

ADVAITA VEDANTA

(AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY)



SIVATHONDAN CIRCLE.

SAFANA

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(AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY)



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PREFACE

The series of articles that appeared in the "Sivathondan" under the caption 'The Philosophy of Advaita' is being published in this new format after revision with an addition of a new chapter entitled 'Non-Advaitic Systems'.

We have, as far as possible, avoided discussions relating to the Advaita Theory of Knowledge—epistemology—and have treated the subject in a practical manner, keeping in view, the needs of those who desire to understand Advaita Vedanta from the point of view of religious sadhana. The book is also meant to serve as an introduction to a more detailed study of the Advaita Philosophy of Religion as expounded by Sri Sankaracharya and his disciples.

The book is the result of the author's earnest endeavour to understand Advaita Vedanta—in the light of modern thought—and he wishes to place on record his indebtedness to the works of Srimath Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Paul Deussen, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Dr. M. N. Sircar and to the trans-

lations of Advaita Texts by the Ramakrishna
Mission Monks.

It is sent out into the world with the blessings and good wishes of One who is the living embodiment of the Highest Mystical Experience proclaimed by the Advaita Texts. May it be a help, at least in a small way, to those who desire to understand the principle and doctrines of Advaita Vedanta.

K. K. S. ROAD, JAFFNA,
THIRUVATHIRAI,
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Advaita Vedanta

CHAPTER I

SRI SANKARACHARYA

“ON the tree of Indian wisdom there is no fairer flower than the Upanishads, and no finer fruit than the Vedanta philosophy. This system grew out of the teachings of the Upanishads, and was brought to its consummate form by the great Sankara,” wrote Prof. Paul Deussen of Germany.

Sri Sankaracharya was the greatest exponent of the philosophy of Advaita. He was a native of Malabar and belonged to a Nambudri family of Kaladi, a village six miles from Alwaye. Sri Sankara was the only son of his father Shivaguru who died when he was very young. He, with the permission of his mother Aryamba, became a sannyasin and joined the ashrama of Govinda Bhagavatpada who lived on the banks of the river Narmada. Govinda Bhagavatpada is supposed to be the disciple of one Gaudapada, an Advaitin of renown and author of a commentary

on Mandukya Upanishad. The existence of an Advaita commentary on Mandukya Upanishad earlier to Sankara, is an unmistakable proof of the fact that Sri Sankara was not the first exponent of the philosophy of Advaita.

Sri Sankara, after completing the studies and sadhanas, travelled all over India as far as the Himalayas and expounded the philosophy of Advaita. He established mutts at Sringeri, Puri, Dwaraka and Badrinath and organised the ten orders of sannyasins known as Puri, Giri, Bharati, Tirtha, Saraswati, Sagar, Aranya, etc. He wrote a number of books expounding the Advaita Philosophy and finally departed from this world at the early age of 32. His period of activity is fixed between A. D. 783 to 820

The literary works of Sankara may be grouped under three heads:- Commentaries (Bhasyas), Hymns (Stotras) and Expositions (Sastras). He wrote commentaries on the ten principal Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Vedanta Sutras which are said to be the pillars of Vedic Religion—Prasthan Traya. Important hymns composed by him are Dakshinamoorthy Ashtaka, Dasaloki, BhajaGovindam, Hari Stotra, Anandalahari, Soundaryalahari, etc. The chief works wherein he expounds

the doctrines and theology of Advaita in a practical manner fit for sadhana are, Vivekachudamani, Aparokshanubhuti, Atmaboda, Upadesha-Sahasri and Mohamudgara.

Sri Sankara was a Saivaite by religion, but gave an equal place to all religious sects as paths to realise the Highest Absolute Consciousness. He reconstituted the Hindu Faith by grouping it into six cults (Shanmatham) as Saivism, Vaishnavism, Saktism, Kaumaram and Saumaram (Sun-worship) and reformed popular Hinduism by abolishing unnecessary irrational practices and rituals.

Siva-worship, though as old as Tamil culture, passed through many crises in its long history of existence. During the early part of the Christian era, it suffered a great setback due to the spread of Buddhism and Jainism. These two religions held sway over the minds of the people till the 7th century A. D. in the Tamil Nad because of the patronage they enjoyed at the hands of the ruling dynasties. The activities of the Saiva and Vaishnava saints and mystics during the period of the Pallavas, revived and popularised the cults of Siva and Vishnu in their devotional aspect and Buddhism and Jainism disappeared from the country.

The new revival of Hinduism emphasised more the devotional aspect of religion as the best and the only means of obtaining God's Grace and Final Beatitude and thereby gave prominence to Temple Worship and Festivals based on Puranic anecdotes connected with the lives of the Saiva and Vaishnava Saints. Institutionalism gradually usurped the place of real religious experience and religion became a matter of sentiment and faith. The advocates of decadent Buddhism, on the contrary, continued to preach a dry and empty philosophy of nihilism, denying God and Soul. An intellectual and mystical approach to the problems of spiritual life and religious philosophy was keenly felt by those who had a rational spiritual urge. This state of affairs in the religious life of the people, necessitated the appearance of one who could successfully counteract the philosophical nihilism of the Buddhists and correct the irrational and fanatical practices in which the masses indulged in the name of religious devotion and worship.

Sri Sankaracharya, the apostle of the philosophy of Absolute Monism, appeared at a time when he was most needed and revitalised Hinduism with his saintly life and bold teachings. He was a master of Yoga, a great Bhakta and a scholar of deep learning and

penetrative intelligence. He met and vanquished the Buddhists in philosophical discussion and silenced the followers of Purva Mimamsa. The teachings of Sri Sankara brought to the forefront the Upanishadic conception of Brahman, the Absolute, and Jnana—path of knowledge—as the only way to realise the Absolute.

Sri Sankara, as a religious philosopher, stands supreme in the world. Dr. Thibaut, translator of the Vedanta Sutra Bhasya of Sankara into English writes, "The doctrine advocated by Sankara is, from a purely philosophical point of view, and apart from all theological considerations, the most important and interesting one which has arisen on Indian soil: neither those forms of the Vedanta which diverge from the view represented by Sankara nor any of the non-Vedantic systems can be compared with the so-called orthodox Vedanta in boldness, depth and subtlety of speculation." "It is impossible to read Sankara's writings", writes Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "packed as they are with serious and subtle thinking, without being conscious that one is in contact with a mind of very fine penetration and profound spirituality. * * * * His philosophy stands forth complete needing neither a before nor an after."

Whatever may be the attitude of sectarians towards Sri Sankara's philosophy of Religion, the garnered wisdom of the last 1200 years has found nothing new to correct it, nor anything to add to it.

CHAPTER II

SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION

It is very essential that those who aspire to understand the philosophy of Advaita, should, in the first place, have a clear idea of the scope and possibilities of Science, Philosophy and Religion as aids to the attainment of true knowledge.

SCIENCE.

The investigation into the working of the laws of Nature is the sole object and purpose of Science. Its activity is limited to the sphere of Matter. The aim of Science is not to ask Why? It endeavours to find out how things are. "Science", writes Sir J. Arthur Thomson "never asks the question Why?. That is to say, it never inquires into the meaning or significance or purpose of this manifold Being, Becoming and Having Been."

Science has, no doubt enabled man to gain control over Nature and has also provided him with all facilities to increase his physical comforts. But, it has failed to provide the inquiring mind with an answer for the question 'Why all this?.' "The exploration of the external world by the methods of physical

science leads not to a concrete reality, but to a shadow of symbols, beneath which those methods are unadapted for penetrating", writes Sir Arthur Eddington. "The only legitimate attitude" writes Bertrand Russell, "about the physical world seems to be one of complete agnosticism as regards all but its mathematical propositions." We know nothing of the intrinsic quality of the physical world and therefore do not know whether it is, or is not, very different to that of percepts." The progress of science during the last fifty years has created as many new problems as it has solved. The true nature of the objective phenomena even now, is a matter of doubt and conjecture to the scientists. We are, therefore compelled to seek elsewhere for the means to know and understand the nature of the ultimate reality behind the universe of name and form. We shall have to say in the words of Prof. John Macmurray, "Soon a new generation, grown used to the new age that scientific knowledge has produced will be more impressed by what science cannot do than by what it can: and it is highly probable that then they will turn from science to religion as they have now been turning from religion to science."

