

# THE VOICE OF ŚĀṆKARA

Śāṅkara-bhāratī



Editor

N. Veezhinathan

एषा शाङ्करभारती विजयते निर्वाणसन्दायिनी

*eṣā śāṅkara-bhāratī vijayate*

*nirvāṇa-sandāyini*

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

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Editor

N. Veezhinathan

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# 1

## HOMAGE TO ŚAṆKARA

॥ श्रीः ॥

वक्तारमासाद्य यमेव नित्या सरस्वती स्वार्थसमन्वितासीत् ।  
निरस्तदुस्तर्ककलङ्कपङ्का नमामि तं शङ्करमर्चिताङ्घ्रिम् ॥

I offer my salutations to Śaṅkara whose adorable feet are worshipped by all; On obtaining him as the exponent, the eternal speech, the Veda has become possessed of its true import, as from it the fallacious reasoning, metaphorically, the dirt and loose clay, has been removed.

[Sarvajñātmamuni]

**THE TEACHINGS OF ŚAṄKARA**

N. VEEZHINATHAN

The prime function of philosophy lies in awakening man to an awareness of the all-pervading Being in which he and other finite existents are grounded. Every man is a mixture of the infinite and finite, Being and non-being. The non-being is the world of objects given in perception including the psycho-physical organism in which man is enmeshed. The Being is the Self which is pure consciousness, bliss, a seamless whole, a supra-personal absolute, and the one and the only Real. Man has forgotten it, his essential nature, owing to the radical error of avidyā, and this forgetfulness has resulted in disaster. He falsely identifies himself with the psycho-physical organism, sees through the veil of avidyā the phenomenal world of individuality and multiplicity, takes it to be real, performs deeds — righteous and unrighteous, and experiences their fruits by undergoing unending cycle of births and deaths. He has thus become an enworlded subject. This process of cyclic existence is dismaying and oppressive, and he can hope to find permanent freedom from this

suffering only in the utter extinct of avidyā. And it is possible only through Self-realization. To achieve this he must first rise above the life of sensual impulse and act as a moral being. The Upaniṣad states: "No one who has ceased from wickedness, who is restless, unsubdued, whose heart is not yet tranquil can realize the Being or unveil the veil that covers the Being." This means that he must acquire "betterment of character," or "the cleansing of the heart," by the performance of moral deeds prescribed in the scripture without any selfish end in view. Then, by ascertaining the Advaitic truth as the final teaching of the Upaniṣads through Vedāntic study (*śravaṇa*), convincing himself that that teaching alone is true by means of continued reflection upon it (*manana*), and by meditating upon the truth with diligence and assiduity (*nididhyāsana*), he would attain Self-realization from the great sayings of the Upaniṣads. It would put an end to avidyā. Consequently, the enworlded subject will strip off its worldliness and remain as the transcendent Subject or the Being which is liberation. This is the teaching of the Upaniṣads which Śaṅkara has set forth elaborately in his commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and the *Vedānta-sūtra*. He is most concerned with the problem of the existential predicament which is experienced by the enworlded subject, and has shown that it is only Self-realization that is the sovereign remedy to overcome it. The Upaniṣads, he says, merely draw man's attention to his true nature and invite him to reflect for himself. They cannot show him the Self-in-itself existing in a pure state unrelated to any phenomenal elements. They give rise to Self-realization, the role of which lies simply in removing avidyā. The Self, being self-luminous in nature, would manifest of its own accord. In other words, the Self cannot be demonstrated.

In this connection, Śaṅkara has resolved the apparent contradictions in the Upaniṣadic texts by so defining the meanings of the texts that their mutual congruity becomes indisputable. He is a *jīvan-mukta*, and he makes an implicit reference to his state of *jīvan-mukti* in his commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* (4.1.15). He says:

We are not weighed down by any sense of compulsion to exercise our powers of argument to prove the validity of the state of one who continues to live in the body after attaining Self-realization. The source of certitude of its truth is one's inner experience which no one can reject or repudiate as untrue or unworthy of acceptance.

He, therefore, proclaims with authority that the philosophy of Advaita is spiritual and at the same time rational and is in harmony with the teachings of the Upaniṣads, and earnestly urges man to direct his attention towards reflection upon his true nature — the Self which is the Upaniṣadic truth in the following words in his commentary on the *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* (2.1.15):

Leave out the belief in variety which is based on vicious logic; discard the misconception of nihilism; being free from pride seek the Self as taught in the Upaniṣads which are a thousand times better well-wishers of man than even his parents.

This is his Message to Mankind. His very presence even now in the form of unconditioned consciousness and bliss accelerates the benign tendencies in our nature. May we offer our homage to him — “The Mirror of Grace and The Majesty Divine.”

### 3

## MAN'S DUTY\*

JAGADGURU ŚRĪMACCHANDRAŚEKHARENDRA  
SARASVATĪ BHAGAVTPŪJYAPĀDĀH

The souls that are in the world are called 'living beings'. Living beings are those that are endowed with life (*prāṇa*). 'Prāṇa' is life. Therefore, all beings endowed with life are called 'living beings'. All living beings are always engaged in doing something or other. Every living being is ever seen to be busy doing some act or other. The ant is always on the move. The snail does something or other. The bird remains flying or eating something. Man goes to office and does his work. Or, he ploughs and rears crops. He is seen engaged in similar other works. Not even one person remains without doing some work or other. The Lord says this in the Gītā:

न हि कश्चित् क्षणम् अपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् (III.5).

The meaning of this passage is: No one at any time remains without doing some work or other even for a moment.

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\* Translated into English by Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan.

Thus, we observe in the world man always doing something or other. For a man who lives in a small village, there are only a few things to do. For one who resides in a big town, there are innumerable things to do. Why should all be doing something or other thus?

It is only when we are doing something that we are without misery. In order to be without misery, many things have to be done. In order to gain happiness also, many things have to be done. Nothing is so difficult as remaining quiet without doing anything. In order that we may thus do things, there is something within prompting us. Some one has placed 'hunger' in all of us. That 'hunger' prompts man saying, 'Do this', 'Do that'. If we remain doing no action, the stomach pinches. One has to procure the medicine for removing the disease called 'hunger', and so one has to do things. If we get a headache, we take medicine, and it disappears. And, again, after several days, it returns. But, this disease called 'hunger' is not like that. There is great difference here from the diseases which, after having been cured, come after many days. For this disease, the medicine should be administered at each part of the day. In order to procure this medicine, everyone has to work. If the tiger kills the antelope or the cow, it is for curing this disease. It is for the same purpose that man acts many roles and tries to be clever. If he is hungry, he procures rice, cooks and eats it. For procuring rice, he works. If the body is to be preserved, one has to work. It is not possible to remain without work even for a moment.

If one remains without any work, one's body would become useless. If one is a wealthy person, it does not mean that he should sit idle without work. It is such a person that

has many things to do. Anxiety haunts him always that the loans that he has given should be safe. In order to ensure this he has to attend to several things. More than a Brāhmaṇa who lives by gathering rice-grains by alms everyday, a wealthy man who has property worth ten lakhs is active. There is no end to the work he does.

Thus there are many kinds of work that a man does. The things that he does for the sake of his own body constitute one kind. Another kind consists of things that he does for the sake of those who belong to him. Children, wife, father, mother and other persons have been entrusted to his care. There are things which he has to do for them. Over and above these, it may be that he owns a cow and a dog. If these attachments increase, there may be a cat. And there are things to do for the sake of the farmer who looks after his land, his servants and others. After these, there are items of business connected with the village community. Just as keeping the house neat and tidy is the responsibility of the family which lives in it, managing the affairs of the village is the responsibility of its inhabitants. A family may consist of ten members; in a village there may be thousand persons. Just as a man should attend to matters connected with his family, he should also attend to the affairs of his village. And, then, there are many things which have to be done for the welfare of the country.

Thus, there are several categories of action. Of these, cleaning the teeth, washing the clothes, bathing, eating, etc., are for the sake of one's body. Building a house, cleaning it, acquiring the accessories for running it, etc., are for the sake of the household, i.e. they are for the sake of those who belong to one's self. Digging a canal, repairing a tank,

building a hospital, making adequate arrangements for the treatment of patients, etc., are for the sake of the village community. The things that are to be done for the country's welfare are known to all these days.

Among the things that we do, there are, besides those that are for feeding ourselves, the duties towards others. Those who have the ability should protect the weak and the disabled: this is the way of the world. The weak and the disabled are entrusted to the care of those who have the ability to protect them. A man who has the ability brings up his child. When he becomes old and decrepit, he is taken care of by his son. Thus, the process of change is natural to the world. This is characteristic not only of humans but also of birds and other living beings. Birds and animals look after their young ones. This characteristic is seen among small creatures also, such as insects, cats and monkeys.

Things go on happening in the entire world. Man does many things; he gets involved in each of them; he earns money; he seeks co-operation; he digs canals; he builds hospitals; he attends to the affairs of government; he derives ways and means for removing the sufferings of people. Sacrificing some of his own interests, he works for the common-weal and also attends to his own affairs. He goes to his fields; he works in his office. Thus, he does many things for earning a living.

The things that are necessary for men are of three categories. For satisfying hunger there is required food; then, for protecting one's self from the sun's heat, cold weather, etc., and for covering one's body, there are required clothes; and, for shelter and rest, there is required a house. These are of greater necessity than other things. Besides these



whatever a man acquires is for the sake of maintaining his children, arranging for their marriage, etc.

Apart from what a man has to do for acquiring the three essential things, he has to be active in regard to other things also. He has to procure his daily food, repair his house when it gets damaged, and stitch his clothes when they get torn. But he also secures the essential things required for the others entrusted to his care. He procures food for the appeasement of the daily disease, hunger, eats and makes others eat. There is a particular aptness in describing hunger as disease and food as medicine.

क्षुद्ध्याधिश्च चिकित्स्यतां प्रतिदिनं भिक्षौषधं भुज्यताम्  
स्वादन्नं न तु याच्यतां विधिवशात् प्राप्तेन सन्तुष्यताम् ।  
शितोष्णादि विषह्यतां न तु वृथा वाक्यं समुच्छार्यताम्  
औदासीन्यम् अभीप्स्यतां जनकृपानैष्टुर्यं उत्सृज्यताम् ॥

(*Sādhana-pañcakam*, 4)

Ācārya Śaṅkara enjoins in this śloka: 'Take treatment for the disease called hunger'. A man with disease would take only that amount of medicine that is necessary for the cure of the disease. He would continue to take the medicine that is good to taste. Besides, he would go in for the medicine that does not involve great cost. Similarly, one should take only that quantity of food which is essential for the satisfaction of hunger. And plain food should be enough. This is the meaning expressed in the śloka.

We have thus seen that man has to do several things both for his own sake and for the sake of others. Besides these, he does also certain extraordinary things. We shall see what some of these are. One man sets up a cross and builds a church. There nothing is seen which would appease

his hunger. Another person wears a garland of *rudrākṣa* beads and smears his body with the sacred ash. With these, will he be rid of his hunger? Or, will these add anything to his dress? Yet another man puts on the mark of Viṣṇu. These doings do not fall within the essential things of which we spoke. These are not necessary for the satisfaction of hunger, or for one's clothes, or for the house. They are not at all necessary for the protection of those who are entrusted to one's care. These are things that are extra. A man takes a *pañcapātra* (small vessel of water) and *uddharāṇi* (spoon), and makes some noise, and does something. He performs what is known as *Śrāddha*; he invites Brāhmaṇas and feeds them. By these acts will his hunger be satisfied? Will the rains come to make his fields fertile? Nothing of that sort will happen. Bringing stone from hills, man builds temples. The temples are not used for providing him with shelter. The temples remain locked during the nights. They are not even useful for seeking shelter against rain. Of what use are they?

Some persons perform several deeds in the name of religion. Some fight for the sake of religion; even heads get broken. Do not such actions appear as unnecessary over and above what are required for man?

Smearing one's body with the sacred ash, wearing *rudrākṣa* beads, building temples, performing *śrāddha*, feeding the Brāhmaṇas — can we not say that all these are extra actions? Of what use are such actions? As if these are not enough, there are *bhajana* parties functioning in this city (Madras) since some years past. What they do involve is great strain for the throat. There is no relation whatsoever between their *bhajana* and their office work. The act of *bhajana* goes on without being necessary. Do not all these actions appear to be quite unnecessary?

But are these really unnecessary? Why should they be performed? What is their use? We shall now ponder over these questions.

Why does man earn money? Will it not do if he gets his hunger satisfied everyday? If he goes to some household and ask for food, he gets it. He could eat also in charity homes. No one thinks: 'There is food to be had; why receive pay?' If a choice is offered between one measure of cooked rice and ten rupees, a person would choose the latter. Why? Is it not that he requires only food? What for is money? Cooked rice would be useful for one meal a day. Uncooked rice could be kept for another meal. But money could be used for fulfilling one's needs ten times. A man prefers that which could be used for several days.

To a boy who goes to school, his mother gives cooked food for his mid-day meal. If we are travelling to a distant place, we take with us rice and other accessories.

In former times there were no railways. There were no quick means of transport. On account of these, our troubles only increase. Train fare, hotel charges, charges for bus, coffee, etc., all these involve expenditure of money. Besides these, if we go to a new place we spend money for buying new things. All these expenses are incurred nowadays. In former days when one travelled, there was no expense at home on food. And, by walking, there was strength for the legs.

I remember, now, of who lived long ago in this manner, spending very little. There was one Krishna Ayyar in a place called Chittur near Palghat. He started a Bank. Out of the income from the Bank, he founded and maintained a Vedic School wherein over seventy students studied. In

those days the students who completed their studies there used to come here and continue their studies in the Sanskrit college founded by V. Krishnaswamy Ayyar.\* Among those who thus started schools there was another by name Muthu Ganapathi. He lived in Tiruvaiyaru. He arranged for Vedic study for about a hundred or a hundred and twenty boys. He also saw to their proper boarding, etc. He used to levy a penalty on those who were working under him when they committed mistakes, fund the money thus collected, and maintain the school out of the interest therefrom. One day, an officer visited that school. Seeing the boys, he said: 'Oh, what a waste! Why should these boys be rendered useless for life? What is the use of impounding them like a herd of sheep for ten years? No way is being shown to them to earn a living. If they had been taught English, they would have benefited greatly.' A person who was then by his side replied: "By keeping these boys here without sending them to learn English, half the expenses are saved. If they had been made to study English, money would have been spent on costly dress, hair-dressing, a bicycle, etc. All that money has now been saved. Had they learnt English and begun to earn, half their salary would go to meet these unnecessary expenses. Now, that has been avoided. As for earning the other half of such salary-amounts, we are showing them the way here. Even if they fail to learn anything here, they will gain by not having turned their attention to English." These instances have been given in order to show that there were people in those days who lived great lives by spending economically.

Even in those days people would take with them enough rice if they had to travel fifty miles. The quantity of rice, etc., would increase with the increase in distance.

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\*This discourse was given at the Madras Sanskrit College.

No one tinks: "It is enough if I have my food today. Why should I worry about tomorrow?" We gather even today the things required for tomorrow, thinking that if tomorrow we do not have the requisite ability we would be put to trouble. If we do not think of tomorrow's comforts, then there would be no need for money. In this Maṭha,\* the servants were being given wages in the form of food at first. But they were not very much satisfied. They thought that if they were given rice, it would be better. They could then use the quantity of rice required for themselves and sell the rest. Now, they are being given rice. It is only the dullwitted person that would receive what would last for a few days; the intelligent man would prefer things that would last for many days.

Thus, when we gather things for later use, we calculate on the basis of the number of days during which we would be happy. Is it one day? One month? One year? How much do we put by? Is it a thousand? Ten thousand? The more we are able to gather, the better it would be for our happiness. But all do not know for how much time they could live happily. The last day has been fixed by God. Yet, we want to be happy always.

After the limit, the last day we referred to above, will the money and other accessories we gather here help us to be happy? These will be useful only as long as our present body lasts. After that, they will become useless. The works that we do are intended to help us remain happy later on. We should do things that will make us happy always. It is true that the works that we do at present should be done. Beside these, we must also do that which will keep us off from misery always. We do not die at any time. Only the

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\*Kāñcī Kāmakoṭi Maṭha.

body dies. Therefore, we must do even now that which will keep us in happiness always. There is no source of solace after death. Just as we insure even now for the future, we must do the things necessary even now.

We are at the foot of a mountain. We have with us one thousand rupees. And that too in cash consisting of paise-coins. A number of thieves approach us with evil intentions. A great turmoil is about to take place. If we could cross the mountain and reach the other side, we would be safe. In such a situation, a person comes and asks for exchange of cash for a thousand-rupee note. What would we do then? Immediately, we would give him the bag containing cash and receive the note and crossing the mountain get to safety. Only, that note should be such that it would be valid in the country beyond the mountain. Our story is similar to this man's. If we make use of our present strength and resources and do things that would be useful later, we shall meet with no difficulties.

One may ask: "We should be happy here. How is it certain that we shall exist later?" The answer to this question is "Suppose we exist, should we suffer?"

नास्ति चेत् नास्ति नो हानिः अस्ति चेत् नास्तिको हतः

In this verse, this is what is stated. The *āstika* says: "We shall exist even after this life; therefore, we should do good works now." The *nāstika* asks: "Where is the certainty that we shall exist?" The reply is: "If we do good works now, we shall gain if we exist afterward, and we shall not lose if we cease to exist." On either alternative, there is no misery for the *āstika*. If it is sure that we shall exist, it is the *nāstika* who will be in trouble.

Therefore, it is always good to do good works. When we have to go on a journey to another place, we should keep ourselves in a happy mood. If we do not do things that will make us happy after we have departed this body, we shall have to suffer. The things that we have to do in order to avert this (suffering) we can learn through discretion. If there are no immediate results for the acts that we do at present, the results will come later. What Newton has stated has been explained a long time ago by our great men with reference to the soul. That every action has a reaction is declared clearly in our Śāstras.

The Christians do not accept the doctrine of re-birth. Yet, some of the things that they say show that even without their knowing they admit re-birth. What they say is this: After leaving the present body the soul waits for the Judgement Day, and as judged it goes either to Heaven or to Hell in accordance with its past deeds. Although the physical body which is the locus of pleasure and pain lies here dead in the coffin, it takes on another body and experiences pleasure or pain (in Heaven or Hell). We refer to such a phenomenon as re-birth. Just as for experiencing pleasure and pain in that body, there is the present body which is the locus of deeds that are the cause, even so, for the present birth, and its experience of pleasure and pain there must have been a previous birth as providing the cause.

It is, therefore, necessary that we should do some things that would be useful even after the present birth. What I referred to earlier as extra things are those which we do for the purpose of being happy always. Acts such as wearing the sacred ash and *rudrākṣa* beads, and performing *śrāddha*, are done for keeping ourselves happy always. The more we do such things, the more they will do us good.

Besides the things that we do for the sake of our welfare in the present life, we should do those things also which will secure our welfare for crores and crores of years, in fact, for ever. The currency of our country will not be valid in Russia. If for all countries there is a single king, there will be a single currency bearing his insignia which will be valid everywhere. For all the fourteen worlds, there is a sovereign ruler. He is God. There is currency which is legal tender in all His dominions. That currency will be valid everywhere and always. What is that? That, verily, is *dharma*.

Before leaving Ayodhya for the forest, Rāma went to Kausalyā to take leave of her. Is it not the practice that a mother gives edibles to her son who is starting on a journey, so that he may eat them on the way? What is to be given to a son who is to be away for fourteen years? Kausalyā did not know what to give. After pondering deeply she said,

यं पालयसि धर्मं त्वं धृत्या च नियमेन च।  
स वै राघवशार्दूल धर्मस्त्वां अभिरक्षतु॥

(*Ayodhyakāṇḍa*, XXV,3)

“O Rāghava! There is nothing that I could do to protect you. There is only *dharma*. That *dharma* will protect you, which you have been preserving with courage, constancy and regularity. That is the only blessing that I can give.” If we preserve *dharma*, it preserves us in turn. The *dharma* that protected Rāma is the *dharma* which is the Law in God’s universal empire. Besides, what we do normally for the sake of children, parents, village, country, etc., we should also do those things which would bring lasting happiness to the soul. Let us see what those things are:

Whatever we do, we should do dedicating it to God.



God is the limit of all knowledge. If we dedicate our deeds to Him, those deeds would give us lasting happiness. If those deeds are not novel, but the ones which our forebears had handed down from generation to generation, their performance would be easy. Even if we have to do something bad, if we do it, not for filling our stomach, but as something extra, dedicating it to God, that will become *dharma*.

Which *dharma* should we follow? We are soaked in the *dharma* which has been followed by our great men for generations, for a long time. As a matter of experience, we can say that they gained happiness. It is enough if we follow that *dharma*. If we cast about for something new, it will be a vain endeavour; and there will be the doubt whether that new thing is good or not. Therefore, to follow the *dharma* which is meant for us and which our great men adopted as the rule for their lives is good.

It is thus clear that we should do something extra which is not for the sake of our stomach, or for our family, or for our village, or for our country. That thing should be what has been handed down to us through generations. We should do that, after dedicating it to God, and with courage and regularity. That is *dharma* that will give us happiness for ever.

Whatever we do with our mind, speech, and body the three instruments of action - all that should bear *dharma*. We should acquire *dharma*, the spiritual currency, in exchange for all the money that we possess. All the powers that we have must be expended in augmenting *dharma*. The *dharma* that is thus acquired and augmented will be valid at all times and in all places. What Kausalyā described to Rāma as his talisman is that. Rāma had to face formidable obstacles. He overcame them through *dharma*.

Man should always do things that will uplift him. Among the animals, all except man are invertebrates. They are referred to as *tiryak* animals. It is man alone that grows vertically. His form shows that he is superior to the other animals. If he follows the way of *dharma*, even the animals would support him. If he adopts the path of *adharma*, even his brothers would desert him. This is illustrated in the story of Rāma. In the following *śloka*, this is clearly explained:

यान्ति न्यायप्रवृत्तस्य तिर्यञ्छोऽपि सहायताम् ।  
अपन्थानं तु गच्छन्तं सोदरोऽपि विमुञ्चति ॥

(*Anarghavarāghavanāṭaka*, i, 4)

Because Rāma followed the way of virtue, even monkeys helped him. Because Rāvaṇa adopted the ways of vice, even his younger brother broke away from him. Although Rāvaṇa was in his own kingdom, surrounded by his armies, he could not be saved. For a man of virtue, there is wellbeing everywhere.

Therefore, it is *dharma* that will protect one. Apart from what we do for satisfying our desires, anger, etc., apart from what we do for earning a living, we should do extra deeds – those which were done by our forebears with courage and regularity. They will give us happiness.

\* \* \* \*

## 4

### KALI – YUGA

[TWO SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS IN THE BHĀGAVATA]

T. P. RAMACHANDRAN

It was Lord Kṛṣṇa who saved the unborn Parīkṣit from the deadly effect of Aśvatthāma's *brahmāstra*. when Parīkṣit grew up, the Pāṇḍavas installed him on the throne of Hastināpura and retired to the Himālaya to spend their last days in prayer. Parīkṣit was as strong and virtuous as his ancestors. He toured the country to satisfy himself about the welfare of his subjects. On the bank of the river Sarasvatī, he saw a strange sight. A wicked man, disguised as a king, was severely beating a bull and a cow. The bull was limping on just one leg, having lost the other three. The cow had lost its auspicious appearance and was weeping profusely. The bull was enquiring about the weakness of the cow, and the cow was also sorrowing for the condition of the bull. (See *Bhāgavata*, I, 16-17 chapters). Briefly speaking, the significance of these symbols is as follows. The moment Śrī Kṛṣṇa left the world, the present *kali-yuga* had begun. This *yuga*, with all its evils, is personified in the man who was tormenting the bull and the cow (*kali-puruṣa*). Morality (*dharma*)

is represented as the bull on one leg, and the weeping cow represents mother earth (*pṛthvī*). Both are afflicted by the evils of *kali-yuga*. Let us explain further.

