

**THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH
OF
SHANKARA VEDANTA**

BY
D. B. GANGOLLI

PUBLISHED BY
ADHYATMA PRAKASHA KARYALAYA
HOLENARSIPUR
1997

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

According to Vedānta, every one's true nature is the non-dual, Transcendental Reality. The main aim of life is to cognise this true essence of Being to be the substratum of all phenomena of the universe. From the empirical viewpoint the universe appears to be real, but in truth the Self or Ātman is the One and Only Reality, being the essence of the universe of multiplicity. This Vedāntic Reality or the Self or Ātman can never be objectified by any means like speech or the mind. The empirical means like perception, inference etc, are of no avail, for this Ultimate Reality of Vedānta is beyond the time-space-causation complex and being the essence of every one's Being can only be Intuited or by taking identification with It. To enable the seeker to Intuit this Transcendental Reality the Vedāntic texts adopt the most unique, ingenious method of Adhyārōpa Apavāda Nyāya or the method of Superimposition and Rescission. This is the only and exclusive method suited to teach the subject-matter of Advaita Vedānta. There are many methods adopted in the Upanishads such as Kārya Kārana Viveka, Panchakōsha Viveka, Sāmānya Vishesha Viveka etc., but among all of them the examination of the three states of Consciousness, viz. *Avasthā Traya Viveka*, is the most important one. With the help of this unique method a qualified aspirant can cognise here and now his true nature as the Self spontaneously, directly and immediately.

The adoption of audio-visual methods in focussing the attention of students on the subtle aspects of a subject has become the order of the day, particularly in teaching science subjects in the educational field.

This modern technique of teaching with the help of diagrams, slides, symbols, formulae etc. enables the students to comprehend the subtle truths using both his faculties of hearing and seeing, thereby enhancing his chances of understanding the subject-matter in its true perspective.

Advaita Vedānta, as expounded by Sri Shankarāchārya, is the Science *par excellence* of Life. In order to teach the esoteric truths of this Science of Being or Ātman, this modern audio-visual technique is adapted suitably and made use of in this small treatise by Sri D.B. Gangolli, Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya,

Holenarsipur, Hassan District, Karnataka 573211. The diagrams are utilised with the sole intention of facilitating the true student to comprehend the subtle aspects of the Vedāntic teachings about this Absolute Truth beyond the time-space-causation factors. Hence, the illustrations should be treated as only visual aids for the benefit of the student in the same manner as the explanatory commentaries; for, in the ultimate analysis he has to Intuit the Ultimate Reality and not try to grasp it intellectually. There is no other go, but from the standpoint of the uninitiated student these diagrams will be of immense benefit.

Within the short space available, the author has attempted to provide, for the benefit of a genuine student, the fundamentals of Vedānta without which he will find it very difficult to solve the apparent anomalies and contradictions the Upanishadic lore abound with. Besides he has given the basic central methodology running in and through the Upanishadic texts as well as Sri Shankara's Bhāshyas (Gītā Bhāshya 13-13) and its various applications. A small chapter on the Vedāntic disciplines is also included. In this book, along with explanatory write-ups adopting the above-stated methodology for the purposes of highlighting the teachings of Vedānta, for the first time simple, attractive diagrams are used to drive home the esoteric truths of Vedānta with telling effect.

We congratulate Sri. D. B. Gangolli on his achieving this unique task of depicting the subtle, esoteric tenets of Shānkara Vedānta utilizing the modern audio-visual aids (diagrams) for the benefit of genuine seekers and acknowledge this his valuable contribution — a purely labour of love — with Nārāyana Smaranams.

Holenarsipur,
December 3, 1996

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In the service of pristine
pure Shānkara Vedānta,
H. Venkatanarasappa
President, Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya
Public Charitable Trust,
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PREFACE

The Upanishads, when read perfunctorily, seem to be intended to teach something about what they call '*Brahman*' or '*Ātman*', about the universe, and the individual soul, but the varied expressions and style of exposition employed in them is so bewildering that one is apt to doubt whether they contain any system of thought uniformly propounding any definite doctrine or whether they adopt any dialectical method leading the seeker to the principle they propose to teach. The language and style adopted to teach *Brahman* is apparently very confusing. All these works team with various narratives, epigrams, symbolic expressions, metaphors and similes, which do not smack of any dialectical approach to Truth. True, we do meet with dialogues, conversations and discussions and debates sometimes; but everywhere it appears to be a display of dogmatic arguments and analogies. On the other hand, we find express statements like - 'This knowledge is not to be attained (or cannot be confuted by) reasoning'; This can be well-understood only when taught by another.'

The numerous commentaries embodying the conflicting interpretations of the several Bhāshyakāras, whose followers are extant to this day, only confirm this impression. For any scholar skilled in exegetics might bring out any additional system of his own with impunity out of these utterances of the ancient sages, if only he could adduce cogent reasons to show that his system is consistently built. And no one can rule out the legitimacy of the ingress of any system or systems in the future, each one of them resting its structure on the foundation of consistency and even on some individual intuition and experience to be gained through spiritual discipline.

In these circumstances, it is most necessary to discover the unique doctrine and the distinctive technique or the method, if there be one at all, which governs all the modes of approach to Reality in these writings. If one could succeed in this attempt, that would be the source to provide the critical student of Vedānta with a clincher to help him out of this apparent maze.

Actuated by a curiosity to find out the truth of the matter, and prompted by an instinctive feeling that there must be some doctrine and some method peculiar to all the Upanishads, an

attempt was successfully made for a diligent search in the Bhāshyas of the great Śaṅkara, the earliest writer on Vedānta, whose commentaries are available even now. The introduction to his Sūtra-Bhāshya contains this unequivocal statement:

“In order to destroy this source of (all evil, one has to attain the knowledge of the unity of Ātman. To this end, all the Vedāntas (Upanishads) are begun.”

The purport of this proposition is crystal-clear : All the Upanishads have the uniform purport of teaching the doctrine of the One Ātman, on attaining whose knowledge, one's ignorance is wiped off for good. And another statement in the opening of the commentary on Vedānta Sūtra 1-1-5, makes this equally unambiguous remark :-

“So far it has been concluded that Vedāntic texts aim at producing the Intuition of Brahmātman (the Infinite Self); that they are syntactically construed as teaching the 'Brahmātman' as their one purport, and culminate in Brahman which is without any connection with something that has to be done.”

This proposition means that the Upanishads serve the sole purpose of teaching the nature of the Self as Brahman in contradiction to the individual self, and that this Knowledge of the Infinite Self, **precludes the possibility of any duty to be done after its attainment.** Of course, this is to intimate that in Śaṅkara's opinion, Upanishadic passages urging a person to do some religious work in order to attain some result, have nothing to do with texts teaching the nature of the One Infinite Ātman. This is in consonance with the previous statement in the Introduction which says that all Upanishads have the one purpose of teaching the doctrine of the unity of Self. But is this his individual opinion or has he the support of any traditional methodology for his view ? Even supposing that he is supported by some tradition, how are we to reconcile ourselves to the fact that there have sprung up so many other Bhāshyas each professing to inherit a tradition of its own and claiming to be the only correct interpretation of the Upanishads ?

In the first place, there are Upanishadic texts proclaiming the unity of Brahman or Ātman in the most unmistakable terms : “That which we perceive in front is the Immortal Brahman alone;

that which is behind is Brahman (alone); to the right and to the left, is Brahman (alone); that which is spread out both below and above, is Brahman. All this universe is Brahman the best" (Mu. 2-2-11); "And now, (is) the instruction concerning Ātman Itself. Ātman alone is below, and Ātman (alone) above, Ātman (alone) behind, and Ātman (alone) in front; Ātman (alone) is to the right, and Ātman (alone) to the left. All this is Ātman alone. " (Chh.). Secondly, one's misgivings about the dualists are laid at rest by these two Shlōkas from Gaudapāda, the traditional grand-preceptor of Shankara :-

"The dualists (who follow the Sāṅkhya or Vaisheshika, Buddhists or Jains etc.) firmly cling to their respective systems and contradict each other. But this system is not contradicted by them. For non-duality is the only Reality, while duality is only its appearance. For them it is duality alone both ways (i.e. as Reality or appearance). Therefore this system is not contradicted by them."

GK. 3-17,18.

As for the texts teaching the creation of multiplicity, Shankara himself quotes two traditional Shlōkas from Gaudapāda:-

"As for the creation narrated variously by means of illustrations like clay, metal and sparks, it is (only) a device for leading (the seeker to the truth of Unity); there is no difference in whatever way (we look at the matter)."

GK. 3-15.

[Shankara has adduced this verse in corroboration of his view that the effect (universe) is nothing other than the cause Brahman. (see S.Bh. 1-4-14,)]

"When the individual soul awakes from the beginningless illusory dream-sleep, then he realizes his unborn sleepless, dreamless, non-dual nature."

GK. 1-16.

[This is adduced to corroborate Shankara's position that the states of creation, sustentation and dissolution of the world, are all illusory and not real, See S.Bh. 2-1-9,]

Two more examples may be cited to emphasize the fact that, according to Shankara's tradition, the Shrutis make use of empirical examples of cause and effect relation only to repudiate all real causality and to establish the Vedic non-dualism, their enunciation of Brahman as the *cause* of the birth, sustentation and dissolution of the world, being only a deliberate imputation of

causal nature - a device to convince the critical enquirer that everywhere the so-called material cause is the only real entity imagined to appear in diverse ways like an actor on the stage (SBh. 2-1-18).

“(Objection:-) Is not Brahman, devoid of sound etc., the cause of the Universe ?

(Reply :-) Certainly; but the effect with sound and other characteristics never exists either before creation or even now except in its essential nature as the cause.” SBh. 2-1-7,

“Therefore it has to be concluded that just as ethers, like a jar-ether etc., are non-different from the universal ether, or just as mirage-water etc., are non-different from barren soil etc., being of the nature of appearing and suddenly disappearing and undefinable in their apparent nature, so also this diverse universe comprising things experienced and experiencers etc., does not exist apart from Brahman.” SBh. 2-1-14.).

The above-mentioned citations from the Sūtra Bhāshya, not only give us an insight into the main doctrine stressed in all the Upanishads, but also disclose the method of approach adopted in those writings to teach the Absolute (Brahmātman). **For, while the Absolute is strictly without a second, we see here the deliberate superimposition of causal nature to Brahman, as a device to teach unity, and the abrogation of this property of being a cause by effectively negating the existence of the effect apart from its material cause.** As Shankara contends in his Bhāshya (on 2-1-14): “This is an illustration used to teach the nature of Brahman. From the expression ‘*Vāchārambhanam*’ (made up of words) used here, we have to infer that in the case of what is illustrated also, the non-existence of all effects apart from Brahman (is meant).” Can it not be surmised from all this that Shankara is referring here to a traditional method common to all the Upanishads making use of this device of deliberate imputation of certain properties to the Absolute just to reveal its real nature, the imputation being subsequently negated when that purpose has been achieved ?

References to this method are actually to be found in the Āchārya’s Gītā-Bhāshya, to justify this hypothesis. There also, Shankara discloses his anxiety to defend his view on the strength of the traditional method. For example, in the course of criticizing the

view of certain thinkers who are of the view that it is impossible for the mind to grasp the Ātman, as He is formless, and that therefore **permanent stay in Right Knowledge**, is impossible of attainment, that teacher says:

“True, it is so for those who have had no access to the traditional teaching handed down by the Gurus (the master teachers), for those who have not studied the Vedāntas, whose mind is completely attached to the external objects of sense, and who have not taken the trouble to understand the nature of the valid means of knowledge. But for those who are of the opposite nature, it is altogether impossible to conceive the real existence of duality of the nature of subject and object; for, they see nothing other than the Consciousness of Ātman.” GBh. 18-50.

And he concludes,

“Therefore, cognition is quite well-known, and the cognizer also is quite well-known. Therefore, no effort is necessary for the attainment of knowledge; effort is necessary only to remove the idea of the Self touching the not-Self. Therefore perfect stay in Knowledge is quite possible of attainment.” GBh. 18-50.

It is evident that Shaṅkara is referring to the traditional way of teaching Ātman by removing what is not the property of the Self. This he affirms in so many words elsewhere:-

“As for the Shāstra, the ultimate means of Knowledge, it attains the nature of being a valid means of knowledge by removing what is not the property of that Ātman, and not by directly reminding the nature of something previously unknown.” GBh. 2-18.

A second reference to this *Sampradaya* (tradition) is to be found in Shaṅkara's Bhashya on Gita 13-2, where he takes up for criticism the misinterpretation of the Gītā teaching: “Know the *Kshetrajna* to be Myself in all the *Kshetras*, O scion of Bhārata !” The follower of that school admits that *Kshetrajna* is certainly *Īshwara*, and *Kshetra* is something else which is the object of *Kshetrajna* alone; “But”, this follower of the other school contends, “as for myself, I am a transmigratory soul subject to pleasure and pain’ and I have to bring about the cessation of this *Samsārā* by attaining the knowledge of both *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*; and then realizing the *Kshetrajna*, the Lord, I must get and stay in the nature of that (*Kshetrajna*).”

Shankara makes these scornful observations with regard to this view:-

“He who thinks thus and he who teaches (another) that he is not the Kshetrajna - he who holds this view - is a learned fool who hopes to make out that both bondage and release as well as the Shāstra, would be meaningful (only that way), that slayer of the Self is himself lost in confusion and confounds others, because he is not in possession of the traditional method of the teaching of the Shāstras; for he is thereby giving up what is expressly taught (here) and presuming what is not taught. Therefore, not being acquainted with the traditional (method of interpretation), he should be ignored like a fool, be he ever so learned in all the Shāstras.” GBh. 13-2

Here the Gītā teaches that the knower of Kshetra, though seemingly an individual self, is really the same as Īshvara or the Witness in all beings. Shankara says that one who twists this express statement to mean that this Īshvara is to be meditated upon, and not to be directly known as the Self, is making both an addition to and a subtraction from the true meaning. One who has been taught in the right way of interpretation would never take such a rash step of misinterpreting the teaching. Evidently, Shankara is here thinking of the traditional teaching of Gaudapāda with regard to Upāsana (meditation of Brahman). For Gaudapāda has these two statements to make concerning the subject:-

“The seeker who is dependent on meditation, depends on the born Brahman; for him, all this is the unborn Brahman (only) before creation. Hence he is known to be a poor (knower of Brahman).”

GK. 3-1.

“Seekers of Reality are of three grades-the lowest, the mediocre and the best. Therefore, this Upāsana has been taught (for the benefit of the first two).

GK. 3-16.

The Upanishads themselves teach that the Brahman meditated upon should not be considered to be the Highest Brahman in Its genuine nature; ‘Nedam Yadidamupāsate’(Ke.). This is a refrain of the Upanishadic teaching.

And lastly we meet with a statement of Shankara which actually alludes to the true traditional method by its significant epithet. In commenting on the Shlōka (13-13), he writes:-

"The collection of specific features in the Kshetrajna due to the different conditioning associates is wholly unreal and therefore He has been taught to be known as neither being nor non-being, by denying that (specific nature. But here) even the unreal form is presumed as though it were the property of (the Kshetrajna) the knowable just to bring home Its existence (by describing It by the expression) "It has hands and feet everywhere etc.'."

Accordingly, there is (this) saying of the *knowers of the traditional method*: 'That which is devoid of all multiplicity is explained by means of (deliberate) superimposition and rescission.'

It would be profitable to note that both the superimposition and the negation are used by the Shāstra or teacher as a device for revealing the true nature of Reality which is inexpressible and inconceivable. **This is not an attempt to remove any manifoldness that actually pertains to, or coexists with, Ātman. It is only an apparent manifoldness.** As Gaudapāda, proficient in all the techniques of the traditional method, crisply remarks:

"Manifoldness, no doubt, would have to be removed, if it (really) existed. This duality is only Māyā (a false appearance),(there is) Non-duality alone, in reality. The thought-construct (of the distinction of the Shāstra, master and the disciple to be taught), would have to be removed if it were the (actual) superimposition of some one. This is a doctrine devised (only) for the purpose of teaching. When (Reality) is known, there is no duality whatsoever (in fact)."

GK. 1-17,18.

This traditional method of teaching the Absolute is responsible for the language and style employed in the Upanishads to amplify It still further so as to make the teaching intelligible to the student. Narratives, mnemonics, enigmatic statements and illustrations, are all made use of for the purpose of Ādhyārōpa (deliberate superimposition), which may be supposed to serve as a device to negate some superimposition of the human mind, and when that purpose has been served, the deliberate superimposition is invariably abrogated. Throughout the course of teaching, certain concepts are employed to indicate the inexpressible and inconceivable Absolute which can never be objectified by the mind, and language applicable to ordinary life is employed in special senses by extending the significance of the words in order to make them suitable to suggest the relation of the phenomenal universe

to the Absolute. This doctrine of the distinction of the common sense or empirical view and the Vedantic view or the Really real view, is one of the most useful principles consistently used in the traditional method of the Upanishads. Shankara was only following in the footsteps of his grand-preceptor Gaudapāda in making use of this distinction in his Bhāshyas. For Gaudapāda had already resorted to this device of superimposition from the empirical standpoint as a means (*Upāya*) and its final negation, when the Intuition of the Absolute unborn Non-duality (*Upeya*) is achieved :-

“Since (the Shruti) negates whatever had been used in explanation before, by pointing to Ātman as “This Ātman is the one described as ‘not this, not that’ for the reason that all that is not to be taken (as truth). The Unborn shines forth of Its own accord.” GK.3-26.

The title of this treatise may apparently create an impression among the readers that it may contain certain ingenious ‘scientific’, that is, the modern science-oriented, discoveries which enable all to ‘perceive’ the Absolute Reality. As he preceeds through the pages and imbibes the subtle tenets which induce him to rise up to the ‘Intuitive level’ of cognition, slowly giving up his identification with the commonplace intellectual cognition, he will realize that scientific logic or reasoning will always be a handmaid subservient to Intuition. Further, he will be convinced that never can intellectual reasoning or dialectics of any human origin take a higher place than Intuition. In fact, even to detect the veracity or correctness of any logic or reasoning method Intuition will perforce be the last resort. Why say more, Intuition is the *summum bonum* of Life, called ‘Enlightenment’.

My heartfelt gratitude to all those who have helped me in bringing out this treatise using the modern methods of education and communication utilizing audio-visual aids. I am thankful to Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya authorities for having given me all the moral support and encouragement in publishing this book. I would also like to express my gratitude to Messrs. Verba Network Services for printing this tratise in such an excellent manner and to Sri Dilip B.K., of L.M. Graphics, for computing all the diagrams so attractively.

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I. INTRODUCTION

What is True Vedānta ?

The Hindus have for ages looked upon the Vedas reverentially as the authoritative, divine and eternal sources of all-comprehensive and consummate human knowledge. The four Vedas, viz. Rg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva, have been, according to tradition, divided into the Samhita or Mantra portion, the Brāhmaṇa portion and the Āraṇyaka portion, predominantly dealing with the aspects of religious rites or rituals, meditations and Intuitive Knowledge, respectively. These three sections of the Vedas are also popularly called 'Karma Kāṇḍa', 'Upāsana Kāṇḍa' and 'Jnāna Kāṇḍa', in that order, and the first two, viz. Karma and Upāsana Kāṇḍas are empirical, while Jnāna Kāṇḍa is metaphysical or transcendental in their approach in ascertaining Life's goal or purpose as well as the Ultimate Reality propounded by all religious faiths and schools of philosophy.

Although the Vedas apparently do not seem to contain any systematic development of teaching or doctrines to the uninitiated common run of people, there is an implicit graded method of instruction running in and through the Vedic literature if only it is elucidated or expounded by the knowledgeable teachers well-versed in the rich traditional methods handed down to posterity from time immemorial in a continuous lineage of illustrious teachers and their equally renowned pupils. Taking a general view, it can be said that the Karma Kāṇḍa caters, in the main, to people who are too materialistic and sensuous in their approach to life's problems, the Upāsana Kāṇḍa to more intellectual and erudite people and the Jnāna Kāṇḍa to those with an ascetic bent of mind, who are pure in heart and seek nothing but Beatitude and real solace in this very life. Thus by an assiduous study of the Vedic texts under the guidance of an expert teacher an aspirant can achieve gradual progress in his spiritual way of life, finally culminating in the attainment of Self-Knowledge and Bliss here and now.

The word 'Vedānta' connotes the end portion of the Vedas, implying that it is the Knowledge *par excellence* to be gained at the end of a phased-out course of learning an ardent seeker of Truth

has to undergo in accordance with the instructions contained in the three sections of the Vedas. The Upanishads are called 'Vedāntas' partly because most of them are to be found at the end of the Vedas, i.e. in the Āraṇyakas, and partly because they contain the quintessence and the ultimate pronouncement of the central or basic philosophy of the Vedas.

Vedānta as a positive science founded on reason, Intuition and experience steers clear of all difficulties incidental to partial and parochial views of physical sciences, which thrive on, and have committed themselves to, an objective view of mind as well as matter, or of realistic philosophies, which aim at a critical view of the universe and try to generalise and harmonise the conclusions of the special sciences. It differs from idealistic systems which speculate on the basis of the laws of the intellect.

What is the Main Teaching of Vedānta?

The subject-matter of Vedānta is quite unlike that of any speculative philosophy. Vedānta does not set before itself the problem of explaining the universe by means of logical deduction or the task of widening the area of human knowledge by trying to harmonise the natural sciences as far as possible. Vedānta is not satisfied with partial views. Its view is comprehensive and is based on Intuition and conscious experience, leaving out no feature of Life in its totality. In fact, Vedānta delineates a sure path to discover the essence (Ātman) of the Universe as a whole and convinces us that this realisation is possible here and now for everyone that has the burning desire and unique capacity and qualifications for it.

The word 'Vedānta' itself is rarely used in the classical ten Upanishads, viz. Īsha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Aitareya, Taittirīya, Chhāṇḍōgya and Brihadāraṇyaka, on which Ādi Shankarāchārya, the greatest exponent of Advaita Vedānta and world teacher, has written his famous Bhāshyas or commentaries, which are acknowledged all the world over as the authoritative texts for Vedānta. In the Muṇḍaka Upanishad (3-2- 6) it is stated: "Those who have perfectly ascertained the nature of the Entity revealed by Vedāntic Intuition, the endeavouring aspirants whose mind had become

purified through the Yōga of Sannyāsa, they are freed from all circumscribing limitations, having become perfectly immortal at the ultimate end of life.” Here the words ‘Vedānta Vijnāna’ found in the Upanishad have been explained by Sri Shankara as ‘Vedānta Janita Vijnāna’ - Intuition born from the teaching of the Vedāntas. It is evident that Sri Shankara interprets the word ‘Vedānta’ in the sense of the Upanishads. In his Adhyāsa Bhāshya, which is an introduction to the Brahma Sūtra Bhāshya, Sri Shankara states: “In order to destroy this source of evil (Avidyā or Nescience) all the Vedāntas are begun so that the knowledge of the unity of Ātman (the Self) may be acquired.” Sri Shankara means to say that all the Upanishads unequivocally purport to teach the aspirants how to acquire the knowledge of the non-dual Self (Ātman).

Two Sets of Teaching

The word ‘Upanishad’ is used with different meanings in Sanskrit, such as a doctrine, a name, meditation, profound secret or the highest secret of the Knowledge of the true nature of Brahman or Ātman. Sri Shankara uses this word primarily in the sense of the Knowledge (Intuition) of Brahman (Ātman) and in a secondary sense for the portion of the Vedas usually called by that name. **The Upanishads contain two sets of teaching regarding Brahman or the Ultimate Reality, addressed to two different levels of the mind.** To the highest grade of the aspirants belongs the one who has attained the mental equipoise necessary for entering upon a course of study enabling him to grasp the teaching imparted in the scriptures (Shruti). This qualification he may gain in this very life or he might possess an introvert mind as a result of disciplines observed in his previous births. This class of seekers comprises two grades again. The first needs only guidance in reminding him of the true nature of one’s Self based on the utterances of the Shruti through an experienced adept who has himself experienced the truths of Vedānta. The second requires guidance for the contemplation of the spiritual steps through which he has ultimately to reach that same Self or Brahman. It is to this highest class of both these grades that the Upanishadic or Vedāntic study will be of immense assistance and value.

The other set of Upanishadic teachings, according to Sri Shankara, consists of injunctions for the meditation of the so-called *Apara* or lower Brahman. This meditation is a mystical discipline quite different from the practice of contemplation as explained under *Adhyātma Yōga* (dealt with in Chapter V of this book), which leads the seeker to direct realisation of Brahman in this very life. Like the meditations taught in the non-Hindu religions, the Upanishadic meditations on Brahman also assure eschatological benefits in Highest Heaven, here called the *Brahma Loka*, and this practice of meditation is to be mainly founded on faith and hope. The Upanishadic mysticism is perfectly rational in that it rests on the secure foundation of the proven results that can be experienced in this very life by seekers belonging to the highest class mentioned earlier.

Unique Teaching of Shānkara Vedānta

The unique teachings of the Upanishads regarding Brahman (*Ātman*) or the Ultimate Reality are not mere theories advanced by doctrinarians but statements of facts which can be verified and are verifiable by any one. Hence Advaita Vedānta, according to Sri Shankara, propounds the Truth based on universal (Intuitive) Experience innate in every one and on a comprehensive, plenary view of Life in its entirety. Sri Shankara has declared in his *Bhāshyas* that all the Upanishads have one purport of teaching the knowledge of the Unity of *Ātman* (*Atmaikatwa Vidyā Pratipattaye*). This is in concurrence with the teaching of the Upanishads themselves. For example, the *Māndūkya* Upanishad says that *Ātman* is Brahman (*Ayamātma Brahma*) and adds that Brahman which is unobjectifiable has to be 'realised solely by means of the concept of *Ātman*' (*Ekātma Pratyaya Sāram*). The *Mundaka* Upanishad declares that Brahman, which is the Light of lights, only the knowers of *Ātman* can know ('*Tat Shubhram Jyothi Tadyat Ātmavidaha Viduhu*'- Muṇ. 2-2-10). The *Bhāshya* on that Upanishadic passage explains it thus: "Only those that follow the trail of the concept of *Ātman* can know It and not those that pursue the concepts of external objects, for It is the brightest Light within." ("*Te Ātmavidaha Tadviduhu Ātma Pratyaya Anusārinaha: Yasmāt Param Jyothi Tasmāt Ta Eva Tadviduhu Netare Bāhyārtha Pratyaya Anusāriṇaha*" - Muṇ. Bh. 2- 2-10).

The Brihadāranyaka Upanishad syas: “*Sa Yāta Ekaikamupāste Na Sa Veda Akritsnō Hyeshōta Ekaikena Bhavati Ātmeti Eva Upāsita Atra Hyete Sarva Ekam Bhavanti*” - ‘So whosoever devotes himself to any one of these concepts, he knows not the Truth, for he becomes only partial by being tied to these ideas severally. One should therefore regard oneself as Ātman alone, for herein are comprehended all these ideas.’ This Shruti says that to regard oneself as the living soul, as a speaker, seer, hearer or thinker is to conceive oneself but partially, for these are notions drawn exclusively from the functions of the soul. But the most comprehensive and complete way of regarding oneself is to think of oneself as Ātman, for in Ātman all other aspects are comprehended.

In the Chhāndōgya Upanishad again it is said: “*Sa Ya Eshōnima Etat Ātmyamidam Satyam Sa Ātma Tat Twam Asi Shwetaketu*” - ‘As for this subtle Principle, all this Universe has It for its essence. That is Reality, that is Ātman, That thou art, O Shwetaketu’ (Ch. 6-14-3). It is obvious that the word ‘Ātman’ here refers to Reality underlying all the phenomenal world and that each individual soul has the Self or Ātman as its very core of Being or Essence.

Basing his assertion on a passage in the Brihadārnyaka (3-9-26), Sri Shankara calls this Ātman the ‘Upanishadic Person’ (*Aupanishadaha Purushaha*) in his Brahma Sūtra Bhāshya 1-1-4 and says: “Now this Purusha who is known only from the Upanishads and who is not a transmigratory soul but Brahman Itself, it is not possible to assert that this Purusha does not exist, or that He cannot be known. For, in the passage ‘Now this is Ātman described as not this, not this’ (Bri. 3-9-26) this Purusha is referred to by the word ‘Ātman’ (the Self) and it is impossible to deny one’s own Self, because the very denier is himself Ātman.” Here Sri Shankara says in so many words that Ātman is the Self of each one of us, whether one believes, doubts or denies the existence of this Ātman.

Now, lest it should be supposed that the Upanishadic Ātman is identical with the individual ego of living beings, Sri Shankara himself raises an objection and provides a rejoinder, clarifying the Upanishadic concept of Ātman: “Objection : Ātman being the object of the notion ‘I’, it is not reasonable to say that He is known only from the Upanishads. Reply : Not so. For, we have refuted

this position by saying that this Ātman is the Witness of that ego. (To explain) - Other than the agent, who is the object of the notion 'I', there is the Witness thereof residing in all beings, the same in all, the one unchanging eternal Purusha, the Self of each and every one, who is never known to any one from the Vidhi Kāṇḍa (Vedic portion enjoining religious acts or rites) or from the speculative schools." - (Sūtra Bhāshya 1-1-4).

This is a bold claim indeed that Ātman is the Witnessing Consciousness distinct from the individual soul, and is the real Self of each and every creature and is identical with Brahman or Divinity Itself. That this Witnessing Ātman is to be known only from the Upanishads and that there is no vestige of this concept in any theological works or speculative systems seems to be yet another tall claim. While Sri Shankara was referring only to the Karma Kāṇḍa of the Veda and to the contemporary **Darshanas** or schools of philosophy, **it is strange and surprising, nevertheless, that it is indisputably true of the entire range of theological or speculative systems in the whole world even to this day. This self-evident and self-existing concept of Ātman as the eternal unchanging Witnessing Principle of all phenomena in each one of us is known only through the Upanishads and can never be traced to any other source.**

Sri Shankara is the only thinker who has clarified this Vedāntic concept and with an unsurpassed and unsurpassable spiritual Intuition he showed that the pronouncement of Shvetāshwatara Upanishad (6-10), viz. "*Eko Devaha Sarva Bhūteshu Gūdhaha Sarva Vyāpi Sarva Bhūtāntara Ātmā Sarva Karmādhyakshaha Sarva Bhūtādhivāsaha Sākshī Chetā Kevalaha Nirgunascha*" - "The One God (Divinity) is hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the one inmost Self of all creatures, presiding over all their acts, the Witnessing Consciousness residing in all creatures, one without a second and having no qualifying adjuncts," - was all-convincing and contained the only Ultimate Truth which could save the human soul from its vicious circle of births and deaths and lead it to immortality.



II. GENUINE TENETS OF VEDĀNTA AND SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THEM

Partial View of Life

Man holds his life as the sweetest, dearest and most precious possession. Life plunges him into and gets him organically involved in a mysterious universe of beauty and power, of action and enjoyment. Empirical science studies life in its phenomenal phase as appealing to his senses and intellect, but philosophy endeavours to obtain a comprehensive view of Life in its totality and to fathom its very essence. The study of Life in one of its manifestations alone is lop-sided, illusory and elusive in its nature, and this gives rise to varied and opposed views among thinkers and philosophers, who severally group themselves under different heads, such as Realists, Idealists, Monists, Pluralists, Humanists, Nihilists etc.