PHILOSOPHY

Very many of us think that philosophy and religion are one. They are two different fields of knowledge. A philosopher, in the modern sense of the term, need not be a religious mystic or a saint; nor a religious mystic need be a philosopher. The task of philosophy is to find the one behind the many or the Changeless behind all the changes we perceive. The natural tendency of man is to transcend all the manifold changes and to rest in a state of peace and happiness. Philosophy is the result of this urge in man and it aspires to comprehend the truth by knowing which there may be peace and contentment. The scientist removes things from the whole to which they belong and studies them in isolation with a view to understand the principles of their structure and activity. But the philosopher reasons and argues about things to arrive at the truth which is not perceptible to the senses. Philosophy endeavours to peep into the world of the Universals; science is satisfied with the realities of the physical world. As criticism and logical reasoning are essential factors for philosophical thinking, dogmatism, whether scientific or religious, has no place in philosophy.

Religion and Science have provided, from time immemorial, the necessary data and ins-

piration for the development of philosophical systems. In the West, the pursuit of philosophy was more influenced by science, and therefore, it developed purely as an intellectual activity, and in only very few instances it had a religious significance. The system of Plato, Spinoza and Hegel were mainly religious. In modern philosophy, in the writings of Henri Bergson and Whitehead we can discern the influence of religious ideas though they are mainly scientific. Among living philosophers of repute in the West to-day, Bertrand Russell is purely scientific and gives no place for religious truths. "It is, I maintain, from science rather than from ethics and religion that philosophy should draw its inspiration", writes Bertrand Russell. Such an attitude will only promote agnosticism. Philosophy divested of values can only increase intellectual doubts and reduce life to a mechanical and monotonous boredom. Science has made man subservient to the machine and unless philosophy, based on higher values of life, comes to his rescue, the creed of the future may ultimately be the belief in the omnipotence of the stomach, based on the doctrine of might over right.

In the East, philosophy drew its inspiration from religion and functioned as an aid to

religious realisation. In ancient India philosophers were saints and mystics, and saints were philosophers. Sankara, Ramanuja, Maddhva, Meikanda and Sri Kantha were not only founders of philosophical systems but also were Acharyas of religious sects. Unlike the philosophers of the West who only utilised their intellect to understand the nature of Reality, the Indian thinkers attempted to intuit the Reality with the help of religious sadhanas. What they posited through reason as the reality, they realised as a fact in their mystical experiences.

RELIGION

Religion is the process by which man acquires the necessary qualities of body and mind to experience the Reality behind the objective and subjective phenomena. It is the art of establishing a conscious relationship with the Divine Reality. It is the adventurous journey of the soul into the realms of the supernatural and not a mere bundle of doctrines, dogmas and blind faith. Religious institutions are but aids and not ends in themselves. What the philosopher arrives at by logical thinking, the religious mystic experiences in the super-conscious state. The Absolute of the philosopher is a fact of experience to the religious mystic.

The mystical aspect of religion is not confined to Hinduism or Buddhism or Christianity or Islam. It is not restricted to any particular racial group or caste. It belongs to all forms and types of religion of all countries and of all ages. "Mysticism" writes Rudolf Otto, "is the same in all ages and places, that timeless and independent of history, it has always been identical. East and West and other differences vanish here. Whether the flower of Mysticism blooms in India or in China, in Persia or on the Rhine and in Erfurt its fruit is one. Whether it clothes itself in the delicate Persian verse of a Jalaluddin Rumi or in the beautiful middle German of Meister Eckhart; in the scholarly Sanskrit of the Indian Sankara, or in the laconic riddles of the Sino-Japanese Zen School, these forms could always be exchanged one for the other. For, one and the same experience speaks here, only by chance in varying dialects. East is West and West is East'.

The answer to the question, Why? therefore, lies not in the realm of science or philosophy but in the realm of religious mysticism. Science only studies the phenomena which are within time and space. Philosophy attempts to understand the Reality behind the phenomena.

But it is religion and religion alone that opens the door of the Absolute and ushers in the individual to a world of ineffable peace and bliss. The "mystic lives in the full light of the vision; what others dimly seek, he knows with a knowledge beside which all other knowledge is ignorance".

The Islamic mystic Omar Khayyam says.

You cannot find the Truth by mere debate
Nor if you dole to paupers your estate;
Unless you pine in Love for all your life
You cannot cross through words to Master's gate.

Pining in love for all your life is the path of Mysticism or Religion. Sri Sankaracharya is not only a philosopher of Transcendental Absolutism, but also a great mystic and saint. On the foundation of the highest type of Upanishadic Mysticism, he has constructed the great edifice of Absolute Monism unrivalled by any thinker of the world both East and West.

CHAPTER III

ENQUIRY INTO BRAHMAN

Vedantic Systems of Philosophy are based on the Prasthanas Traya — The Upanishads, Vedanta Sutas and the Bhagavad Gita, and are divided into five schools of thought known as Dwaita (Dualism), Visistadvaita (Qualified-Monism), Dwaitadvaita (Theory of Different and Non - Different), Suddha - Advaita (Pure-Monism), and Kevaladvaita (Absolute-Monism). The exponent of Dwaita is Sri Maddhvacharya; the exponent of Visistadvaita is Sri Ramanujacharya; the exponent of Dwaitadvaita is Sri Nimbarka; the exponent of Suddhadvaita is Sri Vallabha and the exponent of Kevaladvaita is Sri Sankaracharya. All the above Acharyas have written commentaries on the Vedanta Sutas as no one who does not connect his teaching with at least one of the Prasthanas has the right to be called an Acharya or a religious teacher. Although the five Acharyas differ among themselves, yet all of them base their systems on the Prasthanas.

As explained earlier in the previous chapter, philosophy is an intellectual enquiry into the nature of the Ultimate Reality with a view to gain a true knowledge of it. Knowledge is

of three kinds — perceptual, conceptual and intuitional. Hence, the instruments of knowledge (Pramāṇas) are also three — Pratyakṣa (direct sense-perception), Anumāna (inference) and Śruti (intuition). Śruti or Revelations embody the highest mystical experiences of the saints or religious mystics. Perceptual and conceptual knowledge are finite and limited by the laws of nature and mind; intuitional knowledge is supra-mental and belongs to the realm of the Spirit. Through intuition only Reality is capable of being realised or experienced.

Vedantic philosophers have attempted to base their enquiry on the experiences recorded in the Śrutis which are revelations in the sense of being intuitional. The conclusions of philosophy which are the result of rational thinking should not in any way militate against or contradict the experiences of the mystics. The absolute of philosophy and the supra-mental experience of the mystic should not be at variance. If what the philosopher postulates as the Reality contradicts the content of mystic experience, then that endeavour of the philosopher is of no practical value to man. Such pursuits fail to satisfy the quest in man for the Eternal and the Transcendental. The relative is limited and is transitory. When

the fullest benefits of the relative things of the world are exhausted the search for the Infinite or the Transcendental begins. When the delights and joys of the relative world have had their fullest trial, then alone the worth, the value and the meaning of the Transcendental can be understood by us. It is only at this stage that the enquiry into the nature of Reality has a meaning and value. Philosophy, therefore, is really meant to create the necessary mental attitude and serenity in an individual for the dawn of Wisdom. According to Sankara, the purpose of enquiry into the nature of Brahman with the help of conformable arguments, has for its aim the Highest Beatitude, and he emphasises the desire for final release (Mumukshutva) as an essential pre-requisite for all those who desire to enquire into the nature of Brahman or the Ultimate Reality.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRANSCENDENTAL REALITY *

The experience of the mystic is of a transcendental nature. In the mystical state known as Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the Soul realizes the Supreme not with the help of the mind or the intellect, because all experiences gained through the mind are within the domain of matter or: Prakriti. Mental experiences are made up of the stuff of Name and Form (Nama and Rupa). Anything which has a name and form, is finite and objective and, therefore, foreign to the Self—the knower. What really happens in the highest state of Samadhi or Mystical Experience, is, that all sense of duality vanishes, the knower and the known cease to exist, and that which remains is beyond expression. The real content of this state is beyond mental comprehension or description. The superconscious experience is an immediate apprehension of the Reality and not a conclusion of discursive reasoning based on concepts abstracted from sensible experience. This experience is the result of the highest form of super-rational intuition.