*Dharma* has four main qualities. They are truth *satya*, compassion (*dayā*), austerity, or self-denial (*tapas*), and charity (*dāna*). In contrast, (*adharma*) has four features in the main, which are untruth (*anṛta*), cruelty (*hiṃsā*), discontent (*asantosa*), and strife (*vigraha*). As the world passes from *satya-yuga* to *kali-yuga*, the qualities of *adharma* rise, and by their impact, the characteristics of *dharma* correspondingly decline. Since there are four yugas in each cycle, the rise of *adharma* and fall of *dharma* is said to happen quarter by quarter (*turyāṃśa*). (See *Ibid*, XII, 3, 18-24).

In the present episode, the above idea is symbolically represented by the four limbs of the bull. In *satya-yuga*, *dharma* stood firmly on all fours. When *tretā-yuga* began, it lost one limb. In *dvāpara-yuga*, it had only two limbs. And when *kali-yuga* started, it had only one limb. It was this precarious condition of *dharma* in *kali-yuga* that Parīkṣit understood when he saw the bull on one leg. Now let us turn to the significance of the cow symbol.

Our moral circle is not confined to human society. It extends to nature, or earth, as well. Nature consists of both inanimate objects and all living beings other than humans. Inanimate nature, made up of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) is the source of our sustenance. It is our duty to respect and protect it. Likewise, plants and animals deserve our respect. So far as the body is concerned, we also belong to the animal world. Plants and animals are complementaries in nature. For example, while animals absorb oxygen and give out carbon dioxide,

plants do the reverse. Thus, we, as part of nature, have a close relation to the rest of nature. And since man alone is gifted with intelligence, we are duty-bound to protect the rest of nature. In other words, the need for *dharma* extends beyond human society to nature as well – our environment. Unfortunately, as time passes from *yuga* to *yuga*, man's moral sense declines and the earth is subjected to exploitation and pollution by us. It was this pitiable state of the earth when *kali-yuga* began that was conveyed to Parīkṣit by the sight of the decrepit and debilitated cow.

Unfortunately, it is not within the powers of any human individual, however mighty and virtuous he might be, to stop the march of time. This is nothing but God's *līlā*. This lesson is also conveyed to us by what followed in the same episode. The wicked man, disguised as a king, who was harassing the bull and the cow (*dharma* and *pṛthivī*) was no other than *kali-yuga* represented as a human being (*kali-puruṣa*). Nothing can beat *kali* in its ways of deception and evasion. On seeing the man behaving thus, King Parīkṣit drew his sword to slay him. But suddenly, the man dropped his disguise, fell at the feet of the king, and begged pardon. As for Śrī Rāma, for Parīkṣit also it was a firm principle to forgive anyone who surrendered at his feet. And so, the king withdrew his sword and relented to give *kali* a lesser punishment – he must leave this country of virtue immediately. Instantly, *kali* begged for some other place to live in. And Parīkṣit allowed him to live in four places – gambling (*dyūta*), intoxicant (*pāna*), association with women (*strī*), and slaughter-house (*sūnā*). These are places for *adharma* in four forms – falsehood (*anṛta*), infatuation (*mada*), sensual enjoyment (*kāma*), and enmity (*vaira*). *Kali* asked for one more place, and Parīkṣit allowed him to have access

to wealth, noted for the quality of *rajas*. And *kali* began to flourish in these five places. (See *Bhāgavata*, I, 17, 38 to 40).

The lesson conveyed by the above story is that those who sincerely desire *mokṣa*, though born in *kali-yuga*, should avoid evils like these. (See *Ibid*, I, 17, 41). The evils of *kali-yuga* are a challenge to the spiritual-minded. Fortunately, our ṛṣis have assured us that in *kali-yuga* even constant prayer to God will protect us from evils and pave the way for ultimate release. To drive home this teaching, there is another symbolic representation, which we shall cite below. It occurs in the *Padma-purāṇa* in the section where it praises the greatness of the *Bhāgavata* – “*Bhāgavata-māhātmya*,” Chapters 1 to 6.

Once Nārada toured the earth, which he had known to be auspicious. He visited several holy places, but did not find peace of mind anywhere. He understood that by the impact of *kali-yuga*, the earth was losing its moral character. Continuing his tour, he reached the bank of the river Yamunā, which was closely associated with the early charms of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There he saw a strange sight. A young lady, sunk in sorrow, was nursing two old and feeble men. The maiden was the personification of *bhakti*, and the two sick old men were her sons, who represented *jñāna* and *vairāgya*. The maiden had toured the whole of Bhārata-varṣa along with her two sons. Everywhere the force of *kali* had rendered all the three old and decrepit. But when they came to Vṛndāvana, which still shined with devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *bhakti* woman regained her youth and beauty. But *jñāna* and *vairāgya* remained uncured. (See *Ibid*, Ch. 1). The explanation is found in the next chapter as follows.

In the first three yugas, *jñāna* and *vairāgya* played a vital role as means to *mokṣa*. But in *kali-yuga*, *bhakti* will be the chief means to *mukṭi*. (See *Ibid*, Ch.2, v.4). Nārada tried to revive the two sons by various means. He loudly chanted into their ears the Veda, Vedānta, and also the *Bhagavad-gītā*, but to no avail. Just then an ethereal voice advised Nārada to seek guidance from learned persons. Not knowing whom to consult, Nārada roamed in all places seeking advice from the learned. Ultimately, he met the four ever youthful ṛṣis, Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana, and Sanatkumāra. They told Nārada that the recital (*pārāyaṇa*) of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* in the *saptāha* form alone could restore the two unfortunate sons of *bhakti*. They added that all the evils of *kali* would vanish when the holy sound of the *Bhāgavata* was heard, just as deer flee when they hear the roar of the lion. (See *Ibid*, 2, 62). The story of the *Bhāgavata* is made up of the essence of Vedic hymns and the Upaniṣads. Therefore it is of special merit in *kali-yuga*. (See *Ibid*, 2, 67).

(This does not mean that the study and practice of the Veda could be arbitrarily given up in *kali-yuga*. What it means is that, when they face innumerable difficulties in *kali*, the *Bhāgavata* would make up for all their shortcomings.)

It is the special importance of *bhakti* in the form of the *Bhāgavata* in *kali-yuga* that we learn from this episode. Let us complete it. Accompanied by Nārada, the four ṛṣis reached the bank of the Gaṅgā near Haridvāra and did the preliminaries for reciting the *Bhāgavata* in the *saptāha* form. Several holy persons assembled there. The maiden *bhakti*, accompanied by her two sons, also reached that place to listen to the narration. Wonder of wonders, even as they reached the place with this intention, the two ematiated sons, *jñāna* and *vairāgya*, regained their youth and strength (See *Ibid*, 3, 67).

Finally, the relevance of this topic to Advaita may be stated thus. Though from the standpoint of Advaita, the world is an illusion, we cannot afford to ignore our connection with it at the level of common experience (*vyavahāra*). So long as one has not experienced one's non-difference from Brahman, the evils of *kali* have to be taken into account and avoided at all costs. For all seekers of release, whatever may be their philosophical commitment, *bhakti* is the sole armour against the mounting threat of *kali*. The *Bhāgavata* assures us that even if elaborate rituals of worship, involving time and ingredients, become impossible, the constant recital of the name of God (*nāma-saṅkīrtana*) will pave the way for release from *samsāra* in this age.

\* \* \* \*



## 5

# **THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF THE PHILOSOPHY AND THE ROLE OF THE PHILOSOPHER: A VEDĀNTIC PERSPECTIVE**

R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

### **1. PHILOSOPHER AND THE PURPOSE OF PHILOSOPHIZING**

The question about the role of the philosopher is connected with the role of philosophy which, again, is connected with the subject–matter of philosophy. As a professional, the work of a philosopher is comparable to, for example, that of a doctor. When we want to discuss about the role of a doctor in society, we have to pay attention to the nature and purpose of medicine in the context of the diagnosis and treatment of diseases as well as preservation and promotion of health of humans and others. Just as we ask, “What is medicine for?” we have to ask, “What is philosophy for?”.

Though it is a truism that all cognitive enterprises, scientific or otherwise, undertaken by professionals are for the sake of the people, there is a strong tendency among some technical philosophers today both in India and elsewhere to ignore this well-known truth and indulge in a kind of philosophical activity which is nothing but a futile intellectual exercise, profitless and uninspiring. It has been the practice among the classical philosophers in India to say in the beginning itself that the philosophical treatise which they write is intended to help the people overcome the suffering or to attain a goal which is worthy of realization. Consider, for example, Īśvara Kṛṣṇa's opening verse in the *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* stating that, since there is threefold suffering (*duḥkha-traya*) for human beings, there is the need to undertake the inquiry into the means of terminating it. This healthy practice which was prevalent in the Indian philosophical tradition should not be ignored as nothing more than a pious convention like invocation. On the contrary, it deserves consideration as a pointer to the responsibility of the professional philosopher to society, for whatever he says and does should, by being purposive, be beneficial to the people. In this connection I invite your attention to the remarks of two philosophers, one from the Indian, and the other from the Western, tradition. According to Vācaspati:<sup>1</sup>

A philosophical system is expounded for the sake of the ordinary people who are in need of it and who are, eligible for it.

Wittgenstein observes:<sup>2</sup>

What is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some

plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., and if it does not improve your thinking about the important question of everyday life.

So, three points emerge from the views expressed by the two distinguished philosophers mentioned above.

*First*, philosophy which is for the sake of the people has an important part to play in society. This point may be rephrased differently. Though philosophy, as it was understood and practised by the most exemplary philosophers in the East and the West, has dealt with God, the transcendent reality, and the cosmos, the creation of the transcendent being, it has been, in an important sense, *anthropocentric* analysing, exploring, and explicating the nature and destiny of the human being in relation to both God and the physical universe. Neither God who is omniscient nor the world which is material requires philosophy. On the contrary, the human being who is parviscient, who is not only finite, but is also aware of the finitude, who is capable of knowledge, desire, and will, has the need for philosophy.

*Second*, there are problems or questions of everyday life covering the entire range of philosophy. Making a distinction between "pure philosophy" and "applied philosophy", we can say that some of the problems, *e.g.* questions about God, the knowledge of the external world, the knowledge of other minds, questions about good and bad, right and wrong, fall in the area of pure philosophy, and some others such as abortion, euthanasia, sexual morality, world hunger, civil disobedience, capital punishment, professional ethics, etc., are dealt with in applied philosophy. Though a hard and fast distinction

between these two branches is not possible, still we can say that pure philosophy deals with *general* question whereas applied philosophy is concerned with *particular* issues which require specific answers.<sup>3</sup>

*Third*, philosophy must help a person to improve his/her thinking about these problems. Not that human beings do not think outside the domain of philosophy or that they begin to think only with the help of philosophy. On the contrary, philosophy plays a distinctive role in guiding systematic thinking in three ways. First of all, philosophy in general, and applied philosophy in particular, clarifies "the concepts employed in public discourse and private thought with a view to avoiding obscurantism and unnecessary befuddlement."<sup>4</sup> Secondly, it does not work of formulating arguments for and against any particular issue by highlighting the principle which is applicable to it and drawing the conclusion therefrom. Thirdly, where conflicting conclusions arise as a result of the application of divergent principles to the same issue, it may help a person to take a decision in a concrete situation on the basis of "priorities". These three functions. *viz.* concept clarification, argument identification, and result ranking, which philosophy is expected to do will promote systematic thinking.<sup>5</sup> A word of caution is necessary here. It must be borne in mind that, as R. M. Hare has pointed out, principles and their application to concrete cases can be taught, but not decisions.<sup>6</sup>

I shall now turn my attention to the subject-matter of philosophy and make a brief review of the present philosophical scenario in the West. The self-image of philosophy has suffered a lot because of the scepticism about

the claims of philosophy and its achievements. No one today is so vocal as Richard Rorty about the damage to the self-image of philosophy in his writings. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,<sup>7</sup> *The Consequences of Pragmatism*,<sup>8</sup> and *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*.<sup>9</sup> The age-old conception of philosophy is that it is love of wisdom which, encompassing within its bosom the whole of reality, endeavours to see God, man, and the world as integrally related. The philosophical pursuit was in the direction of the search of the One in the midst of the many and of the explanation of the relation between the One and the many in a holistic way. Fortunately for us in India, there is continuity of the philosophical tradition, though it has given the impression to a superficial observer that philosophy in India has been stagnating without any progress. It is not necessary here to consider the question about the so-called progress in philosophy in general and in Indian philosophy in particular. I shall, however, highlight the strength of the philosophical tradition in India. Uddālaka of the Upaniṣadic fame speaks of the One by hearing which what is not heard becomes heard, what is not thought of becomes thought of, and what is not known becomes known.<sup>10</sup> The Upaniṣadic outlook of which Uddālaka is the spokesman is only an elaboration of the Ṛg-vedic insight into the primal One as the ground of the manifested universe comprising both sentient and insentient beings.<sup>11</sup> It has inspired both classical and contemporary Indian philosophical tradition in India. What, then does this tradition stand for? It is not difficult for us to spell out the central idea of the hoary tradition which has not withered away. To see how things hand together, to explain everything in terms of the One without denying the many, which are related on an

ontological hierarchy, and to emphasize the unity of theory and practice — this has been the main thrust of the philosophical tradition in India from the Vedic times down to the present day.

## 2. PHILOSOPHIZING IN THE WRONG TRACK

The philosophical scenario has been changing from time to time in the West. Perhaps, these changes, the twists and turns, sometimes major and very often minor, have given the impression of progress in the philosophical thinking of the West. There are competent scholars in the West who have questioned for various reasons the so-called “progress” in the Western philosophical thinking. Rorty, for example, has questioned the Cartesian, empiricist, and Kantian traditions which have laid emphasis on the primacy of epistemology. He has also challenged the claims of “perennial philosophy”. “The Demise of the Tradition” is the title of a recent book of Kai Nielsen’s.<sup>12</sup> The very fact that he discusses the question about the stresses on, and the retreat of, the tradition and also raises the question, “Can There Be Progress in Philosophy?”<sup>13</sup> is a pointer to the cracks that have developed in the philosophical structure after Descartes.

Before the advent of Descartes philosophy in the West was oriented mainly towards metaphysics. From this one should not hastily jump at the conclusion that there was no epistemology at all before Descartes. The problem of knowledge and belief which haunts the philosophical domain and which is discussed and debated *ad nauseam* is a heritage from Plato. The one that “exists and must exist” vis-à-vis the sensible world as set forth by Parmenides

through “The Way of Truth” and “The Way of Seeming” respectively, the One as the ground of the many as taught by Plotinus, Being of metaphysics and God of theology — such metaphysical issues dominated philosophy before Descartes.

From the time of Descartes onwards philosophy has become a technique, a method. The insight into the One through contemplation, through ecstasy, through theōriá, through knowledge, was replaced by a *method* of investigation into the two realms of mind and matter, subject and object. Philosophy as the vision of the One became epistemology in the hands of Descartes, Locke, and Kant and undertook a relentless and rigorous search after certainty, search after secure foundations of knowledge, which, most unfortunately, has proved to be a case of chasing a will-ó-the-wisp. Wittgenstein, Rorty, and others are severely critical of the foundationalism of epistemology and also of the programmatic analytical philosophy, which succeeded epistemology. So the question is whether a philosopher should be engaged in this type of epistemology and analysis that was rampant in the academic centres of the University?

Let us now look at another turn in philosophy. This time philosophy is reduced to logic. Russell proclaimed in 1914, four years after the publication of the first volume of the *Principia*, that logic is the essence of philosophy. In 1948 he came to the conclusion that logic is not a part of philosophy at all. It is well-known that neither Whitehead nor Russell developed their philosophy on the basis of mathematical logic. Though the earlier Wittgenstein held the view that logic is the essence of philosophy, when he

was under the spell of mathematical logic, and suggested that we could know the world from logic *via* language as if the structure of language maps the structure of the world, the later Wittgenstein, following a pragmatic view of language, abandoned the earlier view contained in the first part of the *Tractatus*. Considering that the mystique of logic has failed to deliver the goods, as it cannot help us to understand the mystery of the existence of the world — “That the world is, is the mystical”, so declared Wittgenstein — should we say that philosophy is nothing but logic and that a philosopher should be engaged in the technicalities of logic and tiresome verbal games?

We may consider one more turn in philosophy. This time it is the linguistic turn. Contemporary philosophers who are preoccupied with the problem of meaning are interested in the analysis of linguistic expressions. Holding the view that the basic empirical statements are statements expressing sensory experiences, one group of logical positivists, e.g. Ayer and others, undertake phenomenistic analysis, whereas another group of logical positivists, e.g. Carnap and others, who hold that the basic empirical statements are expressions of observations of physical objects, undertake physicalistic analysis. The whole exercise of the logical positivists is based upon, what Quine characterized as, two dogmas, viz. the analytic-synthetic distinction and reductionism. They are also obsessed with the myth of the given. Such an approach, it is obvious, will exclude metaphysical, theological, ethical, aesthetic statements as they do not conform to the Procrustean bed of the positivists. Once again the question is whether a philosopher should undertake this type of linguistic analysis.



I started with the view that philosophy, according to Parmenides and others, is the quest after the One, the pursuit of "That which is," by knowing which everything else is known. Philosophical wisdom is seeing things together in a holistic way. According to Heidegger, something has gone wrong with Western philosophy from the time of Plato. Western philosophy from Plato to Hegel has become onto-theo-logical, because it identifies the Being of metaphysics with the God of theology: that is to say, ontology, the study of Being qua Being, is essentially connected, in Western metaphysics, with theology, the investigation of the highest being which is the necessary condition for the possibility and actuality of all other beings.<sup>14</sup> What is wrong, one may ask, with philosophy as ontotheology? Heidegger's simple and straight answer is: forgetfulness of Being. According to Heidegger, the impact of ontotheology can be seen in science and Western culture.<sup>15</sup> Separating themselves from philosophy, sciences developed and established their independence. To quote Heidegger:<sup>16</sup>

*The end of philosophy proves to be the triumph of the manipulative arrangement of a scientific, technological world and of the social order proper to this world. The end of philosophy means the beginning of the world civilization based upon Western European thinking.*

Science and technology consider beings as objects present on hand to be manipulated without moral and spiritual restraint in pursuit of ends willed by men for men. Not only science and technology, but also our languages exhibit the ontotheological concentration on beings. There is the urgent need to overcome metaphysics which has become onto-theo-logical by an understanding of Being as

unconcealment rather than as the highest Being that grounds itself and all other beings. This calls for a new thinking — post-ontotheological thinking—which is non-conceptual, non-representative, non-calculative. So, the question is whether it is possible to have a thinking which is neither metaphysical nor scientific, a thinking which is a response to a call which comes from Being itself.

For entirely different reasons Wittgenstein is critical about epistemology and analytical philosophy. His *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* show that it is impossible for us to determine the “foundations” of knowledge. Nor is it possible for us to work out a “synthesis” of world-view in view of the fact that our social practices and language games are diverse. He was against a grand *Weltanschauung*. We live our day-to-day life within the framework of “ungrounded beliefs”. However, in all his writings his insight into the Transcendent, the Mystical, the subject, the philosophical “I”, is unmistakably present. He is concerned to show that the Transcendent is outside the boundaries of language, the boundaries of logic. In addition to empirical and mathematico-logical propositions, there are metaphysical, theological, mystical, and moral statements which are not meaningless. He is aware of, and has felt the need of, the mystical ascent. Consider the following passages:

*My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as non-sensical, when he has used them - as steps-to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it).*

*He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.<sup>17</sup>*

*Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?*<sup>8</sup>

*The subject does not belong to the world, but is a border of the world.*<sup>19</sup>

*The philosophical "I" is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the border - not a part of the world.*<sup>20</sup>

Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value* shows how he was alienated from his time and how he was disgusted with scientism and secularism, the culture of the Enlightenment. He is convinced that religion is "a man's refuge in this ultimate torment".

### **3. RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF A PHILOSOPHER**

Philosophy as a discipline must be relevant to society and a philosopher who is doing philosophy has professional responsibility. Opinions may differ with regard to the question of the social relevance of a subject. When I was on a lecture tour in Canada a few years ago, someone asked me why a tax payer should support a department of philosophy or religion. It is obvious that the question was asked not with a view to elicit my answer, because the questioner knew what kind of answer I would give being a professional philosopher, but with a view to convey his own perception of the value or use of the various subjects taught in colleges and universities. Obviously, he would, like many others, classify subjects into useful and useless; and subjects such as philosophy and religion belong to the

second category. Here it is not necessary to go into details about the rationale behind this classification. Suffice it to say that the ideal of liberal education which every society should promote and support for the healthy development of the people will include subjects such as philosophy, religion, history, and so on and that to decide the value of a subject in terms of job opportunities and so on is an index of vulgarity and an expression of philistinism.

Then, how about the role of philosophers as professionals and their responsibility to society? The question about the role of philosophers as professionals is closely connected with what they consider to be the *subject matter* of philosophy, with the *method* they follow, and with the *views/ideas/teachings* which they make available to the people. There is a strong view that philosophy as epistemology, or philosophy as logic, or philosophy as analysis as pursued and practised with the appropriate methods by the professional philosophers has neither been enlightening nor socially relevant. It has been stated that the "narrowing of philosophical vision" has resulted in the decline of philosophical influence in American society".<sup>21</sup> If even for a professional philosopher, who is fairly acquainted with the ideas, theories, and arguments in these specialized areas, it is difficult to follow the type of discussion that takes place in the professional philosophical journals, nothing need be said about the plight of non-philosophers who may be genuinely interested in philosophy.

A decade ago the American philosophical Association issued a statement on "The Role of Philosophy Programs in Higher Education" explaining the function of

philosophy as an autonomous metadiscipline and its contribution to the elucidation of normative issues involved in other disciplines such as medicine, law, history, political science, sociology, and so on. It also amounts to a statement on the role of the professional philosopher for the reason already mentioned. It says:<sup>22</sup>

An important function of philosophy is to foster interdisciplinary perspective... Every discipline generates some essentially philosophical questions about itself, and many questions about relations among different disciplines are also philosophical... Both in exploring the interrelations among other disciplines and in examining their methods of inquiry, philosophy fulfills a unique and important role as a metadiscipline.

Again it says:

Philosophy provides a unique and systematic approach to normative issues...It is sometimes thought that moral, social, aesthetic, and other value questions do or can receive adequate treatment in the social sciences or perhaps in literature or history. These other disciplines, however, do not, and do not claim to, deal with normative questions in the way philosophers do...

In most communities there is much concern with a variety of public policy issues...Philosophers are generally competent to speak informatively on certain important aspect of these issues, particularly the normative aspects.

Regarding the first claim I am doubtful whether philosophy should undertake the role as a metadiscipline. This is no other than the claim that philosophy is the "cultural overseer" which can adjudicate any claim in any domain. This, according to Rorty, is a spurious claim. Nielsen summarises Rorty's arguments as follows:<sup>23</sup>

The traditional conception of philosophy holds that philosophy can be a foundational arbiter of culture. Culture involves claims to knowledge very centrally, and philosophy adjudicates such claims. This has been the proud claim of philosophy, but, as Rorty would have it, the three great philosophical revolutionaries of the twentieth century — John Dewey, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Martin Heidegger — have shown, in diverse ways and in very different idioms, such a claim to be without warrant.

Though philosophy cannot be a metadiscipline, it can, in its own right, be an autonomous discipline committed to its age-old subject matter—the pursuit of the One which is the source, support, and end of all, the implication of the concept of oneness, and the problems connected with, and arising from, the unity of theory and practice. A philosopher has a decisive and effective role to play in this direction.

There is much to be said in favour of the second claim. Philosophy can certainly pinpoint the normative principles involved in various issues that arise in the day-to-day life of the people, examine the issues in the light of these principles, consider the applicability of other principles to the same issues, examine the cases where the principles will break down, and so on. If so, philosophy, as Dewey would have it, is very much concerned with “the problems of men”, and the philosopher has an important role to play in society.