All this irreconcilable divergence of view is due to partial examination or consideration of Life restricting its sphere to one of its manifestations only, viz. the waking state, and neglecting callously and completely its other two states, viz. dream and deep sleep. So much so, when we speak of the world or life, we commonly mean our waking experience and if we happen to speak of the experiences of dream and deep sleep, we regard them only as adjuncts to the waking state or its extensions. **Although this conception is sufficient for practical purposes, it is not in the least helpful in arriving at or discerning the underlying Principles of Life, and that would be possible only when Life is examined in its entirety, and further all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep, which alone comprise the whole Life of man, are treated on an equal footing, i.e. each in its own essence or content, without the dream and the deep sleep states being regarded as subordinate to the waking state.**

Nature is equally insistent on dream and deep sleep as it is on waking and it will not grant the privileges and pleasures of life to any one content with continuous waking, or for that matter, with prolonged dream or deep sleep. As food sustains and invigorates

the physique, sleep refreshes the soul, and Nature has ordained sleep for the preservation of life. The great thinkers or so-called philosophers of the world, therefore, commit a basic error when they entertain the notion that waking comprehends all life. In the absence of a comprehensive view of Life their notions based on the partial waking state point of view regarding the creation and the nature of the world is also erroneous, and no wonder there is such disagreement among them. **The flow of life is punctuated by the states of waking, dream and deep sleep and man picks it up only at the waking state and attempts to reconstruct life by piecing together the recurring intervals of waking alone to the utter exclusion of its other two phases, with the result that the Continuum which forms the common substratum for all the three states, in other words called Reality in philosophy, is completely missed.**

Comprehensive or Plenary View of Life

Vedānta, the traditional philosophic system of the Upanishads, differs fundamentally from all other systems, ancient or modern, in this vital aspect. It does not dwell upon any particular phases of Life, however interesting or valuable, and by a comparative and objective study of these explains and points out the entire sphere of flux. **It enables one to glance objectively at the whole flow of Life, as it were, from the waking to sleep and back, and helps extract the One Principle which swims with the current and is the current. The Reality thus revealed is not vulnerable to the inroads of science or speculative theories of men at all times. Vedānta, in this regard, is itself a science of our own Life, basing its view on Intuition and Conscious experience leaving out no feature of Life in its widest sense.**

Confusion Between Hinduism and Vedānta

Many people, including many intellectuals and erudite scholars, often confound the Hindu Religion with Vedānta. Although the former derives its vital sap from its relationship to Vedānta, its outlook is comparatively narrow and its methods radically dogmatic, but **Vedānta in its scientific approach to Life builds upon the fundamentals of human nature, excludes no class of**

facts from the purview of its investigation and finally denies no community of men the benefits of its truths. Hence Vedānta is truly a spiritual way of life for humanity as such. Tolerance is its key-note and fanaticism simply cannot thrive or even breathe in its rarefied atmosphere. Even in its humanising aspect, Vedānta provides such proven universal doctrines, the adoption of which, even in a dilute form, is enough to tame the brute in man, purify his emotions and feelings of their vulgarities, dispel fear and sorrow and instil courage and confidence. Although even today the secrets of Vedānta are there for those who may care for and covet it or seek it sincerely, yet its guardian Spirit will not unlock its treasures to any and every adventurer proud and presumptuous but only to those who approach it with utmost humility, reverence, open mind and pure heart.

Faith - An Instinct of Man

All are agreed that the human mind can think only in relations, and concepts and percepts necessarily have to obey the laws of time, space and causality. Yet great men all over the world have believed in an Absolute Being without relations, who is somehow the creator of this universe. Every religion starts with an Absolute Being and is centred in a God, though none can rationally demonstrate His existence. How can we account for this wide-spread sentiment, religious or philosophic, which rebels against reason and relies on faith and belief, except as due to an instinctive feeling that somehow we are the Absolute Free Spirit as Vedānta declares ?

Let us consider the egoism in man, the self-love, the self-esteem and all forms of selfishness which every one exhibits in a greater or smaller measure and which permeates all life and action. We rightly condemn selfishness, but how did it originate at all? The explanation again is to be found in our instinct. We start life with love of self, because, according to Vedānta, this self is in essence Brahman, the Ultimate Reality behind this manifested universe before us, and nothing is sweeter and dearer than Brahman, which we cannot but love, but which we love *blindly* through the extraneous body with which through ignorance we identify ourselves. **Every man believes in his own innocence because**

his Brahmic instincts cannot allow of any stain on the purity of his own nature. In fact, the essential nature of Brahman as *Sat* (Absolute Existence), *Chit* (Absolute Consciousness) and *Ananda* (Absolute Bliss or Happiness) is misconceived or refracted, so to speak, through *Avidyā* or Nescience as the instincts of love of life, knowledge and happiness, respectively, in this mundane circumscribed existence. Modern psychology must take note of the fact that without the aid of Vedānta every one of our deepest emotions, such as hope, fear, love, anger, ambition, sympathy etc., would be an inexplicable enigma. The case of the scientist is no exception, for he also seeks the one Principle hidden behind the phenomena and detects It, if at all he could, through all its disguises, but that he does under the indubitable guidance of an assured belief born out of instinct.

The Natural Instinctive Ignorance of Man

Then again take the question of the soul's salvation or immortality. It is an inborn instinct in Man to seek this in some veiled form or the other, and he abhors any system that will not make this primary concession. The negationistic systems like Pessimism, Nihilism, Scepticism and Atheism are never popular, for Man is bestowed with an innate urge to have faith in something. Our love of freedom and impatience of subjection, individual or racial, our sense of the right to think and believe as we like, our zeal bordering often on fanaticism in defence of such right and desire to uphold justice to every one and hate injustice - all these cannot be satisfactorily explained except on the basis of this instinctive nature of Man from which all these spring, and they can be conclusively traced to a fundamental confusion of the *real* with the *phenomenal* to which Vedānta gives the most tender but most expressive appellation called *Avidyā* or Nescience.

Vedānta's Invaluable Service

Vedānta renders invaluable service to all systems of theology, for, irrespective of the outer forms of faith, which have in every case originated with some great personality, it supplies to and strengthens each faith with an indisputable evidence on which its belief in a God and its scheme of rewards and

punishments and its basis for moral and ethical conduct can be justified. The fact that Vedānta happens to have grown on the Indian soil is a mere circumstance that should not matter, for it is the Science par excellence of Reality, the Ultimate Essence or Substratum of phenomena, on which spirituality truly rests. The knowledge of this Truth is the birthright of every human soul which cannot thrive without it. The apathy shown to Vedānta by the followers of various *organised religions* is unjustifiable and misplaced, because it is invariably born out of misconceptions regarding the real tenets of Vedānta and its ultimate purport.

Vedānta Not a Speculative System

Besides, Vedānta has none of the dubious ambiguities or uncertainties concomitant with philosophic speculations or logical abstractions, for its truths are based on universal human experience and their realisation is assured not posthumously but here and now in this very life to all without exception, irrespective of caste, creed, sex, race or nationality. That is because it is a *supra-science*, its declarations being verifiable like those of any physical sciences by immediate reference to facts of Life taken in its totality, provided the student has the desire or zeal and capacity for it. **Vedānta does not require on the part of its followers any change of religious forms, which are left intact as only protective shells of Truth. On the contrary, it helps one to understand that the truths of his own religious dogmas can be sustained and supported, such as those of incarnation, rebirth, sacrifice, sin, faith, merit etc.**

The Marvel of Consciousness

It may be urged that after all man occupies but an insignificant position in this vast universe or stellar systems. What can the world-spirit care for the conduct or life of a small creature on earth, which is itself a mere atom or speck in vast expanse of heaven? What are the achievements of man and his scientific inventions in the midst of the astounding, colossal celestial cataclysms that hourly announce the birth of a new star or the destruction of a whole planet? Where is the real basis for this

homocentric pride which claims all the attention of God the Almighty to man as the highest rational being in his own conceit? All these, for the present, can be answered by saying that it is all an extrovert or external view with the obscure place and position that we humans individually or collectively occupy therein. Still, what is the universe with its infinity of celestial spheres, its myriad systems, planets, comets and the nebulous region, which is the birthplace of stars ? What is all this but an objective reflection in the human consciousness, and how can its existence be conceived at all by us except through the marvellous, nay mysterious, power of consciousness, which can take alike the tiniest object as well as the infinite whole into its field of perception and handle them with equal ease as objects ? **The universe is indeed a great marvel, but consciousness as bestowed upon Man as a privileged creation of God is an even greater marvel, for it alone can grasp such a universe.** The sun is the most resplendent and the hottest object in the universe, but its dazzling light and scorching heat can only be felt by consciousness.

It may be argued that a hard blow on one's head makes him unconscious or during deep sleep and under the effects of narcotics consciousness vanishes. Then how can we advance it to the first rank of things that demand our study and attention ? This objection arises from a misconception of the real nature of consciousness, and it is more essential and fundamental to our interests that we understand it than the external universe with its stars and milky way. For, what affects us immediately is not the celestial disaster that may at one time reduce the earth to ashes, but it is the notion of Reality which we entertain that shapes our conduct in life and enables us to rise to the *conception of a unity* that binds up the whole and tears off the mask of illusion from the face of Nature.

The Enigma of Death

One of the knottiest problems defying solution and confronting all religions and philosophies is the mystery that surrounds life and death. What is the solution prescribed by them to overcome mortality or what exactly is their purport in promising immortality? The God of Death holds all life under his sway, respects neither position nor age nor sex and his decrees are

inexorable and inexplicable. Science priding on her awe-inspiring discoveries and inventions, religion deprecating human vanities and weaknesses and philosophy claiming a higher place than either of these and trying to reationalise and explain away by pointing at the transient nature of life and its *simulacra* - all must confess to their utter helplessness in dealing with this great tyrant called Death, who reigns supreme and whose realm is co-extensive with that of life. While religion puts off the fulfilment of its promise of immortality till after death and science persistently hopes that death also may one day be included in her conquests, philosophy, more pretentious in her ideals, is equally mute on the question and often feigns indifference to it.

Vedānta's Solution of Immortality

This fatalism is based on a feeling of the ultimate futility of all enquiry transcending the immediate concerns and affairs of life. It implies a radical pessimism or fear complex inherent in every mind which tries in vain to forget it or push it to the background so that it may not hamper the enjoyments of life. Thanks to the natural instincts of man, life is still found to be very sweet, dear and loveable, though it may abound never so much in ills of every kind. None can fully enjoy the present without reference to a future life and this innate instinct of love of immortality of the soul takes the guise of a *faith* in a better and permanent existence in a future life. While all the numerous brands of present-day Vedānta promise a posthumous reward of vanquishing death, the pristine pure Advaita Vedānta — as expounded by Ādi Shankarāchārya through his famous Bhāshyas on the ten classical Upanishads, the Bhagavat Gītā and the Vedānta Sūtras, popularly known as Brahma Sūtras (together called Prasthānatrayi)—boldly proclaims Immortality and Beatitude as the instantaneous fruits of Self-Knowledge, **even when the mortal shell of the soul apparently exists. Its fundamental doctrine is that the spirit of man called Ātman or the Self is embodied not in fact but in fancy, and since death can affect only him who has a body, it is powerless against one who has *realised* in this very life his true essential nature to be not the transmigratory soul (Jīva) but Ātman or the Self, the Absolute or Ultimate Reality or Universal Spirit or Immortal Bliss.** According to Sri Shankara, Life in its totality, when scrutinised through the Vedāntic

comprehensive vision, is irradiated with a joy unsurpassable; **it comprehends birth and death and hence transcends both. It inculcates the Truth that reveals Life as far beyond the slings and arrows of Death. That Truth Itself is true Immortality.**

The most enlightened, the most leisured and the most wealthy classes are so narrow and materialistic in their outlook that their cares and concerns never extend beyond this present life. They are so busy in a sense that they have no time left for an enquiry into the true nature of the soul. **Even self-interest demands and desiderates a knowledge of one's own nature and of Reality underlying it. This need is so imperative that it is hard to conceive how a rational being can possibly be indifferent to it.** Even in his day-to-day dealings when a man is asked to do anything, he naturally reflects on how it will profit him. That is so because he unconsciously and rightly assumes that the self is the central focal point to which all action must have ultimate reference. How, then, can his callous neglect of the science of the Self or Ātman or his attention is consumed and energy exhausted chiefly in the acquisition of the relatively insignificant and transient happiness? And this fact he does not know ! **There are deeper and everlasting demands of human nature which strive for expression in the form of a need to find one's place in a whole satisfying Unity wider than this earthly existence. And they are met by Vedānta.**

The Stigma of Māyāvāda

Vedānta is often stigmatised as Māyāvāda, the theory of illusion, as a view that shakes and dazes one out of one's common sense and has wrought the ruin of human soul. Sri Shankara is misrepresented by these pseudo-philosophers as a Māyāvādin whose doctrines are pernicious and whose teachings spell danger to the entire human race. In the Shvetāshwatara Upanishad it is stated that Prakriti is to be known as Māyā and the great Lord, Īshwara, as the Māyin (magician). This word 'Māyā' has scared many a scholar, and Bhaskarāchārya, Yamunāchārya and several others, belonging to non-Advaitic schools, took advantage of the employment of this word by Sri Shankarāchārya (in his Bhāshyas) and by Sri Gaudapādāchārya (in his Māndūkya Kārikās) and argued that these Advaitins who employed the Māyā doctrine were

crypto-Buddhists. Some modern oriental scholars have openly charged that these two exponents of Advaita Vedānta have borrowed the doctrine from Buddhists. And yet what is there in this innocuous epithet of 'Māyin' as applied to Īshwara and 'Māyā' as the *material* out of which He creates the world ? No section of the Buddhistic literature ever postulated an Īshwara or invested Him with Māyā whether as a power or anything else. **And when we closely examine Sri Shankara's Bhāshyas, we find that there is nothing to be afraid of or ashamed of when we entertain this highly philosophical and rational doctrine which so satisfactorily and convincingly explains the phenomena of life while keeping the Advaitic Absolute perfectly intact.**

Basic Error of Equating Avidyā and Māyā

First and foremost, we should as a necessity dismiss the idea of the post-Shankara philosophers (barring the works of Sri Sureshwarāchārya, a direct disciple of Sri Shankara who remained very faithful to his preceptor) who have committed the grave error of equating or identifying Māyā with Avidyā, misled by the collocation of those two words in stray Bhāshya 1-3-19 like : *"Eka Eva Parameshwaraha Kūtasthanithyō Vijnāna Dhātuhu Avidyayā Māyayā Māyāvivat Anekadhā Vibhāvya Nānyō Vijnāna Dhāturasti"* - This passage simply means that — 'There is only one Principle essentially of the nature of changeless Consciousness and that is Brahman or the Supreme Lord and that He is regarded to be many, while there is really no sentient entity other than Brahman or the Lord.' it has nothing to do with the identity or difference of the Vedāntic concepts of Avidyā and Māyā.

Need for the Study of Adhyāsa Bhāshya of Sri Shankara

In order to understand and appreciate fully the concept of Avidyā as propounded by Sri Shankara to reconcile all the apparent anomalies or contradictions to be found in the Upanishadic lore, the Achārya's Adhyāsa Bhāshya, an introduction to the Brahma Sūtras, have to be digested by the student of Advaita Vedānta. Some of the salient features of this Adhyāsa Bhāshya are considered here. **Now Vedānta teaches that the ego as the knower, doer or enjoyer in us is the product of Avidyā, which**

is nothing but the mutual superimposition of the Self or Ātman and the not-Self as well as their respective natures on each other. Sri Shankara says in Sūtra Bhāshya 1-1-1: “Basing themselves on the presupposition of this mutual superimposition of the Self and not-Self, named Avidyā, proceed all activities of ordinary life as well as those prescribed by the Vedas.” Sri Shankara explains further that no one can possibly be a knower etc. unless he entertains the notions that ‘I am the body’ and that ‘the senses are mine’ and the means of knowledge like the intellect, the mind and the senses can never function without a knower. It naturally follows that perceptions of the senses and concepts of the mind are valid only for the ignorant or from the point of view of Avidyā. **The body is an object of the Witnessing Consciousness and obviously one cannot be identical with the body and at the same time be the object of his own Consciousness, nor can the senses, ever dependent upon the body and embedded in it, be regarded as belonging to oneself.** In other words, unless one wrongly takes the body to be one’s self and the senses as one’s own, one cannot regard oneself as the knower, the employer of the means of knowledge desiring to know an object.

The Intuition of this fact in every one’s experience entitles us to conclude that all distinctions of the knower, the means of knowledge and the object of knowledge are all only false appearances proceeding from Avidyā or ignorance of not knowing our essential nature to be Pure Consciousness or Self. And when this *realisation* is reached, the knowledge of the sole Reality of the all-witnessing Ātman immediately emerges, as it were. “Thus this innate superimposition of the nature of a misconception is beginningless and endless and primarily responsible for the notion of agent and enjoyer as is well-known to all people. All Vedāntas have been revealed in order to destroy this cause of all evil by the attainment of the Knowledge of the sole Reality of Ātman,” expounds Sri Shankara in Sūtra Bhāshya 1-1-1.

Māyā is Subjective Avidyā’s Projection

The causal potentiality or Māyā is said to be ‘Avidyātmaka’ (of the nature of Avidyā or Ignorance), which expression may be wrongly understood by the unwary student to have a meaning identical with Avidyā. The following extract effectively wards off the possibility of such a mistake: “*Sarvajnasya Īshwarasya Ātmabhūte*

*Iva Avidyākalpīte Nāmarūpe Tattva Annyattvābhyām
Anirvachanīye Samsāraprapancha Bījabhūte Sarvajnasya
Īshwarasya Māyā, Shaktiḥ, Prakritiḥ Iti Cha
Shrutismṛityōrabhilapyete.*” - “Fictitiously imagined through Avidyā
as though they were identical with the Omniscient Lord, name and
form indefinable either as (Īshwara) Himself or distinct from Him,
the cause of this manifold world of mundane life, are called in the
Shruti and the Smṛiti ‘Māyā’, causal potentiality and Prakṛiti.” -
Sūtra Bhāshya 2-1-14.

Here we find Māyā described as the figment of Avidyā and identified with Prakṛiti, the original state of the world before creation. It is called Māyā (illusory appearance) clearly because it cannot be defined either as identical with Īshwara or Brahman or quite distinct from Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. Elsewhere in the Shankara Bhāshyas the expression ‘Anirvachanīya’ has been explained by the illustration of foam which is not quite the same as water, but yet not a different entity either. This expression, by the way, gave rise to the misconceived theory of ‘Sadasat Anirvachanīya’ (apparent things which are neither being nor not-being) developed in the sub-commentaries on Sri Shankara’s Bhāshyas. In this passage, not fully quoted, we find variants for the expression ‘Avidyākalpita’, such as ‘Avidyāpratyupasthāpita’, ‘Avidyākrita’ and ‘Avidyātmaka’ (the meanings being projected by Avidyā, made up of Avidyā and of the nature of Avidyā, respectively) all of which mean the objective appearance due to Avidyā. Māyā, therefore, according to Sri Shankara, is the illusory causal seed of the world due to Avidyā (i.e. *Adhyāsa* or mutual superimposition of Ātman and un-Ātman or the Self and the not-Self, occasioned by the want of discrimination).

The Concepts of ‘Causality’ and ‘Creation’ in Vedānta

This clarification of the concepts of Avidyā and Māyā in Sri Shankara’s Advaita Vedānta, incidentally, clarifies the Vedāntic concepts of ‘causality’ and ‘creation’ and several other kindred aspects about which there have been startling misconceptions among almost all Vedāntic scholars and teachers. Another extract from Sūtra Bhāshya 2-1-14 places it beyond all doubt that by the Vedāntic word ‘effect’ Sri Shankara understands nothing more than appearance and consequently the ‘cause’ for him stands for

the substratum on which appearances are superimposed. Here the discerning student must be forewarned that the so-called 'theory of origination of appearances from Avidya' (*Prātibhāsika Vastu Utpatti Vādaha*), a pet doctrine of the misguided post-Shankara Vedāntins, is conspicuous by its absence in the Bhāshyas. The doctrine of the three grades of existence viz. transcendental (*Pāramārthika Sattvam*), empirical (*Vyāvahārika Sattvam*) and apparent (*Prātibhāsika Sattvam*), is quite unknown and alien to the Sūtra Bhāshya of Sri Shankara. On the contrary, Sri Shankara emphatically declares in 2-1-16 that there are no grades of existence. He asserts that it is only Brahman, the Pure Consciousness or the Self, that appears as the world and there is, in the ultimate analysis, no real origination of the world at all. This clarification, found in Sūtra Bhāshya 2-1-27, of the concept of Māyā is to be found nowhere else except in Sri Shankara's exposition. **Empirically speaking, Māyā is the causal potentiality of the world of superimposition projected by Avidyā and it is but a special aspect of Brahman which evolves itself into the world, but Brahman in Its true and real nature is above all causation.** Sri Shankara says: "And inasmuch as the special aspect of Brahman, fictitiously created by Avidyā, is a mere play of words. The fact of Brahman being impartible remains uncontradicted."



III. RUDIMENTS OF VEDĀNTIC METHODOLOGY

The Plight of the Seeker Today

Earnest students of Adi Shankarācharya's Advaita Vedānta system are more often than not confused and confounded in their attempt to ascertain the Āchārya's exact teachings about the purport of the Upanishads, the main springs of Vedāntic Truth. This is so neither because of the obscurity of style or the absence of precision or clarity of thought expressed in the great Āchārya's original and authentic works, nor because of the paucity of explanatory literature on the subject. On the contrary, it is mainly because the

proven traditional methodology running in and through the Āchārya's extant Bhāshyas has been overlooked, nay lost sight of, perhaps more by design than accident, by the post-Shankara sub-commentators, who preferred to take recourse to logical exercises in explaining the subtle teachings of the Bhāshyas than verify them by Intuitive Experience. Sri Shankara's Bhāshyas on the Prasthānatrayi, viz. the Upanishads called '*Shruti Prasthāna*', the Bhagavat Gītā called '*Smṛiti Prasthāna*' or '*Sādhana Prasthāna*' and the Vedānta or Brahma Sūtras called '*Nyāya Prasthāna*', are now generally studied and taught by erudite scholars, who are mostly guided by popular Sanskrit works relying on one or more of the conflicting sub-commentaries claiming to propound Sri Shankara's teachings. Besides, neither the professors nor the so-called oriental scholars, who have written profusely on the subject in English, seem to be earnest enough to enter into a comparative study of the varying, and often contradictory, estimates of Sri Shankara's teachings to be found in the sub-commentaries and the works of adverse critics of the Āchārya, on the one hand, and of the original Bhāshyas independent of sub-commentaries, on the other hand, and finally draw their conclusions about the genuine teachings of Sri Shankarāchārya.

Urgent Need for Knowing the Five Fundamentals

In order to avoid such grave mistakes and misinterpretations as committed by the sub-commentators on Sri Shankara's Bhāshyas, the ardent student of Advaita Vedānta should resolve as a pressing need to take up the study in depth of the authentic and original works of Ādi Shankara, fully equipped with the traditional methodology adopted in the Upanishadic lore as taught by Sri Shankara himself in his Bhāshyas, and in the process assimilate the fundamentals, mainly five in number, as elucidated in this Chapter. Without a thorough understanding of these basic doctrines implicit in the Bhāshyas the seeker will find himself in the same hopeless and helpless position as one who has entered a labyrinth without a guide.

It will also be of great interest to him to know that if pure and true Advaita Vedānta is to be comprehended he should follow the texts belonging to the genuine and proven tradition, and they are: Sri

Gaudapāda's Māṇḍūkya Kārikās, Sri Shankara's Bhāshyas on Prasthānatrayi and his independent work called 'Upadeshasāhasri' and Sri Sureshwarāchārya's Vārtikas (sub-commentaries) on Brihadāranyaka and Taittirīya Bhāshyas of Sri Shankara and his independent work called 'Naishkarmya Siddhi'. All the other works, displayed on the book stalls going in the name of Advaita Vedānta, contain a good deal of alien concepts not in consonance with the teachings of Sri Shankara, the true expounder of Advaita Vedānta.

The Five Fundamentals

A. (i) Universal Acceptance: As the first and the most important precaution, the student should always remember that Sri Shankara ever insists on reckoning universal experiences and not the individual experiences in ascertaining the Ultimate or Eternal Truth of Vedānta. Even in the empirical sphere a truth can be called as such only if it is acceptable and verifiable by every one at all times. It is common experience that in our workaday world there are variable truths, as those of physical sciences (valid for the time being but may vary in course of time) as well as eternal truths, as those of Nature, and the latter are supposed on all hands to be unchanging in time.

Strictly speaking, Truth or Reality cannot be variable or even many in number and has to be necessarily constant and changeless at all times. Anything which exists in time and space invariably undergoes change and is liable to change, though its mutation may not be apparently visible or traceable by the naked eye. But the Truth of Vedānta is beyond the time-space-causality complex, all-pervading and all-illuminating. It can neither be perceived by means of the senses nor can It be conceived by means of the mind. It is the Absolute Truth on the strength of which the *truth* of all the other things, manifested as well as unmanifested, is discerned. It is the Pure Consciousness which can never be objectified but remains as the Eternal Witness. In the ultimate analysis, It is the All and nothing can be predicated of It or related to It, for It is the One Reality without a second.

(ii) Comprehensive Outlook of Life in its Entirety: Similarly, the student cannot afford to forget that Vedānta takes into

consideration the whole of Life in all its manifested and unmanifested forms. This means nothing but that it considers all the three states of Consciousness, viz. the waking, the dream and the deep sleep, all of which together exhaust man's total experiences, both at the body and the mental levels. **Incidentally, Vedānta builds up its enchanting edifice (Refer to Diagram 3 on page 35) on these two rudimentary principles of reckoning only universal and comprehensive experiences of human beings in its endeavour to establish the Ultimate Reality behind this magnificent, star-spangled Universe.**

B. Traditional Method of Adhyārōpa Apavāda or Superimposition and Rescission: Indian schools of philosophy insist that nothing can be established in a debate without the substantiating support of *Pramānas* or canonical evidence. The Mādhyamika school of Buddhists alone is an exception, for it has no particular doctrine to defend. On the other hand, this school is predominantly dialectic in its approach and it indulges in polemics to smash up any system or doctrines propounded by other schools. The Pūrva Mimāmsa School of Jaimini and the Uttara Mimāmsa or Vedānta School of Bādarāyaṇa both hold that the Vedas being eternal are the only *Pramānas* with regard to the results or fruits of good and bad deeds to be enjoyed in another birth or in another world where pleasure or pain has to be experienced as a consequence of one's deeds in this mundane world. They further hold that these effects are wholly beyond the ken of perception and other canons of evidence or *Pramānas*. Vedānta tentatively agrees to this view of the eternity of the Vedas only from the empirical standpoint.

However, the Vedas, as scientific and canonical texts for teaching Reality, have two distinct purposes to serve. Sri Shankara in his Sūtra Bhāshya 1-1-1 states: "*Abhyudaya Phalam Dharmajnānam, Tachha Anusthāna Apeksham; Nihshreyasa Phalam Tu Brahma Vijnānam, Na Cha Anusthānāntara Apeksham.*" - 'The knowledge of *Dharma* (religious duties taught in the Karma Kānda) has *Abhyudaya* i.e. prosperity, for its fruit, and it is dependent upon the performance (of a religious duty). The *Vijnāna* (Intuition) of Brahman, however, has the Highest Good (Final Release) for its fruit and It does not demand any performance.'

Besides, the functions and aims of the texts teaching Dharma and Brahman are quite different. Sri Shankara further says: "As for the text which is the *Pramāna* (means of knowledge) concerning Dharma, it enlightens a person simultaneously urging him (to engage in the duty) which is its object of teaching; the text concerning Brahman, however, merely enlightens a person (about It). The enlightenment having been born, the person is not urged to engage in that enlightenment, since that is born (of its own accord) by the text (itself), in the same way as a person (is not urged to engage in the knowledge) arising from the contact of the sense organ and its object." - Sūtra Bhāshya 1-1-1.

Thus there are two different exegetical works on the two topics, viz. Dharma and Brahman, which serve as the subject-matter of the two distinct sets of texts, viz. Karma Kānda and Jnāna Kānda. The Pūrva Mīmāṃsa of Jaimini deals with the knowledge of Dharma only, while Bādarāyaṇa's Uttara or Vedānta Mīmāṃsa teaches the Knowledge of Brahman. The vigilant student should discern that though both Dharma and Brahman are super-sensuous, the fruit of Dharma cannot be directly experienced in this life, but "Brahman to be enquired into is an already existent Entity, and being eternal does not depend upon the will of a person." Sri Shankara says in Sūtra Bhāshya 1-1-2: "*Na Dharma Jijnāsāyāmiva Shrutyādaya Eva Pramāṇam Brahma Jijnāsāyām; Kintu Shrutyādayō Anubhavādayascha Yathā Sambhavamīha Pramāṇam: Anubhavāvasānatwāt, Bhūta Vasthu Vishayatwāchha Brahma Jnānasya.*" - 'Shrutis and other (holy works) are not the only means of knowledge in the enquiry into Brahman as they exclusively are in the case of enquiry into Dharma, but Shrutis etc. and Intuition and the like are also the means of knowledge here according to the context. For, the Knowledge of Brahman has to culminate in (final) Intuition and treats of an already existent Entity.'

Brahman or Absolute Reality of Vedānta, being devoid of all specific features, can neither be expressed by words or thought of by the mind and hence can never be objectified. In fact, It is the prius of all objectification and all distinctions concerning subject and object relation in the empirical sphere (*Grāhya Grāhaka Bhāva*) and those of all action, factors of action and the result (*Kriyā Kāraka Phala Bhāva*) are essentially the One and only Ātman or the Self. It should be evident to the discerning student

that from this transcendental level of Ātman or Intuition there could be no world of diversity or multiplicity and not even the distinction of the Shāstra or Vedānta texts and the process of teaching. This is corroborated by Sri Gaudapāda in his Kārikas 1-17 and 18: "If the manifold universe were actually there (as an entity) it would have to be banished before attaining *Advaita* (non-duality). This duality is only a magical appearance; in truth, there is Non-duality (the Unity of Ātman) alone. The distinction (of Shāstra etc.) would have to actually disappear if it were a real thought-construct of some one person. This doctrine of distinctions is only a device for the purpose of teaching, and when the Reality is known there is no duality whatever."

This nature of non-dualistic Ātman has necessitated a particular device to make the Absolute Truth intelligible to seekers. This device is to deliberately attribute to Reality some empirical characteristic and when the truth is brought home to the student, finally to rescind the imputed characteristic (Refer to Diagram 4). This most important and unique technique is employed here because the Absolute Truth of Vedānta is unrestricted by and unrelated to anything else. This is not because that Its nature is such that nothing else can contact It, but because It is the All and there is absolutely nothing else beside It which can restrict, qualify or modify It or can be related to It; nor even compared or contrasted with It, for It is '*Nishkalam, Nishkriyam, Shāntam, Niravadyam, Niranjanam*' as stated in Shvetāshwatara Upanishad (6-19): - 'Without parts, without activity or change, undisturbed, free from all defects, untainted.' The Absolute or Transcendental Truth can neither be described by words nor conceived through thought-forms. The so-called empirical world of words and thoughts along with their objects does not exist apart from It. In fact, the world is an appearance of names and forms, which are in essence one with the Absolute.

The Upanishads do not dogmatically assert or presuppose the existence of Reality and then undertake to establish It by specious arguments just as some theological systems do. The Vedānta texts have no postulate to defend as in the case of all other schools of philosophy. Nor is there any need for these Upanishads to take recourse to any *critique* of reason to refute and defeat all other rational systems. The Kathōpanishad 2-9 says: "*Naishā Tarkena Matirāpaneyā Prōktānyenaiva Sujnānāya Preshta*" - 'This

knowledge is neither attained (nor refuted) by speculative reason or debate. It is easily Intuited, my dear boy, when taught by some other person who is not a speculator.'

As Brahman lies beyond the reach of the senses and the mind and hence can never be comprehended through those *Pramāṇas* or valid means of right knowledge, the Upanishads do not rely on any natural *Pramāṇas*. They reiterate that Brahman or Ātman as the Self of all is self-evident and self-revealing and hence is in no need whatsoever of any canon of evidence. **In this dilemmatic predicament, it stands to the great credit of the wisdom of the Upanishads in which there lurks, as it were, implicitly an immaculate, nay foolproof, method of teaching this Absolute or Transcendental Truth, which as It is, can neither be grasped or objectified through any empirical means.** This ancient traditional method, known by the name of 'Adhyārōpa Apavāda Nyāya', was almost lost to the spiritual world when the post-Shankara sub-commentators (with the sole exception of Sri Sureshwarāchārya, one of the direct disciples of Sri Shankara) dragged Vedānta into the spheres of dogmas and dialectics, on the one hand, and into the mystical aberrations, on the other. It was given to Sri. Satchidānandendra Saraswati Swamiji, of revered memory, the founder of Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya Holenarsipur (with a branch at Bangalore) to revive and resuscitate this time-honoured tradition and cleanse post-Shankara Advaita Vedānta of all its insidious dross that it had accumulated over a thousand years and more.

