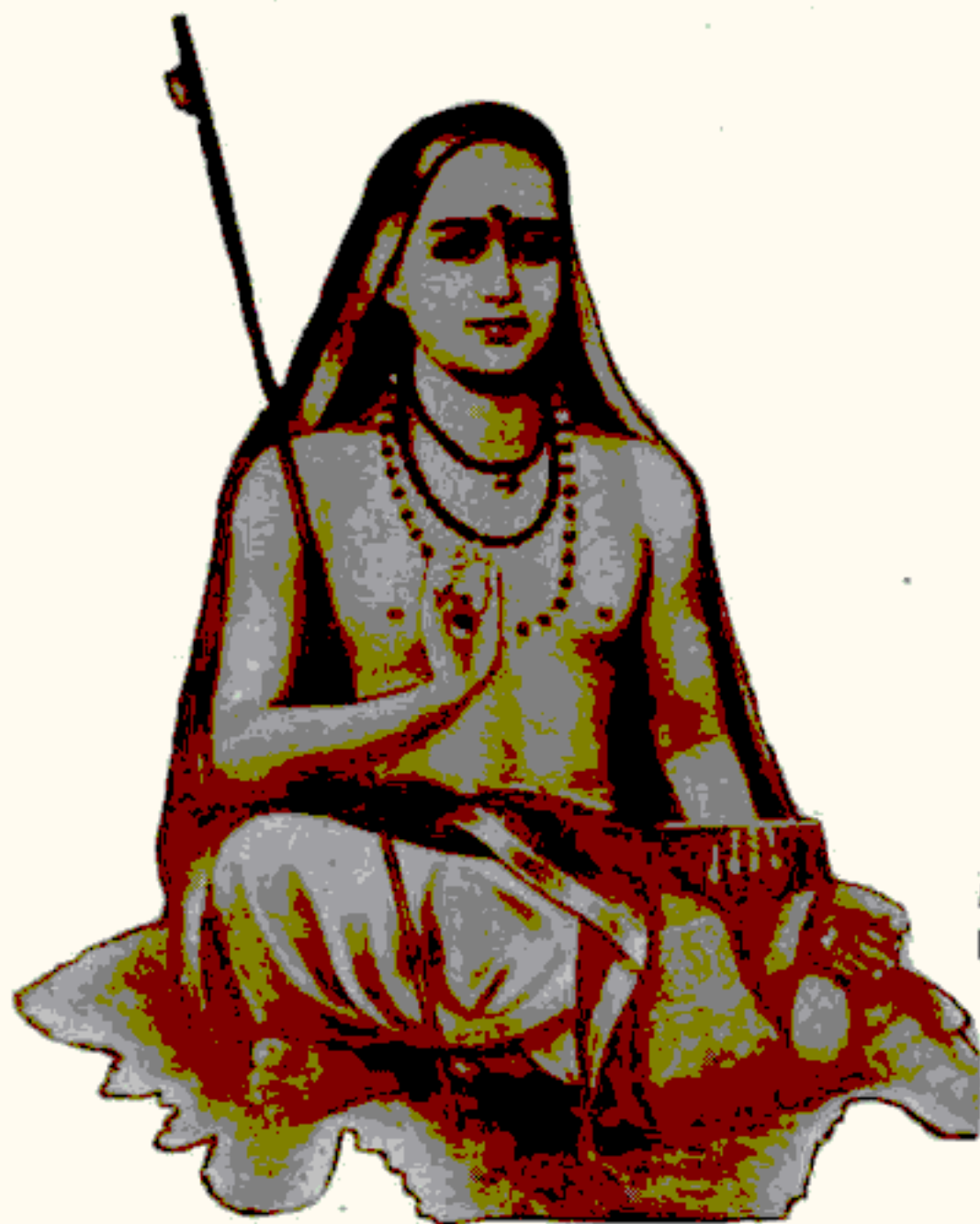


The VOICE of ŚĀṆKARĀ

śaṅkara-bhāratī



Editor :
R. Balasubramanian

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Editor

R. Balasubramanian

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HOMAGE TO ŚAṄKARA

[200]

आशैलादुदयात् तथास्तगिरितो भास्वद्-यशोरश्मिभिः
 व्याप्तं विश्वम्-अनन्धकारमभवद्-यस्य स्म शिष्यैरिदम् ।
 आराद्-ज्ञान-गभस्तिभिः प्रतिहतश्चन्द्रायते भास्करः
 तस्मै राङ्गकरभानवे तनुमनोवाग्भिर्नमः स्यात्सदा ॥

*āśailādudayāt tathāstagirito bhāsvad-yaśoraśmibhiḥ
 vyāptam viśvam-anandhakāram-abhavadyasya sma śiṣyairidam,
 ārād-jñānagabhastibhiḥ pratihataś-candrāyate bhāskaraḥ
 tasmai śaṅkarabhānave tanumanovāgbhir-namaḥ syātsadā.*

Obeisance with body, mind, and speech be to the glorious Sun that is Śrī Śaṅkara; struck back by the lustre of whose knowledge the brilliance of the solar orb was rendered dim like the moon, and the effulgent renown of whose disciples enveloped (all the continents) from the mountains of the Far East to those of the Far West, thereby ridding the universe of darkness.

— Sureśvarācārya

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वक्तारमासाद्य यमेव नित्या
 सरस्वती स्वार्थसमन्वितासीत् ।
 निरस्त-दुस्तर्क-कलङ्क-पङ्का
 नमामि तं शङ्करमर्चिताङ्घ्रिम् ॥

*vaktāramāsādya yameva nityā
 sarasvatī svārthasamanvitāsīt,
 nirasta-dustarka-kalaṅka-paṅkā
 namāmi taṁ śaṅkaram-arcitāṅghrim.*

I bow to Śrī Śaṅkara, whose feet were worshipped by all, and on obtaining whom as the exponent, the eternal speech, namely, the Veda, became possessed of its true import, as from it the fallacious reasoning, consisting, metaphorically, of dirt and loose clay, has been removed.

— Sarvajñātmamuni, *Śaṅkṣepa-śārīraka*, 1.7

THUS SPAKE ŚAṆKARA

R. Balasubramanian

Doing Philosophy from the Advaita Perspective

A Western Philosopher interviews Ādi Śaṅkara in a conference hall. The second part of the interview is given below. This imaginary dialogue shows how Śaṅkara would have responded to the questions, doubts, and arguments of a contemporary Western philosopher, highlighting some aspects of the philosophia perennis of Advaita.

Philosopher: Let me first of all offer my *praṇāms* to you, revered Ācārya. I extend a hearty welcome to you and the scholars assembled here. I would like to begin my questions in the light of the views expressed by the Ācārya earlier. His Holiness told us that in the Indian tradition philosophy and religion are closely connected with each other and that philosophy in India, as it is in the West, is essentially of the nature of inquiry (*vicāra*) in spite of its close association with religion. I have two questions with regard to inquiry for which I seek your explanation. Inquiry presupposes a subject who undertakes

the inquiry, that is to say, inquiry requires an inquirer. The inquirer is usually called the subject or the knower. If so, who is the knower? Again, inquiry means inquiry into something, that is to say, there must be a subject matter which is inquired into. Usually, the subject matter is referred to as the object. In short, inquiry implies both the subject and the object, or the knower and the known. I, therefore, request you, revered Ācārya, to explain to us the subject and the object of inquiry.

Śaṅkara: I very much appreciate the questions you have raised. I agree with you that without clarifying the subject who undertakes the inquiry and the object which is inquired into, we cannot make any sense of the notion of inquiry. The subject who undertakes the inquiry is the *jīva*. In the present context, by "*jīva*" I mean the human being who is endowed with the power of reasoning. I have to restrict the scope of "*jīva*" to the human being. The reason for this is obvious. Any living being, such as a blade of grass and a plant, an insect, a reptile, and an animal, and so on, is a *jīva*; however, none of them has the power of reasoning. It is well known that all these living beings function and survive through the marvellous power of instinct. It is only with the advent of the mind in the evolutionary process that there is the emergence of the human being. The two important characteristics associated with the mind of the human being are the power of reasoning and of will or determination to put into action what has been known and desired as good. I would like to draw your attention in this connection to the well-known definition of human being as a rational animal. According to Aristotle, as all of you know, while the term "animal" is the genus, "rationality" is the differentia of the human being. The work of the differentia in this case is to differentiate the human being from other animals. It follows that, while all human beings are animals, we cannot reverse this statement and say that all animals are human beings. This idea can be differently stated by using the term

"jīva". While all human beings are jīvas, not all jīvas are human beings. I have drawn attention to this important distinction in my commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. I have stated that the human being has been assigned a special importance among all beings created by God due to two powers which a human being possesses: these two powers are the capacity to pursue knowledge and the ability to perform consciously chosen and deliberately willed action. This is what I have stated as *jñāna-karma-adhikāra*. So the jīva is the inquiring subject. What, then, is the object which is inquired into? The entire external world conditioned by space, time, and causality becomes the object of inquiry. The jīva is interested in finding out the truth about this world in which it lives, moves, and transacts its daily business of life. Since every object known to us in our daily life is produced by a cause, then we are led to think that the entire world, the world taken in its totality, must have a cause; and such a cause of the entire world cannot be an ordinary cause like clay and a potter, but an *extra-ordinary* cause capable of producing by itself the entire world. So, the jīva is in search of this *extra-ordinary* cause of the world. As you know, such a cause has been referred to in different philosophical traditions as the First Cause, the Unmoved Mover, the Creator-God, and so on. In the Chinese tradition, it is called the Tao. The Vedāntins call it Brahman or Īśvara. The point to be noted here is that philosophical inquiry into the nature of the external world involves the application of the principle of causality with the hope that reason will be able to unravel the mystery of the world. While some traditions in India as well as in the West hold that reason can and does provide the answer to this mystery, the Vedānta tradition holds that it is only through scripture or revelation that we can know the First Cause of the world. In addition to the external world, there is the need to inquire into the nature and constitution of the jīva who is the inquiring subject. We find it difficult to

answer the question, "Who am I?" in the same way as we find it difficult to answer the question about the cause of the world. In fact, there are some Vedāntins in the tradition who would insist on taking up the problem of the jīva first before trying to understand the mystery of the world. The jīva is the micro-world whereas the external world is the macro-world. It will be easier to start with what is small in scale than to burden oneself with what is big. It means that the jīva who is the inquiring subject becomes the object of inquiry.

P: Please allow me, revered Gurudev, to make an observation at this stage. What I understand from your explanation is that the role as well as the status of the jīva is the problematic of the entire philosophical investigation, because the jīva is both the subject of inquiry and the object of inquiry. I would like to know whether this is possible at all, because one and the same entity cannot, at the same time, be both the knower and the known, the subject and the object.

Ś: I am happy that you have correctly identified the difficulty that arises as a result of making one and the same jīva both the knower and the known. If we pay attention to the constitution of the jīva, it will be possible for us to answer the question you have raised. Let me, therefore, give you a brief account of the constitution of the jīva. According to the Vedānta tradition, the jīva is a complex entity consisting of Spirit and matter, or the Self and the body. Spirit or the Self is called "Ātman". Though the term "body" is used in the singular number, really it stands for three bodies, what we call *śarīra-traya*. The three bodies are the external, gross body called *sthūla-śarīra*, the internal, subtle body called *sūkṣma-śarīra*, and the causal body called *kāraṇa-śarīra*. These three bodies are telescopically arranged, as it were, one inside the other. Ordinarily, everyone is quite aware of the external gross body which can be seen, touched, and so on. The other two bodies which are inside and subtle cannot be directly seen; they are known only through

inference. All these three bodies which are material (*jaḍa*) are different from the Spirit or Self which is of the nature of consciousness. Like light which reveals itself and other objects, even so the Self which is of the nature of consciousness reveals itself and also reveals the material components with which it is associated during the empirical life of the *jīva*. That is why we speak of it as *svapṛakāśa*. It means that in every *jīva* there is consciousness on the one hand, and what-is-not-consciousness on the other. While consciousness is the revealer or the knower, the material outfit or the body in the constitution of the *jīva* is the known. What is true of the physical body is equally true of all the objects of the external world, which are also material. Just as the body is the object which is known, even so the physical objects of the external world are also known. It means that according to the Vedānta tradition there is the dichotomy between the Spirit and matter, between the Self and the not-Self. I do not want to go into further details about this at this stage. The point to be noted here is that it is consciousness in every *jīva* which plays the role of the subject or the knower whereas all other objects which are material and which are transcendent to consciousness are the known.

P: It seems to me that there is one more aspect that has been left out with regard to the problem of inquiry. May I, revered Ācārya, seek your explanation for that?

Ś: Yes. What is that?

P: What is the nature or kind of reasoning that is adopted for the purpose of inquiry in the Vedānta philosophy?

Ś: The Vedānta philosophy makes use of two kinds of reasoning depending upon the problem to be analysed. One is inferential reasoning in different forms. The Vedānta system generally follows the Nyāya system in this regard. I repeat "generally", which means not always. In addition to the standard forms of inferential reasoning, the Vedānta system makes use of comparison or *upamāna*, postulation or *arthāpatti*, and non-

cognition or *anupalabdhi* as the means of knowing. It also makes use of philosophical reasoning known as the logic of *anvaya-vyatireka* for the purpose of distinguishing Reality from the empirical phenomena. Without going into details, I may explain this method of reasoning in a simple way. It makes use of the distinction between the invariable and the variable factors. That which is uniformly or invariably present in all our experience is said to be *anvaya*; and what is sometimes present and sometimes absent is said to be *vyatireka*. Following this method of reasoning, Advaita holds that the Self or consciousness which is uniformly present in all states of experience is the Reality, whereas the empirical phenomena which appear and disappear from time to time, or from context to context, are appearances. I am sure that in the Western philosophy also such a kind of philosophical reasoning must have been used by philosophers.

- P: Yes, we do. We have the closest analogue to what you have mentioned. One of the inductive methods formulated by J.S. Mill is known as the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference. This method is substantially the same as the one you have mentioned just now as the method of *anvaya-vyatireka*. This method is made use of for discovering and identifying the cause of a phenomenon.
- Ś: I would like to call your attention to an important truth that emerges from our discussion. Philosophical problems are the same throughout the world. Generally speaking, problems are problems wherever they occur and are identified. We must note in this context that what is true of science is equally true of philosophy. We do not speak of Indian physics or American physics. Physics is physics, and qualifying it with any geographical adjective is only to show that the problems in physics are discussed in the same way in every place. In the same way, even though we speak of Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, Greek philosophy, and so on, it is only for the

purpose of identifying the problems in the geographical contexts so that we may look into the problems as problems ignoring the context or the situation in which they have been discussed. Just to mention two examples, the problems discussed by Socrates and Plato are discussed at great length in Indian philosophy; and the categories listed and analysed by Aristotle are to be found in the Vaiśeṣika system.

P: I am, indeed, happy to hear this from you, revered Ācārya. I have still one difficulty with regard to the analysis of the constitution of the jīva given by you. The jīva, as stated by you, is both the subject and the object. I presume that consciousness is the revealing principle through which the material component or outfit is known and thereby becomes the object of knowledge. You mentioned earlier that an important characteristic of the human being is the power of reasoning and that it is associated with the mind. Also, it is accepted that the mind is a cognitive instrument. If so, it is also the knower. Then, is it the case that there are two knowers in the jīva, one being the consciousness and the other being the mind?

Ś: This is a good question. Strictly speaking, consciousness alone is the revealing principle, and so it alone deserves to be called the knower or the seer. Though it is capable of revealing on its own, still in some cases it functions through the mind which serves as the physical medium. Consciousness directly reveals the mind and its changing states; and then by casting its reflection on the mind, it helps the mind to function as a cognitive instrument. It must be noted that the power of cognition associated with the mind is borrowed from consciousness. It will be helpful in this connection to consider the example of the moon. It is well known that the moon which has no light of its own is able to provide light for us and illumine objects in the night by borrowing the light from the sun. The same is the case with regard to the mind. So, for all practical purposes, we say that the mind is a cognitive instrument associated with

four basic functions of awareness, determination, memory, and self-consciousness. All the functions of the mind can be reduced to these four. When the mind performs these four functions, it is called *manas*, *buddhi*, *citta*, and *ahaṅkāra*, respectively. One has to go deep into all these four functions for understanding the importance of the mind in the human constitution.

P: Thank you very much, Gurudev, for the elucidation you have given. May I ask you to explain at this stage the relation between the micro-world and the macro-world? Further, relation implies two things which are related, which are called *relata*. It means there is dualism whereas Advaita upholds non-dualism. If so, how does the Vedānta tradition overcome the dualism of these two worlds?

Ś: The distinction between the micro-world and the macro-world is only for the purpose of analysis. Ether, air, fire, water, and earth which are the fundamental elements called *pañca-bhūtas* constitute the macro-world and the micro-world. But these two worlds are studied from two different standpoints. We adopt the objective method when we study the macro-world whereas we follow the subjective method in our study of the micro-world. Through these methods we want to find out the reality behind these two worlds. The objective approach in which we make use of the cause-effect inquiry called *kārya-kāraṇa-vicāra* helps us to establish Brahman as the cause of the world. It is Brahman through *māyā* that appears as the world of space, time, and causality. It is through Brahman that the world originates; it is through Brahman that the world exists and functions; and it is in Brahman that the world finally gets dissolved. While Brahman which is the cause or ground is the reality, the world which has dependent origination and existence is said to be an appearance of Brahman. In the Vedānta tradition, we use terms such as *mithyā*, *kalpita*, *vaitathya*, and so on to convey the sense of appearance. So the everyday world

conditioned by space, time, and causality is an appearance, or false, or illusory only in the sense that it has a dependent existence in the same way as a pot made of clay has a dependent existence on its cause, viz. clay. The important point to be borne in mind here is that the world does not exist independently of Brahman and that Brahman is not exhausted by the world. A person who sees the world does not see Brahman which remains behind it, because his vision is limited. On the contrary, one who realizes Brahman knows the entire manifested world. To such a one, the entire world is Brahman. Just as a person who knows clay can claim that all objects made of clay are known to him, even so a person who realizes Brahman can claim that he knows the entire world. In the subjective approach for the purpose of finding out the reality behind the *jīva*, the Vedānta system undertakes the analysis of the three bodies called *śarīra-traya-vicāra* and shows that the Self or Ātman is the reality of the *jīva*. After pursuing the twofold methods, it synthesizes them and shows that Brahman and Ātman are not two different realities, but one and the same reality called by two different names contextually. It is here that the Vedānta system is guided by the scriptural text called the *mahāvākya*, which conveys the identity of Brahman and Ātman. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Uddālaka repeats the *mahāvākya* nine times in the course of his instruction to his son, Śvetaketu. This is not the only *mahāvākya* which conveys this identity. There are other *mahāvākyas* as well. It is not necessary to go into the details of these *mahāvākyas*. The point to be noted here is that the Vedānta system initially begins with the dualistic standpoint with which we are familiar in our day-to-day life. Every human being thinks that he is limited and finite, transacting all kinds of activities in the external world, which is different from him. This dualistic attitude in our daily life is quite natural to all of us. There is the subject-object dualism in epistemology. There is the cause-effect

dualism in metaphysics. There is the dualism of good and bad in ethics. There is the dualism of the worshipper and the worshipped in religion. The entire philosophical analysis proceeds on the basis of this initial assumption of dualism. However, a systematic and deeper analysis of the external world on the one hand, and of the *jīva* who is the inquiring subject on the other, reveals to us that the *Ātman* which is the reality of the *jīva* is none other than Brahman which is the reality of the external world. This is the message that is conveyed by the oft-quoted statement, "*jīvo brahmaiva, na parah*". Thus, Advaita overcomes the dualism of the macro- and micro-worlds and establishes the oneness of the reality.

P: Still, the Advaita position is not free from dualism.

Ś: How?

P: Even though there is no dualism of micro-world and macro-world, there is the dualism between the object that exists and appears to us in our daily experience and the reality behind it. You said that the *Ātman* or the Self is the reality of the *jīva* who is the individual being functioning in the world. In the same way, Brahman is the reality of the external world of space, time, and causality. It means that in each case there is the dualism between reality and appearance, even though you may hold that the *Ātman* is identical with Brahman. This is obviously a case of dualism. I would like to know how you overcome this dualism.

Ś: I should say that once again you have raised an important point. Before I give the answer to the problem you have raised, I would like to draw your attention to the theory of two worlds formulated by modern science. We are told that the world that we experience in our daily life is one thing and the reality behind it is something totally different from it. You must have known Eddington's example of the two tables. There is the familiar table which we see, touch, push, and lift in our day-

to-day-life. Such a table is said to be a material entity characterized by many qualities; and we know these qualities. But modern science tells us that the table is a pocket of energy and that it has no colour, shape, solidity, and so on. It means that there is the distinction between the reality behind the table and the table which appears to us. When we handle the familiar table, is there any awareness of the reality behind it? The common man will be puzzled if he is told that there are two tables—the "real" table which modern science speaks of and the transactional table which is its appearance. Nevertheless, we say that it is a great insight on the part of modern science to have made such a distinction between reality and appearance with regard to a familiar object such as the table. What is true of the table is true of the entire world which is the totality of objects. There is no dualism between reality and appearance. What we call appearance is not an entity which exists independently of the reality. It has a dependent existence; and what has a dependent existence cannot be reckoned as one entity in addition to the reality. Consider the familiar case of clay-pot relation. In this case, clay is the reality of which pot is an appearance. It is clay that appears, under certain circumstances, as a pot. Pot has no existence of its own, no revelation of its own, and no desirable nature of its own. It has borrowed all these three from clay. All that it can claim as its own is its particular configuration (*rūpa*) and the name (*nāma*) by which it is identified. In the Advaita tradition we say that the pot which is the effect is *kalpita*, which means an appearance whereas clay which is its cause and support is the *adhiṣṭhāna*. The relation between reality and appearance is conveyed by the principle, "*kalpitasya adhiṣṭhānameva svarūpam*." This is how the monistic idealists even in the West explain the relation between appearance and reality. I am sure you are familiar with the idealist standpoint in the West.

- P: Yes, revered Ācārya. The great metaphysical tradition initiated by Parmenides explains the relation between Being, which is the sole reality, and the world of becoming known through the senses as that between (the way of) "Truth" and (the way of) "Seeming". Parmenides maintains that Being is unborn and imperishable, whole and unique, and immovable. If I understand correctly the Advaita position, it is the same as Parmenides' philosophy. The Parmenidean tradition which goes back to fifth century B.C. is upheld by some great metaphysicians in the West in our own times.
- Ś: What you say about the Parmenidean tradition is quite interesting.
- P: You made a reference to the five fundamental elements starting from ether, which constitute the micro-world and the macro-world. What worries me is the term "fundamental". If these five elements are fundamental, then they would have no cause, no beginning, and no end with the result that they would be eternal. This again will militate against the non-dualistic position of Advaita. I request you, Gurudev, to clarify the position.
- Ś: When I said that ether, air, fire, water, and earth are the fundamental elements or *pañca-bhūtas*, it was not in the sense that these elements are without a cause or beginningless. What I meant was that they are the basic elements constituting the mind-sense-body complex of the *jīva* on the one hand, and the physical world on the other. They have a beginning, and their ultimate source is Brahman, the supreme reality.
- P: How is it possible for Brahman which is one, homogeneous, and immutable to be the cause or source of the elements, which are material by their very nature? What I argue first of all is that the nature of Brahman is such that it is not fit enough to be the cause of anything. And then, since Brahman is consciousness by its very nature, it cannot be the cause of anything which is material.

- Ś: The objections that you have raised are quite relevant, and the Vedānta tradition has anticipated these objections. Advaita holds that Brahman by itself is not the cause of the elements, but Brahman associated with māyā is the cause of the elements. It means that, when we consider the causality of Brahman, we have to bring in the mysterious entity called māyā. It is difficult to give a rational explanation of the relation between Brahman and māyā. Also, it is difficult to spell out the nature of māyā. All that we can say on the basis of scriptural authority is that māyā is the power or śakti which is capable of projecting the physical world made up of the five elements. In fact, the relation between Brahman and the world is through this mysterious power of māyā. When Brahman is associated with māyā, then it is called Īśvara or the Creator-God. Though we speak of Brahman *and* Īśvara, it does not mean that they are two different entities. If this were the case, then there will be the problem of dualism. Following the scriptural authority, Advaita speaks about two perspectives through which we have to understand Brahman. There is first of all the cosmic perspective called *saprapañca* view in which we relate Brahman with the world as its source and support. It is only by presupposing māyā that we relate Brahman and the world. As I told you earlier, māyā itself is a mysterious entity, and its relation with Brahman is equally mysterious with the result that the entire manifested world is also mysterious. That the existence of the world is a mystery, is the view held not only by mystics, but also by philosophers with a mystical bent of mind in all the traditions. I am sure, you must have known this.
- P: Yes, Gurudev, I do know. I could quickly recall in this connection the name of Wittgenstein who wrote about the mystery of the world.
- Ś: There is another perspective known as acosmic or *niṣprapañca* view. According to this view, all that exists is only Brahman, and nothing else beside it. There is nothing in Brahman, and

so it is said to be *nirguṇa*, devoid of all categories of understanding. So the distinction between Brahman and Īśvara must be understood perspectively.

P: A beginner will have difficulty in understanding the acosmic point of view.

Ś: Yes, you are right. That is why we always teach Advaita starting from the cosmic point of view making use of cause-effect inquiry or *kārya-kāraṇa-vicāra* which helps us to connect the world with Brahman. It is only when the student understands the problematic of the cause-effect relation and is mentally prepared to visualize Brahman as transcendent to the world, we introduce the acosmic or *nīsprapañca* view. The transition is from the known to the unknown.

P: Once again I go back to your reference to the five basic elements. I would like to know whether these basic elements straight away go to the composition of the world.

Ś: No, that is not possible. The Vedānta tradition speaks about the combination in a particular way of the elements with one another. The process of combination is technically called *pañcīkaraṇa* or quintuplication. I do not propose to go into the details of this process now. I don't know whether you have heard about a composition of mine called *Pañcīkaraṇa*. In this small tract I have elucidated the process of quintuplication showing the parallelism between the collective (*samaṣṭi*) and individual (*vyāṣṭi*) points of you. The ultimate objective in this process is to bring out the identity of the jīva and Brahman as taught in the *mahāvākyas* like *tat tvam asi*. Copies of this book are available in print.

P: I confess I have not heard about this work. I shall buy a copy and read it with the due attention it deserves. May I ask you, revered Ācārya, another question?

Ś: Yes, you are most welcome.

P: Is it possible for one to straight away undertake the study of the Vedānta texts?

Ś: It is not a question of possibility. I would say that the study of the Vedānta texts is open to everyone and that any person can buy a copy of a Vedānta text and try to read it, but it may not make any sense to a beginner.

P: May I know the reason for that?

Ś: The answer is simple. The beginner may not have the necessary mental set for such a study. What is required is the fulfilment of the course requirement. You know why there is insistence on course requirement in your University set-up.

P: Yes, Gurudev. We will not permit a student to take up a higher course unless he or she has studied the basic course and has shown competence for the higher course.

Ś: The same logic holds good here also. It is not mere language competence that is called for as a preparation for the study of a Vedāntic text. In addition to this, the student should fulfil four basic requirements.

P: May I request you, revered Ācārya, to explain those requirements?

Ś: Generally speaking, these four requirements which are called *sādhana-catustaya* have a bearing on the mental frame of the student. There are four Ds in these requirements. They are: discrimination, detachment, discipline, and deep desire for spiritual aspiration. One should first of all be able to discriminate the eternal from the ephemeral. This is what is traditionally called *nityānitya-vastu-viveka*. This requirement is concerned with the value system in our life. You know that what we prefer, care for, and cherish as a value at one time may not be interesting to us, and cease to be a value. There is no need for me to illustrate this point which is quite obvious. On the contrary, there are some values which we care for all

the time. It means that in our day-to-day-life we make a distinction between values which are permanent and those which are impermanent. The Vedānta tradition has formulated the first requirement to ensure the right beginning for pursuing the Vedāntic studies. As we grow, we become mature leading to changes in our value system. A person who has some preunderstanding of the value system through the initial formal study of the Vedas may be interested in deepening this ability to discriminate between a higher value and a lower one, between that which is permanent or *nitya* and that which is impermanent or *anitya*. One who has this ability for discrimination is eligible for the study of the Vedāntic text, and to him the study will be profitable, for he does not settle down on anything less than Brahman which is the eternal value.

P: I appreciate the importance of this requirement.

Ś: The second requirement is closely connected with the first one. It says that one who is interested in the study of the Vedāntic text should develop the spirit of detachment. It is well known that we are drawn towards the external objects through our senses and derive sensuous pleasures from them. Also, it is common knowledge that we are not able to have stable or abiding satisfaction from them. Objects come and go, and so the pleasures derived from them come and go. A serious student of the Vedāntic texts should overcome attachment to objects and their enjoyment not only here in this life, but also hereafter. In short, one should develop the spirit of detachment. This is known as *ihāmutra-phala-bhoga-tyāga*. Have you not come across such a requirement for spiritual pursuits in the Western tradition?

P: Yes, Gurudev. Meister Eckhart, for example, makes a distinction between the inner-man and the outer-man. He holds that God himself is separate and detached from every being, every object. If God himself is pure detachment, then the way to God, according to Eckhart, is the way of detachment.

Ś: I am happy to hear this.

P: What is the third requirement, Gurudev?

Ś: Just now you used the expression "inner-man". To become an inner-man, one should cultivate six virtues. These virtues are so valuable that they are called "treasures". Collectively, they are called *ṣaṭ-sampat*. These disciplinary virtues are control of the mind, control of the senses, renunciation, endurance, concentration, and faith in the scriptural texts.

P: The virtues you have mentioned, Gurudev, reminds me of the discipline prescribed by Eckhart. Please tell us the final requirement.

Ś: It is the deep-rooted longing for liberation. When the mind is emptied of all the things of the world, its longing for liberation is virtually fulfilled.

P: Thank you, revered Ācārya, for explaining to us in detail the preliminary requirements for the study of the Vedānta texts. I hope I am right if I say that the preliminary requirements insist on the importance of a regulated and disciplined mind on the one hand, and a proper value system on the other. If I am wrong in my summary statement, please correct me, Gurudev.