#### **4. PHILOSOPHIZING IN THE VEDĀNTA WAY**

According to Vedānta, the role of a philosopher may be viewed from two perspectives - individual and social. As

an individual, s/he is engaged in philosophizing. When s/he is doing philosophy, s/he is very much a professional philosopher in pursuit of truth. Subscribing to the view that philosophy is not only a view of life, but also a way of life, she is committed to the unity of theory and practice. As a member of the society, s/he must endeavour to see that the social reality, in his own life as well as in that of others, reflects the philosophical ideals of oneness. First of all, I shall consider the philosopher's role as an individual who is doing philosophy.

In India philosophy is both *darśana* and *darśana-śāstra*. "*Darśana*" means seeing, perception, intuition. Each of these words in the verbal form is transitive pointing to an object. In order to bring out the full significance of the etymological meaning of the word "*darśana*" we have to ask: "seeing what?" Since the answer is seeing or intuiting truth, "*darśana*" means "*tattva-darśana*". If so, philosophy means the vision of truth, the immediate and direct knowledge of the real. Philosophy also means *darśana-śāstra*, or *tattva-vicāra* in the sense of a treatise on, or inquiry into, the truth or the real. Though classical philosophers of the Indian tradition knew the semantic distinction between *darśana* and *darśana-śāstra*, still they considered philosophy both as *darśana* and *darśana-śāstra*, as it stands for the vision of truth as well as the means thereto. *Darśana-śāstra*, which is a philosophical treatise sets forth the nature and stages of inquiry (*vicāra*) to be undertaken for realizing the truth. In broad terms, philosophical inquiry is of two kinds—*pramāṇa-vicāra* and *prameya-vicāra*, i.e. epistemological and metaphysical inquiry respectively. It may be noted that metaphysical inquiry is mentioned only

in a suggestive way. The word “*prameya*” means an object of knowledge; so, not only physical objects, but also values such as *dharma*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* are *prameyas*. If so, *prameya-vicāra* should not be understood in the narrow sense of metaphysical inquiry; it also includes axiological as well as ethical inquiry. The Upaniṣad, which is also called Vedānta and which is the source of the classical schools of Vedānta such as Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and so on, provides the clue to the right approach to the pursuit and practice of philosophy.

Let us first consider the celebrated *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text which says: “The Self, indeed, should be seen—should be heard of, reflected on, and contemplated upon.”<sup>24</sup> It speaks about the object to be seen or realized as well as the means thereto – guided study of the text (*śravana*), rational reflection of the content of the text (*manana*), and steadfast contemplation on the object following intellectual conviction (*nididhyāsana*). In short, the Upaniṣad spells out, briefly, but unambiguously, the object of inquiry as well as the method of inquiry for the guidance of philosopher. It is not necessary to go into the details about the method of inquiry, Suffice it to say that the method will comprise both epistemological and metaphysical investigation by means of different kinds of reasoning (*tarka*) that are called for and by means of analysis of concepts and meanings that are necessary. And so, such an investigation cannot but be technical. This is as much true with regard to philosophy as it is true with regard to other disciplines. This, however, does not mean that philosophy is reduced to logic or epistemology, or that philosophy is equated with analysis of terms, concepts, and meaning. Though atten-



tive to the means, the Vedāntic philosopher does not lose sight of the end. Śaṅkara condemns dry reasoning (*śuṣkātarka*) which is purposeless and therefore futile. On the contrary, he commends reasoning which is purposive, which regulates thinking towards the goals as set forth by scripture. He characterizes this kind of logic as one which aids scripture.<sup>25</sup>

The Upaniṣad not only provides the vision of the One, but also throws light on the social implications of the conception of the One. Consider the following texts:<sup>26</sup>

He who sees all beings in the very Self and the Self in all beings, feels no hatred by virtue of that (realization).

When to the man of realization all beings become the very Self, then what delusion and what sorrow can there be for that seer of oneness?

One may think that it is enough if the Upaniṣad says that all are one and that one can work out the implications of such a view in the context of plurality of beings which we experience in our daily life. But it appears that the Upaniṣad does not want to take any chance in working out the implications of the concept of oneness. It is a matter of common experience that there is a plurality of individuals. It is also well-known that every individual has his/her own life history marked by birth and death, that everyone is a distinct center of experience, etc. According to Advaita, what differentiates one individual from another is the mind-sense-body complex. But the Self in every individual is the same and that the Self which is no other than Brahman is the supreme reality. Since the Self, the sole reality, is in every individual, all human beings are equal. The Upaniṣad suggests the sense of equality, the divine nature of every

human being, by saying that one must see all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings. In other words, all are included in the Self, and the Self indwells in all beings. As if this is not enough, the Upaniṣad takes one step forward and declares that to a realized person all beings become the very Self: that is to say, the Upaniṣad suggests the identity of the *jīva* with Brahman-Ātman. So, according to the Upaniṣad, one has to pay attention to the ideas of inclusion, indwelling, and identity in working out the implications of the concept of oneness. One cannot think of a better theoretical justification for the enforcement of social justice than the one that has been made available to us by the Upaniṣad.

If we examine the history of philosophy, we find that philosophy has developed by performing three functions—speculation, interpretation, and analysis. Philosophers, both in the East and the West, have speculated on the origin of human beings and the world; and as a result of their speculation they have built philosophical systems providing a place for humans, world, and God in the scheme of things. Different philosophical systems such as monism, dualism, and pluralism have a bearing on religion. In fact, scholars like Karl Jaspers speak about the religious roots of the Western philosophical tradition. The strength and grandeur of the Indian *darśanas* lie in the fact that they combine both philosophy and religion. A philosopher who is concerned with the problems of life cannot function *merely* as a technical philosopher analysing terms and concepts, truth functions and argument forms, words and sentences, however important these may be, ignoring the forms of human activity in the spheres of religion, morals, and politics. It means that s/he will be required to go beyond the boundaries of philosophy and step into religion, ethics, social and political philosophy.

## 5. INTELLECTUAL ROLE OF A PHILOSOPHER

In the light of the philosophical guidance provided by the Upaniṣad, the Vedāntic philosopher accepts the world, questions it, and endeavours to transcend it. Each one of these activities requires some explanation. I shall confine myself mainly to the Advaita point of view.

According to Advaita, a philosopher has to start his/her reflection on the given world, which is presented to his/her consciousness. The given world may be characterized as the prereflective world. It is pluralistic in character comprising persons and objects. As a person, a philosopher is involved in it as the subject of knowledge, the agent of action, and the enjoyer of the consequences of action. S/he notices that the persons s/he interacts with, and the objects s/he handles, manipulates, and makes use of, appear and disappear, each one having a distinct life history. S/he also realizes that his/her life is governed by various kinds of social practices, a variety of forms of life, and manifold language games, all of which are pointers to the tradition s/he has inherited. The worldly life which goes on in this way within this horizon, what Śaṅkara calls *loka-vyavahāra*, is natural (*naisargika*).<sup>27</sup> A philosopher, when s/he starts doing philosophy, has to accept, like others the world horizon, since, being thrown into it, s/he is already a part of it. The world "acceptance" has to be understood from two perspectives from the perspective of ignorance according to which one not having the vision of the One, sees nothing but plurality and from the perspective of knowledge as a result of which one, having attained the vision of the One, experiences the oneness of all. Though there is the acceptance of the world in both the perspectives, it is not the same, as the behaviour of a person after realization will be

entirely different from the one before realization.<sup>28</sup> Accepting the given world, a philosopher begins to question it in the most radical way; and it is this questioning through speculation, analysis, and interpretation that gives birth to philosophy.

There are, according to Śaṅkara, two problems which a philosopher has to tackle at the beginning of philosophy. The first one is the problem of enworlded subjectivity. The Self or consciousness which is pure subjectivity (*asmad*), is involved in the objective world (*yuṣmad*) through the mind-sense-body complex.<sup>29</sup> Advaita classifies all entities into two categories—the self and the not-self—for the purpose of epistemological and metaphysical analysis. This classification is intended to highlight the polarity between the two categories. The not-self includes the mind, the senses, the body, and the things of the external world, which are all objects of the Self or consciousness, which is the basic *revealing* principle in the absence of which nothing can be known. Neither the mind nor the senses can know anything without the help of the Self. So Advaita holds the view that the Self or consciousness is, to use the Husserlian expression, the “principle of principles”, “the light of lights” (*jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*),<sup>30</sup> as the *Upaniṣad* would put it. The point to be noted here is that the Self, the pure subjectivity, is never an object of knowledge, while an object of knowledge, whatever it may be, can never be the subject, *i.e.* the Self or consciousness. The involvement of the Self in the objective world through the mind-sense-body complex is the problematic according to Advaita. How, then, does this involvement take place? “Through superimposition (*adhyāsa*)”, says Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara says that just as light and darkness are mutually exclusive, even so the Self, which

is the subject, and the not-Self which is the object, are mutually exclusive, and so it is wrong to identify the one with the other, or to superimpose the nature or characteristics of the one on the other.<sup>31</sup> However, we do commit such a mistake, what Śaṅkara calls, "superimposition", in our daily life. For example, when we say, "I am stout", "I am blind", "I am happy", we superimpose stoutness, blindness, and happiness, which are the characteristics of the body, the sense organ, and the mind respectively on the Self. Similarly, we also superimpose the nature of the Self on the mind and the sense organ when we say that we know through the mind and the senses; again we ascribe the nature of the Self to the body when we speak about the sensitivity of the body. In short, there is the illicit transfer of the nature of the Self on the not-Self, and *vice-versa*. It must be borne in mind that the role of *adhyāsa* is not restricted to epistemology and metaphysics. On the contrary, it is pervasive, in all our activities – cognitive, affective, and conative. Though the Self, the pure subjectivity, is not involved in any kind of activity, we ascribe all activities to it and make it enworlded. Unless one is sensitive to the functioning of *adhyāsa*, one will not be able to understand the Upaniṣadic view that the Self which is bodiless (*aśarīra*)<sup>32</sup> becomes embodied, gets involved in worldly life, and suffers bondage. Nor can one make spiritual progress on the basis of intellectual and moral discipline, which requires discrimination (*viveka*) on the intellectual side and dispassion (*vairāgya*) on the moral side.

The second problem which also presupposes *adhyāsa* is about the possibility of knowledge. Śaṅkara raises the most radical question: "Under what condition is knowledge possible?" His answer to this question is: *adhyāsa*. Some explanation is necessary to understand Śaṅkara's point of

view. The epistemic inquiry, first of all, presupposes the knower (*pramātā*); secondly, in the absence of the knower there is no scope for the functioning of the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa-pravṛtti*); thirdly the work of the *pramāṇas* presupposes the functioning of the senses (*indriyas*); fourthly, the body is required as the basis for the senses; fifthly, one must have a sense of identification with the body as one's own (*ātmabhāva*); and finally, there must be *adhyāsa* for a person to have the sense of identification with the body. So, according to Śaṅkara, the entire epistemic inquiry presupposes *adhyāsa*. In other words, in the absence of *adhyāsa* it is not possible for us to have knowledge; and in the absence of epistemology, metaphysical investigation is not possible. So, a philosopher should be sensitive to the role of *adhyāsa* which is presupposed in the entire range of epistemological and metaphysical analysis (*pramāṇa-prameya-vyavahāra*).<sup>33</sup>

Let me now turn my attention to the social dimension of *adhyāsa* in an individual's life. A human being is called upon to play different roles in society — the role of a husband or wife, the role of the head of an institution, the role of the head of the state, and so on. The roles are both relative and temporary. One plays, for example, the role of a husband in relation to somebody; and this role, it is obvious, is relative. One is not the head of the state in one's relation to one's spouse, one's children and friends. Again, the role of the head of the state is only temporary. The very fact that a human being is able to play different roles at the same time shows that s/he is essentially different from all of them. The failure to realize this important truth leads to the problem of "role-identification". When a person plays a certain role, e.g. the role of the head of an institution, s/he not only

“projects the image” of the role, but also identifies himself/herself with that, forgetting the fact that s/he can never play the role all the time. Some people regret and some others resent the change of role, e.g. the change of headship of the department. Identification with a role invariably produces arrogance and pride, what the Greeks called the *hybris*. When a person is the head of the government for a number of years, the strong identification with the role makes him/her, at the height of power and pride, think that s/he is the government, that s/he is the state. The problem of the role-identification manifests itself in other ways as well. Some one claims to be a Hindu or a Christian, a Brāhmin or a Kṣatriya, man or woman, and claims privileges and special considerations thereby. Whether the term “role” is used in a functional sense or as a class concept, there is the problem of role-identification which Śaṅkara calls *adhyāsa*. Why does this problem of role-identification, arise? “It is because of ignorance (*avidyā*).” answers Śaṅkara. Overpowered by ignorance, a person not only does not know the Self in him/her, but also identifies himself/herself with the mind-sense-body complex as well as with the things outside. If only one understands the truth of the Self and is sensitive to the fact that one plays different roles due to *adhyāsa*, one will be humbled in one’s life, responsible in one’s conduct, and detached and self-controlled in one’s attitude and outlook.

## 6. SOCIAL ROLE OF A PHILOSOPHER

I shall now consider the social role of a philosopher from the Vedāntic point of view. On the social side, Advaita may be viewed as *critical theory* combining philosophy and social theory. Philosophy is a reflection on the essential meaning of life, individual as well as social. It is, therefore,

concerned with the freedom of the individual and the factors or conditions essential for the realization of freedom. I have already stated that philosophy, as understood and practised in the Indian tradition, is not only theory, but also practice. It is against this background of the unity of theory and practice that we must try to find out the answer to the problem of spiritual freedom and social justice. Humans as spiritual beings are free, though for all practical purposes they are bound in many ways. This amounts to saying that a human being is both free and bound, i.e. is spiritually free and physically/socially bound. Spiritual freedom as well as equality which is accepted as the goal should not be projected as a convenient cover to hide bondage and social inequality which we notice as social reality. The fact of bondage and all that it implies on our daily life can never be ignored on the ground that a human being is free. Nor can the freedom of a human being be denied on the basis of the limitations a human being is subject to. Advaita holds that, when the right knowledge of the Self arises, ignorance gets removed along with the false identification with the mind-sense-body complex caused by it. A person who has attained the saving knowledge remains as the Self, which is really bodiless; such a person, though with a body, is really bodiless and is spoken of as the liberated-in-life (*jīvanmukta*).

The problem of freedom has to be looked at not only from the individual side, but also from the social side. The politico-socio-economic order, as it exists in every society, is as much a limitation on human freedom as the mind-sense-body complex is. We find that there is social domination, economic exploitation, and political oppression of one class or group by another. It means that there is the concept of privilege, which is the bane of human life, functioning in



all these spheres of daily life militating against the concept of freedom and making a mockery of the doctrine of oneness. Swami Vivekānanda, who was concerned with the problem of theory and practice in Vedānta, as any Advaitin should, declared that one cannot be a Vedāntin and also accept the theory of privilege in any form.<sup>34</sup>

The Vedāntic ideals in its dual form – the concept of freedom and the doctrine of oneness – operates in three ways for the purpose of guiding practice. First of all, it functions as a regulative idea for reordering the economic, political, and social structure. The ideal that has to be realized is oneness of all human beings, who exhibit differences of various kinds. These differences can neither be destroyed nor suppressed because they are “natural” inasmuch as they arise from the material component associated with the Self in its empirical journey. However, there is a way to overcome them. Secondly, the Vedāntic ideal helps us to develop a moral point of view. A correct understanding of the Vedāntic ideal and all that it implies will generate in a perceptive mind a righteous indignation at the injustice of various kinds practised and perpetuated in society. One committed to the Vedāntic ideal will realize that, though differences among human beings caused by the mind-sense-body complex are unavoidable, the inequality in various forms connected with the theory of privilege is avoidable. Thirdly, the Vedāntic ideal presupposes a certain competence of the human being for realizing the ideal. According to Śaṅkara, there is a special competence in every human being for the pursuit of knowledge and performance of work (*jñāna-karma-adhikāra*).<sup>35</sup> It will be of interest to note that the special competence of every human being mentioned by Śaṅkara has also been stressed by thinkers like T.H. Green.

According to Green, every human being has "reason" and "will". By "reason" Green means the capacity in a human being for conceiving the perfection to be attained; and by "will" he means the capacity for action for the purpose of pursuing the perfection.<sup>36</sup>

Just as we speak about the beginning of philosophy we can also speak about the end of philosophy. According to Advaita, reality is trans-relational, trans-rational and trans-linguistic. It is knowable, but not in the way in which stocks and stones are known. It is necessary to bear in mind not only the "matter" of thinking, but also the "method" of thinking. It is well-known that thinking operates through distinctions. As already stated, we have to distinguish the Self from the not-self by means of reasoning of various kinds. It may be mentioned here that Advaita employs the logic of *anvaya-vyatireka* for distinguishing the Self from the not-self.<sup>37</sup> When reasoning has prepared the ground for comprehending the meaning of the scriptural text such as "That thou art" (*tat tvamasi*),<sup>38</sup> it has to withdraw from the scene of operation, since the Self, the ultimate reality cannot be known by means of thinking which is conceptual, representative and relational. Such a non-conceptual, non-representative, and non-relational thinking can be obtained from the major texts of the Upaniṣads.

Finally, we may speak about the acceptance of the world by one after attaining Self-realization.<sup>39</sup> To one who has attained the vision of the One, the world of plurality is no more what it was earlier. As the Upaniṣad says, such a person perceives the entire world as Brahman,<sup>40</sup> and accepts everything, because everything is Brahman.

## NOTES

1. Īśvara Kṛṣṇa; *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, Ed. with text, English translation, and notes by S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri (Madras: University of Madras), verse 1, p.1.
2. N. Malcom, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (London: OUP 1958).
3. See Leslie Stevenson, "Applied Philosophy", in *Applying Philosophy*, Ed. by T.W. Bynum and William Vitek (The Metaphilosophy Foundation, 1988), p.21.
4. Bernard H. Baumrin, "Applying Philosophy", in *Applying Philosophy*, op. cit., p.5.
5. Ibid, pp. 5-7.
6. See R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (OUP, 1952), p.69.
7. Princeton University Press, 1979.
8. University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
9. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
10. See *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6,1.3:  
"येन अश्रुतं श्रुतं भवति, अमतं मतं, अविज्ञातं विज्ञातम्"
11. See *Rg-veda*, 10.129.
12. Kai Nielsen, *After the Demise of the Tradition: Rorty, Critical Theory, and the Fate of Philosophy* (Westview Press, 1991).
13. Ibid., chapters 1,4, and 7.
14. See Martin Heidegger, "The Ontotheological Nature of Metaphysics," in *Identity and Difference*, tr. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 59.
15. Ibid., p. 75.
16. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, tr. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 84-110.
17. *Tractatus*, 6.54.
18. Ibid., 5.633.

19. Ibid., 5.632.
20. Ibid., 5.641.
21. See Morton White, *Science and Sentiment in America* (New York: OUP, 1972), p. 301.
22. See *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 53 (Feb.1980), pp. 363-370.
23. Kai Nielsen, *op.cit.*, p.4.
24. 2.4.5.
25. See his Commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, 1.1.2.
26. *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*, 6-7.
27. See Śaṅkara's introduction, called *adhyāsa-bhāṣya*, to his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*: "*naisargikao'yam lokavyavahāraḥ*"
28. See his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, 1.1.4.
29. See Śaṅkara's *adhyāsa-bhāṣya*, opening sentence. The word "*yusmad*" meaning "you" is used in the sense of the object, the not-Self, whereas the word "*asmad*" meaning "I" is used in the sense of the subject, the Self.
30. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.16.
31. See Śaṅkara's *adhyāsa-bhāṣya*, opening sentence.
32. See *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8.12.1.
33. See Śaṅkara's *adhyāsa-bhāṣya*,
34. See Swami Vidyātmānanda (Ed.), *What Religion is in the Words of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 2<sup>nd</sup> Indian Edition, Reprint, 1978), p. 69.
35. See his commentary on The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1.
36. See T.H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (London: Longmans, 1941), p.31.
37. What remains the same at all times and places is *anvaya*; and that which is subject to change is *vyatireka*. Advaita distinguishes the Self from the not-Self by five kinds of *anvaya*-

*vyatireka*. The first one called *dr̥g-dr̥śya anvayavyatireka* shows that the Self is the seer whereas the not – Self is the seen. The second one which shows that the Self is the witness whereas the not-Self is the witnessed is called *sākṣi-sākṣya anvaya-vyatireka*. The third method called *āgamāpayitadavadhi anvayavyatireka* brings out the nature of the not-Self as that which appears and disappears whereas the Self is the limit of such appearance and disappearance. What is called *anuvṛtta-vyāvṛtta anvaya-vyatireka* shows that, while the Self is what is uniformly present everywhere, the not-Self is not. The fifth method called *duḥkhi-paramapremāspada anvaya-vyatireka* shows that the not-Self is subject to suffering whereas the Self is of the nature of bliss.

38. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.7.

39. See R. Balasubramanian, (Ed.) *The Naiṣkarmyasiddhi of Sureśvara* (Madras: University of Madras, 1988), 4.50, p.376.

40. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14.1.

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## 6

### THE PLACE OF ADVAITA IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

#### A META-PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH (1)\*

T. P. RAMACHANDRAN

### META-PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES

I propose to review the systems of Indian philosophy from the point of view of what in modern terminology is called meta-philosophy. It is, therefore, necessary for me to explain the implications of this expression before I apply it to the Indian tradition.

#### 1. The Meaning of Meta-philosophy

Philosophy, as traditionally understood, has a wide scope and inquires into basic questions that go beyond the range of other subjects. It examines the nature of reality, the process of knowledge, and the meaning of life. At the same

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time philosophy is capable of self-examination. And a self-examination is called for because there are not only problems *in* philosophy, but also problems *about* philosophy. To discuss these, to philosophize about philosophy itself, constitutes meta-philosophy. The meta-philosopher is not a class apart. It is the philosopher himself who occasionally pauses to have a second look at philosophy. Great philosophers in all traditions are known to have done this.

The term "meta-philosophy" is of recent origin. But the idea of it is not unknown to the ancients either in the West or in India. We have not inherited a term in Sanskrit for meta-philosophy. But since the concept is found in the Indian tradition as elsewhere, we might venture to suggest the expression "*darśana-vimarśana*" for it.

The incentive for meta-philosophy is the presence of wide and persistent differences among philosophers. In the first place, there are differences on the very concept of philosophy—on what its origin and end are. Consequently the questions for philosophy and the way they are dealt with could themselves be different for different philosophers. In other words, there are differences also in the content and method of philosophy. Thus basically philosophers could differ on four issues—origin, goal, content, and method. Such differences obtain between broad traditions, for example between the European and the Indian traditions. Secondly, even within a tradition, where the questions are almost the same, there are differences in the standpoints adopted by philosophers for dealing with the same questions, and these give rise to various schools within the tradition.

Differences among philosophers are not easily settled. This is a contrast to what obtains in the sciences. When two

scientists differ on the same question, there are definite procedures by which their solutions could be verified. But solutions to philosophical problems are not open to precise means of verification at least in the foreseeable future. Consequently, philosophical differences often persist through the ages. It is because of the inevitability of philosophical differences that philosophy has been carefully regarded both in Europe and in India as a pursuit rather than as an accomplishment. It is love of wisdom, desire to know, *jijñāsa*. Nevertheless, the persistence of philosophical differences and the impossibility of arriving at a common agreed philosophy leads the philosophers themselves to re-examine the foundations of their pursuit, giving rise to what has come to be called meta-philosophy.

## II. The Tasks of Meta-philosophy

Meta-philosophy may be said to have two tasks. One task is to identify and examine the levels and areas of difference among philosophers. If differences cannot be overcome, it is good at least to know where we differ so that differences may neither be overlooked nor exaggerated. The presence of differences among philosophers does not mean that there are no agreements among them. If that had been so, there would not have been any dialogue among philosophers. Differences have to be identified together with agreements. Hence the first task of meta-philosophy is to find out where philosophers meet and where they part. On the basis of this identification a second task also arises.