And what is this method which transforms magically, as it were, all the seeming chaos into cosmos with regard to the sacred Upanishadic literature ? Sri Shankara was, perhaps, the first traditional teacher after his grand preceptor, Sri Gaudapāda (there are no extant works of Sri Govindapādāchārya, the Guru of Sri Shankara), to refer to this traditional method – in the *Gītā Bhāshya* specifically. The fact that its employment for revealing the abstruse nature of the Ultimate Reality was known long before him (but was, perhaps, imparted to fully qualified disciples in secrecy) is disclosed by a quotation of Sri Shankara himself (*Gītā Bhāshya* 12-13): "*Tathā Hi Sampradāya Vidām Vachanam 'Adhyārōpa Apavādābhyām Nishprapancham Prapanchyate' Iti.*" - "Accordingly, knowers of the traditional method have declared - 'that which is devoid of all distinctions and details is explained

through deliberate superimposition and rescission.'-"
 Superimposition (Adhyārōpa) literally means 'laying something on something else, falsely imputing the nature or property of something to something else'. It is a postulate of Vedānta that, owing to a natural tendency of the human mind, a beginningless superimposition called 'Avidyā' compels us all to look upon the only Reality without a second as infected with manifold distinctions. Now in order to educate the mind to interpret Reality as It is, the Upanishads uniformly employ the aforesaid method.

The Two Steps

This method is utilised in two steps. **The first step is to use empirical words normally expressing objects to indicate the Reality by negating the opposite significance.** For instance, take the Taittirīya quotation 2-1: '*Satyam Jñānam Anantam Brahma; Yō Veda Nihitam Guhāyām Parame Vyōman; Sōshnute Sarvān Kāmān Saha; Brahmanā Vipaschiteti.*' - 'Whoever knows Brahman as Reality, Consciousness and Infinity as placed in the cave of this subtlest Ākāsha, he attains all desires simultaneously as the all-knowing Brahman.' Here the words 'Reality, Consciousness and Infinity' suggest Brahman by negating what is unreal, unconscious and finite, respectively. **By the collocation of these words we are prompted to comprehend that Brahman is of the nature of 'Infinite Reality and Consciousness' and since It is the Self or Ātman of each one of us, we can conclude that the scripture wants us to know that our real Self is Brahman of this essential nature.** Thus while the words retain their significance they exclude all that is unreal, insentient and finite, and since they refer to our core or essential nature of Being, viz. the Self, the proposition seeks to convey the idea that our changing and transmigratory soul or individual self (the ego), which is sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious, is not meant here at all. On the contrary, only the true Ātman or the Self, the Witnessing Principle and the *very prius* of all this manifested universe — hidden, as it were, in each one of us — is Brahman, and that the Highest Reality, the Reality of the apparent reality of the empirical sphere, is Itself infinity and Consciousness all in One.

The second step of the Adhyārōpa Apavāda Nyāya is to superimpose or attribute deliberately a property or

characteristic or feature on Brahman or the Self and from that standpoint to negate what is more obviously divined as not to pertain to it. And when this purpose of this negation has been achieved the original or earlier attribution is itself rescinded or negated by assuming the thought-position of a subtler superimposition, which eventually enables every one to Intuit the Ultimate Truth transcending all limitations or circumscriptions that the thought-constructs of time- space-causation categories impose on matter or any empirical entity.

Here a warning has to be sounded that the student should never forget that Brahman or the Vedāntic Non-dual Reality is not something other than what we conceive as this familiar objective world. It is *the only Reality* of this apparent world, but it so happens that the human mind has an innate, natural proclivity to project and regard this phenomenal world alone as real and, strangely enough, to consider it as a bundle of real and unreal things. **The Upanishads fully take advantage of this inveterate tendency of the human mind, called *Avidyā* or Nescience and adopt a masterly device to take an apparently real thing for the really real for the time being and in doing so it helps the seeker to discard the obviously unreal as unreal.** Thereafter the apparently real aspect also is discarded by assuming something else to be really real. Thus according to this **ingenious method** of our forbears, this process of shifting of standpoints gradually from the apparently real to the really real culminates in Intuiting Brahman as the substratum, all-pervading and all-supporting, and as the One Non-dual Absolutely Real Entity.

In the Chhāndōgya Upanishad 6-1-4 it is said: "This is just as, my dear boy, by means of one lump of clay known, all that is made up of clay would become known: the effect (names and forms) is merely a play of words and that it is all clay is the only truth." Here clay being taken to be the material cause of all things made of clay is shown to be the only real substrate underlying all the effects such as a pot or a plate, which are taken to be real by the common people on account of their various causal efficiencies or utilities. A pot has a different utility than a plate, but as a matter of fact it is only clay that gets different names owing to different sizes and uses to which these earthenware are put. Here apparently clay is taken to be real relatively to the different sizes and uses, but when clay itself is taken to be an effect it becomes

in its turn a mere play of words. Relative to its cause, clay also becomes an effect and thereby is rendered unreal, which is the rescission or *Apavāda* of the reality of clay.

Such commonplace examples of earthenware, gold ornaments and iron implements, taken from the empirical world, are used in the Upanishads finally to draw the conclusion that the effect is not really existent apart from its cause and is neither the cause as it is. There is a stamp of unreality in the effect and the latter is only a false notion superimposed on the substrate of the cause. Thus the wrong notions of the human mind regarding the cause-effect factor is cleverly utilised by the Upanishads to enable the seeker to shift his attention from the effect of the world to its cause of Brahman and the truth of Vedānta brought home that the world as an effect of Brahman is unreal in the ultimate analysis and can never exist by itself apart from its substratum, Brahman. Thus the causal relation between Brahman and the world is indeed another *deliberate superimposition* or *Adhyārōpa* to be later abrogated by bringing home the fact that cause-effect relationship can exist only in time and space, but there cannot be any such relationship between the Absolute and the phenomenal or temporal and all percepts and concepts through which the phenomenal world is known or experienced by every one have the Brahmic Intuition or **Sākshi Anubhava** as their essence. Thus when the technique of the Upanishadic method, intended to take the enquirer from the known familiar empirical sphere to the unknown Intuitive Absolute sphere of Brahman or the Self, enables the seeker to take an identification Intuitively in his essential core of Being and begin objectifying all other phenomenal entities (and never the Self), the purpose of the scriptures is fulfilled; for, then the distinctions of the seeker and the sought are nullified and the Truth is **directly Intuited without any medium at all to be the only Entity without a second, i.e. Brahman or the Self is the non-dual, Absolute Reality.** This is what is meant by all negating texts such as “This is Ātman described as ‘not this, not that’” (Brihadāranyaka 3-9-26); “Neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long, not red, not viscid” (Br. 3-8-8). All such negations of some property or characteristic do not necessarily mean the absence of or something different from or opposed to what is denied. “Neti, Neti” (‘Not this, not that’) denies everything that can possibly be conceived.

It may be argued here that this sweeping absolute negation may lead us to an absurd position of denying even the act of denying and, what is more serious, to the *denial of even the denier himself*. But this repugnant conclusion and absurdity would undoubtedly follow if we restrict ourselves to the language and thought of empirical life. However, here only the apparent reality of everything phenomenal is negated *but not the transcendental ground* on which everything phenomenal is superimposed. Even when everything else is negated, *the real Reality remains untouched or undisturbed by this negation*. In fact, **even the function of negating all else is made possible by taking a stand in this Eternal Witnessing Principle of Intuition or Pure Consciousness called 'Ātman' or the Self. By Intuition we come to know here and now that everything phenomenal is, in truth, Brahman which is beyond all language and thought and therefore can neither be affirmed nor negated.**

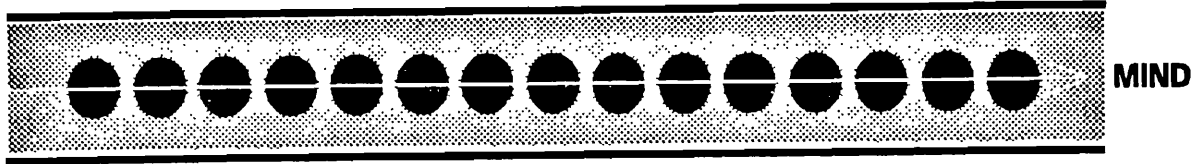
C. Sākshi Anubhava or Vedāntic Intuition: The student should be careful to understand the distinctive meaning and import of 'Vedānta Vijnāna' or 'Anubhava' when it is applied to the knowledge of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. The Brihadāranyaka Upanishad 2-5-19 says: "*Ayamātmā Brahma Sarvānubhūhu Ityanushāsanam*" - 'This Ātman is Brahman, He is the Intuitor of all: this is the teaching.' The word 'Anubhava' in Sanskrit is used to denote immediate apprehension either by one of the senses or by the mind itself. It is well-known how we perceive the colour of an object with the help of the organ of sight, viz. the eyes, and how we conceive joy or sorrow, fear or curiosity without any assistance or mediation of reason. All these are, really speaking, *partial Intuitions* which are events in time and so they are born and cease to exist in time. **But how are we aware or conscious of the senses or of these sensations about things outside themselves? How do we come to know the mind and its functions themselves? And how do we come to know the presence or absence of the mind itself together with all its various modifications?** Further 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. Even so, it is common knowledge that we do not know when and how the mind, our internal instrument or means of conception, and the senses, our external means of perception, function in the waking state and cease their functions in states like deep sleep. Now this

innate faculty lurking in our bosom, so to say, enabling all of us to have this *direct insight* is what is called '**Sākshi Anubhava**' or Plenary Intuition in Vedānta. We may herefore call this the *Vedāntic Intuition* or plainly as *Intuition* (with a capital letter 'I').

The sensual and the mental Intuitions, called perceptions and conceptions, respectively, can be remembered or recollected when a person makes the necessary efforts to do so. "I can quite recall the colour 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" - all such statements of recollection of sensual or psychic experiences in our everyday life confirm this fact. If these mutations in us either at the senses level or the mind level, which are common temporal happenings, are apprehended in ourselves, what aspect of our being could enable us to objectify them as *experiences coming and going and remain immutable as an unaffected subject* ? This then is called the Vedāntic Anubhava or Intuition, variously called '**Ātman**', '**Brahman**', the '**Ultimate Reality**' or the '**Self of all**'.

The senses and the mind have, no doubt, the power of reaching external objects by their inherent nature or faculty to perceive or conceive external things spontaneously, but the question posed by Vedānta is: What is that *immutable light of awareness* on the strength of which this *aggregate* of the body, the senses and the mind carries on its various functions ? And, Vedānta, as a *Science of Reality*, answers this question convincingly by saying: "It is the **inner Light of Ātman** and It is this Intuition which constitutes the inherent nature of man or any other individual creature. This Vedāntic Intuition or Pure Consciousness can directly, without having had to depend upon any media or means, apprehend anything and is eternal guide in all human procedures."

It might be suspected by some that this so-called 'Intuition' is after all the mind only that inspires the aggregate of the body and the senses to move about and perform its functions. This might be justified if it were only a question of inference, but there is no room whatsoever for inference of this type in Vedānta, which undertakes to determine the Ultimate Reality behind Life in its entirety. The mind cannot itself come in contact with the external world of objects except through the doorways of the five senses. Moreover, the *mind is nothing but a flow of thoughts*, but, at the



■ PURE CONSCIOUSNESS (Conscious Continuum)

● THOUGHT (VRITTI)

Diagram 1

same time, it has an innate faculty to compare or contrast two concepts of things either in juxtaposition in space or perceived successively in time. But the *process of knowing* anything is itself possible only by the mind undergoing modifications, however subtle they may be, and then it becomes obvious to a discerning person that the mind can never have two thoughts simultaneously, though this fact may not be very clear to the common run of people not used to view such aspects of life incisively or analytically. To *divine* these continuous mutations of the mind naturally there must be a **Conscious Continuum** beyond the realm of change over and above the mind and its faculties and That alone can become the *fountainhead of all functions of Life*. Thus it can now be easily discerned that the idea of similarity or dissimilarity or for that matter, identity of two things in two points of time or in two different situations *desiderates or presupposes a constant, immutable Witnessing Consciousness*, which endures independently and hence is beyond time, space and causation factors. **This Witnessing Principle is called 'Sākshi Anubhava' or Intuition in Vedānta.** (Refer to Diagram on page 76)

While a person is dreaming he actually experiences as seeing an objective world which is like the replica of the waking world, but he realises on waking that it was all a make-believe impression. What is the *light* that aids the person to see this seeming replica of the waking? **Vedānta brings home the truth that none of the waking adjuncts could possibly pass over to that dream state and neither can the consciousness of the waking mind nor the sensations of the waking state could do so.** Nevertheless, he objectifies all the dream phenomena with the aid of his own *Consciousness*. Now this constant (or continuum of) Consciousness, which is the Witnessing Principle for both the waking and the dream phenomena, is the Vedāntic Intuition, which is nothing but *Ātman* or the Self. This *Ātman*, who is beyond the time, space, causation complexes of these two states,

does not need any light, which has to operate actively as the mind does when it becomes aware of external objects in the waking state. It is evident that **Ātman is self-illuminating and is His own Light** when He objectifies dream as a whole, just as He is when He is conscious of the waking as a whole. In addition, we have the Intuition of the invariable Consciousness of Ātman in and by itself, pure and untainted, 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 truth that the genuine Vedāntic Intuition, *which is the Witness of the waking ego as well as the dream ego*, is never affected by the appearances or changes of the external (waking) or the internal (dream) worlds, can be divined from the fact that its essential nature of Pure Consciousness or Absolute Reality *persists* even while It appears to be passing through the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep **as their common denominator and substratum; similarly through birth, stages of life and through creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe.**

The central philosophy of Vedānta, its main teaching, thus culminates in *knowing* or rather identifying and establishing oneself in the Brahmic Intuition or Pure Consciousness, and unless and until the seeker can discern the distinction between Intuition and Its manifestations in the forms of the mental concepts and the sensual percepts, he will not be able to follow the Vedāntic texts. **Hence this is one of the most important fundamentals.**

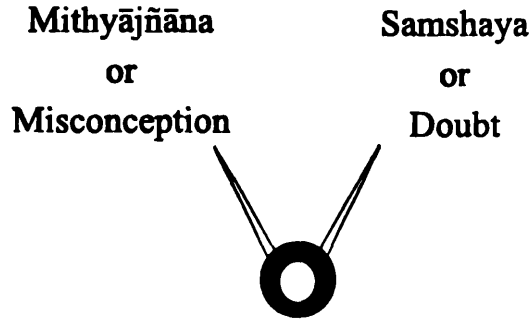
D. Vyāvahārika Drishti (Empirical Viewpoint) and Pāramārthika Drishti (Transcendental or Absolute Viewpoint): There are two ways of looking at the universe, one from the standpoint of the senses, the mind and the intellect and the other from the standpoint of the Vedānta Shāstra or the Upanishads. The first standpoint is a partial view held by the common uninitiated man and is known as *Loukika Drishti* (the commonsense viewpoint) or *Vyāvahārika Drishti* (the practical viewpoint of human procedure or behaviour). It is also called the empirical viewpoint, because mostly it relies on observation and experiment. Though useful for practical purposes, it restricts itself only to one partial manifestation of Life, i.e. waking state only. But the Shāstra Drishti, as taught by the Vedānta Shāstra, covers the whole of Life.

which is nothing other than Brahman or the Absolute Reality. It is known as *Pāramārthika Drishti* or the Transcendental viewpoint, for it is possible only when a person takes a stand in his essential nature as Ātman, Brahman or the Self.

The Upanishads employ both these standpoints when they attempt to enlighten the seekers of Truth, but the viewpoint chosen depends upon the level of the intellect or the purity of heart of the particular student. Besides, the Reality taught by the Upanishads can never be objectified either by means of word or thought, but can only be Intuited. The words or language used in common parlance or in any alien systems which do not recognise the basic distinction between these two viewpoints are not adequate and suitable and they have to be **invested with special meanings** to suggest the unique and peculiar concepts of Vedānta in an exclusive sense, enabling the seeker to rise to the level of Intuiting the Absolute or Transcendental aspect of Reality. This necessitates determination of the exact import of such words and sentences referring to the esoteric truths taught by Vedānta. These universal truths are often couched in a special style and language in the Upanishadic lore in the forms of narratives, contrasting them with empirical notions of dialogues, debates and dialectical disputations frequently utilised for the purpose of leading the enquirer to the deeper truths which have to be verified or to be gradually arrived at by reasoning based on partial Intuitions; of mnemonic formulae designed to chasten the memory of the seeker and of symbols and fanciful derivations—all of which are freely used and which the unwary student may gloss over or even misinterpret if not elucidated and pointed out by a knowledgeable teacher.

It will be evident to the student now that the Vedānta Shāstra as a *scientific treatise* for teaching the Absolute Reality accepts the Vyāvahārika Drishti of the common ignorant man tentatively as a superimposition or *Adhyārōpa Drishti* and then adopts a rational analysis of Life based on universal acceptance and comprehensive outlook or **Intuitive discrimination** to rescind the wrong notions that are there naturally in the mind of the seeker. Even in the empirical sphere a misconception invariably arises in the mind of a person as a result of a lack of the correct knowledge of the truth. In fact, when a person suffers from a lack of the correct knowledge, which is called '*Ajnāna*' in Vedānta, it takes the form of either a

misconception (or wrong knowledge of the truth that is hidden, as it were, from him) or doubt. Thus the misconception or wrong knowledge and the doubting are seen as off-shoots of ignorance



Ajñāna or Ignorance

Diagram 2

(*Avidyā* or *Ajnāna*). This *Ajnāna* is inherent or instinctive in the mind and can never be traced to a cause. At best, it can be explained that a lack of the correct knowledge is itself the cause for this misconception or wrong knowledge. This truth of empirical life is taken advantage of by Vedānta and the concept of *Avidyā* is utilised as a superimposition or *Adhyārōpa* on the Intuitive Knowledge of *Ātman*, the Reality without a second. **Vedānta teaches the student that *Avidyā* or *Ajnāna* always manifests itself in the forms of misconception or doubting and is never realised as it is by a person who is already under its spell.** This *Avidyā* indubitably is removed by *Vidyā* or the right knowledge of the truth, for the two are opposed to each other and can never coexist in the same person.

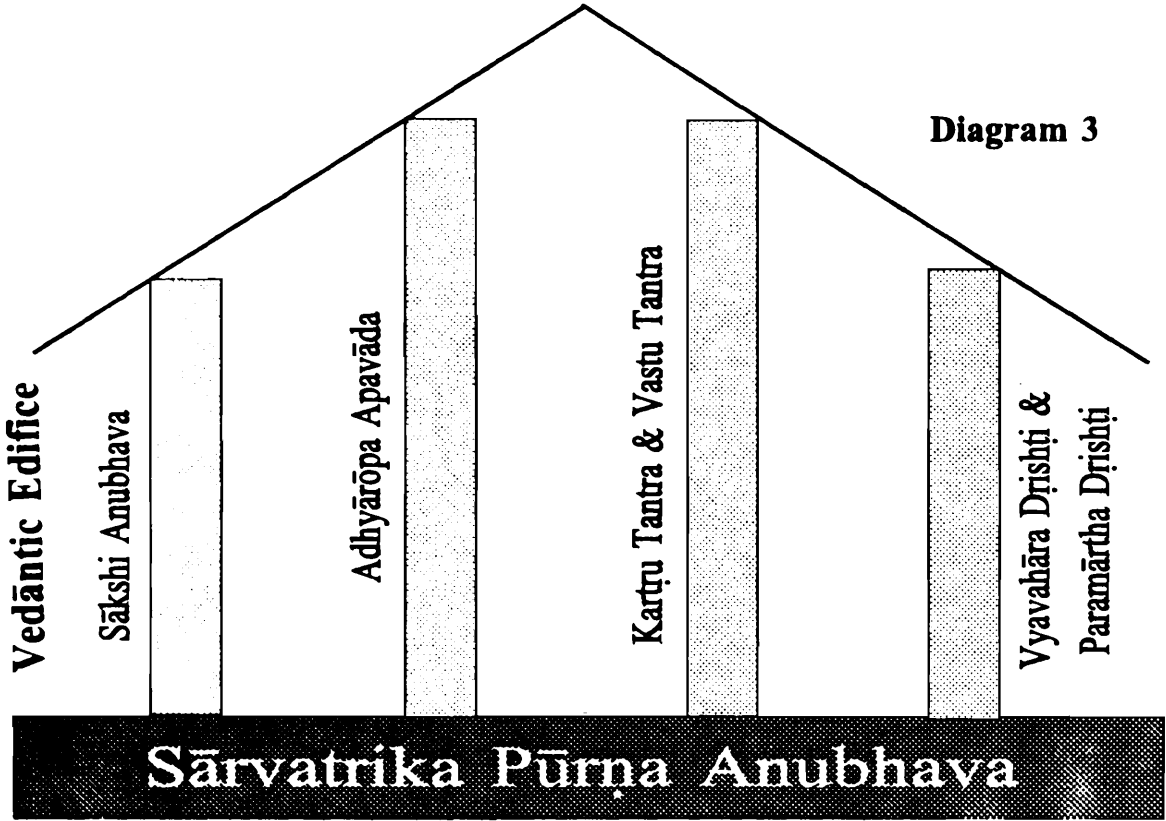
Vedānta calls the misconception *Adhyāsa*, which is shown to be a natural tendency of the mind to superimpose mutually the real and the unreal and their respective natures. This concept of *Adhyāsa* has been explained in detail earlier in this book. Thus when the Vedānta Shāstra adopts the Transcendental viewpoint based on Intuition or Pure Consciousness, it enables the seeker to take a stand in his essential nature as the Self or *Ātman* and rescind all ascriptions made deliberately by the Shāstra or naturally foisted by the mind.

E. Kartu Tantra (what is within the purview of a performer or practioner) and Vastu Tantra (solely dependent upon the entity): Lastly, the student will be required to know clearly yet another fundamental teaching of Vedānta texts, which is, in fact,

a corollary of the Adhyārōpa Apavāda Nyāya. If he has by now discriminated between Ātman or the Self (who is identical with Intuition) and the ego, he will be able **to conclude that the ego is nothing but a superimposition on Ātman or Intuition as a result of Avidyā or Adhyāsa.** Consequently, the Vedāntic texts assume tentatively the reality of the ego and his paraphernalia, comprising the intellect, the mind, the senses, and the external world, but by adopting a gradual process of *Vichāra* or Intuitive reasoning enable the seeker to cognise the one and only Reality of Intuition behind the appearance of the world of the ego. **For this purpose, the Vedāntic texts make a distinction between what is predicated of the ego** and what is Intuitive beyond the realm and reach of the ego. Vedānta calls the first as *Kartru Tantra* or that which is within the realm or control of the ego and the second as *Vastu Tantra* or that which is to be Intuited as it is and is not within the control of the ego. Obviously, the ego with all its fancies and follies has the alternatives of doing a thing, not doing it or doing it in altogether a different manner than stipulated or expected. But a truth can be known as it is, not depending on the whims and fancies of the ego. **The three alternatives open to the ego cannot apply here in Vedānta when it endeavours to teach the Ultimate Reality of Ātman or Pure Consciousness.** There can never be an alternative for Truth nor even a change in It. This Truth of Life as taught by Vedānta can only be Intuited and not grasped or comprehended by the intellect belonging to the realm of the ego. In fact, **Intuition is the substratum and the prius for all the functions of the ego and its intellect.**

Thus the Vedāntic texts predominantly teach Intuition as the *summum bonum* of Life and distinguish between Intuitive Knowledge and *Upāsana* or meditations, for the former is *Vastu Tantra* and the latter *Kartru Tantra*. It will be evident now to the diligent student that the earlier portions of the Vedas, viz. Karma Kānda and Upāsana Kānda, come under the empirical sphere and hence are *Kartru Tantra* but Vedāntas or the Upanishads, the texts for teaching the Reality of Brahman or Ātman, teach as *Vastu Tantra* or appeal to the seeker to Intuit Reality as It is, which is the core of our Being, self-evident and self-existing desiderating no media or *Pramānas* for knowing or cognising It.

The student will now be able to appreciate fully the fact that Vedānta, which is a supra-science of Life in its totality and not a

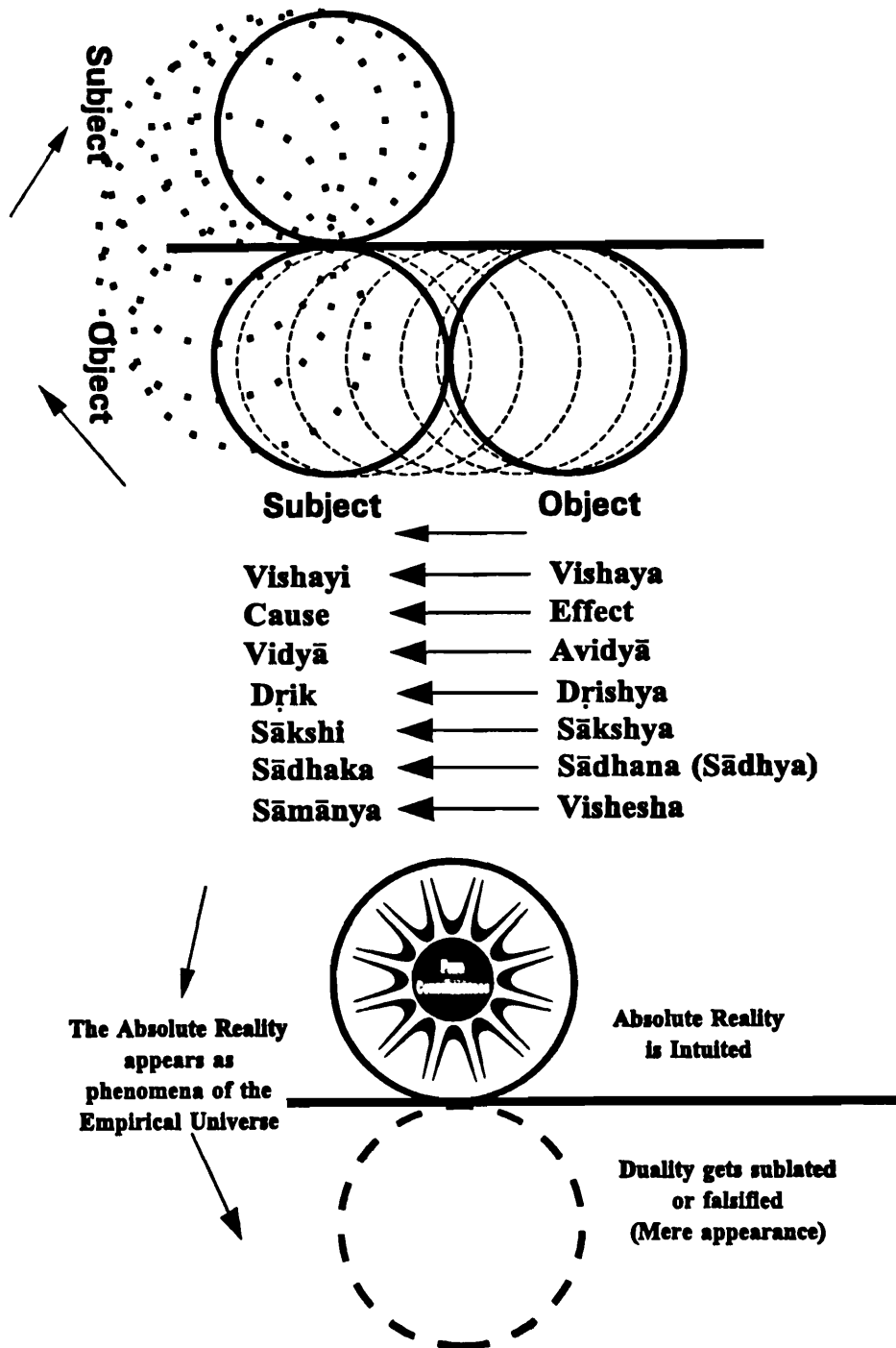


speculative philosophy, has built up its magnificent edifice on the firm foundation of *Sārvatrika and Pūrṇa Anubhava* and that its beautiful upper structure remains unshakeable with its four strong pillars of: 1. Sākshi Anubhava, 2. Adhyārōpa Apavāda, 3. Kartru Tantra and Vastu Tantra and 4. Vyāvahārika Drishti and Pāramārthika Drishti as depicted in the Diagram.



IV. THE RATIONALE OF VEDĀNTIC METHOD

It must never be forgotten that Brahman or Reality, according to the Upanishads, is not something other than what we conceive as this familiar world. It is **the only Reality** of this apparent world. Only, the human mind has a natural inveterate tendency to project and regard this phenomenal world alone as real, and to consider it as a bundle of real and unreal things. The Upanishads take



advantage of this tendency called *Avidyā* (ignorance), and taking an apparently real thing for the really real for the time being, discard some other thing, the obviously unreal as unreal, and then reject the reality of the apparently real also by assuming something else to be really real. **Thus, according to this method, the apparently real becomes a means to determine the really real, while all along the method keeps in mind that Brahman alone is the one Absolutely Real Entity.**

We may illustrate this by means of an example taken from the Chhāndāgya Upanishad:-

"This is just as, my dear boy, by means of one lump of clay known, all that is made up of clay would become known; the effect is merely a play of words and that it is all clay, is the only truth." Chh. 6-1-4.

Here clay, being taken to be the material cause of all things made of clay, is shown to be the only real substrate underlying all the effects such as a pot or pitcher which are also considered to be real on account of their causal efficiency. As a matter of fact, it is only clay that gets so many names, owing to different sizes and uses to which these earthen-ware are put.

Here apparently clay is taken to be real, relatively to the vessels, but when taken to be an effect it becomes, in its turn, a mere play of words. Shaṅkara in his commentary on the Gītā, says:-

"Just as the form of an earthen pot being examined with the eye is not seen apart from clay and is therefore unreal, so also every effect is unreal because it is not known to be distinct from its cause." GBh. 2-16.

[Evidently the reality assumed of clay is only relative to the effect pot etc., but, relative to its own cause, clay is also unreal. This is the *Apavāda of the reality of clay.*]

This example from the empirical world is used in the Upanishads to draw the conclusion that the world, having Brahman for its cause, is unreal because it is not known to exist apart from Brahman or Ātman. The causal relation between Brahman and the world, of course, is another 'Ādhyārōpa' (deliberate superimposition to be abrogated later on), the truth being that Brahman alone is absolutely real.

This is the technique of the method used by the Upanishads when they intend to take the enquirer from the known empirical world to the unknown Brahman. But when that becomes known as It actually is, when Brahman is not an object at all, when one knows It, or rather Intuits It directly without any medium at all, how should one express the nature of Reality? Here is the answer in a Shrutī quoted in the Sūtra-Bhāshya :-

"And it is known through a Shruti that Bādhva questioned by Bāshkali explained It by means of not speaking alone :- He said 'Teach me (Brahman), revered sir,' He kept silent. When questioned a second and a third time, he (Bādhva) replied: 'We are really telling It, but you do not comprehend It; this Ātman is devoid of all multiplicity'." SBh. 3-1-17.

The best way of expressing one's direct Intuition is silence. This is what is meant by all negating texts such as "This is the Ātman who has been described as 'not this, not that'" (Br. 3-9-26), 'Neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long, not red, not viscid' (Br. 3-8-8). The negation of some property does not necessarily mean the absence of, or something different from or opposed to what is denied. 'Neti neti' (not this, not that) denies everything possibly conceivable. Does not this sweeping, Absolute negation lead us to the absurd position of denying even the act of denying and, what is more serious, to the denial of even the denier himself ? This repugnant conclusion and absurdity would certainly follow, if we restricted ourselves to the language and thought of empirical life. But here, only the apparent reality of everything phenomenal is negated and not the transcendental ground on which everything phenomenal is superimposed. Even when everything else is negated, the real Reality remains untouched by the negation, because by Intuition we know that everything phenomenal is really Brahman which is beyond all language and thought and therefore can neither be affirmed nor negated. Denial of everything is only the other way of saying that silence is the best way of describing Reality. Accordingly Shāṅkara in his Sūtra- Bhāshya writes :-

"There is no appropriate way of describing (It) other than this, hence 'not this, not that' (To explain:) For, indeed, there is no description of Brahman other than the negation of the phenomenal manifold."