Ś: You are absolutely right. I would like to draw your attention to the opening aphorism of the *Brahma-sūtra* in this connection. The entire text of the *Brahma-sūtra* composed by the most revered Bādarāyaṇa presents in a logical form the teachings of the Upaniṣads. In the first sūtra or aphorism, Bādarāyaṇa summarizes the preliminary requisites in two words, viz. *atha* which means "then", and *ataḥ* which means "therefore". He maintains that the inquiry into Brahman should be undertaken by a student only after fulfilling the preliminary requirements. The word "then" conveys the fourfold requirement called *sādhana-catustaya*. I have elaborated these conditions earlier in my talk. The next word "therefore" purports to convey the

sense of reason. Since all values—including those produced by rituals and other karmas—other than the realization of Brahman/Ātman are ephemeral, one should inquire into Brahman/Ātman and attain Brahman-knowledge or Brahman-realization. A sūtra is a brief, concise, and unambiguous statement conveying the essence of a topic taken up for discussion. And so, Bādarāyaṇa has formulated not only the preliminary conditions which a beginner has to fulfil before undertaking the study of a Vedānta text, but also the reason therefor in the context of the value system.

- P: Thank you, revered Ācārya, for enlightening us by inviting our attention to the opening aphorism of the *Brahma-sūtra*. May I, with your permission, once again refer to the objective approach you mentioned earlier? You told us that the Vedānta tradition makes use of the principle of causality in its inquiry into the macro-world for the purpose of discovering the reality behind it. It will be helpful to us, Gurudev, if you explain in some detail how this principle helps us to discover the reality behind the physical world made up of the five elements.
- Ś: Yes, I will. Usually, we explain every phenomenon in the world in terms of its cause, because we know that every object comes into existence from its cause. It is for this reason that both scientists and philosophers attempt to explain every object in terms of its cause. For example, when we see a pot, we know that clay is its cause. What we call clay is only a particular formation or configuration of earth. It is not necessary that earth should be only in the form of clay. It can be in many other forms. The point that we have to bear in mind is that earth is made up of molecules and still finer particles which are called atoms. The Vaiśeṣika philosopher gives detailed explanation as to how the atoms of earth combine with one another and give rise to the solid stuff called earth. The basic element known as earth originates from its cause. The Vedānta tradition holds that water is the cause of earth and that fire

is the cause of water. This process of going backwards from one element to another will finally lead to Brahman as the ultimate cause or ground of the world. As I told you earlier, Brahman in association with *māyā* is the cause of the world. I am not considering in the present context the difficulties inherent in the causal explanation of the world. It must be noted here is that we are compelled to postulate the existence of the ultimate cause, or ground, for the entire manifested world. What we notice in our day-to-day experience is the manifested world which is a totality of objects which are limited or conditioned by space and time. The question whether space and time are ultimate, or whether each of them has a cause, and so on, though important, need not engage our attention in this context. So I just ignore this important question now, and stress only the need to accept the First Cause, or what the tradition prefers to call the ground or *adhiṣṭhāna* for the manifested world. Brahman which remains hidden in the manifested world is not experienced when we cognize the world through our senses. The finite mind which functions through reason is not able to have the vision of Brahman which is not a substance, or a quality, or any other category by which the things of the world are characterized. That is why we say that Brahman, though immanent in the world, can be intuited only through the mystical experience which is generated by scriptural revelation. This is how the Vedānta tradition explains the need for the principle of causality and its limitation. Though Brahman is transempirical, we try to explain its status and role through empirical examples. The Advaitin, as you must have known by this time, makes use of the well-known clay-pot example. What the clay is to the pot, Brahman is to the world. From this one should not hastily conclude that the analogy is unsound on the ground that, while clay is a finite material entity, Brahman is infinite and consciousness by nature. It must be borne in mind that analogy has only a

suggestive value. It is not at all a conclusive proof. Further, one should try to find out what the analogy is intended for. In the present case, what is suggested is that just as clay is the source and support of the pot which is made out of it, even so Brahman is the source and support of the world which arises from it. Also, we hold that the effect which has a dependent status is an appearance, what we call *kalpita*, whereas the cause which is the reality is the ground or *adhiṣṭhāna*. The oft-repeated formula of the Advaitin is: *kalpitasya adhiṣṭhānameva svarūpam*.

P: Thank you, Gurudev, for the lucid explanation of the application of the principle of causality. I remember that, in addition to the clay-pot example, the Advaitin also uses the rope-snake example to explain the relation between Brahman and the world. I have a difficulty with regard to this example. It is obvious that it is through actual transformation or modification that clay becomes a pot. But in the case of the rope-snake example, the rope remains the rope all the time even though it gives rise to the appearance of the false or illusory snake. It means that there is a basic difference between the two empirical examples. Just as the rope remains unchanging even though it serves as the cause or the ground for the manifestation of the illusory snake therein, Brahman also which is immutable by its very nature does not, and cannot, undergo any change. Nevertheless, there is the manifestation of the world. Though the Advaitin may say that, what the rope is to the snake, Brahman is to the world, still the difficulty that one faces here is that there is no parity between the two empirical examples given by the Advaitin to explain the metaphysical relation between Brahman and the world. I would like to know from you, revered Ācārya, whether the two illustrations operate on the basis of two different logical principles. If this were the case, a critic will raise the objection that the Advaitin according to his convenience shifts his position. May

I request you to consider this difficulty and explain to me the real position of Advaita?

Ś: I know that this is one of the common objections which critics raise against Advaita. The Advaitin who makes use of these two empirical examples is aware of the fact that in one case there is transformation or modification which is technically called *pariṇāma*, whereas in the other case there is transfiguration or apparent change for which the technical word that is used is *vivarta*. The difference between *pariṇāma* and *vivarta* does not call for two different principles for explaining the cause-effect relation. In both the cases, the cause alone is real whereas the effect—the pot in one case and the snake in the other case—is illusory, false, appearance. The Advaitin uses different terms such as *mithyā*, *vaitathya*, *kalpita* to refer to the effect, irrespective of the manner of its origination. The status and role of the cause both in *pariṇāma* and *vivarta* remain the same. What is true of the illustrations is equally true of the illustrated. Therefore, the Advaitin makes use of only one principle for the explanation of the relation between cause and effect. That principle, as I told you, is: *kalpitasya adhiṣṭhānameva svarūpam*. One should be guided by logic and principle, not by contingency and convenience, in doing philosophy.

P: I thank you Gurudev for enlightening all of us about the principle which Advaita uses in the explanation of the relation between cause and effect. May I request you to explain to us the subjective approach in which there is the inquiry into the three bodies called *śarīra-traya*.

Ś: Yes, I will do. Let me first of all tell you that the doctrine of *śarīra-traya* is closely connected with the analysis of *pañca-kośa* in the explanation of the subjective approach to discover the reality in the *jīva*. Advaita holds that the Self or *Ātman* is covered by three bodies which are apportioned to five sheaths or *kośas*. The word "*kośa*" means a covering or sheath. For example, we put a long knife or sword in a scabbard, which

covers and protects it. In the same way the Ātman is covered by three bodies, or five sheaths. These bodies or sheaths are one inside the other. The outermost body is called gross body or *sthūla-śarīra*. Corresponding to this is the sheath of matter called *annamaya-kośa*. Inside the gross body is the subtle body or *sūkṣma-śarīra* consisting of three sheaths called the sheath of vitality or *prāṇamaya-kośa*, the sheath of mind or *manomaya-kośa*, and the sheath of the intellect or *vijñānamaya-kośa*. And then, inside the subtle body is the causal body or *kāraṇa-śarīra* corresponding to which is the sheath of bliss or *ānandamaya-kośa*. Inward to all these is the Self or Ātman. For the sake of convenience, we just call the three bodies by the collective term "*śarīra*" or body. Instead of using the term "*śarīra*", we may use the term "*kośa*" and say that the Self or Ātman is covered by five sheaths. Just as clay which is the reality remains concealed in the pot, even so the Self or Ātman which is the reality of the jīva, which is the source, support, and animating principle of the entire body-complex remains concealed in it. It is only by systematically probing into the body-complex, or the five sheaths, layer after layer, sheath after sheath, that we discover the Self or Ātman. As I said earlier, we call the reality of the macro-world as Brahman, and the reality of the micro-world as Ātman. The basic elements which constitute the macro-world and the micro-world are the same; and so there is only one manifested world, which gets differentiated into animate and inanimate worlds. We call the former jīva, and the latter, the physical world. There are many jīvas and countless objects. The one reality behind the manifested world is called contextually by two different terms, Brahman and Ātman. The truth is that Brahman is Ātman, and Ātman is Brahman. This is the great message of the Vedānta philosophy.

P: Now I have another question with regard to the inquiry into Brahman/Ātman. Is Brahman/Ātman which is to be inquired

into already known or not known. If it is already known, there is no need to undertake any inquiry. If it is not already known, how is it possible to undertake any inquiry at all with regard to that? I don't think that there is a third alternative other than these two. It seems to me that, whatever be the answer to these two alternatives, the Advaitin cannot escape from the horns of the dilemma.

Ś: This objection in the form of a dilemma has been anticipated in the Vedānta tradition. You proceed on the assumption that there are only two alternatives and that, therefore, the Advaitin has to accept an undesirable result, whatever be the alternative that is accepted. My simple answer is that the alternatives in the disjunctive proposition are not collectively exhaustive, because there is a third alternative. The Self is known and also not known. It is known in a general way as something existing; and there is no one to whom it remains unknown. The sense of "I" or "ahaṁ" which everyone has is a pointer to the knowledge of the existence of the Self. However, it is not known in itself, but only in association with the mind-sense-body complex. In other words, though its general nature or *sāmānyāṁśa* as an existing entity is known, its specific nature or *viśeṣāṁśa* is not known. It is through scripture that we have to know its *cit-svarūpa* and *ānanda-svarūpa*, and also its identity with Brahman. Hence, there is the need to undertake the inquiry into Brahman/Ātman.

P: Salutations to you, Gurudev, for enlightening us about the message and mission of Advaita.

*Ācārya Śaṅkara gets up from his āsana and blesses
the entire audience including the interviewer.*

The entire hall is filled with the spiritually elevating chorus:

"Jaya Jaya Śaṅkara, Hara Hara Śaṅkara."

 THE EPICS, VEDIC RELIGION AND SOCIETY*

Śrī Candrasekharendra Sarasvatī

1. Sannyāsins and the Duty of Society

There are lakhs of *sannyāsins* of all denominations in our country. They do not earn their livelihood by engaging themselves in any "productive work" as that is understood ordinarily, but live on the alms they get from householders. That *sannyāsins*, like ordinary beggars, do not contribute to the national wealth, but prey upon society, is the view entertained by certain persons in governmental authority in our country. It has recently been resolved to start an organisation known as the All India Sadhu Sangh, and to utilise the services of its members, that is, the manpower of *sannyāsins*, in social welfare movements. Some persons belonging to the order of *sannyāsins* are to be employed as travelling Pracharaks (propagandists) for that purpose, paying them substantial honoraria and allowances.

Taking an overall and impartial view of the situation, one has to agree that there are far too many *sannyāsins*, and that some of them are parasites on society. This may not be desirable. But on that account can we subscribe to the proposition that *sannyāsins*

* From *Ācārya's Call*, Śrī Jagadguru's Madras Discourses (1957–1960), Part II.

as a class are parasite-beggars and should therefore be liquidated? Can we by statute prevent begging by *sannyāsins* in the face of the injunction that *sannyāsins* should beg their food?

In the way of life prescribed by the *Śāstras*, every individual has to pass through the four stages (*aśramas*) of life known as *brahmacarya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*. Of these four *āśramites*, *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsins* alone have both the right and the obligation to beg. During his student days, under the roof of a teacher, or *gurukulavāsa*, a *brahmacārī* should beg for cooked food, both for himself and his *guru* (teacher), going to a few houses each day and asking the lady of each house to give him alms by saying "*bhavati bhikṣām dehi*".

The object of this begging for food is twofold. One is to conserve the time and energy of the student for the arduous task of learning, and the other is to instill in him the sense of *vinaya* (humility), without which no *vidyā* (knowledge) can be received and can fructify in the mind. Begging is compulsory for all pupils, including the sons of royalty. The food so collected is handed over to the *guru*, who distributes it to all his disciples. There was no tuition fee in those days. At the end of the course of education, the students were required to give a consolidated remuneration, or *guru-dakṣiṇā*. The kings and the nobility of the land helped poor students to find this remuneration, which the pupils offered with true *bhakti*.

The *sannyāsin* is also enjoined by the *Śāstras* to maintain himself on the alms of cooked food collected by him. His duty is to engage himself constantly in meditation of the *Paramātman*, giving up all other mental activities (*citta-vṛttis*), which will entice him to worldly pursuits. If *sannyāsins* are to take up a profession to find the means for their livelihood, or engage themselves in other "productive activities", they could not become *brahmaniṣṭhas* (persons with their minds fixed in the *Paramātman*), which is their only avocation, according to the *Śāstras*. It is specifically laid down that a *sannyāsin* should go only to seven houses each

day, stopping at the gate of each house only for the duration of the time necessary to milk a cow (*godohana-kāla*) and be satisfied with whatever he is able to gather in this manner. If he gets nothing, he must fast. It is to be noted that, while a *sannyāsin* can and must be content with a little food (*alpāhāram*), the *brahmacāri*, who has to engage himself in the arduous task of learning, needs a substantial quantity of food.

Thus, while the *brahmacāri* and the *sannyāsin* have the duty to beg, society has the reciprocal duty to maintain them by giving them alms of cooked food. As it is told: "*yatiśca brahmacārī ca pakvānna-svāmināvubhau*". Society, far from being harmed by these two classes of people begging for their food, stands to gain in an immeasurable degree. In the process of begging, a *brahmacāri* acquires *vinaya* (humility) and also the *śānti* (peace) necessary to give his undivided attention to studies, by which he will become a useful member of society in due course. A true *sannyāsin* is he who gives up his wealth and position and takes to *sannyāsa*, and not he who becomes a *sannyāsin* to escape from the worries of family or to find an easy means of livelihood by taking to begging. *Bhikṣā* (alms) ought to be given only to the former category of *sannyāsin* and not to the latter. It is not everyone who can become a true *sannyāsin* in the approved manner. The world has need for such spiritual stalwarts who always spend their time in the contemplation of the Supreme. They show the way to a higher life. Such *sannyāsins* will not be many, and society will not find it a burden to maintain them.

All the *sannyāsins* we see around us do not come up to the requirements of a true *sannyāsin*. In Buddhist times, it was obligatory for every one to become a *bhikṣu* (*sannyāsin*) for a prescribed period as a form of spiritual discipline. A *bhikṣu* can, if he so chooses, revert to secular life after that period. Not a few Buddhists, however, remained *bhikṣus* all through their life. The example of the Buddhist monks was followed by many others in the land as it provided for them, who had no pretensions to

spirituality, an easy means of livelihood, without the obligation to work for a living.

This historical factor accounts for the numerous *paradeśis* in the South and for the *sādhus* in the North. These *paradeśis* and *sādhus*, not having the requisite qualification for true *sannyāsa* and not having been initiated into an approved *sampradāya*, or order, by any competent preceptor, are not able to concentrate their minds on the Supreme, but go about begging, like worldly men, in quest of food. It is these mendicants who are parasites on society and they must be liquidated. But in the attempt to pluck out the weeds, we should not pull out the stalks which bear grain. The true *sannyāsin*, who is an asset to society, should not be condemned as an unproductive dependent on society. He can be identified by his *daṇḍa* and *kamaṇḍalu* and the manner in which he conducts himself.

A *saṅgha* or association is not contemplated for the order of *sannyāsins*. Forming a *saṅgha* is not *sannyāsin lakṣaṇa*. A *sannyāsin* must live in solitude, and, as far as possible, away from worldly life. Forming an association pulls down the *sannyāsins* to the level of worldly men, and deflects them from the duties pertaining to their *āśrama*.

I agree with the proposition that no one should have to eke out his livelihood by begging unless he is a student or a *sannyāsin*. Two solutions for the problem of able-bodied beggars are: (1) the provision of opportunities for widespread employment, and (2) the removal of disparities in the standard of living between the rich and the poor. The former is the duty of the state and the latter that of the people themselves. Raising the standard of living, which is the slogan of the present times, only results in luxurious life for a few. Real socialism lies in giving up luxuries, leading a frugal life, observing simplicity in food and clothing, and observing a standard which will approximate to that which a common man can afford. Our dress requirement should be only as much as is needed to observe decency and to provide protection from

heat and cold. Food must be taken only to satisfy hunger and not to please the palate. Eating the minimum one needs is real *apari-graha*. National wealth should be utilised in productive scientific advancement, and for the defence of the country, and not in tempting people to live a life of luxury. The standard should be lowered to the level of plain living, instead of raising it to a luxurious level. Then there will be sufficient wealth in the country to go round to everybody.

Excess wealth in the hands of individuals should be diverted to help the indigent persons in the community, and excess wealth in the hands of a nation should go to better the conditions in indigent and backward countries, and not to help those, as is being done now, who subscribe to one's ideology or to those who may be depended on to be one's allies in case of war. If the people of every country make up their minds to live on what the country produces, there will be no artificial rise in the standard of living. Countries with a high standard of living, depending on the markets of other countries to keep up that standard, always stand in perpetual fear of a depression. Having risen sky high in their standard, they are afraid of a fall. That will be our fate too, if we imitate other nations in this respect.

A *sannyāsin saṅgh* is a contradiction in terms. It is the obligation of society to maintain the true *sannyāsin*. All those who have taken to begging, as a profession, must be provided with employment. It is improper to condemn those few who have embraced the *sannyāsa āśrama*, in the standards prescribed for that *āśrama*, as parasites living at the expense of society. Nor is it proper to institutionalize the *sannyāsins* into an organization for performing the functions that appropriately belong to the State.

2. Religious Reform Movements

Different schools of Hindu philosophy, like Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Pāśupata and Vaiṣṇava, came into existence to satisfy the needs of varying temperaments and tastes—"rucīnām vaicitryād" in the

words of Pushpadanta. There have also been subsequent religious reform movements. Though the ostensible purpose of those reform movements was to purify Hinduism, in reality, they were movements to defend Hinduism against the attacks of alien religionists. They came into existence because the truths of our religion were not understood by the generality of our people, for lack of presentation in the proper manner. The Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society began with the object of stemming the tide of Christian and Muslim conversions. Seeing that Christian missionaries ridiculed our *karma-kāṇḍa* practices, the Brahma Samajists, unable to justify these practices, came to proclaim that the *karma-kāṇḍa* is no part of real Hinduism. The Arya Samajists went to the extent of saying that the Veda portion alone was valid in Hinduism and nothing else, not even the Upaniṣads. Both these movements inveighed against idol worship influenced largely by Christian and Muslim criticisms of it.

It was left to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda to vindicate idol worship; for, they were devotees of the Divine Mother in her manifestation as *Kālī* and had attained their realization through the worship of the Mother in that form. They accepted the authority and the efficacy of the Vedas, the Vedānta, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas in their entirety. Among modern Hindu religious movements, they are the nearest to classical Hinduism, in spite of a few deviations from the orthodox practices of our forefathers. The Theosophists went to the opposite extreme and said that Varṇa differences existed even among astral bodies—*sūkṣma-śarīra*. This is not the traditional view. Mahatma Gandhi subscribed fully to all aspects of Hinduism, except untouchability, which he considered a blot on our religion. When one or other aspect of Hinduism is taken out of context by alien religionists and made the target of attack on Hinduism as a whole, reformers, in their anxiety to defend our religion, dubbed those criticised aspects as "weeds" that had grown in our religion.

None of these accommodations and dilutions of Hinduism will be necessary if one understood its principles perfectly. All the

difficulties arise on account of the lack of correct comprehension on our part of the Vedic religion as a whole. But from the days of the Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj, we have made considerable progress in our understanding of our religion. Faith in the religion has increased, and the younger generation is full of good intentions. But they are unable to discipline themselves along the prescribed forms of conduct. *Śraddhā* and *tapas* are the means by which enlightenment will dawn in our minds and help us to lead our lives in conformity with that enlightenment.

3. Soldier of Vedic Religion

Śaivism, or Vaiṣṇavism, or any other system of Hindu religious thought has the Vedas as its basis. The Vedas represent the cumulative wisdom of the ages. In the stream of *Veda Nerśi*, Vedic Dharma, the various systems of religious thoughts are like bathing ghats. The principles enunciated by the Vedas are elucidated in stories and simple songs which used to be sung in olden days by every housewife while at work. The children who listened to these stories or heard the songs used to get saturated in the Vedic spirit unconsciously. Times have changed, and those wholesome traditions have begun to disappear to our detriment.

It is being argued in some quarters as to why we should continue to hug these ancient ways when science has advanced so much as to enable man to create even artificial satellites and to make them go round the earth. But such people ignore the fact that all these material advancements are of no avail, when there is no peace within oneself. What is the use of the entire world to a man if, in the process of acquiring it, he loses his soul? It is also worth remembering that the country which has created the Sputnik is also getting the *Mahābhārata* translated, and that this great Indian epic is being taught in their schools, even though religion is not. It will not be a surprise if the Russians begin to treasure the *Mahābhārata* with great enthusiasm.

The Vedic religion commands the allegiance of millions of people, in spite of the absence of propaganda or missionary institutions to propagate it. It is the example of great men who lived that religion that sustains the faith of the people. Good men, who had attained a high level of *jñāna*, won universal respect, irrespective of the caste in which they were born. Godliness and love for all are the qualities by which the greatness of a person is judged. So long as such great men continue to illumine the dark corners of the human heart, the Vedic religion will wield its influence, not only in this country but outside it also. It is only when we regularly and faithfully practise the *anuṣṭhānas* enjoined upon us that society can produce outstanding persons, who will be the beacon lights of Vedic religion to guide the multitude along the right lines. If even one in a thousand rises to great spiritual heights by such *anuṣṭhānas*, he will be a gain to society and a source of strength to our religion.

Our religion has grown and spread through the spiritual influence of such perfected souls. Even in the recent past, great persons like Kabirdas and Masthan Saheb have been influenced by Vedic thought. Threats from disturbing unsocial elements need not detract us from doing the right. Troubles may come if it is His will. Do not floods and epidemics take a heavy toll of human lives occasionally? The oppression of Aurangazeb produced a Sivaji and an Ahalya Bai. God is both *bhayakṛt* and *bhayanāśanaḥ*. Therefore, we need not feel disturbed. Whatever happens will be for our good. We must act in the faith, "God's will shall be done." If each of us performs the *anuṣṭhānas* prescribed for him, the cumulative effect of the *anuṣṭhānas* of all will be the welfare of society. One does one's religious duty in the interest of all. In order that each may do his part well, different duties have been prescribed for different persons. The *anuṣṭhāna* prescribed for one is neither superior nor inferior to that prescribed for another. On the other hand, one who is enjoined to do *bhajan* only may reach the ultimate goal earlier than another who has to perform

elaborate rituals. Therefore mutual respect and mutual love should prevail in society. Each person should do the *anuṣṭhāna* prescribed for him, respecting and cooperating with the others, so that the collective efforts of all may result in the welfare of society as a whole. The man doing devoutly the *anuṣṭhāna* prescribed for him is the true solidier of Vedic religion.

4. Keep the Epics Green

We are indebted to a great extent to the sages Vālmīki and Vyāsa for the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata*. The influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* has at one time spread even to the Far Eastern islands, like Java, Sumatra and Bali. Though the population of most of these islands is predominantly Muslim now, the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* are being enacted on all important festive occasions even to-day. Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda has given us several works for widening our jñāna, and we are indebted to him also. Besides these, there are the *smṛtis* and the *sūtras* for our guidance.

The *purāṇic* stories, which teach us right conduct in thought, words, and action, are regarded by some as mythology or legends. There is a tendency on the part of some of the people to treat them as imaginary tales. It is human nature to regard a thing which we cannot comprehend as false. Yet, in modern days, people are ready to believe such news items appearing in newspapers, as the find of leg bones several feet long, or the birth of a child with two heads, or a woman giving birth to a snake. If that were so, why should we disbelieve if a *purāṇic* story tells us of a person as tall as a palmyra tree or a man with more than one head?

There is *sthalapurāṇa* for each temple. The Śaivite and the Vaiṣṇavite saints have also sung about many of our temples and places of pilgrimage. This temple literature contains a fund of information which, when understood properly, will help us to approach the Purāṇas with the reverence they deserve. There is need to equip our boys and girls with a certain rudimentary

knowledge of Sanskrit and classical Tamil so that they can easily understand when they hear the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata* recited either in Sanskrit or in Tamil. In the past there was a custom to make boys and girls learn by heart certain easy verses in Sanskrit like the *Nītisāra*. With the disintegration of village life such wholesome practices have disappeared. The Kamakoti Math has prepared books both in Tamil and in Sanskrit containing easy verses which will pave the way for understanding the epics. If this knowledge about the Purāṇas and other ethical works spreads among our women, they will be in a position to pass on their knowledge to their children and thus ensure a continuity of Purāṇic knowledge. It is possible to form study groups of women even in Madras.

5. Welfare of Society*

When we think of the Dharmapuram Adeenam, it will be ingratitude not to remember the Lord of Vaideeswaran Koil. According to the traditions of this temple, Jaṭāyu has sung the praise of Śrī Parameśvara enshrined therein, and the deity itself has been sanctified by *Ṛg-veda*. This place is known as Pullirukkuveloor, *Puḷ* meaning bird (Jaṭāyu), and *iruk*, *Ṛg-veda*. There are, in Tamil Nadu, temples sanctified by other Vedas also. It is the sanctification, through *Veda-mantras*, that gives divinity to an idol or a *liṅga* installed in a temple. Great saints have, in the past, dedicated all the spiritual powers they had accumulated through their *tapas* (penance) to these temples, so that lesser mortals, who worship at these shrines, may get the benefit of their valuable spiritual achievements. In some temples the *Liṅga* is of sand; but the spiritual power that has been poured into them by the great saints has sustained the sanctity of these *Liṅgas*. Hence the expression வெண மணலே சிவமாகி (*veṇ maṇalē śivamāhi*) which occurs in one of the Śaivaite songs.

* Speech made by the Jagadguru in reply to an address presented by Srilasri Somasundara Thambiran at the Dharmapuram Adeena Madalaya Devalaya Samaya Prachara Nilayam, Usman Road, Theagarayanagar, Madras.

We require the grace of God for the removal of our physical and mental ailments. That is the significance of the expression அரன் நாமமே சூழ்க (aran nāmamē sūlga). I am finding that the name of Hara (Śiva) has begun to pervade everywhere in this city.

The Madalaya Devalaya Samaya Prachara Nilayam is the gift of the Dharmapuram Adeenam to Madras, and it has been doing very useful work, in spreading religiousness among the people. When we think of some of the flourishing Adeenams (Mutts), like the Dharmapuram Adeenam, we have to remember with gratitude the service, sacrifice, and *tapas* of the great founders. Those now in charge of these Mutts can do nothing better than follow the footprints of those great founders.

Good results flow even when a person pretends to act as if he were deeply religious. There is a verse in Sanskrit whose meaning is that it is the effect of worshipping Śiva that endows a person with all worldly riches, like elephants and horses at his doorsteps, and a number of beautiful women to serve in his house. The expression *Śiva pūjā vidheḥ phalam* which occurs in that verse is also construed to mean that all the riches are due to performing *pūjā* in the wrong way (*avidheḥ*) signifying that when *pūjā* is performed in the right way, a person realizes God. There is a story that a robber chieftain pretended to be a great devotee and was performing elaborate *pūjā* to Lord Śiva everyday, in order to attract the attention of the king of that country. After a few days, the king himself came and paid his respects to this pretender. This opened the eyes of the robber to the Truth, and he realized that if by pretending to be a devotee he could make the king come to him, he could attain God himself by becoming a true devotee.

This is why we say that the tongue should be trained to utter the name of God constantly. What we think of in our wakeful moments, we see in our dreams. So also if the tongue is trained to utter God's name under all circumstances, it will automatically beseech God, at the moment life departs from the body, when it will not be possible for the dying man to remember God consciously.

There are some people who think that all that is necessary for a person is good conduct (*oḷukkam*) and not divine grace (*aru!*). This is a mistaken view. Good conduct without devotion to God is like a flower without fragrance. When people of this country were fighting for independence, making immense sacrifices, the watchword given to the people was "country first, everything next". I had occasions to talk to some of the leaders and I asked them whether it was right to place all the emphasis on country, relegating God and religion to the background. Their reply was that if the country became independent, everything else would follow. That has not happened and the effect of this wrong approach is being felt to-day in all spheres of life and it has become difficult to control even a child.

History has seen the rise and fall of many empires. We have seen recently what happened to Hitler's nationalism in Germany. Political status is a fluctuating factor. Therefore, the emphasis on country is all right only upto a certain point. Political power once lost can be regained; but if we lose our soul, everything is lost. If the soul force (*ātma-balam*) is lost, no country can survive for long. I was told that at a school function, some years ago, Prime Minister Nehru asked everybody to be seated when a prayer song was being sung, but called upon everyone to stand up, as they naturally ought to, when the National Anthem was sung. This illustrates the undue emphasis laid on politics. At least during Gandhiji's time, people used to sing *Rāma-Nāma*. Even that has disappeared now.

We require God's grace to get rid of our mental ailments. Our heart should be filled with love if we are to banish evils like lust, anger, hatred and greed from our heart. God resides in everybody's heart; but He is being elbowed to the background by our selfishness and the various passions. By driving out these passions with the help of love (*aṅbu*), we will succeed in making our heart pure for God to reside. It is only by developing our force through devotion to God that we can hope for the lasting prosperity of the individual, society, the nation, or the world. Let us, therefore, develop devotion to God for the welfare of ourselves and the world.

