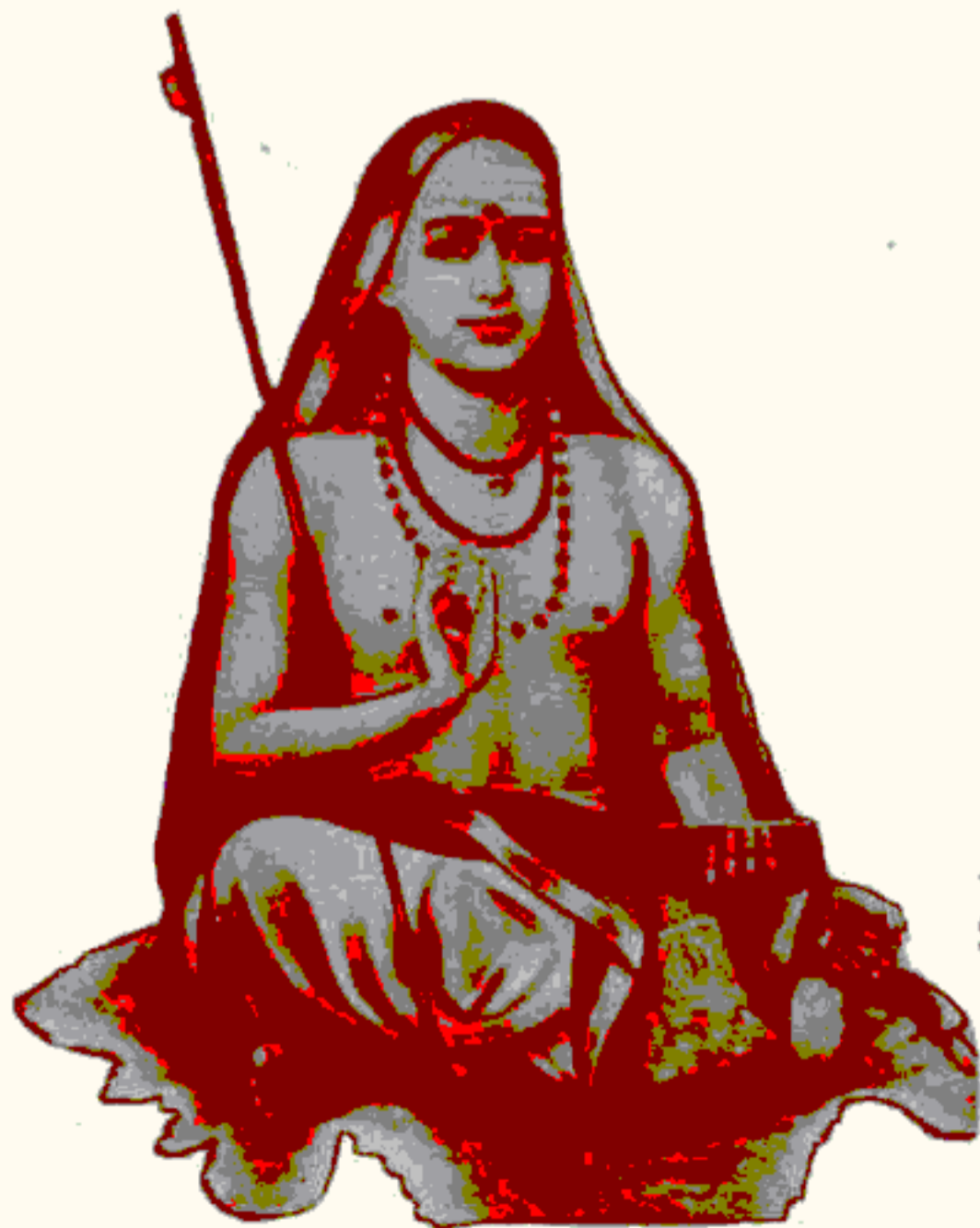


# *The VOICE of* ŚĀṆKARA

śaṅkara-bhāratī



*Editor :*  
S. Ramaratnam

eṣā śaṅkara-bhāratī vijayate  
nirvāṇa-sandāyinī

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# *The VOICE of* ŚĀṆKARĀ

Śaṅkara-bharātī

*Editor*

S. Ramaratnam

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Mr. J. Jayaraman, 39/4, C.P.Ramaswamy Road, Alwarpet, Chennai – 600 018 has been appointed as the President of **Adi Sankara Advaita Research Centre**, Chennai in the place of Mr. C.N. Ramachandran with effect from 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2008.

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 HOMAGE TO ŚAṆKARA
 

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॥ श्रीः ॥

सर्वव्यापकचैतन्यरूपेण अद्यापि तिष्ठति ।  
 स एव शङ्कराचार्यः गुरुः मुक्तिप्रदः सताम् ॥

*sarva-vyāpaka-caitanyarūpeṇa adyāpi tiṣṭhati*  
*sa eva śaṅkarācāryaḥ guruḥ muktipradaḥ satām*

That Śaṅkara himself, our preceptor, who grants liberation to the spiritual aspirants, exists here even now.

Ānandagirīya-Śaṅkara-Vijaya

---

 THUS SPAKE ŚAṆKARA
 

---

S. Ramaratnam

According to tradition, Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on *Viṣṇusahasranāma* was the first commentary he wrote. It is a combination of *Bhakti* and *Vedānta* philosophy. In fact, in Indian context, philosophy, mythology, religion, devotional fervour, art, architecture and other cultural and social aspects of life are not isolated entities independent of each other. They are not shut up in water tight compartments and made to linger in barren exclusivity. Each one is a supplement and compliment of the other. Even our musical compositions are full of philosophical concepts. Tyāgarāja sings '*dvaitamu sukhamā advaitamu sukhamā*'. Emphasising the value of *sādhana sampat* like *śama*, he says, *śāntamu leka saukhyamu ledu*' (without quietude, there is no happiness for anybody). Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita's lines, *saccidānanda paripūrṇa brahmāsmi* in the Kamalāmbā Navāvaraṇa kṛti (Śaṅkarābharāṇa rāga) is in tune with the Mahāvākya '*aham brahmāsmi*'. Vedānta is not something to be pursued at the fag end of one's life; it is part and parcel of life's journey at all stages. It is no wonder therefore, that Śaṅkara gives philosophical interpretation for many of the *nāma-s* in *Viṣṇusahasranāma*.

The Lord is called '*bhūta bhāvanah*' since he is the originator and sustainer of all beings. The idea is supported by the Upaniṣadic statement '*yena jātāni jīvanti*'. The Gītā says: '*bhūtabhāvana bhūteś a devadeva jagatpate*' (X.15).

Though there is but one, the one and only Supreme Being at the absolute level, the differences between the individual souls and the Supreme Soul are recognised at the empirical level. They are distinguished as *jīvātmā* and *paramātmā*. The Lord is called as *paramātmā*, in the sense that He is distinct from the cause and the effect and free from all imperfections of the *jīva-s*. While man gets into the steel jacket of body and mind, the Lord remains free from all shackles. Śāṅkara points out to this distinction in his *Ātma Bodha* (s' 2.20): '*dehendriya - mano - buddhi - prakṛtibhyo vilakṣaṇam*'. The sense organs are indeed powerful and hence man succumbs to them easily and undergoes miseries. How to get relieved of the miseries? It is by controlling the sense organs. But do we have any tool by which they can be controlled? God has provided ample opportunities for man to prosper and it is for man to seize the opportunities and redeem himself. Man has the mind which is more powerful than the sense organs and therefore he can control them through the mind. But unfortunately mind has a wavering nature and is, therefore, undependable. The mind has to be controlled and channelised with the help of the *buddhi* or intellect. The intellect is the most powerful tool man has, but it has its limitations as well. The intellect of even great persons becomes dull at times. There is a *subhāṣita* stanza which says:

*asambhavam hemamṛgasya janma tatopi rāmo lulubhe mṛgāya |*  
*prāyah samāpanna vipattikāle dhiyopi puṁsām malinībhavanti ||*  
(Hitopadeśa I.24)

'The appearance of a golden deer is impossible, yet Rāma ran after it. Generally the intellect of even great persons get blunted in the wake of calamities'. The *buddhi*, though

powerful is not infallible. Do we have anything else other than the body and the mind and the intellect? Yes, there is one, it is the Inner Self. It is not something which we can 'have'. It is, what we are. It is self - effulgent, eternal and all revealing. It is more powerful than the intellect.

*indriyāṇi parāṅyāhu rindebhyah param manaḥ |*

*manasastu parābuddhiryo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ ||*

(Gitā III.42)

The Vedic seers directed their mind and the intellect into the Inner Self and found out great truths. Scientists came up with great scientific discoveries through contemplation, a state that transcends the level of mind and the intellect.

The Inner Self is none other than the Supreme Consciousness, the *Paramātman*. The Lord is, therefore, addressed as the *Paramātmā* (Nāma number : 11)



---

## IS THERE A POSITIVE PRAMĀNA FOR EXISTENCE OF BRAHMAN?

---

S. Balakrishnan

A purist of Advaita will wonder why such a question is posed at all as it is elaborately taught in the scriptures that being self-evident and self-effulgent, no positive proof need be there for existence of Brahman. Do you ever ask yourself whether you exist? Advaitins generally dismiss such questions as irrelevant and foolish. Nevertheless, Upaniṣads discuss this topic elaborately to satisfy persistent queries of the *pūrvapakṣi*. The patience of advaitins is indeed tested by repeated objections on this topic. We can cite a few instances from the Upaniṣads. The 6th *Anuvāka* of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* begins with "*Asanneva sa bhavati, Asadbrahmeti veda cet, Asti Brahmeti, cet veda..... Athāto Anupraśnāḥ*". "He becomes non-existent if he thinks Brahman is non-existent ..... On this some questions are raised". The *Ācārya* in his commentary to this *anuvāka* postulates three questions reading between the lines of the Upaniṣad and raising a grammatical point that the word "*Anupraśnāḥ*" is plural and hence more than two questions are intended. The questions are (1) Does Brahman

exist or not? (2) Does an ignorant man reach Brahman? (3) Does a wise-man reach Brahman? The answers are there in his commentary on the same *anuvāka* and the next, but these have to be carefully searched for and culled. We can in fact find seven answers to the question, "whether Brahman exists or not" from Śaṅkara's commentary. They are collected and presented as follows:

(1) Brahman exists as the ultimate cause of the universe, (2) Brahman is existent because an effect can come only from an existent cause, (3) Brahman is the basis for all transactions, (4) Brahman is available in the mind as *vṛttijñānam*, (5) Brahman is the content or taste which gives *ānanda* and contentment to humanity, (6) Brahman exists because it enlivens all sense organs and (7) Brahman ensures fearlessness.

But an adamant objector does not accept even these as positive *pramāṇa*-s as these are only corollaries in answers to a supposed question. We have the example of such strong opponents in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. *Uśaṣṭa* and *Kahola* insist that *Yājñavalkya* must show Brahman to them just as a cow can be dragged by its horn and shown. It is another matter that *Yājñavalkya* ingeniously answers the objectors and comes out convincingly as victor in the debate. The fact however remains that no positive *pramāṇa* is given by the scriptures for existence of Brahman. Śruti justifies this stand in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* again, by the famous mantra "*yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*"; the words and the mind cannot reveal the *Ātma* or Brahman. But the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.19 contradicts this saying "*manasā eva anudraṣṭavyam*": *Ācārya* resolves this contradiction in his commentary to *Bhagavad Gītā* 2-21, saying that a mind refined by teaching of scriptures from a competent teacher will reveal the *Ātma*.

From the above discussion the operation of any of the six *pramāṇa-s* are ruled out to prove existence of Brahman. We shall deal with the *pramāṇa-s* briefly and see how they fail in this task. *Pratyakṣa* or direct perception can reveal only tangible objects through the instruments of knowledge. Brahman being the very subject and never an object is not available for perception. *Arthāpatti* or postulation depends upon perception, the common example in Vedānta being "Devadatta is fat, but does not eat during day". The postulation is, he eats during night. Comparison or *upamāna* is also useless as there are no other things with which Brahman can be compared so that you can say for example. "This animal in the forest resembles a cow". The *pramāṇa* of *Anupalabdhi* or "absence" also fails as it relies on perception alone or on the absence of perception. We have seen words or *śabda* cannot also reveal Brahman. Normally words can talk about only five types of things, namely, *rūḍhi*, a well known object like mountain or river, *jāti* or species like an animal or a bird, *guṇa* or attribute like colour, fatness etc. relationship like "he is your friend's father" and professions like driver or cook. Obviously Brahman does not fall under any of these categories. The *anumāna* or inference will be dealt with elaborately later in this article.

The Upaniṣad overcomes this impasse by asserting that Brahman requires no proof being an eternal witness, the knower, subject, you yourself who is self evident. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* poses the question "who will know the knower?" The most famous *pramāṇa* in the *Upaniṣad*, "*neti, neti*" satisfactorily rejects all objections and Brahman is what remains after negating all known and unknown *anātmas*. Śaṅkara brings out this point very forcefully in his *Upadeśa Sāhasrī* II-1. "Since the self cannot be negated, it is evidently what remains after negating everything else as "not this, not this".

But, Bauddhas, especially the *Kṣaṇika vijñānavādins* cannot be convinced by such arguments. Their pet argument is that if you negate all the existing things you end up in "void" and they criticise advaitin that Brahman is void i.e. it does not exist. Most of the post-Śāṅkara philosophers dismiss this argument asserting that the "void" must also have a witness and that witness is Brahman. Śāṅkara confronts the opponents mainly the *Kṣaṇika vijñānavādins* in his very famous work *Upadeśa Sāhasrī*. This text is a thorough treatise on Advaita Vedānta. Each chapter takes up various deep and difficult topics and discusses them exhaustively. Ācārya refutes the Bouddhas in Chapter - 16 of this work in verses 15 to 29. Again in Chapter - 17 titled "*Tattvamasi*" which can be given the status of "magnum opus" in Ācārya's works, he ingeniously furnishes a positive proof for existence of Brahman and strikes the final nail on the coffin of *Kṣaṇika vijñānis*. The Ācārya here takes up the *pramāṇa* of "*Anumāna*" (inference) in a novel way to bring out his purpose.

Inference is a well known *pramāṇa* generally dependent on perception and the usual example given is "wherever there is smoke there is fire". This is a weak example because although the presence of fire can be inferred from smoke, the form or extent of fire has to be perceived if one wants more knowledge regarding the fire. Śāṅkara works out a very strong inference in defense of his arguments and from a study of the development of his reasoning from verses 123 to 152 of chapter - 17 of *Upadeśa Sāhasrī*, it would appear that inference is indeed as strong or even stronger than *pratyakṣa pramāṇa* (perception). In fact verse-123 serves as the '*upakrama*' and 151 and 152 as *upasamhāra* to these arguments. The relevant phrases are "*Anumānam pradīpavat*" in 123 and ending with almost same words "*vyañjakatvāt pradīpavat*" in verse 152. The list of the argument is in fact very simple though very strong and convincing. You are in search of a



very important object and some one says that it is in a dark room. You go there and switch on the light. Immediately you perceive the object of your search. In perceiving the object although your eyes are required, the most important requirement for perception is the illumination provided by a light, which may be visible or invisible as we have such powerful illumination in modern days. But the inference that the light is there behind your perception can never be refuted by anyone. The Ācārya argues that appearance, availability for transaction and existence of the object are revealed by another source which is inferred like the presence of a lamp. Starting from this, Śaṅkara builds up a set of irrefutable reasonings, ironically agreeing with the opponent initially that a positive *pramāṇa* is indeed necessary so that we may not end up in void. The building up of argument is so convincing and *pūrva pakṣi* appears to win in the process a few points in his favour and to help the Ācārya, he even suggests the instances of memory and *tripuṭi* thus laying a trap for the Ācārya. Śaṅkara smoothly rejects these suggestions without falling into the trap. He further agrees with the opponent that the ignorant is ignorant of the fact that he has a self-evident Ātma different from the body and hence the argument of self-evidence after negation has to be corroborated by a positive *pramāṇa*. Śaṅkara makes some very interesting observations in agreeing with the opponent. *Pramāṇa* is required because the awareness present in the ignorant is not aware of itself and hence some authority must tell him. The Ācārya further appears to help the opponent by discussing the meaning of the word "Siddhi" and the opponent is very happy and reiterates that according to him knower himself is a momentary phenomenon. It is also of interest to note that the *Kṣaṇika vijñāna vāda* has many similarities with the views of Advaita, but the main and fundamental difference is that it mistakes what we term as

*vṛtti jñāna* as the awareness and rejects our arguments. Being a *nāstika*, he does not accept scriptures as authority. Hence the Ācārya's quest for a positive *pramāṇa*. Śaṅkara now proceeds to ridicule the conclusions of the opponent and reduces his arguments to absurdity. Then he springs a surprise in verse-151. The attributes like, yellow, etc. are only adjectives, perceived as the qualities of an experienced object or relating to transactional knowledge regarding an object like a pot. A question must arise now in an intelligent mind as to who is experiencing or seeing the *anātma-s*. Here Inference alone helps to point out an experience or a seer different from all that is seen. This conclusion does not require any super intellect. When you see a house, you infer the builder, when you see furniture you infer the carpenter, an ornament points out to a goldsmith, a photograph or a picture to the photographer or painter. Then comes his conclusive verse 152 saying "*Vyañjakatvāt pradīpavat*" building up a *vyāpti* (general law) for the *anumāna*, "Wherever there is a cognition there must be a different cognizer "*yatra yatra grāhyatvam tatra tatra anyagrāhakatvam*". The colours revealed by the sense organs are grasped by a seer, smell by a smeller etc. reminding us of the very pithy statement of Kena Upaniṣad "*Pratibodha viditam*" i.e. "*Bodham bodham prati viditam*". Explaining further, the Ācārya reiterates that objects are visible in a room due to the presence of an independent source of light. Therefore inference is a powerful *prāmaṇa* which reveals the illuminator. It is often taken for granted just as when you put your hand up and ask what is seen, nobody includes "light" by which alone the hand is seen. Thus the creation intelligently put together, the mind with its thoughts, the sense organs with their power of perception etc. are all revealed by a different illuminator and this inference is even more powerful and in a positive *pramāṇa* than direct perception for the existence of the only one

independent illuminator, the Ātma, Self or Brahman. That this inference is very powerful, positive and useful *pramāṇa* and is even stronger than the direct *pramāṇa* of perception is seen from science and other fields of transaction as illustrated further.

It is generally known that sciences like mathematics, chemistry and physics list the number of corollaries which is the same as inference at the end of a theorem or an experiment. These are extensively made use of in the application of the theorem to solve riders or in applied science. Nobody can say that these inferences are not positive *pramāṇa*-s. In the field of Sports, especially in the game of cricket, we have the well known l.b.w. rule. This is based on pure inference. An intelligent and observant umpire infers that if the ball had not been intercepted by the batsman with his pad on a particular area it would have hit the stumps and dislodged the bails and he raises his hand to give the batsman out. Many a reputed batsman has been given out on this basis even when he is in the score of nineties nearing his century. Generally there is no protest against this decision and even no confirmation is called for by a TV review or by a third umpire, whereas even for a perceptible *pramāṇa* like a run out or a catch the umpire sometimes confirms it with a review on TV or by referring to a third umpire. Thus inference is proved to be even stronger than perception.

Concluding, it must however be noted that Advaita never relies on logic alone for providing existence of Brahman. This is highlighted by Vyāsa in *Brahma Sūtra* 1-2 and 1-3 and convincingly commented by Śaṅkara. The *naiyāyikas* feel that the 3rd *Sūtra* (*Śāstrayonitvāt*) is redundant because second *Sūtra* itself (*janmādyasya yataḥ*) has logically established the existence of Īśvara. But Śaṅkara argues in accordance with the Upaniṣad dictum "*Naiṣā Tarkena matirāpanīyā*" that Advaita never relies on logic alone for any substantial proof.

The logic is always backed by *śruti pramāṇa* and hence relevance of the 3rd *sūtra*. However in the case of Bauddhas (*Kṣāṇika Vijñānavādins*) being *nāstikas* Śaṅkara cannot quote *śruti* as they do not accept the authority of *śruti*. Hence Śaṅkara has hit upon the ingenious logic of providing positive *pramāṇa* in *anumāna*.



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## INDIAN PHILOSOPHY IN PERSPECTIVE

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T.P. Ramachandran

The Indian Philosophical systems are brought under a common term *darśana-s* which include both theistic (*āstika*) as well as non-theistic (*nāstika*) systems of thought. Not all the *āstika* systems believe in God (for example, the *pūrva mimāmsā* and *Sāmkhya* systems do not believe in God as the creator of the Universe) but all of them accept the authority of the Vedas. The *āstika darśanas* are, traditionally, six in number, namely, *Sāmkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Pūrva Mimāmsā* and *Uttaramīmāmsā* (which is popularly called as Vedānta philosophy). The materialistic school of thought called *Cārvāka*, *Buddhism* and *Jainism* are brought under non-theistic system. All these systems analyse the basic questions such as the nature of human being, the purpose of human life, nature of the universe, nature of creation and the nature of ultimate reality. In Indian Philosophy, all these problems are discussed from different angles - metaphysical, ethical, logical, psychological and epistemological. The inner spirit in Indian Philosophy, however, needs to be understood in the true nature of the sublime thoughts expressed in these systems.

## I. The Nature of Philosophy

The term "Philosophy" means "love of wisdom". Wisdom is more significant than knowledge. Ascertainment of the details of any object or area is knowledge. But wisdom consists in assessing also how that knowledge stands in relation to the purposes of life. The Sanskrit equivalent for knowledge is *jñāna*, and for wisdom it is *viveka - jñāna* or simply *viveka*. The meaning of the term "Philosophy" thus indicates that its scope, is wider than that of any particular branch of knowledge. Philosophy goes into fundamental questions - questions which exceed in depth and scope the nature of the questions discussed in a systematic study of any particular phenomenon or area like any science or any of the humanities. The nature of philosophical questions can be indicated through the main divisions of philosophy.

(1) First, there are questions about what constitutes reality. We live in a world of matter. We also perceive other physical bodies in the sky. All these are governed by time and space. Is this material universe real? If real, did it have an origin, and will it have an end? If yes, why and how do the origin and end happen? Similarly, there are questions about ourselves. We live in a physical body, which is subject to birth and death. Is there any aspect in us which existed before birth and will survive after death? There is widespread belief in a soul. If the soul is real, what is its nature? Then, there is the question whether there is an ultimate reality. Neither the world nor ourselves seems to be completely self-governed. Both have their limitations. Matter is insentient, and we individuals are, beyond a point, unable to determine and regulate ourselves and the world as we deem fit. Most people believe in a higher power, an ultimate reality, usually called god, which shapes our ends and conducts the world.

All these three broad types of questions - about the world, ourselves, and an ultimate reality - constitute one main

division of philosophy called metaphysics. In Sanskrit, it is called *tattva-vicāra* - inquiry into *tattva* or reality. It is also called *prameya - vicāra* inquiry into the central object (*prameya*) of philosophy viz. *tattva*.

It is difficult to arrive at definite conclusions on questions in metaphysics. The content of the questions is such that no answer is open to immediate verification. Hence differences among philosophers on metaphysical questions are common. That is how there have arisen many schools of philosophy. However, such a difficulty does not preclude the continuation of the quest. In fact, we cannot help raising metaphysical questions. The urge is ingrained in man. Even a child or a layman sometimes raises such questions, which elders and experts are unable to meet in full.

2. Now, the very fact that philosophers are never agreed on metaphysical questions makes them look into the mental process by which they seek to find answers to such questions. Metaphysical inquiry is a matter of speculation. By the very nature of the case, experiment is ruled out. As for observation, it can be applied only to such phenomena as are open to perception. But metaphysical inquiry extends far beyond the perceivable. Even of what is open to perception, we have access only to individual objects, but not to the whole universe. Hence the question arises what the means are by which we can find the truth about reality and whether they are adequate to this task. Such a question forces the philosopher to reflect on the methods of knowing about reality. This constitutes another broad area of philosophy called epistemology (episteme = knowing). In Sanskrit it is called *pramāṇa-vicāra* (*pramāṇa* = means of knowledge). Let us add a brief note on the *pramāṇa-s*.

A total of six *pramāṇa-s* are recognised by Indian schools. They are *pratyakṣa* (sense perception) *anumāna* (inference) *upamāna* (comparison / analogy), *arthāpatti* (presumption based

on connected facts), *anupalabdhi* (non-cognition by any of the above means) and *śabda* (verbal testimony). Of these, *pratyakṣa* provides direct knowledge of objects which are open to sense perception. *Anumāna*, *upamāna*, and *arthāpatti* provide indirect provisional knowledge of perceivable objects, which may be verified later by *pratyakṣa*. *Anupalabdhi* also applies only to the sensible world. But what it apprehends is the non-existence of a sensible object where it is expected to be present. It gives direct knowledge of the absence of an object.

*Śabda* may relate either to sensible objects or to what is beyond the senses, like soul and god. In the case of sensible objects, a report by another person gives provisional knowledge, which may be verified later by one's own perceptual experience. In the case of suprasensible entities, *śabda* operates through the words of a competent authority. The content is initially taken on faith by a believer. Later on, it is corroborated in his own spiritual experience (*anubhava*). The competent authority is of two kinds. One is the master who is believed to have had direct experience of the content. The other is the Veda, which is said to be supra - personal, of which the recipients are the sages. Schools vary in regard to the number of *prāmaṇa*-s accepted by them.

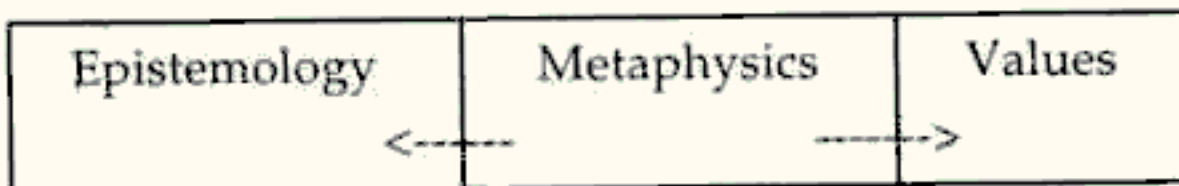
There are other questions also in epistemology. The purpose of applying the means of knowledge is to find out the truth about reality, i.e. to arrive at the correct knowledge of it. So the question arises as to what we mean by correct knowledge. If the area is perceivable, we can define truth as that knowledge which, on verification, accords with the observed facts. But metaphysics is not confined to the perceivable. In such a case, how can we define *truth* and what would be the criterion for judging it? When such a question is raised, a similar question arises in regard to the opposite of truth, viz., error, or invalid knowledge. These two questions presuppose an understanding of the psychology of knowledge, i.e. the nature of its process.



How does knowledge arise at all? The term *pramāṇa-vicāra*, though primarily referring to the means of knowledge, implies also the other questions. There are differences among philosophers in regard to all questions in epistemology. They arise from their special commitments to types of metaphysics.

3. We now come to another broad area of philosophy. It is natural for any human being including a philosopher to ask about the bearing of metaphysics on the purposes of life. Such a question involves also the question what the purposes are. Does metaphysics throw any light on these purposes? The inquiry into such practical questions constitute a third area of philosophy called the philosophy of values. In Sanskrit it is called *pramāṇa-vicāra prayojana* (*prayojana* = use). What is the use of metaphysics in regard to life?

A value is anything that is considered to be valuable, or worthy of pursuit. If we come down to particulars, there are many values. We cannot enumerate them. But it is possible to identify that types of values. In the first place, there are mundane values like material possessions, position in society, fame and name. Then, there are cultural values that appeal to the mind, like truth, beauty and goodness. Since none of these values by themselves go beyond the range of life, people seek also the ultimate, or spiritual value of liberation a condition of permanent and complete freedom from all the ills of life. To discuss all these values in regard to their nature and relative importance in the light of metaphysics is the third area of philosophy. The kind of metaphysics a philosopher holds will influence his treatment of values. Hence there are differences among philosophers on questions of value also. The three broad areas of philosophy may be represented as follows.