SBh. 3-2-22.



V. THE METHOD APPLIED IN THE UPANISHADS (Āgama and Tarka)

The application of the method has to be considered now. This will illustrate how Vedānta utilizes the distinction of the empirical and the transcendental standpoints in its procedure to convince the inquirer that Brahman is the only Ultimate Reality, and that the epistemological and ontological facts are not affected in the least in spite of the Vedāntic teaching that Brahman or Ātman is the only Reality.

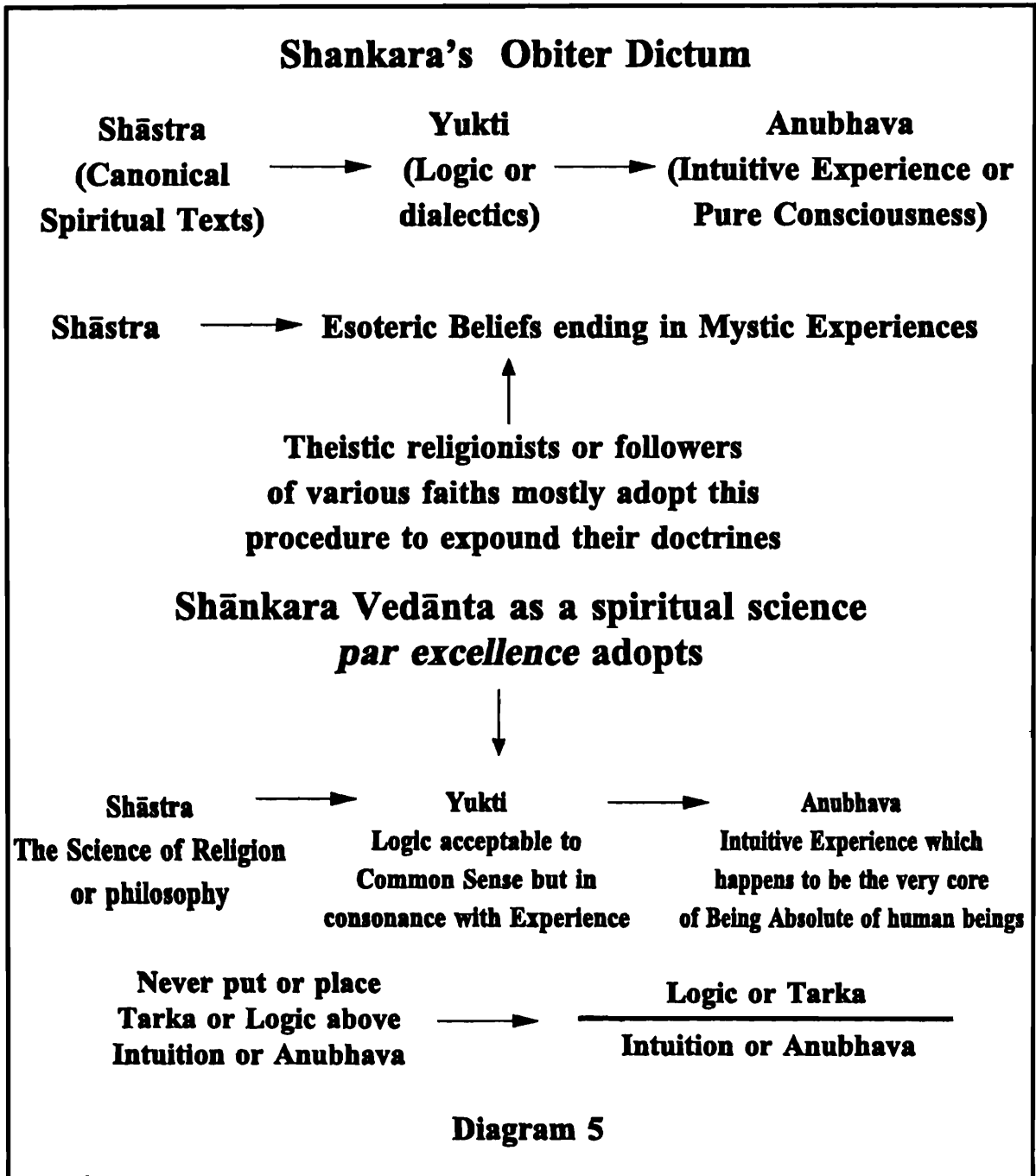
Does Vedānta accept the *Pramāṇas*, valid sources of right knowledge ? This question does not arise here because *Pramāṇas* are accepted only by those who are dealing with objects of empirical knowledge and Vedānta is not interested in proving or disproving the reality of the objects or disputing the nature, number or validity of the *Pramāṇas*. The empirical world as it appears to all is accepted only as a device to lead the seeker to the really real Brahman and then where the non-dual Ātman alone is Intuited, the *Pramāṇas* as well as all phenomena will have become one with Reality. As the Shruti says:-

"Where there is duality, as it were, there one sees another there one knows another. But when everything has become Ātman alone, then whom could one see and with whatthen whom could one know and with what ? "

Br. 4-5-15.

A difficulty may rear up its head here. If *Pramāṇas* are discarded altogether, how is the seeker to know the Reality ? He would have no means of knowledge at all, and Vedānta would lose its vocation if even the Upanishads were discarded as a source of knowledge ! And how could a Vedāntin undertake to refute the position of the other schools of thought if the principles of logic or the *Pramāṇas* were not accepted at all ?

This difficulty is founded more on fancy than on facts. For, we have already stated that Vedānta is not interested in defending or disputing the validity of the *Pramāṇas*. The Upanishads only suggest the nature of Reality to the enquirer, and the fully qualified seeker of truth at once Intuits his own Self to be that



Reality. In this sense, the Upanishads are a *means of knowledge* before the Intuition, inasmuch as they remind the enquirer that there is no distinction of the knower, means of knowledge and the known in the Absolute or Ātman, and no distinction of teacher and the taught. In the Reality Itself, the Ātman Absolute Intuited as such, there is absolutely no place for perception and other Pramāṇas or even for the Vedas, nor is there any need for any revealer for the self-resplendent Ātman. (Refer to Br. 2-4-14; 4-3-22; 4-4-7)

Shankara thus explains how the unobjectifiable Brahman is known through the Upanishads which are considered to be a '*Pramāna*' for It :-

"(Objection:-) If Brahman is not an object, It cannot be consistently held to be (knowable) through the (Vedānta) Shāstra as a valid means of knowledge !

(Reply:-) No;for, the Shāstra purports to wipe off the difference invented by Avidyā. (To explain:) The Shāstra indeed does not propose to teach Brahman as such and such an entity as its object, but it teaches that as one's inmost Self, It is unobjectifiable, and removes all differences such as that of the knowable, known and knowledge." SBh. 1-1-4.

The Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gītā and the Brahma-Sūtras are the three classical reservoirs of Vedāntic knowledge. These three sources approach the subject from three different angles and open up different vistas of study. The *Upanishads* are the original and perennial sources of the eternal truths of Vedānta and should be studied reverently. Their teachings have **to be assimilated not through faith and belief**, but verifying each revelation by and appeal to direct Intuition and reason based upon Intuition. Faith and belief may also be required in the case of Upanishadic teachings regarding *Upāsana*s or meditations. That is why Shankara writes in his Sūtra- Bhāshya:-

"In the enquiry into the nature of Brahman, it is not merely Shrutis etc. alone that are the valid means of knowledge, as is the case in the enquiry into the nature of *Dharma* (religious duty), but also Shrutis etc. and direct Intuition and the like are here the valid means according to the applicability of these. For knowledge of Brahman has to culminate in Intuition, and relates to an existent entity." SBh. 1-1-2.

[While meditation is only a mental act not in need of direct Intuition, knowledge relates to an entity immediately to be known, and therefore demands *immediate Intuition*.]

Anubhavādayashcha (Intuition etc. also) *Pramānam* (means of knowledge) - The meaning of this sentence should be carefully noted. Partial Intuitions such as those of waking, dream and deep-sleep *are the means, and the final Intuition of the secondless Ātman* is the resultant knowledge; 'etc.' here refers to reason based upon Intuition also as will be seen presently. Brahman being a self-existent Entity, demands not only immediate Intuition, but in the case of persons who may be beset with doubts and

misconceptions, a suitable course of *reasoning* also. That is why Shāṅkara observes as follows:-

“While, however, there are the texts teaching the cause of the origination etc., of the universe, inference also not in conflict with the Vedānta texts may become a valid means of knowledge, and as such it is not ruled out, since it serves the purpose of stabilizing the grasp of the meaning of those texts, inasmuch as the Shruti itself has admitted reasoning as an aid (to it). For instance, the Shruti: ‘(Ātman) is to be heard about, to be reflected on’ (Br. 2-4-5), as also (the text): ‘Well-informed and shrewd, he would reach the country of the Gāndhāras itself; so also here, one who has an adept teacher knows the truth’ (Chh. 6-14-2) shows the need of human intelligence as an aid to it.” SBh. 1-1-2.

The reader should be careful to note that the phrases - ‘inference also’ and ‘when it becomes a means of valid knowledge’- are used in special senses, and not in their usual senses of ‘syllogistic inference’ and ‘immediate means of right knowledge’. This is quite in fitting with the technique used by the Upanishads. ‘*Purusha Buddhi*’ (human intelligence) refers to the intelligence of both the teacher and the taught. The disciple has to use his intelligence in grasping the teaching as well as in following it up with his personal reasoning in getting his doubts cleared by the teacher. And the teacher has to simplify the statements of the Shruti. Both will have to use reasoning on the lines indicated by the Shruti and never in conflict with it.

That the inference refers to **Vedāntic reasoning** alone is expressly stated in the following extract from Shāṅkara’s Sūtra-Bhāshya:-

“As for the other argument that the Shruti itself, enjoining reflection in addition to hearing or the study of Shruti, shows that reason also is to be respected, we reply:- Dry reasoning proffered by the Shruti alone is resorted to here as ancillary to Intuition.” SBh. 2-1-6.

“For this reason also, one should not stand up against what is to be known exclusively by the Āgama (*traditional teaching of the Shruti*); for, reasonings which are the outcome of mere surmises without any Āgama for basis, would be inconclusive; since a surmise has nothing to check it.” SBh. 2-1-10

“We have already observed that being devoid of colour (or form) etc., this Entity is no object of perception, and being devoid of the grounds etc., it is not an object of logical inference and other valid means of knowledge.” SBh. 2-1-11.

The Bhagavadgita is called by the name of the 'Smṛti-Prasthāna' in contrast with the Shrutis which are called the 'Struti-Prasthāna' and the Brahma-Sūtras known by the name of the 'Nyāya-Prasthāna'. Although these titles of the works are not to be found expressly employed by Shankara, they are significant of the different ways of approach adopted by them severally and so quite appropriate. The Shrutis (literally 'what are heard') are never referred to as records, scriptures or compositions of any particular great personages. They are only 'heard' and known by the disciples from the teachings of their masters and the truths they inculcate never depend upon the authority of the Rishis who are sometimes mentioned in them, Thus :-

"One result, they say, is obtained with the aid of *Vidyā*, and another, they say, is obtained with the aid of *Avidyā*. So **we have heard** the saying of the wise ones who have explained it to us." Isha. 10.

"It is altogether other than the known, and It is beyond the unknown. Thus **have we heard** our predecessors who explained It to us."Ke. 1-4.

"He has neither body nor any organ of sense; nobody is seen either equal or superior to Him. His supreme power **is heard** to be diverse as also His natural knowledge, strength and action." Sve. 6-8.

Even the Rishis are said to have **received** the Shrutis by means of their good deeds and acts of discipline but not to have themselves composed the texts:

"By the act of worship, they got the fitness to receive the Veda, and that word they received as it has entered into the Rishis." Rig. 10-71-3.

"The Maharshis (great seers) got the Vedas, which together with *Itihāsas* has disappeared at the end of the last cycle, by virtue of penance, with the permission of the Self-manifested One. " Mok.Dh. 210-19.

The *Bhagavadgītā*, on the other hand, is the work of the revered Vyāsa:-

"That (two-fold) Dharma, just as it was taught by the Lord, the omniscient and revered Veda-Vyāsa incorporated in a treatise in the form of seven hundred Shlōkas called the *Gītās*." GBh. Intro.

Hence being the composition of a human being, although a great (almost omniscient) Rishi, the *Gītās* or verses composed by Vyāsa,

as far as he could remember the teaching, have been together called a Smṛti, just like the *Manusmṛti* or even the *Vishnupurāna*, from which Shānkara has frequently quoted in his *Sūtra-Bhāshya*. This work, forming the *Smṛti-Prasthāna*, is only second in rank to the *Shruti-Prasthāna*, and it has to be interpreted so as to harmonize with the Upanishadic teaching.

The **Brahma-Sūtras** popularly so-called comprise what is called the *Sārīraka-Mīmāṃsa Sāstra* (the Shāstra devoted to the sacred enquiry into the real nature of the embodied self or Jīva), or the *Vedānta-Mīmāṃsa Sāstra* (The Shāstra devoted to the sacred enquiry into the meaning of the Vedāntas or the Upanishads). This constitutes, as we have already noticed, what is known as the *Nyāya-Prasthāna*, because it treats of the *Nyāyas* or principles governing the interpretation of the Vedānta texts. If the *Gītā* is a *Smṛti-Prasthāna*, aiming at an exposition of Vedānta and placing before us the application of the teaching to practical life, the *Sārīraka-Mīmāṃsa* is a *systematic exegesis both adopting the principles of the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsa* (the previous exposition of the *Karma-Kāṇḍa*) and supplementing them and evolving a new set of principles that are specially needed in understanding the meaning of Upanishadic texts that reveal the nature of Brahman which has to be known only through direct Intuition and reasoning based upon Intuition. Hence it is known by the title of the *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā* (Supplementary Exposition).

Brahman is technically *Āgamagamyā* (known through the *Āgama*) especially because it has to be Intuited with the help of the only right way of interpretation handed down by a succession of traditional teachers and disciples. To this day, the orthodox students of Shānkara-Bhāshyas on the Upanishads and the *Brahma-Sūtras*, solemnly repeat a sentence revering the traditional line of teachers to remind themselves that the traditional method of interpretation alone is being strictly followed in understanding the genuine Vedānta. This is, of course, liable to degenerate into a platitude, but nevertheless is pregnant with meaningful consequences when all its implications are borne in mind. The *Kāthakōpanishad* warns us thus :-

“This knowledge is not acquired (or refuted by) speculation; only when taught by another, it becomes easily intelligible, O my dear boy.”

Ka. 2-9.

"And that is why this knowledge, arising out of Vedic teaching, conduces to effective conviction only when taught by another, one other than a mere speculator, one who is specially proficient in Āgama."

Ka. Bh. 2-9.

Before concluding, we wish to repeat that only Āgama, the tradition which recognizes reason based upon Intuition and leads the seeker to universal Intuition of Ātman, is the genuine Pramāṇa here, and the so-called Pramāṇas or valid means of right knowledge, while they have their place in the empirical field, are really *Avidyā* (ignorance) so far as the transcendental Truth about Ātman is concerned.

It is sometimes supposed that the Vedāntic *Avidyā* is a mere doctrine formulated to explain the appearance of difference and manifoldness. That this is a hasty judgement, can be readily seen by any critical enquirer who cares to bestow the close attention which it deserves on the *Adhyāsa Bhāṣya*. For the present it will quite suffice to examine the following excerpt from that Introduction:

"How, again, are perception and other Pramāṇas and the Sāstras (only) for the man (infected) with ignorance ?

"We reply : Inasmuch as one who does not entertain the notion of me and mine with regard to the body, and the senses etc., cannot be reasonably a knower, and hence the means of knowledge cannot reasonably function. (To explain:-) There cannot be any talk of perception and other (means of knowledge) without presupposing the senses. Nor can there be the function of the senses without the body as their resting place; and no one can do any act with the body on which the idea of the self is not superimposed. And there cannot be knowership consistently in the Ātman who is intrinsically unattached to anything, unless all this (the idea of 'me' in the body and the idea of 'mine' in the senses) is assumed. And there can be no functioning of the senses unless there is knowership in the Ātman. Therefore perception and other Pramāṇas, and the Shāstras also, are only for the man steeped in ignorance."

Adh. Bh.

It will be noted that the term *Avidyā* is used in a special sense in Vedānta and the division of knowledge into *Vidyā* (right knowledge) and *Avidyā* (error) in empirical life, remains undisturbed by this transcendental terminology. *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* in other systems, refer to empirical knowledge only and that division is unaffected and unchanged until the transcendental knowledge of Ātman

dawns. The following excerpt from the Gītā-Bhāshya will make this clear:-

“When the true nature of the Ātman has been known, there is no longer the convention of the means and the object of knowledge ; for, the final means sublaes the knowership of Ātman too and while sublating it, it becomes itself no Pramāṇa, just as the means of knowledge obtaining in a dream (becomes no Pramāṇa) on waking. ” GBh. 2-69.

Avidyā therefore as a *tendency of the mind* to mix up the real and the unreal, is a *fact, not a theory* brought forward just to account for appearances. The distinction of truth and error, as well as of reality and unreality in the empirical sphere, is not denied by Vedānta ; for, the division rigorously holds good relatively to that sphere. Only, the division is not absolutely real.

As Shankara rightly observes:-

“Therefore, all secular and sacred convention is consistent before the dawn of the Knowledge of one’s being identical with Brahman. Just as to the common man who has fallen asleep and sees all sorts of dream-objects, high and low, there arises the notion with a certainty that it is real perception, but *never at the time* does it occur to him that it is only a *semblance of perception*, so should this (reality of perception also be regarded).” SBh. 2-1-14.

The above-mentioned illustration of the distinction of dream and waking, is all right so far as we are concerned with the ascertainment of truth and reality with the help of a concept in waking; but, from another standpoint from which we judge both dream and waking, the latter loses its claim to be in possession of higher truth and reality as compared with dream. **And from the standpoint of Absolute Consciousness all distinctions of states and degrees of reality and truth are bereft of any value altogether.** With this proviso, we are justified in holding for the present as far as the method of *Adhyārōpāvāda* is concerned, Āgama is the sole Pramāṇa and reason based upon Intuition, is the only reason that can be employed to ascertain the nature of Ātman (Absolute Reality) as such.



VI. AVIDYĀ AND MĀYĀ

We have seen that the one teaching of the Upanishads is that Reality is the All, the one without a second, and that Reality is called *Brahman*, greater than the greatest entity, because It is not limited by anything else. It is also called *Ātman*, because it is the real Self of everything and everyone of us. The so-called Universe, as people understand it, is only an appearance. To think otherwise, is *Avidyā* (ignorance) and to ascertain this as it is, is *Vidyā* (wisdom).

This way of explaining truth and reality on the basis of the Upanishads belongs to the tradition of Shaṅkarāchārya and Gauḍpādāchārya, his grand-preceptor. There have been other schools of Advaitins antecedent and subsequent to Shaṅkara, and even among the followers of Shaṅkara differences of opinion have sprung up as to what exactly is the genuine interpretation of the Upanishads. These differences have arisen mainly owing to ignoring the Upanishadic method of *Adhyārōpāvāda*, which Shaṅkara stresses in his *Bhāshya*. As it is neither possible nor desirable to enter into these details¹ here, we shall rest content with stating the genuine teaching of the Upanishads and quoting relevant passages supporting our view directly from Shaṅkara's works themselves :-

It will be helpful to remember that the Upanishads generally restrict the terms **Vidyā and Avidyā** to right knowledge and wrong knowledge respectively, and the terms *Prakriti* and *Māyā* to the objective appearance projected by ignorance.

“Wide apart, mutually opposed and moving in different directions, are these two, viz., *Avidyā* (ignorance) and what is known as *Vidyā* (wisdom), I regard (thee) *Nachiketas* as an aspirant for *Vidyā*; for, the many objects of pleasure have not made thee break off from your purpose.” Ka. 2-4.

[This is Yama's introduction to *Ātma-Vidyā*.]

“One should know *Prakriti* to be *Māyā*”

Shve. 4-10.

Accordingly Shāṅkara writes :-

“Name and form conjured up by *Avidyā* as though identical with the omniscient Lord, (but) undefinable either as identical with or other than (Him), which constitute the seed of the entire expanse of the world of *Samsāra* (mundane life), are spoken of in the *Shrutis* and *Smritis* as the *Māyā*, *Shakti* and *Prakṛiti*, of the omniscient Lord.” SBh. 2-1-14.

“Notwithstanding this, there is the natural human behaviour (of thinking, speaking and acting) in the form, ‘I am this’, ‘This is mine’, mixing up the real and the unreal, owing to wrong knowledge of both of these and their attributes which are absolutely disparate, by superimposing of the nature and of the properties of the one on the other on account of non-discrimination of the one from the other.” SBh. Intro.

In the face of the above unmistakable definitions of both *Avidyā* and *Māyā*, the sub-commentaries on Shāṅkara-Bhāshya, have started a procession of the blind led by the blind, so to say, in emphatically affirming the identity of both *Avidyā* and *Māyā*, and defining *Avidyā* not as subjective ignorance but as something objective clinging to *Ātman*, and thus distorting His nature by converting the all-pure Brahman into a transmigratory soul by enveloping His essential nature.

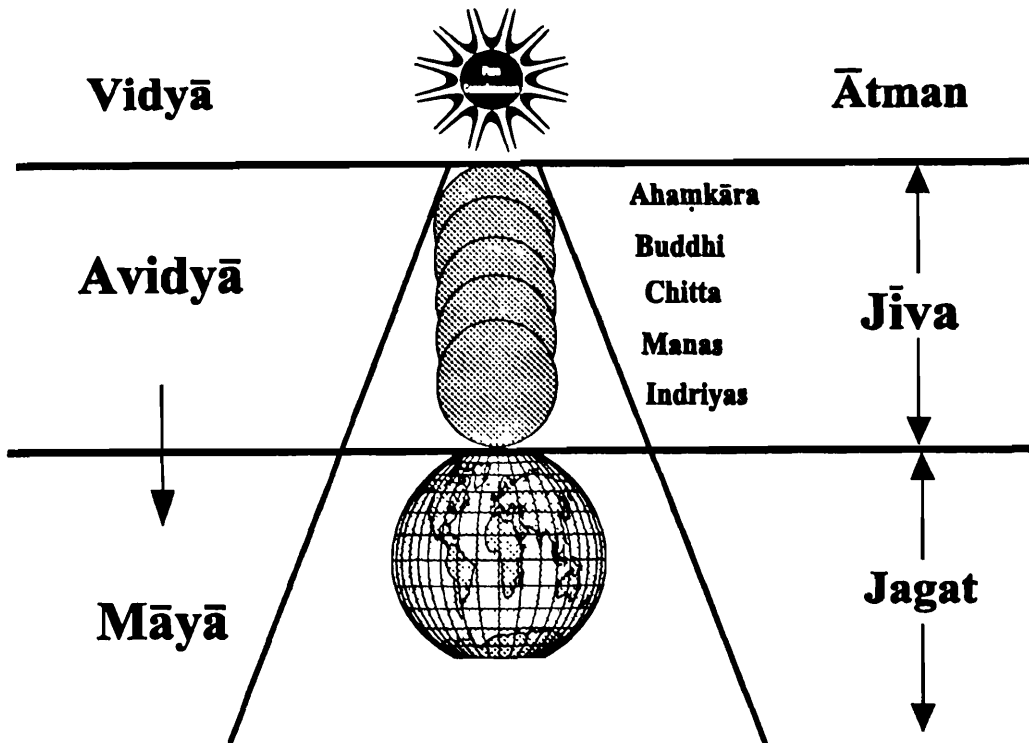


Diagram 6

We shall quote one more passage from Śaṅkara which expressly states that *Nāmarūpa* (name and form) or *Avyākṛita* (undifferentiated seed of the world) is an invention of *Avidyā* (ignorance).

“Brahman becomes the object of ‘transformation’ and other modes of expression in its special aspect of *name and form* superimposed by *Avidyā*, which, whether differentiated or undifferentiated, is undefinable as that (Brahman) or other than It. In its real nature, however, It remains beyond all such modes of expression.” SBh. 2-1-27.

Even according to Śaṅkara, however, it would not be wrong to speak figuratively of *Avidyā* as *Māyā*, and *Māyā* as *Avidyā* also. In its primary sense, no doubt, *Avidyā* means ignorance and therefore refers to a subjective notion; but in a secondary sense, the word may be *extended to cover any object that is imagined by ignorance*. In that case, usage would permit statements like ‘All this is *Avidyā*’ where we only mean that everything objective is a figment of *Avidyā*, and *not really real*. Similarly, when the term *Avidyā* is taken to mean a modification of the mind, it is evidently included within the phenomenal world and therefore may be appropriately called *Māyā*. To avoid confusion, we shall restrict the use of these words *Avidyā* and *Māyā* to denote ignorance and name and form, respectively; and ‘*Avidyā*’ shall be the name of mutual superimposition of the Self and not-Self alone, whatever the signification of these words may be in any other system.

One word more before concluding this section. These terms are used in Vedānta for the particular kind of wrong knowledge and the objective phenomena, respectively, only as a device to introduce the reader (by means of *Adhyārōpāpavāda*) to the Transcendental Entity or the Witnessing Principle called *Ātman*, and not for formulating theories which the system undertakes to defend. **This latter misconception prevails in certain quarters even now.** Rāmānujāchārya, for instance, confounds Śaṅkara’s teaching of *Avidyā* and *Māyā* with the post-Śaṅkara-theory of *Avidyā*, and with the *Māyā* doctrine of the Buddhists. He has considerably exercised himself in undertaking an elaborate refutation of the ‘*Avidyā* Theory’ and in calling the Advaitins opprobriously ‘*Pracchanna-Māyāvādins*’ (Crypto-Buddhists)

That Śaṅkara has not formulated any ‘doctrine of *Avidyā*’ to explain something, but has merely drawn our attention to a

natural tendency of the human mind, has been made abundantly clear by citing his express statements. That Gaudapāda is equally innocent of any such doctrine, and that he is merely concerned with inviting the attention of enquirers to the undeniable Non-dual Being and Consciousness or Ātman of the Upaniṣhads, will be clear from the following:-

“Dream appertains to him who takes (Reality) to be otherwise, and sleep to him who knows not Reality; when the misconception of both these is removed, one attains the fourth abode.” GK. 1-15.

Gaudapāda is here characterizing both waking and dream as only dream or wrong view of Reality, and deep sleep as not knowing. Both these are ‘misconceptions’ from the standpoint of the real Ātman who transcends both consciousness and unconsciousness. Gaudapāda has not used the word ‘Avidyā’ anywhere in his work. For him *Anyathāgrahaṇa* (misconception) and *Agrahaṇa* (unconsciousness) which he calls *Kārya* (effect) and *Kāraṇa* (cause) respectively, are both ‘error’ (*Viparyāsa*).

“This duality is only *Māyā*, it is only non-dual in reality.” GK. 1-17.

Here the word *Māyā* is applied to the world of duality. **There is no theory of *Māyā* to account for anything.**

These are Shrutis, and therefore there is no theory advanced here. The *Bṛihadāranyaka* text ‘through *Māyās*’ means through sensuous perceptions, for in the Vedas, the word *Māyā* is also used in the sense of knowledge according to Yaska’s *Nirukta*. There are five senses each of which presents Reality in a particular form, such as sound, touch etc. This kaleidoscopic variety of knowledge, is evidently illusory with reference to Reality as It is. Here the name ‘*Maya*’ is applied to the variety of sense-perception.

If one remembers the precise nature of *Avidyā*, its function and effect as defined by Shāṅkara in the *Adhyāsa-Bhāshya*, a number of unnecessary doubts and differences about it would vanish altogether. (1) In the first place, *Avidyā* is only a technical name to denote the inveterate *natural tendency of the human mind* and no theory, (2) And in the second place, this is used by Vedānta only as a device for the purpose of teaching the truth, and never as a really real something to be defended. (3) Its *function* consists

in setting up an unreal not-Self as a second to the really real Self, and in mixing up the Real and the unreal and in misleading one to mistake the identity and attributes of one for those of the other, although in fact the unreal not-Self is not another entity beside the real Ātman, since Ātman is *absolutely* without any attribute and as such is not numerically one desiderating a second. (4) And finally, its effect is to induce one to imagine that one is really an agent of actions and experiencer of the fruits thereof although all actions, instruments useful to produce action as well as the fruits thereof, are really *Māyā* (false appearance only).

Neither the form of the *Māyic* Universe is perceived as such, nor its end, nor yet its persistence, while it appears (G. 15-3). *Avidyā* which has given rise to this appearance is equally beginningless, endless and is no more than a natural superimposition of the human mind and only an erroneous notion.

Therefore, it is futile to indulge seriously in speculative discussion about its cause, locus, object or number as many post-Shankara Advaitins have done; for, all these categories pertain to the magic phenomena invented by *Avidyā* and can never be applied to *Avidyā* itself which projects these phantoms.

The Upanishads therefore recommend the wisdom of the Unity of Ātman as the only *antidote* to remedy this malady, **the mother of all evils of life.**



VII. BEING AND BECOMING

Dr. T. R. V. Murthy, author of *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* makes an observation in the course of a discussion of the *Mādhyamika* Dialectic, which deserves the serious consideration of all philosophical thinkers:

“Philosophy selects a particular pattern from among several exemplified in things, exaggerates it out of all proportion and universalizes it to infinity. The pattern or concept so selected and universalized becomes an Idea of Reason, as Kant calls it. What impels us to select one particular point of view and not any other is a matter of our spiritual affiliation. The Mahāyānist would call this our spiritual *gens* (Gōtra). But having chosen one, consciously or rather unconsciously, we universalize it and take it as the norm of evaluation. Though innocently stated as a description of facts, every philosophical system is an evaluation of things or a prescription to view them in a particular way.”

C. P. B. p. 125.

This is too true in the case of speculative systems; for, they all lie prostrate under the tyranny of the intellect. The intellect, indeed, is a humble servant in the hands of any master-thinker who holds the magic wand of intelligibly handling the laws of thought, and can undertake to prove that any particular system presents a complete picture, and the only picture possible, of the universe; or else it can demolish any other system or even all systems by exposing their inconsistencies ruthlessly.

But **Vedānta**, it must be remembered, is no speculative system which chooses a particular theory to criticize or defend. **Sureshwarāchārya** thus explains how it forms the sole exception to the general rule:-

“(Objection:-) All systems are reasonable, each according to its own standpoint, and they are untenable when judged by other points of view. So we do not see any one system on which we can rest our faith. Nor can we possibly conceive of any one way of approach not blamed by any other thinkers or supported by all, as free from all logicians’ attack !

(Reply:-) You may well conceive of such a system without any misgiving. For, all approaches to truth take refuge uniformly in Intuition. This is being stated (in the following verse):-

‘Taking this umpire (as the common court of appeal), those that are seriously suffering from the fever of speculation are bewildering one another by means of their magical words ending in the suffix ‘*tvāt*’ (the ablative ending, meaning ‘because of’)”

Nai. 2-59.

Every reason adduced, appeals to universal Intuition which is undisputed, and so, Sureshwara says, Vedānta which stakes it all on this Intuition is consciously or unconsciously admitted by all.

We shall illustrate our meaning with reference to the question of 'Being' with which we are specially concerned in this section.

Four, and only four, views are possible on any subject and therefore the Buddhist uses his dialectic of four views (*Chatushkōṭī*) and refutes all these views; his rejection is based on the contradiction implicit in each view. Therefore, his conclusion is that all possible views have been rejected. Dr. Murthy quotes the following verse of Āryadeva from the *Chatuh-Shatkam*:-

"Being, non-being, both of these, neither of these - these are the four alternative views to be applied by the wise to all other concepts such as 'unity' (to be taken up for critical examination)."

Gauḍapāda, who uses the Buddhistic dialectic to refute conflicting views regarding Reality, and, at the same time, shows how this refutation culminates in revealing Vedāntic Reality indirectly, writes as follows:-

"This childish person covers up Reality by attributing these predicates to It: 'It is', 'It is not', 'It is and is not' and 'It is not at all'. These are predications signifying change, statical nature, both, and neither, respectively."