 ŚAṄKARĀNANDA*

P.C. Subbamma

As is common with the lives of our great men in the past, even with regard to Śaṅkarānanda, it is difficult to determine with any accuracy his date and to gather the details of his life. Yet from his writings it is possible to gather that Śaṅkarānanda was the disciple of Anantātman and Vidyātīrtha. Śaṅkarānanda, along with Bhāratīrtha and Vidyāraṇya, studied under Vidyātīrtha. He became a *guru* of Vidyāraṇya. Vidyāraṇya offers his salutations to his guru thus:

"namah śrī śaṅkarānanda-guru-pādāmbujanmane"

Śaṅkarānanda's most important work is *Ātmapurāṇa* which is also known as *Upaniṣad-ratna*, and contains the essence of the Upaniṣads in verse, in the form of story and dialogue. He has also written a commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and a *vṛtti* on the *Brahma-sūtra*. Besides, he has written *Dīpikās* on several major and minor Upaniṣads. Not only this; there are, indeed, other independent works attributed to Śaṅkarānanda; for instance—*Yatyanuṣṭhāna-paddhati*, *Viveka-sāra*, *Śruti-tātparya-nirṇaya*, and so on. His magnum opus, however, is *Ātmapurāṇa*.

* Courtesy: *Preceptors of Advaita*, Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Mandir, Secunderabad, pp. 178–81.

The Teaching of the Ātmapurāṇa

Śaṅkarānanda is mainly concerned with explaining the nature of Ātman; yet in order to generate in the minds of the aspirants an irresistible attraction towards the knowledge of Brahman, he introduces several stories from the major as well as the minor Upaniṣads. Most of the materials are drawn from Śrī Śaṅkara's commentary on the Upaniṣads.

Brahman or Ātman, not being conditioned by the three divisions, namely space, time, and matter, is homogeneous. The limitations that are caused by the above three factors exist only in the objects comprising the not-Self. (1) The counter-correlate of the absolute non-existence (*atyantābhāva pratiyogī*) is called space-division (*deśa-pariccheda*). This division is seen in a pot which exists in one place while there is the absence of that pot in other places, since the counter-correlateness of the absolute non-existence is in that existent pot. (2) The counter-correlate of the prior non-existence and of the posterior non-existence is known as the time-division. This division is applied to the halves of a pot, since there are both the prior non-existence (*prāgabhāva*) and posterior non-existence (*pradhvaṁsābhāva*) in a pot before its production and after its destruction, respectively. (3) The counter-correlate of mutual non-existence (*anyonyābhāva*) is called the division of matter. For instance, a cloth is not a pot and *vice versa*. In this cognition, the non-existence of the cloth in the pot and the non-existence of the pot in the cloth are understood. Thus all the objects that come under the category of not-Self are conditioned by three kinds of limitations. Brahman, being all-pervading, transcends the division of space. Since Brahman is eternal, the category of time is inapplicable to it. Further, Brahman, being the inmost self of all, is not conditioned by matter. So, Brahman is established as the transcendental Reality beyond all kinds of divisions.

The Self (Ātman) does not come within the range of mind and speech. Every word employed to denote an object signifies that object in relation to a genus, or a quality, or an action. For instance, the word "pot" denotes a thing which contains a particular form, or a quality, blue, etc.; the word "cook" denotes a man who is associated with the act of cooking. The Self (Ātman) does not have a genus; it is not related to any quality; it does not act. So, words cannot primarily convey Ātman. However, Brahman-Ātman is taught by the method of *adhyāropa* and *apavāda*, which consists in first superimposing the world on Brahman-Ātman and negating it subsequently. In this teaching of Brahman-Ātman, exclusive-cum-non-exclusive implication (*jahad-ajahallakṣaṇā*) is resorted to.

Is the universe which we perceive self-sustaining and self-established? The Upaniṣads affirm that there is the Being transcending the universe and yet immanent in it. And that Being is Brahman, which is non-dual. This non-dual Brahman appears as the universe, and avidyā or māyā is the cause of the appearance of Brahman as the universe. This avidyā is doubly evil in that it veils the true nature of Brahman and distorts it in the form of Īśvara, jīva and the jagat. Brahman is said to be the source of the universe in that it is the substratum of avidyā, which is the immediate cause of the universe. Avidyā, being inspired by the reflection of Brahman in it, transforms itself into the form of the universe. It is thus the transformative material cause (*pariṇāmyupādāna*) of the universe. Brahman only illusorily appears as the universe; it is the transfigurative material cause (*vivartopādāna*) of the universe. Brahman viewed in this aspect is Īśvara. While the Nyāya system holds that atoms are the material cause of the universe and that God is the efficient cause, Advaita holds that Brahman as Īśvara is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe.

It is because of its association with avidyā and its product, intellect, that Brahman, which is supra-relational (*asaṅga*),

appears as the individual soul. The latter in essence is Brahman. But, owing to avidyā, it identifies itself with intellect and its qualities, experiences pleasure, pain, etc., and undergoes transmigration. It is the mind alone that acts and thinks; but being falsely identified with mind, Ātman, which is pure consciousness, appears to act and think. Avidyā, thus, is the source of all evil. It is described as the one which is capable of bringing together two incompatible things (*aghaṭita-ghaṭanā-paṭīyasī māyā*). Avidyā is termed *ajñāna*, *mūlaprakṛti*, *pradhāna*, and *avyākṛta*. This avidyā is the cause of the superimposition of all the objects on Brahman or Ātman. It becomes operative in this way only by being itself superimposed on Brahman. It does not require another avidyā for its own superimposition on Ātman; for, to assume a second avidyā is to be involved in the fallacy of infinite regress. Hence it is admitted that avidyā itself is the cause of its superimposition on Ātman.

Avidyā, the root-cause of the universe, is one; yet it consists of various aspects, and these are known as *tūlājñāna* or *tūlāvidyā*. Avidyā which is present in Ātman and which is annihilated by the intuitive knowledge of Ātman is known as *mūlāvidyā*. And the various aspects of avidyā which are present in the consciousness delimited by the objects and which are removed by the knowledge of the true nature of those objects are termed *tūlāvidyā*.

The entire universe is superimposed on Ātman through avidyā. The Upaniṣadic text "*neti neti*" negates the entire universe superimposed on Ātman, and Ātman, the self-existent entity, alone remains. The individual souls are identical with Ātman. But, owing to avidyā, they have lost sight of their identity with Ātman and undergo transmigration. By pursuing Vedāntic study (*śravaṇa*) reflection (*manana*), and meditation (*nididhyāsana*), an individual soul attains to the intuitive knowledge of Brahman. Avidyā, in his case, is annihilated and the individual soul becomes free from characteristics such as finitude, agency, etc., that are brought about by avidyā. He is a released soul and he remains as Brahman.

ŚRĪ ŚAṄKARA'S GREAT HYMN OF ŚIVA

V.A. Devasenapati

Bhakti, says Śrī Śaṅkara, is the flow of the mind towards the lotus-feet of the Lord and the fixation of the mind therein. He compares the nature of the attachment obtaining in devotion between the devotee and the Lord to the attachment in the following cases: the seeds of the *ankola* tree and the tree itself to which they get back when they fall from it; the needle and the magnet; the chaste woman and her lord; the creeper and the tree; and the river and the sea. The intimacy of union witnessed in the analogues helps us to realize how intimate should be the union between the devotee and the Lord. Devotional songs are of great help to devotees endeavouring to have a close relationship with the Lord. Not only has Śaṅkara given us a clear idea of the nature of true devotion but he has also given us devotional songs of great beauty and religious fervour. Among his numerous hymns on Śiva, the *Śivānanda-laharī* stands out as a work which appeals to those of advanced spirituality as well as to those who have just begun their spiritual pilgrimage.

* Courtesy: Proceedings of the conference on "Śaṅkara and Shanmata" held in Madras, June 1-9, 1969.

The second verse of the *Śivānanda-laharī* may be paraphrased thus: "Victory to the flood of Śiva-bliss (*Śivānanda-laharī*), which flows from the river of Śiva's story (*carita*), removes the dust of sin, runs through the channels of the intellect, destroys sorrow caused by *saṁsāra* and remains in the lake of the mind." *Śiva-carita* is a narrative of Śiva's gracious acts. Śaṅkara teaches us that, by listening to such a narrative, we not only get rid of our impurities but we are also made permanent recipients of His bliss. To meditate upon the Lord who is supreme purity is to shed our impurity and acquire His purity. Śaṅkara's concern is to enable us to train our minds on the right lines. He dwells in some hymns on the good tendencies of the mind, and in others, on its evil tendencies. This is to make us realize that we must endeavour to root out the evil tendencies and strengthen the good ones. Let us recall here some of the many sublime thoughts enshrined in Śaṅkara's *Śivānanda-laharī*.

Death lies in wait for us. How shall we meet its challenge? It is by worshipping the lotus-feet of the Lord, not by mere book-learning or logic, that we overcome death. Śaṅkara asks, "Whether it is a pot, or a lump of clay, or an atom, whether it is smoke, fire or mountain, whether it is cloth or thread—will inquiry along these lines serve as a remedy for gruesome death?" He tells us that such discussions result only in our throats getting dry. Hence it is wise to refrain from such useless pursuits and turn instead to the worship of the Lord.

Worship must be such as to make us dedicate ourselves entirely to the Lord. Our mind, senses and body should be used wholly for this purpose. Our mind should abide at His lotus-feet, our speech should be used in His praise, our hands raised in His worship, our ears in listening to His story, our intellect in meditation on Him and our eyes in looking at His splendid form.

It is comparatively easy to engage the body and the senses in worship, but the mind refuses to come under control. As a seer who can judge the spiritual condition of devotees, Śaṅkara knows

the difficulty which most of them feel in controlling their minds. It so happens that the more we try to control the mind, the more intractable it gets. Śaṅkara makes this difficulty an occasion for a humorous appeal to the Lord. What can the poor devotees do in this matter? Mind is beyond their control. But the Lord, if He so chooses, can assume control of the situation and to His own advantage too! Does He not go abegging with a skull in his hand? Let him take with him this monkey of a mind. "It ever roams about in the forest of delusion, dances on the breast-hills of young girls, leaps quickly in all directions from branch to branch of desires and is fickle." It is, as if Śaṅkara makes us appeal to the Lord thus: "We shall control our body and speech in worship. We shall leave the remaining third, viz. *manas*, our make-up to be controlled by you." Indeed, this is to make us realize that even the impulse to worship arises from his grace, when we are endowed with such a double-edged instrument as the mind.

Is the mind only like a monkey? No, it is also like an elephant. Who, then, but the Lord can tame it? "Oh Lord who destroyed the three cities! Please bind this elephant to your feet with the chain of devotion and pull it fast with the goad of courage and the machine of intelligence to prevent it from straying. This elephant is wild with passion and roams about in all directions, doing violent deeds. Seize it skilfully and lead it to the place of stability."

What, if the Lord refuses to come to our aid, saying that He cannot interfere with the decrees of Brahmā, the Creator, imposed on men according to their past deeds? Can he not be thus indifferent? If he is not indifferent, is he powerless? No, how can it be so? Did he not, with the tip of his finger-nail, sever one of the heads of Brahmā?

Let us try to please the Lord by using our mind in his service and thus place it under his control. How shall we use it? Śaṅkara tells us that the mind is not only like a monkey and an elephant. It is also like a horse. Here then is an attractive possibility. The

Lord uses a bull for his rides. Will not a horse be a better mount? "Oh Lord, riding about on a bull! mount my mind which is auspicious and capable of moving quickly and in different ways, which is fast in its movements and able to understand all signs, which is free from blemishes and which possesses all stable characteristics."

Changing the figure of speech, Śaṅkara likens the mind to a tent which the Lord can use as his residence. "Enter, Oh Lord with your consort, this resplendent tent of my mind which has the will as the supporting central pole and is fastened with the ropes of constant virtues, which could be shifted anywhere, is many-coloured, is adorned with the figures of lotuses and is moved daily on highways. May you be victorious!"

Śaṅkara indicates other possibilities. In the manner of setting a thief to catch a thief, we can appeal to Śiva, the arch-thief, to catch our mind which is a petty thief. "In its efforts to secure wealth, this thief of a mind wanders widely and breaks into the houses of the rich. Please, Oh Lord, bring it under Your control and shower your grace on me."

In this drama of the soul's salvation, if the soul changes its role constantly to escape him, so can the Lord, to catch and save it. The Lord is not only an arch-thief, but he is also a great hunter. Let him not wander over mountains in his search for wild game. Here in our minds, he can find all sorts of wild animals—jealousy, delusion, etc. Let him satisfy his craving for hunting by entering the wild jungle of our minds.

As a hunter, Śiva walks on the rough surface of mountains. Accustomed to the softness of the hearts of the yogins, his tender feet may find walk on the mountain rough going. Besides, his tender feet have also to perform the hard task of kicking the chest of Yama and destroying ignorance (*apasmāra*). "Let him, therefore, wear the jeweled foot-wear of my mind." In another verse, Śaṅkara sings, "Your feet are very tender. Please bring them before me, I shall bear them up with my hands." Why does

Śiva walk on the mountains? Śaṅkara finds a reason therefor. The Lord knows in advance the birth of hard-hearted persons. To protect them, he has to enter their hearts, and so he practises walking on mountains as a preparation for the subsequent encounter with hard-hearts. Thus comes about his walk on mountains.

Thus we see that Śaṅkara brings home to us in various ways the dual nature of the human mind. In some verses he describes its evil tendencies and prays (on our behalf) for their correction. In some others, he describes the good tendencies and prays to the Lord for their retention and use in the service of the Lord. Granting that there are evil tendencies in us, still the Lord should accept us. Does he not wear the crescent on his head? "Inertness, animality, impurity and devious movements are not to be found in me. Even supposing that they are to be found, am I not fit to serve you as your ornament? You wear the crescent on your head!"

The allusion here is to the Lord wearing the moon in spite of all its defects. If he does not forgive and protect the poor ones, who else will? He is the Lord of souls. Hence he has to protect us by his overwhelming grace. We are blind and revolve unwisely in the cycle of births and deaths. "To you who can be poorer in spirit than myself? To me, who can be more skilful in protecting the poor and being their refuge than you? You are the greatest friend of the poor. Of the poor, I am the poorest. When such is our indissoluble relationship, you must forgive all my lapses and protect me. This, verily, is the way followed among kinsmen."

What is it that we should want from the Lord? It is ceaseless devotion to him. Here is a peculiar situation. When the sun shines, all darkness disappears. We see it clearly in the sky. The Lord is more luminous than crores of suns. Why, then, do we fail to see him? It must be on account of the intensity of our ignorance. "Please destroy this darkness completely and manifest yourself directly to me," sings Śaṅkara.

So long as we are in bondage, we go up and down in the scale of living beings. Even as human beings, we pass through several

stages. What does it matter whether we are born as human beings, gods, mountains, as wild animals, as mosquitoes, cows, worms, birds, etc.? If our hearts are given to him and flooded with the bliss arising from the contemplation of his feet, nothing else matters. Likewise let us be in any stage of human life—that of a student, householder, monk, ascetic, etc. "When our hearts are yours, you become ours and you bear the burden of our life!"

What has the Lord to give us? His food is poison; ornament, serpent; clothing, animal skin; and mount, a big bull. But then, what do we really need? We need devotion. Let him then give us devotion. In a humorous vein Śaṅkara sings, "I do not know how to churn the ocean to get poison or reach the nether world to get serpents, or go hunting to procure for you the hide of animals. How can I offer you the things which you like?" Again, the Lord is not pleased with obeisance, song-offerings, meditation, etc. Curiously, he likes being hit with a bow, a club or a stone. Let him tell us whether our offering should be along those lines! Here, Śaṅkara is referring to the occurrences connected with the life of Arjuna, Māṅikkavāchakar and Sākkiya Nāyanār. They were all great devotees of the Lord. Caring none of the precious things rated highly by the world, the Lord has yet at his command all these. Śaṅkara says, "The golden mountain (Meru) is in your hands, the Lord of Wealth (Kubera) stays near you. Celestial trees are in your household as also the celestial cow (Kāmadhenu). What can I give you ! May my mind be dedicated to you!"

Śiva drank poison to save the world from a deadly poison. He retained it in his throat so that it might not get in and destroy the worlds within him. This act of great compassion has always stirred the hearts of his devotees to their profoundest depths. Śaṅkara sings, "Oh Lord of Souls! Is not this one supreme act of help sufficient to proclaim your compassion? To protect the beings, moving and stationary, within and outside, you placed the poison in your throat. You neither swallowed it nor spat it out." He asks the Lord in affectionate raillery, "How did the flaming poison

that frightened the gods appear to you? How did you bear it in your hand? Was it *jambu* fruit or medicinal ball used by the *Siddhas*? You placed it in your throat. Was it a blue gem ornament?"

The Lord's compassion for us is boundless. What, then, should be the nature of our devotion to him? It should be wholehearted and complete. Is there an ideal devotee whose devotion will serve as a model for us? Yes, there is. He is Saint Kaṇṇappar, a wild hunter whose devotion to the Lord has been a source of inspiration to all subsequent generations. His worship was completely unconventional and as completely ideal. There was no trace at all of the sense of "I" and "mine" in his worship. It was a complete "sense of the presence of God" that possessed him in his worship. Śaṅkara sings "The hunter's foot-wear worn out by use in forest paths was placed between the eye-brows of the Lord of all souls; the water carried in his mouth became the sacred water for the bath of the Conqueror of the three cities; meat already tasted by him became fresh food-offering. What is impossible for devotion? The hunter became the greatest of devotees!"

Not only in his *Śivānanda-laharī*, but in his other hymns of Śiva also, Śaṅkara has given us invaluable help for eschewing the evil tendencies of our minds and strengthening the good ones in utter dedication to the Lord.

There will be no spiritual impoverishment so long as we follow Śaṅkara's lead in singing the praises of the Lord in utter devotion. Here is his assurance: "Oh Lord of the Universe! With the ambrosial water of the story of Sadāśiva, brought with the help of the intellect as water-wheel, speech as vessel, poesy as water-conduits, the crops of devotion in the fields of the heart become richly productive. How can there be (even) the fear of spiritual famine for me?"

GODLESSNESS*

C. Rajagopalachari

The universe of matter with its unchangeable laws does not explain itself. That it exists does not satisfy the human mind, although the atheist may refuse to give further thought to it. At that point, beyond which reason cannot operate, Faith begins. This is Religion. It covers ground which science cannot explore. In particular, it gives rise to commandments as to how men should act towards one another and themselves.

India's hope lies in her intellectuals taking the people back to God from whom they have been recently made to stray away. Mammon has secured a victory and inflicted a defeat on Religion. This defeat should be retrieved.

The learned dialectics of Hinduism will not save us, however famous in the world of philosophy it may make us. What is wanted is that God should not only be accepted in intellectual ratiocination, but that He should be present with us, with every individual among us, in his acts and behaviour towards fellow-beings, in public and private life. We want a nation of God-fearing men

* Courtesy: Proceedings of the Conference on "*Śaṅkara and Shanmata*" held in Madras, June 1-9, 1969.

not only praying for grace during distress but guiding us in all our doings. Godlessness must go.

Our bodies were built by the Sun, the great Father luminary overhead. We get from him all that life requires. Every atom and every particle making up our flesh, blood and bones depends on the sun. Without the heat and the light he gives us, we would be extinct. The human mind, likewise, has grown from the beginning of time on something, not visible like the blazing sun, but on something equally real and powerful, viz. Religion. All human thought from the time that human thought began, was based and grew on the sense of an Unseen Mind governing the universe. The human mind was born and bred out of Religion, and it lives, therefore, on it every moment, even as the body sustains itself on sunlight. If Religion goes, the human candle will go out with it. Man will revert to the status of an untamed hungry animal.

We want not merely the acceptance of God in a dialectic debate. We need God as a living force for guidance in life. If we kill the *ātman*, we shall wander in a world of dense darkness. As the body cannot sustain itself without sunlight, the mind cannot sustain itself without an *ātman*, without Religion with which it began and grew from time immemorial. A divorce of the human mind from Religion will mean its death. If we take a fish out of the water in which it began to live and adjust its growth and its every movement, it dies. So also, if we take man out of Religion, his wonderful mind-structure will go out of existence.

Asuryā nāma te lokā
andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ
Tānste pretya abhigachchanti
ye ke cātmahano janāḥ
—*Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*, 3.

Atheism is a refusal to think beyond a stated material line, a denial of the need for faith. The godlessness that prevails now as

our besetting sin is much worse than atheism. It is a defiance of God and God's rule. Our masses were not godless, but the product of the modern advance of knowledge, our intellectuals, have not merely become theoretical atheists, but have sold themselves to a bold godlessness which has ruined national life in all spheres. It is this godlessness, which is different from atheism, that we must cure. All our maladies really result from it. Atheism is passive non-cooperation with the idea of God. Godlessness is not only that, but a revolt against the moral rules of conduct that have issued out of all religions.

Symptomatic treatment will not achieve a cure. Each step in symptomatic improvement leads to a corresponding and equivalent evil. We must go to the root of the matter. Having diagnosed it, we must not shirk to apply the remedy, but work to get rid of the disease in a radical way. This is the task set for us now.

This is the real issue in every election even if we wish to decide it that way. Let us be evolutionists if we so choose, but let us be evolutionists such as great Darwin was without denying God or disregarding His moral governance. Every moment let us remember and realize the presence of God and be guided by Him in the working of our minds. It is man's mind that gave man his special survival potential and made him what he is, supreme monarch among living beings. This sovereignty is not merely a sovereignty of material power, but a spiritual privilege. Let not our elite kill the religion of the masses and kill themselves, but relearn the truth set down by the Ṛṣi about what happens to "*ātma-hano janāḥ.*"

Printed money we must have, but let us get as much of it as we can get through honest work, not by over-reaching one another. The function of money is to evaluate honest work done and to serve as a legal security for that value when you need it. Let us not over assess its utility and realize our folly when it is too late.

Religion is our real asset, religion which makes us God-fearing and straight in all our dealings, and increases our credit in society,

and the credit of our people in the society of nations. The printed stuff called money, and jobs, self-respect, status, everything will come in due course if we go back to God, leaving godlessness behind as a loathsome way of life which has recently poisoned our national life. The Bhakti way is the only way to God and to good life. Only on the basis of that faith can we live and do our duties to ourselves and to society with detachment and equanimity, and secure lasting happiness. Out of Bhakti issues Dharma. If Bhakti is extinguished, Dharma, even if it survives, soon tends to become hypocrisy, attached to worldly advantages. Dharma was not invented by men for utility as utilitarians imagined. It is Bhakti and Faith that gave birth to what is God as well as useful.

METAPHYSICS AND MYSTICISM

George F. Mclean*

The life of society is a creative task, with multiple dimensions and even changing results. It focuses upon unity, for the very essence of society is the unitive life of its members in their distinctive communities. As that unity is effected essentially through multiple and convergent human decisions, it is that of a project which can be realized well or poorly. Life in society is a given only as a common human task to which we are born;¹ it is something at which we must work, and whose quality will depend upon the success or failure of our efforts.

In this common project the role of the mystic is central. As one who lives in terms of a unity which transcends all oppositions, his or her sense of life continually points through and beyond the divisions which separate and alienate. Further, this unity is the Absolute, or the divine fullness, or plenitude of being. In its terms the mystic's life continually judges any compromises of the quality of our life in society, whether in matters personal,

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political or environmental. The mystics is then a key to both the unity and the quality of the life of the community.

Generally, the life of the mystic is understood in negative terms. This is legitimate and even essential, for it reflects the mystic's refusal to reduce his life to terms that are contraries, mutually exclusive, and hence necessarily limited. As the proper object of our human intellect is the nature of such differentiated things, the negative will always enter our description of the mystical. This is reflected in the fact that the Greek etymologies of both "mute" and "mystic" have a common root in "mu" as closed mouth, silent, or signaling silence by putting one's finger before one's mouth. From this come both "muein": to close one's eyes and mouth, and "muein": to enter into arcane and secret activities. From the latter in turn is derived the adjectival "mystikos": to describe a hidden sacred cult reserved to those who are initiated therein.²

It is unfortunate, but understandable, that the history of this term should take on a wide range of meanings and connotations. Lalande³ notes that while, on the one hand, it is used properly to express belief in the possibility of an intimate and direct union of the human spirit to the fundamental principle of being, on the other hand, it is almost always used with the pejorative nuance of beliefs which are based on sentiment or intuition rather than on observation and reasoning. This would appear to indicate that, where the understanding of mysticism remains primarily in negative terms, as in the case of its etymology, it is particularly vulnerable to epistemologies which are limited to reasoning exclusively either in tautological transformations of sense data⁴ or conceptual terms which are essentially limited and contrary one to another. The former has been relatively characteristic of Anglo-American thought in this century; the latter reflects the Cartesian European tradition of "clear and distinct ideas." Hence, the pejorative connotation noted by Lalande extends quite broadly, though by no means universally,⁵ through recent Western philosophy.

This suggests that in order to be able to recognize the essential role of the mystic in society, it is necessary to look more deeply than epistemologies and questions of knowledge; these, in any case, are derivative of the more fundamental or metaphysical issues. It is essential to turn to these and to the effort of metaphysics to open the mind positively and formally to the consideration of what is and what it means to be and to live. It is in these terms that the mystics' union with the absolute and his or her message of unity can be reflected upon. Its focus upon being is not a luxury, for this opens the mind to the positive basis of our reality and hence to the deepest resources for discovering the sense of our life in society and for working towards its realization in our days. Indeed, R. Garrigou Lagrange argued successfully earlier in this century that the mystical life, far from being an extraordinary way of perfection, was in fact the sole and proper goal of human life.

I. Parmenides

There are significant resources in Western thought for developing the mutual contribution between metaphysics and mystical life. It was perhaps Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopogite, who so formulated this as to make the way for the related school of medieval thinkers. His roots, however, can be traced back, via Plotinus, to Plato and the golden age of Greek philosophy. Indeed, even Aristotle, whose emphasis upon an origin in senses for all knowledge most distinguished him from Plato, would insist that metaphysics should be called a divine science. This is only because God is among its objects, because the body of knowledge which constitutes this science is that which it is most fitting for God to have.⁶ This is not all, however, for not only did both of the main branches of Western philosophy recognize the central place of this "divine knowledge," but this level of understanding was begun within but a few generations of the initiation of philosophy itself.

In order to see how this was done and what it means for the relation of metaphysics to mysticism, we shall investigate the poem written by the Father of Metaphysics, Parmenides (504–456 B.C.). Our interest here will be in seeing how the philosophical science he developed prepared the conceptual apparatus for opening the mind to the One, how the One is seen to be the Absolute, and how all else must be understood therein.

(i) *The Proemium*: The poem is divided into three major parts, namely, the proemium or introduction, the way of truth, and the way of opinion. Parmenides' treatment of the two ways is prepared in the proemium which is most indicative for our purposes.⁷ He begins this by describing himself as being borne up along the famous highway which takes him through all the cities. This appears to allude to the central arching way which in ancient mythology was at times the path of the sun (Ernford). It was said to run through the entire cosmos, and by extension even to the nether world (Gilbert). This opens the horizons of the poem to an all-inclusive universality. This is later reinforced when he is told that he must inquire into everything without exception, both truth and opinion about things that seem.

Further, this journey from darkness into light dramatically changes the condition of his understanding of these things. Interpreters understand this change somewhat differently: e.g., from error to truth (Bumet), or from the irrational to the rational (Sixtus). All recognized, however, that it constitutes the major transformation in the nature of understanding.

Finally, the means of this transformation are divine. Parmenides is guided by goddesses who are daughters of the Sun. They bring him to the portal for which the keys are held by the goddess, Justice. It is she who takes him by the hand and leads him into the light; it is she who tells him that it is by both divine command and Right that he has come; it is she who directs him to inquire into and test everything without exception, both the motionless

heart of truth and the realm of human opinion; and finally, it is she who, like Krishna in the *Gītā*, speaks the words of Truth.

In order to catch the full sense of this passage, Werner Jaeger suggests that one should amend the text to read, not that he passed through (aste) all the cities in a quantitative manner, but that he passed unscathed (asine) in a qualitative reference to the way of salvation. As this is the way of truth, it keeps him unscathed wherever he goes. In this understanding the metaphysician is the bearer of the higher knowledge (mystes) received from the divine.⁸

Though there is considerable variation in the details of interpretation, if one takes account of the ability and even the genius of the poetic form to convey a number of levels of meaning at the same time, the Proemium appears to set a number of coordinates for the two parts of the poem which follow. First, they will be a universal inquiry into all that is and all that is thought. Second, this knowledge will be transcendent both in its source and in its object. This is manifest by the journey, by the fact that Justice opens the gate to the light, by its being a goddess who leads him by the hand and explains all to him, and by his new-found ability to see that the opinion of mortals have no true reliability. Third, nevertheless, this does not mean that the way of truth will be a simple infusion of knowledge about reality without understanding. On the contrary, he is commanded to inquire into and to test all. If it is in some way (as Aristotle was to say) a divine knowledge, it will not be out of proportion to the highest capabilities of his intellect. The ability to see Truth lies within the object of man's intellect, if not properly, as human, then at least in what it has in common with the divine intellect. The Proemium indicates that the human intellect, though it may need a divine hand to guide it in its first essential steps along the path of Truth, is, nonetheless, capable of inquiring, seeing the light, and testing all else in its truth. That his life is no longer restricted to opinions in which

there is no true reliability means, not that his intellect is not taken away, but fulfilled in this experience.

All the three of these coordinates would appear to characterize both the mystic and the metaphysical. By clarifying the proper steps for the human intellect in its deepest reasoning, Parmenides began in the earliest days of philosophy to delineate the proper contribution of metaphysics to mysticism and to free the mind for the contributions of the mystic thereto.

(ii) *The Way of Truth*: What, then, is this path of truth about which he is instructed by the goddess in Fragments 2–8 and along which she enables him to walk? It would appear to be made up of four steps: first, it establishes the notion of being; second, this, in turn, excludes non-being; third, together these provide a method for clarifying the nature of being; and, fourth, when this method is applied, it manifests the characteristics of being as such and in at least its primary instance.

