



## 1. ADHYATMA PRAKASHA

Gentle Reader,

At the repeated request of some of the non-Kannada patrons of this Magazine, the Editor has consented to include one or two pages in English in each of the monthly issues hereafter. Whether this will continue as a regular feature of the periodical depends on how this innovation is appreciated by the readers.

The title '*ADHYATMA-PRAKASHA*' chosen for the Monthly, has a two-fold meaning. In the first place, the word means 'light on the inner portion of the universe'. The magazine is mainly interested in inviting the attention of its readers towards the aspect of the universe within man, which is as important as, if not even more important than the external aspect of the universe, the *ādhībhoutika* aspect as it is called in Sanskrit. Physical science has explored a considerable part of the world without and revealed many of its wonders hitherto unknown to man. But Vedantas or the Upanishads, forming the ancient secret literature of India treating of Reality, stand alone in all literature on earth, in revealing many more wonders stored up in the portion of the universe within man. The knowledge of these wonders are of far-reaching consequences to humanity.

In the second place the word "**Adhyatma Prakasha**"



means 'the light of the Self within'. This magazine is interested in sharing its views with the readers on this subject also. The Upanishads are fond of speaking about the light of Ātman within man, not only as the basic Reality underlying the whole universe, but also the "Light of Lights" (ज्योतिषां ज्योतिः) by which man is guided in all his behaviour in life.

(1) आत्मनैवायं ज्योतिषाऽऽस्ते पल्ययते कर्म कुरुते विपल्येति ॥

(बृ. ४-३-६)

"This man sits, goes out, works and returns guided by the light of Ātman alone". (Br. 4-3-6)

(2) यच्छुभ्रं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिस्तद्यदात्मविदो विदुः ॥

(मुं. २-२-१०)

"That pure (Brahman) which is the Light of lights, only the knowers of Ātman know rightly". (Mu. 2-2-10)

Saṅkara explains that *Ātmavidah* 'knowers of Ātman' means those that pursue the notion of the I and dive deep and not those that hunt after the out-ward ideas of sensuous objects.

According to Vedanta, the one object of human life is to recognize this Light in which we all live, move and have our being. More of this in my next article.



## 2. WORTH KNOWING ABOVE ALL

I wonder how often you have read that text in Devanagari printed on the front page of the cover of this magazine. It reads:

एतज्ज्ञेयं नित्यमेवाऽऽत्मसंस्थं नातःपरं वेदितव्यं हि किञ्चित् ॥

This is from the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* (1-12). It means "This which is for ever within ones own self is the only Reality to be known, there is nothing else to be known beyond this".

Did you ever believe that all that is worth knowing is within your own self ? Scientists and philosophers have mostly regarded themselves as the investigators of Truth and that Truth relates to the Reality to be known by them. But this Ṛshi proclaims at the top of his voice that the only Reality to be known abides for ever in one's own self and that there is nothing whatever beyond it awaiting to be known after one has known It !

Many of us may think it audacious for any single man to claim that he has known everything to be known, while thinkers who have made so many miraculous discoveries concerning this earth of ours and are on their way to other planets in heaven to make further research. Can this ancient Ṛshi be supposed to be superior to all theorists and system-builders who have left such a brilliant record of their achievements in this field ? How on earth did he



stumble upon the method of knowing all the knowable at one sweep ?

This is R̥shi's reply to this indignant question :

तपःप्रभावाद्देवप्रसादाच्च ब्रह्म ह श्वेताश्वतरो ह विद्वान्।

अत्याश्रमिभ्यः परमं पवित्रं प्रोवाच सम्यगृषिसङ्घजुष्टम् ॥

श्वे. ६-२१

"By dint of deep thinking and by the grace of Divinity, Śvetāśvatara came to know Brahman (Reality) and preached the holiest Truth to men occupying revered stations of life, the Truth to which a host of R̥shis are devoted" Śve. 6-21

What may not be possible for the highest brain-work, is possible to attain through *tapasyā*, concentration of the mind and the senses.

Adhyatma Vidya (the Science of Ātman) which treats of Brahman, the all-pervading immortal Self of everything, can be acquired only by those who are self-controlled and turn inward to search for the Inmost Ātman. The Upanishad says that "the creator has bored the senses of man so as to be able to look outwards only; so it is only a rare discriminating person who withdraws them and looks for the vision of the Ātman within, so that he might become immortal" (Ka. 2-1)



### 3. BRAHMA-VIDYA

Adhyatma-Vidyā (the science of the inmost all-pervading Self), is also called Brahma-Vidya (the Science of the Infinite). The following text from the Muṇḍaka Upanishad, exhibits the full significance of this name :-

ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः संबभूव विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता ।  
स ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठामथर्वाय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह ॥

मुं. १-१-१

"Brahmā manifested himself as the first and foremost of the shining gods, the creator of the universe and sustainer of the whole world. He told the Brahma-Vidyā the foundation and goal of all sciences to his eldest son Atharvan".

Mu.1-1-1

**Brahmā**, the first manifestation of Reality in the empirical world at the time of creation, is so called because, as Saṅkara explains it, he excels all other beings in righteousness, wisdom, dispassion, and lordliness. These special qualities make him a competent teacher of Brahma-Vidyā. This vidyā being the Science of the Absolutely Infinite, there can be no question of its being taught by some one or caught by another; for Brahman in its very nature, is the only entity without a second. From the empirical stand-point, however, there is need for a capable teacher who can impart it and it presupposes a



duly qualified disciple also who is ready to receive the teaching. It is on this view of presupposition, that the Śruti tells us that the great Brahmā imparted the Vidyā to his eldest son.

A hierarchy of successive Brahma-Vidyā teachers and students is stated in the Upanishads for the benefit of students so that they may seek out a genuine teacher of this traditional Vidyā. Remembering the names of this list of succession, is also believed to result in the accumulation of spiritual merit. That is why orthodox students solemnly repeat to this day the sentence ॐ नमो ब्रह्मादिभ्यो ब्रह्मविद्या संप्रदायकर्तृभ्यो महद्भ्यो नमो गुरुभ्यः ('Om' Prostration to Brahmā and other great Ṛshis enumerated in the succession list of teachers who have handed down the traditional Brahma-Vidyā !

But cannot a scholar who has a philosophical outlook, take up the study of this Vidyā of his own accord ?

No, because as we have already remarked, the subject-matter of this Vidyā is Ātman the inmost Self of all, while man is naturally an extrovert. As the Śruti says

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात् पराङ्पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ॥

का. २-१-१

"The creator has bored the senses outwards and so one sees outwards and not into his own self". (Ka. 2-2-1)

Moreover the senses are adapted to see only gross things possessing sound, touch, form or colour, taste or smell, whereas the Ātman is the subtle witnessing principle having none of these specific features. Therefore even the keenest intellect of man can never objectify this eternal subject. But how can even an adept teacher impart the knowledge of such an entity ? We shall take up this question in the next article.

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## 4. HOW IS THE ABSOLUTE TAUGHT OR CAUGHT ?

One of the paradoxical doctrines, is that the ineffable Brahman is taught by the Upanishads or a competent teacher, and that the unknowable Brahman can be known by a duly qualified disciple.

यद्वाचानभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते । तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम् । तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

के. १-५,६

"That which is inexpressible by speech but by which speech is expressed, know that alone to be Brahman; not that which they meditate upon as 'this'. That which one cannot conceive with one's mind, but by which they say, mind itself is conceived, know that alone to be Brahman; not that which they meditate upon as 'this'. Kena. 1-5,6

These texts contain a dialogue between a Guru and his disciple about the process of knowing Brahman. The question naturally arises, "If Brahman is both inexpressible and inconceivable how is the master to teach it, and how can the disciple know it ? How is one to know, for that matter, that such an entity is existent at all ?

The answer to this question, is that Brahman, being our very Self, can never be denied existence or conceived as unknowable.

‘स एष नेतिनेत्यात्मा इत्यात्मशब्दात्, आत्मनश्च प्रत्याख्यातुमशक्यत्वात्,  
य एव निराकर्ता तस्यैवात्मत्वात्’ । सू.भा. १-१-४

"The Śruti describes it as Ātman in such texts as 'this is the Ātman described as 'not this, not this'. And Ātman the Self cannot be negated, for the very negator himself is the Ātman". S.Bh. 1-1-4

(Objection) :- But the Śruti says that Ātman is unobjectifiable by speech or mind ?

(Reply) :- Quite so; but the very Self of both speech and mind which reveals both of them, cannot be denied on that account. The Śruti declares that "Brahman is (मनसो मनो यद्वाचो ह वाचम्) that it is the Speech of speech and the Mind of mind.'

It will be asked how can the Śruti, itself a variety of speech, teach the inexpressible Brahman ? The Vedantin's reply is 'The Śāstra does not propose to teach Brahman as such and such an object but tells us that Brahman is no object as It is one's inmost Self and thus removes all distinctions created by *avidyā* - such as that of the knowable, known and knowledge' (S.Bh. 1-1-4). This is the device used by Vedantic teachers to teach Brahman and hence there is no difficulty for a qualified student to intuit Brahman as his immediate Self.

It is quite enough to remind one that the world of distinctions such as that of the teacher, teaching, and the taught is itself an appearance superimposed on one's Real Self. The moment that a competent seeker realises this, he would see that Brahman without distinction is his own Self.

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## 5. IGNORANCE AND WISDOM

An objection is likely to rear up its head with regard to the last statement in my article in the December issue of this Magazine. It is said there that the world of distinctions is a superimposition on the Real Self of the seeker. But what is meant by superimposition ? Is it not mistaking one thing for another ? Who has superimposed this world on the Real Self ? Is it not a contradiction in terms to say that my Real Self is absolutely devoid of all distinctions and differences and, in the same breath to assert that I have superimposed the manifold world on that Self ? If not, how could the superimposition be imputed to me ?

This objection is due to a confusion of two different points of view, the common view and the Śāstraic view. It is quite true that mistaking one thing for another is possible only when the person mistaking is quite distinct and different from the things so mistaken. But in this particular case, Vedantins are not referring to any incident of mistaking objective things, mistaking one objective thing for another. Superimposition here relates only to a natural tendency of the human mind to wrongly presume that each one of us is really an individual enquirer amongst many such others, and that the mind of each such individual is endowed with the faculty of knowing things just as they are. The mind also presumes that each

one of the individuals is capable of acting in diverse ways and liable to experience the pleasant or unpleasant results of such actions while, as a matter of fact, there is only one Real Self, the Reality with absolutely no distinctions in It underlying all this phenomenal world.

Now this natural inveterate tendency to superimpose an unreal world of distinctions and differences is called *Avidyā* (Ignorance), and, in contrast to it, the ascertainment of the truth that there is only one Reality, the real Self of us all, which is the real substrate of the whole universe that we are aware of in ordinary life, is what has been called *Vidyā* (Wisdom) in Vedanta.

I can understand that a lay man with his naive view of life can scarcely be satisfied even with this clarification. He is likely to wonder whose ignorance is responsible for this huge mistake, and, if there be no individual at all beside the Absolute Reality, how one could possibly speak of the ignorance of Reality. The Absolute as such cannot make any mistake at all, for if It did so, It would cease to be Absolute, and if It did not, where would there be any others that could mistake It for anything else ? Can the Absolute be made the object of this mistake ?

We shall take up this question next month.

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## 6. THE LOCUS OF AVIDYĀ

Who is it that is ignorant of Reality (Brahman)? Not Reality itself for It is of the nature of Absolute Consciousness; and there is no sentient or non-sentient being beside Brahman, to whom this *Avidyā* (ignorance) can be imputed! This is often regarded as an enigmatical question in Advaita Vedanta.

It is certainly enigmatic so long as we do not make ourselves sure as to what we exactly mean by the term *avidyā*, for *avidyā* means two very distinct and different things according as we regard Śaṅkara's Bhāshya or the sub-commentaries thereon as our authority for Śaṅkarādvaita.

In the first place, the sub-commentaries mostly take *avidyā* to be positive something clinging to the individual soul or Brahman. Without entering into the details of mutually conflicting and contradictory statements of all these post-Sāṅkaras, we may cite the opinion of the author of the Pañcapādika, the earliest sub-commentary available, on this vexed question. This writer says that latent *avidyā* must be necessarily presumed to be clinging to the essential being of both internal and external things, since false appearances cannot be otherwise consistently explained (अवश्यमेषा अविद्याशक्तिः बाह्याध्यात्मिकेषु वस्तुषु तत्स्वरूपसत्तामात्रानुबन्धिनी अभ्युपगन्तव्या; अन्यथा मिथ्यावभासानुपपत्तेः ॥ pp. 96-102). In the case of the external insentient things it is only responsible for the presentation of a foreign appearance (तत्र रूपान्तरावभासहेतुरेव केवलम् । p.

107). In the case of the inner Ātman, however, there being no reason for the non-manifestation of the Brahmic nature of the self-luminous Self, it is entirely due to the obstruction of the innate avidyā-Śakti (तद्गतनिसर्गसिद्धाविद्याशक्तिप्रतिबन्धादेव तस्यानवभासः pp. 112, 121)

Reference to this hypothetical latent avidya which clings and obscures the Brahmic nature of Ātman and is the undefinable material cause of the ego and other false appearances (मिथ्येति अनिर्वचनीयता उच्यते। अज्ञानमिति जडात्मिका अविद्याशक्तिः, ज्ञानपर्युदासेनोच्यते। तन्निमित्तः, तदुपादान इत्यर्थः। p. 88), is conspicuous by its absence in Śaṅkara's Bhāshya. For he has distinctly defined avidya as 'आत्मानात्मनोरितरेतराध्यासः' (The mutual superimposition of the Self and the not-self, in his Introduction to the Sūtra Bhāshya.)

It is therefore necessary to find out what his answer is to the question posed in the beginning of this article. Who is it that is ignorant of Brahman ? - that is to say, who is it that superimposes the Self and the not-self - on each other ? Here is the answer of the Ācārya :-

‘कस्य पुनरयमप्रबोधः?’ इति चेत् । यस्त्वं पृच्छसि तस्य ते - इति वदामः। नन्वहमीश्वर एवोक्तः श्रुत्या । यद्येवं प्रतिबुद्धोऽसि नास्ति कस्यचिदप्रबोधः। योऽपि दोषश्चोद्यते कैश्चित् अविद्यया किलात्मनः सद्वितीयत्वात्, अद्वैतानुपपत्तिः - इति; सोऽप्येतेन प्रत्युक्तः॥

सू.भा. ४-१-३, पा. ४६५

"(Question :-) To whom then does this ignorance pertain?



(Answer :-) We reply, to you, who pose this question.

(Objection :-) But the Śruti tells me that I am Īśwara Himself !

(Reply :-) If you are thus awakened, then there is no ignorance pertaining to anybody whatsoever. By this reply, another defect sometimes imputed by certain critics, may also be deemed to have been warded off :- These critics suppose that Ātman would have something second beside Him if Avidyā be attributed to Him."

S.Bh. 4-1-3, p. 465

The implication of the above extract is that superimposition is not known to be such while we take the waking notion of each of us being an individual thinker as quite real. Each one of us entertains the idea that he is one among many thinkers and actors in this ordinary life. The Śruti teaches the enquirer at this state that this idea is based upon an innate error or avidyā. But the enquirer associated with this idea continues to live a life of acting and experiencing the fruit of actions so long as enlightenment dawns upon him. Duality is a fact and the enquirer with his ignorance as an attribute is really an individual in the life of duality. But when he awakes from this dream of duality, by realizing what is taught by the Śruti, there is no ignorance and therefore the question of its locus or object does not arise at all. The moment enlightenment dawns one realizes that one has been always the Absolute Ātman, One without a second.

## 7. THE PROCESS OF KNOWING BRAHMAN

The present writer was once asked this question : "Suppose there was no teacher and no books to consult. How would a man proceed?"

He was rather puzzled by the question. Being placed amidst a number of strangers of various levels of understanding, he could not make up his mind to offer a direct answer. "Proceed to do what?" he asked in return "to live, behave or to know the truth ?" It all depends upon one's *Samskāras* (impressions of past experiences).

The next question was "If a man is the creature of his *Samskāras*, would not that view lead to fatalism?"

I am only reporting from memory and not on the strength of any notes taken down at the time of the exact train of questions and answers. I remarked that man is not only a bundle of impressions latent in his mind; he is creating new *samskāras* at present by his mind; he is creating new *samskāras* at present by his thought process and behaviour. If by any chance one of the favourable impressions could wake up and lead him to make the right effort, he could certainly get out of the coil of past impressions and become free here and now.

The person who had opened the discussion was a great thinker. He wished to help me out of the uncomfortable



bog in which I was unwittingly submerged. "But" he said "when the observer is observed there would be no need for any right or wrong effort?"

That really cuts the Gordian Knot; for when you make a serious effort to reflect upon your-self there would be neither an observer, nor anything observed, nor even the act of observation. The Upanishad reveals this truth when it proclaims.

‘स यो ह वै तत्परमं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति’ । मुं. ३-२-९

"Verily, he who knows Brahman, becomes that very Brahman". (Mu. 3-2-9). It is not that we know Brahman first and then become Brahman. Sri Krishna, the Lord, describes the process thus :-

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान् यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।

ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥ गी. १८-५५

"Through devotion one recognizes Me exactly how much and who I am and knowing Me exactly one enters into Me." G. 18-55

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## 8. EACH ONE OF US CAN BECOME THE ALL

The statement that one who knows Brahman, becomes that very Brahman, seems to be a great enigma to a beginner in the study of Vedanta. It sounds as astounding as the statement that a tiny ant can become as big as a full-grown elephant by the sheer force of some feat of imagination. Besides, there seems to be a logical difficulty involved here. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad opens a discussion with giving expression to this difficulty of the beginner in these words :

तदाहुर्यद् ब्रह्मविद्यया सर्वं भविष्यन्तो मनुष्या मन्यन्ते किमुतद्ब्रह्मावेद्  
यस्मात्तत्सर्वमभवदिति ॥  
बृ. १-४-९

"Thus they ask : Now that men think that they are going to become the All through the knowledge of Brahman, what possibly did that Brahman know by virtue of which It became the All ?"  
Br. 1-4-9

The objection is this :- If one can become Brahman the All by merely knowing Brahman, then, the proponent of this theory must be prepared to tell us what Brahman itself knew before it became the All. If it became the All without knowing anything else, then the knowledge of Brahman serves no purpose. If, on the other hand, It did know something else which was the All, to become the All, what did that something else itself know to become so ? We are thus landed in an infinite regression of

thought, for each one has to be assumed to have known something else before becoming the All !

This objection is founded on fancy rather than on fact. For Brahman has not got to become the All; it is the All. The Upanishad therefore states the fact as it is, in the following words :-

ब्रह्म वा इदमग्र आसीत्तदात्मानमेवावेत् अहं ब्रह्मास्मीति । तस्मात् तत्सर्वमभवत् । तद्यो यो देवानां प्रत्यबुद्ध्यत स एव तदभवत्तथर्षीणां तथा मनुष्याणां तद्धैतत्पश्यन् ऋषिर्वाग्मिदेवः प्रतिपेदेऽहं मनुर्भवं सूर्यश्चेति । तदिदमप्येतर्हि य एवं वेदाहं ब्रह्मास्मीति स इदं सर्वं भवति तस्य ह न देवाश्च नाभूत्या ईशते । आत्मा ह्येषां स भवति ॥

बृ. १-४-१०

"This (self) was verily Brahman in the beginning. It knew Itself in the form "I am Brahman" whence It became the All. Now whichever among the gods was enlightened, he alone became That. So among the Rshis, so among men. The sage Vāmadeva, seeing this (as Brahman) came to realise this "I have been Man and the Sun. And even now, who ever knows this in the form 'I am Brahman' becomes all this. And even the gods are not able to prevent him from becoming so." Br. 1-4-10

The purport of the Śruti is this : This self which is apparently individual self, which is being experienced in the body, was really Brahman which projected the world of names and forms and entered into it. It was Brahman even before it knew itself as such. Only, in its aspect as the finite self, it superimposed un-brahmic nature on itself

in spite of its being Brahman the All. On being reminded by the Śāstra and the teacher, it came to know itself in the form "I am Brahman" and by virtue of that knowledge which reveals Reality as it is, the self became the All.

The knowledge did not create Brahmic nature or of its being the All; it only dispelled the darkness of ignorance just as the sheen of the rising sun dispels darkness; its intrinsic nature as Brahman and the All shone forth without let or hindrance.

The Śruti further tells us that whosoever among the gods, Ṛshis, or men, thus know the truth, immediately realized that he had been always Brahman - the All; for the so-called envelopment of Avidyā, was itself the figment of avidyā. This enlightenment and glory came not only to the great gods, Ṛshis and men in the past, but it may dawn upon any one even of the lowest rank, even in these days; for Brahmic nature and Allness are intrinsic and inalienable in the case of one and all. Not even the gods can prevent one from becoming the Brahman, for the knower of Brahman is the very Self of even the gods themselves.

As Śaṅkara remarks in his Sūtra-Bhāshya (SBh. 4-1-13) every knower of Brahman has the firm conviction that he is identical with the One Brahman throughout the three periods of time, that he was never an agent of action or the experiencer of the fruits thereof in the past, neither is he such at present, nor would he be so at any time in future.

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## 9. PREPARATION FOR THE STUDY OF VEDANTA

Who are called to the study of Vedanta ? Can any one with a tolerable knowledge of the Sanskrit language study and understand the purport of the Upanisads with the assistance of a good dictionary and a fair knowledge of grammar ? Now-a-days many seem to be under the impression that, given a keen intellect and a philosophical bent of mind, one could grasp the teaching even through a translation. But what do the Upanishad themselves demand on the part of one who seeks to know the Ātman?

Here are two texts from the Kāthaka Upanishad throwing sufficient light on the subject :-

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तन्नू स्वाम् ॥

नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ॥

नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ॥ का. २-२३, १४

"This Ātman cannot be attained by learning up the Vedas; neither by acquiring a good memory, nor by intense study. This Ātman is attained only by him who longs to know Him alone; to him this Ātman reveals His true nature. No one who has not desisted from bad conduct, can attain this Ātman through knowledge. Neither can one who has not tamed his sense, nor one who is not concentrated, nor yet can one who is not free from agitation."

Ka. 2-23, 24

The reason for the above-mentioned restrictions is self-apparent for those that are already familiar with the exact nature of Adhyātma-Vidyā and the method of approach necessary to gain that knowledge. Adhyātma-Vidyā is the knowledge of the Self within the seeker, and not the conceptual knowledge of any object outside; and the method of approach to that knowledge has necessarily got to be an inward retreat, which demands the transcending of the extrovert senses, the fluttering mind, and the intellect which is by its nature ever pre-occupied with things of external phenomena. Even when forced inwards, the mind of an untrained aspirant is unable to reach the inmost Ātman on account of its inherent defects. Accordingly Lord Sri Krishna says :-

यतन्तो योगिनश्चैनं पश्यन्त्यात्मन्यवस्थितम् ।

यतन्तोऽप्यकृतात्मानो नैनं पश्यन्त्यचेतसः ॥

गी. १५-११

"Those who strive and constantly practise Yōga, vision Him as staying in their own self, whereas even while striving, those whose mind is not purified, and who cannot discriminate, cannot vision Him." G. 15-11.

In explaining the purport of this slōka, Śaṅkara refers to the very text quoted above when he remarks :-

यतन्तोपि शास्त्रादिप्रमाणैः, अकृतात्मानः - असंस्कृतात्मानः तपसा, इन्द्रियजयेन च, दुश्चरितादनुपरताः, अशान्तदर्पाः - प्रयत्नं कुर्वन्तोऽपि नैनं पश्यन्ति, अचेतसोऽविवेकिनः ॥ गी.भा. १५-११, पा. २३३

"Even while striving to know him by valid means of knowledge such as the Sāstra, indiscriminate persons that have not purified their self or mind by experience and control of the senses, persons who have not desisted from bad conduct and have not subdued their pride, cannot behold Him." G.Bh. 15-11, p.223

Elsewhere this same teacher observes :-

"One who is desirous of going to the eastern sea, cannot surely travel by the same route pursued by another who desires to go to the western sea. And devotion to knowledge consists in a sustained effort to set up a stream of ideas of the Inner Self; and that is just as opposite to the way of works (as the eastward is to the westward way.)" GBh. 18-55, pp. 284, 285

The reader can now see why an introvert attitude of self-denial is a *sin qua non* for the study of Vedanta.

That is the very reason why Bādarāyaṇa starts his sacred enquiry into the meaning of the Upanishads with the aphorism "Then, therefore, the sacred enquiry into the nature of Brahman must be instituted". The word 'then' here includes according to Sankara the four indispensable requisites : Discrimination between the eternal and the transitory, dispassion for the enjoyment of objects here and in the other world, being equipped with disciplines like control of the mind and of the senses, and intense longing for release.

## 10. ENQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF BRAHMAN

It is significant that Śaṅkara introduces the first of Bādarāyaṇa's Vedānta Sūtras in these words :-

‘वेदान्तमीमांसाशास्त्रस्य व्याचिख्यासितस्य इदमादिमं सूत्रम्’ ।

"This is the first aphorism of the Vedānta Mīmāṃsā-Śāstra which is here proposed to be explained :-

The word *Sāstra* means teaching or scientific exposition and Mīmāṃsā signifies deep and reverent investigation. It is evident that this great teacher regards the collection of what are popularly known as the Brahma-Sūtras as a work devoted to the respectful investigation and exposition of the system of thought contained in the holy Vedāntas or the Upanishads.

The Sūtra itself runs thus :-

‘अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा’

"Then, therefore, the enquiry into the nature of Brahman".

Śaṅkara says that the word 'अथ' here should be taken in the sense of subsequence (आनन्तर्यार्थः), and not as indicating commencement (नाधिकारार्थः) since the treatise is not taking up जिज्ञासा (enquiry) for exposition, as one would expect to understand by the sentence. "The enquiry



about Brahman is now begun," if we attach this denotation to the word. If one were to ask "what is it that should necessarily precede the enquiry, if as Śaṅkara insists that the word 'अथ' means 'then'?, the answer is as we have already seen that it is the fourfold qualification of the enquiry, to wit, discrimination between the eternal and the transitory, renunciation of all enjoyments of sense, self-control and other kindred acts of discipline necessary for an introvert mind, and intense longing for final release from the bondage of suffering; for, enquiry into the nature of Brahman can be undertaken and Brahman can be known only if one is equipped with these and not otherwise (तेषु हि सत्सु शक्यते ब्रह्म जिज्ञासितुं ज्ञातुं च न विपर्यये ॥)

The Sanskrit word which has been translated as 'enquiry', is जिज्ञासा which literally means desire to know (ज्ञातुम् इच्छा). Enquiry is really the act of attempting and accomplishing it by arriving at the final knowledge of a thing. The word Jñānam in Sanskrit means both the valid means as well as as the final resultant knowledge. Here Śaṅkara draws our attention to the fact that it is not merely the means of knowledge that is to be aimed at by our desire, but the final intuition, for (ब्रह्मावगतिर्हि पुरुषार्थः, निःशेषसंसारबीजाविद्याद्यनर्थनिबर्हणात्। तस्मात् ब्रह्म विजिज्ञासितव्यम् ॥) It is the intuition of Brahman that is the ultimate goal of human life, inasmuch as it is that alone which would eradicate all evils such as ignorance which are the root-

cause of the cycle of mundane suffering. Therefore one should actually desire and attempt to acquire the direct intuition of Brahman.

