

**INTUITION  
OF  
REALITY**

**ADHYĀTMA PRAKĀSHA KĀRYĀLAYA  
HOLENARSIPUR  
(Hassan District, Karnataka State)  
PIN Code No. 573 211**

## ABBREVIATIONS

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Intro. SBh. Introduction to Sūtra-Bhāshya

Isa. Īs'avāsyōpanishad

Ke. Kenōpanishad

Kā. Kāthakōpanishad

G. The Bhagavadgītā

GBh. The Bhāshya on Bhagavadgita

G.K. Gaudapāda's Kārikas on the Māndūkya

G.K.Bh. Bhāshya on Gaudapāda's Karikas

Ch. Chāndōgyōpanishad

Tai. Taittirīyōpanishad

Tai-Bha. Bhāshya on Taittirīyōpanishad

P. Page.

Ma. Māndūkyaōpanishad

Br. Bṛhadāranyakōpanishad

Mu. Mundakōpanishad

VS. Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana

SBh. S'aṅkara's Bhāshya on Vedānta Sūtras

Sve. S'vetāsvatarōpanishad

**ADHYATMA GRANTHAVALI**

**INTUITION  
OF  
REALITY**

**BY**

**SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA  
SARASWATI**

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## **PUBLISHERS' NOTE**

**(First Edition)**

This is the substance of the series of lectures delivered by Sri Swāmiji at Bangalore, during S'ankara Saptāha (from 18-4-72 to 24-4-72 both days inclusive).

We hope that the readers of this English version of the Kannada lectures will cordially welcome it as a valuable addition to Swāmiji's works in English already brought out by the Kāryālaya.

We are grateful for the partial financial help rendered by Mr. Alessandro Bruschetti, via Vassallo-2, Genova-Italy, in bringing out this work.

Holenarsipur  
30-1-73

**Y. Narasappa,**  
Chairman, A.P. Kāryālaya,  
Executive Committee.

## **(Second Edition)**

As there was an increasing demand for this enlightening work, which is out of stock, of Swāmiji, of revered memory, we have pleasure in bringing out this second edition.

Holenarsipur,  
❖❖❖❖  
5-5-1995

A. Thāndaveshwar,  
Chairman, A.P. Kāryālaya

## PREFACE

The year 1972 was a happy occasion for the Kāryālaya, in that the celebration of S'ankara's Week took place twice, the first in the Adhika Vaishākha at Bangalore and the second at Mysore during Vaishākha proper. The Kāryālaya is thankful to the devotees in the cities of Bangalore and Mysore, who arranged for this celebration on a grand scale.

I have availed myself of this opportunity to publish the substance of both the series of lectures delivered by me, with some additions and alternations, in the English language in the hope that these may appeal to a larger section of readers, who may be interested in the subject.

The distinctive feature of the Upanishads, in contrast with the Sacred Books of various other religions, is that the Rshis here have presented Brahman or Reality in a suggestive language calculated to lead the qualified enquirer to Intuit directly that the God proclaimed in the various faiths is his actual Self, and the very Substance of which all the universe is an empirical manifestation.

The nature of the Intuition of Reality and the process of reasoning which serves as an aid in arriving at It is the main theme of the first series of lectures. While there

have been a number of interpretations of the Upanishads with a theological bias, S'āṅkara's has been privileged to stay as the solitary representation of an ancient tradition which claims to reduce the teaching of these revelations into one system and to show how universally applicable that teaching is for all time.

The second series is intended to explain how the various Upanishads uniformly adopt a single Method of approach leading to the ultimate Intuition of Reality. If I am fortunate enough to live to complete the booklet containing this aspect of Vedānta, the reader would see how mutually complementary these lectures are in presenting the kernal of Vedānta.

My Nārāyaṅsmaranams to the Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya which has undertaken to publish this book and to all those that have assisted in making this undertaking a success. Special mention is necessary in this connection of two names : Mr. H. N. Nārāyaṅa Rao, M.A., B.T., Retired High School Head Master, and Mr. K.G. Subraya Sharma, Private Secretary, in passing the proof-sheets from the press.

Bangalore  
30-1-73.

AUTHOR

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अ. भा., सू. भा. अ.	Intro. SBh.	Introduction to Sūtra-Bhāshya
ई.	Isa.	Īs'avāsyōpanishad
के.	Ke.	Kenōpanishad
का.	Kā.	Kāthakōpanishad
गी.	G.	The Bhagavadgītā
गी. भा.	GBh.	The Bhāshya on Bhagavadgita
गौ. का.	G.K.	Gaudapāda's Kārikas on the Māṇḍūkya
गौ. का. भा.	G.K.Bh.	Bhāshya on Gaudapāda's Karikas
छां.	Ch.	Chāndōgyōpanishad
तै.	Tai.	Taittirīyōpanishad
तै. भा.	Tai-Bhā.	Bhāshya on Taittirīyōpanishad
पा.	P.	Page.
मां.	Ma.	Māṇḍūkyōpanishad
ब्रह्म.	Br.	Bṛhadāranyakōpanishad
मुं.	Mu.	Muṇḍakōpanishad
वे. सू.	VS.	Veśānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana
सू. भा.	SBh.	S'aṅkara's Bhāshya on Veśānta Sūtras
श्वे.	Sve.	S'vetāsvatarōpanishad

# INTUITION OF REALITY

## I

### THE VEDĀNTIC INTUITION

### ACCORDING TO S'ĀNKARA

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः संन्यासयोगाद् यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः ।  
ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥

मुं. ३-२-६.

“Those who have perfectly ascertained the object-matter of Vedāntic Intuition, who strive through the Yōga of renunciation and thereby purify their mind—they become absolutely immortal and in their worlds of Brahman, and at the final stage of their life they are all freed in all respects.”

Mu. 3-2-6.

### WHAT VEDĀNTIC KNOWLEDGE IS NOT

Before attempting to have a positive idea of what exactly the Vedāntic Knowledge of Brahman is according to S'ānkara, it would be profitable to bear in mind what it is not. For, to be forewarned, is to be forearmed. Vedāntic Knowledge has been confounded with so many species of knowledge, that this is really a case where one does not see the wood for the trees.

## 1. Vedānta is Not a Purely Rationalistic System

(A) In the first place, we should abandon the assumption that S'āṅkara's tradition tries to bring out, mainly or mostly, a rationalistic system of philosophy out of the Upanishadic teachings. Swāmi Vivekānanda is reported to have referred somewhere to a combination of the head of S'āṅkara with the heart of Rāmānuja.\*

Whatever be the implication of this contrast, the sooner we extricate ourselves from the presumption that S'āṅkara insists in his writings on the importance of

---

\* I am not quite sure as to whence I got this piece of information. A friend of mine has since drawn my attention to this passage from the Swāmi's lecture on 'The Sages of India':-

"Then came the brilliant Rāmānuja. S'āṅkara, with the great intellect, I am afraid, had not as great a heart. Rāmānuja's heart was greater. He felt for the down-trodden, he sympathized with them." *Complete Works, Vol. III, p. 265.*

Further on we find the following observation in this same lecture:-

The one had a great head, the other a large heart, and the time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of both this head and heart; the time was ripe for one to be born who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of S'āṅkara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Chaitanya. *Ibid p. 267.*

It is not impossible that, in my hazy memory, both these passages got mixed up. In any case, it is obvious that Swāmi Vivekānanda was speaking only of social reform when he referred to the greater heart of Rāmānuja or Chaitanya.

intellectual knowledge at the expense of devotion to God, the better it would be in any endeavour to assess the worth of S'āṅkara's Vedānta. At all events, the Ātma-Jñāna, according to S'āṅkara, is never knowledge estranged from devotion; for, he proclaims in his *Gītā Bhāshya*:-

सेयं ज्ञाननिष्ठा आर्तादिभक्तित्रयापेक्षया परा चतुर्थी भक्ति-  
रित्युक्ता । तया परया भक्त्या भगवन्तं तत्त्वतोऽभिजानाति,  
यदनन्तरमेव ईश्वरक्षेत्रज्ञभेदबुद्धिरशेषतो निवर्तते ॥

गी. भा. १८-५५.

"Now, this culmination of Jñāna (Intuition) is called the *Parā Bhakti* (Supreme Devotion) relatively to the three secondary varieties of devotion, such as the devotion of one who is extremely afflicted by the separation from the Lord and it is from this *Supreme Bhakti* that one recognizes the Lord as He really is." GBh. 18-55.

Failure to appreciate the vital difference of Vedāntic Vijnāna from the knowledge based on cold rationalization based on forms of thought is responsible for the daring identification of Gaudapāda's *Ajātivāda* (doctrine of the Unborn Reality) with the rejection of causality by the advocates of the *S'ūnyavāda* (the doctrine of no essence of things), merely because that grand-preceptor of S'āṅkara seems to approve the four-termed dialectic of Nāgārjuna. As a matter of fact, however, the Vedāntic and the Buddhistic traditions are poles asunder; for, while the S'ūnyavādin rejects all the four

possible alternatives to establish his rejection of causality, the Vedāntin affirms his undeniable position that Reality, as such, transcends all possible predications. S'ankara, as we all know, writes (on Kārika 4-84) in the most unambiguous terms:-

स भगवान् आभिः 'अस्ति', 'नास्ति' - इत्यादिकोटिभिः  
 चतसृभिरपि अस्पृष्टः - अस्त्यादिविकल्पनावर्जितः इत्येतत् - येन  
 मुनिना दृष्टो ज्ञातः वेदान्तेष्वौपनिषदः पुरुषः, स सर्वदृक् सर्वज्ञः  
 परमार्थपण्डितः इत्यर्थः ॥                      गौ. का. भा. ४-८४.

“That Revered one, untouched by all these four alternatives such as 'Is', 'Is not' etc.—that is to say, altogether devoid of all determinants like existence—by whomsoever that *Purusha* of the Upanishads has been seen, known through the Upanishads, he alone is the Seer of all. The meaning is; that he alone is the true Knower (of Reality).”  
 GK.Bh.4-84.

(B) Nor is S'ankara's Vedānta-Vijnāna speculative in the sense that it deduces any one truth from another in which it is already implied. The reasoning that if A is neither greater nor less than B, it must needs be equal to B is a deduction which follows from logical necessity, but it gives us no clue as to whether or not there is actually such a thing in practical life as we suppose A to be.

(C) Again, S'ankara's Vedānta-Vijnāna is not inferential knowledge based upon actual perception. It neither analyses as the *Vais'eshikas* do, in order to deliver

its judgment on the nature of substance, quality, action, or genus and species, nor undertakes to examine or enquire into the nature, number and validity of the means of knowledge as the *Nyāya* of Gautama does.

In fact, the Upanishads declare in so many words:

नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया ॥

का. १-२-९.

“This Knowledge is not attainable with the aid of ratiocination, nor refutable by logical reasoning.” Kā.1-2-9.

And as S'āṅkara pertinently observes in his commentary on Bādarāyaṇa's Sūtra (V.S. 2-1-11)

“For this further reason also, one should never oppose anything that has to be *known* only through Revelation, solely on the strength of reason. For, reasonings, bereft of the support of Revelation but owe their origin only to human surmises, would never be final. That is why theoretical reasonings conjectured by certain adepts with great effort are found to be shown to be incorrect by others, and theories propounded by these are also shown to be fallacious by still others, and so, it is impossible to expect finality from the different ways of reasoning; for, human minds are not uniform in capacity. If, on the other hand, one should take refuge in believing the reason of some one famous for his perfection such as Kapila or some other person to be final, even so, the non-finality of reason would certainly persist; for, we find even founders of schools like Kapila and Kanāda, admitted to be perfect, are found to disagree on certain (vital) points.”

SBh. 2-1-11.

(D). The inconclusive and non-final nature of speculative thought could be still more palpable from a survey of the course of the different Western systems of philosophy propounded from the most ancient times down to this day. Idealism and Realism, static and dynamic theories concerning Reality as well as the other numerous metaphysical views, rampant in the history of Western philosophy, only confirm our fear that unbridled speculation is most likely to introduce utter chaos rather than offer any solace to souls seeking refuge in philosophy. Kant, Hegel and Bergson, to name only a few of the brilliant thinkers of the West, have no doubt offered a treat to students of philosophical thought, but have hardly anything in advance to offer to appease the spiritual hunger of a genuine seeker of certainty as regards Truth or Reality.

It was Dr. Paul Deussen, perhaps, that remarked with assurance that, while S'āṅkara rightly described the universe as characterized by time, space and causality, the positive proof of it was to be found only in Kant, in whose *Critique of Pure Reason* it has been shown most convincingly that these three are only forms of thought conditioning our experience. The mind can know nothing about the things in themselves, or the Thing-in-itself; it can only deduce things through its innate *apriori* forms such as time, space and causality. But a student of Vedānta may well question the

followers of that thinker : "How can we be possibly sure of 'the things in themselves' (plural) if there be no time or space in the essence of the Noumenon ? Or, going still further, how can we be sure at all of the independent existence of the so-called Noumenon itself ?

## **2. Vedānta-Vijnāna is Not Some Knowledge of the External World**

In the second place, it has to be noted that the *Vijnāna* spoken of in the Upanishads has nothing to do with the study of the objective universe. In spite of the stupendous claims of physical science to be science or exact knowledge, and even while recognizing the wonderful discoveries and the numerous inventions that it has led to, it must be confessed that its method consisting of observation, experiment, and verification and its procedure of postulating hypothesis and formulating theories necessarily restrict its sphere of investigation to the objective portion of the universe, and that all its inquiries – including those concerning the *vital principle* or even mind – are obliged to treat these only as objective. Even in its legitimate sphere of investigations, it is too well known how some of its old conceptions have been invalidated by the theory of relativity brought forward by Einstein.

## **3. Vedāntic Intuition is Not the Result of Studying the Teachings of Any Prophet**

And in the third place, it must be remembered that Vedānta does not lay any claim to be the result of the



study of the extra-ordinary teachings of an authoritative prophet or of any inspired writings. S'āṅkara does not recognize even the *Vedas* as composed by or spoken for the benefit of mankind by an omniscient God at any particular point of time. The *Vedas* cannot claim any superiority over other sacred writings merely on the score of their having a *divine origin*. His argument in favour of the *Vedāntas* or the Upanishads as a valid means of right knowledge rests quite on other grounds than that it is of divine origin. This is most clear from his remarks with regard to the validity of the *Pās'upati Āgama* claimed by its adherents:-

परस्यापि सर्वज्ञप्रणीतागमसद्भावात्, समानमागमबलम् इति चेत्,  
न । इतरैतराश्रयत्वप्रसङ्गात् । आगमप्रत्ययात् सर्वज्ञत्वसिद्धिः,  
सर्वज्ञप्रत्ययाच्च आगमसिद्धिः इति ॥ सू. २-२-३८.

“(Objection :-) The opponent can equally claim the support of Āgama too, since there is (the *Pās'upati*) Āgama composed by the Omniscient God.

(Reply :-) No, for in his case there would be the repugnant fallacy of mutual dependence, inasmuch as the validity of Āgama has to be depended upon for establishing the omniscience, and the omniscience of God has to be depended upon for establishing the validity of the Āgama.”

SBh. 2-2-38.

It is obvious that S'āṅkara would take exception to the claims of the Bible, the Koran, the Zend Avasta or any other book on religion, for the simple reason that

the assumption of the inspired nature of these writings rests on the shaky ground of an argument in a vicious circle, just like that of the Āgamas in India.

#### 4. Vedāntic Intuition is Not Any Individual Intuition

Fourthly, *Vedāntic Intuition* should not be confounded with knowledge derived from any *individual intuition* attained in a particular state like the mystical *Samādhi* (trance). It is true that the S'ruti says:

‘यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत् केन कं पश्येत्’

(बृ. ४-५-१५).

“Where, for this knower, all has become Ātman alone, there what can one see and with what ? .....” Br. 4-5-15.

Thereby denying all empirical experience to one who has attained the Vedāntic Intuition. But it does not follow from this that Vedāntic Intuition refers to a super-sensuous state such as the *Samādhi* of Indian Yōgins or even to an eschatological *state of salvation* which is reached after the seeker has shuffled off the mortal coil.

As S'āṅkara pertinently remarks:

न चायं व्यवहाराभावोऽवस्थाविशेषनिबद्धोऽभिधीयत इति युक्तं वक्तुम्, ‘तत्त्वमसि’ इति ब्रह्मात्मभावस्य अनवस्थाविशेष-निबन्धनत्वात्॥

सू. भा. २-१-१४.

“Nor can it be right to say that this absence of all human procedure is taught only as due to a particular state. For, being of the nature of the Brahman-Self, taught in the text ‘That thou art’, is not consequent on any one particular state.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

Again :

कर्मफले हि स्वर्गादौ अनुभवानारूढे स्यादाशङ्का ‘भवेद् वा न वा’ इति; अनुभवारूढं तु ज्ञानफलम्; ‘यत्साक्षादपरोक्षाद् ब्रह्म’ (बृ. ३-४-१) इति श्रुतेः, ‘तत्त्वमसि’ (छां. ६-८-७) इति च सिद्धवदुपदेशात् । न हि ‘तत्त्वमसि’ इत्यस्य वाक्यस्य अर्थः ‘तत् त्वं मृतो भविष्यसि’ इत्येवं परिणेतुं शक्यः ॥

सू. भा. ३-३-३२.

“As for the effect of Karma, such as Svarga (Heaven), which does not directly appeal to Intuition, it is possible to doubt whether or not It would accrue. The result of Vedāntic knowledge, however, is directly Intuited. For, the S’ruti says: ‘That which is Brahman in the primary sense and not intercepted (by time or space)’ (Br. 3-4-1). For the meaning of the text ‘That thou art’ (Ch. 6-8-7) can never be twisted so as to signify it ‘Thou shalt be after death.’ ” SBh. 3-3-32.