Inasmuch as philosophers differ, almost on a permanent basis, it is natural for those who pursue philosophy to align themselves with one or other philosophical position. The commitment to a particular type of philosophy, however,



does not mean either ignorance of, or prejudice against, other types. Ignorance and prejudice have no place in intellectual pursuits. On the contrary, it is only on the basis of sufficient awareness of other positions that an intellectual is led to prefer one type of philosophy to another. It only shows that there are legitimate grounds for genuine philosophical commitment. What are these grounds? How far are they natural and how far deliberate or rational? The natural or psychological grounds cannot be helped, but must nevertheless be identified. But whatever grounds are logical or rational could be examined and improved. Thus, to describe and discuss the reasons for philosophical choice is the second task of meta-philosophy. It is necessary next to discuss in detail the outcome of these two tasks to understand their application to Indian philosophy.

## **1. Identification of Philosophical Differences**

### **(a) Basic Differences**

Let us first consider the nature of the differences among philosophers. When speaking of these differences, it is necessary to distinguish between two levels of them. There are differences of a basic nature and there are differences that are superficial. The basic differences are in respect of what constitutes the origin and goal of philosophy and what its content and method should be. Let us indicate them first.

The conception of the goal of philosophy depends on the conception of its origin. The two factors are thus closely connected and may be taken together. Traditionally, there are two trends among philosophers on the questions of the origin and end of philosophy. In one trend the urge for philosophy is the perception of evil in life, and the aim of

philosophy comes to be the search for a way to overcome evil for all time and in full. This is the direction of all philosophies that are associated with religion, e.g. Indian philosophy (with the exception of the Cārvāka) and Scholastic philosophy in Medieval Europe. A distinctive feature of such philosophies is that they pay special attention to the discussion of values.

The other trend in philosophy arises in wonder and curiosity. The desire to know for the sake of knowledge what is in the universe and life is the urge for this type of philosophy. This direction is represented by such philosophies as have developed independently of religion, e.g. Greek philosophy after Socrates and modern Western philosophy after Descartes. Such a philosophy is not necessarily opposed to religion. All that this type of philosophy holds is that philosophy is not necessarily bound with religion. The aim of philosophy as represented by this trend is to satisfy curiosity. The prominence given to metaphysics and epistemology in such philosophies is indicative of this.

Traditional philosophy thus falls into two main groups on the basic questions of origin and end. We may describe them for the sake of identification as the religious and the speculative or non-religious. The one has a practical orientation; the other is primarily interested in intellectual satisfaction.

If we ask how it comes that one type of philosophy arises from suffering and gets oriented to the practical goal of liberation and the other springs from curiosity and seeks only to satisfy the intellect, the answer is more than reason can find. It may be that there are deep influences of different kinds – differences in the temperaments of the philosophers, differences in their cultural milieus, may be even in the

presence of a religious experience in the one case and its absence in the other. In classical Indian philosophy at least there is a distinct claim to such an experience as the starting point and goal of philosophy, with the systems of philosophy being called *darśana*.

It must be noted, however, that the divergence between the two groups is not absolute but relative. Curiosity is not absent in religious philosophy. This is evident from the fact that there is as much detailed pursuit of metaphysics and epistemology in religious philosophy as in the other. Only here it is not a self-subsistent motivation but is subordinated to the practical urge for liberation. Similarly, the practical concern of freedom from suffering is not ruled out from non-religious philosophy. After all, human nature is basically the same, and no philosopher can be impervious to the presence of evil in the world and man's longing for freedom from it. The presence of such a concern, however, remotely, in non-religious philosophy is evident from the fact that there is a place here for axiology even as in the other case. The only difference is that axiology here does not occupy the place of pre-eminence which it does in religious philosophy. Thus, knowledge and its application to human freedom cannot be separated. The difference between the religious philosophy and the non-religious lies, properly speaking, in that the former emphasizes the importance of applying knowledge to life and the latter sets store by the knowledge behind the application.

Both the types may be said to have the same scope in that both involve an epistemology, a metaphysics, and a theory of values. But the nature of the content differs with the two types by virtue of the stress laid on one or other part of it. Religious philosophy is value-oriented. It regards salvation

as the final goal of man and directs the whole course of philosophical quest towards this end. Metaphysics and epistemology are, as a consequence, only preparations for axiology, which is the consummation of philosophy. They are not pursued for their own sake. Indian philosophers, for example, are not interested in metaphysical and epistemological questions that have no bearing on *mokṣa*. In the other group speculation dominates practical concerns. Hence, metaphysics and epistemology represent the vital part of philosophy, and whatever attention is given to values is only as an addition to the theoretical quest.

In terms of their differing shifts in the content, the two types of philosophy differ also in their methodology. Generally speaking, philosophies that arise mainly out of curiosity and seek to gratify it depend on pure reason to reach conclusions. They believe in the power of reason to unravel the mysteries of things. But philosophies which spring mainly from the sense of suffering, though they do not exclude reason, do not regard reason as a self-sufficient means of answering the problems of philosophy. It may work as far as phenomena that are open to perception are concerned. But as regards what lies beyond the sense, e.g. the problem of God, of the soul, of after-life, of the ultimate sanction for morality, and so on, spiritual experience as communicated through scripture is the only means of knowledge. Even here reason can be of use, but only as an aid to scripture – in understanding and justifying scripture. What is known mediately through scripture must ultimately be corroborated by one's own experience. Evil is a matter of experience, and it is only the experience of what is beyond evil that can remove the experience of evil.

The two trends which we have indicated—religious and speculative—together represent the traditional view of

philosophy. For both of them philosophy as such is a wide field comprising an epistemology, a metaphysics, and a theory of values. Some modern philosophers of the West, however, break away from this traditional conception. We shall refer to their stand only in passing. Typical of these revolts are Marxist philosophy and analytical philosophy. Each has its own separate perception of the goal and content of philosophy. But it so happens that they agree in rejecting metaphysics, which is the bedrock of traditional philosophy. Their outlook may be stated in brief thus. Philosophers have never agreed among themselves on any question. The root of their differences lies in their pursuit of futile questions in metaphysics. Hence, if philosophy is to become worthwhile, metaphysics must be abolished. Philosophers must confine their minds to fruitful investigations. Marx wanted to make philosophy an instrument of social change. And the positivists and analysts settled that the only useful work for philosophy is to clarify the concepts and ideas that are employed in science and ordinary language.

These are highly restricted views of philosophy, which are not shared by other philosophers in the West who still believe in the traditional conception of philosophy. The main contention of the traditional philosophers against these limited views is that it is psychologically impossible for a philosopher not to think metaphysically and have some conception of reality. Even the Marxists and analysts have a covert metaphysical assumption, namely that reality is confined to the world of sense experience. Materialism is as much a metaphysical view as idealism. The choice for a philosopher, therefore, is not between metaphysics and no metaphysics; it is between one type of metaphysics and another. This is the basic reason why the traditional conception of philosophy,

as a quest involving epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology, has survived in spite of trenchant opposition by a few modern thinkers. So we return to the consideration of traditional philosophy.

### **(b) Surface Differences**

We have said earlier that philosophical differences could manifest themselves at two levels, basic and surface. We have indicated two branches of traditional philosophy, the religious and the non-religious, which differ on the basic questions of origin, goal, content, and method. We may even speak of them as two traditions. We have also noted that the grounds for these basic differences go beyond reason. But from this point other differences of a more logical nature manifest themselves.

Within a tradition, where the subject-matter is almost the same, philosophers prefer to take different standpoints for dealing with common questions. The result is that different sets of solutions are offered to the same questions whether in metaphysics, or in epistemology, or in values. And when a set of solutions comes to be believed in, followed, developed, and defended by successive thinkers, there emerges a school or system in that tradition. The positions taken by schools of philosophy are not arbitrary. On the contrary, they are supported by arguments, and are open to counter arguments. Hence it is at the surface level of schools that there is scope for philosophical polemics.

## **2. Decisions on Differing Philosophies**

We have so far identified the levels and areas of difference among philosophers. The next important task for

meta-philosophy is to discuss the grounds of philosophical affiliations. When we are confronted with philosophies of different kinds, we take sides with one or other philosophy. On what basis do we do so?

When philosophical differences are of the first degree, as between two traditions, one's affiliation happens to be based more on subjective considerations, like faith, temperament, and association, than on argument. When one is interested in a religious, value-oriented, type of philosophy which is concerned with the goal of liberation, or in the opposite one of a speculative, non-religious, type of philosophy, the inclination can hardly be rationalized. At this level one can only answer in such terms as "I am drawn to it" or "I am used to it". But when it comes to choosing a school or a particular point of view within one's tradition, there is scope for argument, for rational justification. The preference now becomes deliberate.

Even in this second level of choice, the subjective element could operate first and the rational element could supervene to justify and strengthen the natural choice. That is to say, the preference for a school may, in the first instance, be a matter of faith, temperament, and association, and subsequently one may also find adequate reason to justify the commitment. In some cases the original commitment may even change as a result of subsequent examination.

In the stage of deliberate choice among schools, there arises the need for proper criteria. To forge such criteria is also the task of meta-philosophy. The criteria suggested should be in tune with the general nature of philosophy. The traditional view of philosophy has been that unlike other disciplines, which have limited scope, philosophy seeks to

cover the whole gamut of human experience. But, for that matter, it is not the same as what we call general knowledge, which is just a collection of disjointed bits of information. Philosophy unifies its wide range of coverage by going into its fundamental principles. It seeks the essence of reality, knowledge, and values. It is thus not only universal in scope, but also organic in nature. With this idea in mind it seems possible to suggest the following criteria for judging between one system of philosophy and another.

First, a system of philosophy must cover the widest possible range of data. A philosopher cannot shy away from interpreting any presentation in experience and bringing it in relation with the rest of his system. Hence, between two schools of philosophy one which has greater scope must be better. The second criterion relates to the way in which the data considered are explained and related to the rest of the content. Each experience must be interpreted in such a manner that there does not occur any contradiction with the position of the school on other matters. That is to say, the system must be consistent with itself in dealing with any of its data. So between two systems which cover the same areas of experience, the one which is better organized must be superior.

Thus, scope and organization may serve as convenient tests of the systems of philosophy. An assessment of the Indian systems in the light of these criteria will be undertaken in the sequel. But a word of caution is necessary with regard to these criteria before we begin to apply them. The criteria are too broad and general to be of use for hard and fast decisions as in the sciences. To presume that scope and organization are crucial tests by which one position in



philosophy may be proved to be right and another wrong would be misleading. All that may be claimed on their behalf is that they help to indicate the relative advantage of one position over another.

Judgement between two philosophical schools is somewhat like judgement between two criticisms about a work of art. Both forms of judgement are loose and semi-subjective. When a work of art is criticized in two ways by two critics, the reader who judges between the two criticisms cannot look for their correctness or otherwise, for these terms are inappropriate in this context. He looks for their depth, for their penetration or insight into the work. He expects the critic to help him see the work with fresh eyes, to reveal to him aspects of the work whose significance he did not know before. A critic who is able to do this better than another is rated as superior. By illuminating the work, the critic in effect inclines or persuades the reader to accept his view of the work. But he cannot necessitate the reader's acceptance. The final decision of the reader is personal.

Likewise, in judging between two philosophical schools, the individual student of philosophy has a more modest expectation than correctness. In the absence of verificatory possibilities, to expect a philosophy to demonstrate its absolute rightness would be far-fetched. The individual would be satisfied if he finds a school more appealing, persuasive, than another. And this is what our criteria of scope and consistency achieve, just as illumination estimates the appeal of criticism in art. A larger coverage and a cleaner organization cannot *prove* the worth of a philosophical school in comparison with another. They can only induce us to be convinced that this school must be nearer the truth than the other. The decision of the student is ultimately personal.

### III. The Importance of Meta-philosophy

It is desirable here to bestow some thought on the importance of meta-philosophy in the scheme of philosophical studies. Meta-philosophy occupies a place similar to that of the history of philosophy. The study of individual systems and thinkers and of specific divisions like ontology or ethics has its own value. It acquaints us with the subtleties of particular philosophical problems. At the same time it is necessary to have an overview of philosophy to perceive its general nature, its interconnections, and its significance for man.

The history of philosophy affords one such overview. It is not a record of accidentally successive events. It gives us insight into the causes and consequences of each stream of philosophical thought as it appears in time and shows the inner links between preceding and succeeding endeavours. Copleston says:

The history of philosophy is certainly not a mere congeries of opinions, a narration of isolated items of thought that have no connection with one another... There is continuity and connection, action and reaction, thesis and antithesis, and no philosophy can really be understood fully unless it is seen in its historical setting and in the light of its connection with other systems.<sup>1</sup>

The history of philosophy thus serves as a good introduction to the detailed study of various schools. Dasgupta observes:

A work containing some general account of the mutual relations of the chief systems is necessary for those who intend to pursue the study of a particular school.<sup>2</sup>

A different overview is provided by meta-philosophy. It digs into the foundations of divergent traditions and schools and

thereby gives us insight into the essential nature of philosophy. Meta-philosophy thus involves comparisons, but it is not *meant* for comparisons. It should be distinguished from comparative research in philosophy. Comparative philosophy is intentionally comparative. Two schools, or movements, or two thinkers, or two texts, in philosophy are compared in all their detail using each of them as a tool to draw out the implications of the other. But the comparison involved in meta-philosophy is only incidental. The real intention of meta-philosophy is to bring out the basic nature and significance of philosophy, and it undertakes comparisons as a means to this purpose. Hence the comparison involved here is only in terms of the patterns of thought or perspectives available in systems and traditions and not with reference to the details of their doctrines.

The method of meta-philosophy is holistic and not analytical. It is marked by what is called in modern jargon a "systems approach". It is a review of philosophical systems, and it is as such that it serves, like the history of philosophy, as a link subject. If the history of philosophy is a chronological link among systems of philosophy, meta-philosophy may be said to be a conceptual link. It thus serves as a framework for understanding, not only the relative positions of various schools and movements within philosophy, but also the relation which philosophy bears to other disciplines. In teaching courses on philosophy the importance of these two subjects cannot be over-emphasized. They together provide the connections by which to see the place of philosophy in human civilization.

The history of philosophy has always occupied a recognized place in University courses in philosophy. There

are histories of whole traditions in philosophy, like the European or the Indian. Attempts are being made by modern scholars also to produce a history of world philosophy, of East and West. Apart from these macro-histories, as they may be called, there is need also especially for the Indian tradition, for histories of individual systems of philosophy, or micro-histories, as they may be described. The role of the history of philosophy in research and teaching has thus remained unquestioned. However, sufficient attention has not been given to the other link subject, meta-philosophy. There is of course a difficulty in introducing it for beginners, but at higher levels it can serve as a stimulant for research.

To write either a history of philosophy or a meta-philosophy requires much experience. The history of philosophy, according to Copleston, requires a specialist's knowledge of the various schools and philosophers covered, although the history written cannot afford to go into every detail of them. I quote.

To work one's way into any thinker's system, thoroughly to understand not only the words and phrases as they stand, but also the shade of meaning that the author intended to convey (so far as this is feasible), to view the details of the system in their relation to the whole, fully to grasp its genesis and its implications, all this is not the work of a few moments. It is but natural, then, that specialization in the field of the history of philosophy should be the general rule, as it is in the fields of the various sciences.<sup>3</sup>

Scholarship is not enough. The historian should not be so overwhelmed by the details that he fails to perceive the spirit of the philosophies he considers. This means that he requires, besides scholarship, sympathetic insight into each philosophy.

To quote Copleston again, "We have to endeavour to put ourselves into the place of the philosopher, to try to see his thoughts from within." Such a "psychological approach," as he calls it, will enable the historian "to grasp the peculiar flavour and characteristics" of the system in question.<sup>4</sup>

I have dwelt for so long on the history of philosophy in order to show that a similar equipment is needed for the construction of a meta-philosophy. As in the former, so here the equipment should combine scholarship and sympathetic insight. It is necessary to know the essential teachings of typical traditions and systems before one could undertake a critical review of their thought patterns. Apart from such scholarship, a psychological understanding of the spirit of the philosophies considered, their urges and aspirations, their viewpoints and their accents is also called for. To these requirements may be added as a special desideratum in the case of meta-philosophy what may be called a *gestalt* mind, a knack of viewing the systems of philosophy as structural wholes, as patterns, in the manner of viewing a work of art. For, the ultimate objective of meta-philosophy is to view philosophy itself as a whole.

I have said earlier that the concept of meta-philosophy is not unknown to tradition, though the term is modern. But systematic attention to the field is of recent origin, and this has been necessitated by the proliferation of philosophical differences. Among Western writers, R.G. Collingwood and W. H. Walsh may be mentioned for their distinctive contributions. In the Indian tradition the *Sarvadarśana-saṅgraha* of Mādhavācārya may be cited as an old work approaching the character of meta-philosophy. Among modern Indian scholars, R.D. Ranade made a pioneering venture in his book, *Vedānta – The Culmination of Indian*

*Thought.* The writings of Hiriyanna provide, not only much valuable material, but also the direction for the systematic construction of a meta-philosophy for the Indian tradition.

#### NOTES

1. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol.1.pt.1,p.19.
2. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Vol.1. Preface.
3. Copleston, Vol.1.pt.1. pp. 23-24.
4. *Ibid.*, p.23.

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## THE ĀTMAVIDYĀ - VILĀSA

[A Spiritual Autobiography of  
Sadāśiva-Brahmendra-Sarasvatī]  
TEXT WITH TRANSLATION

C. MURUGAN

[40a]

प्रविलाप्य जगदशेषं परिशिष्टाखण्डवस्तुपरतन्त्रः ।  
प्राश्नाति कबलमास्ये प्राप्तं प्रारब्धकर्मणा कोऽपि ॥

Having nullified the entire world by Self-realization, and being rooted in the unconditioned Self that remains as the substratum of world-negation, someone who transcends expression is taking handful of food set before him by his fructified deeds.

[41]

निन्दति किमपि न योगी नन्दति नैवापरं किमप्यन्तः ।  
चन्दनशीतलहृदयः कन्दलितानन्दमन्थरः स्वास्ते ॥

The sage neither blames nor praises anyone (even) inwardly. Brimming over with joyous wisdom, he remains with his heart refreshingly cool as sandal paste.

[42]

सन्त्यज्य शास्त्रजालं संव्यवहारं च सर्वतस्त्यक्त्वा ।  
आश्रित्य पूर्णपदवीम् आस्ते निष्कम्पदीपवद्योगी ॥

Leaving out the study of scriptural texts, completely giving up activities — sacred or secular, and having realized the seamless whole, the sage remains like a steady flame.

[43]

तृणपङ्कचर्चिताङ्गः तृणमिव विश्वं विलोकयन् योगी ।  
विहरति रहसि वनान्ते विजरामरभूमि विश्रान्तः ॥

The sage whose body is smeared with mud and covered with dried grass, who regards the world as worthless like a straw, and who reposes in the Self which is absolute and is beyond death and old age, roams around the outskirts of the forest all alone.

[44]

पश्यति किमपि न रूपं न वदति न शृणोति किञ्चिदपि वचनम् ।  
तिष्ठति निरूपमभूमनि निष्ठामवलम्ब्य काष्ठवद्योगी ॥

The sage does not take cognizance of anything by physical vision; he does not speak; nor does he listen to anything that is spoken. Like a log of wood he remains motionless by being rooted in the Self which is transcendental.

[45]

जात्यभिमानविहीनः जन्तुषु सर्वत्र पूर्णतां पश्यन् ।  
गूढं चरति यतीन्द्रः मूढवदखिलागमार्थतत्त्वज्ञः ॥



Being free from class-consciousness and discerning the all-pervasive Self in every being, the prince among the ascetics, who has realized the truth of all the Vedas, wanders unnoticed like an unenlightened one.

[46]

उपधाय बाहुमूलं परिधाय आकाशम् अवनिमास्तीर्य ।  
प्रस्विपति विरतिवनितां परिरभ्य आनन्दपरवशः कोऽपि ॥

With his head pillowed on his arm, with the bare ground as bed and space as blanket, the ineffable sage is fast asleep with a feeling of deep beauty by holding the damsel, i.e. detachment (*virati*) in a warm embrace.

[47]

गतभेदवासनाभिः स्वप्रज्ञोदारवारनारीभिः ।  
रमते सह यतिराजः त्रय्यन्तान्तःपुरे कोऽपि ॥

In the inner apartment, viz., the Upaniṣads, the king of ascetics who is beyond description is revelling in spiritual illumination which is likened to a group of charming ladies who are free from any trace of latent impressions born out of the cognition of duality.

[48]

वैराग्यविपुलमार्गं विज्ञानोद्दामदीपिकोद्दीप्तम् ।  
आरुह्य तत्त्वहर्म्यं मुक्त्या सह मोदते यतिराट् ॥

Having mounted the lofty mansion, viz., the Self by passing through the royal highway in the form of absolute detachment towards material things — the royal high way which is brilliantly lighted by the resplendent lamp of Self-realization, the king of ascetics rejoices greatly in the company of “*mukti*” (liberation).

[49]

विजनतलोत्पलमालां वनितावैतृष्ण्यकल्पवल्लीं च ।  
अपमानामृतगुटिकाम्, आत्मज्ञः कोऽपि गृह्णाति ॥

The peerless realized soul has blue lily flowers grown in uninhabited places as a rosary, commendable aloofness from womenfolk as the wish-yielding tree, and absence of the false notion of "I" as the magic pill that would confer immortality.

[50]

न निषेधति दोषधिया गुणबुद्ध्या वा न किञ्चित् आदत्ते ।  
आविद्यकमखिलम् इति ज्ञात्वा उदास्ते मुनिः कोऽपि ॥

The unexcelled sage does not reject with scorn anything by considering it as worthless; nor does he accept something by deeming it to be valuable. Having ascertained that these are projected by avidyā, he remains majestically impassive.

[51]

भूतं किमपि न मनुते भावि च किञ्चित् न चिन्तयति अन्तः ।  
पश्यति न पुरोवर्त्यपि वस्तु, समस्तार्थसमरसः कोऽपि ॥

This preeminent sage who is the Self that is uniformly present in every being does not brood over the past; nor does he intend to achieve something in future. He does not see (but merely looks at) the things that are in front of him.

[52]

निगृहीताखिलकरणः निर्मृष्टाशेषविषयेहः ।  
तृप्तिमनुत्तमसीमां प्राप्तः पर्यटति कोऽपि यतिवर्यः ॥

The distinguished and unmatched sage roams about by experiencing the transcendental bliss after having subdued all his sense-organs and having obliterated every form of desire for enjoyment of worldly objects and of heavenly things.

[53]

संत्यजति नोपपन्नं नासंपन्नं च वाञ्छति कापि ।  
स्वस्थः शेते यतिराट् आन्तरमानन्दम् अनुभवन् एकः ॥

Not rejecting anything that is afforded by the fructified merits and demerits, and not desiring for anything that is not attained, the prince among ascetics rests with undisturbed tranquillity by experiencing supreme felicity in his heart.

[54]

कामपि विमलां पदवीम् आसाद्य आनन्दसंविदुन्निद्राम् ।  
आस्ते भिक्षुक एकः विहरन्निर्मुक्तबन्धनः स्वैरम् ॥

Having attained the state which is indescribable, which is free from everything that is foreign to its essential nature, and which is absolute bliss and consciousness, and having become free from the characteristics of being an agent, an experient, and a knower, the sage who is second to none remains by moving freely at will from place to place.

[55]

वस्तुनि अस्तमिताखिलविश्वविहारे विलीनमनाः ।  
राजति परानपेक्षः राजा अखिलवीतरागाणाम् ॥

The sage who is the most distinguished one among those who have overcome desire which is low in the scale of

moral or spiritual values, whose mind is focused upon the Self which is free from the phenomenal world and its meretricious attractions, and who is not subject to the rule or control of another shines forth in full glory.