We may now consider how far philosophical differences could be reconciled. The answer depends on the nature of the differences. There are differences arising from temperaments and cultural backgrounds. Such differences are of a basic nature, and it is difficult to reconcile them. But there are differences arising from reasoning. They may be called surface differences. Such differences could be debated. But even here, it is not possible to say in precise terms that one view is correct and another incorrect. Hard and fast decisions are impossible in philosophy for the very reason that there are no means of verifying conclusions on matters that go beyond the range of all other branches of knowledge. Therefore, even in regard to surface questions, all that is possible is to say that one view seems to be more plausible than another. This is similar to differences in literary criticism. When we find two critics commenting on the same work, in two different ways in spite of observing fidelity to the author, all that the reader can say is "this criticism is more plausible than the other". Thus, the choice of a school of philosophy from among many becomes largely personal - whether in regard to basic or surface differences.

## II Special Features of Indian Philosophy

### (1) Philosophy and Religion in India:

Religion is largely a matter of faith and practice. The common belief of all religions is that there is a soul apart from the physical body and that it holds the possibility of attaining a state of freedom from bodily constraints (liberation / salvation). Based on this belief, a religion prescribes courses of discipline by practising which the soul could attain liberation. There are differences among religions on what exactly is meant by soul and liberation. But, in a general sense, the belief is common that there is a soul other than the body and that it could, by practice, attain a state of freedom from

all the imperfections of life. Most religions also believe that there is an ultimate reality, commonly described as god, who is the dispenser of salvation to the soul. Such is the position in Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. There are also some religions which do not involve the belief in god and which hold that liberation is the result of personal effort guided by a master. This is the case in religions like Jainism and Buddhism. In any case, faith and practice are the hall-marks of all religions.

Philosophy is not necessarily connected with religion, though it may choose to. In contrast to religion, philosophy depends on speculation and argument. This difference has made some philosophers to keep Philosophy apart from religion, even if in personal lives they were religious. The reason behind this separation is the notion that philosophy, being an intellectual quest, would be circumscribed and conditioned if it got mixed up with religion. Whether the notion was correct or not, it held on in some cases. In the west, for example, while ancient philosophies were allied to Greek mythology and medieval philosophies were linked to Christian theology, modern philosophers from Descartes struck a line independent of religion.

In India, however, with the single exception of the *Cārvāka* School, all schools of philosophy were allied to religion - with Jainism and Buddhism in two cases and with Hinduism in all the rest. All the schools held the view that philosophy would stand to gain by its alliance with religion. In fact, results bore out their expectation. Philosophy ceased to be mere abstract speculation; it came closer to life and held an appeal to the common man in addition to the learned. Religion also stood to gain by this alliance. It ceased to be blind faith and got supported by reason also.

## (2) The urge for philosophy in India:

What prompts one to philosophize, starting from metaphysics? There are two kinds of urges. If philosophy is pursued independently of religion, it is clear that the urge for philosophy is purely curiosity. But, if philosophy is pursued in alliance with religion, the urge for philosophy is primarily man's desire for liberation. This has been the case with philosophy in India throughout its history barring *Cārvāka*. Metaphysical investigation has been motivated by desire to find a way to liberation and also to define the nature of that goal. Thus, the discussion on values is not merely the consequence of metaphysics, but also its aim. This does not mean that curiosity is absent in Indian Metaphysics. But curiosity itself becomes a means to a practical purpose. Even within the philosophy of values, all the other values come to be discussed for their potentiality in leading to liberation. Hence Indian philosophy has, on the whole, come to be described as a *mokṣa-sādhana*.

## III. Values in Indian Philosophy

(1) The nature of the *puruṣārthas*:

The Sanskrit term for value is *puruṣārtha*, which means "what is desired by human beings". In all, four *puruṣārthas* are mentioned. They are *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*. The term *kāma* is taken in the wide sense of all worldly pleasure ranging from comfortable physical life to subtle pleasure as in winning popularity, influence, position, and so on. *Artha* comprises the worldly means to the fulfilment of *kāma*, namely, money and material goods. Thus *kāma* is an intrinsic value and *artha* an instrumental value.

*Kāma* and *artha* are not special to man. To a degree, we share them with animals. Animals also seek the needs of their bodies, like food, safety, sleep, and progeny. The difference between men and animals in these regards is in the way in which these

ends are pursued. Man seeks them knowingly. He remembers the past, knows the present, and can anticipate and plan for the future. He can even make innovations and inventions in these pursuits. Civilization belongs only to man. There is little evidence to show that animals pursue their ends deliberately. Some species prepare for the future, as by building a nest, storing food, and so on. But mostly, animals seem to engage in these activities by instinct. That is why when their habitats are destroyed, they become extinct. Thus, though man shares material ends with animals, by virtue of the conscious and deliberate pursuit he is capable of, *artha* and *kāma* which are recognised as human values (*puruṣārtha*).

*Dharma* and *mokṣa* are special to man. *Dharma* stands for good conduct. We live in a society, and the conduct of an individual has an impact on society. Good conduct is described as *dharma* because it sustains society (*dhāraṇāt dharmah*). Men, by nature, observe good conduct and avoid bad behaviour. They also expect others to observe *dharma*. That is why actions receive praise or blame in society. Ethics (*dharma - śāstra*) is the systematic study of the significance, standard, codes and aim of conduct.

*Mokṣa* stands for complete and lasting freedom from all the ills of life. No one can ignore the fact that life involves pain. We can endeavour to redress suffering by worldly means. We seek to cure illness and disability by medical means. We seek to remove poverty by earning more. We endeavour to protect ourselves from natural calamities by suitable precautions. But such attempts at the worldly level can relieve suffering only partially and temporarily. There is no lasting and complete solution to the problem of suffering at the mundane level. It is, therefore, natural to ask whether, at least beyond life, it would be possible to attain a state of freedom from pain on a permanent and total basis. Religion holds the key to this problem. All religions believe in the possibility of such an

end and teach it as the final goal of man. Indian philosophy, being closely related to religion, adopts it as the final value. It is true that there are differences among religions and schools of philosophy as regards the exact nature of this end and the means to it. But what matters to us in the present paper is the common belief in the possibility of freedom from all the blemishes of life on a permanent footing. And the term *mokṣa* is used here purely as a term of convenience.

The influence of metaphysics on values is most evident in the case of *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is for the soul. Hence the conception of the soul in a school of philosophy determines its conception of *mokṣa*. To the *cārvāka*, reality is confined to what is perceivable, i.e. what is material. There is no entity called the soul, as it is not open to perception. So there is no question of its liberation either. The *Mīmāṃsā* school in its early phase also denies the goal of liberation, but for a different reason. It believes in a soul. But it relies for information about it entirely on the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the veda—that portion of the veda which is concerned purely with the rituals which a person has to perform in life. The goal of life as pointed out here is not liberation, but only elevation to the higher world belonging to the devas, where the soul can enjoy pleasure, this elevation being called *abhyudaya*. But after a long period, when the fruits of the rituals done on earth are exhausted, the soul comes back to the earth to take another birth.

The Jaina and Bauddha schools differ from each other in regard to the nature of the soul. Hence they differ in respect of liberation also. But they agree on one basic point. The soul in its essential nature is characterized by absence of pain but not by the presence of bliss. Hence, for both the schools, liberation is a state where the soul regains its original nature as one free from pain. Liberation, for both, is a state of absolute peace, where there is neither pain nor pleasure. In Jainism,

this kind of liberation is called *kaivalya* and in *Buddhism*, *nirvāna*.

The above position may be described as a negative view of liberation. Other schools which hold such a negative view are *Nyāya - Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṅkhya - Yoga*, and *Mimāṃsā* in its later phase. Though differing in certain respects, they all agree that the essential nature of the soul is one of freedom from pain. Hence liberation also is characterized by absence of pain, but not by presence of pleasure. In *Nyāya - Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṅkhya - Yoga*, it is called *apavarga* and in later *Mimāṃsā*, *mokṣa*.

By contrast, all the branches of *Vedānta*, theistic and absolutistic, regard liberation as a state of absolute bliss. This is because, to all of them, the essential nature of the soul is one of pure bliss. The bliss is hidden in the state of bondage by reason of its association with matter. This association is real for all branches of theistic *Vedānta*. Hence liberation, according to all of them, can be attained only after death, when the association is severed (*videha - mukti*). But for *Advaita*, the association with matter is false, matter itself being an illusion. The soul remains bound only so long as it is ignorant of this truth. The moment the soul realizes that it has nothing to do with illusory matter, it is released, though the body may continue to function by reason of the impetus given to it at birth. This is called *jīvan - mukti*. Thus, *Vedānta*, as a whole, takes a positive view of *mokṣa*.

(2) The hierarchy of the *puruṣārtha*-s:

*Dharma* and *mokṣa* are superior to *artha* and *kāma*. The criterion employed in this judgement is unselfishness. *Artha* and *Kāma* are avowedly self-centred. One seeks wealth and comfort for oneself and family. Even when we speak in social terms like "development" and "progress", every individual can afford to think only in terms of how far he himself would benefit from such social goals. There is nothing wrong in

seeking personal benefits. It is natural and legitimate. But we also recognize that the pursuit of personal ends must not be at the cost of others who have the same rights. This recognition is *dharma*. *Dharma* is thus the regulative principle for *artha* and *kāma*. For this reason, *dharma* is superior to them.

By the same criterion of rising above selfishness, *mokṣa* is superior to *dharma*. In fact, it is the highest value. Let us explain. *Dharma* involves conscious effort to curb natural selfish tendencies when they tend to go against the interest of others. So long as there is need for effort, unselfishness cannot be said to be absolute. But to one who has attained liberation or is even on the verge of liberation, unselfishness becomes spontaneous. *Mokṣa* is more than self-restraint. It is self-transcendence. According to some schools, the individual as such does not disappear in *mokṣa*. But his individualistic attitude, which marked his bondage, becomes completely absent. That is why *mokṣa* is uniformly declared by all schools to be a state of permanent and unalloyed peace (freedom from pain), whether it involves bliss or not.

To all the schools that recognise *mokṣa*, *dharma* is not only subordinate to *mokṣa*, but also subservient to it. In fact, it is an indispensable means to *mokṣa*. According to Jainism and Buddhism, *dharma* directly leads to liberation. According to the rest, it leads to liberation indirectly by cleansing the mind and making it fit for *jñāna*, which in turn, leads to *mokṣa*.

(3) The place of truth and beauty among *puruṣārtha*-s:

In the history of Western philosophy, a set of three values which appeal to a cultivated man are mentioned. They are truth, beauty, and goodness. They may well be described as cultural values. Of these, goodness (*dharma*) is mentioned in the Indian *puruṣārtha*-s. The question arises why truth and beauty are not similarly mentioned. Let us examine. Truth, which may be rendered as *jñāna*, finds substantial place under



Indian epistemology. Indian metaphysics is nothing if not a pursuit of the truth about the whole of reality comprising *jīva*, *jagat* and *paramātman*. The traditional practice of discussing this value under epistemology is because of its special importance among values. It is the backbone of metaphysics, which, in turn, determines the conception of *dharma* and *mokṣa*. In fact, it is the practice in the west also to discuss truth under epistemology. Hence the mere absence of a formal inclusion of truth in the list of *puruṣārtha*-s does not mean that it is neglected in Indian philosophy.

Like *dharma*, *jñāna* is a higher value than *artha* and *kāma*, if we go by the criterion of unselfishness. The dedicated pursuit of truth is marked by intense absorption. But *jñāna* is not equal to *mokṣa*. The self-forgetfulness in the pursuit of *jñāna* is neither continuous nor permanent. The reason is this. The state of mind as self-forgetful is not self-achieved, but induced by the study of relevant texts and reflection on their teachings. *Jñāna*, at this stage, is at the intellectual level. It is mediate knowledge about the nature of reality. Such knowledge does not transform the personality; it gives only conviction. However, *jñāna* serves as a means to *mokṣa* when mediate knowledge is converted into immediate knowledge, or direct experience. This is called *vijñāna*, or *anubhava*. The term *jñāna* is also used for this level of knowledge, but it must be clearly distinguished from *jñāna* at the mediate level. All schools of Indian philosophy recognize *jñāna* in the higher sense as an important means to *mokṣa*, though they differ in the details relating to its content. All schools hold that *mokṣa* results from experience of reality, not from mere theoretical understanding. That is why all schools of Indian philosophy are called *darśana* - based on (spiritual) vision.

We now come to the question of beauty, which may be rendered as *saundarya*, *cārutva*. Even this is not ignored by Indian philosophy. Beauty in nature, being real, is extolled

in the Vedas, Itihasas, and Purāṇas, as a manifestation of God. Beauty in art, which is a product of the artist's imagination, is systematically studied in a special class of works called *Alaṅkāra - śāstra*. If philosophical works in schools do not discuss beauty, whether in art or nature, as a *puruṣārtha*, it is because beauty has no necessary connection with *mokṣa*. Whatever significance it has for *mokṣa* is purely incidental. This we shall see in the sequel.

Like *jñāna* and *dharma*, the pursuit of beauty lifts man above the personal level and makes it one-pointed. Thus, it is a higher value than *artha* and *kāma*. We may say that, in this respect, it has an advantage over *dharma*. Given the mental sensitivity, mental absorption is secured in a spontaneous manner. The thing of beauty itself gently means the mind away from the personal attitude and rivets it to the object. The result is a state of pure joy. It is said that this pure joy is similar to the bliss of *mokṣa* as understood in Vedānta. Beauty is, thus, a pointer to *mokṣa*. However, aesthetic experience, being object-induced, does not last beyond the period of contact with the object. After enjoying impersonal bliss, one returns to the common run of life. Again, since no personal effort is involved, the experience does not transform one's personality. For these reasons, beauty cannot be recognised as a means to *mokṣa*. Nevertheless, there are certain incidental advantages in beauty which serve as inducements to *mokṣa*. Objects of beauty in nature could remind a believer about god, who is considered as the supreme architect of the universe. Works of art bearing on moral and religious themes can infuse the moral and religious spirit in man. Thus, all the three values (truth, goodness and beauty) are recognized in Indian philosophy, the first two explicitly and the third implicitly.



## NINE GEMS

N. Hariharan

Hurricane is a dreaded force, vicious and destructive. The trail of destruction it leaves in the wake of its death-dance chills one's heart. It rips through the landscape, uproots trees, flattens structures and reduces everything to rubble. While the tempest that hits the terrestrial landscape is horrifying, the hurricane, that maims and mauls the spiritual landscape, is daunting and death-dealing in the spiritual sense. The grisly typhoon on the spiritual terrain blasts one off and dislodges one from one's spiritual moorings. It raises a thick pall of the dust of delusion, makes one spiritually myopic and blind and even causes a jaundiced vision and warped view. It has, at its core, three vicious hollows from which erupt three wicked gales to scatter all-round chaos and confusion.

The name of the macabre hurricane that rains spiritual destruction is *avidyā*. (primal Nescience) The three savage gales that issue from its deep hollows are the triple *guṇa-s* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The spiritual terrain that the ferocious tempest strikes is the universe of *jīva-s*. There is, however, one vital difference between the terrestrial cyclone

and the spiritual hurricane. While the former is localised, seasonal and destructive merely in the physical sense, the latter is universal, incessant and deadly in that it almost permanently saps the spiritual potential of the *jīva-s* and renders them spiritually weak, fragile and blind.

Śaṅkara would, however, liken *avidyā* to a cobra with three raised hoods. Actually, the great Ācārya portrays *ahaṅkāra* (Ego) as a three-hooded cobra. But, *ahaṅkāra* is only the vilest offspring of *avidyā*. As the child is the father in miniature, *ahaṅkāra* is a minor edition of *avidyā* and can be called *avidyā* in miniature. *Ahaṅkāra*, therefore, inherits all the wicked attributes of *avidyā*. We may, therefore, take Ācārya's censure of *ahaṅkāra* as that of *avidyā*. The venerable Ācārya's depiction of *ahaṅkāra*, in a verse of *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, as a-cobra, with triple hoods, to be ruthlessly slain, is a model of presentation of subtle Vedāntic truths in sensitive poetry. He says.,

*brahmānandanidhir mahābalavatāhamkāraghorāhinā  
samveṣṭyātmani rakṣyate guṇamayaiscaṇḍaistribhir  
mastakaiḥ*

*vijñānākhyamahāsinā dyutimatā vicchidya śīrṣatrayam  
nirmūlyāhimimām nidhim sukhakaram dhīronubhoktum  
kṣamaḥ<sup>1</sup>*

The following story-like narrative would facilitate easier and better comprehension of the profound implications of the verse. A certain wise man learns, on reliable authority, of the existence of a most precious treasure and is seized with an overmastering passion to possess it. Promptly, he applies himself to necessary action, but, on reaching the spot, finds, to his utter dismay, that the treasure lies in the deadly embrace of a venomous cobra who keeps an unwinking vigil with its triple outspread hoods, lest it should be mulcted of its life-giving treasure. Undaunted, the wise man unsheathes his sword, slashes off the serpent's three hoods (*vicchidya*

*sīrṣatrayam*) and makes short work of it (*nirmūlyāhimimām*) The treasure comes into his possession and he remains ever rejoicing over his acquisition and possession of it (*nīdhim sukhakaram dhīro'nubhoktum kṣamaḥ*).

Beneath the innocent veneer of this apparently flippant story, lies the weighty theme of *Vedānta*. The wise man represents the *mumukṣu*, the spiritual seeker with an intense longing for liberation. The unexcellable Bliss of Self-realisation is the treasure (*brahmānandanidhiḥ*) on which the spiritual sets his heart. The aspirant learns of the possibility of this supreme bliss through scriptures, the highest authority. The dreadful and powerful serpent, with its awesome triple hoods, coiling round the treasure and jealously guarding it, symbolizes the Ego, with its triple modes, of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*, eclipsing and suppressing the Self. (*mahābalavatāhamkāraghorāhinā samveṣṭyātmani rakṣyate guṇamayāiscaṇḍaistribhir mastakaiḥ*). The wiseman's sharp sword represents the seeker's realization, born of contemplation-*nididhyāsana* (*vijñānākhyamahāsinā dyutimatā*). With the dawn of Self-realisation, the seeker transcends the sway of the triad of *guṇa*-s. The dissolution of the *guṇa*-s spells the doom of Ego, which, until then, was camouflaging the Self, as it were, keeping up its lofty pretensions and shining in borrowed glory. The wise man's acquisition of the treasure means the spiritual seeker's attainment of *mokṣa*, spiritual liberation.

*Avidyā*'s most striking self-expression is *ahamkāra*. Speaking in the idiom of a war, *avidyā*'s foremost lieutenant, in its onslaught on the Self, may be deemed *ahamkāra*. *Ahamkāra* is an insidious martial expert and employs, against the adversary, the triple magical ammunitions of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* that are ever at his command. Of the three ammunitions, the firepower of the latter two is explosive and

fatal while the power of the ammunition of *sattva* is, at worst, wildly obstructionist to Self-vision. *Ahaṅkāra*'s major reliance, in his assault on Self, out of base motives of duplicity and self-preservation, is, however, on the twin ammunitions of *rajas* and *tamas*.

*Avidyā* is nothing but the incubus of ignorance of one's spiritual identity. It is, primarily, a grave state of deep-seated non-awareness of *Ātman*, the Self. *Avidyā*'s sin of non-apprehension of the Spiritual Truth is caused by *tamas*, its constituent power of hiding the Truth and perpetuating spiritual sloth. The ammunition of *tamas* which *avidyā* galvanizes into action in its war against the Self, has the sharp teeth of *āvaraṇa śakti* (Power of concealment). By employing the ammunition of *tamas*, possessed of the veiling power, *avidyā* effectively shuts off *Ātman* from the spiritual ken of the *jīva*. As soon as *tamas* does its part of the mischief of spiritual sabotage, *rajas* takes over and completes the wicked job. Now, the forte of *rajas* is *vikṣepa śakti* (Power of projection) *Rajas*, the henchman of *avidyā*, employs, in his sinister plot of ditching *Ātman*, his magical power of conjuring up phantasm and sets up an essentially illusory Ego in the void created by *Ātman*'s eclipse. Now, the *jīva* slips into spiritual bondage dues to the twin reasons of non-apprehension and misapprehension of Reality. *Śaṅkara* spells out the anatomy of *avidyā* and bondage with clinical precision. He says,

*atrānātmanyahamiti matir bandha eśo'ṣya pumsaḥ  
prāpto' jñānājjananamarāṇakleśasampātahetuḥ  
yenāivāyam vapuridamasat satyamithyātmabuddhiḥ  
puṣyatyukṣatyavati viśayais tantubhiḥ kośakṛdvat<sup>2</sup>*

Meaning: The belief that the *ajñātman* is the *ātman* is the cause of man's bondage. This belief arises from *avidyā*. It is the cause of the congeries of pains like birth, death etc. By

it, thinking this unreal body to be real like the *ātman*, one nourishes it, wets it and protects it by sense-objects and gets bound like the spider by its threads.

*Avidyā*, wielding its powers of concealment and projection, induces a gross misreading of *anātman* as the *ātman* and entangles hapless *jīvas* in a state of bondage marked by suffering and delusion. This misreading of the *anātman* as the *ātman* is technically called *adhyāsa* (superimposition) in the jargon of *Avidyā*. Superimposition, in the present context, means false ascription of the qualities of *ātman* to *anātman*. In plain language, it means entertaining the idea of *ātman* in the body (*dehātma buddhiḥ*). The logical corollaries of *dehātma buddhi* are a grossly materialistic outlook, an obnoxious culture of body-worship and a vulgar habit of wallowing in the mire of paltry sense-enjoyments. In short, *dehātma buddhi* implies Epicureanism with a vengeance. Thus, erroneous perception of body as the *ātman* leads to the unwelcome consequence of reducing homo sapiens to an ugly breed of two-legged beats.

Śaṅkara clarifies the nature of *adhyāsa* vividly. The source of *adhyāsa* lies in the lack of understanding of the difference between *adhiṣṭhāna* (substratum) and *āropya* (what is superimposed) He says,

*atasmin tadbuddhiḥ prabhavati vimūḍhasya tamasā  
vivekābhāvādvai sphurati bhujage rajjudhiṣaṇā  
tato 'narthavrāto nipatati samādaturadhikas  
tato yo 'sadgrāhaḥ sa hi bhavati bandhaḥ śṛṇu sakhe<sup>3</sup>*

Meaning: By the *ajñāna* (which is of the nature of *tamas*) an indiscriminating man mistakes what is not a thing as that thing. This is due to lack of discrimination. This is like thinking a serpent to be a rope and great calamities befall one who loses the power of discrimination. Hence, listen, my

friend! Taking unreal things to be real is what constitutes bondage.

The joint mischief of the twin villains viz, *rajas* and *tamas* causes the *jīva* to have the idea of *ātman* (*tadbuddhiḥ*) in the body etc, which are the *anātman* (*atasmin*). The usual analogy employed in *Vedānta* to explain the concept of *adhyāsa* is the rope-snake analogy in which the idea of a snake is superimposed on the rope. Here, in the verse under study, Śaṅkara deliberately reverses the meaning of the analogy by saying that a rope is superimposed on the snake. The purpose of popular analogy in which the rope is the substratum and the snake is the superimposed object is to highlight the sentiments of fear and dismay that ignorance engenders in a person in the grip of hallucination, that is to say, before the dawn of knowledge. The great *Ācārya*, by reversing the *adhiṣṭhāna* and *āropya* in the present analogy, drives home the grave risks of death by snake-bite that await a person who sees the snake as a rope. While fear and dismay are fleeting and debilitating, the consequence of snakebite is more horrendous in that it is fatal. The spiritual ignoramus, who sees the body as the Self, become, *Virocana*-like, a zealous votary of the cult of body-worship and pampers the body that is a slave to the senses. With his distorted spiritual view, he courts spiritual death by getting caught in the whirligig of birth and death.

The body, in Śaṅkara's view, is not innocuous and harmless, as, *prima facie*, it appears to be. Elsewhere in *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, he makes out that for one to rely on the means of indulgence and pampering of the body for attaining the goal of spiritual evolution is tantamount to one's riding on the back of a crocodile for crossing a deep river under the mistaken notion that it is a log of wood. He says, "*śarīrapoṣaṇārthī san ya ātmānam didṛkṣati grāham dārudhiyā*



*dhytvā nadīm tartum sa icchati I*"<sup>4</sup>. The fallacious idea, that the basically inert and foul psychophysical complex is the sentient and pure Self, is the worst type of *adhyāsa* that can seriously hamper a seeker's growth.

Enshrouded, as he is, in thick spiritual ignorance, *jīva's* proneness to *adhyāsa* is ingrained and inescapable. This is the meaning of the statement of S.Radhakrishnan to the effect, "*Avidyā* or the natural tendency to *adhyāsa*, is involved in the very roots of our being and is another name for our finitude."<sup>5</sup> Śaṅkara expatiates on the theme of *adhyāsa* in his elaborate and incisive introduction to *Sūtra Bhāṣya*. Annotating on those pregnant remarks of Śaṅkara and quoting him, S. Radhakrishnan writes:-

"To attribute to the real what is different from it is what Śaṅkara calls *adhyāsa*, or attributing to one thing what is different from it. (*adhyāso nāma atasmimstadbuddhiḥ*). *Adhyāsa* is defined as a appearance of a thing, where it is not. When the light appears double, or when the rope appears as a snake, we have *adhyāsa*. All knowledge of finite things is in a sense the negation of pure being, since objects are superimposed (*adhyasta*) on the one eternal consciousness. The most striking instance of this *adhyāsa* is the confusion of subject with object where we attribute to the *Ātman* activity, agency and enjoyment. Strictly speaking, there is nothing different from the subject, for the subject of reality includes all that we can possibly predicate of it. What we attribute to the subject is something less than real, an appearance thereof. 'Object (*viśaya*) and subject (*viśayin*), having as their province, the presentation of the "thou" (*yusmat*) and the "I" (*asmat*), are of a nature as opposed as darkness and light. The transfer of the object which has as its province the "thou" (or the not-self) and its qualities to the pure spiritual subject which has for its province the idea

of the "I" (or the self) and, conversely, the transfer of the subject and its qualities to the object is logically false. Yet in mankind this procedure, resting on false knowledge (*mithyājñānanimitta*), of pairing together the true and the untrue (the subject and the object) is natural (*naisargika*), so that they transfer the being and qualities of the one to the other" (*Dehādiṣvanātmasu aham asmītyātmabuddhiravidyā – Sūtra Bhāṣya* I.iii.2)<sup>6</sup>.

*Āropya* (the object superimposed) that is the product of *adhyāsa*, is essentially illusory, evanescent and liable to termination. Can it, on that score, be considered *asat* (a non-existent entity)? Quoting from *Vivaraṇa-prameya-sangraha*, T.M.P. Mahadevan, the eminent philosopher, clarifies the doubt unambiguously. To quote him, "Superimposition which constitutes error may be defined in two ways. From the point of the thing which is superimposed, superimposition may be defined as that thing which is similar to what is remembered and appears as of the nature of a different thing and from the point of view of the cognition, superimposition is that cognition similar to memory, which is the presentation of one thing as of the nature of another. Thus, error in the view of the *Advaitin* is inexplicable. The content of error cannot be unreal, because it is cognized. It cannot be real, because it is sublated. And it cannot be both real and unreal; there would then be violation of the law of contradiction. Since there is no other alternative left, it is indeterminable, *anirvacanīya*. Though it is not possible to determine the content of error either as real or as unreal, it is *jñāna-nivartya*, removable by right cognition. True knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*) destroys ignorance and its product, delusion"<sup>7</sup>

Admitting that erroneous cognition, in the spiritual sense, is a chronic infirmity of the *jīva* but *jñāna-nivartya*, how does the *jīva*, in the clutches of erroneous cognition, attain *jñāna*?