(1) *Being*: It is possible to identify the general area for consideration by three mental coordinates or characteristics of this work. The first of these is the distinctive object of the path of truth which, in contrast to the way of opinion, leads to the motionless heart of truth. The way of opinion is concerned with the opinions of men, which have no true reliability. These include not only the concrete objects of common experience, but the two dimensions of scientific knowledge which had been newly developed. One of these is physics, which science first articulated three generations earlier in the theories of, e.g. Thales (625–545 B.C.). On this first level of abstraction, the intellect works in terms of the external senses. The other is the mathematical dimension, which had been newly initiated by the work of Pythagoras (572–510 B.C.) and his school. There the intellect works in terms of reality as perceived by the imagination. Following this schema, Parmenides' proper contribution was to begin thought in terms of the intellect as such. That is, he investigated the capabilities of the intellect when it works in terms not of the external or internal

senses, but properly and precisely of the intellect itself. In doing this he initiated thought formally, explicitly and self-consciously in terms of that power in man by which he is termed the image of God. The importance of this for mysticism and *vice versa* can hardly be exaggerated. As "it is the same thing to think and to be" (Fr. 3), the formal object of this type of knowledge is being, to which we shall turn below.

The second coordinate which guides our attention to the point of Parmenides' concern may be found in Fr. 4. This approaches the object "being" in terms of its total comprehensiveness. Whether things are collected or scattered throughout the universe, when considered as beings, all is present to the mind. Hence, while thought on other levels was concerned only with what is changing (the physical) or numerable (mathematics), on this level, it is to be concerned equally with all beings whatsoever. Finally, when working in terms of being, all is present to the mind in a secure and stable manner; in contrast to the opinions of mortals in which there is no true reliability, here one is at "the motionless heart of well-rounded truth".

The combination of these three coordinates—intellectuality, comprehensiveness, and definitiveness—and which characterize as well the understanding or vision had by the mystic, help to direct the mind to the proper object or subject of the science of metaphysics, namely, being (*estin*). This is presented directly by the goddess in Fr. 2 as the only way which can be explored, namely, "that it is (*estin*), and is not possible for it not to be (*ouk esti me einai*)."

As the pivotal concept for the science of metaphysics, being has been the subject of the most intensive investigation, and still retains its mystery. Indeed, in this century Gabriel Marcel would want to insist that it remains ever a mystery, for, unlike a problem it is never subject to exhaustive analysis. Investigations of its usage in Parmenides, have led scholars to numerous positions. Charting these as initial alternatives may help to identify the issue.

Two questions arise as one attempts to understand the meaning of being (*estin*), namely, whether it has a subject and whether it has an existential content. Among those who would consider it to have a subject, the minimal position is that of G.E.L. Owen,⁹ for whom the subject is only "what can be talked about." This is the logical subject of which one works out the formal properties. This seems less probably both, because such a merely linguistic interpretation would be anachromatic and, because the converse of "not being able to express what is not" would be not "what can be spoken of" but "the necessity of saying." Greater content for the subject is proposed by J.H. Loenen, namely, who understands it as "something." Via Fragment 3, he transforms this into "being apprehended by the mind," or the idea of being.¹⁰ This depends upon a doubtful interpretation of Fragment 3.

K. Reinhardt, E. Zeller, F.M. Cornford and J. Zafiropoulo propose the strongest subject for *estin*, namely, "reality" or "all that exists." This is the most commonly held position and sees *estin*, as having existential content. This existential content is retained, but without the subject, by Taran, for whom a subject would seem to be premature at this point in the development of Parmenides' argumentation. Frankel and Colegero join in this dismissal of a subject, but gradually attenuate the existential content as well to meaning simply "taking place" or something between an ontological and a copulative sense. This brief survey of the literature¹¹ suggests that the two questions of subject and of existential content for *estin* interact and that at their intersection the development of metaphysics and of its contribution to mysticism is to be found.

What, then, is being and how does it function in Parmenides' project? Regarding existential content, a distinction must be made. On the one hand, it does not seem that being could have had for Parmenides the existential sense of "standing out from" or "being actually";¹² this was a later, Christian insight. The Greeks were concerned rather with the nature of things, as can be seen in

Aristotle for whom the simple conciliability of essential notes answered the scientific question: whether it is?¹³ This focus upon nature would seem to recommend what H. Kahn calls the veridical meaning and especially what A. Morelatos terms the speculative meaning for *estin*.¹⁴ Properly, this answers not "Whether it is?" but another scientific question: "What is it?" This sense both includes the identity of the reality as it removes all which is not that, and provides for new description. What is distinctive about this sense, however, is that once it is had, the subject is redundant and no more predications are necessary. It is, in other words, the type of definitive explication which is expressed by the addition of the terms "really and truly," in "its essence or inner meaning," "absolutely." This sense of being corresponds to the task Parmenides had been divinely given in the Proemium of the path of truth upon which he is now embarked, namely, to discover the motionless heart to well-rounded Truth in contrast to opinions in which there is "no true reliability."

This strong essential sense of speculative predication for being relates especially to the neuter present participle of *einai* (to be), that is, *to on* or "what it means to be." We will see Parmenides pursue that vigorously as he develops his method for advancing along the path of truth.

On the other hand, however, this should not be isolated from the reality of things which do exist. The feminine present participle of *einai*, which is *ousia*, originally meant not essence, but the riches of being in all its actuality and virtuality, i.e. reality in all that it is or can be. It is essential to note with Heidegger that prior to Socrates' and Plato's focus upon clear distinctions of forms, ideas, and natures, the Greek mind had a strong sense of the dynamic actuality of all in a unified process. All of this must be included in *ousia* as present to Parmenides. This is the sense and meaning of what mankind has always grappled with. The mystic searches, not to flee from this, but to enter into it with ever greater clarity. Similarly, when Parmenides constitutes being as the subject

to be investigated by metaphysics as a science, he is concerned to elaborate, not an abstract paradigm, but a subject which will direct the highest capability of the human intellect in its search for the meaning of the whole in its centre and in all of its parts.

Thus, when the search for the speculative sense, i.e. for what it really is, is directed according to the common prephilosophical usage of *ousia* to the entire riches of being, it can be seen that Parmenides' precise question is: what does it mean for things to be real? What is really real?

This would seem to cohere well with the overall division of the body of Parmenides' poem between the ways of truth and of opinion. Like the term "truth", *aletheia* itself, this division of paths would seem to imply that the facts present themselves in a misleading form and are hence concealed. It is necessary, therefore, to move beyond the unreliable opinions to what really is. To be precise, Parmenides' term is more properly not "the route of truth", but "the course of persuasion" which attends the truth. As veridical, this is most properly seen as conveying one "from the proximate but latent" to the transcendent, but "non-latent" identity of things."¹⁵

2. *Non-being*: The message of the goddess is not only that Parmenides must follow this path of truth, but how it can be traversed. As what really is, is expressed by "being", it would not at first appear that anything else can be said; indeed, Parmenides does not speak of any alternate path than that of truth in which being appears. The "other" path is in fact an impossible one, one that cannot be walked, or explored, or expressed, or thought. It is a non-path. It is a construct of the mind, constituted by taking being and conjoining to it negation in order to form "what is not" (*me eon*).

This, however, does have a scientific usage, for by identifying what one must not do in attempting to follow the path of truth, it provides essential guidance for Parmenides in his quest. As with the notion being, this would seem to have two levels of implication.

On the first level or speculative predication, Morelatos suggests that the attempt to say what being really is must include both pre-dication and identity. A negative predication made in relation to something in the world as having its individual identity would exclude only this individual and open an infinity of alternates. This would be similar to placing not-Athens as a constitutive element of the road to Sparta. Precisely because not-Athens would include some 359⁰ of alternatives, this would constitute a formula for wandering; it would be a non-route for arriving at one's destination.

More precisely, this means that Parmenides is rejecting constitutive negation, that is, that negation can be part of the basic structure of the world. Only one of a pair of opposites could be a real constituent of the world, the other is not possible. Historically, the basic opposites at his time were atoms as full and the void as empty. In the Proemium, the goddess described Parmenides' search as that for well-rounded Truth. In Fr. 8, he will soon articulate that being as being is complete.

While this is helpful in clarifying the basic logical truth for following the way of truth, namely, that no step must be constituted by a simple negation, it appears too bound to individuals and contraries. We saw above that this path was to be comprehensive and concerned with all reality. Further, we saw that, if being did not have a properly existential sense, it was open to the full sense of the reality of all that is or could be. Hence the mental construct of non-being would appear to articulate the negation not merely of any one reality, but of all reality. It is this that cannot be integrated into the meaning of being. In this light, non-being constitutes an impossible step on the road to truth, not simply because it is an unguided step, but because it is as such a non-step, abortive in its very conception. It is the negation, not of something as this particular, but of whatever is or can be said of the very reality expressed by being.

3. *Method*: With this basic opposition between being and non-being having been posited out by the goddess, the effect is not only to identify in what a step along the way of truth must consist, but a method for finding one's way along that route. The key to this lies in the fact that one is definitively debarred from any step by which "To be and Not to be are regarded as the same and not the same" (Fr. 6). This follows from what has been said above. There, it was shown that "Being is," that "To be" is possible. It was shown also that non-being not only is not, but "is not possible," i.e. that it is inconciliable with being and hence cannot be. One cannot proceed in any way that would consider "To be" and "Not to be" as both the same and not the same.

As he will show in Fragment 8, this is precisely what is implied in any understanding of the nature of the real as generated, divisible, changing or incomplete. In these cases, one begins from a statement such as changing which seems positive. Upon analysis, however, this is found to conceal "Not to be" as a constitutive negation. As this becomes apparent, it constitutes a signpost for any authentic search of what being really is, namely, that one must look and proceed towards the unchanging rather than the changing. "For this can never predominate, that "That which is not" exists. You must debar your thought from this way of search" (Fr. 7)

There is here a method for the search, but there would appear to be more still. If we are debarred from the negative route in our search, then not only the search but that which is found must be without constitutive negations. In this we move 'as it were, from the "formed" to the "material" mode of speech.' We affirm by a series of double negatives which are equivalent to affirmations that the reality of being (*eon*) is ungenerable, indivisible, immobile and not-to-be completed.¹⁶

(4) *The Characteristics of Being*: It would be too extensive an enterprise to follow here the sophisticated and serried argumentation of Parmenides in Fragment 8. There he reviews the

common understanding of reality as encountered in the way of opinion and shows how each of these in fact includes in a constitutive manner some non-being. In summary form, I will simply note his conclusions, namely, that being as such must be:

(a) ungenerable: because what is generated would of its very nature pass from non-being to being; without non-being the nature of generation is inconceivable, and generation itself unrealizable;

(b) indivisible: because differentiation implies negation of what one class is vis-à-vis another; hence, there is rejected any composition of opposites such as atoms and void, and all is of a single homogeneous kind;

(c) immobile: because the very notion of change implies a not being of what is now coming to be, or *vice versa*, perhaps especially in the case of any violent rupture with oneself of one's proper place; and

(d) not-to-be-completed: for to be completed would imply some lack or negation, whereas reality of its very nature is and in no way is not.

The result of this argumentation is real progress in the way of truth, and this on three levels. First, the mind is no longer limited to proceeding by images as had been the case in mythic thought. Nor is it any longer limited to attending simply to some types of things, precisely as they are distinct from and in contrast to other types of things. Instead, by the articulation of being and its formal contrast to non-being the mind has been enabled to focus upon what it means to be real, or what reality really is. By this it is freed from bondage to the world of things in which it finds itself. It can search out what it means to be and become explicitly aware of all that this essentially requires.

Second, in Fragment 8 the signposts mark each major step in the process of discovery by which the truth (*aletheia*) about being is unveiled. In each case, as the constituent negation or non-being is identified and removed, what being as such really is becomes

manifest. As the notion of being is clarified progressively, the mind is gradually freed from impressions which characterize its condition as a human intellect and rendered open to the nature, the requirements, the call of being as such.

Third, there is yet more to this, for it is a question not only of concepts and of nature, but of reality. These can be only in terms of what is really real, which, in turn, we have seen precisely as to be and in no sense not to be. Further, we have seen that this must be, e.g. ungenerable, indivisible, immobile and not-to-be-completed. In view of this, not all beings could be generated without being marked by a constituent non-being; which is to say, it would not be. Therefore, in the realm of being there must be something ungenerated. The same is true of the other characteristics of the real as real: if being precisely as being is unchanging and change implies non-being, then not all could be changing, for in that case no thing could be. This is true also of multiple and incomplete.

In this way, Parmenides' road of truth definitively relativizes the realm of opinion, and this in two senses. First, it enables the human mind to uncover the ultimate conceit of any pretension on the part of limited and multiple beings, whether human or not, to ultimacy and self-sufficiency. It manifests that of themselves they are ultimately insufficient, not merely in some accidental sense, but precisely as beings. By that very fact, however, it directs the mind to the nature of the one being without which no being could be, namely, the Absolute Being as ungenerable, indivisible, immobile and not-to-be-completed. This is the unique, eternal, unchanging plenitude of being. It is being itself.

Many have read Parmenides as going so far as to rule out all changing or multiple beings, to say not only that it is not as changing that the real is real, but that there can be no reality to changing or multiple things. Indeed, this was so common soon after Parmenides that Plato had to undertake to provide a way to integrate multiple and limited beings into the consciousness of reality in his day. It does seem improbable, however, that the

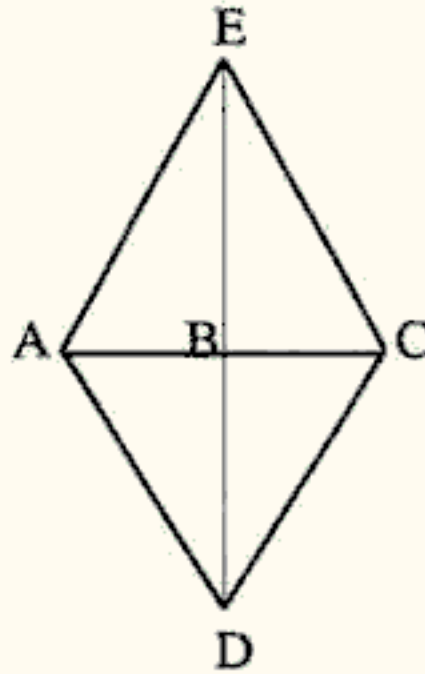
exclusion of multiple beings was the intent of Parmenides. In the Proemium, he began by passing through all the cities and received directions from the goddess to examine "all the things that seem without exception." In the way of truth, he used *estin* a form of *einai* which of old had served for the many things at hand. In the way of opinion, he devoted many times as much space to this examination of the patterns of multiple and changing things. It seems evident then that these multiple things are real. If their nature is not that of reality as such, then they must have their reality by relation to what is absolute or Being as Such.

It is true that in his poem there is not, as there is in Plato, a theory of participation for understanding the relation of the many to the One. Parmenides had already done much; it is not necessary for him to have solved all in order to retain his place as father and leader in the field of metaphysics. Nevertheless, the pattern of his poem gives sufficient indication that his negation of change and of the changing as being the very nature of the real freed the mind for attention to the Absolute. What is more, it laid thereby the foundation for the recognition by Parmenides, and especially Plato, Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius and the Western mystical tradition, that one's life is lived in God or not at all.

Let us now summarize the results of our analysis of Parmenides' founding work of metaphysics. We have found there one major dynamism which begins from the notion of being and moves to constructing the notion of non-being. The implacable opposition between the two is expressed in the principle of contradiction which becomes the main rule for all reasoning in the realm of being and its science, metaphysics. This principle is used to test out any proposed route in our effort to uncover the truth. By identifying and excluding the surreptitious encroachment of non-being upon being, it releases one to enter into being in its plenitude. Released from the ever changing and unreliable opinions, the mind is enabled to enter into the motionless heart of Truth.

II. A Metaphysical Structure of Being

This structure, worked out by Parmenides, operates on a number of different dimensions which might be illustrated by the following figure.



One dimension (A–C), the realm of being, includes simply all the beings there are, singly, unanalysed, ungraded. Another dimension (B–D) expresses the ever deepening levels of scientific analysis from physics via mathematics to metaphysics D. The subject of the science of metaphysics is being considered precisely as being. It is the task of this science to contrast being to non-being and to articulate this in the principle of non-contradiction (being is not non-being). This principle is then used in elaborating those guideposts by which metaphysics can progress along the way of truth, i.e. in clarifying the nature of being as being or what being really is.

Once this instrument of metaphysics is constructed, with its principles and reasoning process for understanding being as being, it is possible to return once again to the beings as on A–C and variously dispose them along the axis B–E in terms of their hierarchical realization of being. This ranges from the pure potency of matter at B, through beings that are ungenerable, indivisible, and immobile to whatever degree they are, to being

that is simply such, i.e. eternal, unique, unchanging and perfect, namely, the Absolute or divine at E.

I would underline especially that, by establishing metaphysics as a scientific instrument, Parmenides enabled the West to come to formal appreciation of that logical dynamism whereby beings in passing through non-being are released into Being. He provided the science for understanding, assessing and protecting the passage of the mystic into the infinite.

We saw also how by beginning from the set of beings (A–C) which had been the referent of the term *einai* in its earlier prephilosophical usages, being as the subject of the science of metaphysics (D) was not an ultimately abstract notion. Rather, it contained all the acts found in the world of beings, which we have at hand in the world in which we live.

This changed with the development of metaphysics from Parmenides to Plato, and it was a change which had great importance for mysticism. In their search for clarity, Socrates and Plato turned to the formal dimension of beings. Since in these terms things were real to the degree they were clear, the ideas as that in which the formal meaning was most clearly and distinctly expressed were the most real. Further, as things are one, inasmuch as they share the same form, there was no proper justification for the distinctness of those which shared in a form from that one form or idea itself. It can be seen that such a philosophical underpinning gave easy play to the notion of unity with the transcendent idea or absolute form which is central to mysticism. The line of mystical thought from Plato to Plotinus, to Pseudo-Dionysius, to the mystics of the Renaissance, and to those of an idealist orientation in more recent times drew richly upon this philosophic heritage to articulate unity with and in the divine same.

III. Metaphysics and Mysticism

It is a rich tradition, but is not without its costs. On the one hand, there is an inevitable element of pantheism here.¹⁷ For, if

one of the reasons the mystic cannot distinguish himself from the Absolute is that he is sensitive only to the formal dimension of reality, then this is due to a lack of adequate philosophic resources. What the mystic gains in exhilaration involves the divine losses of Transcendence through admixture with the mystic. On the other hand, for the mystic to integrate his or her identity with the divine in formal terms is to be dissolved into the divine and thereby drawn away from the activity required in order to build and maintain society. Society is thereby deprived of its major source of inspiration and spiritual strength.

What is needed from philosophy in order to overcome the pitfalls for the mystical life is an enriched understanding of being, an appreciation not only of its formal dimension but of its active and existential character as well. This enables the mystic to recognize conjointly two things. The first is that he exists entirely *by* the creative act of God. The second, however, is that he is thereby constituted as existing *in* himself. This is the necessary corrective to the impression of an absorptive formal unity, detrimental to one's self-identity and personhood. Its roots were traced by Parmenides in his poem as analysed above. In this era of existential philosophers and their emphasis upon person and freedom, this corrective is particularly important, for it enables the mystical life to be appreciated as the fulfilment of the person rather than as his dissolution.

There is, however, another problem with the constitution of a mystical life which is, if anything, exacerbated by the recent recognition of our existential as well as our formal reality. This is the constitution of the personal centre as an ego that is understood in distinction and opposition to others. This lays the basis for a personal egoism and social individualism, which is the anti-thesis of the aspirations of the mystic. To abandon the existential basis and be absorbed into a lifeless formal identity with the divine, seems not only infeasible for this generation now alive with existential sensitivity, but unfaithful to Parmenides' insights

regarding what it really means to be real, and hence personally destructive. It would be a major disservice to the mystical life in our times. For this reason, the philosopher, especially the metaphysician, is called to draw upon his resources and work out with the mystic a better understanding for our times of this highest level of the life of man in God.

We have seen above in Parmenides the foundational resource of Western metaphysics for this work. It is the pattern he describes according to which beings, by passing through non-being, are released into Being so that they might have life and that more fully. This is the basic task with which metaphysics must ever grapple.

Śaṅkara's brilliant defence and restoration of this as the central theme of the Hindu tradition is well known. In his epistemological introduction to his *Commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra*, he sketches out in strong and graphic lines the main thrust of his analysis. The terms are common to mystics everywhere: the illusion of the world obscuring the truth, the removal of this illusion in order to rediscover the Absolute, the final appreciation of the unity of one's self (*ātman*) in or as the absolute Self (Brahman). His employment of non-being in order to focus all upon the Absolute and establish the unity of all therein is swift and sure. What has been seen above might suggest, however, as a conclusion, not that in the final elucidation there is no reality to the finite, but that there can be no reality to anything that is in opposition to, or without the Absolute. That is, it is only in the divine that we have our life and our being.

This points, in turn, to the great Bhakti tradition in which the mystical life is seen as the fulfilment of the thrust of mankind, which is not only from, but to the Absolute. There is here, as everywhere, one major problem: it is to respond to the divine invitation, to divine love without self-seeking in order that no impediment be placed in its way. If anything, this is an even greater problem in our days when the true mystical life is always in danger of

being translated as self-fulfilment—spelled always and precisely in the lower case.

In this situation, Parmenides' passage by way of the negative becomes crucial. It bespeaks the negation of that which is not of Being. By implication from the Bhakti tradition of Love, this means the negation of all that is against love, namely, sin, precisely so that the life of the divine might be shared even more fully in our times.

The appreciation of the full implication of this for society requires the introduction of some additional factors. One must, for example, consider the character of the negation of love in the heart of such immediate and natural societies as the family and neighbourhood against individuals, classes and races. To this, one must add the institutionalization of this negation of love in the unjust structures of the economic and other systems whereby our social life is implemented. All of this undergirds the threats and implementations of merciless aggression in communal, civil, and international strife. Taken cumulatively, this becomes overpowering and draws one toward despair. What can—what must—be done?

The cumulative metaphysical traditions of Parmenides in the West and Śaṅkara in the East concur that the common mode of human perceiving and acting—the way of opinion—must be passed through the crucible of the test of being v. non-being. As Parmenides searched out and removed elements of constitutive non-being from human understanding in order to enable the Truth to stand forth, the Bhakti traditions call for the elements of injustice and hate predicated upon a deeper selfishness to be rooted out in order that peace and love might reign. This requires, what the mystic has always said, a death to self. In our present circumstances, however, this will and must most often mean not a withdrawal from the world, but a selflessness in the service of those who suffer the effects of evil and injustice.

For this service the sign of the cross has special meaning. Realized by our life in society, it is at once both a death and thereby an end of ego and of the separation from brothers and from God. Yet, it is also a work of love whereby our community, small or large, is purified of selfishness and united in the One. In its origin as a work of God, it is sufficient to overcome the immensity of evil noted above; in its metaphysical structure, it calls forth and coordinates in active terms the basic elements of both the metaphysics initiated by Parmenides and the great perennial Eastern traditions; in our day, it provides a pattern for the challenge to live as a mystic in society.

NOTES

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TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY AND ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

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In this paper an attempt will be made to argue that Advaita Vedānta is a system of transcendental philosophy. Transcendental philosophy is well known as a system of philosophical thought that has always sought the transcendental ground of everything, i.e. being, or substance, or the first principles of everything.¹ This philosophy is so called because it transcends the given, the factual and the empirical in search of that which is the ground or the source of everything, and yet is not given in our ordinary empirical experience. Western philosophy from Plato to Wittgenstein and Heidegger is committed to the availability of transcendental philosophy. Indian philosophy, long before Plato, had laid the foundations of transcendental philosophy in the Upaniṣadic search for the transcendental ground of everything. Advaita Vedānta is the final culmination of this transcendental tradition of philosophy established in the Upaniṣads.

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1. The Idea of Transcendental Philosophy: The Limits of the Empirical

The idea of the transcendental philosophy is rooted in the philosophical dissatisfaction with empirical knowledge and the empirical world. It is a response to the demands of reason to go beyond what is empirically given, that is, what is a matter of the sensible world. It searches for the supersensible as the source of the sensible and posits reality beyond the world of appearances.² This duality between the sensible and the supersensible, between reality and appearance, and between the empirical and the transcendental is the heart of transcendental metaphysics.³ This is because of the fact that transcendental philosophy is aware of the limits of what is called our empirical knowledge of reality. Hence its eternal search for the Beyond, the Immeasurable, the Unlimited and the Infinite.

The Idea of the Limits

The idea of limits is ingrained in transcendental philosophy, because philosophical reflection is an intellectual exercise of determining the limits of knowledge that is naturally given to us by our senses. Plato questioned the very efficacy and adequacy of the empirical knowledge in his famous distinction between knowledge and belief or opinion. He argued that empirical knowledge of the objects given in sense-experience is no knowledge at all. It is at best a kind of belief or opinion having no true cognition of reality, for reality, according to him, is of the nature of the Forms which can be apprehended only by the human reason and not by the sense-organs. This was the first step in Western transcendental philosophy to demarcate the limits of empirical knowledge which has never been given up by the Western thinkers. Its echo is heard in the philosophy of Kant, Wittgenstein and Heidegger.

Kant attempted to set the limits of empirical knowledge by mapping the structure of knowledge by a critical examination of the functions of speculative reason. He has shown that speculative reason can only know the world which is given in sense-experience in terms of the *a priori* forms of sensibility and understanding. Thus the world known is the spatio-temporal world to which all our categories like causality and substance apply. Speculative reason is denied the right to explore anything beyond the sensible world. Nevertheless, Kant admits that there is a supersensible world which is otherwise known as the noumenal world⁴ which is to be explored by the practical reason for the sake of morality and religion. Thus the limits of the sensible world are laid down, because there is a supersensible world beyond it. Kant defends the supersensible world on moral and religious grounds. His transcendental philosophy is an invitation to look both sides of the limits in order to pass from the sensible to the supersensible by transcendental and critical reflections.

Wittgenstein carried forward the Kantian transcendental project in his *Tractatus* to its logical conclusion. He has shown that the limits of language have to be drawn to make room for ethics and religion, because language as it is given to us naturally is not capable of expressing higher truths in ethics and religion. Keeping this in mind Wittgenstein made a distinction between what can be said in language and what can only be shown. It is: that which is shown is more important and significant as it refers to something which is inexpressible and so mystical. As Wittgenstein says: "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical."⁵ Wittgenstein takes God, Value, Self, etc. which are inexpressible in language as mystical. His sole concern is to safeguard the mystical against the encroachment of science and all that goes with scientific and empirical thought. His transcendental philosophy is meant to keep the supersensible in the realm beyond scientific language so that we can understand the moral and religious truths

in a better way. What is beyond language and thus cannot be said is the major concern of Wittgenstein's transcendental philosophy in the *Tractatus*.

The Beyond

The idea of the Beyond is crucially important for transcendental philosophy in general. This idea is at the root of transcendental metaphysics conceived as the study of reality beyond the appearances. Appearances as they are called do not reveal reality as it is. They conceal reality as they misrepresent the latter because of the conceptual limitations of our categories. F.H. Bradley takes metaphysics as the "attempt to know reality as against mere appearance, or the study of first principles or ultimate truths."⁶

The idea of the Beyond, however, does not mean that the appearances have no reality at all or that the world here and now is a mirage to be discarded for the sake of the ultimate Reality. All that it suggests is that the world here and now does not have ultimate truth about it and that it depends on the Beyond for its existence. This point makes it clear that the world here and now itself depends for its own significance on another world that is outside its boundary. The transcendental philosophers have called the Beyond as the Absolute which is the ultimate source of everything in this world.

Plato and Aristotle took the Forms as the ultimate source of everything, though they differ about the exact nature of the Forms. Hegel took the Absolute to be of the nature of Thought or Idea that manifests itself in the world here and now. Spinoza found the Absolute in the all-comprehensive Substance which he called God or Nature. The eternal Substance was taken by him to be the ultimate ground of everything in the world. Thus, the Beyond is always conceived as the timeless and eternal reality beyond the changing universe. The absolute Reality has been postulated by the transcendental metaphysicians as the true and ultimate nature of reality. This is the principle that is supposed to be real beyond all changes in the appearances.

The Eternal Reality

Transcendental metaphysics aims at the understanding of the eternal reality that transcends the world of changing reality. The world of change is believed to be less real than the eternal reality which is unaffected by change and history. The non-changing reality does not suffer from the limitation of being subject to the laws of time and contingency. This is evidenced in Spinoza's idea of the non-eternal world of the modes which have no stability of their own except in the Substance itself. The modes of the Substance constituting the world are transitory and passing, and so have only a temporary existence. The Substance taken as the eternal reality is the transcendental ground of the world of modes and thus can be understood *sub specie aeternitatis*. This reality is the timeless ground of everything in the universe, i.e. of both material and non-material objects.

Transcendental philosophers are not satisfied with the things that are given in our experience. They always try to see them from the point of view of eternity so that what is missing in them in their temporal aspects will be revealed in the aspect of eternity. Hence there is always the demand for the God's Eye point of view which brings out the timeless character of reality. The God's Eye point of view does not cancel the temporal reality altogether, though it does specify that the reality in the ultimate sense must be above the contingent and temporal order of things.

The passage from the temporal to the eternal or the timeless has been the favourite intellectual preoccupation of transcendental metaphysics from Parmenides to Wittgenstein in the sense that, while time symbolizes change and transitoriness, eternity symbolizes the perfect and the unchangeable. Eternity in the sense of timelessness is the idea of what is real in the ultimate sense. Eternal life is the life lived in the absolute realm of timelessness. As Wittgenstein puts it: "If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present."⁷ That is to say, we transcend time

by living in the present which is equivalent to timelessness. Transcendental philosophy in general is the search for the eternal in the sense that it delimits the realm of the temporal and the historical.

What is temporal is limited in the sense that it extends only up to that which is given in the sensible world. The sensible world is the realm of change and instability which is incapable of explaining itself in the absence of a necessary Being which is beyond time. This absolute and necessary Being is the Spinozistic Substance or the Parmenidean Being, which has always attracted the attention of the metaphysicians. Heidegger's Being is no less timeless though the Dasein or the Being-in-the-world is supposed to be steeped in time and history. Being as the ground of beings cannot itself be in time like other beings.⁸

Infinity

The necessary Being cannot be a finite being since the latter is a limited being. A finite being is bound to be limited in space and time. That is why transcendental philosophy is not satisfied with the finite and the limited reality. It searches for the Infinite and the unlimited Being which cannot be comprehended with the finite categories of the human mind. The notion of infinity stands for the unlimited character of the Being which stands above all the finite beings.