[56]

आचार्यापाङ्गदृशा समवाप्तापारसंविदाकारः ।  
प्रशमितसकलविभेदः परहंसः कश्चिदाभाति ॥

An ascetic of the highest order who has realized his essential nature of unconditioned consciousness by the gracious glances from the eyes of his preceptor, and from whom the erroneous cognitions of duality are effaced, remains absolutely radiant.

[57]

वर्णाश्रमव्यवस्थाम् उत्तीर्य विधूय विध्यादीन् ।  
परिशिष्यते यतीन्द्रः परिपूर्णानन्दबोधमात्रेण ॥

Rising above the state of belonging to a specific class and stage of life, and transcending the obligation to perform enjoined deeds and to refrain from the interdicted ones, the exalted sage remains purely as the Self which is absolute, bliss, and consciousness.

[58]

क्षयमुपनीय समस्तं कर्म प्रारब्धमुपभुज्य ।  
प्रविगलितदेहबन्धः प्राज्ञः ब्रह्मैव केवलं भवति ॥

He who has realized his true nature as the Self gets rid of all merits and demerits accumulated by him (in his previous lives and in this life too prior to his attaining Self-realization)<sup>1</sup>, and exhausts the fructified merits and demer-

its by experiencing their fruits. The bondage in the form of the present body is then cast off, and he remains as the Self, pure and simple.

Note: *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.8.; *Vedānta-sūtra* 4.1.13.

[59]

स्तिमितमनन्तमनाद्यं सन्ततमानन्दबोधघनम् ।  
अविकल्पमाद्यमेकं सन्मात्रं विद्यते किमपि ॥

There manifests something which is mere Existence. It is one without a second, immutable and is the primal Being. It is serene, endless, beginningless and is always of the nature of bliss and consciousness.

[60]

अक्षरमजरमजातं सूक्ष्मतरापूरुवशुद्धविज्ञानम् ।  
प्रगलितसर्वक्लेशं परतत्त्वं वर्तते किमपि ॥

There exists the supreme Self which is transcendental. It is immutable, free from the process of growing and also from birth. It is not apparent to the senses, and is of singular excellence. It is pure consciousness and is free from *kleśas*, viz., ignorance (*avidyā*), individuation (*asmitā*), desire (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*), and attachment (*abhiniveśa*).

Note: For details regarding the *kleśas*, See *Yoga-sūtra*, 2, 3-9.

[61]

सुखतरममरमदूरं सारं संसारवारिधेः तीरम् ।  
समरसमभयमपारं तत्किंचन विद्यते तत्त्वम् ॥

The Self which is the significance of the term *tat* (in the text (*tat tvam asi*)) manifests (of its own accord). It is inexpressible; it is more than common pleasure, is immortal,

inmost, and bliss. It is the substratum of the ocean of transmigratory existence. It is unvaried; it is free from the characteristics of being an agent, an experient, and a knower, and is boundless.

[62]

अरसमगन्धमरूपं विरजस्कमसत्त्वमतमस्कम् ।  
निरुपमनिर्भयतत्त्वं तत्किमपि द्योतते नित्यम् ॥

Free from taste, from smell, and from form, and also from *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, the three strands of avidyā, the Self which is peerless and which is free from the characteristics of being an agent, an experient and a knower, and which is the significance of the term “*taṭ*” (in the text *tat tvam asi*) shines forth for ever.

[63]

इति गुरुकरुणापाङ्गात् आर्याभिः द्व्यधिकषष्टिसंख्याभिः ।  
निरवद्याभिः अवोचम्, निगमशिरस्तन्त्रभूतसारार्थम् ॥

Thus, animated by the gracious looks from the eyes of my preceptor, I have set forth the essentials of the Upaniṣads in sixty-two exquisite verses, each one in the Ārya metre.

[64]

गदितम् आत्मविद्याविलासम् अनुवारं स्मरन् विबुधः ।  
परिणतपरमात्मविद्यः प्रपद्यते सपदि परमार्थम् ॥

The spritual aspirant who has the mediate knowledge that his true nature is the Self shall continually contemplate the grandeur of Self-realization presented in this work. In this process, his mediate knowledge would attain peak of

perfection, i.e. it would become immediate, and he would then remain here and now as the Self which is absolutely real.

[65]

परमशिवेन्द्रश्रीगुरुशिष्येण इत्थं सदाशिवेन्द्रेण ।  
रचितेयमात्मविद्याविलासनाम्नी कृतिः पूर्णा ॥

This work entitled *Ātmavidyā-vilāsa* composed by Sadāśivendra, the disciple of the spiritual preceptor Paramaśivendra comes to an end.

इतिश्रीमत्परमहंसपरिव्राजकाचार्य -  
श्रीपरमशिवेन्द्र सरस्वती - पादाब्जसेवा -  
परायण श्रीसदाशिवेन्द्र सरस्वत्या विरचितः  
आत्मविद्याविलासः समाप्तः॥

Here ends the work *Ātmavidyā-vilāsa* composed by Śrī Sadāśivendra Sarasvatī whose mind is bent on worshipping the lotus-feet of Śrī Paramaśivendra Sarasvatī of the Paramahansa order of ascetics.

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**THE MAITREYĪ-BRĀHMAṆA-BHĀṢYA-  
TĀTPARYADĪPIKĀ - A STUDY**

J. KRISHNAN

Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* has been commented upon by Sureśvara in his *Vārttika* comprising 11,151 verses. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* consists of six chapters and the famous dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī occurs in 2.4 and 4.5, and it provides the quintessence of the Upaniṣads. Mahādevendra Sarasvatī, in the text, *Maitreyī-Brāhmaṇa-bhāṣya-tātparya-dīpikā* has summarized the entire teaching of the sections dealing with the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī in 150 verses.

In the history of Advaita Vedānta, Mahādevendra Sarasvatī is a well-known figure. He was a disciple of Svayaṃprakāśānanda, the disciple of Gopālabālayogi. Eleven of his works are known to exist<sup>1</sup>.

1. *Advaitagrantha*; 2. *Advaitaparakāśa*; 3. *Advaita-bhūṣaṇa*; 4. *Tattvabodha*; 5. *Tattvānusandhāna*;



6. *Advaitakaustubha*; 7. *Paramāmṛtaṁ*; 8. *Maitreyī-Brāhmaṇa-Bhāṣya-Tātparya-Dīpikā*; 9. *Viśveśvarānusan-dhāna*; 10. *Vedāntasaṅgraha-vyākhyā-prakāśikā*, and, 11. *Śārīrakasaṁkṣepavivṛtti-prakāśikā*.

He is known to have flourished during the seventeenth century (A.D. 1700).

Yājñavalkya in his instruction to Maitreyī emphasizes the following points:

1. the self is bliss;
2. it is free from duality which is non-real, and, it alone is fit to be realized and for that purpose one must pursue Vedāntic study, reflection, and meditation, and,
3. it is Liberation.

We shall discuss these in detail:

### 1. THE BLISS-FORM OF THE SELF

According to Advaita, Brahman – the only reality appears as God, the soul and the world through avidyā. The world is totally indeterminable either as real or as an absolute nothing. God is a complex of Brahman and avidyā and He is always aware of His identity with Brahman. He is, therefore, ever-released. The soul too is a complex of Brahman and avidyā and its product, mind. It is overpowered by the influence of the mind and hence it loses sight of its identity with its essential nature, namely, Brahman. It undergoes transmigration. It is to realize its identity with Brahman. Such a realization is known as Self-realization. When the latter is attained, avidyā will be removed and as a result the relation of the mind to Brahman will be removed. The soul then would cease to be a soul and would remain in its true nature. And it is liberation.

Brahman is non-dual consciousness and bliss. The true nature of God which is consciousness and bliss is referred to as Brahman<sup>2</sup> and the true nature of the soul which too is consciousness and bliss is referred to as Ātman<sup>3</sup>. The great-sayings of the Upaniṣads such as *tat tvam asi*<sup>4</sup> and the like convey the identity or non-difference of Brahman from Ātman.

The true nature of the soul which is termed Ātman and which is identical with Brahman is bliss in nature. Bliss is that with reference to which every object in the world is ancillary and which by its very existence gives up the state of being an ancillary to anything else. This description is fully applicable in the case of Ātman. Hence Ātman is of the nature of bliss<sup>5</sup>.

In ordinary experience there is love for bliss that is manifested. There is love toward one's self and on this ground it must be of the nature of bliss. There is, of course, love toward one's son and other factors. But this love is conditional. It is because son and other factors are only the means of the manifestation of the bliss that is of the nature of the Self. Yājñavalkya in his instruction to Maitreyī states that every object in this world becomes an object of love only for the sake of the Self.

आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियम् भवति।<sup>6</sup>

Earlier in the first section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* it is said that the Self is the most inward principle. It is the most lovable when compared with son, wealth, etc.

तदेतत् प्रेयः पुत्रात् प्रेयः वित्तात् प्रेयः अन्यस्मात् सर्वस्मात् अन्तरतरम्।<sup>7</sup>

It comes to this that the Self which is identical with Brahman is bliss. Since there can be love toward bliss that is manifested and since there is love toward one's Self, the latter is bliss that is always manifested.

It may be asked: if the bliss that is the Self is manifested even now, then there will be no difference between the states of liberation and transmigratory existence.

The Advaitin answers this question by stating that the bliss which is the Self gets itself reflected in the mental states during transmigratory existence. The mental states which are the revealing media of the bliss are associated with different degrees of purity consisting in the superiority of the sattva-guṇa of the mind. This is caused by the contact of the mind with different pleasant objects owing to one's past merits. The different kinds of superiority are superimposed upon the bliss that is reflected in the state of transmigration.

Owing to one's past demerits, the mind comes into contact with different kinds of unpleasant objects. And the mental states are associated with different degrees of impurity consisting of the constituent of the tamo-guṇa of the mind. Thus the reflected images of bliss which is the Self are surpassable as they are associated with different degrees of superiority or inferiority. Therefore there is no satisfaction in the bliss which is manifested in the state of transmigration. On the rise of the knowledge of Brahman, avidyā is removed and all superimposition of superiority and inferiority ceases and the superimposed surpassability is lost. There is thus the manifestation of unsurpassable bliss in the state of liberation.

To sum up this part of the discussion: the self is of the nature of bliss as it is the content of unbounded love.

## 2. THE SELF IS FREE FROM DUALITY

In his instruction to Maitreyī, Yājñavalkya emphasizes the fact that the self which is identical with Brahman is free from all attributes. This we know from his promissory statement that by knowing the Self through Vedāntic study, reflection and meditation everything else will become known<sup>8</sup>. We have a similar promissory statement in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* where Āruṇi, the father asks his son Śvetaketu “Have you ever asked for that principle by knowing which that which is not heard will become heard, that which is not deliberated will become deliberated and that which is not ascertained will become ascertained”.<sup>9</sup> These two texts convey an identical sense, namely, that by the knowledge of Self there will result the knowledge of everything. These texts are characterized as promissory statements.

The import of the above promissory statement would not hold good if the world were admitted to be real independent of the Self. In that case the knowledge of the Self would not result in the knowledge of the world which by being independent of the Self would be different from the latter. Hence it must be held that the import of the promissory statements implies that the world has no independent reality apart from the Self and it is a mere appearance of the Self like silver in a shell.

To the question as to how there could arise the knowledge of everything by the knowledge of the Self, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*<sup>10</sup> provides the example of the knowledge of the effects such as pot, jar, etc., that results

from the knowledge of clay. If pot were real then it will be independent of clay and so there will not result the knowledge of pot by the knowledge of clay. Hence it must be held that pot is non-real and it does not have any independent existence apart from its cause, namely, the clay. When viewed in this light, the world, the effect does not have any independent existence apart from the Self, the cause. And the knowledge of the cause would result in the knowledge of the effect. Thus it is only by admitting that the effect has no independent existence apart from the cause and so is non-real or *anirvacanīya* we can maintain the validity of the promissory statements.

The non-reality of the effects and the reality of the cause are affirmed in the *Chāndogya* text –

वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम्।<sup>11</sup>

The pot, the effect is merely referred to in the expression such as “The pot-exists”. It is not real. Further, the pot can neither be viewed as identical with nor different from clay. An analysis of the perceptual experience of the form *mṛdghataḥ* affirms so. If clay and pot were two disparate objects like a cow and a horse, then there cannot be the usage of the words *mṛd* and *ghataḥ* involving co-ordinate relation between each other. In the same way, if pot and clay were identical with each other then also the two words *mṛd* and *ghataḥ* cannot be used in appositional relation to each other. Hence it must be held that pot is not either identical with or different from clay. It is, therefore, non-real. This is the significance of the expression *vācārambhaṇam vikārah*.

It may be asked that if the pot were *anirvacanīya* or non-real, then how are we to account for the experience “The pot has come into existence from clay” which involves reference to the difference between the pot and the clay. It is answered that since we cannot take the pot as different from or as identical with the clay, the above verbal usage is to be considered as devoid of any content. In other words, the difference between the clay and the pot, that is, the cause and the effect too which is noticed in the verbal usage is *anirvacanīya* like the effect. This is the significance of the word, *nāmadheyam*.

The question that suggests itself at this stage is: what then is real? The Upaniṣad answers that it is clay alone that is real (*mṛttiketyeva satyam*) as it exists prior to the origination of the pot, at the time of the existence of the pot and also after the destruction of the pot. The import of this statement is that the causal factor alone is real and the effect is non-real or *anirvacanīya*.

It must be noted here that clay, the cause is real when compared to the pot, the effect. And the clay is not absolutely real. It is only Self - the cause of clay and other objects of the world that is absolutely real in view of its non-sublation in the three divisions of time past, present and future. The text - *mṛttiketyeva satyam* refers to the reality of the clay, the cause as an example for the reality of the cause of the world, namely, the Self and the text *vācārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyam* refers to the non-reality of the pot; i.e. the effect as an example of the non-reality of the world. The word *eva* in the expression *mṛttiketyeva* excludes reality in respect of the effects.

An objection may be raised at this stage. The knowledge of Brahman cannot result in the knowledge of the world in all its specific aspects. For, the world is an appearance of Brahman, like silver in a shell. The knowledge of the shell removes the appearance of silver and as such we do not have the knowledge of silver at all. In the same way, when the knowledge of Brahman arises, the world which is an appearance in Brahman will be removed and as such one cannot have the knowledge of the world at all. So the promissory statements which assert that by the knowledge of Brahman there would ensue the knowledge of the world are not valid.

The above objection is answered by saying that when it is said that by the knowledge of Brahman there would result the knowledge of everything what is intended to be conveyed is that there will arise the knowledge of the true nature of every object. And this knowledge is of the form that Brahman is the essential nature of every object and no object has any independent existence apart from Brahman.

The explanation given above is based upon the teaching of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* which too has a similar promissory statement. In this Upaniṣad, the sage Śaunaka besought Aṅgiras to impart him the knowledge of that by which everything else will become known.<sup>12</sup> Aṅgiras imparts him the knowledge of the Self and concludes by saying that by attaining this knowledge one would transcend the knot of avidyā.<sup>13</sup> He has not said that by the knowledge of the Self everything else will become known. And when he says that the knowledge of the Self will result in transcending avidyā, what he means is that everything else will become known as having no independent reality and as deriving existence and

manifestation from the Self. Thus the promissory statements in the Upaniṣads that by knowing Brahman everything else will become known reinforce the conclusive view of the Advaitin that the world is non-real. The Self, therefore, is free from all factors and is *nirviśeṣa*.

Having thus set forth the view that the Self appears as the world and the latter is not real, Yājñavalkya confirms this by stating that the objects of the world will make one who thinks that they constitute the Self lose sight of one's identity with one's true nature.<sup>14</sup>

Yājñavalkya then proceeds to state that the essential or true nature of an object is that without which it cannot be known. When viewed in this light, the true nature of the world could be discerned as the pure Self.<sup>15</sup> The world does not exist independent of the Self at the time of its origination, sustenance and destruction. These are explained by illustrative examples.<sup>16</sup>

The various particular notes of a drum cannot be distinguished from the general notes of the drum. In the same way, the objects cannot be distinguished from the Self. On this analogy it is ascertained that the world exists in the Self. It is thus: the sound of a war-drum is the general one. The sound associated with the sentiment – heroism is the particular feature. Its association with low pitch and high pitch are its further particulars. The low pitch and the high pitch are included in the sound associated with the sentiment, heroism. And it too is included in the sound of the drum. Yājñavalkya gives the example of the conch, the drum and the *vīṇā* with a view to emphasize that the sounds of the three are included in sound in general. The point is that the



particular notes such as high pitch, low pitch, etc., are first understood as the sound of the notes associated with heroism. The latter is understood as the sound of the drum which is then understood as sound in general. Just as the series of particulars, namely, low pitch, etc., its particular feature, namely, sound associated with heroism and its general feature, namely, the sound of a drum exist in sound in general, in the same way the entire world is noticed to be existing in the Self which is pure consciousness. Sound in general, the sound of a drum, the sound associated with heroism, and the sound associated with low pitch and high pitch each succeeding one is not at all cognized as different from the previous one. Everything, being a variant of the general sound, is superimposed upon the latter. In the same way, since the Self or *sat* pervades every object, the latter is superimposed upon the Self. For every object it is *sat* or the Self that is the essential nature. Yājñavalkya states that on the basis of the reasoning set forth above, it is possible to understand easily that the objects of the world during the time of their existence are comprehended as associated with *sat* and hence the latter constitutes their essential nature.<sup>17</sup>

The world can be understood as superimposed upon *sat* at the time of its origination too. Yājñavalkya states that prior to the distinction into smoke, flame, sparks, etc., there existed only fire and not smoke, etc. In the same way, prior to the creation of the world there exists only *sat*.<sup>18</sup> Fire gives rise to smoke, etc., without any consideration for a fruit and without depending upon extraneous means or effort. In the same way, the Self creates the *Rg-veda*, etc. Unlike the writings of Kālidāsa and others, the origination of the Veda is not preceded by the knowledge of its sense. But like breathing it comes out in an effortless manner. Hence it is

said to be of non-human origin.<sup>19</sup> It is impossible to conceive of any object excepting the *sat* or consciousness.

Exactly similar consideration applies to dissolution also. In the case of the world there are two kinds of dissolutions – one natural and the other final. The natural one is that which takes place at the end of the cosmic age. The final one is that which results from the knowledge of the Self. Yājñavalkya cites the ocean and the lump of salt as examples of the natural and the final dissolution respectively.<sup>20</sup> Just as all sorts of water merge in the ocean, in the same way, every object merges in the *sat* at the end of the cosmic age. Water gets merged in the ocean directly and the other waters of the tributaries through Ganges and other rivers. In the same way, the causal factors merge in the *sat* directly. And the effects merge there through their causal elements. The merger of the sense-organs must also be taken as mentioned by the mention of the merger of objects. Thus it is well-known that there is the dissolution of the entire world in *sat* or the self.

The example of the lump of salt is mentioned in order to prove the final dissolution. The water of the ocean when heated by the rays of the sun in the salt-pans becomes solidified and is spoken of as lump of salt. When thrown into the ocean, the lump of salt is dissolved into the water when it becomes free from the heat of the sun. It is impossible to take the lump as such as before. From wheresoever one takes the water with a view to pick up the lump, then it is only the saltish taste that is experienced and not the lump as such.<sup>21</sup>

The water of the ocean acquires the state of the lump of the salt by the heat of the sun. In the same way, the Self attains to the status of the individual soul through avidyā. The Self is *mahat*, *bhūta*, *ananta* and *apāra*.<sup>22</sup> It appears as

the individual soul by its association with physical body and sense organs.<sup>23</sup> *Sat* is present everywhere and so it is conveyed by the term *mahat*. It is ever-existent and hence it is termed *bhūtam*. Further it permeates everything and hence it is designated as *anantam*. It is eternal (*apāra*).

The individual soul is compared to the lump of a salt. It acquires the characteristics of being an agent and an experient. It is now the one who sees, hears, is a man of spiritual birth and white-complexioned. Thus the *sat* or the Self which is pure consciousness when associated with *avidyā* that has undergone modifications in the form of five elements appears as the individual soul. And its essential nature is to be realized through scripture. When all the false notions vanish by the rise of the knowledge that everything is the Self, the notion of being an individual soul too is dissolved like a lump of salt thrown into the water. There will not be any awareness of the distinction as the individual soul and God then. It is because the cause of such a distinction, namely, *avidyā* is removed. It is similar to the impossibility of picking up the lump of the salt when it is dissolved in the water.<sup>24</sup> This dissolution is final and it is characterized by the absence of any fresh birth. In the case of natural dissolution, there is fresh birth since *avidyā* is not removed as there is the absence of the knowledge of the Self.

When the knowledge of the Self arises, *avidyā* and its effects are removed. Hence there is no manifestation of them thereafter. It should not be thought that their non-manifestation suggests that there is ignorance. It is because ignorance or *avidyā* has already been removed and there is only Pure Consciousness which is the Self. Thus when the knowledge of Brahman arises there remains Pure

Consciousness which is the Self, and there is no cognition born out of avidyā.<sup>25</sup>

When the Self as such is not known, it appears as characterized by duality. There is the cognition of duality in the form of an agent, experient, etc. The Self attains the three designations, namely, the one who smells, the object smelt, and the act of smelling when there is the erroneous cognition of duality under the realm of avidyā.<sup>26</sup> When avidyā is removed, the cognition of duality in the form of one who smells, the act of smelling, etc., too ceases to exist. When the world has become the Self in the case of one who has attained the knowledge of the Self, then what should he smell and through what?<sup>27</sup>

To sum up this part of the discussion:

Yājñavalkya has instructed Maitreyī that the Self is free from any relation to the world. But owing to avidyā the world appears thereon and the Self attains to the state of the individual soul possessing the characteristics of being an agent, experient, etc. The soul has to realize its identity with its true nature which is the pure self.

### 3. LIBERATION AND ITS MEANS

As long as the soul is associated with the adjunct, the mind, so long only is the soul, a soul. In reality, however, there is nothing like the state of being a soul apart from what is known to be such by reason of this adjunct. This relation of the mind to the pure self has but avidyā as its source and this avidyā cannot be removed by anything other than the knowledge of the Self. Hence this association with such a limiting adjunct as the mind does not cease so long as the essential nature of the soul, namely, the pure Self is not

realized. Avidyā, therefore, is the source of all evil and its removal would result in the removal of the relation of mind and its qualities like finitude, agency, etc. The soul, then, ceases to be a soul, as it is manifest as Brahman in its true nature of absolute bliss and consciousness. And the self which is thus free from avidyā and which is unconditioned bliss is liberation.

#### a). Karma not the Direct Means to Liberation

We must now consider whether *karma* is efficacious in bringing about liberation. This, however, requires the discussion regarding the fundamental distinction between *karma* and *jñāna*- the distinction which is essential for the doctrine of Advaita. *Karma* and *jñāna* differ in two ways both as regards their nature and their fruits. In the first place, *karma* is of the nature of action, and it can be either performed or not performed, or performed otherwise. It depends upon Vedic injunctions or on the choice of a man. *Jñāna*, on the other hand, is the result of means of knowledge. Means of knowledge relate to things that are existent. So *jñāna* cannot be made or not made, or made otherwise according to the choice of a man, but depends upon the nature of the thing - in - itself, and is thus always one and the same. In the second place, the fruit of *karma* is of the nature of happiness or misery to be achieved, and it admits of various degrees or stages; these stages are the worlds of the upper, the intermediate and the nether worlds and the forms of life therein. But the fruit of *jñāna* is the inner Self identical with the Supreme Self – the only partless ultimate which is real, consciousness, and bliss. It must be noted here that it is only by courtesy it is said that the fruit of *jñāna* is the inner Self. Really the fruit of *jñāna* is only the

removal of avidyā; and when avidyā is removed the inner self manifests in its true nature.