## 5. Vedāntic Knowledge is Unlike That of Karmas in the Vedas

Fifthly and lastly, Vedāntic Knowledge is not the result of an exegetical interpretation of an eternal revelation of religious duties to be performed in order to get a *post-mortem enjoyment* of the joys of Heaven as is claimed by the *Karma-Kānda* of the Vedas. It is true

that Bādarāyaṇa, as interpreted by S'āṅkara, does endorse the eternity of the entire Veda, just like Jaimini ('अत एव च नित्यत्वम्' १-३-२९), but the validity of Vedāntic Knowledge rests on quite a different and surer foundation.

### 6. The Comprehensive Nature of Vedāntic Intuition

The student of Vedānta, according to S'āṅkara, should not be misled by what has been said above about Vijnāna into supposing that this is really a crypto-Buddhism of the type of Nāgārjuna's *S'tunyavāda*, as has been alleged by some adverse critics of Advaita. For, on diving deeply, he will see that S'āṅkara's Advaita not only comprehends and assimilates all, that is acceptable in the various systems of thought at the level of empirical life, but also transcends them all as it leads the seekers of Truth to the peculiar Intuition by dint of which they become perfectly aware of their *eternal oneness* with the One Ātman or Brahman, the only Reality without a second.

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## II

### PRACTICAL LIFE AND TRANSCENDENTAL REALITY

‘तत् सत्यम्, स आत्मा, तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो ॥’

छा. ६-८-७

“That is Real, that is the Ātman, That thou art,  
O S’vetaketu !” Ch. 6-8-7.

#### 1. Practical Life is Confined to the Sphere of Duality

It is not true to say that the world is an illusion according to S’āṅkara’s tradition. For, while the idea of illusion involves only the false perception of an external object, neither S’āṅkara nor his predecessors who handed down the traditional Vedāntic teachings, ever confined their judgment to an assessment of the value of things in the external portion of the world exclusively. The Vedāntas or the Upanishads, according to S’āṅkara, assert that practical life is possible only wherever there is seeming duality.

यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति तदितर इतरं पश्यति तदितर इतरं  
जिघ्रति तदितर इतरं रसयते तदितर इतरमभिवदति तदितर इतरं

शृणोति तदितर इतरं मनुते तदितर इतरं स्मृशति तदितर इतरं  
विजानाति ॥ बृ. ४-५-१५.

“Where, as is well known, there is duality, as it were, there one sees another (thing), there one smells another, there one tastes another, there one says something to another, there one hears another thing, there one reflects upon another, there one touches another, there one understands another.” Br. 4-5-15.

It is evident that the above-cited text refers to the fact that all procedure of practical life is possible only where there is duality, for practical life necessarily involves duality, or distinction of the knower and the known, or the distinction of the doer and that which is done.

Practical life covers the whole of life, that is, procedure on the part of men or even of living souls of a higher order, such as that of gods etc. This life consists in thinking, speaking or acting either to achieve what one likes or to avoid what one dislikes. Life as far as lower animals are concerned, however, involves no thinking, but only instinct. So then, on the whole, what we call practical life, may be summed up as that which involves the functions of the mind and the organs of sense or of action. S'āṅkara uses the general term 'Vyavahāra' to denote this totality of practical life.

The reader should be careful to note that under the significance of the term Vyavahāra are subsumed all activities guided by the Vedas also. Acquiring the

knowledge of Karmas or religious works and performing the rites prescribed by the Veda in order to reap the fruits thereof are all included within the scope of Vyavahāra. And so are the activities recommended by the Vedāntas or the Upanishads; such, for instance, as studying, reflecting upon the purport of the Upanishads and endeavouring to ascertain and understand the nature of the Transcendental Reality taught therein.

## 2. The Intuition of Reality Transcends all Vyavahāra

All practical life is overpassed when the unity of Ātman has been Intuited. The S'ruti says :

यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत्केन कं पश्येत् तत्केन कं जिघ्रेत्  
तत्केन कं रसयेत्तत्केन कं मभिवदेत्तत्केन कं शृणुयात् तत्केन कं  
मन्वीत् तत्केन कं स्पृशेत् तत्केन कं विजानीयात् ॥ बृ. ४-५-१५.

“Where, however, all has become one Ātman alone for this (knower), there what could one see and with what ? There what could one smell and with what ? There what could one taste and with what ? There what could one say and with what ? There what could one hear and with what ? There what could one reflect upon anything and with what ? There what could one touch and with what ? There what could one understand and with what ?”

Br. 4-5-15.

## 3. All Duality is Only Apparent Though Not Illusory

The significance of the particle 'iva' (as it were) in the phrase '*Dvaitam Iva Bhavati*' in the first part of the

quotation cited above, should be clearly understood by beginners in the study of Vedānta. It does not refer to any illusion or deceptive appearance; for, all procedure of practical life is quite real so long as the Intuition of the Reality has not dawned. S'ānkarā says in so many words :

सर्वव्यवहाराणामेव प्राग् ब्रह्मात्मताविज्ञानात् सत्यत्वोपपत्तेः ॥  
सू. भा. २-१-१४.

“All activities of practical life can continue to be real before the dawn of the Intuition of one's nature as the Infinite Self (*Brahmātman*).”  
SBh. 2-1-14.

#### 4. Reality and Unreality

The epithet 'real' can be applied both to empirical things as well as to the real substrate of all apparent duality. But the definition of reality is not identical in the two cases. The S'ruti says :

‘सत्यं चानृतं च सत्यमभवत्’  
तै. २-६.

“Reality became both the empirically real and the (empirically) unreal.”  
Tai 2-6.

In common life water is considered to be real because it possesses the causal efficiency of quenching one's thirst; whereas mirage-water is unreal, because it only looks like water but can never slake one's thirst. The one Ātman taught by Vedānta is real, not in the sense of possessing any causal efficiency; for, He is the



*only Reality* underlying all individual creatures and thus there is no meaning in supposing that He serves any purpose with regard to some one who is other than He. Ātman is therefore real, not in this empirical sense of having causal efficiency, but because of His being *absolutely changeless* in His nature. Accordingly S'ānkarā writes in his Gītā-Bhāshya :

यद्विषया बुद्धिर्न व्यभिचरति तत् सत्, यद्विषया व्यभिचरति  
तदसत् ॥ गी. भा. २-१६.

“That is the real thing, the notion of which *never changes* and that is unreal the notion of which is liable to change.”  
G. Bh. 2-16.

And in his Taittirīya-Bhāshya also, he writes as follows :-

यद्रूपेण यन्निश्चितं तद्रूपं न व्यभिचरति तत् सत्यम् । यद्रूपेण  
यन्निश्चितं तद्रूपं व्यभिचरत् अनृतम् इत्युच्यते ॥  
तै. भा. २-१.

“That which, having been ascertained to be of some particular nature, *never changes*, that nature is real; and that which, being ascertained to be of any particular nature, changes, that nature is unreal.”  
Tai. Bh. 2-1.

Thus Ātman is said to be *really real* in the sense that His essential nature is never liable to change unlike phenomena in ordinary life, which do not, and really cannot, maintain their self-identity. This metaphysical estimate of their being unreal, however, never affects

their empirical reality; for, from the empirical stand-point, they are actually perceived or inferred to exist with the aid of valid means of knowledge and maintain their characteristic of possessing causal efficiency.

### 5. Knowledge Right and Wrong

Similarly, the distinction of right and wrong knowledge also must be carefully distinguished according as we refer to the empirical or to the Transcendental stand-point. As applied to knowable objects in ordinary life, knowledge of things should be adjudged to be right, so long as it is the result of applying valid means of knowledge such as perception, and we have nothing to find fault with the means applied. But even the most indisputably correct knowledge of things—nay, the notion of the very distinction of knower, knowledge and error universally accepted in the empirical field—and the very Knowledge of all duality itself becomes stultified by the final knowledge of the Transcendental Reality obtained through Intuition of Brahman. It is from this point of view that the S'ruti refers to duality as not faithful to fact when it says यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति “where there is duality ‘as it were’ ” (Br. 4-5-15). It is to draw our attention to this circumstance that S'ankara says that all speculative philosophy stands condemned as wanting in finality :-

एकरूपेण ह्यवस्थितो योऽर्थः स परमार्थः; लोके तद्विषयं ज्ञानं सम्यग्ज्ञानमित्युच्यते । यथा अग्निरुष्ण इति । तत्रैवं सति सम्यग्ज्ञाने पुरुषाणां विप्रतिपत्तिरनुपपन्ना ॥ सू. भा. २-१-११.

“That is reality, which continues to be uniform throughout; and in the world, knowledge of such a real thing alone is considered to be right knowledge; as, for instance, the knowledge of fire as a hot substance. Such being the case, it is inconsistent that there should be divergence of opinion with regard to right knowledge.”

SBh. 2-1-11.

## 6. Distinction of Empirical Truth and Error

It is obvious that the distinction of truth and error in the empirical field remains intact so long as one has not risen to the level of Intuition of the Transcendental Reality. But, so soon as one comes to see things as they are from the *really real* point of view—that is, so soon as one becomes perfectly aware of the oneness of Brahman, the Infinite Self or the All – all duality vanishes, or rather, merges in that Reality, and then there is no question of any distinction whatsoever.

The following excerpt from the Sūtra-Bhāṣya deserves careful consideration in this connection :

यावद् हि न सत्यात्मैकत्वप्रतिपत्तिः, तावत् प्रमाणप्रमेयफललक्षणेषु विकारेषु, अनृतत्वबुद्धिर्न कस्यचिदुत्पद्यते । विकारानेव तु 'अहम्, मम' इत्यविद्यया आत्मात्मीयेन भावेन सर्वो जन्तुः प्रतिपद्यते स्वाभाविकीं ब्रह्मात्मतां हित्वा । तस्मात्, प्राग्

ब्रह्मात्मताप्रतिबोधादुपपन्नः सर्वो लौकिको वैदिकश्च व्यवहारः।  
 यथा सुप्तस्य प्राकृतस्य जनस्य स्वप्ने उच्चावचान् भावान् पश्यतो  
 निश्चितमेव प्रत्यक्षाभिमतं विज्ञानं भवति, प्राक् प्रतिबोधात्, न  
 च प्रत्यक्षाभासाभिप्रायस्तत्काले भवति, तद्वत् ॥

सू. भा. २-१-१४.

“As long as there has not arisen the Intuition of the Reality of the one Ātman, so long the idea of the unreality of the effects of the nature of valid means, objects of knowledge, and the resultant knowledge never occurs to any one; for, every creature goes on regarding the appearances alone in the relation of the owner and the owned and takes them to be me and mine through nescience, abandoning his intrinsic nature of being Brahmātman. Therefore, while one is not awake to one's being Brahmātman, all procedure remains intact. This is just in the same way as an ordinary person who sees various kinds of things in his dream; there is—as long as he does not awake – the idea that he actually perceives them, but there is no suspicion that it is only a semblance of perception.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

## 7. Ātman Exists in and for Himself

But what proof have we got to be sure that there is this so-called Brahmātman whose Absolute Reality the Vedāntas propose to reveal? Have we any indication that this Ātman might be in and for Himself, independently of the evidence of the senses and the mind? And, why should we have any misgiving about the validity of the means of right knowledge like

perception which are the only doors to human knowledge ?

We shall try to set forth S'āṅkara's answers to these questions one by one. In the first place, we may adduce S'āṅkara's views with regard to the individual self, the Jivātman himself:-

आत्मत्वाच्चाऽऽत्मनो निराकरणशङ्कानुपपत्तिः । न ह्यात्मा  
 आगन्तुकः कस्यचित्, स्वयंसिद्धत्वात् । न ह्यात्मा आत्मनः  
 प्रमाणमपेक्ष्य सिध्यति । तस्य हि प्रत्यक्षादीनि प्रमाणानि  
 अप्रसिद्धप्रमेयसिद्धये उपादीयन्ते । न ह्याकाशादयः पदार्थाः  
 प्रमाणनिरपेक्षाः स्वयंसिद्धाः केनचिदभ्युपगम्यन्ते । आत्मा तु  
 प्रमाणादिव्यवहाराश्रयत्वात् प्रागेव प्रमाणादिव्यवहारात् सिध्यति ।  
 न चेदृशस्य निराकरणं संभवति । आगन्तुकं हि वस्तु निराक्रियते,  
 न स्वरूपम् । य एव हि निराकर्ता तदेव तस्य स्वरूपम् ॥  
 सू. भा. २-३-७.

In the above-mentioned excerpt, S'āṅkara argues as follows:-

(1) Phenomena like *Ākāśa* (ether) are proved to exist only through the aid of some *Prāmāṇya* or valid means of knowledge.

(2) But *Ātman* or the individual self is self-established. Being no adventitious object, but the very locus of all means of all knowledge which are needed to prove the existence of alien phenomena, He is already there even before the operation of any one of such means.

(3) As such, Atman can never be negated; for, he who would negate Him is himself the Ātman, the very essence of the would-be negator. SBh. 2-3-7.

## 8. Is Atman Really a Knower ?

So much for the question about the guarantee for the existence of Ātman independently of the *Pramāṇas* or valid means of knowledge. Brahman being our real Self (*Paramātman*), may, therefore, be taken to be self-established without the need of any intervention of the *Pramāṇas*. And we have the further evidence of deep sleep also to strengthen the conviction that Brahman as our Self can very well be disentangled altogether from *all duality*. For, there is not, in that state, even the trace of our being contaminated by the body, senses or the mind.

It is evident that in our enquiry into the question of this independence of Ātman we have assumed that Ātman is really the operator of the means of knowledge and that He does exercise His power of using the means of knowledge very much like a carpenter who actively employs his tools before he makes any article of furniture, such as a chair or a table, out of wood which actually exists outside him. But what is the fact? Here is S'āṅkara's analysis of this *Pramāṅtrva* (knowership) and of the function of the means themselves:-

तमेतम् अविद्यख्यम् आत्मानात्मनोरितरेतराध्यासं पुरस्कृत्य सर्वे  
प्रमाणप्रमेयव्यवहारा लौकिका वैदिकाश्च प्रवृत्ताः, सर्वाणि च  
शास्त्राणि विधिप्रतिषेधमोक्षपराणि ॥ सू. भा. अव.

“It is on the pre-supposition of this mutual superimposition of Ātman and Un-Ātman (the Self and the not-Self) called *Avidyā* (nescience), that all conventions of *Pramānas* (means of right knowledge) and *Pramēya* (object of knowledge) -- whether relating to secular or *Vedic* activities--come into vogue, and so do *all S'āstras* dealing with injunctions and prohibitions and *final release*.”

Intro. S. Bh.

This is further explained by that teacher as follows:-

कश्चं पुनरविद्यावद्विषयाणि प्रत्यक्षादीनि प्रमाणानि शास्त्राणि चेति ?  
उच्यते - दहेन्द्रियादिष्वहंममाभिमानरहितस्य प्रमातृत्वानुपपत्तौ  
प्रमाणप्रवृत्त्यनुपपत्तेः ॥ सू. भा. अव.

“And how, again, can it be that perception and valid means of knowledge, and the *S'āstras* also, pertain to those that are under the influence of *Avidyā*? This is the answer: This is so because knowership being inconsistent for one who does not imagine the body and the senses etc. to be oneself and one's own, the means of knowledge cannot possibly function at all.”

Intro. S. Bh.

The body and the senses are the object of the *Witnessing Consciousness*, which is *always* the subject. And yet the ignorant identify themselves with the body and take the senses and the mind to belong to them. Thus arises the misconception that one is a knower who

operates these means to ascertain the nature of knowable objects.

## 9. The Nature of Ignorance

The ignorance that is imputed to the *Pramātr* (Knower), who operates the *Pramānas*, is not the ignorance of empirical objects, but the ignorance of the *really Real Ātman* and the unreal not-Self. Strictly speaking, it is not to be expected that there can be any mixing up the natures of these two in any one's thought.

तथापि अन्योन्यस्मिन् अन्योन्यात्मकताम् अन्योन्यधर्माश्चाध्यस्य  
इतरेतराविवेकेन, अत्यन्तविविक्तयोर्धर्मधर्मिणोः, मिथ्याज्ञान-  
निमित्तः, सत्यानृते मिथुनीकृत्य 'अहमिदम्' 'ममेदम्' इति  
नैसर्गिकोऽयं लोकव्यवहारः ॥ अध्या. भा.

"Nevertheless, there is this natural human procedure of thinking in the form 'This is me', 'This is mine', thus mixing up the Real and the unreal, owing to a mis-conception for want of discrimination between the absolutely disparate properties and the things to which they pertain, by superimposing mutual identity and mutual transference of properties on each other." Intro. S. Bh.

It is this natural tendency of the human mind to mix up the Real Ātman and the unreal un-Ātman as well as the mistaken transference mutually of their properties on each other that has been called *Avidyā* in Vedānta, according to S'āṅkara's interpretation :-



तमेतमेवंलक्षणम् अध्यासं पण्डिता अविद्येति मन्यन्ते, तद्विवेकेन  
च वस्तुस्वरूपावधारणं विद्यामाहुः ॥ अध्या. भा.

“Now this superimposition of this nature, the wise ones consider to be *Avidyā* (nescience) and the conclusive ascertainment of the nature of these as they are after discrimination, they call *Vidyā* (correct knowledge).

Intro.SBh.

We shall refer to the difference of opinion (about the nature of this Ignorance) among Advaitic Vedāntins themselves later on.

### 10. Mutual Superimposition of Ātman and not-Ātman, Responsible for the Ideas of Agency and Enjoyment

Looked at from this stand-point, all practical life involving agency or doing something and experiencing the fruits of one's actions is vitiated by the pre-supposition of this ignorance or super-imposition of the Self and the not-Self.

एवमयमनादिरनन्तो नैसर्गिकोऽध्यासः, मिथ्याप्रत्ययरूपः,  
कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वप्रवर्तकः सर्वलोकप्रत्यक्षः । अस्यानर्थहेतोः प्रहाणाय  
आत्मैकत्वविद्याप्रतिपत्तये सर्वे वेदान्ता आरभ्यन्ते ॥ अध्या.भा.