"These are the four alternative views, by clinging to which he is ever enveloped. He is the all-seer by whom has been seen this Revered Lord untouched by these views." GK. 4-83, 84.

The reader will note that Gauḍapāda holds that Reality, being of the nature of Intuition Itself, transcends all concepts in the empirical field and consequently It is neither proved nor disproved through affirmation or negation. Ātman or Brahman is the *Absolute* beyond all empirical predicates.

Bearing this Vedāntic position in mind, we may now proceed to a consideration of the question of 'being' and 'becoming' according to the *Adhyārōpāpavāda-Nyāya*.

The following texts should be studied in this context:-

"He (Ātman) wished "I would become plenteous, I would be born'
Reality became the real and the unreal." Tai. 2-6.

"Being alone was this (universe) in the beginning, One without a second.
Here some say Non-being alone, one without a second was this (universe)

in the beginning. How could it possible be so, my dear boy', he said, how could Being be born from non-being ? Being alone, my dear boy, this was in the beginning, One without a second." Chh. 6-2-1, 2.

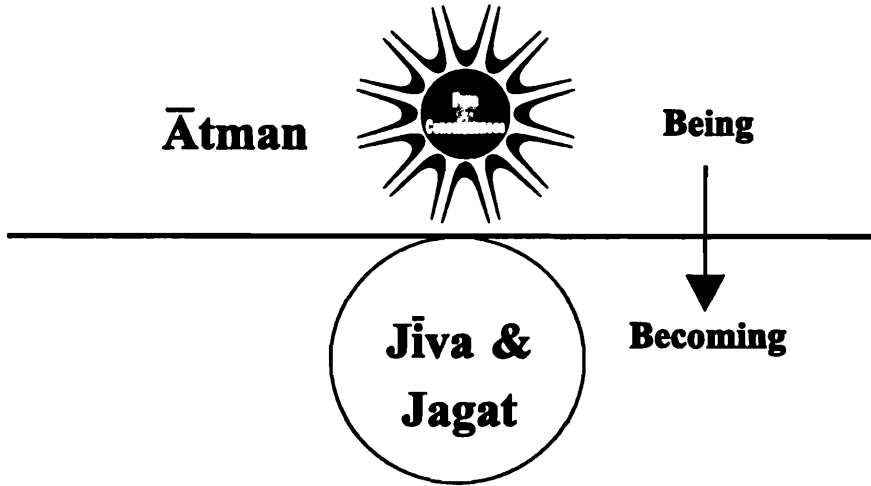


Diagram 7(a)

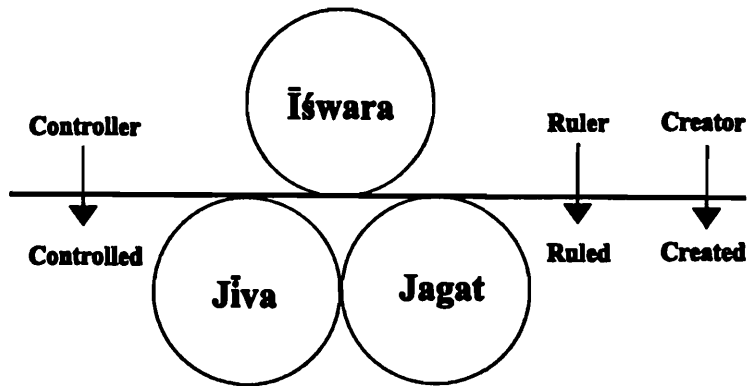


Diagram 7 (b)

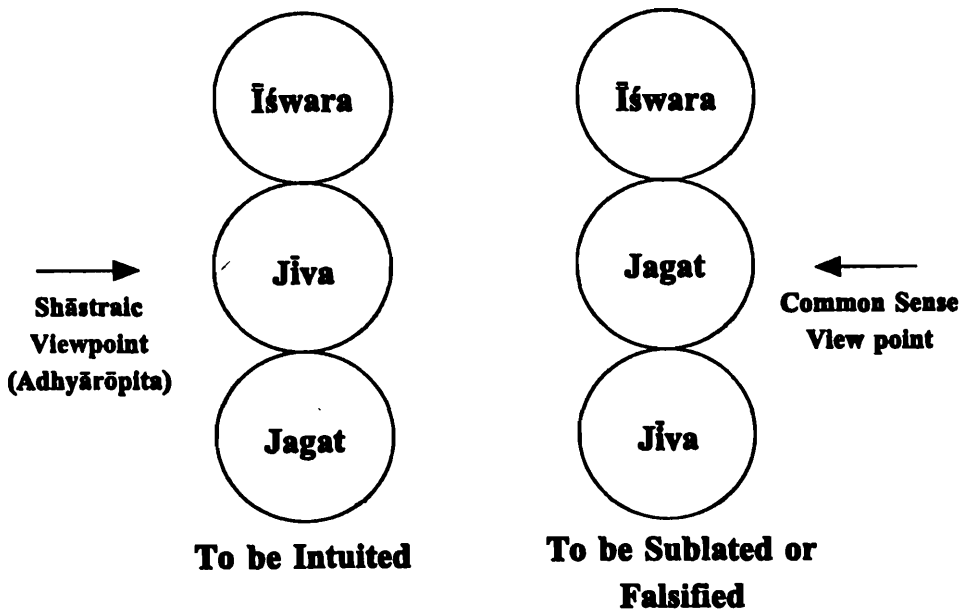


Diagram 7 (c)

"It thought, 'I would become plenteous, I would be born,' It created Fire. That Fire thought 'I would become plenteous, I would be born; it created Water. That Water thought, 'I would become plenteous, I would be born'; it created food." Chh. 6-2-3, 4.

Here is an enigma. Reality alone was in the beginning. Reality is the All, the Whole without a second. How could It wish 'to become plenteous' ? How could It be born ? Reality being the Absolute, free from all determinations, how could there be any willing, or the action of *becoming*, unless It ceased to be the Absolute ?

This difficulty can be solved only by reminding ourselves that this is only the style of the Upanishads to express universal truths. The statement only means that, while the universe appears to present numerous phenomena subject to change, and different from one another, it is really the Absolute alone, One without a second.

It would not be right to suppose that this is a formulation of the *substance view* as opposed to the view that recognizes reality as change alone. This is not to assert the supremacy of 'Being' as opposed to 'Becoming'. Absolute Being has nothing to do with the opposition between the permanent and the changeful. True, the Upanishad seems to **presuppose a school of thinkers** who would appear to have held that all things positive have come out of non-being, but this is only the Upanishadic way of formulating the *common-sense view* which considers everything newly born as non-existent before its birth, and therefore concludes that there was nothing before the world made its appearance; or, this may be the *philosophic view* that there can be no substrate underlying the phenomenal world that we experience. We have to go into an examination of such a view, if there be one, when we take up the concept of causality.

'Being' in the empirical world, implies time or place. It is difficult to ascertain what this corresponds to as distinguished from 'Becoming'. *Yāska* in his *Nirukta* says that there are six *Bhāva-Vikāras* (*changes pertaining to things*). *A thing is born, exists, grows, undergoes transformation, decays, and is destroyed. All these changes may be subsumed under the concept of 'Becoming' and they are all perceived to take place in time or place. Yet we have an idea of some 'thing' which undergoes all these changes and is supposed to persist throughout. It is by emphasizing this substance view that certain schools of thought*

oppose other schools which insist that only change and movement constitute the core of Reality.

The Witnessing Principle, which enables us to recognize the Being or Becoming of things, however, neither is, nor undergoes any Becoming in time or space, for it is the 'Seer' of the whole universe, within and without, including time and space. It is neither here nor there, neither in the past nor in the future, and is untouched by the concepts of Being and Becoming. Inasmuch as Its non-existence is impossible to conceive for anyone, however, It has been called 'Sat' (Being) by the Upanishad; and inasmuch as It is in Its light *alone* that we are aware of the universe, or even conceive of the disappearance of the universe, It has been called *Jñānam* or *Vijñānam*, Consciousness *also*.

This Witnessing Principle in us has, therefore, to be described as Being and Consciousness in one.

"Here Sat is to be understood as the entity which is Pure Being, subtle, free from all specific features, all - pervading, one, untainted by anything else, indivisible; the Consciousness which is known from all the Upanishads."
Chh.Bh. 6-2-1.

Being and Consciousness are not two distinct qualities inhering in Ātman; for, Ātman is the Vedāntic *Absolute* free from all duality either within Itself or without It. In the course of a discussion devoted to the refutation of an ancient school of Advaitins interpreting the Brahma-Sūtras, Shānkara remarks:-

"It is not possible to assert that Brahman is only of the nature of Being alone, and not of the nature of Consciousness; for then, the Shruti 'He is Conscious through and through' (Br. 2-4-12) would be meaningless. And how possibly can Brahman bereft of Consciousness be taught to be the Self of Jīva ? Nor can it be asserted that Brahman is of the nature of Consciousness alone and not of the nature of Being. For then, texts like 'He should be known emphatically as Being' (Ka. 6-13) would lose their force. And how could one possibly hold to the doctrine of Consciousness bereft of Being ? Nor is it possible to assert that Brahman possesses both these *characteristics*. For then, one would be contradicting what he maintained in the beginning (that Brahman is not manifold)"

SBh. 3-2-21, p.360.

Therefore, one can never hold that Being and Consciousness are two distinct properties of Ātman, without doing violence

to the undeniable universal Intuition of Ātman as Pure Consciousness and Pure Being (Consciousness not desiderating an object, and Being not admitting any specific characteristics) in one.

It is sometimes supposed by critics of Vedānta, that the Upanishads or Vedāntins identify the Absolute with something experienced in some form even empirically¹, to wit, Ātman (substance), and that Vedānta deals with the changeless, universal, and unrelated as opposed to the changeful, particular, and related². It will be evident from what has been said above, that the real Ātman or Brahman, as known to Vedānta, *transcends all these pairs of opposites*. We may observe here that even regarding the Absolute as Pure Being (*Asti*), is a device in Vedānta used for the purpose of discarding empirical 'Being' and 'Becoming' with reference to Ātman (the Absolute). The following quotations will vouch for this statement :-

"He should be emphatically known as being (empirical) and also in His real nature Absolute). Of these two aspects, the real nature (of Ātman) which has been known emphatically to Be, reveals Itself (to one who has known It to exist)."

Ka. 6-13.

"Of the Ātman previously known to Be, that is to say, of Him known through the notion of existence due to the conditioning adjunct of the pre-existing effect. @ABSTRACT = Afterwards the *Tattvabhāva*, the real nature, the unconditioned non-dual nature distinct from the known and the unknown, pointed out by Shrutis like 'Not this, not that (Br.), 'Not gross, not subtle, not short' (Br.), 'Invisible, bodyless, undefined, having no support' (Tai.) etc., turns towards Him to reveal His nature. The purport is (that this aspect turns towards Him) who has previously known (Ātman) as existent."

Ka. Bh. 6-13.

This true nature (*Iattva-Bhāva*) of Ātman or Brahman the Absolute, should always be assumed to be meant by the Shruti even when seemingly positive terms are applied to Reality. It will suffice to quote one passage from the commentary on the *Aitareya*:-

"It is, is not; one, many; with qualities, without qualities; knows, knows not; static, dynamic; fructifies, does not fructify; has a cause, is causeless; happiness, misery; the inside, not inside; void, not void; is myself, other than that - whoever tries to superimpose such thought-constructs upon His real nature, which is beyond the range of all words and thoughts, he is surely trying to roll up even ether like a piece of leather, and to climb it up as if it were a flight of stairs; he is

trying to find out the trail of fish in water and of the birds in the sky ! For, there are Shrutis like the following : 'Not this, not that' (Br.), 'From which all words fall back' (Tai.)".

- Ai.Bh. p. 312, discussion at the end of the first chapter.



VIII. ĪSHWARA AND JĪVA

It is evident that Brahman or the Real Ātman being the only Reality according to Vedānta, the three-fold division of 'God, creatures (Jīvas) and the world' recognized in the theological systems of religions, could find no place in this Advaitic system. Nevertheless, we do find mention of *Īshwara* (Ruler), *Jīva* (the soul supporting the senses and life) and *Jagat* (the universe) in the Upanishads. How are we to account for this ? The answer is very simple :-

"(Objection:-) Unity being Absolute for one who holds the doctrine of changeless Brahmātman, there is no place for the distinction of the Ruler and the ruled, and consequently (this postulate) would run counter to (his) proposition that *Ishwara* (the Ruler) is the cause (of the universe).

[This objection is raised on the basis of the presupposition that the Absolute or Brahman cannot be *Ishwara* (Ruler) and the ruled also at the same time. In the Bhāshya on 1-1-2, however, *Ishwara* has been equated with Brahman to be enquired into, which is apparently self-contradictory.]

"(Reply:-) No. For omniscience (or Rulership) is (only) relative to the differentiation of the seed of name Name and form conjured up by *Avidyā* as though identical with the omniscient Lord, (but) undefinable either as identical with or other than (Him), name and form, which constitute the seed of the entire expanse of the world of Saṃsāra, are spoken of in the Shruti and the Smriti as the '*Māyā*', '*Shakti*' and '*Prakriti*' of the omniscient Lord. *Ishwara* (the Ruler) is other than these..... In this way, *Ishwara* is he who is in conformity with the conditioning associates of name and form made up by *Avidyā* in the same way as ether conforms to the conditioning associates such as a pot or a *Kamandalu*. And he rules, from the empirical stand-point, over the conscious selves (*Vijñānātman*s) called *Jīvas*, who conform to the aggregates of body and senses made up of name and form projected by *Avidyā*, and correspond to the pot-ethers (of the illustration)".

SBh. 2-1-14.

[The reader will note that *Avidyākālpita* (conjured up by *Avidyā*), *Avidyātmaka* (product of *Avidyā*), *Avidyārta* (made up by *Avidyā*, or made up of *Avidyā*), *Avidyāpratyupasthāpita* (projected by or presented by *Avidyā*), are all synonymous terms in this passage. Ishwara, Ruler or God is illustrated by *Akāsha* (ether) conditioned by name and form, while *Jīvas* (individual souls conditioned by bodies etc.) are likened to apparent portions of ether conditioned by jars etc. the effects of ether. The relation of the Ruler and the ruled is only apparent like that of the ether in general and the apparent portions of ether conditioned by pots etc.]

“So then, Ishwara’s rulership, omniscience, and omnipotence are only relative to the limitation caused by *Avidyāic* associates but no such convention as that of the distinction of the Ruler and the ruled, or omniscience, is possible in the *Ātman* whose real nature is such that all conditioning associates are abolished (there) by *Vidyā*.” SBh. 2-1-14.

The *Jīvas* then, are the ‘effects’ of Brahman only figuratively, inasmuch as they are really one with Brahman for ever, in the same way as pot-spaces are one with space in general. Their limiting conditions, such as the body and the senses, are only apparently so, for they are only products of *Avidyā*. Shāṅkara has closely followed in the foot-steps of Gaudapāda in thus describing the individual selves and the conditioning associates:-

“*Ātman* is born as *Jīvas*, like pot-ether from (ether in general); and He is born as the aggregates (of bodies and senses) like pots etc.” GK. 3-3.

“The aggregates (of bodies and senses) are projected by *Ātman*’s *Māyā* as in a dream. There is no reason supporting the superiority (of one aggregate over the others), or the equality of all (aggregates).” GK. 3-10.

[Gaudapāda uses the word ‘*Māyā*’ as synonymous with *Avidyā*. He does not strictly adhere to the distinction of the two as defined by Shāṅkara.]

Jīvas as such have two aspects. Their real nature is always identical with that of *Ātman*, but the aggregates of body etc. by which they are apparently conditioned are *Māyic*, and hence, in respect of their conditioning associates, they are *Anirvachariya* i.e., they cannot be defined to be one with or different from Brahman. Thus Shāṅkara described the *Jīva* in two ways :-

“While there is this correct knowledge of the identity of *Kshetrajña* (individual self), and the Supreme *Ātman*, there is only a difference of names (when we use the words) ‘*Kshetrajña*’ and ‘*Paramātma*’ and therefore to say ‘This *Kshetrajña* is different from the Supreme Self’ or

"This Supreme Self is different from the Kshetrajña' and to insist on the difference of the two Ātmas in this way, is purposeless; for, one and the same Ātman is spoken of diversely by different names." SBh. 1-4-22.

Here 'Kshetrajña' is the name of the Witnessing Consciousness which objectified the entire aggregate of the body and the senses, and 'Paramātmā' is the name of Ātman as He is in Himself. There is absolutely no difference at all between the two. Sri Krishna therefore tells Arjuna :-

"Know the *Kshetrajña* in all *Kshetras* (bodies) to be myself, scion of Bharata ! The discriminatory knowledge of the Kshetra and Kshetrajña, is the one right knowledge, according to me." G. 13-2.

"And this Jīva should be taken to be only an appearance of the Supreme Ātman such as the reflection of the sun; neither directly the same nor something other than that (Ātman). And therefore, just as when any one of the reflections is shaking, no other reflection moves, so also it is in the fitness of things that when one Jīva is in contact with the fruit of his Karma, no other Jīva comes in contact with it. On this ground also (as for other reasons already adduced), there is no inter-mixing of the Karmas (of the Jīvas) and their effects. And this appearance being a concoction of Avidyā, it stands to reason that the Samsāra having its seat in it, is also a concoction of Avidyā. And hence the feasibility of teaching the real Brahman-nature by negating this (Samsāra)."

SBh. 2-3-50.

Just as the Upanishads teach that Brahman is the creator, sustainer and the final goal which all phenomena finally reach and merge in, with the sole purpose of revealing that they are really appearances ever essentially one with It, they uniformly teach that Brahman has entered into the created world in the form of Jīva :-

"Having cleft this parting place (of hair), He entered through this opening." Ai. 1-3-12.

"Having created it, He entered that very (object of creation)." Tai. 2-6.

"The self-same One has entered here." Br. 1-4-7.

"As this Jīva, my own Self, let me enter and differentiate name and form." Chh. 6-3-2.

"As the one fire has entered the world and taken a form in conformity with each and every form, so also, the inner Ātman of all creatures, takes a form in conformity with each and every form and is also outside of them" Kā. 5-9.

[This teaches not only the identity of the Supreme Self with Jīva, but also that It yet retains Its transcendental nature.]

"He made fortresses (bodies) with two feet, and fortresses with four feet. He first became a bird (the subtle body), and the Purusha entered the fortresses. This is Purusha indeed, because He is the indweller of the fortress, in all fortresses. There is nothing not covered by this (Purusha), nothing not pervaded by Him." Br. 2-5-18.

[All the bodies as well as the embodied souls, are verily His very Self.]

The reader will have realized by now, how the Vedāntic *Ananyatwa* (not being other than It) of the cause and the effect is different from the Sāṃkhya's *Ananyatwa* (identity of cause and effect). Gaudapāda has inveighed against the doctrine of the Sāṃkhyas that the cause and the effect are identical. Bādarāyaṇa in his Sūtra (2-3-13) anticipates a similar objection against Vedāntic causation. There the objector appeals to common sense which requires that one who experiences ought to be distinct from what is experienced. If the universe be the effect of Brahman, the cause, then either Jīva, the experiencer, would be identical with what he experiences or the experienced itself would be the experiencer, since both are not other than Brahman the first cause. This *objection* is met by citing the example of the sea, where the distinction of the effect, billows, waves, or bubbles as well as non-mixing of them with one another, is maintained even while each of them is not other than their essence, the sea as water. Thus the distinction of the experiences and the experienced, may well be kept up, and yet they will not be other than the Highest Brahman, the first cause.

This reply would be all right if we recognized the empirical distinction of *experiencer* and the *experienced*. The Vedāntin does recognize this sort of causal relation between Ātman and the universe from the empirical standpoint. Bādarāyaṇa has an aphorism or Sūtra (1-4-23) which says in so many words that Brahman is the *material cause* (as well as the *efficient cause*) of the universe in conformity with the Shruti, which says that everything

else becomes known when Brahman is known, and cites the example of clay and other material causes which are transformed into several effects. And there is another Sūtra (1-4-26) which expressly refers to Shrutis teaching Brahman's transformation into the universe. But all this represents only one aspect and does not present a complete picture of the genuine Vedāntic tradition followed by Shankara and his predecessors. **That no revolution has been ushered in by Shāṅkara or Gauḍapāda in this respect,** is more than obvious in Bādarāyaṇa's Sūtra: 'Tadananyatwam-ārambhanashabdādibhyaha' Sū. 2-1-14. The Sūtra declares in consonance with the Shruti that the *effect is only a play of words*. Shāṅkara writes in substance: "But this distinction of cause and effect is not really real; for as the Shruti says the so-called 'effect' being merely a name, is factually *nought* in itself, unreal, and there are a good number of texts purporting to teach the *unity of Ātman*, and if we do not accept them, the *knowledge of all by knowing one*, would not be possible.

"Therefore, just as a pot-ether, a *Kamandalu* ether and the like, are not other than ether in general, and just as the water of a mirage and the like, is not other than a barren soil and the like, since they are of the nature of vanishing soon after they are seen, and in themselves undefinable in nature, so also it should be concluded that this world of experiencers and the experienced etc., has no existence apart from Brahman." SBh. 2-1-14.

Here, 'pot-ether etc.' of the illustration correspond to the Jīvas, and water of a mirage etc. corresponds to the names and forms constituting the insentient part of the universe. Thus, while both of these are essentially one with Brahman, the Jīvas are actually identical with Brahman, whereas the insentient phenomena such as the five elements are only appearances superimposed on Brahman.

In accordance with the illustration of *Ghatākāsha* (pot-ether) in the context of the soul, we have to explain its birth and death, its atomic size, its being limited by the associate intellect, its being an agent of action, being dependent on God for its activities, its being spoken of as a part of Brahman in Shruti and Smriti texts, injunctions in the Veda permitting it to act in certain ways and prohibiting it from doing other acts, absence of intermixture of the actions of Jīvas and the results thereof - all these we have to explain - to be due to the *Upadhis* (conditioning associates)

peculiar to the several individual selves. We may cite the following verses from *Gauḍapāda* in support of this statement :-

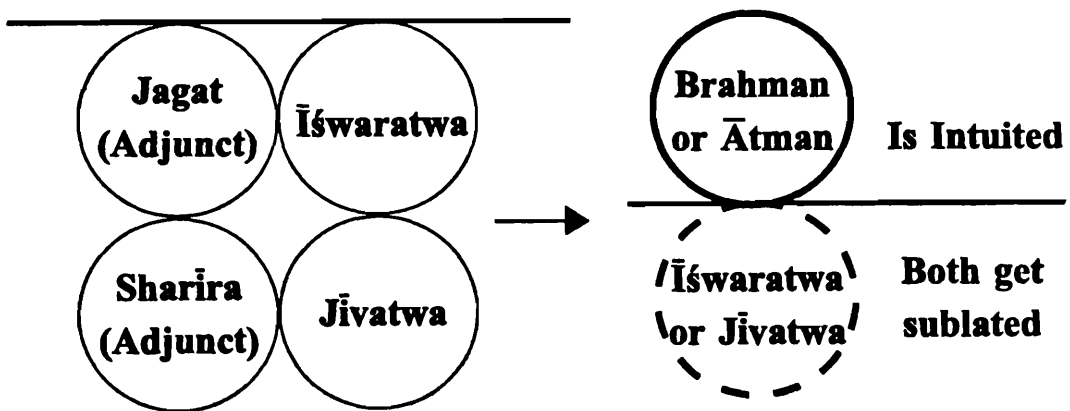
“Just as the pot-ether and the like ethers merge in the universal ether when the pot and other (Upādhis) are destroyed, so also the Jīvas merge in the (Supreme) Ātman.” GK. 3-4.

“Just as all ethers do not come into contact with dust, smoke etc., when one pot-ether comes into contact with them, so also the Jīvas do not all (premiscuously) come into contact with pleasure etc.” GK. 3-5.

“The form, function and the name differ indeed in each individual case, but yet there is no difference in the cosmic ether. So also we have to decide in the case of the (various) Jīvas.” GK. 3-6.

“Just as pot-ether is neither a modification nor a part of the cosmic ether, so also the Jīva is neither a modification nor a part of the Supreme Ātman.” GK. 3-7.

“Just as the sky becomes soiled by different kinds of dirt in children's eyes, so also Ātman too is soiled by (ignorance, attachment and other) defilements in the eyes of the unenlightened.” GK. 3-8.



Sāstraic Teaching Leads to Intuition

Diagram 8

“Ātman is not dissimilar to cosmic ether with regard to birth, death, going (to other worlds) and coming back (to earth) and in dwelling in various bodies.” GK. 3-9.

The distinction of Īshwara and Jīva, therefore, is only a *distinction without difference*. Īshwara's divinity and superiority and the Jīva's dependence upon Īshwara, are relative to each other and, from the *transcendental standpoint*, their identity and intrinsic

nature as the Absolute (Brahman), is never affected even while they appear to be disparate owing to the conditioning associates. We shall close this section giving a few excerpts from the Sūtra-Bhāshya which make this point clear:-

“So long as he does not remove ignorance responsible for duality, as one would remove the idea of a man (superimposed) on a stump of tree, and does Intuit his own nature as the changelessly eternal Ātman in the form ‘I am Brahman’, so long does Jīva’s Jīva-nature persist. When, however, the Shruti causes a person to rise above the idea of one’s being the aggregate of the body, senses, the mind and the intellect, and enlightens him in this way:” “You are not the aggregate of the body, senses, the mind and the intellect, you are not a transmigratory person, but that which is the Real, the real Ātman, That thou art”, then, knowing that he is of the essential nature of the changelessly eternal Seer, and rising above the predilection for the body etc., he becomes that very Ātman, the eternally changeless Seer.”

SBh. 1-3-19.

“For, so long as Avidyā is not removed, Jīva’s being subject to right and wrong deeds, and his Jīva-nature is not removed. When, however, that (Avidyā) is gone, Prājñā (the omniscient Ātman) Himself is taught to be such by the Shruti ‘That thou art’. Nor is the identity of the entity itself affected by being apparently infected by Avidyā or by the latter’s disappearance.”

SBh. 1-4-6.

“For this reason also, all followers of Vedānta must accept that the difference between the Vijñānātman (*knowing* Ātman) and Paramātman (*Supreme* Ātman) is only due to conditioning associates like the body made up of name and form presented by Avidyā and not real.”

SBh. 1-4-22.

“So, theĪ Shwara’s rulership, omniscience and omnipotence is only relative to the limitation of the conditioning associate of Avidyāic nature, but in the Ātman, bereft of all conditioning associates, there can be really no talk of Ruler and the ruled, or omniscience etc.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

“And it is only so long as there is this connection with the conditioning associate of the mind (*Buddhi*), that this Jīva continues to be a Jīva and a transmigratory soul. In reality, however, there is no such being as a Jīva other than the form conjured up by the connection of the conditioning associate, to wit, the mind. For, when the meaning of Vedānta texts is closely examined, there is no second sentient entity to be found, other than Īswara who is ever-free by nature and omniscient.”

SBh. 2-3-30.

“Moreover, this connection with the conditioning associate of *Buddhi*, presupposes wrong knowledge (i.e. Avidyā) and there is no way of removing wrong knowledge except by right knowledge. Therefore this

connection with the conditioning associate of mind is not destroyed till one does realize one's identity with Brahman." SBh. 2-3-30.

"During the state of ignorance the Jīva who indiscriminately sees his identity with the aggregate of the body and the senses because of his blindness caused by the cataract of Avidyā, derives his transmigratory nature of being an agent and experiencer (of the fruits of actions) from the Supreme Ātman. Iswara, the Witnessing Conscious Entity, who presides over all activities, indwells (and inspires all beings to action). And it is through the knowledge due to His grace alone that release could be expected to accrue (to the Jīva)." SBh. 2-3-41.

"There is nothing self-contradictory in holding that Ishwara with His unsurpassable conditioning associate, rules over the Jīvas with inferior conditioning associates." SBh. 2-3-45

"Even in the case of the Jīva, the experience of misery is only due to the delusion caused by indiscriminate identification with the conditioning associates such as the body and the senses made up of names and forms produced by Avidyā, while there is no real misery." SBh. 2-3-46

"This *Brahmic nature* of the embodied self, which is being taught here, is what already is a fact and not something to be achieved through a fresh effort. And therefore, this Brahmic nature taught by the Shāstra, having been ascertained, becomes the *sublater* of the innate idea of one's identity with the body, like the ideas of rope etc., sublating the ideas of snake etc." SBh. 2-1-14.

[This is an illustration revealing that our identification with the body is only a delusive notion.]

"(Question:-) But which is this (body-connection)?"

(Reply:-) It is the rise of the perverse idea regarding the Self that this aggregate of body etc. is one's own Self. It is found in all creatures in such forms as 'I go', 'I come back'; 'I am blind', 'I am not blind'; 'I am ignorant', 'I am not ignorant'. There is nothing that can eradicate this (perverse idea) other than *right discernment*. Before the dawn of right discernment, however, this delusion is seen to continue in all creatures." SBh. 2-3-48.

"(Objection:-) But why is it that the Jīva, being a part of the Supreme Ātman, has his knowledge and predominant power intercepted? It is reasonable that his knowledge and power should be unintercepted like the burning and illuminating (capacity) of a spark.

(Reply:-) This is certainly true. But even that interception of Jīva's knowledge and power is due to his body-connection; that is, connection

with the body, senses, mind, intellect, perception of object etc. There are (suitable) similes also here. Just as the burning and illuminating powers of fire, which does possess these powers inherent (in it), are intercepted in the fire (latent) in a faggot, or in fire covered up with ashes, so also the interception of Jīva's knowledge and power is due only to the delusion caused by the non-discriminatory notion, owing to the connection with the conditioning associates like the body made up of name and form, presented by Avidyā." SBh. 3-2-6.

"Moreover, when the idea of non-difference, has been awakened by texts like 'That thou art' pointing to non-difference, the Jīva's transmigratory nature and Brahman's creatorship both vanish for good; for, all convention of duality spread out by wrong knowledge will have been sublated (then)." SBh. 2-1-22.

[Brahman's creatorship is only *relative*; but Jīva's transmigratory nature is *unreal* being superimposed by Avidyā.]

"In Him (the universal Prāṇa), what is myself that is He (in the Sun); what He is, that I am myself." Ai. Āraṇyaka 2-2-4.

"Thyself am I, O revered Divinity. I myself art thou." Jābāla

The above cited two texts are for meditation. Here the objection may crop up that by equating Ishwara with Jīva's Ātman, transmigratory nature would have to be imputed to God, and that is not desirable, Shāṅkara rebuts the charge thus:-

"This is no defect (in the system) for it; is unity of Ātman alone that is being meditated in this manner." SBh. 3-3-37.

"We are not going to ward off confirmation of unity, but only insist that a reciprocity of identity should be meditated upon. As an inevitable consequence, unity also will have been confirmed." SBh. 3-3-37.

Here perfect unity of Ishwara and Jīva has been allowed from the *transcendental standpoint* even for a meditator.



IX. JĪVA AND THE REAL ĀTMAN

The Jīva in the state of sustentation of the world identifies himself with his various conditioning associates. The *Adhyārōpāvāda* method is applied here in the Shruti by superimposing the Ātman - nature on each of these seemingly circumscribing associates successively in order to rescind the Ātmanhood imputed to the other. This is what is known as the Discrimination of the Five Sheaths. *Gauḍpāda* refers to this method thus in one of his *Kārikās*:

“The Supreme Jīva (Real Ātman) is the Self of the sheaths such as the essence (of food), which have been stated at length in the *Taittirīyaka* (*He is the One*) illustrated by us in the simile of Ākāsha.” GK. 3-11.

Subsequent to the account of creation of Ākāsha and the other four elements the Taittirīya Upanishad describes the evolution of man with his physiological associate, the body, thus:-

“From Earth (were born) herbs; from herbs food; (and) from food *Purusha* (man). Now he, this man, is made up of the essence of food. Of him this, as is well-known, is the head; this is the self (the mid-portion); (and) this, the tail, the prop.” Tai. 2-1.