The Self of this nature when freed from avidyā is liberation; and it cannot be on any account the fruit of *karma*. For, as we have said, the fruit of *karma* admits of various degrees, while the Self is the same always. Further, the fruits of *karma* are classified into four divisions: (i) effected (*utpādya*), (ii) obtained (*āpya*), (iii) ceremonially purified (*saṁskārya*), and (iv) modified (*vikārya*). If it is admitted that liberation identical with the Self is the fruit of *karma*, then the Self must be admitted to be either effected, or obtained, or ceremonially purified or modified. None of these holds good in the case of the Self which is identical with liberation.

It cannot be regarded as effected or modified. For, if these positions be admitted, then the non-permanence of *mokṣa* would certainly follow. In ordinary experience, we find sour milk and the like which are modifications, and jars and the like which are effects to be non-eternal.

Nor can liberation identical with the Self be regarded as a thing to be obtained; for, being one's Self, it is not something to be attained by one. Even if it is held to be different from one's Self, still it would not be something to be obtained; for, as it is all – pervasive like etheric space it must be understood to be ever present to everyone in its essential nature.

Nor can liberation identical with the Self be regarded as ceremonially purified and therefore depends on activity; for, ceremonial purification to an object is the result of addition of some excellence to or removal of some blemish

from that object. It cannot happen in the case of liberation through addition of excellence; for, liberation identical with the Self is absolute perfection and needs nothing to be added to it to make it more perfect; nor can it happen through removal of some blemish, for, liberation is identical with the eternally pure Self.

It follows from this that liberation which is identical with the Self cannot be brought about directly by *karma*, and so we have to exclude *karma* as a direct means of liberation.<sup>28</sup> It is with this view, Yājñavalkya has instructed Maitreyī that there is no possibility of attaining liberation by *karma* that could be accomplished by wealth.<sup>29</sup>

### **b) KARMA-THE REMOTE MEANS TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF**

The remote means consists of the performance of duties relating to one's stage and class of life as an offering to God without any attachment toward their fruits. This is known as *karma-yoga*. Performance of *karma* in this manner gives rise to merit which by removing the sin present in the mind of the aspirant generates therein the desire to know the Self (*vividiṣā*) and ceases to exist thereafter. *Karma-yoga* is thus conducive to the rise of the knowledge of the Self only indirectly and not finally.

### **c) THE PROXIMATE MEANS TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF**

After the rise of *vividiṣā*, one gives up the performance of *karma*. In other words one adopts what is known as *karma-sannyāsa*.

*Karma-sannyāsa* is a necessary qualification for the aspirant who enters into the study of Vedānta (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*) and meditation (*nididhyāsana*), which too serve as the proximate means to the knowledge of the Self. Of these, *śravaṇa* is inquiry into the import of the Upaniṣadic texts. It is a mental activity that leads to the determination of the import of the Upaniṣadic texts. *Manana* is mental activity in the form of arguing within oneself on the basis of reasoning that are in conformity with the Upaniṣadic teaching after knowing definitely what the Upaniṣads teach with a view to convince oneself that that teaching alone is true. *Nididhyāsana* is mental operation helpful to turn away the mind from external objects in order to maintain the continuity of knowledge in the form 'I am Brahman' that has arisen from *śravaṇa* and *manana*. These three factors are referred to by Yājñavalkya in the text—

आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यः मन्तव्यः निदिध्यासितव्यः।<sup>30</sup>

Of these three, *śravaṇa* removes the false notion that the Upaniṣads do not teach the non-dual Brahman. This false notion is termed *pramāṇāsambhāvanā*. Even after this false notion is removed there would linger in the mind of the aspirant the doubt that the Upaniṣadic teaching is stultified by perception, etc. This doubt is termed *prameyāsambhāvanā* and *manana* removes this. The mind of the aspirant is still afflicted by the contrary notion in the form 'I am an agent, enjoyer', etc. This is known as *viparītabhāvanā*. And this is removed by *nididhyāsana*. When the mind of the aspirant becomes free from the pursuit of *śravaṇa*, etc., there would arise the direct knowledge of Brahman from the great-sayings of the Upaniṣads.



Sureśvara in his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka – Upaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārttika* considers that the word *nididhyāsana* stands for the knowledge of Brahman. He is of the view that *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* referred to in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text, namely,

आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यः मन्तव्यः निदिध्यासितव्यः<sup>31</sup>

are restated in the subsequent text thus:

आत्मा वा अरे दर्शनेन श्रवणेन मत्या विज्ञानेन<sup>32</sup> etc.

Here *nididhyāsana* mentioned in the earlier text is referred to by the word *vijñāna*. The latter conveys through convention the sense of knowledge only which is free from doubt. Thus on the basis of the reference to *nididhyāsana* by the word *vijñāna*, Sureśvara considers that *nididhyāsana* stands for the direct knowledge of Brahman.<sup>33</sup>

Earlier we have said that *sannyāsa* is the essential qualification for one to embark upon *śravaṇa*, etc. It is two-fold as one relating to the fruit and the other relating to the means thereof. Of these two, the former one is intended for those who have already attained the knowledge of the Self. The latter one relates to those who seek the knowledge of the Self. We shall explain this in some detail.

Vedāntic study, etc., which are the proximate means to the knowledge of the Self when pursued by non-ascetics would not lead to the rise of the knowledge of the Self in this life because they have not adopted *sannyāsa*. They would attain the knowledge of the Self in the next life by adopting *sannyāsa*. If, on the other hand, one pursues Vedāntic study, etc., in a previous life by being an ascetic and if the knowledge of the Self did not arise then owing to some impediments,

then one attains the knowledge of Brahman in the next life irrespective of the stage of life which one leads then. In the present case, Yājñavalkya who had pursued *śravaṇa*, etc., in his previous life by being an ascetic and who could not attain the knowledge of the Self because of some impediments had attained the knowledge of the Self in the next birth when he was a house-holder. He desires to abandon the house-holder's life which is characterized by the distractions of mind with a view to experience the fruit, namely, the state of *jīvanmukti*.<sup>34</sup> This is known as *vidvat-sannyāsa*. The second one is known as *vividiṣā-sannyāsa* and it is adopted by those who want to attain the knowledge of the Self.

To sum up:

Liberation which is identical with the Self cannot be achieved by *karma*. It is the knowledge of the Self that is its sole means. In order that knowledge may arise, one must pursue Vedāntic study, reflection and meditation by being an ascetic.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The sacred episode in the form of the dialogue between Maitreyī and Yājñavalkya in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* deals with the essentials of the Advaita Vedānta, namely, that the Self is of the nature of bliss and it is free from duality; the soul is the conditioned form of the Self and liberation consists in remaining as the pure Self, and, knowledge is the sole means to liberation.

## NOTES

1. *A Bibliographical Survey of Advaita Vedānta Literature* by R. Thangaswami, University of Madras, 1980.
2. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (hereafter *CU*), 6.2.1.
3. *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (hereafter *BU*), 4.3.7.
4. *CU*, 6.8.7.
5. *Saṁkṣepaśārīraka*, 1.25.
6. *BU*, 2.4.5.
7. *Ibid.*, 1.4.8.
8. *Ibid.*, 2.4.5.
9. *CU*, 6.1.3.
10. *Ibid.*, 6.1.4.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.1.3.
13. *Ibid.*, 2.1.10.
14. *BU*, 2.4.6. See also *Maitreyī-brahmaṇa-bhāṣya-tātparya-dīpikā* (here after *MBBTD*), 29-31.
15. *MBBTD*, 32-33.
16. *BU*, 2.4. 7-9.
17. *MBBTD*, 34-39.
18. *BU*, 2.4.10.
19. *MBBTD*, 43.
20. *BU*, 2.4. 11-12.
21. *MBBTD*, 60-75.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Anubhūtiprakāśa*, 15-17.

25. *BU*, 2.4.12; *MBBTD*, 125-127.
26. *BU*, 2.4.14.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya*, 1.1.4.
29. *BU*, 2.34.
30. *Ibid.*, 2.4.5.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārttika*, 2.4.217 to 221.
34. *BU*, 2.5.1.

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**ON THE RELATIVE MERITS  
OF  
PERCEPTION AND INFERENCE IN ADVAITA**

V. M. ANANTHANARAYANAN

The proof, perception which gives us the knowledge of the world as real (*sat*), the Advaitin holds, is sublated by the cognition arising from inference of the form—

“The world is not real (*mithyā*); it is because it is perceived, insentient, conditioned and composite”.<sup>1</sup>

He further holds that this argument advanced by him is supported by indirect argument or *reductio ad absurdum* (*tarka*) which consists in the assumption that if the thing that is sought to be established (*sādhya*) is not admitted, then it would inevitably lead to the absurd position of viewing the absence of the ground of inference (*hetu*), which, however, is not the case. Here if the non-reality (*mithyātva*) of the world which is the *sādhya* is not admitted, then it would result in viewing that perceptibility which is the *hetu* does not exist in the world which is the *pakṣa* or the subject of inference. In other words, the *hetu* which is known to

exist in the world would have to be admitted as not so. It is on this basis that the Advaitin admits that inference is valid and it invalidates perception.

Vyāsatīrtha is of the view that perception is more valid than inference and so it sublates the latter. He points out that if this position is not admitted, then there would arise series of difficulties. And Madhusūdana examines them in detail. We shall deal with some of the arguments of both these preceptors.

### First Objection

Vyāsatīrtha argues that the Advaitin maintains that inference invalidates perception. It amounts to saying that inference is more powerful than perception. If this were the case, then the perceptual cognition that fire is hot would be contradicted by the cognition that arises from inference that fire is not hot because it is a substance. In the same way, Prakāśātman in his *Vivaraṇa* has proved the non-momentary nature of the soul on the basis of recognition of the form "I am the one who experienced the dream and the deep sleep state"<sup>2</sup>. Recognition is perceptual cognition of a present thing in conjunction with the residual impression of prior experience. And this cognition would be contradicted by inference adduced by the Vijñānavāda school of Buddhism proving the soul which is of the nature of momentary cognition to be momentary. The inferential argument is:

"all *bhāva-padārthas* (including the soul) are momentary; it is because they have practical efficiency"<sup>3</sup>

Vyāsatīrtha concludes by saying that, according to the view of the Advaitin that inference invalidates perception, there would not be the valid knowledge of fire as hot through perception and of the non-momentary or the permanent

nature of the soul.<sup>4</sup> Hence in order to maintain the validity of the perceptual cognition of fire as hot and of recognition that points to the permanent nature of the soul, it must be admitted that inference is not efficacious enough to invalidate perception. The latter is more powerful than inference. The perceptual cognition that comprehends the reality of the world invalidates the cognition of the non-reality of the world derived through inference.

### Reply to this Objection

Madhusūdana rejects the above objection of Vyāsatīrtha by stating that the perceptual cognition that fire is hot is ascertained to be valid as fire is adapted to practical needs of life such as cooking, etc. In the same way, recognition which points to the permanence of the soul is ascertained to be valid on the basis of the śruti texts that speak of the soul to be eternal. Since perception is ascertained to be valid in these cases, it could very well sublimate the inferential cognition.<sup>5</sup> Further the inferential arguments too suggested by Vyāsatīrtha consist of the grounds of inference (*hetu*) that are fallacious. It is thus: in the inferential argument –

“Fire is not hot; it is because it is a substance”

the absence of the thing that is sought to be established (*sādhyābhāva*), that is, ‘being hot’ is perceived through tactile perception and so the ground of inference which is presented to prove its absence, that is, ‘not being hot’ is associated with the fallacy known as *bādha* and the ground of inference which is thus fallacious is known as *bādhita*. And an inferential argument which has a fallacious ground of inference is not a *pramāṇa* at all and so the question of its invalidating the perceptual cognition of fire being hot does not arise at all.

The inferential argument advanced by the Vijñānavāda school of Buddhism too is wrong. The ground of inference that is admitted by this school to prove the momentary nature of the soul, that is, the cognition, is “practical efficiency” (*arthakriyākāritva*). This is indemonstrable. It is because practical efficiency in the case of the cognition is admitted to be the generation of another instant; and, on this ground the cognition is admitted to be momentary. But, according to this school, by four different forms of meditation, namely, everything is momentary, is its own existence, is misery and is void, there results the penultimate cognition which is the final stage of excellence of meditation. From this there arises the cognition free from any reference to any object. It is the final instant. Cognition at this stage does not give rise to another instant. Hence it ceases to be practically efficient. It comes to this that practical efficiency which is admitted to be the ground of inference to prove the momentary nature of *bhāva-padārthas* which include cognition, that is, the soul also is not present in the latter at one stage.<sup>6</sup> Hence this ground of inference is associated with the fallacy *svarūpāsiddhi*, that is, non-presence of the ground of inference in the subject (*pakṣa*) of inference. The ground of inference which is thus fallacious is known as *svarūpāsiddha*. And an inferential argument which has a fallacious ground of inference is not a *pramāṇa* at all and so it cannot invalidate recognition that points to the permanence of the soul.

Madhusūdana concludes by saying that two inferential arguments referred to by Vyāsātīrtha are fallacious and hence they are invalidated by perception. The inferential argument that proves the non-reality of the world is valid



and is more powerful than perception and hence it invalidates the latter that gives rise to the cognition of the world to be real. It is similar to the inferential cognition which points to the ether as free from any colour and which invalidates the perceptual cognition "The ether is blue".<sup>7</sup>

### Second Objection

Vyāsatīrtha argues that the Advaitin contends that the perceptual cognition "The ether is blue" is invalidated by the cognition that arises from inference. But the Advaitin cannot adduce a valid ground of inference (*hetu*) to prove that the ether is devoid of colour (*nīrūpa*). He might argue that the absence of colour in the ether could be proved on the basis of the following inferential argument:

The ether is devoid of colour; it is because it has all-pervasive size (*paramamahatparimānavat*); or, it is not the cause of a composite whole (*dravyānārambhakatvāt*); or, it is devoid of touch (*nissparśatvāt*); like time, etc. (*kālādivat*).<sup>8</sup>

Vyāsatīrtha points out that none of the three grounds of inference given above is efficacious in proving the colourlessness nature of the ether.

The first ground of inference is the state of having all-pervasive size. Vyāsatīrtha points out that this ground of inference does not exist in the subject of inference (*pakṣa*). It is because the Advaitin admits all-pervasiveness as the essential nature of Brahman. He does not admit it in the ether. Hence the state of having all-pervasive size is associated with the fallacy – *svarūpāsiddhi* and the ground of inference associated with the fallacy is *svarūpāsiddha*. Being fallacious, this ground of inference cannot establish the absence of colour in the ether.

The second ground of inference is the state of not being a cause of a composite whole. This too, Vyāsatīrtha states, does not exist in the subject of inference (*pakṣa*), as the ether is admitted to be the cause of air on the basis of the *śruti* text –

आत्मनः आकाशः संभूतः आकाशात् वायुः<sup>9</sup>

This ground of inference also is associated with the fallacy *svarūpāsiddhi*. Further, the invariable relation between the ground of inference and the thing that is sought to be established in the present case will be of the form “whichever does not cause a composite whole is devoid of colour”. But this invariable relation lacks correspondence in the case of pot which does not cause a composite whole but which is not devoid of colour. In other words, the ground of inference – the state of not being the cause of a composite whole is present in an entity which possesses colour. It is the lack of correspondence in the case of the above invariable relation between the ground of inference and the thing that is sought to be established that precludes the possibility of inferring absence of colour in the ether on the ground that the latter does not cause a composite whole.

The third ground of inference, namely, the state of being devoid of touch, too is fallacious. It is thus: the invariable relation between this ground of inference and the thing that is sought to be established, namely, colourlessness lacks correspondence in the case of darkness (*tamas*). *Tamas*, according to the Advaitin, is a *bhāva-padārtha*. It is not absence of light (*tejas*) as the Naiyāyika views it. In it the state of being devoid of touch which is the ground of inference exists. But the thing that is sought to be established, namely, colourlessness does not exist, as *tamas* possesses black colour. Thus this ground of inference too is fallacious

and so it cannot establish colourless-ness in the ether.

The Advaitin, Vyāsatīrtha argues, might advance another inferential argument to prove the colourless-ness in the ether. It is as follows:

“The ether is devoid of colour; it is because it is different from the first three substances; like the air”.

In the air, difference from the first three substances, namely, earth, water and fire, exists. And it is devoid of colour. In the same way, it is argued that the ether too is different from the first three substances and on this ground it must be treated as colourless.

Vyāsatīrtha states that the invariable relation of the form that whichever is different from the first three substances is devoid of colour lacks correspondence in the case of *tamas* which is different from the first three substances but is possessed of colour. Hence the ground of inference in this argument is fallacious, and so it is not efficacious to prove the intended thing, namely, colourless-ness in the ether.<sup>10</sup>

Vyāsatīrtha, therefore, states that the perceptual cognition “The ether is blue” cannot be invalidated by the cognition arising from inference of the form “The ether is not blue”; or, “The ether is devoid of colour”, as the grounds of inference suggested to prove it have been shown to be fallacious. The only alternative left to the Advaitin is to hold that the perceptual cognition that the ether is blue is invalidated by another perceptual cognition that the ether is not blue or it is devoid of any colour.

It might be asked that when the ether itself is not in direct contact with the sense of sight how is it possible for

the latter to comprehend absence of colour in it? Vyāsatīrtha argues that air does not come within the range of sense of sight; yet, absence of colour in it is admitted to be comprehended by it. In the same way, in the ether which does not come within the range of sense of sight, absence of colour could be perceived by the sense of sight.<sup>11</sup>

It emerges from the above that the contention of the Advaitin that inference is more powerful than perception and it invalidates the latter is not correct.

### **Reply to this Objection**

Madhusūdana rejects the contention of Vyāsatīrtha set forth in the foregoing paragraphs. He states that it is impossible to comprehend the absence of colour in the ether through perception. It has been said that just as the absence of colour in air is perceived by the sense of sight, in the same way absence of colour could be perceived by the sense of sight in the ether too. But it is wrong. It is because in the case of the perception of the absence of colour in air by the sense of sight, there does not exist the cognition of colour in it contrary to the cognition of the absence of colour in it. But here we do have the perceptual cognition of colour in the ether through the sense of sight and so we cannot have the perceptual cognition of the absence of colour in it through the sense of sight. And so the cognition of the absence of colour in the ether should be derived through inference only. And it must be held that the cognition of the absence of colour derived through inference invalidates the perceptual cognition of the blue colour in the ether.

It may be said that it has been pointed out by Vyāsatīrtha that the inferential arguments that might be

advanced by the Advaitin are proved to be wrong and so there is no possibility of the rise of the inferential cognition of the ether as devoid of any colour. Madhusūdana presents a ground of inference which unlike the ones discussed by Vyāsatīrtha, is a valid one. The inferential argument is as follows:

“The ether has the absolute non-existence of colour in it; it is because it is perceived without any relation to colour following the functioning of sense of sight; like colour itself”.<sup>12</sup>

Colour is the illustrative example in this inference. It is perceived as devoid of any colour through the sense of sight. In the same way, through the sense of sight blue colour is not cognized in the ether nearby. But it is seen in the ether at a distance. From this we must conclude that the cognition of blue colour in the ether is produced by the defect of distance.<sup>13</sup> Thus the perceptual cognition that the ether is blue is invalidated only by the cognition that arises from inference. Inference, therefore, is more powerful than perception and the perceptual cognition of the world as real is invalidated by the cognition of the world to be non-real that is derived through inference.

It must be added here that according to Advaita, the ether does not come within the range of sense of sight. It is only light that comes into contact with the latter. Thereby there arises the mental state in the form of light. And the consciousness that is reflected in it manifests the ether. The latter is devoid of any colour. Yet, as Śaṅkara says, the ignorant views the ether which does not come within the range of sense of sight as deep-blue in colour and as a dish-like receptacle placed upside down.<sup>14</sup>

### Third Objection

Vyāsatīrtha states that in the case of the flame of a lamp which is extinguished first and lighted later on, the difference between the two is ascertained through perception. In the same way, in the case of the continual glow of the flame of a lamp which is mistaken to be one but which, in fact, is different at every instant, the difference could be identified through perceptual cognition of the form "The flame was long earlier, and it is short now".<sup>15</sup> What he wishes to emphasize is that the earlier perceptual cognition is invalidated by the subsequent perceptual cognition only and not by the cognition that is derived from inference. And when viewed in this light, the perceptual cognition of the world as real cannot be sublated by the cognition of the non-reality of the world derived through inference.

### Reply to this Objection

Madhusūdana concedes to the fact that in the case of the flame of a lamp extinguished first and lighted later on, the difference between the two flames is identified through perception. But in the case of the continual glow of the flame of a lamp which is different at every instant, the difference could be discerned only through inference and not by perception. Vyāsatīrtha has said that the difference could be identified through perceptual cognition of the form "The flame was long earlier and it is short now". But this contention is wrong. The flame is associated with the characteristics of being long and short at different points of time no doubt. Yet there is the re-cognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of the form "That which was long earlier is short now" pointing to the identity of the flame. And so one cannot identify the difference between the flame at one instant and another at the next instant in the continual glow of the

flame through perception. The re-cognition that the flame is one which is erroneous could be invalidated not by perception but only by inference. The inferential argument is that the continual glow of flame is different at every instant, because of the variations in the fuel-content. Hence inference is more powerful than perception.<sup>16</sup>

In the same way, one whose eyes are defiled by bilious content has the perceptual cognition "The conch is yellow" which is erroneous. This cognition of such a one could be invalidated only by the cognition "The conch is white" which arises from inference and not by perception.

The perceptual cognition of the moon as of small size cannot be invalidated by the perceptual cognition of the moon as of great size, because such a perceptual cognition is impossible to attain. Hence we must admit that it is invalidated by a cognition that is different from perceptual cognition; that is, inferential or the one derived from verbal testimony.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Fourth Objection**

In order to uphold the view that perception is more powerful than inference or verbal testimony, Vyāsatīrtha first classifies cognition into two as follows:

- (i) one having reference to two contents which are mutually exclusive; and,
- (ii) another having reference to only one content. Of these two, the former is doubt, for example, of the form "Is this a stump or a man". The latter is two-fold as:
  - (i) one which is known to be invalid; and,
  - (ii) another whose validity is ascertained.

The invalidity of a cognition may be ascertained on two grounds: one, if the cognition is known to be derived from the instrument of cognition that is defective (*duṣṭakāraṇakatvaniścaya*); and, two, if it is known that there is no correspondence between the thing that appears and what it is (*arthābhāvaniścaya*).<sup>18</sup>

Vyāsatīrtha proceeds to point out that in respect of the perceptual cognition which refers to two contents that are exclusive of each other, there is the need for another *pramāṇa* – perception or inference or verbal testimony to ascertain which of the two contents is true.

The cognition which refers to only one content and is ascertained to be invalid on the ground that it is known to have arisen from an instrument that is associated with some defect or that its content is known to be not corresponding to that which is actual need not be invalidated by another *pramāṇa*, either inference or verbal testimony. It is thus: there arises the cognition of trees on the summit of a hill to be very small in size. This cognition is ascertained to be invalid because it is known that it has arisen through the sense-contact associated with the defect, namely, distance. On this ground itself it is decided that the cognition of the moon as small in size is also invalid. The cognition of blue colour in the ether too is discerned to be invalid on the ground that it is perceived when one looks at the ether from a distance and it is not perceived in the region of the ether when one is near to it. Thus the cognition of the moon as of small size and that of blue colour in the sky, are ascertained to be invalid even prior to the functioning of the proofs – inference or verbal testimony. The cognition “The conch is yellow” is ascertained to be invalid at the



time of its origination itself as its content, namely, the conch as yellow is known to be not corresponding to that which is actual, on the basis of the perceptual cognition of the conch as white which one had earlier. Vyāsatīrtha points out that in all the above cases, invalidity is ascertained even before the functioning of inference or verbal testimony. And the latter two do not serve the role of invalidating the perceptual cognitions of the moon as of small size, of the blue colour in ether and of the conch as yellow.