“Thus, there is this innate superimposition—beginningless and endless – of the form of a mis-conception, giving rise to agency and experience of beings, as is well known to all men. In order to destroy this fundamental source of evil, all *Vedantas* (Upanishads) have been begun to help the acquisition of the wisdom of (knowing) the *unity* of Ātman.”

Intro. SBh.

Beginning and end, as we all know, relate only to co-existences in time or space. These ideas of time and space, pertaining as they do to phenomena in practical life, cannot possibly be applied to the *fundamental* Ignorance owing to which we see the world, do acts and experience results.

### **11. Practical Life and Absolute Reality are Not Really Distinct**

It should not be thought that practical life is an independent something pertaining to a particular state *occasioned* by Avidyā, and that Reality is something actually distinct which has got to be brought about by Vedāntic Knowledge. It is not meant that duality has got to be *actually removed* or wiped off before we reach Transcendental Reality. It is only a question of *direct Intuition* of the truth of things, the Absolute Ātman who has been ever the *same* One without a second.

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## ĀTMAN AND NON-ĀTMAN

‘अयमात्मा ब्रह्म सर्वानुभूरित्यनुशासनम्’

बृ. २-५-१९

“This Ātman is Brahman, He is the Intuitor of everything. Such is the teaching.” Br. 2-5-19.

### 1. Brahman is Our Own Self

Brahman, the subject-matter of Vedānta, is not something absolutely *unknown* to us. As S’aṅkara says:

अस्ति तावद् ब्रह्म नित्यशुद्धबुद्धमुक्तस्वभावम्, सर्वज्ञं  
सर्वशक्तिसम्पन्नितम्; ब्रह्मशब्दस्य हि व्युत्पाद्यमानस्य  
नित्यशुद्धत्वदयोऽर्थाः प्रतीयन्ते । बृंहतेर्थातोऽर्थानुगमात् ।  
सर्वस्यऽऽत्मत्वाच्च ब्रह्मास्तित्वप्रसिद्धिः । सर्वो हि आत्मास्तित्वं  
प्रत्येति न नाहमस्मीति । यदि हि नात्मास्तित्वप्रसिद्धिः स्यात्,  
सर्वो लोको नाहमस्मीति प्रतीक्यात् । आत्मा च ब्रह्म ॥

सू. भा. १-१-१.

“In the first place, there is *Brahman*, ever pure, (ever) conscious, and (ever) free, omniscient, and endowed with omnipotence; for, the word ‘Brahman’, according to its derivation, discloses these, eternal purity and other characteristics. And, Brahman is known to exist, also because of Its being the Self of every one. Everyone is aware

of his existence, but never thinks 'I am not'. If the existence of Ātman were not obvious, then every one should have been able to conceive of his non-existence." SBh. 1-1-1.

It follows that, according to S'ankara's Vedānta, Brahman alone is the Self of each one of us and that the individual self in its real nature is Brahman and nothing else. So enquiry into the *real nature* of one's own Self is the only way of seeking to *know* Brahman.

## 2. Atman is Eternally Conscious

It should not take much time for a qualified seeker to arrive at the conclusion that his own Self is really Brahman of the nature of being *eternally conscious* (*Nitya-Buddha*). For, when he turns to reflect upon his essential nature, every person *at once* knows that he is the *real knower* of things through valid means of knowledge, and as such, needs nothing else to vouch for his Consciousness. The S'ruti says :

येनेदं सर्वं विजानाति तं केन विजानीयात् ॥ बु. ४-५-१५.

"With the aid of whose Consciousness one knows all this, with what could one possibly know Him?" Br. 4-5-15.

Moreover, our Self, as the knower, can never be objectified by any means of knowledge, which can know only external phenomena.

विज्ञातारमरे केन विजानीयात् ॥ बु. ४-५-१५.

"With what, my dear, can one know the knower?"

Br. 4-5-15.

The real Self or Ātman, therefore, being the Knower, *and the very stuff or the essence* of Consciousness, whose light alone makes us aware of the triad of the empirical knower, knowledge and the knowable objects, neither needs any means of knowledge, nor is there any such means which could throw light upon Him.

Strictly speaking, then, there is no ignorance possible, enveloping our Self (Ātman) or Brahman. Each one of us is aware of his ignorance and actually objectifies it when he says 'I know that I am ignorant', and no object can therefore objectify this Consciousness, the *eternal subject*. It is therefore absurd to suppose, as some do, that *Avidyā* is something that has actually enveloped Ātman's real nature.

### 3. Ātman is Eternally Free

Ātman being the eternal subject, it follows that He can never be objectified and bound by anything else. The S'ruti texts, which enjoin meditation upon Brahman or recommend knowledge of Brahman to attain freedom from *Samsāra* or bondage of mundane life, only do so for the purpose of teaching the Truth to the ignorant who imagine themselves to be seekers of certain enjoyments in this or in the other world, from the standpoint of *Vyavahāra*. The Veda is *not serious* about the Brahman being really an *object* of meditation or

something to be *attained at a future point of time*. This fact is made abundantly clear when texts declare:-

‘तत्त्वमसि’ (छां.)

“That thou art” (Ch.)

यद्वाचानभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ के. १-५

यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम् ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ के. १-६

“That which is not expressed by words, that by which the organ of speech itself is objectified, know that alone to be Brahman, not that which is meditated upon as ‘this’. That which one cannot think of with the mind, by which they say, the mind itself is objectified, know that alone to be Brahman, not that which is meditated upon as ‘this’.”

KE. 1-5, 6.

How, then, do the Upanishads teach Brahman? S’ānkarā replies:-

न हि शास्त्रमिदंतया विषयभूतं ब्रह्म प्रतिपिपादयिषति; किं तर्हि प्रत्यगात्मत्वेनाविषयतया प्रतिपादयत्, अविद्याकल्पितं वेद्यवेदितृ वेदनादिभेदम् अपनयति । ..... अतोऽविद्याकल्पित-संसारित्व निवर्तनादेव नित्यमुक्तात्मस्वरूपसमर्पणात्, न मोक्षस्या- नित्यत्वदोषः ॥ सू. भा. १-१-४.

“The S’āstra, indeed, does not propose to teach Brahman as *an object* of such and such a nature, but teaching It to be no object at all, as being the inner-most Ātman, it only *removes* all differences created by Avidyā (in It), such

as that of the knowables, knower and knowledge. Therefore, as it (the S'āstra) *presents the ever-free Ātman* just by removing his transmigratory nature conjured up by Avidyā, the defect of being impermanent cannot be imputed to *final release*."

SBh. 1-1-4.

#### 4. The Function of the S'āstra

Freedom of Ātman being eternal, it is obvious that it is wrong to assume that the Knowledge of Ātman actually produces 'final release'. Knowledge has the only function of dispersing Ignorance which is the sole impediment conceivable (if impediment it were) and thus revealing the ever-free nature of Ātman:-

त्वं हि नः पिता योऽस्माकमविद्यायाः परं पारं तारयसि ॥

प्र. ६-८.

('इत्येवमादयः श्रुतयः मोक्षप्रतिबन्धनिवृत्तिमात्रमेव आत्मज्ञानस्य फलं दर्शयन्ति'— as S'ānkarā says.)

"Thou art indeed our genuine father; for, thou hast taken us across the ocean of Avidyā to the other shore."

Pra. 6-8.

— These and other S'rutis point to the removal of the obstacle to *Release* as the only effect of the knowledge of Ātman.

तस्मै मृदितकषायाय तमसः पारं दर्शयति भगवान् सनत्कुमारः॥

छा. ७-२६-२.

“To him (Nārada) whose defilements of the mind had been washed off, the revered Sanatkumāra now showed the other shore of the ocean of darkness.” Ch. 7-26-2.

## 5. The Notion of Ātman

The Māṇḍūkya Upanishad describes the genuine Ātman as discoverable by following up the trail of the *notion* of the only Ātman (एकात्मप्रत्ययसारम् M. 7). In common life the me-notion is found to attach itself to various forms of not-Self and to flit from object to object as occasion demands and the unthinking man scarcely, if ever, bestows any thought upon the real Self to which alone the notion actually *owes its origin*. For example, a man may imagine that he himself is in sound health or impaired health according as his son or wife is healthy or ill, owing to extreme attachment to those dear ones, even while he is quite aware that they are distinct from him. This is an instance of the notion of *Gauṇātman* (secondary self). Or he may be, and often is, identifying himself with his body, as, for instance, when he thinks and says ‘I am stout’ or ‘lean’, ‘I am fair’, ‘I am standing’, ‘I am going’, or ‘I am jumping’ etc. So also, he may identify himself with the senses, as when he thinks and says ‘I am dumb, blind or deaf’; or he may identify himself with the mind and mistakenly transfer its properties to himself, as when he imagines and says that he desires, wills, doubts or determines the nature of external things, or that he is happy or miserable. These



and other varieties of *identification* and *mistaken transference* mutually of properties of the Self and the not-Self give rise to the notion of *Mithyātman* (the false self); for, here, the Self and the not-Self are not *known* to be distinct, as they are in the case of superimposition of the secondary self such as the son or the wife who is sometimes the object of the notion of Ātman. People actually *identify* themselves with the body etc. and *superimpose* the properties of the Self and the not-Self on each other. One glaring instance of this notion of the *false self*, however, is what people never suspect to be a superimposition. This *is at the very bottom* of all other superimpositions, and, therefore, S'āṅkara draws the attention of seekers of Truth to it in these words:-

एवमहंप्रत्ययिनम्, अशेषस्वप्रचारसाक्षिणि प्रत्यगात्मन्यध्यस्य तं  
च प्रत्यगात्मानं सर्वसाक्षिणं तद्विपर्ययेणान्तःकरणादिष्वध्यस्यति ॥

सू. भा. अव.

“So also, one superimposes the *Ahampratyayin* (the *locus* of the notion of me), on the innermost Self, the Witness of all its modifications, and, conversely, superimposes that innermost Self, the Witness of all, on the inner organ etc.”

Intro. SBh.

It is only when one goes to a genuine teacher who expounds the *real nature* of Ātman as He is—as the innermost Self, the Witness of all—that one comes to intuit directly that *Parātman*, the really real Ātman, to be no other than his own Self, who has been always the

One without a second. The me-notion, now takes up and resides in its *real abode*. Accordingly, the S'ruti says:-

तस्मादेवंविच्छान्तो दान्त उपरतस्तितिक्षुः समाहितो  
भूत्वाऽऽत्मन्येवाऽऽत्मानं पश्यति ॥ वृ. ४-४-२३.

“Therefore, one who knows the truth thus acquires self-control, tames his external senses, gives up all external activities, becomes strenuous in enduring the pairs of opposites, and having acquired balance of mind, sees Ātman exclusively in his own Self.”  
Br. 4-4-23.

## 6. Ātman is Eternally Pure

The real Ātman or Self of each one of us, being verily Brahman, is Real, eternally Pure, Conscious and Free. We have so far seen how this Ātman is eternally Conscious, and how He is eternally Free, though in common life, He sometimes seems to be *ignorant* and *bound* by the limiting associates of the body and the senses. We have seen how, really, the Ātman is ever-Conscious and ever-Free and how the *notions* of unconsciousness and bondage are only the result of the innate tendency of the mind to mix up the real Ātman and the unreal not-Ātman. As for His eternal Purity, the seeker of Truth is invited to ponder over the following observations of S'aṅkara.

यथा देहाश्रयचिकित्सानिमित्तेन धातुसाम्येन तत्संहतस्य तदभिमानिन  
आरोग्यफलम् 'अहमरोगः' इति यत्र बुद्धिरुत्पद्यते; एवं  
स्नानाचमनयज्ञोपवीतादिना 'अहं शुद्धः, संस्कृतः' इति यत्र

बुद्धिरुत्पद्यते, स संस्क्रियते । स च देहेन संहत एव । तेनैव  
हृहंकर्त्रा अहंप्रत्ययविषयेण प्रत्ययिना सर्वाः क्रिया निर्वर्त्यन्ते;  
तत्फलं च स एवाश्नाति ॥ सू. भा. १-१-४.

“Just as the recovery of health due to the restoration of the balance of the (three) constituents of the body (phlegm, etc.) resulting from medical treatment of the body, accrues to him alone who owns the body and has identified himself with the body, and in whom the feeling ‘I am cured’ is born, so also, he alone is religiously purified in whom the idea arises: ‘I am pure now, I have been religiously purified by purificatory bath, religious sipping of water, wearing the sacred thread, and the like Karmas’. He is certainly associated with the body. It is by that ego only, the object of the notion of me, that all Karmas are performed; it is he alone that reaps the fruit thereof.” SBh. 1-1-4.

S’aṅkara means to say that the *really real* Ātman neither performs any Karma, nor experiences the fruits thereof, inasmuch as He is *no doer* possessing a body and the senses necessary for the performance of actions. It is only Ātman on whom the ego is *superimposed* that is usually considered to be the doer of action in ordinary life permeated by nescience.

## Conclusion

The aspirant, who has undertaken the long journey of searching for Ātman or his real Self, has to discard each and every pseudo-self to which the *notion of me* attaches frequently in every-day life, till he arrives at the

individual self which is usually regarded as a knower, doer and experiencer of good and bad actions. And when he has succeeded in divesting the Self of all these *conditioning associates*, which are wrongly superimposed on It, he finds himself to be really identical with the *genuine Ātman* (the *Parātman* or the Absolute) who has always been intrinsically ever Pure, ever Conscious, and ever Free (*Nityas'uddhabuddhamuktasvabhāva*).

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## IV

### THE GENUINE INTUITION OF ĀTMAN

अयमात्मा ब्रह्म सर्वानुभूरित्यनुशासनम् ॥ बृ. २-५-१९.

“This Ātman is the Brahman. He is the intuitor of all;  
this is the teaching.” Br. 2-5-19.

We are now in a position to consider the direct investigation of the nature of *Vedānta-Vijnāna*, the main subject-matter of our enquiry. The word ‘*Vijnāna*’ which occurs in the title of this booklet, has many variants in Sanskrit. *Avagati* (ascertainment), *Adhyavasāya* (final understanding or determination) and *Anubhava* (Intuition) are some of these equivalents that are used by S’āṅkara. We shall employ the English word ‘Intuition’ uniformly while translating them all.

#### 1. Vedāntic Intuition as Distinguished from the Sensuous and the Intellectual Intuitions

We must be careful, however, to keep the *distinctive* meaning of this word in mind when it is applied to the Knowledge of Brahman. The word ‘*Anubhava*’ in Sanskrit is used to denote ‘immediate apprehension’,

whether by one of the senses or by the mind itself. It is well-known how we intuit colour with the help of the organ of sight and how we intuit joy or sorrow, fear or curiosity without any *assistance of reason*. All such intuitions, however, are events in time, and so, they are all born and cease to *exist* in time. But how are we aware of the senses or of these sensations themselves? How do we come to *know* the mind or its *intuitions* themselves? And how do we come to *know* the presence or absence of the mind itself together with its various modifications? The senses cannot objectify and know themselves; nor can the mind know itself, and much less is it possible for the mind to become *aware of its own absence*. Nevertheless, it is common knowledge that we do know when the mind or the senses function, or when they cease to function, in such states, for instance, as deep sleep. Now this *faculty* which enables us to have this direct insight, is what is called *Anubhava* in Vedānta. This is what has been rendered by the term 'Intuition' here.

The sensuous and the mental intuitions can be remembered and recollected when a person makes the necessary effort to do so. 'I can quite recall the colours of the rainbow', 'I can recollect the excruciating pain I felt when I was operated upon' or 'I well remember the shock I felt on hearing the tragic end of my friend'—these and other such statements of recollection of sensuous

and psychic experiences, we are familiar with in every-day life, confirm this fact. Now, the question is, what is It that enables us to be *aware* of these temporal happenings without undergoing any *change in Itself*? This is what is called *Anubhava* in Vedānta.

## 2. How Sensuous and Mental Intuitions Pre-suppose a Changeless Intuition

The senses and the mind have no doubt the power of reaching external objects by their inherent nature to see things spontaneously, but when there is neither light nor sound to guide, what is that Light, guided by which, this aggregate of body and the senses is enabled to go through all its activities? This question was posed by Janaka, to which Yājñavalkya gave a significant reply:-

अस्तमित आदित्ये याज्ञवल्क्य चंद्रमस्यस्तमिते शान्तेऽग्नौ  
शान्तायां वाचि किञ्ज्योतिरेवायं पुरुष इत्यात्मैवास्य  
ज्योतिर्भवतीत्यात्मनैवायं ज्योतिषाऽऽस्ते पल्ययते कर्म कुरुते  
विपल्येतीति ॥

बृ. ४-३-६.

“When the sun has set, when the moon has set, when the light of fire has gone out, and when even the sound of voice is hushed, what Light, O Yājñavalkya, has this *Purusha* (the aggregate of body and organs)? To this, Yājñavalkya answered, ‘Ātman alone is its light, it is by the Light of Ātman alone that this *Purusha* sits, goes out, does any work and returns’.”

Br. 4-3-6.

This inner Light of Ātman is the Intuition which constitutes the *inherent nature* of man or any other individual creature. That Light or Intuition can directly apprehend and It serves as the eternal guide for all procedure for the assemblage of body and senses, called man, in ordinary life.

It might be suspected, perhaps, by some that this so-called Intuition is only the *mind* that *inspires* the aggregate to move about and perform its functions. This might be justified if it were only a question of inference; but how could the mind work except through the gateways of the senses insofar as the external world is concerned? Moreover, there is, as we all know, a *faculty* of the mind, which apparently enables it to compare or contrast two concepts of things either in juxtaposition in space or perceived successively in time. But the process of knowing for the mind being possible only through forming a modification of itself, it is evident that it can never have two thoughts *simultaneously*.

