man. It is needless to say that such foundations of morality are secure only as long as the special status of man remains unquestioned.

Humanism is a fairly wide-spread world-view in the west; it has been upheld over a long period of time by very many eminent thinkers and has also thrown up a large number of individuals who remain and have remained moral without subscribing to any belief in any religion, Church or God. Thus, in very practical terms, humanism seems to have succeeded reasonably well in providing a non-theistic, non-religious basis for morality. Even so, it still rests on a somewhat uneasy foundation in man himself, because the special status conferred on man by humanism may be questioned. If man is indeed a being of such a special nature as to serve as the fountainhead of moral behaviour, all human beings should naturally exhibit a moral nature and behave morally all through. But this is not the case. There is simply too much of immoral behaviour seen among men to lend credence to the humanist credo that all men are specially endowed with moral inclinations. In other words, humanism cannot satisfactorily account for the fact of so many human beings ending up immoral in their behaviour, despite being endowed with some very special qualities that mark them off from all other creatures in the universe, and which are supposed to account for their unique moral

nature. Therefore, the humanistic foundations of morality are also as insecure as the theistic foundations.

There can be other "humanist-like" foundations offered for morality on the ground that as human beings we are all similar, even if not special, and therefore we all must treat one another in the same way, i.e., the just and moral way. The virtue of such a view consists in not making any appeal to any idea of human beings as special kind of beings as in humanism. What is taken into consideration is just the fact of all human beings belonging to the same type, class or category. Such a view also encounters problems. On the face of it, and based purely on the most typical of our everyday experiences, this alleged similarity seems to be viewed by human beings themselves as anything but superficial. It is most natural for any human being to look upon himself as different from others. The basis for such thinking is that, even as human beings, each one of us is considerably different from every other. As a rule, we all always emphasise and regard as important our differences from all others. Differences in treatment among different individuals in society are invariably rooted in the differences among them in matters of birth, wealth, faith, race, social status, power, intelligence, beauty and hundreds of similar qualities. We are all aware of such differences in treatment in our society, and while some resent and protest against it, most others accept it without any questioning or debate. Also, in this view, there is no answer to the question: if human beings are all really similar—for which even convincing scientific proof is available—why is it that they all so very uniformly perceive, recognise, emphasise and celebrate just their mutual differences and never their overwhelming similarity? The non-humanists will have no answer to this very important question within the strictly empirical framework within which they uphold the above thesis of human similarity.

In fact, the idea that all humans are equal has been upheld and emphasised so many times and by so many saints in different

parts of India that such repetitive emphasis can be properly understood only in the context of actually existing, serious inequalities. If real inequality did not exist in actual human thinking and practice, it is very difficult to make sense of the saints' serious and consistent wars against it. It is also very pertinent to ask the question why these wars against inequalities always had limited success, and even these limited successes were very hard to retain consistently. The only answer that seems right is that humans have never seriously believed in equality, because they have always been guided by their perceptions of ever-increasing differences and they have not, for even a moment, stopped to consider whether their perceptions are not mistaken. All human action everywhere is normally rooted in the thinking that each human being is different from another. Such thinking makes it hard to accept that all humans may in fact be equal and non-different.

Precisely because of this persisting fact of human behaviour, the saints have tried to instil the belief in the populace that there is a non-difference lying beneath all the immediately perceived differences. This non-difference is not either purely physical or empirical. It is a fact seen not physically but metaphysically. But it is perfectly possible to deny such metaphysical non-difference as some dualists insist on doing, like the followers of Madhva. There may also be other kinds of philosophers like the humanists or humanist-like thinkers to whom attention has been drawn a little earlier, who may be averse to admitting anything metaphysical into our world-views. From such points of view it is perfectly possible to argue that the so-called non-difference all the saints have spoken of is merely metaphorical and that it is invoked with the sole practical intent of making men more compassionate and considerate towards one another. Since such a possibility cannot be ruled out *ab initio*, we have to proceed on the assumption that there may be no underlying non-difference at all and try to look for a proper foundation for morality on the basis of perceived

differences alone. We may, therefore, seriously deny all non-difference and affirm only the differences. It is worth examining what kind of a foundation for morality will be emerging out of such an affirmation of differences alone.

The first immediate consequence of affirming the differences will be that any demand for the equal treatment of all human beings (which is essentially a moral demand) becomes unjustifiable or, at least, extremely hard to justify. The legitimacy of the demand for treating all human beings equally can be questioned on the ground that all people are not in fact equal to one another and therefore they are not entitled, on this ground, to be treated equally. Only equals are entitled to equal treatment and not unequals. The justification for treating the equals equally is that they are all equal to one another. Likewise, the justification for treating the unequals unequally is that they are not equal to those who deserve equal treatment on account of their equality. Thus, the first very serious major consequence of upholding the absolute reality of differences in the modern world is that it seriously clashes with the universally accepted and endorsed institution of democracy and its serious practice.

Besides, the attitude of upholding the absolute reality of differences and the moral demand for the equal treatment of all men mutually negate each other. The demand for equal treatment cannot be legitimised unless the absoluteness of differences is negated, and the absoluteness of differences cannot be justified unless the legitimacy of equal treatment is negated. That is because, if the equal treatment of unequals becomes permissible at all, it is only on the basis of the supposition that perceived differences are to be disregarded, which means that those perceived differences are not absolute and final. On the other hand, if the differences among men are indeed absolute and final, this very finality of the differences completely negates the need for according any kind of non-differential treatment to them. Therefore, the acceptance of the finality of differences makes it

impossible to accept not only the need for treating all men equally, but also any system or institution like democracy which is essentially based on the concept of the fundamental equality of all its citizens.

Every democracy professes the principle of equality of all its citizens, but in actual practice most democracies willingly accommodate a high degree of inequality. This is more a defect in the actual practice of democracy than in its very conception itself. Consequently, the professed or promised equality in democracies turns out to be something abstract, ideal and almost mythical. It is almost never real. There are very many people in all democratic countries who are, in their hearts, against treating equally all the men, women or children, the able and the disabled, the rich and the poor, the socially backward and disadvantaged and their opposite number, the immigrants and locals, the people of one's own religion and those of other religions and so on. These people who refuse equality to others of a different kind are, in many cases, very well educated and also very much better off in life than most of us.

Unequal and unfair treatment extends much beyond the strict confines of human society. It is well known that except for household pets, animals also do not receive any kind of fair treatment at the hands of humans. It is only just a few years ago that the west came to recognise that animals too are conscious beings, that they too have a significant level of intelligence and also exhibit emotions like us. But this was a well-recognised fact in India long ago as can be seen through Śaṅkara's statement in his famous *adhyāsa-bhāṣya* on the *Brahma-sūtra*s that not only transactions involving objects as well as the means of cognition of objects (*pramāṇa-premeya vyavahāra*) are common to both men and animals, but also that animals run away from a person approaching them with a stick in hand, while they themselves readily approach a person holding some grass or delicacy in his hand. The duties of humans towards animals was also a well

established tenet in classical India. Emperor Ashoka had established separate hospitals for animals. But, the talk of "animal rights" in the west is a very recent phenomenon. Animals have always been subjected to unfair treatment by humans, because they are so manifestly different from the human species. Descartes' assertion that animals, birds and insects had no soul came in very handy in the west for tolerating and encouraging the abhorrent exploitation of animal species.

In view of such very common unfair treatment by men of other men as well as of animals, it can be surmised that it is very normal or natural on the part of a human being to treat very differently any other being that happens to be different from himself. The different ways in which we behave with the governor of a state and an ordinary citizen of that state are rooted in the differences between governors and ordinary citizens. The differential treatment we mete out to dogs is rooted in the fact that some are street dogs and others are pet dogs. In fact, all our empirical transactions (*vyavahāra*) are rooted only in difference. Not only is it so, but unfortunately we all seem to highly value, and also celebrate, our differences. Those who are intelligent, beautiful or well off are usually happy about being so, but how many among them are also unhappy about the fact that so many others in the world are *not* as intelligent, as beautiful or as well off as themselves? Not only this is so today, but it has always been so all the time and all over the world since differences are always most readily perceived, and are also regarded as very natural. Also, they are very rarely analysed at all, let alone analysed in depth.

The differences that we all so innocently regard as but natural have very deadly consequences. While the way human beings fight over natural differences among themselves is painful, the way they fight over differences created by themselves is amazing. The horrors brought about by apartheid in Africa as well as America are too well known to need any recounting here. Such racial discrimination resulting in the unfair treatment of people

with black skin colour is based entirely on a difference created by nature and not by man. But differences crated by man himself have been hardly less deadly in their consequences. The boundaries between countries are drawn by humans; the caste differences are man-made; all churches, mosques and temples are also man-made; all cultural differences are rooted in human customs, conventions and practices, and all political differences are man-made. But these differences are treated by some people almost like natural differences such as skin colour. That is why, while white men so readily ill-treated blacks, men of higher castes in India looked down upon men of lower castes. Though being born in a particular caste is a completely accidental matter, such a chance birth is treated as an essential and un-erasable feature of a human being. Not only that, this accidental fact of birth is also readily used as an unquestionable foundation for all sorts of unjust and discriminatory treatment.

Even if we carry out only the most cursory examination of the social history of mankind, it becomes immediately obvious that differences have always served as the sole and solid basis of unjust social practices everywhere in the world. Most of the time, a difference comes to be noticed as well as recognised only in order to be used as a basis for practising discrimination. Adolf Hitler took note of the so-called "racial" difference between the Jews and non-Jews—a completely fabricated or invented difference—only in order to persecute the Jews. If such a difference were not to be invented, the unfair treatment meted out to millions of Jews would have been entirely unfounded. It is totally undeniable that we require a natural, artificial or even a totally imaginary difference in order to dish out as well as justify every one of our discriminatory treatment. If we do not at all want to discriminate, it is not at all understandable why we should pay serious attention to any of our mutual differences. There are many natural differences that have emerged in the course of evolution, and there are also several others that have been set up by human society in the

course of its evolution. Of course, it may not also be possible to completely disregard some of these differences in the normal course of everyday transactions necessitated by social life. But then, we should not also fail to note the very important point that the problems are not caused by the differences themselves, but by the manner in which we choose to deal with and use these differences as the basis of our actions and interactions with our fellowmen and other living beings in the world.

This last point is very important. While any activity of discriminating necessarily requires the existence—or creation—of a difference as its basis, the opposite of this is not also true. That means, the very existence of a difference need not necessarily compel us to resort to discrimination on its basis. If there is no difference at all, we cannot of course discriminate, because there is no basis on which we could possibly discriminate; but if a difference does indeed exist, we need not necessarily resort to discriminatory practices on that basis simply because that difference exists. That is, the existence of some difference or the other is surely an absolutely necessary condition for discriminatory practice in the sense that, if that difference were not to exist, the discriminatory practice based on it would not have become possible. But, in the sense that if a difference exists, we need not necessarily or invariably resort to any kind of discriminatory practice on its basis; the existence of that difference is *not also a sufficient condition* or ground for any discriminatory practice.

We have already pointed out that, just because there is a natural difference like the difference in skin colour, it is not morally correct to make any discrimination on that basis. But, what about the differences created by men themselves? Surely, such man-made differences cannot *all* be summarily rejected as evil. Most of the differences created by men in societies seem to have a justification in the sense that they can be shown to be serving a useful purpose in being necessary for a very organised and smooth running of human society. For example, we must necessarily make

a difference between pedestrians and people driving vehicles, and make appropriate rules to be followed by each of these two categories in the interest of the common safety of all road-users. This difference cannot be cited as leading to any unjust discriminatory practice. But there are also other man-made differences which are not as unambiguous in their conception and implementation as the pedestrian–driver distinction. There are differences that have definitely been created with some common interest or purpose in view, but they can also be most readily made to serve as the basis for very pernicious and large-scale discriminatory practices.