The absolute Reality is supposed to be the infinite Reality, because it is the Being that cannot be thought and expressed in language. It always stands outside the bounds of our thought and language. This point is well brought out by Hegel who takes the Absolute to be the Infinite and the Absolute Thought. The finite is only a limited manifestation of the infinite Reality. The Absolute can be understood only in terms of the finite, but that does not make the Infinite a sum of the finite. Metaphysics grapples with this problem of the infinity in the sense that the infinite Reality is real though we cannot conceive it except logically through our finite categories.

The limited and finite beings of the world presuppose the infinite Reality, because the latter brings in significance for the former. The infinite Reality is the ground of all that that is finite. It is the source of the finite beings itself, being above and beyond the finite beings. Transcendental philosophy makes it a point to bring out the full significance of the infinite Reality by trying to understand the limits of the finite world. The possibility of the finite world depends on the possibility of the infinite Reality. This transcendental argument makes it clear that nothing finite and limited can be understood unless the infinite Reality is posited.

2. Advaita Vedānta as a Transcendental Philosophy

It is well known that Advaita Vedānta is a system of metaphysics in the transcendental tradition which provides an account of the world and what is beyond it on the basis of its doctrine of Brahman. Advaita as a system of philosophy aims not only at explaining the world and the ultimate Reality, but also at making a perfect life possible in its theory of mokṣa or liberation. Advaita Vedānta is not only a theoretical and logical enterprise, but also a practical discipline making moral and spiritual life possible. Like many other systems of Indian philosophy, Advaita Vedānta is both a theoretical and a practical discipline.

Brahman as the Ground of the World

The metaphysics of Advaita is the metaphysics of Brahman or Atman⁹ which is the absolute ground of the world. It is imperative for Advaita to expound a theory of non-duality of Reality, since it is committed to the metaphysical principle that Brahman alone is real.¹⁰ Brahman is Sat (Truth), Cit (Consciousness) and Ānanda (Bliss). Since Brahman alone is real, it follows necessarily that there is no other reality than Brahman itself. The world as such is not real because as the world it is different from Brahman and so cannot be real. But if the world itself is Brahman, then

there is no reality as the world. Thus ultimately there is only one Reality, that is, Brahman, and there is nothing other than Brahman.

How can the world which is so real in our everyday experience be unreal? This is the most puzzling question for the philosophers of Advaita. The problem they face is exactly the problem faced by the transcendental philosophers in general: How can we account for the existence of the world? This question has manifested in various forms like: What is the ground of this world which is given? What are the principles which can explain how the world comes into existence? Advaita provides an effective answer to these questions by showing that the world is grounded in the ultimate Reality, viz. Brahman. The world is the appearance (*vivarta*) of Brahman; that is, from a limited point of view, Brahman appears as the limited world. Our ignorance about Brahman makes us see the world in stead of Brahman. This is called *adhyāsa*¹¹ or superimposition which is caused by ignorance.

The Advaitic explanation of the universe is based on the principle of *adhyāsa* which says that, when two disparate entities like subject and object are confused with each other, there results ignorance about the reality of both. This happens in the case of the two realities such as the world (*jagat*) and Brahman. The world is superimposed on Brahman thus resulting in the blockage of the knowledge of Brahman. The world is taken as real, though it is Brahman which is real. The appearance of the world is a sheer mistake. This is a transcendental argument which shows that the world is due to ignorance and is caused by the mistaken identity. The world is a false appearance (*māyā*) which can be dispelled by the rise of knowledge.

Māyā

The doctrine of *māyā* is a transcendental doctrine which suggests the transcendence of the existence of the world by the knowledge of Brahman. It shows that the world as *māyā* is temporary and transitional, because it can be cancelled by know-

ledge. Till the cancellation occurs, there is continuance of the world for the man in ignorance. *Māyā* is an explanatory concept since it suggests that everything with the ordinary conception of the world is not well and that the world must be lost in the presence of the knowledge of Brahman. *Māyā* is not an ontological principle¹² at all, for it does not provide a causal explanation of the universe.

Advaita does not provide a causal explanation of the universe, because Brahman is not the cause of the world. There is no causal relation (*pariṇāma*) between the world and Brahman. Had Brahman been the cause of the world, then it cannot but be limited and finite like any cause in space and time. But this goes against the very nature of Brahman. Besides, Brahman and the world do not exist on the same level, and so there cannot be any causal relation between the two. However, Brahman is the ground of the world, because the world cannot appear as what it is without there being a ground for it. Brahman is the ground of the world, and the world is an appearance (*vivarta*) of Brahman.

Ignorance itself is a case of conceptual error rather than a psychological illusion. There is massive ignorance about the nature of Brahman, and therefore there is logical illusion regarding the status of the world. The world is not reduced to a dream world for the reason that we have enough empirical experience to vouchsafe for it. The world is empirically real (*vyāvahārika sattā*) whereas it has no transcendental reality (*pāramārthika sattā*). In this sense, the world is a product of *māyā*, logically speaking. The transcendental argument in this regard is that the world tends to be real only insofar as we do not know its real nature. The world being essentially identical with Brahman, we see the world only in ignorance, as it were in a dream.

Knowledge as Transcendence

Knowledge is divided by Advaita into *parā vidyā* (higher knowledge) and *aparā vidyā* (lower knowledge).¹³ The higher knowledge is the knowledge of Brahman, whereas the lower

knowledge is that of the world. The latter is empirical knowledge which is conditional and contingent. The higher knowledge is infallible, necessary and true eternally. This knowledge is always the transcendental knowledge that is based on the revelation of Brahman. It is absolutely valid, because there is no higher knowledge than this to cancel it. It is true knowledge that is self-validated (*svataḥ-prāmānya*). Thus transcendental knowledge is the highest knowledge which is based on the experience of Brahman.

Śaṅkara, like Kant, is searching for the absolutely necessary knowledge. But while Kant is satisfied with the *a priori* conditions of knowledge, Śaṅkara goes further in searching for the transcendently valid knowledge that is revealed in experience of the ultimate Reality. Kant fails to allow for this knowledge, because he denies intellectual intuition of Reality. According to him, all knowledge is based on sense-experience and so we cannot have access to the ultimate Reality which remains ever unknowable to the human reason conditioned by sense-experience. Śaṅkara refutes this view, because Brahman is known absolutely in what is called *brahmānubhava* or Brahman-realization. Śaṅkara's transcendental philosophy is more rigorous than Kant's, because it assures us of the knowledge of Brahman and does not leave out the ultimate Reality as unknowable.

Transcendental phenomenologists like Husserl and Heidegger fail to assure us of the knowledge of the absolute Reality, either because they do not have the concept of absolute Reality, or because they have no way to reach such Reality. Husserl's Transcendental Ego fails to match the Advaitic Ātman, because the latter is far more universal and transcendental than the Ego. The Ātman is the universal principle that sustains the whole universe as the ground of all beings. Heidegger's Being comes closer to this, but there is little light thrown on the absolute Being except on the Dasein, the Being-in-the-world. The latter is only the Being chained to the world and cannot be the absolute Being. Advaita

Vedānta goes far in exploring the absolute Being in order to provide an absolute ground to the universe.

The highest knowledge guaranteed by Advaita goes to prove that knowledge of the absolute Being is possible and that it can be based on the direct encounter with the ultimate Reality. This direct encounter is made possible because of the fact that Brahman and the individual soul (*jīvātman*) are ultimately identical. If they are ontologically different from each other, there can never be any absolute direct knowledge of Brahman. Advaita does not admit partial knowledge of Brahman, because there is nothing partial or local about this knowledge. It is a complete knowledge of the absolute Reality by the revelation of the latter to the knower who is Brahman itself.

Identity and Difference

Advaita is the metaphysics of identity rather than of difference. It seeks to establish that all reality is based on this principle of identity best expressed in the Upaniṣadic statement: "Thou art That" (*tat tvam asi*).¹⁴ This statement shows that Brahman and the *jīvātman* are identical in spite of the fact that the latter is attached to limiting adjuncts (*upādhis*). The *upādhis* are temporal and can be removed by knowledge, and so the *jīva* is really Brahman conditioned by the *upādhis*.

Advaita metaphysics discounts the differences created by the empirical conditions. Differences, according to it, are due to lack of knowledge, that is, *avidyā*. Ignorance is caused by the fact that man has limited capacity to grasp Reality and that he is conditioned by the world as an embodied being. The embodiment of the *jīva* is caused by the causal conditions which cannot be avoided. But these conditions can be known so that they do not create any bondage. Bondage is caused by ignorance of the conditions. Differences arise due to ignorance.¹⁵ Advaita declares that those who see differences instead of identity are in utter ignorance.

Plurality is an illusion created by language,¹⁶ according to Advaita. It is language that creates the illusion that there are many things in the world and that the world itself is non-different from Brahman. This idea of plurality is generated by the practical or everyday use of language. But in reality there is unity of things which is symbolized by Brahman. Thus there is an underlying unity throughout Reality, and this is best exemplified in the realization of the identity between the world and Brahman, and between the *jīva* and Brahman.

The *Samsāra*

Advaita declares the world to be the *samsāra*, that is, that which is in the process of change and instability. It is the world of impermanence and of birth and death. It is symbolized by the wheel of time and the cycle of birth and death.¹⁷ This world is, therefore, considered to be not real, as Reality is taken to be that which is eternal, infinite and unchanging. Brahman is the eternal Reality that is not affected by time and change. Brahman subsumes all the changes within itself as if they are non-existent. The changes are real only in so far as they are seen in isolation. Considered from the transcendental point of view, the changes are not real, because they cease to exist in the realm of the transcendental Being.

The Advaitic transcendental philosophy takes the *samsāra* as the starting point of its inquiry, but transcends it by invoking the superior reality of Brahman. Brahman is the goal of the inquiry, but it is the *samsāra* which provides the urgency of the inquiry. *Samsāra* itself is not so unreal that it cannot generate the urgency of the desire for liberation. It is the very ground on which the desire for *mukti* or *mokṣa* can be fulfilled. Therefore, Śaṅkara gives the highest importance to the *samsāra* at the level of the practical life (*loka-vyavahāra*).¹⁸ Besides, he admits that there is no real difference between *samsāra* and Brahman. Brahman

appears as the *saṁsāra* under the condition of our ignorance. The *saṁsāra* is ultimately identical with Brahman. There is no reason to accept the separate identity of the *saṁsāra* at the transcendental level (*paramārthataḥ*).

Advaita is a philosophy of transcendence of the *saṁsāra* as much as it is the philosophy of identity, or of non-difference of the world and Brahman. The theory of the *vivarta* of Brahman as the *saṁsāra* is a legitimate heir to the transcendental urge for seeking the ultimate Reality beyond the sensible world given here and now. The sensible world is not final; there is another Reality to be sought after. It is the latter that gives significance to the world here and now. This, however, does not demand other-worldliness, since it tries to explain this world itself.

If *saṁsāra* and Brahman would have been different, then there can never be any necessary relation between the two. In that case, the *saṁsāra* would have been entirely due to a chance event, or it would have been an autonomous reality. But such a *saṁsāra* would pose the greatest challenge to the possibility of moral life of man. Man would have been condemned to a degenerate existence without any hope of moral perfection. Advaita makes it clear that *saṁsāra* is not autonomous, nor is it caused by an arbitrary force. The world follows the natural laws and has an order that is due to its divine ground on which it is based. Brahman stands for the perfect order and divine lawfulness. Therefore, the world which is identical with it has the same perfect order. The perfection of life is possible, because it is a divinely ordained world.

Moral Necessity

The world exists out of moral necessity,¹⁹ because the world is the moral prerequisite for the perfection of life embodied in the idea of mokṣa or mukti. Mokṣa stands for the spiritual and moral perfection of man free from the bondage to the world. Not the world, but man's attachment to it is the source of bondage.

Man in ignorance is bound to the world because of attachment. This ignorance has to be removed, and not the world itself. The world makes it possible for man to achieve the highest moral perfection. Advaita shows the way to moral life in and through the world. Without the world, how can there be moral life? Brahman is the ground and the source of the world. Hence, existence of the world is morally necessary.

Advaita provides a moral defence of the existence of the world. It does not condemn the world as a morally insignificant existence for the reason that it can be saved from its moral degeneration by effort and divine intervention. This is more so, because the world is ultimately divine in nature. The world is only an appearance of Brahman, and so it partakes of the divine possibilities which are implicitly there in the nature of the world. Mokṣa is possible, because man in the world is implicitly a divine being. The state of liberation envisaged by Advaita is not nullification of the world, but a true understanding of it so that man does not become forgetful of the real nature of the world. This world is taken seriously for the sake of mokṣa itself as the world is the place for moral struggle and spiritual realization.

The idea that Advaita is other-worldly and life-negating is based on the wrong understanding that it emphasizes the dissolution of the world and the worldly life. There is no reason why the Advaitins should recommend the dissolution of the world when it is so grounded in Brahman itself. All that Advaita recommends is the dissolution of the ignorance (*avidyā*) regarding the world. Ignorance is the cause of the sufferings of man, and therefore it must be removed at any cost. Knowledge itself is liberation, and so there is overwhelming emphasis on the knowledge of Brahman in the Advaita philosophy.

Advaita is not life-negating, because it can never afford to be so. It is a transcendental philosophy of life, because it aims at a better life to be established on the knowledge of Brahman. It emphasizes the removal of suffering through knowledge, and

hence it cannot negate life as such. Knowledge will not be possible if life is not taken as real. The life of man is not cut off from the life of the cosmos which is grounded in Brahman itself.

3. Against Naturalism and Anthropocentrism:

Why Transcendental Philosophy Must Be Taken Seriously

Transcendental philosophy, especially Advaita Vedānta, has been found to be on the receiving end in recent times, because philosophy has turned naturalistic and anthropocentric. The recent emphasis is on the importance of nature and man at the cost of the transcendent Reality. Philosophers have tended more and more to be inclined to accept science as the paradigm of knowledge and have pushed metaphysics to the background. Transcendental philosophy, however, does not deny the validity of scientific knowledge and hence does not deny the significance of nature and man. However, it draws limits to scientific knowledge, because it finds that science cannot explain reality in every sense of the term.

Limits of Naturalism

Naturalism is not enough to explain how the world has come to being and how man can attain the knowledge of the world. The naturalist thinkers harp on the fact that nature is self-sufficient and that man is a natural product in the process of evolution of nature. This world-view is not only insufficient, but also downright wrong in thinking that man is just a natural object and that nature needs no higher principle than matter for its explanation. Transcendental philosophy in the West arose in order to check the pretensions of naturalistic and the so-called humanistic philosophy of the naturalists. Kant, Husserl, Wittgenstein and Heidegger have all been anti-naturalists for the simple reason that philosophy has a greater task than that of science and that we can go beyond science in order to understand nature and man. They have sought

to explain man and nature from a transcendental standpoint according to which there is more to nature and man than the naturalists can explain.

Advaita Vedānta as a transcendental philosophy rejects the naturalistic and the anthropocentric world-view on the ground that the naturalists have no clue as to how man can transcend himself and his nature. Man in nature is the man in *māyā*, and so there must be a state of transcendence that can assure release from nature. The liberation from nature is the main issue, and hence there must be logical scope for such a release called *mokṣa*. Advaita Vedānta pleads for the liberation of man from nature for the reason that the natural man is the man in bondage. Nature is the source of bondage, because it is the seat of man's attachment to the world. This natural state has to be transcended.

Advaita does not accept that man is the supreme reality and that man is self-sufficient in nature. This is based on the argument that man as a biological being is incomplete and that his natural self is not the higher self. There is a higher Self which is called *Ātman*, the universal Self. This Self is the highest in the sense that it is the same as Brahman which is the underlying reality in the universe. In this sense, the Self is common to all beings. Thus, the human self is not different from the universal Self. Man is not to be taken in the limited naturalistic sense and has to be understood in the universal sense. Man is a spiritual being, and this must be the premise of the philosophy of man, according to Advaita. Not humanism, but spiritualism is the main theme of this philosophy of man.

Beyond the Man in the Cave

Metaphysics which is the mainstay of transcendental philosophy is an imperative for philosophy, because, without the metaphysical urge to go beyond the world here and now, there can never be any higher knowledge. Metaphysics must be the

transcendental study of man and nature. That is to say, philosophy must go beyond the scientific understanding of the natural processes and events. There is something more fundamental than the natural processes and events which constitute the natural world. Nature yields to Supernature, because only in the latter that nature gets its self-fulfilment.

Transcendental philosophy gives us the true metaphysics which helps us in understanding nature and man beyond the cave-like situation into which man has been condemned. It leads us from the ordinary to the extra-ordinary, from the mundane to the higher Reality, and from the sensible world to the supersensible world. Philosophy is the search for the extra-ordinary, as Heidegger²⁰ has rightly pointed out. Plato has shown that man in the cave is bereft of the real knowledge of Reality and hence is in bondage. He has to be released from the cave by showing him the Reality in its true form. Like Plato, Advaita shows that man is in bondage in the world because of ignorance of Brahman. Hence, knowledge of Brahman is the absolute condition for the release of man.

Transcendental philosophy of Advaita demolishes the walls of the cave of ignorance and promises to liberate man from ignorance which has kept him in bondage. Therefore, this philosophy must be taken seriously by all who think that philosophy is basically a pursuit of liberation.

NOTES

1. See Jeff Malpas, "Introduction: The Idea of the Transcendental" in *From Kant to Davidson: Philosophy and the Idea of the Transcendental*, ed. Jeff Malpas (Routledge, London and New York, 2003).
2. See F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (Oxford University Press, London, Oxford and New York, 1969), Introduction.
3. Ibid. See also W.H. Walsh, *Metaphysics* (Hutchinson University Library, London, 1963), Introduction.

4. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N.K. Smith (Mcmillan, London, 1929; Reprinted 1980), B/307.
5. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1961), 6. 522.
6. F.H. Bradley, op. cit., p. 1.
7. Wittgenstein, op. cit. 6.4311.
8. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), Introduction.
9. See Paul Deussen, *The System of Vedānta*, trans. Charles Johnston (Orient Publisher, Delhi, 1972).
10. Ibid.
11. See Śāṅkara, *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1972), Chapter I, Section 1, Preamble on the concept of Adhyāsa.
12. Ibid. See also S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol II (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1923).
13. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, I. i. 4.
14. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI. 9.4 / VI. 10. 3
15. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, II. i. 10–11.
16. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI, 1. 4.
17. See Paul Deussen, op.cit.
18. See Śāṅkara, op. cit.
19. See Paul Deussen, op. cit.
20. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1959), p. 12.

THE ART OF DISCOURSE: THE
MAHĀSVĀMĪ'S WAY — II

V. Sivaramakrishnan*

Bhakti or devotion to God is a part of the religious heritage of mankind. It is a heritage of faith in a Divinity "that shapes our ends". There are few religions without prayers to God in a spirit of supplication or in an attitude of total surrender. Prayers represent the vocal expression of a mind lost in God either momentarily or constantly. There could be a purpose or no purpose at all. Yet, it is a matter of endless amusement that Western Indologists such as Lorinser, Lassen and A. Weber could think of bhakti "as a more or less direct reflection of Christian ideas."¹ Rebuttal of this view has come both from the West and the East, and scholars have pointed out that the germ of the idea is to be found in the *Ṛg-veda* (1.156.3), the *Kātha Upaniṣad* (2.23), the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, (2.23) and the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.23), which show bhakti as the means of God-realization (*Ātmānubhava*). The date of these Upaniṣads could be anytime between the second century B.C. and second century A.D., if not earlier.

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Leaving aside the Western Indologists, one finds that dissidents are not wanting even within our country. The Mahāsvāmī of Kanchi has drawn our attention to this in one of the several discourses he delivered in the fifties of the last century. He singled out for mention the Sāṅkhyas and the Mīmāṃsakas. The former have affirmed that the universe needed no creator, as it is the outcome of the *saṃyoga* or interaction between the puruṣa and the prakṛti. The latter hold that God is not the dispenser of the fruits of action (*phaladātā*) as the actions themselves (actions performed as ordained by the Vedas) yield the fruits. Ādi Śaṅkara rejected both propositions and established God as the Dispenser of Human Destiny on the basis of the *Brahma-sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa. The Mahāsvāmī follows the Śaṅkara way and adds his own characteristic illustrations to show why both God and his worship are necessary.²

The two *sūtras* that affirm God as the creator and as the dispenser of the fruits of action are: *kartā, śāstrārthavattvāt* (2.3.33) and *phalamataḥ, upapatteḥ* (3.2.38).³ The first says that God is the creator and the second, Īśvara gives the fruits of action of one. But then, the Mahāsvāmī poses the question: Well, let Īśvara be the creator and dispenser. Where is the need for bhakti? He adds that there is another reason why we should be devoted to him. He is the One who, says the Svāmī, though omniscient, remains unshaken, calm, peaceful and in a state of bliss. He is the embodiment of bliss supreme (*ānanda-svarūpi*). By remembering him always, we can become one like him. But we have to reckon with a mind ever unsteady, leaping, like a monkey, from one object to another, with a speed that surpasses even that of light.

Bhakti, then, is possible only after the mind is brought under control (*yogaḥ cittavṛtti-nirodhaḥ*: Patañjali, *Yoga-sūtra* 1.2). Devotion to Īśvara helps concentration as Īśvara is a special kind of Being, untouched by ignorance and the products of ignorance, not subject to karmas, or saṃskāras, or the results of action (*Īśvarapraṇidhānādvā* [1–23] and *kleśa-karmavipākāśayaira-*

parāmr̥ṣṭaḥ puruṣaviśeṣa īśvaraḥ [1–24] Ibid).⁴ A state of mind attuned to God need not necessarily be for some personal gain; it could be for relieving oneself of one's burden of worry. In this connection, the Mahāsvāmī cites a prayer by Nīlakanṭha Dīkṣita in his *Ānanda Sāgarastava*, the substance of which is: "Oh Mīnākṣī, daughter of Malayadvaja Pāṇḍya, I am telling you (this) not because you don't know. You know everything. Yet, if I keep anything to myself, my mind will know no rest. You just listen, that is enough." The Mahāsvāmī emphasizes that even without our supplication God knows what is to be done. Bhakti is a part of our selves, like the skin to the bone, if one may say so.

The Big Thief

The Mahāsvāmī, in his exposition of bhakti, gives us many ideas about God and his ways. To our great surprise, he calls him the Big Thief—the thief who leaves his imprint on everything and yet remains elusive. Where does he hide himself and how to find him out? He is the One, says the Svāmī, who lies hidden in the cave of the heart (as the Vedas say). Make the effort to search for him, and that is bhakti, he adds.

Why should one make the search at all? The Svāmī answers this question after establishing the *Īśvara-tattva*. Nature, he says, everywhere shows pairs of opposites. If there is winter, there is also a summer. Night follows the day. Soft flowers are found amidst sharp thorns. Sweetness has its opposite, bitterness. Love is poised against hatred. Thus in nature opposites are the rule. Following this line of thought, we should find an opposite to man's mind, which is restless, discontented, lost in a whirl of desires and passions. There must be something restful and free from all the vacillations of the human mind. That "something" is God, says Svāmī. Nature changes, even mountains and seas. If there is anything changeless, it is God. God is above wants, all-powerful with full of compassion. He is full; we are not. We are in a pit; he

is on a high. If we want to reach him or expect him to lift us up, we should pray. That aspiration to be uplifted spiritually is bhakti.

We do not see the fragrance of a flower; we smell it through the nose. The nose knows not the sweetness of sugar-candy; the tongue relishes it. We listen to music with the ear, not taste it with the tongue. The ear does not feel the cold; the skin does it. All these four—fragrance, sweetness, music and chillness—are not seen. But the eye distinguishes the colours, which is not done by the other organs. Thus, if an object is sensed by even one organ, we take it as real. For example, music is sensed by the ear, not by any other organ, and we enjoy it. Atheists say that anything that cannot be sensed by the five organs is unreal; and God is beyond all the senses. Electricity, it is said, is all-pervasive including our body and brain. But we do not realize it unless we use some special instruments. When filaments are inserted in an air-free (vacuum) bulb and we put on the switch, we have bright light. Similarly, if, in the bulb of our heart, we insert the wire of bhakti, and put on the switch of *śraddhā*, we see God in all his splendour. In his infinite mercy, he, who is formless, takes many attractive forms, which can easily be seen.

One can realize the formless through devotion to God in various forms. Among the five functions (*śṛṣṭi*, *sthiti*, *pralaya* or *samhāra*, *tirodhāna* and *anugraha*) we associate with him, "anugraha" or beneficence is one. We can have his "anugraha" through our faith in his compassion, and our loving devotion—this we call bhakti. We may or may not attain jñāna, spiritual knowledge of the divine leading to self-realization. But we are certain to experience divine bliss through "anugraha". This is enough for most of us.

God is omniscient. He knows our joys and sorrows, and he is the ocean of knowledge and compassion. To pray to him to relieve us of our pain, or distress, or sorrow is not true bhakti. It implies lack of faith in his beneficence. However, we can pray to him in the belief that he knows all and thereby we can lighten the burden of our sorrow or distress. This requires abject humility, which is

indeed the mark of surrender unto him. Through bhakti, either we get rid of our worldly troubles or prepare the mind to be fit enough to bear them all; we can subdue the waves of desire in our mind and remove the dirt of passions; we can absorb some of his auspicious qualities; above all, he can bestow on us that cherished freedom from "*samsāra*"—"mukti". In other words, he would help us to know ourselves, and by his grace, we can attain *advaita-jñāna*. Bhakti purifies the heart, transforms our nature and prepares the way to knowledge divine, the last step to *kaivalya* or mukti.

Awareness of one's own self as the supreme Being is bhakti. One can have one's own *iṣṭa-devatā*. If one thinks of oneself as a child and looks upon the Paramātman as a mother, the way of *Devī upāsanā* is open to him. If one wants to immerse oneself in peace, Dakṣiṇāmūrti is there for worship. If one wants to worship by dancing and singing, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is readily available. The Hindu recognizes all the gods as the manifestation of one supreme God. The jibe that there are crores of gods in the Hindu pantheon holds no water. The Veda proclaims the oneness of godhead, and poets like Kālidāsa unequivocally declare that all gods are equal.⁵

The Mahāsvāmī was the head of a Math established for the preservation of Sanātana Dharma, propagation of Advaita Vedānta, attainment of Ātman-Brahman identity through spiritual knowledge (*jñāna*) and promotion of bhakti as an indispensable aid to *jñāna* leading to mokṣa. In explaining the doctrine of bhakti, he makes no compromise about the means to salvation, to wit, the *jñāna-mārga*. He does not rely on special texts on bhakti like the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* and the *Śāṅḍilya-bhakti-sūtra*—the latter, in particular, affirms that the cause of bondage is lack of devotion alone, and not knowledge. He bases his views on the *Brahma-sūtra* and, at the same time, in no way minimizes the importance and value of bhakti to a personal god. In this connection, he also refers to temple-worship and sectarian conflicts.

His Holiness does not reject outright the view advocated even by devout persons that "service to man is service to God." But he

holds that the statement, even when reversed, is no less true. Building more hospitals and schools is necessary, but not at the cost of temples. The educated and those cured of their ailments need also to be good men and citizens. Temples being a collective expression of our gratitude to God as the bestower of all the good things of life, worshipping at his shrines is an elementary duty. It is in a temple that one gets an opportunity to empty the mind and fill it with pious thoughts. This cleansing of the mind does a world of good. There is no better place than the temple to keep alive the traditional god-centred arts of religious discourse, music, dance and drama.

Sectarian Conflicts

The Mahāsvāmī, all through his exemplary saintly life, set his face against sectarian conflicts and rivalries. He took great pains to establish that there is really no difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu. Some of his thoughts on the subject are best given in his own words.⁶

We also associate with the Trinity the three guṇas (natural qualities) that bind us—*rajas* (passion) with Brahmā who creates; *sattva* (purity) with Viṣṇu who maintains; and *tamas* (passivity) with Śiva who destroys. The identification of *rajas* with Brahmā is generally accepted, and there seems to be no quarrel over it. It is in respect of the latter two that quarrels arise. Śaivites do not accept the association of *tamas* with Śiva. Śiva, they say, dispels ignorance (*ajñāna*) and his function of *samhāra* is only aimed at freeing man from the bondage of karma. Actually, both Śiva and Viṣṇu combine in themselves a mixture of the guṇas of both *sattva* and *tamas*. Viṣṇu is described as dark and that is the colour of *tamas*. Śiva is said to be snow-white, partaking the whiteness of the clouds that surround Kailāsa, his abode; the colour of *sattva* is white. Viṣṇu lies recumbent on Ādiśeṣa and seems to be in slumber all the time—a clear sign of *tamas*. Śiva, on the other

hand, is not known to be asleep at any time. He either remains in a peaceful state as Dakṣiṇāmūrti or dances as Natarāja—this is certainly not *tāmasic* but *sāttvic*. In essence, both Śiva and Viṣṇu are one and the same. Then, why this quarrel?

"Viśvaṁ viṣṇuḥ"—so begins the *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma*. As Viṣṇu maintains the universe, we say "*sarvaṁ viṣṇumayaṁ jagat*". We talk of "Harikathā" and "Harināma-saṅkīrtana" and not Harakathā and Haranāma-saṅkīrtana. With Śiva is associated jñāna. We talk of Śivajñāna and not Viṣṇujñāna. Śiva may thus be seen the single absolute reality, and Viṣṇu as the agent of the diversity of the Universe. *Sarvaṁ śivamayaṁ*—we say dropping the jagat that is linked up with Viṣṇu. Thus both play complimentary roles. Both are of a transcendental nature, as neither the black (of Viṣṇu) nor the white (of Śiva) is found in the rainbow (vibgyor)."

Let us consider the "possessions" of Śiva and Viṣṇu. Śiva is smeared all over with ash, wears the elephant hide, has a snake round his neck and adorns himself with wayside flowers, the datura, "tumbai", etc. Viṣṇu, on the contrary, has all the valuables of the world—crown, ear-rings, necklace, the *kaustubha* gem, silk cloth, etc. While Viṣṇu has by his side the goddess of Wealth, Lakṣmī, Śiva has Aparṇā, the one who does not have even a leaf to eat. For attaining worldly prosperity in the dhārmic way, we worship Viṣṇu; for "*vairāgya*" (strength of will attuned to God), we pray to Śiva. Devotion to the one or the other helps in attuning the mind to God.