Here man is called *Purusha*, because he possesses head and other parts of which his body is made up. It must be noted that while the ignorant take this body alone to be their self, yet this organism together with Brahman or Ātman, is called *Annamaya Ātman* (Ātman made up of food) by the Shruti to indicate that it is the very same Brahman which appears to have been evolved into what is known as man. And while there are numberless creatures who are likewise evolved, man alone is particularly mentioned here, because, as Śaṅkara remarks, man alone is specially qualified to perform Karma as laid down in the Shāstra and also to realize his real nature by acquiring Knowledge. He alone possesses the capacity required by the Shāstra, he alone is an aspirant for the fruit of Karma or Knowledge. In his species alone are to be found persons who are qualified to perform Vedic Karmas or enter into detailed and direct investigation of the meaning of Vedāntic texts teaching the nature of Brahmātman. Man's body is metaphorically spoken of here as though it were the body of a bird. Hence the words *Paksha* (wing) and *Puccha* (tail.)

Evolution of man is here purposely described to lead the enquirer by the method of Adhyārōpāpavāda to his real nature of Brahmātman as contrasted with Shārīrātman. The next Shruti text here, therefore, superimposes Ātman-nature on a more comprehensive conditioned self called the *Prāṇamayātman* :

“Other than this (Ātman) made up of the essence of food, who was described before, there is another inner Ātman made up of *Prāṇa* (*Vāyu*). By that (Ātman), this (one) is pervaded. Now this one is also of the form of *Purusha* (human body). This (*Prāṇamayātman*) is of the form of *Purusha* (human body), after the bodily shape of that (*Annamayātman*). Of that (*Prāṇamayātman*) *Prāṇa* is the head ; *Vyāna* is the right wing, *Apāna* is the left wing; *Ākāsha* (i.e. *Samāna*) is the Self, the midmost function; (the goddess presiding over) earth is the tail prop.” Tai. 2-2.

Prāṇamayātman and the other Ātmans hereinafter mentioned, are all subtle, that is to say, *supersensuous*, and therefore can have no particular shape of their own. Hence the Shruti says that their shape is in conformity with the shape of the body, and Shāṅkara illustrates this by comparing them to an image made up of smelt copper cast into a crucible. Each of the preceding sheaths, herein enumerated, is filled with the succeeding one just as bellows are filled with air.

We shall now proceed to the description of the next sheath, on which again the Shruti superimposes Ātman-nature to negate the self-hood of the *Prāṇamayātman*:-

“Of that former (*Annamayātman*), this indeed is the embodied- self. Other than this *Prāṇamayātman*, there is an inner Ātman made up of *Manas* (mind). By that (Ātman) this one is pervaded. Now this (Ātman) is also of the form of *Purusha* (human body). This (*Manōmayātman*) is of the form of *Purusha* after the bodily shape of that (*Prāṇamayātman*). Of that (*Manōmayātman*) *Yajus* is the head; *Rik* is the right wing; *Sāma* is the left wing; *Ādesha* is the Self (midmost part); (*Mantras and Brāhmaṇas* discovered by Atharvāṅgiras, are the tail prop.” Tai. 2-3.

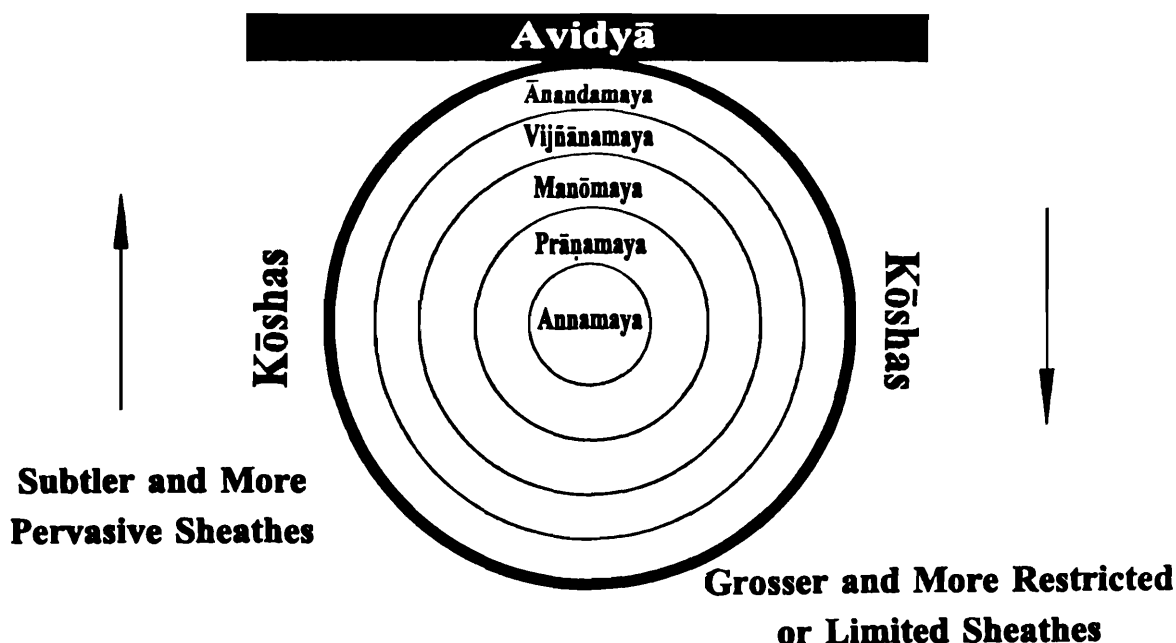
Inasmuch as the vital part of human beings is controlled by the psychic part, it is natural that the mind is considered to be still more subtle and more pervasive than, and the Ātman (the inner essence) of, the vital aspect.

It might be asked how *Yajus* and other Mantras are here described as organs of *Manōmaya*'s body. This difficulty is obviated by

observing that it is not the body, vital force or the mind pertaining to any individual man that is being described here. It is the cosmic body etc. which are the conditioning associates of Ātman, that are enumerated in succession. Thus the Annamayātman is the *Virāt* and the Prāṇamayātman is the *Sūtrātman*, and that is why at the end of each description, the Shruti refers to the cosmic body of Ātman. 'They get all food indeed, who meditate upon food as Brahman' (Tai. 2-2), 'They attain the full span of life, who meditate upon Prāṇa as Brahman' (Tai. 2-3). Similarly, Manōmayātman being *Hiraṇyagarbha* or *Vedātman* (Ātman conditioned by *Manas* of the form of the Vedas), his body is rightly described as constituted by Yajus etc.

Ātman (Self)

Diagram 9



Another point of apparent difficulty must be solved here before we proceed. In each of these descriptions, the succeeding 'Kōsha' (sheath) is described as the Self in the body which is the previous Kōsha. This interpretation is according to the Taittirīya-Bhāshya. An alternative interpretation is offered by Sureshwara. His interpretation seems more plausible, because the two sentences as they stand, are more faithfully translated thus: 'Of him this alone is the Ātman residing in his body, who is the Ātman in the body of the previous one'. According to this interpretation, the drift would be that one and the same Brahman is the Self in the Body of Annamaya, Prāṇamaya, Manōmaya and other sheaths; and this is quite in consonance with the opening sentence 'From this (Brahman, who is the) Self (of all), Ākāsha was born.' The

conclusion that Brahman is the Ātman of all, therefore, only reinforces what was said at the very commencement. On second thoughts, however, we are more likely to side with the author of the Bhāshya; for, it is not the question of confirming a dogmatic statement of the Shruti, that is being pursued here. The Shruti aims at utilizing the *Adhyārōpāvāda* method *at each step*. Identification of Ātman with the body is first discarded by superimposing Ātman-nature on the Prāṇamaya, and then this is also rescinded by a further superimposition of Ātman-nature on the Manōmaya and so on, till we ultimately reach Brahman, the inmost real Ātman. Therefore it is better to take the expression as equivalent to 'this Manōmaya himself is the Ātman of the previous Prāṇamaya'. This interpretation has the support of grammar also, since the word (*Ishah*) refers to the more proximate antecedent ('*Samīpataravartichaitadōrūpam*' as the grammarian would say), and is preferably construed as referring to *Manōmaya* rather than to the more remote word Brahman.

Suffice it to say that *Vijñānamayātman* and *ānandamayātman*. *also refer to cosmic Kōshas*, conditioning associates of Ātman as *Hiraṇyagarbha*, each taught, by superimposition, as the Ātman of the preceding one. What is more pertinent to the present discussion is that in this Upanishad Annamaya, Prāṇamaya, Manōmaya, Vijñānamaya and Ānandamaya are the five Kōshas (or sheaths), each of which is successively spoken of as Ātman by superimposition or we might say that Ātman conditioned by each of these sheaths, is spoken of as though he were the real Ātman - just to lead the enquirer gradually to the really real Ātman or Brahman.

It would be of some interest to the critical reader to remember that in the description of each of these kooshas, cosmic food, vital force, the mind etc. are praised as the cause of the Annamaya Kōsha, Prāṇamaya Kōsha etc. It is perhaps in confirmation of this that the dialogue between Bhṛgu and his father Varuṇa, is brought in by the Upanishad, where Bhṛgu after deep contemplation, presumes that Food (or, it may be, Ātman as conditioned by the associate of that name), etc. as Brahman and finally arrives at the conclusion that Ānanda or Bliss Absolute, is the only real Brahman. Only, there, the nature of Brahman as the cause of the origin, sustentation and dissolution of the world is superimposed on cosmic Food etc., whereas in this *Brahmānanda Valli*, the notion of Ātman is being examined till it culminates in the notion

of Brahman **which is the tail prop of Ānandamayātman**. The result of this enquiry is thus stated in the Mantra :-

"Knower of the Bliss of Brahman, from which (all) words return without reaching It along with mind, is not afraid of anything whatever."
Tai. 2-9.

Here Ānanda (Bliss) is not to be construed as some property pertaining to Brahman. It is Brahman Itself, the Ātman of everyone.

So, it is Brahman or Ātman which is Pure Bliss that is discovered by both of the sub-varieties of the method.



X. AVASTHĀTRAYA VIVEKA

Having understood the methodology adopted by the seers in interpreting the Vedāntic texts as well as the rudiments of this unique and traditional method, the student now will have to know clearly how this method and its rudiments are applied in the Upanishads. The application will lucidly illustrate how Vedānta utilises the distinction of the empirical and the Transcendental standpoints in its endeavour to convince the inquirer that Brahman or Ātman is the only Ultimate Reality without a second. While Vedānta does not seek to deny the apparent reality of the universe around man - it is necessary for practical-life - it only helps to lift the seeker, as it were, to the mystic heights of the Absolute Reality above the empirical or phenomenal plane.

The empirical viewpoint that one is a knower, doer or enjoyer etc. is the viewpoint of ignorance, Avidyā or Ajnāna. It is from this point of view that all secular and Vedic activities, nay all human procedures, start. For, the idea that one is a knower, doer or enjoyer etc. is the result of an intrinsic mental superimposition mutually between the real Witnessing Principle of Ātman and the unreal object witnessed, viz. the aggregate of the body, the senses and the mind, as also their essential natures. This is called *Adhyāsa* in Vedānta.

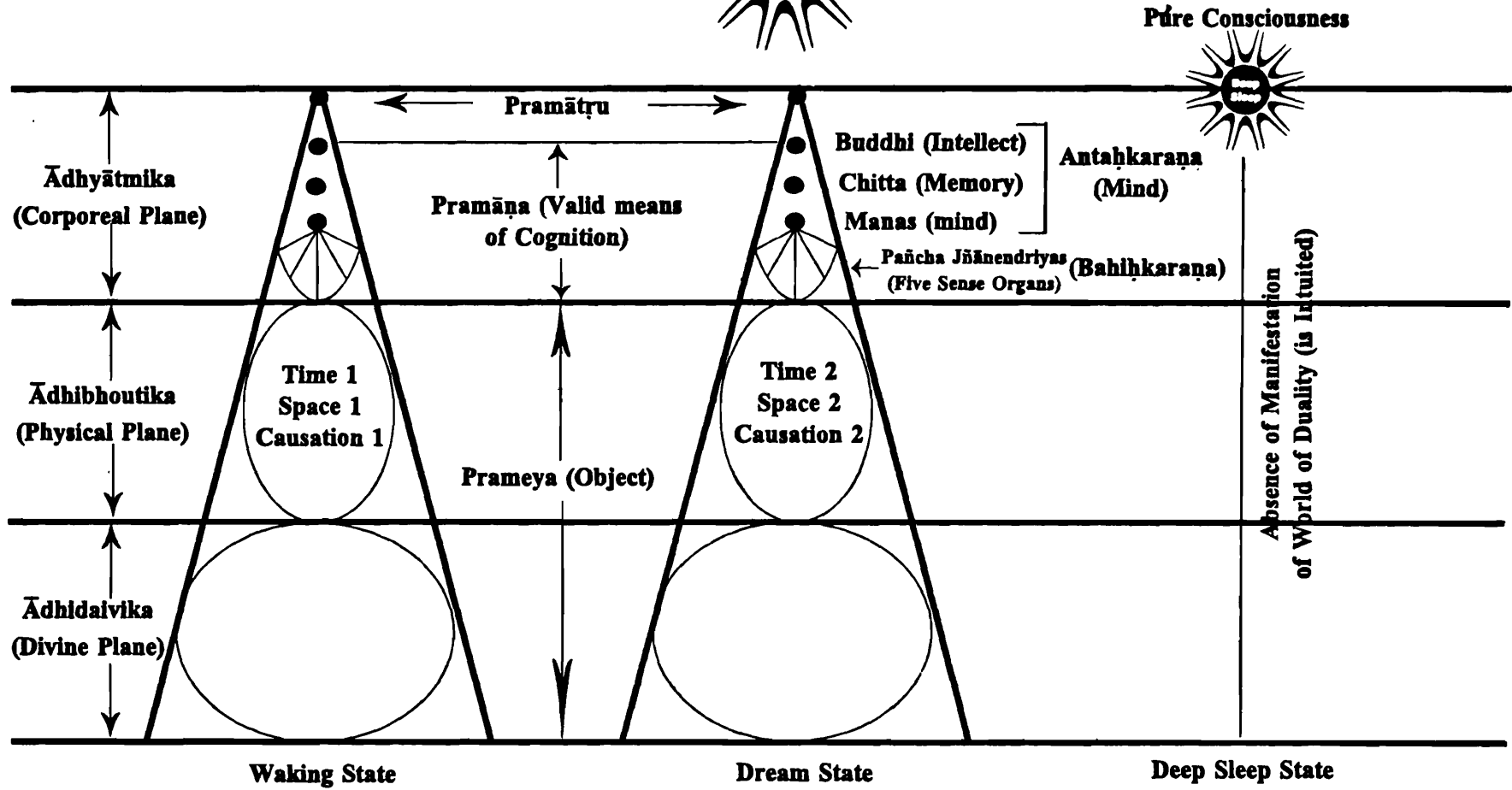
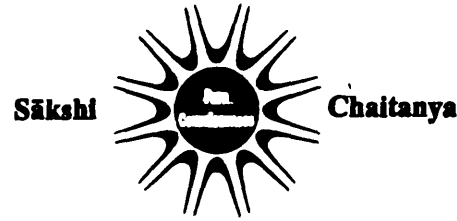
Sri Shankara states in his Bhagavadgītā Bhāshya 2-69: "This secular and Vedic activity, being the effect of Avidyā, ceases on the cessation of Avidyā in the case of one who is possessed of the steady knowledge due to the dawn of the discrimination of the Self; and Avidyā ceases because it is opposed to Vidyā (enlightenment)." This is just as darkness vanishes as soon as the sun rises. This truth is brought home convincingly by an examination of the three states of Consciousness, which method occupies a unique position in Vedānta and, in fact, is a sure clincher.

Examination of the Three States of Consciousness

Man continually passes through the three states of Consciousness viz. waking, dream and deep sleep. While he is awake or in the waking state, perception of the objective world before him through his means of perception viz. the five senses, is predominant and his mind and intellect are subservient to the senses. While in dream, he has left behind his waking body and senses together with his mind and intellect but still the *mind appears to continue* to operate but in an eccentric fashion. One might dream a number of dreams during a single night, but yet not one of them is cognised as a dream so long as it is being experienced. For every one a dream is a real experience as long as it lasts and therein he can never realise that his experiences are queer or grotesque. Moreover, when he is overtaken by deep sleep, all his sensual percepts or mental concepts are extinct and therein it appears as if there is no trace of consciousness whatever, so that one might even think it a total waste of so much active life.

Now all these observations are from the standpoint of the waking ego and the outcome of the empirical viewpoint. Vedānta utilises the method of *Adhyārōpa Apavāda* or Superimposition and Rescission to ascribe all these experiences of the three states to Ātman and by a phased-out, highly rational analysis of the contents of the states, viewed on their own merits, lifts the enquirer's attention and awareness to the Transcendental Intuitive level of Ātman, who is then seen to be the only Reality behind all these three states, i.e. total Life of man which is all-pervading but yet untouched and untainted by any of these states or their blemishes.

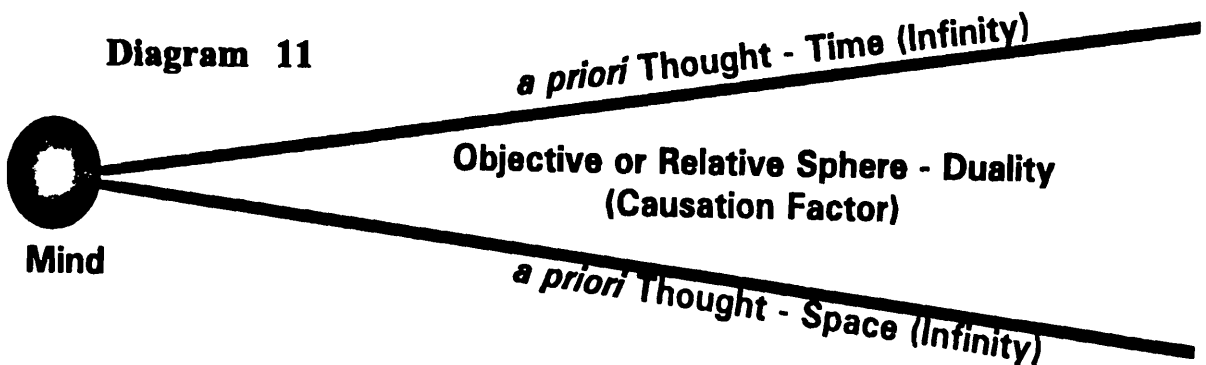
Diagram 10



Avastī ātraya Viveka

Vedānta teaches the aspirant that his waking world can be divided into the Ādhyātmika or the corporeal plane, the Ādhibhautika or the material plane, the Ādhidaivika or the divine or celestial plane, along with the time-space-causation complex. All these different factors are coexisting or coeval and inseparable. The Ādhibhautika, the Ādhidaivika planes and the time-space-causation complex are all extensions of the Ādhyātmika plane, in a manner of speaking, and a man can ratiocinate that this Ādhyātmika sphere itself is his prized possession, dearest to him, for it comprises the aggregate of his body, the senses, the mind, the intellect and, above all, self or 'I' - notion. This I-notion or ego is the *locus* or focal point in Man where all his life's experiences, knowledges, activities find their culmination and they converge in this 'I'-sense and get concentrated there as his totality of experiences. He is the 'Kartru' or doer and the 'Bhōktru' or experiencer of everything in this life.

According to Vedānta, the Ādhyātmika, the Ādhibhautika and the Ādhidaivika planes as also time-space-causation factors, all being co-existent and inseparable appear together and disappear also together, with the ego as the *central figure* at the helm of affairs, for whose sake all the other components are there to serve. In a manner of speaking, all of them are ego's paraphernalia and they follow him faithfully. It should be evident to the discerning student that the objective external world of the waking state, which is seen to exist in infinite time and infinite space (time and space are again inseparables), is bound up by the law of relativity and is, in truth, the projection of the ego, which is the *concentric point of the mind* in every one of us. In other words, without the waking ego the waking world with any of its components, particularly the waking time-space-causation complex, is extinct. It is implicit here that although the common man in his misconception thinks that time and space are two eternal entites of the external world unrelated to his being or existence (in fact, he thinks that he is born, grows and finally dies in time and space



of the world), Vedānta shows, by a rational method based on man's inherent faculty of Intuiting extra-mundane, extra-temporal or extra-spatial truths and experiences, that his commonsense viewpoint is based on a fundamental wrong premise and helps the seeker to get rid of this misconception with the help of partial Intuitions, finally establishing him in the plenary Intuition.

Vedanta points out that the time-space-causation factors are man's thought-constructs or concepts, and for their comprehension the mind is pre-supposed, nay is essential. Although to the common man time and space both seem to be eternal or infinite, they are projections of the mind of man and the mind cannot function without associating itself with its own creations of time and space. Man builds up all relationships, however vague or subtle they may be, between things within the frame-work of this time-space complex. However, Vedanta draws the attention of the student to the fact that the time-space causation series of the waking state being essentially and organically tied up with the waking mind, the latter cannot be operative outside its rightful realm or sphere. **Thus the waking ego which is nothing but the focal point of the mind, can never possibly emerge out of its own state and consequently no member of its retinue could ever emerge out of the waking.**

The dream state also, if scrutinised in accordance with the teachings of Vedānta, has a similar set-up as the waking, but *it is certainly not related* in any manner whatsoever to the waking; for, **the ego who experiences the dream world is not the waking ego.** The dream ego, just like the waking ego, has his own kingdom with his own Ādhyātmika, Ādhibhautika and Ādhidaivika planes as also time-space-causation complex. Just as the waking ego, the dream ego, also can never emerge out of his dream state, nor could any member of his retinue. **In truth, the dream while it lasts is as real as the waking.** While in the dream, man takes that state as the waking and his dream mind projects the hallucination, as it were, that there are dream and deep sleep states, and this process of Mind's projections may go on. Man gets befuddled by his dream mind, but this fact can never be realised by him until he returns to the real waking and see that the dream world is falsified. In deep sleep the 'I'-sense or ego itself is totally missing and naturally none of its paraphernalia can possibly exist there.

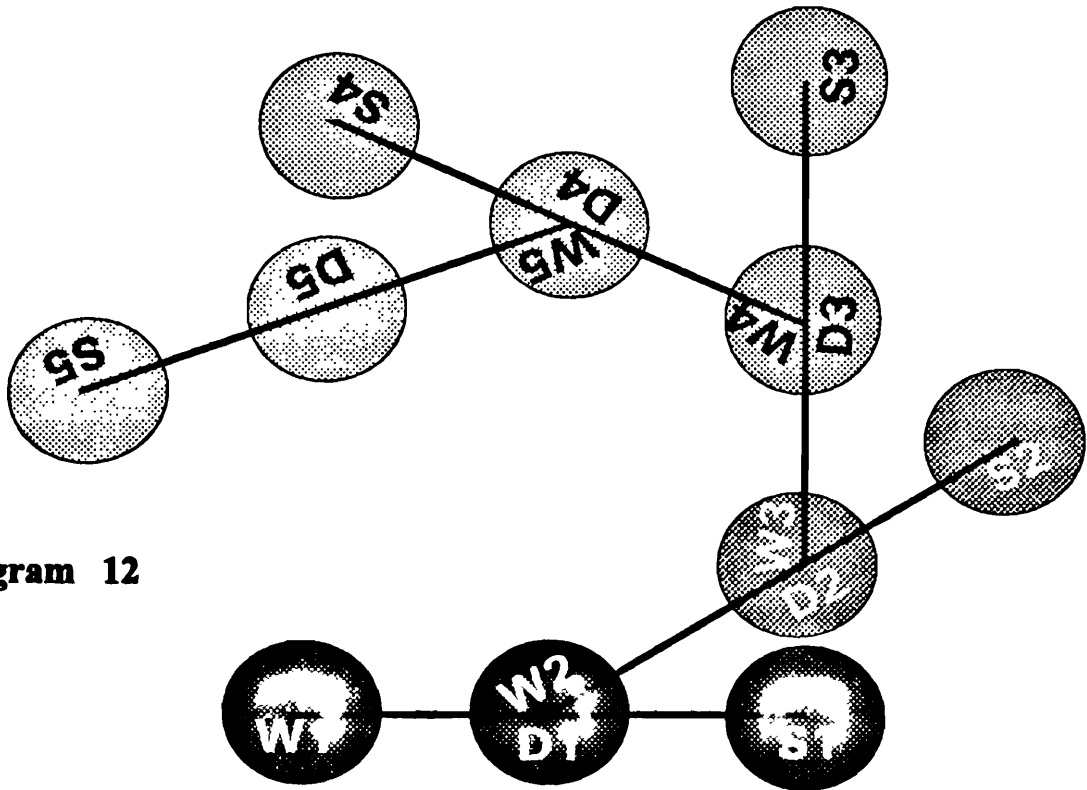


Diagram 12

Thus if the alert discriminating student follows the dictates and directives of the Vedāntic texts, particularly the Bhāshyas of Sri Shankara, he will be able to realise that the waking time-series ends with that state and sleep cannot occupy any point or period of that series, as in that case it would be converted into a *waking event*, which is preposterous. Neither can dream events claim a place in the waking time-series, as their duration may infinitely differ from that of the waking. The rates of the time-flow in these two states are in-commensurable and the events of the dream are simply *stultified* at the return of waking. **Hence appearance and disappearance of the triad of the states cannot be regarded as successive events in time like any three events that follow one another in the same time-and-space series.** Thus although the time and space series of the waking and that of the dream are mental projections restricted to their respective states or realms, yet these three states are real and distinct as testified by our Intuition and experience! How can this enigma of Life be explained?

Although the waking state is the one in which alone knowledge, reaction, real progress and enlightenment are possible and wherein all our practical interests and values lie, Vedānta declares

that Life to be truly understood and its ultimate goal to be realised demands a consideration of all its experiences in their totality, in all its aspects as the three states, all of which are indispensable. Vedāntic Truth is not like the speculative truth emanating from the subtle or inspired perception of a great intellect, which is often incommunicable and is liable to be misinterpreted. This Vedāntic Reality springs from our intimate experience of life, verifiable at all times by introspection following the *trail of Intuition* alone (*Ekātma Pratyaya Sāram - Māndūkya Mantra 7*), which is the core of Being of every one. Really speaking, no one in the immaculate creation of the Almighty is ever denied this Truth or Pure Consciousness. Vedānta thunders in its reverberant utterances that 'That (Truth) thou art (here and now)' and appeals to all humanity to cognise the Reality in this very life. We humans as living, conscious, discriminating beings in God's creation can dive into its inmost depths and corners and arrive at its core not as aliens or outsiders but as the very SELF of Life, but identical with It. We are Life itself and the world before us is but a single manifestation of it. Hence waking should not be permitted to *domineer* over the other states which are entirely independent of it and the idea of the succession of the states is a purely partial, and hence misconceived, idea from the waking standpoint. Really speaking, this waking standpoint cannot be logical and true to universal experience if it is extended beyond the waking state and taken as the standard to judge other alien spheres.

The mono-basic view of waking regards Consciousness as the invariable subject of all perception and when there is no perception a man is said to be unconscious. Much of the antagonism between the Idealists and the Realists would disappear if they try to understand Consciousness in its true perspective. The Idealist is not wrong when he asserts that nothing can be imagined to exist without pre-supposing Consciousness..... As the objective world is known to us only as a percept it cannot have any existence apart from consciousness. On the other hand, the Realist makes a distinction between being and knowing and affirms that a real independent world may exist unrelated to consciousness. He further argues that since the outside world reveals an order and a power beyond the ken of our conception it must be real, though not as it appears to us. He avers that for anything to exist, it need not be related to consciousness. Here both the schools are using the term

'consciousness' as if it meant the same thing. Vedānta reconciles both these views, however antithetical they may seem to be. As the Realist says, though knowing and being are two different things in the empirical sphere, and though the empirical world, which is a necessary correlate of the empirical consciousness, is an independent entity, even so as Pure or Absolute Consciousness being and knowing are identical. **The world and our individual consciousness must be both referred to Pure Consciousness as their substratum and not traced to one another.**

A man knows as a certainty that he passes through the three states. How is this made possible ? Really speaking, his faculty of understanding ceases at the peripheries of waking and can never transcend them. However, his 'memory' of sleep and dream in waking is distinctly unlike that of his past experience in the waking. Yet no one can dispute that the three states somehow entwine themselves about him. While the 'I'-sense or ego of waking vanishes in deep sleep, the ego of dreams, though it is in subsequent waking identified with the waking ego by the common man, behaves so strangely and helplessly in dreams that the nature of the ego that acts in waking seems entirely at variance with the same in dreams. Now Vedānta solves these anomalies of life by superimposing these three states on Ātman or Pure Consciousness and explains these common man's daily experiences on the basis of its method of viewing these states as superimpositions on the common substratum of the *Sākshi Anubhava* or the Witnessing Principle. Here Vedānta once again takes advantage of the innate weakness of the mind in relating the subject and the object as two different things in time-and-space series.

Vedānta points out that the subject has always to be distinct and separate from the object and both should necessarily be in the same time-and-space series. **Nothing of the object can enter into the subject and vice versa, and yet they are so intimately connected with each other that in the empirical sphere the mind just cannot conceive of the one without the other.** Yet on the basis of a *logical priority* the subject should precede the object. No one can identify himself with the object and objectify the subject, for it is absurd, And the subject can function as such because it is endowed with consciousness in complete contrast with the object. Thus it is a pet theme or device of Vedānta to

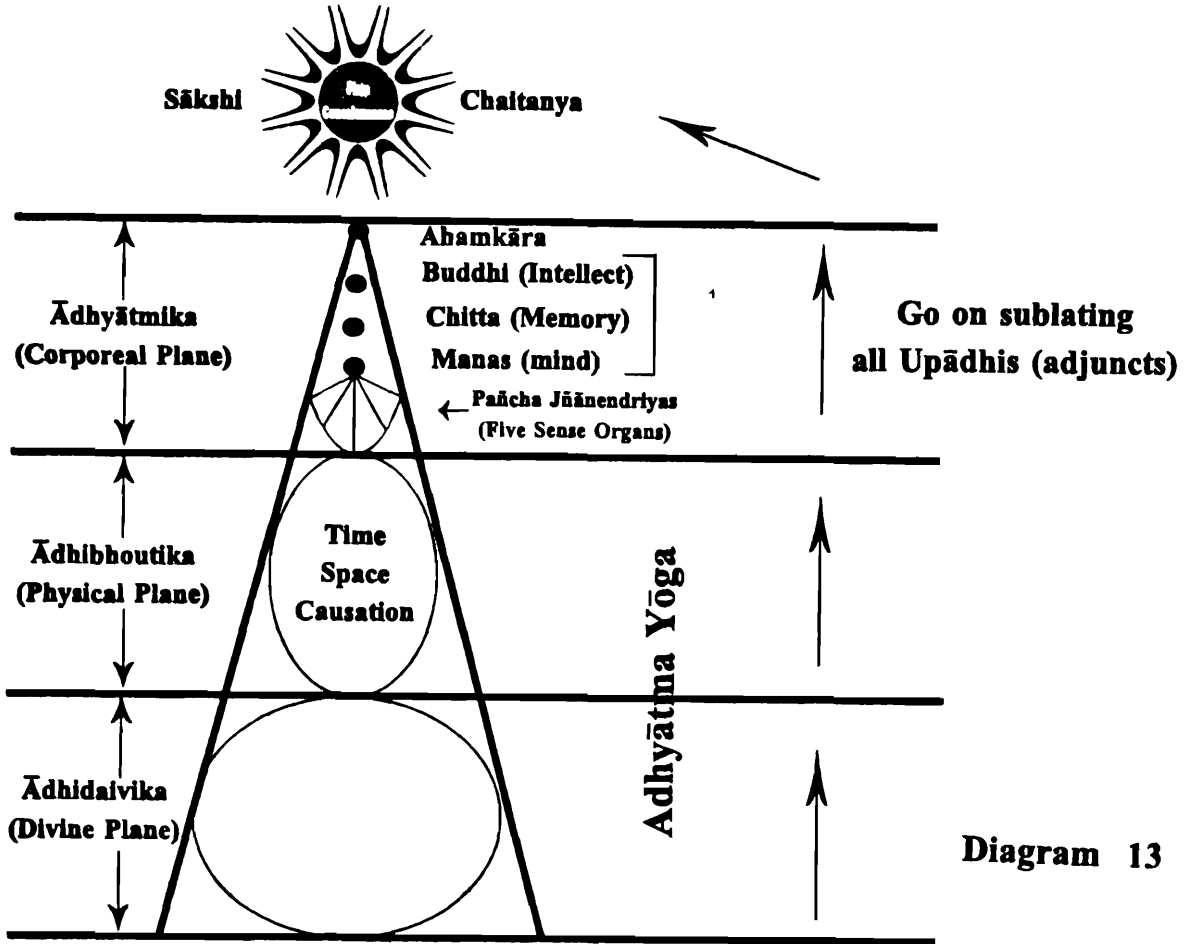


Diagram 13

draw the attention of the seeker to the fact that whatever is objectifiable - and Vedānta, being an *Adhyātma Vidyā*, applies this method predominantly to the *Ādhyātmika* plane - is not truly conscious. When this discriminatory process is applied to one's own inner set-up or aggregate of the body, the senses, the mind and the intellect, in that order (as is done in the **Adhyātma Yōga**), the senses can be objectified by the mind, which is subtler, more pervading, more intimate, and comparatively it becomes conscious while the objectified senses become insentient or inert. This process of shifting the subject-object relationship inwards can proceed till we reach the ego. But the ego, according to Vedānta, is born out of *Adhyāsa*, misconception, on a natural superimposition mutually between the *Sākshi Anubhava* or *Ātman* and the *Sākshya* or un-*Ātman*. The student can divine (Intuit) that *Ātman* as *Sākshi* can easily objectify the appearance and disappearance of the waking ego as also of the dream ego and remain also in and by Himself in deep sleep. Vedānta brings home the truth that this *Ātman* or *Sākshi Anubhava* can remain as He is and simultaneously appear as the waking or the dream at a time

without undergoing any mutation in Himself. He, as the Pure or Absolute Consciousness, transcends time and space, and hence causation, and in truth, He manifests them inside the respective states. Absolute Reality, beyond reality and unreality of the empirical sphere, is the Witnessing Principle of both and not involved in either of them. Hence Ātman is called 'Pure Consciousness', the prius of all experiences and knowledges of Life in its totality.