Vyāsatīrtha proceeds to point out that the cognitions "The fire is hot", "The strew is different from the sacrificer", and "The pot is real" are valid. In these cases we do not notice any defect such as distance in respect of their origination. Nor is the content of any of these cognitions is noticed to be not corresponding to that which is actual. Further each one of these cognitions refers only to one content. Hence there is no possibility or need for the functioning of any *pramāṇa* in respect of these either to affirm or to deny their validity.<sup>19</sup> It comes to this that the perceptual cognition of the world as real is not at all invalidated by the cognition of the non-reality that arises from inference.

### **Reply to this Objection**

Madhusūdana points out that Vyāsatīrtha in the process of explaining that the invalidity of the perceptual cognition "The moon is small in size", and "The ether is blue" is ascertained on the ground of their having been caused by the defect, namely, distance, and that of the perceptual cognition "The conch is yellow" is ascertained on the ground of its content not being in conformity to that which is actual subscribes, in the ultimate and final analysis,

to the view that these cognitions are invalidated by inference only.

To begin with, when it is said that the cognitions “The moon is small in size” and “The ether is blue” are known to be invalid on the ground that they are caused by the defect – distance, the latter actually serves as the ground of inference. It is thus:

The perceptual cognition that the moon which is located far away is invalid; because it is a cognition that comprehends the object located at a distance to be small in size;

like the cognition of the trees on the hill top.

In the same way, the perceptual cognition of the blue colour in the ether is said to be invalid on the ground that when one looks at it from a distance it appears to be blue, while it is noticed to be colour-less when one is nearer to it. Here also Madhusūdana points out that the defect, distance which is said to have caused the perceptual cognition of blue colour serves as the ground of inference to prove the invalidity of the cognition.<sup>20</sup>

The perceptual cognition of the conch as yellow, Vyāsatīrtha has argued, is ascertained to be invalid on the ground that its content is known to be not in conformity to that which is actual. Madhusūdana points out that it could be invalidated only by the cognition arising from inference of the form –

“This conch is not yellow;  
it is because it is a conch;  
like the conch that is being  
remembered”.

He proceeds to point out that when one's eyes are defiled by the bilious content, the cognition of the white colour of the conch cannot be had. So it cannot be said that the subsequent perceptual cognition of the conch as white invalidates the cognition that conch is yellow. It cannot also be said that the recollection of the white colour of the conch invalidates the cognition that conch is yellow. It is because recollection is never noticed to be the sublating factor of a perceptual cognition.<sup>21</sup> Madhusūdana concludes by stating that the perceptual cognition of the moon to be small in size would be invalidated by inference as well as by verbal testimony. The perceptual cognitions of the blue colour in the ether and of the conch as yellow could be invalidated only by the cognitions arising from inference.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover the contention of Vyāsatīrtha that the perceptual cognitions of the blue colour in the ether and of the moon to be small in size are ascertained even prior to the functioning of inference or verbal testimony to be invalid, as they are known to have been caused by the defect, namely, distance is wrong. It is because "distance" could be identified as a defect in regard to these two cognitions only when the latter are invalidated by the cognition arising from inference or verbal testimony. Madhusūdana argues that in certain cases nearness constitutes a defect and distance, merit. For example, the dewdrops on grass could not be perceived by one who is near to the grass. And they could be perceived if one is at a distance from it. Here nearness constitutes the defect in so far as it leads to the non-perception of the dewdrops; and, "distance" constitutes a merit in so far as the perception of the dewdrops is concerned. In the case of the perceptual cognitions of the blue colour in the ether and of the moon as small in size,

one does not know whether “distance” is a merit or a defect. But one identifies it to be a defect only when these cognitions are invalidated by the cognition arising from inference or verbal testimony. When they are invalidated by the latter, one would naturally investigate the cause that has led to their invalidity and comes to the conclusion that it is “long distance” between the one who perceives and the object perceived. In this process the long interval in space is identified to be the defect. The latter is not identified prior to the functioning of inference or verbal testimony, as Vyāsatīrtha thinks.<sup>23</sup>

In the same way, the perceptual cognition of the conch as yellow is invalidated by the cognition arising from inference. Only after its invalidation by the latter, one comes to know that its content is not in conformity to that which is actual and not earlier, as Vyāsatīrtha holds.

The perceptual cognition of the world to be real is invalidated by the cognition arising from inference and verbal testimony first. Subsequently it is decided that it is caused by the defect, avidyā or primal nescience.<sup>24</sup>

It emerges from the above that the contention of Vyāsatīrtha that the perceptual cognition could not be invalidated by the cognition derived from inference is wrong.

### **Conclusion**

Inference aided by non-fallacious *reductio ad absurdum* (*sat-tarka*) is more powerful than perception. The cognition derived from the latter is invalidated by the cognition arising from the former. When viewed in this light, the perceptual cognition of the world to be real is invalidated by the cognition that arises from the former.

The false notion that the perceptual cognition of the world is valid and the world is real are removed thereby. Since the existence of the non-real world would not impair the non-dual nature of Brahman, one could have the intellectual conviction that Brahman is non-dual (*Advaita*).

### NOTES

1. *Advaita-siddhi* (hereafter *AS*) with the commentary *Bālābodhinī*, Tara Publications, Varanasi, 1971, pp. 49, 63, 73, 81.
2. *Vivaraṇa* (hereafter *V*) with commentaries, Madras Government Oriental Series, Vol. CLV., Madras, 1958, p.323.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 329.
4. *Nyāyāmṛta* (hereafter *Nmṛ*) Ed. by Svāmi Yogīndrānanda. Published along with *Advaita-siddhi*. Śaḍdarśana-Prakāśana-Pratiṣṭhānam, Benares, 1977. p.136.
5. *AS*, p. 136.
6. *V.*, p. 331.
7. *AS*, pp. 136-7.
8. *Nmṛ.*, p. 164.
9. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.
10. *Nmṛ.*, p. 164.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
12. *AS*, p. 164.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Adhyāsa-bhāṣya*.
15. *Nmṛ.*, p. 160.
16. *AS*, p. 166.

17. Ibid.
18. *Nmr.*, p. 161.
19. Ibid., pp. 161-162.
20. *AS*, p. 169.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 170.
24. Ibid.

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## “SERMON ON THE CHARIOT”: A GOSPEL OF HUMAN VALUES

K. SUNDARARAMAN

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is the cream of various philosophical systems and the culmination of the spiritual genius of India. Śaṅkara at the beginning of his commentary on the *Gītā* observes that it is the “quintessence of the entire Vedic teaching” (*samasta-vedārthasārasaṅgraha*). In no other scripture such a lofty approach has been made to synthesize various streams of philosophic thinking into a coherent and harmonious gospel of human values. As Svāmi Vivekānanda says, “*Gītā* is like a fine garland or a bouquet of the choicest flowers”<sup>1</sup>. It shows the humanity a unique way of dynamic and enlightened action without getting acted upon by its results. It’s message is transcendental and hence it’s relevance to humanity is timeless. It has an intimate message to deliver for both the lay and the learned.

J.W. Hauer, a German missionary and a Sanskrit scholar finds the *Gītā* as “a work of imperishable significance.... We are not called to solve the meaning of life

but to find out the Deed demanded of us and to work and so, by action, to master the riddle of life".<sup>2</sup>

*Gītā* is characteristically a dramatic scripture, its milieu set in the midst of battle-field where, as in life, no one can predict what is in store next. The fact that it is delivered amidst the tumultuous uproar of the battle-field is itself a metaphor for the boisterous senses. Mind of man is the epi-centre of struggle and strife (*kurukṣetra*). As an allegory of inner struggle and strife it has a bearing on the practical crises of life.

Comradeship between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna is a symbolic divine-human nexus. Human soul can claim kinship with God spiritually in a transcendental plane. Man should strive and discover his potentially exalted nature and to perform his duty in a lofty state of mind.

We find, in the opening section, a despairing Arjuna, 'a representative human soul of great world struggle' as Sri Aurobindo puts it<sup>3</sup>; his mind deluded, his avowed conviction shattered, his mind in total mutiny; for every individual there comes an hour some time or other of this kind of terrific dilemma—'to do or not to do', 'to be or not to be'. Depression has a devastating effect on the mind. Weakness of will dissipates one's energy. Mistrust of oneself undo even abundance of valour and knowledge one possesses.

Kṛṣṇa rebukes Arjuna for his weakness and depression at the most crucial hour of his life and warns him not to misinterpret his fickleness and cowardice as forgiveness and renunciation. Kṛṣṇa by invoking the transcendental Higher Law of *ātman* brings about a great metamorphosis in the psyché of Arjuna, redeems him from disillusionment and leads him to dispassionate valiant action. Arjuna, the fighter and actor stands transformed into a seer of Truth.



क्लेशं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नै तत् त्वयि उपपद्यते ।  
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वा उत्तिष्ठ परन्तप ॥ 4

Yield not to unmanliness, O Pārtha, for it does not become thee. Cast of this petty faintheartedness and arise.

This is the buoyant and resounding message which is pertinent to each and every one. Life should be a positive affirmation, action and achievement. We, as an instrument in the higher power, should earnestly believe that each one has a mission to accomplish and a destiny to fulfill.

Everyone is psychically equipped to respond to tragedy and comedy, tears and cheers, gloom and bloom that are essential components in life. Every odd we must dare only to defy. Our faculties are aroused to full and vibrant manifestations of their amazing powers, almost involuntarily, thanks to the adverse currents we encounter in life. But steadiness of purpose is all. Irresolute, wavering and unsteady mind does not get established in steadfastness. According to the *Gītā*, attachment to sense objects brings desire; from desire comes anger; from anger arises bewilderment; from bewilderment, loss of memory, from loss of memory, destruction of intelligence causing ultimately total ruin. The *Gītā* cautions us against this cascading and demoralising catastrophe.<sup>5</sup>

Get ready for the battle (of life) treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat because evenness of mind is called *yoga* (*samatvam yoga ucyate*).<sup>6</sup> How exactly Rudyard Kipling echoes this mental equipoise in his famous inspirational poem “IF”!:

“If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster, And treat those two imposters just the same”.

The *Gītā* evolves *karma-yoga* as a superb strategy by integrating two opposite elements, viz. action and resignation in a way that is both convincing and practical. It preaches *karma-yoga* and not *karma-sannyāsa* i.e. renunciation *in* action and not renunciation *of* action.<sup>7</sup> Freedom from action is not through abstaining from it. **It is not only for what we do that we are held responsible, but also for what we do not do.** When *karma* binds a doer, *karma-yoga* liberates him and so the *Gītā* hails it as even superior to meditation.<sup>8</sup> *Karma-yoga* triumphs over the law of *karma* by separating the doer from the consequences of his doings. It thus successfully intervenes into the law of *karma*; and at the point of intersection, action and its results, in other words, cause and effect, stand separated. Action without passion or desire becomes a *sādhana*. The way to enlightenment lies through dispassionate action and any honest labour is the noblest of action and as good a sacrament as worship. The consequences of action cease to devour a dispassionate *karma-yogin* who has completely subdued his sense of ego and thereby the sense of doership which is the cause of bondage. He acts only as a tool in the hands of the Divine. Dispassion implies cessation of preferences of all sorts. Even a bloody war when fought with a sense of high purpose in response to a call of duty does not defile the doer. The *Gītā* therefore does not make violence or non-violence a creed but stresses only on right action in a right attitude.

The *Gītā* recognises the power of human will because of the potential divinity of the human soul. Each one has the freedom to rise or fall. One's actions are one's own friend and one's own enemy. Destiny is not irrevocable. It is conquerable by perseverance, diligence and constant striving.

उद्धरेद् आत्मना आत्मानं न आत्मनं असादयेत् ।  
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुः आत्मैव रिपुः आत्मनः॥<sup>9</sup>

One should lift oneself by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself; for one's own self is one's own friend and enemy.

Stephen Hawking, the most brilliant theoretical physicist living since Einstein, was affected by a wasting motor neuron disease that resulted in his loss of speech and mobility totally and he was doomed to die by the medical fraternity in two years in 1965, but still lives and lecturing to international audience through the computer-assisted speech synthesizer. His extraordinary brain probes the problems of cosmos. His life is a sterling example of triumph of will against determinism. He advocates, by his own example, an effective theory of free will:

'One cannot base one's conduct on the idea that everything is determined because one does not know what has been determined. Instead, one has to adopt the effective theory that one has free will and that one is responsible for one's actions.'<sup>10</sup>

Martin Luther King (Jr) in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in Oslo on 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 1964 says—

"I refuse to accept that man is mere flotsam or jetsam in the river of life unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him".

'Be a lamp unto yourself. Work out your way diligently to salvation' was the final farewell message of Lord Buddha to his monks and to the world at large.

No one is forsaken in the eyes of God. Every sinner is a saint in the making if only he rightly resolves and turns

to God by totally resigning his will. Vālmiki and Tulasidās are citing examples. As Tulasidās put it: 'a piece of charcoal loses its blackness and turns lustrous when fire penetrates it.' Such is the saving grace of God which is for all.

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।  
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥<sup>11</sup>

Four kinds of virtuous men worship me, O Arjuna, man in distress, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and the man of wisdom.

Among the four types of seekers of Divine grace, the man of wisdom (*jñānī*) enjoys a special privilege of God because he is like a mighty raft of log that while floating down the stream carries on it many to the destination, i.e., deliverance as Sri Ramakṛṣṇa Paramahansa said<sup>12</sup>. A man of wisdom abides in peace and radiates peace. So the *Gītā* says '*nahī jñānena sadṛśam pavitraṁ iha vidyate*' – there is nothing on earth equal in purity to wisdom.<sup>13</sup>

The *Gītā* preaches both *bhakti* (devotion) and *prapatti* (total surrender to God). Devotion is loving submission of a devout heart. Devotion is not ostentatious ritualistic worship with pomp and pageantry. It is not the offering that is reckoned but the attitude of the offerer:

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।  
तद् अहं भक्त्युपहृतं अक्ष्णामि प्रयतात्मनः॥<sup>14</sup>

Whoever offers to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, that offering of love, of the pure of heart I accept.

Lord Kṛṣṇa accepted a handful of parched rice from Sudāma, his poor friend and blessed him with abundance of wealth.

Lord Rāma ate the tasted-fruits from Śabarī with immense joy. Hunter-turned Saint Kaṇṇappar is an illustrious example of loving devotion to Godhead.

The *Gītā*<sup>15</sup> advocates moderation, i.e. avoidance of extremes in life. Neither hedonistic sensual indulgence nor ascetic mortification of flesh is the way to enlightenment. Gautama, the Buddha, too preached it as ‘middle path’ having realised by his own experience the futility of observing the extremes. Aristotle called it the ‘golden mean’.

Common people follow the standard set by the elect. They are the path makers. They set the ideals for the society. So it is incumbent on them to lead an impeccable life worthy of emulation by the common lot.

यद् यद् आचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेव इतरो जनः।  
स यत् प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तद् अनुवर्तते ॥<sup>16</sup>

Whatever a great man does, the same is done by others as well; whatever he sets up as the standard, the world follows.

To sum up: the *Gītā* wants us to lead a righteous, valiant, virtuous, value-based awakened living so that such living itself becomes an eloquent message for the rising generation. When Mahatma Gandhi was asked by a foreign journalist the day before his assassination as to his message to the world, the Mahatma said, “My Life is my message”.

### NOTES

1. Svāmi Vivekānanda: *Thoughts on the Gītā*, Advaita Ashram, Calcutta, 1993, p.7.
2. Cited in *The Bhagavad-Gītā* by Radhakrishnan, Blackie & Sons (India) 1970, Intro. p.11.

3. Sri Aurobindo: *Essays on the Gītā*, The Sri Aurobindo Library Inc, Newyork, 1950, p.20.
4. *Bhagavad Gītā* (hereafter *BG*) 2.3.
5. *Ibid.*, 2. 62-64.
6. *Ibid.*, 2-48.
7. *Ibid.*, 5.2.
8. *Ibid.*, 12-12.
9. *Ibid.*, 6.5.
10. Stephen Hawking: *Black Holes and Baby Universes*, Benthem Books, London, 1996, p. 122.
11. *BG*, 7.16.
12. F. Max Müller: *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings*, Indigo Books, New Delhi, 2006, p. 108.
13. *BG*, 4.38.
14. *Ibid.*, 9.26.
15. *Ibid.*, 6. 16 -17.
16. *Ibid.*, 3.21.

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## 11

### ON THE CONCEPT OF BRAHMAN IN THE KṚTIS OF ŚRĪ MUTTUSVĀMI DĪKṢITA

R. ASHA (SIVASREE)

Since ancient times, *nādotpāsanā* in India has been regarded as a spiritual *sāadhanā*, a means to *mokṣa*. This *sāadhanā* is based on the concept of *nāda* or the primordial sound. The idea of sound being the supreme principle, the Ultimate Essence, is explained in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* thus:—

“ओमित्येतत् अक्षरं उद्गीथं उपासीत.....साम्  
उद्गीथो रसः स एव रसानां रसतमः”<sup>1</sup>

Later texts like *Saṅgīta-Ratnākara* equate the concept of Nāda-Brahman with that of Brahman of the Advaita Vedānta—

चैतन्यं सर्वभूतानां विवृतं जगदात्मना ।  
नादब्रह्म तदानन्दं अद्वितीयं उपास्महे ॥<sup>2</sup>

Standing as some of the pre-eminent exemplars of this spiritual *sāadhanā* (*nādotpāsanā*), are the famous Music Trinity of South India, namely, Tyāgarāja, Śyāmā Śāstrī and

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita who, through their musical efflorescence, have enriched the spiritual and cultural fabric of our country. They are revered not only for their contributions to music, but also for the range of their *sāhitya* and of their life soaked in spirituality and mysticism. Of these, Tyāgarāja and Śyāma Śāstrī composed their *kṛtis* in Telugu, and Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, in Sanskrit. With Advaita as the bedrock, the underlying thread, his *kṛtis* embody philosophic and esoteric lore (containing concepts from *āgama*, *tantra* and *mantra śāstras*) as also details regarding temples, iconography, mythology and astrology.

A perusal of his life and works brings to the mind the saying —

ईश्वरानुग्रहादेव पुंसां अद्वैतवासना ।

Dīkṣita was born at Tiruvarur (near Tanjavur in South India, a place renowned for its hallowed traditions, not the least of which is that birth here ensures salvation) to Rāmasvāmi Dīkṣita (himself an illustrious personality in the field of music) by the grace of Lord Muttukumārasvāmi and Lord Śiva of Vaitīśvaran Koil. At a young age, he came under the tutelage of Śrī Cidambaranātha Yogi who took him to Kāśī. He was initiated into Śrīvidyā-Upāsanā, learnt Vedānta and other śāstras and was blessed with a divine Vīṇā (which he obtained on the banks of the Ganges). Coming down south, he had a mystic vision of Lord Kumāra at Tiruttanī which opened the floodgates of poesy and resulted in a spontaneous outpouring of divine music. At Kañcī he came into contact with Śrī Upaniṣad Brahmendra Yogin who was one of the foremost Advaitic sannyāsins of his time. Travelling extensively, he then visited various shrines and was inspired to compose numerous *kṛtis* in Sanskrit. During his last



days, he was patronized by the King of Eṭṭayapuram. Many miracles are associated with his life like the closed door of a shrine (at Kīvalūr near Tiruvārūr), opening to his rendering of a *kṛti*, the shower of rain in response to his *kṛti* in the rāga, Amṛtavarṣiṇī, etc. He is said to have had a premonition of his time of death and he shed off his mortal coil and attained *mukti* by hearing the strains of one of his compositions on Devī, “*Mīnakṣī me mudam dehi*” (especially, the phrases *mīna-locani pāśa-mocani*, extolling the Goddess as one who grants liberation from mundane shackles). His samādhi is at Eṭṭayapuram near Tirunelveli and to this day *ārādhana* is being performed every year.

Dīkṣita’s compositions are on manifestations of Brahman like Gaṇeśa, Kumāra, Devī, Śiva and Viṣṇu. But his approach is not confined to a particular form alone. Using the medium of song and form, he transcends them and ascends to the highest level of reality, where all forms, all names converge. Such attitude is marked in the treatment of all deities and is not restricted to one particular deity. This is possible only if one views from an advaitic angle. And so is it that his *kṛtis* abound in Advaitic terminology.

In this paper an attempt is made to present some of these concepts, selecting the relevant phrases while mentioning the *kṛtis* in brackets.

### THE CONCEPT OF BRAHMAN

According to Advaita Vedānta, Brahman, the ultimate Real is non-dual, one without a second. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* declares—

सदेव सौम्य इदमग्र आसीत्, एकमेव अद्वितीयम् ।<sup>3</sup>

Brahman is one only, i.e. it is devoid of any kind of

differentiation, external or internal. Since there is nothing similar to it, it is devoid of the kind of difference that exists between two objects of the same class (*sajātīya-bheda*). So also, as there is nothing unlike it, it is devoid of the kind of difference that exists between two objects of two different classes (*vijātīya-bheda*). Again, as it is partless, it is devoid of any internal differentiation (*svagata-bheda*). The three words 'ekam' (one), 'eva' (only) and 'advitīyam' (without a second) in the text cited above are intended to deny these three kinds of difference in Brahman.

From the ultimate point of view, Brahman being the sole reality, the world of plurality does not exist. As the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* puts it – नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन ।<sup>4</sup>

This being so, the ultimate logical significance of the texts of the Upaniṣads in the non-dual reality.

This central thesis of Advaita Vedānta is referred to in many places by Dīkṣita. For eg.

1. सजातीयादि रहितम् (in the *kṛti* शङ्खचक्रगदापाणिम्); 2. विकल्पातीतः (विश्वेश्वरः); 3. स्वेतरवर्जितात् (श्री गणेशात्परम्); 4. विकल्परहितम् (गुरुगुहस्वामिनि); 5. द्वित्वादिभेदकर्तनपरमाद्वैतस्वात्मानन्दरूपिणः (त्यागराजादन्यम्).

At other places, individual deities are described as embodying this non-duality, For eg.

1. पराद्वयया (सरस्वत्या); 2. अद्वैतप्रतिपाद्यम् (आनन्दनटनप्रकाशम्); 3. अभेदप्रतिपादितायाम् (अभयाम्बायाम्); 4. पराद्वैतस्फूर्तेः (श्री कमलाम्बायाः); 5. परमाद्वैतबोधिते (श्री राजराजेश्वरि); 6. परमाद्वैततात्पर्यानुसन्धान (मारकोटि).

Brahman could be known only from the Upaniṣads. As Śaṅkara puts it,

उपनिषत्स्वेव विज्ञेयः नान्यप्रमाणगम्यः।<sup>5</sup>

Dīkṣita echoes this thus:

1. उपनिषत्प्रतिपादितं (महागणपतिम्); and 2. वेदान्तवेद्यं (श्री दक्षिणामूर्तिम्).

The nature of Brahman is indicated by various terms in the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara says —

‘अस्ति तावद्ब्रह्म नित्यशुद्धबुद्धस्वभावं सर्वज्ञं, सर्वशक्तिसमन्वितम्। ब्रह्मशब्दस्य हि व्युत्पाद्यमानस्य नित्यशुद्धत्वादयोः अर्थाः प्रतीयन्ते, बृहतेर्धातोः अर्थानुगमात्’।<sup>6</sup>

Following Śaṅkara, Sarvajñātman in his *Saṅkṣepa-Śārīraka* gives a list of such words - *nitya* (eternal), *śuddha* (pure), *buddha* (intelligent), *mukta* (ever-free), *satya* (truth), *sūkṣma* (subtle), *sat* (existence), *vibhu* (all pervasive), *advitīya* (non-dual), and *ānanda* (bliss)<sup>7</sup>. All these words however secondarily signify Brahman.<sup>8</sup>

Dīkṣita makes use of these words in his compositions to convey the Supreme. Examples are:—

1. नित्येन, शुद्धेन, बुद्धेन, मुक्तेन (आनन्देश्वरेण);
2. नित्यशुद्धबुद्धमुक्ताय (गौरीशाय); 3. बुद्धशुद्धनित्यानन्दमात्रस्य (श्री त्यागराजस्य); 4. नित्यं शुद्धं बुद्धं मुक्तं सत्यं निर्विकल्पं निष्प्रपञ्चं आनन्दम् (जगदीश).