Does *jñāna* fall, manna-like, from heaven? The wrong cognition of a rope, in twilight, as a snake can be dispelled only by the right cognition of it as a rope, brought about by such an act as observing it repeatedly and clearly with the aid of a lamp etc. Similarly, the delusion of seeing the psychophysical complex as *ātman* can be eradicated only by *samyag-jñāna* brought about by the practice of certain acknowledged spiritual *sādhana*s. The tireless denouncer of *adhyāsa*, Śaṅkara, is also an earnest counselor of the tested means of liquidating it. Almost in the spirit of a concerned mother pleading with her errant child, Śaṅkara urges bemused *jīvas* to seriously initiate corrective steps to end *adhyāsa*. The nine verses on this theme in *Vivekacūḍāmani* are nine precious gems to be jealously treasured and used by struggling *jīva* for spiritual redemption. The refrain "*svādhyāsāpanayam kuru*" (Dispel the superimposition on your self) underscores both the gravity of *jīvas'* plight and the infinite compassion of the Ācārya.

1. Mind is a centrifugal force that naturally weans a man away from the inner Divine essence and embroils him in the web of external sense-experiences. Being, by nature, extrovert, mind is highly volatile and unsteady. With its insatiable hunger for sense-experiences, mind can gravitate towards either healthy or *sāttvic* experiences or foul experiences of *rājasic* or *tāmasic* nature. The chief determinant of the direction of the mind's flow is the mass of potent *vāsanās* (latent impressions) that lies in its subconscious chamber, apparently dormant but silently exerting its influence. The extraneous streaming of the mind, under the propulsion of *vāsanās*, is a sure index of the *jīva's* *dehātmabuddhi*. Only a keen sense of self-identification with its body can cause the irrational outward rambles of the *jīva's* mind and impede its inward turn. Hence, the spiritual strategy of attenuating *dehātmabuddhi* consists in the two-

pronged attach on the oscillating mind and fermenting *vāsanās*. In other words, the mind's proclivity for furious gyrations has to be ruthlessly curbed and the poison-like *vāsanās* have to be defanged. This is the negative aspect of the spiritual strategy in which the mind and the *vāsanās* have to be subjected to a joint control and management. The positive side consists in conscious efforts to latch on to the *Ātman* and abide in it. It should not be too difficult to attain the state of abidance in the *Ātman*, once the mind is reined in and its support-base of *vāsanās* weakened and knocked off. Both the positive and negative steps constitute an integrated spiritual strategy and have to be simultaneously implemented to achieve the goals of *manonāśa* (destruction of the mind), *vāsanākṣaya* (liquidation of *vāsanās*), and *ātma-samsthiti* (anchorage in *ātman*). The first of Śaṅkara's nine gems of verses glitters with matchless charm, giving rise to a host of the above-mentioned implications. The verse reads :-

*svātmanyeva sadā sthityā mano naśyati yoginaḥ  
vāsanānām kṣayaścūtaḥ svādhyāsāpanayam kuru<sup>8</sup>*

Meaning: By unceasing establishment in the *ātman*, there arises *manonāśa* (stilling of the mind) for the *yogins* and the decline of the *vāsanās*. Hence, bring about the removal of the superimposition (of other things) on you.

2. *Vāsanās* sustain thoughts. The weaker the *vāsanās*, the feebler become the thoughts. It logically follows that for the fanciful flights of mind to subside and eventually to decline and die, *vāsanās* have to be combated and scotched out of existence. *Vāsanās* that form an integral part of the complex apparatus of the mind are, in the final analysis, the handwork of *māyā* - constituted of the triple *guṇa*-s. Upaniṣad speaks of *māyā* as a battling principle that triggers the triple *guṇa*-s. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says, "There is one un-originated Principle of red, white and black colours which gives birth

to numerous offspring like itself. An unborn (individual soul) becomes attached to it and enjoys it, while another unborn (the *Puruṣa* or *Spirit* that has liberated itself from the clutches of *Prakṛti*) leaves it having enjoyed it." (*ajāmekam lohitaśuklakṛṣṇām bahvīḥ prajāḥ sṛjamānam sarūpaḥ ajo hyeko juṣamānonuṣete jahātyenam bhuktabhogāmajonyah*<sup>9</sup>). The triple *vāsana-s* viz. *tāmasic*, *rājasic* and *sāttvic*, form a strange but powerful team. They present a united front in their clash with spiritual exercises, though *sattva*, one of the trio, is a secret all of spirituality and chafes at his association with the other two viz. *rajas* and *tamas*. For all its apparent look of impregnability, the team of triple *guṇa-s* is, basically, fragile. The Achilles heel of the team is the simmering ember of mutual antipathy and envy among its triple members. The triple *guṇa-s* resent being in a state of perfect equilibrium. Each one of the three *guṇa-s* attempts to gain ascendancy over the other two. When *tamas* predominates, spirituality suffers a serious setback. While *rajas* rules the roost, the prospects for spirituality are less disastrous but, nonetheless, bleak. When *sattva* gains ascendancy, spirituality receives a powerful impetus. The strategy of transcendence of *guṇa-s* consists of three phases. First, *tamas*, the vilest villain, has to be curbed by strengthening *rajas* and *sattva*. Second, *rajas* has to be weakened by assiduously reinforcing *sattva*. But, even *sattva*, albeit an ally of spirituality, has to immolate itself in the flame of Self-vision. The purest experience of Self-vision cannot brook even a trace of impurity. *Sattva*, with its faint vestiges of impurity, has to perish in the blaze of Self-vision. *Sattva* is an indispensable stepping-stone for entry into the field of Self-vision. Hence, it has to be consciously cultivated. A stepping-stone is only a point of entry and cannot intrude into the inner chamber. To enter into the mansion of Self-vision, *sattva*, the stepping-stone, has to be passed over and left behind. *Tamas* and *rajas*, being the root-

cause of *adhyāsa*, have to be wiped out in toto. *Sattva*, though conducive to spiritual growth, has the innate taint of being a *guṇa* and is sternly debarred from entry into the lofty realm of Self-experience.' The state of Self-vision is a state of complete transcendence of *guṇa-s* (*guṇātīta*) Embodying the above thoughts in a crisp verse, Śaṅkara sings :-

*tamo dvābhyām rajāḥ sattvāt sattvam śuddhena naśyati  
tasmāt sattvam avaśṭabhya svādhyāsāpanayam kuru<sup>10</sup>*

Meaning: - *Tamas* is destroyed by the two (*sattva* and *rajas*); *rajas* by *sattva*, and *sattva* is destroyed by the *śuddha* (*nirguṇa*) *Brahman*. Therefore, keeping hold of *sattva*, effect the removal of your superimposition.

3. Instinct of self-preservation (body-preservation) is the surest index of *dehātmabuddhi*. The fool who dotes on his own body and is obsessed with its maintenance and preservation is a pathetic victim to the vile machinations of *adhyāsa*. Mistaking the perishable body for the imperishable *ātman*, the stupid person lavishes unwarranted care and attention on the stinking receptacle of filth that is the gross body. A seeker has to be on guard against falling a prey to the insidious sense of attachment to the body. He has to firmly persuade himself that it is his *prārabdha karma* (the stock of his past deeds that has begun to fructify) that inexorably determines the condition and duration of his body and it ill-behoves him to worry on its score. In the ultimate analysis, it is neither nutritious food nor life-saving drugs that can save a person from death decreed by *prārabdha karma*. The common occurrence of even an affluent person meeting with an untimely and unnatural death from an incurable disease or accident is inexplicable except in terms of the theory of invincibility of *prārabdha karma*. Concern for the body is irrational and misplaced for, at least two reasons. First, being a foul abode of ordure, the body hardly deserves the care it

receives. Second, being a plaything of *prārabdha karma*, its protection is beyond the range of human efforts. Therefore, he has to develop an attitude of supreme nonchalance towards his physical body lest the viper of *adhyāsa* should fatten and raise its ugly head. Undisturbed by profitless concern for his body, he should strive, with courage and conviction, to keep the demon of *adhyāsa* at bay. The stanza below reflects such thoughts beautifully.

*prārabdham puṣyati vapuriti niścitya niścalaḥ  
dhairyamālambya yatnena svādhyāsāpanayam kuru*<sup>11</sup>

Meaning: - Be unswerving and brave in the firm conviction that *prārabdha karma* will sustain the body, and, with effort, try to get rid of your superimposition.

4. The taproot of surging thoughts is the thick mass of accumulated *vāsanās* crowding in the subconscious mind. Thoughts do not arise in a vacuum. They sprout and grow on the soil of *vāsanā-s*. The capital fallacy of *atasmin tadbuddhiḥ* arises out of the encrustations of *dehātma-buddhi vāsanā-s* gathered in countless previous births. The force of these foul *vāsanā-s* compels one to think, "I am a finite individual" The sense of individuality is the essence of egoity. Egoity is a divisive principle that splits the unitary consciousness into a plurality of *jīva-s*. It is the pseudo-self that usurps the throne of the Self and struts about with obstreperous pretensions. It is, in the words Aurobindo, "the axle of delusion" How is one to exercise the phantom of Ego and identify oneself with the Reality that is the Self? The only way to outlaw Ego and assert one's *ātma svarūpa* is to adopt the technique of autosuggestion. The embodied soul, labouring under the tyranny of Ego and the concomitant sense of finitude, should firmly negate the Ego and strongly and uninterruptedly persuade himself that he is not a *jīva*, a finite being of conditioned consciousness but the infinite

Brahman. This technique of spiritual indoctrination of oneself, as it were, is the only way to foil the crafty machinations of *adhyāsa*. Śaṅkara sings :-

*nāham jīvaḥ param brahmetyatadvyāvṛttipūrvakam  
vasanāvegataḥ prāptasvādhyāsāpanayam kuru<sup>2</sup>*

Meaning:- Preceded by the elimination (of the *jīva*) as "I am not the *jīva*, but the supreme Brahman," get rid of your superimposition wrought by the force of the *vāsanās*.

5. As the finest of regiments need to be deployed at strategic places to defeat a formidable enemy, the best spiritual resources have to be judiciously pressed into service to conquer the mortal foe of *adhyāsa*. A seeker keen on eliminating *adhyāsa*, has, at his command, a triad of forces to mobilize viz. *Śruti* (scriptures), *yukti* (healthy reasoning) and *anubhava* (personal experience). He has to respectfully listen to (*śravaṇa*) *śruti vākyas*, which unanimously proclaim the sole reality and universality of *Brahman* and the non-difference between *Ātman* and *Brahman*. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says, "Verily all this is Brahman. From It the universe comes forth; in It the universe merges and in It the universe breathes. One ought to meditate on It calmly" (*Sarvam khalvidam brahma tajjalāniti śānta upāsita*)<sup>13</sup> *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* avers, "Thou art the woman, Thou art the man. Thou art the youth and maiden too. Thou art the old man who totters along, leaning on the staff. Thou art born with faces turned in all directions". (*tvam strī tvam pumānāsī tvam kumāra uta va kumarī tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vancasī tvam jato bhavasi visvatomukhaḥ*)<sup>14</sup>. The *Gītā* echoes the same view when it states, "In Me all this is woven as clusters of gems on a string." (*mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva*)<sup>15</sup>. He has to deeply reflect upon the import of such *śruti* and *smṛti vākyas* (*manana*) and assimilate and envision their content. (*nididhyāsana*) Even as he is in the stage of *manana*, he has to confirm the validity



of *Upaniṣadic* teachings having recourse to the technique of accordant reasoning. He has then to strive and achieve the peak of spiritual endeavour viz. intimate personal realisation of the *Vedāntic* truth. (*svānubhūti*) His *svānubhūti*, preceded by the triple disciplines of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, would conclusively prove to him the untenability and utter hollowness of *adhyāsa*. The demon of *adhyāsa* trembles at the authoritative *śruti vākyas*, crouches in fright at their revalidation by *yukti* (sound reasoning) and wilts and withers under the searchlight of *svānubhūti*. The seeker has to be highly circumspect and ward off the delusion of *adhyāsa*, even when he so much as scents a whiff of the impending danger of its emergence. *Śaṅkara* sings:

*śrutyā yuktyā svānubhūtyā jñātvā sārvaṭmyam ātmanah  
kvaśid abhāsataḥ prāptasvādhyāsāpanayam kuru*<sup>16</sup>

Meaning: Understanding the universality of the *ātman* by *śruti*, by reasoning and by your own realisation, effect the removal of your superimposition which appears somewhere by the reflection (of the *caitanya*).

6. A consequence of *adhyāsa* is the transference of the *dharmas* of *ārōpya* to *adhiṣṭhāna*. This type of superimposition leads to bizarre results. When the action-ridden psychophysical complex, that is of the stuff of inert *prakṛti*, is mistaken for the workless Self, the ignorant man, in his delusion, thinks and says, "I eat; I evacuate", etc., thereby revealing his sense of identification with his body. But the sage, who has unflawed Self-vision, has a clear awareness that he, the real *Ātman*, is ever the Subject, distinct from his psychophysical conglomerate (constituted of the triple bodies viz. *sthūla* (gross), *sūkṣma* (subtle), *kāraṇa* (causal)) that is the Object. The sage, as anybody else in-the-world, engages-in action. But, even when he is in the midst of furious actions, he maintains his sense of non-agency born

of his deep sense of identification I with his Self. This is what the *Gītā* means when it says, "Giving up attachment to the fruits of works, eternally content, independent, the man, engaged in works (as he is, does nothing at all" (*tyaktvā karmaphālasaṅgam nityatṛpto nirāśrayaḥ karmani abhipravṛtto 'pi nai va kiñcit karoti saḥ*)<sup>17</sup>. The twin senses of *karṣṭvam* (doer-ship) and *bhokṣṭvam* (enjoyer-ship) that essentially belong to the Ego are falsely attributed by the spiritually purblind to the action-less and non-attached Self. The sage has snuffed out even the faintest flicker of his Ego and is ever awake in the ineffable experience of his stir-less Self. He is spiritually fortified by the conviction that when he has to be engaged, of necessity, in a frantic flurry of activities in the workaday world, such activities do not touch his essential being, the Self, as they are only movements of *prakṛti*. A seeker should try to emulate the example of the sage and firmly eschew the ideas of doer-ship in his varied activities of indulgence in, eschewal of and abstention from sense-experiences. He should frustrate the malfeasance of *adhyāsa* by his firm abidance in the Self that is a silent, unattached and uninvolved witness of all activities of *prakṛti*. Śaṅkara sings :-

*anādānavisargābhyām iṣannāsti kriyā muneh  
tadekaniṣṭhayā nityam svādhyāsāpanayam kuru*<sup>18</sup>

Meaning: - To the sage there is not the least activity concerning taking of food or expulsion thereof. Being solely concentrated in the *Paramātman*, effect the removal of your superimposition.

7. Deep cogitation on and inward assimilation of *mahāvākyas* (major texts of *Vedānta*) and absorption of their lofty spirit into the texture of one's life is the most efficacious means of attenuating and annihilating *adhyāsa*. The quintessence of *Vedāntic* message is distilled in the four aphoristic texts of the four Vedas and offered to us for spiritual redemption. The *mahāvākya* "*prajñānam brahma*"

(Consciousness is Brahman) occurs in the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* of The Ṛg Veda. The *mahāvākya* "aham brahmāsmi" (I am Brahman) is found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* of Yajur veda. The *mahāvākya* "tattvamasi" is embedded in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* of Sāma Veda. The *mahāvākya* "ayam atmā brahma" occurs in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* of Atharva Veda. While the first two *mahāvākyas* can be considered *abhyāsa vākyas* (texts for repeated meditative practice), the third is the *upadeśa vākya* (instructional text) and the fourth *anubhava vākya* (text expressive of deep spiritual experience) Of this quartet of aphoristic texts, the *upadeśa vākya* "tattvamasi" is a cathartic teaching imparted by a *brahmaniṣṭa* to an *adhikārin*. It is a dramatic orchestration of the esoteric equation between "that" (the macrocosmic Reality-Brahman) and "thou" (microcosmic Reality-Ātman). All the four *mahāvākyas* articulate the kernel of *Vedāntic* wisdom viz. the identity between *Ātman* and *Brahman*. They imply that, shorn of their *upādhi-s*, the microcosmic Reality and the macrocosmic Reality are one and the same. In a simple but profound language, they express the truth of divine immanence-and the falsity of *upādhi-s* (adjuncts) that camouflage it. They logically imply that *Ātman*, the inner Light of Consciousness, is the core of a being and the *upādhi-s*, like the body etc., are *mithyā*: A seeker should, through the transcendental wisdom gained by intuiting the subtle *Vedāntic* message contained in the *mahāvākyas* "tattvamasi", strengthen his conviction of the truth of the identity between *Brahman* and *Ātman* and firmly curb and eliminate *adhyāsa* whenever it tries to raise its ugly head. The Music of the Spheres that emanates from the *mahāvākyas* "tat tvam asi." should be captured, listened to and internalized by the seeker to subdue and still the distracting cacophony of *adyāsa*. Śaṅkara sings :-

*tattvamaśyādivākyottha-brahmātmaikatva-bodhataḥ  
brahmaṇyātmatvaḍārdhyava svādhyasāpanayam kuru*<sup>19</sup>

Meaning: Effect the removal of your superimposition for strengthening the sense of the ātman in Brahman through the knowledge of the oneness of Brahman and Ātman declared in the statements like *tat tvam asi* etc.

8. *Adhyāsa* is like a swarm of termites. To get rid of the nuisance of termites, the mother- termite has to be tracked down and killed. Mere decimation of tthe swarms of termites without killing the mother-termite is unavailing as the latter would keep procreating millions of termites and continue to pose a threat. Similarly, the offensive against *adhyāsa* has to be carried on till its last vestiges are liquidated. The noxious weed of *adhyāsa* should be plucked out by its roots and thrown away. The roots of *adhyāsa* are in *avidyā* (primal nescience). Nothing short of the slaying of the serpent of *avidyā* would suffice to destroy *adhyāsa*, root and branch. Śaṅkara says that the removal of *adhyāsa* that is nothing but the conceit of "I" in the body (*ahambhāvaḥ*) should be *niśśeṣaḥ* (without an iota of residue left). In fencing with the demon of *adhyāsa*, the seeker has to maintain his mental vigilance and equipoise lest the demon should furtively sneak in and overpower him in an unguarded moment. Śaṅkara sings :-

*ahambhāvasya dehe 'smin niśśeṣavilayāvadhi  
sāvadhānena yuktātma svādhyāsāpanayam kuru*<sup>20</sup>

Meaning: -Endeavour to effect the removal of your super-impositiion with great care and circumspection of mind till the identification of the ātman with this body disappears without a trace.

9. *Advaita* maintains that of the triple categories of *Īśvara*, (Brahman-Ātman), *jagat* (universe) and *jīva* (the individual soul), *Brahman* alone is real and the latter two are mere mental projections caused by *avidyā*. The essence of spiritual illumination consists in negating the apparent reality of *nāma-rūpa* (*jīva* and *jagat*) and fastening on the ultimate reality of

their Substratum viz. *Sat-chit-ānanda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). To an embodied being, steeped in primal nescience, the universe of names and forms is a stark and brutal fact impinging upon his intellect, mind and sensory system. The mystic entity of *Ātman-Brahman* alone seems to him to be a figment of imagination and a fanciful dream. This distorted view that consists in according the status of reality to the empirical universe and being blind to the underlying Reality of *Brahman-Ātman* is the result of the spell of illusion cast by *adhyāsa* on the hapless *jīva*. The spiritually true perception is that of unmistakably identifying the Truth of *Sat-chit-ānanda* underlying the tangled maze of the multiplicity of names and forms. *Śruti* attests to this fact when it says, "He who sees all beings in the very Self and the Self in all beings feels no hatred by virtue of that realisation" (*yastu sarvāṇi bhūtānyātmanyevānupaśyati sarvabhūteṣu cātmānam tato na vijugupsate*<sup>21</sup>). The acid test of the extinction of *adhyāsa* is the overarching spiritual vision of the Reality of *Brahman-Ātman* in which the essentially dreamlike illusoriness of the empirical universe is known without a shred of doubt. Even a little lingering suspicion, that the concrete world of names and forms might, after all, be true, indicates that the stranglehold of *adhyāsa* on the *jīva* is not fully shattered. The war against treacherous *adhyāsa* has to be relentlessly waged till the empirical universe is known to appear verily like a dream. The presence or absence of *adhyāsa* is known by the nature of *jīva*'s perception of the empirical universe, whether it is flawed in the sense that it accords it the status of reality or unflawed in the sense that it treats it as a dream. Śaṅkara sings :-

*pratītirjīvajagatoḥ svapnavadbhāti yavatā  
tāvannirantaram vidvān svādhyāsāpanayam kuru*<sup>22</sup>

Meaning: -Learned one! Endeavour to effect the removal of your superimposition without a break till the

awareness of the *jīva* and the *jagat* (the self and the world) appears like a dream.

Śaṅkara earnestly pleads with bemused *jīvas* to return to their Native Home of Life in Spirit. *Jīvas* are now living in a state of self-exile and self-alienation. They have embraced the Life in Flesh that is sense-centred, shabby and mired in *adhyāsa* that is nothing but chronic perversion of values. Śaṅkara beckons them to embrace the Life in Spirit that God-centred, sublime and bereft of even an iota of the taint of distorted values. Śaṅkara's call is for the repudiation of *adhyāsa*, lock, stock and barrel and for the regaining of *samyag jñāna*. Let us heed the great *Ācārya's* sage counsel !

#### Notes

1. V.C. 303
2. Ibid 139
3. Ibid 140
4. Ibid 86
5. Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p 508
6. Ibid Pages 505 - 506
7. Philosophy of Advaita, pp 107 - 108
8. V.C. 278
9. S.U. 4-5
10. V.C. 279
11. Ibid 280
12. Ibid 281
13. Ch.U. 3 - 14 - 1
14. S.U. 4 - 3
15. Bh.G. 7- 7
16. V.C. 282
17. Bh.G. 4.20
18. V.C. 283
19. Ibid 284
20. Ibid 285
21. Iśā. Up. 6
22. V.C. 286



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THE DEEP SLEEP STATE – ‘AN ANALYSIS  
FROM THE ADVAITA - STAND POINT’

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S.Revathy\*

The theory of ignorance or *avidyā* is the prolegomena to the metaphysics of Advaita. It serves as an antecedent to an extended treatment, development, discussion and presentation of the main thesis of Advaita that the ultimate reality is pure identity, the *jīva* is none other than it, the world is non-real and the knowledge of the reality is the sole means to liberation from the trammels of *samsāra*. Śaṅkara prefaces his commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* with a detailed exposition of the theory of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) or the false knowledge of “I” and “mine” which is caused by *avidyā*. He is of the view that it is the means of gaining a correct understanding of the theme (*viśaya*) and also the objective (*prayojana*) of the inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣads with the aid of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. The theory of superimposition, according to Padmapāda and other

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preceptors of Advaita, is implicit in the first aphorism, "*atha atah brahma-jijñāsā*. The word "*atha*" conveys the sense of subsequence (*ānantarya*) and implies the qualifications which an aspirant should possess and which would serve as the pre-requisite to the study of the Upaniṣads. The qualifications comprise of what is well-known as the "four-fold aid" or *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*."<sup>1</sup> The word "*atah*" sets forth the ground for pursuing inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara states that the ground is referred to in the Upaniṣads itself. It is the impermanence of the fruits of karma and the permanence of the fruit of the knowledge of the Self.<sup>2</sup> The expression, "*brahma-jijñāsā*" means the desire to have the knowledge of the Self, i.e. Brahman. The whole aphorism means: "subsequent to the attainment of the fourfold aid (*atha*), since the Upaniṣads itself speaks of the ephemeral nature of the fruits of *karma* and of the everlasting nature of the fruit of the knowledge of the Self (*atah*), the desire to have the knowledge of Brahman." The aphorism as such does not provide any information about the course to be undertaken to attain the knowledge of Brahman, and there is, therefore, every likelihood of its being mistaken for a futile statement. But it must be borne in mind that each "*sūtra*" or the body of "*sūtras*" is intended to discuss and ascertain the import of specific passages of the Upaniṣads. The text that is taken up for consideration under the present aphorism is, "*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ, śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ*."<sup>3</sup> This text means that the Self is fit to be realized; and, in order that the realization may be possible, one should pursue Vedāntic study, reflection, and meditation. To have conformity with the teaching of this text, we have to insert in the aphorism the word "*kartavyā*", i.e. "to be undertaken."<sup>4</sup> The form of the aphorism now is, "*atha atah brahma-jijñāsā kartavyā*. The word "*jijñāsā*" in the expression "*brahma-jijñāsā*" consists of two components, viz., the stem



(*prakṛti*) and the suffix (*pratyaya*). "*Jñā*" is the verbal base and "*san*" is the suffix. The sense of the stem is knowledge, and that of the suffix is desire. But neither of the two can be related to the sense to be undertaken; for, they cannot come within the range of an obligation. To get over this difficulty, the suffix "*san*" is taken in its secondary sense of inquiry. The ground for taking it in this sense is that the knowledge of the Self could be attained only through inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣads.<sup>5</sup> The verbal base "*Jñā*" signifies the knowledge of Brahman whose fruit is liberation. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text<sup>6</sup> "I ask about the "*puruṣa*", i.e. the Self who could be known only from the Upaniṣads," declares that the Upaniṣads constitute the instrument of knowing the Self. Thus the aphorism means that an aspirant who possesses the fourfold aid and who is desirous of liberation should inquire into the import of the Upaniṣads to attain the knowledge of the Self.

So far, the explicit meaning of the aphorism. Śaṅkara identifies that the theory of superimposition, i.e. false identification of the Self with the mind and its qualities, is implied here. He gathers from it its full significance and makes an explicit statement of it in his celebrated introduction to his commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*.

The fruit of inquiry is the knowledge of the Self. And the inquiry is carried out by an aspirant, i.e. the *jīva* who is desirous of liberation from bondage which consists of the characteristics of being an agent, an experient, and a knower. If bondage were real, then it cannot be removed by knowledge; for, knowledge could remove only ignorance and its effects which are non-real or "*mithyā*". This suggests that bondage is caused by the false identification of the Self with the mind and its qualities viz., the characteristics of being an experient and a knower. So it is not real. The theory of

false identification or superimposition implies the objective or the *prayojana* of the inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣads. It is the removal of bondage which would be possible only when bondage is non-real. Rāmānanda in his commentary *Ratnaprabhā* on Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the *Vedānta-sūtra* explains this in a syllogistic form thus:

The Upaniṣads of which an inquiry is enjoined is purposeful; for, they constitute the instrumental cause of the knowledge of Brahman that would remove bondage, like the statement, "This is a rope".<sup>7</sup>

Bondage would be removed by knowledge; it is because it is superimposed or falsely presented, like the snake upon a rope.<sup>8</sup>

Rāmānanda points out that when it is said that bondage which is illusory and which pertains to the *jīva* is removed by the knowledge of Brahman, it is implied that the *jīva* is none other than Brahman. For, the relation of the one that removes and the other that is removed cannot exist between the knowledge of Brahman and the bondage of the *jīva*, if Brahman and *jīva* are different. He puts this in a syllogistic form thus:

The *jīva* is none other than Brahman; it is because it is the substratum of bondage that would be removed by the knowledge of Brahman, like the "this-element" that is identical with the shell.<sup>9</sup>

It may be added here that the "this-element" of the shell is the substratum of the illusory silver which is removed by the knowledge of the form "This is shell". The "this-element" is identical with the shell.

It emerges from the above discussion that the first aphorism of the *Vedānta-sūtra* which enjoins inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣads for attaining the knowledge of

Brahman implies that the removal of bondage or liberation in the case of *jīva* is the ultimate objective (*prayojana*) and the identity of the *jīva* with Brahman is the theme (*viṣaya*). These two have a bearing upon the superimposed nature of bondage of the *jīva*. Padmapāda summarizes the whole matter thus:

The knowledge of Brahman is stated in the aphorism as the means to the removal of evil, i.e. that which is disastrous to one's well-being. And it is only the group of characteristics of being an agent, an experient, and a knower. If it were real, then it cannot be removed by knowledge; for, knowledge is the annihilating factor of avidyā only. The affirmation that the knowledge of Brahman is the annihilating factor of the cause of the evil in the form of bondage would hold good only when bondage of the form of agency, etc. is illusory by being effected by avidyā. So when the author of the *Vedānta-sūtra* states that the knowledge of Brahman would remove bondage he implies that bondage has avidyā as its cause. Thus the *adhyāsā-bhāṣya* serves as an introduction to the entire *Vedānta-sūtra* by providing what is necessary for a clear understanding of what follows.<sup>10</sup>

Padmapāda herein refers to the *adhyāsā-bhāṣya* as an introduction to the entire *Vedānta-sūtra* (*sakalāntropodghāta*).