There is a sculpture at the Madurai Mīnākṣī temple showing Mahāviṣṇu offering his sister in marriage to Śiva, Sundareśvara. The traditional legend is brought out beautifully in the sculpture. To see Ambāl as Padmanābha's sister and Parameśvara's śakti is delightful. Gazing at it, all our differences over the Śiva-Viṣṇu superiority issue will vanish.

...|| Śiva is depicted as Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa and Ardhanārī. In the former, Viṣṇu stands to the left of Śiva, and in the latter, the

goddess is on the left. Thus Viṣṇu and Parāśakti are one and the same. Śiva is Paramātmān and the goddess is his inseparable Power. Viṣṇu sustains the universe with the power (śakti) of the supreme goddess. Śiva, Viṣṇu and Śakti are the "ratnatraya".

Two Rājas

Let us take the two "Rājas"—Raṅgarāja and Natarāja. The one has his abode at Śrīrangam and the other at Chidambaram, both in Tamil Nadu. Both the gods look in the direction of the south, where Yama stays, and thereby assure us of freedom from the fear of death.

Natarāja is dancing, and Viṣṇu is reclining. The Hall of Dance is called "sabhā"; "raṅgam" also means a stage or "sabhā". Here again is a reversal of roles. Śiva, the Destroyer, is active; Viṣṇu, the Sustainer, is asleep in peaceful slumber as it were. It is not necessary to talk about the three or the five functions of the gods. There is only one God who has several functions. This is all the work of the goddess, Śakti. We should worship them all with single-minded devotion, making no distinction of any kind.

No one has said that Śiva and Viṣṇu are enemies. In the Purāṇic legends and in some temples, the one is shown as the bhakta of the other. They serve as models of bhakti. When there is no quarrel between them, why should we, the mortals, quarrel among ourselves? In the *Praśnottara Ratnamālikā*, Śaṅkarācārya poses the question: "Who is Bhagavān?" The answer: "The one that exists as Śaṅkara and Nārāyaṇa—*Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇātmā ekaḥ*."

(to be continued)

NOTES

1. Swami Harshananda, *Śāṅḍilya-bhakti-sūtras—A Study*, Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore, 1995, p. 6. R.C. Zaehner says that loving devotion introduces a new element into Hinduism. Refer

- R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, Home University Library Series, London, p. 165.
2. *Deivattin Kural* by Ra. Ganapati (Tamil) Vol. I. Vanati Patippakam, Chennai, 1976.
 3. *Brahma-sūtra*, English translation with text and commentaries by Swami Vireswarananda, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1936.
 4. *Patañjali's Yoga-sūtra*, English translation with notes by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai - 4, 1994.
 5. *ekaiva mūrtirbibhīde tridhā sā sāmānyameṣām prathamāvaratvam, Kumāra-sambhavam*, 7.44.
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THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOUL IN
ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATA*

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5. Qualifications for Release

Advaita generally lays down four credentials (*adhikāra*) for one to pursue the goal of *mokṣa*. They are (1) *nityānitya-vastu-vivekaḥ*, or the knowledge that discriminates what is of real value from what is worthless, (2) *ihāmutrārtha-bhoga-virāgaḥ*, or the absence of desire for enjoyment in this world and in other worlds, (3) *śama-damādi-ṣaṭ-sampattiḥ*, or the acquisition of six qualities like *śama* and *dama*, and (4) *mumukṣutvam*, or the desire for release. The *Bhāgavata* speaks of the importance of two more requirements: (1) *guru-bhakti*, or devotion to a teacher and (2) *sat-saṅga*, or the company of holy persons.

Viveka, Vairāgya, and Mumukṣutva

Of all the six qualifications, *vairāgya* is the most important. Only for a person endowed with *vairāgya* do the other qualifications also become possible. *Rāga* is attachment to various

* Continued from the previous number

aspects of worldly life. And *vairāgya* is the state of being non-attached. But absence of attachment does not mean the presence of its opposite, viz. aversion (*dveṣa*). Aversion to the world is as dangerous to spiritual pursuit as attachment. Attachment and aversion form an inseparable pair (*dvandva*). And, therefore, the mind has a tendency to swing from the one to the other in recurring modes. So, though *vairāgya* is described as non-attachment, it implies also non-aversion. It is actually midway between attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*), between infatuation (*moha*) and revulsion (*jugupsā*). It is a skilful balance between the two extremes, and, for that reason, difficult to practise, like tight-rope walking.

A necessary concomitant of attachment is desire (*kāma/trṣṇā*). Attachment to anything is accompanied by desire to enjoy its association, possession or utilization. And the range of desire is very vast. It extends from worldly aspects to aspects of higher worlds upto *brahma-loka*. It is not easy to give up attachment and desire, which have been built into our minds through innumerable births. But unless one learns to turn away from attachment and desire for worldly objects, one cannot seriously think of pursuing *mokṣa*.

The key to the development of *vairāgya* is *viveka*, or discriminative knowledge. It is that knowledge by which we can avoid wasting time and energy on matters which are in no way helpful to the pursuit of *mokṣa*. It is acquired by reflection (*vicāra*) on the nature of the objects to which we are usually attached. The material for such reflection comes partly from our own observation and partly from scriptural accounts. Common experience shows that whatever pleasure we derive from worldly aspects is mixed with pain of various kinds. Desire for worldly enjoyment leads to effort (*karma*) to fulfil it. There is no guarantee that our efforts for worldly ends will succeed. Effort has often to encounter human as well as natural obstacles. Even assuming that effort succeeds, worldly ends cannot give us lasting satisfaction, as they

are subject to change and destruction. Hence attachment and desire shift from one object to another in an endless chain. Scripture also recounts the sordid aspects, not only of this world, but also of other worlds. Constant reflection on the limitations of worldly ends and the perils of seeking them helps to break down attachment and cultivate *vairāgya*. A further ground for reflection is the teaching of scripture that the material universe is not only impermanent, but also illusory, as compared to Brahman, the ultimate reality. Even the mediate knowledge of illusoriness thus acquired can influence the mind towards *vairāgya*.

The targets of *viveka* and *vairāgya* may be classified under three heads: those which are inimical to *mokṣa*, those which are irrelevant to it, and those which are partly useful to it. (1) There are aspects of life which are patently detrimental to spiritual well-being, for the reason that they cannot be secured without breaking codes of conduct, e.g. living off the fruits of theft or cheating. *Mokṣa* cannot be secured without respect for morality. What is opposed to *dharma* (*pratiṣiddha-karma*) is also opposed to *mokṣa*.

(2) There are many other worldly desires that are, from the moral point of view, legitimate and permissible. Man may pursue them if he is so inclined. Actions in pursuit of such desires come under the head *kāmya-karma*. The development of yogic powers, ascendance in the scale of birth, enjoyment of bliss in heaven, and even the acquisition of detailed knowledge about the physical universe are of this kind. But the pity is that they are in no way useful to the pursuit of *mokṣa*. They serve only as distractions to the true goal of life. In the terminology of the Upaniṣads, they constitute *preyas*, or the merely pleasurable, in contrast to *śreyas*, or what is worthwhile in terms of liberation. One who is serious about liberation must reject them outright like Naciketas of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* or at least learn to withdraw from them.

(3) There is a third category of worldly ends also to which *viveka* and *vairāgya* have to be applied, but with judicious care. Take for example, minimum good health and freedom from

poverty. These are indispensable for the rigorous observance of spiritual practices. Health and wealth, in fact all kinds of material development, become distractions to spiritual life only when they are looked upon as ends in themselves and pursued for their own sake. Similarly, scholarship in the scriptures and skill in argument could be applied to spiritual practice. But they become detrimental to *mokṣa* when they are used for display. Thus, how such worldly ends stand in relation to *mokṣa* depends on the motive with which we take to them.

The world, in spite of all its imperfections, provides opportunities to train ourselves for attaining liberation. And *viveka* consists in discriminating whatever is spiritually worthwhile in the world from whatever is not so, so that we may use the opportunities without getting involved in all sorts of obstacles and diversions. Thus, *viveka* and *vairāgya* go together and form the indispensable preliminary requirement for the pursuit of *mokṣa* through *karma*, *bhakti*, *dhyāna*, and *jñāna*. Even the development of virtues like *śama* and *dama* are facilitated by the presence of *viveka* and *vairāgya*. Again, only a person endowed with these two qualities will spontaneously seek the company of holy persons (*sat-saṅga*) and only such a one will be sincerely devoted to a *guru*. The *Bhāgavata*, therefore, devotes special attention to *viveka* and *vairāgya*.

Mumukṣutva is intense longing for liberation. This is the positive side of *vairāgya*, if *vairāgya*, being a process of withdrawal, could be described as a negative process. The two qualifications are inseparable. Unless there is intense desire for liberation, one will not feel urged to turn away from the world. Similarly, without practising *vairāgya*, one cannot sustain one's longing for liberation. Thus, they are complementaries.

Śama-damādi

Liberation is attained when the *jīva* overcomes its ignorance and realizes its non-difference from Brahman. The immediate means

to this realization is *jñāna-yoga*, which consists of three steps. First one has to learn Vedānta under a *guru* (*śravaṇa*), then reflect on what one has learnt in order to remove doubts (*manana*), and finally meditate on the truth learnt in order to make it a direct experience by overcoming all contrary mental tendencies (*nididhyāsana*). *Jñāna-yoga* is, thus, a difficult process. It comes only to a person who has cultivated the six virtues mentioned in the present list. The six virtues are *śama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titikṣā*, *śraddhā*, and *samādhāna*. The following verses from Śrī Śaṅkara's *Aparokṣānubhūti* present the meaning of each of these in a neat and convenient manner.

सदैव वासनात्यागः शमोऽयमिति शब्दितः ।
निग्रहो बाह्यवृत्तीनां दम इत्यभिधीयते ॥ (v. 6)

Desires for worldly objects operate as a result of two forces. One is the force of tendencies (*vāsanā*) acquired in past lives. To restrain this force is the virtue called *śama*. The other force is the attraction of the senses towards objects in this life. To control this impulse is the virtue called *dama*.

विषयेभ्यः परावृत्तिः परमोपरतिर्हि सा ।
सहनं सर्वदुःखानां तितिक्षा सा शुभा मता ॥ (v. 7)

The state of withdrawal from the objects of senses achieved by *dama* must be maintained steadily (and not slackened by a bit). This determination is verily *uparati* of the highest order. Endurance of all kinds of pain is the virtue called *titikṣā*, and this conduces to happiness.

निगमाचार्यवाक्येषु भक्तिः श्रद्धेति विश्रुता ।
चित्तैकाग्र्यं तु सल्लक्ष्ये समाधानमिति स्मृतम् ॥(v. 8)

Faith in the words of the Veda and the teacher (who expounds them) is called *śraddhā*. Concentration of mind on the goal, viz. Sat (Brahman), is known as *samādhāna*.

The observance of these qualities is facilitated by the practice of *viveka* and *vairāgya*. The *Bhāgavata* includes these six virtues among a long list of virtues which it considers necessary for the pursuit of *mokṣa*. They are part of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's instruction to Uddhava in response to his questions. (See XI, adhyāya 19, vv. 33–45) The text also illustrates how these various qualities were learnt by a great saint from twenty-four agencies converging the human, animal, plant, and elemental realms. (See XI, adhyāyas 7 to 9)

Guru-bhakti and Sat-saṅga

All the four qualifications mentioned so far, namely discrimination, dispassion, yearning for liberation, and the group of six virtues, require self-effort. But external aid is also needed to facilitate their development. This comes in two forms. One is the grace of a teacher (*guru*). Since the goal is realizing Brahman, the teacher in this case is one who is not only learned in Vedānta, but also one who has oneself realized Brahman, i.e. a *jīvan-mukta*. Placing implicit faith in the words of such a teacher, one must acquire first the mediate knowledge of Brahman, and then, by practice, the direct experience thereof. Faith in the words of the teacher is already included in the group of six virtues under *śraddhā*. The special point made by the *Bhāgavata* is that such faith earns the grace (*anugraha*) of the teacher. No amount of self-effort will succeed unless it is blessed and guided by the grace of the *guru*, who is an embodiment of God himself.

The other form of external help is the company of holy ones. This is *sat-saṅga*, the word *sat* here meaning a person of high and noble character. It is well known that a person's mind is influenced by the kind of company he cultivates. A person who is intent on realizing *mokṣa* should avoid the company of the worldly-minded. He should always be in the company of the spiritual-minded, especially of those who are more advanced than himself in the study and practice of Vedānta. To be blessed with

a great teacher and the company of holy ones is a gift of God in fulfilment of the merit (*puṇya*) acquired through several past lives.

GIST OF RELEVANT VERSES

1. On *viveka*, *vairāgya*, and *mumukṣutva*

II, 2, 2–3. The primary meaning of the Veda is such that men are drawn to the pleasure of *svarga*. But, actually the pleasure of *svarga* is equal to a nice dream. Hence people with *viveka* should devote attention to objects only to the extent that they are useful to *mokṣa*. Even if the goods of the world are received by *prārabdha*, one should remember that their pursuit or acquisition is worthless.

III, 26, 1. The purpose of knowing about the nature of *prakṛti* is to distance oneself from it.

III, 27, 21–23. Though the *avidyā*-born association of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is very fast, it can be worn out by strong *vairāgya* combined with *niṣkāma-karma*, *bhakti*, *dhyāna*, and *jñāna*.

III, 27, 27. *Vairāgya* through prolonged *viveka* is acquired towards enjoyment of worlds up to *brahma-loka*.

III, 27, 30. For attaining *mokṣa*, *vairāgya* is needed even towards the *siddhis* gained through *yoga*.

V, 11, 15–17. The mind is responsible for all kinds of misery. So the only way to get released from *saṁsāra* is to reform the mind. Give up attachment and all mental weaknesses and impurities; realize that *Ātman* is one's true reality and the mind is the *upādhi* which makes it appear as the *jīva*. The mind is your enemy. By neglect, the mind only becomes strong. The mind is *mithyā*. It hides the true nature of the self.

VI, 15, 23–26. Worldly experience is an illusion created by the mind. Therefore give up the sense of difference and withdraw the mind from objects and turn it God-ward.

VII, 14, 2–4. The householder must not be too much attached, realizing that all relationships are temporary. He must do his duty, but keep *vairāgya* at heart. He must dedicate all actions to God and serve holy men.

VIII, 19, 23–25. There is no end to desire, and desire cannot be absolutely satisfied. Therefore one must be restrained. He who is satisfied with what is obtained by *prārabdha* finds peace in himself. But he who has not controlled his senses can never be satisfied even by securing the three worlds. Greed is the cause of rebirth; contentment leads to *mukti*.

IX, 19, 14–16. Desire is not ended by any amount of gratification. It grows, just as fire grows with offering of ghee. Giving up desire, avoiding attachment and aversion, and viewing everything with an equal eye are the only means to happiness.

XI, 3, 18. Those who wish to cross *māyā* and attain *mokṣa* should first ponder over the nature of the fruits reaped from action. They reap only sorrow, though they aim at pleasure.

XI, 3, 20. Attaining *paraloka* is of no use. When the fruits of good actions are exhausted, they (the souls) fall back to earth. This fear haunts them there.

XI, 9, 29–33. It is with great difficulty and after innumerable births that we obtain a human birth. Therefore, even before the time of death, one must make haste to seek *mokṣa* with the help of this human instrument (body and mind). Sense enjoyment is possible in any birth. So one must not waste the human birth on it. Only the human birth provides for *viveka* and *vairāgya*. The guru's guidance followed by one's own reflection are necessary. Thus, one should give up all attachment and become an equal viewer (*sama-darśī*).

XI, 10, 7. The seeker of truth (*jijñāsā*) should think of the Ātman in everything and view all things equally. Giving special importance to anything will entail attachment to it.

XI, 10, 10. The gross and subtle bodies are products of *māyā*. Birth and death belong to the gross body, and coming and going, i.e. taking new lives, belong to the subtle body. To identify the Ātman with these bodies is *avidyā*.

XI, 13, 9–14. Ignorance of one's true nature leads to attachment. Desire and effort to obtain objects results in pain. A discriminating person withdraws himself from objects and devotes himself more and more to God.

XI, 21, 23–27. *Śruti* describes *svarga* as a goal, not for its own sake, but as an inducement to good action (like coaxing a child to take medicine by other promises). Enjoyment of objects in this world is inimical to *mokṣa*, apart from bringing sorrow. (Likewise) even *svarga* leads to rebirth. Therefore, when *śruti* glorifies *svarga*, its proper import must be understood. Those who hanker after *svarga* miss the chances of *mokṣa*.

XI, 28, 9. That the world is illusory can be known by a variety of *pramāṇas*—perception, inference, scripture, and experience of the Ātman. Knowing that it is so, one should be detached from the world.

2. On *śama-damādi*

XI, 23, 43–45. The courage to endure (*titikṣā*) is of the nature of *sattva*. Even when someone causes misery, the *titikṣu* knows that nobody and nothing is responsible for his suffering except himself, i.e. his mind, which has indulged in various types of actions.

XI, 23, 60–61. The mind is a big enemy, difficult to conquer. One should resist and stamp out the tendency to get angry with others for one's own mishaps. Therefore *titikṣā* is a very important element in self-discipline, which is preparatory to all other disciplines leading to *mokṣa*.

3. On guru-bhakti

VII, 15, 25–26. The *guru* who bestows knowledge is to be regarded as God himself. Devotion to the *guru* will enable one to conquer all weaknesses.

X, 87, 33. Yogīs who try to conquer themselves without seeking a guru's guidance fail; they only encounter difficulties and pain.

XI, 3, 21. One who desires that knowledge which leads to supreme peace should take refuge in the *guru*. The right type of *guru* is one who knows the central import of the Veda and who could transmit that knowledge from his own experience. His mind should be calm and his worldly activities should be minimum.

XI, 3, 22. The aspirant should regard his *guru* as his chosen form of God (*iṣṭa-devatā*). He should serve the master sincerely and learn from him the nature of *bhakti*, which would enable him to realize God. By these, God is pleased.

XI, 20, 17. This body is like a boat to cross the ocean of *saṁsāra*. The *guru* is the boatman; surrender to him. God is the wind that drives the boat. Think of God. With all this facility, if one does not use the body to cross the ocean of *saṁsāra*, one only ruins oneself.

4. On sat-saṅga

X, 84, 11–12. A *sat-puruṣa* is greater than a *tīrtha* and a *devatā*. The latter two purify us only by repeated service. But the mere sight of a *sat-puruṣa* confers benefits. Meditation on devas cannot wash away sins completely, because the sense of duality will persist. But service to holy men destroys the sense of duality, which is the origin of sin. They are themselves *jñānīs*.

XI, 12, 1–7. By *sat-saṅga* all attachments are destroyed and God's grace is won as no other means can. The value of *sat-*

saᅅga remains the same in all the four yugas. All kinds of beings and all kinds of human beings, though they may not know any discipline, attain God through *sat-saᅅga*.

XI, 26, 30-34. A *sat-puruᅅa* is one who has acquired true *bhakti* to the Lord. He who takes refuge in a *sat-puruᅅa* becomes free from bondage to *karma*, fear of *saᅅsāra*, ignorance, and even from fear of the elements of nature. For one who is immersed in *saᅅsāra*, the only saviour is a *sat-puruᅅa*. A *sat-puruᅅa* gives us inner light to experience God. He is a friend, well-wisher, one's own dear self, nay God himself.

6. Karma-yoga

1. Karma and release

In general terms, a person who longs for *mokᅅa* should adopt the following attitude to *karma*. (1) He should take care not to commit any prohibited deed, knowingly or unknowingly. If he either happens to commit sin unknowingly or commits it knowingly but later regrets it, he should undertake the requisite expiatory act. Sometimes suffering occurs to a good person (like continued illness or poverty). Though seemingly unmerited, knowledgeable persons would trace it to some hidden sin committed in a previous birth. In that case also, the person should undertake a suitable act of expiation. What exactly is the benefit of an expiatory act? There are two kinds of results accruing from any deliberate act, whether good or bad. One is objective, the fruit of the action (*phala*). The agent receives a reward or a punishment as the case may be for the act done. The other result is subjective. The agent acquires a tendency (*vāsanā*, *saᅅskāra*) to perform the same type of act in the future also. The main advantage of an expiatory act is that it reduces the intensity of the punishment for sin (*phala*) and also gives the agent the strength and detachment to bear the punishment. As for the acquired

tendency for sin (*vāsanā*), an expiatory act by itself is powerless to remove it. As we shall see in a later section, both *vāsanā* and *phala* resulting from sin can be completely wiped out by *bhakti*.

(2) Now we shall turn to actions that are good. Of these, optional deeds (*kāmya-karma*) should gradually be eschewed. *Kāmya-karma* are deeds done for the fulfilment of desire for pleasurable ends, like prosperity, fame, progeny, longevity, going to the worlds of celestials, and so on. Such desires, though morally legitimate, are a clear distraction from the pursuit of *mokṣa*. Scripture teaches *kāmya-karma* ostensibly as a concession to weakness and as a means of diverting the mind from sinful deeds, but ultimately they are intended to reveal to the agent the impermanence and worthlessness of their results. Even those who reach the world of the gods (*svarga*) have to return to the earth when the fruits of their *kāmya-karma* are exhausted. *Kāmya-karma* provides only for *abhyudaya*, but not for *niḥśreyasa*.

(3) Thus, a person who desires *mokṣa* should train himself to be confined to obligatory good deeds, both of the general category (*sādhāraṇa-dharma*) and of the special type (*varṇāśrama-dharma*). Such deeds are not intended to confer specific benefits on the doer. They are prescribed for the reason that they are good for society by helping to maintain its solidarity and welfare. That is why the word *dharma* is applied only to deeds of this head while the other categories already mentioned are merely called *karma*. The term *dharma* means "that which sustains" (*dhāraṇāt dharma ityāhuḥ*). (*Mahābhārata*, XII, 109, 11). Even failure to observe these duties impairs society. That is why it is said that, though duties are not meant for earning any specific merit (*puṇya*), abstinence from them becomes sin (*pāpa*). Such a position does not imply that there is no personal benefit at all for the doer. Though duties are not *meant* for personal benefit, their observance incidentally confers blessings on the doer also. He earns merit as a matter of course, which bear fruit for him in unknown ways, either in this life or in a future life. In astrology, this general

benefit is called *yoga*, which is indicated by a lucky conjunction of planets in a person's horoscope. For example, a person born in poverty may surprisingly become very wealthy in life by fair means. A seeker of *mokṣa* should avoid applying his mind even to these incidental personal rewards. So long as there is desire for personal benefit, however remote, diffuse, and indirect it may be, one is bound to be reborn to enjoy that benefit. Therefore a seeker of *mokṣa* should undertake his obligatory deeds, duties, in a spirit of detachment. Such a practice is called *niṣkāma-karma*, or *karma-yoga*. We shall now go into the details of this discipline.

2. *Niṣkāma-karma*

The paths prescribed by Vedānta for attaining *mokṣa* are *karma-yoga*, *dhyāna-yoga* (*upāsana*), *bhakti-yoga*, and *jñāna-yoga*. Of these, *karma-yoga* is the foundational discipline. It does not directly lead to liberation. *Jñāna-yoga* is the direct means to release. *Bhakti* and *dhyāna* yogas can merge in *jñāna-yoga*. But *karma-yoga* cannot. The reason is this. *Jñāna-yoga*, though starting from a sense of difference between knower and known, ultimately aims at and culminates in the experience of non-difference (of the *jīva* from Brahman). *Jñāna-yoga* comprises *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. To study the texts and to reflect on what has been learnt implies a sense of difference of the self from the source of study and the object of reflection. But *nididhyāsana* is meditation on Nirguṇa Brahman from which the self is not different. *Dhyāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* also have the same feature. *Upāsana* on any object, though beginning with a sense of difference, ultimately calls for mental identification with the object of meditation. *Bhakti* as devotion to God for either personal or altruistic ends is of the lower form (*aparā-bhakti*), where God becomes a means to the satisfaction of the devotee. But in the higher form (*parā-bhakti*), the devotee asks for nothing except to be united with God. By contrast, *karma-yoga* is necessarily based on difference.

All *karma*, whether it is motivated by desire for personal and worldly results or is free from such desire, is based on the distinction between the doer, act done, and the result. There is, of course, such a phenomenon as involvement, or engrossment, in work, especially when the work is serious or interesting. The agent gets absorbed in the work and forgets even food and other needs and is unaware of the passage of time, requiring to be reminded by others. But this does not mean that the distinction of the doer from the deed and the result becomes absent. Work is closer to the physical and social environment than devotion and meditation. Hence it often meets with difficulties and delays, either from the environment or from the nature of the work, and these disturb his involvement and bring back to his mind all the distinctions connected with work. Nevertheless, though thus standing apart from the other three disciplines, *karma-yoga* is the indispensable foundation to all of them.

The way *karma-yoga* fulfils its role as a preparation is by purifying the mind of all selfish inclinations. So long as action is done with desire for worldly and personal results, it entails enjoyment of those results, which constitutes bondage. But when action is done without any such desire, it secures mental purification (*citta-śuddhi*)—freedom from all mental impurities acquired from past conduct. And purity of mind is absolutely necessary to practise *dhyāna*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna*. Hence we are asked to practise our duties without any personal and worldly motive. This is the essence of *niṣkāma-karma*, or *karma-yoga*.

The concept of *niṣkāma-karma* needs a clarification. The term literally means "desireless action." But it is psychologically impossible to perform any deliberate action without some desire or other. Hence "desireless" only means that all worldly and personal desires are to be avoided. The only desire that should motivate action should be self-purification. Such an idea is too abstract and difficult to implement. But the same spirit can be maintained in an indirect way by offering the action as a means of service to

God. The doer could cultivate the attitude that he is doing all good action under the direction of God and for the sake of God. Since it is not easy to give up personal desire, which is deeply ingrained in the mind by long habit, the practice of *niṣkāma-karma* even as service to God involves considerable mental skill. For this reason, *niṣkāma-karma* is also called *karma-yoga*—*yoga* in action. The *Bhagavad-gītā* describes *karma-yoga* as "skill in action" (*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*) (II, 50).

GIST OF RELEVANT VERSES

I, 2, 9. *Dharma* is for *mokṣa*, not for wealth. And wealth should be a means to *dharma*, not for enjoyment.

I, 2, 13. The observance of *varṇāśrama-dharma* has for its object the pleasure of God.

I, 5, 32–35. Surrender the fruits of all actions to God. *Karma* as such will lead to bondage. But *niṣkāma-karma* will rid one of the three kinds of sins and prepare for release. It will make for *parā-bhakti*, which is identical with *jñāna*.

III, 32, 5–7. Those who perform the duties of their station and stage in life purely for pleasing God become pure of heart. At last they attain Śrī-hari, who is the cause, sustenance, and refuge of all the worlds.

IV, 30, 19–20. One who does *karma* as dedication to God, though he be a householder, will not become bound. Such a one, through *bhakti*, attains *jñāna* by God's grace and is released for ever.

V, 10, 23. Doing one's duty as service to God is a means of washing away past sins (and thereby cleansing the mind).

VII, 10, 13. *Niṣkāma-karma* liberates one from all sins done.

VII, 15, 66–68. Avoid *pratiṣiddha-karma*. Observe *svadharma*. Even a householder can attain *mokṣa* by doing his *svadharma* as service to God.

VIII, 1, 15. *Niṣkāma-karma* releases one from bondage to *karma* and thus leads to release.

VIII, 5, 47–48. Even small acts done with dedication to God bear fruit. But big acts done with desire do not; they involve only pain and effort.

VIII, 9, 29. All effort for the sake of oneself and one's family goes in vain. But the same effort for the sake of God benefits oneself and all. The reason is this. In the former, there is a sense of duality, but not in the latter. Watering the roots of a tree benefits all parts of the tree. God is the root of everything. Therefore worship him (through dedicated acts).

VIII, 16, 5. Householdship can confer the benefits of *yoga* on those who cannot practise *yoga*.

XI, 3, 41–42. *Karma-yoga* purifies the mind and paves the way for *jñāna*.

XI, 3, 46. The intention of the Veda in promising attractive results like *svarga* is to induce a person to perform the prescribed good deeds. When a person, out of discrimination and detachment, performs the same deeds without any thought of the proffered benefits and purely for the pleasure of God, he attains *jñāna*, which leads to release from *karma*.

XI, 5, 13. *Soma* juice and animals are mentioned in connection with some Vedic sacrifices. Such passages should not be interpreted literally as prescriptions for drinking and killing. The real meaning is that the juice is only to be smelt and the animal is only to be touched during the sacrifice. Likewise, one is called upon to marry, not for enjoyment, but only for progeny to carry on the tradition of *dharma*. Thus, the intention of the Veda is to discipline natural impulses, and not to encourage them.

XI, 5, 14. Those who kill animals are themselves killed and eaten by those very animals in the next birth.

XI, 10, 2. *Niškāma-karma* becomes possible when the aspirant ponders over the fact that, though all beings seek pleasure through objects, they receive only pain.

XI, 10, 4. Those who desire God should become inward-turned by doing only *nitya-karma* without desire. They should give up all *kāmya-karma*, because they are desireful.

XI, 20, 10–13. Doing good actions according to one's *varṇa* and *āśrama*, avoiding the bad, and doing the good without any personal desire and devoting them to God, one will not be obliged to go to heaven or hell. Such a one becomes pure of heart and fit for *jñāna-yoga* and, through it, acquires direct experience of Ātman. Or he becomes fit for *bhakti* through melting of heart (*citta-druti*). The wise person does not desire enjoyment in heaven, nor does he desire even rebirth as a human being. Human birth is rare. In it alone are *niškāma-karma* and *citta-suddhi* possible and, through them, *jñāna* and *bhakti*. Therefore even those in heaven and hell long for it. This does not mean that one should get attached to human birth, for any attachment is an impediment to *mokṣa*.