* Paramarthika Sat

In the opinion of the mystics, it defies expression, in terms of human attainments, and no adequate report of its content can be given in words. Plato writes, "There is no writing of mine on this subject, nor ever shall be. It is not capable of expression like other branches of study. To find the Father and maker of the Universe is a hard task, and when you have found Him it is impossible to speak of Him before all people." The same truth was taught by Badhva when he was questioned about the nature of Brahman. "Teach me the nature of Brahman, Reverend Sir," Baskali besought Badhva. The latter remained silent. The question was again put. The sage was still silent. The enquirer still persisted. The answer came: "I teach but you do not understand. Silent is Atman." (Sankara Bhasya, 111, 2, 17).

St. Arunagiri says:

“வாய்விட்டுப் பேசொணுதது”

Inexpressible in terms of speech.

Lord Buddha says:

"There is brethren, a state wherein there is neither earth nor water, nor fire, nor the sphere of infinite space, nor the sphere of infinite consciousness, nor the sphere of void,

or the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception: there is no "this world" and no "world beyond" where there is no moon and no sun. That state, brethren, do I call neither a coming nor a going nor a standing still nor a falling away nor a rising up: but it is without fixity, without mobility, without basis. That is the end of woe."

The intuitive insight bestows on the mystic a certitude, beyond the possibility of doubt, about the existence of the Reality. The beliefs and doctrines which the mystics arrive at or entertain or preach after their experience, are the results of their mental reflection upon the inarticulate experience in terms of their traditional religion, education and culture. "Thus in addition to the conviction which all mystics share, we find, in many of them, other convictions of a more local and temporary character, which no doubt become amalgamated with what was essentially mystical in virtue of their subjective certainty." Therefore, those who really desire to understand the content of the superconscious experience, should ignore such accretions and limit themselves to the main central experience which is universal and common to all mystics irrespective of creed and country.

From this point of view, the experiences of a theistic nature are also limited and finite.

The philosophy of Advaita is an enquiry into the nature of the Ultimate Reality based on the experiences (Anubhava) of the Upanishadic Mystics. The Upanishads deal with and describe the nature of Reality not so much by reasoning or dialectics, but by inner experience and realisation. In the Upanishads the search is after the real and the enduring beyond the temporal. This real is Brahman, the Absolute, which is described thus:

“Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the Infinite.

Where however one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else—that is the finite.”

(Chandogya Up. VII. 24.)

When we see, hear, perceive, and know the Self, then all this is known.

(Brihad. Up. 11. 4—5)

Hence, now, there is the teaching ‘Not thus! not so! (Neti, Neti’), for there is nothing higher than this, that he is thus. Now the designation for Him is ‘the Real of the real’

Verily, breathing creatures are the real. He is their Real.

(Brihad. Up. 2. 3. 6.)

That soul (Atman) is not this, it is not that (Neti, Neti). It is unseizable, for it is not seized. It is indestructible, for it is not destroyed. It is unattached, for it does not attach itself. It is unbound. It does not tremble. It is not injured.

(Brihad. Up. 3. 9. 26).

The eye cannot approach It, neither speech, nor mind. We do not therefore know it, nor can we teach It. It is different from what is known, and it is beyond what is unknown. Thus have we heard from the ancients who instructed us upon It.

(Kena Up. 1. 3)

He understands It, who conceives It not, and he understands It not, who conceives It: It is the 'unknown' to the man of true knowledge, but to the ignorant It is the 'known'.

(Kena Up. 2. 3)

The Ultimate is void of any marks (a-linga) whatever.

(Katha. Up. 6. 8)

Without qualities (Nirguna).

(Svet. Up. 6. 11)

Brahman, the Absolute, according to the Upanishads, is beyond all conceptions of the mind. It is the ultimate Subject, the source and seer of even the mind, and cannot, therefore, be the object of any conceptual thinking. Only the man of true illumination can understand Its non-objective character; such men of illumination make no conceptual statements about It. Sri Sankara, true to the Upanishadic tradition, explains Brahman as Indefinable, Unthinkable, Uchangeable, Unmanifested and Eternal. According to him, Brahman is without attributes (Nirguna), without any activity (Nishkriya), without any parts (Niravayava), unconditioned and absolute (Nirupadika), and without any distinguishing element (Nirvisesha). It is free from all qualities and conditions, attributes and parts. The only One without a second. Even the term Sat-Cit-Ananda is a limitation on Its absolute character. Any attempt to describe the unthinkable and the indefinable will bring it under the realm of things endowed with qualities and attributes. It can only be explained by the method of 'Neti! Neti! not this! not this!'

Although this unconditioned, unknowable Brahman transcends all qualities and has a supra mental existence, yet, the Upanishads

speak of It as the background of everything because without It nothing could exist.

“That, verily, whence being here are born, that by which when born they live, that into which on departing they enter—that be desirous of understanding. That is Brahma.”

(Taittiriya Up. 3. 1)

It is everywhere, but not to be discovered anywhere.

The Transcendental Reality of the super-conscious Experience is the only Real in relation to which everything else is non-real or relatively real. Sri Sankara defines this Reality as the Paramarthika Sat—the Existence beyond all relative existences. In fact, It is the Absolute of Philosophy and It transcends the highest of thought. This Absolute or the Paramarthika Sat, is not only of philosophic interest, but also can be experienced in the highest mystical state known as Samadhi. It is beyond the accessible God of religious devotion and yet the background of it. It does not create, it takes no action, possesses no motion. It transcends even the quality of Being.

CHAPTER V.

THE PHENOMENAL WORLD *

According to Sri Sankara, Reality is Absolute and is not conditioned by time, space and causality. He defines Brahman the Absolute as beyond all attributes and conditions. In view of this definition, there arises the question in what sense then the phenomenal universe may be said to be emanating from, subsisting in and dissolving into the Absolute Brahman? Sankara maintains that in no way this question could be satisfactorily answered. If Brahman is the only Reality, then the phenomenal world is un-real. The non-existence of time, space and causality as real categories, reduce the phenomenal world to an appearance. Any attempt to reconcile it with the Absolute Brahman will only end in reducing Brahman to a thing endowed with qualities or conditions which is opposed to the teachings of the Sruti. What the Sruti affirms is the result of intuitive spiritual experience and cannot be negated by intellectual knowledge.

Whatever may be the standpoint of highest spiritual experience, the rational nature in

* Vyavakariya Sat.

man, always, endeavours to relate the phenomenal world to the Absolute. This attempt of man to grasp by his intellect the relationship that exists between the phenomenal and the Absolute has brought into being the various schools of philosophic thought. Sankara solves this problem by his doctrine of Maya or Adhyasa (Theory of illusory superimposition). Maya is not an independent category (Tatwa) or an attribute of Brahman as some erroneously imagine it to be. Maya is a term which Sankara uses to explain the in-explicable, un-definable and un-understandable relationship that exists between the Absolute and the phenomenal.