The critical student of Vedanta should carefully note the difference between *Mīmāṃsā* and *Jijñāsa* as used by Śaṅkara. The former term denotes the several steps of exposition of the Upanishadic teaching as set forth in Bādarāyaṇa's teaching, while *Jijñāsa* is what an aspirant who seeks to attain intuition of Brahman should do to reach the goal. Bādarāyaṇa proposes to treat at length of the rationale which governs the teaching of the Upanishads, and at the very commencement of his work, advises the seeker to equip himself with the most necessary qualifications and then attempt to enquire into the true-nature of Brahman, which is his own self.

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## 11. TWO DOUBTS ABOUT BRAHMAN

We have seen that Bādarāyaṇa recommends enquiry into the nature of Brahman after the accomplishment of the four-fold discipline beginning with discrimination of the eternal and the transitory. The student of Vedanta is confronted at the very outset with two doubts concerning this enquiry :-

- 1) Is Brahman really a fit subject for enquiry ?
- 2) To what purpose is the enquiry to be instituted ?

We shall take up the second question first for consideration because every wise man looks ahead for the consequences of any task before he undertakes it. The fruit of the enquiry is indicated by the word अतः (therefore) which comes immediately after अथ (then) which denotes the indispensable qualification that entitles one to enter into the investigation. Sankara thus explains the meaning of the word अतः -

यस्माद् वेद एवाग्निहोत्रादीनां श्रेयःसाधनानाम् अनित्यफलतां दर्शयति -  
'तद्यथेह कर्मजितो लोको क्षीयते एवमेवामुत्र पुण्यजितो लोकः क्षीयते'  
(छां ८-१-६) इत्यादिः; तथा ब्रह्मविज्ञानादपि परं पुरुषार्थं दर्शयति  
'ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्' (तै. २-१) इत्यादिः, तस्मात् यथोक्तसाधनसंपत्त्यनन्तरं  
ब्रह्मविज्ञानासा कर्तव्या ॥ सू.भा. १-१-१, पा. ५

"Because the Veda itself shows how the fruits of Agnihotra and other means of attaining the good are impermanent, through such texts as "Just as enjoyment

earned through (secular) exertion here is exhausted, so also enjoyment in the other world through virtuous (religious) deeds, is exhausted (in the end)' (Ch. 8-1-6), and likewise it shows how the highest goal of human life is attained as a result of the knowledge of Brahman through such texts as 'The knower of Brahman attains the Highest' (Tai. 2-1), *therefore* one should undertake the enquiry into the nature of Brahman after one is equipped with the qualifications already enumerated."

S.Bh. 1-1-1, p.5

And now for the point raised in the first question. We know that in ordinary life that alone is regarded as worthy of investigation which is open to doubt. It is therefore in the fitness of things when we ask 'What is this Brahman? Is it something with which we are already familiar or something quite unknown'? For if it is familiar to us, there will be no need to enquire about it, and if it be utterly unknown, it would be impossible to start any enquiry concerning it !

*Śaṅkara replies*, that in the first place Brahman referred to in the Upanishads must be inferred to be an entity existing, as the very derivation of the word Brahman implies something which is of the nature of being eternally pure, conscious, free from all trammels, omniscient and omnipotent. And since, as the Śrutis tell us, It is the very Self of each one of us, It must be presumed to be familiar to all (सर्वस्यात्मत्वाच्च ब्रह्मास्तित्वप्रसिद्धिः). For if Ātman or the Self were something

unfamiliar, everyone should be able to think 'I am not', which is not the case as matters stand.

(Objection :-) If Brahman is already known to be everybody's Self, then we are again confronted with the repugnant conclusion that it needs no investigation at all!

Śaṅkara's rejoinder is as follows : Not so, for there are conflicting views with regard to its specific nature. (To explain :-) Uneducated people and even followers of the *Lokāyatika* (materialistic) school, are of the opinion that the body together with consciousness is the self. The sentient senses alone are the self according to others. 'The mind is the self', say others. Some suppose that it is the momentary cognition, while others aver that it is void. Others again posit the existence of a transmigratory soul, agent and experiencer of the fruit of actions, whereas others insist that Ātman is merely an experiencer but not the agent of actions. Some again postulate the existence of God other than that self, who is omniscient and omnipotent, while yet others say that He is the Self of the experiencer.

Thus there are many who entertain divergent views depending on the Vedantic texts genuine or apparent. So if one were to accept any one of these views without investigation, one would not only be cheated out of the Highest Good, but also encounter evil.

Therefore, says Śaṅkara, the real nature of Brahman has to be enquired into and therefore this *Mīmāṃsā* is begun.

## 12. THE DEFINITION OF BRAHMAN

Can Brahman be defined at all ? Seeing that Brahman or Brahmātman is the All, the One Infinite Self without a second and devoid of all specific features, we are constrained to admit that it is undefinable. And yet Bādarāyaṇa's second Sūtra (aphorism) runs thus :-  
जन्माद्यस्य यतः 'Brahman is that from which (take place) the birth etc. of this (universe)'; and Śaṅkara, the famous commentator of the Sūtras, introduces the aphorism and explains it as follows :-

‘किँल्लक्षणं पुनस्तद्ब्रह्मेति ? अत आह भगवान् सूत्रकारः’

"And what is the definition of that Brahman ? - it may be asked. To this, the venerable author of the Sūtra says "That from which (take place) the birth etc. of this (universe)".

‘अस्य जगतः नामरूपाभ्यां व्याकृतस्य, अनेककर्तृभोक्तृसंयुक्तस्य, प्रतिनियतदेशकालनिमित्तक्रियाफलाश्रयस्य, मनसाप्यचिन्त्यरचनारूपस्य जन्मस्थितिभङ्गं यतः सर्वज्ञात् सर्वशक्तेः कारणाद् भवति, ‘तद् ब्रह्म’ इति वाक्यशेषः ॥’

"That omniscient and omnipotent cause from which takes place the birth, sustentation and dissolution (all put together) of this universe differentiated with names and forms, the universe which contains numerous agents and experiencers (of the fruits of actions), and which is the

field of actions and fruits thereof regulated by time, place and cause peculiar (to them), and whose make up is not even conceivable by the mind - 'that is Brahman' has to be supplied to make the proposition complete".

On the face of it, this statement means little or nothing, if we interpret the terms contained in it literally. For we are told here that Brahman is the 'cause' to which the universe as an effect, owes its origination, continuance and dissolution. But nobody can make out anything out of a statement which asserts that the universe whose contents are time, place and causality, is the 'effect' of something which lies beyond the sphere of time, place and causality. It is therefore evident that Bādarāyaṇa as interpreted by Śaṅkara, attaches a metaphysical meaning to the terms 'cause' and 'effect' employed in this proposition.

This hidden meaning is unfolded later on in a Sūtra as explained by Śaṅkara. The Sūtra itself runs as follows :

तदनन्यत्वमारम्भणशब्दादिभ्यः ॥

वे.सू. २-१-१४.

"Its being not other than that (has to be deducted from) the word '*ārambhaṇa*' (used in a text) etc."

VS. 2-1-14.

And Śaṅkara explains it thus : "The effect is the universe in its diverse forms such as ether, and the cause

is the Supreme Brahman. That the effect is not really other than that cause, that it does not exist apart from it, has to be concluded from the word '*ārambhaṇa*' etc. In the first place, the word *ārambhaṇa* is used in the text 'Just as, my dear boy, by the knowledge of a lump of clay, all that is made up of clay is known, since a modification is only a name, being a mere play of words, and that clay alone is real' showing that the universe as effect is only a name, its essential nature being Brahman alone. This abridged version of Śaṅkara's commentary, should suffice to show the Bādarāyaṇa uses the word 'cause' in the sense of a substrate of which the so-called effect is only an appearance.

Śaṅkara adds that by the word 'etc', (आदिभ्यः) we have to take texts declaring the unity of Ātman such as

‘ऐतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं तत् सत्यं स अत्मा तत्त्वमसि’ (छा. ६-८-७)

"All this universe has this Pure Being for its essence, that alone is real, that is the Ātman, That thou art."

Ch. 6-8-7

And finally Sankara concludes :

तस्मात्, यथा घटकरकाद्याकाशानां महाकाशानन्यत्वम्, यथा च मृगतृष्णिकोदकादीनाम् ऊषरादिभ्योऽनन्यत्वम्, दृष्टनष्टस्वरूपत्वात्, स्वरूपेणानुपाख्यत्वात्, एवमस्य भोग्यभोक्त्रादिप्रपञ्चजातस्य ब्रह्मव्यतिरेकेणाभावः - इति द्रष्टव्यम् ॥ (सू.भा. २-१-१४, पा. १९७)





"Therefore we have to conclude that just as a pot-ether and kamaṇḍalu-ether etc. have no being apart from that of the universal ether, and just as mirage-water etc. have no being apart from that of the barren soil etc., inasmuch as they now appear and now disappear and are undefinable in their nature as appearances, so also this phenomenal universe consisting of experiencers, and objects experienced etc. has no being other than that of Brahman".

(S.Bh. 2-1-14 p.197)



### 13. BRAHMAN IN ITS TWO ASPECTS

One of the difficulties that a beginner in the study of Vedanta has to surmount is to find a satisfactory answer to a question concerning the relative importance of the two sets of texts regarding Brahman. In the first place, there are certain Texts which merely describe Brahman. A typical example of this set, is the following :-

‘स य एषोऽणिमैतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं तत्सत्यं स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो’  
(छा. ६-८-७)

"Now as for this subtle principle, all this (universe) has this for its essence; That alone is real, That is the only Ātman, That thou art, O Śvetaketu!"

And in the second place, we find texts like the following :-

‘सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म तद्ब्रह्मणोऽस्मिन् शान्तं उपासीत’ (छा. ३-१४-१)

"All this is verily Brahman; for it is born from It, it is finally dissolved in It, and functions in It. Therefore one should calmly meditate upon It." Ch. 3-14-1.

Again, there are texts that appear to lay down injunctions even while the true nature of Ātman is being discussed : 'आत्मेत्येवोपासीत' 'One should meditate upon oneself as Ātman' (Br. 1-4-7), 'आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः' - 'Ātman alone, my dear, is to be seen, to be heard of, reflected upon, and meditated upon' (Br.

2-4-5). The question therefore that arises in the mind of the enquirer is this : Are we to suppose that all the Upanishads uniformly aim at laying down injunctions of various kinds of Upāsanas (or meditation), the descriptive passages being merely meant for enlightening us about the nature of Brahman to be meditated upon ? Or, seeing that injunctions are conspicuous by their absence in certain passages where Brahman is being discussed, the texts purport to reveal the real nature of Brahman whose knowledge leads to immediate release, without presupposing any intervening thing to be practised ?

This has been a moot-point among interpreters of Vedanta from time immemorial to this day. Most of the schools that lie outside the pale of Śaṅkara's tradition, have insisted that Upāsana or meditation upon Brahman, has been the one purport of the Upanishads, and that texts that describe the nature of Brahman, are invariably to be deemed as subservient to the injunction of Upāsana. The chief reasons that have swayed with these interpreters are (1) that there would be no ultimate good accruing from the mere ascertainment of a statement of an existent fact, since no evil is warded off, not any desired end attained by the sheer understanding of a statement of fact, and (2) that the Śruti is not content with merely recommending the study (*Śravaṇa*) of the meaning of a text, but also enjoins reflection (*Manana*) and meditation (*Nididhyāsana*) also. The contention of the Advaitin that even the mere grasping of the meaning of a text describing the nature of Brahman may well remove the evil resulting

from the misconception that one is transmigratory soul, is rebutted by observing that there would then be need of reflection and meditation being enjoined in addition to *Śravaṇa* or understanding of the meaning of the text. Therefore, they conclude, Śāstric or the Vedantic teaching is a valid means of the knowledge of Brahman only in so far as it presents Brahman as the object of the meditation enjoined. Nididhyāsana, or meditation (Upāsana) as they interpret the word, can deliver the goods by leading the seeker to release from Saṁsāra, after one has shuffled off the mortal coil.

The followers of the traditional interpretation according to Śaṅkara can only say that the assertion of the advocates of the other school, that one who is convinced of his Brahmic nature is enjoined to do something even after he has understood the meaning of the Vedic text that teaches the identity of his self with Brahman, is over-shooting the mark. For how can one say that the Śruti which says 'अशरीरं वाव सन्तं न प्रियाप्रिये स्पृशतः' 'Pleasure and pain do not touch (the knower of Brahman) who is really bodiless' (Ch. 8-12-1). Pleasure and pain may trouble one who misconceives oneself to be a transmigratory soul possessing a body. But how can the evils of mundane life affect one even after one is convinced of one's eternal bodilessness ?

Readers who may be puzzled as to how possibly a knower can be without a body even while living in it, should wait for the next article on this subject.

## 14. THE ENLIGHTENED PERSON IS WITHOUT A BODY

"I have heard of a Yogin with two bodies," one of our readers is said to have ejaculated, "he had gone to the river-side to talk to a friend while he was quietly sitting on the flat of a house where his devotees had arrived for his *darśan*. Even that is conceivable, since we read that Yogins acquire miraculous powers when they approach the point of perfection. But to say that an ordinary mortal becomes entirely bodyless so soon as knowledge of Brahman dawns, that appears to be too preposterous to believe !"

This apparent enigma of that critic is easily solved by remembering that the study of Vedanta has to be pursued by observing the distinction of two different stand points, the empirical view-point of the common man who proceeds on the naive universal assumption that man has a body in which the senses and the mind function, and the transcendental view-point of Vedanta which undertakes to examine the complete range of life and tries to show how this assumption, universal as it is, is really erroneous, since it is based upon the partial experience of common life.

It is true that all procedure of human life is based upon the innate belief that each one of us is a knower presuming that one is identical with a body and that the senses and

the mind function within that body. It is also true that even Śāstras enjoining or prohibiting certain acts, do proceed on the supposition that a person aspires for the enjoyment of the fruits of his good actions in heaven in a body, after he has shuffled off the earthly body. It is equally true that even the Upanishads which propose to reveal the nature of Reality, have to presuppose that seekers after release from the bondage of mundane life, are enquirers furnished with a body in which alone the mind can work.

But the Śāstras never assert that the body and the instruments of knowledge depending on it, are really real. And even if they had so asserted, it would not be true to fact. As Śāṅkara observes :

शरीरे पतितेऽशरीरत्वं स्यात्, न जीवतः इति चेत्, न; सशरीरत्वस्य मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तत्वात्। न हि आत्मनः शरीरात्माभिमानलक्षणं मिथ्याज्ञानं मुक्त्वा अन्यतः सशरीरत्वं शक्यं कल्पयितुम्, नित्यमशरीरत्वम्, अकर्मनिमित्तत्वादित्यवोचाम ॥  
सू.भा. १-१-४

"It might be said, that being without the body might be possible after death, and not for one who is living. But this is not right, for the idea of being the owner of a body is due to misconception. (To explain :-) It is not possible to conceive that the Ātman has a body in any other sense than that there is the misconception of identifying oneself with the body. For we have already observed that bodylessness, being no effect of Karma, is eternal."

SBh. 1-1-4

It is therefore only from the empirical standpoint that individuals beset with ignorance and other defects, are said to assume bodies of various kinds as a result of the performance of enjoined or prohibited karmas, and experience pleasure or pain in consequence of their deeds.

From the transcendental view-point, however, all this is seen to be the result of ignorance. As Śaṅkara observes:-

तत्कृतधर्माधर्मनिमित्तं सशरीरत्वमिति चेत्, न; शरीरसंबन्धस्य धर्माधर्मयोस्तत्कृतत्वस्य चेतरेतराश्रयत्वप्रसङ्गात् अन्धपरम्परैषा अनादित्वकल्पना । क्रियासमवायाभावाच्चात्मनः कर्तृत्वानुपपत्तेः ॥

सू.भा. १-१-४.

"If it be urged that embodiedness is the result of good or bad deeds done by him. But it cannot be so for it has not been established by any piece of evidence that Ātman has a body, and so the idea that a good and bad deed having been performed by Ātman is out of the question. The idea of Ātman having a body and that of good and bad deeds having been performed by him, being mutually dependent on each other, this would be really arguing in a vicious circle, and to conceive a beginningless series of these two as cause and effect would be only conception of a procession of the blind leading the blind. Moreover, the idea of Ātman's being an agent is itself inconsistent since Ātman is devoid of all inherent action".

SBh. 1-1-4

## 15. THE IMMEDIATE MEANS OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF ĀTMAN

The *Naiyāyikas*, as the followers of Gautama are called, who undertook to examine the reality or unreality of empirical objects, maintained that the *Pramāṇas* or the valid means of knowledge should be accepted as the exclusive means of ascertaining whether or not any particular thing exists and that reason must be employed to assure oneself whether or not a particular means has been appropriately applied in any particular case. A thinker who respects the authority of Gautama in respect of *Pramāṇas*, would naturally raise the question what is the *Pramāṇa* for Ātman ? How do you know that Ātman exists at all ?'

Some commentators who profess to be Śaṅkara's interpreters, have declared that while Ātman is not an object of perception or any other canon of valid knowledge, He is realized in His pristine purity in the highest extatic state called the *Nirvikalpaka Samādhi*, but when the enlightened person awakes from that state, he is forced to experience the world of duality owing to a residuum of *avidyā-śakti* or potential ignorance, which clings to him as long as he lives in order to exhaust the effect of *Prārabdha-karma* (action that has begun to fructify in the present body).

Readers who have gone through the English Article





in the last issue of this periodical, will readily see that this theory is in flat contradiction of Śaṅkara's traditional Vedanta that embodiedness of Ātman, while empirically true enough, is only an appearance due to ignorance of the true nature of Ātman. The knower of Brahman is convinced that he has never been an agent of any action whatsoever at any point of time, and hence there can be no residue of any karma for him. Indeed, from the transcendental or reality standpoint, (according to the Gītā):

न कर्तृत्वं न कर्माणि लोकस्य सृजति प्रभुः ।

न कर्मफलसंयोगं स्वभावस्तु प्रवर्तते ॥

गी. ५-१४.

"Neither agency of action, nor objects of actions, has the Lord created for man, nor does He cause any contact with the fruits of acts. It is only the natural ignorance that functions (thus)."

G. 5-14

The critical enquirer, therefore, has no option but to reject this theory of residual *avidyā* clinging to Ātman. And likewise we have to reject the notion of transcending all duality of agency and experience of fruits of actions being realized exclusively in any extatic state like the *Nirvikalpaka Samādhi*. Śaṅkara expressly denies this in so many words :

“न चायं व्यवहाराभावोऽवस्थाविशेषनिबद्धोऽभिधीयत इति युक्तं वक्तुम्,

‘तत्त्वमसि’ इति ब्रह्मात्मभावस्य अनवस्थाविशेषनिबन्धनत्वात् ॥’

सू.भा. २-१-१४, पा. १९८

"Nor can it be said that this absence of all dual transaction (stated in the Śrutis) refers to it as contingent to any particular state, for the Brāhmic nature of Ātman taught by the text 'That thou art' is not conditioned by any state." SBh. 2-1-14, p. 198.

What then is the means of the knowledge of Brahman according to genuine Vedanta ? The answer is two-fold. In the first place, Ātman stands in no need of any proof :

‘न ह्यात्मागन्तुकः कस्यचित्, स्वयंसिद्धत्वात्। न हि आत्मा आत्मनः प्रमाणमपेक्ष्यसिध्यति। तस्य हि प्रत्यक्षादीनि प्रमाणानि अप्रसिद्धप्रमेयसिद्धये उपादीयन्ते ॥’

सू.भा. २-३-७, पा. २३६

"Ātman as we all know is no adventitious something to any one, for He is self-established. Indeed, Ātman has not got to be established for himself by means of Pramāṇas; it is for Him that perception and other Pramāṇas have to be employed for establishing the existence of objects to be known."

SBh. 2-3-7, p. 268

And in the second place, *Vedanta-Sāstra* or Holy Revelation in the shape of the Upanishads, is called a Pramāṇa by courtesy, because this Śāstra suggests the true nature of Ātman. True Ātman or Brahman is no object of any knowledge. The Śruti says :



‘येनेदं सर्वं विजानाति तं केन विजानीयात्’

बृ. ४-५-१५

"With what could one know Him by the light of whose consciousness, one knows everything?" Br. 4-5-15.

‘अविज्ञातं विजानतां विज्ञातमविजानताम्’

के. २-३.

"Brahman is unknown to those who think that they know It and is known only to those who think that it cannot be known by objectifying It." K. 2-3.

The implication is that Ātman can never be known as an object. But yet Śastra is a pramāṇa in another sense :

‘न हि शास्त्रमिदंतया विषयभूतं ब्रह्म प्रतिपादयिषति; किं तर्हि, प्रत्यगात्मत्वोनाविषयतया प्रतिपादयत् अविद्याकल्पितं वेद्यवेदितृवेदनादिभेदम् अपनयति ॥’

सू.भा. १-१-४, पा. १६

"The Śastra does not teach Brahman as such and such an object but only by teaching that It is the unobjectifiable inmost Self of everyone it removes all distinctions such as that of the knowable, the knower and knowledge, superimposed by Avidya". SBh. 1-1-4, p. 16.

Atman or Brahman is indeed the Absolute, the One without a second. It is the very essence of consciousness, and as such does not desiderate anything extraneous to throw light on its self-shining nature.

This leads us to the consideration of the method adopted by the Upanishads in revealing the nature of Ātman. More of this subject next month.

## 16. THE METHOD OF VEDANTA

We have seen that the main theme of the Upanishads, is the knowledge of Brahman or Ātman, the real essence or Self of all the universe. The Upanishads are never tired of eulogizing this knowledge. 'This is the basis and the goal of all branches of learning' (Mu.), 'The knower of Brahman attains the Highest Goal of life' (Tai.), 'One who knows that Imperishable Entity, becomes omniscient and enters the All' (Pr.)

While one's curiosity is naturally roused as to how this ideal knowledge could be acquired, one despairs of all possibility of ever knowing this Brahman when these texts are found to declare in the same breath that It is not objectifiable by speech or thought : 'यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह'; 'From which words fall back along with mind, being unable to reach It'; 'अन्यदेव तद्विदितादथो अविदितादधि' 'It is altogether different from the known and beyond the unknown.'; 'निष्कलं निष्क्रियं शान्तं निरवद्यं निरञ्जनम्' 'It is without parts, devoid of activity and change, undisturbed, free from all defects, untainted by anything else'; 'अस्थूलमनण्वहस्वमदीर्घमलोहितमस्नेहम्' 'Neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long, not red, not viscid' - Such descriptions would naturally induce one to suspect that the so-called Brahman devoid of all imaginable specific features and consequently indescribable and inconceivable, might as well be absolute nihility, and there

is no good in following the Upanishads which are merely beating about the bush.

Fortunately, however, there is this heartening message that Brahman is the very Self of the enquirer 'अयमात्मा ब्रह्म सर्वानुभूः' This Ātman is Brahman, intuiting everything (Br. 2-5-19), 'स वा एष महानज आत्माऽजरोऽमरोऽमृतोऽभयो ब्रह्माभयं वै ब्रह्माभयं हि वै ब्रह्म भवति य एवं वेद॥ This One indeed, is the great unborn Ātman, undecaying, undying, immortal, fearless Brahman. Brahman is well-known to be fearless. Whoever knows It thus, becomes indeed that very Brahman of the nature of fearlessness.' (Br. 4-4-25).

The critical reader will note that not only Brahman is something positive, but that the Upanishads bring us this optimistic message that each one of us is verily identical with It and that by the knowledge of this eternal identity, each one of us realize one's Omnipresent, Unborn, Immortal, Fearless, Absolute nature.

We thus see that knowing Brahman merely means realizing one's own genuine nature by immediate intuition. The Upanishads, therefore declare that Brahman is 'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तम्' Reality, Consciousness and Bliss in one, and thus there is no necessity of knowing it like any external object. The one method of teaching the nature of Brahman therefore, is merely to remove the natural ignorance of It, by negating all characteristics that do not pertain to the real Self of the enquirer. All such

characteristics are due to a mistaken transference of those that belong to a fictitious non-self conjured up by Avidya. The mutual superimposition of the identity of the Real Self and the unreal not-self is necessarily presupposed before this transference.

We shall consider the details of the Vedantic method in our next article.

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## 17. THE FICTITIOUS DISTINCTIONS IN REALITY

Before taking up the details of the Vedantic method, the reader will do well to remind himself of the distinction of the two different points of view recognized by Vedanta to which I have already referred in a previous article.' In the first place, there is the common man's view in accordance with which the Upanishads speak of the first cause of the origin, sustentation and dissolution of the Universe; and in the second place, there is the transcendental or the real Śāstraic view from which they abrogate that causality and all other specific features which they have ascribed to Brahman for purposes of teaching.

As for Brahman being the cause of the whole Universe, we have seen, that, by the term 'cause' Bādarāyaṇa as interpreted by Śāṅkara, means the substrate of appearances like the experiencing souls and the objects experienced. The Upanishads make use of the empirical causal relation between the material cause and its effect such as clay and a pot etc., only as in illustration to show how the so-called effect, is really not different from its cause. The causality ascribed to Brahman is then cancelled by concluding that the universe of sentient and non-sentient things, is essentially identical with Brahman. Thus Brahman is seen to be the only Reality that has ever existed.