This *adhyāsa* or false identification of the Self with mind has avidyā as its material cause. In the *adhyāsa-bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara states that there cannot be any real relation between the Self which is pure consciousness and the mind which is insentient. Both are opposed to each other like light and darkness. So there is no possibility of the transference of the

qualities or features of the one upon the other. Yet, on account of avidyā which is indeterminable, the two are falsely identified with each other and hence there arises experiences and corresponding expressions such as, "I am this", "This is mine."<sup>11</sup> Śaṅkara has used the expression, "*mithyajñāna-nimittaḥ*". Padmapāda interprets it as *ajñāna* or *avidyā* which is indeterminable either as real or an absolute nothing. The word "*mithyā*", he states, conveys the sense of indeterminability (*anirvacanīyatā*) and the word "*ajñāna*" stands for the insentient power which is known as *avidyā* and which is opposed to knowledge. The word "*nimitta*" means "material cause."<sup>12</sup> It comes to this: *avidyā* is the material cause of the false identification of the Self with the mind. Thereby the qualities of the mind such as agency, etc. are falsely presented upon the Self.

Padmapāda further states that *this (eṣā)* power known as *avidyā* must *necessarily (avaśyam)* be admitted as present in the Self which is the substratal reality of objects, both external and internal. Otherwise there is no possibility of the manifestation of illusory objects (viz., the world, the dream objects and shell-silver).<sup>13</sup> Prakāśātman in his *Vivaraṇa* points out that the words "*eṣā*", "*avaśyam*" and "*anyathā*" respectively indicate the function of *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *arthāpatti* in regard to the features of *avidyā*.<sup>14</sup>

It must be noted here that *avidyā* is directly manifested by the witness-self (*sākṣicaitanya*).<sup>15</sup> *Sākṣi* is the consciousness that transcends *avidyā*; <sup>16</sup> or, it is the consciousness reflected in the mode of *avidyā*. <sup>17</sup> An entity which is directly manifested by the witness-self, does not require any proof for the existence of *avidyā*, e.g. happiness or misery. Further, *avidyā* cannot become the object of any proof; for, a proof is that which makes known a thing that is unknown or characterized by *avidyā*. If we admit any proof for the existence of *avidyā*, then we must admit that *avidyā* is

characterized by another avidyā. This would lead to the fallacy of *infinite regress*.

Although avidyā as such cannot become the object of any proof, yet as regards its specific nature, viz., whether it is positive or not, there may arise doubt<sup>18</sup>. And it is this feature that is characterized by *tūlāvidyā* or the derivative of avidyā. And perception, inference, verbal testimony, and presumption aided by reasoning (*tarka*) go to prove its positive nature by removing the *tūlāvidyā* pertaining to that element.

Prakāśātman in his *Vivaraṇa* sets forth the proof, viz., perception, inference, and presumption that go to prove the positive nature of avidyā. The perceptual experience "I am ignorant" (*aham ajñāḥ*) is technically known as *Sākṣi-pratyakṣa*. It is suggestive of the existence of avidyā. Aided by reasoning, it proves that avidyā is positive in nature. It might be said that this experience relates to the mere absence of knowledge (*Jñānābhāva*) and not to avidyā as positive entity. But it is not so. For, it is immediate experience like "I am happy," while absence is to be known by the proof, *anupalabdhi*. Further, absence of knowledge cannot become the content of perceptual experience of the form "I am ignorant". For, negation presupposes the knowledge of the thing negated. The perceptual knowledge of the negation of pot, for example, presupposes the cognition in the form of remembrance of pot which is negated. If there be no cognition of pot, then there cannot be perceptual cognition of the pot. In the same way, in order that there may be the perceptual cognition of the absence of knowledge, there must be the knowledge of the negatum, viz., knowledge. Thus knowledge itself exists and there can be no cognition of its negation. To overcome this difficulty, it is argued that the negatum, viz., knowledge is not cognized, then there can be

no perceptual knowledge of the absence of knowledge because of the absence of the cognition of the negatum. Since absence of knowledge cannot be perceptual, the content of the perceptual experience "I am ignorant" cannot be absence of knowledge, but a positive entity. And that is avidyā.

In order to prove the positive nature of avidyā, Prakāśātman refers to the perceptual experience in the state of deep sleep which is identified on the basis of the *parāmarśa* which one has on coming back to the waking state and which is of the form "I did not know anything when I was asleep."<sup>19</sup> In the state of deep sleep there cannot be the perceptual experience of the absence of knowledge. It is because, as we have said above, the latter depends upon the knowledge of the negatum., viz., knowledge. As such it would be a determinate cognition. The latter in order that it may arise requires the functioning of the mind. The state of deep sleep, however, is characterized by the absence of the functioning of the mind. Hence we cannot have a determinate cognition in the form of absence of knowledge in the state of deep sleep. What is experienced then must be a positive entity and that is avidyā.

Vyāsatīrtha in his *Nyāyāmṛta* raises several objections to the conclusion of the Advaitin that in the state of deep sleep there is the experience of avidyā which is not absence of knowledge, but a positive entity. Madhusūdana Sarasvati in his *Advaita-siddhi* critically examines the objections and finally rejects them. We shall deal with this in some detail.

Vyāsatīrtha argues that the *parāmarśa* of the form "I did not know anything when I was asleep", serves as the basis to infer the absence of knowledge as present in the state of deep sleep. And he sets forth three inferential arguments to this effect:

(i)I, who was in the state of deep sleep, was devoid of any knowledge; because it is a unique kind of state;

(ii)I, who was in the state of deep sleep was devoid of any knowledge; because it is devoid of any instrument of cognition; and,

(iii)I, who was in the state of deep sleep, was devoid of any knowledge, because of non-remembrance of my having any knowledge then.<sup>20</sup>

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī proves that the inferential arguments advanced by Vyāsatīrtha are logically unsound. In the first inferential argument, the ground of inference (*hetu*) is the “characteristic of being a unique kind of state.” And this characteristic pertains to the deep sleep state. It is unique in the sense that it is characterized by absence of knowledge. And this could be known only when the thing that is sought to be established (*sādhya*) is known from this inferential argument. Since we cannot have the knowledge of the *hetu* which is essential, prior to the functioning of this inferential argument, it cannot be employed in this inferential argument. Further, the *pakṣa* is the *jīva* who is in the state of deep sleep. The substantive feature of the *pakṣa*, is the *jīva*. And the adjectival feature is the state of deep sleep which is characterized by absence of knowledge. Prior to arriving at the inferential cognition of the *sādhya*, we must have the knowledge of the *pakṣa* and its adjectival feature. But here the adjectival feature, viz., the deep sleep state characterized by the absence of knowledge cannot be known prior to inferring it from this inferential argument. The point that is relevant here is that we cannot treat the deep sleep state as unique in nature without having the knowledge that it is characterized by the absence of knowledge. It comes to this that we do not have the knowledge of the *hetu* as well as

the adjectival feature of the *pakṣa*. Hence, this inferential argument is not a valid one.<sup>21</sup>

The second inferential argument too is not a valid one. The *hetu* of this argument is "the absence of any instrument of cognition". This should be inferred only on the basis of the absence of any knowledge in the deep sleep state. And the absence of any knowledge is said to be inferred on the basis of the absence of any instrument of cognition. The fallacy of interdependence is quite evident here.<sup>22</sup>

It might be said that the group of sense organs is in a calm condition in the case of one who comes back to the waking state from the state of deep sleep. From this it is inferred that in the state of deep sleep, the group of sense organs is provisionally merged and it is not active. From the absence of the functioning of the group of sense organs in the state of deep sleep which is thus inferred, we could infer the absence of any knowledge in that state. This does not involve the fallacy of interdependence.<sup>23</sup>

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī points out that the calmness of the group of sense organs is due to the experience of bliss in the state of deep sleep and not due to their non-functioning.<sup>24</sup>

The third inferential argument also is not logically sound. The *hetu* is non-remembrance of the *jīva* as having any knowledge at the deep sleep state. This lacks correspondence with absence of knowledge which is the *sādhya*. It is thus: there is a particular kind of cognition known as *upekṣā-jñāna*. It does not leave any latent impression (*samskāra*) and hence it will not be remembered later on at any point of time. On this ground it cannot be said that there is the absence of *upekṣā-jñāna* in the *jīva*. From this it is evident that non-remembrance is not invariably related to absence of



knowledge. Thus the fallacy of lack of correspondence or *vyabhicāra* is clear in this argument. It is, therefore, not valid.<sup>25</sup>

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī points out that the absence of knowledge in the state of deep sleep could be inferred on the basis of *avidyā* which is positive in nature and which is revealed by the *sākṣi-caitanya*. And the inferential argument is:

I who was in the state of deep sleep was devoid of any knowledge, as I was enveloped by *avidyā*.<sup>26</sup>

Vyāsatīrtha, at this stage, argues that if *avidyā* positive in nature is admitted in the state of deep sleep in order to infer the absence of knowledge therein, then we will be forced to admit the existence of aversions (*dveṣa*) to infer the absence of desire (*rāga*). For, one cannot infer the absence of *rāga* without the experience of *dveṣa* which is opposed to it<sup>27</sup>.

Madhusūdana rejects this contention by stating that *rāga* or desire will not arise with reference to an object, if the object is unknown. Hence, the absence of knowledge which is inferentially known on the basis of *avidyā* would account for the absence of desire too. Or, on the basis of the absence of knowledge which is inferentially known we could infer the absence of desire too. For, as has been said, desire is based upon knowledge; and, so absence of knowledge will prove the absence of desire.<sup>28</sup>

In fact, the cognition of the form "I slept happily and I did not know anything when I was asleep" is recollection. Since recollection presupposes experience, there must be experience of bliss and *avidyā* in the state of deep sleep. In that state even the mind is quiescent. The vital air or the principle of unconscious activity, however, is present. This accounts for the persistence of respiration in the case of one who is asleep. The *jīva*, free from its relation to the mind,

remains as the Self which is consciousness and which is associated with avidyā, i.e. the causal body or the sheath of bliss. There are three modes of avidyā (*avidyā vṛtti*). One is of the form of the Self which is bliss; the other is of the form of *sākṣi-caitanya*; and the third one is of the form of avidyā itself. The consciousness that is reflected in these three modes is known as the perceptual cognition of the bliss-form of the Self, the *sākṣi*-aspect of the Self and of avidyā. When the deep sleep state comes to an end, the three modes of *avidyā-vṛtti* are lost. Consequently the consciousness reflected in them also will be lost. This means that the perceptual cognition of the bliss-form of the Self, the *sākṣi*- aspect of the Self and avidyā will be lost leaving the latent impression (*samskāra*) from which recollection of the form referred to above occurs. The recollection "I do not know anything when I was asleep" presupposes the perceptual experience of avidyā which, on the ground we have mentioned earlier, cannot be absence of knowledge but a positive entity, i.e. avidyā.<sup>29</sup> Vyāsatīrtha's criticism that there is no possibility of recollection because there can be no latent impression has no force.

Vyāsatīrtha further argues that if avidyā as such is admitted to be manifested by *sākṣi-caitanya*, then one can admit that the absence of knowledge too is *sākṣibhāsyā*. It is true that absence of knowledge, in order that it may become perceptual, requires the knowledge of the negatum, viz., knowledge in the present case. But this rule is applicable only with reference to the absence of knowledge that is related to its counter-positive (*pratīyogī*) and not in regard to absence of knowledge as such.<sup>30</sup>

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī rejects this argument by saying that if *abhāva* is manifested by *sākṣi* without any reference to its counter-positive, then its cognition will be of the form "naught", which, however, is not the case.<sup>31</sup>

Vyāsatīrtha further argues that in the state of deep sleep determinate perception (*savikalpaka-pratyakṣa*) is not possible. For, unlike in the state of waking and dream wherein the mind is active by giving rise to determinate perception, in the state of deep sleep mind does not function. When such is the case, in the state of deep sleep there is no possibility of the determinate perception of avidyā as opposed to knowledge. As a result there is no possibility of the recollection of the form "I did not know anything when I was asleep" which refers to avidyā as opposed to knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī points out that in the state of deep sleep the mind also remains in a latent form, as it is provisionally merged in avidyā. At the time of waking, the consciousness-element, i.e. the *sākṣi* which is recollected comes to be associated with the mind in its gross form resulting in the cognition "I". The cognition of the form "I slept happily and I did not know anything when I was asleep" is of the nature of recollection only with reference to the consciousness-element identical with the bliss-element and avidyā. There is experience in regard to the mind-element. In the same way, there is experience in regard to the state of being opposed to knowledge. Since the latter is not the content of recollection there is no necessity that it should have been experienced in the deep sleep state thus forcing one to admit that in the state of deep sleep there is only determinate cognition.<sup>33</sup> Vyāsatīrtha raises the objection that the experience of avidyā in the deep sleep is admitted to be the consciousness reflected in the mode of avidyā of the form of avidyā (*avidyākārā avidyāvṛtti*). Since it endures in the state of waking too, how could it be said that there is the recollection of avidyā in the state of waking?<sup>34</sup>

Madhusūdana answers the above objection by stating that the mode of avidyā characterized by *tamo-guṇa* is the state of sleep. In the state of waking avidyā as conditioned by the mode of avidyā in the form of deep sleep is lost. Hence it is not experienced then. It is only manifested by the consciousness conditioned by *avidyā-vṛtti* arising from the latent impression left over by the mode of avidyā in the form of deep sleep. Avidyā as related to the state of deep sleep is recollected; but *avidyā* in its unqualified form is an object of experience.<sup>35</sup>

It must be noted here that Prakāśātman subscribes to the view of Patañjali when he speaks of the perceptual experience of avidyā in the deep sleep state on the basis of the recollection one has on coming back to the waking state. Patañjali in his *Yoga-sūtra* has said that the means of right knowledge, erroneous knowledge, imagination, sleep and memory are the mental states.<sup>36</sup> Of these, *nidrā* or sleep is the mental state which is characterized by the *tamo-guṇa* and which is the cause of the absence of mental states of the waking and the dream state.<sup>37</sup> From this it is known that according to Patañjali *nidrā* or sleep is a modification of the mind or the mental state characterized by *tamo-guṇa*. According to Advaita, mind provisionally merges in *avidyā* in the state of sleep. Hence it is said by Madhusūdana that the state of sleep is the mode of avidyā relating to avidyā. In the state of waking, the state of *nidrā* is lost and so avidyā as associated with the *nidrā-vṛtti* is not experienced by the *sākṣi-caitanya*.

Sureśvara, however, in his *Vārttika* on Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says that deep sleep is only *avidyā* associated with the latent impression born out of the cessation of the mind. It is similar to *pralaya* or deluge. And *avidyā* is manifested by the consciousness transcended by

it. It is not manifested by the mode of *avidyā* inspired by the reflection of consciousness in it. Since consciousness conditioned by *avidyā* endures, in the state of waking too there is only the experience of *avidyā* and not its recollection. The cognition "I did not know anything when I was asleep" has *avidyā* for its content. It refers to the characteristic of being opposed to knowledge. Hence it is a determinate perception and not *avidyā-vṛtti* of the form of recollection.<sup>38</sup> Madhusūdana, following Patañjali, treats the state of sleep as *avidyā-vṛtti* characterized by *tamo-guṇa* and advocates the view that the consciousness associated with it is lost when it ceases to exist. Then there arises latent impression which leads to recollection of the form "I did not know anything when I was asleep".

In a later section of the *Vārtika*, Sureśvara advocates the view that the cognition "I did not know anything when I was asleep" is recollection and there is indeterminate perception of *avidyā* in the state of deep sleep.<sup>39</sup>

It may be asked whether indeterminate perception could give rise to recollection. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī affirms that it is possible. The word "*ākāśa*" is known as having the significative power to convey "*ākāśa*-in itself" without involving reference to its being the substratum of sound. And it gives rise to the recollection of *ākāśa* which is indeterminate.<sup>40</sup> In the same way there could arise recollection from the indeterminate perceptual experience of *avidyā* in deep sleep.

To sum up: the recollection of the form "I did not know anything when I was asleep" which one has after coming back to the waking state proves the existence of *avidyā* as a positive entity in the state of deep sleep.

## NOTES

1. तस्मात् किमपि वक्तव्यं यदनन्तरं ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा उपदिश्यते इति ।  
उच्यते नित्यानन्तवस्तुविवेकः, इहामुत्रार्थभोगविरागः शमदमादिसाधनसंपत्, मुमुक्षुत्वं चेति ।  
*Vedānta-sūtrabhāṣya (hereafter VSB) of Śaṅkara, I. 1. 1.*
2. यस्माद्देव एव अप्रिहोत्रादीनां श्रेयःसाधनानाम् अनित्यत्वतां दर्शयति ' तद्यदेहकर्मचितो लोकः क्षीयते एवमेव अमुत्र पुण्यचितो लोकः क्षीयते ' (छा.उ.8.1.6) इत्यादिः । ततो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासादिपरं पुरुषार्थं दर्शयति ' ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम् ' (तै.उ.2.1.) इत्यादिः ।  
*Ibid., 1.1.1.*
3. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (hereafter BU) 4.5.6.*
4. अत्र श्रवणविधिसमानार्थत्वाव 'कर्तव्या' इति पदमध्याहृतव्यम् । अध्याहृतं च भाष्यकृता 'ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा कर्तव्या' इति । रत्नप्रभा *hereafter RP, Commentary on of Śaṅkara's VSB., ed. by jagadisvara Sastri along with Bhāmatī Nyāyanirṇaya, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1996, p.3.*
5. प्रत्ययेन इच्छासाध्यो विचारः जहलक्षणया, *Ibid.*
6. *BU, 3.12.6.*
7. शास्त्रं प्रयोजनवत्, बन्धनिवर्तकज्ञानहेतुत्वात् 'रज्जुरियम्' इत्यादिवाक्यवत्, *RP p.3.*
8. बन्धः ज्ञाननिवर्त्यः अध्यस्तत्वात्, रज्जुसर्पवत्, *Ibid. pp.3-4.*
9. जीवः ब्रह्माभिन्नः तज्ज्ञाननिवर्त्याध्यासाश्रयत्वात्, यदित्थं तत्तथा, तथा शुक्त्याभिन्नः इदमंश & *Ibid. p.4.*
10. ब्रह्मज्ञानं हि सूत्रितमनर्थहेतुनिवर्हणम् । अनर्थश्च प्रमात्ताप्रमुखं कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वम् । तत् यदि वस्तुकृतम्, न ज्ञानेन निवर्हणीयम् ; यतः ज्ञानम् अज्ञानस्यैव निवर्तकम् । तथादि कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वम् अज्ञानहेतुकं स्यात्, ततः ब्रह्मज्ञानम् अनर्थहेतुनिवर्हणम् उच्यमानं उपपद्यते । तेन सूत्रकारेणैव ब्रह्मज्ञानमनर्थहेतुनिवर्हणम् सूचयता अविद्याहेतुकं कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वं प्रदर्शितं भाष्यस्य- Pañcapādikā (hereafter PP. ). Pub. along with the commentaries Vivaraṇa (hereafter V), Tatvadīpana (hereafter TD) and Rjvivaraṇa, Mahesh Anusandhan Sansthan, Varanasi, 1992, pp.24-28.
11. युष्मदस्मत्प्रत्ययगोचरयोः विषयविषयिणोः तमः प्रकाशवद्विरुद्धस्वभावयोः इतरेतरभावानुपपत्तौ सिद्धायां तद्धर्माणामपि सुतरां इतरेतरभावानुपपत्तिः इत्यतः अस्मत्प्रत्ययगोचरे विषयिणि चिदात्मके युष्मत्प्रत्ययगोचरस्य विषयस्य तद्धर्माणां च अध्यासः तद्विपर्ययेण विषयिणः तद्धर्माणां च अध्यासः मिथ्येति भवितुं युक्तम् । तथापि ..... मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तः सत्वानृते मिथुनीकृत्य 'अहमिदं' 'ममेदं' इति नैसर्गिकोऽयं लोकव्यवहारः । *Adhyāsabhāṣya.*

12. मिथ्या च तदज्ञानं च मिथ्याज्ञानं। 'मिथ्या' इति अनिर्वचनीयता उच्यते। 'अज्ञानं' इति च जडात्मिका अविद्याशक्तिः ज्ञानपर्युदासेन उच्यते। तत्रिमित्तः तदुपादानः इत्यर्थः।  
PP,p.46.
13. अवश्यमेवा अविद्याशक्तिः ब्रह्मात्मिकेषु वस्तुषु तत्स्वरूपसत्तामात्रानुबन्धिनी अभ्युपगन्तव्या, अन्यथा मिथ्यार्थावभासानुपपत्तेः। ,pp.50-53. 14.V.p.50.
15. सा च अविद्या साक्षिवेद्या Advaitasiddhi (hereafter AS ) with लघुचन्द्रिका hereafter LC and चट्टहलेशव्याख्या, Parimal Publications, Delhi,1997,p.575.
16. साक्षिणि अविद्योपहितचित्ति LC,p.345.
17. साक्षी च अविद्यावृत्तिप्रतिबिम्बितचैतन्यम् AS,p.575.
18. अज्ञानस्य स्वरूपेण अज्ञानविषयत्वेऽपि तद्भावत्वादिकं अज्ञानविषयो भवत्येव ,तस्य अज्ञानग्राहकसाक्ष्यग्राहकसाक्ष्यग्राह्यत्वात्, Ibid.
19. एवम् उचितस्य ज्ञानाभावपरामर्शोऽपि ज्ञानविरोधिनः अज्ञानस्य अनुभूततया स्मर्यमाणस्य अनुपपत्त्यैव प्रमीयते, नानुस्मर्यते, V,p.170.
20. तत्कालमहं ज्ञानाभाववान्, अवस्थाविशेषकत्वात्, ज्ञानसामग्रीविरहकत्वात्, नियमेन अस्मर्यमाणत्वात् AS, pp.556-557.
21. हेतोः पक्षविशेषणस्य च अज्ञानात् । न हि ज्ञानाभावमन्तरेण अवस्थायां विशेषो वक्तुं शक्यः ,p.557.
22. ज्ञानसामग्रीविरहश्च ज्ञानाभावानुमेयत्वेन अन्योन्याश्रयग्रस्तः
23. ....इदानीन्तनेन इन्द्रियप्रसादेन पूर्वकालीनं तदुपरममनुमाय सामग्रीविरहानुमानम्,
24. इन्द्रियप्रसादस्य सुखानुभवहेतुकस्य तदुपरमहेतुकत्वासिद्धेः
25. उपेक्षणीयज्ञानाभावो न सिद्ध्येत् ; तत्रैव व्यभिचारश्च Ibid.
26. एवं सर्वत्र अज्ञानस्य ज्ञानाभावव्याप्यत्वेन तदनुमापकत्वम्, Ibid.
27. सुषुप्तिकाले ज्ञानाभावानुमानार्थं भावरूपज्ञानमपि रागाभावानुमानार्थं द्वेषोऽपि स्वीकरणीयः तद्विरोधिपदार्थानुभवं विना तदभावानुमानायोगात् । Ibid.
28. भावरूपाज्ञानेन ज्ञानाभावेन वा रागाभावानुमानसंभवात्, Ibid.
29. (i) अज्ञान-सुखानुभवयोः साक्षिचैतन्यस्य च अविनाशिनः संस्काराभावे कथमुत्थितस्य त्रयाणाम् अनुस्मरणम् स्यात् ? उच्यते, अज्ञानगतचैतन्याभासजन्मोपाधित्वात् अज्ञानसुख-साक्षिविकल्पानुभवस्य, अज्ञानावस्थाभेदेन चैतन्याभासानां भिन्नत्वेत् तद्विनाशसंस्कार जस्मरणमज्ञान-सुख-साक्षिचैतन्याकारं अज्ञानविशिष्टात्माश्रयमेव संभाव्यते- V,p.171.





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 ON PARAMĀRTHA-SĀRA OF ĀDI ŚEṢA
 

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*An Advaitic reference to the esoteric essence of Ultimate Truth*

J. Devanathan\*

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The *pre-Śaṅkara* genesis of Advaita *Vedānta* is normally designated with the doctrinal medley with *Gauḍapāda Kārikā*, a popular independent treatise available to our present days. Alongside of early *Vedāntins* like Brahmanandin, Bodhāyana, Dramiḍa, Bhartrprapañca, Bhartrhari, Brahmadata etc, the tradition traces back to the mythological chronology to account for preceptors like Brahma, Vaśiṣṭa, Śakti, Parāśara and so on. In this order, we have yet another obscured preceptor in *Advaita* tradition, who is none other than Ādi Śeṣa. The great serpent, calls himself as the supporter of the entire Universe, on whom the Supreme Īśvara – Viṣṇu rests. The author here mentions that his objective is to display the entire essence of *Upaniṣadic* revelation through his treatise named *Paramārtha-Sāra*. The work is composed in eighty-six

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verses and is otherwise known as *Āryā Panacaśati*. *Paramārtha Sāra* is one of the oldest manuals available in the pre-Śaṅkara period. Scholars have varied view on the authorship and date of this particular text. From the contents and terminologies used in the text, some scholars regard the work as a *Sāṅkhya* treatise (*Seśvara Sāṅkhya*) while others consider it to be an Advaitic treatise. On close doctrinal comparisons between *Paramārtha Sāra* and *Gauḍapāda Kārikās*, it is evident that these two authors bear a close resemblance on various issues particularly with treating *Māyā* as *Śakti* and *Vibhūti* of *Īśvara*; on theory of non-origination (*ajāti vāda*) and the juxtapositions on illustrations of clay – pot, fire-spark analogies etc. On account of vagueness in systematic coherence of ideas, we advocate the plausibility of Ādi Śeṣa's date to be prior to Gauḍapāda, and that there is plausible reasonable suggestion for the latter to have borrowed ideas from the former. Some differences are deliberately seen between both, where Ādi Śeṣa seems to be non-emphatic on the *Nirguṇa tattva* unlike the other. The purport of this work as the author himself declares is to elaborate of the unity of Brahman and Self, revealing the underlying truth about the resplendent redemption of the Supreme state of bliss *Viṣṇu- 'Viṣṇoḥ paramam padam'*. Ādi Śeṣa, systematically works out his dialectical presentation to map the *Sāṅkhyan* understanding of Nature of Soul and the empirical world while polemically expounding the tenets of *Advaita Vedānta*. Brief research has been done by scholars like S.S.Suryanarayana Sastri and T.M.P.Mahadevan, who on the grounds of doctrinal similarities seem to suggest *Paramārtha Sāra* to be the oldest original text which was later drawn upon by Gauḍapāda in his *Kārikās*. Further Ādi Śeṣa makes effective synthesis of *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta* to formulate his thesis in an Advaitic accent to explain the tenets of non-dualism. Ādi Śeṣa's style and language reflects his intention to provide a channelized

view on *Vedānta* while restructuring the *Sāṅkhyan* model of metaphysics. Further Ādi Śeṣa's repeated reference to *Nārāyaṇa*, *Hari*, *Vāsudeva*, *Viṣṇu* and *Upendra* etc clearly shows his theistic mood that conveys his *Viṣṇu Bhakti* being a strong *Vaiṣṇava* as akin to most of the early classical Advaitins inclusive of Gauḍapāda (who refers '*Dvipadam varam* indicating *Nārāyaṇa*), Śaṅkara and his direct disciples. Thus the age of Ādi Śeṣa may finally be placed in a period not later than Gauḍapāda and that may vary from a lower limit of 400 AD leaving the possibility of a preferable earlier date towards 200 AD.