Maya or Mithya has two meanings in Vedantic literature. One is Apahnavā or negation and the other is Anirvachaniya or in-explicable or un-definable. Sri Padmapada-charya, one of the disciples of Sri Sankara, explains the meaning of the word Anirvachaniya as 'what is different from both (absolute) being and (absolute) non-being.' If there is an entity which can neither be affirmed as real nor can be denied as unreal, then that is an undefinable, inexplicable something. According to Advaita, the phenomenal universe is such an entity. Therefore, when Advaitins say that the world is Maya or

Mithya, they mean that it is neither real nor unreal, but something inexplicable-Anirva-chaniya. Sri Swami Vivekananda, very beautifully explains this position in his lecture on 'MAYA AND ILLUSION': "The Maya of the Vedānta in its last developed form, is neither Idealism nor Realism, nor is it a theory. It is a simple statement of facts—what we are and what we see around us.....This world has no existence. What is meant by this? It means that it has no absolute existence. It exists only in relation to my mind, to your mind and to the mind of everyone else. We see this world with our five senses, but if we had another sense it would appear as something still different. It has, therefore, no real existence; it has no un-changeable, immovable, infinite existence. Nor can it be called non-existence; we see it exists, and we have to work in and through it. It is a mixture of existence and non-existence."

According to the conclusion of modern physics, "A thing is nothing but the correlation of all the aspects which are the sense data. The thing is the system of all the different sense data which appear in all possible perspectives. It is a logical construction and not a real existent," says Bertrand Russell.

According to Russell, the ultimate constituents of matter and energy are mere logical constructions of our own mind, and have no objective correspondence in the outside world. Sir Arthur Eddington says: "In comparing the certainty of things spiritual and things temporal, let us not forget this—Mind is the first and most direct thing in our experience: all else is remote inference."....."That environment of space and time and matter, of light and colour, and concrete things, which seems so vividly real to us is probed deeply by every device of physical science and at the bottom we reach symbols. Its substance has melted into shadow. None the less it remains a real world if there is a background to the symbols—an unknown quantity which the mathematical symbol x stands for. We think we are not wholly cut off from this background. It is to this background that our own personality and consciousness belong."

Maya, therefore, does not mean absolute non-existence like the Sunya of nihilistic Buddhism or the barren woman's child. Swami Vivekananda says: "Maya is not illusion as it is popularly interpreted. Maya is real, yet it is not real. It is real in that the Real is behind it and gives its appearance

of reality. That which is real in Maya is the Reality (the mathematical symbol x of modern physics) in and through Maya. Yet the Reality is never seen, and hence that which is seen is unreal, and it has no real independent existence of itself, but is dependent upon the Real for existence''

Brahman, the Absolute, is Paramarthika Sat and the phenomenal world of plurality is Vyavakariya Sat. Brahman is the only reality that remains in the Transcendental Mystic State. When Brahman is experienced in that state, nothing exists apart from that. It exists without a second. In the Vyavakariya state, that is in the condition where the world exists as real, Brahman appears not to exist. When a man is conscious of the phenomenal world and its activities, he is not conscious of Brahman. Therefore, Sankara considers the Vyavakariya state as real not in the absolute sense but in the relative or phenomenal sense. When man is in bondage, when he is under the influence of Avidya, the world is real to him and it is foolish to deny its existence. The world is only unreal to the man who has realised the Highest, but to the others, it exists as a reality. The world of phenomena has the characteristics of

real existence till the Absolute, the Paramarthika Sat, is realised. After this realisation, the world remains but only as an appearance or a manifestation, having Brahman as the Adhithana or background.

The objective universe of plurality is only an appearance and is not a reality possessing absolute existence. The illustration used in Advaita literature to explain the nature of the phenomenal universe is that of the rope and the snake where the rope appears as a snake to a person because of the absence of light. The rope never changes into a snake but only appears as a snake due to erroneous perception caused by darkness. The snake in the rope is an appearance, but the rope which is the basis of the appearance, is the reality. The snake is a superimposition due to ignorance. The phenomena and the reality behind the phenomena both have the quality of existence (Sat) as their characteristic. The only difference is that which is real has the quality of absolute existence and that which is phenomenal has the quality of relative existence. Because the phenomenal world—Vyavakariya Sat—is negated in the transcendental state of Mystic Experience, it is said to possess a relative existence. But no

experience can negate the Paramārthika Sat which is absolute and Eternal, Real and abiding under all circumstances. It is not caused by anything nor can It be related to anything by the laws of cause and effect. It is the permanent background of all phenomenal appearances. Appearances change, but It never changes. Appearances are real as long as they appear to exist, but the truly wise or the Jivan Muktas know them as such and are never deceived by them.

Advaita considers the world as the product of Nescience (Avidya). Because of Avidya or ignorance, the Reality appears as the phenomenal universe, in the same way that a rope appears as a snake in darkness. The very minute light is brought in, the real rope is perceived and the non-real snake disappears from perception. Correctly speaking, the snake never disappears from existence as it never existed in reality. What actually happens is the disappearance of darkness and the act of erroneous perception caused by darkness. Similarly in the highest mystic state of Jnana, Avidya ceases to exist and the phenomenal world (Vyavakariya Sat) also disappears as a fact of experience, and what remains is the Paramārthika Sat.

If superimposition is due to Maya or Avidya, the question may be asked as to how does Avidya or Maya originate? Brahman, the Absolute, cannot be the cause of it as It is beyond all qualities and conditions. If Maya exists as an entity apart from Brahman, then the statement of the Sruti "That which exists is One without a second," is untrue. The question what is the cause of Maya or Avidya? is the unsolvable problem of philosophy down the ages. To know the cause of Maya one has to transcend Maya or the realm of cause and effect. Cause and effect are successive events in time and space. The concept of causation is phenomenal and is bound by the laws of mind. The Reality is a-logical and transcends reason and intellect. Hence, in the transcendental state no question will ever arise as to the origin of Maya or Avidya.

From what has been discussed so far, it should be clear that according to the philosophy of Advaita, the phenomenal world is not a real transformation (Parinama) of Brahman, but only an illusory transformation (Vivarta Parinama). Sri Sankara, therefore, is a Vivarta-Parinama-Vadi (exponent of the theory of illusory transformation) and not a Nimitto-Upadana-Parinama-Vadi (exponent of

the theory of real transformation) like the exponents of the other schools of Vedanta as Sri Ramanuja, Sri Kanta, Sri Nimbarka and Sri Vallabha.

CHAPTER VI

ATMAN, THE REAL SELF

In the previous article we have been outlining the teachings of Advaita regarding Reality and Its relation to the universe of phenomena. We propose to deal in this article with the teachings of Advaita regarding the Atman, the reality behind the human personality.

The Self or Atman is the transcendent and permanent principle of which the manifested being, the human being, for example, is only a transient modification which in no way can affect the Atman or the real Self. The Self is never individualised and cannot become so. It is not susceptible to any change which would cause it to be other than itself. This transcendental nature of Self is always ignored in our daily life and we live and move as beings possessed of bodies, minds and souls. For the majority of us, the human being is nothing but a physical organism endowed with mind and something known as spirit or soul. Materialistic science denies, even the spirit and rests satisfied with the body and its emergent the mind. But, modern scientific materialism is now showing signs of change and some of

the present day biologists strongly feel that the phenomena of life cannot be satisfactorily said to originate from matter. The study and contemplation on the philosophical doctrines of Advaita are only for those who believe in the spiritual background of life and its ultimate realisation, and therefore, we need not labour much to refute the materialistic standpoint of those who are not interested in the spiritual values of life.

AVASTHATRAYA

Advaita classifies human experiences under three categories and analyses them to arrive at the final truth regarding the nature of Self. Every individual undergoes three states (Avasthas) of consciousness daily in his life which are known as Waking State (Jagrat), Dreaming State (Svapna) and Dreamless Sleep (Sushupti). We consider the state of mind or consciousness in which we carry on the ordinary activities of the world before us as the waking state, and the dream and dreamless states as subordinate to it. But, Advaita on the contrary, takes all the three states - waking, dreaming and dreamless - as equally important and tries to determine the nature of Reality behind the three states of consciousness.