The difference in nationalities is a very good case in point. The Nation State is a political entity distinguished from all other similar entities by a unique reference to a specified geographical area. The boundaries of one nation are the boundaries of its neighbouring nations also, and each nation is sovereign within its boundaries or territory. It is the duty of the State to provide security, education and other facilities to its citizens, and it is endowed with every conceivable power to achieve its objectives. Since national differences also constitute national identities, the sharp differences in nationalities can also be powerfully used and manipulated to produce conflicts or wars between different nations, thus leading to large scale destruction of life and property. It is ironical that, when national boundaries are redrawn as a consequence of war-time or peace-time operations, people who were friendly neighbours for centuries can turn into enemies of each other in no time. National differences have been one of the largest sources of unjust treatment of human beings on a massive scale. Though the European Union has recently set up a model of how pernicious effects of national differences may be peacefully overcome to the advantage of everyone, that model is yet to catch up world wide. Meanwhile, national conflicts continue to arise afresh resulting in large scale unjust treatment of peace-loving

citizens, or leading otherwise peaceful people to a state of war and mutual destruction.

It is now time to raise the all important question as to whether there are any differences that are absolutely real and ultimate. This is a very important question because, if it turns out that there are differences that are absolutely real and therefore not erasable at all, we have to accept that we are for ever condemned to live with all the complex problems that these differences always give rise to. But it does not seem that differences are totally ineradicable since we have just alluded to the European Union which has successfully abolished national boundaries in the sense that the boundaries that previously demarcated one European State from another now just serve to demarcate mere geographical regions and boundaries. Thus, the difference between nations which seemed to be an inevitable and real difference is now negated within the European Union. If this experiment goes on and finally succeeds and spreads, we may eventually have just one world. Keeping in mind this very specific possibility of being able to sink national differences, it may not altogether be wrong to ask the question: Do differences—which are the source of so much discriminatory and immoral practices—which appear to be so very real, absolute and ultimate in all the experiences of all of us, truly possess these features of being very real and so on?

All those who vouch for the reality, finality and absoluteness of differences have to ask one question: Are differences very real, final and absolute, or do they just *appear* to be very real, final and absolute? This is a vital question because everything hangs on just which way it is answered. We have already hinted that, if differences are real and final, not much can really be done to remove the discriminatory and unjust practices in the world and ensure any fair implementation of moral codes. In fact, we cannot even seriously argue that discriminatory practices based on differences are unjust and immoral. For example, suppose that

one child is very intelligent and another very dull. If this is a real difference, it cannot be remedied or eradicated. Therefore, if the same excellent facilities are equally provided to both the children, only one of them—the intelligent—will make proper use of them and develop very well while the dull child is unable to make any use of the facilities provided. In that case it can be argued that we have wasted our resources on the dull child and our practice of treating equally both the dull and the intelligent is wasteful and therefore possesses no moral worth. The dull child will not lose anything if we deny it the facilities while the intelligent child will definitely lose quite a bit. Therefore it is not at all improper, unjust or immoral to differentiate between the dull and the intelligent and treat them very differently.

Thus, it turns out that the reality of differences can very well be used to justify differential treatment and to argue that such treatment cannot be regarded as either unjust or immoral. Also, once it is conceded that differences are quite real, it is no more reasonable to say that the dull and the intelligent should still be treated the same way. This is because the real differences themselves constitute a legitimate basis for unequal treatment, and where unequal treatment is warranted, extending equal treatment would not be justifiable. Therefore it seems pretty clear that no sound moral principles or practices can be promulgated or defended on the basis of the idea that differences are quite real and fundamental.

If differences are regarded as real constituents of the structure of human existence, there is no hope of securing any foundation for morality. Therefore, differences cannot be regarded as constituting the real nature of human existence. Differences cannot be essential; they can only be accidental. It is necessary to point out at this juncture that all differences are the accidental products of the evolution of nature and human society. At some point of this evolution, some differences might have served some useful purposes, but later on might have become completely irrelevant,

but that still makes all differences accidental. For example, if the earth's atmosphere were to be such that it had everywhere filtered out ultraviolet rays to a degree very safe for humans, people in equatorial Africa would not have developed and retained black pigmentation in their skins which protects them from excessive ultraviolet radiation. People of Africa are indeed black, but they need not have been black at all if the circumstances determining the nature of the earth's atmosphere in the equatorial region were to be very different from what they used to be. In this sense, even natural differences can be regarded as accidental. Of course, all man-made differences are accidental products of human social evolution. Had human social evolution proceeded very differently, the lines marking the differences would have been drawn probably very differently. In that case, the presently existing differences might not have developed, but some other types of differences might have developed. Therefore, in reality, all differences including the social ones are completely accidental in character.

From this perspective, it can be argued that, wherever a difference is being used as a basis for discrimination, the discrimination is achieved by mistakenly believing an accidental difference to be an essential difference. If we treat accidental differences as accidental ones, that is, if we take them to be what they really are (mere names and forms or "*nāmarūpa*" in the language of Advaita), there will be no basis at all for discriminatory practice. For example, if I look upon the caste in which I am born and the caste in which you are born as both accidental, there is no way I can discriminate against you on the basis of your caste, or you can discriminate against me on the basis of my caste. That is because, a difference arising from a purely accidental feature or quality can never be a necessary or essential difference. If that accidental property were not to be there, the alleged difference would not also have existed.

In reality, none of the differentiating qualities we perceive in a person or thing can be treated as basic or fundamental to that

person or thing in the sense that in the absence of those differentiating qualities it is impossible to conceive of that person or thing to be what he or it really is. All the so-called necessary qualities we associate with any entity are necessary to it only by stipulation, and never by natural necessity. I am necessarily an Indian and someone else is necessarily an American only because there are countries that happen to be called India and America. If these countries had not existed, or if they were called by entirely different names—which is perfectly possible to imagine—there would have been none who is necessarily an Indian or an American. Therefore, the necessity involved in my being an Indian is completely and purely accidental, circumstantial and never absolute. The same is the case with my being a male, a professor, a Brahmin, a father, an uncle and so on. Therefore, none of the qualities we perceive in the things of the world can be legitimately treated as being essential to them in any fundamental way. Treating some of the perceived qualities as essential to those things is dictated solely by practical needs and never by the very nature of those things themselves. Advaita emphasises this very point when it maintains that every quality we perceive in persons and things is an adjunct (*upādhi*), and no such quality has any kind of role whatever in the final determination of what that person or thing really is. Reality is what it is, and it always remains what it is irrespective of all the accidental differences (*āgantuka upādhi*) that we may come to ignorantly attribute to it.

Therefore, in all our talk about the world and ourselves, we mistakenly assume accidental qualities to be essential qualities. We do not quite get to see this fundamental error (*adhyāsa*), because we are always driven by our own practical considerations (*vyavahāra*). As long as our practical requirements continue to be met in some way, we never feel any need to question our existing understanding of the true nature of the things in the world. We draw various boundaries, make ingenious distinctions and

create an indefinite number of groups absolutely without justification or perhaps with some extremely tenuous or dubious justification. There is one absolutely glorious and harmonious existence (*Brahman*) in which we make all sorts of distinctions, just as on the vast land surfaces of this one earth we draw arbitrary lines and create different countries without realising that we might thereby be making total enemies out of perfectly friendly neighbours. We treat arbitrarily drawn lines as the most natural boundaries—which they are not—and invite endless trouble of national conflicts. We do not realise that once we distinguish between nations and people and treat them as really different and distinct, any subsequent attempt to treat them all equally will be ineffective and also without any sound basis. If they are all indeed equal, why divide them into different unequal entities in the first place and then desperately try to treat them as equal? Such attempts are absurd and human history has ample proof that this way of trying to achieve equality and unity has never worked.

If people are really fundamentally different from one another, then they are all indeed different from one another, and will always behave differently towards one another; and there is no known mechanism to make them behave differently. Any moral advice to them that they should all treat each other on equal terms, be kind and compassionate towards one another, will have no basis and will also be completely ineffective. True equality can never emerge by having difference as its foundation. Equality requires some other foundation, a really metaphysical foundationùof the essential oneness of all humanity, of all existence. If differences are treated as something essential and fundamental, there will be no scope or basis for the discovery of this metaphysical oneness. If at all we can legitimately appeal to people to honour each other, to treat the other to be as valuable as oneself, not to hurt or kill another, not to deceive another, not to steal what belongs to another—in short, to follow all the usual principles of morality—it

can be done only on the basis of this undeniable fact of the oneness of all existence. There is really no true "another" towards whom we may behave differently from how we would be behaving with ourselves. If we do not know this, then, in hurting another we are only hurting ourselves, because there is truly no "another" to be hurt in any way.

People so readily harm or hurt others simply because they think of them as truly *the other*, and this "other" is what is regarded as essentially and really different from oneself. People do not identify themselves with the other since they honestly believe that the other is really different from themselves. Therefore, they naturally do not hesitate to treat the other very differently from the way they would treat themselves. How can one treat another the same way he treats himself when the other is so clearly perceived to be radically different from oneself? Therefore, a man decisively avoids all injury and harm to himself. He has no hesitation to act this way. But, when another person is being injured or harmed, he would not choose to act equally decisively or unhesitatingly to prevent that harm or injury to the other person. If we ask him why he does not act when the other is being harmed, in almost all cases the reply will be uniform: just as I try to prevent harm to myself, the other person too must try to prevent harm to himself. It is the other who should be trying to prevent the harm to himself and not me. It is basically his business and not mine.

This kind of response presupposes that the other is really and totally different from myself. But we have already shown that all differences are accidental and not real. Therefore, the presupposition on which the above kind of response is grounded turns out to be totally mistaken. We have no valid ground at all to look upon another as really and absolutely different from ourselves, because all differences are accidental and arbitrary. All our behaviour towards others is grounded in the completely wrong assumption that they are all radically different from us. Therefore,

it turns out that we are indulging in discriminatory behaviour towards others (be it racism, casteism or whatever else) not at all on any justifiable ground, but simply on the basis of a completely ignorant conception concerning the nature of others.

Under such circumstances, even if we behave justly and morally towards others, such behaviour is still not *enlightened* behaviour. It is still based on a totally flawed conception of the true nature of others, and such behaviour is to be regarded as just and moral only accidentally. Moral and immoral actions may as much be due to ignorance as they could be due to knowledge. It is not enough if we can manage to behave morally; our moral behaviour should be rooted in our knowledge of the things as they really are. Only then will we be able to be unwavering in our moral behaviour, and we will not be accidentally behaving in a moral way. If we are only accidentally behaving in a moral way, there is no guarantee that we will always continue to behave in the same moral way.

When there is a clear awareness that the other is not really different from oneself, the behaviour emerging out of such awareness will be radically different from that of ordinary human beings. Such behaviour will not be harmful to others, because the person knows very clearly that in harming others he is harming himself. Just as we spontaneously avoid any behaviour harmful to ourselves, the enlightened person also spontaneously avoids behaviour harmful to all others. He becomes naturally incapable of any kind of immoral behaviour. Moral behaviour thus becomes natural to him, and he does not experience any kind of moral crises which others might experience. His moral behaviour is very firmly grounded in his realisation of his own non-difference from the rest of existence. The enormously difficult exercises undertaken by all societies to "cultivate" morality in its members become totally unwarranted and irrelevant when morality finds its most natural and inevitable grounding in the awareness of non-difference.

This essay cannot be complete without raising and answering another important question about moral behaviour in the world. Is there no genuine moral behaviour seen in the world at all? For example, are not human beings behaving genuinely morally during communal riots when they give shelter to people of another religion, saving their lives even at very great risk to their own lives? Yes, they are indeed acting genuinely morally on this occasion. They are not looking upon those who are being chased by communal rioters as genuinely the "other" because, had they really looked upon them that way, they would have joined the rioters in trying to put them to death. The sharp division we normally make between the "I" and the "other" has broken down in the case of the people who are risking everything to save the victims. They are trying to save them as they would be trying to save their own people, or even themselves. At that point of time they are seeing no difference between themselves and the others whom they are trying to save. If they ever did see any real difference, they would not also have been trying to save them. This is again in support of whatever has all along been said in this paper: people begin to behave genuinely morally only when they stop seeing the differences.