The omniscience and omnipotence of Brahman as the *Īśvara*, the Lord of the Universe, who creates, sustains and finally dissolves into His own Self, are similarly ascribed to Brahman as a device for purpose of teaching. When the seeker has finally understood the teaching, when he has realized his own real nature as Brahman, he would be able to appreciate the negation of the distinction of *Īśvara* and *Īśitavya* (The Ruler and the ruled). This has been explained by Śaṅkara in the following words :-

सर्वज्ञस्येश्वरस्यात्मभूते इवाविद्याकल्पिते नामरूपे तत्त्वान्यत्वाभ्या-  
मनिर्वचनीये संसारप्रपञ्चबीजभूते सर्वज्ञस्येश्वरस्य माया, शक्तिः प्रकृतिरिति च  
श्रुतिस्मृत्योरभिलष्येते । ताभ्यामन्यः सर्वज्ञ ईश्वरः, 'आकाशो वै नाम  
नामरूपयोर्निर्वहिता ते यदन्तरा तद्ब्रह्म' (छा. ८-१४-१) इति श्रुतेः । ....  
इत्यादिश्रुतिभ्यश्च । एवमविद्याकृतनामरूपोपाध्यनुरोधीश्वरो भवति, व्योमेव  
घटकरकाद्युपाध्यनुरोधि । स च स्वात्मभूतानेव घटकाशस्थनीयानविद्या-  
प्रत्युपस्थापितनामरूपकृतकार्यकरणसंघातानुरोधि नो जीवाख्यान् विज्ञानात्मनः  
प्रतीष्टे व्यवहारविषये । तदेवमविद्यात्मकोपाधिपरिच्छेदापेक्षमेवेश्वरस्येश्वरत्वं  
सर्वज्ञत्वं सर्वशक्तिमत्त्वं च, न परमार्थतो विद्ययापास्तसर्वोपाधिस्वरूप  
आत्मनीशित्रीशितव्यसर्वज्ञत्वादि व्यवहार उपपद्यते ॥

(सू.भा. २-१-१४, पा. २०१)

"Name and form conjured up by *Avidyā* (nescience) as though they were identical with the omniscient *Īśvara* (the Ruler), which are neither identical with, nor distinct from Him and which are the seed of all the Universe, experienced by the transmigratory soul, are called the *Māyā*, *Śakti* (potency) and *Prakṛti* (nature) of the



omniscient Īśvara , in the *Śrutis* and *Śmṛtis*. The omniscient Īśvara is distinct from them, for the *Śruti* says "Ākāśa (the ether-like Ātman), indeed, is well-known to be the differentiator of name and form". Thus (the Ātman) conforming to the conditioning associates of name and form, becomes Īśvara just like ether conforming to a pot or drinking bowl etc. And from the empirical stand-point, He rules over the *Vijñānātmans* (selves conditioned by intellect) called *Jīvas* - who are verily His own self conforming to the aggregates of body and senses, made up of names and forms projected by *avidyā*. So then the rulership, omniscience and omnipotence of Īśvara are only relative to conditioning associates of the nature of ignorance; but from the real point of view, no talk of the relation of the ruler and the ruled, omniscience etc., is possible in the case of Ātman whose nature is freed from all limiting associates by enlightenment."

From this lengthy excerpt from the *Sūtra-Bhāshya*, it is clear that the Upanishads alternately assume the distinction of the ruler and the ruled selves and negate that distinction according as they accommodate to the empirical view or propose to reveal the real nature of the One Ātman without a second. And in order to serve this purpose of teaching, they presume the existence of the phenomenal world and say that Brahman is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. When the enquirer has sufficiently grasped the true nature of Brahman as

distinct from this apparent world, they declare that the so-called ruler is intrinsically the Absolute Being, Consciousness and the Infinite in one.

This, then, is the dialectic of the Vedantic method of presenting the Absolute Reality - first tentatively ascribing some features which enables one to negate some other feature wrongly ascribed to It and subsequently to demonstrate that the assumed feature does not really belong to the Absolute. This process pushed to its finality, convinces the enquirer that Reality is altogether free from all conceivable specific features. A half verse quoted in the Bhagavad Gītā Bhāshya sums up the method thus :

अध्यारोपापवादाभ्यां निष्प्रपञ्चं प्रपञ्चते ॥

"That which is devoid of all features, is described by deliberate superimposition and subsequent negation."

(GBh. 13-13)

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## 18. VEDANTA-ŚĀSTRA AS A PRAMĀṆA

It is significant that Bādarāyaṇa does not use the word Pramāṇa to denote the valid means of knowledge regarding Brahman. He only remarks that the Śāstra is the exclusive 'source' of that knowledge (शास्त्रयोनित्वात्). The reason is that unlike external phenomena, Brahman is not object of either the act of knowing or of meditation taught in the Upanishads. Śaṅkara quotes the following texts in support of this view :-

(१) अन्यदेव तद्विदितादथो अविदितादधि ॥ के. १-४

"It is quite other than the known, and beyond the unknown". Ke. 1-4

(२) येनेदं सर्वं विजानाति तं केन विजानीयात् ॥ बृ. २-४-१४.

"With what could one know Him with whom consciousness alone one knows all this ?" Br. 2-4-14

Being the eternal Witnessing Principle of every thing, Ātman can be directly intuited as one's own inmost Self, but never objectified by the senses or the mind.

Moreover, the Vedantic Śāstra, revealing as it does Ātman as the One without a second, affords no scope whatever for the distinction of any means or object of knowing. As Śaṅkara rightly observes :

अपि चान्त्यमिदं प्रमाणम् आत्मैकत्वस्य प्रतिपादकम्, नातःपरं किञ्चिदाकाङ्क्ष्यमस्ति। यथा हि लोके 'यजेत' इत्युक्ते 'किं केन कथम्?' इत्याकाङ्क्षा जायते, नैवं 'तत्त्वमसि', 'अहं ब्रह्मास्मि' - इत्युक्ते किञ्चिदन्यदाकाङ्क्ष्यमस्ति; सर्वात्मैकत्वविषयत्वादवगतेः। सति ह्यन्यस्मिन्नवशिष्यमाणेऽथ आकाङ्क्षा स्यात्। न त्वात्मैकत्वावगत्यतिरेकेणावशिष्यमाणोऽन्योऽर्थोऽस्ति य आकाङ्क्ष्येत॥ सू.भा. २-१-१०

"Besides, the source of knowledge teaching the unity of Ātman is absolutely ultimate and there is nothing beyond this (intuition) about which any further question could arise. (To explain :-) For instance in ordinary life, when one hears (the statement) 'one should sacrifice', the question naturally arises 'What, with what and how ?' (should one sacrifice?); (but) no (such) question arises when one hears it said 'That thou art', 'I am Brahman', for the intuition is with regard to the unity of the Universal Self. It is well-known that some questions could arise only when something remains to be thought of; but nothing whatever remains beside the intuition of the unity of Ātman, about which any question could possibly arise."

S.Bh. 2-1-14

One observation more. Any means of knowledge is considered to be invalid if it does not actually give rise to right knowledge, or if the knowledge arising through it is found to have no practical efficiency, or again if it be contradicted by a subsequent knowledge. None of these defects can be suspected to attach itself to the Vedanta Śāstra :-

न चेयमवगतिर्नोत्पद्यत इति शक्यं वक्तुम्; 'तद्भास्य विजज्ञौ' (छां.) इत्यादिश्रुतिभ्यः। अवगतिसाधनानां श्रवणादिसाधनानां वेदानुवचनादीनां च विधानात्। न चेयमवगतिरनर्थिका, भ्रान्तिर्वा इति शक्यं वक्तुम्। अविद्यानिवृत्तिफलदर्शनात्। बाधकज्ञानान्तराभावाच्च। प्राक्च आत्मैकत्वावगतेरव्याहतः सर्वः सत्यानृतव्यवहारो लौकिको वैदिकश्चेत्यवोचाम॥ सू.भा. २-१-१४

"Nor can it be said that this intuition is not born (at all); for means to the intuition, such as the ascertaining the meaning of the Śruti texts etc. as well as the study of Vedas, have been enjoined. Nor can it be said that this intuition is useless or is a delusion; for the result of the effective removal of ignorance is actually experienced, and there is no subsequent knowledge sublating it. We have already said that all convention, secular or sacred, of the distinction of truth and falsehood, is only before the dawn of the intuition of the Unity of the Self."

S.Bh. 2-1-14

It is evident that according to Bādarāyaṇa as interpreted by Śaṅkara, the Vedantas or Upanishads are valid means of knowledge, not because of any belief demanded in the authority of the Upanishads, but because their teaching gives rise to unsublatable universal intuition.

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## 19. VEDANTIC INTUITION

Some of our readers have asked me to clarify the signification of the word *anubhava* in the following excerpt from Śaṅkara's Sūtra-Bhāshya :

न धर्मजिज्ञासायामिव श्रुत्यादय एव प्रमाणं ब्रह्मजिज्ञासायाम्, किं तु श्रुत्यादयोऽनुभवादयश्च यथासंभवमिह प्रमाणम्; अनुभावसानत्वात् भूतवस्तुविषयत्वाच्च ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य ॥ सू.भा. १-१-२, पा. ८

"Śruti and other scriptures are not the sole valid means of right knowledge for the enquiry into the nature of Brahman, as they are in the case of enquiry into the nature of Dharma, but Śruti etc. and intuition etc. are also the means here wherever applicable; for the knowledge of Brahman has to culminate in intuition and relates to an already existing entity." S.Bh. -1-2, p. 8

The initial difficulty with which the students of Vedanta is confronted here, is in understanding why Śaṅkara happens to use the word '*anubhava*' (intuition) in two distinct senses, one regarded as the means of the right knowledge of Brahman, and the other as the very culmination of that knowledge. How are the two to be recognized and distinguished ?

Before attempting to solve this apparent difficulty one should acquaint oneself with the various senses in which the term intuition has been used in philosophical works. A reference to dictionary reveals that intuition may signify



not only (1) immediate apprehension by the senses, or (2) immediate apprehension by the mind without reasoning, but also (3) immediate insight. Accordingly Indians philosophers speak of (1) Indriyānubhava (sensuous intuition of objects), and (2) mānasa pratyaksha (mental perception or intuition of pleasure and pain, happiness and misery). Distinct from either, there is the immediate intuition such as that of the states of consciousness - waking, dream and sleep. It is this last kind of universal intuition without the aid of the senses or the mind that has been regarded by Śaṅkara as the valid means of right knowledge.

Besides the intuition of this variety, reasoning based on such partial intuitions also has to be employed in determining the true nature of Brahman. For instance, there is the Śruti :

स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं चोभौ येनानुपश्यति ।

महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥

का. २-४

Here we are referred to the immediate intuition of both waking and dream as the means of right knowledge of Ātman, as well as to the intuition of Ātman (आत्मानं मत्वा) as a result of employing this means. This latter is the resultant intuition in which deliberation on the nature of Ātman is declared by Śaṅkara to be the culmination of the knowledge of Brahman.

More of this in our next article

## 20. KNOWLEDGE AND INTUITION OF ĀTMAN

We have seen that over and above sensuous intuition and mental intuition, man possesses an immediate insight by virtue of which he can be aware of the entire aggregate of the body, senses and the mind without the aid of reason. Whereas the mind and the senses relate to something objective and have invariably to react to some stimulus owing to their contact with that object, this third variety of intuition is absolutely immediate and is quite unaffected by the nature of the object it intuits. It is therefore more appropriately called by the name of intuition. If we thus restrict the use of the word in order to distinguish between the two varieties, we must say that we intuit the states of consciousness such as waking or dream, while we experience things with the mind and the senses, or still better, we feel and understand things with their help rather than intuit. It is this immediate intuition alone that has been regarded as the valid means of right knowledge by Śaṅkara, when he is speaking of the knowledge of Brahman.

But what does Śaṅkara mean when he says :

‘अनुभवावसानत्वात्, भूतवस्तुविषयत्वाच्च ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य’

(Intuition etc. are also the means here, for Brahma-Jñāna culminates in intuition and relates to an already existing entity.)?



It is significant that Śaṅkara writes as follows in the course of his exposition of the meaning of the word Jijñāsā in the very first Sūtra of the Śārīraka-Mīmāṃsā :

‘ज्ञातुमिच्छा जिज्ञासा । अवगतिपर्यन्तं ज्ञानं सन्वाच्याया इच्छायाः कर्म । फलविषयत्वात् इच्छायाः । ज्ञानेन हि प्रमाणेनावगन्तुमिष्टं ब्रह्म । ब्रह्मावगतिर्हि पुरुषार्थः ॥

“The word Jijñāsā means desire to know. Here the desiderative suffix denotes the desire which has for its object knowledge culminating in intuition, for desire is (always) for some result. Brahman is desired to be intuited by the valid means of knowledge, because that intuition of Brahman is the (highest) good.”

SBh. 1-1-1.

It is evident that in each of the above excerpts, Śaṅkara is solicitous to distinguish Jñāna as signifying knowledge, from the same word as denoting something else. The student of Vedanta needs to be posted up with information on this subject at the very outset in order to be able to distinguish the two different significations of the word, lest he should confound two different sets of Vedantic texts wherein this word occurs.

Both of the words Jñāna’ and ‘Upāsānā’ happen to be used to denote either knowledge or meditation. Thus in the text आत्मेत्येवोपासीत (One should know Him as Ātman, rather than as a seer, hearer &c., Br. 1-4-7) the word ‘*upāsāta*’ refers to ‘knowledge’, whereas in the text ‘मनो

ब्रह्मेत्युपासीत' ('One should meditate upon the mind as Brahman' Ch. 3-18-1), the same word refers to meditation. Similarly, in the two texts 'तदन्वेष्टव्यं तद्वाव विजिज्ञासितव्यम्' (It has got to be sought after and It alone is to be known' (Ch. 8-1-1) and 'सोऽन्वेष्टव्यः स विजिज्ञासितव्यः' ('He has to be sought after and He alone is to be known' Ch. 8-7-1) the same word 'Jijñāsā' is used with reference to meditation and knowledge respectively.

Śaṅkara therefore is anxious to stress the fact that wherever the word 'Jñāna' refers to the exact knowledge of Brahman as an existant entity, it signifies knowledge culminating in direct intuition.

Accordingly, he explains his proposition that the knowledge of Brahman culminates in intuition as it relates to an existing entity, in the following words :

“It is well-known that with regard to something to be done, there is no need of immediate intuition, and so Śrutis etc. are the sole valid means of knowledge with regard to it. This is so for the additional reason that the fulfilment of a duty depends on the will of a person. (To explain :) Any duty secular or Vedic, can be done, undone or done quite in another way; as for instance, one can go riding a horse, or by walking on foot or in some other way, or may not go at all.” SBh. 2-1-2.

We shall pursue this enquiry still further in order to clarify Śaṅkara's position with regard to intuition.

## 21. KNOWLEDGE AND MEDITATION

Knowledge of Brahman and meditation upon Brahman, are both mental. But then there is this important difference between them, that while knowledge culminates in immediate intuition of Brahman as Ātman or one's own Self, meditation bears its final fruit only after death in the other world.

As Śaṅkara remarks :-

ननु ज्ञानं नाम मानसी क्रिया । न, वैलक्षण्यात् । क्रिया हि नाम सा यस्मिन् वस्तुस्वरूपनिरपेक्षैव चोद्यते, पुरुषव्यापाराधीना च । ... । ध्यानं चिन्तनं यद्यपि मानसम्, तथापि पुरुषेण कर्तुमकर्तुम् अन्यथा वा कर्तुं शक्यम् । पुरुषतन्त्रत्वात् । ज्ञानं तु प्रमाणजन्यम् । प्रमाणं यथाभूतवस्तुविषयम् । अतो ज्ञानं कर्तुमकर्तुम् अन्यथा वा कर्तुम् अशक्यम् । केवलं वस्तुतन्त्रमेव तत्, न चोदनातन्त्रम् । नापि पुरुषतन्त्रम् । तस्मात्, मानसत्वेऽपि ज्ञानस्य महद् वैलक्षण्यम् ॥

सू.भा. १-१-४

“(Question :”-) Is not what is called *Jñāna* (knowledge) a sort of mental action?

(Answer:-) No, for there is a difference. (To explain:) That is known to be an action, which is enjoined (by the Śruti) without any regard for the nature of things and which is dependent solely upon the function of a person's mind. While meditation or thinking is mental, yet it is possible to do, or not to do, or even to do it quite

otherwise, since it is solely dependent on (the will of) a person. Knowledge, however, is produced by (some) valid means (such as perception), and a valid means of knowledge relates to an existent thing just as it is. Hence knowledge is impossible to do, or not to do or else to do in some other way. It is solely dependent upon its object, and not upon any (Vedic) injunction or on (the will of) a person. Therefore, even while knowledge is mental, there is a great disparity (between knowledge and meditation).”

Śaṅkara is at pains of stressing this disparity, especially because a commentator of an earlier school of Vedanta, insisted on it that the Vedanta Śāstra as the sole valid means of knowledge with regard to the nature of Brahman, presents the latter only as a factor of the injunction of meditation (*Pratipatti*), since the purpose of (all) Śāstra is only to urge or to dissuade persons aspiring for release from the bondage of mundane life. This particular school of interpretation adopted cross roads in its approach to explain the purport of the Upanishads.

The position of this commentator is thus described in the Sūtra-Bhāshya :-

“There are (Vedic) injunctions like the following: ‘Ātman alone, my dear, is to be seen’ (Br.); ‘That, Ātman who is free from sin,..... He is to be sought after, He is to be known’ (Ch.); ‘He is to be meditated upon as Ātman

alone' (Br.); 'The world of Ātman alone is to be meditated upon' (Br.); 'Knowing Brahman, one becomes that very Brahman' (Mu.); (with regard to such texts), the question arises 'Who is that Ātman?' 'And what is that Brahman?' Texts like the following serve the purpose of presenting the nature of that (Ātman or Brahman):- 'Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipresent; Ever content; 'Ever Pure, intelligent and free', 'Brahman is Consciousness and Bliss'. And from Its meditation will accrue release in the other world, as revealed in the Śastra."

In perfect contrast and direct opposition to this view of the ancient school, Śāṅkara maintains that :-

1. Knowledge cannot be enjoined and release from bondage is not something to be accomplished.

‘अविधिलक्षणत्वाद् विद्यायाः, असाध्यत्वाच्च विद्याफलस्य’

सू.भा. ३-४-३३.

2. Knowledge of Brahman (culminating in intuition) only points out release which has been ever-achieved by the aspirant. The state of release is Brahman.

‘ब्रह्मैव हि मुक्त्यवस्था’, .... तद्धि असाध्यं नित्यसिद्धस्वभावमेव विद्ययाधिगम्यते ॥’

सू.भा. ४-१-५२, पा. ४५८, ४५९

3. Texts devoted to the description of Brahman only end by teaching the nature of that existing entity; they never urge aspirants as to undertake any action.

‘वस्तुमात्रपर्यवसानानि हि ब्रह्मवाक्यानि, न नियोगोपदेशीनि ॥’

सू.भा. ३-१-१२.

4. In texts which negate specific features in Brahman must be regarded as representing Brahman as it is, but texts that ascribe specific features to Brahman do not actually purport to describe Reality, for their aim is only to lay down an injunction of meditation.

‘इतराणि त्वाकारवद्ब्रह्मविषयाणि वाक्यानि न तत्प्रधानानि, उपासनाविधिप्रधानानि हि तानि ॥

सू.भा. ३-२-१४

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## 22. MONISM ACCORDING TO ŚAṅKARA

All the Vedantins, whether contemporaneous with, or antecedent to Śaṅkara, were monists. We do not find any teacher of Vedanta referred to in Śaṅkara's Bhāshyas, who does not profess to be a monist or advaitin in the sense that ultimately the world of multiplicity will have to be merged in Brahman and that the individual self will become one with that monistic principle. The one peculiar teaching of Śaṅkara's tradition, however, is that all manifoldness and all distinctions that we now see, are so many appearances due to our wrong way of looking at things. When we are able to intuit Reality as It is, there are no differences or distinctions whatever in It.

Here are two verses from Gauḍapāda's commentary on the Māṇḍūkya, clarifying the concept of non-duality according to genuine Vedic monism.

प्रपञ्चो यदि विद्येत निवर्तेत न संशयः ।

मायामात्रमिदं द्वैतमद्वैतं परमार्थतः ॥

विकल्पो विनिवर्तेत कल्पितो यदि केनचित् ।

उपदेशादयं वादो ज्ञाते द्वैतं न विद्यते ॥

गौ.का. १-१७, १८

“If multiplicity actually existed, it would have to be removed, no doubt. This duality is wholly Māyā, but

really it is Non-duality. A thought-construct would have to be cancelled, if it had been really conjured by someone. This dwaitism is only a device for the purpose of teaching. So when Reality is known there is no duality at all.

G.Kā. 1-17, 18

These two verses are an amplification of the meaning of a previous ślōka which states that when the individual self awakes from his long mayic dream, then he becomes aware of the unborn, unsleeping and undreaming Non-duality.

The manifold universe has not actually emanated from the non-dual Brahman, and so nobody need wait for its dissolution for attaining one's identity with Brahman. All duality is only apparent like mayic phenomena displayed by a magician, and it has to be only seen to be identical with non-dualistic Reality by awaking from our dreamy notions, and so do not demand any actual wiping off or dissolution.

Here some one might, perhaps, bring forward the objection that for this type of non-dualism, there must be at least the admission of the distinction of the Śāstra (holy teaching), Śishya (the disciple to be taught) and the teacher who has already known the truth of Advaita. How could the monist hold the doctrine of Advaita at all, if he never granted this fundamental distinction?





This objection does not hold water. For it is not true to say that there is actually this three-fold distinction as the foundation of non-dualism. The distinction so-called, is only a device accepted for the purposes of teaching, and so belongs to the mayic world of manifoldness only. When the real intuition has dawned, however, there is no distinction whatever in the non-dual Reality. Even the distinction of the intuition of Reality and the Reality intuited, is not really there. For non-duality is of the very stuff of this intuition.



## 23. THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS ACCORDING TO VEDANTA

Brahman is often described to be of the nature of consciousness (ज्ञान) or special consciousness (विज्ञान) in the Upanishads, and the signification of these words in common parlance, has misled many a beginner in Vedanta to suppose that this consciousness is the act of being conscious or aware of an object. This surmise is further supported by the wide-spread teaching that consciousness is a property of the brain or nerves.

The ancient school of Sāṅkhya founded by Kapila, had a theory that *Prakṛti* or primordial matter evolves itself into *Mahat* (universal Consciousness), which later in its turn, transforms itself into *ahankāra* and thence into the gross material world. Theologians of the various religions have all assumed that God is omniscient, and as such possesses eternal consciousness inherent in His nature, by dint of which, He is the overlord of all. The question naturally arises 'What is meant by Consciousness exactly, when the Upanishads characterize Brahman as *Jñāna* or Consciousness?'

Here is Śaṅkara's answer :-

सत्यानन्तशब्दाभ्यां सह विशेषणत्वेन ज्ञानशब्दस्य प्रयोगात् भावसाधनो ज्ञानशब्दः । 'ज्ञानं ब्रह्मेति कर्तृत्वादि कारकनिवृत्त्यर्थं मृदादिवदचिद्रूपतानिवृत्त्यर्थं

च प्रयुज्यते। 'ज्ञानं ब्रह्म' इति वचनात् प्राप्तम् अन्तवत्त्वम्, लौकिकस्य ज्ञानस्य अन्तवत्त्वदर्शनात्। अतः तन्निवृत्त्यर्थमाह - 'अनन्तम्' इति ॥

तै.भा. २-१

‘As the word *Jñāna* is used as an epithet of Brahman, along with the words ‘*satya*’ (real) and ‘*ananta*’ (infinite), the word *Jñāna* must be taken to have been used in the sense of an abstract noun (consciousness). Brahman is called ‘consciousness’ in order to preclude agency and other case-meanings of this word, and to exclude the meaning of something inert like clay etc., (which, though real in the empirical sense, are not conscious). The expression ‘Brahman is consciousness’, may imply finiteness, inasmuch as empirical consciousness is seen to be finite, and so, to preclude that, the Śruti say that Brahman is ‘infinite.’

Tai. Bh. 2-1.

From the above cited excerpt, we have to conclude that *Jñānam* (consciousness), used in collocation with the words ‘*satyam*’ (real) and ‘*anantam*’ (infinite), can only mean consciousness in its essence, and indicates the intrinsic infinite nature of Brahman and can never be understood to mean either the property of knowing or the function of knowing.

And what do the Vedantas mean by the epithet सर्वज्ञ (omniscient) as applied to Brahman? The followers of the Sāṃkhya school, hold that what the Vedantin calls ‘consciousness’ is really a property of ‘*satvam*’ one of

the three constituents of *Pradhāna* (the primordial matter), for the *Gītā* says that *Jñāna* is a product of Sattva (Bg. 14-17) and on account of possessing a great measure of that property, yogins, each of whom owns a body and senses, are known to be omniscient. So, according to them, it is inconceivable that Brahman without a body or senses, can ever be omniscient. Obviously, Brahman which is said to possess eternal consciousness cannot be said to exercise the function of knowing with any propriety, since it cannot be a knower in the strict sense.

We have given above the substance of the *sāṃkhya* view of the matter. Without entering into a detailed consideration of the correctness or incorrectness of this view, we may now turn to what Śaṅkara has to say in defence of the omniscience of brahman :-

इदं तावत् भवान् प्रष्टव्यः - कथं नित्यज्ञानक्रियत्वे सर्वज्ञत्वहानिरिति ?  
यस्य हि सर्वविषयावभासनक्षमं ज्ञानं नित्यमस्ति, सोऽसर्वज्ञ इति  
विप्रतिषिद्धम् । अनित्यत्वे हि ज्ञानस्य कदाचिज्जानाति कदाचिन्न  
जानातीत्यसर्वज्ञत्वमपि स्यात् । नासौ ज्ञाननित्यत्वे दोषोऽस्ति ॥

सू.भा. १-१-५.

“In the first place , you have to be asked ‘ how is omniscience impaired if consciousness be eternal ? To say that he who has eternal consciousness which can throw light upon all objects, is not omniscient, is manifestly a contradiction in terms. In the case of one whose consciousness is impermanent, it is of course

possible that he is not omniscient, since he sometimes knows, and sometimes does not know things ; but this defect can never be imputed to one whose consciousness is eternal,”

And in his taittiriya Bhāshya, Śaṅkara explains how brahman is indisputably omniscient :-

यत्तु ब्रह्मणो विज्ञानम्, तत् सवितृप्रकाशवत्, अग्न्युष्णत्ववच्च ब्रह्मस्वरूपाव्यतिरिक्तं स्वरूपमेव तत्, न तत्कारणान्तरसव्यपेक्षम्; नित्यस्वरूपत्वात्, सर्वभावानां च तेनाविभक्तदेशकालत्वात्, कालाकाशादिकारणत्वाच्च । निरतिशयसूक्ष्मत्वाच्च न तस्यान्यदविज्ञेयं सूक्ष्मं व्यवहितं विप्रकृष्टं भूतं भवद्भविष्यद्वा अस्ति । तस्मात् सर्वज्ञं तद् ब्रह्म ॥

तै.भा. २-१

“As for the Vijñāna (consciousness) of brahman, it is like unto the light of the sun or the heat of the fire, the very essence of brahman , and not anything other than that, and so being eternal, does not depend upon phenomena are in time and space, which can never be distinct from it, and because it is the cause of even time and ether etc. Moreover as it is the most subtle entity, there is nothing unknowable - subtle intercepted, distinct, past, present or future - in relation to it. Therefore that brahman is omniscient.”