XI, 21, 5–6. Though in reality the Ātman is the same in all and all bodies are made up of five elements, people are classified according to their nature. One has to follow one's *svadharma*, which alone is best for one.

XI, 21, 29–30. Animal sacrifices are mentioned in the Veda for reaching *svarga*. Such passages should not be understood literally. Their real intention is to wean people from practising cruelty (*himsā*), and not to encourage it. Such motivated prescriptions are called *parisaṅkhyā-vidhi*, in contrast to prescriptions like *sandhyā-vandana*, which are free from implied motives and are called *apūrva-vidhi*.

7. Dhyāna-yoga

Bondage is the result of ignorance relating to the truth that the self of the individual is non-different from Brahman. Ignorance can be removed only by knowledge, by which is meant here the direct experience of the truth. Mediate knowledge of the truth is acquired by study of the sacred texts (*śravaṇa*) and reflection thereon (*manana*). This knowledge has to be converted into direct experience by meditation on the non-dual reality (*nididhyāsana*).

Meditation on *nirguṇa* Brahman is a very difficult process. It presupposes considerable practice in the art of mental concentration. The mind is known for its fickleness. It is difficult to make it dwell on any object continuously for a long time. It is this skill that has first to be acquired. For this purpose, any object could be chosen, provided it is morally satisfactory. There can be no spiritual effort which goes against moral considerations. Therefore, in choosing objects for training in meditation, it is safe to follow scripture. The Upaniṣads prescribe a number of meditative exercises on a graded scale for training in the concentration of mind. The objects prescribed pass from the concrete, like the sun, to the abstract, like *prāṇa*. These exercises are called *vidyās*, though the term *vidyā* is also used to stand for knowledge. Specific objective results are mentioned for each *vidyā*, such as enjoying unlimited powers in the upper worlds. Though such results are offered apparently for their own sake, really they are intended to induce the mind to practise the *vidyā* and thereby acquire skill in mental fixation. Ultimately, the object of meditation is Brahman itself. Here, again, one may pass from *saguṇa* Brahman, or *Īśvara*, to *nirguṇa* Brahman.

Thus the technique of meditation is as old as the Upaniṣads. In the principal Upaniṣads, the method of concentration is not overlooked, but taken for granted. It finds adequate expression

in the minor Upaniṣads and the early Smṛti literature. The *Bhagavad-gītā* devotes the whole of the sixth chapter to it. The technique of concentration was thus originally associated with Vedānta and looked upon as a means to *jñāna*. Later on, it came to be assimilated by diverse schools, which gave it their own orientation. By the time of Patañjali, the technique must have been developed to such detail that he must have thought it necessary to systematize the technique and condense the whole teaching in the form of aphorisms for the use of posterity. The term *yoga* in the general sense of "a means to an end" could be applied to all forms of spiritual discipline, as in *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, *dhyāna-yoga*, and *jñāna-yoga*. But with Patañjali's contribution, the term *yoga* came to be applied as an equivalent to *dhyāna-yoga*. We shall hereafter use the term *yoga* in this specific sense in this section.

Under Patañjali, the technique of *yoga* came to be grafted to Sāṅkhya metaphysics. In this form, the aim of *yoga* is different from the one in Vedānta. To Vedānta in general, *yoga* is a means to union with the ultimate reality, namely Brahman. (The term *yoga* means also "union.") To Patañjali, its aim is to secure separation of the spirit (*puruṣa*) from matter (*prakṛti*)—the only two realities recognized by Sāṅkhya. It is a case of union (*yoga*) in Vedānta and one of disunion (*viyoga*) in Sāṅkhya. But the technique of *yoga* as systematized by Patañjali is sufficiently broad as to be accommodated in Vedānta.

As conceived by Patañjali, *yoga* consists of eight steps, or limbs, and thus the technique has come to be called *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. The first two steps are the cultivation of certain ethical virtues. This itself shows that morality is the basis of any spiritual discipline. The steps are called *yama* and *niyama*. *Yama* stands for the avoidance of certain wrong practices which tend to distract the mind. It is thus the negative side of the ethical base and could be represented as "self-control." These virtues are abstention from injury, falsehood, theft, incontinence, and greed. अहिंसा-सत्यमस्तेय-

ब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः (*Yoga-sūtra*, II, 30). The positive side, or *niyama*, consists in the observance of certain ethical dispositions which facilitate concentration. These virtues are purity, contentment, austerity, study (of scripture), and devotion to God. शौच-सन्तोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः (*Yoga-sūtra*, II, 32).

The next three steps in *yoga* constitute a stage where one brings the body and mind to a state conducive to meditation. Since this stage involves strong determination, it is called *hatha-yoga*. The steps are *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, and *pratyāhāra*. *Āsana* is the right posture of the body that is fit for meditation. The body must be relaxed and the mind alert. Relaxation avoids strain, and alertness, sleep. *Prāṇāyāma* is regulation of breath. This is needed because there is a close connection between the state of the mind and the rate of breath. When the mind is agitated, the breath is fast; and when the mind is calm, the breath also is slow. In *prāṇāyāma*, by the reverse process, we seek to quieten the mind by regulating the breath. The next step is *pratyāhāra*. This consists in withdrawing the senses from the objects to which they run by nature. The senses feed on objects, activated by the tendency of the mind to be drawn to objects. So, by curbing this outward tendency of the mind, the senses too could be weaned from objects.

The final stage in *yoga* consists of three steps which are purely mental. They constitute *yoga* proper. By way of compliment, this stage is called *rāja-yoga* (fit even for kings), because this becomes less difficult for a person who has conquered the mind and body in the earlier stage. The three steps involved are *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*. *Dhāraṇā* is fixing the mind on the chosen object, and *dhyāna* is directing an even current of thought on the object, like the flow of oil. The culmination of *dhyāna* is *samādhi*. It consists in total absorption of the mind in the object. *Samādhi* has two levels—*savikalpaka* and *nirvikalpaka*. In the former, the *yogī*, though absorbed in the object and undistracted by anything else, is aware of himself as dwelling on the object. In the latter, he loses his own identity in the object. This is *tādātmya*, or mental

oneness with the object. In terms of the Sāṅkhya ideal, stated earlier, the expression *tādātmya* has to be taken in a special sense. The *puruṣa* here, having overcome its false notion as bound by *prakṛti*, remains identified with its true nature as *puruṣa*. In terms of Vedānta, the culmination of *samādhi* is the identity of the *jīva* with Brahman.

The whole process of *yoga* may be summarized as follows:-

yama, niyama: ethical foundation

āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra: body-mind control

dhāraṇā, dhyāna, samādhi: meditation

The *Bhāgavata* generally follows the same lines as Patañjali in regard to the first five steps. But it enlarges the list of *yama* and *niyama* to twelve virtues in each (See XI, adhyāyas 19 and 20.) In regard to the final three steps of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*, it makes an innovation. It merges these steps into *bhakti-yoga* by orienting them to loving devotion to Īśvara. Thus, *yoga* comes to be suffused with *bhakti* instead of remaining a separate discipline. The big advantage of this merger is that it relieves *yoga* of its usual strain when it remains pure self-effort. The mind is now gently and sweetly weaned away from worldly distractions and gets fixed on the object, which is here no other than Bhagavān. Love for God does this miracle. In the final stage of reaching and maintaining *samādhi*, there occur innumerable obstacles. These are listed as follows in Śrī Śaṅkara's *Aparokṣānubhūti* (vv. 127-128).

समाधौ क्रियमाणे तु विघ्नान्यायान्ति वै बलात् ।

अनुसन्धानराहित्यमालस्यं भोगलालसम् ॥

लयस्तमश्च विक्षेपो रसास्वादश्च शून्यता ।

एवं यद्विघ्नबाहुल्यं त्याज्यं ब्रह्मविदा शनैः ॥

"Lack of inquiry, idleness, desire for sense-pleasure, sleep, dullness, distraction, tasting of joy, and slackness. One who desires knowledge of Brahman should gradually overcome such nu-

merous obstacles." It is difficult to overcome these hindrances by self-effort alone. But when *yoga* takes the form of *bhakti*, getting over them becomes less difficult. In this connection, the *Bhāgavata* repeatedly warns against the temptation for siddhis, which are nothing but distractions to *mokṣa*, and stresses the need for *bhakti* as an insurance against the temptation.

There is a special form of *yoga* developed by the Śākta cult in their texts called Tantras. Here the focus of meditation is not objective, but subjective. The technique is called *kuṇḍalini-yoga*. It is believed here that there is a tubular column (*nāḍī*) running from the bottom of the spine upto the top of the head. It is called *suṣumnā*. There are seven centres (*cakra*) in it, situated from bottom to top, each representing a higher level of consciousness than the previous one. They are: (1) *mūlādhāra* at the bottom, (2) *svādhiṣṭhāna* above it, (3) *maṇipūraka* near the navel, (4) *anāhata* near the heart, (5) *viśuddha* near the throat, (6) *ājñā* between the eyebrows, and (7) *sahasrāra* at the top of the head. These centres are not physical organs, but purely psychic points. At the lowest centre, consciousness lies dormant. It is pictured as a serpent lying coiled up, and, therefore, called *kuṇḍalinī*. With repeated practice of *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, and *dhyāna* on the cakras in their hierarchy, the pent-up energy of consciousness can be roused up from the sub-conscious level and carried through the conscious level to the super-conscious level. For facility in fixing the mind on the cakras, the psychic energy is personified as *Devī*, or *Śakti*, the consort of *Śiva*.

The object of *prāṇāyāma* here is to secure the first step of rousing the dormant *kuṇḍalinī* by regulating the breath. Besides the central column (*suṣumnā-nāḍī*), there are also two other columns, one on either side of the *suṣumnā*. On the left side is the column called *idā*, which is connected with the left nostril. On the right side is the one called *piṅgalā*, which is connected with the right nostril. The essence of *prāṇāyāma* is this. Gently draw the breath through one nostril and its connected column, retain

the breath for a while in the body, and then gently release the breath through the other nostril and its connected column. Then do this process of inhalation, retention, and exhalation in the reverse direction. Thus, one regulates the breath from left to right and right to left repeatedly to enable the latent consciousness to rise from the *mūlādhāra*.

The *Bhāgavata* includes this elaborate technique called *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* in its teaching, as in II, 2, 15–21. But even here, its objective is to convert *dhyāna-yoga* into *bhakti-yoga*.

GIST OF RELEVANT VERSES

II, 2, 18. The *yoga* rejects everything that is not God's real nature as "not this," "not this." He is also non-attached to the body and whatever is connected with it. Thus, step by step, fixing his mind wholly on God's essential nature, he bestows on God the highest love in order to be united with him.

IV, 23, 11 ff. Pṛthu attained *yoga-siddhis*, but, in order to ignore them, he practised intense *bhakti*. He attained *jñāna* through *bhakti*.

V, 5, 29–31. Rṣabhadeva, as an *avadhūta*, ignored the *siddhis* obtained by his *yoga*.

V, 6, 1–5. The *siddhis* should not be welcomed even when they occur. The reason is that the mind cannot be trusted. It could drag the *yogī* back to worldly life.

XI, 15, 33–35. Great men say that to those who practise *yoga* as *bhakti* the attainment of *siddhis* is an obstacle; it is sheer waste of time and effort. The *siddhis* divert the mind from the true goal of a *yogī*, namely *mokṣa*. The Lord is the sole cause and master of all *sādhana*s.

XI, 20, 22. One way of bringing the mind under control is to dwell on the course of evolution from *prakṛti* to *śarīra* and then again on the course of involution from *śarīra* to *prakṛti*, as taught in Sāṅkhya philosophy.

XI, 25, 34–36. Conquer *rajas* and *tamas*, develop *sattva*, turn the mind to God, give up attachment to objects, and conquer the senses. Then, by *yoga*, still all modifications of the mind and conquer *sattva-guṇa* also. At this stage, one is above all *guṇas*, becomes free from the notion of *jīva*, and realizes God. Such a one never returns to a life of attachment to anything, external or internal.

XI, 28, 44. The *yogī* who is constantly devoted to God will not be affected by any obstacle. All his desires will vanish and he will be immersed in the experience of the bliss that is Ātman (*ātmānanda*).

(to be continued)

BEYOND THE FINITUDE:
EXPLORATIONS IN INFINITY

Prema Nandakumar*

When Sri Aurobindo sat down to write a series that was to begin with the opening issue of his magazine *Arya*, even as the war-clouds were gathering on the horizon, the words formed themselves to give us a perfect definition of philosophy and mysticism:

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its

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primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.¹

Man is very much a creature of this earth and is aware of the limited term he has been granted to live in the world. The *Gītā* speaks of birth coming along with death, *jātasya hi dhruvo mrtyuḥ*. Patnam Subramania Iyer sings of this body as of lesser value than a mud pot. Beyond the entry point marked by birth and the exit point marked by death, does man have any firm idea of what is outside this finitude? From the time he became aware of his surroundings, man has wondered about what is beyond his finitude, because he has not been able to reconcile himself to being born as an accident and getting atomized into particles for being mixed up with the five elements. Man's desire to know what is beyond life and death has been presented to us as an unforgettable image by the Northumbrian Latinist, the Venerable Bede (672–735 A.D.) in his *Ecclesiastical History of the Angels*. Before Northumbria was converted to Christianity in 633, King Aedwin holds court with his nobles about the new religion. Was it worthwhile to give up their old ways and follow Jesus Christ? One of the nobles then speaks up. We have no idea of our past and future, though we do have a desire to know about them:

So, O king, does the present life of man on earth seem to me, in comparison with the time which is unknown to us, as though a sparrow flew swiftly through the hall, coming in by one door and going out by the other, and you, the while, sat at meat with your captains and liegemen, in wintry weather, with a fire burning in your midst and heating the room, the storm raging out of doors and driving snow and rain before it. For the time for which he is within, the bird is sheltered from the storm, but after this short while of calm he flies out again into the cold and is seen no more. Thus the life of a man is visible for a moment, but we know not what comes before it or follows after it. If, then, this new doctrine brings something more of certainty, it deserves to be followed.²

Throughout the world, for millennia man has quested to know what lies beyond the finitude and has tried ever so many pathways, always in search of "something more of certainty". Often he has fallen into a total despair. Death seems so final! Indeed, a well known writer, Thomas Lovell Beddoes (19th century), has even written a *Death's Jest Book*, a metaphysical drama that explores the universal presence of death in all time and everywhere. In effect, Beddoes finds even life to be an area little understood by man:

Methinks

The look of the world's a lie, a face made up
 O'er graves and fiery depths; and nothing's true
 But what is horrible. If man could see
 The perils and diseases that he elbows,
 Each day he walks a mile; which catch at him
 Which fall behind and graze him as he passes;
 Then would he know that Life's a single pilgrim,
 Fighting unarmed amongst a thousand soldiers.
 It is this infinite invisible
 Which we must learn to know, and yet to scorn,
 And, from the scorn of that, regard the world
 As from the edge of a far star.³

At the same time, there is the fact that man has been able to transform dreams into realities and visions into concrete achievements which has strengthened his belief in that which is termed as infinity. The Lord's creation is on, as a Brahma-kamal, the lotus of Brahmā, opening petal by petal. Very few petals have opened as yet. This belief is found reflected in the Vedic statement, *amṛtaṁ divi*. The heavens are immortal. A *Rg-vedic* hymn to Indra describes such a heaven as a vastness of pure glory:

Make me immortal in that realm
 where beatitude and joy and cheer
 and transports of delight abound,
 where the highest desires have been filled.
 For Indra, flow thou on, Indu!⁴

While Hell is not ruled out, the Vedas prefer to speak of the immortal heavens only. Hell and its variety of tortures (the several *narakas*) were obviously built up later into this world of vision, intuition and imagination.

It became natural for the Indian to think thus of the worlds beyond the finite and he preferred a positive world to hold on to, when he looked around. Indians have always affirmed life and looked beyond death. What is the use of lamenting over something that is inevitable? According to A.C. Bose, "The knowledge that men being mortal, death should be accepted and welcomed, marked a great spiritual advance for the Aryan people. They did not imagine the dead body to be in a state of suspended animation."⁵

The dying rishi called upon his people only to remember his deeds (*kṛtaṁ smara!*) for it was just the body that was being reduced to ashes (*bhasmāntaṁ śarīraṁ*). The spirit was immortal and could enter other spheres. From this acceptance of death and prayer rose the prayer not to be cut off from immortality (*mā amṛtāt*). It is clear that for several millennia the Indian has been struggling to map the infinitudes of the spirit.

Traditional Paths have their own versions of what happens once the soul is detached from the body, though almost all of them agree with the Vedic view that it is the body which is the gross material that gets destroyed. The soul is immortal and enters a new body according to the fruits of its action in earlier lives. The Vaishnavites speak of the route taken by the soul in its journey

after death as the *arcirādi mārga*. The *jīvātman* goes through the middle of the fiery sun, says Vedānta Deśika in his treatise, *Śrīmad Rahasya-traya-sāra*:

The Lord helps him (the *jīvātman*) to climb up by a ladder to Vaikuṅṭha through the sphere of the sun whose hot rays dispel the darkness and then removes the ladder,—the Lord sets the self on the path called *devayāna* and leads him Himself with the following to guide him, namely *arcis* or fire, day, the bright half of the month, Uttarāyaṇa and the year, Vāyu, Sūrya and Candra and Lightning: with Lightning who is called also *amānava* and his companions, Varuṇa, Indra and Prajāpati, the self is helped on its way.⁶

Further on, there is even divine entertainment when the *jīvātman* casts off its subtle body, crosses the Virajā river provided by heavenly dancers. Finally, the *jīvātman* becomes one of the Immortals (*nitya-sūris*) and enjoys the bliss of Brahman. It is a colourful projection of what happens in the hereafter, probably presented as the personifications of the emotional atmosphere in which one finds oneself after death. However, we are not able to dismiss any of these heavens (and hells) as the result of nothing more than a colourful imagination. Much of it is vouchsafed by realized souls who have based their findings firmly on the tripod of scholarship, personal *tapasya* and the gathered recordings of racial memory.

Would this mean that an external force is brought into play over the way we live in our finite world? Does this force happen to be an ethical one? Does a fear of the future govern our living in the present? Is it possible to explain our present being by placing the blame or praise on our "past"?

How far can we go in rejecting the rational as well as metaphysical descriptions of the infinity beyond the entry-exit points of finitude? How about the ethics of our being? All these onto-

logical thoughts about the world cannot be dismissed as idle ways of passing time. What with terrorism stalking the entire world with people believing in what they consider to be ethical living and seeking to impose the same on others who do not subscribe to such belief-systems, we need to do some reformatting about our approach to finitude. There is what is called a "radical finitude of human existence" which we have to discover and bring a new approach to the moral world.

Discovering the basics is not so easy as our nature imbibes the values as we grow up and before we start to think of them. But reflecting beyond finitude helps us rearrange our priorities, as it were, and also tuck in safety valves and inspirational icons for future time. Is life only to be made of birth, growth, society, music, education, political and philosophical pursuits and no more? Will this have to be repeated till the end of time? It is true that, when we are stung by remorse and find all doors to escape closed, life loses its meaning completely:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.⁷

But the thinker and toiler in the ideal's air feels that this world was not created to end in such a despairing cry, where human avarice leads to moral turpitude. There ought to be some desirable ideals that can build up that can make life meaningful and bring

fulfilment in the future. How can this be done? Can we not get a glimpse into the future? Does the infinity beyond have promises, lessons, even a possible transformation that can impinge on our finitude?

One of our modern thinkers on the subject, Sri Aurobindo, has sought to probe the origin of existence to understand why the moral arena is so murky. Despite knowing that his is but a brief stay on the world, why does man create pockets of aggression in ever so many fields? Look at the picture around us today, even as we remain bound by our own finitude!

A barriered autarchy excluded light;
 Fixed in its will to be its own grey self,
 It vaunted its norm unique and splendid type:
 It soothed its hunger with a plunderer's dream;
 Flaunting its cross of servitude like a crown,
 It clung to its dismal harsh autonomy.
 A bull-throat bellowed with its brazen tongue;
 Its hard and shameless clamour filling Space
 And threatening all who dared to listen to truth
 Claimed the monopoly of the battered ear;
 A deafened acquiescence gave its vote,
 And braggart dogmas shouted in the night
 Kept for the fallen soul once deemed a god
 The pride of its abysmal absolute.⁸

There is very little for us to choose from! Surely, creation with its parameters of finitude for the man had other ideas in view. Sri Aurobindo draws up an evolutionary theory which presupposes an involution. In this process of involution-evolution, a seed from infinity is placed in matter which then undergoes the process of development and growth. The urge for this action is a sense of Delight, the Delight of Existence. In the course of the process, light and darkness vie for mastery over the created universe. This darkness is but another side of the Delight of Existence, as it

were. The Delight is not absent from matter, and that helps the evolution upwards. It is sure to break through the confinements of man's finitude and lead him to the freedom of existence in the infinity. Nor need we reject this as an implausible concept.

Even as of old man came behind the beast
This high divine successor surely shall come
Behind man's inefficient mortal pace,
Behind his vain labour, sweat and blood and tears.⁹

We have to make the choice here and now. Yes, we do fail now and then, but the evolution has managed to keep its upward swing. Man gets caught up in the confused categories of ethics in what he considers to be his moral world, but he must always set his sights beyond the confinements of his finitude. He should not be myopic and proceed to apply correctives of his own making without taking a universal view. Else, he will end up doing more evil than good for mankind. The best way would be to gain strength from the nature of consciousness and posit a methodology for a change in this consciousness. Right now, it is mixed up with a lot of ignorance. But raising its level upwards, it can shed these evils of the mind and flash illuminations from the infinitudes of the spirit. This would bring forth a transformation of man into a being that is no more nettled by its entrances and exits in this mortal world.

After all, how can we define the nature of man? Is he an immortal at birth (*amṛtasya putraḥ*) or a sinner? Is he confined to himself as an individual? Why then does he weep when somebody else is in pain, and why does he love some other person so much that he is prepared to lose his life to save the other? Does this not mean that he is going out of his "individual self" and thus breaking out of the finitude of his existence? Positing the possibilities of a transformation of man in his evolutionary movement upwards, Sri Aurobindo envisages a future in which this "going out of oneself and getting in tune with others" becomes a way of life:

None was apart, none lived for himself alone,
 Each lived for God in him and God in all,
 Each soleness inexpressibly held the whole.
 There Oneness was not tied to monotone;
 It showed a thousand aspects of itself,
 Its calm immutable stability
 Upbore on a changeless ground for ever safe,
 Compelled to a spontaneous servitude
 The ever-changing incalculable steps —
 It made all persons fractions of the Unique,
 Yet all were being's secret integers.¹⁰

This is being done even now when we rush to the succour of somebody in trouble. The movement is so spontaneous in humanity that the celebrated Gujarati poet, Narsi Mehta, considered this compassion in the human heart to be the mark of a true Vaishnava. Once we begin to cogitate upon human finitude, all these existential truths swirl around us helping us realize the fundamental unity of mankind. Once this unity is assured, then it follows that in spite of a few taking to the Dance of Death, humanity will not only survive, but climb up to higher, nobler states of being as well. Then, what prevents us from reaching out to the *vijñānamaya caitanya* which is by its very nature infinite?

Does our own physical/material limitation stop us from looking beyond physics to such supra-physical possibilities? It is curious that though we speak of having entered the scientific and technological era, we have not really found answers to fundamental questions. Frustrated by their disability to explain creation, some of the finest minds of the 21st century have turned to metaphysics with electrical ease. It is said that eminent scientists like Einstein and Planck have shown a mystic turn in their thinking. After all, the scientist is in search of the very basis of the formation of matter. But as they proceed deeper into the subject, matter itself seems to disappear as an almost untrackable movement of energy.

So then the question: what is it that moves which is recognized as this energy? The explanation from the side of scientists is that this seeming void is actually a "quantum field" and is not a nothingness. There have been others who have preceded further and inferred planes beyond our finitude where the same energy would have matter appropriate to that plane. Could this be what we already experience and know as *caitanya*? Is this what our great rishis have recognized in their askesis?

In India, this intense, scientific thinking regarding what lies beyond our finitude has given us some of the finest icons to base our faith and ascend further into higher realms, shedding the evils that nag the earth consciousness. The Tantra, for instance, has the tremendous icons of Mahāmeru and Śrī Cakra, which are based on the powers and personalities of the Supreme Consciousness in different planes of being.

It (the Tantra) teaches that in this creation, apart from this world in which we live, there exist other worlds and universes in serried sequence spreading over a rising tier of Consciousness and planes. There is one Supreme Deity presiding over every thing. He does so with a gradation of his powers, personalities and emanations, vibhūtis, with a hierarchy of gods and goddesses who perform the functions delegated to them, deriving their authority from the Supreme God-head. These are posited in the various planes in the rising tiers of consciousness.¹¹

This firm faith that what lies beyond finitude is not mere darkness that we ought to fear is, perhaps, the inspiration for all the great achievements of mankind. Occasionally, there is an interference from the shadow that is inevitably stationed beyond the light, but generally evolution has been proceeding unhindered so far, and man has reached a state when he is able to look into a plane beyond the mind. It is such a faith that has been at the background of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of a supramental consciousness

descending to meet the ascending stair of evolution and that their meeting would lead to a new creation.

While his philosophy can be studied in his path-breaking works like *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Supramental Manifestation*, his visions regarding the past, the present and the future of man gathered in his yoga have been given a local habitation and a name in his epic poem, *Savitri*. Here we find Aswapati, King of Madra, undertaking a yogic adventure into the inner countries of the mind. His yoga actually begins with his first realization that the material appearance is not all. Earth and heaven meet in man, and man partly is and wholly hopes to be. Beyond night and twilight and starlight beckons the dawn of a spiritual day. The mystery, the miracle, of 'married Earth and Heaven', the mating of finite self with Infinity, is the drama that is being played, and is yet to be concluded.

Towards understanding this whole gamut of evolution from the worm that was to the god that is to be, Aswapati adventures after mastering the received wisdom of the racial experience and travels in the world-stair. From gross matter he moves through subtle matter (material paradise), little life (insect, animal, early man), greater life (the heroic age), night (Mother of falsehood, sons of darkness), day (the Gandharva world), little mind (thought, intelligence, reason), greater mind (higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind) and the heavens of the ideal. In the self of mind which is a centre of silence, Aswapati has a vision of the World-soul as Puruṣa-Prakṛti. It is a tremendous revelation to watch Aswapati's dogged pursuit of the Unknowable and how he gains the vision of the Divine Mother. One is inclined to compare it with the reaching of the summit of the Mahā Meru and coming face to face with Śrī Lalitā Tripurasundarī in Tantra:

Even as a mother draws her child to her arms,
Took to her breast Nature and world and soul.

Abolishing the signless emptiness,
 Breaking the vacancy and voiceless hush,
 Piercing the limitless Unknowable,
 Into the liberty of the motionless depths
 A beautiful and felicitous lustre stole.
 The Power, the Light, the Bliss no word can speak
 Imaged itself in a surprising beam
 And built a golden passage to his heart
 Touching through him all longing sentient things.
 A moment's sweetness of the All-Beautiful
 Cancelled the vanity of the cosmic whirl.¹²

As yet, these inner countries of the mind cannot be researched with the help of atom-smashers and particle detectors since even the much-toted Higgs boson is yet to be found though we are told that all particles do swim through a sea of invisible Higgs bosons. What best we can do is to follow the way of Indian yogis and seek out what is beyond our finitude. At any rate, the findings of our yogic methodologies have not been disproved straight on by scientists spreading their wares of spectrometers and colliders, amplifiers and absorbance detectors. Hence, metaphysics continues to be a valid path for us to step beyond our finitude and awaken to the New Creation helped by the *vijñānamya* consciousness. A deep salutation to the Vedic Rishi who gave us the assurance that stands witness to all Vedānta philosophy and all our tomorrows when closing the *Yajur Veda*:

"The face of truth is covered with a golden lid.
 The Puruṣa who is in the sun,
 Who is there and there --
 I am He;
 Om, the Supreme Brahman.¹³

NOTES

1. 14th August 1914. Subsequently the series of essays was issued as the *The Life Divine*.
2. Quoted in Emile Legouis & Louis Cazamian, *A History of English Literature* (1943), p. 12.
3. *The Complete Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, The First Part* (1928), pp. 205-6.
4. Translated by A.C. Bose.
5. *The Call of the Vedas* (1960), p. 293.
6. Translated by M.R. Rajagopala Iyengar.
7. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act V, scene v.
8. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Book II, canto vii.
9. *Ibid.*, Book III, canto iv.
10. *Ibid.*, Book III, canto iii.
11. S. Sankaranarayanan, *Sri Chakra* (1979), p. 2.
12. Book III, canto ii.
13. Translated by A.C. Bose.

 THE ALL-FILLING FULNESS

Saint Tāyumāṇavar*

Without Thee None

"No atom moves but by His motion,"
 The sages say. What follows then?
 What is knowing, and what unknowing?
 Who knoweth, knoweth not, of men?
 Who are the silent, who the babblers
 All-mouthed and babbling such as I?
 Whence cometh mind the soul's delusion?
 Hardness and mercy, whence and why?
 Whence is creation, whence is action?
 And elemental changes whence?
 Falsehood and truth, fruitage and failure,
 Evil and good in consequence,

* St. Tāyumāṇavar (1705–1742) was a great philosopher who reconciled Śaivism and Advaita Vedānta. His writings which were composed in the state of spiritual exaltation reveal the mystical bent of his mind. The two hymns given above are from his *Engu Niṛaiṅṅa Poruḷ*. Courtesy: *Psalms of a Saint*, tr. with Introduction and Notes by T. Isac Tambyah, Luzac & Co., London, 1925.

Whence come? Whence patience and impatience?
 Who are the great and who the small?
 Who are the foes and who the friendly?
 Without Thee none, in Thee are all
 O Life of life That all sustainest
 For time that is and time to be,
 And all-where Fulness That remainest
 For time that is and time to be.

Art Thou Not Grace?