The didactic work, *Paramārtha Sāra* begins with a dialogue between the *guru* (our author) and a *Śiṣya* (student). The student who is puzzled by the mystics of migratory existence, approaches the former with 'folded hands' to enquire about the eschatology and the metamorphic cycle of births and deaths <sup>1</sup>. The great preceptor Ādi Śeṣa begins to narrate on this truth with all the imperatives of the philosophy of non-dualism. In the opening verse, Ādi Śeṣa puts forth his teleological argument on *Sṛṣṭi* wherein he explains the concept of *Jagat*. World according to his illustration is compared with the spider's web with which it builds its cocoon using its filaments. These filaments exist in the unmanifested state in the Spider itself as *Māyā* resides in *Brahman* (*avyaktād aṇdam – Svaguṇairnigūdām*). The spontaneous instinct that stimulates the spark of creation and thus arose the cosmic germ, from whom the *Brahma – Prajāpati* emerged which results in the creation of Universe. This process of creative activity resolves back into the same order during the time of dissolution. Thus Ādi Śeṣa, brings in the concept of *Pravṛtti – Nivṛtti Dharma* to explain the teleological method of creation and so does Bhagavaḍpāda, in his opening verses of *Gītā Bhāṣya* talks about the teleology in the same fashion <sup>2</sup>. Ādi Śeṣa looks upon the *Advaitic*

teleology with a different justification wherein he brings in the *Sāṅkhyan* accent to say that the consciousness, which is sentient, makes inert insentient body (*jaḍa*) looks as though active as the loadstone does with the iron with its magnetic effect<sup>3</sup>. The proximity is taken in a figurative sense, as literal application of *Sāṅkhyan* analogy leads to many difficulties. Ādi Śeṣa extends the explanations under a different analogy saying

Just as this world of limiting beings performs deeds when the Sun rises, and it is not the Sun that performs them or causes them to be performed, so too is the Self ...<sup>4</sup> [pp9]

Ādi Śeṣa's conception of *Jagat* as *Prakṛti* throughout this work is interesting indeed. He develops a systematic understanding on the relation between the Universe and the Supreme Self, which he concreticizes with yet another analogy that categorically explains world as Sun's reflected image (*Dinakara bimba*) in a pool of water as akin to the case where the Self, whose effulgence gets reflected in the *antahkarana*. Emphatic about the *Advaitic* perspective of *ātma* being devoid of notions like *Kartṛtva* (activity), *bhokṛtva* (enjoyment) etc., against the *Sāṅkhyan* assumptions, Ādi Śeṣa adds to iterate another analogy depicting sky which is untouched by the passage of clouds, mist and smoke, similar to the *Puruṣa* (*Tejomayāḥ amṛtamayāḥ Puruṣaḥ – Madhu Brāhmaṇa*) who is indifferent to these afflictions of *Prakṛti*<sup>5</sup>. Ādi Śeṣa with this repeated redactions on the concept of *Jagat* develops a foundational base to declare the non-agentship of the *Jīva* as *akartā* and *abhoktā*, while the metempsychic activities are taken only in a figurative mood. The Author aptly explains thus: from the stand point of Sun, there is no rise and no fall, no dusk and no dawn, no cause for any activity whatsoever, so too the Self – a non-agent in all facets of its own existence<sup>6</sup>. By this analogous distinctions of Self from the non-Self notions of agentship, our author advocates

the true nature of *ātman*, as '*Svabhāva vimala*' – the essential purity, that is innate and immanent, which due to the conceit of *māyā* entertains the factor of Self identity 'I'ness'. The contingency of Self is revealed thus with the mapping of *Māyā/avidyā* that causes the duality and bondage consequently. The Self is like a clear crystal (*Spaṭika*) that takes on light to diverge into different colours of Universe. These colours of fancy world deludes the *Jīva* to cause for all wanderings in wilderness in the name of *Samsāra*. Ādi Śeṣa, calls for an interesting discussion on *Prakṛti* in this context where some pluralistic views are exhibited. *Prakṛti* is nothing but a conglomerate of three *guṇas* (*triguṇātmikām māyām*) and this aggregate assembles in different proportion to appear as empirical modifications. These *guṇas* are the limiting adjuncts that acts in disguise to conceal and obscure the true nature of Self, which is *nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva*. *Sāṅkhya*s, however, argue that *guṇas* are the underlying principle that determines the modifications of *Prakṛti* for the sake of *Puruṣa* (*Parārthya*). The procreatrix of the world is for the purpose of *Puruṣa*'s *abhimānika* imagined bondage or *bhoga*. Ādi Śeṣa rejects this claim and interpolates his contention on *guṇas* to say,

'*Sattva* is the state of tranquil mind which when excited becomes known as *Rajas*, while it deludes itself to denote *Tamas*; thus schedules itself in three different states of *Jīva* – the untouched consciousness' [...]

Postulation of a purpose to *Puruṣa* serves no purport; for the scriptural canons assert the Self as that which shines in its own light and looks as though hidden in the cave of nescience without being affected by the effects of occasioning cause. Thus the matrix of creation with the strands of *Jati* (genre), *cala* (movement) and *Vastutva* (objectivity) is proved to be mere appearance than reality<sup>8</sup>.

## [2]

Subscribing the theme of *Advaita* doctrine of soul, the *Upaniṣadic* text affirms the view '*advayo hi ayamātmaikala eva na vikalpo hi sadayam hyota iva*'<sup>9</sup> - the phenomenal things do not exist in him for they do not truly exist, being the work of *māyā*, as the *ātman* is non-dual and it is one alone. Without being involved in the catalymic happenings of the world, the soul shines in its own light. *Ātman* is hence distinct from the pair of opposites (dualities) such as merit and demerit, pleasure and pain, heaven and hell, birth and death etc. All these dualities are purely imaginary (*kalpana mātra*), says *Ādi Śeṣa*<sup>10</sup>. The adventitious mark of *Jivātma* is nothing but the conglomerate of *Buddhi* - intellect, *antaḥkaraṇa* - mind with its individuation - egoity along with the aggregate of five gross and subtle elements. While explaining the apparent metaphorical origination of *Jivahood*, *Ādi Śeṣa* uses the pot analogy to describe the limitation of ether in it. Using the expression 'Like the ether in pots etc *Brahman* is present in all bodies ...'<sup>11</sup> it is clear that the author subscribes to the *Avaccheda vāda* - the limitation theory which was later conceived by *Maṇḍana* and was subsequently formulated by *Vācaspati Miśra*. He advocates the theory of limitation in the process of creation against the *Pratibimba vāda* of *Vivaraṇa Vādins*, to say that ether conditioned by the pot is completely non-different from the all pervasive ether, depicting the omniscience of the *Jiva*. The limitations appear to persist as though, as long as the real nature of distinction is discerned<sup>12</sup>. This is further elaborated by *Ādi Śeṣa* using the analogy of a sugarcane, which assumes diverse forms such as juices, molasses, sugar, jaggery and so on; so as the Self which is Supreme consciousness appears in other forms such as *prāṇa* - vital breath, *Virāṭ* - the collective cosmic sheath and microcosmic sheath characterized by generic and particular features and the three different states (*avasthās*) viz,

*Viśva*, *taijasa* and *Prājña* as according to waking, dream and deep sleep states etc<sup>13</sup>. The subtle *ātman* that underlies all these diverse appearances is the conscience of innerself – the *Vijnānāntaryāmi* as Ādi Śeṣa mentions, is alone known to be the Ultimate reality. This subjective Self that dwells in all beings even within the five elemental compounds etc is known to be the *Vijñānātman*. Such a subjective consciousness – the inner controller is neither separate from all beings, nor is similar to them, it is the perfect Self supreme consciousness that resides in all and as all having no particular sense of relations towards itself. The metempsychic transactions do not hinder the effulgence of this *Vijñānātman* it is the witness of all activities<sup>14</sup>.

Sureśvara describes this *Vijñānātman* - the *antaryāmi* as the inner controller who is non-dual, one who is directly perceived, he who is not conditioned by body, he who is devoid of attributes, he who is different from all earthly beings and their nature, he who is known as *Vijñeyah* – the conscience<sup>15</sup>. Śaṅkara mentions this bodiless *vijñānātman* the *antaryāmi* as *Nārāyaṇa* himself, who controls the entire world and its movements as being the witness, the immortal Self devoid of all attributes. How then can the bodies and its functionalities of *Virāṭ*, *Jāti*, *Piṇḍa* be accounted for? It is said that these diverse forms of the same *Vijnānāntaryāmi* are its manifestations for which he alone is the witness. The terms like 'deha' 'jāti' etc implies to worldly entities for which the deity earth itself is identified with. Such attributes are taken as those for *Vijnānāntaryāmi* too for he does not have any *karma* for his own. He merely animates all animations with his mere effulgence for he is known to be self-luminous<sup>16</sup>. Ādi Śeṣa declares that these dualities are due to the powerful *māyā* which veils the Self, that is untouched though<sup>17</sup>. The individual soul accrues deeds with its empirical transactions, which results in the creation of body through

birth, and death for which former becomes the witness. It is only these deeds that actually perform the metempsychic activities, as the three fold qualities of *Prakṛti* pervades the evolved bodies and sensory organs that enjoys or experiences the *Prakṛti* again <sup>18</sup>.

Methodical and systematic enjoyment of these deeds shapened by the gross body one after another by birth and death in a cyclic order causing no reciprocal dependence says Śaṅkara. The exhaustion of *karmas* are done only by consumption of deeds and not by any other means. The *prārabdha* – the past *karmas* continues to exist even for a *Jīvanmukta*, as residual trace of latent impressions. These traces of latent impressions do not affect the *Jīvanmukta*, so as the water droplets in a lotus leaf says Ādi Śeṣa. Such is a wise man who aspires to discriminate the real and unreal that consequently results in firm establishment about the truth of unreal world – *jagat mithyā*. Realization of the unreality of world begins with knowing nature of *manas* as a product of *māyā* that which is the centrifugal locus of human individuation or egoity as illumined by the consciousness apparently. Ādi Śeṣa promptly calls these people foolish, whose who thinks oneself as enjoyer or sufferer by the activities of *manas*. The visibility of the world through *manas* alone,

Just as in the world, *Rāhu*, though invisible, becomes visible, as present in the lunar orb (it obscures) even so the Self, though omniscient (and hence not an object), yet as present in the intellect, comes to have the visibility.

The above view suggests that the author subscribes to the *Dṛṣṭi Sṛṣṭi Vāda*, which beholds that the world is created only by the subjective mind as in reality it never existed apart. The theory of *Dṛṣṭi Sṛṣṭi* as conveyed by *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, explains that the merits and demerits of the individual soul become operative only when the mind animated and there



takes place the cosmic creation. The exhaustion of deed takes place during deep sleep whence the mind is at rest and is withdrawn. This is *nithya pralaya* technically. Thus the subjective creation as explained by the *Dṛṣṭi – Sṛṣṭi vāda* takes place through the 72,000 *nādis* called *Hita* <sup>19</sup> that which extends from the center of the heart to the pericardium <sup>20</sup>. *Śruti* further declares that the *Jīva* sees nothing other than what he sees, for there is no creation apart from his *Dṛṣṭi* <sup>21</sup>. The seer is known as *Dṛṣṭṛ*, wherein the 'ṛc' suffix indicates the agency. Śaṅkara clarifies the meaning of the suffix to say that it should be understood as '*Prakāsayitṛ*' – the revealer that shines through the reflective medium – the mind. And this mind has generated all differences in the empirical world. The import that the author conveys here from the *Dṛṣṭi Sṛṣṭi Vāda* mainly heralds to refute the liberal existence of world as accepted by the *Sṛṣṭi Dṛṣṭi Vādins*, maintaining the subjective apprehension (*Dṛṣṭi*) of the world. This *Dṛṣṭi* of the individual soul conjures itself to illumine the status of *Jāgrat* and *Svapna* while it dissolves during *Suṣupti*. This phase of emergence and continuance of animated world by the apprehensional vision, *prātīka Dṛṣṭi* is technically termed as *Dṛṣṭi samasattāka Sṛṣṭi*. Such a creation completely denies the 'pre-apprehensional' existence of the empirical object, no matter what degree of phenomenal potentiality they withhold. Thus in the context of proving the falsity of world, Ādi Śeṣa towers in the notion of *Dṛṣṭi Sṛṣṭi* to uniquely portray the subjectivistic outlook and ascribe empirical reality to it.

The superimpositional character of the empirical object cease to exist the moment they cease to be apprehended and are created anew by conjuring *avidyā* (mind) of the Individual soul ... Every night during *Suṣupti* when the conjuring vision of Individual soul gets submerged in the fundamental cause thereof to *avidyā*, the whole world, conjured up thereby during the state of *Jāgrat*, invariably dissolves away; and

every morning when the former stirs again into activity ... springs up again into existence. <sup>22</sup> [pp247]

Hence the duality of the divergent world that appeals through one's mind is a product of indeterminable *avidyā* that appears like water in mirage, silver in nacre, serpent in rope or the visibility of two moons <sup>23</sup>. It is only due to this indeterminability of *avidyā*, the illusory snake practically presents itself in existence causing delusion. Likewise the world, which is false, that appears to be in praxis is a mere act of Nescience <sup>24</sup>. The only way to burn out all these delusions depends on the rise of knowledge; like the flame of fire that burns the impurity of birth and death. This tranquil mind to adapt the supreme knowledge is sought by the grace of Lord *Viṣṇu*, as the author calls by the name *Upendra*, by whom the non-real world is projected as though it is real.

### [3]

The appearance of the projected world does not have any origination or destruction (*ajāti vāda*) since the serpent on a rope never originates physically and hence not subjected to destruction at all. The ultimate reality is no cause for the world in actuality. The non-real appearance without the causal relation leads to the theory of non-origination that Ādi Śeṣa explains here to say '*jagad utpatti – vināśau na ca kāraṇam asti tatvad iha*'. The theory of non-origination is derived from the dualistic roots of causal relation by the method of methodical negation. The proposition of '*prapañcopaśamam*' may be explored here with Ādi Śeṣa's illustration of the world's manifold appearance. The concept of *Prapañcopaśamam* mainly explains the untouched unchanging truth of non-dual Soul while the states of experience modifies with the ephemeral modifications of the pluralistic world. Here with the influence of *Prakṛti pariṇāma vāda* put forth by

the *Sāṅkhyans*, Ādi Śeṣa finds favour with the modification of transient world while its quiescence is the Ātman, the real *prapañcōpaśama*. The relative world experience (*samvṛti*) that is relatively unreal, is illustrated by the author, utilizing the *Sāṅkhyan* analogy of thieves to say:

The activity of the adjuncts and the conjunctions with pleasure and pain consequent on what is meritorious or otherwise, because of the association with (adjuncts) like the bondage for one who is not a thief because of the association of the thieves <sup>25</sup>. [pp26]

Once this essence is apprehended, the duality disappears along with *avidyā* (*dvaitasyōpaśama*) and the mind becomes non-mind (*amanah*); just as the water mixes with milk that mixes with air and so on at last everything merges into Brahman, which alone is unborn. The primal empirical aggregates, the twenty-four *tattvas* resolve into the non-dual Brahman, the *Tattvi-bhuta*. This vitally indicates the fact that Brahman the pure consciousness is the underlying factor that lies within all penetrating all, which on realization makes one see nothing else other than the same. '*Sarvam ātmaivā bhūt kena kam paśyet?*'. The individual soul which is potentially in possession with the nature of supreme consciousness, on realization discerns the fact that he in his magnitude is not a part or property of Brahman, for he is non-different from it. *Īśvara* is that state of consciousness, which is in a conditioned state, refers Ādi Śeṣa. Such an *Īśvara* must be contemplated upon for the supreme good '*paramā Puruṣārthā*'. *Īśvara* is one who is omnipotent, who enlivens various forms in its multiplicity. Whatever be the form of worship be, it ultimately reaches *Nārāyaṇa* alone says Ādi Śeṣa advocating,

The Lord has all forms since He (*Nārāyaṇa*) is the Self of all, in whatever form He is worshipped; He takes on those respective ones like the *Cintāmani* gem... <sup>26</sup> [pp 31]

Describing the role of *Īvara*, Ādi Śeṣa makes *Nārāyaṇa* responsible not only for Sustenance but also for creation and destruction. He adds that anyone who completely realizes this supreme truth of nature is one who attains immortality attaining the supreme state of *Īvaratva*. Such is one who crosses the ocean of misery; *tarati śokamātma vit* as *Chāndogya Upanisad* delivers. Realization inevitably involves discriminative knowledge between *Prakṛti* and the *Puruṣa* whose association is nothing but mere imagination – *nirasta kalpanā jāla* as Ādi Śeṣa puts it. Raghāvananda in his commentary (*Vivarāṇa*) points out that this *kalpana* to be the cause for delusion towards duality (*dvaita bhrānti*). On a *Sāṅkhyan* scheme once again, Ādi Śeṣa calls the knower of such a discriminate knowledge as *Vidvān* mentioning him as the *Nirupādikamuktah*, one who is freed from all limiting adjuncts (except for his own body). A knower is known to be a *muktah* even while living; embodied state whose *Prārabdha* (past karmas) does not expunge completely even after realization of Reality. Just as the plantations like *nala*, *bāna* perish only after giving their respective fruits. Raghavananda's *Vivarāṇa* mentions two main references from *Śruti* in favour of Ādi Śeṣa's stand on persistence of *Prārabdha* for a *Jīvanmuktaḥ*. This is a stage where the knower stays untouched by the merits and demerits of the empirical transactions just as the lotus leaf in a pool of water. The *karmas* whatsoever it be, (like *Hayamedha* sacrifice etc) its results do not influence the state of equanimity for a *Jīvanmuktaḥ* for his mind is turned towards the inner bliss of Self <sup>27</sup>. Such is the state of trance whence the knower releases his knot of ignorance, free from doubt and demerits finally annihilating the seed of metempsychosis. He is one who reaches *Hari* <sup>28</sup> the supreme abode, says Ādi Śeṣa. Paying all inclinations to the doxology of *Viṣṇu*, Ādi Śeṣa sponsors to the view of *Prasaṅkhyāna* – the theory of

continued meditation, as an instrument for immediate experience of *Brahman*, which inspired some later Advaitins like Maṇḍana and Vācaspati Miśra. Stressing the importance of *abhyāsa* and *bhāvana*, Ādi Śeṣa renders the elements of (*paramātmā* = *Viṣṇu*) *Bhakti* while in the process of synthesizing *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta* without eliminating the theistic concerns. As an early Advaita progenitor, Ādi Śeṣa holds a special place as a *Vaiṣṇava*, is unanimously revealed by formal research both by eastern and western experts (Mayeda, Nakamura, Hacker etc) in the field of Indology. Jacqueline Suthren Hirst particularly endorses this to say,

In Śaṅkara's time, the possibility of *Vaiṣṇava Advaita* is shown at a popular level in the texts like *Viṣṇu Purāna* and more philosophically in the writings like Ādi Śeṣa's *Paramārtha Sāra*. ... I am not arguing that Śaṅkara is explicating Advaita for a specific *Vaiṣṇava* community. Rather, I am suggesting that he draws on the familiarity with a *Vaiṣṇava* environment to help his pupil realize the truth of non-duality... <sup>29</sup> [pp 130]

Such a familiarity with a *Vaiṣṇava* environment is clearly initiated by early preceptors like Ādi Śeṣa, with which Śaṅkara precisely draws his influence from. Multitude expressions in multifarious accents in terms of doxology and doctrinal medley constitute *Parāmartha Sāra* with a different metaphysical tone that centrifugally situates itself on the grounds of Ultimate truth for Liberation. Even as a systematic exponent Ādi Śeṣa lost his place in the history of *Advaita Vedānta* while his work still deserves a pivotal significance that appeals as a theological digest in revealing the *Upaniṣadic* import. Revelation of Ultimate truth is common to all those who are realized; no matter where they shed their body – whether on the banks of holy water, or in the house of the outcaste, whether with or without consciousness; sorrows diminish as and when knowledge dawns <sup>30</sup>.

## Notes

- 1) VIII, S.S.Suryanārāyaṇa Sastri, 'The Paramārtha Sāra (PS) of Ādi Śeṣa', Bombay, 1941
- 2) द्विविधो हि धर्मः - प्रवृत्तिलक्षणः निवृत्तिलक्षणश्च जगतः स्थितिकारणम् । १ । Śāṅkara's *Gitā Bhāṣya*, A.G.Krishna Warriar, Advaita Ashrama, Chennai, 2005.
- 3) चद्वद् अचेतनम् अपि सन्-निकतस्थे भ्रमके भ्रमति लोहम् ।  
तद्वत् कर्ण-समूहश् चेतति चिदधिब्यिजे देहे ॥ १२ ॥ PS XII
- 4) PS Verse XIII
- 5) PS Verse XXXV
- 6) PS Verse XIII
- 7) PS Verse XV
- 8) cf Bradley.F.H , *Appearance and Reality*, London, 1904.
- 9) *Nṛsimha uttara tāpini Upaniṣad* (8.1) .
- 10) PS Verse XXI
- 11) PS Verse XXIV
- 12) cf Dr.S.Revathy, *Three little known Advaitins*, pp58-59
- 13) PS Verse XXVI-XXVII.
- 14) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Vārtika* III.vii.55
- 15) *Ibid* III.vii.33
- 16) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* III.vii.3
- 17) PS XXXII
- 18) PS XXXVII
- 19) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* II.1.19
- 20) *Subāla Upaniṣad* IV.1
- 21) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* IV.3.23
- 22) S.S.Hasurkar, *Vācaspati Miśra on Advaita Vedānta*, Jabalpur, 1958
- 23) PS XXII
- 24) PS XXIX
- 25) PS LII
- 26) PS LXVI
- 27) PS LXXVII
- 28) हरिस्तियत उक्तम् परमब्रतमानमिति आत्म वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीन्नान्यत्किञ्चन मिषत्  
स ईक्षत Raghavānanda Vivaraṇa
- 29) Dr.Jacqueline Sūthren Hirst, *Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta*, Newyork, 2005
- 30) PS LXXXI, also see *Jīvanmukti Viveka of Vidyāranya*, pp103, Advaita Ashrama Edition.



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BONDAGE IS AN ERROR #-  
BASED ON NIŚCALADĀSA'S VICĀRASĀGARA

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S. Bhuvaneshwari\*

**Introduction**

The empirical experience is dismissed as erroneous cognition of Self and the Knowledge of Self is declared as the Absolute Real. Niścaladāsa<sup>1</sup>, in his magnum opus *Vicārasāgara*<sup>2</sup> refutes the view that points out the impossibilities of the falsity of empirical reality as claimed by Advaita from the transcendental reality. The opponent<sup>3</sup> objects that for any error to take place there is the requirement of five-fold causes (*sāmagrī*) of which none is found in the case of world-experience. Hence, the Advaitic claim that world is *mithyā* is untenable. Here, each of the view of the opponent is presented and the answer of Advaitin is analysed as discussed in the *Vicārasāgara* - second *taraṅga*.<sup>4</sup>

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\* This article is developed based on the classes on '*Vicārasāgara*' (Sanskrit Translation) conducted by Svāmi Paramārthananda.

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### The Opponent's view

The entire perceived world along with the bodies is bondage. The opponent presumes that if this bondage is a superimposition then it can be destroyed by Knowledge. On the other hand, if this bondage is not a superimposition then it cannot be destroyed by Knowledge.

- Nature of Knowledge: that which destroys the ignorance of the substratum along with its effects in the form of errors. In the case of rope-snake, the rope-knowledge destroys the rope-ignorance and its effects in the form of snake-error.
- Nature of Error: The false object which is the content of the erroneous cognition or the false cognition related to the false object is known as error.

Knowledge cannot destroy the experience of empirical reality. If bondage is said to be an error then the possibility of error should fulfill five-fold causes. Bondage is not an error since these five-fold causes are absent in empirical experience. Bondage as false as claimed by Advaitin, lacks cause of superimposition but one experiences bondage. Hence bondage is real and Knowledge is not the solution.

### I

*Pañca Adhyāsa Sāmagrī: The five-fold causes of Error* <sup>5</sup>

An error can take place in the following five conditions:

1. Based on impression formed by past experience of a real entity. (*saṁskāra*)
2. When there are defects in the Perceiver. (*pramātr̥ doṣa*)
3. When there is defect in the Instruments of perception. (*pramāṇa doṣa*)
4. When there is defect in the object of perception (*prameya doṣa*)



5. When one is ignorant of the specific feature of the substratum and there is knowledge of the general feature. (*adhiṣṭhānaviśeṣājñānaṁ tatsāmānyajñānaṁ ca*)

An error is unaccountable in the absence of any of these factors.

### Instances where error is possible

Error is possible in cases of 'shell-silver' and 'rope-snake' etc, since the above mentioned five-fold causes are present.

1. Erroneous cognition of 'shell-silver' and 'rope-snake' is possible only by such a perceiver with the impressions of past experience of real silver and real snake. For a phenomenal (erroneous) cognition the empirical experience is pre-supposed. (In the same manner, for an empirical erroneous cognition a transcendental experience is pre-supposed).
2. Defect in perceiver is in the form of greed, fear etc.
3. Defect in the instrument of perception are defective eye in the form of cataract, jaundice etc.
4. Error involves similarity in the object perceived with past impressions. A snake is not superimposed on a shell and silver is not superimposed on rope. The 'shell' is seen as 'silver' because of similar feature like brilliance and 'rope' is seen as 'snake' because of similar features like curve, length etc.
5. In the erroneous perception of silver in shell, one says 'this is silver'; the general knowledge 'this is' is known but the specific knowledge 'shell' is not known. There is no error in the case of ignorance of 'this' general knowledge or in the case of 'shell' specific knowledge. Therefore, the general knowledge of the substratum and the ignorance of the specific feature is cause of error.

An error is not possible in the absence of any one of the above mentioned factors. In the production of a pot, the group of causes is the potter, stick, wheel, mud, water etc. In the absence of any one of these, a pot cannot be produced. Similarly, in the absence of even one of the 'pañca adhyāsa sāmagrī' an error cannot take place. Therefore, the error could take place only if the five causes mentioned are present and not otherwise.

The opponent thus concludes that since bondage does not fall under error due to the absence of all the five causes, Knowledge is not the solution.

## II

### **Absence of five-fold causes in Bondage as error**

The absence of five-fold causes in bondage is shown here:

**Absence of first cause:** (Impressions based on prior experience of a real entity)

According to Advaita there is only one real Brahman and everything else is unreal. There is no possibility of prior experience of a real bondage and hence bondage as error is untenable.

**Absence of second and third causes** (Defects in the Perceiver and Instrument of perception)

The contention of Advaitin is that the very perceiver and instrument of perception are superimpositions. Thus the presence of perceiver and instrument of perception prior to the error of bondage cannot be accounted for. Without establishing the defects in the perceiver, instrument etc, the bondage-error can never be established.

**Absence of fourth cause** (Defect in the object of perception)

There is no similarity between bound non-self and Self. Thus, the defect in the object of knowledge is absent. Self

(Ātmā) and non-self (Anātmā =Bondage) are opposed to each other like light and darkness. The dissimilarities between Ātmā and Anātmā are:

Ātmā is Inner Self, Anātmā is External. Ātmā is the Subject, Illuminator. But Anātmā is illumined object, inert. An external entity cannot be superimposed on an internal entity or vice-versa. From the standpoint of body people are external. One does not erroneously perceive the body of the son as one's own body or vice versa. Similarly, one does not superimpose the illuminator on the illumined or vice-versa. The objects like pot are illumined by a lamp. The pot is not superimposed on lamp or lamp on pot. In this manner, due to absence of similarity, Ātmā-Anātmā superimposition is not possible.

**Absence of fifth cause** (Knowledge of the general feature and ignorant of the specific feature)

Brahman, the substratum is of the nature of self-evident knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Darkness is always opposed to bright sun. Similarly the darkness of ignorance is always opposed to the self-evident Consciousness Brahman. Ignorance of Brahman is not possible. Thus, specific ignorance is absent in Self-evident Brahman.

### **Indeterminate Brahman:**

According to Advaita, Brahman is devoid of features, general or specific. So, the knowledge of the general feature and ignorance of the specific feature is impossible. If the possibility of error is provided by describing general and specific features, then the basic tenet of Advaita that Brahman is feature-less is to be given up. Therefore, in Brahman bondage as error is impossible.

Hence bondage is to be accepted as real. If bondage is real then it cannot be removed by knowledge. The opponent then suggests Action as means to liberation. (The opponent's view

that action is means to liberation is beyond the scope of discussion here).