In other words, immoral behaviour is rooted in our ignorance of our own true nature and the true nature of others. We may see many differences most clearly, but all these are accidental features perceived in our ignorance of the true nature of reality. Therefore it will be totally wrong to base our behaviour on our mistaken understanding of reality. It will be very dangerous like mistaking in the cowshed a sleeping snake for a rope and trying to pick it up to tie down the buffalo. We are sure to be harmed. Hence, we must try to convince people that they are not really very different from one another and that the differences among them are superficial and non-fundamental. The more we are able to make them realise this truth, the more spontaneously they begin to

behave morally towards one another. The foundation of all things is no different from the foundation of all morality, and there is no other foundation for morality. All true morality can be most firmly founded only on non-difference which happens to be the central teaching of Advaita. Any other foundation is far less secure and also, as we have shown here, far less convincing in rational terms.

11

THE ROLE OF NIDIDHYĀSANA VIS-À-VIS SELF-KNOWLEDGE

S. Balakrishnan*

This discussion is centred on *Brahma-sūtra*, 3.4.47, which reads:

"Sahakāryantara vidhiḥ pakṣeṇa tṛtīyam tadvato vidhyādivat."

सहकार्यन्तरविधिः पक्षेण तृतीयं तद्वतो विध्यादिवत् ।

The contention is whether "*nididhyāsana*" translated as "dwelling upon the teaching" is a primary means of Self-knowledge or only a subsidiary one. This is a very important topic in Advaita Vedānta, and this article examines the role of "*nididhyāsana*" in the establishment of Self-knowledge, as explained by Śaṅkara in the commentary on the above sūtra and elsewhere in many contexts. The primary sādhana or means for liberation is Self-knowledge. This is indisputably stated in all the Upaniṣads and in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in

---

* S Balakrishnan is a student of Swami Paramarthananda for a long time. He spends his hours learning, teaching and writing on Advaita Vedānta. He retired from HAL as Senior Commercial Manager.

Chapter 2 declares: "*Ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nididhyāsitavyaḥ*" Here the word "*draṣṭavyaḥ*" meaning "understanding the self' is to be taken as the primary means and all the three following it are to be considered as accessory injunctions to acquire Self-knowledge. In other words, acquiring Self-knowledge is "aṅgi vidhi", and *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* are "aṅga vidhi". Later in the same Upaniṣad in *Kahola Brāhmaṇa* the role of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* are reiterated using technical terms "*pāṇḍityam*" for *śravaṇa*, "*bālyam*" for *manana*, and "*mauna*" for *nididhyāsana*.

Let us examine the roles of all the above three means to acquire Self-knowledge in order to find out whether all of them can be grouped together as restrictive (*niyama*) injunctions only. At the outset, we shall define the three words to exactly grasp their meanings. *Śravaṇa* is defined as listening to the scriptures systematically for a considerable length of time under a competent teacher. *Manana* is defined as contemplation of the teaching to clear possible doubts. *Nididhyāsana* is defined as repeated dwelling upon the teaching. This discussion is made from three angles to establish total clarity in their roles to acquire Self-knowledge. The obstacles to acquire Self-knowledge are ignorance (*ajñāna*), doubts (*saṁśaya*) and habitual errors (*viparyaya*). Ignorance of anything is removed by knowledge, and in the same way self-ignorance is removed by Self-knowledge. This is the role of *śravaṇa*. Since Self-knowledge is rather difficult to assimilate, doubts are bound to arise during *śravaṇa*. These are cleared by *manana*.

We have acquired various *vāsanās* over a period of time, not only in this birth but also in several previous births. These *vāsanās* create habitual errors in our mind, which can be washed off only by repeated dwelling upon the teaching. A very simple example will illustrate what is meant by habitual error. If you are very much used to wearing a wrist-watch, even on a day that the watch has been given for repair and in spite of your certain knowledge

of this fact, you repeatedly turn your wrist to look at the time and get disappointed. In the case of Self-knowledge, since the teaching is unique and out of the ordinary, your mind keeps on dwelling upon your erroneous knowledge instead of on the right knowledge. This error is removed by *nididhyāsana*.

Let us now look at these three means from a technical angle as generally explained in the scriptures. It is said that *śravaṇa* removes *pramāṇa asambhāvana*, *manana* removes *prameya asambhāvana* and *nididhyāsana* removes *viparīta bhāvana*. In order to know the significance of the above, we have to define pramāṇa and prameya and then explain the word *asambhāvana* as applied to them. Pramāṇa is defined as one which is unique, which is not negatable and serves a purpose (*anadhigata, abādhita, arthabodhakam vākyam*).

If the Upaniṣadic texts are taken as pramāṇa for Self-knowledge, a doubt arises in the listener's mind as to why the same pramāṇa allows several interpretations such as: Brahman alone is real as in Advaita; world and jīva are parts of Brahman as in Viśiṣṭādvaita; and that the world and Brahman are real as in Dvaita. The erroneous interpretation of a pramāṇa is termed *asambhāvana*. Here, we must know that the defect is not in the Upaniṣad pramāṇa, but lies only in the mind of the pramātā, the knower. Therefore, the correction is to rectify his defective interpretation. This is done by proper *śravaṇa* which involves analysing scriptural texts using the six clues. A further elaboration of all the six pramāṇas and the six clues which are used to determine the real purport of the scriptures is beyond the scope of this short article. We, therefore, conclude that proper *śravaṇa* removes *pramāṇa asambhāvana*.

Coming to the role of *manana*, we say that it removes *prameya asambhāvana*. Prameya is the one to be known, i.e. Brahman, jīva, Īśvara, the world and the mutual relationship between any two of them. Here again, the defect lies only with the pramātā,

the knower and not with the prameya. Doubts arise regarding the relationship between Īśvara and jīva, Brahman and Īśvara, Brahman and jīva and also their relationship with the world. Such doubts are clarified by contemplation on the teaching and with the help of the teacher.

The following verse is worth quoting:

आचार्यात् पादमादत्ते पादं शिष्यः स्वमेधया ।
पादं सब्रह्मचारिभ्यः पादं कालक्रमेण तु ॥

This means that a student can normally grasp only one-fourth of the teaching from his teacher, one-fourth he understands by exercising his intellect, one fourth he learns by discussion with his co-students and the last one-fourth gets clarified only in due course of time. Thus *manana* removes *prameya asambhāvana.*

Nididhyāsana removes habitual errors (*viparyaya*) as we have already explained. There is a third and more convincing angle to look at these means. We say that *śravaṇa* removes contradictions in śruti (*śruti-virodha*), *manana* removes logical fallacies (*yukti-virodha*) and *nididhyāsana* removes experiential contradictions (*anubhava-virodha*).

We have already explained that contradictions in the śruti are only apparent, and proper *śravaṇa* will set right this defect in the listener's mind. We shall now explain what is meant by logical fallacies or contradictions. Advaita philosophy is essentially based on *śruti pramāṇa.* We do not give excessive importance to logic. We use logic to substantiate what is given in the śruti, and hence all logic in Vedānta is subservient to śruti and never *vice versa.* We term it "*śruti-sammata-tarka,*" i.e. logic supported by or based on śruti. We collect data from sruti and apply logic to satisfy a questioning mind. We do not collect data from the world, nor use dry logic to contradict the śruti. In this context we have scriptural authority: "Naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneya" (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*,1. 2.9).

Another famous verse says:

"Acintyā khalu ye bhāvāh na tān tarkeṇa yojayet,
Apratiṣṭhita tarkena kastīrṇaḥ samśayāmbudhim."

अचिन्त्या खलु ये भावाः
न तान् तर्केण योजयेत् ।
अप्रतिष्ठित-तर्केण
कस्तीर्णः संशयाम्बुधिम् ॥

Logic is not applicable to facts which are beyond logic. Invalid logic cannot clear any doubt. Thus we can now conclude that logical contradictions are resolved by *manana*. *Nididhyāsana* can be a certain remedy for resolving contradictions of the teaching which we experience in the world.

The teaching given in Advaita Vedānta is unique because it contradicts direct experiences brought to us by various sense perceptions. We are not able to assimilate that the Self is pure awareness, existence and ānanda as the śruti repeatedly declares. The most difficult part of the teaching is to accept that I am not a miserable, limited creature; that my Self is ever-happy, unlimited and all-pervasive. The teaching seems to click during *śravaṇa* under a competent Guru, but rarely stays in our mind. It does not come to our aid when we need to respond to vexing and miserable situations. We tend to mix up the ego with the real Self. Hence constant revision and dwelling upon the teaching are required to give timely correction to our thinking. This will help us remain tuned to the teaching, especially in times of crisis. This alone is termed "*nididhyāsana*". Thus to sum up: Acquiring Self-knowledge is the primary sādhana for liberation. *Nididhyāsana* along with the other two sādhanas of *śravaṇa* and *manana* play the role of secondary sādhanās. This is what the sutra wants to convey. Depending upon the maturity of the seeker, an *uttama adhikāri* would get the knowledge by mere *śravaṇa* alone. A *madhyama adhikāri* or manda seeker may have to go through

much *manana* and *nididhyāsana* before the knowledge settles down permanently. This is one more reason to establish that *nididhyāsana* is a *niyama-vidhi*.

Coming back to the commentary of Śaṅkara on this sūtra and his reference to the word "maunam" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad*, 3.5.2) in the *Kahola Brāhmaṇa*, it is interesting to note that the Ācāraya stretches the meaning of this word to *sannyāsa*. He is justified in doing so because the mantra in the *Kahola Brāhmaṇa* is regarding a jīva who has no desires for material wealth, son, family, etc., or for going to the next higher world. Such a jīva will naturally end up in *sannyāsa* and ultimate liberation. Thus Śaṅkara remains close to the text that he is commenting on. But in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, his commentaries can be interpreted as favourable to the *gṛhastha* as regards liberation, wherever Lord Kṛṣṇa has intended it to be so. He is not partial to *sannyāsa* as many want us to believe.

Before concluding this article a brief note on the word "meditation" which is often used as a translation to *nididhyāsana* will be relevant. The word "meditation" is proper when used to translate the word *upāsanā*, because then alone it can convey the meaning of a mental exercise to acquire integration or oneness of the mind. If, however, the word meditation is used in the context, after one acquires Self-knowledge, the word "*nididhyāsana*" may be retained without translation to convey the meaning of dwelling upon the teaching.

12

THE ADVAITA VIEW OF LIFE*

T.P. Ramachandran

1. Introduction

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ।

"Brahman is real, the world is illusory, and the individual soul is Brahman itself and not another." [1]

In this celebrated half-verse, Śrī Śaṅkara puts the philosophy of Advaita in a nut-shell. This philosophy may be said to be very simple in so far as it reduces everything to Brahman. But it is equally difficult in so far as ordinary experience does not square with it. The physical world in which we live and move looks very much the real. Our own individualities are so much to the fore and cannot easily be forgotten. And those who believe in an ultimate reality are habitually used to believe in it as a personal Supreme Being, above themselves and the world, instead of as the sole Impersonal Reality. It is, therefore, natural to ask whether such a philosophy, which rises to the dizzy height of a non-dual

* Adapted from the author's article in the *Kamakoti Vani*, October—December, 1971.

reality, can have any message for life. The present paper is an endeavour to abstract and present the principles according to which life, in the view of Advaita, ought to be lived. To appreciate the philosophy of life according to Advaita, it is necessary to examine the Advaita doctrine of *sattā-traividhya*, which represents three levels in the conception of reality.