Most of the scholars, thinkers and philosophers of today, being unfamiliar with the traditional Vedāntic method as expounded by Ādi Shankara in a pristine pure form in his extant Bhāshyas, commit the basic error of taking consciousness as an attribute of the ego, as adjectival in its nature. This implies the activity of the senses and the intellect, and a man is said to be conscious when he can be aware of a physical object (percept or *Pratyaya Anubhava*) or mental forms (concept or *Vedana Anubhava*). The activity of the subject is thus synchronous with the presence of an object and the only proof of a man's consciousness seems to be that he is aware of something, some object. But Vedānta's Pure Consciousness is the Eternal Witnessing Principle beyond both the empirical subject and object and their relationship in time and space.

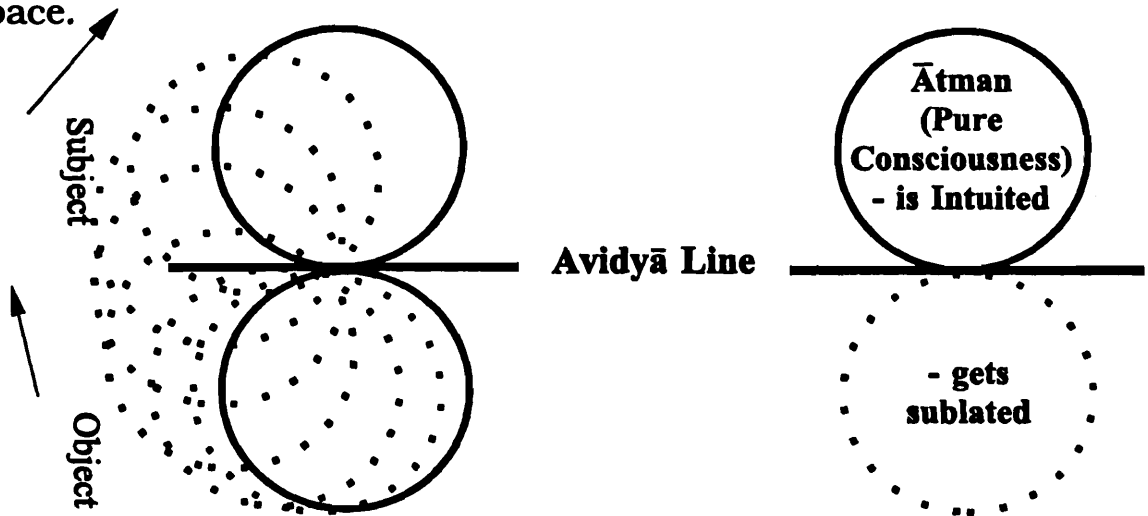


Diagram 14

Cause	←	Effect
Vidyā	←	Avidyā
Witness	←	Witnessed
Sākshi	←	Sākshya
Sādhaka	←	Sādhana (Sādhyā)
Sāmānya	←	Vishesha
Mōksha	←	Bandha

According to Vedānta the ego is unlike the non-ego (the intellect, the memory, the mind, the senses and the objective world) and is radically opposed to it inasmuch as the former is of the nature of *Chit* or substantial Consciousness; and the intellect, the memory, the mind and the senses are only material instruments-*Jada Upādhis* or *Pramānas* - of its perception. If the ego were purely material in its inherent nature, then under no conceivable conditions can consciousness originate. For, even that origination should be perceptible or a witnessing principle and this latter in its turn should be comprehended by another and thus there will be the defect of *regressus ad infinitum*. Or else, this would degenerate into a blind belief and will not stand the onslaughts of reason. This substantial Consciousness of the ego is no intellectual abstraction but the Real of the reals. It is the Vedāntic Intuition or Pure Consciousness, ever present in all the three states with or without the association of the senses, the mind and the intellect. Our so-called memory of deep sleep and dream entirely depends upon It and but for this Eternal Witnessing Continuum or Vedāntic Intuition (*Sākshi Anubhava*), we could never refer to the state of deep sleep. For, **Consciousness can never conceive unconsciousness; Consciousness or Eternal Witnessing Principle is beyond and above the plane of subject-object relationship and is the prius of all kinds of conceptual or perceptual experiences of the manifested and unmanifested worlds.** Unfortunately, the so-called great thinkers and philosophers of the world sought for this Absolute Truth in the world of the waking state divorced from the other states and their conceptions did not go beyond pure abstractions or they degenerated into mere intellectual concepts and conjectures with nothing to warrant their reality in life.

No man can maintain that when he is in deep sleep he is reduced to the condition of a mere stone; for, as soon as he wakes up Intuition tells him that he had a refreshing sleep and that he was unaware of the ongoings of the external world, having been entirely absorbed in a not merely painless but positively blissful state of sleep. Now this feeling refers to a past experience, in the language of the intellect, but the felicity unquestionably enjoyed was not derived from any objective element of life, since all objective existence was for the time being entirely annulled. The only inference possible is that the person returned in his sleep to his own intrinsic nature of *Absolute or Pure Being* beyond

time-space-causation complex and experienced Its essential blissfulness, not as an ego (for the ego vanished then along with its concomitant adjunct of non-ego) but as pure undifferentiated *Absolute Consciousness*. From this point of view, deep sleep is not a state at all like the other two, *but is the very core of Being of every one of us. Therein Pure Consciousness can be Intuited to be in and by Itself.*

But can Pure Consciousness exist in Itself and by Itself ? Vedānta gives an emphatic 'yes' as a reply. It points to the experience of every one in deep sleep, which can only be Intuited or cognised by *Vedāntic introspection*. As an unceasing Witness, just as It tells us of all the past happenings in the waking state or the dream state, It holds before us the *clear mirror of sleep* in which nothing was reflected as no second thing existed. The Witness *assumes* the form of the ego when the non-ego (intellect, mind, senses and object etc.) has to be registered in memory. But when the latter is absent as in deep sleep, the Witness *plays the role of a silent spectator* and when the waking returns It puts on the garb of an ego in referring to it. "There is no loss of vision to the seer then." (Bri, 4-3-23).

No *a priori* reasoning can be of any avail in maintaining the impossibility of Pure Consciousness. For, even if, for mere argument's sake, we grant its possibility, we are compelled to admit that deep sleep truthfully and exactly represents how It can be. Absolute Consciousness demands the absence of the subject and the object at the same time, and we have just such an experience in deep sleep. The Chhāndōgya Upanishad says: "In sleep one gets lost in his Self (Ātman)". The ego and its correlate, non-ego, disappear alike, leaving Pure Consciousness behind, which enables us in subsequent waking to Intuit sleep. The possibility or impossibility of a fact of universal experience does not depend upon a *priori* reasoning; for, **true reasoning can never outreach or supersede experience; on the other hand, reasoning to be true has to keep trail of universal experience and can only thrive under its protective shield.** When we are *thinking* of Consciousness, we make It unconsciously the object and Consciousness Itself puts on the role of the subject. Thus in reflection on Consciousness, Consciousness alone is serving both as the subject and the object and all distinctions are transcended. This Pure Consciousness is substantial, all-pervasive and

self-illuminating and becomes, as intellect etc., adjectival to the ego and then Pure Consciousness puts on the robe of the ego, as well as the non-ego. In deep sleep the phenomena of intellect etc. as well as the objects are absent and hence Consciousness does not perceive, not because It cannot perceive but because there is nothing other than It to perceive (Refer to Bri. 4-3-21, 22, 23) . The adjectival consciousness as percepts and concepts may appear or disappear, may glow or glimmer, but the substantival or Pure Consciousness is changeless and eternal, being the Reality of Life and its substratum.

The mind and the world, according to Vedānta, are inseparable from waking, while deep sleep excludes them. A thing not perceived might exist, provided it is perceptible somewhere or some time or the other but not what can never be experienced such as a world in deep sleep. The idea of persistence depends upon time and no one would conceive the persistence of the world during deep sleep if one did not thereby include deep sleep in the waking time-series. The cause of the world must be sought in the waking state alone as both the cause and the effect should belong to the same time-series. hence **a state gives rise to and includes its world, but no world can give rise to or include a state.**

The Upanishads, which from the empirical point of view had earlier superimposed the deep sleep as a state, rescind this attribution when they refer to deep sleep experience as an illustration in life of the blessedness of release or emancipation. Sri Shankara in his Brihadāranyaka Bhāshya (4-3- 21) states: "In deep sleep there is neither ignorance (*Avidyā*) nor desire (*Kāma*) nor action (*Karma*) -

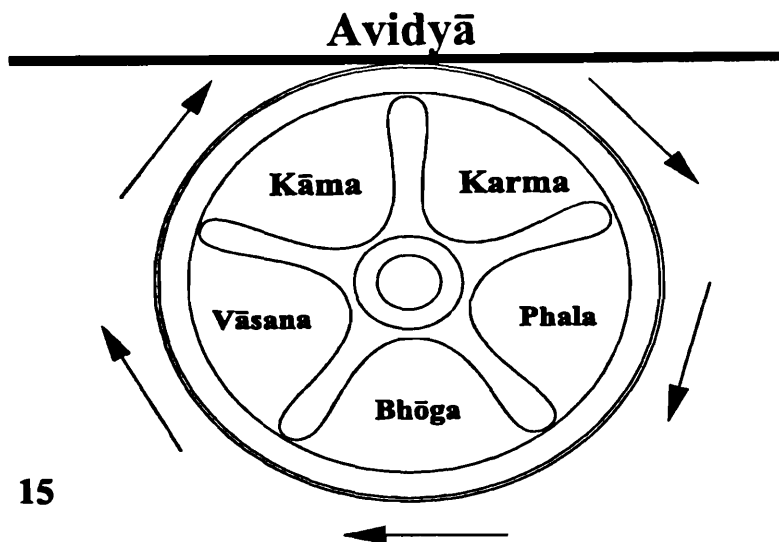


Diagram 15

Karma or Samsāra Chakra

(these are the root cause for the vicious circle of *Samsāra* (*Samsāra Chakra*), and non-cognition is due to the absence of multiplicity and therefore of ignorance (*Avidyā*).”

Vedānta points out that *Avidyā* in the form of *Adhyāsa* leads to *Kāma* (desire), which in turn leads to *Karma* (action) and that to *Phala* (fruit of action) and that leads to *Bhoga* (enjoyment of the fruits of action), then to *Vāsana* (subtle impressions in the mind which, when ripe and under suitable outer conditions, emerge out of the mind as, or rather get transformed into, strong desires remaining in a potential form) which lead to *Janma* (rebirth). Thus the vicious circle of *Samsāra* goes on and on until the *Jīva* (transmigratory soul) attains Immortality by means of Self-Knowledge, which alone can help and take him out of this vicious circle.



XI. KĀRAṆA-KĀRYA VIVEKA

The Upanishads very ingeniously take advantage of the inherent weakness of human mind to correlate two things in time and space in order to turn the attention of the seeker towards his essential Being, Pure Consciousness or *Sākshi Anubhava*. The Vedāntic texts deliberately superimpose causality on Pure Consciousness and declare the world of multiplicity as Its effect. There are many Upanishadic texts, particularly *Prashna* 6-4, *Aitareya* 1-1 and 2, *Mundaka* 1-1-7 and *Chhāndōgya* 6-1-1,2 and 3, which by implication mean that the Primeval Being or Brahman (*Ātman*) actually modified and transformed Itslef into the universe. But this sort of self-transformation of Reality is repugnant to the Upanishadic teaching of Brahman being non-dual. It must be remembered that these statements are made from the initial stage or stand-point of superimposition or *Adhyārōpa*, but they are never left at that. Later, in all such cases in the Upanishadic lore, the earlier ascriptions are sublated or rescinded by means of *Apavāda* and in the process the texts drive the attention of the seeker from the sphere of multiplicity to the one and only substrate for all this seeming diversity and bring home the fact of the Absolute Reality to be non-dual at the end of all discrimination, based on Intuition and Intuition alone.

The Shrutis speak of Brahman both as *Nimitta Kāraṇa* (cause) the efficient *Upādāna Kāraṇa* as well as (the material cause) of the universe. This is impossible in the empirical sphere. Then in what sense precisely is Brahman the *cause* of the universe ? To answer this, it is necessary to understand the nature of the effect, the universe itself. Sri Shankara in his Sūtra Bhāshya 1-1-2 states: "The Omniscient and Omnipotent cause from which proceeds the origin, sustentation and dissolution of this universe -the universe which is differentiated by name and form -comprehends many agents and experiencers (of the fruits of action), and is the abode of the fruits of actions regulated by particular places, times and causes, (the universe) whose creation is not even conceivable by the mind- that cause is Brahman." This description is so comprehensive, including, as it does, even time, space and causation in its scope and it evidently forbids the conception of Brahman as 'the cause' of the universe in the ordinary sense of the word. Nor can we think of Brahman as the 'creator' of the world in the same sense that a carpenter is the maker of a table, for all agents of action are within the universe. Brahman, as Īshwara, cannot be thought to be the material cause of the universe if He is outside it as an agent and vice versa. In what sense, then, is Brahman the cause and the universe Its effect? Sri Shankara answers in Sūtra Bhāshya 2-1-14: "The effect is this manifold world consisting of ether (*Ākāsha*) etc. and the cause is the Highest Brahman; the non-existence of the effect, in reality, apart from that cause is concluded. On what grounds ? For the reason that the Shruti declares that the effect is merely the play of words (*Vāchārambhanam*) and for other similar reasons."

Besides passages in Chhāndōgya, Brihadāranyaka and several other Upanishads teach the essential *unity* of the world with the non-dual Ātman or Brahman. It follows that this apparent world as we are aware of is only the effect of Māyā and cannot be described as either essentially identical with or as having any independent existence apart from Brahman (*Tattva Annyattwābhyām Anirvachariṇye*). Sri Shankara leaves no room for any doubt in his Sūtra Bhāshya 2-1-14 that by the Vedāntic word 'effect' is meant nothing more than 'appearance' and consequently the word 'cause' means nothing more than the 'substrate' on which appearances are superimposed.

In many Shrutis, particularly in the Māndūkya Upanishad, the world is said to be in a latent condition, in the seed form, in Ātman

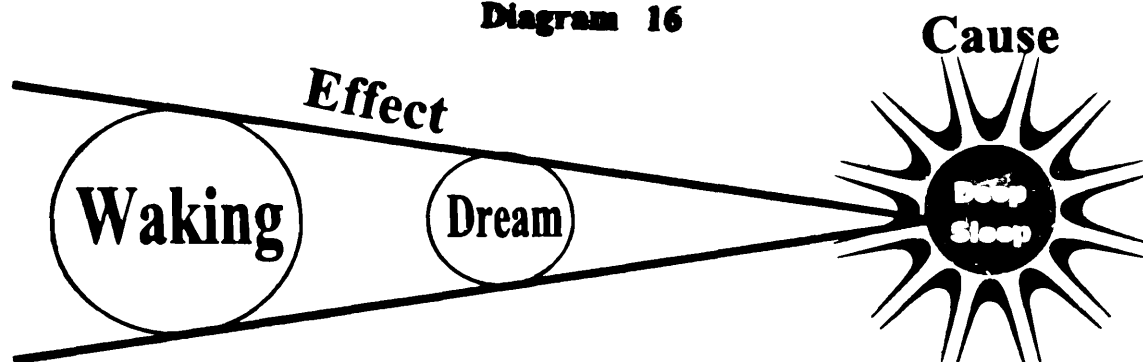
or Pure Consciousness, and it sprouts out and again returns back and merges in Him at the time of dissolution. In such contexts too it should not be likened to the future tree being in a latent or potential form in the seed; for, in every instance of organic development and transformation the substance in the form of the previous stage is entirely exhausted in the form into which it develops or transforms itself. Thus the cause is exhausted in its effects. Action exhausts itself in the reaction. However, Pure Consciousness is not like the seed giving rise to tree in the shape of the world; for, in that case the original entity should be completely exhausted and should perforce become extinct when it assumes the form of the world. Pure Consciousness is the substrate of the manifestation of the world, but at the same time It remains whole, undivided and unaffected throughout the states as the changeless Witnessing Principle in every one. There cannot be a perfect example for such a fact in the empirical sphere and yet the scriptures use this weakness, or rather the innate habit, of the mind to correlate things always as cause and effect, subject and object etc. in time and space to focus our attention on the Vedāntic Reality of Pure Consciousness.

Hence the world is not a *creation* nor an organic development or transformation, but simply a manifestation of Ātman or Pure Consciousness without affecting Its integrity. This fact is based on a universal and comprehensive experience; for, when waking gives place to deep sleep, Pure Consciousness, as the Witnessing Principle, remains unaffected, which would not be the case if it had undergone any modification whatsoever in the interval. Besides, the expression 'changelessness' smacks of association with the time factor in the empirical sense but changelessness as applied to 'Pure Consciousness' in Vedānta has a peculiar or special import. **It does not indicate a static entity persisting amidst changing things which would involve It in the sphere of time.** Change is impossible without pre-supposing time, and Pure Consciousness, which transcends the realm of time altogether, cannot be rightly described as changing or changeless. Even the empirical consciousness in the form of the 'I, -sense, which operates within the limits of time must be conceived, in a manner of speaking, as persisting unchanged in the midst of the changing experience of the external and the internal worlds (i.e. the sensual and the mental experiences). All the more reason, therefore, that Pure Consciousness, which is the eternal basis of

all Life, should be described as changeless, but, strictly speaking, both change and changelessness cannot be predicated of Pure Consciousness, as these ideas savour of time.

This Pure Consciousness is Absolute, transcending all relations projected in association with the mental concepts of time, space and causality. But relations can have a significance and are possible only in a sphere of duality. Hence any attempt to connect the Absolute with its manifestation as an appearance in the shape of the world must thus end in failure; for, no relation can ever be imagined beyond the sphere of duality. By the Vedāntic discrimination based on Intuition it is impossible to develop any relation even between the waking state and the dream state, and deep sleep does not manifest any duality at all. Hence deep sleep cannot be truly treated as a state. As a matter of fact, we realise that — 'Starting from the undifferentiated oneness of Pure Consciousness of deep sleep, a world manifests itself in the waking. As this can have no other substratum, we are compelled to admit that Pure Consciousness Itself somehow appears split up into subject and object, into the ego and the non-ego, in the waking. Hence it is only from the waking point of view that Pure Consciousness has two aspects, viz. the changing and the changeless, but in Itself and by Itself It is beyond both, and this is the transcendental or *Pāramārthika* viewpoint.' Thus the Pure Consciousness of deep sleep is the waveless ocean into which we the egos, the differentiated waves and bubbles, merge and our reality is nothing but Pure Consciousness, and apart from It our existence is a mere appearance. The full import of the following Māndūkya Upanishad Mantra 6 referring to Pure Consciousness of deep sleep as Ātman could now be comprehended: "He is the Ruler of all. He is all-knowing. He is all-pervading. It is from Him that all things originate and it is in Him that they dissolve."

Diagram 16



XII. VEDĀNTA SHĀSTRA – THE ONE AND ONLY MEANS FOR SELF-KNOWLEDGE

One outstanding difference between the Vedānta Shāstra as a means of right knowledge and other empirical means of knowledge is that while the latter dispel the ignorance enveloping their respective objects in particular, they never assure the knower of the destruction of all ignorance for good, whereas the Upanishadic texts (*Vedānta Shāstra*) pulls out all ignorance (*Avidyā*) with all its roots, as it were, by means of Ātma Vidyā or Jnāna or Self-Knowledge. Sri Shankara in his Gītā Bhāshya 2- 69 says: “The ultimate means of knowledge (to wit, Vedānta Shāstra) removes the knowership (*Pramātrutva*) itself superimposed on Ātman, and simultaneously with that removal it ceases to be a means of knowledge cease to be such on waking.”

From the empirical standpoint, the Self as knower or cogniser (*Pramātru*) is necessarily taken for granted by every one before seeking for the means of knowledge (*Pramānas*); for, nobody in the world ever thinks of proving his own existence in the manner of ‘I am such and such a person’ before proceeding to determine the nature of an object (*Prameya*). In other words, *Pramānas* like *Buddhi* (intellect), *Chitta* (memory), *Manas* (mind) and *Indriyas* (senses) can never be utilised to establish the truth of *Pramātru* (the ego). For, *Pramānas* can come into existence and start functioning only after *Pramātru* (the ego or *Ahamkāra*) is established. This statement also is made only on the basis of a logical priority, but in truth *Pramātru*, *Pramānas* and *Prameya* are all co-extensive or coeval and cannot possibly be conceived of separately. For this reason alone the ego is said to be self-established, needing no proof, in the *Avidyā* or *Vyavahārika* (empirical) sphere. (Sri Shankara states this in Gītā Bhāshya 2.1-). Similarly, *Pramānas* are necessarily presumed to be real means of right knowledge by every knower who wishes to investigate and determine the nature of objects (*Prameya*). Hence the concept of one’s being the knower (*Pramātrutva*) lies at the very root of all human conduct based on primeval ignorance (*Avidyā* or *Adhyāsa*). But the Vedānta Shāstra reveals that the very fact of Ātman being a knower or *Pramātru* rests on *Avidya* or *Adhyāsa*, and when the Self or Ātman is cognised or Intuited to be

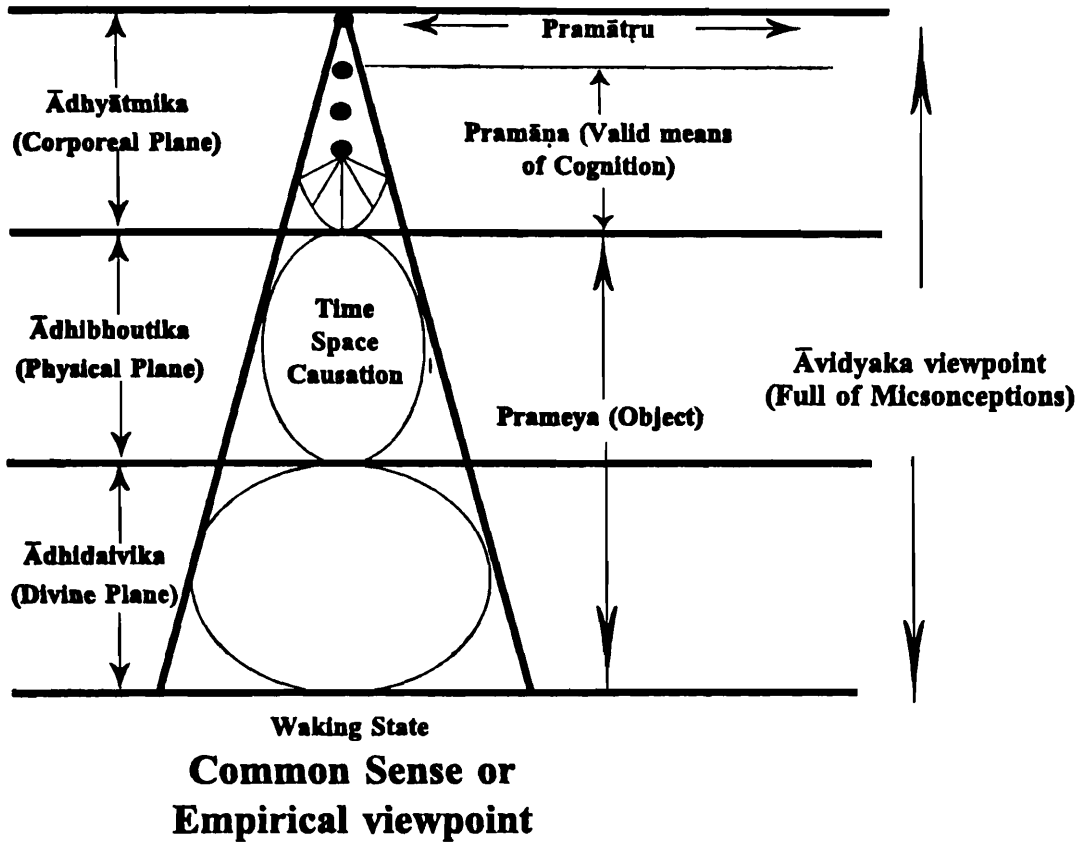
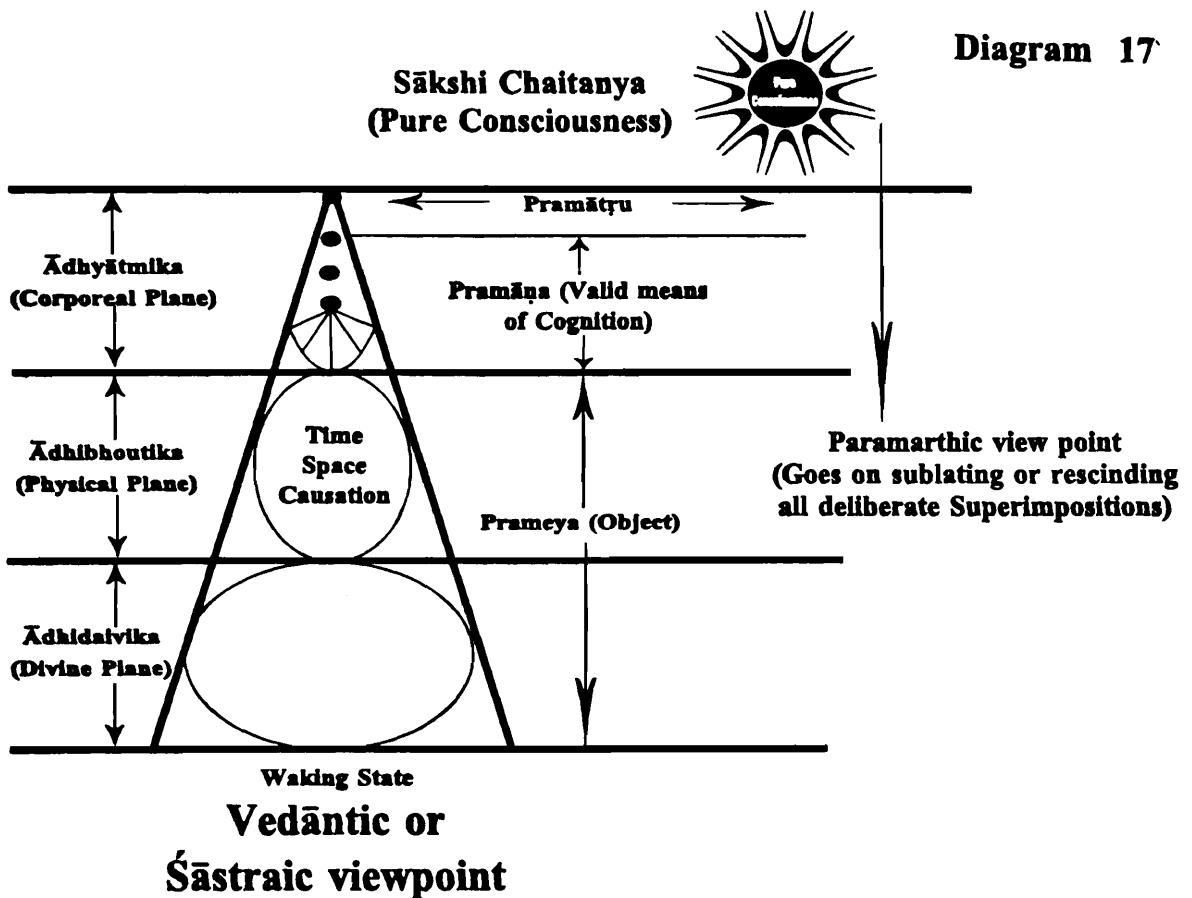


Diagram 17



no longer a knower or Pramātru, then the Pramānas are not Pramānas and without Pramānas there can be no object (Prameya) to be determined. Thus when the Vedānta Shāstra *enlightens* us on the non-dual nature of Ātman (this is called *Ātmaikatwa Vidyā*) the truth of Brihadāranyaka Upanished 4-5-15 is Intuited, viz. "When all has been reduced to the One Self, who is to see, what object, by what means ?"

The very notion of these distinct elements of knowledge is effaced at the dawn of this unitary (non-dual) knowledge of Ātman, just as our dream-notion of the distinctions of the knower (Pramātru), the means of knowledge (Pramānas) and the knowable objects (Prameya) as well as the resultant knowledge (Pramiti) is sublated as soon as we wake up. Inasmuch as the Vedānta Shāstra thus abolishes the very nature of all means of knowledge, as such, it has been called '**Antya Pramāna**', the final means of knowledge. And the Vedānta Shāstra being itself a means of knowledge, just like any other Pramāna, ceases to be such as soon as the Intuitive Knowledge of the One Ātman makes Its appearance, in the same way as dream-means of knowledge fade away on waking. Hence the Shruti says: "The Vedas become no Vedas when one takes one's stand in Ātman". (Bri. 4-3-22).

It will be noted by the student that the term 'Avidyā' is used in a special sense in Vedānta and the distinctions of *Vidyā* (*right knowledge*) and *Avidyā* (*lack of knowledge or ignorance*) about an object or phenomenon of empirical life remain undisturbed by this *Transcendental terminology of Vedānta*. It should be discerned here that within the purview of *Vedāntic Avidyā* lie the distinctions of *Vidyā* (right knowledge) and *Avidyā* (lack of knowledge or misconception) of the empirical life. **These distinctions hold their sway until the Absolute Knowledge of the Ultimate Reality of Ātman dawns and one is established in his essential nature as the Self. It will also be clear now that the Vedāntic Avidyā projects the Māyā Jagat of names and forms, and in this aspect Avidyā projects Māyā and is the cause for the appearance of Jagat and one's involvement in it.**



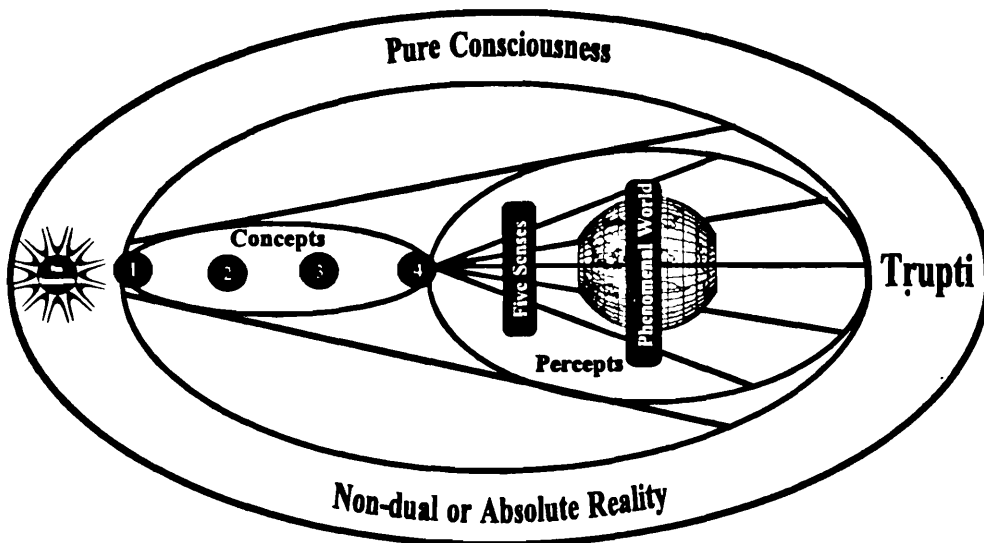
XIII. EKĀYANA PRAKRIYĀ

Man, under the spell of Avidya, gives the waking experience the pride of place in his life and is prone to show an indifference to the other states, treating dream and deep sleep as negative aspects of active life. He feels that the totality of his experiences or knowledge is to be found only in the waking and hence for him this state is synonymous with Life itself.