The scientific attitude which is the predominant character of modern culture, drives us more and more into the intricacies of nature and thereby emphasises the waking state as more important than the other two. This attitude narrows down our outlook completely to the things of the world, and makes us more extrovert in thought and action. An introspective turn of mind is essential for the realisation of the inner nature of man. By guiding us to contemplate on each of the three states separately and individually, Advaita helps us to rise above the three states and realise the transcendental nature of the Self or Atman. The states enumerated above, are in reality, not external conditions foreign to the consciousness of the individual who experiences them. They are but different aspects of one's consciousness which he becomes aware of at different periods. They are more intuitively felt or experienced than objectively perceived.

The intellect as an agent of perception does not function in all three states. It cannot function without the aid of the categories of Time and Space and as such, all phenomena experienced in the waking state have time and space as their essential ingredient. The

nature of time and space in dream is not the same as that of the waking state. A man in dream, though lying in his bed, travels thousands of miles without any relation to waking time and space. The time and space experienced in dream, therefore, should be taken to belong to a different type or category peculiar to the dream state only. Because of the absence of the awareness of physical time and space in dream, we are forced into the conclusion that in dream we intuitively feel the experiences than perceive them through the aid of intellect. The awareness of dream results more by identification with the mental modification which occur in the dream state than by an objective perception of events as foreign to the dreamer. In dream, the self identifies itself more with the dream events and experiences them more intensely than it does with the objects of the waking state. In the waking state there is a definite sense of aloofness on the part of the experiencer from the objects of experience.

In waking experience, the self identifies itself completely with the body and with the aid of the senses, perceives the external universe as different and separate from itself. In the dream, the dreamer identifies himself

with the experiences so much that he never gets the idea that he is dreaming. The relationship between the subject and the object is so close in the dream that there is no sense of duality except that of a feeling of awareness. On the contrary, in the waking state, there persists a consciousness of an object and a subject as a permanent background to the process. The very minute a dreamer becomes aware that he is dreaming, the dream ceases and he automatically passes into the waking state.

In deep-sleep or dreamless sleep, the self experiences nothing objectively but only feels a joyful rest. In this state the self exists by itself divested of all associations with gross and subtle environments. It is said that it enters into the Causal Body or Karana Sarira. All activities and manifestations are in abeyance, and the self is all alone. Though, it is alone, yet it is under the influence of Avidya or ignorance.

The three states discussed above are pure psychic conditions created by the environments which are peculiar to the respective states. In the states of Jagrat, Svapna and Sushupti the self identifies itself with the products of

Maya and considers itself to be undergoing births and deaths and experiences pains and pleasures according to its Karma. The experiences of the waking state are conditioned by the contact with gross matter (Sthula Bhuta). The dream experiences are conditioned by subtle matter (Shukshma Bhuta) which are known as Samskaras or impressions in the mind. In the dream state, the self creates the objects of experience out of the impressions (Samskaras) which are latent in the mind in a psychic form. In deep sleep, the self is temporarily freed from the contact of gross and subtle matter and all manifested conditions are reduced to a state of non-manifestation (Avyakta). In it the experiences of the other two states are resolved into their causal condition or state.

APPARENT SELVES

When the self (Jivatman) identifies itself with the body and the organs of perception and experiences the pleasures and pains of the waking state, then it is known as Vaisvanara.

“The first quarter (Pada) is Vaisvanara whose sphere of activity is the waking state, who is conscious of external objects,

who has seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and whose experience consists of gross objects."

(Mandukya Up. 1. 3)

The self in identification with the subtle body experiencing the pleasures and pains of the dream state is known as Taijasa.

"The second quarter (Pada) is the Taijasa whose sphere of activity is the dream, who is conscious of internal objects, who has seven limbs and nineteen mouths and who experiences the subtle objects."

(Man. Up. 1. 4.)

The self in deep-sleep is in a state which is characterised by the absence of physical objects, and mental modifications. It is then known as Prajna.

"That is the state of deep sleep wherein the sleeper does not desire any objects nor does he see any dream. The third quarter (Pada) is the Prajna whose sphere is deep sleep in whom all (experiences) become unified or undifferentiated, who is verily, a mass of consciousness entire, who is full of bliss and who experiences

bliss, and who is the path leading to the knowledge (of the two other states)."

(Man. Up. 1. 5)

Though, Vaisvanara, the empirical-self, Taijasa, the dream-self and Prajna, the self that enjoys the deep sleep, are spoken of as separate entities there is a unity running through them all. In spite of the fact that each state is negated by the other two, yet there is a unitary consciousness or awareness which tries to relate them together as the experiences of one and the same person. There is an abiding consciousness in man, whatever may be the experiences he undergoes, which negates the apparent multiplicity of his personality or being, and asserts his unchangeable eternal Unity.

REAL SELF (ATMAN)

The self of man passes through these states daily, identifying itself with each state for the time being, and later externalises itself by analysing the experiences as foreign to itself. The inherent power to externalise itself, proves the great truth that Vaisvanara, Taijasa and Prajna are but the un-real and apparent selves, and the real abiding Self is that which is associated with the permanent

unchanging consciousness of unity which underlies all the three states. Because the three states are objectively analysed and negated by the Atman, the Real Self, It is said to be the knower and Witness (Sakshi) of all conditions and states. This very Atman is the Highest Reality.

TURIYA

The state beyond the three relative states of consciousness where the Atman shines in Its pure aspect is called Turiya. In this state there is no subjectivity and objectivity and all distinctions of knower, knowledge and knowing vanish. Turiyam transcends Triputi and cannot be described or defined as a state or condition of the ordinary normal consciousness. It is not a continuation of the other three states, nor is it a fourth state. It is the true and real state of the Atman which is ever so. Turiya is nothing newly attained, nor is it the result of any process of knowledge in the relative sense.

Knowledge never brings into existence Turiya. By means of knowledge, we only become aware of the negative aspect of the Upadhis and this reveals the Atman. The knowledge and the revelation do not occur

as two events one following the other. What actually happens is that by the process of neti, neti, we become aware of the Upadhis as foreign to the Self and transcend them. The result of this negation, or transcendence is the realisation of the Atman. The negation and realisation occur simultaneously. The activity of negation is an empirical event but the realisation is beyond time and, therefore, they cannot be related as cause and effect. But, when we attempt to speak about them, they can only be spoken of as events successive in time. The Atman exists even before the negation of the Upadhis as their background, and continues to exist in that condition during and after negation. No instrument of knowledge can establish the Turiya Experience which is non-relational and non-dual. Therefore, we cannot speak of Turiya as a state or condition caused by another state or condition. Even the Srutis do not describe It nor define It. They only help the aspirant (Mumukshu) to experience It and deny the possibility of comprehending It by the process of thought.

“Turiya is not that which is conscious of the internal (subjective) world, nor that which is conscious of the external (objective) world, nor that which is con-

scious of both, nor that which is a mass all sentiency, nor that which is simple consciousness, nor that which is insentient. (It is) unseen (by any sense organ), not related to anything, incomprehensible (by the mind), un-inferable, unthinkable, indescribable, essentially of the nature of consciousness constituting the Self alone, negation of all phenomena, the Peaceful, all Bliss and the Non-dual. This is what is known as the Fourth (Turiya). This is the Atman and It has to be realised".

(Mandukya Up. 1. 7)

In Turiya or the Paramarthika State the Atman Is and the Upadhis do not exist. The rope which is always the rope, appears in darkness as a snake because of one's subjective condition. When the light is brought in, darkness which caused the false perception disappears and the rope is seen in its true form and condition. With the disappearance of Avidya or Ignorance, all Upadhis caused by it also disappear and the Real Self or Atman shines in Its Resplendent Glory. This transcendental state is called Turiya.