2. The doctrine of sattā-traividhya and the status of the vyāvahārika

What constitutes reality? In deciding this question, Advaita proceeds on the principle that what is real does not suffer contradiction and what is unreal is not cognized at all.[2] Judged by this principle, the real is Brahman alone, for, while Brahman-experience negates everything else, Brahman itself is not negated by the experience of anything else. The perception of the rope denies the snake which it formerly appeared to be. Even after the negating experience, the same rope may appear as a snake, but this time the perceiver does not forget that it is nothing but the rope. In the same manner, one who has experienced Brahman finds that the entire realm of common experience stands negated. He may continue to perceive it, but he is no longer deceived by it. Hence the term "reality" (*sat*, or *sattā*) properly applies only to Brahman. There is nothing besides Brahman, either similar to it or different from it, by which it could be contradicted. Nor is there any distinction within Brahman by which it suffers contradiction. Brahman is, therefore, said to be non-dual (*advaita*). The opposite of the real is the unreal (*asat*). This expression stands for mere words like "hare's horn," "the circular square," and "the sky lotus," for no objects corresponding to these words are ever experienced by any one.

In between reality and unreality, is all that we perceive in common life. We perceive separate objects and think of ourselves as separate from them all. In contrast to the reality, which is

declared to be non-dual, every instance of common experience involves duality, a sense of otherness, a distinction between two factors: between one object and another, between an object and its quality, and so on. The realm of duality occupies an intermediate position between being and non-being. It is not real, because the final experience of the non-dual Brahman annuls the sense of duality. At the same time, it is not unreal, because it is actually presented to experience. The impossibility of determining its status as either real or unreal in an absolute sense is expressed by the application of such terms as *māyā*, *mithyā*, *anirvacanīya*, and *sad-asad-vilakṣaṇa*.[3] It means that the entire realm of duality stands for one vast illusion, that which appears, but is not real.

Although the realm of duality is an illusion, one who has not had experience of Brahman is unable to dismiss it as an illusion. He is vitally caught in it and presumes that diversity is real. He may be learned in scripture and may be intellectually convinced that Brahman is the only reality. But intellectual conviction cannot alter the assumption on which he carries on his daily life. Presuming all the while that plurality is real, he goes about a whole range of activities, which involve distinctions, such as the agent, his actions, the means of actions, and their results. Since diversity appears as though real, and since it is the scene of all activity, it is called *vyāvahārika-sattā*. *Vyavahāra* means usage, practice, business, or day to day life. And the *vyāvahārika* is what relates to usage, or practice. It must be noted that the term *sattā*, or reality, is applied to the realm of duality, not in the strict sense of the term, but only by courtesy, i.e. simply for the reason that to the ignorant it presents itself as though it were real. In order to distinguish Brahman, which is reality in the strict sense of the term, from the *vyāvahārika*, Brahman is designated as *pāramārthika-sattā*, which means "that which is absolutely real."

Every illusion has a basis (*adhiṣṭhāna*). The snake illusion has the rope for its basis, and the silver illusion has nacre as its basis. For the appearance of the entire realm of duality (*vyāva-*

hārika), Brahman alone can be the substratum. Brahman, which is the *pāramārthika*, wrongly appears as the *vyāvahārika*, owing to *māyā*, which is nothing but the ignorance (*avidyā*) of those who are thus deluded.

The *vyāvahārika* comprises God (Īśvara), who is Brahman appearing as though with form and attributes, the souls (*jīva*), and the physical world (*jagat*). Although it is Brahman itself that appears as Īśvara, the jīvas, and the *jagat*, Īśvara and the jīvas are not appearances in the same sense in which the *jagat* is an appearance. The *jagat* as such is an illusory superimposition on Brahman in the same sense in which the so-called snake is an illusory superimposition on the rope. Hence, when Brahman is realized, there is nothing left of what we call the physical world, just as, when the rope is seen, nothing is left of the illusory snake. But Īśvara and the jīvas are in essence Brahman. The character of being Īśvara and the *jīva*. (*Īśvaratva* and *jīvatva*) is due to the mistaken identification of Brahman with adjuncts provided by the illusory physical world, e.g. the body and mind in the case of the *jīva*. When ignorance ceases, what disappears is only the notions of Īśvara and the *jīva*, and not the reality that constitutes their essence. When the notions of Īśvara and *jīva*, which mark their mutual difference, disappear, the essential non-difference of the two as Brahman manifests itself. Hence Īśvara and the jīvas are not illusory in the same sense in which the *jagat* is illusory. This has been explained by using a different example.[4] A person looking at a white conch through a sheet of yellow glass, of whose existence he is not aware, takes it to be yellow. When the sheet of glass is removed, the conch as such does not disappear; what disappears is only the yellow colour falsely attributed to it by association with the glass. Thus only an aspect of the conch is said to be illusory. Brahman appears as the *jagat* by being mistaken for a different entity altogether. But Brahman appears as Īśvara and the *jīva* only by being taken to possess features that do not really belong to it.

We have seen how the status of Īśvara and the *jīva* as members of the *vyāvahārika* is not the same as that of the *jagat* as a member of the same realm. We now come to a further distinction. So far as the *jagat* is concerned, there is a level of appearance which is further removed from reality than the *vyāvahārika* level. It represents objects which we call illusory by comparison with the objects with which we are familiar in common life. The lion that appears in a dream is called illusory in comparison with the lion in the forest. The silver that appears to exist where there is only a shell is illusory when compared to the silver in the ornament. Such objects are contradicted, not by Brahman-experience, but by common experience itself. They are called illusory for the reason that they are presented only to the individual who is deceived for a brief moment and suffer contradiction only with reference to that individual. On the contrary, objects such as the lion in the forest or the silver in the ornament are perceived by many people either at the same time or at different times. The former are "private" and the latter are "public." These private objects occurring in dreams and individual illusions are designated by the Advaitin as *prātibhāsika-sattā*. The verb *pratibhā* means "to appear," and *prātibhāsika* is what exists merely in appearance. The term *sattā* is thus applied to objects such as the dream-lion or the shell-silver in an even more restricted sense than to objects belonging to the *vyāvahārika* order.

We have now three levels at which the term *sattā* has been employed. This is the doctrine of *sattā-traividhya* in Advaita. The doctrine does not mean that reality itself is of three levels. The three-foldness (*traividhya*) marks only three levels in the *view* (*dṛṣṭi*) of reality. The *pāramārthika*, or Brahman, alone is the reality. The *vyāvahārika* is regarded as real only so long as Brahman-experience has not dawned. Even within the *vyāvahārika*, one sometimes lapses into particular illusions. This is the *prātibhāsika*. The *prātibhāsika* object disappears when one awakens to the objects of daily life. Even so, the entire domain of

the *vyāvahārika* disappears when Brahman is realized. (See diagram at end.)

The important feature of the theory of *sattā-traividhya* is that what applies to one level does not apply to another level. Since the *prātibhāsika* level is distinguished within the *vyāvahārika*, the main distinction is between the *vyāvahārika* and the *pāramārthika*. What happens within the *vyāvahārika* has to be judged by its own standards. The *vyāvahārika* is characterized by change, and the *pāramārthika* is above all change. No one can correctly understand the philosophy of Advaita without making a clear distinction between the standpoint of the *vyāvahārika* and that of the *pāramārthika*. Any confusion between the two standpoints results in misconception, which has not only theoretical, but even practical repercussions. And it is a mistake to which not only critics, but also followers of Advaita are liable.

3. The nature of the vyāvahārika

Although the ontological status of the *vyāvahārika* is indeterminable, the Advaitin is certain that the disposition and working of the *vyāvahārika* exhibits definite laws. The *vyāvahārika* is a system, an organization of members. Speaking of the physical world in two places, Śaṅkara refers to the remarkable nature of its arrangement as one "which cannot even be conceived by the mind"[5] and "of which the most ingenious architects cannot even form a conception in their minds."[6] What applies to the physical world applies to the whole of the *vyāvahārika*.[7] The physical world consists partly of the external, or inanimate, nature, made up of elements and enabling the souls to experience the fruits of their various actions. It also consists of the bodies of the various classes of living beings, possessing a definite system of organs and thereby constituting the abodes for the enjoyment of the fruits according to definite places, times, and causes. And this orderly arrangement is due to Īśvara,[8] who creates the world

with due regard to moral justice.[9] There is thus a close relationship among the members of the *vyāvahārika*, namely the *jagat*, the jīvas, and Īśvara.

It may be asked how the *vyāvahārika*, which is the outcome of original ignorance, exhibits order, or system. The explanation is to be found in the nature of the intellect (*buddhi*), which is a product of *avidyā* and which is the medium through which *avidyā* manifests itself. Diversity is perceived only when *avidyā* is manifest, or patent. When it is unmanifest, or latent, Brahman is no doubt hidden, but diversity is not perceived in its stead. That is why in deep sleep, when the intellect is inactive, diversity is not perceived, while it is perceived in the dream and waking states, when the intellect becomes active. Thus it is through the operation of the intellect that Nirguṇa Brahman comes to be viewed as Īśvara, the *jīva*, and the *jagat*.[10] Order, or system, is the character of the intellect. This feature is naturally imposed on what is viewed through the intellect. The intellect, not only apparently dismembers the non-dual reality, but also presents the resulting members as belonging to one another through significant relationships and thus forming a system. Thus, since the *vyāvahārika* is the product of the intellect, it is only natural that we should see it as a cosmos, governed by certain laws.

The point of interest in this context is that, since the *vyāvahārika* is found to exhibit intelligible connections, it is full of meaning and purpose to life. It is quite evident how we are able to act upon our experiences of the waking state. Even dream experiences are not meaningless. They foretell the future and also reprehend or delight a person according to his actions.[11] Consequently, the *vyāvahārika* is the field of purposeful living. It is the scene of all endeavour, secular and spiritual. The term *vyāvahārika* itself testifies to the efficient character of the realm of duality.

It may appear strange that the *vyāvahārika*, which is illusory, could be the scene of useful activity—indeed of any activity at all. But, in fact, all activity can pertain only to the realm of illusion.

Brahman, the absolutely real, cannot be connected with activity, for the idea of activity implies the idea of duality, such as between agent and action, means and end, and cause and effect. At the other end, there can be no question of activity for the totally unreal, like the hare's horn, for it does not exist at all. Therefore, activity can belong only to what is neither real nor unreal, namely the illusory realm of duality comprising Īśvara, the *jīva*, and the *jagat*. Critics often charge Advaita with a world-negating and life-negating attitude. This is far from the truth. The doctrine of illusion, instead of nullifying purposeful life, justifies and explains it.

4. The significance of the vyāvahārika to mokṣa

We have seen that the *vyāvahārika* is the field of effort, secular as well as spiritual. It is not worth our while to explain how the *vyāvahārika* is useful for securing secular ends, such as wealth (*artha*) and pleasure (*kāma*). Even the layman would be able to say this. We are concerned only with examining how the *vyāvahārika* subserves the goal of *mokṣa*. To the Advaitin, *mokṣa* is not a state to be newly attained. We are ever free, being non-different from Brahman. In fact, *mokṣa* is another name for Brahman. Bondage consists in being ignorant of this truth. What is required is the removal of ignorance (*avidyā*). When ignorance is removed, Brahman, or *mokṣa*, is self-manifest. Hence, strictly speaking, what are described as means to *mokṣa* are means to the removal of *avidyā*.

Ignorance of Brahman can be removed only by knowledge of Brahman. What is meant here is not mediate knowledge, or intellectual conviction, regarding Brahman, because this involves distinctions, and thus implies *avidyā*. What is required is immediate knowledge of Brahman, its direct experience (*anubhava*), which alone transcends difference. The term *brahma-jñāna* strictly applies to this. The attainment of *brahma-jñāna* requires

a long and arduous course of practice. The practice is in two stages. The second stage is the final and direct means to the dawn of *brahma-jñāna*. It consists of the study of scripture (*śravaṇa*), reflection on the Advaita truth thus learned (*manana*), and meditation thereon (*nididhyāsana*). These three steps together are called *jñāna-yoga*. One acquires the qualifications for *jñāna-yoga* by the preliminary practice of other disciplines such as *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, and *dhyāna-yoga*, or *upāsanā*. These are the disinterested practice of duty, of devotion to God, and of meditative exercises, respectively.