### III

#### Advaitin's Answer

**The first cause: Prior real experience is not necessary for a later superimposition**

The contention of the opponent is that the cause of superimposition is past real experience. This is invalid. There is no maxim that only by a past real experience a superimposition is possible. The criterion for superimposition lies merely on the knowledge of an entity, real or unreal. As claimed by the opponent if only past real experience is the cause of error then the following will not be possible. A person is ignorant of a real mango tree but has seen a mango tree in a magic-show. By hearing the words 'this is a mango tree' (pointing to the magical mango tree) this knowledge creates an impression in the mind. That same person does not know a madhūka tree (a tree with leaves similar to a mango tree) sees this tree and recollects the knowledge regarding mango tree and says seeing the madhūka tree that 'this is a mango tree.' This is an error as mango tree is superimposed on madhūka tree. Such an instance of an error is not possible based on the view of the opponent since an unreal mango tree was experienced in the past. But there is the possibility of such an error. Hence according to Advaita, even though the mango tree experienced in the past is unreal since there is the impression of the unreal mango tree knowledge it is capable of resulting in an erroneous cognition on a madhūka tree.

The impressions produced by the prior experience of a similar entity serves as the cause of subsequent superimposition. Our author states that this has to be understood as the first cause of error. With regard to the

ontological status of the past entity it can be the experience of either a real or an unreal entity.

The cause of error analysed: The cause of error is either impression generated by a past cognition or cognition through the intermediate impressions. In either case the impressions become the cause of error.

### **Impression alone is the cause of error**

Knowledge of an entity by itself cannot be the cause of error. A cause should immediately precede its effect. But in the case of rope-snake erroneous cognition, snake is cognized long before and is superimposed on a rope at a later period. Thus, here the cause is not immediately preceding the effect. The cause of error is the impressions created by snake cognition in the past. Even though the snake knowledge is lost over a period of time the impression in the mind is triggered by the past snake cognition on seeing a 'rope'. Therefore, the cause of error is impression generated by cognition and it is not mere knowledge of an entity.

**Objection:** The cause need not immediately precede its effect but cause should precede its effect. The condition of prior existence of cause may be immediate or not immediate. If the immediate precedence of cause is to be accepted then Vedic statements will become futile. The injunctions that by performance of prescribed actions one attains heaven and by performance of prohibited actions one reaps hell will become invalid. Karma is performed physically, verbally or mentally. After the performance of action it gets destroyed immediately. But the respective result of relevant actions like heaven or hell is reaped over a period of time. Therefore, the results like heaven or hell are not the effect of an immediately preceding cause. The cause existed long before its result but still the prescribed and prohibited actions are the cause of attainment of the results – heaven or hell. In the same manner, the knowledge of snake attained long

before is the cause of superimposition on the rope and thus snake-knowledge is the cause of error.

**Answer:** This objection is untenable. If the destroyed knowledge is the cause of error and past action is the cause of heaven or hell then the dead potter or destroyed stick, wheel etc, could serve as causes of pot. Just as rope-snake error is caused by snake-knowledge attained long before, similarly attainment of heaven or hell is the result of performance of prescribed or prohibited actions, then long before the production of pot these destroyed potter, stick, wheel etc should have been the cause of pot though they do not exist now. A dead potter cannot be the cause of a pot. Therefore, the preceding cause cannot produce an effect but an immediately preceding cause alone can produce an effect. This is Advaitin's contention.

The prescribed or prohibited actions do not independently over a period of time result in the attainment of heaven or hell since actions are momentary. But the next moment after the destruction of actions, apūrva or unseen merit, namely, dharma and adharma is created. Both dharma and adharma remain in the subtle body of the individual. The results like heaven or hell is because of the immediately preceding cause in the form of apūrva. Thus, impression alone is the cause of all kinds of errors. As pointed out earlier this impression can be gained by experience of a real or false entity. Such an impression is possible in the case of bondage where there is *arthādhyāsa* – superimposition of world and *jñānādhyāsa* – experience of *ahaṅkāra*. The prior false *ahaṅkāra* experience creates impression which is the cause of the rise of successive *ahaṅkāra* and its knowledge.

**Objection:** What is the cause of the first error? It is agreed that prior impressions are the cause of successive error. But in the case of the first error both *arthādhyāsa* and *jñānādhyāsa* are absent. If there had been a first *ahaṅkāra* then

it can be accounted that by the experience of the first *ahaṅkāra* error takes place. The first *ahaṅkāra* is not established. Thus for any object the first error cannot be accounted for due to the absence of its prior experience.

**Answer:** According to Advaita the following six categories are without a beginning. <sup>7</sup>

(1) *Jīva*, (2) *Īśvara*, (3) Brahman, (4) Mutual difference between *Jīva* and *Īśvara*, (5) Avidyā, (6) Relation between (*adhyāsa sambandha*) avidyā and Brahman. (*avidyā cit samyogaḥ kālaḥ api anādi*).

But the origin of *ahaṅkāra* is described in Śruti<sup>8</sup> and Smṛti<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, unlike the above six categories *ahaṅkāra* is not intrinsically without a beginning. The anādi of *ahaṅkāra* is described as *pravāhataḥ anādi*<sup>10</sup>

**The Second cause: Defect in perceiver is not a condition for error:**

According to the opponent, the cause of error is defect in perceiver in the form of greed or fear. Error can happen even when the perceiver is not subject to greed or fear. A dispassionate person who is not greedy may also mistake shell for silver.

**The Third cause: Defect in the instrument of knowledge is not a condition for error**

A dome shaped blue-sky is experienced by all.<sup>11</sup> It is a universal erroneous perception perceived even though there is no defect in eyes. The perception of blue-sky cannot be said due to the defect in everyone's eyes just as perception of yellow in objects is said to be the defect in one's eyes.

The example of blue-sky can be cited to show that none of the defects mentioned by the opponent is a condition for error. The blue-sky is perceived in absence of defect in the perceiver, instrument of perception and absence of similarity<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, bondage is a superimposition on Self,

an error without defects. Thus, the understanding of the opponent that bondage-error is not possible in the absence of defects is untenable.

Error is possible in spite of absence of defects. But it is said by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī that error originates from defect.<sup>13</sup> Niścaladāsa adopts *prauḍhivāda* to show the possibility of error without any defects. Thus, even though particular defects are not present there is a general defect in the form of Ignorance which is the cause of error.<sup>14</sup>

**The Fourth cause: Defect in the object of knowledge is not a condition for error:**

Though the Self and non-self are not similar even then error is possible. This is with regard to the object of knowledge known as *Prameya doṣa*. Niścaladāsa first disproves the opponent's view that "I am a Brahmin" is not an error. Then, he shows the absence of similarity in this erroneous knowledge.

'I am a Brahmin' is an attribute of the gross body and not Self or not even the subtle body.<sup>15</sup> Self is eternal and subtle body continues from the gross body of the previous birth to the gross body of the present birth. It is not necessary that past birth Brahmin-hood should continue in the present birth. If *jāti* is an attribute of Self or subtle body then it would continue in all future births. *Jāti* is an attribute of the gross body. Brahmin-hood is superimposed on Self. This is known by postulation. In the case of rope-snake, snake is not present in the three periods of time, but the snake is experienced. This snake is said to be a superimposition. Similarly, in Self Brahmin-hood etc are absent in three periods of time. But it is experienced. This experience is said to be a superimposition. There is no similarity between Brahmin-hood and Self. Self is all-pervasive, inner subject and of the nature of consciousness. *Jāti* is limited, external and inert. Still *jāti* are superimposed on Self. Similarly there is the



possibility of superimposition of ego, bondage etc. even without similarity. Therefore, the defect of similarity is not the cause of error.

Moreover, if similarity is taken as a necessary condition for error then superimpositions like yellow-conch <sup>16</sup>, bitterness in jaggery <sup>17</sup> will not be possible due to the absence of similarity. There is the error of yellow-ness in white conch and bitterness in sweet though they are of contradictory nature. Therefore, the superimposition does not demand the condition of defect in the form of similarity in the substratum.

**The Fifth cause: Ātmā is known generally and unknown specifically**

Error occurs when the general feature of the substratum is known and specific feature is unknown. Ātmā is devoid of features with no scope for partial ignorance. Niścaladāsa resorts to one's own experience. The existence of Self expressed as 'I' is well-known to everyone. But no one experiences the Self as 'Consciousness'<sup>18</sup>, divisionless, bliss-nature, all-pervasive, eternally pure, eternally free.' These specific features of Self is unknown. The Self that is known to pāmara etc<sup>19</sup> which shines in the form of Existence is the universal nature of Self. The nature of self in the form of consciousness and bliss is known to the realized one <sup>20</sup> and this is the specific nature of Self. The universal and particular is empirically differentiated as that which is more pervasive in space and time and that which is less pervasive in space and time respectively. Really speaking, Consciousness and Bliss being of the nature of Self is all-pervasive like Existence.<sup>21</sup> This difference in pervasiveness cannot be applied to the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss of Self. Exceptionally the nature of Existence is known to all even during self-ignorance while the Consciousness and Bliss nature is unknown to the ignorant ones. The one who is

established in the Self alone knows Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

In the 'state' of ignorance, Existence, Consciousness and Bliss are present but unknown. Consciousness and Bliss are as though not present in inanimate objects and in unhappy persons respectively. The ignorant ones mistake that Existence alone is pervasive. In reality, there is no difference in the form of universal and specific features. It is only imagined for the sake of ignorant people.<sup>22</sup> Self is free from divisions and is the transcendental reality. Since Self is experienced with universal and particular features such a view is considered for ignorant ones. Thus, bondage-error is due to the partial knowledge of the universal feature and partial ignorance of specific feature of Self. Such an erroneous bondage is removed by Knowledge.

#### IV

#### Cause of Error according to Advaita

**Establishing the cause of error:**

Brahman is *nirviśeṣa* (devoid of features), *niraṁśa* (free from parts), *jñāna svarūpa* (nature of Consciousness). Brahman cannot have features, parts and ignorance. Such an objection is untenable.

Error is of two kinds: 1. *Kāraṇādhyāsa* 2. *Kāryādhyāsa*. In the case of rope-snake, snake is *kāryādhyāsa*. The cause of snake superimposition is ignorance of rope. Ignorance of rope is also a superimposition. Ignorance-error is known as *kāraṇādhyāsa*, the cause of all ignorances. *Kāryādhyāsa* is an effect of *kāraṇādhyāsa*. *Kāraṇādhyāsa* is due to ignorance. Ignorance is self-superimposed like a lamp that illumines everything and itself.

**Ignorance resides in self-evident Brahman:**

Ignorance of the specific feature of Brahman is error. One may consider that the self-luminous Brahman cannot be the

locus of ignorance since they are of contradictory nature like light and darkness. The self-evident Self is not contradictory to ignorance. If self-luminous Brahman is opposed to ignorance then in deep-sleep the self-luminous Brahman cannot illumine ignorance. One gets up from deep sleep and says 'I slept very well; I did not know anything.' This person refers to ignorance experienced in deep sleep. The object of experience in deep sleep is bliss and ignorance. This experience of bliss and ignorance in deep sleep is not perceived in waker's world. Perception is knowledge of an object in front. In waking world, the bliss and ignorance of deep sleep are absent and hence both are not the object of perception in waking period but it is only remembrance. The memory cannot deal with something which is not experienced. Therefore, in deep sleep both bliss and ignorance are directly known. This experience in deep-sleep cannot be known directly by the internal organ or the sense organ since they merge into their causal status. Thus, in deep sleep both the experiences are illumined by the self-luminous consciousness.

## V

### Knowledge <sup>23</sup>alone is the solution

If the very nature of Brahman that is knowledge is opposed to ignorance then one cannot experience ignorance in deep sleep. Self-luminous Brahman is not opposed to ignorance. On the other hand, this self-luminous Brahman is the substratum of everything which includes ignorance also. This Brahman lends existence and knowability to everything. Based on the above view, Advaita Vedānta distinguishes the universal consciousness which is not opposed to ignorance. But consciousness conditioned by a mental modification is opposed to ignorance.<sup>24</sup> The universal consciousness is all-pervasive, omnipresent and is divisionless. The consciousness conditioned by the internal

organ is limited. For instance, the fire principle pervades everything including araṇi stick. This general fire principle found in araṇi stick is not opposed to darkness. When the stick is churned the fire emitted from it removes darkness like the flame in the wick of a lamp.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, all-pervasive general consciousness is not opposed to ignorance but the same consciousness, by the enquiry of Vedāntic scriptures emits thought of divisionless Brahman. This direct knowledge conditioned by the mental state removes ignorance. Being the cause of destruction of ignorance it is said to be opposed to ignorance. Thus, general consciousness is not opposed to ignorance but consciousness conditioned by mental state is opposed to ignorance.

**Advaita Prakriyā-bheda:** Does Consciousness conditioned by mental state remove ignorance or does mental state destroy ignorance supported by Consciousness? According to *Avacchedaka Vāda*, *vṛttiviśiṣṭa caitanyam* Consciousness conditioned by mental state or *caitanya viśiṣṭa vṛtti* mental state supported by consciousness is said to be *viśeṣacaitanyam* specific consciousness. This specific consciousness is said to be opposed to ignorance.

According to *Ābhāsa Vāda*, neither the general consciousness nor conditioned consciousness is opposed to ignorance but the reflection of consciousness is opposed to ignorance. Here too, reflection supported by mental state or mental state supported by reflection opposes ignorance. Advaitin's conclusion is that Consciousness of the nature of self-luminosity is not opposed to ignorance. In fact, ignorance abides in self-luminous Consciousness.<sup>26</sup> That Ātma which is concealed by ignorance is erroneously perceived as bondage. This erroneous perception is possible even without the five-fold causes as claimed by the opponent. Since bondage is an error it is destroyed only by Knowledge.

Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Niścaladāsa, a 19<sup>th</sup> century mendicant is the author of the popular work *Vicārasāgara*. His other works are *Vṛttiprabhākara* and *Yuktiprakāśa*. He is said to have written a gloss on *Mahābhārata* and commentaries on *Īsopaniṣad* and *Kāthopaniṣad*.
- <sup>2</sup> *Vicārasāgara* is originally written in Khaḍi Hindi in the form of couplets. This work is commented upon by Pitāambar in Khaḍi Hindi. The text and its commentary are translated into many languages including Sanskrit. The Sanskrit translation by Svāmi Vāsudeva Brahmendra Sarasvatī, is edited by Brahmaśrī Pañcāpageśāśāstri and Brahmaśrī Varahūr Kalyāṇasundaraśāstri.
- <sup>3</sup> Any School of thought that holds the view that bondage is real and knowledge is not the solution for destruction of a real bondage.
- <sup>4</sup> *Vicārasāgara* is divided into seven chapters or taraṅgas. In the second taraṅga, Niścaladāsa deals with arguments against the anubandha catuṣṭayam. This discussion on bondage and liberation occurs while establishing the purpose of this text.
- <sup>5</sup> Of the five causes mentioned – second, third and fourth causes are defects. The first and fifth causes are conditions for error.
- <sup>6</sup> यत् साक्षात् अपरोक्षात् ब्रह्म Br.Up. 3.4.1 and 3.5.1.
- <sup>7</sup> जीव ईशो विशुद्धा चित् तथा जीवेशयोर्भिदा । अविद्या तच्चित्तोर्योगः षडस्माकमनादयः ॥
- <sup>8</sup> तन्मनोऽकुरुत Br.Up. 1.2.1.
- <sup>9</sup> Gitā – 7.4 and 13.6
- <sup>10</sup> The perennial flow (pravāhataḥ anādi) in both unmanifest and manifest form is without a beginning. So, all objects are said to be without a beginning. One can never use the expression 'pot is absent'. Everything (other than Brahman) emerges without a beginning. At the time of deep-sleep or great deluge, everything resolves unto Brahman and remains in potential condition. This manifest and unmanifest condition of the world is said to be without a beginning.

**Objection:** Since world is without a beginning then one has to admit the reality of the world based on the inference:

World is real,

Since it is without a beginning

Like Brahman.

**Answer:** Such an inference is invalid. It is known that 'rope-snake' and 'dream' are illusory. This phenomenal experience varies from one second to hours. Though they are without a beginning, on rise of 'rope-knowledge' and on 'waking up', 'snake' and 'dream' are destroyed respectively. This proves the absence of 'snake' and 'dream' at three periods of time. यत्रैकालिकनिषेधप्रतियोगित्वनिश्चयः ॥ The inference thus must be:

World is unreal

Since it is sublated

Like snake (and dream)

Though snake and dream are without a beginning they are sublated.

Similarly, though the world is a superimposition, at the time of error, it is projected as though without a beginning. स्वकाले सत्यवद्भाति - Ātmabodha verse-6. On the rise of knowledge of the substratum it is known that world does not exist in three periods of time. Therefore, world is unreal. Māṇḍūkya Kārikā - II.32.

<sup>11</sup> Adhyāsa Bhāṣyam.

<sup>12</sup> Similarity as a condition for error is discussed while dealing with the fourth cause.

<sup>13</sup> दोषजन्यत्वं भ्रमस्य लक्षणम् Advaita Siddhi

<sup>14</sup> Sarvajñātman in his Saṅkṣepaśārīraka describes Error wherein he mentions the three defects other than ignorance resulting in erroneous bondage.

a. Defect in perceiver - because of ignorance in the internal organ there is the imperceptible impressions born of good and bad actions abiding in the power of projection which is the cause of defect in a perceiver.

b. Defect in instrument of perception - Consciousness being self-evident cannot be revealed by any instrument of knowledge. Ignorance is the defect in instrument of perception.

c. Defect in object of perception - There is similarity between Self and non-self. The non-self in the form of five sheaths is internal and Self of the nature of Consciousness is also internal. Absolute innerness is in Consciousness. But in sheaths of the individual self there is relative innerness. Consciousness is (positive)

absolute reality. Individual self sheaths are relative reality. Thus, there is the similarity in the form of 'innerness' and 'reality' between Consciousness and Individual Self. This is said to be the defect in the object of knowledge. Sādrśya is defined as तद् भिन्नत्वे सति तद्गत भूयो धर्मवत्त्वं सादृश्यम्, that which is different but with similar features of another thing. This is prauḍhivāda adopted by Sarvajñātman. Niścaladāsa differs from Sarvajñātman in this regard and establishes that in the absence of these three defects error is possible.

<sup>15</sup> Adhyāsa Bhāṣyam.

<sup>16</sup> According to Nyāya, नित्यमेकमनेकानुगतं सामान्यम् – Generality is inherent in all particulars, it is one and eternal. The features of generality is similar to that of Self. The superimposition of jāti on Self is because of their similarity. Therefore, one may consider that the defect in the object is the cause of error. To avoid this possible objection, instance of the superimposition of yellowness in conch is cited here.

**Objection:** Yellowness is not a superimposition on conch, but it is because of jaundice or because of the anointment of yellow substance in the eyes.

**Answer:** The workmanship of embedded gems in a pot by a goldsmith is not only experienced by the goldsmith but by everyone. In the case of yellow-conch, the yellowness in the conch is not experienced by all but one with defective instrument of perception. The yellow substance in one's eyes cannot pervade and anoint the conch. **Objection:** If one observes a bird flying initially close-by and then farther the direction of the flying bird can be known even from a distance. The bird farther away cannot be easily traced by one who has not observed its movements initially. In the same way, the yellow substance in a person's eyes anoints the conch, that yellowness is experienced by that person easily and not by others.

**Answer:** The movement of the bird in the distance can be indicated to another by pointing out with finger but this cannot happen in the case of a conch. The conch which is not in yellow colour cannot be indicated to another person with the help of a finger that the conch is yellow in colour. Therefore, the yellowish conch is not real but it is an erroneous cognition. The yellowish conch is a superimposition which is experienced even

without any similarity. This instance is enough to show that error is possible without the defect of similarity in the object of cognition.

- <sup>17</sup> To avoid any further problems in the case of yellow-conch example, the experience of bitterness in jaggery is cited to show that error is possible without the defect of similarity in the object of cognition.
- <sup>18</sup> The Existence, Consciousness and Bliss nature of Self manifests in the upādhis gross, subtle and causal body respectively. The Existence and Consciousness nature is known to all. Here, Niścaladāsa takes to the view that Existence nature alone is known to all.
- <sup>19</sup> Niścaladāsa classifies people into four categories. 1. *Pāmara* – those who are not aware of scriptural injunctions. 2. *Viṣayī* – one who follows scriptural injunctions with a desire to enjoy higher worlds. 3. *Jijñāsu* – a seeker of Absolute knowledge. 4. *Mukta* – one who directly knows the true nature of Self.
- <sup>20</sup> A Mukta.
- <sup>21</sup> Śaṅkara Taittiriya Bhāṣyam II.1. Upadeśasāra – Verse 23.
- <sup>22</sup> In Kaṭhopanīṣad II.1.1 'parāṅ paśyati' is not an obstacle for Self-knowledge but it presumes that Self is known as Cit and not Sat.
- <sup>23</sup> According to Advaita, Knowledge is of two kinds – *Svarūpajñāna* and *Vṛttijñāna*. *Svarūpajñāna* illumines both knowledge and ignorance and hence it is not opposed to ignorance, whereas *vṛttijñāna* is opposed to ignorance. This discussion does not find a place in this context.
- <sup>24</sup> तृणादेर्भासिकाऽप्येषा सूर्यदीप्तिस्तृणं दहेत् । सूर्यकान्तमुपारुह्य तन्न्यायं तत्र योजयेत् ॥  
Q.in Śāstrasiddhāntaleśasangrahaḥ p.363.
- <sup>25</sup> Śaṅkara Gītā Bhāṣyam 10.11
- <sup>26</sup> The worldly instances of sun, fire etc is unfitting since the light of these luminaries are specific in nature. But the Consciousness nature of Self is general and hence not opposed to ignorance.



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## VEDIC VISION OF INCLUSIVENESS AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS

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Shashiprabha Kumar \*

Vedas are the oldest available texts of humanity, but they propound the most novel vision for cosmic harmony and global peace. The present article aims to highlight two basic concepts of Vedic philosophy which are foundational for the attainment of peace in modern world; namely **inclusiveness** viewed from the metaphysical aspect and **interconnectedness** seen from the empirical point of view.

### II

The Vedic philosophy presents a complete, comprehensive and holistic world view according to which all life in the cosmos is inter-twined and inter-woven, the process of inter-relation works at all levels of existence. Nothing is exclusive in this universe in the sense that nothing stands in isolation, even the highest principle of consciousness, i.e. the all-pervading Absolute is permeated in all the beings of the world:

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*Venastatpaśyannihitam guhā sad yatra viśvam  
bhavatyekanīdam*

*Tasminnidam sam ca vi caiti sarvam sa otaḥ protaśca  
vibhuḥ prajāsu.* (Yajurveda, 32/8)

i.e., The loving sage beholds that mysterious Existence  
wherein the universe comes to be one nest.  
Therein unites and therefrom issues the whole  
The Lord is warp and woof in created beings.

In other words, each entity of the cosmos is pulsating  
with the one innermost, subtle principle of consciousness.

*Eka evāgnirbahudhā samiddha ekaḥ sūryo  
viśvamanu prabhūtaḥ*

*Ekaivoṣā sarvamidam vibhātyekam  
vā idam vibabhūva sarvam.* (Rgveda, 8/58/2)

i.e. One is Agni kindless in many a spot  
One is Surya shining over all  
One is Uṣas illumining all this  
That which is one has become this All

*Ekam sadviprā bahudhā vadanti* (Rgveda, 1/146/46)

i.e. "The one being the sages call by many names"

But it must be clarified here that this does not convey  
monotheism in the technical sense of the term, rather it  
suggests that there is an inner impersonal essence beneath  
each personal existence:

*Āviḥ sannihitam guhā jarannāma mahatpadam  
Tatredam sarvamarpitamejat prāṇāt pratiṣṭhitam*

(Atharvaveda, 10/8/6)

i.e. Though manifest, it lies concealed, as if, in a cave,  
an ancient name and a great place.  
Therein is well established all this,  
that which moves and that which breathes.

The great Absolute is like the thread in a garland, the string which holds all the beads together;

*Vedāham sūtram vitatam yasminnotā imā prajāḥ  
Sūtram sūtrasyāham vedātho yat brāhmaṇam mahat.*

(Atharvaveda, 10/8/38)

i.e. I have realized the wide-spread thread,  
into which these creatures have been woven,  
and I have realized the thread of the thread and also  
that, which is the great Lord supreme.

All the beings of the world are strewn in the same thread which pervades all and is the first principle of the universe:

*Parītya bhūtāni parītya lokān parītya sarvāḥ  
pradiśo diśasca*

*Upasthāya prathamajāmṛtasyātmanātmānmabhī  
samviveśa.*

(Yajurveda, 32/11)

i.e. Having pervaded all the creatures, encompassing  
all the worlds,  
all the quarters and mid-quarters,  
and approaching the first born (daughter) at Eternity,  
He entered directly by his self in himself.

The one, innermost, all-pervading principle in which every object of the universe, living or non-living, finds a substratum of existence is variously described in various hymns of the Vedas. For example, *Prajāpati* in the Ṛgveda, *Skambha* in the Atharvaveda, *Tadeva* in the Yajurveda and *Viśvadeva* in the Sāmaveda:

(i) *Prajāpate na tvadetānyanyo viśvā  
jātāni paritā babhūva*

(Ṛgveda, 10/121/10)

i.e. O Lord of people, there is none other than you  
who has given existence to all these beings.

- (ii) *Skambha idaṁ sarvāmātmanvadyat  
prāṇannimiṣacca yat.* (Atharvaveda 10/8/2)
- i.e. All this which has soul and which breathes and winks,  
verily is in the *Skambha* itself.
- (iii) *Eṣo ha devaḥ pradiśo 'nu sarvāḥ pūrvo ha  
jātaḥ sa u garbhe antaḥ  
Sa eva jātaḥ sa janiṣyamānaḥ pratyānjanāstiṣṭhati  
sarvatomukhaḥ* (Yajurveda, 32/4)
- i.e. Surely this deva pervades all the regions  
He was born before all, yet he is in the womb still  
He is what has been born also he is what shall be born  
Having faces all around, He stands facing each and  
every person.
- (iv) *Sameta viśvā ojasā patīm divo ya eka  
idbhūratithirjanānām  
Sa pūrvyo nūtanamājigīṣaṁ taṁ vartanīranu  
vāvṛta eka it.* (Sāmaveda, 372)
- i.e. May all of you come and join us in praising that Lord  
who on account of his strength is the lord of celestial  
region and who alone is honoured by everyone as if,  
He is the Chief Guest  
He verily blesses all the new projects of public service  
and He is in truth the only one (as our reliance)

The Supreme Consciousness, which is at the foundation of the universe is also termed as *Kāla* (= *kalayitā*) or creator in the Vedas. But it is a unique feature of Vedic philosophy that the creator himself is a part of the creation and the created, while all created beings and objects are dependent on Him; He is the *Brahman and Parameṣṭhī*:

*Teneṣitam tena jātam tadu tasmin pratiṣṭhitam  
Kālo ha brahma bhūtvā bibharti parameṣṭhinam.*  
(Atharvaveda, 19/53/9)

- i.e. Urged by Him, created by Him, all that is set, surely within Him  
Time, becoming the Divine supreme, sustains the Lord seated in the highest abode.

The entire cosmos is just a manifestation of Him, who was this, who became this and who is witnessing this world as well:

*Pari dyāvāpṛthivī sadya itvā pari lokān pari diśaḥ  
pari svaḥ*

*Ṛtasya tantum vitatam vidhṛtya  
tadapaśyattadabhavattadāsīt* (Yajurveda, 32/12)

- i.e. Quickly going around the earth and heaven around the worlds, around the quarters and around the realm of light, and having woven the well-spread thread of truth, He sees it, becomes it, and still is it.

The above truth is explicitly stated in the following, famous statement of Yajur Veda:

*Īśāvāsyamidam sarvam yatkiñca jagatyām jagat*  
(Yajurveda, 40/1)

- i.e. All whatsoever exists in this universe, is pervaded by God supreme

The same sense is expressed in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad too:

*Tatsṛṣṭvā tadevānuprāviśat* (Taittirīyopaniṣad 2/6)

- i.e. The Supreme Brahman after creating the world, entered into that only.