BRAHMAN & ATMAN

The Srutis declare that the Reality behind the modifications of the body and mind,

and the phenomenal universe are both identical. The Reality behind the objective universe is known as Brahman; the Reality behind the modifications (upadhis) of the Jivatman is known as Atman. The Upanishads proclaim both as one and the same. Sankara's philosophy of Advaita solely rests on this Eternal Truth of the Upanishads. Advaita Texts very clearly explain this identity by the use of the simile of the 'space inside the pot' and the 'space outside it.' Kata Akasha is the term used for the space inside the pot and Maha-Akasha is the term used for the space outside the pot. Both spaces are one and not different from each other. Yet, the space inside the pot appears as limited and finite because of the Upadhi, the pot. When the pot is carried from place to place, the space inside it also appears to be moving from place to place. In reality, it is not so. What moves about is the Upadhi—the form known as pot (Nama and Rupa). The movement of the pot space is only an optical illusion due to incorrect understanding and not an occurrence in reality. The space inside the pot is neither a part nor an attribute of the space outside it. They are one and the same. The appearance and disappearance of the pot as an object of

perception are events of an empirical nature which do not interfere with the space which is permanent and unchangeable.

The Atman behind the Upadhis—the three states—is compared to the space inside the pot, Katakasha; and the space outside, Maha-akasha, to Brahman. They are one and the same. The duality, which is an empirical fact, is only an illusory appearance—Vivarta Parinama—and this illusory appearance is negated in Turiya.

The Metaphysics of Advaita is completely based on the Maha-Vakyas: TAT-TVAM-ASI (That art Thou) and AHAM-BRAMASMI (I am Brahman). The four Maha-Vakyas spoken of in the Upanishads are: Prajnanam Brahma, (Aitreya Up. 111), Aham Brahmasmi (Brihad Arankyaka Up. 1. 4. 10), Tat Tvam Asi (Chandogya Up. VI. 8. 7) and Ayamatra Brahma (Mandukya Up. 11). The author of Vedantasara deals with Tat—Tvam—Asi and Aham Brahmasmi as the most important of them all. Therefore, they may be considered as the cardinal doctrines of Advaita. The Mahavakyas indicate the Eternal Truth the realisation of which is the purpose of human existence. The aim of all activities according to Advaita, is the realisation of the Divine Nature of man. Religious doctrines, institu-

tions, rituals and symbols are but secondary factors and are not end in themselves. They are unreal and illusory but essential to transcend the great cosmic illusion. Just as a man who has a thorn in his foot seeks the aid of another thorn to remove it, or just as a man uses dirt, to remove another dirt, similarly, we seek the aid of one illusion to get rid of another illusion and in the end transcend both.

Sankara takes his stand on the highest experiences recorded in the Srutis and builds a metaphysical system completely based on them. To relate the Transcendental with the empirical, he brings in the hypothesis of Maya. But, yet Maya is as unreal as the empirical which it tries to explain. Both, Maya and the empirical universe, are transcended in Turiya. From the metaphysical point of view, Advaita maintains the identity of Atman and Brahman for all times and denies all manifoldness, and in doing so, denies not only the creation and destruction of the universe but also individuality and transmigration to souls. Because, the system is purely metaphysical, the emphasis is more on the transcendental (Paramarthika). At the human level, where the empirical is considered real, it outlines a cosmology and theology in keeping with the realistic outlook of life.

There is a certain amount of confusion and misunderstanding about the doctrine of identity among schools of thought which are more religious than metaphysical. The identity spoken of in Advaita, is not the identity of Jivatman and Iswara or God. Tat—Tvam—Asi refers to the oneness of Atman and Brahman in the state of Turiya. God in Advaita refers to Saguna Brahman and Jiva refers to the individual self in conjunction with Avidya. They are separate and remain separate as long as their finitising principles, Maya and Avidya, persist. Theistic religious systems without understanding the metaphysical stand point of Advaita, attack the doctrine of identity as a blasphemous conception outrageous to the religious sentiments of man. Certainly, the Doctrine of identity of God and Jiva is an illogical, irrational and outrageous idea as long as we are bound by the laws of the empirical universe of which we form a part. But, it should not be forgotten that Tat—Tvam—Asi has no bearing to things of the empirical world and it has no meaning to ordinary mortals. It is an Absolute, Transcendental Experience beyond all empirical conceptions as God, (Iswara), Soul (Jivatman) Maya, Avidya and Moksha (Liberation).

CHAPTER VII.

THEOLOGY IN ADVAITA.

We have been, so far, dealing with the Metaphysical or the Transcendental aspect of Advaita. The aim of human existence is the realisation of the identity of the Self or Atman with Brahman. Therefore, the purpose of knowledge should be the attainment of this end or aim. A knowledge that fails to provide man with the means to attain this is not true knowledge. Advaita, with this in view, divides knowledge into two kinds. Absolute knowledge or Para Vidya is that which helps the direct realisation of Brahman. Relative knowledge or Apra Vidya is that which helps one to live a life of happiness and well-being in the empirical world of relative values. An intellectual understanding of the laws of nature, devotion to God (Iswara or Saguna Brahman) with the aid of religious institutions, and the study of the sacred scriptures, all come under Apra Vidya.

* "There are two knowledges to be known, as indeed the knower of Brahma are wont to say a higher (Para) and also a lower (Apra). Of these, the lower is the Rig Veda, the Yajurveda, the Sama

Veda, the Atharva Veda, Siksha, Kalpa, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Chandas, Jyotish. Now, the higher is that whereby That Imperishable (Akshara) is apprehended.”
(Mundaka Upanishad)

Because of the two kinds of knowledge and way of life, Advaita posits two aspects for Brahman—Nirguna and Saguna. Nirguna Brahman is the highest and is beyond all attributes and conditions. The object of Para Vidya or higher knowledge is the realisation of Nirguna Brahman. This is only possible by **right cognition** and the result is emancipation from transmigration (Samsara). The object of Apra Vidya or lower knowledge is the realisation of wordly happiness and prosperity and the attainment of Krama-Mukti or abode in the Heavens. The worship of God or Iswara helps one to attain Krama-Mukti for a period, but never helps the cessation of transmigration. Souls which attain Krama-Mukti are born again in the world and continue to progress by performing tapas till they attain right cognition and thereby Moksha or emancipation.

“Liberation can be through (an intuitive) knowledge alone about the Ultimate Truth, and not by any other means,

just as one's dream is never sublated except by one's own awakening."

(Panchadasi VI. 210.)

The man of realisation views everything from the point of view of the Absolute Experience (Turiya) in which the Absolute Brahman is the sole reality and everything else is unreal or Vivarta. But, the man of the world accepts the categories of empirical life as real and fundamental. To him God or Iswara or Saguna Brhman is a reality. By the categories of life, we mean, the temporal, operative life of man and animals; the life of instincts and desires, of adaptation and environment, of progress and civilisation, of devotion to God and the attainment of Heaven. In short, we mean the world of He, She and It.

Advaita takes its stand on the Transcendental aspect of Reality and rejects the phenomenal as relative and impermanent. It, in no way even for a moment, attempts to compromise its position. Because of its absolute character, it is considered as a purely metaphysical system without any bias towards Theistic or Pantheistic doctrines and dogmas. Those who have a leaning towards religious

beliefs and institutions look upon Advaita with a suspicious eye and attack it as an atheistical system of thought more influenced by Nihilistic Buddhism. An Advaitin is not an irreligious or an atheistic individual. He may belong to any religious sect and may worship in any Temple or Church or Mosque. For him all religions are of equal status and value. He has no sect to preach nor any dogma to defend. All dogmas and doctrines are real to him and at the same time unreal or relatively real from the transcendental point of view. To him, Right Cognition is the only path and this may be attained through the aid of any religious sect, symbol or ritual, or even without them.

The world of He, She and It are real as long as man is in the relative or empirical plane of existence. When the world is taken to be real, then it has a creator, preserver and destroyer. God or Iswara is the sole guide and controller of the Universe and the power which operates in and through Him is called Sakti or Maya. Sakti emanates from God and from Her the manifold objects. As long as the evolutionary process lasts, the world is real and the souls which are many and real, go round the cycle of birth and death

according to their Karma till they attain emancipation by right cognition.