According to vedanta then, brahman is omniscient not because it can exercise the power of knowing everything other than itself, but because it is the all and it is the very essence of consciousness.

It is not the ordinary consciousness opposed to unconsciousness ; it is Ātman himself who manifests himself as this pair of opposites in empirical life, in whose inherent light all pairs of opposites live, thrive and have their being. It is only relatively to these two, that brahman is spoken of as being omniscient empirically speaking ; from the absolute or transcendental view, however, Ātman as pure consciousness is the all.

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## 24. OMNIPOTENCE OF BRAHMAN

Brahman is often described as the Omniscient and Omnipotent Lord (सर्वज्ञः सर्वशक्तिरीश्वरः) who is the cause of birth, sustenance and dissolution of the world. There are two doubts with which a beginner's mind is beset. First of all, Brahman is according to Vedanta, the Absolute without any specific features, and at the same time It is said to be the 'cause' of the Universe. How is one to understand this paradoxical statement that one and the same entity is absolute as well as relative to the universe? Secondly, how can the Absolute Brahman be Īśvara, the Lord, omniscient and omnipotent Ruler, when there is nothing second to It to know or to rule over ?

This question has been raised and answered in the Sūtra-Bhāshya as follows :-

कूटस्थब्रह्मात्मवादिन एकत्वैकान्त्यात्, ईशित्रीशितव्याभावे  
ईश्वरकारणत्वप्रतिज्ञाविरोध इति चेत्, न; अविद्यात्मकनामरूपबीज  
व्याकरणापेक्षत्वात् सर्वज्ञत्वस्य ॥ सू.भा. २-१-१४, पा.

२००

(Objection :-) "Since the unity of (of Brahmātman) is absolute for one who maintains the doctrine of a changeless Brahmātman, there is neither a ruler nor the ruled, the proposition that Īśvara (the Ruler) is the cause (of the universe) becomes self-contradictory !

1. (Reply :-) No, for the omniscience (of Brahman) is

(only) relative to the differentiation of name and form which are the figment of ignorance."

S.Bh. 2-1-14, p. 200

We have already seen that the Advaitin holds that Brahman is essentially consciousness itself, and It is said to be omniscient only in a secondary sense, because Its nature is consciousness that can throw light on all objects, and that there is nothing in ordinary life subtle, intercepted and distinct from Brahman, which is not within the range of that consciousness. We have now to see in what sense It is a Ruler and how It is omnipotent. Śaṅkara offers the following explanation of the foregoing brief citation :-

सर्वज्ञस्येश्वरस्य आत्मभूते इवाविद्याकल्पिते नामरूपे तत्त्वान्यत्वाभ्या-  
मनिर्वचनीये, संसारप्रपञ्चबीजभूते सर्वज्ञस्येश्वरस्य माया, शक्तिः, प्रकृतिः -  
इति च श्रुतिस्मृत्योरभिलष्येते। ताभ्यामन्यः सर्वज्ञ ईश्वरः। .... स च  
स्वात्मभूतानेव घटाकाशस्थानीयान् अविद्याप्रत्युपस्थापितनामरूपकृत-  
कार्यकरणसंघातानुरोधिनो जीवाख्यान् विज्ञानात्मनः प्रतीष्टे व्यवहारविषये।  
तदेवम् अविद्यात्मकोपाधिपरिच्छेदापेक्षमेव ईश्वरस्य ईश्वरत्वं सर्वज्ञत्वं  
सर्वशक्तित्वं च; न परमार्थतो विद्ययाऽपास्तसर्वोपाधिस्वरूपे आत्मनि  
ईशित्रीशितव्य सर्वज्ञत्वादि व्यवहार उपपद्यते ॥

सू.भा. २-१-१४, पा. २०९

"Name and form, conjured up by Avidyā (nescience) as if they were identical with the omniscient Īśvara (the Lord), which are undefinable as either Himself or other than Him and which are the seed of the phenomenal world of practical life, are, in Śruti and Smṛti, spoken of as the



Māyā (deluding appearance), Śakti (potency) and Prakṛti (nature) of the omniscient Īśvara. Īśvara is quite distinct from these two.

And this Īśvara (as associated with the conditioning Māyā) rules over the Vijnānātmanas (knowing souls) called jīvas who are actually His very Self, only in the sphere of practical life .... So then it is only relative to the limitation of ignorance that Īśvara is called Īśvara (Ruler), 'omniscient' and 'omnipotent', while there is no room for such usage (of terms) as 'the relation of the ruler and the ruled', 'omniscience' etc. in the case of Ātman in the transcendental state, who is of the nature divested of all conditioning associates at the dawn of Vidya".

S.Bh. 2-1-14, p. 201

This is only half the story, for we are yet to learn how the impartible Brahman can be 'the material cause' of all this universe. How is the Śruti to be reconciled to fact, when it says 'Reality becomes both (the empirical) real and unreal ? (Tai.) Śaṅkara himself writes :-

इतश्च प्रकृतिर्ब्रह्म, यत्कारणं ब्रह्मण एव विकारात्मना परिणामः  
सामानाधिकरण्येनाऽऽम्नायते ॥ सू.भा. १-४-२६, पा. १७७

"For this reason also Brahman is the material cause, for the evolution of Brahman into the effect has been revealed in the Śruti, by treating (both Brahman and the universe) as one and the same (in the Taittiriya which says 'Brahman became all this')." S.Bh. 1-4-26, p. 177

Śaṅkara gets over this difficulty elsewhere by drawing our attention to the truth at the transcendental level.

नैष दोषः। अविद्याकल्पितरूपभेदाभ्युपगमात्। न ह्यविद्याकल्पितेन रूपभेदेन सावयवं वस्तु संपद्यते। न हि तिमिरोपहतनयनेन अनेक इव चन्द्रमा दृश्यमानोऽनेक एव भवति। अविद्याकल्पितेन च नामरूपलक्षणेन रूपभेदेन व्याकृताव्याकृतात्मकेन तत्त्वान्यत्वाभ्यामनिर्वचनीयेन ब्रह्म परिणामादि सर्वव्यवहारास्पदत्वं प्रतिपद्यते। परमार्थिकेन च रूपेण सर्वव्यवहारातीतम् अपरिणतम् अवतिष्ठते। वाचारम्भणमात्रत्वात् च अविद्यकल्पितस्य रूपभेदस्य इति न निरवयवत्वं ब्रह्मणः कुप्यति ॥ सू. भा. २-१-२७, पा. २१३

"This is no defect (in Vedanta), for a special aspect (of Brahman) conjured up by nescience is admitted (here). (To explain :-) It is well known that a thing does not become really partible, merely because of a species of its aspect conjured up by ignorance. Surely, the moon does not become many, merely because of its appearing to be many to one who is suffering from cataract ? Brahman is spoken of as being subject to evolution and as something subject to such other empirical notions, only in its special aspect of differentiated and undifferentiated names and forms, undefinable as Itself or other than It (this aspect itself being) conjured up by nescience, whereas in Its own really real aspect, It is beyond all such language and continues to be without any evolution. The (so-called special) aspect conjured up by ignorance being merely a play of words, the impartibility of Brahman is (quite) unaffected."

S.Bh. 2-1-27, p. 213

## 25. THE HIGHEST AIM OF HUMAN LIFE

The ancient philosophers of India, have enumerated the objects of human life as four, to wit, *Dharma* (merit arising out of the performance of religious duties), *Artha* (wealth), *Kāma* (enjoyment or pleasure), and *Moksha* (final Release from the bondage of mundane life). The first three are sometimes bracketed within the name of *Trivarga* (the triad) in order to imply their ephemeral and unreal nature in contrast with the last which is considered to be eternal, and hence is entitled *parama-purushārtha* (the highest goal of man).

All schools regard Release as eternal, while they widely differ about the means which help the seeker in achieving it. *Karma* (merit earned through the performance of religious duty), *Upāsana* (Meditation upon Reality), and sometimes a combination of both, have been proposed as conducive to this highest goal. Discrimination between *Purusha* (the indifferent Self) and *Prakṛti* (primordial matter) has been recommended by the *Sāṅkhyas* as the sole means of release, since they believe that non-discrimination as the only bondage from which man is suffering. There are a number of Purushas according to this school, and so they think that each one of them has to free himself from bondage by means of this discrimination. The Yogins, or the followers of Patanjali, who have been sometimes called *Seśvara Sāṅkhyas* (Sāṅkhyas who

believe in the existence of God), insist upon the constant practice of *Yoga* (or Psychic Practice) for the dissociation of Purusha from the entanglement in the various forms of Prakṛti. The ultimate freedom for them is possible only when the seeker attains the *Samādhi* (Super-conscious state of the mind).

The contemporary and pre-Śaṅkara Vedantins, referred to in Śaṅkara's *Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, uniformly believed in Release, as freedom from the duality of the individual self and the Supreme Self called Brahman, and recommended various means for the attainment of union of the individual self with Brahman.

The one distinctive feature of Śaṅkara's tradition of interpretation of the Upanishads lies in its holding to the axiomatic principle that nothing eternal can be produced by any artificial means whatever. The Upanishads emphatically proclaim. 'नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन' (nothing un-artificial can be accomplished through doing something). Therefore, according to this school of Śaṅkara, the only means,- if means it were-would be to realize this eternal freedom of one's Self by dispelling the ignorance which makes one fondly believe that one is actually bound.

Śaṅkara, therefore remarks :

यस्य तूत्याद्यो मोक्षः, तस्य मानसं वाचिकं कायिकं वा कार्यमपेक्षत इति युक्तम्, तथा विकार्यत्वे च। तयोः पक्षयोः मोक्षस्य ध्रुवमनित्यत्वम्॥

सू.भा. १-१-४, पा. १७

“For one who thinks that freedom has got to be produced, it is right that the goal depends on some mental, verbal, or bodily effort to be made. And so would it be for one who thinks Release is the result of transforming the present state. And freedom is sure to be transient in both these cases.” SBh. 1-1-4, p. 17.

There are two more effects that can be expected to result from the operation of some means, viz., the effect may be something to be reached or to be produced by some purificatory process. Neither of these alternatives, is possible in the case of *Brahmabhāva* (becoming Brahman) for, as Śaṅkara adds, Brahman is all-pervading and hence is not something to be reached, and Brahman does not admit of any purification by making it more perfect or removing any defect in It, since It is absolutely perfect and is altogether devoid of any taint.

For these reasons, Śaṅkara concludes, our nature as Brahman is not something to be achieved afresh. Everyone is eternally free as Brahman, and this has to be realized only by removing the natural ignorance that one is limited by the body and the senses. That is why the Śrutis say that one who knows Brahman attains the Highest.

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## 26. THE ONE MEANS OF ATTAINING ĀTMAN

Absolute Reality called Ātman or Brahman is, paradoxically enough, most difficult of attainment from one point of view, while from another, there is nothing more easily accessible than It; for It is the very Self of the seeker. The Upanishad thus states the relative value of the several means available for the attainment of Ātman:-

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥

मुं. ३-२-३, का. २-२३

"This Ātman is not attainable through the study of holy works, not through (thinking on them and) remembering (their teaching), nor by listening (to sacred teaching) in various ways. (By that Ātman) alone whom this seeker longs (to attain), by that (Ātman), can He be attained. To him, this Ātman reveals His true nature."

Mu. 3-2-3, Ka. 2-23

This same mantra, which occurs in two different Upanishads, declares that more than study, memorizing and even listening to teaching about Ātman, there is one important means to the attainment of Ātman, viz., the intense longing for and pursuit of the knowledge of Ātman exclusively. To such a persevering seeker alone

this Paramatman or Universal Self is sure to disclose His real nature.

Of course, study of the Vedas and other means are also necessary, but they would be fruitful only when they are employed with the sole aim of reaching Ātman. There are, indeed, many other proximate means which are calculated to hit the target even more surely than the above-mentioned means. For instance, the *Mundaka* mentions some of them :-

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यो न च प्रमादात् तपसो वाप्यलिङ्गात् ।  
एतैरुपायैर्यतते यस्तु विद्वांस्तस्यैष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्मधाम ॥

मुं. ३-२-४

"This Ātman is not attainable by one devoid of the vigour (of staying in Ātman), nor by distraction, nor even by the discipline (of concentration) without *Sannyāsa*. Whichever discriminating person, however, makes a sustained effort with these aids, this self of his enters into the abode of Brahman." Mu. 3-2-4.

We may refer the readers to other qualifications such as humility desisting from vanity, non-injury, mentioned in the *Gītā* (XIII-7 to 11)

The one indispensable element, however, that should run through all these names is, as the Upanishad insists, यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः (Mu.) sustained devotion to Ātman, or as Bhagavān Śri Krishṇa says 'मयि चानन्ययोगेन

भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी' (unflinching devotion to God by means of the Yoga of non-difference).

Ātman or Divinity is the inner-most Self of the seeker, and can therefore be reached in no other way than intently seeking It with the help of the introvert mind. The seeker should therefore first of all turn his mind inwards, and train it to develop an unwavering love of Ātman in contrast to the natural attachment to outward objects. This is what is called *Bhakti*.

Bhagavān Śri Krishṇa promises to bless His devotees with the intuition of Ātman in these words :

“To those who ever stay their mind on Me, and ever serve Me with love, I give that direction to their mind by which they approach Me. Out of compassion for such devotees exclusively, I destroy the darkness born of ignorance, seating myself in their heart, by means of the luminous lamp of wisdom.”

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## 27. THE REMOVAL OF AVIDYĀ BY BRAHMA-VIDYĀ

Does the knowledge of Brahman remove the entire Avidyā (nescience) immediately at its very dawn ?

This has been a moot point for discussion among the advaitins themselves ever since some sub-commentator on Śaṅkara brought forward the theory that a little of Avidyā (*Avidyā-leśa*) continues to stay on till the fructifying karma is quite exhausted. This theory naturally gave birth to another undesirable doctrine that has been maintained in some quarters that real Moksha or Final Release in its primary sense, is possible only after the knower has shuffled off this mortal coil !

The latter doctrine is of course, directly opposed to Bādarāyaṇa's Sūtra :

एवं मुक्तिफलानियमस्तदवस्थावधृतेस्तदवस्थावधृतेः ।

सू.भा. ३-४-५२

“There is no such alternative with regard to Release, for that has been emphasized to be uniform throughout.”

SBh. 3-4-52.

Śaṅkara proclaims in his commentary on this aphorism :

तद्धि असाध्यं नित्यसिद्धस्वभावमेव विद्यया अधिगम्यत  
इत्यसकृदवादिष्म ।

सू.भा. ३-४-५२

"For we have remarked more than once that it (the release) is not something to be attained, but eternally existing as it is by nature, and (only) revealed by Vidyā.

SBh. 3-4-52

It is true that from the empirical standpoint, the false notion that one is an agent may continue to stay, as it were, even after true knowledge has dawned. Accordingly Śāṅkara writes elsewhere :

बाधितमपि तु मिथ्याज्ञानं द्विचन्द्रज्ञानवत् संस्कारवशात् कश्चित्कालम्  
अनुवर्तत एव ॥ सू.भा. ४-१-१५

"This false notion, even while it has been sublated, does continue for a while owing to impressions (of past notions), like the notion of two moons."

SBh. 4-1-15

But by dint of knowledge acquired through the intuition of Reality, the wise one knows that there was no duality whatever even in the state of ignorance.

It is therefore wrong to think that a fraction of Avidyā remains as a residuum even after correct knowledge has sublated it. For Avidyā is not an actual something clinging to Ātman waiting to be really erased by Vidyā. It is only a device for teaching the true nature of Ātman, granting empirical binding of the human mind to be negated as soon as the truth has been realized.

## 28. BĀDARĀYAṆA'S TREATISE ON VEDANTA

Śaṅkara has assigned two epithets to Bādarāyaṇa's work consisting of aphorisms popularly known by the name of '*Brahma Sūtras*.'

At the close of the famous Introduction to his commentary on this unique work, Śaṅkara says :-

‘यथा चायमर्थः सर्वेषां वेदान्तानाम्, तथा वयमस्यां शारीरकमीमांसायां प्रदर्शयिष्यामः।’  
अ.भा.

“We shall show in this *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*, how this is the uniform purport of all the Vedantas.” Intro. S.B.

After explaining that the Avidyā referred to in the Upanisads is only another name for the mutual superimposition of the real Self and the unreal not-self and the mistaken transference of the properties of either of these to the other, Śaṅkara says that Bādarāyaṇa's work called the *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā* proposes to show how the one uniform aim of the Vedantas or Upanishads, is to teach that the wisdom of the unity of Ātman is the only means of wiping off this Avidyā, the source of all evils.

And in introducing the very first aphorism of the work, the Ācārya says :

“वेदान्तमीमांसाशास्त्रस्य व्यचिख्यासितस्य इदमादिमं सूत्रम्”

सू.भा. १-१-१

“Of the *Vedānta-Mīmāṃsā Śāstra* which is now proposed to be explained, this is the first Sūtra.”

S.Bh. 1-1-1.

It is obvious why Bādarāyaṇa's work has been designated as '*Vedānta Mīmāṃsā*' for it is solely written for the purpose of interpreting Vedantic texts. It is a systematic exposition of the sacred subject-matter (*Mīmāṃsā*) of the Vedāntas (or the Upanishads).

But why does Śaṅkara call it the *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*? That this name is no invention of that teacher, is disclosed by a statement of his in this commentary elsewhere :-

अत एव च भगवता उपवर्षेण प्रथमे तन्त्रे आत्मास्तित्वाभिधानप्रसक्तौ  
'शारीरके वक्ष्यामः' इत्युद्धारः कृतः ॥ सू.भा. ३-३-५३

“Hence it is that the revered Upavarsha only said ‘we shall explain this in the *Śārīraka*’ even while there was the need in the previous *Mīmāṃsā* to prove the existence of *Ātman*.”

S.Bh. 3-3-53.

This sentence occurs in the course of a reply to the question as to why the question of the existence of the *Ātman* is taken up here again, seeing that in the very beginning of the former *Mīmāṃsā* by Śabara-Swāmin. Śaṅkara answers that there is no Sūtra devoted to this subject in the *Karma-Mīmāṃsā*, and both the *Bhāshyakāra* and Upavarsha had to anticipate what is expressly taken up here for discussion. It is clear that the

name 'Śārīraka' was already familiar to Vedic expositors, at least as early as Upavarsha. Śaṅkara has therefore to be supposed to have retained this title of the work for good reasons.

While Śaṅkara has nowhere stated in so many words what the exact significance of this word *Śārīraka* is, we can surmise from one or two statements of his, what exactly he understood by this epithet. The first sentence worthy of consideration is in his commentary on the Sūtra 'अनुपपत्तेस्तु न शारीरः' (V.S. 1-2-3). Bādarāyaṇa says here that the attributes of Manomaya etc. (in Chandogya 3-4-1, 2) cannot be rightly supposed to belong to the individual self, inasmuch as there are many properties enumerated there which are inapplicable to Jīva.

That Ācārya derives the word '*Śārīra*' in this Sūtra as follows, and adduces the reason why it cannot be the name of Brahman :

शारीर इति - शरीरे भव इत्यर्थः। ननु ईश्वरोऽपि शरीरे भवति ? सत्यम् शरीरे भवति, न तु शरीरे एव भवति। 'ज्यायान् पृथिव्या ज्यायानन्तरिक्षात्', 'आकाशवत् सर्वगतश्च नित्यः' इति च व्यापित्वश्रवणात्। जीवस्तु शरीर एव भवति। तस्य भोगाधिष्ठानात् शरीरादन्यत्र वृत्त्यभावात्॥

सू.भा. १-२-३

"Here '*Śārīra*' means- 'one who is in the body.' "

(Objection) :- Does not Īśvara also have His being in the body ?

(Reply) :- True, he does have being in the body, but He is not in the body alone; for we learn that He is all-pervading from Śrutis like 'more extensive than the earth, more intensive than the ether' (Ch. 3-14-3), 'He is all-pervading and eternal like ether' (Sath. Br. 10-6-3-2). Jīva on the other hand, exists exclusively within body alone, for he cannot function anywhere else than in the body which is the only basis for his experience."

S.Bh. 1-2-3

We are told here that the name 'Śārīra' in the Sūtra uniformly denotes the embodied individual self. We have therefore to conjecture that the title of Śārīraka applied to the collection of Śāstras has been retained by Śaṅkara not merely because it has been traditionally handed down by a succession of teachers from very ancient times, but also because as connected with Jīva, it has some thought-arresting significance for this school of Vedanta. And Śaṅkara confirms this conclusion in this commentary on another Sūtra :

"There are other doctrines - and some belonging to our own way of thinking also-who think that the Jīva form also is really real. This śārīraka has been undertaken (by Bādarāyaṇa) to awaken all those who are opposed to the only right view of the Unity of Ātman, तेषां सर्वेषाम् आत्मैकत्वसम्यग्दर्शनप्रतिपक्षभूतानां प्रतिबोधायेदं शारीरकमारब्धम् (by showing how the one Supreme Īśvara, the unchangingly eternal, conscious entity is conceived to be many through



Avidyā-just as a magician is imagined to be many owing to magical effects conjured up by him- while really there is no conscious entity other than that Lord.)"

S.Bh. 1-3-19

It is now crystal-clear that Śaṅkara aims at suggesting that Bādarāyaṇa's work is called 'Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā' because its chief aim is to dispel the popular notion that there are actually a number of individual selves besides Brahman, and to convince us that as the substrate of all these apparent Jivas, is Brahman, the one Ātman, taught by the Upanishads.



## 29. BĀDARĀYAṆA'S VIEW OF THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE UPANISHADS

There are at least two methods of approach open to any interpretation of the body of the Upanishads.

In the first place, this portion of the Vedas forms the closing of the Vedas, whence plausibly they have been called the Vedantas. From this view-point, one is justified in expecting that, like the previous portion, they also propose and teach some means to achieve the goal like Dharma, resulting from the performance of religious rites; and seeing that almost all the Upanishads prescribe Upāsanās (meditations) yielding beneficial results both here and in the other world, it is quite natural to suppose that the Upāsanās that promise the attainment of Brahmaloaka whence there is no return to this mundane life, constitute the cardinal doctrine of the Vedantas.

And in the second place, there is the fact staring us in the face that these Upanishads uniformly teach that the knower of Brahman attains the Highest Goal, and verily becomes that Brahman itself. There are certain items of discipline also which the seeker is recommended to undergo for knowing Brahman. So, from this stand-point, it would appear that Brahman alone is the transcendental entity recommended to be known for attaining the Goal. There is, however, a problem to be solved here





concerning the relation of the texts enjoining meditation to these texts recommending the knowledge of the Brahman alone for the purpose of attaining Release.

In view of the fact that there are texts enjoining the meditation on Brahman also, one could naturally suppose that the injunction of Brahman is the main theme of the Vedantas in contrast to the texts that enjoin karma of the *karma-kānda* whose main goal is the propitiation of the devas (or demi-gods) and the attainment of *swarga*. This view has been actually held by some Vedantins.

Another question now crops up. How are we to treat the karmas in relation to the Vedantic doctrine ? Are they to be dispensed with altogether in considering the means of Release, or do they still continue to have their own place here ?

There have been Vedanta-Bhāshyakāras who have stoutly maintained that a conjunction of karma and meditation on Brahman is needful for the attainment of Release and the Bādarāyaṇa's Vedanta-Mīmāṃsā is mainly for the purpose of ascertaining which karmas are to be combined with Upāsanā in order to bring about the final Release.

We now come to the verdict of Śaṅkara's tradition in this matter. This school is of opinion that over and above the knowledge of Brahman subservient to meditation, there is another kind of knowledge culminating in

intuition proposed in the very first Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa 'अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा' (Then, therefore, the enquiry into the nature of Brahman).

Śaṅkara comments on the word '*Jijñāsā*' here as follows :-

ज्ञातुमिच्छा जिज्ञासा । अवगतिपर्यन्तं ज्ञानं सन्वाच्याया इच्छायाः कर्म ।  
फलविषयत्वादिच्छायाः । ज्ञानेन हि प्रमाणेनावगन्तुमिष्टं ब्रह्म । ब्रह्मावगतिर्हि  
पुरुषार्थः । निःशेषसंसारबीजाविद्याद्यनर्थनिबर्हणात् ॥ सू.भा. १-१-१

"*Jijñāsā* literally means desire to know Brahman. Here the knowledge culminating in intuition is the object of the desire denoted by the desiderative suffix (*sun*), for, desire is always for some result. The intuition of Brahman alone is the highest goal, for it destroys all evils such as ignorance, which are the root cause of *saṁsāra*, the cycle of births and deaths." S.Bh. 1-1-1

This, then, is the view of Bādarāyaṇa according to Śaṅkara about the subject-matter of the Upanishads. It is the intuition of Brahman and not merely Upāsanā, or the knowledge subservient to it, that is mainly proposed to be revealed in the Upanishads; for that is the one effective means of eradicating Avidyā or ignorance and making Release manifest.

We shall take up in the subsequent articles, all the implications of this teaching of Śaṅkara, so as to enable the student of Vedanta to realize the unique teaching of Vedanta according to this tradition.

## 30. THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN

We have seen that Bādarāyaṇa's view, according to Śaṅkara, the subject-matter of the Upanishads, is chiefly Brahman and Its knowledge, and not any injunction as supposed by some schools of Vedantins who interpreted the Sūtras before and after Śaṅkara.

We have now to see whether this interpretation of Śaṅkara's, is merely a revolutionary departure from the majority of commentators on the Sūtras, or there are any redeeming features which specially commend this unique system to the critical reader who is serious about the goal of life promised in the Śrutis.

In the first place, we have the very first Sūtra which runs thus अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा 'Then, therefore, the desire to know Brahman' (VS. 1-1-1). This is obviously in contrast to Jaimini's Sūtra अथातो धर्मजिज्ञासा (Then, therefore, enquiry into the nature of Dharma). Śaṅkara remarks that Bādarāyaṇa's work could not have been composed, if like Jaimini, he also only meant to emphasize the injunction of *Upāsana* (meditation) as held by the other schools of Vedanta.

स्वतन्त्रमेव ब्रह्म शास्त्रप्रमाणकम्, वेदान्तवाक्यसमन्वयादिति सिद्धम्। एवं च सति 'अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा' इति तद्विषयः पृथक् शास्त्रारम्भ उपपद्यते। प्रतिपत्तिविधिपरत्वे हि 'अथातो धर्मजिज्ञासा' इत्येवारब्धत्वात् न पृथक्शास्त्रमारभ्येत ॥

"It is established that Brahman, independent of any

injunction, is revealed by the (Vedanta) Śāstra, because of the syntactical connection of Vedantic texts. For if the Śāstra were meant to have its purport in the injunction of knowledge (meditation), a new Śāstra could not have been begun, since enquiry into dharma (religious duty) has been already composed." S.Bh. 1-1-4

This is of course only a negative argument to show that knowledge of Brahman is not something to be enjoined. There is, however, a positive side of the argument in Śaṅkara's explanation of the word 'therefore' (अतः) in the first Sūtra.