What is specially to be noted in this connection is that both the preparatory and the final sets of discipline function on the basis of the sense of duality, though their common aim is the removal of *avidyā*, which is responsible for the sense of duality. The disciplines involve distinctions such as means and end, teacher and taught, votary and pursuit, subject and object, material cause, instrumental cause, and efficient cause, and process and product. It is bound to be so, because all function is in the realm of duality and ignorance. In this sense, *avidyā* provides for its own removal. While *avidyā* is the cause of bondage, it is also the instrument for the cessation of bondage. The removal of *avidyā* by means resting on *avidyā* has been compared to the removal of a thorn stuck in the flesh by means of another thorn (*kaṇṭa-koddharaṇa-nyāya*). We have, therefore, to understand that the transition from the *vyāvahārika* to the *pāramārthika* is not a real one. There is no regular growth from the one to the other. If that were so, all the dualism which characterizes the *vyāvahārika* would be carried over into the *pāramārthika*. The transition is rather through the displacement of the *vyāvahārika*. The *vyāvahārika* is an illusory superimposition on the *pāramārthika*. When the superimposition is removed, the *pāramārthika* reveals itself. The utility of the *vyāvahārika* is not directly with reference to the condition of *mokṣa*, but with reference to the removal of *avidyā*, which hides it. Being steeped in *avidyā*, we have

necessarily to employ the means which rest on *avidyā* in order to remove it.

Here the critic may raise an objection. Let it be granted that all activity, including the practice of the means to *mokṣa*, lies within the *vyāvahārika*. But, then, as the *vyāvahārika* is illusory, the result of activity taking place in it must also be illusory. It is illogical to assume that the illusory means will lead to real results. Hence, either the means prescribed by the Advaitin will not lead to *mokṣa* if *mokṣa* be real, or the *mokṣa* to which they lead will not be real. In either case, it is useless to practise those means. The upshot is that there is really no place in Advaita for *karma*, *bhakti*, and *upāsana*, and even for the study and so on of the Veda.

Śaṅkara's reply to this objection is two-fold. First of all, the critic is betraying a confusion of standpoints. We have to make a clear distinction between the standpoint of one who has experienced Brahman and that of one who has not. When the body of one who has realized Brahman has fallen off, i.e. in *videha-mukti*, there is no question at all of diversity being presented to him, since there is no longer the adjunct to produce that presentation, namely the body-mind complex. But, when the body continues to exist by the force of its *karma* even after Brahman-realization, i.e. in *jīvan-mukti*, diversity is on occasions presented to the realized one. Such occasions constitute the state called *vyutthāna*, when the *jīvan-mukta* comes down for the time being from his natural state of non-dual consciousness called *samādhi*. Even when diversity presents itself in the state of *vyutthāna*, the *jīvan-mukta* is not in the least deceived by it. He could afford to treat diversity as if it does not exist at all. But one who has not realized Brahman stands on a different footing altogether. He may be intellectually convinced that all diversity is but an appearance. But mere intellectual conviction cannot stand up against the immediate perception of diversity. Until the realization of Brahman, the person is bound to go about his business as if

diversity is real. Hence the means prescribed for *mokṣa*, although they are by nature illusory, cannot be treated so by one who needs them. They are bound to go on. On this vital point, Śaṅkara observes thus:-

"Prior to the realization of the non-difference of the self with Brahman, all activities acquire legitimacy like the activities in dream before waking up. So long as the non-duality of the true self is not realized, nobody entertains the idea of unreality when dealing with (its) modifications such as means of knowledge, objects of knowledge, and results of knowledge. As a matter of fact, out of ignorance, all creatures, forgetting their natural non-difference with Brahman, acquiesce in the modifications themselves under the notion of 'I and mine,' i.e. as the self and what belongs to the self. Therefore, prior to the realization of the non-difference of the self with Brahman, all worldly dealings and Vedic observances are proper."[12]

The second part of the reply is this. There is no doubt that, in relation to Brahman, the means to *mokṣa* are illusory. But a thing need not be real in order to lead to real consequences. When taken to be real, even the illusory is capable of producing real results. There are many instances in ordinary life of the illusory leading to real consequences simply because they are taken to be real. Death sometimes takes place when a man imagines himself to have been bitten by a venomous snake. The phantom of a dream may foretell a real result to occur. Hence the capacity of the prescribed means to lead to *mokṣa*, by producing *brahma-jñāna*, cannot be questioned.[13]

It is thus not surprising or unreasonable that the *vyāvahārika*, the realm of duality, though of the nature of an illusion, is yet the passage to the *pāramārthika*, the non-dual reality. It is the field for a many-sided and graded training for the ignorant and bound, the ultimate aim of which is to enable them to cross the ocean of *saṁsāra*. The *vyāvahārika* is thus full of meaning for *mokṣa*. We

can now infer the bearing of all this teaching on the attitude we should adopt towards the *vyāvahārika*, of which we are members.

5. The attitude to the vyāvahārika

The attitude is governed both by the status of the *vyāvahārika* as neither real nor unreal and by its nature as an efficient system of members.

In the first place, as the *vyāvahārika* is not real, we ought not to be attached to it. The unenlightened man believes that the world of duality is real and runs after the goods of the earth and heaven, ends that are pleasurable (*preyas*) to the ego. Desire for such goods involves the obligation to enjoy them through repeated births. And in each birth one experiences the good and bad fruits of his *karma* in a former birth. Thus passion for the world of common experience is the cause of suffering. Dispassion (*vairāgya*) towards the world is the first requirement for release. Dispassion is taught in all the philosophies of India which believe in *mokṣa*. But, while in other philosophies the reason for *vairāgya* is that the goods of the world are impermanent, the ground for it in Advaita is stronger. The entire world of duality, including the individuality of souls and the personality of God, is but an appearance of the ultimate reality.[14] Consequently, the scope for *vairāgya* in Advaita is wider and its intent deeper. Dispassion is to be developed, not only with reference to the physical world, but also with reference to the notion of one's individuality and separateness from God. So much so, even the attainment of *brahmaloka*, which is the highest point of elevation in the scale of *saṁsāra* (*abhyudaya*), is to be shunned by one who desires absolute freedom.

At the same time, as the *vyāvahārika* is not unreal, we ought not to be indifferent to it. Unlike the unreal, the *vyāvahārika* is actually presented to experience. What impinges on experience

cannot be ignored so long as it is not contradicted by a higher experience. No portion of the *vyāvahārika* can be dismissed from view until one attains the experience of Nirguṇa-Brahman. Hence it is only the *jīvan-mukta* who can afford to be unpurturbed by the realm of duality even when it is presented to him in the state of *vyutthāna*. Such a one is free even from obligations, because the notion of duty is based on the idea of difference. A person may have acquired mediate knowledge of Brahman through scripture and reason. But mediate knowledge cannot repudiate duality, the knowledge of which is immediate, being given in perception. Intellectual conviction must be transformed into direct experience before one can live up to it. The competence of the subject to treat the world of duality as illusory is easily forgotten by the misguided enthusiast in Advaita who runs away from his station and duties. Such an attitude has been called *śuṣka* Vedānta, or mock Vedānta. One cannot hope to realize the non-dual reality simply by being indifferent to the realm of duality. The only way to that goal is the long hard way of all-round preparation, intellectual, moral, and emotional.[15] Such a preparation can proceed only on the provisional acceptance of the realm of duality as though it were real. Śaṅkara is very clear on the point that no one who has not realized Brahman has any right to absolute renunciation of the world.[16] People have come to grief by failing to grasp the true import of the teaching of non-duality. That is why the great teachers of the Upaniṣads and in the line of Śrī Śaṅkara took great care to impart instruction through the method of *adhyāropa* and *apavāda* and certainly not without long and severe tests.

As we have said earlier, the right attitude to the *vyāvahārika* is determined both by its ontological status as neither real nor unreal and by its nature as an efficient system. As the *vyāvahārika* is not real, we ought not to be attached to it. As it is not unreal, we ought not to be indifferent to it. And, as it is efficient, we

ought to be interested in it to the extent that we who are in it have necessarily to utilize it to get released from it. He who leads such a life is indeed an artist of considerable skill.

NOTES

1. Śaṅkara, *Brahmajñānāvalīmālā*, v. 20.
2. सत् चेत् न बाध्येत, असत् चेत् न प्रतीयेतः Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, *Advaita-siddhi*, Nirnayasāgar edn., p. 630.
3. अव्यक्ता हि सा माया, तत्त्वान्यत्वनिरूपणस्य अशक्यत्वात्: Śaṅkara, Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya, I, 4, 3.
4. vide M. Hiriyanna, Essentials of Indian Philosophy, pp. 156–58.
5. मनसाप्यचिन्त्यरचनारूपस्यः Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya, I, 1, 2.
6. प्रज्ञावद्भिः सम्भाविततमैः शिल्पिभिः मनसापि आलोचयितुमशक्यं: Ibid., II, 2, 1.
7. vide Ibid., I, 1, 2 and II, 2, 1.
8. vide Ibid., I, 1, 2 and II, 2, 1.
9. vide *Brahma-sūtra*, II, 1, 34 and Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* thereon.
10. बुद्ध्यद्युपाधिकृतं तु विशेषमाश्रित्य ब्रह्मैव सन् जीवः कर्ता भोक्ता चेत्युच्यते: Śaṅkara, *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, I, 1, 31.
11. vide Ibid., III, 2, 4.
12. सर्वव्यवहाराणामेव प्राग्ब्रह्मात्मताविज्ञानात् सत्यत्वोपपत्तेः। स्वप्नव्यवहारस्येव प्राक्प्रबोधात्। यावद्धि न सत्यात्मैकत्व-प्रतिपत्तिः तावत् प्रमाणप्रमेयफललक्षणेषु विकारेषु अनृतत्वबुद्धिः न कस्यचित् उत्पद्यते। विकारानेव त्वहं ममेति अविद्यया आत्मात्मीयेन भावेन सर्वो जन्तुः प्रतिपद्यते स्वाभाविकीं ब्रह्मात्मतां हित्वा। तस्मात् प्राग्ब्रह्मात्मताप्रतिबोधात् उपपन्नः सर्वो लौकिको वैदिकश्च व्यवहारः। *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, II, 1, 14.
13. vide Ibid.
14. vide Śaṅkara, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, v. 21 and *Aparokṣānubhūti*, v. 4.
15. vide *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, vv. 2 and 3.

16. अतः परमार्थदर्शिनः एव अशेषकर्मसंन्यासित्वं सम्भवति, अविद्याध्यारोपितत्वात् आत्मनि क्रियाकारकफलानां, न तु अज्ञस्य अधिष्ठानादीनि क्रियाकर्तृकारकाणि आत्मत्वेनैव पश्यतः अशेषकर्मसंन्यासः सम्भवति। *Bhagavad-gītā-bhāṣya*, prefatory note on XVIII, 13 and ff. न च शक्यते अशेषतः त्यक्तुं अज्ञेन कर्म यतः, तस्मात् न त्यजेत् . . .। Ibid., XVIII, 48.

NIRGUṆA BRAHMAN
pāramārthika

māyā / avidyā

vyāvahārika

ĪŚVARA

JĪVA

JAGAT

prātibhāsika

Sattā-traividhya

13

THE SOCIAL CONCERNS OF THE MAHĀSVĀMĪ

V. Sivaramakrishnan*

The title may suggest a limitation on the Mahāsvāmī's concerns, which are universal as becoming of a saint of his spiritual stature. His Holiness viewed life as a whole, and his vision encompassed humanity in its entirety. Man-made barriers between man and man on the basis of caste, creed, religion, race, religion and country counted for nothing in his all-comprehending compassion, *bhūta-dayā*. He was concerned with the individual, here and there, high and low, rather than with the man in the mass. One rarely comes across his references to the "poorer sections of the people." His stress was on the removal of poverty through *paropakāra* (helping others) at the individual level and through *pūrta* (public utilities) at the societal or state level.