This fact forces us to admit that, over and above mental intuitions, there must be a constant *something* which enables it to perform these *functions*. The idea of similarity or dissimilarity or even identity of two things in two points of time or in two different situations, therefore, necessarily presupposes a *sustained* Witnessing Consciousness which *endures* independently, and is *beyond* all time or space.



### 3. Intuition Unaffected by Waking or Dream

The Upanishads draw our attention to another characteristic of life, which compels us to admit the axiomatic nature of this *changeless* Intuition which maintains Its *self-identity* independently of time or space *Intuited* by the mind:-

स यत्र प्रस्वपित्यस्य लोकस्य सर्वावतो मात्रामपादाय स्वयं  
विहृत्य स्वयं निर्माय स्वेन भासा स्वेन ज्योतिषा प्रस्वपित्यत्रायं  
पुरुषः स्वयंज्योतिर्भवति ॥ बृ. ४-३-९.

“When he dreams, he takes a little of this all-embracing world; he himself casts aside (the body) and he himself creates (a new body) and through his own semblance and through his own light, he dreams. Here this *Purusha* becomes self-luminous.” Br. 4-3-9.

While a person is dreaming, he sees seeming bodies and senses and seeming objects. And what is the Light which aids him to see this replica of waking? Apparently, none of the waking associates passes on to that state, and so, there can be neither consciousness of the waking mind, nor the sensations of the waking state. Nevertheless, He objectifies all the dream-phenomena with the help of His own Consciousness! Now this *constant Consciousness* is the Intuition which is *identical* with *Ātman*. The *Ātman* does not make use of any Light, which has to operate actively as the mind does, when it becomes *aware* of external objects in the waking state. Obviously, therefore, *Ātman* is His own *light* when

He *objectifies* dream as a whole, just as He is when He is Conscious of waking as a whole.

#### 4. The Intuition of Deep Sleep

Besides the evidence of the Witnessing Consciousness in waking, and of the Ātman's *intrinsic* Consciousness unaffected by the appearance and disappearance of waking and dream, we have the Intuition of the *invariable* Consciousness of Ātman which *continues* to maintain its self-identity in deep sleep, where not only the modifications of the mind and the functions of the *senses*, but even the ego, the *locus* of all these, are all conspicuous by their absence. The Sruti describes this unique state in these terms:-

तद्वा अस्यैतदतिच्छन्दा अपहतपाप्माभयं रूपम् । तद्यथा प्रियया  
स्त्रिया संपरिष्वक्तो न बाह्यं किञ्चन वेद नान्तरमेवमेवायं पुरुषः  
प्राज्ञेनात्मना संपरिष्वक्तो न बाह्यं किञ्चन वेद नान्तरं तद्वा  
अस्यैतदाप्तकाममात्मकाममकामं रूपं शोकान्तरम् ॥

बृ. ४-३-२१.

“Now this is verily (His) form beyond desires, beyond (all) evil (of Karma), fearless. In the same way as one, firmly embraced by his beloved wife, is aware of neither the exterior nor the interior (world), so also this *Purusha*, (the individual self), firmly embraced by the *Prājña-Ātman* (the Ever-Conscious Self), knows nothing external or internal. And this, verily, is the form, which has accomplished all desires, whose Self is Itself all the desires, which is desireless and devoid of grief.”

Br. 4-3-21.

## 5. Intuition Which is Constant Throughout All States

That the genuine Atman, who is the *Witness* of even the ego, is never affected by the appearances or changes of the external or internal world can be known from the fact that His essential nature of Pure Consciousness or Absolute Intuition persists even while He appears to pass through the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep; birth and other stages of life and death; creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. The following remarks of S'ankara should be considered and studied with due care for being convinced of the *changeless nature* of Ātman as identical with the Essence of Intuition:-

(१) यथा स्वयंप्रसारितया मायया मायावी त्रिष्वपि कालेषु न संस्पृश्यते, अवस्तुत्वात्, एवं परमात्मापि संसारमायया न संस्पृश्यत इति। सू. भा. २-१-९.

“Just as a magician is not touched throughout the three points of time by the magical display of a thing projected by himself, for the (simple) reason that it (the projected thing) is unsubstantial, so also the real Atman remains untouched by the magic display of *Samsāra*.” SBh. 2-1-9.

(२) यथा च स्वप्नदृशकः स्वप्नदर्शनमायया न संस्पृश्यते प्रबोधसंप्रसादयोरनन्वागतत्वात्, एवम् अवस्थात्रयसाक्षी एकोऽव्यभिचारी, अवस्थात्रयेण व्यभिचारिणा न संस्पृश्यते । मायामात्रं ह्येतत् यत् परमात्मनोऽवस्थात्रयात्मना अवभासनं रज्ज्वा इव सर्पादिभावेनेति । अत्रोक्तं वेदान्तार्थसंप्रदाय-विद्विराचार्यैः-

‘अनादिमायया सुप्तो यदा जीवः प्रबुध्यते । अजमनिद्रमस्वप्नमद्वैतं  
बुध्यते तदा’॥ (गौ. का. १-१६) इति॥ सू. भा. २-१-९.

“And just as the one dreamer is untouched by the magical experience of dreams, for that does not persist in waking and deep sleep, so also, the one Witness of all the three states, who remains unchanged, is untouched by the triad of states which is changeful. For, that the real Ātman appears in the form of the triad of states is but a magical show, just like the appearance of a rope as a snake etc. Here it has been proclaimed by the respected teacher (Gaudapāda), who is well-conversant with the genuine tradition of Vedānta, in the following verse:- ‘When the Jīva (the individual soul) awakes from the beginningless dream of *Māyā*, he comes to know the birthless, sleepless, dreamless Non- dual Principle’ (GK. 1-16).” SBh. 2-1-9

## 6. Why Do Distinctions In Ātman Re-appear Even After Their Disappearance?

An objection is likely to rear up its head here. If freedom from all distinctions is the intrinsic nature of Ātman, as the Advaitin asserts, why do distinctions re-appear again and again even after they disappear altogether in states like deep sleep? Does not this point to something potentially persistent in Ātman, which compels the latter to re-manifest these distinctions? Here is S’ankara’s reply to this objection:

अयमप्यदोषः, दृष्टान्तभावादेव-यथा हि सुषुप्तिसमाध्यादावपि  
सत्यां स्वाभाविकव्याम् अविभागप्राप्तौ, मिथ्याज्ञानस्यानपोदितत्वात्,  
पूर्ववत् पुनः प्रबोधे, विभागो भवति, एवमिहापि भविष्यति ।

श्रुतिश्चात्र भवति-‘इमाः सर्वाः प्रजाः सति संपद्य न विदुः सति संपद्यामह इति, त इह व्याघ्रो वा सिंहो वा वृको वा वराहो वा कीटो वा पतङ्गो वा दंशो वा मशको वा यद्यद् भवन्ति तदा भवन्ति’ ॥ (छां. ६-९-२, ३) इति ॥

सू. भा. २-१-९.

S’ankara is here offering his reply to the objection as to why, even after complete dissolution of all distinctions at the end of a cycle, they appear again. He says:

“This is no defect either. For, there is an illustration here also. Just as in the case of deep sleep, trance or in any other similar state, where there is the innate non-distinction, distinction reappears as before as soon as one awakes, for the simple reason that *false knowledge* has not been wiped off, so also this may well happen even here. There is this S’ruti also to this effect: ‘All these creatures have become one with Pure Being (Brahman) but they are not aware that they have become one with Pure Being. Whatever they have been, a tiger, or a lion, or a wolf, or a boar, or an insect, or a butterfly, or a gad-fly, or a mosquito - that they become again’ (Ch. 6-9-2).”

SBh. 2-1-9.

## 7. Is There an Actual Merging of Distinctions in Ātman During the states Like Deep Sleep?

It should not be thought that Ātman is actually infested with distinctions now, and that we have got to attain a state of non-distinction called *Mukti* or Release after undergoing some course of spiritual discipline. The truth is that our *Real Nature* is ever-free from all

distinctions and differences, even while it *appears* to be sullied and tainted with them owing to our innate nescience, and so long as this is not wiped out, we persist in imagining that they continue to be in a potential form even when nature repeatedly merges us in *undifferentiated* Reality in such states as deep sleep. S'āṅkara draws our attention to this popular blunder in these words:-

यथा ह्यविभागेऽपि परमात्मनि मिथ्याज्ञानप्रतिबद्धो  
विभागव्यवहारः स्वप्नवदव्याहतः स्थितौ दृश्यते, एवम् अपीतावपि  
मिथ्याज्ञानप्रतिबद्धैव विभागशक्तिरनुमास्यते । एतेन मुक्तानां  
पुनरुत्पत्तिप्रसङ्गः प्रत्युक्तः, सम्यग्ज्ञानेन मिथ्याज्ञानस्य  
अपोदितत्वात् ॥ सू. भा. २-१-९.

“Just as during the period of sustenance of the universe the practical life of distinctions is found to thrive even in the distinctionless Ātman, as it does in dreams, owing to wrong knowledge, so also a potency, consequent on that self-same wrong knowledge, is inferred (from the empirical point of view) to persist even in the state of dissolution. This disposes of the objection regarding the *possibility of rebirth* of even the Released. For, in their case, wrong knowledge has been destroyed by Right Knowledge.” SBh. 2-1-9.

## 8. Conclusion

This, then, is the essence of Vedāntic Intuition. It is not something to be *generated by effort*. Whenever we are said to have knowledge of a thing as it is, we use some valid means of knowledge such as perception. The

only function of all such means is merely to remove our *ignorance* of the thing, that is to say, to remove the *misconception* that has been projected by the absence of *contact* of the Light of Intuition and the object which is desired to be known. As the author of the *Māṇḍūkya-Bhāṣya* writes:-

यदा पुनर्घटतमसोर्विवेककरणे प्रवृत्तं प्रमाणम् अनुपादित्सित-  
 तमोनिवृत्तिफलावसानम्, छिदिरिव छेद्यावयवसंबन्धविवेककरणे  
 प्रवृत्ता तदवयवद्वैधीभावफलावसाना, तदा नान्तरीयकं घटविज्ञानम्,  
 न तत् प्रमाणफलम् । न च तद्वदपि आत्मन्यध्यारोपितान्तः  
 प्रज्ञत्वादिविवेककरणे प्रवृत्तस्य प्रतिषेधविज्ञान प्रमाणास्य,  
 अनुपादित्सितान्तःप्रज्ञत्वादिनिवृत्तिव्यतिरेकेण तुरीये व्यापारोपपत्तिः ।  
 अन्तःप्रज्ञत्वादिनिवृत्तिसमकालमेव प्रमातृत्वादिभेदनिवृत्तेः ॥  
 मां. भा. ७.

“If, on the other hand, we accept that the valid means, which has undertaken the discrimination of the pot and the ignorance thereof culminates only in eliminating the ignorance which is not desirable—in the same way as the act of cutting undertaken to sever the connection of the two parts of a log of wood culminates in its two parts being made asunder—then, the knowledge of the pot necessarily arises of its own accord, and as such, cannot be regarded as the result of the function of the means. So also, the means of negating inward consciousness etc., undertaken for the discrimination of the nature of being inwardly conscious etc., can have the only effect of eliminating the nature of being inwardly conscious etc. and cannot exercise the additional function of *operating on* (Ātman) the Fourth also. For, simultaneously with the elimination of the nature of

being inwardly conscious etc., the distinction of being a knower etc., removes itself automatically." Mān. Bh. 7.

Ātman, as Intuition, is the only Reality existing in Its own right. The right knowledge of anything invariably culminates in revealing its real nature as Intuition (or Ātman), only by removing the Ignorance which intervenes and envelops its real nature. When we speak of understanding a particular thing, our mind really removes ignorance of that thing, and rests in the Ātman, who, in this particular case, reveals Himself as the Intuition of that thing. Ātman, as Intuition, is spoken of as the Intuition of waking and other states of empirical consciousness *only relatively*, just as we speak of the sun throwing his light on objects when darkness disappears owing to sunrise. The so-called sensuous and mental intuitions are really this self-same Intuition as particularized by the conditioning associates called the senses or the mind.

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## INTUITION AND REASON SUBSERVIENT TO IT

### 1. How is Intuition Tested?

All intuition, whether sensuous, mental or of the nature of direct insight, is *direct apprehension*. Intuition only sheds its *light* on its object and does not deliver any judgment as to whether or not the object is *really* what it appears to be. The question, therefore, naturally arises : 'How are we to conclude whether or not any particular object of Intuition is real? How are we to be sure about the Truth of the entity called Ātman which the Upanishads teach?'

In the first place, sensuous intuition or perception is commonly tested in three ways in common life; firstly, by seeing whether our Intuition, at first sight, is confirmed by our *knowledge* of it on closer examination; secondly, by seeing whether the thing possesses the *causal efficiency* expected of it; and thirdly, by seeing whether our experience is *common to all* persons possessing normal faculties. For instance, when we see something at a distance what our Intuition reports to be what we call water, we go nearer, and see by experimenting whether the liquid in front of us can moisten our cloth

or quench our thirst and whether this property, attributed to it, is verifiable by all persons in like manner; and when it is found to be so, we arrive at the conclusion that it is really what we know as water.

A mental intuition, like that of a dream object, may satisfy all the above-mentioned tests while the dream lasts, but it is dismissed as *untrue* when it is found to be *sublated* on waking, and so, all that we saw before is now *decided* to be only an individual intuition very much like that of an insane person. So then, we see that, besides satisfying the tests of causal efficiency and of universality, an Intuition must be such that its *sublatability* is inconceivable.

## 2. Is Intuition Of Ātman in Conflict with Perception and Means of Right Knowledge?

It is sometimes argued that Intuition of the *unity* of Ātman has to be rejected as being unfaithful to fact, inasmuch as the *Pramānas* or valid means of knowledge *uniformly* point to a pluralistic universe. But the truth is just the other way round. For every *Prāmāna* or valid means of knowledge is accorded that pride of place only insofar as it culminates in the Intuition which certifies its *validity*, that is, when it conforms to the nature of the object.

Besides, the veracity of perception or any other *Pramāna* rests on the pre-supposition that Ātman is *really*

a knower. But this is in itself a presumption without any warrant. For as S'ānka remarks :-

न हीन्द्रियाण्यनुपादाय प्रत्यक्षादिव्यवहारः संभवति, न चाधिष्ठानमन्तरेण इन्द्रियाणां व्यवहारः संभवति । न चानध्यस्तात्मभावेन देहेन कश्चिद् व्याप्रियते । न चैतस्मिन् सर्वस्मिन्नसति असङ्गस्याऽऽत्मनः प्रमातृत्वमुपपद्यते । न च प्रमातृत्वमन्तरेण प्रमाणप्रवृत्तिरस्ति । तस्मात्, अविद्यावद्विषयाण्येव प्रत्यक्षादीनि प्रमाणानि शास्त्राणि च ॥ अध्यास भा.

“Function of perception and the like is not possible, as we all know, without making use of the senses. And the senses cannot possibly function without a body as their resting place. Nor can any one be active with a body on which the idea of its being one's own Self is not superimposed. Nor can there be cognizership in the Ātman, who is by nature untainted by anything else, unless all this has been presumed. And no *Pramāna* can proceed to function without cognizership (in Ātman). Therefore, (it is clear that) perception and other *Pramānas* and the *S'āstras* likewise are only for persons influenced by nescience.”

SBh. Intro.

The Intuition of Ātman can never be called in question for a further reason:-

अपि चान्यमिदं प्रमाणम् आत्मैकत्वस्य प्रतिपादकं नातः परं किञ्चिदाकाङ्क्ष्यमस्ति, यथा हि लोके 'यजेत' इत्युक्ते 'किम्?', 'केन?', 'कथम्?' इत्याकाङ्क्ष्यते, नैवं 'तत्त्वमसि' 'अहंब्रह्मास्मि' इत्युक्ते किञ्चिदन्यदाकाङ्क्ष्यमस्ति, सर्वात्मैकत्वविषयत्वादवगतेः । सति ह्यन्यस्मिन्नवशिष्यमाणेऽर्थे आकाङ्क्षा स्यात् । न त्वात्मैकत्वव्यतिरेकेणावशिष्यमाणोऽन्योऽर्थोऽस्ति य आकाङ्क्ष्येत ॥ सू. भा. २-१-१४.

“Moreover, this *Pramāna* propounding the *unity* of Ātman is *absolutely* final; for, there is no further question that can possibly arise when it has dawned. When it is said, in ordinary life, that one should sacrifice, it can be asked ‘What (should be sacrificed), with what, and how (should the sacrifice be conducted)?’ But there is no question which can possibly arise in like manner when it is said : ‘That thou art’, ‘I am Brahman’; for, the Intuition (that dawns here) relates to the *unity* of Ātman as the *All*. For, a question can arise only when there is something left over, but there is nothing left over besides the unity of Ātman, about which a question may naturally arise.” SBh. 2-1-14.

### 3. Intuition of Ātman is Not Opposed to Reason

But is it not possible that this Vedāntic teaching is opposed to *reason*? For, after all, Vedāntic teaching is only a statement made about an actual fact and can be deemed to be unassailable only when it is not against reasoning. Reason, on the other hand, is often used to infer something unknown on the strength of something already known by perception, and so is more approximate to Intuition than a mere traditional statement. Moreover, the Upanishad says that one should study the teaching about Ātman (श्रोतव्यः) and adds that the teaching should be reflected upon (मन्तव्यः), evidently implying that the textual teaching should be checked by *reasoning* also. And, in the Upanishads themselves whatever has been taught is invariably found to be *reasoned out*, as, for instance, when the S’ruti brings forward examples from ordinary life to illustrate and support the truth of what has been already taught. Would

it not, therefore, appear that the truth of a mere statement has to be rejected whenever it is in conflict with reason? And any one could see easily that *reason* can never breathe in the *rarified atmosphere* of Absolute Unity.