यस्माद् वेद एव अग्निहोत्रादीनां श्रेयःसाधनानाम् अनित्यफलतां दर्शयति 'तद्यथेह कर्मजितो लोकः क्षीयत एवमेवामुत्र पुण्यजितो लोकः, क्षीयते' (छां. ८-१-६) इत्यादिः, तथा ब्रह्मविज्ञानादपि परं पुरुषार्थं दर्शयति 'ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्' (तै. २-१) इत्यादि ॥ सू. भा. १-१-१

"Inasmuch as the Veda itself shows how ephemeral the result of Agnihotra and other means to the good (in the other world) in such texts as 'just as the enjoyment won through secular work here is exhausted, so also the enjoyment won through meritorious religious duty exhausts itself' (Ch. 8-1-6) and Veda itself points to the Highest Goal of human life accruing from the knowledge of Brahman, (therefore one should desire to know Brahman after one has equipped oneself with the required qualifications)."

Upāsana also being Dharma, cannot grant the eternal fruit of Moksha - according to the Śruti. We shall go into the details of the nature of the knowledge of Brahman, in the next article.

## 31. KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN

The reader has so far seen that knowledge of Brahman, according to Bādarāyaṇa as interpreted by Śaṅkara, is that which culminates in final intuition. "This intuition is the highest goal of human life, as it does away with all the ills of transmigratory life, such as Avidyā. (ब्रह्मावगतिर्हि पुरुषार्थः निःशेषसंसारबीजाविद्याद्यनर्थनिबर्हणात्) Unlike Upāsanā it is not something to be enjoined. We have now to see some other characteristics of this knowledge.

(1) Another feature of this knowledge is that unlike Karma or Upāsanā, which is something to be done, it does not depend upon the will of a person, but only on the nature of an entity Brahman, which already is there. (न वस्तुयाथात्म्यज्ञानं पुरुषबुद्ध्यपेक्षम्, किं तर्हि वस्तुतन्त्रमेव तत्)

(2) Again, any action secular or Vedic, being dependent on a person's will, it is in the fitness of things that injunctions and prohibitions would serve some purpose in its case (विधिप्रतिषेधाश्च अत्र अर्थवन्तः स्युः), but knowledge of an already existing something like Brahman, depending as it does solely on the nature of a thing, cannot be so enjoined or prohibited.

(3) Again, alternate courses, general rules and exceptions are also possible (विकल्पोत्सर्गापवादाश्च)

Accordingly, the same karma such as libation is sometimes allowed in the Veda to be performed in one

way for some, and quite in another way for others. But, the knowledge of the truth of an existing entity like Brahman, cannot allow of alternatives. No one thing can be alternatively conceived to be such and not such or that is and is not; (न तु वस्तु एवम् नैवम्, अस्ति नास्ति इति वा विकल्प्यते) For alternative views are solely dependent on a person's will, but the truth of a thing is solely dependent on the real nature of the thing to be known.

It is obvious, therefore, that the nature of Reality cannot be supposed to be dualistic or non-dualistic, or a combination of both. It is not correct, therefore, to say that all systems of philosophy may be right, each being true from a different standpoint. As Śāṅkara rightly remarks (न हि स्थाणावेकस्मिन् स्थाणुर्वा पुरुषोऽन्यो वेति तत्त्वज्ञानं भवति). It cannot be a correct view of a post to suppose that it might be a post or a person.

(4) Again Brahman is taught to be one's own Ātman in the Upanishads (अयमात्मा ब्रह्म) and being the inmost Ātman of every creature (सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा) and the Witness (साक्षी) of everything as well as devoid of all characteristics (निर्गुणश्च), it does not stand to reason to think that It is an object of thought.

As a matter of fact, the Śrutis teach that Brahman is no object of the act of knowing 'अन्यदेव तद्विदितादथोऽविदितादधि' (केन. १-४) 'It is quite other than the known, and above what is unknown' (Ke. 1-4). Much



less is It the object of meditation enjoined by the Śruti. For there is the Śruti itself emphatically negating that what is enjoined to be meditated upon is not the real Brahman, for Brahman's consciousness objectifies everything.

यद्वाचाऽनभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते ।

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

"That which is not expressible by speech, but that which objectifies speech itself, know That to be Brahman, and not this which they meditate upon." Ke. 1-5.

The knowledge of Brahman, therefore, is quite unlike the knowledge of empirical objects or of Vedic duties. The only way to know It is to intuit It as unknowable.

‘विज्ञातमविजानताम्’ (के. २-३)

More of this in the next article.

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## 32. KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN

We have seen in the last article that the knowledge of Brahman, being no action like Karma or Upāsana, is dependent neither upon some Vedic injunction or prohibition nor upon the will of a person, but is just like the knowledge of any external object, solely dependent on the nature of what is revealed, to wit, Brahman. As such, this knowledge does not admit of any alternative views.

We have seen too, that this knowledge cannot objectify Brahman like the knowledge of external phenomena; for Brahman is the very Self of the knower himself and being devoid of all characteristics, is quite inexpressible by words and unthinkable by thought. It follows, therefore, that no scientific observation or experimentation can be expected to make any research with regard to Brahman's nature at any distant future in some distant place.

There is another peculiar feature to be remembered in connection with this knowledge. Brahman is not the individual self of any one person. The Upanishads describe It as 'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म'. Pure Being, Pure Consciousness and Infinite. Therefore when It is intuited as the inquirer's Self, the inquirer himself will have ceased to be a knower distinct from Brahman, and there is no possibility of there being anything second to the Infinite Brahman. Time and space will also have been absorbed





into Brahman. Śaṅkara says that the "Vedanta Śāstra is a Pramāṇa (means of knowledge) not because it describes or defines Brahman to be such and such, but because it abolishes all distinctions like that of the knowable, known and knowledge, conjured up by ignorance. It only reveals Brahman as no object, that is all" (S.Bh. 1-1-4)

An Upanishadic text describes the truth about Brahman as follows :-

“ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्तात् ब्रह्म पश्चात् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण । अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम्॥” (मुं. २-२-११)

"This in front of us is verily Brahman alone, what is behind is Brahman alone. To the right and to the left is Brahman alone. Before and above is Brahman alone that is all-pervading. All this is Brahman, the Best."

Mun. 2-2-11



### 33. TRUTH AND ERROR

The term 'truth' and 'reality' as used in Vedantic discussion, have not quite the same sense as they have when used in common life. A thing is said to be real in ordinary life only when it is ascertained to possess the causal efficiency expected of it. Water, for instance, is really water only when it can moisten our clothes, or slake our thirst. Mirage-water, however, is not real water, because, even while it appears to be like water from distance, it fails to stand the test of causal efficiency. Therefore, people conclude that it is an error to think that it is water; there is no truth in that thought.

In Vedantic discussion, however, we set no store by practical efficiency. Certain objects in dream may possess causal efficiency while that state lasts, and yet everybody knows that they have been unreal all along, as soon as one awakes. Ātman is real according to Vedanta, not because he possesses any practical efficiency, but because He maintains His self-identity irrespective of the presence or absence of something seemingly second to Him. He has an undeniable nature, and He does not stand in need of any proof for His being such, because He exists in and for Himself. We may think anything that is not self. For instance our bodies and senses supposed to pertain to us cease to be such during our dreams, which present their own set of the body and the senses, which are sublated the moment we awake. True, people do believe

that the waking-body and the waking-senses continue to exist even while they dream, but that is only a waking belief. We have no inkling of any recollection or remembrance of waking or its contents in any dream. As a matter of fact, dream impresses itself as waking and one has no suspicion whatever that one has been transferred to a replica of the original state. A critical observation of the two states, however, discloses that whereas the two states together with their contents - the knowing ego, knowledge and its objects replace each other, the Witness in whose light of consciousness each of the states appears and disappears, maintains Its unchanging self-identity, and therefore, in the strict sense of the word, really real.

This is further confirmed by what is called deep-sleep where Ātman is intuited to be as He really is, without a second even to be witnessed.

One more circumstance deserves to be noticed here. Phenomena in both Waking and dream are characterized by limitation of time and space, and invariably exist in time or co-exist in time and place. From this fact, we have to conclude that the states themselves, cannot be said to exist in time or place. Their being, therefore, cannot be equated with that of the phenomena within each of them. They have being only in so far as they appear in the light of the consciousness of the Witness and is entirely dependent on it. The Witnessing

consciousness, on the other hand, is not enveloped within either waking or dream, in each of which the ego is conscious.

From the strictly real point of view, however, time, as we have already seen, is contained within waking or dream, and there is no notion of time or space within deep sleep. There is no one ego common to all the three states, and thus viewed, these are not states of consciousness at all. The consciousness of the waking ego, may for the nonce be conceded to be occasionally active, vivid or dull, and in this sense that consciousness may be supposed to pass through several states. But how can waking, dream and sleep, depend solely on the Witness and have no one time series in which they may be said to occur to be real 'states of consciousness' ?

The case of the Witnessing Consciousness is altogether different. Its being is not existence in time or place; nor is it a co-existence like that of phenomena seen in waking or dream. It is Pure Being, which has no characteristic features, and forms the very essence of the Witness. The consciousness of the Witness, likewise, is quite unlike that of the waking or dreaming ego, for it is neither an event in time or consciousness of an external object. It is Pure Consciousness, devoid of all specific features and forms the very essence of the Witness. There is again, no distinction between the Pure Being and the Pure



Consciousness of the Witness. Being is Consciousness, and Consciousness is Being.

Moreover, the Witness is witness only relatively, for It ceases to be such in states of sleep or swoon. From this point of view, we have to conclude that the Witness in its pure essence is the only Reality in the strict sense of the word, and its reality being absolute, Vedanta calls It Ātman (the all-pervading Self) or the Brahman (the Infinite)



## 34. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE UPANISHADS

The language and style of the Upanishads is so peculiar to themselves, that any clever scholar who has not dived deep into the technique of their teachings, can find ample material in them to suit his own theory of the system which he chooses to make out of them.

Some of the early oriental scholars were tempted to believe that 'the authors of these ancient works' were 'poets' who taught the worship of the powers of nature !

The founders of rational schools of Indian Philosophy like the Sāṅkhya or the Vaiśeṣhika, imagined and advocated that the cause of the Universe, which they independently inferred according to principles accepted by their school, found its support in the Upanishads. Śaṅkara writes in this connection :

एवमन्येऽपि तार्किका वाक्याभासयुक्त्याभासावष्टम्भाः पूर्वपक्षवादिन इहोत्तिष्ठन्ते। तत्र पदवाक्यप्रमाणज्ञेनाचार्येण वेदान्तवाक्यानां ब्रह्मावगति-परत्वप्रदर्शनाय वाक्याभासयुक्त्याभासविप्रतिपत्तयः पूर्वपक्षीकृत्य निराक्रियन्ते ॥  
सू.भा. १-२-५, पा. २४

"Likewise, there are other speculators who have for their support texts seemingly advocating their doctrine and frail arguments in favour of objections to the genuine teaching. In these circumstances, the venerable teacher (Bādarāyaṇa), who knows the spirit of words, sentences, and the valid means of right knowledge, takes up these

misconceptions arising out of garbled quotations and sophistic reasonings as *prima facie* views to be refuted in order to show how all Vedantic texts purport to induce the intuition of Brahman'. S.Bh. 1-1-5, p. 24

It would be profitable to ascertain what exactly Śaṅkara means to convey by the epithet पदवाक्यप्रमाणज्ञेन (one who knows the spirit of words, sentences and valid means of knowledge).

Some have interpreted this phrase to signify 'one who is versed in Panini grammar, the exegetics of Jaimini and Gautama's Nyāya'; but that is only half the truth.

In the first place, we may illustrate what is meant by the knowledge of the import of words, by referring to the mis-interpretation of the term *Sākshi* (Witness) by certain Vedantic schools who insist that the self is invariably an entity corresponding to the notion of 'me'. They argue that the knowership of the self is obviously supported by this word as vouched for by Pāṇini's rule साक्षाद्द्रष्टरि संज्ञायाम् (Pāṇini 5-2-91) which derives the word so as to mean an immediate seer or knower. This mis-interpretation obviously owes its origin to ignoring the śruti which says that the sākshin is केवलो निर्गुणश्च (Sve. 6-11) non-dual and without any specific property. These interpreters have laid stress on the word द्रष्टा (seer), and not upon साक्षात् (immediate) as they could have surely done by understanding the spirit of the Upanishadic text. The reader will remember how Śaṅkara has convincingly shown that all talk of *Pramāṭṛtva* (knowership) and

*Pramāṇas* (means of knowledge), is out of place in the case of *Ātman* (देहेन्द्रियादिष्वहंममाभिमानरहितस्य प्रमातृत्वानुपपत्तौ प्रमाणप्रवृत्त्यनुपपत्तेः) since He can never rightly suppose the body to be in 'me' and the senses and the mind as 'mine'.

Secondly, that Brahman can never be denoted by any particular word nor be regarded as expressible by a sentence consisting of words denoting qualities and something qualified, is proclaimed by Śaṅkara in his commentary on the Taittiriya text सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म ('Brahman is Reality, consciousness and Infinite') :-

"Thus the words Reality etc., in collocation with one another, restricting and being restricted by one another, form an apt definition of Brahman, which has therefore to be concluded as neither denoted by any particular word, nor an entity to be described by a sentence like 'The lotus is a blue (large and sweet, smelling) flower.' (Tai. Bh. 2-1, p. 283)

And thirdly, by the epithet प्रमाणज्ञ (one who knows the nature of the valid means of knowledge), we have to understand not only that the empirical means of knowledge cannot objectify the transcendental entity Brahman or *Ātman*, but also that in addition to the Śrutis and other textual sources (which suffice to give us a knowledge of Dharma), intuition and reason subservient to final non-dual intuition are to be admitted as means, since Brahman is an entity existing in and for Itself. More of this in a subsequent article.



## 35. CERTAIN TERMS USED TO DEFINE ĀTMAN

The student of Śaṅkara's Vedanta is often puzzled in understanding the nature of Reality as defined in the Upanishads, mostly because that Ācārya seems to use certain words in a sense quite different from what they bear in classical literature. This, however, is no invention of Śaṅkara, for it is the Upanishads themselves that use these words in this peculiar manner to suggest transcendental truths which are beyond the sphere of speech and thought. I shall give here a list of some of these words to illustrate what I mean :-

1. The word *Sat* (सत्) ordinarily signifies something that exists in time or place, and usually possesses some attribute. In Vedanta, however, it not only conveys this meaning when used with reference to an object in practical life, but is also used to suggest Ātman as Pure Being without any other implication. In the text तत् सत्यं स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो for example, Śvetaketu is told by his father that *Sat* (Pure Being) is the only Reality, the only Ātman who is the real Self of all living creatures.

2. Ātman (आत्मशब्दः) is a reflexive pronoun meaning oneself. It also means the essence of something, as when it is said मृदात्मा घटः. 'A pot is of the essence of clay' with the implication that it is not made up of something else. It is also used as a name for the individual

souls (जीवात्मानः) by believers in a transmigratory soul distinct from the body. The Upanishads, however, use it to denote the all-pervading Reality which manifests Itself as the universe. Thus आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीत् 'All this was Ātman alone in the beginning' refers to Reality.

3. '*Satyam*' (सत्यम्) ordinarily means truth as opposed to falsehood in propositions like 'सत्यं वद' (Speak the truth), or something really existing and not merely an appearance, in sentences like शुक्तिकारजतम् अनृतम्, न हि कस्मैचिदाभरणाय कल्पते 'The silver in nacre is unreal, for it cannot be used for any ornament like actual silver'. *Satyam*, as applied to Reality, however, it means the only real Being which never parts with its self-identity. In the text सत्यं चानृतं च सत्यमभवत् 'The Real became both the (empirical) real and the unreal', the absolutely Real Ātman is declared as the substrate of the empirically real and unreal phenomena superimposed on It.

4. "*Jñānam*" (ज्ञानम्) is another word which is thus used in the Upanishads in a peculiar sense when applied to Reality. Ordinarily it means knowledge as opposed to ignorance, in sentences like ज्ञानम् अज्ञानस्यैव निवर्तकम् 'Knowledge can remove only ignorance'. *Jñānam* as awareness, may disappear altogether in certain states. Thus मूर्छितस्य बाह्यवस्तुज्ञानं नश्यति 'Of one who falls into a swoon, knowledge or awareness of the external world, disappears altogether'. एकवस्तुविषयं ज्ञानम् अपरविषयकज्ञाने समुत्पन्ने नश्यति 'Knowledge of one thing disappears when

that of another is born'. As applied to Reality, however, the word Jñāna or Vijñāna suggests the very essence of consciousness. This Pure Consciousness is unborn and has no object like empirical knowledge or awareness. It is in fact identical with *Sat* or *Satya*, which is the same as the Absolute Ātman. It is quite distinct from Vijñāna or ascertainment which is meant in such sentences as मनो ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात् 'He now came to know that the mind was Brahman' (Tai. 3-4). Nor is this Vijñānam the same as Vijñānam in the text 'तदनुप्रविश्य । सच्च त्यच्चाभवत् ... विज्ञानं चाविज्ञानं च - 'He, the Ātman, became the formfull and the formless ..... both the Vijñāna (sentient) and the avijñāna (non-sentient)' (Tai. 2-6)

Again the word *Ānanda* (आनन्दम्) as applied to Reality is not great joy or happiness opposed to misery. It is Bliss, the very nature of Ātman which is above both pleasure and pain.

The word एकम् (one), similarly, has no implication of a second or any distinction within Ātman, or even persistence of identity in spite of change, as in the case of a stream or a flame. It only means that Ātman is the All without any change, or movement or any other specific feature.

We shall take up some more words of this kind, which bear a special meaning when they are used in the context of Reality, in a subsequent article.

## 36. VEDANTIC TERMS USED FOR SUGGESTING THE NATURE OF REALITY

The reader has seen in the last issue that certain words are used in the Upanishads in a peculiar sense when they are applied to Reality. The most important of these is *Ātman*. Śaṅkara thus explains the signification of this word in his commentary on the Aitareya :-

‘आत्मा आप्नोतेः, अत्तेः, अततेर्वा; परः सर्वज्ञ, सर्वशक्तः, अशनायादिसर्वसंसारधर्मवर्जितः, नित्यशुद्धबुद्धमुक्तस्वभावः; अजोऽजरोऽमृतोऽभयोऽद्वयः॥’

"Ātman is derived from the root 'Āp' to pervade, 'Ad' to eat or to destroy, 'Āt' to be continuous. It suggests the Supreme Being, Omniscient, Omnipotent, free from evils of mundane life such as hunger; ever pure, (ever) conscious and (ever) free; unaging, undying, immortal, fearless, without any distinction." Ait. Bh. 1-1

In the Sūtra-Bhāshya that great teacher says, that all the Upanishads are begun to teach the *Ātmaikatva-Vidyā* (the science of intuiting the unity of Ātman). Another word is '*Brahman*', which the *śruti* itself frequently uses in collocation with the word Ātman to suggest the secondless Reality and is the very Self of the universe as well as of each and every one creature. This word is derived from the Sanskrit root *Bṛh* to grow, suggesting that Reality is the most Supreme entity; and Śaṅkara

explains its import in just the same terms as he has used for explaining the meaning of the word Ātman. It is significant that the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* (Mu. 2-2-11) proclaims that "all that we see in different directions is Brahman alone, and that all this universe is Brahman alone" and that the *Chāndogya* (Ch. 7-25-2) describes Ātman in just the same manner, thus leaving no doubt whatever about the fact that the cardinal tenet of the Upanishads is that the basic Reality of all the universe is meant by both the words Ātman and Brahman.

The word *Sākshi*, literally means a direct seer, a witness. This word is applied to Ātman, to suggest that Reality is the one real Self common to all creatures of the nature of Witnessing Consciousness without a second and without any limiting adjuncts (साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च) as the *Śvetāsvatara* (Śve. 6-11) reveals It.

Śaṅkara quotes this text to support his doctrine that this Witnessing Ātman, distinct from the ego corresponding to the notion of *me*, untainted by any earthly feature and ever pure in His nature, is unknown to the speculative systems and even to the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsākas, and is the real "Aupanishada Purusha" (The Pure all-pervading entity) revealed only by Upanishads.

This word *Purusha*, again, may mean the body or a man, but as applied to Ātman, it means the One by whom all the universe is pervaded. Compare the Mundaka text "All this is Purusha" (Mu. 2-4-10). It is just another equivalent of Ātman, that is all.

Words like आकाशः (ether), प्राणः (the vital principle in living beings) or ज्योतिः (light), are not only used in the Upanishads in their primary sense, but are sometimes used for Brahman to suggest It as all pervasive, as the source of all activity or as an all-revealing entity. Bādarāyaṇa in his *Vedānta-Mīmāṃsā*, has discussed the exegetical principles that guide us in determining in what secondary or metaphorical sense they are applied to Brahman.

Finally, the word *Akshara*, is used in the Upanishads not only for the syllable Om, often recommended to be meditated upon as a substitute (प्रतीक), or a name (वाचक) of Brahman, but also Reality itself, as devoid of all specific features used for distinguishing phenomena. Compare for instance, the *Muṇḍaka text* "अथ परा यया तदक्षरमधिगम्यते" (Mu. 1-1-5). "Now for the Higher Vidyā, through the help of which that *Akshara* (the imperishable) is intuited." The subsequent text describes this Absolute Reality by negating its perceptibility as well as the possession of all organs of sense. A similar description of this Absolute by negating all properties of substance, all qualities and other characteristics that are conceivable in the case of external phenomena, is to be found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (Br. 3-8-8). In fact, Ātman or Reality being completely devoid of all specific features and being beyond all sphere of speech and intellect, the Śruti ultimately describes It as 'स एष नेतिनेत्यात्मा' (Now this One is the Ātman known as 'not such, not such' - Br. 3-9-26).

### 37. AIDS TO REFLECTION ON VEDANTA

1. I have been writing certain articles on Vedanta for the use of English-knowing readers of this monthly, who have sympathetically patronized the good work of the Karyalaya, even while they do not understand Kannada. In these days, when Sanskrit has not been accorded its proper place of a link-language among the diverse provincial vernaculars, I think English is the only language that can occupy the room in its stead.

Do you think it worthwhile to continue the publication of this short English Supplement in the periodical ? Is it serving the purpose for which it was intended ? I await for a reply.

2. In the meanwhile, I have made up my mind to replace the usual articles by a series of continued thoughts on Vedanta or Adhyātma-Vidyā, contained in the Upanishads, Smritis, and Purāṇas. These will be a collection of all that is best in the Kannada Articles. They will not, however, be faithful reproduction of any particular article in the vernacular; they are intended to be self-complete. I hope that the English-knowing reader in the Kannada State also would be profited by going through them.

## THE SUBJECT MATTER OF VEDANTA

1. The word 'Veda' means the source of wisdom. The Vedas contain information concerning the rites and rituals which lead to certain good results in man's earthly life, through some process unascertainable by perception or inference; but mostly *the course* of these rites and of discipline has to be believed in as yielding its fruits in some future birth or in another world, where the Vedas promise that the effects will have to be experienced.

2. The above-mentioned portion of the Vedas, which deals with religious works, is called the *Karma-Kāṇḍa*. It teaches works to be performed as enjoined and to be avoided when prohibited. These injunctions called *Vidhis*, and prohibitions called *Pratishedhas*, are taught as yielding religious merit (*Dharma*) and demerit (*Adharma*) respectively. It is all a question of faith (*Śraddha*), hope (*Pratīksha*) and fear (*Bhaya*).

3. The Vedas consist of *Mantras* (incantations to be recited seriously) and *Brāhmaṇas* (portions, explaining the process of the rite). Mostly at the end of the latter, are to be found certain portions called the *Āraṇyakas* (portion of the Vedas to be recited in a forest or some secluded place). It is in the *Āraṇyakas* that the *Upanishads* (teachings of secret wisdom) are to be found. They are secret in the sense that their teaching is not accessible to those that cannot turn inward into the recesses of their mind.





The Upanishads are also called the *Vedantas*, not only because they are mostly at the end of the Vedas, but especially because they contain the culminating teaching of the Vedas, the teaching regarding the Essence of the whole universe.

4. The Upanishads consist of two sets of teachings. The first set deals with *Upāsanas* or meditations, which comprehend mental courses of discipline. These *Upāsanas* are really karmas; only, they are exclusively mental, unlike the rites and rituals enjoined by the previous portion of the Vedas. Some of these meditations are conducive to greater efficacy of religious karmas and some yield to welfare in the earthly life just like karmas. But unlike karmas, some relate to the meditation on Brahman or the Highest Reality, which leads to gradual liberation after death. All these *Upāsanas* are called *Vidyās* (items of wisdom) only because they are mental.

5. The second set of teachings of the Upanishads is the most important, and it is primarily because of this teaching that the Upanishads form what is known as the *Jñāna-Kāṇḍa* (the portion teaching wisdom). The Upanishads are 'Upanishads' because they contain the *Vidyā* 'on which is based the attainment of the Highest Good' (परं श्रेयो अस्यां निषण्णम्) as Śaṅkara states in his commentary on the last text of the *Brahmānanda-valli*. They are Vedanta because they contain this culminating

wisdom called the *Ātmaikatva Vidyā* (the wisdom of intuiting the Absolute Unity of Ātman).

6. The subject matter of Upanishads, is as Śaṅkara writes in his famous Introduction to the *Sūtra-Bhāshya*, *Ātmaikatva-Vidyā* (आत्मैकत्वविद्या) or the Wisdom of the Absolute Unity of Ātman. The Ātman, according to the Upanishads, is the only 'Reality' in the strict sense of the word. It has been also called Brahman (ब्रह्म), Bhūman (भूमा) Akshram (अक्षरम्) Purusha (पुरुषः) and by some other names also.

7. The Sanskrit name *Ātman* as applied to Reality, must not be associated with any other signification which it may have in common parlance. The Śruti says 'तत् सत्यं स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि' (Ch. 6-8-1). it is the only Reality underlying the universe, It is the real Self of the enquirers of Vedantic Truth. Each and every one is identical with It, whether one is aware of this fact or not.