What follows from the above Vedic statements is that the created or manifested physical world is not uncaused or accidental, but ordained and controlled by an underlying ultimate principle, the innermost spirit which is self-dependent:

*Ātmā devānam bhuvanasya garbhe yathāvaśam carati deva eṣaḥ*  
(R̥gveda, 10/168/4)

i.e. It is the life-force of the divine powers, it is the germ of the world and moves according to its own will.

### III

It is worth mentioning here that different terms used in the Vedas for denoting several deities are in fact the names of same, single, Supreme spirit which rest at the heart of the universe, manifests itself in various forms, sustains the whole created world and rules over in too:

(a) *Rūpam rūpam pratirūpo babhūva tadasya rūpam*  
*praticakṣanāya*  
*Indro māyābhiḥ pururūpa iyate yuktā hyasya*  
*harayaḥ śatā daśa.* (R̥gveda 10/168/4)

i.e. In every figure of his creation, the resplendent Lord has been the model.  
This is the only form for us to look on.  
He moves multiforms by his designs since  
His motivations, yoked to the Universe, are thousands in number.

(b) *Hiraṇyagarbhaḥ samavartatāgre bhūtasya jātaḥ*  
*patireka āsīt* (R̥gveda, 10/121/1)

i.e. The sustainer Lord of illuminant celestial cosmos has been present from the very beginning;  
He has ever been the sole Lord of all created beings.

In the cosmic vision of the Vedas, which is the most secular, universal and therefore sacred, all forms of life share a common bond, all animate beings and inanimate things are manifestations of one and the same principle. But it must be clarified that this is not the monism of traditional type, since each being or thing of the cosmos has its own,

individual existence and purpose in the integral world-view of the Vedas. It is not that oneness alone matters in the universe, as will be clear from the following verses:

*Yadejati patati yacca tiṣṭhati prāṇaprāṇannimiṣacca  
yadabhuvat*

*Taddādharma pṛthvīm viśvarūpām tatsimbhūya bhavatyekameva  
(Atharvaveda 10/8/11)*

- i.e. That which moves, flies or stands and which breathes or breathes not, which winks and which has come into being, that one of universal forms sustains the earth  
Being assembled, that becomes one only.

*Ānīdavātām svadhayā tadekaṁ  
tasmāddhānyanna paraḥ kiñcanāsa*

*(Rgveda, 10/129/2)*

- i.e. That breathless one breathed upon as if by its own automation  
Apart from that one, there was nothing else whatever

*Yaḥ prāṇato nimīṣato mahitvaika idrājā jagato babhūva  
Ya īśā asya dvipadaścatuspadaḥ kasmāi devāya haviṣā vidhema  
(Rgveda 10/121/3)*

- i.e. He, by his greatness, has verily become the sole king of breathing and seeing world; He rules over this aggregate of bipeds and quadruped.  
Whom else, besides that bestower of happiness, can we offer all our devotion?

*Virād vāg virāt pṛthvī virādantarikṣam virāt prajāpatiḥ  
Virāṇmr̥tyuḥ sādhyānāmādhirājo babhūva tasya bhūtam  
bhavyam vaśe*

*(Atharvaveda 9/10/24)*

- i.e. Viraj is speech, Viraj the wide earth.  
 Viraj the midspace and Viraj is the Lord of creatures  
 Viraj is death, the overlord of sādhyas (souls seeking  
 perfection)  
 He has full control over what was and what will be  
 May he put what was and what will be under my  
 control.

*Trīṇi padā vicakrame viṣṇurgopā adābhyah*  
*Ato dharmāṇī dhārayan* (Ṛgveda 1/22/18)

- i.e. The omnipresent God, the preserver of the indomitable  
 created three regions, the earth, mid-region and the  
 celestial  
 He sustains and preserves the sanctity of all vital  
 functions that keep life ticking.

*Suparṇam viprāḥ kavayo vacobhirekam santam bahudhā*  
*kalpayanti* (Ṛgveda 10/114/5)

- i.e. The beautiful winged bird (=the deity) who is one,  
 The wise poets imagine him with their words in various  
 ways

*Savitā paścāttāt savitā purastāt savitottarāttāt*  
*Savitā naḥ suvatu sarvatātim Savitā no rāsataṁ dīrghamāyuh*  
 (Ṛgveda, 10/36/14)

- i.e. The deity from westward, the deity from eastward  
 the deity from northward, the deity from sotheward  
 May he send us all bliss, may he grant us long life.

*Baṇmahān asi sūrya baḍāditya mahān asi*  
*Mahaste sato mahimā panasyate 'ddhā deva mahān asi*  
 (Yajurveda, 33/39)

- i.e. Verily, you are great, O Radiant Sun  
 Verily you are great.



O eternal, the greatness of the great one we adore  
Verily you are great, O Supreme God!

*Om kham brahma (Yajurveda, Kāṇva Samhitā, 40/11)*

i.e. Om, the Abstract, the Divine Supreme!

#### IV

It needs to be emphasized that the Vedic view of inclusiveness does not deny individuality to different beings or objects; rather it suggests a symphony of sorts, where each entity of the cosmos is in harmony with the greater, divine principle. It is not uniformity or oneness, where identities have to merge themselves but a 'unique diversity in unity' wherein all forms of existence have full freedom to blossom in their own way, but share a spiritual bond at the deeper level which nourishes them. It is not to be imposed from outside, but inherently woven in their existence. The most striking feature of this philosophy is that it does not restrict itself to any class, creed or group, but encompasses the whole cosmos in its stride. The various appellations of the divine principle are also not personal nouns or individual names of any particular deity, they are in fact different depictions of the same, supreme principle. So, it is a globalization of a different kind which seeks spiritual unity rather than physical uniformity. The real import of Vedic statements like the following ones which proclaim that the whole world is like one nest of a village can be grasped only when this subtle background of Vedic view is comprehended:

(i) *Yatra viśvaṁ bhavatyekaniḍam*

(Yajurveda, 32/18)

i.e. Where the whole universe becomes, (as if) one nest.

(ii) *Viśvaṁ puṣṭaṁ grāme 'sminnāturam*

(Rgveda 1/114/1)

i.e. May the whole universe become a strong, disease-free village!

(iii) *Mahatsadhasathaṁ mahātī babhūvitha*

(Atharvaveda, 12/01/08)

i.e. Thou hast become great, a great station (O Earth!)

### V

The unitive vision of the Vedas finds expression in several other forms also such as follows:

(a) **Dualism** of binary principles is a basic concept which underlies the whole Vedic philosophy. The bond between *bhūta-bhavya*, *agni-soma*, *dyāvā-prthivī*, *rayi-prāna*, *ṛta-satya* and *yoṣā-vṛṣā* is so strong as well as deep-rooted in Vedic view that one cannot explain one without referring to the other.

(b) **Complementarity** of opposites is another conceptual device which is very foundational and widely available in the Vedas. The pairs of antonym terms like *amṛta-ṛta*, *mṛtyu-amṛta*, *tama-jyoti*, *asat-sat*, *vāmana-virāt*, and *avidyā-vidyā* etc. are so frequently used in Vedic verses that it is essential to grasp the symbolism underlying these ideas for a proper understanding of Vedic view.

(c) **Parallelism** between gross and subtle or macrocosmic and microcosmic is also a very significant concept of Vedic interpretation. It is therefore stated in the Vedic texts:

*Yathā piṇḍe tathā brahmāṇḍe*

i.e. There is similarity at the level of an individual body and the cosmos.

Accordingly, there is a correspondence between the broad principles of the outer world and the subtle processes of the inner world in Vedic view. Hence the atomic as well as the most pervasive are twin ends of the same string. The Vedic statements like the following ones which apparently seem to be paradoxical, are in fact suggesting the same symbolic relation between the two aspects of one and the same principle:

*Tadejati tannaijati tadu dūre tadu antike*  
*Tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ*  
 (Yajurveda, 40/05)

i.e. It moves, but still it moves not  
 It is far away, even then it is very close.  
 It is within all,  
 it encompasses all this universe on the outer side  
 as well

*Bālādekamañīyaskamutaikaṁ naiva drśyate*  
*Tataḥ pariṣvajīyasī devatā sā mama priyā*  
 (Atharvaveda, 10/8/25)

i.e. That is one, that is finer even than a hair,  
 also there is one, that is not visible at all  
 (that is visible as if nothing) The deity, that embraces  
 them firmly is dear to me.

## VI

Moreover the integral approach of Vedic philosophy is revealed in repeated assertions to the effect that all objects of the world are inter-related at the empirical level also. This relationship is again to be observed from two angles

**interconnectedness and intra-connectedness.** It means that on the one hand, all beings are connected with other living and non-living beings of the world and on the other hand, they are also connected with the members of their own species. For example, the Vedas propound in clear terms that there is interdependence between human beings and other forms of Nature; in fact, among all the elements of creation;

- (i) *Dyaurme pitā janitā nābhiratra bandhurme  
Mātā pṛthivī mahīyam*  
(Rgveda, 1/164/33)

i.e. The heaven is my parent and progenitor, the navel is my kinsman, the spacious earth is my mother.

- (ii) *Śam no bhava dvipade śam catuṣpade*  
(Rgveda 10/85/44)

i.e. Be the bestower of happiness and bring prosperity to our bipeds and quadrupeds.

The Vedic prayers for peace in all spheres of the cosmos and all elements of the physical world as also sweetness in all the forms of creation amply substantiate this fact:

- Madhu vātā ṛtāyate madhu kṣaranti sindhavaḥ  
Mādhvīrnaḥ santvoṣadhīḥ  
Madhu naktamutoṣaso madhumat pārthivam rajaḥ  
Madhu dyaurastu naḥ pitā*  
(Rgveda, 1/90/6-7)

i.e., The wind blows sweetly on its own.  
The rivers glide on sweetly.  
May the herbs yield sweetness to us  
May the night be sweet  
May the sun be imbued with sweetness;  
may our milchkin be sweet to us.

Not only this, the emotional bonding of human beings with other living beings and various forms of Nature is also sought as follows:

*Mātā bhūmiḥ putro 'ham pṛthivyāḥ*

(Atharvaveda, 12/1/12)

i.e., Earth is mother, I am the son of Mother Earth.

*Dyauh śāntirantarikṣam śāntiḥ pṛthivi śāntirāpaḥ*

*śāntiroṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ vanaspatayaḥ śāntiroisve devāḥ*

*śāntirbrahma*

*śāntiḥ sarvām śāntiḥ śāntireva śāntiḥ sā mā śāntiredhi*

(Yajurveda, 36/17; Atharvaveda, 19/9/14)

i.e. Peace of sky, peace of mid-region, peace of earth, peace of waters, peace of plants, peace of trees, peace of All-gods, peace of Brahman, peace of the universe, peace of peace.

May that peace come to me !

Obviously, this interconnectedness among various elements of Nature is a distinct characteristic of Vedic philosophy which has percolated in the post-Vedic literature also.

## VII

The Vedic vision of inter-connectedness among various aspects of the universe is best exemplified in the concept of *Yajña*. "The natural, the physical and the spiritual - all these layers of existence are deeply rooted in the principle of *Yajña* from the cosmic point of view"<sup>1</sup>.

*Yajñena yajñamayajanta devāstāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan*

(Rgveda, 10/90/16)

<sup>1</sup>Shashiprabha Kumar, "Vedic Yajña: From Ritual to Spiritual" in *Self, Society and Value: Reflections on Indian Philosophical Thought*, Vidyananidhi Prakashan, Delhi: 2005, pp. 58-75

- i.e. Gods (Nature's bounties) worshipped the Supreme Lord with sacrifice. These have been the earliest ordinances (of humanity).

The universe is created, sustained and even dissolved through the basic principle of *Yajña*; through the combination and separation of two basic elements *agni* and *soma* representing twin aspects of the cosmos: solar energy and all other products sustaining on it. This is the formula of synthesis, a blending of the natural with the physical and the earthly, the bodily and the psychic are combined through a process of sacrificing one for the other. The *Yajña* is stated to be the best of acts, since it is based on the wider principle of synthesis through sacrifice:

*Iśe tvorjje tvā vāyavastha devo vah savitā prārpayatu  
śreṣṭhatamāya karmaṇe* (Yajurveda, 1/1)

- i.e. We invoke you O Lord, for food, we invoke you for vigour, you are the vital breath. May the creator Lord depute you, O sacrificers, to the noblest accomplishments!

*Yajño babhūva sa ā babhūva  
sa prajajñe sa nu vāvṛdhe  
Punaḥ devānāmadhipatīrbabhūva  
So asmāsu draviṇamādadhātu* (Atharvaveda, 7/5/2)

- i.e. The Lord of creatures (sacrifice) came into being  
He came to be here all around.  
He was born and again he grew in vigour  
He became the over-lord of the bounties of Nature  
May he bestow riches on us in abundance.

In fact, the universe cannot sustain or function without this feeling of mutual co-operation. This is the secret of balance of nature at the *brahmāṇḍa* or cosmic level where the offerings are being made every moment for the divine

powers and they are worshipped. The coordination of the humans with them is made possible and the sacrifice is completed with a feeling of giving up oneself for the world at large. From the *pinḍa* or individual point of view, *Yajña* is an internal process wherein all the forces residing in the human body are sacrificing their best for the presiding deity within. In this way, Vedic *Yajña* symbolizes the widest principle of the universe through mutual interconnectedness.

### VIII

As far as the intra-connectedness of human beings is concerned, the Vedas hold that the whole world should be tied with the bond of brotherhood and friendship, since all the human beings are the progeny of the divine:

*Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ*  
*Ā ye dhāmāni divyāni tasthuḥ* (Rgveda, 10/13/1)

i.e. May all the sons of immortal listen all those who have inhabited celestial regions!

The Vedas distinguish themselves from all other literatures of the world by the holistic view of the humanity without any distinction; a clarion call is given to all human beings to become humane and bear divine progeny:

*Manurbhava janayā daivyaṁ janam* (Rgveda, 10/53/6)

i.e. May you first strive to become MAN and then rise to the status of an enlightened one, the DIVINE!

The humankind should have universal friendship with each and every being:

*Mitrasya mā cakṣuṣā sarvāṇi bhūtāni samīkṣantām*  
*Mitrasyāham cakṣuṣā sarvāṇi bhūtāni samīkṣe*  
*Mitrasya cakṣuṣā samīkṣāmahe.*

(Yajurveda, 36/18)

- i.e. May all beings look on me with the eye of a friend,  
 May I look on all beings with the eye a friend;  
 May we look on one another with the eye of a friend!

It is only when we be friendly with everybody that all the quarters of this world will become friendly to us:

*Pumān pumānsaṁ paripātu viśvataḥ*

(Rgveda, 6/75/14)

- i.e. One person should protect the other by all means.

What better idea of humanism can be thought of ! Not only this, the Vedic idea of a fear-free world suggests that the humanity can meaningfully survive and strive further if there is genuine good-will and mutual trust:

*Abhayaṁ mitrādabhayamamitrādabhayaṁ jñātādabhayaṁ  
 parokṣāt*

*Abhayaṁ naktamabhayaṁ divā naḥ sarvā āśā mama mitraṁ  
 bhavantu* (Atharvaveda, 19/15)

- i.e. May the midspace make us free from fear  
 Free from fear may both these heaven and earth be (for us)  
 May there be no fear to us from behind  
 From the front, from above as well as from below.

*Abhayaṁ naḥ karatyantarikṣamabhayaṁ dyāvāpṛthivī ubhe ime  
 Abhayaṁ paścādabhayaṁ purastāduttarādadharaḍdabhayaṁ no  
 astu* (Atharvaveda, 19/5/5)

- i.e. May there be no fear from a friend, no fear from a foe,  
 no fear from the one known to us; no fear from the unknown one.  
 May there be no fear at night, no fear in the day for us.  
 May all the regions be friendly to me.



## IX

Although it is natural for any group of people that there will be differences of mental, physical or financial status, yet the Vedas exhort human beings to live peacefully and affectionately:

*Jyāyasvantaścittino mā viyauṣṭa sam rādhayataḥ  
sadhurāscarantaḥ  
Anyo anyasmai valgu vadanta eta sadhrīcinānvah  
samanasaskṛṇomi*

(Atharvaveda, 3 / 3 / 5)

i.e. You should not be separated - growing old and thinking wisely, thrive together, moving under a common Yoke, speak sweetly to one another, I will make you have one aim and be of one mind. The two hands are alike but they do not perform the same work. Two cows calving at the same time.

Those who are capable of helping others, should invariably do so, since the course of life is long and the circumstances keep changing like the wheels of a chariot:

*Pṛṇīyādinmādhamānāya tavyāndrāghīyamśamanu paśyeta  
panthām  
O hi vartante rathyeva cakrāṇyamānyamupa tiṣṭhanta rāyah  
(Rgveda, 10/117/5)*

i.e. It is expected of every rich man to satisfy the poor implorer;  
Let the rich person have a distant vision (for a rich to today may not remain rich tomorrow)  
Remember that riches revolve from one man to another,  
As revolve the wheels of a chariot.

Not only this, the Veda goes a step further and directs that the human beings should live in complete concord,

without being jealous of each other and there should be perfect union of hearts and minds amongst them:

*Sahṛdayaṁ sāmmanasyamaividveṣaṁ kṛṇomi vaḥ  
Anyo anyamabhi haryata vatsaṁ jātamiṁvāghnyā*

(Atharvaveda, 03/30/01)

- i.e. Them union of hearts and minds and freedom from hate I will bring you.  
Love one another as the cow loves the calf that she has borne!

The divine message of the Vedas worth quoting here is that the water-storage as well as share of food amongst family members should be common so that they stay united and gather round the sacrificial fire like spokes around the navel of a wheel:

*Samānī prapā saha vo annabhāgaḥ samāne yoktre saha vo  
yunajmī*

*Samyañco 'gnim saparyatārā nābhimiṁvābhitaḥ*

(Atharvaveda, 3/30/4)

- i.e. Common be your water-storage, common your share of food,  
I bind you together to a common Yoke.  
United, gather round the sacrificial fire  
Like spokes around the navel of a wheel.

In this way, the family concord, the social harmony and the union of hearts and accord of aims are solicited for well integrated human kind in the Vedas. It must be noted here that it is not just the imposed grouping of people but the real, emotional bonding which is being aspired in the Vedic verses:

*Samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hṛdayāni vaḥ*

*Samānamastu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati*

(Rgveda, 10/191/4)

- i.e. Let your aims be common  
and your hearts of one accord  
and all of you be of one mind  
so you may live well together

The use of 'susaha' (= coming together in a noble way) is to be particularly marked here, since the Vedic view is positing a model of social co-ordination and a secret of united social life.

*Akṣaṅvantaḥ karṇavantaḥ sakhāyo manojaveṣvasamā babhūvaḥ  
Ādadhnāsa upakaṣāsa u tve hr̥dā iva snātvā u tve dadṛśre.*  
(Rgveda, 10/71/7)

- i.e. There are friends possessing eyes and others possessing ears; and yet they are unequal in mental apprehension.

*Samau ciddhastau na samam vīviṣṭaḥ sam mātarā cinna  
samam duhāte*  
*Samayościnnā samā vīryāṇi jñāti cit santau na samam pr̥ṇītaḥ*  
(Rgveda 10/117/9)

- i.e. The two hands are alike but they do not perform the same work.  
Two cows calving at the same time do not yield the same milk, both twins have not the same strength, two persons of the same family do not display equal liberality.

## X

Vedas do not show any sign of discrimination among human beings except that of a qualitative difference between good and bad which is a universal and eternal fact. Hence, the terms *ārya* or *deva* and *dāsa* or *dasyu* should not be taken to mean any separate classes of humans, they should rather be interpreted as the ones representing good and evil respectively. The battle between these two forces is constant

no doubt, but the Vedas implore upon humanity to fight for good and resist the evil so that the rule of noble may prevail:

*Indraṁ vardhanto 'pturaḥ apaghñanto arāṇaḥ*  
*Kṛṇvanto viśvamāryam.* (Rgveda 9/63/5)

i.e. May the active be glorifying God / Self,  
 Ennobling the whole world  
 Driving away the lawless / evil

This may be substantiated with several examples. To quote, "We find the antitheses between *Ārya* and *Dāsa* or *Dasyu* in the Vedas: but the antithesis is stated as one between enlightenment and ignorance, goodness and wickedness, lawful life and lawlessness ..... on the other hand, it is stated that the enemy, whether our king or a foreigner, should be valiantly opposed (Rgveda VI-75.19)

The evil-doer from the ranks of the forward marching people must be eliminated (Rgveda X.53.8). It is also said that God is the God of *Dāsa* as well as of *Ārya*- '*Yasyayam viśva āryo dāsaḥ shevadhīpa ariḥ*' - Lord God of glory is He to whom both *Ārya* and *Dāsa* belong' (Rgveda VIII 51.9). There is a prayer for the forgiveness of sins against the foreigner (Rgveda V 85.7)<sup>1</sup>

## XI

Another significant aspect of Vedic view of intra-connectedness among human beings is that of a perfect parity between male and female. The Rgveda asserts that:

*Jāyedaṣṭam*

<sup>1</sup> Abinash Chendra Bose, *The Call of The Vedas*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay: 1954, pp. 33-34

(i.e. The wife, verily, is the home), while the address by the bride in Atharvaveda lifts the physical union of husband and wife to a spiritual level:

*Amo 'hanasmi sã tvam sãmãhamsmyrktvam  
Dyauraham pṛthvī tvam  
Tāviva sambhavāva prajāmājanayāvahai*

(Atharvaveda, 14/2/71)

i.e. I am song, thou art verse;  
I am Heaven, thou art earth,  
we two together shall live here becoming parents of  
children

The Vedas propound complete equality and complementarity between man and woman which has been followed in the later Vedic tradition of *ardhanārīśvara* and the marriage ritual. The various epithets used in Vedas to denote a woman<sup>1</sup> are sufficient evidence to prove the respectable status a woman enjoyed in Vedic society. So much so, she has been addressed to be a queen of the household:

Further, her intellectual capabilities are also recognised well in the Vedas; soon after the marriage, she is invited to address the '*vidatha*', a religious assembly in which it was the ambition of sages to speak eloquently:

(i) *Gṛhān gaccha gṛhapatnī yathaso vaśinī tvam  
vidathamāvadāsi*

(R̥gveda, 10/85/26)

i.e. Go to the house, the house-hold's mistress, ruler of the home, thou wilt address the assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> Shashiprabha Kumar, "Indian Feminism and Vedic Thought" in *Facets of Indian Philosophical Thought*, Vidyanidhi Prakashan, Delhi: 1979, pp. 32-33.

- (ii) *Śikṣā stotr̥bhyo māti dhagbago bṛhadvadema  
vidathe suvīrāḥ*

(R̥gveda, 2/11/21)

- i.e. May we sing your glory loudly at this sacred assembly  
and be blessed with worthy descendents.

- (iii) *Pūṣā tveto nayatu hastagr̥hyāśvina tvā pravahatām*

- i.e. May Pūṣan lead thee from here by the hand!  
May Aśvins convey thee in their chariot.

It goes without saying that the foundation for social concord and universal harmony is laid in the happy family where both the partners live and work in coordination rather than the aggressive competition and confrontation of modern age. This basic truth had since been realised by the Vedic seers, hence the depiction of family union and conjugal love therein is unparalleled.

## XII

The Vedas not only urge upon the human kind to stay united and inter-connected with other elements of the universe but also inspire and awaken their inner stream of consciousness so that the *jīvas* may rise upto the level of *devas* and enjoy the ultimate bliss of immortality. Throughout the Vedic lore, there is an ascendant idea of getting up, growing, rising and transcending - this is what one may call Vedic dynamism. Many of the verses call upon humanity to ascend higher and still higher, such as follow:

- (a) *Udyānam te puruṣa nāvayānam.*

(Atharvaveda, 8/1/6)

- i.e. O man, your goal (in life) is to go up and not to fall down.

(b) *Ārohaṇamākramaṇam jīvato jīvato 'yanam*  
(Atharvaveda 5/30/7)

i.e. Ascending and moving in all sides is the sign of a living being and life.

The same spirit of ascending is reflected in the following aspirations of earthly beings who wish to transcend darkness and reach out to the highest light of spiritual glory:

*Udṛvayam̐ tamasaspari svaḥ paśyanta uttaram*  
*Devam̐ devatrā sūryamaganma jyotiruttamam*  
(Rgveda 1/50/10)

i.e. Looking at the transcendent light beyond the darkness, we have come to Sūrya, God among gods, the Light that is most excellent.

In another verse, the above desire is echoed as follows:

*Divam̐ ca roha pṛthivīm̐ ca roha*  
*Raṣṭram̐ ca roha draviṇam̐ ca roha*  
(Atharvaveda 13/1/34)

i.e. May you ascend to the heaven, and may you ascend on the earth, and may you ascend to the kingship and may you ascend to the wealth.

*Śukro 'si bhrājo 'si svarasi jyotirasi*  
*Āpnuhi śreyānsamatisamkrāma*  
(Atharvaveda 2/11/5)

i.e. You are bright, you are blazing, you are the light, you are illuminator. Attain superiority, surpass your equals.

### XIII

In conclusion, it may be stated that the Vedic view is an inclusive one, where each and every tiny particle of the

cosmos is accepted as an individual object and nothing is negated or rejected but there is an underlying principle of inter-connectedness which makes everything of the universe related to each other and to the ultimate reality as well. The integral vision of the Vedas is eternally relevant to humanity, since it propounds a basic principle of life and goes even upto the extent of those beings or things which are very minute and hence invisible:

*Yānśca paśyāmi yānśca na teṣu mā sumatim kṛdhi*

(Atharvaveda 17/1/7)

i.e. Among those whom I see and those, whom I do not see, may you cultivate friendship for me.

In fact this feeling of care and concern for all the aspects of creation is all that is vital for any sustainable society. The Vedas not only exhort the human beings to rise and grow themselves but also urge upon them to feel and fend for other aspects of life and world. We have to adopt this mindset and adapt it to our modern lifestyle so as to respect, appreciate and tend to the divine spirit in everything around us. This should not be taken as exclusive monism or pluralism, rather a holistic view of the reality which is so beautifully expressed in the Atharvaveda as follows:

*Pūrṇāt pūrṇamudañcati pūrṇam pūrṇena sicyate*

*Uto tadadya vidyāma yatastatpariṣicyate.*

(Atharvaveda 10/8/29)

i.e. From the full it takes out the full,  
the full is impregnated with the full.  
May we know today that,  
where from that is impregnated!





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## THE PHILOSOPHY OF ADVAITA - ITS RELEVANCE TO OUR AGE

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N. Veezhinathan

It would appear almost as a superfluous insistence upon the obvious when we say that the proper study of mankind is man. Man, according to the Upaniṣads, is a complex of the spiritual element of consciousness and the material element of the psycho-physical organism of which the mind is the predominant factor. It is the confounding of these two - the permanent and the passing, owing to the radical error known as *avidyā* that is responsible for man's becoming an enworlded subject. He becomes falsely associated with the characteristics of being an agent (*kartṛtva*), an experient (*bhokṛtva*), and a knower (*pramāṛtva*). These three characteristics constitute what is known as *samsāra*. Man, having thus become a *samsārin* or the enworlded subject or the *jīva* performs righteous deeds, commits interdicted actions, experiences their fruits, and thus under goes cyclic existence in an endless manner. The hardships and sufferings, both physical and mental, entailed by his being involved in the transmigratory process leads him to the point of weariness or disgust. He discovers that material ends, whether visible or known through the Veda, are unstable, quivering as leaves and evanescent as lightning, and

so are not solutions for his difficulties. He becomes aware of the futility of his attempts to achieve them and wearied with their useless repetition. Compare the text: "*parīkṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedam āyāt* [MU, 1.2.12]. Thus, irresistibly impelled by his perpetual suffering that swells with silence in his tortured soul, man seeks remedy for the cause of the evil consisting of the characteristics of being an agent, an experimenter, and a knower that are adventitiously presented upon his essential nature - the remedy that would lead him to liberation which is unclouded tranquillity or undisturbed serenity. That remedy, which Nārada has learnt from the venerable seers, is the true knowledge of one's essential nature which is the Self, the consciousness - element in man [*so 'haṁ bhagavaḥ śocāmi, śrutam hi eva bhagavadṛśebhyaḥ tarati śokam ātamavit iti*, CU, 7.1.3]. The knowledge of the Self is variously termed *ātma-vidyā*, *brahma-vidyā*, or *brahmātmaikatva-vidyā*. Śaṅkara in his celebrated introduction to his commentary on the *Śārīraka-sūtra* states:

*asya anarthahetoḥ prahāṇāya ātmaikatvāvidyā-pratipattaye sarve vedāntāḥ ārabhyante (Adhyāsa-bhāṣya).*

This text means:

The source of the existential predicament of man, i.e. the *jīva* which is experiential is the false identification with the mind and its characteristics that constitute *saṁsāra*. Its cause is beginningless *avidyā*. In order that it may be got rid of root and branch, what is needed is the direct knowledge of the true nature of the *jīva* as the Self (*ātmaikatva-vidyā*) - the knowledge which has arisen from the great sayings of the Upaniṣads and which must be unimpeded by the false notions such as *pramāṇāsambhāvanā* and the like. These false notions could be rinsed off only by the pursuit of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. It is solely

with this aim in view the Upaniṣadic texts, especially the great sayings, are studied and their import is inquired into, reflected, and meditated upon.