This misgiving is altogether unjustified; for, the obvious reason that all *ratiocination* is only a by-product of the *wonderful manifestation* of Intuition itself in the hape of empirical life. The Upanishads no doubt employ reason in the course of teaching the Absolute, but this is only insofar as it is based upon *partial intuitions*, just to lead the seeker to a *gradual unveiling* of Reality; but they never *encourage* mere reasoning for reasoning's sake. S'aṅkara distinguishes this Vedāntic *reasoning*—used as a device for the purpose of teaching the Absolute Truth—from barren reasoning or syllogistic reasoning as follows :-

नानेन मिषेण शुष्कतर्कस्यात्राऽऽत्मलाभः संभवति । श्रुत्यनुगृहीत  
एव ह्यत्र तर्कोऽनुभवाङ्गत्वेनाऽऽश्रीयते । स्वप्नान्तबुद्धान्तयोरुभयो-  
रितरेतरव्यभिचारात्, आत्मनोऽनन्वागतत्वम्, संप्रसादे च प्रपञ्च  
परित्यागेन सदात्माना संपत्तेर्निष्प्रपञ्चसदात्मत्वम्; प्रपञ्चस्य  
ब्रह्मप्रभवत्वात् कार्यकारणानन्यत्वन्यायेन ब्रह्माव्यतिरेकः -  
इत्येवञ्जातीयकः ॥ सू. भा. २-१-६.

“This argument cannot be used in excuse of finding room for *dry reasoning* here. For, it is reasoning *advanced* by S'ruti alone that is resorted to here as subservient to Intuition—reasoning, for instance, of the following type:- (1) Ātman is not followed up with any of the characteristics of either dream or waking inasmuch as both these appear

exclusive of each other, and since the individual self sheds all plurality and becomes *one* with the Ātman as Pure Being in deep sleep, that Ātman is *really* of the nature of *Being* devoid of all plurality. And (2) Since the universe is born from Brahman, it cannot be other than Brahman, if one respects the law of the effect not being other than its cause."

SBh. 2-1-6.

Here, evidently, the S'ruti brings forward reason based upon *universal* Intuition and not founded upon logical induction or syllogistic deduction. Besides, no reasoning whatsoever is necessary for one who can *directly* refer oneself to the nature of the genuine Ātman Himself as the Witnessing Self of the ego which corresponds to the notion of 'I'. For, the Witness is, by His *very nature*, altogether independent of all objective not-Self, which can never claim any independent existence of its own as a real second to the Witness.

#### **4. The Place of Non-dual States like Sleep in Vedāntic Reasoning**

Vedāntins, following the footsteps of Bādarāyaṇa as interpreted by S'āṅkara, cite deep sleep and other states of non-duality only to confirm their contention that this Ātman maintains His *absolute identity* in spite of the appearance or disappearance of the pluralistic universe along with the waking state. But no waking or dream actually *sticks on* to the Witnessing Self when we remember that waking or dream is only for the individual self which identifies itself with a body and *fancies* that its senses actually reside in the body while they function.

The so-called *merging* in the Pure Being or Ātman (सत्संपत्ति) in deep sleep is only a concession to the credulous who persist in the belief that each one of them is actually an individual distinct from the real Ātman. Accordingly, S'āṅkara makes this shrewd observation on the self which apparently undergoes the three states of consciousness :-

अपि च न कदाचिज्जीवस्य ब्रह्मणा संपत्तिर्नास्ति, स्वरूपस्या-  
नपायित्वात्; स्वप्नजागरितयोस्तु उपाधिसंपर्कवशात् पररूपापत्ति-  
मिवापेक्ष्य तदुपशमात् सुषुप्ते स्वरूपापत्तिर्वक्ष्यते । अतश्च  
सुप्तावस्थायां कदाचित् सदा संपद्यते, कदाचिन्न संपद्यते -  
इत्ययुक्तम् ॥ सू. भा. ३-२-७.

“Moreover, there is no time when the Jīva (the living soul) has not become one with Brahman, for the inherent nature of a thing can never be alienated from it. It is (only) relatively to its apparent transformation into a foreign form in dream and waking that the Jīva is supposed to attain his own form in deep sleep. So, for this reason also, it is improper to aver that the Jīva becomes one with Pure Being on one particular occasion and not on any other.” SBh. 3-2-7.

The critical student of Vedānta will have noticed by now how the so-called Vedāntic *reasoning* is merely leading the enquirer from one aspect of Intuition to another till he finally intuits his intrinsic nature by his own self without desiderating any intellectual reasoning whatever.

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## VI

# GRADUAL REVELATION OF BRAHMAN AS ĀTMAN

### Introduction

It would be highly edifying for the student of Vedānta to take notice of the gradual modes of revealing the nature of Brahman as Ātman as found in the Upanishads. If one remembers how the human mind has a natural tendency to be a slave to the senses which cannot help looking outwards exclusively, one would be so grateful to the Rshi who sounds this note of warning to all those who are in search of Brahman or the Reality which is their own Self:-

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयंभूस्तस्मात् पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन्।  
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरपृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥

का. २-१-१.

“The Self-existent One has carved out the organs of sense outwards, and therefore one looks outwards and not within oneself. It is only a rare wise person who looks into his inner Ātman withdrawing his senses, desiring to attain immortality.”

Kā. 2-1-1.



## 1. The Mind Is The One Instrument Useful For The Vision Of Ātman

It goes without saying that a super-sensuous entity like Brahman cannot be known through any empirical means of knowledge. It is, therefore, to be expected that the Upanishads should teach It as knowable only through the Vedas, which are exclusively devoted to reveal such entities. Accordingly, we are told in the *Kāthakōpanishad* that It is the goal which all the Vedas uniformly teach (सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमाप्नन्ति । का. १-२-१५.)

But lest it should be supposed that Brahman or Ātman might be something [like the *Devas* (gods) or *Svarga* (heaven)] to be reached after death, the Upanishads warn us that It is to be seen through the mind's eye.

मनसैवानुद्भष्टव्यं नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन ॥ बृ. ४-४-१९.

“This has to be seen only through the mind; for, there is no diversity whatsoever here.” Br. 4-4-19.

Here the word एव (alone) is used to lay stress on the mind to the exclusion of the senses. The latter can see only finite things, and so, they function only in the sphere of manifoldness. But there is no manifoldness – no diversity or variety, no distinctions or differences at all – in Ātman. Of course, the ordinary mind not trained to turn inwards can be of no use to us in our effort to see Ātman. This fact is implied by the prefix ‘अनु’ (after)

attached to the word 'अनुद्गृह्यम्' in the text quoted above, which means that Ātman is 'to be seen in accordance with the direction of holy teaching'.

## 2. The Need of Adhyātma-Yōga

It being the only instrument, the mind has got to be made sharp enough to be able to see this subtle Ātman. So the S'ruti says:-

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोऽऽत्मा न प्रकाशते ।  
दृश्यते त्वञ्चया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥ का. १-३-१२.

"This Ātman, hidden in all creatures, does not show Himself generally. He is seen, however, by those who have the capacity to see subtle entities with the help of one-pointed subtle mind." Kā. 1-3-12.

Those that strive to know Ātman directly have to undergo the course of discipline called the Adhyātma-Yōga, the Yōga by means of which one can stay the mind on the Ātman within. Accordingly, the S'ruti exhorts the seeker to practise this Yōga in these terms:-

तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम् ।  
अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥  
का. १-२-१२.

"Knowing this ancient *Deva* (the shining one), hard to see, and hidden in a secret place and lodged in the cave, and located in the midst of inaccessible surroundings,-

knowing Him, a wise person shakes off both elation and grief.”

Kā. 1-2-12.

The Yōga recommended here is to be practised by taking several steps, one by one. These are enumerated in the following verse:-

यच्छेद्वाङ्मनसी प्राज्ञस्तद्वच्छेज्ज्ञान आत्मनि ॥

ज्ञानमात्मनि महति नियच्छेत् तद्वच्छेच्छान्त आत्मनि ॥

का. १-३-१३.

“The discerning seeker should control (and dissolve) the organ of speech in the mind, and that in the Ātman of intellect; and the intellect he shall dissolve in the great Ātman, and that (Ātman) in the featureless Ātman.”

Kā. 1-3-13.

It must have been evident by now to the student of Vedānta that the ‘Vision’ of Ātman, referred to by the Upanishads, is neither sensuous perception, nor inference with the aid of the mind. This would be clearer by a close study of S’aṅkara’s Bhāshya explaining the various stages of the Adhyātma-Yōga, specified in the S’ruti cited above:-

1. (The Yōgin) should control and dissolve the organ of speech in the mind. That is to say, he should give up the functions of the external organs of sense, such as that of speech, etc. and continue to stay as if he were one with the mind.

2. This mind (मनस) also, which may tend to revolve in itself the properties of outside objects, should be confined

to and merged in the intellect—denoted by the word 'Jñāna' in this text—the faculty of determination, by (constantly) warning oneself against the defects of any object.

3. And that intellect also he should render more subtle and merge it in the great Ātman, that is, experiencing ego, or in the primary integral intellect of Hiranyagarbha.

4. As for this 'great Ātman', he should be made steadfast, and merged in the *S'ānta-Ātman* (the Ātman who is absolutely free from all the specific features of phenomena), in the *Parama Purusha* (Supreme Person), the 'Final Goal' in whose context this Yōga is being taught."  
SBh. 1-41.

### 3. Ātman As Beyond Speech And Thought

The seeker who has made sufficient progress in the Adhyātma-Yōga is ready to understand the spirit of Upanishadic texts which declare that Brahman cannot be expressed by words, or thought of by the mind.

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह ।  
आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् । न बिभेति कुत्स्यतेति ॥ तै. २-९.

"Knowing the nature of Brahman as Bliss, from which words turn back along with the mind, unable to reach It, one is afraid of nothing else."  
Tai. 2-9.

### 4. Brahman As Un-objectifiable By Meditation Or Knowledge

The organ of speech, referred to in the text 'यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते' quoted just now, is only a typical example

representative of all senses. Accordingly, the *Kena Upanishad* sets forth the organs of sight, hearing and smelling also in succession along with speech and mind, and sounds a repeated note of warning that while it is true that Brahman is enjoined to be meditated upon, one should not be carried away with the notion that Brahman is actually the object of meditation; for, It is the one *eternal subject* that sheds its radiance on all the senses before they are able to perceive objects:-

(१) यद्वाचाऽनभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ के. १-५.

“That which is not expressed by the organ of speech, but that by which (the organ of) speech itself is objectified, know thou That alone to be Brahman and not that which they meditate upon as ‘this’.” Ke. 1-5.

(२) यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम् ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ के. १-६.

“That which one cannot think about with the mind, but That by which, they say, mind itself is objectified, know thou That alone to be Brahman and not that which they meditate upon as ‘this’.” Ke. 1-6.

(३) यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षुषि पश्यति ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ के. १-७.

“That which one cannot see with the organ of sight, but That which objectifies (all) sensations of sight, know Thou that alone to be Brahman and not that which they meditate upon as ‘this’.” Ke. 1-7.

- (४) यच्छ्रोत्रेण न शृणोति येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतम् ।  
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ के. १-८.

“That which one cannot hear with the organ of hearing, but That by which that organ of hearing is objectified, know thou That alone to be Brahman and not that which they meditate upon as ‘this’.”  
Ke. 1-8.

- (५) यत्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणोयते ।  
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ के. १-९.

“That which one cannot smell with the organ of smell, but That by which the organ of smell itself is objectified, know thou That alone to be Brahman, and not that which they meditate upon as ‘this’.”  
Ke. 1-9.

It is intelligible that the specific form which is enjoined by the S’ruti to be meditated upon may not necessarily pertain to Brahman, since the text enjoining meditation does not propose to ascertain the *true nature* of Brahman. But can we not suppose that Brahman is the object of the act of knowing, seeing that in each of the above texts this advice is repeated : ‘*Know* thou That alone to be Brahman’? The Upanishad has forestalled this surmise:-

- अन्यदेव तद्विदितादथो अविदितादधि ।  
इति शुश्रुम पृर्वेषां ये नस्तद्व्याचक्षिरे ॥ के. १-४.

“It is quite other than the known and even beyond the unknown. So have we heard from the ancients who have explained It to us.”  
Ke. 1-4.

Being the Witness of all that is knowable or known as well as of all that is unknown, It cannot be known, that is to say, objectified by knowledge in the same way as external objects. It has got to be directly Intuited by means of the suggestion of S'ruti texts and teachers. There is no need to objectify It by means of any words or thought and, much less, by the senses.

'How is it then', it will be asked, 'that the Upanishad alone is said to be the *only means* of valid knowledge for revealing Brahman? Here is S'aṅkara's answer:-

अविषयत्वे ब्रह्मणः शास्त्रयोनित्वानुपपत्तिरिति चेत् । न;  
अविद्याकल्पितभेदनिवृत्तिपरत्वच्छास्त्रस्य । न हि शास्त्रम् इदंतया  
विषयभूतं ब्रह्म प्रतिपिपादयिषति, किं तर्हि,  
प्रत्यगात्मत्वेनाविषयतया प्रतिपादयत्, अविद्याकल्पितं  
वेद्यवेदितृवेदनादिभेदमपनयति ॥ सू.भा. १-१-४.

“(Objection:-) If Brahman is no object (of speech), it would not be proper to say that Brahman is known only through the Vedānta-S'āstra !

“(Reply:-) No; for, the aim of the S'āstra, is to take off all differences conjured up by Avidyā. (To explain:-) 'The S'āstra never proposes to propound the *nature* of Brahman as an *object* (of verbal expression) and to teach It as such and such a *thing*. It only teaches that It is no object at all, being the innermost-Self of everything; and thereby removes all distinctions in It created by Avidyā, (distinctions), such as that of the knowable, knower and knowledge.' S'bhū. 1-4,

## 5. Interpretation Of Positive Terms Applied To Brahman

How then are positive terms employed for describing Brahman to be interpreted? This question presents no difficulty to followers of schools who believe that Brahman really possesses certain properties which distinguish It from other external beings; but how is a follower of S'āṅkara's tradition—which maintains that Brahman is altogether devoid of all specific features—to interpret such *seeming* epithets? Here is S'āṅkara's reply. In explaining the text सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म he writes:

(१) सत्यं ब्रह्मेति ब्रह्म विकारान्निवर्तयति ॥ तै.भा. २-१.

“By the term ‘Reality’ the S'ruti only intends to teach that It is not an effect (which being superimposed on Brahman is unreal).”  
Tai. Bh.2-1.

(२) अतः कारणत्वं प्राप्तं ब्रह्मणः; कारणत्वं च कारकत्वम्,  
वस्तुत्वात्; मृद्वदचिद्रूपता च प्राप्ता ॥ अत इदमुच्यते  
ज्ञानं ब्रह्मेति ॥ तै. भा. २-१.

“As a consequence, (Brahman not being an effect) has to be considered to be the cause, and being a cause implies that it is a factor in producing an action; and being a thing (causing something else) It might be taken to be insentient like clay (which is the material cause of a pot etc.). To preclude this contingency, the S'ruti says that Brahman is Consciousness.”  
Tai. Bh. 2-1.



## 6. Interpretation Of Negative Terms Applied To Brahman

We should guard ourselves from mistaking negation of certain features as implying the opposite of what is negated. Thus, when it is said that Brahman is 'not unreal', it should not be supposed that It is real (the opposite of unreal) like any other empirical object that exists in time and possesses some causal efficiency. In like manner, the S'ruti text that describes Brahman as Jñāna (Consciousness) never means that this term indicates the opposite of unconsciousness. To make this explicit the Upanishad says:-

तदनुप्रविश्य । सच्च त्यच्चाभवत् । निरुक्तं चानिरुक्तं च ।  
निलयनं चानिलयनं च । विज्ञानं चाविज्ञानं च । सत्यं चानृतं  
च सत्यमभवत् । यदिदं किञ्च । तत्सत्यमित्याचक्षते ॥

तै. २-६.

“Having entered into it, He became the gross matter with form and the subtle formless; the definable and the undefinable, the supporting and the not-supporting, the sentient and the non-sentient; the Real became the real and the unreal, all this. (So) they call It the 'Real'.” Tai. 2-6.

It is evident from this extract that Brahman is called the Real, not because It is the opposite of what we call unreal in ordinary life, but because It is the substrate of both the empirical real and unreal phenomena which are *equally* superimposed upon It.

This becomes more obvious when we meet with texts describing Brahman as the Absolute (अक्षरम्) by

denying a number of specific features together with their opposites.

स होवाचैतद्वै तदक्षरं गार्गी ब्राह्मणा अभिवदन्त्यस्थूलमनण्व-  
ह्रस्वमदीर्घमलोहितमस्नेहमच्छायमतमोऽवाय्वनाकाशमसङ्गम-  
रसमगन्धमचक्षुष्कमश्रोत्रमवागमनोऽतेजस्कमप्राणममुखममात्रम-  
नन्तरमबाह्यं न तदश्नाति किञ्चन न तदश्नाति कश्चन ॥

वृ. ३-८-८.

“This is verily that *Akshara* (the Imperishable Reality). O Gargi, which, the knowers of Brahman say, is neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long, not red, not adhesive, neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor ether, nor attached, without taste, without smell, without eyes, without ears, without the organ of speech, without mind, without light, without the vital power, without mouth, without measure, without interior, and without exterior. It never consumes anything, nor does anybody consumes It.”

Br. 3-8-8.

It is evident that S'rutis are so serious in taking pains to negate every conceivable specific feature to stress the fact that there is *absolutely* nothing to be *attributed to* or *predicated* of Reality, because It is absolutely One without all distinctions and differences.

## 7. What Exactly Is Negated In The Negative Description Of Brahman

The Upanishads are so fond of employing the negative method of teaching Brahman that they sometimes describe It as 'not this, not that'. It is

necessary to ascertain what exactly they mean by this *absolute negation*. Bādarāyana in his *Vedānta-Mīmāṃsā* (popularly called the *Brahma-Sūtra-Prasthāna*) has taken up this topic for discussion (in Sūtra 3-2-22) :

प्रकृतैतावत्त्वं हि प्रतिषेधति, ततो ब्रवीति च भूयः ॥

which freely translated means:

“This text only negates the limitation that is under discussion; (for) it says something more (subsequently).”