8. The common man believes that there are many living souls (जीवात्मानः) each of whom owns an aggregate consisting of a body, senses and mind. Each of these Jivātman, as they are called, is born, grows and lives for a certain period of time and then dies. Some believe in re-incarnation and believing in what their scriptures teach, they think that according to virtues or vicious deeds (karmas) performed in the present life, they may reap the fruit of their acts in other worlds and be reborn as lower

animals or beings of a higher grade of life also. According to Vedanta, however, this is not the whole truth. Judged from the *Pāramārthic* (transcendental) point of view (परमार्थदृष्टि), there is only one Ātman. The word Ekatva (unity), in Ātmaikatva-Vidyā (knowledge of the unity of Ātman), should not be understood as implying a numerical one. It means that Ātman is One without a second, the All. A Śruti text explains this as follows :

"Now, therefore, the teaching about Ātman alone; Ātman alone is below. Ātman is above, Ātman behind, Ātman in front, Ātman to the right, Ātman to the left; all this is Ātman alone".

Ch. 7-25

A text of similar import is to be found in the Muṇḍaka:-

"This in front is the immortal Brahman alone, Brahman behind, Brahman to the right and to the left. Both below and above is Brahman alone. All this is verily Brahman the Highest".

Mu. 2-2-21.

That this Reality is without a second, goes without saying, since Reality is the All. The following text states that this is so, in so many words :-

यत्र नान्यत्पश्यति नान्यच्छृणोति नान्यद्विजानाति स भूमा अथ  
यत्रान्यत्पश्यत्यन्यच्छृणोत्यन्यद्विजानाति तदल्पम्॥

छा. ७-२४-१

"Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else, that is Brahman, the Infinite; and on

the other hand, where one sees something else, hears something else and knows something else, that is finite."

Ch. 7-24-1

9. What is the good of this knowledge ? The Upanishads declare :

(१) स यो ह वै तत्परमं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति । तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति ॥

मुं. ३-२-१

"He who knows the Supreme Brahman, becomes that very Brahman. He crosses over grief, he crosses over sin (Dharma and Adharma); freed from the knots of the heart, he becomes immortal."

Mu. 3-2-9

(२) यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूत् विजानतः । तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

ई. ७

"When all the creatures have become Ātman alone to the knower of Truth, then, what sorrow, what delusion could there be to this knower of the One Reality ?"

(Isa 7)

(३) आत्माना विन्दते वीर्यं विद्यया विन्दतेऽमृतम् ॥ के. २-४

"Through Ātman one attains vigour, through wisdom one attains immortality."

Kena 2-4.

Is it possible for any one to see all creatures and all this multifarious universe as the only one Reality or

Ātman? We shall consider this question in the sequel.

10. The wise one who knows the Brahman or Ātman becomes that very Brahman which is the Ātman or the real Self of the whole universe, so say the Upanishads. But how is it possible for anyone to know or recognize oneself as Reality, the One without a second? The Upanishads proclaim that Brahman or Reality is beyond words and thought (यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते। अप्राप्य मनसा सह।) Obviously then, no reply couched in words is possible here, and no concept formulated by the mind can enable us to know this Reality.

Śaṅkara's answer to this objection is as follows:-

न । अविद्याकल्पितभेदनिवृत्तिपरत्वाच्छास्त्रस्य । न हि शास्त्रमिदंतया विषयभूतं ब्रह्म प्रतिपादयिषति; किं तर्हि प्रत्यगात्मत्वेन अविषयतया प्रतिपादयत् अविद्याकल्पितं वेद्यवेदितुवेदनादिभेदमपनयति ॥

सू.भा. १-१-१

The Śāstra or the Upanishad does not propose to teach Reality as an object, or to describe It as such and such an entity; it only negates the distinctions of the knowable, the knower and knowledge etc., for the Śāstra intends to teach Reality as the unobjectifiable inmost self of the enquirer.

11. Our inmost Ātman or real self according to Vedanta is absolutely free from all specific features and also can never be described by any language nor conceived

by thought. It is not something that can be produced, changed, purified or reached by any form of activity. It is therefore that the Śruti says 'स एष नेतिनेत्यात्मा' 'This is the Ātman ,who is taught as neither this nor that'

This should not be interpreted as either confession of inability to describe on the part of the Śāstra , or inadequacy of words to exhaust all that is attributable to Brahman. We are to understand that Ātman being the eternal Witness of everything, no specific feature of any thing objective pertains to Him. He is devoid of all characteristic feature.

Nevertheless, His being is undefinable, for as Śaṅkara irrefutably remarks, Ātman is the inmost self of even the would be denier.

12. As the reader has already learnt, there are two sets of Vedantic texts referring to Brahman, some undertaking to reveal the nature of Brahman as It is, and other enjoining meditation of Brahman. At first sight there would appear to be mutual contradiction between text ascribing certain specific features to Reality and others categorically denying all features to it. This circumstance gave rise to differences of opinion among the ancient Vedantins as to what exactly was the purport of the Upanishads. Some schools held that the Vedantas or Upanishads would cease to be *Pramāṇa* or means of valid knowledge, if they did not enjoin or prohibit some

action like those text of karma-kāṇḍa and, therefore, they concluded that the only purport of the upanishads, conceivable under these circumstances is, that the Upanishadic text referred to the nature of Ātman as the agent of actions enjoined or else to the same God to whom sacrifices are made. If it is thought, however, that this is rather a far-fetched inference inasmuch as the rites enjoined are in the context of Upanishadic texts, we might say that meditation or some such action is meant to be enjoined here.

Śaṅkara rejected this contention on the ground that there was no reason why the purport of assertive sentence or negative sentences describing the nature of Brahman should be rejected even while the syntactical connection of words in such sentence conveys an expression of complete thought. Nor can it be insisted that those sentences are intended to describe the nature of the agent of some action enjoined or the God to whom the sacrifice is to be offered; for there is an express denial of all actions, means and results thereof at the level of the absolute Unity of Ātman 'तत्केन कं पश्येत्' (Br. 2-4-14). No one can contend that the Upanishad would cease to be a Pramāṇa, if it undertakes to teach an existent thing, since it would be something already known through secular means like perception. For truths like that taught by the text, 'that thou art' can never be known except with the help of the Śāstra.

Śaṅkara further argues that it is not a general rule that the veda solely purports to enjoin some action; for Vedic texts that prohibit certain acts would cease to be Vedic in that case.

Again, it would be futile to argue that no purpose is served by teaching an entity like Ātman, as there would be nothing to be shunned or to be gained by the knowledge. For the very knowledge of one's own self as Brahman puts an end to all evils of mundane life to be avoided and that is surely what humanity is in search of.

13. We have seen that Śaṅkara's tradition of interpretation of the Upanishads differs from both Upāsanāvādins, (who maintained that Vedas, to be a means of valid knowledge, should be supposed to enjoin something to be performed), and the Dhyāna niyogavādins, who while granting that the Vedantas may well be a means of valid knowledge with regard to an existing entity like Ātman, that entity must be subservient to some meditation which the qualified seeker is prompted to perform. Both of these schools naturally held that the effect of meditation enjoined must needs be experienced in another world to be reached after death.

There were of course some Vedantic schools which granted that final release from bondage may be attained in this very life. But one doctrine common to them all was that there is something to be performed in order to reach that goal. In perfect contrast to all other traditions,



Śaṅkara in consonance with the teaching of Vedantins like Gauḍapādāchārya, maintained that the knowledge of Brahman alone as the māyic cause of the birth, sustenance and dissolution of the Universe, can secure moksha or freedom from Samsara, since Brahman is by its intrinsic nature, eternally the Self of the seeker ever pure, conscious, and free. Nothing but the dispersion of Avidyā or basic nescience is needed to reveal It.

14. The reader should remember that Śaṅkara in common with other Vedantins contemporaneous with him or before his time, strictly stuck to the doctrine that Brahman being a transcendental entity, can be known exclusively by the Vedanta-Śāstra or the system of Vedanta revealed in the Upanishads.

The distinctive feature of his tradition, however, was that Brahmātman was an eternally existing entity, which is beyond the ken of all secular pramāṇas or means of valid knowledge. Being devoid of specific features like sound, touch or colour or form which necessarily belong to external objects, It can never be perceived. Although Brahman is the cause of the universe, we can never guess that cause for the very reason that we only know the effect but can never guess the specific nature of the cause by means of inference or other ordinary means of valid knowledge. The Brahmic nature of Ātman taught in the Śāstra can never be grasped through any other pramāṇa (तत्त्वमसीति ब्रह्मात्मभावस्य शास्त्रमन्तरेणानवगम्यमानत्वात्) for the

reason that neither Ātman as the knower (प्रमातृ), nor the Witnessing Consciousness of that knower is within the range of the objects of these pramāṇas.

15. Contemporary with Śaṅkara and Bādarāyaṇa, however, there were systems of independent philosophies, which solely depended upon secular pramāṇas as the only canons of correct knowledge. The Sāṃkhyas, for instance, who relied upon perception, inference and testimony as the only means of knowledge, believed that any existing entity can be known through one of these pramāṇas. They actually supposed that wherever the Śrutis referred to the cause of the world, they were appealing to syllogistic reasoning which enables us to infer some material cause of the world like the *Pradhāna* or primordial matter which transforms itself into the universe at the time of creation. Treating the Śruti as main testimony, they interpreted the Vedantic texts in concordance with their own line of reasoning. Their chief doctrine was that Pradhāna (original matter), Puruṣa (the experiencing soul) and the contact of these two (संयोगः) are eternally inferable.

There were other independent logicians like the Kaṇādas or Vaiśeshikas, who thought that Īśvara or God, as the efficient cause of the world, is to be inferred and that atoms are the material cause of the world, since according to them an effect is produced by many causes and not a single cause as Vedantins hold.

True, there are no Sāmkhyas or Vaiśeshikas as such in the modern world. But there are materialists who do suppose that matter is the original cause that gives rise to consciousness. They would not readily grant that Pure Consciousness is the one cause of the birth, sustenance and final dissolution of all the universe.

16. In the course of his interpretation of the Upanishadic texts, Bādarāyaṇa according to Śaṅkara, refers to other speculators also who offer their own theory of the cause of the universe and interpret Vedantic texts accordingly.

We shall see how Bādarāyaṇa proves to conviction that the One Ātman or Brahman is the only Reality aimed at, to be taught in these revelations, and how he manages to disprove all other possible theories in this connection.

17. We have seen that Śaṅkara, in writing his Bhāshya on the Vedanta-Sūtras, had to expose the fallacies in the interpretations of the Upanishads followed by contemporary Vedantins who held advaitic doctrines akin to his own, as well as in the arguments advanced by non-Vedantic systems of philosophic thought.

18. We shall first of all dispose of kindred Vedanta schools. These were mostly prejudiced in favour of the line of argument pursued by the Mīmāṃsakas who confined themselves to the exegesis of the Vedanta texts devoted to religious rites. Besides the Upāsanāvādins

(advocates of meditation) or the Dhyānaniyogavādins (who held that seekers of the Ultimate Good are urged by Vedantic texts to meditate on Brahman in order to get freedom from bondage after the present body falls off), there were some other schools which maintained that freedom from bondage could be achieved in this very birth, without the wisdom of the Unity of the Absolute Ātman.

There was one school, for instance, which insisted that the seeker of release, should perform obligatory and contingent karmas to avert the evil consequences that would necessarily befall one who fails to do those rites. Kāmya-karmas, religious works calculated to yield certain good effects desired and karmas prohibited should be given up, to ward off the resultant enjoyment in heaven or suffering in hell. The results of the fructifying karmas should be exhausted by submitting oneself to the consequences in the present birth. There being no remaining karma to desiderate another body any more, the goal of resting in one's own intrinsic nature is thus reached without the need of attaining one's identity with Brahman !

Now, these arguments have neither Śāstraic sanction nor the support of reason. There is not a single text that enjoins obligatory and contingent karmas to the exclusion of other karmas to attain final release. Besides, it passes one's understanding, how the accumulated effects of all

previous births are exhausted or how one's samsāric nature is removed without the sublation of Avidyā by the wisdom of one's Brahmic nature.

19. The school of Dhyāna-niyogavādins was most probably the strongest opponent among all the doctrinaires of Vedanta, who Śaṅkara had to contend with. Śaṅkara devotes the major portion of his Bhāshya on the Samanvaya Sūtra (VS. 1-1-4) to disarm this school. These Vedantins stoutly declared that texts devoted to describe the nature of Brahman would lose all their efficacy, and would serve no purpose at all, if they were not conceded to present the object of meditation, which the seekers of the Ultimate Good, were invariably urged to undertake.

As against Śaṅkara's tradition, they avowed that it is not right to hold that mere *Śravaṇa* or the ascertainment of the import of texts could yield enlightenment effectively sufficient to subulate the delusion of the aspirants' transmigratory nature, just as one's fear is utterly removed when he understands the meaning of the proposition teaching the true nature of the rope mistaken for a snake.

Śaṅkara's main contribution to traditional interpretation of the upanishads, was mainly to show how the dhyānaniyoga-doctrine was utterly opposed to the spirit of upanishadic revelation both exegetically and on rational grounds. The āchārya conclusively proved how

all injunctions and prohibitions as well as all other means of valid knowledge, remain unsublated only so long as the intuition of one's identity with brahman has not dawned. (तस्मात्, अहं ब्रह्मास्मि - इत्येतदवसाना एव सर्वे विधयः सर्वाणि च प्रमाणानि). He insists throughout that the effect of the vedantic teaching of reality is known directly by immediate intuition. 'प्रत्यक्षावगम्यमेवेदं फलम्' (SBh.1-4-14), and that it is impossible to deny the dawn of this intuition. 'न चेयमवगतिः नोत्पद्यत इति शक्यं वक्तुम्' (SBh.2-1-14) or that it serves no purpose or that it is itself a delusion, since we know that Avidyā is sublated by its appearance, and there is no knowledge that could sublate it (न चेयमवगतिः नोत्पद्यते भ्रान्तिर्वा - इति शक्यं वक्तुम्; अविद्यानिवृत्तिफलदर्शनात् बाधकान्तराभावाच्च).

20. Whatever concession the non-traditional Vedantins were ready to show in favour of the *Ātmaikatva-vāda* or *Brahma-vāda*, they found it very difficult to reconcile themselves to the position of Śaṅkara-Vedanta which insisted that the bare Jñāna or knowledge of Ātman or Brahman as the only self-existent entity, was quite sufficient for the attainment of final release. This was most probably because of their unflinching allegiance to the mīmāṃsīc dictum that the Vedic Revelation was exclusively restricted to the facts which could not be ascertained through secular means of valid knowledge. The mīmāṃsākas maintained that the aim of the entire Veda was to enjoin *kārya*, something to

be done, and texts which did not enjoin karma were to be treated as purpose-less, or, where possible, as eulogistic and subservient to injunctions.

21. Accordingly, a particular school of Vedantins held that the Vedantas or Upanishads must be dismissed as useless, since they did not enjoin any karmas or they may be regarded as revealing the nature of the agent or the demigods subserving some karmas enjoined in the previous portion of the Veda, or, as last alternative, that they enjoin some Karma like the Upāsana revealed in the Upanishads themselves.

22. There was a certain school of Vedantins who granted that there may be freedom accruing to seekers in this very life, and that this goal consisted in staying in the intrinsic nature of one's own Self. This goal, according to them, however, could be reached by doing the obligatory and contingent rituals exclusively, and no realization of one's identity with Brahman, is needed.

23. The *Dhyāna-niyoga vādin* came forward with further concession to the doctrine of the knowledge of Ātman or Brahman. He denied, however, that the bare teaching concerning an existing entity was of any use. This knowledge of Ātman, therefore, must be treated as presenting the object of meditation which the aspirant for release was urged by the Śruti to practise.

24. When the Vedantins of the traditional school,

pointed out that final release, being of the very nature of the eternal Brahman, requires no meditation which could help in reaching only an eschatological goal, there came another school of Niyoga-vādins, who said that the knowledge of Brahman itself could be achieved by practising what is called *Prapancha-pravilaya*. According to their theory, all texts inclusive of those that referred to forms of Brahman, had no purport other than to urge the dissolution of multiplicity; for, as a matter of fact, the manifold world is really of the nature of Brahman and there is no multiplicity in Brahman.

Śaṅkara rejects this doctrine on two grounds. In the first place, we see no words implying any urging in texts describing Brahman, and Bādarāyaṇa has established in Sūtra 1-1-4, as has been explained at length in the Bhāshya thereon, that all propositions devoted to teach the nature of Brahman, were syntactically self-complete in revealing that existent Entity.

In the second place, it cannot be supposed that an acutally existing world of multiplicity can be dissolved, and even granting the possibility of this fact, we are driven to the repugnant conclusion that there could have remained no multiplicity at all at present, inasmuch as some one who attained Release for the first time, should have already dissolved it. The only alternative available, therefore, is that all multiplicity is a superimposition due to avidyā; and in that case, the only course open to the



Śruti, is to reveal the real nature of Brahman, so that avidyā may be sublated. Moreover, the Jiva or individual self, cannot be supposed to be included in the manifold world, since in that case, he would also be dissolved along with the world, and there would remain no one to reap the benefit of this dissolution; and, what is more serious, there would be really none whom the Śruti could urge to dissolve multiplicity!

Again, in texts like "Ātman is to be seen", words like द्रष्टव्यः (to be seen), श्रोतव्यः (to be heard about), can only mean 'pay attention' and can never prompt any one to effect knowledge itself. For the knowledge of a thing solely depends on the means of knowledge and its object. No knowledge can be born even by the urging in contradiction of the knowledge already known to be otherwise by some other means of valid knowledge (न च प्रमाणान्तरेणान्यथाप्रसिद्धेऽर्थेन्यथाज्ञानं नियुक्तस्याप्युपपद्यते) If, on the other hand, one thinks of a thing as other than what it really is, on the score of his being urged by the Śruti, that would not be a valid knowledge, but only a mental action due to one's will. (यदि पुनर्नियुक्तोहम् इत्यन्यथा ज्ञानं कुर्वीत, न तज्ज्ञानम्, किं तर्हि मानसीक्रिया) If the knowledge so arises of its own accord, it would be only a delusion.

We shall take up this criticism of *Niyōga-vāda* in more detail in the next issue.

25. It would be profitable to summarize the chief

reason which weighed with the Niyōga-vādins when they insisted that some Niyōga or prompting on the part of the Vedas is necessary, if they are to be regarded as a means of valid knowledge at all. The very first condition that a Pramāṇa should satisfy before it is admitted to be Pramāṇa, is that it should be a means of knowledge which is not already known through some other means. All orthodox Vedantins, therefore, are agreed that the Upanishads no less than Karma-kāṇḍa texts of the Vedas, are means of valid knowledge for the simple reason that they teach some transcendental facts not ascertainable by perception for any other secular means of valid knowledge. It is therefore quite understandable that all advocates of Vedic injunction of meditation, should have made sustained effort to present a united front to the tradition of Absolutism which insists that the Upanishads merely purport to reveal the nature of the already existent Ātman.

26. This divergence of opinion should not be regarded as one of merely academical interest; for both the conditioning portions seriously held that the knowledge of the one Brahman or Ātman, is the only means to attain the Highest Goal of human life. Both the schools seriously maintain that this knowledge enables the aspirant to reach goal from which there is no return to transmigratory life, as is the case with those who reach heaven (*Swarga*) by virtue of religious aids performed.

Of course there is this one difference of opinion amongst



these believers that whereas some hold that the goal is reached after the fall of this body, others grant that the ultimate goal is possible of attainment in the very life in which knowledge of Ātman ripens.

27. Mere affirmative propositions describing Ātman or Brahman being well-known to serve no purpose, it is natural that one is curious to know what is that knowledge that is referred to in such texts as 'ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्' ('One who knows Brahman attains the Highest' Tai. 2-1) 'आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः' ('Ātman alone is to be visioned' Br.2-4-5), 'सोऽन्वेष्टव्यः स विजिज्ञासितव्यः' ('He alone is to be sought out, He alone is to be recognized' Ch. 8-7-1).

The Śruti itself supplies us the clue in understanding the meaning of the root *vid* (to know) when it uses both the verbal roots *vid* (lit. to know) and *Upās* (to meditate) synonymously in the same context. As for instance 'यस्तद्वेद यत्स वेद स मयैतदुक्तः छां. ४-१-४' 'He who knows that what he knows', the root *vid* denoting literally knowledge is used for meditation which Raikva practised. And 'मनो ब्रह्मेत्युपासीत' ('One should meditate on the mind as Brahman' Br. 3-18-1) is eulogized in the text 'भाति च तपति च कीर्त्या यशसा ब्रह्मवर्चसेन य एवं वेद' ('He who knows thus shines and warms by name and fame and glory of Brahmacharya' Ch 3-18-3). Therefore the Niyōga-vādins conclude that whenever knowledge is enjoined, should be understood that it is meditation of Brahman that is meant to be taught.

28. Advocates of meditation, who concede that intuition of one's identity may be searched even while the seeker is alive, differ from Śāṅkara's traditional interpretation only in respect of the function of texts teaching the real nature of Ātman. (1) Some assert that meditation itself might remove avidyā, though it is not clear how they reconciled themselves to the idea that ignorance might be actually 'removed' by something other than right knowledge. (2) The *Prapancha-Pravilaya School*, as we have already seen, believed that the texts ascribing certain forms and qualities no less than those that negate all characteristics, have the sole aim of prompting the aspirant for Release to dissolve all multiplicity by means of meditation. They do not pause to consider whether there is any Śruti enjoining it or how real manifoldness could be dissolved even if the Śruti commands one to practise the impossible fact. (3) Other schools thought that the Śruti requires the seeker of freedom to suppress the beginningless *vāsanā* or wrong impression in the mind which deludes one to imagine himself to be transmigratory soul. (4) While yet other schools believed that the suppression of all modifications of the mind has got to be practised for the attainment of direct intuition of Reality.

29. There were certain schools who supposed that no one could attain knowledge of Brahman by merely understanding the meaning of constant teaching the identity of the individual self with Brahman. So they

argued that a constant repetition of the knowledge first obtained by śravaṇa, or understanding of the meaning of the text was necessary. Others maintained that understanding the text and reasoning thereon, are necessarily to be constantly repeated before ignorance is completely eradicated.

30. Śaṅkara's tradition differed from all these schools in maintaining that (1) final intuition of Ātman is the result of knowledge of the precise meaning of the terms, 'Thou' and 'That' in the proposition 'That thou art', without the least tinge of ignorance, doubt or misconception; (2) śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana, being all meant for the ultimate intuition, it is evident that repeated effort to understand the full import of the Text is only for those who cannot grasp the meaning of the text all at once for want of precise knowledge of the terms involved. Reasoning and concentrated attention to the significance of the terms, is merely for the purpose of confirming what has been understood by the first śravaṇa.

We shall try to explain the distinctive feature of this interpretation in the next article.

31. The one distinguished feature of Śaṅkara's Vedantic tradition, is that it maintains that the Vedantas or the Upanishads are to be considered as special means of valid knowledge in so far as they teach the real nature

of Brahman quite independent of any relation to something enjoined like religious duty or meditation.

It is to this special feature that the opponent Vedantins take exception. This doctrine, they say, is quite opposed to the Mīmāṃsīc principle that the Vedas, as a rule, aim at enjoining something to be done. So, if the Upanishads are supposed to teach Brahman or Ātman which is only an existent entity, they serve no purpose at all.

32. The traditional school may point to a weak link in this chain of argument : besides the karma enjoined, it is granted by the other school that certain existing things also are seen to be taught in connection with the rites enjoined. If so, where is the harm in the Śruti teaching the Non-dual Ātman ? The advocate of injunction replies, "The teaching of things other than karmas, is not altogether ruled out by us. We only hold that there is no purpose served by mere propositions like 'The earth consists of so many continents.'"

Śaṅkara replies that assertive sentences like 'That thou art' have the desirable effect of removing the delusion of one's being a transmigratory soul in the same way as propositions like 'This is a rope, not a serpent' remove delusion.

33. The opponent may object that teachings like 'That thou art' do not bear any comparison with statements like 'That is a snake'; for, the delusion of one's being an



individual ego is not removed as soon as one listens to the teaching this identity of the seeker with Brahman in the same way as one's fear is allayed as soon as he hears the statement about the rope. So many who have understood the meaning of the text, continue to be ordinary agents and experiencers of the fruits of action quite as before. Moreover, there is a vital difference between the two cases. The Śruti not only teaches the oneness of Jīva with Brahman but proceeds to give reasons to reflect upon it and advises contemplation also. Mere śravaṇa, never does away with one's transmigratory nature.

To this, the rejoinder of the Vedantins of Śaṅkara's tradition, is as follows :- It is true that all students of Vedantic teaching do not land at the direct intuition of the Brahmic nature by a single act of listening to the text. The meaning of the text teaching the true Brahmic nature of the student, can be fully grasped only after the meaning of each of the terms involved in the proposition is determined. The word 'That', for instance, means the Brahman as taught in the various Śrutis. It means the real cause of the birth, sustentation and dissolution of the universe, and the unborn undecaying and inmost Reality beyond all changes affecting phenomenal things, and properties of empirical things such as grossness and subtlety; Consciousness itself. This is what is meant by the term 'That' which is known as Brahman, which is devoid of all empirical characteristics. Similarly, the term

'Thou' refers to the inmost Ātman, transcending the body, senses and the mind. Now it is only for the purpose of discriminating the true nature of the meaning of these terms that śravaṇa and manana are to be repeated. But for those who are possessed of acute intellectual capacity to grasp the meaning of these terms at the very first instance of śravaṇa, there is no further effort needed to intuit the true nature of Ātman. It is not right, therefore, to insist that there is none who can understand the meaning of the text for the first time.

34. Where, then, is there any need for recommending manana (reflection) and *nididhyāsana* (contemplation) in addition to śravaṇa ? This question does not arise here. For repetition of manana is for different grades of intellectual capacity. There is no need for further effort in the case of those who are able to grasp the meaning of the terms involved without ignorance, doubt or misconception. For they can arrive at the intuition of the One Ātman as their very Self, so soon as they hear the proposition. The intuition of the oneness of Ātman wipes off for good all nescience simultaneously with its dawn. Additional effort in the shape of manana and nididhyāsana may, in ordinary cases, be quite necessary. That is the very reason why Śvetaketu repeatedly requests his father to enlighten him on certain points. And the Śruti concludes that he at last 'came to understand perfectly' (तद्वास्य विजज्ञौ) only after his ninth doubt was cleared.



35. Nor would it be proper to think that it is impossible for any one to arrive at the intuition, how ever much he may be taught by the Śāstra or teacher. 'How is it then', some one may ask, that none in these days comes to intuit Ātman as beyond all samsāric nature ? It is well-known that the misery of samsāra attaches itself even to those of the highest intellect who are able to dabble in Vedantic lore. Misery of mundane existence is so strong and so directly felt, that it is impossible to deny it! Śaṅkara's answer is, "It is quite conceivable that even the direct experience of misery is due to misconception like the acute pain that one feels when one's body is cut or burnt. We all know that the pain due to cutting off or burning some part of the body really belongs to the body which is the object of our perception and yet we wrongly impute the pain to the knowing subject! So also people are well-known to feel miserable when actually their son or friend, who is quite distinct from them, is affected as a matter of fact. And as the Śruti tells us we feel no pain or misery in deep sleep. So samsāric pain and pleasure may well be concluded to be no property of our true Self."