Religion, or more precisely, the preservation of Sanātana Dharma, was Mahāsvāmī's primary concern. All else, the cultural, social and economic aspects of the life, were secondary. He wanted to promote, as he said in one of his illuminating discourses, Ātma-vicāra, Īśvara-dhyāna, and, what may be considered as

* Formerly, Associate Editor, *Bhavan's Journal*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai.

socially significant, *paropakāra*. As the Vedas form the taproot of Sanātana Dharma, he wanted to preserve them at all costs. In 1954, when his sixtieth birthday celebration was hinted at, he said, "Not for me any personal celebration. The true celebration consists in avoiding the infamy that with me the Vedas have disappeared from this country. If the Vedas are not preserved and protected, I see no reason for any kind of celebration." He made bold to say (on a different occasion) that his Math would lose its *raison d'être* if the study of the Vedas was given up as unnecessary or useless. He was firmly convinced—he has given his reasons in a lengthy discourse—that if the sound of the Vedic Mantras and the smoke of the Vedic yajñas fill the air, there would be prosperity in the world and peace for the mankind. The Vedic religion, he said, was once the universal religion. He made Veda-rakṣaṇa, a movement in his lifetime.

Of the three constituents of poverty—food, clothing and shelter, His Holiness considered appeasement of hunger through provision of food as the dharma of each individual. He launched what is now well known as the rice-gift scheme in the sixties. Under the scheme, each household has to deposit a handful of rice each day, along with a coin of a small denomination, in a pot, and every week the pot is to be emptied by handing over the contents to the nearby temple. The rice is to be cooked, offered as *naivedya* to the deity, and then distributed to the poor. The amount collected along with rice is to be used for fuel, payment to the temple priest, cook etc. The merit of the scheme is that not only is the temple made the centre of distribution, but the food that is distributed is sanctified. There is nothing grandiose about the scheme, but its very simplicity makes it grand. A group of households could find a temple anywhere and at any time could start this kind of charity with least strain and without the consciousness of helping someone. Food, said His Holiness, following Śaṅkara's *Sādhanā-pañcaka*, is the medicine for the disease of hunger.

Cremation or the burial of the dead, especially of the destitutes, was another aspect of social life that caught the Mahāsvāmī's attention. Under his inspiration, *Hindumata-kainkarya-saṅgha* came into being to take care of the dead. The activities of this Sangha are being carried on quietly without much fanfare. The workers of the Saṅgha visit hospitals, and offer *prasāda* (*vibhuti* and *kumkum*) to patients. Those on the verge of death are given *tulsī* leaves and Ganga water even as the workers chant Rāma-nāma.

His Holiness did not ignore the growth of violence and crime with the advance of technology and increasing amenities of life. He had no ready-made solutions to offer but held up good governance—a government by politicians and officials free from corruption and imbued with the true spirit of service—as one of the ways of reducing the crime rate. He attached much importance to individuals serving as models of good conduct in public and private life. He good-humouredly referred to them as "Ahiṁsā soldiers" (The term "soldier", he hastened to clarify, is one who is ready not to fight but die for a good cause.)

As one who was the custodian of Hindu Dharma as the Head of an illustrious maṭha, His Holiness was not very enthusiastic about married women taking up sundry jobs. He was, however, keen that women should marry and lead good family lives. He was painfully aware that the demand for dowry (bride-price) stood in the way of many young girls getting married. He appealed to parents (of boys) not to insist on dowry but settle the marriages if otherwise all things were satisfactory. This, he said, is but a small sacrifice for the cause of upholding our dharma. His appeal to young-men was to observe *kṣātra-dharma*—protecting others from harm.

The Mahāsvāmī thus set much store by self-reliance on the part of individuals in society, who should be inspired by the *puruṣārthas*—dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa. In such a society the temple plays a vital role as the radiating centre of spiritual values supported and sustained by saints and their maṭhas.

14

JIJÑĀSĀDHIKARAṆA
(Second and Third Varṇaka)

N. Veezhinathan

In the first varṇaka it has been shown that the study of the Upaniṣads aided by the *Vedānta-sūtra* is to be undertaken, as it has a theme (*viṣaya*) and a definite aim (*prayojana*). The second varṇaka deals with a possible objection that the study of the Upaniṣads on the basis of the *Vedānta-sūtra* need not be commenced afresh, as their import has already been discussed and ascertained by Jaimini in his *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-sūtra*. To ascertain the import of the Upaniṣads, it is argued, a body of interpretative principles (*nyāyas*) is required. And that has been set forth by Jaimini in his aphorisms beginning with "Then, therefore, the inquiry into the nature of *dharma*."[24] The word "*dharma*", according to Kumārila, stands for deeds prescribed in the Veda. Prabhākara conceives it as the result of sacrificial and other acts—not those acts themselves. He refers to it as "*niyoga*". We shall in the sequel deal with this point in great detail. According to both Kumārila and Prabhākara, the final import of the entire Veda is action. The

---

* Continued from the previous Number.

Upaniṣadic texts, "*ātmetyeva upāsīta*,"[25] "*ātmānaṁ lokam upāsīta*,"[26] enjoin meditation upon the Self. The text, "*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ*,"[27] conveys a mandate that one should attain the knowledge of the Self. The assertive propositions like *tat tvam asi* are subsidiary to the injunctive statements referred to, for they only furnish the subject matter for the meditation enjoined therein. The import of the Upaniṣads too is activity in the form of meditation, and so it falls within the scope of the *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-sūtra* wherein action which is the import of the entire Veda is discussed. The result of this argument is that there is no need for the commencement of the *Vedānta-sūtra* with a view to inquire into the nature of the Self.

In refutation of what has been set forth, it is pointed out that Jaimini has addressed himself to the task of discussing the nature of *dharma* which is something that is yet to be accomplished (*sādhya*), its proof and other details relating to its accomplishment. There is no mention of the nature of the Self, the existent entity (*siddha*) in his aphorisms. The argument that the Upaniṣads enjoin meditation upon the Self, and imparts a mandate to attain its knowledge has no force. In order that the Self may be meditated upon, its true nature should be known; and, it could be known only from the great sayings of the Upaniṣads. The knowledge that is derived from the latter would instantaneously put an end to the distinction between the one who meditates and the object that is meditated upon. The text, "*tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedam yadidam upāsate*,"[28] expresses a categorical denial that the Self could come within the range of meditation. Further, knowledge *per se* depends upon the proof for its rise. It is *pramāṇa-tantra*; unlike sacrificial rites and meditation which depend upon the will of the person concerned, and which are, therefore, *puruṣa-tantra*. Hence knowledge of the Self is not something to be accomplished by human effort. The texts like "*ātmetyeva upāsīta*" are intended to divert one's attention from external objects, and so they do not as Vācaspatimiśra says, have the force of an

injunction; they only have the semblance of an injunction.[29] The Upaniṣads cannot therefore be considered as having action as their final import. It follows that what has been carried out in the *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-sūtra* is a systematic inquiry into the nature of what is to be accomplished (*sādhya*) that is set forth in the ritualistic section of the Veda, and not of the Self, the existent entity (*siddha*) set out in the Upaniṣadic section. Hence a separate text in the form of the *Vedānta-sūtra* identifying the Self as the logical significance of the Upaniṣads is needed. This, in brief, is the content of the second varṇaka.

One objection may be raised at this stage. The study of the *Vedānta-sūtra* may have a theme (*viṣaya*) and an aim (*prayojana*), and their teaching may not have been covered in the *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-sūtra*. Yet, its study could not be commenced in view of the absence of the person qualified to pursue it. The fourth varṇaka is chiefly designed to disprove this objection.

The process of identification of the qualifications which the disciple should possess to pursue Vedāntic study involves the discussion about the meaning of the word "*atha*" in the aphorism. On the strength of its application in the usage of the elders, this word is known to have several senses, viz. auspiciousness (*maṅgala*), commencement (*ārambha*), interrogation (*praśna*), completeness (*kārtsnya*), difference from the sense of what has been stated (*arthāntaratva*), and immediate succession (*ānantarya*). In what sense the word "*atha*" is to be taken, we shall discuss now.

In the first place, it cannot be taken in the sense of auspiciousness. We have earlier said that we have to incorporate in the aphorism, "*atha ataḥ brahmajijñāsā*" the word "*kartavya*" which means "to be undertaken." The sense of the aphorism is "Then, therefore, the inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣads must be pursued with a view to attain the knowledge of the Self." The sense of auspiciousness cannot be related either as an agent (*kartā*) or as an object (*karma*) to the sense of the aphorism, viz. the activity of devoting oneself to Vedāntic study. Hence the word "*atha*" in

the aphorism cannot be taken in the sense of auspiciousness. This is Prakāśātman's view.[30] Vācaspatimiśra holds that the word "*atha*" is not significative of auspiciousness at all. It is only its utterance or its auditory perception that affords one auspiciousness. Since auspiciousness is not the word-meaning, the question of relating it to the sense of the aphorism does not arise at all.[31]

The word "*atha*" cannot be taken in the sense of commencement too. If the word *jijñāsā* in the expression "*brahmajijñāsā*" is taken in its primary sense of desire, then it cannot be commenced at all. For desire in itself carries no implication of a determination or effort to possess or attain. It is an impulse or a conceivable longing for an object which originates in man's nature and drives him toward that object which promises him satisfaction in its attainment. If, on the other hand, the word "*jijñāsā*" is taken in its secondary sense of inquiry, then this sense would be arrived at only when the word "*kartavya*" which means "to be undertaken" or "to be commenced" is incorporated. This we have explained earlier. Since the sense of commencement is known by the inclusion of the word "*kartavya*" itself in the aphorism, there is no need to take the word "*atha*" too in that sense.[32]

Nor can the word "*atha*" be taken as conveying the sense of interrogation, as there is none in the present context who puts a query in an attempt to elicit information. Completeness too cannot be accepted as its sense. For, in that case, the meaning of the aphorism would be that the desire to have the knowledge of the Self, or the inquiry into the nature of the Self is complete. This sense does not contribute anything to the understanding of what is under discussion.[33]

It may be argued that the word "*atha*" can be taken as signifying that a particular meaning is different from that of what has been stated earlier. But it cannot be. When it is said "The world is real; or rather (*atha*) it is non-real", the word "*atha*" no doubt conveys that the sense of the second part of the statement is different from that of the first part. It must, however, be noted that in order to

convey this sense, it must depend upon what has been said earlier. If the word "*atha*" in the aphorism were taken in this sense, then the aphorism would mean that Vedāntic inquiry (*brahma-jijñāsā*) is different from something that has been referred to earlier. But the aphorism wherein this word occurs is the initial one having no statement immediately before it. Hence the sense of difference from what has been said earlier cannot be conveyed by "*atha*". Further, the sense that Vedāntic inquiry is different from something else—the sense that would be suggested by the word "*atha*" —does not have any relation to, or a bearing upon, the subject matter in hand, viz. Vedāntic inquiry. It is the end that is in view, or the purpose to be fulfilled. To realize this, a disciple possessing specific traits is absolutely indispensable. We could identify the specific traits which the disciple should posses only if we take the word "*atha*" in the sense of immediate succession or subsequence (*ānantarya*). We shall explain this in some detail.

When it is said, "one shall take food *after* feeling hungry," the sense of subsequence is conveyed between the state of feeling hungry and the act of taking food. From this is known that the correlate (*pratiyogī*) of subsequence, viz. the person who is hungry is eligible to take food. But when it is said, "One shall take food which is *different* from hunger," the person that is fit to take food is not known. From this it follows that it is only the sense of subsequence (*ānantarya*) that implies the person qualified to fulfil something that is expected, and not the sense of difference from something that is already known (*arthāntaratā*). On this ground it must be held that the meaning of the word "*atha*" in the aphorism is subsequence.