The text taken up for consideration herein is from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*

अथात आदेशो नेति नेति न हेतस्मादिति नेत्यन्यत् परमस्ति॥

बृ २-३-६.

In the course of his commentary on the Sūtra, S'aṅkara states the *prima facie* view that the text denies both Brahman and Its forms, since both have been taken up for consideration at the commencement; further, two negations are employed here, and it stands to reason that by one *Neti* the form of Brahman with all Its details has been negated, while by the second *Neti*, Brahman Itself to which the form pertains has been negated. Or, still better, Brahman Itself, which is said to have the two forms, has been negated here; for, being beyond speech and mind, Its existence is inconceivable and so, that alone deserves to be denied and not the phenomenal form, since, being the object of perception (and other

means of valid knowledge), This cannot be negated with propriety. The repetition of the word 'Neti' (not this), may be explained away as being due to solicitude for negation.

S'aṅkara rejects this view as follows:-

(१) न तावदुभयप्रतिषेध उपपद्यते, शून्यवादप्रसङ्गात् । कञ्चिद्धि परमार्थमालम्ब्यापरमार्थः प्रतिषिध्यते यथा रज्ज्वादिषु सर्पादयः । तच्च परिशिष्यमाणे कस्मिंश्चिद् भावे अवकल्पते । उभयप्रतिषेधे तु कोऽन्यो भावः परिशिष्येत? अपरिशिष्यमाणे चान्यस्मिन् य इतरः प्रतिषेद्धुमारभ्यते प्रतिषेद्धुमशक्यत्वात् तस्यैव परमार्थत्वापत्तेः प्रतिषेधानुपपत्तिः । नापि ब्रह्मप्रतिषेध उपपद्यते; 'ब्रह्म ते ब्रवाणि' (बृ. २-१-२) इत्याद्युपक्रमविरोधात् ॥

सू. भा. ३-२-२२.

“In the first place, both (Brahman and Its forms) cannot reasonably have been negated; for, that would lead to Nihilism. We know that something unreal is usually denied on the basis of something known to be real, as, for instance, a snake etc. are denied in substrates like a rope etc. And that denial is possible only when something positive is left over; and what other possible thing could be left over if both be denied? And if there is nothing else left over, negation itself would be impossible, inasmuch as that which was sought to be negated would itself be real, since it could not be possibly negated. Nor could Brahman be intended to be negated here; for, that would be contradictory to the proposition at the commencement, viz. 'Let me teach you Brahman'.”

SBh. 3-2-22.

As for the text which states that Brahman is beyond both speech and mind, S'ankara says:

(२) वाङ्मनसातीतत्वमपि ब्रह्मणो नाभावाभिप्रायेणाभिधीयते। न हि महता परिकरबन्धेन 'ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्' (तै. २-९), 'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म' (तै. २-१) इत्येवमादिना वेदान्तेषु ब्रह्म प्रतिपाद्य तस्यैव पुनरभावोऽभिलष्येत; 'प्रक्षालनाद्धि पङ्कस्य दूरादस्पर्शनं वरम्' इति हि न्यायः। प्रतिपादनप्रक्रिया त्वेषा 'यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते। अप्राप्य मनसा सह।' (तै. २-९) इति। एतदुक्तं भवति - वाङ्मनसातीतम् अविषयान्तःपाति प्रत्यगात्मभूतं नित्यशुद्धबुद्धमुक्तस्वभावं ब्रह्मेति। तस्मात् ब्रह्मणो रूपप्रपञ्चं प्रतिषेधति, परिशिनष्टि ब्रह्म - इत्यभ्युपगन्तव्यम् ॥

सू. भा. ३-२-२२.

“Even Brahman's transcending both speech and mind is not stated with a view to teaching It's being a *non-entity*. For, it cannot be supposed that the S'ruti girds up its loins to proclaim Brahman in such propositions as 'The knower of Brahman attains the Highest. Brahman is Reality, Consciousness and Infinite' and then denies the existence of that very Brahman. For, as the popular adage says, it is far better to stand at a distance and not touch mud at all, rather than (touch it and then) wash oneself! As a matter of fact, this is (only) a way of propounding the nature of Brahman, when it is said: 'Failing to reach which, words turn back along with the mind' (Tai. 2-9). This is as much as to say 'Brahman is what is one's own innermost Self which is beyond speech and mind, not comprehended by the objective phenomena and is ever Pure, Conscious and Free. Therefore, we have to conclude that the text denies

the phenomenal form (of Brahman) but retains Brahman (intact).”  
SBh. 3-2-22.

In support of the propriety of this interpretation, S'āṅkara adds the following remarks:

“As for Brahman, It has been taught only as an adjunct to the two forms by means of a genitive (*Brahmanō Rūpam*) in the previous portion of the Upanishad, but not as an independent entity *in* and *for* Itself. The two forms having been explained at length, desire to know the nature of that which has them, arises naturally, and so, this text is begun (in response to it, which says) ‘Now, therefore, the teaching: ‘Not this, not this’. (So) here, it has to be concluded that this is a presentation of the *nature* of Brahman through the denial of both the forms superimposed; for, it is on the basis of that substrate that all this effect has been negated by the expression: ‘Not this, not this’.”  
SBh. 3-2-22.

So, what is S'āṅkara's final position with regard to this double negation *Neti, Neti*? He tentatively offers two interpretations: (1) These two negatives deny respectively the two forms, the gross and the subtle. Or (2) the first negative denies the totality of the (five) elements, while the second denies the totality of impressions. Finally, however, he pronounces his verdict thus:

अथवा नेति नेतीति वीप्सेयम् । इतीति यावत्किञ्चिदुत्प्रेक्ष्यते  
तत्सर्वं भवतीत्यर्थः । परिगणितप्रतिषेधे हि क्रियमाणे, ‘यदि  
नैतद् ब्रह्म, किमन्यद् ब्रह्म भवेत्’ - इति जिज्ञासा स्यात् ।  
वीप्सायां तु सत्यां समस्तस्य विषयजातस्य प्रतिषेधात्, अविषयः

प्रत्यगात्मा ब्रह्म - इति जिज्ञासा निवर्तते । तस्मात्, प्रपञ्चमेव  
 ब्रह्मणि कल्पितं प्रतिषेधति, परिशिनष्टि ब्रह्म - इति निर्णयः॥  
 सू. भा. ३-२-२२.

“Or rather, this ‘*Neti Neti*’ is (a repetition) to denote all-comprehensiveness; the meaning is: ‘Whatsoever may be conceived by the word ‘this’ (or thus), that is not (Brahman). For, should there be only a negation of a limited (number), the desire to know as to what else could it be if this is not Brahman, would naturally arise; but, if the repetition is intended to be exhaustive, all that pertains to the range of the *objective* will have been denied, and the conclusion would be that Brahman is the inmost Ātman who is no object at all; and so, there would be an end to all further enquiry. Therefore, the final conclusion is that (this text) denies only the universe which is superimposed and retains Brahman (intact).”

SBh. 3-2-22.

## 8. Negation is the Only Available Method of Teaching Brahman

We have now reached the last way of revealing Ātman, adopted in the Upanishads. There is no further teaching of the Upanishads which is worth understanding and remembering in connection with Ātman. The Upanishads not only close their teaching by denying every specific feature in Ātman, but they insist upon declaring that *this* is the only *exclusive* way of teaching Ātman. In his precious commentary on the Sūtra under consideration, S’āṅkara makes the following thought-arresting remarks. His interpretation of the Sūtra

and S'ruti is based upon a special syntactical relation of the words in the text:

यदा पुनरेवमक्षराणि योज्यन्ते 'न ह्येतस्मादिति नेति नेति'। न हि प्रपञ्चप्रतिषेधरूपात्, आदेशनात् अन्यत् परमादेशनं ब्रह्मणो-ऽस्ति - इति, तदा 'ततो ब्रवीति च भूयः' इत्येतत् नामधेयविषयं योजयितव्यम्; - अथ नामधेयम् 'सत्यस्य सत्यमिति प्राणा वै सत्यं तेषामेष सत्यम्' (बृ. २-३-६) - इति हि ब्रवीतीति। तच्च ब्रह्मावसाने प्रतिषेधे समञ्जसं भवति। अभावावसाने तु प्रतिषेधे किं सत्यस्य सत्यम् इत्युच्येत? तस्मात् ब्रह्मावसानोऽयं प्रतिषेधो नाभावावसान इत्यध्यवस्थामः॥  
सू. भा. ३-२-२२.

"When, however, the words of the text are construed as follows:- 'न ह्येतस्मादिति नेति नेति' 'For, there is no other more appropriate teaching of Brahman than the negation of the universe'; then, the portion of the Sūtra 'ततो ब्रवीति च भूयः' (the S'ruti says something more again) should be applied to (Its) name.' 'Now, Its name; (It is) the Real of the real', so says the S'ruti, 'The Prāṇas are known to be (सत्य) this (Paramātmān) is their Real (such is the meaning of the subsequent S'ruti text).' Now, this subsequent text would be intelligible only when the negative culminates in something positive as the substrate. If, on the other hand, the negation culminated in non-entity, what could it possibly be, that is described (in the subsequent text) as Real of the real? Hence we finally conclude that this negation ends with revealing Brahman, and not with (teaching) a non-entity."  
SBh. 3-2-22.



## VII

### PRE-S'ANKARA VEDĀNTIC SCHOOLS

#### 1. Introduction

A close scrutiny of S'āṅkara's Sūtra-Bhāṣya would disclose that S'āṅkara's was only one of the many Vedāntic traditions of interpretation of the Upanishads current in ancient times. In the face of this fact, it is passing strange that scholars have tried to glean views of Ancient Vedāntā from other quarters and rest content with drawing conclusions on the basis of very flimsy grounds. Thus, misled perhaps by observations and criticisms of adverse Bhāṣyakāras like Bhāskara and Rāmānuja, some thinkers have surmised that S'āṅkara and his grand-preceptor, Gaudapāda, have been greatly influenced by Mahāyānic Buddhism. Struck by apparent similarities between Gaudapāda's Kārikas and Mahāyāna books – as regards the use of technical words, almost verbatim quotations or adaptation from well-known Buddhistic works and even certain doctrines – they have jumped to the conclusion that Gaudapāda is largely indebted to Buddhism. Some historians of the

development of Vedāntic thought have even gone to the length of conjecturing that Gaudapāda was perhaps himself a crypto-Buddhist. As I have tried to examine these views and expose the fallacies underlying this line of reasoning elsewhere,\* I refrain from entering into a detailed discussion about the subject, especially because it is not directly germane to our present enquiry into the nature of ancient schools of Vedāntic interpretation.

We shall also waive the consideration of the popular belief that S'āṅkara was the founder of the Advaita (*Advaitaprathisthāpanācārya*) for obvious reasons. Apart from the references and quotations from works of this tradition, *Gaudapāda Kārikas* on the *Māṇḍūkya*, still fortunately extant, will also be sufficient to explode the plausibility of this hazardous claim. As for the theory that a revolution in Vedānta tradition has been ushered in by S'āṅkara and Gaudapāda, their references to ancient Vedāntins of the tradition, such as Dravidāchārya, Brahmanandin and others in the Upanishad-Bhāshyas and in the Sūtra-Bhāshya itself, will quite suffice to shelve it. I shall, therefore, rest content with a few quotations which are sure to serve as clinchers in this case:-

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\* English Introduction to the *Māṇḍūkya-Rahasya-Vīrti* in Sanskrit, published by the Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya.

(1) यैरिमे गुरुभिः पूर्वं पदवाक्यप्रमाणतः ।

व्याख्याताः सर्ववेदान्तास्तान्नित्यं प्रणतोऽस्म्यहम् ॥ तै. भा.

Here S'āṅkara pays his obeisance to *ancient teachers* who have explained all the Upanishads according to acceptable etymology, syntax and valid means of right knowledge.

(2) S'āṅkara's quotations on two different occasions in his Sūtra- Bhāshya, where he refers to Gaudapāda as one well-conversant with tradition:

(a) तथा च संप्रदायविदो वदन्ति ॥ सू. भा. १-४-१४.

“So say they that are conversant with the tradition.”

SBh. 1-4-14.

‘मृल्लोहविस्फलिङ्गाद्यैः’ etc. (G.K. 3-15) which is taken as a voucher for the traditional interpretation of creation.

(b) अत्रोक्तम्, वेदान्तार्थसंप्रदायविद्भिराचार्यैः ‘अनादिमायया सुप्तः ....॥’ (गौ. का. १-१६)'' सू. भा. २-१-९.

“Here it has been said by those who know the traditional interpretation of the Vedāntas: ‘The Jīva who has been dreaming Mayically .....’ (G.K. 1-16).”

SBh. 2-1-9.

This is adduced in support of the traditional interpretation of texts treating of the three states of consciousness.

(3) The three S'lōkas at the end of the Bhāshya on the fourth Sūtra, whose authorship has not yet been

definitely traced, are introduced with 'अपि चाऽऽहुः' 'Moreover, they say'. These S'lōkas are quoted in support of the genuine tradition which teaches (a) that there remains nothing to-be done after one has realized one's identity with Pure Being or Brahman; (b) that knowership (*Prāmatṛtva*) is real only until Ātman is Intuited as the seeker's own Self and (c) that the empirical *Pramāṇas* or valid means of right knowledge are regarded as such only till the true nature of Ātman has been ascertained, and their nature as means of knowledge is sublated, just in the same way as one's notion of the body as one's self continues to be real only until the Self distinct from it has been known. These three doctrines belong to the genuine tradition of S'āṅkara, as has been argued by him at length in his Sūtra-Bhāṣya (1-1-4).

## 2. Pre-S'āṅkara Advaitins

First of all, it would be profitable to remember that pre-S'āṅkara Vedāntins were almost all Advaitins in the sense that in the state of final release the individual self invariably became one with Brahman.

There were some differences of opinion regarding the *Sādhana* (discipline to be undergone by the seeker) as well as the relation of the phenomenal world to Brahman. A number of such Vedāntic schools have been referred to and their peculiar methods of

interpretation have been critically examined by Sures'wara in his *Vārtika* on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Bhāshya*. I shall restrict myself, however, to S'āṅkara's *Sūtra-Bhāshya*, wherein he has examined the most important shades of such Advaitic schools and shows how his own tradition is different from them, pointing to the glaring faults of the opponent in each case.

It is interesting to note that Vedāntic schools, known as Dvaita and Vishistādvaita now-a-days, are nowhere found to be referred to whether by S'āṅkara or Gaudapāda or even in treatises devoted to the treatment of Sāṅkhya, Vais'eshika or other systems contemporaneous with Advaita philosophers.

### **3. The School Postulating Diversity Within Brahman**

The first school that deserves our attention is the *Anekātmaka Brahma-vāda* (The school which admits of variety within Brahman). This school has gained its prominence in the eyes of modern scholars mostly because it has been associated with the name of *Bhartr-Prapanca*, whose opinions have been criticized almost at every step by the Bhāshyakāra on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and by Sures'wara in his *Vārtika* on that *Bhāshya* in the course of expounding the traditional

interpretation. As I have discussed this side of the question elsewhere\* at length, I shall merely quote Bhartr-Prapanca's views on Brahman and the universe as it is found in the Sūtra-Bhāshya:-

(१) नन्वनेकात्मकं ब्रह्म । यथा वृक्षोऽनेकशाखः, एवमनेकशक्तिप्रवृत्तियुक्तं ब्रह्म । अतः एकत्वं नानात्वं चोभयमपि सत्यमेव । यथा वृक्ष इत्येकत्वं शाखा इति नानात्वम्; यथा च समुद्रात्मना एकत्वम्, फेनतरङ्गाद्यात्मना नानात्वम्; यथा च मृदात्मना एकत्वम्, घटशरावाद्यात्मना नानात्वम् । तत्रैकत्वांशेन ज्ञानान्मोक्षव्यवहारः सेत्स्यति । नानात्वांशेन तु कर्मकाण्डाश्रयौ लौकिकवैदिकव्यवहारौ सेत्स्यत इति । एवं च मृदादिदृष्टान्ता अनुरूपा भविष्यन्तीति ॥ सू. भा. २-१-१४.

"But Brahman is of a manifold nature. Just as a tree has many branches, so Brahman has many potencies and functions. Therefore, both unity and diversity are indisputably real. Just as a tree is one (as a tree), but admits of diversity as branches; just as there is unity (in the sea) in its aspects as a sea, but yet there is diversity in its aspect as foam, waves, etc., and just as clay is one as clay, but has diversity as pots, plates etc. (so Brahman too may be one and yet manifold).

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\*See 'How to Recognize the Method of Vedānta' in English and वेदान्त-प्रक्रिया-प्रत्याभज्ञा in Sanskrit, both published by the Kāryālaya.

This being so, the convention of release would be possible from the standpoint of unity, and on the basis of diversity, all activity whether secular or Vedic, as enjoined in the Karma-portion of the Veda, would (also) be feasible. And from this thought-position, (Vedic) illustrations, like the clay etc., would (also) be appropriate." SBh. 2-1-14.

This school, also called द्वैताद्वैतवाद, नानारसब्रह्मवाद as opposed to एकरसात्मवाद or अद्वैतवाद (the doctrine of uniformly one Ātman, or the non-dual Brahman) propounded in S'āṅkara's tradition, has been later adapted by Āchāryas like Bhāskara, Rāmānuja, Chaitanya and others to suit their own systems. The student of S'āṅkara's Advaita would, therefore, do well to study the extensive review of Bhartṛ-Prapanca in the Sūtra-Bhāshya. The most important items in the refutation are: (1) The emphasis laid by the S'ruti on the exclusive reality of the cause; (2) the sublation of all diversity or differences and distinctions in Ātman, when one's *intrinsic nature* as identical with that of Brahman is realized; (3) the fact that *Mōksha* or final Release is not restricted to a particular state, since 'That thou art' only reveals the *identity* which is always there; (4) The S'ruti disparaging one who adheres to the notion of diversity; and finally (5) The inability of the school to justify the universally accepted Vedāntic doctrine of Release by Knowledge, since, according to it, there is

no Avidyā or mis-conception at all which has to be sublated by right Knowledge.