The Advaita Philosophy of religion is based on the aforesaid assumptions and, therefore, its religious doctrines, belief and rituals are similar to those of other theistic cults. So long as the individual soul exists, God also exists separate from it, controlling and guiding its activities towards higher developments and attainments. As such, devotion to God is an indispensable necessity for the well-being of every one. Through His Grace, the individual progresses gradually towards final emancipation.

The conception of a determinate Saguna Brahman or Iswara is an empirical necessity and has a pragmatistical value. "The Reality or Iswara, in Sankara's philosophy, is not a self-evident axiom, is not a logical truth, but an empirical postulate which is practically useful."* According to Sankara, Brahman, in his Saguna Aspect, is the cause of the empirical world.

Iswara is Brahman associated with Maya. Maya is the Sakti or power of Iswara and it co-exists with him. It is an attribute of Iswara as heat is to fire. Though Iswara

*. adhakrishnan

and Jiva are products of Maya, Iswara controls Maya and uses it as His power, but the Jiva is under the influence of Maya. God -Iswara- helps the Jiva to liberate itself from the bondage of Maya.

Maya has two qualities or functions, one is the act of hiding the Reality (Avarana) and the other is the act of misrepresenting (Vikshepa) the Reality and making It appear as the phenomenal universe. Maya is, therefore, the immediate cause of the universe of objects. The power that makes the Self to perceive the Reality as the world of objects is Avidya. "When we look at the problem from the objective side, we speak of Maya, and when from the subjective side, we speak of Avidya, even as Brahman and Atman are one, so are Maya and Avidya one. * * * The space-time-cause world is the view of reality given to us through Avidya, which is adapted to the purpose of presenting us with such a world."*

Although, the metaphysical and the empirical points of view are entirely irreconcilable, yet Sankara outlines a metaphysical background for the empirical also. Pure transcendental idealism is only capable of being

*Radhakrishnan

understood and practised by a very few who are anxious to tread the path of Self-Realisation, and therefore, it is meant only for them alone. The majority cannot rise up to this level and for them, he outlines an empirical metaphysics or popular religion, accepting the traditional views of Soul, God Maya, Avidya and Moksha. In this scheme, Maya and its evolutes are traced to Saguna Brahman or Iswara. Everything evolves from God and in the end gets absorbed into Him. The cosmology of Advaita is more or less based on the Sankhya categories. In Sankhya, material objects are traced to Prakriti which is absolutely different from Purusha. But, Advaita theology connects Prakriti or Maya and Purusha or Spirit, to Saguna Brahman or God. Sakti or Prakriti or Maya evolves out of God and after dissolution of the world, it enters into God and exists in a potential form as His Sakti. Individual souls are reflections of Iswara or God in Maya. Souls have no independent existence like the Purushas of Sankhya. They are only the Reality reflected in Maya, and therefore, have no existence apart from Iswara. Sankara's conception of death, life after death and Karma and its working, are the same as those found in the other Hindu religious sects, and therefore,

need not be elaborated here by us. In the practical side of religion, he preaches nothing new and simply follows what are taught in the Upanishads and other scriptures relating to devotion, rituals and ceremonies.

PRAVRITI AND NIVRITI

The empirical life of practical activity is known as the path of Pravriti. As long as one is in the Pravriti Marga or the external way, he should follow the injunctions of the sacred scriptures and lead a life of devotion to God and service to humanity. One should seek the Grace of God and lead a virtuous life in order that he may be able to enter the path of Nivriti or the Spiritual life. For those who have seen through the glamour and un-real nature of the universe, the desire for emancipation comes. They begin to yearn for the Absolute. They are the mature souls (Mumukshus) who can really understand the metaphysical standpoint of Advaita. They direct not their thoughts to the external universe but try to dive deep within themselves to realise the Supreme Identity. They are the adepts who tread the path of the Mystical Way, which leads towards right cognition and identity with the Absolute. It is they who have the right to speak of the illusory

character of the empirical world and not those who are immersed in the path of Pravriti. Sri Sankara has very clearly and explicitly maintained the difference between the two positions and has shown the spheres where theology or practical religion is indispensable and where pure metaphysics is essential.

CHAPTER VIII

ADVAITA SADHANA

Religious activity is an empirical process, yet it is essential for the realisation of the Transcendental. This paradoxical position is beyond human understanding. The Ultimate Reality is beyond all relative approaches and hence cannot be comprehended by the mind. But, in spite of this, the goal of human existence is said to be the realisation of identity with the transcendental. Whatever may be the logical standpoint of an Advaitin, the practical realisation of the identity he speaks of or posits, is only achievable through the path of religion. By religion, we do not connote any particular sect or creed. We mean by it, the practical application of those spiritual principles which bring about the required transformation in an individual, so as to enable him to realise the goal or aim of existence. In fact, true religion, is a course of spiritual discipline meant to remove gradually the barriers that separate man from the Divine. Vivekananda defines religion as the manifestation of the Divinity in man.

ADHYAROPA

So long as man takes the world to be real, he will cherish a desire to enjoy the things of the world and would hanker after them day and night. Out of ignorance, he identifies himself with the phenomenal universe which is everchanging and un-real. The Reality is Brahman the Absolute. Because of Avidya or ignorance, we superimpose the world of appearance on It and go after the world of appearance with excitement and emotion. This tendency or condition of existence is called Adhyaropa in Advaita Texts.

“Adhyaropa is the superimposition of the un-real on the real, like the false perception of a snake in a rope which is not a snake.”

(Vedantasara, Ch. II. 32)

APAVADA

Man's bondage and the ups and downs of life arising as a result of it, are due to Adhyaropa, the tendency of mistaking the un-real for the real. So long as this condition persists in an individual, he has to go round the cycle of birth and death till he attains real knowledge. As a result of experience

gathered in an innumerable rounds of births and deaths, an individual begins to realise the transitory nature of the pleasure and pains of life and he longs for a life of peace and un-alloyed bliss. At this stage of his life, he endeavours to understand the real nature of the phenomenal world and tries to grasp at the Reality behind the fleeting things. This urge to perceive the real behind the phenomenal is called Apavada. It is the beginning of the path of Self-Realisation known also as the Nivriti Marga or the Mystic Way. Apavada culminates in the realisation of the Supreme Reality. Apavada is defined thus :

“As a snake falsely perceived in a rope is ultimately found out to be nothing but the rope; similarly the world of unreal things, beginning with ignorance superimposed upon the Reality, is realised, at the end, to be nothing but Brahman. This is known as Apavada or de-superimposition.”

(Vedantasara, Ch. IV. 137)

Apavada is the only process by which Adhyaropa can be annihilated. Darkness can only be dispelled by light. Unless light is

brought in, darkness will never disappear. Any amount of adjustments with it will never help us to get rid of it. A person who has hypnotised himself into a state of ill-health will have to de-hypnotise himself back to normal health. Before one could start the process of de-hypnotising, it is imperative for him to realise that he is in a state of ill-health. Unless one becomes aware of his state and the causes which led to it, the endeavour to regain normal health cannot be successful. Similarly, the essential conditions for the dawn of a real religious life, are the realisation of the un-real nature of the world of sense pleasures, and an earnest desire to be free from their bondage. The following lines of Kaivalya Navaneetham, very beautifully portray the state of mind of the man who has realised the transitory nature of existence.

“மாயவாழ் வெனும் சோகத்தால்
உணங்கினே நையனே யென்
உள்ளமே குளிரும் வண்ணம்.”

The path of realisation or the religious life is only meant for those who dread the world as poison and to none else. Formal religion which aims at rewards in this life and hereafter, is absolutely different from real religion spoken of in the Advaita Texts.

Formal religion is a social institution, but real religion is a spiritual discipline based on self-sacrifice, self-control, renunciation and universal love. The former is full of Kamya Karmas - ceremonies performed with a definite motive or desire. The latter is full of Niskamya Karmas - duties performed without any desire for reward. Niskamya Karmas only can purify the mind and make one fit for the highest realisation.