Within the waking state the whole gamut of man's experiences can be classified into *Pratyaya Anubhava* [experiences gained through the five senses, viz. eyes (*Chakshu*), ears (*Shrotru*), nose (*Nāsika*), tongue (*Jihwa*) and skin (*Twak*)] and *Vedana Anubhava* (experiences gained at the mental level, like emotions, feelings, ideations, inferences etc). Really speaking, man can possibly gain all his experiences only at these two levels, viz. the sensual and the mental. The senses, being the external instruments embedded in the body by means of which man comes into contact with the objective world, are called 'Bahih Karana' or external means, while the intellect (*Buddhī*), the memory (*Chitta* and not *Chit* which means Consciousness) and the mind (*Manas*), which are merely different aspects of the same Mind, are together called the internal means or 'Antah Karana'.

Ekāyana Prakriyā

Diagram 18



1. Ego 2. Intellect 3. Memory 4. Mind

The common run of people are all ignorant in the eyes of Vedānta, for they suffer from *Adhyāsa* or misconception (about their real, essential nature as the Self or Pure Being) born out of a natural

(*Naisargika*) superimposition mutually between his real nature of Ātman or the Self and the un-Ātman or not-Self and their respective natures. To rid man of this inveterate Avidyā, Vedānta texts use the Adhyārōpa Apavāda Nyāya and deliberately attribute a feature to Ātman, who is featureless Absolute Being, only to sublimate this ascription as soon as its purpose of teaching the Transcendental Reality is achieved.

The Diagram elucidates in a picturesque manner the **Ekāyana Prakriya** (the method of treating Ātman as the one Abode of everything). It is already brought home to the student that the 'I' - notion itself is the projection of Avidyā in the form of *Adhyāsa* or misconception. This initial misconception is rooted in the baseless, unjustifiable clinging to the not-Self in the manner of identifying oneself with the body as 'I' and the senses, the mind, the intellect as 'mine'. This natural Adhyāsa compels every human being to take without any rational basis the sphere of Avidyā, starting from the 'I'-notion (the ego) and extending through the intellect, the memory, the mind, the five senses up to the objective world (manifest and unmanifest like the extra-sensory worlds of the religions) made up of the five elements, viz, Ākāsha (space), Vāyu (air), Agni or Tejas (fire), App (water) and Prithvi (earth) along with its inseparable time-space-causation complex, as real and at the same time be indifferent to his real, essential nature of Being (the Self) and treat it as non-existent or unreal.

Vedānta Shāstra dīns it into the ears of the true seeker that his percepts (*Pratyaya Anubhava*) of the external objects through the senses and the internal concepts (*Vedana Anubhava*) of emotions, feelings, ideations etc. through the mind are all experienced by the ego. Without the ego being pre-supposed, these percepts and concepts have no existence and content. In a manner of speaking, both these categories of experiences begin from the ego and finally return back to the ego, in whom they culminate only as far as the practical life is concerned. The ego in this aspect is called the *Kartru* (doer) and *Bhoktru* (enjoyer) and is the abode of all mundane experiences.

In the Diagram the egg-shaped circle I depicts the Vedana Anubhava or concepts, which start from the ego and culminate in him, the circuit being completed like that of an electric current. Similarly, the bigger oval-shaped circle II depicts the Pratyaya

Anubhava or percepts within which the circle representing the objective phenomenal world with its time-space-causation complex is included. It would be observed that the sensual experiences of the external world are gathered by the mind and are finally communicated to the ego through the memory and the intellect. Thus the ego is the concentric point for all practical life which comprises the percepts and the concepts. In other words, the ego is the *abode* of the totality of waking experiences.

Now Vedānta convincingly proves that the ego is nothing but an appearance superimposed on its substratum of Ātman, the real Self. Really speaking, Ātman, the cause and substratum, Himself appears as the effect i.e. the ego through misconception or *Adhyāsa (Avidyā)*. If the student has assimilated this teaching, then he can easily Intuit that Ātman as the Eternal Witnessing Principle, the Absolute Immutable Reality, the Sākshi Anubhava (shown as the biggest egg-shaped circle III) is the cause which merely appears as the manifold Pratyaya Anubhava as also Vedana Anubhava through Avidyā. The circle III is only shown to depict that in truth all mundane experiences start from and culminate in the *Sākshi Anubhava* or the Pure Consciousness, which is the very prius of all practical life and is, therefore, called the real and only Abode of all practical life (*Eka Ayana*). Ayana in Sanskrit means abode. But the circle should not be taken to mean that Ātman is also circumscribed or restricted.

This Ekāyana Prakriyā is used in Brihadāranyaka 4-6-11 and 13. Yājñavalkya used this method while instructing his wife, Maitreyi. He says: “Just as for all waters (rivers) the sea is the abode, all sensations of touch find their abode in the skin; similarly, all the sensations of smell find their abode in the nose; similarly, all sensations of taste find their abode in the tongue; similarly, all the sensations of forms find their abode in the eyes; similarly, all sensations of sound find their abode in the ears; similarly, for all ideations the mind is the abode etc.....”



XIV. SĀMĀNYA VISHESHA PRAKRIYĀ OR THE METHOD OF THE GENUS AND THE SPECIES

The description of Brahman as the cause of the birth, sustentation and dissolution of the universe (*Janmādyasya Yataha-Vedānta Sūtra 1-1-2*) is only a device of deliberately superimposing the causal nature on Brahman or Ātman in order to transcend all idea of causality. The Brihadāranyaka 2-5-19 says: “Now this Brahman is without a before and an after, without an interior and an exterior. This Ātman is Brahman; He is the direct experiencer of everything. This is the (whole) teaching.”

From the standpoint of the Absolute, therefore, there can be no creative cause, efficient or material, nor can there be any universe created as an effect; there cannot be any action, instruments of action or the fruits of action; no time, space or causality; and hence, nothing is predicable as substance or quality, nothing changeful or changeless; no act or its consequence and no relation of the genus and the species. However, from the standpoint of Adhyārōpa or superimposition there is scope for all these attributions in the universe *created*.

The Upanishad therefore takes hold of an empirical example to illustrate how the genus (*Sāmānya*) is indispensable for the species (*Vishesha*) to enjoy their being and consequently concludes that the genus is their *real being*. In this manner by deliberately superimposing generality upon Ātman the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad (2-4-7) applies the following illustration to decide that all not-Self depends upon Ātman for its being and hence is *identical* with Him: “When a drum is being beaten, one cannot grasp the particular sounds apart from it, but being grasped as the sounds of the drum or as the outcome of beating the drum the sound is grasped.” Other sources of sound are given as illustrations to show that particular sounds in themselves cannot be grasped except by referring them to their source, the genus.

Sri Shankara in the Brihadāranyaka Bhāshya 2-4-9 indicates the general line of reasoning suggested by these illustrations: “The citation here of many examples is to draw the listener’s attention to the fact that there are many *genera*. For, there are numerous

sub-genera, sentient and insentient. Thereofre, the intention is to show how in succession all of them are included in the highest *genus of Pure Consciousness* just as the sub-varieties of the sounds of the drum, conch and the vīna are comprehended as sound in general. Thus during the state of sustentation, since the sub-genera do not exist apart (from Brahman), it is possible to conclude that Brahman alone is Real.”

The force of the argument adduced above lies in the fact that no phenomenon in the empirical sphere can claim any substantive existence or being of its own unless it is recognised as a *species* of a *genus* common to all particular phenomena of its nature. Now all these genera are in themselves dependent upon Pure Consciousness, which is Ātman. The fact that — all phenomena, interior (psychic), or exterior (physical) enjoy their existence through the grace of the Witnessing Pure Consciousness, whose non-existence is impossible to conceive — is hence no mere speculation, but is based on the firm ground of Intuition. We thus see that the Upanishads make use of the device of Adhyārōpa Apavāda Nyāya by taking illustrations of some genera and species from common life and superimposing the character of a genus (*Sāmānya*) on Ātman to lead the enquirer to realise that Ātman is the only Reality behind all particularised (species of) appearances (*Vishesha*)

Similarly, *Jīva* (the transmigratory soul) and *Jagat* (the universe of multiplicity) are treated as the *Vishesha Roopa* (particularised forms) of their substratum, viz. Īshwara, who is said to be the controller or Lord of both. When the superimpositions are rescinded, Īshwara is divested, as it were, of his Īshwaratwa or Lordship or controllership, the *Jīva* loses his *Jīvatwa* or restricted, finite appearance as the soul and the *Jagat* of its multiplicity and its being a circumscribed sphere of constant mutations—all of them merging in Brahman or Ātman, who is Absolute, Infinite and Immutable beyond the time-space-causation factors. Hence in this aspect Ātman or Brahman becomes the *Sāmānya* or genus of the apparent appearances of Jīva and Jagat. Īshwara is Brahman itself but is used relatively along with Jīva and Jagat, on the basis of Adhyārōpa or superimposition (later on to be rescinded).



XV. DISCIPLINE AND GOAL

From the highest standpoint of Advaita, there can be neither a goal to be reached nor any way to be traversed before reaching that goal. Advaita is not to be acquired by the abolition of duality or the manifold universe, for what is real is always there, and can never be wiped off by any feat or legerdemain. As Gaudapāda says:-

“If the manifold were existent, then, no doubt, it would need to be removed. This duality is mere Māyā - a magical show; really there is Advaita alone.” GK. 1-17.

[It is not a real pluralistic universe that has got to be actually blotted out to attain non-duality.]

“A thought-construct would have to be removed, if it had been actually conceived by some one. This is only a device for the purpose of teaching; there is no duality when the truth is known.” GK. 1-18.

It is not true to say that there is some one who has wrongly imagined and actually brought about the appearance of duality. It is not true even to say that some one has got to be actually enlightened by the Shriti or a teacher in order to remove his wrong idea of duality. The distinction of the teacher and the taught, is merely a device resorted to by the Upanishads to reveal the grand truth that Advaita or the Absolute is eternally unaffected by anything foreign to It, for really there can be nothing foreign beside the Absolute.

Yet conceding to the empirical point of view, Advaitins talk of levels of intellect as well as of the aspirants for Truth and gradations of teaching as well:-

“There are three grades of seekers, possessing the lowest, mediocre and the highest view-points. Upāsana is therefore taught out of compassion for such seekers.” GK. 3-16.

Karma (ritual) is taught to the lowest grade of seekers, Upāsana (meditation) to those of the middle grade, while Jnāna is reserved for seekers of the highest grade. Thus, for instance, the Brihadāranyaka says:-

"It is this Ātman whom Brāhmaṇas seek to know through the recitation (or study) of the Vedas, sacrifice, charity, asceticism consisting of moderation in enjoyment of sense-objects. It is by knowing this Ātman alone that one becomes a *Muni* (a sage). Urged by the desire of this World (of Ātman) alone, they renounce everything. This is it, we learn, that (prompted) the ancient sages never to desire offspring, (thinking) 'What shall we do with offspring, we for whom this is the Ātman, this is (the only) World (to be attained)?' They, we learn, rose above the desire for a son, desire for wealth, and desire for worlds and went away begging for alms."
Br. 4-4-22.

[In the above passage, discipline necessary for each of the stages of life, has been mentioned.]

Where the efficacy of recitation (or study) of the Vedas, is apparently derided, it should be understood as intended to lay stress on some other *Sādhanas* and not to negate the recitation (or study) or sacrifice as a means. For instance, in the text

"Not by Karma, not by offspring, nor by wealth, but by renunciation only, did some attain immortality."
Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad 12

it is intended to stress that renunciation is a more immediate means than Karma etc.

The Bhagavadgītā thus assesses the value of Karmas:-

"The Karma consisting of sacrifice, charity and asceticism should not be given up, it should needs be practised. For sacrifice, charity and asceticism, are purifiers to the wise. These Karmas, however, should be practised, renouncing attachment and fruits (of action). This, O son of Prithu, is my deliberate and final verdict."
BhG. 18-5, 6.

One who wishes to reach his destiny, naturally tries to get information about the goal, and to remember and discuss the nature of the goal to be reached. But this Ātman being the very Self of the seeker, the mere study, memory of what is studied or even constant discussion with a teacher, would be of no avail. This is not like the geographical study of a particular place to be reached. Intense longing to rest in one's own Self is of the utmost importance here.

One who yearns for the knowledge of Ātman, has already got it, for the Ātman has revealed Himself to all but those who have a tendency to stay away from Him.

“No one who has not desisted from bad conduct, no one who has not restrained his mind, and no one who has not achieved one-pointedness of mind, and no one whose mind is not absorbed (in the Ātman), can ever reach this Ātman through intuition.” Kā. 2-24.

This is the graduated course of discipline set forth for those who would retrace their steps back to Ātman. First of all one has to control the senses and restrain them from fleeting about aimlessly. Then the mind has to be brought back from fluttering in all directions. The third step is to make the mind singlepointed and direct it exclusively towards Ātman. The last step is to dissolve the mind into Ātman.

To stop the senses from fleeing from one object to another, the very first step is what has been called the *Karma-yōga in the Bhagavadgītā*. The one way of accomplishing it, is thus explained:-

“Him from whom the (evolution and activity of all) beings take place, (and) by whom all this is pervaded by worshipping Him through (the performance of) duty proper to oneself, man attains the end. Bhg. 18-46.

[‘The end’ is the qualification necessary for attaining knowledge. Actions without recognition of Ātman as their source and support, cannot conduce to that.]

This verse makes the meaning of the Shruti (Br. 4-4-22) already quoted more explicit. No doubt, the duties proper to *Varnas and Āshramas*, have lost their full force owing to lapse of time and preponderance of desire in this Iron Age, yet performance of what little is still in practice, and even the performance of one’s secular duties in a spirit of worship, would be conducive to the purification of the mind. Hence *Smritis like the Pārāshara*, say: ‘The twice-born act as influenced by the particular Yuga, and so, are not to be condemned.’ Moreover there is this *Shlōka* in the *Purāṇa*:-

“What good merit one obtains by meditation in the *Kṛita Yuga*, what through the performance of sacrifices in the *Treta*, what through worship in *Dvāpara*, that merit one attains in *Kali* by the mere loud utterance of *Keshava’s Name*.” Vishṇu Purāṇa. 6-2-17.



XVI. SĀDHANAS

The human mind has a natural tendency to be a slave to the senses which cannot help looking outwards exclusively, for they are created by the Lord to function in that manner alone. The Kathōpanishad 4-1 says: "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." Obviously, the ordinary extrovert mind of a common man in the grip of Avidyā gets defiled by the desires for gaining the temporal and transient fruits of this world.

In the ultimate analysis based on Intuitive discrimination (*Vedāntic Vichāra* or *Viveka*) Ātman or the Self is, in truth, One without a second, but from the Vyāvahārika standpoint (*Avidyā Drishti*), a two-fold distinction is foisted upon Him as a superimposition by the Vedānta Shāstra for the purposes of teaching the essential nature of Reality as the *Pramātru* or the seeker of this Reality and the *Paramātmān* or the Supreme Self, free from all Samsāric defilements and defects, to be sought out by that seeker. There is a traditional saying to this effect quoted by Sri Shankara in his Sūtra Bhāshya 1-4-1: "Before the realisation of Ātman to be sought out, Ātman is a *Pramātru*. When He is sought out the *Pramātru* himself would become the One Supreme Self free from all evils of good and bad and the like (of the empirical life)". And it is from the standpoint of the *Pramātru* or the ego that all spiritual disciplines are enjoined in the Shrutis and the Smritis for the attainment of *Jnāna*, the Intuitive Knowledge of Ātman. Religious works, devotional meditations, listening to the Shrutis etc. are all means to this end. Sri Shankara says in Sūtra Bhāshya 4-1-18: "Agnihōtra or any other obligatory ritual whether with or without the aid of Upāsana performed in this or in a previous birth with a view to obtaining freedom becomes, in proportion to its intensity, a means to the Knowledge of Brahman through the destruction of accumulated sins that form a hindrance to the realisation of Brahman. Through proximate means such as listening to Shrutis (*Shravana*), reflection (*Manana*), faith and perseverance Jīva ultimately achieves along with Brahma-Vidya (Knowledge of Brahman) the same result that is aimed at by the latter."

In Brihadāranyaka Upanishad 4-4-42 it is said: “It is this Ātman whom Brāhmanās seek to know through daily recitation of the Vedas, sacrifice, charity and asceticism or moderation in food”. It is evident that these sacrifices and other such practices are means conducive to ‘the birth of the Knowledge of Ātman’, as the words ‘seek to know’ imply. The Bhagavadgītā also says: “Man attains Perfection through worshipping Him (Īshwara) by means of duty enjoined on a person proper to his station ‘in life.” (G. 18-46). Hence Sri Shankara says in his Gītā Bhāshya 2-39 that *Karma Yoga* consists in the worship of Īshwara, the Lord, through performing one’s duties without attachment, after doing away with the pairs of opposites, and this is a good discipline to be practised by an aspirant externally. This “*Bahiranga Sādhana*” to be performed outwardly in our behaviour in the world, is also called ‘*Parampara Sādhana*’ by Sri Shankara, for it helps indirectly to remove desires and other defilements of the mind. For, while performing one’s duties whether spiritual or secular, the person treats the work that has come to his lot as the Lord’s worship and does it with all diligence and sincerity, and when he does so devoid of all attachment towards the fruits but only as a duty towards the Lord, he becomes capable of removing all mundane desires, which are truly a defilement of the mind. “Yogins do their duty, abandoning all attachment for self-purification.” (G.5-11).

Sri Shankara in his Sūtra Bhāshya 3-4-38 says: “It is quite possible that disciplinary spiritual acts like *Japa* (repetition of Mantras). *Upavāsa* (holy fasts) and *Devata Arādhanā* (worship of deities) enjoined on all human beings are conducive to the knowledge of Reality.” It may even be that religious works performed in a former birth or existence give rise to knowledge in the present life. Gītā confirms this in 6-45: “Perfected in the course of many births, he then reaches the Supreme Goal.” It is evident from this that particular helpful mental impressions (*Samskāras*) accumulated in other births also may lead to knowledge as in the cases of Vidura, Dharmavyādha and others who attained immortality or Knowledge of Ātman on account of effects produced by past deeds in other births, though they were ineligible to perform Vedic rites. It should be clear that the Knowledge of Ātman or the Self must invariably yield its fruit if it is sought by any person who is pure in heart, having got rid of all the defilements of the mind.

There is another class of disciplinary practices of greater efficacy, more conducive to the Knowledge of Ātman, and they are called '*Antaranga Sādhanā*' or internal disciplines. They are also called '*Sahakāri Sādhanas*' in Vedānta, for they are to be performed at the mind level and are aimed at purifying the mind of its defilements and thereby contributing more efficaciously to enlightenment. Lord Sri Krishna enumerates nearly 20 of these profound disciplines like humility, unostentatiousness, avoiding injury to others, forgiveness, straightforwardness etc. for the benefit of Arjuna in the Gītā (verses 7 to 11 of the 13th Chapter). Sri Shankara in his Taittirīya Bhāshya 1-11 says: "By the term 'Karma' we should understand not merely rituals like *Agnihōtra*, *Brahmacharya* (religious celibacy), *Tapas* (asceticism), *Satyavadana* (truthfulness), *Shama* (self-control), *Dama* (control of the senses), *Ahimsa* (harm-lessness) and others of the kind are also Karmas known among the followers of the stages of life other than that of a house-holder to be of greater efficacy in contributing to enlightenment and are known to be unmixed with defilements, and there are also Karmas of the nature of meditation and concentration." There is an express statement pertaining to *Shama* (control of the the mind) and such other practices as leading to Self-Knowledge in Brihadāranyaka 4-4-23: "Therefore, one who knows this shall become self-controlled, self-subdued and quietistic, patient and concentrative and thereby see Ātman in himself." In Sūtra Bhāshya 3-4-25 Sri Shankara opines: Kindling the sacrificial fire (*Agnihotra*) or other Āshrama Karmas are not desiderated by Self-Knowledge to yield its fruit or effect."

Strictly speaking, Knowledge of Ātman cannot possibly be conceived to be ancillary to Karma, and enjoining of all these practices or disciplines are purported to cleanse the mind, the inner subtle instrument of man, of its dross - (viz. natural proclivity of hankering after external objects and getting attached to them with a view to achieving the fruits of his desires) - and thereby make it introverted, concentrative and full of equanimity. Only such a pure mind is capable of ratiocination or Intuitive discrimination taught by the Upaniṣhadic texts, which are to be first heard (*Shravana*), then reflected upon (*Manana*) and contemplated upon (*Nididhyāsana*). These three practices are called '*Sākshāt Sādhanā*' or direct means for attaining Knowledge of Ātman or the Self, which is the core of Being of all human beings, nay all creation. The Kathōpanishad 3-12 states: "This

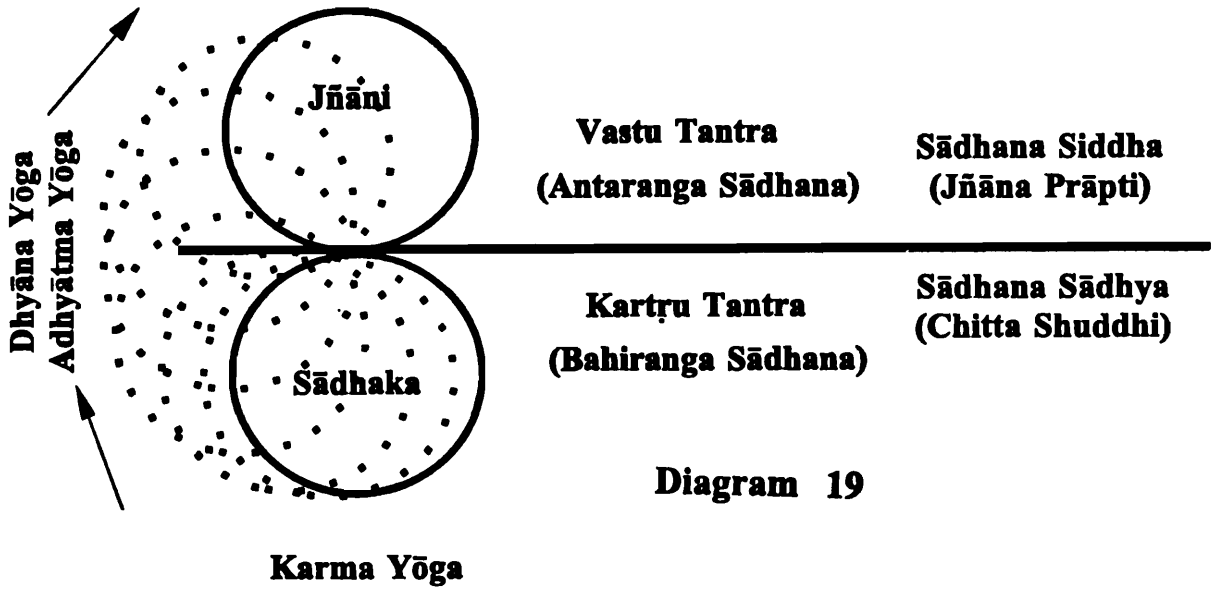


Diagram 19

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.”

Adhyātma Yoga

The Upanishads teach the *Adhyātma Vidyā* or the Knowledge of Ātman of all as *Vastu Tantra* and not as *Kartṛu Tantra* or *Purusha Tantra*. In other words, the seeker has to ‘know’ or Intuit his core of Being as It is. He has to Intuit the Pure Consciousness, the One Eternal Witnessing Principle and not try to grasp It through his intellect as it is his wont. Those that strive to know Ātman *directly* have to undergo the course of a discipline called ‘**Adhyātma Yoga**’, the Yōga by means of which one can *stay the mind* on Ātman within. Accordingly, the Kathōpanishad exhorts the seeker to practise this Yōga by taking several steps one by one. These are enumerated in the verse 3-13 thus: “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.”

It should be evident by now to the ardent student of Vedānta that the ‘Vision’ or ‘Knowledge’ of Ātman referred to by the Upanishads is neither sensual perception nor the inference by or concept of the mind. **He should understand that to ‘know’ the Self is to ‘be’ the Self, and to ‘be’ the Self is to ‘cease the identification with the not-Self**. This teaching would be clearer by a close analysis of Sri Shankara’s Bhāshya explaining the various stages of the

Adhyātma Yōga specified in the Upanishad: 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 external organs of sense, such as that of speech, and continue to stay as if he were one with the mind." 2. "This mind (*Manas*) 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 'Jnāna' in this text) the faculty of determining, by (constantly) warning oneself against the defects of the 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 *Hiranya Garbha*." 4. "As for this 'Great Ātman' he should be made steadfast and merged in the *Shānta Ātman* (Ātman who is absolutely free from all the specific features of phenomena) in the *Parama Purusha* (Supreme Person), the 'Final Goal', on whose context this Yōga is being taught." (Sūtra Bhāshya 1-4-1). This Yoga is referred to as *Dhyāna Yōga*, the Yōga of contemplation, in Gītā 6-3, as *Nididhyāsana* in Brihadāranyaka Upanished (2-4- 4) and as *Manōnigraha Yōga* (control of the mind) in Sri Gaudapāda's Kārika 3-40 in the Mādūkya Upanishad.

The highest renunciatory acts of discipline called in Vedānta '*Nivruttidharma*' are: First, one should know all that is worth knowing about Ātman; secondly by virtue of that knowledge overcome the consciousness of the *reality* of sensory objects and learn to behave in all humility, just like a child, without making a display of his knowledge, scholarship, moral excellence and other such attainments. And thirdly, overpassing even that stage he should devote himself to the contemplation upon the real nature of Ātman, which culminates in the Vedāntic Intuition. When he has succeeded in all these three stages of practice he becomes a *Brāhmana* or knower of Brahman in the real sense of the word. Spiritual discipline can be said to have fructified when it is found to culminate in the **Knowledge or Intuition of Brahman** and this Knowledge can be said to have fructified when Absolute or Spiritual Freedom called *Immortality* is attained. It is repeatedly stressed in the Bhāshyas by Sri Shankra that this Spiritual Freedom or Emancipation is nothing to be newly acquired, but being an ever-attained essential nature of the Self, is only to be *realised* or Intuited by Knowledge, and there are no gradations whatever in this Freedom, for That is the Absolute Reality, and Real of the reals, the All without a second.

XVII. CONCLUSION

It is now time for retrospection. We may try to have a resume of what we have learnt about the Upanishads so far.

The word 'Upanishad' itself primarily means **Brahman-Vidyā**, **the Knowledge of Paramātman** or the real Self of all the universe, internal and external including the enquirer of Truth. The word is sometimes used in the sense of a secret. *Brahmātma-Vidyā, however, is secret only for those who dare not look at things as they are. Being the very Self of the enquirer, as of all other beings, its Knowledge (Intuition) cannot be kept as a secret by any one. It only requires the proper way of looking at It.*

Brahman is the subtlest principle and is the essence of all things, animate and inanimate. It is the only *Reality* in the strict sense of the word, and is the very Self of the seeker of Truth. The human mind, in its present state, is not capable of knowing It because of its tendency to look outwards, and desire for gross objects which, it imagines, are the only source of happiness in life. Moreover, Brahman is devoid of all specific features and **can never be objectified** by the senses or the mind, the usual instruments for observing and determining the nature of phenomenal things. This is an additional reason why Brahman is not comprehensible by means of any concept. Yet It is the inmost Self of the enquirer. **It is the only entity that is undeniably real.**

Brahman is eternally pure, essentially conscious, and ever free. Being the only Reality, It is the All. One who knows It as his very Self becomes Brahman by that very Knowledge. As Brahman is the All, the Knower of Brahman also becomes all. The word 'all' here *does not denote quantity or number*, for Brahman has no specific adjunct such as quantity or number. It is the only Entity that ever existed. It is a *Whole* without parts, *One* without a second beside It, *Infinite* not to be contrasted with something finite. It is *fearless*, for there is no second for It to be afraid of, and there is nothing in Its intrinsic nature about which It could be afraid. It is *immortal* by nature, is *All-pervading*, *entire* in Itself, but should not be thought of in connection with something else which is pervaded, or with something else which is broken and decayed. It is *changeless* and *eternal* without reference to time,

Being not opposed to non being, *Consciousness* without an object, *Bliss* underived from any object. In a word, It is the *Absolute Reality*. So soon as one Knows It as his real Self, he becomes Brahman Itself with all these characteristics, if they can be called 'characteristics' at all.

Brahman or the Real Ātman being *all that really is*, it goes without saying that there can be no one to teach It or to be taught, if the truth of this non-duality is once admitted. But from the standpoint of the common unphilosophic mind, it seems to be absurd to maintain that there is only *One Absolute Reality* without a second. **This view contradicts all experience and denies all canons of knowledge which loudly proclaim the existence of a universe of manifoldness, variety, constant change and novelty.** How can the Upanishads make such a self-contradictory statement like that? And how are they going to teach anybody an *Absolute* without features, which can neither be described by words nor thought of by the mind?

Students of Vedānta as taught by the Upanishads, should first of all acquaint themselves with the **Method** adopted therein to present the truths of the system. The distinction between the empirical or the Vyāvahāric view restricted to the phenomena of the waking state, and the Sāstraic view, or the Paramārtha (real) view of Vedānta taking cognisance of the whole of life, should be carefully noted; for, the Upanishads are treating of Brahman or Reality underlying not only the entire universe (both internal and external) experienced in waking, but embracing Life in all its aspects in our waking, dreaming and sleeping states.

The **language and style** specially devised for suggesting the nature of Brahman which is unobjectifiable by word or thought, and the negation method called the *Adhyārōpāpavāda Nyāya* adopted to lead the inquirer to the Intuition of Reality, by sublating all not-Self, must be thoroughly understood, if the study of the Upanishads, is to yield any tangible and beneficial result.

The aspirant to the Intuition of Vedāntic Truth should be prepared to undergo the necessary **Spiritual discipline** to recede inwards and make a diligent search till he lands at Reality which is his inmost Self. In any case, he must be forewarned that success in mastering Vedāntic Truth is never possible to attain through a mere intellectual game.

The Upanishads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Vedānta-Sūtras, are the three standard sets of literature that help us to understand the traditional way (*Āgama*) and the peculiar course of reasoning (*Tarka*) to be followed in understanding the Vedāntic truths. We have shown in these chapters how a qualified seeker can follow the application of the method of the *Adhyārōpāvādā Nyāya* in all its details. It is hoped that the earnest student who has gone through these specimen modes of application of the method, would be able to see how Vedāntins who seriously hold to the Upanishadic teaching of Advaitic Brahman or the Absolute without the slightest tinge of any specific feature, can talk in the same breath of *Avidyā* and *Māyā*, of *Being and Becoming*, *cause and effect*, *God and creatures*, *the universal and the particular*, *the individual soul and the universal Ātman*, *states of Consciousness and Pure Consciousness*, *bondage and freedom*, *discipline and the goal*, and such other distinctions which can apply only to a pluralistic Universe.

OM TAT SAT