All these charges, it is needless to say, would apply *pari passu* to all modern dualistic systems that are more or less aligned to the doctrine of real diversity.

#### 4. The School Which Holds that Brahman is Subservient to an Injunction of Meditation

We may leave out of account schools that insisted upon the entire Veda as only enjoining *Karma* (Rites and rituals) or *Upāsanas* (meditations); for, they *countermmand* the existence of an entity called Brahman altogether. So too the school that taught that a seeker for Final Release need only perform obligatory Karmas and avoid others which necessarily lead to *Samsāra*; for, even this school rejected the Knowledge of *Brahmātman* as a *sine qua non* for Release. Its only peculiarity lay in postulating one's permanent stay in one's Self *स्वरूपावस्थानम्* as the final goal of life.

The one school next in importance, insofar as it admitted the identity of the individual self with Brahman, is that of the *प्रतिपत्तिविशेषवादिनः* – those that said that Brahman was subservient to Vedāntic meditation:

(२) 'आत्मा वा अरौ द्रष्टव्यः' (बृ. २-४-५), 'य आत्मापहतपाप्मा .... सोऽन्वेष्टव्यः स विजिज्ञासितव्यः' (छां. ८-७-१), 'आत्मेत्येवोपासीत' (बृ. १-४-७), 'आत्मानमेव



लोकमुपासीत' (बृ. १-४-१५), 'ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति' (मुं. ३-२-९) - इत्यादिविधानेषु सत्सु 'कोऽसावात्मा?', 'किं तद् ब्रह्म? - इत्याकाङ्क्षायां तत्स्वरूपसमर्पणेन सर्वे वेदान्ता उपयुक्ताः; 'नित्यः सर्वज्ञः', 'सर्वगतो', 'नित्यतृप्तो', 'नित्यशुद्धबुद्धमुक्तस्वभावः, विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्म' - इत्येवमादयः। तदुपासनाच्च शास्त्रदृष्टोऽदृष्टो मोक्षः फलं भविष्यतीति । कर्तव्यविध्यननुप्रवेशे वस्तुमात्रकथने हानोपादानासंभवात् 'सप्तद्वीपा वसुमती', 'राजाऽसौ गच्छति' - इत्यादिवाक्यवद् वेदान्तवाक्यानामानर्थक्यमेव स्यात् ॥

सू. भा. १-१-४.

"While there are injunctions for meditation like the following: 'The Self alone is to be seen' (Br. 2-4-5); 'That Ātman who is free from sin .... He is to be sought after, He alone is to be known' (Ch. 8-7-1); 'One should meditate upon Him as Ātman alone' (Br. 1-4-7); 'One should meditate upon the world of Ātman alone' (Br. 1-4-15); 'Should one meditate upon Brahman, one becomes that very Brahman' (Mu. 3-2-9) - (in the case of such injunctions) there arise the question: 'Who is this Ātman?', 'What is that Brahman?' and in order to present the nature of that (Ātman or Brahman) all *Vedāntas* are employed, such as 'The Eternal', 'Omniscient', 'All-pervading', 'Ever-content', 'Of the nature of being ever Pure, Conscious and Free', 'Consciousness and Bliss is Brahman'. And, as a consequence of the meditation on that (Ātman or Brahman) the fruit of meditation to be enjoyed in the other world accrue as revealed in the S'āstra." SBh. 1-1-4.

It is evident that this school insists upon meditation as the *one teaching* of the Upanishads. No independent

entity in itself can be the subject-matter of Vedic teaching, as it would serve no purpose:-

कर्तव्यविध्यननुप्रवेशे वस्तुमात्रकथने हानोपादानासंभवात्  
'सप्तद्वीपा वसुमती', 'राजासौ गच्छति' - इत्यादिवाक्यवत्  
वेदान्तवाक्यानामानर्थक्यमेव स्यात् ॥

सू. भा. १-१-४.

“If it were only a statement about a thing, which formed no part of an injunction or duty, it would be altogether ineffective, inasmuch as there would be nothing to be taken up or rejected by the seeker of truth, very much like statements such as ‘The earth consists of seven islands’, ‘There goes the King’.”  
SBh. 1-1-4.

It is one of the maxims of the exegetics of the Veda that all Vedic texts are invariably injunctions or prohibitions, mere assertions or denials of any fact being always deemed to be subservient to these incentives, since otherwise these would serve no purpose. Hence, this school maintained that mere *S'ravaṇa* or study and interpretations of Vedāntic texts would be of no avail, and that is why after enjoining *S'ravaṇa* or study, the *S'ruti* enjoins both *Manana* and *Nididhyāsana* (reflection and meditation). So, it concluded that *S'āstra* is a means of right knowledge of Brahman only insofar as the latter is the object of an *injunction* of meditation.

*S'aṅkara's* tradition of interpretation is, of course, quite in opposition to this view; for, it is a sustained

effort to show that all Upanishadic texts purport to reveal the *eternal freedom* of beings who are ever bodiless, though owing to *Mithyājñāna*, they have been imagining that they possess a body (सशरीरत्वस्य मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तत्वात्). The moment that enlightenment dawns, however, they come to *realize* that they have been *always* bodiless. There is, therefore, no question of 'attaining' Release after death, according to this tradition of S'aṅkara.

### **5. The School that Maintained that the Meditator goes Direct to the Higher Brahman after Death**

We have no means of knowing whether or not, according to this commentator (*Vṛittikāra*), the seeker reached the Higher Brahman directly after his travel by the Northern Path as depicted in the Upanishads. We do come across, however, a school of Vedāntins who recognized both the *Kārya-Brahman* (the effect or the Lower Brahman) and the Higher-Brahman and yet held that the meditator of Brahman goes directly to the Higher Brahman. There is nothing in our way of supposing that like the *Dhyāna Niyōga Vādins* (teachers who maintained that the seeker is urged to meditate upon Brahman), they also supposed that the seeker has to meditate upon Brahman and should not rest content with merely *knowing* Brahman.

After discussing the various stations at which the meditator stays for a time and is taken by the various guides to the immediately next station in succession, Bādarāyaṇa takes up for investigation the subject as to whether the last guide takes the meditator to the Higher Brahman or to the Lower Brahman. There are two different views set forth here: (1) Bādari, deciding in favour of the Lower Brahman as the goal, since it is only in the case of an empirical entity alone that one could conceive of attainment after a journey. But Jaimini thinks that it is the Higher Brahman, because the word 'Brahman' could be taken in its primary sense with regard to Higher Brahman alone.

S'āṅkara here refers to some Vedāntins who prefer to side with Jaimini, taking shelter under the exegetical maxim that it is reasonable to treat the former argument to represent the *prima facie* alone.

(३) केचित्पुनः- पूर्वाणि 'पूर्वपक्षसूत्राणि भवन्ति . उत्तराणि सिद्धान्तसूत्राणि - इत्येतां व्यवस्थामनुसूच्यमानाः परविषया एव गतिश्रुतीः प्रतिष्ठापयन्ति ॥ सू. भा. ४-३-१४.

"Some, however, would follow the general practice of restricting the earlier set of Sūtras to the *prima facie* view and the subsequent set to the correct view, and decide that the S'rutis teaching motion relate to the Higher (Brahman) Itself." SBh. 4-3-14.

It is clear that ignoring S'rutis that deny all specific features in Brahman, as well as those that emphatically teach the identity of the individual self and Brahman, no less than texts which teach immediate Release as pointed out by S'āṅkara in this connection, these teachers would insist upon meditation alone as the sole Brahma-vidyā taught in the Upanishads, and they would not hesitate to make both Jīva and Brahman limited in space for the sake of justifying the doctrine of the *Deva-yāna* or the path of gods for souls that have to attain final Release. It is to meet all such arguments that S'āṅkara has clarified his position that Brahman has not got to be reached after going from one place to another.

न चाप्यत्वेनापि कार्यपिक्षा, स्वात्मस्वरूपत्वे सत्यनाप्यत्वात्।  
स्वरूपव्यतिरिक्तत्वेऽपि ब्रह्मणो नाप्यत्वम्, सर्वगतत्वेन नित्याप्त-  
स्वरूपत्वात् सर्वेण ब्रह्मणः आकाशस्येव ॥

सू. भा. १-१-४.

“Nor does Release depend upon some duty to be performed for the reason that it has to be reached; for, being identical with one's own Self, it has not got to be reached at all. Even in the case of Brahman being (supposed to be) distinct from one's own Self, It has not got to be reached, for Brahman, being all-pervasive, has been already reached by every one, just as (in the empirical sense the all-pervasive) ether has been reached by everyone.” SBh. 1-1-4.

[The above extract is from the portion of the Bhāshya which argues that Release, as identical with Mōksha, does

not depend on the contingency of some duty to be performed, since the only effects of action relate to something that has got to be (1) originated, (2) transformed, (3) reached, or (4) purified and none of these four alternatives is applicable to Brahman.]

## 6. Schools that Objected to the Meditation of Īs'vara as Identical with Jīva

There were two schools which objected to the meditation on Īs'vara as identical with Jīva. The first school objected to this meditation on the ground that the properties of Īs'vara (or God) are the opposites of those of the individual self.

न ह्यपहतपाप्मत्वादिगुणो विपरीतगुणत्वेन शक्यते ग्रहीतुम्,  
विपरीतगुणो वाऽपहतपाप्मत्वादिगुणत्वेन । अपहतपाप्म-  
त्वादिगुणश्च परमेश्वरः, तद्विपरीतगुणस्तु शारीरः । ईश्वरस्य च  
संसार्यात्मत्वे ईश्वराभावप्रसङ्गः, ततः शास्त्रानर्थक्यम् ।  
संसारिणोऽपि ईश्वरात्मत्वे अधिकार्यभावात् शास्त्रानर्थक्यमेव ॥  
सू. भा. ४-१-३.

“One who is free from all sin and is endowed with such other qualities cannot possibly be conceived to be possessed of properties which are quite the reverse of these properties. The Supreme Lord has properties like sinlessness, whereas the embodied soul has properties which are the reverse of these. Again if Īs'vara be identical with the transmigratory soul, the repugnant conclusion would follow that there is no Īs'vara at all; and if the transmigratory soul be of the nature of Īs'vara, there will be no one for

whom the S'āstra is intended, and consequently the S'āstra would lose its vocation." SBh. 4-1-3.

It is by no means impossible that the propounders of this doctrine were, nevertheless, Advaitins in the sense that they held that even an individual self, quite different from Brahman, could become Brahman by dint of meditation after giving up the present body. There is, positively, such a school taken up for criticism in Gaudapāda's Kārikas (G.K. 3-1). The *prima facie* view taken up here also-reluctantly grants the meditation upon Īs'vara as one's own self:

अन्यत्वेऽपि तादात्म्यदर्शनं शास्त्रात् कर्तव्यं प्रतिमादिष्विव  
विष्ण्वादिदर्शनम् इति चेत् - काममेवं भवतु; न तु संसारिणो  
मुख्य आत्मा ईश्वरः - इत्येतन्नः प्रापयितव्यम् ॥

सू. भा. ४-१-३.

"If it be urged that even while there is difference, one should meditate on the identity on the strength of S'āstra, just as one has to meditate upon images etc. as Vishnu etc. (as laid down in the S'āstras), we say be it so if you please; but you must not press us to admit that Īs'vara is actually the Self of the transmigratory self." SBh. 4-1-3,

S'ānkarā here adduces texts that teach the reciprocal identity of Īs'vara and the Jīva to bring it home to the opponent that the Upanishads do teach that Īs'vara is the actual Self of the individual soul, and so, it is not merely meditation of identity as prescribed

in the S'āstras but also the Knowledge of *actual identity* that is meant here. Elsewhere (V.S. 3-3-37) texts of this type are specifically taken up for discussion. There, the question is whether the meditation is to be confined to only one form, to wit, thinking upon Jīva as Īs'vara or both the forms of thinking upon Īs'vara as well as upon Jīva, taking them to be mutually identical. The *prima facie* view runs as follows:-

न ह्यत्र आत्मन ईश्वरैकत्वं मुक्त्वा अन्यत् किञ्चित्  
चिन्तयितव्यमस्ति । यदि चैवं चिन्तयितव्यो विशेषः परिकल्प्येत  
'संसारिणश्चेश्वरात्मत्वम्, ईश्वरस्य संसार्यात्मत्वम्' इति । तत्र  
संसारिणस्तावदीश्वरात्मत्वे उत्कर्षो भवेत्, ईश्वरस्य तु संसार्यात्मत्वे  
निकर्षः कृतः स्यात् । तस्मात्, एकरूप्यमेव मतेः ।  
व्यतिहारान्नायस्तु एकत्वदृढीकारार्थं इति ॥ सू. भा. ३-३-३७.

The opponent to the double form of meditation says:

“There is nothing to be meditated upon except that upon the identity of the individual self with Īs'vara. If on the other hand, this particular form of meditation should be conceived as that on the identity of the transmigratory self with Īs'vara and also on Īs'vara's identity with transmigratory self, then the transmigratory self, identified with Īs'vara would be up-graded, while Īs'vara identified with the transmigratory self, would be degraded thereby. Therefore, the meditation should be of one form only. As for the reciprocity taught, it must be taken to be merely meant for emphasizing the Unity.” SBh. 3-3-37.



Evidently, the followers of this school are loath to allow *absolute identity*, even in respect of meditation. There might be union of Jīva with Īs'vara after the meditator has shuffled off his mortal coil here, but to think of the *identity* of Īs'vara with the puny Jīva is monstrous, according to this tradition of Advaitins. S'aṅkara, however, insists that *absolute identity* alone is confirmed by this meditation on reciprocity, there being actually no transmigratory Jīva apart from Brahman.

### 7. Schools Which Demanded Mental Repetition of Knowledge Itself

Besides Advaitins that refused to accept any kind of bare knowledge of Ātman as the means of final Release, there were others who, while admitting the possibility of Knowledge alone being the sufficient means of the final goal, rejected the idea that merely *understanding* the meaning of texts like *Tat Twam Asi* (That thou art) would be quite sufficient for the purpose. These schools contended that the repetition of that knowledge is quite necessary for *ripe* Knowledge.

(१) सकृच्छ्रुतौ च ब्रह्मात्मत्वप्रतीत्यनुपपत्तेरावृत्यभ्युपगमः ॥

सू. भा. ४-१-२.

“We hold that repetition is necessary, inasmuch as a single listening (studying and understanding the meaning of the text teaching identity) cannot possibly produce the knowledge of the identity of Brahman and Ātman.”

SBh. 4-1-2.

[This view is rejected on the ground, that if the first act of *S'ravana* cannot produce the final knowledge, there is no hope that a repetition of the same can produce it.]

A second variety of this tradition of the doctrine of *Prasaṅkhyāna* (repetition of knowledge) suggested an improvement on the first postulate:

(२) न केवलं वाक्यं कञ्चिदर्थं साक्षात्कर्तुं शक्नोति, अतो युक्त्यपेक्षं वाक्यमनुभावयिष्यति ब्रह्मात्मत्वम् ॥ सू. भा. ४-१-२.

“A bare text is not able to produce the realization of anything. So the text with the assistance of reasoning (*Manana*), might well produce the Realization.” SBh. 4-1-2.

[This view also is rejected on similar grounds on which the first was rejected. Reason, once applied, should be quite sufficient to bring about Realization. If it cannot, what hope is there that a repetition of the knowledge of the meaning of the text with reasoning could produce the desired result?]

Now, the third variety of this tradition brings forward another *alternative* reasoning in support of this doctrine of mental repetition of knowledge:

(३) युक्त्या वाक्येन च सामान्यविषयमेव विज्ञानं क्रियते, न विशेषविषयम् । यथा 'अस्ति मे हृदये शूलम्' इत्यतो वाक्यात्, गात्रकम्पादिलिङ्गञ्च शूलसद्भावसामान्यमेव परः प्रतिपद्यते, न विशेषमनुभवति यथा स एव शूली । विशेषानुभवश्च अविद्याया निवर्तकः, ततस्तदर्थं आवृत्तिः ॥ सू. भा. ४-१-२.

“Reason and the text (together) can only give a general idea of a thing, but not its specific nature. For

instance, from a statement like 'I am suffering from heart-ache' and (inference from) signs like contortion of the body, another person (listening to what is said) can only know the general fact of the existence of aching, but cannot have that particular feeling like that suffering man himself. It is this *direct intuition* alone that can remove ignorance, and therefore to gain that, repetition is necessary."

SBh. 4-1-2.

Needless to say that all these different ways of revolving knowledge in the mind could scarcely produce *right Knowledge*. If the knowledge, accruing on the first understanding of the meaning of the text, is incapable of producing that knowledge, the so-called *Prasāṅkhyāna*, repetition of knowledge gained in the first instance, is only a subterfuge devised for evading the plain truth that direct Knowledge of Ātman attained through the Vedāntic teaching can and does dispel *all ignorance* once for all.