Śaṅkara points out that, even if we take the word "*atha*" as conveying that a particular sense is different from what is known earlier, this sense does not in effect differ from subsequence. To quote: "*pūrvaprakṛtāpekṣāyāśca phalataḥ ānantaryāvyatirekāt.*"[34] The expression, "*pūrvaprakṛtāpekṣā*" is a *bahuvrīhi* compound word in which the component members designate something else. The

significance of the component members is "that which has reference to the sense that is known earlier", and this points to something else, viz. "the sense that is different" (*arthāntara*). It is only by making reference to the sense known earlier that one could have the knowledge that the latter is different from it. This implies the cognition of the antecedent–subsequent relation between the sense known earlier and the one known later. The point that is of impor-tance here is that, since the knowledge that a particular sense is different from the earlier one (*arthāntaratā*) involves reference to the sense of subsequence, it need not be considered as the sense of the word "*atha*".[35]

To sum up: the word "*atha*" in the aphorism conveys the sense of subsequence (*ānantarya*).

We must now identify the factor, in immediate succession to which inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣadic texts is prescribed. In other words, we have to specify the essential qualification which an aspirant must possess, i.e. the qualification which is essential for pursuing the study of Vedānta. Śaṅkara is of the view that neither the inquiry into the import of the ritualistic section of the Veda with the aid of the *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-sūtra*, nor the knowledge of the nature of rituals can be thought of as the precondition for the study of Vedānta. For, an aspirant who is desirous of liberation and who has learnt the Veda along with its auxiliaries can very well embark upon the study of Vedānta even without carrying on an inquiry into the ritualistic section of the Veda, or without acquiring the knowledge of rituals. The inquiry into the import of the ritualistic section of the Veda is not the distinctive cause of the knowledge of the Self, or of the study of Vedānta. It is useful only for ascertaining the nature of rituals. The knowledge of the nature of rituals too is not a prerequisite as it is helpful for the performance of rituals only. The performance of rituals too does not constitute the qualification of an aspirant to pursue Vedāntic study. For, the performance of rituals would lead to the cleansing of heart (*sattva-śuddhi*) through which one

could attain what is known as the "fourfold aid" (*sādhana-catuṣṭaya*) to the study of Vedānta.[36] This we shall explain later.

It may be said that the word "*atha*" is used in the sense of sequence (*krama*). For example, the Vedic text, "One should cut the heart (of the sacrificial animal) first, *then* its tongue, then its sides," refers to the sequence of action. In the same way here too it can be said that there is sequence between inquiry into the nature of rituals and that of the Self. This contention is not correct. In the text cited above, the activity of cutting off of the limbs is to be carried out by a single individual. The limbs cannot be cut off simultaneously, and so an order has to be followed, which is set forth in the text by using the word "*atha*" in the sense of "then". Here, the inquiry into the nature of rituals and that of the Self are not to be pursued by a single individual. Hence, the word "*atha*" cannot be taken in the sense of sequence between the inquiry into the nature of rituals and that of the Self.[37]

A question may be raised as to why the two kinds of inquiry should not be pursued by a single individual. The answer is that, provided there is the subsidiary–principal relation between the two, it could be the case. For example, the *prayāja* sacrifice is the subsidiary one, and the *darśa* sacrifice is the principal. These two are to be performed by a single person. They cannot be performed simultaneously, and so *krama* or sequence is made known between the two. In the same way, the *soma* sacrifice is to be performed only by one who has already performed the *darśa-pūrṇamāsa* sacrifice. Here, the performance of the *darśa-pūrṇamāsa* sacrifice qualifies a person for the performance of the *soma* sacrifice. And so the order of succession is declared between the two. But the two kinds of inquiry do not stand in the relation of the principal and the subordinate to each other; nor is there any evidence to conclude that the pursuit of the inquiry into the nature of rituals makes one competent to inquire into the nature of the Self. Since the two kinds of inquiry are undertaken severally by different individuals, there can be no sequence between the two.[38]

It may be contended that the text of the *Jābāla Upaniṣad*, "Having fulfilled one's obligations relating to the stages of the religious student, of the householder, and of the anchorite, one shall adopt the order of asceticism (to pursue Vedāntic study),"[39] and the smṛti text, "One should seek for liberation, after fulfilling the obligations such as the learning of the Veda by rote, begetting children (for the continuance of the culture of the race), and the performance of rituals to the best of one's ability"[40] state that one should adopt the stage of the ascetic, only after passing through the stages of the religious student and of the householder. It is evident from these texts that it is only a single individual who has to carry out the inquiry into the nature of rituals when he is placed in the stages of the religious student and of the householder, and also the inquiry into the nature of the Self through the study of the Upaniṣads when he is in the sate of the ascetic. What these texts affirm is that the inquiry into the nature of rituals makes one competent to inquire into the nature of the Self. Hence the word "*atha*" is to be taken in the sense of sequence (*krama*).[41]

This contention is not valid. The śruti and smṛti texts cited above are addressed to a person whose mind is not free from selfish concerns for his personal interests. This we know from the subsequent texts of the *Jābāla Upaniṣad* itself. It is stated therein that an aspirant shall become an ascetic from the stage of the religious student itself, provided his mind has become cleansed by the performance of duties in his previous births without any thought of personal advantage. It he discerns that at the stage of the religious student his mind is not guiltless of desire, he must become a householder and perform duties prescribed in regard to this stage of life without any desire for their fruits. It the mind is not still freed from desire, he must become a hermit devoting himself to the duties of that stage; and finally by attaining the "cleansing of the heart", he must become an ascetic and pursue Vedāntic inquiry.[42] From this it is known that the precondition for adopting the stage of the ascetic is the possession of com-

mendable aloofness from selfish desires. It is with this in view the same Upaniṣad states that one shall take up asceticism the very day one becomes detached from the material world.[43] It is known herefrom that one could choose the ascetic stage of life from the stage of the religious student itself if and only if one has attained absolute detachment. Such a one who is not qualified to inquire into the nature of rituals could pursue inquiry into the nature of the Self through the study of the Upaniṣads. It follows that there is no evidence to consider that inquiry into the nature of rituals makes one competent to inquire into the nature of the Self. Since the two kinds of inquiry need not be pursued by a single individual, the word "*atha*" cannot be taken in the sense of sequence between the two.[44]

The Bhedābhedavādin contends that the performance of rituals and the knowledge of the Self together constitute the means to liberation. The inquiry into the nature of rituals, by providing their knowledge, is the means to their performance. The inquiry into the nature of the Self is the means to the knowledge of the Self. The two kinds of inquiry are thus defined by the one end, i.e. liberation (*phālābheda*). In the same way, rituals and the Self share the common characteristic of being the sense of the Veda (*vedārtha*). The two kinds of inquiry have thus a single content (*jijñāsyābheda*). On this ground, it is argued, they are to be pursued by a single individual. The inquiry into the nature of the Self makes one eligible to inquire into the nature of the Self. The word "*atha*" conveys the sequence between the two.[45]

This contention too is untenable. The two forms of inquiry do not have a single aim or a single content. They differ vastly from each other when viewed in relation to their respective fruit and content. In other words, they are marked off by difference in the fruit (*phala-bheda*) and the content (*jijñāsya-bheda*). The inquiry into the nature of rituals gives rise to the knowledge of rituals; and it prompts one to perform the rituals wherefrom results material prosperity (*abhyudaya*). The knowledge of the Self, which

is derived from the inquiry into its nature, gives rise to spiritual felicity (*niśśreyasa*) without depending upon any observance whatsoever. Rituals which constitute the content of the *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-sūtra* do not exist at the time of knowing them. They are to be accomplished by human effort later. The content of the *Vedānta-sūtra* is the Self which, being eternal, exists even at the time of knowing it. Being eternal, it need not be achieved by human effort. Also, the proofs in respect of rituals and the Self differ. The text, "He who is desirous of heaven shall perform the *jyotiṣṭoma* sacrifice," imparts to a person the knowledge of the sacrifice as the means to the desired end only by prompting him towards its performance. The Upaniṣads, on the other hand, merely imparts the knowledge of the Self and does not direct one toward any activity. Thus, rituals and the Self which form the content of the *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-sūtra* and the *Vedānta-sūtra* respectively, differ from each other in respect of their inherent nature, the fruit that ensues from their knowledge, and their proofs. There can, therefore, be no sequence between the inquiry into the nature of rituals and that of the Self. The inquiry into the nature of the Self does not impart eligibility to one to pursue Vedāntic study. The *Uttara-mīmāṁsā-śāstra* functions quite independently of the *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-śāstra*.[46] The word "*atha*" must, therefore, be taken not in the sense of sequence, but in the sense of subsequence. It implies the qualifications that are required of the aspirant to pursue the study of Vedānta.

We shall now set forth the factors that are necessary for the pursuit of the study of Vedānta. In the section entitled *Maitreyī Brāhmaṇa* in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,[47] which contains the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and his wife, Maitreyī, we find that Maitreyī asks Yājñavalkya to teach her the means by which she would become immoral. Yājñavalkya states: "Verily, not for the good of anything is anything dear, but for the good of the Self is it dear. It is the Self that is fit to be realized through the study of Vedānta, reflection, and meditation." After describing the Self

as consciousness, supra-relational, and as one free from all phenomenal elements, Yājñavalkya concludes by saying, "This much indeed is the means to immortality."[48] This section opens with the question relating to the means to immortality and concludes after providing instruction regarding it. From this we gather that desire for immortality or liberation (*mumukṣā*) is a necessary condition to pursue the study of Vedānta.

To the attainment of *mumukṣā*, the three factors known as *nityānitya-vastu-viveka*, *ihāmutrārthabhoga-virāga*, and *śamādi-sādhana-sampat* must be acquired as preliminaries.[49] These three, like *mumukṣā*, are set forth in the Upaniṣads themselves. Of these, the first one is discriminative knowledge that, while the Self alone is real, everything else is non-real. From the texts, "The Self which is consciousness neither comes into existence, nor passes away,"[50] "The Self is real, consciousness, and infinite,"[51] "That which is infinite is immortal,"[52] and "That which is different from the Self is subject to destruction,"[53] it is known that the Self is eternal and that everything else transient.

The second one is detachment from the enjoyment of worldly objects and of heavenly things. The text, "Not for the good of anything is anything dear, but for the good of the Self is it dear,"[54] which we referred to earlier states that everything in the world gets worth because of the Self. From this it is known that the Self is the object of ultimate value by being unconditioned bliss, and one should not long for empirical pleasures. Another text, "After discerning that the objects of enjoyment acquired through action is ephemeral, and after getting convinced that liberation (which is the Self) could not be attained from action, the seeker for liberation shall remain detached from action and its fruit,"[55] stresses the need for absolute detachment.

The third one consists of six characteristics, viz. *śama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titikṣā*, *samādhāna*, and *śraddhā*. Of these, *śama* and *dama* respectively represent the withdrawal of the mind and of the senses from objects other than the study of Vedānta, refle-

ction, and meditation. *Uparati* is abandonment of scripturally enjoined duties relating to the stage of life in which one is positioned with a view to attain the knowledge of the Self. *Titikṣā* is strength and firmness of mind to bear the opposites like heat and cold. *Samādhāna* is persistence in fixing one's attention on the study of Vedānta, reflection, and meditation by averting, through sheer force of will, sleepiness, laziness, and abstractedness. *Śraddhā* or faith is complete trust in the authority of scripture and of the teaching of the preceptor. These are referred to as "mental treasures" (*śamādi-sādhana-sampat*).[56] It may be added here that the Mādhyandina recension of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[57] refers to *śama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titikṣā*, and *samādhāna*, while the Kāṇva recension of it mentions *śraddhā* in the place of *samādhāna*. Grouping the texts in the two recensions together and retaining *samādhāna* as it is, *śraddhā* is added as the sixth one in the series. Thus, we have the six factors as described above. Earlier we have said that a study of the *Maitreyī-Brāhmaṇa* section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* shows that intense longing for liberation is a necessary condition to pursue the study of Vedānta. These four, viz. *nityānitya-vastu-viveka*, *ihāmutrārtha-bhoga-virāga*, *śamādi-sādhana-sampat*, and *mumukṣutva* constitute the "fourfold aid" (*sādhana-catuṣṭaya*) to pursue inquiry into the nature of the Self through the study of the Upaniṣads aided by the *Vedānta-sūtra*. The order of this fourfold equipment as given by Śaṅkara indicates that each serves as the distinct cause of the next one following it.