36. Śaṅkara's traditional interpretation of the Vedantas has had to face two different vigorous attacks from two opposite camps of advocates of Vedic injunction. One extreme view is that since the Upanishads do not enjoin any Vedic karmas, they serve no purpose as a means of valid knowledge. Or they may be admitted

into the fold of Verbal testimony in so far as they reveal the nature of agent or the gods which subserve certain karmas; or else they may be regarded as enjoining the mental act of meditation or some such religious duty referred to in the Upanishads themselves. But as merely teaching the nature of Brahman independently of all action to be performed, they can never be raised to the rank of Vedic means of valid knowledge, inasmuch as Vedic texts are never found, or consistently conceived, to serve any purpose without the least relation to any injunction.

The other extreme view of these exegetists, is that it grants that the Upanishadic texts are a means of valid knowledge of Brahman, but it insists that they reveal Brahman or Ātman as the object of the injunction of knowledge itself.

37. This school of Niyōga-vādins as they are called, take shelter under the seeming or express injunctions supposed to be enjoined in such text as 'Ātman alone, my dear, is to be seen' (Br. 2-4-5), 'That Ātman free from all sin. .... He is to be sought out and He alone is to be desired to be known' (Ch. 8-7-1), 'He is to be meditated upon as Ātman alone' (Br. 1-4-7), 'One should be devoted to the World of Ātman alone' (Br. 1-4-15), 'If one knows Brahman, one becomes that very Braman' (Mu. 3-2-9). In such cases, they insist that the so-called Jñāna is itself a kind of mental act.

38. Śaṅkara quotes for the benefit of this latter school of opponents a text teaching that Final Release is not something to be attained as a result of some Vedic duty performed, for it is no effect of our action; it is no freedom from something pleasant or unpleasant which affects an embodied person. It is the natural eternal nature of Ātman who is devoid of body, senses and the mind. This state of being Ātman eternally free from the body is to be intuited simultaneously with the dawn of the knowledge of Brahman as the Śrutis uniformly proclaim.

39. The Āchārya further argues that the universal nature of propositions like 'That thou art' (Ch.), 'I am Brahman' would have to be utterly disregarded if Final Release of the very nature of being Brahman were something to be achieved as a result of an action. And there are texts too, which teach that ignorance is the only obstacle to Final Release.

40. The opponent now takes his stand on an exceptional thought position. Let it be granted that there are texts teaching *Jñāna* (knowledge) distinct from *Upāsanā*. Is not knowledge itself an action, a function of the mind? Why not suppose that *Jñāna* itself is enjoined by texts like 'Ātman alone, my dear, is to be seen, heard about, and contemplated upon' (Br.)?

It is evident that this advocate of injunction uses a sophistic argument here. Just because the word *Jñāna* (knowledge) is derived from the verbal root *Jñā* (to know)

and just because the verbal form like '*Vijijñāśasva*' (know this), *drashtavyah* (is to be seen), *śrotavyah* (should be heard about) which appears to be imperative in form, he assumes that Jñāna itself is an action that can be enjoined!

Śaṅkara points to marked difference between *Jñāna* and *Dhyāna* which denote two distinct kinds of function of the mind.

ध्यानं चिन्तनं यद्यपि मानसम्, तथापि पुरुषेण कर्तुम्, अकर्तुम् अन्यथा वा कर्तुं शक्यम्, पुरुषतन्त्रत्वात्। ज्ञानं तु प्रमाणजन्यम्। प्रमाणं च यथाभूतवस्तुविषयम्, अतो ज्ञानं कर्तुम् अकर्तुम् अन्यथा वा कर्तुमशक्यम्। केवलं वस्तुतन्त्रमेव तत्। न चोदनातन्त्रम्, नापि पुरुषतन्त्रम्॥

सू.भा. १-१-४, पा. १८

"Dhyāna or meditation while it is mental, can be done, undone or even done quite otherwise by a person; it is (entirely) dependent upon the will of the person. *Jñāna* (knowledge), on the other hand, is born out of the (function of) a *pramāṇa* or (some) means of valid knowledge and a *pramāṇa* has for its object something which actually exists. So, knowledge cannot be (voluntarily) done, undone, or done quite the other way; for it solely depends upon the nature of a thing and does not depend upon any injunction or the will of a person".

S.Bh. 1-1-4, p. 18

41. In the above-cited excerpt, Śaṅkara is drawing our attention to a fact of utmost importance, which

students of Śaṅkara's Vedanta are apt to leave unnoticed. *Upāsanā* (meditation) is a voluntary function of the mind, but all mental modifications are not voluntary. Feeling hot or cold, for instance is not voluntary; but we may will and sometimes can, ward off the effect of these feelings if we so desire. Similarly knowledge is a modification of the mind that is born of its own accord when we use some means of knowledge. To open our eyes and look at anything is voluntary, but the knowledge of some colour is born in our mind necessarily as the effect of the will out of the organ of sight and the object.

42. The Vedanta-Mīmāṃsā of Bādarāyaṇa as interpreted by Śaṅkara, is not merely an exegetical work interpreting the Upanishadic texts in accordance with the principles enunciated by the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini. For, according to the tradition represented by Śaṅkara, the Upanishads do not purport merely to lay down certain injunctions of rites and to prohibit certain acts, which result in pleasure or pain ensuing in the other world. They also intend to reveal the nature of Brahman, a self-existing entity.

For the same reason, this traditional school differs from (2) those who think that all Upanishads enjoin some meditations and (3) those that think that some of the Upanishadic Texts reveal the nature of Brahman or Atman as an object of meditation which yields Release either after the fall of the body or here alone after wiping

off Avidyā. And finally it differs from (4) those who think that all the Upanishads teach Brahman with or without attributes, only to urge the seeker after final Release to dissolve all multiplicity in order to realize the real nature of Brahman.

The one unique feature of Śaṅkara's traditional interpretation, is that it holds that the main purport of the Vedantic texts is to reveal Brahman or Atman by culminating in the Intuition of Brahman without any intervention of any action to be done either before or after that intuition. Accordingly, Śaṅkara sums up the discussions in his Bhāshya on the first four Sūtras thus :-

एवं तावत् वेदान्तवाक्यानां ब्रह्मात्मावगतिप्रयोजनानां ब्रह्मात्मनि तात्पर्येण समन्वितानाम् अन्तरेणापि कार्यानुप्रवेशं ब्रह्मणि पर्यवसानमुक्तम् ॥

सू. भा. १-१-५

"Thus it has been stated that all Vedantic texts have the one aim of leading to the intuition of Brahmātman, that they all coverage towards the Brahman by the unity of thought-connection even without the interposition of something to be done" Intro. to 1-1-5.

43. Bādarāyaṇa has defined Brahman in the second Sūtra as जन्माद्यस्य यतः 'That is Brahman from which emerge the birth, sustentation and dissolution of this universe'.

While the face-value of the statement apparently points to the cause of the birth etc. of the universe, it is obvious



that Upanishads do not really aim at pointing to an actual cause. For Śaṅkara describes the nature of the universe thus :-

अस्य जगतः नामरूपाभ्यां व्याकृतस्य, अनेककर्तृभोक्तृसंयुक्तस्य, प्रतिनियतदेशकालनिमित्तक्रियाफलाश्रयस्य, मनसाप्यचिन्त्यरचनारूपस्य, जन्मस्थितिभङ्गं यतः सर्वज्ञात् सर्वशक्तेः कारणाद् भवति, 'तद् ब्रह्म' इति वाक्यशेषः ॥

"That cause from which the birth, sustentation and dissolution of this universe (emerge), this universe which is differentiated in name and form, consisting of numerous agents and experiencers of the fruits of action, which is the support of acts and results regulated by uniform space, time and causality, whose invention is not even conceivable by any mind; 'that cause is Brahman' has to be supplied to complete the proposition implied by the aphorism."

Obviously, the universe which comprehends time, space and causation as well as agents who achieve something in harmony with the laws governed by time etc., can never be taken to be real effect of a cause in the primary sense of the word. And no valid means of reason can ascertain the real nature of such a source. Hence Vedantins hold that the only possible means of knowing such an Existing Entity, can be only a transcendental revelation which culminates in a direct intuition (साक्षादवगति).

But the Sāmkhyas and others taking the literal meaning of the words 'existing entity' (भूतवस्तु) and 'cause' (कारणम्) have made two mistakes in the interpretation of the Sūtras. In the first place, they think that Brahman being an already existing entity, must be ascertainable by some ordinary means of valid knowledge (परिनिष्ठितं वस्तु प्रमाणान्तरगम्यमेव); and in the second place, they have been misled by the word 'cause' (कारणम्), to think that the universe has really a cause, and therefore, the Śruti must be taken in the light of a verbal testimony of some one who can corroborate the inference as a witness.

44. The unique teaching of Śaṅkara-Vedanta is that all Vedantas or Upanishads uniformly purport to teach Reality or BrahmĀtman, the infinite Self of the whole Universe inclusive of each of the individual selves in it. Other teachings such as Vedic rituals, meditation, the distinction between the Higher and the Lower Brahman, the details of transmigratory life eschatological experience of pleasure or pain in the other worlds, are all from the empirical view, and are subservient to the main teaching.

45. The definition of Brahman as the cause of the birth, sustentation and dissolution of the Universe, serves a two-fold purpose. While it is mainly intended to teach that the Universe of names and forms, containing numerous agents and experiencers of the fruits of their actions is, from the *Pāramārthic* standpoint, essentially



one with Brahmātman, it also explains how the Vedic teaching of Īśvara or divine Being as the only cause of the Universe is superior to other empirical teachings which have brought forward their own theories of the cause of the world.

46. In the first place, this Vedantic doctrine of the first cause of the world, exposes the theory of the Sāmkhyas, who think that an existent entity like the cause of the world ought to be accessible to ordinary means of valid knowledge, and so they try to justify their own system which teaches that the universe is the outcome of the conjunction of Prakṛti (primordial matter) and *Purusha*. According to this view, *Prakṛti* is constantly active for the enjoyment of Purushas or selves, and also for the Release of Purushas who are dispassionate. All this has to be inferred. One peculiarity of this school of thought is to regard the Vedantic texts as verbal testimony. Vedantas are not an absolute independent means of knowledge, but, they say, these are only corroborative like the testimony of an adept in the subject.

47. There are theologians who suppose on the authority of their Holy Revelation (*Āgama*) that God the Divine Lord, has to be inferred from the effect in the form of the Universe, as an efficient cause. The second Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa, is according to them an authority in support of their theory.

48. There were the followers of Kaṇāda, who thought that Īśvara (God) is only the efficient cause of the Universe, but the atoms are the real inherent material cause. They thought that the world was an ultimate effect of different processes of combination of atoms etc. They also had their own Vedantic texts in support of their theory.

Bādarāyaṇa, according to Śaṅkara, had to refute all such misinterpretations and to show how Brahman is the only real cause of birth, sustenance and dissolution of the universe.

49. The system of Patanjali, which adopts the main doctrines of the Sāmkhyas, but accepts the existence of Īśvara also, has been refuted in the Sūtras, both in the first and the second chapters, because they also, like the Sāmkhyas, insist that their system has the support of Vedantic texts.

50. True, there are no followers of Sāmkhyas now-a-days, but yet, both these systems, the Sāmkhya and the Yoga, have been assimilated by a majority of orthodox Smṛitis like the Bhagavad-Gītā, and have texts which at first sight might appear to teach Sāmkhya and Yōga doctrines also as those systems claim. There are Śrutis which seem to declare that the cause of the universe is known through these systems also, For instance, there is a text : तत्कारणं साङ्ख्ययोगाभिपन्नं ज्ञात्वा देवं मुच्यते सर्वपाशैः ॥' "Knowing the Lord to be that cause taught by Sāmkhya



and Yōga, one is freed from all bonds" (Sve. 6-13).  
Therefore Śaṅkara writes :-

(१) सतीष्वपि अध्यात्मविषयासु बह्वीषु स्मृतिषु साङ्ख्ययोगस्मृत्योरेव निराकरणे यत्नः कृतः । साङ्ख्ययोगौ हि परमपुरुषार्थसाधनत्वेन लोके प्रख्यातौ शिष्टैश्च परिगृहीतौ, लिङ्गेन च श्रौतेनोपबृंहितौ ।

सू.भा. २-१-३, पा. १८३

"While there are many Smṛtis relating to Ātman, an attempt has been made here to refute the Sāṃkhya and the Yōga in particular, for those two are famous as the means to the Highest Goal of human life, and have been recognized by orthodox scholars in Vedic lore; and are even seemingly supported by Śruti texts."

S.Bh. 2-1-3, p. 183.

(२) निराकरणं तु न साङ्ख्यज्ञानेन वेदनिरपेक्षेण योगमार्गेण वा निःश्रेयसमधिगम्यते इति । श्रुतिर्हि वैदिकादात्मैकत्वविज्ञानादन्यन्निः-श्रेयससाधनं वारयति ।

सू.भा. २-१-३, पा. १८३

"The refutation, however, is undertaken here, because Ultimate Good is never attained either through Sāṃkhya or the practice of Yōga independent of the Vedas. The Śruti indeed, negates every means of the Highest Good other than the Vedic Wisdom of the unity of Ātman.

S.Bh. 2-1-3, p. 183

द्वैतिनो हि ते साङ्ख्या योगाश्च, नात्मैकत्वदर्शिनः ॥

सू.भा. २-१-३, पा. १८३

"These Sāmkhyas and Yōgas are only dualists and not teachers of the Unity of Ātman". S.Bh. 2-1-3, p. 183

51. Bādarāyaṇa undertakes to refute the misinterpretation of the Sāmkhyas, and determines the correct interpretation of disputable or doubtful passages in the first chapter. He also explains away all the objection of the Sāmkhyas against the Vedantic system in the second chapter. And he adds a rational refutation of that system (VS. 2-2-1, 2-2-10) and thus makes his refutation complete.

52. We have seen why the Sāmkhya has been chosen in particular for refutation by Bādarāyaṇa according to Śaṅkara.

At the close of the refutation of the Vaiśeshikas, the propounders of the atomic theory, Bādarāyaṇa's Sūtra runs as follows : अपरिग्रहाच्चात्यन्तमनपेक्षा' । (VS. 2-2-17). And Śaṅkara remarks :

"The doctrine of the Pradhāna as the material cause (of the world) has been incorporated by Vedic scholars like Manu (in their writings) because it is useful in supporting views like the *Satkāryatva* (the previous existence of the effect in the cause). This theory of atoms, however, has not been accepted by any orthodox writers in any respect whatever. It has to be altogether ignored by the followers of the Veda."

S.Bh. 2-2-17. p. 235

And in introducing his criticism of Buddhism, Śaṅkara writes as follows :

"We have observed that the system of the Vaiśeshikas should not be considered worthy of notice, because it is beset with fallacious reasoning, opposed to the Vedas and never accepted by the orthodox. That being a partially nihilistic view, we are now going to show how all nihilism is un-acceptable." S.Bh. 2-2-18, p. 239

The above-cited extracts should suffice to show how Śaṅkara regards purely speculative systems without the assistance of the Upanishads which uniformly appeal to direct intuition.

53. While there are several conflicting systems of thought among the later Buddhistic thinkers Bādarāyaṇa according to Śaṅkara, takes only three principal schools for consideration.

The *Sarvāstitva-vādins* (the realists who admit both external and internal things), the *Vijñānāstitva-vādins* (who admit the existence of internal ideas only), and *Sarvasūnyatva-vādins* (nihilists who deny all essence to things). This classification is based on difference of views, or mental calibre of the followers (प्रतिपत्तिभेदात् विनेयभेदाद् वा)

54. The first group admits the existence of both the external elements and their products on the one hand, and the internal *Chitta* and mental factor on the other.

They say that the atoms of earth and other elements constitute and produce the gross earth also. Similarly the internal *Rūpa-Skandha* (colour) *Vijñāna-Skandha* (giving rise to the several organs and objects), the *ālaya-vijñāna* (giving rise to egoity), and the *Vedanā-Skandha* (giving rise to feelings), *Samjñā-Skandha* (producing concepts) and the *Samskāra-Skandha* (which are factors producing emotions).

The main defect in this doctrine is that neither of the ultimate varieties of effects is possible simply because neither the atoms nor the skandhas are sentient, and no constant sentient experiencing self or Ruler is admitted by the school. And awareness is not possible since it depends only on Bhautika form etc. and the organ of sight etc. on the effects of combination are produced. Even if consciousness comes into existence independently, it would never cease to appear. The so-called *Āsraya* (आश्रय) on which all these depend is undefinable as either different or not-different from these. And since everything is held to be momentary, in which activity itself is impossible and consequently the effect of combination (either elements or the effects of the five skandhas) cannot possibly come into existence.

55. The teaching of the Sarvāstitva-vādins, as explained by Buddhists themselves or as explained by Sāṅkarites, is rather difficult to be understood precisely. But it is sufficient for our purpose to see that the teaching

with regard to *Bhūtas* (Elements) that their atoms are to combine and produce *Bhautikas* (products of elements) colour etc. (objects) and the organs of sense such as the eye. Similarly the five skandhas (groups) are supposed to combine and produce something within the body as the locus of all human behaviour. Now Śaṅkara's criticism of this doctrine is chiefly concerned with pointing to the defect that no individual experiencer or a Ruler is admitted here who could initiate this combination. Neither the flaring of the *chitta* nor the *āśraya* or *Ālaya vijñāna* can be supposed to set up the motion or activity in these two cases since they already pre-suppose the combination. Moreover, activity is the function of the individuals of each group, and that cannot be conceived in the case of atoms or skandhas, since they are all presumed to be momentary; for that which functions must need exist before and also at the time of the function. As a consequence of the absence of combination all mundane life depending on this combination, would cease to exist!

56. Besides postulating the combination of momentary atoms of the four *Dhātus* (earth etc.) and the momentary *skandhas*, the Sarvāstitva-vādins hold the doctrine of the *Pratītya Samutpāda*. This is the doctrine of the successive causation of *Avidyā* etc. in a series where each preceding item necessarily gives rise to the next one. *Avidyā* is nescience (misconception which

takes momentary things to be permanent) *Samskāra* (attachment, hatred and delusion), *Vijñāna* (self-consciousness), *nāma* (the four dhātus), *rūpam* (four colours), *Shadāyatanam* (the group of six sense organs) *sparsa* (contact of nāma, rūpa and organs), *Vedanā* (feeling) *trshṇā* (thirst or hankering), *Upādānam* (activity) *bhava* (virtue and vice), *jāti* (birth), *jarāmaraṇam* (aging and death), *sōkah* (grief), *paridevanā* (lamentation), *dukka* (pain), *durmanastā* (dejection) and other effects invariably happening in cyclic order repeatedly. All these are momentary and insentient and yet can set the life-process going on without the need of any individual soul or Ruler!

57. There are two steps in Śaṅkara's refutation of the doctrine of *Sarvāstitva-vādins*. The first step is to concede that *Pratītya-Samutpāda* is possible, that the links in the chains of causation do give rise to the birth of each of the succeeding effects. For example, *Avidyā* being there *Samskāra* is necessarily born, and *Samskāra* being there *Vijñāna* is sure to take its birth and so on.

But even after conceding the possibility of this chain of causality, there is no explanation of how an aggregate of all these links, can take place. It cannot be presumed that the continuous birth of these links in succession necessarily implies a combined effect, and the aggregate is a necessary -presupposition, since the serial chain of causation, cannot happen without the aggregate. For even



so, you have to explain how the aggregate itself comes to be. For even according to Vaiśeshikas who postulate permanent atoms and experiencing egoes, who can be supposed to be support of the effects of good or bad deeds, we have seen that an aggregate cannot be accounted for as arising out of atoms; how much less plausible should it be in the case of nihilists who take all atoms to be momentary and grant no individual selves that may be supposed to be the locus of the effects of the merits or demerits of a past-deed !

58. If, on the other hand, you think that avidyā etc. are themselves the cause of aggregate, we ask how these avidyā and other causes which are born from the pre-supposed aggregate, be the cause of that very aggregate.

Nor can it be insisted that in the beginningless mundane life, the aggregates themselves recur continuously like a stream as well as avidyā etc. which abide in them. You will have to grant that the bodies which have this locus successively are either as a rule exactly similar to the preceding ones or dissimilar. If they are uniformly similar, then a human being cannot take up a god's body or any animal's or plant's body. If there be no uniformity of similarity on the other hand, a human being could become an elephant in a moment and turn into a divine being or a man back again !

59. Moreover no permanent self being admitted to exist according to this school of thought, the repugnant

conclusion would follow that experience of pleasure or pain has to be attributed to experience itself and release too would be for its own sake! For if it be granted that enjoyment of life or release is for one who is distinct from either, then the Buddhist will have to abandon his doctrine that everything is momentary.

60. Now we arrive at the *second step* of the regulation. We have so far granted that the *Pratītya-Samutpāda* (the chain of causation of momentary attributes) is possible, and our contention has been only that a combination of the constituents cannot be explained. But, strictly speaking, that causation itself - the birth of the succeeding link after the previous one - is not possible at all. For this school maintains the absurd theory that the previous moment is gone when the subsequent moment comes into being! How can any one think of the relation of cause and effects between two things which do not simultaneously exist? If, however, it should be supposed that there is positive activity of the previous moment before it disappears and hence it can very well transfer its nature to the effect, then the doctrine of momentariness will have to be abandoned. If, however, the relation of causality can be supposed to subsist without the transmission of the nature of the cause to the effect, it will have been conceded that there is no causal relation between any two things whatever! Moreover, we have to explain what is meant by birth and cessation. Are they

identified with the essence of the things, or distinct states of these things ? In the former case, there would be no meaning in saying that a thing is born or destroyed; for essence, birth and cessation would be synonymous terms! If birth and cessation be supposed to be distinct from the essential nature of a thing, then the existence, birth and cessation would presuppose three distinct moments, which this school is holding, the doctrine of momentariness would not of course allow!

61. So the doctrine of momentariness cannot explain how one momentary link can be the 'cause' of the succeeding link. If it is thought that the effect can arise even without the cause, it would go against the dogma that *Chitta* and *Chaittas* come into being owing to four kinds of causes. Moreover it will have been granted that anything might be born anywhere. If, however, it be granted that the cause does exist until the effect is born, then the doctrine of momentariness will have to be given up.

We shall reserve our remarks with regard to the other views of Buddhism.

62. We need not tarry long in considering the refutation of the two kinds of destruction and the nature of *Ākāśa* as postulated by the *Sarvāstivā-vādins*. This school holds that everything knowable except the three-to wit, *Pratisankhyā Nirodha* (deliberate destruction) *apratī sankhyā nirodha* (natural destruction) and *Ākāśa* (ether) - has origination. These three are supposed to have

no essence of their own. The two kinds of destruction, whether they are supposed to pertain to the whole series or to the individuals in the series, can never take place since there is persistent arising of the individuals as cause and effect of each of the succeeding individuals, and there can be no absolute destruction of the effect without persistence in the cause. And destruction of avidyā etc. comprehended by Pratisankhyā Nirodha-whether it is supposed to happen through right knowledge or of its own accord-cannot be; for in the former alternative, it would go against the postulate of destruction with a cause, and in the second alternative, there would be no purpose served in preaching the path out of Samsāra.

That Ākāśa (ether) is essenceless, is equally untenable. The Buddhist may not recognize the Śruti which teaches the origin of Ākāśa from Ātman; but he cannot ignore the inference that there must be something whose quality is sound. For this school which takes Ākāśa to be merely absence of some enveloping entity, there would be no reason why two birds cannot fly simultaneously in Ākāśa since there is absence of obstruction. If the opponent thinks that another bird may well fly about where there is no covering up, then that which is without covering it evidently some real entity. Moreover, there is the Buddhistic traditional teaching that air is supported by Ākāśa, which is in conflict with the doctrine of Ākāśa being a non-entity.

63. And lastly, this teaching is wholly self-contradictory for the following reasons :- (1) That these three are undefinable and essenceless and yet eternal, is in itself self-contradictory; for the purposes of being eternal or ephemeral, can pertain only to an existent entity. (2) Besides, this Nihilist holding as he does the momentariness of everything, would have to admit that the knower himself is momentary. But that is impossible, since there is memory of a past experience. This is conceivable only if the person who remembers his past is one and the same, but not if he be momentary. This continuous stream of recognition from birth to death of one and the same person notwithstanding, it is quite inconceivable how this Buddhist feels unabashed at his doctrine of self momentariness; should he reply that this can be explained away by similarity of cognition, even then, that would be an unfounded statement, since according to him there is no one person who cognizes the similarity; for 'this is like that' cannot be a single concept inasmuch as 'this is like unto that' evidently refers to two different things. It may be even granted that it is possible that one may be deceived in the case of an external thing as to whether it is one and the same thing or one similar to another; but it is impossible that one can doubt whether oneself is identical with the past one or one similar to that one; for there is the certain recognition that one is the same person.

64. There is another argument against this school. For, these Sarvāstitvavādins hold that there is no permanent cause continuing to inhere in the effect, and so commit themselves to the view that something can come out of nothing. Indeed the doctrine is in so many words that there is manifestation of the effect without destroying the cause! If this doctrine of effect coming out of nothing be admitted, then 'nothing' being not different from such things as a hare's horn, anything could be expected to arise out of anything whatever, since there is no specific feature characterizing nothing. If, on the other hand, it should be argued that there is some characterizing feature attaching even to absence or nothing, then that nothing itself would become something positive!

65. There is another repugnant conclusion following from the doctrine of something coming out of nothing. For even inactive and indolent persons would be able to achieve what they want, for non-existence would be available everywhere. A farmer would be able to grow bumper crop without cultivation, a potter could produce pots without undergoing the effort of preparing the needed quality of clay and weaver could get a cloth without spinning yarn just like one who takes the trouble to do so! And no one would make any effort to attain heaven or final release !

66. The most flagrant self-contradiction in this

doctrine, is to try to introduce confusion in all human behaviour when they first admit that *Chitta* and *Chaittas* are born from former cause and that elements and combinations of elements are produced from atoms, and then declare that something is born out of nothing and thus deny what they themselves have postulated !

67. In contrast with *Sarvāstitva-vādins*, the idealist *Vijñāna-vādins* seems to stand on firmer ground. For according to them, the Buddha's doctrine of external elements, was only a concession to the credulous disciples who strongly believed in the reality of external phenomena. But the teacher's own esoteric doctrine was the reality of the *Vijñāna-Skandha*.