Female is God is one faith's teaching'
 Another teacheth male is He;
 A third of all beliefs will babble
 And wildly cry its creed to be
 Now this, now that, is God, ever
 Uncertain and ungaining go,
 Heedless of what may follow after,
 From thought to thought and nothing know;
 A fourth sees God in light whose glory
 The tongue of man can never tell.
 One says that God is space in vastness;
 God is the state where ever dwell
 Sound and the other primal causes.
 Some say God is the atom sole
 Surviving wreckage universal
 When all things into ruin roll;
 That God is present, past and future,
 The threefold time is what some say.—
 These thou becoming, all transcendest
 And in the gracious interplay
 Of deeds Divine art Bliss eternal.
 O! marvel unto men like me

The workings of Thy grace are wondrous !
 Shall I not marvel ceaselessly,
O Life of life That all sustainest,
 For time that is and time to be,
And all-where Fulness That remainest
 For time that is and time to be?

JANMĀDYADHIKARAṆA*
(Fifth Varṇaka)

N. Veezhinathan

The first sūtra, "*atha atah brahma-jīñjāsā*," lays down that the jīva, in order to overcome its existential predicament, must inquire into its true nature, the Self. The second sūtra, "*janmādi asya yataḥ*," which forms the *janmādadyadhikaraṇa* gives a description of the Self. Śaṅkara's commentary on this adhikaraṇa is the fifth varṇaka in the series. The *Taittirīya* texts, "That from which these beings arise, by which they are sustained, and into which they lapse at the time of dissolution, seek to realize it (as your true nature); that is the Self,"⁷⁰ and "The Self is real, consciousness, and infinite"⁷¹ describe the Self; and these form the subject-matter of this adhikaraṇa. The first text defines the Self in terms of its accidental attributes as the material and the efficient cause of the world. The second text defines it in terms of its essential nature as real, consciousness, and infinite. The characteristic of being the material and the efficient cause does not belong to the original and intrinsic nature of the Self. It is

* Continued from the previous number.

illusorily superimposed on it by avidyā. Being thus introduced from outside, it serves as a sign pointing to the Self, like a bough to the moon. It is *tatastha-lakṣaṇa*. Reality, consciousness, and infinitude, on the other hand, are the essence of the Self and are, therefore, indissolubly involved in its very nature and being. These constitute what is known as *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* of the Self. The present sūtra sets forth these two kinds of definition of the Self.

The Self as the cause of the world is Īśvara—a complex of the consciousness-element and avidyā. While the Self is of the nature of consciousness and is attributeless, Īśvara is endowed with all auspicious qualities through avidyā. He has complete knowledge of the world to be projected and a settled determination to effect it. He is all-knowing and all-powerful, omniscient and omnipotent.

Like the *Taittirīya* text, "That from which these beings arise.... That is the Self," the *Chāndogya* text too in the section entitled *Śāṅḍilya-vidyā* defines the Self as that (*tat*) from which the world arises (*ja*), into which it is reabsorbed (*li*), and by which it is sustained (*an*), and further describes it as possessing all (virtuous) activities, all (righteous) desires, all (pleasant) odours, and all (agreeable) tastes.⁷² Again, in the same Upaniṣad it is said that "All these beings originate from the Self (*ākāśa*) alone, and they merge in it."⁷³ Śaṅkara observes:

It is well-known that anything from which something originates and in which it merges must be its material cause, as for instance, earth is of paddy, barely, etc. Never indeed is an effect noticed to be absorbed in anything other than its material cause.⁷⁴

The Upaniṣadic texts thus refer to the Self as the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) of the world.

The Self is known to be the efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) too of the world from the Upaniṣads. The *Taittirīya* text states: "The Self desired, 'let me become many, let me be born;' it resolved, and having resolved, it created all this that exists."⁷⁵

The *Chāndogya* text declares: "That Being thought, 'I shall become many, I shall be born;' It created fire."⁷⁶ The *Aitareya* text states: "The Self resolved, 'let me create the worlds,' and it created all these worlds."⁷⁷ Another text of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* expresses clearly that the Self *manifested itself* into the form of the world *by itself*.⁷⁸ These two expressions "*manifested itself*" and "*by itself*" signify respectively that the Self is both the material and the efficient cause of the world.

The Self is the source from which the world comes into existence. In this sense, it is its material cause. Material causality (*upādāna-kāraṇatva*) is applicable to the Self in respect of the origination of the world. Efficient causality (*nimitta-kāraṇatva*) pertains to it in respect of the origination, sustentation or governance, and dissolution of the world.

The text of the *Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad*, "*yo vai bālāke eteṣāṃ puruṣāṇāṃ kartā, yasya vā etat karma, sa vai vedītavyaḥ*,"⁷⁹ identifies the Self as the efficient cause in respect of the origination of the world. In this Upaniṣad, the king Ajātaśatru instructs Bālāki that the Self is the creator (*kartā*) of all the beings (*eteṣāṃ puruṣāṇāṃ*) such as the sun, the moon, and the like. It is the one of which the entire world (*etat*) given in perception is the effect (*karma*). The world, "*karma*", etymologically means the thing that is being created or originated (*kriyate iti karma*). And the king concludes by saying that the Self is to be realized (*vedītavyaḥ*). From this it is known that the Self is the efficient cause of the origination of the world. This text forms the subject-matter of the sūtra, "*jagadvācivāt*".⁸⁰

The seventh section of the third chapter of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* commences by raising the question concerning the principle that controls this world, the other world, and all the beings.⁸¹ It further states that the Self is immanent in the earth, water, fire, the sky, air, heaven, the Vedas, the sacrifices and the like, and also in the jīva as their internal ruler controlling and regulating them from within.⁸² It is this characteristic of being

the controller of the whole world (*sarva-niyantr̥tva*) by remaining as its internal ruler that constitutes efficient causality in respect of the sustentation or governance of the world (*sthiti-kar̥tva*). The Upaniṣadic texts referred to constitute the subject-matter of the sūtra, "*antaryāmy-adhidaivādiṣu taddharma-vyapadeśāt*."⁸³

The Katha Upaniṣad states: "That to which Brahma and kṣatra become food and Death is spice—who can know it, thus, where it is?"⁸⁴ This text compares Death to a spice, and the class of Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas who are the support of all order and the protectors of all, to food. In ordinary experience, we notice that a spice added to food to season it is consumed along with it. It is stated here that for the Self the class of Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas constitute the food, and Death which is the destroyer of all is the spice. Since Death destroys every being, the words, "Brāhmaṇas" and "Kṣatriyas" are to be taken as representing the entire world. From this we gather that the Self consumes the entire world along with Death. The Self is thus the efficient cause of the destruction of the world. This text forms the subject-matter of the sūtras, "*attā carācaragrahaṇāt*."⁸⁵

Śaṅkara describes the world as characterized by four striking features as under:

First, it is differentiated by names and forms. That which is differentiated by name and form, like a pot, is seen to be caused by an intelligent being. Hence, the one by whom the entire world is differentiated into names and forms must be an omniscient being, and not the insentient *pradhāna* of the Sāṅkhya school, or the *śūnya* of the Mādhyamika school.

Second, the world comprises different kinds of agents and experiencers, i.e. the *jīvas*. Although the *jīvas* in their essential nature are the Self and so eternal, yet as related to the subtle and the gross body, they form part of the world that is created. This characteristic excludes the *jīvas* from being considered as the cause of the world.

Third, the world is the abode of the fruits of actions, the experience of which occurs only at a particular time and place, and

under specific conditions. The place, time, and conditions are unalterably fixed or well regulated. This implies that the cause of the world of this nature could not be *yadr̥cchā* or chance, but an omniscient being.

Fourth, the possibility of conceiving the design of the world itself is indeed remote; and the question of its creation is, therefore, virtually impossible. This feature suggests that the efficient cause of the world must be an omnipotent being.

Having thus described the world in its true perspective, Śaṅkara sums up by saying that of this world characterized by the above-mentioned significant features, origination, sustentation, and destruction cannot be postulated from the insentient *pradhāna*, primal atoms, non-existence or *śūnya*, the *jīva*, or in fact from anything other than the Self which is omniscient and omnipotent. It is deducible from this that the efficient cause of the world must possess omniscience and omnipotence, and it is the Self.⁸⁶

The view that the Self is the material and the efficient cause of the world, it may be argued, is beset with difficulties. A material cause is that which undergoes a different configuration or modification. This means that it must be composed of parts. The Self, however, is admitted to be a partless entity, and so it cannot undergo modification. Consequently, it cannot be regarded as a material cause. Nor can it be viewed as the efficient cause. It is because an efficient cause is the one who has the knowledge of the thing to be created which, in the present case, is the world of variegated nature. If the Self were to be viewed as the efficient cause of the world, it must possess omniscience and omnipotence. But, being of the nature of attributeless consciousness, it is free from any instrument of cognition. It cannot have even knowledge which, according to Advaita, is the mode of the mind inspired by the reflection of consciousness in it, and so the possession of omniscience is out of the question. Being attributeless, it cannot have omnipotence as its quality. In sum, the Self cannot be the material and the efficient cause of the world. This is the *prima facie* view.

Śaṅkara points out that the Upaniṣads which attribute the feature of the material and efficient causality to the Self justify it by introducing the principle of māyā or avidyā. The *Śvetāśvatara* text states: "Know then that prakṛti is māyā or avidyā, and the controller of it is the great Lord, i.e. the Self."⁸⁷ Here the word, "*prakṛti*", means material cause. Also, another text of the same Upaniṣad declares: "The sages absorbed in meditation discovered the *creative power* which is present in the self-luminous Self and which is inexplicably blended with the three strands of sattva, rajas, and tamas."⁸⁸ The *creative power* which the Upaniṣad mentions is avidyā. On the basis of these two texts, Śaṅkara maintains that the Self, being associated with avidyā, is viewed as the material and the efficient cause. The blend of the Self and avidyā is Īśvara. When the Upaniṣads state that the Self is the material and the efficient cause of the world, what they mean is that the Self in its aspect of Īśvara is so, and not the Self-in-itself. The admission that the Self as Īśvara is the material and the efficient cause implies that both consciousness, i.e. the Self, and avidyā taken together are so, as the conception of Īśvara involves reference to both. Avidyā is admitted to be the transformative material cause, and the consciousness-element is the transfigurative material cause. Avidyā, inspired by the reflection of consciousness in it, undergoes modification into the form of the world. Both avidyā and the world have the same ontological status. They are empirically real, as both are sublated by the direct knowledge of the Self. The consciousness-element in Īśvara serves as the substratum of avidyā whose transformation is the world. It appears as the world which is alien to its essential nature. The consciousness-element and the world, therefore, belong to two different levels of reality—the former being absolute, and the latter, empirical. In this sense, the consciousness-element in Īśvara is considered to be the transfigurative material cause of the world, and the world as the transformation of avidyā. It is only by admitting that avidyā is the transformative material cause, and

the consciousness-element in Īśvara is the transfigurative material cause, the validity of the two Upaniṣadic texts—one proclaiming the Self as the cause, and the other, avidyā as the cause could be maintained. It follows that the *Taittirīya* and the *Chāndogya* texts referred to earlier speak of the Self as the transfigurative material cause of the world. And the Self, when subjected to the causal inquiry, is Īśvara. "Īśvara is the Self moulded in logic." So far, the material causality in respect of the Self.

The consciousness-element in Īśvara, Śaṅkara says, comes to be endowed with the attribute of omniscience through avidyā. The world consisting of names and forms remain during the period of dissolution in a subtle form in avidyā, the limiting condition of Īśvara. At the beginning of creation, avidyā, inspired by the reflection of the consciousness-element of Īśvara, undergoes modification into the form of the world to be created. This modification is known *avidyā-vṛtti*. Since avidyā is all-pervasive, its mode is related to everything that is to be created. The consciousness-element reflected in it is knowledge, and since it comprehends everything, it is omniscience or *sarvānubhava*. Being the substratum of omniscience through *avidyā-vṛtti*, Īśvara, i.e. the Self associated with avidyā, is regarded as omniscient and as the efficient cause of the world. Moreover, omnipotence also is projected by avidyā to the consciousness-element in Īśvara. This view, Śaṅkara says,⁸⁹ is based on the authority of the following Upaniṣadic text:

*na tasya kāryam karam ca vidyate
na tatsamaśca abhyadhikaśca dṛśyate
parā asya śaktiḥ vividhaiva śrūyate
svābhāvikī jñāna-bala-kriyā ca.*⁹⁰

He is free from body and senses. He is excelled by none and equalled by few. His power (*śakti*), viz. avidyā is great (*parā*), and it is efficacious in projecting the world of variegated nature (*vividhā*). It is not known through pramāṇas; rather it is recognized

on the basis of belief passed on from generation to generation (*śrūyate*). By receiving the reflection of the consciousness-element (*jñāna*) in its mode (*vṛtti*), it is endowed with efficacy (*bala*). Its function (*kriyā*) in virtue of this is to attribute efficient causality (*janakatā*) and omniscience (*jñātrīā*) to Īśvara. These two characteristics are illusory (*svābhāvīkī*).

From the above it follows that the characteristic of being the cause is projected by avidyā, and so it does not constitute the essential nature of the Self. It is only its accidental attribute. Although it is alien to the nature of the Self, it serves as a sign pointing to the latter. We may exemplify this point thus: a person who is under the mistaken notion of a piece of shell as silver is instructed by another that "what is silver is shell only" (*yat rajatam sā śuktiḥ*). In the process of providing this instruction, reference is first made to the silver which is the content of the illusory cognition, and then the attention of the person concerned is drawn to the shell, its substratum. That is to say, the illusory silver carries the suggestion of reference to its substratum with which it has figurative association. In the same way, the *Taittirīya* text, "That from which (*yataḥ*) these beings arise... That is the Self," imparts to us the knowledge "That which is the cause of the world is the Self" (*yat jagatkāraṇam tat brahma*). Here the text first refers to the characteristic feature of causality which is illusory, and then points to its substratum, the pure Self. This characteristic feature is *tataṣṭha*, i.e. it is external to the Self, and yet it serves as an outward sign of its substratum, viz., the Self, with which it has a symbolic relation.

The word, "*yataḥ*" in the sūtra, "*janmādi asya yataḥ*", is derived from the pronominal stem, "*yat*", by the addition of the *taddhita* suffix, "*taṣil*". It means "from whence". The pronoun "*yat*" refers to what has gone before, viz. the Self described as real, consciousness, and infinite in the *Brahmavallī* section of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. The sūtra means: "From whence the origination, etc.

of the world proceed is the Self which is real, consciousness, and infinite. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* affirms that which is infinite is bliss.⁹¹ Hence the Self which is infinite is bliss. In the *Bṛguvallī* section of the same Upaniṣad, the teaching starts with the *tatastha-lakṣaṇa* of the Self: "That from which these beings arise... . That is the Self," and it culminates in its *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* which refers to its very essence, viz. bliss. The text is:

*ānandāt hi eva khalu imānibhūtāni jāyante, ānandena jātāni jīvanti, ānandaṁ prayantiabhisamviśanti.*⁹²

By using the particles, "hi," "eva," and "khalu" which stand for emphasis on increased conspicuousness, this text, with added implication of clearness and directness, identifies the cause of the world as bliss in nature. This is as it should be; for the Self which is described in the *Taittirīya* text as real, consciousness, and infinite is bliss in nature according to the *Chāndogya* text referred to earlier.

To sum up: the sūtra, "*janmādi asya yataḥ*," and the śruti text, "That from which these beings arise... . That is the Self," furnish the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* of the Self as real, consciousness, infinite and bliss, and also its *tatastha-lakṣaṇa* as the cause of the world. The critics of Advaita argue that there is no need for these two types of definition as both alike differentiate the thing defined from the rest. This argument has no force. The *tatastha-lakṣaṇa* simply points to the Self by referring to its accidental feature that it is the material and the efficient cause of the world (*jagat-kāraṇa*) and thereby differentiates it from *pradhāna*, the atoms, and the like which are regarded as the cause of the world by other schools of thought. But it does not give us the notion of its character which the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* alone could give. However, when the Self is defined by reference to its essential nature as real, consciousness, bliss, and infinite, there arises the need to confirm that it is infinite, as the world given in perception may be thought of as limiting it. The *tatastha-lakṣaṇa* arrived at by the causal inquiry

into the world shows that the world, being the effect of the Self, has no independent existence apart from it, and so is a mere appearance and not real. This leads us to the conclusion that there is no possibility of the Self suffering limitation by the world, and so it is infinite or non-dual (*ananta* or *advitīya*) in nature. The *tatastha-lakṣaṇa* provided by the text, "From which these being arise... That is the Self," is not an imposed requirement; it is an inner exigency. It follows that the need for two types of definition provided by the sūtra, "*janmādi asya yataḥ*" is clear and justified with no room for confusion and doubt.

NOTES

70. *TU*, 3.1.
71. *Ibid.*, 2.1.
72. *CU*, 3.14.1.
73. *Ibid.*, 1.9.1.
74. *VSB*, 1.4. 25.
75. *TV*, 2.6.
76. *CU*, 6.2.3.
77. *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, 1.1.1, 2.
78. *TU*, 2.7.
79. *Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad*, 4. 18.
80. *VS*, 1.4.16.
81. *BU*, 3.7.1.
82. *Ibid.*, 3.7.3–23.
83. *VS*, 1.2.9.
84. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2. 25.
85. *VS*, 1.2.9.
86. *VSB*, 1.1.2.
87. *ŚV*, 4.10.
88. *Ibid.*, 1.3.
89. *VSB*, 1.1.5.
90. *ŚU*, 6.8.
91. *CU*, 7.23.1.
92. *TU*, 3.6.

SELF-ENQUIRY, KNOWLEDGE
AND LIBERATION

S. Balakrishnan

This article discusses the question whether there is any time gap between enquiry and rise of knowledge, as also between knowledge and liberation. The discussion has its basis on the two aphorisms of the *Brahma-sūtra*, 3.4.51–52, which occur at the end of the pāda. They are as follows:

ऐहिकमपि अप्रस्तुतप्रतिबन्धे तद्दर्शनात् ।
एवं मुक्तिफलानियमः तदवस्थावधृतेः तदवस्थावधृतेः ।

(The last word is repeated to indicate the end of the chapter.)

The running meaning of the first *sūtra* is: "In the absence of active obstacles, knowledge arises in this birth itself—so it is seen" and that of the second *sūtra* is: "The condition specified above is not applicable in the case of liberation as clear from the definition of liberation in scriptures."

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Put in simple words, the questions raised are: "Does self-enquiry give self-knowledge immediately? Does self-knowledge give instant liberation?" This topic assumes primary importance in Advaita because *jīvan-mukti*, the "magnum opus" of Advaita, depends on the answer to these two questions. Our discussion will take into account Śaṅkara's commentaries on the above *sūtras* and also on other texts, some relevant verses from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Vidyāraṇya's brilliant analysis of this topic in his famous work, *Pañcadaśī* and Niścaladāsa Muni's observations in the *Vicāra Sāgara*.

In his *Sūtra-bhāṣya* for the above *sūtra* 52, Śaṅkara establishes that, in the absence of any obstructions, self-enquiry leads directly to knowledge in this birth itself. The same topic is highlighted by the Ācārya in Chapter 18 of the *Upadeśa-sāhasrī* titled *tat tvam asi* where he vehemently refutes any exercise like *prasāṅkhyāna* to get knowledge from the *mahāvākyas*. But he adds a condition that the *mahāvākya* can produce immediate knowledge only if the seeker has a clear idea of *tvampada* (*jīvātman*) and that of *tatpada* (*Paramātman*). This condition also presupposes preliminary requirements such as adequate *sādhana catuṣṭaya sampatti* (the fourfold qualification) and integration of the mind resulting in absence of distraction or wandering. Stress is made on dispassion and *śama* (control of mind). *Śravaṇa* can always bear fruits immediately if there are no such obstructions, or the same *śravaṇa* heard earlier can trigger the mind of a seeker even after a time gap, or later in his next birth without repeated *śravaṇa*; and knowledge can arise as soon as the impediments stated above are removed. To substantiate these arguments, Śaṅkara quotes verses 6. 40, 43 and 45 of the *Bhagavad-gītā* where Lord Kṛṣṇa clarifies the misgivings of Arjuna in the topic of *Yogabhrāṣṭa*. Śaṅkara explains in his *Bhāṣya* that the Lord assures Arjuna that one who has chosen the path of self-enquiry never looks back. He has no deceleration in his spiritual journey. Quoting the example of Vāmadeva, Śaṅkara substantiates that such a seeker need not

even begin his *sādhana*s again in his next birth; he will be provided with conducive circumstances such as noble birth, etc. He can take up the thread from where he left it in the previous birth; and the obstacle having been removed, the knowledge is certain to arise. Śaṅkara also quotes *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.7, to elaborate on the difficulties of grasping self-knowledge. In his commentary on the famous *Brahma-sūtra*, 1.4.4, (*tattu samanvayāt*), he makes a clear distinction between one who merely listens to Brahman-knowledge and one who grasps the knowledge (*śruta-brahman* and *avagata-brahman*). The objector points out that just as one who mistakes a rope for a snake is immediately relieved of his fear, etc. when a torch is flashed on the rope, the bondage of a seeker must vanish on hearing the *mahāvākya*. This is never the case as even after much *śravaṇa* one continues to be afflicted by *saṁsāra*. Śaṅkara answers this objection by saying that one, who casually listens without adequate preliminary qualifications, will have strong body-identity, and hence the bondage continues; on the other hand, one who has passed through such *sādhana*s as *karma-yoga* and *upāsanā* and listens sincerely to his teacher's words, followed by required *manana* to clear his doubts and to remove habitual errors (by *nididhyāsana*) will not have any body-identity, and the knowledge will helplessly arise in such a listener. Thus the obstacles alone create a time-gap between *śravaṇa* and knowledge as was illustrated by the story of Vāmadeva and Jaḍabharata. As pointed out in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, 3.38, the impediments are also graded—very light like smoke covering the fire, thicker like dirt covering the mirror, or very thick like the foetus covered by a membrane.

In this context the *Vicāra Sāgara*, a fairly recent treatise on Advaita Vedānta by Niścaladāsa Muni, gives an interesting story (page 133, para 230) to prove that a strong obstruction in the mind can even obliterate perceptual knowledge. A king had an efficient minister called Bharcchu. The other counsellors of the king got jealous of him and planned to do away with him, as he

was a favourite of the king. They conspired and managed to send Bharcchu to the forest to catch some thieves and murderers hiding there. Bharcchu completed the task, but could not immediately return from the forest. In the meantime the counsellors spread a rumour that Bharcchu got killed in the forest and that he was roaming about there as a ghost, killing whomever he met. They also worked out some clever plans to keep Bharcchu permanently in the forest and to make the king believe their story. Several months passed, and the king went on a hunting expedition to the forest. He saw his favourite minister, Bharcchu, running towards him to meet him. But in spite of seeing him in flesh and blood, the king totally disbelieved his eyes and thought that it was only a ghost. The rumour had very strongly blurred his mind. He sped away in his chariot leaving his dear friend whom he believed to be a ghost. Thus, the obstruction in his mind was so strong that it could deceive his perception.

Coming back to Śaṅkara, he vehemently argues that *śravaṇa* gives direct knowledge. He says in many places in his works that there is no indirect knowledge as regards the Self, it being the most immediate. According to him, *śravaṇa* properly done systematically under a competent teacher for a considerable length of time produces direct knowledge. *Manana* and *nididhyāsana* are not meant to improve upon *śravaṇa*, but only help to clear doubts and error. Niścaladāsa also agrees with Śaṅkara. He clarifies that definitions of *tatpada* (*Īśvara*) and *tvampada* (*jīva*) impart indirect knowledge, but the *mahāvākyas* like *tat tvam asi* impart direct knowledge only.

Vidyāraṇya, however, makes a small departure in his approach. He distinguishes *parokṣa-jñāna* from *aparokṣa-jñāna*. In his *Pañcadaśī*,¹ Vidyāraṇya clearly states that *parokṣa jñāna* (indirect knowledge) and *aparokṣa jñāna* (direct knowledge) are two separate steps in self-enquiry. The enquiry comes to an end in the second step, because direct knowledge is synonymous with liberation, as we shall see while discussing the next *sūtra*. Quoting

from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Vidyāraṇya explains that indirect knowledge gives information about the existence of Brahman. The realisation or direct knowledge is the same as owning up Brahman as "I am Brahman". He discusses this again elaborately in the seventh chapter of the *Pañcadaśī* called *Tr̥pti Dīpam*. To substantiate his view, he makes use of the often-quoted example of the tenth man story. The existence of Brahman and the nature of *jīva* are established before teaching the *mahāvākya*, and they are called *avāntara vākya* or indirect knowledge. Thus in the tenth man story, the reassurance from the wayfarer that the tenth man exists and is alive is indirect knowledge. Vidyāraṇya derives seven steps from this story. They are ignorance, non-apprehension, misapprehension, indirect knowledge, direct knowledge, removal of grief and rise of *ānanda*.² In verse 45 of the same chapter he reiterates that indirect knowledge removes the ignorance about the existence of Brahman, and direct knowledge removes the ignorance that Brahman is something other than the Self. He adds in verses 50 and 51 that such indirect knowledge is not counter-productive, because ultimately when direct knowledge that "I am Brahman" arises, it does not contradict the earlier knowledge, but only confirms it. As a final advice, Vidyāraṇya quotes the *Vākya-vṛtti*³ (v. 49) of Śaṅkara. It says that one must improve the values like *śama*, etc. and continue the exercise of *śravaṇa* if one feels that the meaning of the *mahāvākya*, "*aham brahmāsmi*" is not firm in the mind. This removes any semblance of difference of opinion between these two great Ācāryas of Advaita.

We shall now pass on to the second part of this article. Is there any time-gap between knowledge and liberation? *Sūtra* 52 quoted states that the conditions stipulated in *Sūtra* 51 between enquiry and knowledge does not hold good here. There is no time-gap at all between self-knowledge and liberation for the simple reason that self-knowledge happens to be the same as liberation.

They are synonyms. Self-enquiry leads to knowledge in this birth itself if there are no obstructions, and knowledge means liberation. In other words, in the absence of obstructions, self-enquiry gives immediate liberation for a seeker.

In the *Bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara quotes several *śruti-mantras* to substantiate this contention and provides supporting logic for the same. However, a most important mantra⁴ in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* has not been quoted by him. This *mantra* states that one who knows Brahman is Brahman only. He overcomes all grief and is freed from all bondages and is immortal. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text⁵ says that Brahman knew himself as "I am Brahman", and Śaṅkara writes very detailed and lucid comments on this *mantra*. The state of Brahman is non-dual as proclaimed by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 4.5.15 which says when the Ātman is everything, how can one see something else, etc. and the text of the *Chāndogya*⁶ confirms the same. Thus, this knowledge immediately removes the erroneous notion that I am something other than Brahman.

In this regard other Ācāryas like Vidyāraṇya and Niścaladāsa also fully agree with Śaṅkara. In Vidyāraṇya's analysis of the tenth man story in the *Pañcadaśī*, Ch.7, the last three stages, direct knowledge, removal of grief and rise of *ānanda* are simultaneous. The moment the tenth man was told that he himself was the tenth man, his sorrow totally disappears and he could jump with joy at this discovery. Earlier, while afflicted by grief at the apparent loss due to his delusion, he might have wailed and even got a bump on his head by beating it against a wall. It might not heal immediately on his knowing the truth, as it was due to his *prārabdha*, but the happiness he got from the knowledge was immediate and ever-lasting.

Similarly, when Karṇa was told by Kuntī that he was her son, i.e. He was *Kaunteya* and not *Rādheya* (Rādha being his foster mother), he immediately knew that he was a *kṣatriya* like Arjuna.

It is another matter that the indignities and humiliations he suffered, when this knowledge was obstructed, could not be compensated by the discovery, but Karṇa had nothing more to do or no more to wait to realise that he was the son of Kuntī.

Swami Ranganathananda in of his book on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (p. 76) gives a very illuminating example to illustrate this point. He says that there cannot be any gap between knowledge and removal of ignorance, because a form such as a tree or building is revealed as soon as the observer's eyes are in touch with the illumined object, or darkness in a room disappears, the moment the light is switched on.

The logic behind these conclusions has also been thoroughly analysed by the Ācārya. The important point here is that in self-knowledge no external object is concerned and no knowledge as such takes place. The Ācārya establishes in Ch.18 of the *Upadeśa Sāhasri* that the verb "Jnā - to know" is a misnomer here and that it is to be taken figuratively. By elaborately explaining Sanskrit grammar for derivation of the verb, "jnā - to know", Śaṅkara states that the Ātman is not a *jñāta* (knower) or *kartā* (doer).

Self-knowledge is imparted by the method of superimposition and negation. Being an already established fact, the knowledge that "I am Brahman" is not a new event; the ignorance covering the reality is just removed. The *Kena Upaniṣad*, using riddles, says that the Self is not known being beyond objectification and not unknown too, being self-effulgent.

Once I realise that I am the Self, i.e. the same *cit* as Brahman, I have no cause for any sorrow. I am in a totally different plane and can sing my glories as Vidyāraṇya does in verses 292-298 of Ch.7 of the *Pañcadaśī*, "*Dhanyoham, Dhanyoham*". The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, third section, also concludes singing *sāmagana* in the discovery that he is *jīvan-mukta*.

It is very significant in Advaita that the knowledge must give immediate liberation. Otherwise, the status of the *jīvan-mukta* promised in Advaita will be in vain. The Advaitin is not content

with any gradation in liberation propounded by other philosophers like Viśiṣṭādvaitins and Dvaitins. They can be happy with *sālokya*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya*, and *sāyujya* after leaving the mortal body. But the Advaitins will have nothing but *jīvan-mukti*, liberation here and now. We will have the cake and eat it too.

NOTES

1. *Pañcadaśī*, 6.15–16.
2. *Ibid.*, 7.33, 45, 50, 51.
3. *Ibid.*, 7.98.
4. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.9.
5. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.10.
6. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.24.



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

*saṁsārādhvani tāpabhānukiraṇaprodbhūtadāhavyathā-
 khinnānām jalakāṅkṣayā marubhuvi bhrāntyā paribhrāmyatām
 atyāsannasudhāmbudhiṁ sukhakaram brahmādvayaṁ
 darśayant-
 yeṣā śaṅkarabhārātī vijayate nirvāṇasandāyīnī.*

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.