The acquisition of the "fourfold aid" is possible only when the mind of the aspirant is free from all demerits; and, this would be possible only through performance of duties relating to his stage of life in this birth, or in the previous ones. Śaṅkara makes an emphatic declaration that, even without carrying out an inquiry into the nature of rituals, it is possible for the aspirant to inquire into the nature of the Self and realize it, provided he possesses the "fourfold aid", and not otherwise.

In sum, the word "*atha*" in the aphorism signifies that Vedāntic inquiry could be pursued in immediate succession to the possession of the "fourfold aid" by the aspirant.

The word "*ataḥ*" is intended to dispel the doubt that the acquisition of the "fourfold aid" may not after all be possible. The basis for the rise of such a doubt is that the text, "The fruit of the merit resulting from the performance of the *cāturmāsya* sacrifice is everlasting,"[58] conveys that fruit of ritual-action is not subject to destruction. As a result, the discriminating knowledge, according to which the fruit of action is non-eternal and the Self which is of the nature of liberation (*nityānitya-vastu-viveka*), is not capable of being achieved. In the absence of such a discriminating knowledge, there is no likelihood of one becoming free from desire for fruits of actions (*ihāmutrārtha-bhoga-virāga*). As a consequence of this, the acquiring of the "six treasures" (*śamādi-sampat*) is impossible. Intense longing for liberation (*mumukṣā*) which is of the nature of the Self is inconceivable, as the jīva is different from the Self. It follows that in the absence of the attainment of the "fourfold aid", there is no possibility of pursuing Vedāntic study.

The word "*ataḥ*" signifies the ground to defend that the acquisition of the "fourfold aid" is quite possible. We have earlier referred to the Upaniṣadic texts that convey the non-eternity of the fruits of actions, and also of everything different from the Self. When viewed in relation to these texts, the text that conveys that the fruit of the merit resulting from the performance of the *cāturmāsya* sacrifice is eternal must be understood in the sense that it endures for a longer period of time, and not in the sense that is everlasting, or it continues on and on without end. In other words, what is attributed to the fruit of action is only *relative* and not *absolute*. The justification for adopting this view is that whichever is effected must necessarily be evanescent.

The argument that the jīva cannot seek for liberation which is of the nature of the Self as it is different from it has no force. In the *adhyāsa-bhāṣya* it has been proved that the Self is the essential nature of the jīva, and the jīvahood is superimposed upon it by avidyā. The text, "He who realizes the Self attains (*as it were*) the supreme bliss,"[59] declares that the supreme human end, viz. liberation which consists in remaining in the form of the Self results from the realization of the true nature of the jīva as the Self. Thus, we see that the acquisition of the "fourfold aid" is possible. The word "*atha*" implies it as the essential qualification of the aspirant, and the word "*ataḥ*" confirms it on the basis of reasoning.

We shall now discuss the meaning of the expression "*brahma-jijñāsā*". This is a compound word. When resolved into its component parts, it comes to "*brahmaṇaḥ-jijñāsā*. The word "*jijñāsā*", we have said earlier, consists of the stem "*jñā*" and the suffix "*san*". The suffix secondarily signifies the inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣadic texts. The fruit of the inquiry is conveyed by the stem, "*jñā*". It is intuitive knowledge. The word "*brahmaṇaḥ*" is in the sixth case in the sense of content. The expression "*brahma-jijñāsā*" thus means that the inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣadic texts results in the intuitive knowledge whose content is the non-difference between the Self and the jīva. The non-difference is not conceived as other than the Self and predicated of it. It itself is the Self.[60] The intuitive knowledge is the mental state in the firm of the Self inspired by the reflection of the Self in it. It is termed *jñāna*. It removes the veil of avidyā in the Self, and the latter manifests in its true nature as unconditioned bliss and consciousness. This manifestation is known as *avagati*.

To sum up: the Upaniṣadic texts must be studied with the aid of the *Vedānta-sūtra* by the aspirant who possesses the "fourfold aid" to attain the direct knowledge of his true nature as the Self.

NOTES

24. *Jaimini-sūtra* (hereafter *JS*), 1.1.1.
25. *BU*, 1.4.7.
26. Ibid., 1.4.15
27. Ibid.
28. *Kena Upaniṣad* (hereafter *Ke.U*).
29. *Bhāmatī* (hereafter *Bh.*) ed. with the commentaries *Kalpataru* and *Parimala* (Krshnadas Academy, Varanasi, 2000), pp. 115, 130, 905.
30. *Vivaraṇa* (hereafter *V*) published along with *Pañcapādikā* (hereafter *PP*) and the commentaries *Prabodha-pariśodinī* and *Tātparyadyotinī* and also with the commentaries, *Tātparya-dīpikā* and *Bhāva-prakāśikā* on *V*. (Madras Government Oriental Series, 1958), p. 216.
31. *Bh.*, p. 48.
32. *RP*, p. 27.
33. *Brahma-vidyābharaṇa* (hereafter *BVB*). Commentary on *VSB* by Advaitānanda. 2 Vols. (Sanskrit Education Society, Chennai, 1979), Vol. I, Part I., p. 103.
34. *VSB*, 1.1.1.
35. *RP*, pp. 28–29.
36. Ibid., pp. 29–32.
37. Ibid., pp. 33–34.
38. Ibid., p. 34.
39. *Jābāla Upaniṣad* (hereafter *JU*), 4.
40. *Manu-smṛti*, 6.36.
41. *RP*, p. 34.
42. *JU*, 4.
43. Ibid.
44. *RP*, p. 34.
45. Ibid., pp. 34–35.
46. Ibid., p. 35.
47. *BU*, 4.5. 1–15.

48. Ibid., 4.5.15.
49. *VSB*, 1.1.1, and *RP*, pp. 2, 36.
50. *KU*, 1.2.18.
51. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (hereafter *TU*), 2.1.
52. *CU*, 7.24.1.
53. *BU*, 3.5.1.
54. Ibid., 4.5.6.
55. *MU*, 1.2.120.
56. *VSB*, 1.1.1; *RP*, pp. 36–37.
57. *BU*, 3.4.2; *RP*, p. 2.
58. *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, 2.5.4.1.
59. *TU*, 2.1.
60. *The Vedānta-sāra*, ed. by M. Hiriyanna, Oriental Book Agency, Poona, 1929, p. 23.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

The Ādi Śaṅkara Advaita Research Centre was established in 1975 under the guidance and with the blessings of His Holiness Jagadguru Śrī Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcī Kāmakoṭi Pīṭha. The main objectives of the Centre, among other things, are:

(1) to undertake research for the extension of knowledge in the fields of Natural and Applied Sciences generally, and in particular in the fields of Physics and Metaphysics;

(2) to undertake and carry on scientific study and analysis of the Advaita system of thought as expounded by Ādi Śaṅkara and to conduct research as regards the relevance of his teaching in solving present day ills of mankind;

(3) to undertake, promote, and encourage the study of ancient philosophical systems of India; and

(4) to undertake research for the purpose of establishing norms necessary for realizing the divinity in man through moral, spiritual, and cultural infrastructure.

THE VOICE OF ŚAṄKARA (ŚAṄKARA BHĀRATĪ) is the half-yearly journal published by the Centre in pursuance of its main objectives.

The following are its office-bearers:

President

C.N. Ramachandran

Vice-Presidents

T.K. Ramanakumar
M. Balaji
S. Subramanian
R. Kalidasan

Secretary

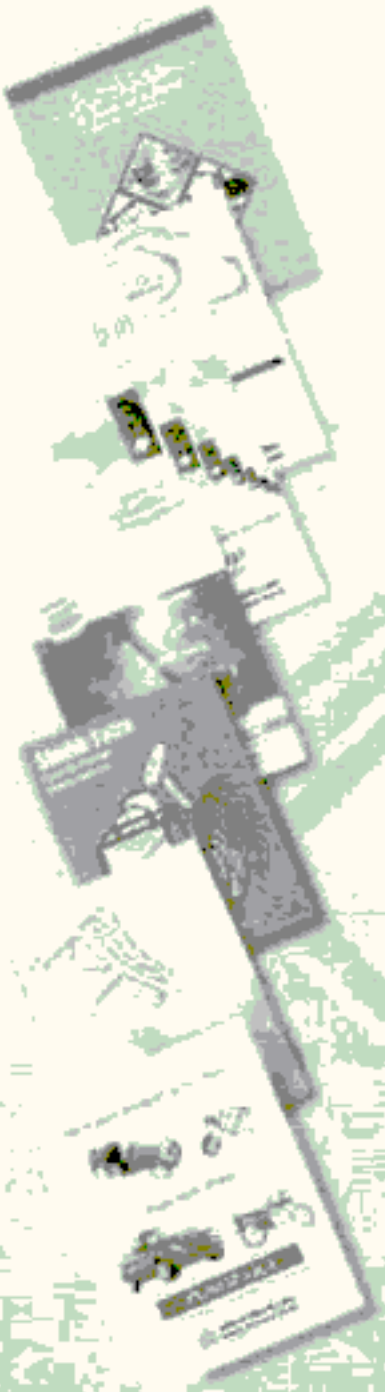
G. Natarajan

Joint Secretary - cum - Treasurer

V. Kamakoti

Editor: R. Balasubramanian. Published by: C.N. Ramachandran on behalf of Ādi Śaṅkara Advaita Research Centre, 8-A, Bishop Wallers Avenue (West), Near C.I.T. Colony, Mylapore, Chennai - 600 004. Printed by: V. Seshachalam, Avvai Achukkoodam, Chennai - 13.

The dream-come-true loans.
Simple to acquire
Superior schemes.



Retail Gem
A gem of a loan for growing retailers.

Subha Gruha
The most hassle-free housing loans at most affordable interest rates and FREE accident insurance.

Akshay
Quick loans in emergencies against your life insurance polices.

Vidya Jyothi
An Educational Loan Scheme that empowers the young minds.

Shubh Yatra
Go places and travel around the world with the help of Shubh Yatra scheme.

Clean Loan Scheme
A loan scheme that understands your domestic and financial requirements.

Pushpaka
The 'Easy-to-pick-up' Vehicle Finance Scheme.

For more details, contact your nearest IOB branch

इण्डियन ओवरसीज़ बैंक
Indian Overseas Bank
Good people to grow with
Central Office : 763, Anna Salai, Chennai-600 002.
Visit us at: www.iob.com

संसाराध्वनि तापभानुकिरणप्रोद्भूतदाहव्यथा-
खिन्नानां जलकाङ्क्षया मरुभुवि भ्रान्त्या परिभ्राम्यताम् ।
अत्यासन्नसुधाम्बुधिं सुखकरं ब्रह्माद्वयं दर्शय-
न्त्येषा शङ्करभारती विजयते निर्वाणसन्दायिनी ॥

saṁsārādhvani tāpabhānukiraṇaprodbhūtadāhavyathā-
khinnānāṁ jalakāṅkṣayā marubhuvi bhrāntyā paribhrāmyatām
atyāsannasudhāmbudhiṁ sukhakaraṁ brahmādvayaṁ
darśayant-
yeṣā śaṅkarabhāratī vijayate nirvāṇasandāyinī.

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.