## **8. The School Which Maintained that All S'rutis Teach the Dissolution of Multiplicity**

The type of Advaita, referred to in the immediately preceding section, appears to be surviving to this day in certain quarters of modern Advaitins, who insist that *Nididhyāsana* or meditation on what has been acquired through *S'ravana* and *Manana* (understanding the meaning of the text and reflection thereupon with the aid of reasoning) is absolutely necessary to get what is

called *Sākshātkāra* or direct immediate insight of Ātman as He is. The tradition that we shall now take up for consideration seems to be the prototype of another teaching often paraded by some modern Vedāntins under the name of what they call *Layacintana* (thinking on dissolution of duality). That ancient school was a branch of *Niyōgavādins* (those who suppose all the Veda enjoins on the seekers some *religious duty*) who contended that even the S'rutis that ascribe certain forms to Brahman are only meant to lead the seeker to the Knowledge of Brahman without any form, through the dissolution of all differences, and that they have no distinct purport of their own. (आकारवादिन्योऽपि श्रुतयः प्रपञ्चप्रविलस्यमुखेनानाकारप्रतिपत्त्यर्था एव न पृथगर्थाः)

To the question as to how we are to decide that both these sets of texts have a single purport, they replied:-

‘एकनियोगप्रतीतेः प्रयाजदर्शपूर्णमासवाक्यवत्’

सू.भा. ३-२-२१.

“(This is so), because we see the unity of the same injunction (about dissolution of the differences in both the sets), as is the case with regard to the injunction of *Dars'a* (the principal) and the *Prayāja* (subservient) sacrifices.”

SBh. 3-2-21.

Their argument was as follows :-

द्वैतप्रपञ्चविलयो नियोगविषयो भविष्यति । अप्रविलापिते हि  
द्वैतप्रपञ्चे ब्रह्मतत्त्वावबोधो न भवति । अतो

ब्रह्मतत्त्वावबोधप्रत्यनीकभूतो द्वैतप्रपञ्चः प्रविलाप्यः । यथा स्वर्गकामस्य यागोऽनुष्ठातव्य उपदिश्यते, एवम् अपवर्गकामस्य प्रपञ्चप्रविलयः; यथा च तमसि व्यवस्थितं घटादितत्त्वम् अवबुभुत्समानेन तत्प्रत्यनीकभूतं तमः प्रविलाप्यते, एवं ब्रह्मतत्त्वमवबुभुत्समानेन तत्प्रत्यनीकभूतः प्रपञ्चः प्रविलापयितव्यः। ब्रह्मस्वभावो हि प्रपञ्चो, न प्रपञ्चस्वभावं ब्रह्म; तेन नामरूपप्रपञ्चप्रविलापनेन ब्रह्मतत्त्वावबोधो भवति ॥

सू. भा. ३-२-२१.

“The injunction may well have for its object the dissolution of the manifold universe of duality. Awareness of Brahman cannot be there so long as the universe of duality is not dissolved. Therefore, the universe of duality which stands in the way of the awareness of Brahman has got to be dissolved. Just as for one who is desirous of heaven the performance of a sacrifice is taught, so also for one who is desirous of freedom the dissolution of the dual universe is taught (as something to be performed); or again, just as by one who is seeking to know the reality of anything like a pot, the doubt which is in the way of that knowledge has got to be removed, so also by one who is seeking to know Brahman, the universe which stands in the way of that knowledge has got to be dissolved. For, the universe is essentially of the nature of Brahman, but Brahman is not essentially of the nature of the universe. So the Knowledge of Brahman can be achieved by the dissolution of the universe of names and forms.” SBh. 3-2-21.

It can be readily seen that this tradition of interpretation is very near that of S'āṅkara's insofar as it holds that Knowledge of Brahman can bring about

final Release here and now, except for one limitation under which it is suffering; for, instead of saying that real Knowledge of Brahman brought about by *revelation* of the S'ruti disperses ignorance and thereby sublates all apparent duality, it leans towards the Mīmāṃsīc ways of thinking that all plurality has to be *obliterated* by performing something as enjoined by the S'ruti in order to *get rid* of plurality, which is *essentially* one with Brahman itself.

There is another teaching of this school which hurls it far away from the shores of S'āṅkara's tradition:-

नन्वावेदिते ब्रह्मणि तद्विज्ञानविषयः प्रपञ्चप्रविलयविषयो वा  
नियोगः स्यात् । सू. भा. ३-२-२१.

"After Brahman has been taught, the injunction may have for its object either its Knowledge or the universe to be dissolved." SBh. 3-2-21.

Of course, this drives the follower of this line of thought to suppose that the revelation of the text cannot itself yield *direct Knowledge*, and even to the *absurd* position that plurality can *still live* even after Knowledge has dawned.

So much for the object of the injunction. As for the subject for whom the dissolution of the universe has to be enjoined, S'āṅkara brings forward the convincing reason against the opponent that (1) if the Jīva is

comprehended by the universe itself, the dissolution of the universe would *swallow* up Jīva also and as a consequence leave none behind to enjoy final Release, and (2) if, on the other hand, Jīva is Brahman Itself, there would be no one for whom the act is enjoined! So the only possible conclusion is that all plurality is the *figment* of Avidyā, and when it is dissolved by the revelation of the true nature of Jīva as secondless Brahman, one is convinced that there is no need whatever for any injunction; in any case, either for the achievement of knowledge or for the Brahman to be known, which can neither be impelled to do something, nor conceived to be an object of injunction.

### **9. Advaitins that Belonged to S'āṅkara's Tradition Itself, but Slightly Differed from Him in Certain Respects**

We have now to enumerate certain Vṛttikārās who actually belonged to S'āṅkara's genuine tradition itself, but yet were tempted to make slight departures from the strictly orthodox method of interpreting the Upanishads.

First of all, there is the *Vṛttikāra* on *Ānandamaya-Adhikaraṇa*, who interpreted all the Sūtras in favour of the conclusion that Ānandamaya is Brahman Itself. That he actually belonged to the genuine tradition can be

made out by the fact that he explains Ātmalābha (gaining one's own Self) on the basis of the difference between the Jīva and Īs'vara as only due to *Avidyā* (परमेश्वरस्त्वविद्याकल्पितात् शारीरात् कर्तुर्भोक्तुर्विज्ञानात्माख्यादन्यः। SBh. 1-1-17). S'aṅkara closely follows his interpretation which seems to be quite appropriate to the phraseology of the S'ūtras themselves, but at the end of the topic he pronounces his verdict in favour of the conclusion that *Ānandamaya* is only one of the five *Kōshas* (or sheaths) devised to reveal the real Ātman. Brahman (without specific features), which is the basis of all the five *Kōshas*, is really what is taught by the Taittirīya S'ruti. His criticism of the Vṛttikāra commences from 'इदं त्वहं वक्तव्यम्' ('But this has to be explained') – SBh. 1-1-19, and extends till the very end of the Bhāshya.

*Secondly*, there was another school that was in perfect agreement with S'aṅkara's tradition which has always maintained that Brahman is absolutely free from all specific features, but yet needlessly split one topic for discussions (Sūtras 3-2-11 upto 3-2-21) into two, the first subdivision being devoted to determine whether Brahman is really free from all features and the second to ascertain whether Brahman is exclusively Pure Being or Pure Consciousness or is of both these natures in one. (किं सत्त्वक्षणं ब्रह्म, उत बोध्यलक्षणम्, उत उपयलक्षणमिति ॥)



S'āṅkara says that this discussion is only hair-splitting and serves no purpose at all, since this school also holds that Brahman is altogether free from all specific features.

We may leave out of consideration other schools of this ilk, such as the one which proposed 'प्राणस्य प्राणम्...' (Br. 4-4-28) as the text intended by Sūtrakāra in Topic Number nine of Chapter one, and the disputants about the propriety of including the Mūṇḍaka text also ('द्वा सुपर्णा' ३-१-१) as belonging to the type of texts discussed in the second section of the first Chapter. Suffice it to note that there are strewn many such references to traditional schools of Advaita in the Sūtra- Bhāṣhya.

## 10. Conclusion

It is hoped that the reader who has gone through the foregoing paragraphs is convinced that S'āṅkara is not the *originator*, but only the *elaborator* of a type of interpretation of, and systemiser of, the Advaitic thought contained in the Upanishads. That system belonged to a hoary tradition and existed side by side with many other Advaitisms which had been brought out of the Upanishadic teachings. That renowned teacher not only propagated the *genuine* Advaita according to his tradition, but also exhibited the *technique* of the principles of correct interpretation to which the other schools were unable to conform.

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## RETROSPECT

It would be profitable to take stock of what has been set forth in the previous Chapters before we try to assess the value of the system as presented by Bādarāyaṇa in his *S'ārīraka Mīmāṃsa* according to S'āṅkara.

1. Vedānta is not a purely *rational system* based on forms of thought. Nor does it try to present any kind of knowledge derived from syllogistic reasoning. This system cannot be equated with the *Ajātivāda* (Doctrine of no-birth or no-essence of things) of the Buddhist (who based his argument mainly on the dialectic of the four alternatives), or compared with any one of the speculative systems of the West. Nor is it like the ancient Sāṅkhya, which recognized the S'ruti as a means of knowledge, only in the light of *Āptavākya* or testimony of adepts. Neither does Vedānta rely on any individual intuition, as the Pātanjalas, or the *Yōgāchāra Buddhists* do.

It goes without saying that the *Vijnāna* of Ātman has no point of comparison with the knowledge of the external world as acquired through experimental science whose subject-matter is exclusively confined to the objective universe.

Again the Knowledge of Reality to be attained by the Revelation of the Upanishads is quite unlike that of

Vedic duties and prohibitions taught by the *Karma-Kānda* (portion of the Vedas confined to teach the nature of religious rites). The Unity of Brahmatman, taught in the Upanishads, can be Intuited here and now by a qualified aspirant, whereas the effect of the knowledge of Karmas and their performance is promised in the Vedas to result in the enjoyment only after death. Much less is this Vijnāna similar to the knowledge derived from the teachings of any prophet or an omniscient being or from the writings of inspired writers, as claimed by some religions.

While Vedānta, according to S'āṅkara, does not deny the value of *verified truths* taught by the other systems of thought at the level of practical life, it will be found to *assimilate* and *transcend* them all when it leads the qualified seeker to the ultimate Intuition of his *eternal oneness* with the Absolute Brahmātman, the only Reality without a second.

2. Practical life is confined to the sphere of duality. It necessarily involves the distinctions of (1) the knower, knowledge and the known. (2) of the speaker, speech and what is spoken of; to be more precise, of one who operates the organs of sense, the senses and their objects; (3) of the doer, deed and what is done; and (4) of the experiencer, experience and the experienced pleasure or pain. S'āṅkara uses the general term *Vyavahāra* to

denote this *totality* of practical life. This term *Vyavahāra* comprehends all activities guided by the Vedas also, including the Upanishads.

All this *Vyavahāra* is realized to be unreal when the *Unity* of Ātman is Realized. Ātman is said to be *really real* in the sense that He is *absolutely* changeless, and not in the sense of possessing causal efficiency, as it is the case with regard to things in practical life. And the Knowledge obtained through this final Intuition alone is considered to be *right* from the Transcendental standpoint. Even right knowledge of things, obtained by infallible means of knowledge, is stultified the moment one attains this *culminating Intuition* of the Unity of Ātman.

Ātman or Brahman, being the only Reality, needs no proof to convince the enquirer of His existence. The S'ruti says that it is in His Light that every one is guided in his daily activities. Even in His aspect as the Knower, He is the very *Prius* of the function of the *Pramāṇas* which are used for proving the existence of outward objects. That the individual self is spoken of as the knower and the operator of *Pramāṇas*, is itself the result of *Avidyā* or ignorance, which *presumes* that Ātman is really the owner of the body and the senses and the mind. This *Avidyā*, or nescience is really the innate bent of the human mind to superimpose the Real Self and

the unreal not-Self, on each other, and to transfer mistakenly their properties to each other.

Practical life, so-called, is not really something distinct from *Paramārtha* or Absolute Reality. It is Reality and nothing else, and even *Avidyā* or ignorance is not a real *something* to be actually removed by the Knowledge of the one Ātman. Intuition of the Unity of Ātman convinces the enquirer that ignorance, no less than the triple distinction of the knower, knowledge and the knowable, has been always absolutely identical with that Reality without a second.

3. Reality or Brahman is eternally Pure, Conscious and Free. It is really the genuine Self of each one of us, and being the *eternal* Witness of all the senses and the mind, It can never be objectified by the latter. The Vedānta S'āstra or the holy revelation in the Upanishads, therefore, does not actually teach this Brahmātman by objectifying It as such and such an entity. The S'āstra only *reveals* It by sublating the distinctions conjured up by *Avidyā*, so that the enquirer may come to Intuit Reality as his own Self which is ever-free.

The process of arriving at this Intuition may be described as an *inward journey* of the purified mind in accordance with the guidance of a genuine teacher, who has *realized* his oneness with Brahman. The seeker tries

to discard all pseudo-selves – the body, senses, mind, intellect, will and the ego as well – with which he has been identifying himself, till at last he takes his stand in his genuine Self which has been always free from the taint of all conditioning associates.

4. Maṇ possesses a *constant faculty* called Intuition which is distinct from and independent of the sensuous and *intellectual intuitions*. This is the faculty with which we have *direct insight* of states like deep sleep or swoon. The *insight* with which we come to know waking or dream as a whole is also Intuition. Our waking mind is enabled to know, remember – if remembrance be the right word for it at all – to recall, co-ordinate and judge these states. It is common knowledge that while none of our conditioning associates such as the senses or the mind can pass on to the dream state, they never make their appearance in states like deep sleep. Now, that Witnessing Consciousness, that Intuits and is not affected by any of these, is the Real Ātman, whom we ordinarily little suspect to be quite independent of all the three as they keep on appearing and disappearing, as it were.

If we remember that this Witnessing Consciousness, which is the *intrinsic nature* of our true Self, is distinct from our individual self usually called the 'me' in the waking state, then we shall no longer be troubled with the problem with which people are frequently

confronted when they ask: 'Why then do distinctions and differences re-appear again and again in the waking state even after they have totally disappeared in such states as sleep? The reply to this question is obvious: We forget that, in the first place, the states are not events that happen in a common series of time which endures throughout. We also forget that we are partial to the waking ego, which we fondly believe to maintain its *self-identity* and to experience and to remember all the happenings in these states. Actually, we superimpose the ego on the Witness and conversely the latter with its *nature* on the ego, wrongly supposed to be a constituent factor of the states themselves.

The critical student of Vedānta should always try to discriminate between his 'me' in waking and the Witness thereof which is the *only Reality* existing in and for Itself.

5. The truth of perception is generally tested by satisfying oneself about whether or not it possesses the causal efficiency expected and whether that perception is universal. But these tests fail us with regard to dream-phenomena; for, even while they satisfy both these tests as long as dream lasts, their *reality* is stultified as soon as we awake. The Intuition of Ātman, however, which involves no subject-object relation, is quite distinct from other intuitions; for, its sublatibility is

inconceivable inasmuch as It is identical with the One Ātman without a second. For the same reason, the question of Its being in conflict with any other valid means of right knowledge can never possibly arise.

The Upanishads do make use of reason to support what they teach, but this *Vedāntic reasoning* (called '*S'rutyānugrahīta Tarka*' by S'aṅkara) must be carefully distinguished from dry formal reasoning and the syllogistic reasoning habitually employed by Sāṅkhya and other systems. It is only reason based upon universal intuitions, such, for instance, as the reason based upon the non-difference of the effect from its material cause, or that based upon the variable non-Ātman and the *constant* Ātman when we examine the three states of consciousness *viz.* waking, dream and dreamless sleep. Any *independent reasoning* in consonance with such Upanishadic reasoning is also allowable; but formal inference or syllogistic reasoning employed by speculative systems is *strictly ruled out* here for the reason that there is *no finality* in this latter type of ratiocination ('तर्का प्रतिष्ठानात्' as Bādarāyaṇa puts it). The one principle uniformly observed in Vedāntic reasoning, it may be noted, is ascending step by step from one partial intuition to another till, at last, the investigator of Truth arrives at the *final Intuition* of the *really real* Brahmātman.



6. The Upanishads employ this peculiar type of reasoning for the purpose of a *graduated Revelation* of Brahman as the Self of all. The very first teaching is to warn the student against the supposition that Reality, devoid of all plurality, can be *known* through one of the external senses, however refined it might be. The highest Truth can be *known* only by means of suggestion of the S'ruti or an Āchārya by making use of one's own purified mind alone. By this *one instrument* the seeker can practise the *Adhyātma-Yōga* (the graded contemplation leading to the inmost Ātman). The process of this Yōga demands that the seeker should gradually *still* the activities of the senses, the mind, intellect as well as the ego, trying to *merge* each preceding entity in the next succeeding one, till at last he *becomes one* with the really real Tranquil Ātman, beyond all objects of the senses and the intellect.

This Yōga, it must be remembered, does not aim at *objectifying* Brahman or Ātman by meditation or any species of knowledge; for, the real Ātman is the eternal Witness of everything possessing no specific features at all. That is why the Upanishads finally *Reveal* this Reality – 'the *real* of the real' as it is called in the S'ruti – by negating every conceivable feature.

7. S'aṅkara was not the *originator* of the Advaitic interpretation of the Upanishadic teaching, as it has been wrongly supposed in some quarters. He was only the

systematizer of a particular tradition of Advaita to which S'āṅkara has referred in his Sūtra- Bhāshya and actually incorporated certain quotations extracted from his predecessors' works.

There were many other schools of Advaitic interpretation, some of which have been considered in the last Chapter of the present work. The doctrine of distinctions within the nature of Brahman (*Anekātma Brahmanvāda*) of Bharṭṛ-Prapañca, the doctrine of Brahman subservient to meditation (*Pratipatti-Vidhis'ēsha Brahmanvāda*), the doctrine that multiplicity has to be dissolved by meditation (*Prapañcha Pravilaya Vāda*) and the doctrine that knowledge gained through S'raṇa etc. has to be repeatedly practised before it becomes effective (*Prāsāṅkhyāna-Vāda*) are some of the teachings advocated by the other schools.

S'āṅkara's chief contribution to Advaita-Vedānta consisted in laying emphasis on the Upanishadic teaching of the intuition of the *eternally free* Brahmātman which resulted in *immediate* Release (*Sadyōmukti*) by dispelling the *innate* Ignorance of the human mind once for all.

*Om Tat Sat*

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