### **SVARŪPA-LAKṢANA AND TAṬASTHA-LAKṢANA**

The concept of Brahman is explained on the basis of two kinds of definitions, *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* and *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*.

Of these, the former gives the essential nature of Brahman as *sat* (existence), *cit* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss). Each of these independently connotes Brahman.<sup>9</sup> Further, they constitute the very nature of Brahman and are not its attributes. They are metaphorically called attributes, since they appear to be different, while, in reality, they are not different from Brahman. As stated in the *Pañcapādikā*—

आनन्दो विषयानुभवो नित्यत्वं चेति सन्ति धर्माः  
अपृथक्त्वेऽपि चैतन्यात् पृथगिवावभासन्ते ॥<sup>10</sup>

The Upaniṣads declare—

1. सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म;<sup>11</sup> 2. आनन्दो ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात्;<sup>12</sup>
3. विज्ञानं आनन्दं ब्रह्म<sup>13</sup>; 4. यो वै भूमा तत्सुखम्.<sup>14</sup>

Taking up each of these terms for consideration, *satyam* or truth is that which never changes its nature. In other words, that is real whose nature by which it is cognized, remains constant. Consequently, that is unreal (*anṛtam*), whose nature by which it is determined varies. As Śaṅkara puts it—

यद्रूपेण यन्निश्चितं तद्रूपं न व्यभिचरति, तत्सत्यम्।<sup>15</sup>

This, in effect, means that *vikāras* or modifications are non-real, being mere products of speech.<sup>16</sup> The Upaniṣad further proceeds to state that Existence (*sat*) alone was in the beginning.<sup>17</sup> It follows that *sat* or Existence is Real (Truth). To quote Śaṅkara:—

अतो विकारोऽनृतं 'वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम्' एवं सदेव सत्यमित्यवधारणात्। अतः सत्यं ब्रह्मेति ब्रह्म विकारान्निवर्तयति.....'सन्मात्रस्य च सत्यत्वं' 'तत्सत्यं' इति श्रुत्यन्तरात्।<sup>18</sup>

When it is said that Existence is Real; and is the essential nature of Brahman, it means that it is unsublatable in the three divisions of time (*trikālābādhyā*) and is never sublated. Existence which is of the nature of Brahman is different from the existence of other objects of the world. As absolute Existence, Brahman pervades the world and is revealed through all existent objects. These objects are said to possess five characteristics, namely existence, manifestation, lovability, name and form. The first three constitute the essential nature of Brahman and the last two form the nature of the world and are variable.

अस्ति भाति प्रियं रूपं नाम चेत्यंशपञ्चकम्।  
आद्यत्रयं ब्रह्मरूपं जगद्रूपं ततो द्वयम् ॥<sup>19</sup>

So, in empirical usages such as 'The pot exists', 'The cloth exists' etc., the existence cognized in the pot or cloth is not their essential nature but that of the underlying reality, viz., Brahman. It is wrongly attributed to them due to ignorance.

Coming to the next component of the definition: Brahman is consciousness or knowledge. It is not an agent of knowing. If it were so, it would not be 'Truth' and 'Infinite'. It is absolute knowledge or absolute consciousness, pure and undifferentiated.<sup>20</sup> It is *svapprakāśa* (self-luminous)<sup>21</sup>. It manifests other objects, but it does not require any other factor for its own manifestation, i.e. it stands self-revealed. It is *svayam-siddha* (self-established) as the substratum of all experience. It is permanent and is constantly affirmed by the notion *aham*. As Dīkṣita puts it, अहम् अहम् इत्यात्मरूप in the *kṛti* – बृहदीश. This notion can never be denied and requires

no proof. It cannot be doubted, Since, it is the essential nature of the doubter himself and is always present even in the act of denial of its existence. No one has the feeling 'I do not exist'.

The word, *anantam* in the definition indicates that Brahman is beyond limitations of space, time or things. It is the cause of space (*ākāśa*), etc., and it is not limited by it. Not being an effect (i.e. uncaused), it is not delimited by time. Nor can it be limited by things, as there is nothing apart from it, as it is non-dual.

Brahman is of the nature of unconditioned bliss (*ānanda*). It is only a fraction of this Bliss that is reflected in the mental state that arises from the contact of sense-organs with their respective objects. These words, *satyam* etc., which convey the essential nature of Brahman are used very frequently by Dīkṣita to convey his experience of Supreme. Some examples are;

1. सच्चिदानन्दमूर्ते (in नमस्ते परदेवते); 2. सत्यज्ञानानन्दं (in दण्डायुधपाणिम्); 3. सन्मात्रं (in श्रीविश्वनाथम्); 4. अखण्डसच्चिदानन्दम् (in चिन्तय माकन्दमूलकन्दम्); 5. सङ्कल्पविकल्परहितसच्चिदानन्दमात्रम् (in वेङ्कटेशयादवभूपतिम्); 6. अनन्तम् (in प्रणतार्तिहरम्); 7. त्रित्वपरिच्छेदराहित्यत्रैपदपरमाद्वैतरूपिणः (in त्यागराजादन्यम्); 8. स्वयंप्रकाशम् (in पञ्चभूतकिरणावलिम्); 9. स्वयंप्रकाशकं (in श्री वल्मीकलिङ्गम्);

The definition of Brahman as *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* constitutes its essential nature and also serves to distinguish it from the world which is non-real (*anṛta*), insentient (*jaḍa*) and of the nature of misery (*duḥkha*). Dīkṣita puts this as: अनृतजडदुःखरहितम् in सन्तानरामस्वामिनम्.

It is also to be noted that these terms only indicate Brahman, as it is held that Brahman is beyond the range of speech and mind. Dīkṣita mentions this too as मनोवागगोचरं in श्री दक्षिणामूर्तिमीशम्।

*Cf.* यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह।<sup>22</sup>

The definition (*tatastha-lakṣaṇa*) of Brahman characterizes it as the cause of the world. Brahman is the cause of the origination, sustenance and destruction of the universe. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* puts it thus:

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते, येन जातानि जीवन्ति, यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति।<sup>23</sup>

This definition is of the essential nature of Īśvara, who is Brahman qualified by māyā. Brahman is considered as the material cause and the efficient cause (*abhinna-nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇa*). It is further maintained that Brahman is only the transfigurative (*vivarta*) material cause, while māyā is the transformative (*pariṇāma*) material cause. In the case of transfiguration, the cause and effect are on different levels of reality and there is no actual modification in the cause. In the case of transformation, the cause and effect belong to the same degree of reality and the cause undergoes modification.

Dīkṣita refers to the causality of Brahman in some of his compositions. For eg:

1. विश्वोत्पत्ति-स्थिति-विलयाय (in हस्तिवदनाय); 2. विश्वसृष्ट्यादिकारणम् (in बृहदीश्वरम्); 3. समस्तविश्वोदयस्थितिलयमूलप्रकृते (in नमस्ते परदेवते).

Interestingly, in the last mentioned *kṛti* Dīkṣita refers to both the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* and the *tatastha-lakṣaṇa*. Given below is the *kṛti* in full.

राग-देवरंजि

ताल-रूपक

पल्लवी

नमस्ते परदेवते शिवयुवते कामाक्षी नमस्ते नमस्ते  
समष्टिचरणम्

समस्तविश्वोदयस्थितिलयमूलप्रकृते  
साधुजनचित्तवत्ते संगीतशास्त्रयुक्ते  
विमलगुरुगुहोत्पत्ते विनोदकरसंपत्ते  
समस्तदेवरंजित सच्चिदानन्दमूर्ते (नमस्ते)

Before proceeding further, it would be of use to touch upon the concept of two Brahman, the higher and the lower.

### Personal God and Attributeless Absolute

As mentioned earlier, Reality (Brahman) according to Advaita is non-dual. It is attributeless, partless and unconditioned (*nirguṇa*). The same Brahman when described as being endowed with qualities, is called *apara-brahman* or *saguṇa-brahman*.<sup>24</sup>

There is a group of Upaniṣadic texts which speaks of Brahman as possessed of attributes (*saviśeṣa*).<sup>25</sup> There is another group which speaks of it as *nirviśeṣa*.<sup>26</sup>

Reconciling these apparently contradictory texts, Śaṅkara says that Brahman by itself is attributeless, but due to association with *māyā* or *avidyā*, acquires qualities which are not real. The former is to be realised (*jñeyam*) while the latter is for the purpose of meditation (*upāśyam*).

एकमपि ब्रह्म अपेक्षितोपाधिसम्बन्धं निरस्तोपाधिसम्बन्धं च  
उपास्यत्वेन ज्ञेयत्वेन च वेदान्तेषु उपदिश्यते।<sup>27</sup>



Dikṣita also, in keeping with this advaitic tradition uses phrases like the following:

1. गुणातीताय रूपरहिताय (गुरुगुहाय); 2. गुणरहिते (वीणाभेरी); 3. निर्विकल्प (अभयाम्बानायक); 4. निर्गुणरसपूर्णशरीरं (मार्गसहायेश्वरम्); ५. निर्विशेषचैतन्यरूपिणम् (कमलाम्बाम्); ६. सगुणनिर्गुणस्वरूपम् (सन्तानरामस्वामिनम्); ७. सकलनिष्कलरूपाय (गौरीशाय).

Elsewhere, he uses phrases like सत्यसङ्कल्प (Abhayāmba-nāyaka), सर्वज्ञ (Subrahmaṇyam) etc.

Regarding Dikṣita's approach to the non-dual Truth, all his compositions are on a particular deity like Gaṇeśa, Kumāra, Devī, Śiva or Viṣṇu. But the advaitic trend persists uniformly throughout as is evident in the profuse use of advaitic terminology.

By way of typology, one could classify the *kṛtis* as predominantly *saguna*, *saguna-nirguna* complex (in varying proportions) and predominantly *nirguna*. The last is of course, rare. One such composition is *sādhu-jana-citta-sarasijodayam*, where Dikṣita expostulates on the Absolute as all-pervasive, as consciousness, pure, eternal, immutable, as with and without attributes, primordial and beginningless, as existence, consciousness and bliss, as the cause of the variegated world of *māyā*, as known through the Upaniṣads.

राग-पूर्णपञ्चम

ताल-त्रिपुट

पल्लवी

साधुजनचित्तसरसिजोदयं सकलं ब्रह्ममयमाश्रये

अनुपल्लवी

बोधं शिवसङ्कल्पविकल्पं बुद्धशुद्धनित्यनिर्विकल्पम्

### चरणम्

सकलनिष्कलरूपमाद्यं सच्चिदानन्दमनाद्यं  
सगुणनिर्गुणवेद्यमनाद्यं संसाररोगमाद्यमक्लेद्यं  
प्रकटमायाचित्रचोद्यं प्रसिद्धाम्नायान्तवेद्यं  
शुकरहस्यप्रतिपाद्यं शुभकरं हरिहराराध्यं

### मध्यमकालसाहित्यम्

स्वकल्पितविद्याविद्यं सुरुचिरं भेद्याभेद्यं  
शुकवामदेवादिचिन्त्यं सुखतरं गुरुगुहमाद्यम् (साधु)

Elsewhere we have descriptions of the deity in purely *saguna* terms, where Dikṣita restricts himself to glorifying that particular manifestation through descriptions of form and exploits (eg. Bālagopāla).

In the *saguna-nirguna* complex, he glorifies the *saguna* in *nirguna* terms, much like Śaṅkara who composed verses on different deities in a similar vein. All these reveal that Dikṣita was able to apprehend the non-dual reality behind the mirage of names and forms.

To be continued...

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## NOTES

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3. *CU*, 6-2.1.
4. *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (hereafter *BU*), 4.4.19.
5. Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* (hereafter *ŚB*), on *BU*, 3.9.26.
6. *ŚB* on *Vedānta-sūtra* (hereafter *VS*), 1.1.1.
7. *Samkṣepa-śārīraka*, 1.173.
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9. *ŚB* on *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (hereafter *TU*), 2.1.
10. *Pañcapādikā*, Ed. by S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Mahesh Research Institute, Varanasi, 1992, pp. 41-2.
11. *TU*, 2.1.
12. Ibid., 3.6.
13. *BU*, 3.9.28.
14. *CU*, 7.23.1.
15. *ŚB* on *TU*, 2.1.
16. *CU*, 6.1.4.
17. Ibid., 6.2.1.
18. *ŚB* on *TU*, 2.1.
19. *Dṛg-dṛśya-viveka*, 20.
20. *ŚB* on *TU*, 2.1.
21. *BU*, 4.3.9; and 4.3.23; *CU*, 3.14.2.
22. *TU*, 2.9.
23. Ibid., 3.1.

24. *Praśna Upaniṣad*, 1.1; 5.2; 6.7.; and *ŚB* on *VS*, 4.3.14.
25. *CU*, 8.1.5; 3.4.2.
26. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 3.15; *BU*, 3.8.8.
27. *ŚB* on *VS*, 1.1.12.

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## THE CONCEPT OF *MUKTI* IN SANSKRIT AND TAMIL WORKS\*

C. MURUGAN

Man, according to the Upaniṣads, is a blend of consciousness and the psycho-physical organism of which the mind is the predominant factor. Owing to the radical error of avidyā, he has forgotten his essential nature, i.e. consciousness, falsely identifies himself with the psycho-physical organism, sees through the veil of avidyā the phenomenal world, takes it to be real, performs deeds-righteous and unrighteous, and experiences their fruits by undergoing unending cycle of births and deaths. This process of cyclic existence could be overcome only through the annihilation of avidyā. And it is possible only through Self-realization, i.e. realization of one's true nature as consciousness. The *Kātha Upaniṣad* declares:

तं स्वाच्छरीरात् प्रवृहेत् मुञ्जादिव इषीकां धैर्येण ॥<sup>1</sup>

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One should draw out the consciousness-element (i.e. one's true nature) from one's psycho-physical organism as from the reed the stalk which is inside it.

Self-realization is the vanishing point of all differences through the removal of avidyā. When one attains Self-realization, the concealing phase of avidyā which has bound the Self with the mind and other factors will be removed. All his past merits and demerits which have not yet fructified will be dissolved. He would continue to live in the body till his past merits and demerits which have given rise to the body by abiding in which he has attained Self-realization are exhausted. He will be free from the false notion of "I" and "mine" with reference to the body and other objects. He is a *jīvan-mukta*. When his fructified merits and demerits are exhausted his psycho-physical organism would fall off and he would remain as the Self. This is *videha-mukti*. (ब्रह्मभावश्च मोक्षः)

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिः छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः।  
क्षीयन्ते च अस्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥<sup>2</sup>

Saint Tiruvalluvar refers to liberation or *mukti* as சிறப்பென்னும் செம்பொருள் in the following Kural :

பிறப்பென்னும் பேதமைநீங்கச் சிறப்பென்னும்  
செம்பொருள் காண்பது அறிவு (358).

இருள் நீங்கி இன்பம் பயக்கும் மருள் நீங்கி  
மாசறு காட்சியவர்க்கு (352).

The phrase சிறப்பென்னும் செம்பொருள் is significant. Liberation which is the Self is the Good (சிறப்பு). It is not valuable, but value itself (செம்பொருள்). Śaṅkara while commenting on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text — एष ब्रह्मलोकः<sup>3</sup> interprets it as ब्रह्मैव लोकः in this sense.

Liberation which Tiruvalluvar characterizes as சிறப்பு or the good (श्रेयः) is different from செல்வம் or the pleasant (प्रेयः) compare the text of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*:

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतः तौ संपरीत्या विविनक्ति धीरः।  
श्रेयो हि धीरः हि प्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दः योगक्षेमात् वृणीते।।<sup>4</sup>

The good and the pleasant both go unto man; pondering over them, a wise man discriminates. It is the wise that choose the good (சிறப்பு எனும் செம்பொருள்) to the pleasant; the simple-minded chooses the pleasant for the sake of bodily welfare.

Tiruvalluvar re-confirms that liberation is the *Good* in another Kural:

சிறப்பினுஞ் செல்வமுமீனும் அறத்தினூ உங்கு  
ஆக்கமெவனோ வுயிர்க்கு (31).

In order that liberation of this nature may be realized, man must first rise above the life of sensual impulse and act as a moral being. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* states:

“No one who has ceased from wickedness, who is restless, unsubdued, whose heart is not yet tranquil can realize the Self (which is liberation).”

न अविरतो दुश्चरितात् न अशान्तः न असमाहितः।  
न अशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेन एनम् आप्नुयात्।।<sup>5</sup>

Tiruvalluvar records this view in the following verses:

பொறிவா யிலைத்தவித்தான் பாய்தீரொழுக்க  
நெறிநின்றார் நீடுவாழ்வார் (6).

இருள் நீங்கி இன்பம் பயக்கும் அருள்  
நீங்கி மாசறு காட்சி யவர்க்கு (352).

The state of *mukti* or liberation identical with the Self is

referred to as the goal (तत्पदम्) or final destination in the *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*:

स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति यस्मात् भूयो न जायते।<sup>6</sup>

Urutturaṅkaṅṅanār (உருத்திரங்கண்ணனார்) in his work — *Perumpāṅārūppadaḥ* uses the term “அந்நிலை” (तत्पदम्) to signify the state of *mukti*.

நில்லாவலகத்து நிலைமை தூக்கி  
அந்நிலை அணுக வேண்டி (466-7).

Kāriyāśān in his work *Śirupañcamūlam* records the Upaniṣadic view that Self-realization is the means to liberation:

ஞானத்தால் வீடாக நாட்டு (சிறுபஞ்சமூலம், 36)

Compare the Upaniṣadic text:

तमेव विदित्वा अतिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यते अयनाय ॥<sup>7</sup>

The *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* declares that when all desires dwelling in the heart vanish, then a mortal becomes immortal and becomes the Self here itself.

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा ये अस्य हृदि श्रिताः।  
अथ मर्त्यो अमृतो भवति अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते॥<sup>8</sup>

Tiruvalluvar in the *Kuṛal* —

ஆரா வியற்கை யவா நீப்பன ந்நிலையே  
பேரா வியற்கை தரும் (370).

emphasizes the above view.

This state of *mukti* is known as *parā-mukti*, i.e. liberation which is attained here and now. The Upaniṣads mention *krama-mukti* or liberation attained in stages. Those who worship god with living devotion will reach the world of Hiraṇyagarbha wherein they will attain self-realization by the grace of God and will be liberated thereby at the end of this cosmic age.



The *Bhagavad-Gītā* states:

तेषामेव अनुकम्पार्थं अहम् अज्ञानजं तमः ।  
नाशयामि आत्मभावस्थः ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥<sup>9</sup>

Tiruvalluvar speaks of this kind of *mukti* by stating that those who worship God with loving devotion would reach the world (நிலம்) and live there for a long time, i.e. till the end of the cosmic age; and they would attain liberation then.

மலர்மிசை ஏகினான் மாணடி சேர்ந்தார்  
நிலம் இசை நீடுவாழ்வார் (3).

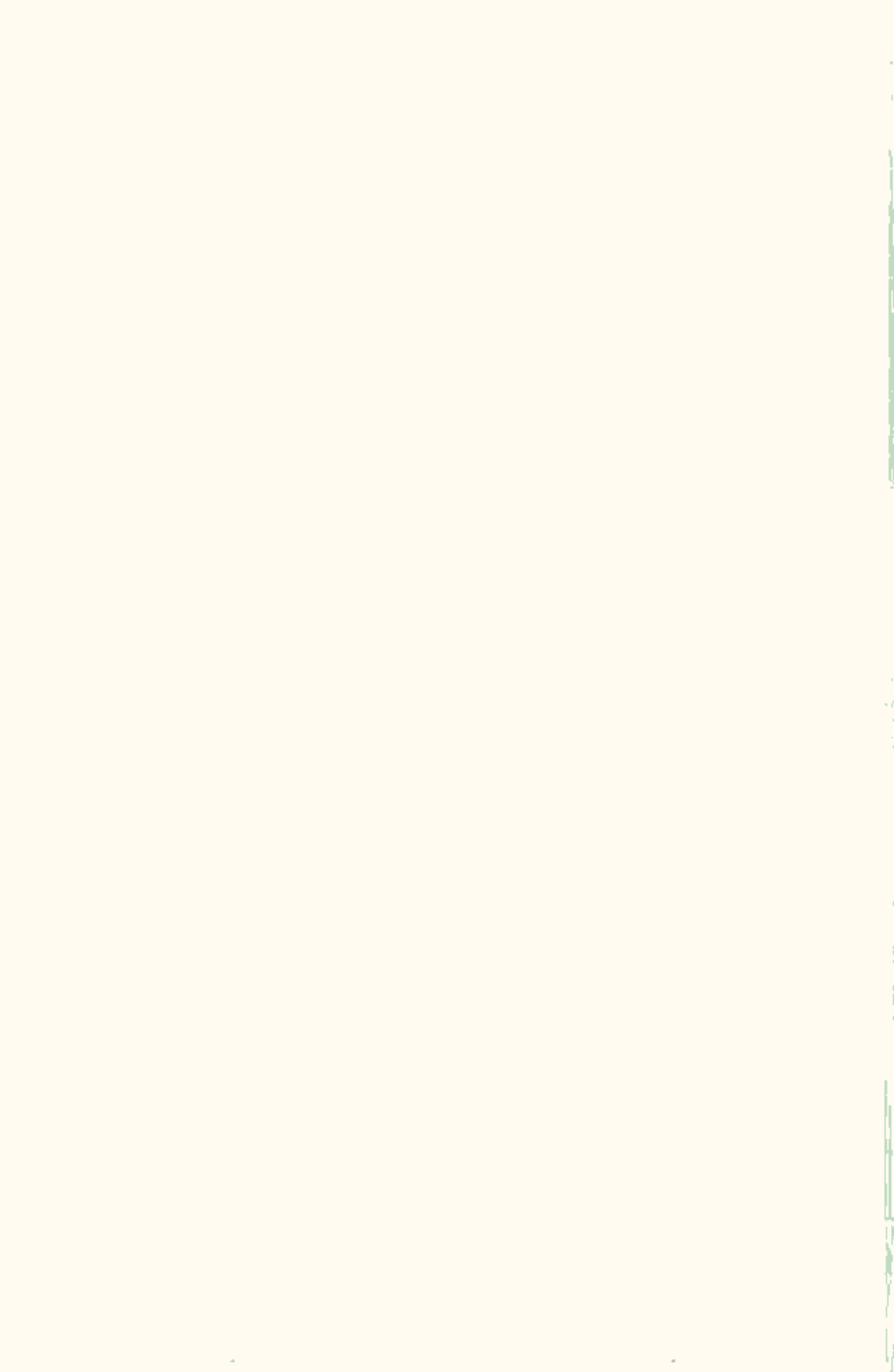
It must be noted here that Śaṅkara gives another interpretation of the word “*Brahma-loka*” in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text referred to earlier as “ब्रह्मणः लोकः” — the world of Hiraṇyagarbha. This Tiruvalluvar refers to as நிலம்.

Thus we see that the teachings of the Upaniṣads and of the *Gītā* are presented in a lucid manner by saint-scholars in their Tamil works.

### NOTES

1. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (hereafter *KU*), 2.2.17.
2. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.8.
3. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.23.
4. *KU*, 1.2.2.
5. *Ibid.*, 1.2.24.
6. *Ibid.*, 1.3.8.
7. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 3.8.
8. *K.U*, 2.3.14.
9. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 10-11.

\* \* \* \*



## ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

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

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

*samsārādhvani tāpabhānukiraṇaprodhbhūta-dāhavyathā-  
khinnānāṃjalakāṅksayā marubhuyi bhraṅtyā paribhramyatām  
atyāsannasudhāmbudhiṃ sukhakaram brahmādvayam darsayant-  
yesā śāṅkarabhārati vijayate nīrvāṇasandāyini.*

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 Śankara—is victorious, leading, as it does, to liberation.