This text is significantly relevant as it contributes substantially to the understanding of the unfailing means to overcome the apparent worldliness of the *jīva* - the final goal of philosophical endeavour.

The Self is Advaita in the sense that it is free from duality (*na vidyate dvaitam yatra*). It is pure consciousness (*jñāna*), bliss (*ānanda*), a seamless whole (*ananta*) and the one and the only Real (*satya*). And this is the final import of all the Upaniṣads. In his writings, Śaṅkara proclaims that this truth is spiritual and at the same time rational and is in harmony with the teachings of the Upaniṣads. He is not an explorer of the philosophy of Advaita. He is only an expounder of it which has been traditionally handed down from God himself. It is not a fabrication of something new by him through the exercise of his imagination, as Bhāskara, his later day critic has alleged. The sixth *brāhmaṇa* of the second chapter of the *Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* sets forth the line of teachers who transmitted the teachings of the Vedānta from time immemorial. Sureśvara in his *Vārttika* states:

The *śruti* gives a detailed list of teachers who have imparted knowledge of the Self, i.e. the true nature of the *jīva*, with a view to clear the misapprehension that the truth of Vedānta may after all be something brought into being as the result of the intellectual effort of someone.

*pum matyūhotthita-āśaṅkā nivṛttyartham yathoditam  
brahmajñānasya vā vaṁśah yatnāt śrutya ayam ucyate*

[Bṛ.Up.V, 2.62]

In the *Sūta-saṁhitā* it is said:

The knowledge of the teachings of the Upaniṣads imparted by one who does not know the traditional interpretation of the Upaniṣads is not knowledge, but is exactly the opposite of it. This is the considered view of the enlightened ones.

*saṁpradāyavihīnā ya vidyā vedāntapāragā  
sā avidyā naiva vidyā syāt iti tattvaavidān s̥thitiḥ* [4.35.19]

Just as the knowledge of one's lineage is essential for one getting married, even so the knowledge of the traditional interpretation is so important as to be indispensable for attaining Self-realization.

*yathā gotraparijñānaṁ vivāhasya upakārakam  
pāraṁparyaparijñānaṁ tathā jñānopakārakam* [4.35.22]

It is with this in view, Śaṅkara states in his commentary on the *Gītā* that the person who does not know the traditional interpretation of the Upaniṣads must be kept away whatever his other academic acquirements may be [*asaṁpradāyavit sarvaśāstravidapi mūrkhavat upekṣaṇīyah*, 13.2]

Balasubramanian in his Foreword to the monograph entitled "*The Advent of a Mahān*" which appeared in the Special Issue of the Journal "*The Voice of Śaṅkara*" edited by him to commemorate the Centenary of Kāñchī Paramācārya's Pīṭhārohaṇa and published by the Ādi Śaṅkara Advaita Research Centre, Chennai, observes:

In a significant sense, Culture is tradition, and tradition is memory. It so happens that, when memory is weak, we are not able to recollect the tradition and the culture that remains behind it. As Radhakrishnan puts it, "the duration of this memory depends on the continuous appearance of creative personalities".

The advent of Śaṅkara helped us to revive our memory

of the past and thereby to get a clear understanding of the philosophy of Advaita - the Philosophy of Spiritual Life.

Śaṅkara got illuminating confirmation of the truth of Advaita from his preceptor, Govinda-bhagavat-pāda who had received it from his Guru, Gauḍapāda. Sureśvara while offering his obeisance to Śaṅkara says:

My preceptor, Śaṅkara while commenting upon the *Ḗṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* has explained the import of all the Upaniṣadic texts. He is the one who has attained the knowledge of the teachings of the Upaniṣads from his preceptor by loving devotion toward him.

*yām kāṅvopaniṣacchalena sakalāmnāyārthasamśodinīm  
vyācakruḥ guravaḥ anuvṛttaguravaḥ vṛttim satām śāntaye.*

[Bṛ.Up.V., 1.1.2]

Following the Upaniṣads, Śaṅkara described the Self as bliss, infinite, real, and consciousness. The following texts of the Upaniṣads affirm the Self as of the nature of supreme bliss:

1. *tat etatpreyaḥ putrāt, preyaḥ vittāt, preyaḥ anyasmāt sarvasmāt antaratarm yat ayam ātmā* [BU, 1.4.8]

The Self is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than everything else and is the innermost.

2. *vijñānam ānandam brahma* [Ibid., 3.9.28]

The Self is consciousness and bliss.

3. *ko hi eva anyāt, kaḥ prāṅyāt, yadeṣa ākāśa ānando na syāt* [TU, 2.7].

How could one have the bodily activity through the functioning of the vital airs, if the Self which is bliss does not exist in the body-mind complex?

4. *na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvaṃ priyam bhavati, ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyam bhavati* [BU, 4.5.6].

Verily not for the good of anything is anything dear, but for the good of the Self everything is dear.

5. *eṣo asya parama ānandaḥ, etasyaiva ānandasya anyāni bhūtāni mātrām upajīvanti* (Ibid., 4.3.32).

This is the supreme bliss of the *jīva*. All other common pleasures are but particles of it, i.e. the Self which is bliss.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* it is stated that Nārada approaches Sanatkumāra with the prayer that he may be blessed with the knowledge of the Self by which he could transcend every form of grief that characterizes cyclic existence. Sanatkumāra instructs him to realize bliss (*sukhaṃ tveva vijijñāsitaavyamiti*, 7.22.1). He then describes the nature of bliss thus:

That which indeed infinite is bliss; there is no bliss in the finite. The infinite alone is bliss and it is to be realised.

*yo vai bhūmā tat sukhaṃ, na alpe sukhaṃ asti, bhūmaiva sukhaṃ, bhūmā tveva vijijñāsitaavyaḥ* [7.23.1].

He further explains the nature of the infinite and the finite thus:

The infinite is that where one does not see anything else, does not hear anything else, does not understand anything else. The finite is that where one sees something else, hears something else, and understands something else. That which is infinite is immortal, and that which is finite is mortal.

*yatra na anyat paśyati, na anyat śṛṇoti, na anyat vijānāti, sa bhūmā; atha yatra anyat paśyati, anyat śṛṇoti, anyat vijānāti*

*tat alpam; yo vai bhūmā tat amṛtam, atha yat alpam tat martyam*  
[7.24.1].

Śaṅkara commenting upon this text observes:

The finite exists during the period of ignorance. It is like a thing seen in a dream which exists only during that period, i.e. before waking. For that very reason it is *martya* or subject to destruction, like a thing seen in dream. The infinite is opposed to that, and that is immortal.

*yatra avidyāviṣaye anyah anyena antyat paśyati, tat alpam*  
*avidyākāla-bhāvi ityarthah. yathā svapnadṛśyam vastu prāk*  
*prabodhāt tatkālabhāvi iti tadvat. tata eva tat martyam vināśi*  
*svapnavastuvadeva. tadviparīto bhūmā yah tat amṛtam.*

From the above it follows that the Self is of the nature of bliss and is infinite, i.e. it is uncaused or uncreated and unending. It is immortal or eternal.

In the section known as *Uṣasta-brāhmaṇa* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, Yājñavalkya instructs Uṣasta thus:

You cannot see that which is the witness of vision; this is your Self that is immanent in all beings; everything else apart from it is subject to destruction.

*na dṛṣṭeḥ draṣṭāram paśyeh .... eṣa te ātmā sarvāntarah, atah anyat*  
*ārtam* [3.4.2].

In the *Kahola-brāhmaṇa* section of the aforesaid Upaniṣad, Yājñavalkya gives the same instruction to *Kahola* that everything excepting the Self is subject to destruction.

*atah anyat ārtam* (3.5.1)

Again he instructs Uddalaka:

"There is no other revealing principle but the Self: it is immanent in your heart; it is immortal, and everything else is mortal.

*adṛṣṭo draṣṭa, ..... eṣa te ātmā antaryamī amṛtaḥ ataḥ anyat ārtam (3.7.3 - 23)*

When the Upaniṣads speak of the Self as infinite, what is meant is that it is not subject to limitation by time, by space and objects. In other words, the Self is eternal as it is not conditioned by time, all-pervasive since it is not delimited by space, and non-dual as it is not marked off by the objects of the world. The objects of the world do not have any independent existence and manifestation apart from the Self and so they are not real. As such the Self is not circumscribed by anything that is real. The text of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* "satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma" (2.1.1) describes the Self as real. It is implied from this that whichever is different from the Self is non-real. If the world too that appears as different from the Self were real, then this definition would be exposed to the defect of being too wide (*ativyāpti*), as it would be applicable to the world too. The *Vedānta-sūtra*, *tadananyatvam ārambhaṇaśabdādibhyaḥ* (2.1.14) describes the relation between the Self and the world as *ananyatvam*. Śaṅkara explains this term as "non-existence apart from" (*vyatirekeṇa abhāvaḥ*). Vācaspatimiśra explains the significance of this term as only negation of difference, but not affirmation of identity (*na khalu ananyatvam iti abhedam bhrūmaḥ, kim tu bhedaṁ vyāsedhāmaḥ*). What is meant is that the world has no independent existence apart from the Self. It is a mere appearance. It is non-real. And the existence of the non-real world would in no way affect the non-dual nature of the Self.

In the sections entitled *Ajāta-śatru-brāhmaṇa* and *Mūrtāmūrta-brāhmaṇa* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, it is said:



The secret name of the Self is the real of the real.

By way of explaining this, the Upaniṣad further states:

The *prāṇā-s* are real; of these, the Self is the real.

*tasya - prāṇāḥ vai satyam, teṣāṃ eṣa satyam* (2.1.20; 2.3.6)

Here the word "*prāṇāḥ*" signifies the sense organs. It is indicative of their respective objects too. Thus it stands for the whole world. The world consisting of sense organs and their objects is said to be real. And compared with it, it is stated that the Self is more real. Reality is of the nature of un-sublatedness (*bādhyatvābhāva*). In respect of it there can be no superiority or inferiority. The only distinction that we can make is that, while the Self remains unsublated for ever, the world remains unsublated for sometime, i.e. till there arises Self-realization. Hence the Self which is said to be real of the real remains unsublated for all time, while the world which is stated to be real is unsublated for the time being. In other words, the Self is absolutely real, and the world is provisionally so. Reality that is noticed, e.g. in the case of pot of the form "The pot is real" is not natural to the pot. It is derived from the Self wherein the object is superimposed or appears to exist. The reality of the Self, however, is natural to it. From this we could gather that the world whose reality is dependent upon the Self which is real is by nature non-real. The dream state and also the shell-silver are non-real. But they appear to be real as long as they are cognized. They are admitted to be apparently real (*prātibhāsika-satya*), as they are removed by the knowledge of the waking state and by the true nature of the shell. The world-appearance could be removed only by Self-realization and hence it is characterized as empirically real (*vyāvahārika-satya*). The world is a prolonged dream, while the dream state and shell-silver are the short-lived one.

The world is characterized as *mithyā* or non-real by the Advaitins. According to the other schools of Vedānta, there are only two categories, real (*sat*) and an absolute nothing (*a-sat*). It is only the Advaitin who admits a third category known as *mithyā-padārtha* which is neither real, nor an absolute nothing. It appears to be real or unsublated for the time being and is given in perceptual cognition. The absolute real must be distinguished from the real that is known.

The Self which is absolutely real, bliss and non-dual is of the nature of consciousness. In the celebrated dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Janaka in the *jyotirbrāhmaṇa* section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, we notice that Janaka raises the question as to what serves as the light for man enabling him to function (*kiṃ jyotirevāyam puruṣa iti*, BU, 4.1.3). After initially suggesting outer luminaries like the sun, the moon, fire, and speech, Yājñavalkya finally affirms that it is the Self that provides the light for man to act (*ātmaiva asya jyotiḥ bhavati*, Ibid., 3.4.6). To the further question of Janaka as to what precisely is the nature of the Self, Yājñavalkya replies that it is consciousness which is immanent in the mind, identified with the intellect and is in the midst of sense organs (*yo' yam vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hr̥di antarjyotiḥ puruṣaḥ*, Ibid., 3.4.7). Śaṅkara, commenting on this passage, states:

The Self is light as it is self-luminous; and, through this light - the self-luminous Self, the aggregate of the body and sense organs sits, goes out, works, and returns as if it were sentient, in the same way as a jar shines when illuminated by the light of the sun.

*tena hi avabhāsakena ātmanā jyotiṣā āste palyayate karma kurute, cetanāvān iva hi ayam kārya-karaṇa-piṇḍaḥ, yathā ādityaparakāśastho ghaṭaḥ.*

The *Aitareya* text, "*prajñānam brahma*" (3.3) and another text of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, "*prajñānaghana eva*" (2.4.12) identify the Self as consciousness. Being the essential nature of the Self it is eternal. Thus, according to the Upaniṣad, the Self is eternal and non-dual and is of the nature of consciousness and bliss.

The texts of the *Aitareya* - (1-3-12), the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* - (1.4.7), the *Chāndogya* - (6.3.2.), and the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.6) speak of the *jīva* as the Self immanent in the mind - the predominant constituent of the psycho-physical organism. In his commentary on the *Śārīraka-sūtra* (3.2.9), Śaṅkara states:

There is no entity known as *jīva* apart from the Self. The latter itself is figuratively spoken of as *jīva* because of its association with limiting adjuncts, viz. *avidyā* and the body-mind complex.

*na jīvo nāma kaścit parasmāt anyaḥ vidyate ..... sadeva tu upādhi-samparkāt jīva iti upacaryate.*

Īśvara, on the other hand, is the Self that transcends *avidyā* and the body-mind complex. *Īśvaratva* or the state of being Īśvara and *jīvatva* or the state of being a *jīva*, are, like the material world, projected by *avidyā*. The consciousness-element in both Īśvara and the *jīva* are real, while *Īśvaratva* and *jīvatva* are non-real.

By interpreting the trinity - Īśvara, *jīva* and the world as apparent manifestations of the Self, the Advaitin resolves the problem of one and the many. Viewed from the way of belief or opinion, Īśvara, the *jīva*, and the world are distinct realities. But, when judged from the way of Truth, they are mere appearances. It is on the basis of this vital distinction between truth and appearance that the epistemological and soteriological inquiry in *Advaita* proceed.

The Self is the Being and *Īśvaratva*, *jīvatva* and the world are the beings which are grounded in it. Man has forgotten the Being - his essential nature.

In this connection it is worthwhile recording the following observation of the German thinker, Martin Heidegger as set down by Frederic Copleston in his *A History of Philosophy* (Vol.VII, pp.437-8).

Being as the Being of beings, as that which is veiled by beings and as that which grounds the duality of subject and object that is presupposed by the study of beings is passed over and forgotten: it remains hidden, veiled. Heidegger asks, therefore, what is the meaning of Being? For him this is not a grammatical question. It is to ask for an unveiling of the Being of beings.

The primary aim of Advaita Vedānta, on the theoretical side, is the removal of ignorance or *avidyā* relating to the true nature of the *jīva*, i.e. the Self. In other words, it is the unveiling of the Being of beings. On the practical side, its aim is determining the means to fulfill this aim. And, the means is Self-realization. To achieve this, man must first rise above the life of sensual impulse and act as a moral agent. The *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* declares:

No one who has ceased from wickedness, who is restless, unsubdued, whose heart is not yet tranquil can realise the Being or unveil the veil that covers the Being.

*na avirato duṣcaritāt na aśānto na asamāhitaḥ  
na aśāntamanaso vāpi prajñānena enam āpnuyāt (1.2.24)*

In his commentary on the *Kena Upaniṣad* (4.8), Śaṅkara states:

Self-realization or the knowledge of the Self resides in those who are wholly virtuous and not at all in insincere people who are demon-like.

*teṣu hi āśrayati vidyā ye amāyāvīnah sādhanavah, na asuraprakṛtiṣu māyāvīṣu*

He adds:

Man must be trustful, i.e. free from hypocrisy in thought, word and deed.

*satyamiti amāyitā akauṭilyam vānmanahkāyānām*

In his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.2), he states:

*sarvaśāstrāṇām yatnataḥ vidheyah arthaḥ duṣcaritāt ca uparamanam.*

The earnest appeal of every *śāstra* to man is that he must refrain from committing any ignoble act.

The acquisition of this moral excellence in character is possible only when man becomes free from the tyranny of the egoistic self and has genuine love for others - love for them not as equals but as essentially one with oneself. The belief in the doctrine of Advaita that the true nature of man is the Self and it is immanent in every being would enable one to overcome selfishness or the illusion of individuality so that he could set others on the same level of himself and to love them not as such but as himself. Further the belief in the Advaita view that the deadly sins such as desire, aversion, anger, etc. are only the modes of the mind and not the qualities of the Self would make it possible for us to love the criminal while, at the same time, abhorring his crime.

Bertrand Russell, the author of the Book, *Why I am not a Christian* declares in his other work, *The Impact of Science on Society* [Routledge, London: P.105] thus:

The things that it (i.e. our age) must avoid, and that have brought it to the brink of catastrophe, are cruelty, envy, greed, competitiveness ....

The root of the matter is very simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it, for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean - please forgive me for mentioning it - is love, Christian love, or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action.....

If all men act with genuine love for others by overcoming egoistic selfishness the world would be a paradise in comparison with what it is; and that joyous serenity which we think belongs to a better world than this could be experienced here and now.

**Abbreviations:**

BU - *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*

Bh.Up.V, - *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad-bhāṣya-Vārttika*

CU - *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*

MU - *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*

TU - *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*



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 THE ĀTMAVIDYĀ-VILĀSA
 

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[A Spiritual Autobiography of  
Sadāśiva-Brahmendra-Sarasvatī]

C. Murugan\*

Sadāśiva-Brahmendra-Sarasvatī, a *Mahāyogin* and *jīvanmukta* became a legend in his own lifetime. He was the disciple of Paramaśivendra-Sarasvatī, the fifty-seventh head of the Kāñcī-Kāmakoṭī- Pīṭha of Ādi Śaṅkara. He was a prolific writer. He made a verse compendium of the *Siddhānta-leśa-saṅgraha* of Appayya Dīkṣita; it is entitled *Siddhāntakalpavallī* with the auto-commentary, *Kesaravallī*. His valuable gloss on the *Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara known as *Brahma-tattva-prakāśikā* and his splendid scholium on the *Yoga-sūtra* entitled *Yoga-Sudhākara* serve as refreshers to serious students engaged in *manana*.

Experiencing all throughout his life the non-dual bliss, his true nature, Sadāśiva enshrines the quintessential experience of the *jīvanmukta* in his work, *Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa* which consists of sixty-five lovely verses in Āryā metre. This article seeks to give a summary account of the substance of this work.

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For a clear understanding of the concept of *jīvanmukti*, it is essential to note the stages that precede its rise:

1. The first stage is characterized by the attainment of intense desire to get liberated (*mumukṣutva*). This is possible by the performance of one's allotted duties, obligatory as well as occasioned, by offering their fruits to God;

2. The second stage is marked by the adoption of asceticism (*samnyāsa*) and by the observance of vedāntic study and reflection (*śravaṇa* and *manana*)— the two constituents of *jñāna-yoga*. These two respectively remove the false notion that the Upaniṣads do not teach the non-dual Brahman (*pramāṇāsambhāvanā*) and the false notion that what is imparted in the Upaniṣads, viz. the true nature of the *jīva* is the non-dual self, may not after all be true (*prameyāsambhāvanā*);

3. *Nididhyāsana* or continued meditation upon the Upaniṣadic truth, viz., the true nature of the *jīva* as the Self characterizes this stage. It removes what is known as *viparīta-bhāvanā* or an unconscious re-assertion of old habits of thought such as "I" and "mine"; and;

4. This stage is marked by the rise of the direct knowledge of the true nature of the *jīva* as the Self— the direct knowledge which is variously termed "*brahmātmaikatva-vidyā*", *brahmajñāna*, or *ātma-jñāna*,

The aspirant who has attained this stage is known as *brahma-vit*. The *āvaraṇa-phase* (*āvaraṇa-śakti*) of *avidyā* would be removed in his case. Hence the Self which is his true nature would never be concealed from him. He will always be aware of his identity with the Self.

The *vikṣepa-phase* of *avidyā* (*vikṣepa-śakti*) will continue to operate in his case till his fructified merits and demerits (*prārabdha-karma*) which have given rise to the body by being present in which he has attained the knowledge of his true



nature are exhausted by giving forth their fruits. This phase of *avidyā* would present the world of duality; but the one who has realized his true nature as the Self would perceive it as non-real and he would never lose sight of his identity with the Self. Such a one who has attained the knowledge of his true nature as the Self and who is living out only his *prārabdha-karma* is called a *jīvan-mukta* and the state in which he is positioned is known as *jīvan-mukti*.

The life of a *jīvan-mukta* has two phases: it is either *samādhi* or mystic trance when he is one with the Self; or, the state known as *vyutthāna* or reversion to empirical life when he wakes back to variety. The world of duality would appear to him when he is not in the state of *samādhi*. On reversion to empirical life, he would perceive it as superimposed on and so manifested by the Self, his true nature which is supra-relational. He has transcended the obligation to perform any *karma* prescribed in the Vedas. Happiness, misery, etc., pertain to the mind from which he is dissociated; and, so he remains as a mere witness of them.

It may be added here that *śravaṇa*, etc., when pursued by ascetics remove the impediments present in their mind and the direct knowledge of one's Self effective in dispelling *avidyā* would arise in this life provided there is no obstruction to its rise by a variety of *prārabdha-karma*. If there be such an obstruction, knowledge would arise in the next life irrespective of the stage of life which one leads then. This is precisely the case with Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra. At an early age, says tradition, he became an enlightened soul. He spent his time mostly in the secluded peace and charm of the Kaveri banks as an *avadhūta*. Nallākavi who studied along with Sadāśiva-Brahmendra under Paramaśivendra Sarasvatī offers his salutations to Sadāśiva-Brahmendra in his *Advaita-Rasa-Maṅjarī* thus:

*vande avadhūtāmārga-pravartakam śrī sadāśivam brahma-*

Sadāśiva in his *Ātma-Vidyā-Vilāsa* gives expression to his experience of the Self. To him the world of phenomena has ceased to be a snare; it is a source of delight. Nature ministers to him. He says.

(1)

The sage shines forth in a transcendent manner, silent and pure. His resting place is the ground under the tree; the begging bowl is his palm; he wears no clothes; he wears the only ornament, the priceless one which is non-attachment.

आशावसनः मौनी नैराश्यालंकृतः शान्तः ।  
करतलभिक्षापात्रः तरुतलनिलयः मुनिः जयति ॥

(2)

The Self shines pure, devoid of multiplicity. It is eternal; it is like nothing and unlike everything. It is free from any activity.

निरुपमनित्यनिरीहः निष्कलनिर्मायनिर्गुणाकारः ।  
विगलितसर्वविकल्पः शुद्धो बुद्धः चकास्ति परमात्मा ॥

(3)

He who was so long bound merely by his own ignorance and was engaged in worldly activities and felt bewildered, now (after attaining Self-realization) by God's grace is freed his bonds.

स्व-अविद्यैक-निबद्धः कुर्वन् कर्माणि मुह्यमानः सन् ।  
देवात् विधूतबन्धः स्वात्मज्ञानात् मुनिः जयति ॥

(4)

He who was in deep slumber under the influence of *māyā* and had thousands of dreams, is now awakened by the words of his preceptor and delights in the ocean of bliss.

मायावशेन सुप्तः मध्ये पश्यन् सहस्रशः स्वप्नान् ।  
देशिकवचः प्रबुद्धः दीव्यति आनन्दवारिधौ कोऽपि ॥

(5)

Leaving out the desert region of this worthless world, he, the good swan sports freely in this excellent lake of knowledge which is full of sweet waters of unconditioned bliss.

निस्सारभुवनमरुतलम् उत्सार्य आनन्दसारपूर्णं ।  
वरसरसि चिन्मयेऽस्मिन् परहंसः कोऽपि दीव्यति स्वैरम् ॥

(6)

Having his hand for a pillow, covering his body with the blanket in the form of etheric space, using the bare ground as the soft bed, and embracing the lovely damsel, viz. *virakti* or absolute detachment from worldly concerns, someone sleeps by being overpowered with absolute bliss.

उपधाय बाहुयुगलं परिधाय आकाशं अवनिम् आस्तीयं ।  
प्रस्विपति विरतिवनितां परिरम्य आनन्दपरवशः कोऽपि ॥

(7)

He does not treat any one with contempt as worthless; he praises none. With his heart as cool as sandal paste, he remains a mass of bliss overflowing.

निन्दन्ति किमपि न योगी नन्दति नैव अपरं किमपि अन्तः ।  
चन्दन - शीतलहृदय-कन्दलित-आनन्द-मन्धरः स्वास्ते ॥

(8)

Having transcended the obligation to perform *karma* relating to one's stage and class of life, the prince among the ascetics remains in the form of unconditioned bliss, i.e. the non-dual Self.

वर्णाश्रमव्यवस्थाम् उत्तीर्य विधूय विध्यादीन् ।  
परिशिष्यते यतीन्द्रः परिपूर्णानन्द - बोधमात्रेण ॥

(9)

The Self is the ultimate; it is unborn; free from decay; ever-lasting; and ever-existent; It is beyond the senses, and is free from worldliness. It is pure and perfect knowledge.

अक्षरं अजरं अजातं सूक्ष्मतर-अपूर्वशुद्ध विज्ञानम् ।  
प्रगलित - सर्वकेशं परतत्त्वं वर्तते किमपि ॥

(10)

Having thus given expression to his experience of non-duality, Śrī Sadāśiva states:

"The wise one shall contemplate on the splendour of *Ātma-Vidyā* described herein. He will attain the intuitive knowledge of the Self and would remain as the Self here and now."

गदितम् इमं आत्मविद्याविलासं अनुवारं स्मरन् विबुधः ।  
परिणतपरमात्मविद्यः प्रपद्यते सपदि परमार्थम् ॥

Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra remains here and now in the form of unconditioned bliss. May we offer our salutations to him with a devout prayer that our land should remain by his grace holy, sacred, divine, spiritual, religious and blessed.



## ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

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

- (1) to undertake research for the extension of knowledge in the fields of natural and applied sciences generally, and in particular in the fields of physics and metaphysics;
- (2) to undertake and carry on scientific study and analysis of the Advaita system of thought as expounded by Ādi Śaṅkara and to conduct research as regards the relevance of his teaching in solving present day ills of mankind;
- (3) to undertake, promote, and encourage the study of ancient philosophical systems of India; and
- (4) to undertake research for the purpose of establishing norms necessary for realizing the divinity in man through moral, spiritual, and cultural infrastructure.

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

*saṁsārādhvani tāpabhānukiraṇaprodbhūtadāhavyathā-  
khinnānām jalakāṅkṣayā marubhuvi bhrāntyā paribhrāmyatām  
atyāsannasudhāmbudhiṁ sukhakaram brahmādvayam  
darśayant-  
yeṣā śaṅkarabhāratī vijayate nirvāṇasandāyini.*

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