The argument of the *Vijñāna-vādin* is as follows :- All convention of the means of valid knowledge, the object of that means and the resultant understanding becomes intelligible as a subjective occurrence alone; for, even granting the existence of a real object, the convention of means of valid knowledge is inconceivable unless it is related to the intellect.

68. It may be asked, how is it to be concluded that all procedure is only subjective, and how are we to convince ourselves that there are no external objects at all? The reply is that the existence of such an object is impossible. The external object has to be supposed to be individual atoms or things like a pillar. It cannot be the

former, for no one can have knowledge corresponding to the minute atoms. Neither can it be objects like a pillar, for these cannot be determined to be either identical with or different from the atoms. Objects like the genus, activity etc. have to be disposed of in a similar manner.

69. There is another reason for rejecting the external objects. For the experience of all instances of consciousness is knowledge, but every instance of a knowable so born is seen to assume a particular form, such as for instance 'the knowledge of a pillar', 'knowledge of a piece of cloth'. This cannot be explained unless we grant that some predilection for a particular form is revealed in each of the cases. This form of an object being necessarily admitted to take place in consciousness, it serves no purpose to presume (it) as independent of an external object.

70. Moreover, there is seen to be an invariable rule that an object and its idea are experienced always simultaneously, which fact argues for the identity of both. For this rule is inconceivable if each of the two has a peculiar feature of its own, for there would be no reason to compel them to occur simultaneously, if they were distinct.

This can be also explained on the analogy of notions like that of an object in a dream. (To explain :) In the same way as the notions of a dream, māyic vision, a



mirage water, a phantom city in the sky, are experienced as though they were distinguished into objects and their ideas, so also can the waking cognition can well be seen as distinguished into subjective ideas and objective things, being no more than mere cognitions.

71. (*Vedantin's objection:-*) But how is it possible that diversity of cognitions can arise without diversity of objects ?

(*Buddhist :-*) This is quite explicable by the diversity of mental impression. For in this beginningless mundane life, cognitions and impressions may very well be diverse without any conflict appearing as they do in a series of cause and effect relation like that of a seed and its sprout. Moreover it can be concluded that diversity of cognitions is due solely to diversity of impressions on the principle of invariable concomittance and disagreement. For in experiences of a dream and the like, we do see that diversity of cognitions is seen by both, without any external objects only through impressions, but I do not admit that there is variety of cognitions due to external objects without diversity of impressions. For this reason also, we have to conclude that there are no external objects.

72. To all this line of argument, the Vedantin's reply is 'It is impossible to conclude that there are external objects, for they are perceived. (To explain:-)

corresponding to every perception, an external object is perceived - such as a pillar, a well, a wall or a piece of cloth. And it cannot be that an object actually perceived is not there, for that would be like denying one's own satisfaction of hunger without actual eating.

(Buddhist :-) Well, but I do not deny that I perceive an external thing but only say that I do not perceive an external thing distinct from the cognition!

(Vedantin :-) Yes, you say so, for there is no restraint to your tongue. But what you say is not in conformity with reason; for an external thing quite distinct from your perception has to be necessarily admitted to exist for no other reason than that is cognized. For no one feels that he sees the cognition itself as a pillar or a wall etc. All people do perceive things as objects of cognition. It is to negate this that the ViJñānavādins say that what is externally known appears 'as though it were outside'!

73. Even the ViJñāna-vādins who experience the cognition as referring to something outside, are anxious to negate the external object and use the expression 'as though it were outside'. There it is proper for those that acquiesce in reality according to appearance, to admit that the object does appear outside alone.

(Buddhist :-) But we have concluded that it appears as though it were outside since it is not possible for an object to be actually outside.

(*Vedantin :-*) This conclusion is not legitimate; for possibility or impossibility (of a fact) has to be determined by what the means of valid knowledge does or does not reveal it to be; and not the possibility or impossibility that determines whether or not a means of valid knowledge reveals a fact. (To explain;) That alone is possible which is known with the help of some means of valid knowledge such as perception, and that which is not known through any such means is impossible. In the present case, however, an external object being ascertained to exist by all means of valid knowledge according to its nature, how can it be said to be non-existent merely by raising logical alternatives such as agreement or difference ? It is actually perceived and can never be disposed of as not existing.

Nor can the object cease to exist merely because cognition is of the same form as the object. For this very reason the invariable concomitance of the object and idea is to be concluded to be due to the fact that the object is the occasional cause and the idea the resultant effect.

74. Moreover when we have experiences like the knowledge of a pot or the knowledge of a piece of cloth, there is difference of a pot or a cloth but not of the knowledge differentiated as in the case of white cow or a black cow where the genus cow is identical even while the colours differ. Therefore, here also, the object and its cognition are different. Similar is the case with the

perception and memory of a pot, where the pot remains the same while perception and memory are different, in the same way as the qualities of milk such as smell or taste differ even while the substance remains identical.

75. Moreover, two different cognitions which exhaust themselves by self-cognition cannot cognize each other whence their teaching that two cognitions are different from each other, that the cognitions have the property of momentariness, individual characteristics defining a thing or characteristics common to many things, doctrine of the antecedent idea bearing its impressions on the consequent one, the evil of avidyā, the property of one thing as existing and that of another as not existing the doctrine of bondage and release etc. taught in the scriptures of the Vijñāna-vādins themselves will have to be abandoned !

76. Besides, the opponent who admits the existence of this idea or that to exist has to tell us why he does not admit external objects such as a pillar or a wall.

(*Buddhist :-*) Simply because an idea is actually experienced.

(*Vedantin :-*) Then it is reasonable to admit the existence of an external object, since that is cognized too.

(*Buddhist :-*) But Vijñāna being of a luminous nature is self-cognized, but this is not the case with the external objects also !

(*Vedantin :-*) You are prepared to admit that a thing objectifies itself - as fire burning itself - which is against all reason, but do not admit a self-known fact not self-contradictory, to wit, that an external object is experienced by a cognition distinct from it. This is really displaying an unusual erudition indeed! Nor is an idea even if not distinct from an object, known by itself for this very reason that a thing cannot objectify itself without a self-contradiction.

(*Buddhist :-*) But if it be granted that a cognition is cognized; then that other cognitions will have to be taken to be objectifiable by another, and that too by another, thus leading to an infinite regress. And besides, whoever conscious of another cognition objectifying cognition which is luminous, grants that matter without any need whatever since both being luminous by nature, one cannot reveal another in any sense !

(*Vedantins :-*) Both of these arguments are futile. For once the idea is cognized, there would be no question of something else to cognize that the Witness who reveals it, the Witness and the concept being altogether different by nature as seer and the seen and the Witness is of an undeniable nature being self established as He is.

Moreover, you ascertain that Vijñāna reveals itself like a lamp-light, virtually amounts to saying the Vijñāna is not known through any means of valid knowledge without

any knower whatever, which is very much like saying that a thousand lamps emit light within a boulder!

*(Buddhist :-)* Quite so, for you are only approving our own view that Vijñāna is of the nature of intuition !

*(Vedantin :-)* Not so. For there is another knower who is endowed with the organ of sight, who sees the shining of the light, there it has to be concluded that Vijñāna also being of the nature of something to be revealed, it shines only in the presence of a knower.

*(Buddhist :-)* When you postulate that the Witness is self established, you are virtually resorting to our own view that Vijñāna is self-luminous !

*(Vedantin :-)* No, for you hold that Vijñāna has birth, destruction, plurality and other specific features. That is why we have argued that Vijñāna also has to be revealed by a different knower like a lamp-light.

77. As for the contention of the nihilist who denies all external objects, on the analogy of a dream etc., that cognitions of a pillar etc., even in waking can very well be without an object, inasmuch as they are no more than cognitions, Śaṅkara's rejoinder is as follows : Waking ideas cannot be just like ideas experienced in a dream, for there is dissimilarity between the two. (To explain:-) The thing seen in a dream is falsified on waking. For on waking one feels : "My meeting with a number of people

in a dream is all false; only my mind was overpowered by sleep, whence this delusion occurred". Alike sublation of ideas occurring in magic etc. takes place in the normal state. But no experience of pillar etc. in waking is even stultified in any other state. Moreover what we call a dream-experience is only an instance of memory. The difference between memory and actual perception is actually intuited by every one personally; for one feels : 'I remember my beloved son, but do not perceive him; I wish to see him.'. This being so, it is impossible to say for one who directly intuits the difference between the two, that an experience is illusive just because it is a perception like a dream-perception. It is obviously wrong to deny personal experiences, for those who think that they are wise thinkers. Moreover it is because the opponent is unable to prove that waking ideas are without the corresponding objects that he tries to reason their falsity on the analogy of a dream idea. But what is really not the intrinsic nature of a thing can never be proved to be such with the analogy of some other thing; for fire, being directly experienced as being hot, cannot become cold on the analogy of water ! We have however, demonstrated the dissimilarity between a dream and waking state, and so all arguments to the contrary will serve no purpose.

78. Hence whether the object is real or not, the subjective Witness being the same can never be got rid

of. It is on the firm foundation of this Witness that we have taken the Witness as quite real even when the apparent experiences are taken to be as real as waking experiences. It is also on the foundation of this Witness that we have taken both the experiences of waking and dream to be different, even while the Witness is the very same in both cases. It is again on the firm foundation of this Witness indeed that we have taken both the phenomena of the states to be as real as if they happen in one and the same state. The Buddhist, however takes the experiences of both the states to be real as though there was no real Witness common to both. Even the truth of the phenomena has been granted, by the Vedantin, on the sure basis, as mentioned above.

It is the certainty granted by both the experiences, however, that this firm reality is the only reality that is common to the states. It is this sure reality of the common experience that grants the showy reality of the phenomena, while at the same time it grants the firm reality of the Witness.

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## 38. TECHNICS OF ŚAṆKARA'S INTERPRETATION OF THE UPANISHADS

While there have been several schools of interpretations of the Upanishads preceding and following the emergence of Śaṅkara's celebrated commentary on the Vedanta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa, the one unique feature of that famous commentary is that it presents a systematic and compact traditional interpretation which insisted on a happy amalgamation of direct intuition and the theological principles of *Karma-Mīmāṃsā* in bringing out the essence of Vedantic teaching.

The very introduction to this Sūtra-Bhāshya contains an appeal to universal intuition unmixed with any quotation, to lay bare the normally unsuspected axiom that every instance of human thought is based upon an unwarranted mutual superimposition of identity of the real self and the un-real not-self, together with a mistaken transference of the properties of each of these to the other. Śaṅkara concludes that knowledge of the absolute unity of Ātman as uniformly taught in the Upanishads is the only remedy for all the evil consequences of this fundamental tendency on the part of human mind to err.

Again, in his introduction to his commentary on the fifth aphorism of Bādarāyaṇa, Śaṅkara has given a resume of what he has written in explanation of the previous

Sūtras that so far it has been concluded that Vedantic texts which aim at producing the intuition of Brahman, the Infinite 'Self', are syntactically construed as solely purporting to reveal Brahman, without any connection of something to be done. It is thus clear that this teacher is anxious to emphasize that the combined method of exegetical interpretation of texts and appealing to universal intuition as vouching for their validity is the principal technique of Upanishadic teaching.

It is thus obvious that it is not quite right to regard this Āchārya as an acute speculative philosopher or even as a logician given to syllogistic reasoning. This is confirmed by his vehement tirade against all speculative and syllogistic reasoning when he accepts Bādarāyaṇa's Sūtras (VS. 2-1-11) at its face-value and argues that this kind of dry reasoning can never end in a final conclusion in as much as people think at various levels of intellect, and there is always the possibility of one thinker disclosing the fallacy in another's reasoning and several logicians have been always at loggerheads with one another. As for the objection that Śruti (Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4-5-6) itself teaches that reason also is to be respected in addition to śravaṇa or study of the texts, he says that 'this cannot be made an excuse for allowing for dry reasoning also; for it is only the reasoning subservient to intuition as offered by the Śruti itself, that is resorted to in this context' (S.Bh. 2-1-6)

Some suppose that Śaṅkara regards all the Universe as illusory, on the score that he sometimes adduces the text 'Prakṛti should be regarded to be Māya and the Great Lord as the Magician' (Śvetāśvatara Up. 4-10). But this is not the right assessment either of the Śruti or Śaṅkara's position. The Śrutis themselves, according to Śaṅkara, cite illustrations from empirical life to clarify Vedantic thoughts and Śaṅkara himself says that 'all Pramāṇas (means of right knowledge), their objects and the resultant knowledge can well be real as long as the metaphysical intuition of the One Brahmātman has dawned' (SBH 2-1-14). Neither Śaṅkara, nor even Gauḍapāda brought about any revolution in Vedantic thought as is sometimes alleged. Śaṅkara quotes three verses from an ancient teacher of this tradition, where the cardinal doctrines of Vedanta have been summed up.

(1) When one has intuited one's identity with the Brahmātman, the Pure Being, there being nothing besides Ātman, there cannot possibly be anything remaining to be achieved.

(2) It is only before the intuition of the Ātman that the enquirer is a knower; and when one has arrived at one's identity with the Ātman, one becomes free from all duties and other defects of mundane life.

(3) Just as the idea of one's self being the body remains true so long as the true self other than the body

is not seen, so also all the means of right knowledge continue to be valid only as long as the absolute Ātman is not ascertained to be the only Reality.

Bādarāyaṇa's interpretation of the message of the Upanishads, according to Śaṅkarāchārya, therefore, should not be looked upon as a mere theological exegesis of historical interest, not a mere piece of intellectual product satisfying the curiosity of the archeologist, but a messenger of Truth which is the solace of all mankind, irrespective of the limitation of time or place.

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## 39. THE VEDANTA-ŚĀSTRA AS THE MEANS OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN

### INTRODUCTION

Vedanta-Mīmāṃsā-Śāstra is one of the two titles assigned by Śaṅkarāchārya to Bādarāyaṇa's energetical work popularly known by the name of Brama-Sūtras. This is because Bādarāyaṇa proposes to systematise the art of interpreting the Vedantas in that work.

In the third and the fourth Sūtras of that book, Bādarāyaṇa interpreted by Śaṅkara, says that Brahman or Reality as the cause of the birth, sustentation and dissolution of the universe is to be known as such only through the source of the Śāstra (*Śāstra-yonitwāt*) as is evidenced by the uniform coherence of the texts in all the Upanishads and by the syntactical relation of the words in the texts teaching Brahman (*Tat-tu-Samanvayāt*). What is the attitude of the Vedantins with regard to the Vedantas or Upanishads as a means of the right knowledge of Brahman, and what is the value that might be attached to this knowledge by the thinkers who would undertake a comparative study of the religious and philosophical productions of such ancient writers ? I shall try to answer this briefly in this article.

1. *Vedanta as a Śāstra :*

The word Śāstra may be regarded either as a sacred work which lays down some injunctions or prohibitions (*śāsthī*) or that which teaches (*śinasthī*) something for that edification of the enquirer after truth. The Vedantas, may with impunity be considered as constituting a Śāstra in both the senses, because they enjoin certain Upāsanās (meditations) and also teach the nature of Brahman. Of course we shall restrict the word to mean a Holy Word aiming to teach the real nature of Brahman, for obvious reasons.

2. *What Vedanta is not :*

How is the Vedanta-Śāstra to be regarded as a trustworthy source of information regarding Brahman ? In the first place it has to be noted that the Vedantas forming, as they do, an integral position of the Veda as a whole, are not like chapters of a holy book like the Bible or the Koran, nor do they claim to be the utterances or writings of some inspired prophet or prophets. Bādarāyaṇa specifically falls in with the view of Jaimini regarding the Veda as eternal (*ata eva ca nityatvam* Br. Sū 1-3-29) and Śaṅkara quotes a verse from the Rigveda (10-71-3) which says that the Ṛshis discovered the word 'Vaiham' already existing.

3. *Not God's spoken word :*

Secondly, the eternal Vedas, are declared to be

transmitted by the *Deva* (self-shining God) to the Brahmā or Hiraṇya Garbha manifested in the beginning of each *Kalpa* (Cycle), and that it is that God by whose grace one is enlightened with the consciousness of the real self ('*ātmabuddhi-prakāśam*' Sve. 6-18). So the Vedas should not be considered to be even God's spoken word.

#### 4. (a) *Brahman without Specific Features :*

Thirdly, *Saguṇa-Brahman* (Brahman with qualities) has been sometimes enjoined in the Vedantas to be meditated upon, as for instance, in the text "All this is verily Brahman, for it is born and is dissolved in, and moves in it. So one shall meditate upon it with peace of mind" (Ch. 3-141). And there are other texts which teach that Brahman is devoid of any specific features. (See Br. 3-8-8, Ka. 3-15, Ch. 8-14-1, Mu. 2-1-2). How are we to reconcile with these two sets of teaching ?

Bādarāyaṇa, according to Śaṅkara, has given his verdict in favour of the latter (*arūpavadeva hi tatpradhānavat*). Brahman is to be regarded as being devoid of all specific features, for texts preaching it to be such specially purport to teach that nature; whereas the other set are particular about enjoining meditation (SBh. 3-2-14). So the description of Brahman found in the Upāsanā texts, are to be taken to be really real only in so far as they are not in conflict with the texts which mainly aim at revealing the true nature of Brahman.

4. (b) *Samanvaya* :

Again even with regard to texts which purport to teach exclusively the nature of Brahman, we should be careful not to commit the mistake of thinking that they are meant to teach Brahman as only subservient to some injunction. For we find that the texts in all the Upanishads have uniform coherence (*Vākya-samanvaya*) in emphatically beginning and ending with revealing this entity alone, without the tinge of connection with any injunction. These words in each text teaching of Brahman, have the syntactical relation with the word denoting Brahman alone and never with any word denoting an injunction. And in each case the whole teaching ends with pointing to some fruit accruing to be experienced immediately out of the knowledge of Brahman. So, even restricting ourselves to the principles of interpretation propounded by the former exegesis (*Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*), we have to conclude that the Vedāntas have the uniform purpose of teaching the nature of Brahman.

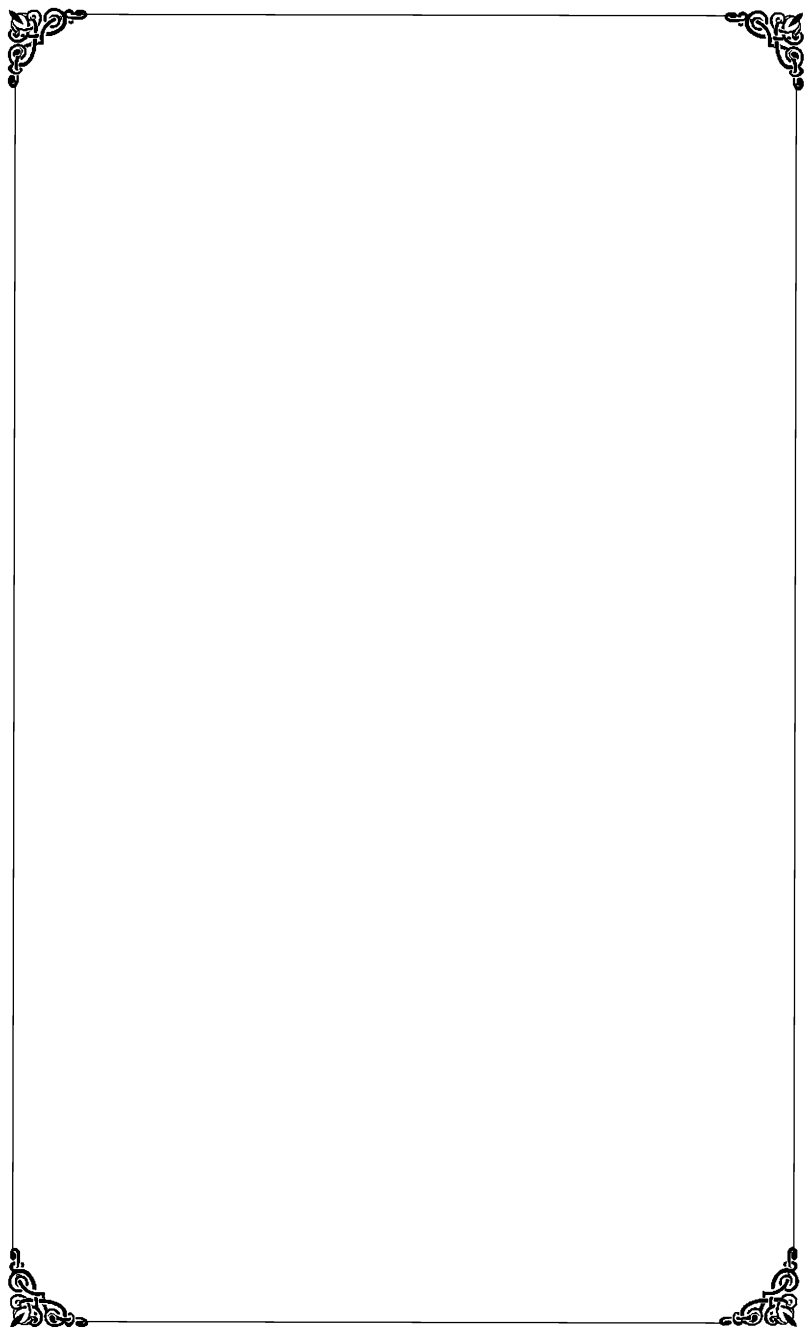
5. *Immediate insight of Brahman* :

Fifthly, the subject matter of Upanishadic teaching is wisdom of Brahman or the really real nature of Brahman or the Ātman, the very self of the enquirer as it is, and not some knowledge whose fruit is to be experienced in a future birth or in the other world, as is the case with texts enjoining Karma or Upāsana. This is the most



important feature of the vedantic teaching, this ātman being one eternally present entity, knowledge pertaining to Him has to be judged not merely by the standard of the authority of the sacred word, but also by the immediate insight of the enquirer here and now. Here the knowledge of Brahmātman is quite unlike that of the not-self whether inside the body or outside. The knowledge of the latter depends on the instrument of knowledge we have to employ, such as the organs of sense or act or the mind. Brahman on the contrary, being the witnessing self of all these, can never be perceived or conceived or even inferred on the strength of some perception or conception. The Vedantas, therefore, appeal to another means more immediate than either of these, and demand from the enquirer quite another process of inward effort before he becomes aware of reality which is his inalienable self.

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The present book is a collection of articles and thoughts of Sri Satcidanandendra Saraswathi Swamiji, on a variety of topics on Vedanta. These were written for the monthly magazine 'Adhyatma Prakasha', published by the Karyalaya, during the years 1970-74. Sri Swamiji has stated that he consented to include one or two pages in English in each of the monthly issues of the magazine because of the repeated requests of some non-Kannada patrons of the magazine. However writing in English is quite in line with his firm resolve to spread advaita Vedanta of Śaṅkara in its purest form to all, whether they knew Kannada or not. He considered English as the only link language since Sanskrit had not been accorded its proper place as a link language among the different vernaculars.

The reader may note that Sri Swamiji was over 90 years of age when he wrote these articles and thoughts. By that time almost all of his over 200 highly acclaimed books in Kannada, Sanskrit and English, were already written. His wisdom, authority on the topics, simplicity and clear diction etc. are present in these articles and the reader will immensely benefit by them.

The author gives the meaning of the terms 'Adhyatma Prakasha' as the 'light on the inner portion of the universe, meaning that aspect of the universe within man'. That

explains the significance of the name given to the monthly magazine, which he started publishing in the year 1923 and which continues to be published even now! Elsewhere he defines the terms ātman, brahman, sākshi, ākāsha, prāṇa etc that are used for suggesting the nature of Reality. The reader will find articles explaining avidyā, its removal and avidyā leśa, meditation, śāstra as the only Pramāṇa for brahmavidya, vedantic intuition, aśarīratva of the enlightened person, sarvātmabhāva and so on, all in simple language and, of course, with quotations from the bhāshyas.

The part of the book commencing with the title 'Aids to Reflection on Vedanta', is a series of continued thoughts of Sri Swamiji on Adhyatma vidya. These are printed as paragraphs with numbers from 1 to 78, without any demarcations, since the author had given the same title to his thoughts printed in each of the issues of the magazine. These may be read from beginning to end for deriving full benefit.

The thoughts contained in these paragraphs are mainly concerned with bringing a contrast between the Vedanta in the tradition of Bādarāyaṇa, Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara on the one hand, and a number of different schools like Upāsanāvāda, dhyānaniyogavāda, Mīmāṃsaka view, prapañca pravilaya, niyoga vāda, Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeshika, sarvāstitvavāda, vijnānavāda and sarvaśūnyatva vāda, the

last three being different views of Buddhist thought, on the other. Sri Swamiji has rejected all these views and brought out the salient features of the traditional atmaikatva vāda, Śāstra as the only Pramāṇa for the knowledge of Brahman, and the role of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana.

It is very much hoped that the beginners of Vedanta will get a proper introduction to the various topics of Vedanta and also motivation to read further, while those who already have some familiarity with the topics will be able to firm up their own understanding, by reading the book.

The Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya gratefully acknowledges the services of Dr. K.S. Ramanatha Sharma who took the entire responsibility of editing and proof reading tasks and ensured the release of the book on time. The Karyalaya also thanks all those devotees of Sri Swamiji for their help in bringing out this volume, the donors (list below) for their financial assistance and the printers for their efforts in giving a novel look to the book. May the blessings of Sri Swamiji shower on all of them.

Donors : 1. Dr H.V. Nagendra Prasad; 2. Sri Mahesh Babu; 3. Sri R.B. Gopinath; 4. Sri H.N. Prabhakara Hebbale; 5. Smt. Anasuya Murthy; 6. Smt. H.Lakshmiddevamma; 7. Sri G.S.Nagaraj; 8. Sri Virupaksha, all from Bengaluru.

*12-8-2015*

*- Publishers*





# ARTICLES AND THOUGHTS ON VEDANTA

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*Published by*

**ADHYATMA PRAKASHA KARYALAYA,**

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2015

**ARTICLES AND THOUGHTS ON VEDANTA** Written by  
**Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswati Swamiji,**  
Published by - Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, (Public  
Charitable trust), Holenarasipura - 573211; Tel : 08175 - 273820;  
Bangalore : 080-26765548 [www.adhyatmaprakasha.org](http://www.adhyatmaprakasha.org)

First Edition: 2015  
Pages 8 + 176  
Copies 500  
Price **Rs. 100/-**  
Paper 80 gsm NS maplitho

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Copies available at :

**Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya**  
Holenarasipura - 573211  
Tel : 08175 - 273820;  
**Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya**  
Thyagarajanagar, Bangalore - 28  
080-26765548

Type set :

**Meera Raghuram**  
Cell : 94814 77334

*Printed by*

**Sri Rama Printers**  
# 25, 15th Cross, 5th Main, Srinidhi Layout  
Bangalore - 560 062 Cell : 9845346197