FUNDAMENTAL QUALIFICATIONS

All Advaita Texts as — a matter of fact all religious scriptures of the world-expect certain qualifications from those who aspire to tread the path of realisation and emphasise over and over again, that the attainment of true knowledge is not possible without them. Apart from the study of the sacred scriptures and devotion to God (Bhakti), there are four fundamental requisites that are absolutely essential for all those who desire to adopt the path of Self-Realisation. They are:

1. Discrimination between the Real and the un-real (Nityanitya vastu Viveka).
2. Renunciation of the enjoyment of reward here in this world and in the next world (Ihamuthrarthapalabhoga viraga).

3. Attainment of six means (Samadhi-Sadka-Sampatti), viz; Tranquillity (Shama), Control of passions (Dama), Renunciation (Uparati), Patient Endurance (Titiksha), Self-Settledness (Samadhana; and Unflinching Faith based on clear and rational thinking (Shraddha).
4. Longing for Emancipation (Mumukshutva).

Sri Sankara, in addition to the above, enumerates three other essential factors which are indispensable for a seeker after Truth. They are : intellectual attainments, longing for liberation and the protecting care of a perfected sage (Jivanmukta). The man who has been blessed with the above three privileges is sure to progress on the path of Truth. He who having been born a human being with intelligence and learning, fails to study the scriptures and exert himself for self-liberation, verily commits suicide, for he kills himself by clinging to things of the world.

The four fundamental qualifications enumerated above cannot be acquired by an individual all of a sudden. They only manifest gradually in a person who is well-versed in the religious scriptures of his sect and who has regularly performed his Nitya and

Naimitika Karmas with sincere devotion to God. The Nitya Karmas are: Morning and Evening worship, Study of the Scriptures, and Observance of all ethical and moral rules of conduct in daily life. Naimitika Karmas are the ceremonies and rituals performed on special occasions and they are obligatory on all householders. Upasana is devotion to one's own ideal or Istam which may be Iswara or Guru.

NITYA-NĀIMITIKA-KARMAS

The purpose of Nitya and Naimitika Karmas is the purification of the mind. Upasana or Devotion promotes mental concentration and tranquility. There are individuals who are intellectually convinced of the necessity to realise the Highest Truth but yet feel weak to tread the path. Such people should engage themselves constantly in meritorious acts. When an individual is not capable of completely devoting his life to the pursuit of Self-Realisation, he should at least, refrain from evil actions and endeavour to do good. A life of devotion to God and service to fellow beings will help one to attain purity of mind - Chitta Suddhi, which will enable him to acquire true renunciation and tranquility of mind. Performance of

Nitya and Naimitika Karmas are prescribed only for those who desire to purify their minds with a view to qualify themselves for Self-Realisation. Unless one has an earnest desire for the highest spiritual realisation, he will not endeavour to practise Niskamya Karmas. Majority of people are drawn more towards Kamya Karmas because they desire benefits and rewards in this life and the life to come.

The performance of duties with devotion to God or Guru, purifies the mind and destroys the tendency towards sinful acts. An individual with a purified mind will acquire a correct sense of values and will be able to discriminate between that which is right and wrong; real and un-real. He will cease to care for the fruits of action and will earnestly desire to attain a state of equanimity and calmness. He will only possess one desire and that is the desire for liberation. When the desire for liberation dominates his mind, the search for the Guru who could guide him and lead him towards Self-Realisation begins.

GURU

The path of realisation is not a bed of roses. It is thorny and rugged and full of

pitfalls and disappointments. Therefore, the guidance of a spiritual master is imperative. No man can walk on the path without a competent guide and on this point all religions are agreed. The blind cannot lead the blind. He who has not realised the Truth cannot guide another towards It. Spiritual illumination is only possible for those who have completely transformed their lower self by proper Sadhana. Mere intellectual attainments and mastery of the intricacies of ritualism cannot qualify a man to be a Guru. He who has attained the Highest can only help another to attain It. Sri Sankara describes a Guru as one

"Who is versed in the Vedas, sinless, unsmitten by desire and knower of Brahman par excellence, who has withdrawn himself into Brahman, is calm like fire that has consumed its fuel, who is a boundless reservoir of mercy that knows no reason, and a friend of all good people who prostrate themselves before him."

"There are good souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring, and who having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and

death; help others to cross the same without any motive whatsoever."

(Viveka Chudamani, 33 & 37.)

The seeker after Truth, having discovered a holy person of the type spoken above, should surrender himself to him, nay, take refuge in him, and endeavour his best to live up to his teachings with faith, hope and devotion.

REAL AND THE UN-REAL

The first requisite essential for an aspirant in the path of Self-Realisation, is the ability to discriminate between the real and the un-real objects of experience. In another sense, this means the development, in an individual, of a proper sense of values. Things in themselves possess no inherent quality of value as such. The value of a thing entirely depends on its relation to the individual who is in need of it or uses it. Objects which are considered indispensable at a certain stage of one's life are rejected as useless or of no value at another period of life. They gain a place of importance only according to the capacity they possess in satisfying man's need. If the things of the world are said to possess no intrinsic value except the

one which the enjoyer puts on them, then, what is the real position of the world of objective phenomena?

In the common - sense world of everyday life, the objective phenomena and the subjects who experience them are taken as two different groups. What - ever may be the conclusions of science and philosophy, this dual relationship exists in all objective experience. The individual who is possessed of a body, mind and a something which he calls the spirit or soul, considers the world as a real objective fact of experience. He, never for a moment, dares to question its validity or existence. The idea of unreality in relation to the world never enters his stream of consciousness. Whatever his senses report, he takes them to be true and acts on them. So long as man is satisfied with the environments and the reactions such environments create in him, he never pauses to question the validity of his senses, nor the reality of the external world which is perceived with the aid of the senses. This is the common man's position in regard to the world of phenomena. He seeks not only to enjoy the pleasures of this world but also the pleasures of the next world by fulfilling the injunctions of the religious scriptures.

Worldly minded people are not concerned with religion as a means of liberation from births and deaths. To them religion is only a social institution meant to promote a life of well-being, here and hereafter. They do not endeavour to discriminate between the real and the un-real because everything that exists as objects of experience is absolutely real for them. They only manipulate their religious and social environments, in such a way, as to enable them to live a life of ease and comfort.

Science in the twentieth century gives a different picture of the ultimate nature of the world as opposed to the common-sense point of view. Though, the world of phenomena appears real and concrete in everyday life, scientific analysis has reduced the phenomenal appearance to shadows and mathematical symbols of an abstract nature. It has removed the concreteness of matter and has made it a mental concept. "Matter is a convenient formula for describing what happens where it isn't. I am talking physics, not metaphysics; when we come to metaphysics, we may be able, tentatively, to add something to this statement, but science alone can hardly add to it. Materialism as a philosophy becomes hardly tenable in view of this evaporation

of matter."¹ "What, then, is matter? Matter is a kink in space-time, as electron 'mush', a wave of probability undulating into nothingness, a collection of charges of electricity which are not charges in anything, a system of spatio-temporal events whose qualities are exclusively mathematical. A world of matter so conceived is so shadowy and insubstantial that some physicists are inclined to follow Berkeley or Kant, and to regard it as an emanation from or a construction of their own minds—it is variously described as an inference from events in the brain and body, a projection from consciousness, a phenomenal selection made by consciousness from a noumenal world—and assert that reality is in its fundamental nature mental, as unhesitatingly as their predecessors announced fifty years ago that reality was material and mind a creation of matter".² If modern science has reduced matter—the phenomenal universe—to a mental concept or a mathematical formula, then, what happens to the ordinary man's world? It nevertheless, continues to exist and provides satisfaction to one and all. How are these two points of view to be reconciled? Advaita provides the answer.

1. Outline of Philosophy by Bertrand Russell, p. 165.
2. Guide to Philosophy by C. E. M. Joad, pp 313—14

Even as the ordinary world of common-sense, is within time and space, so is the world of science. The difference is one of degree in manifestation. One is grosser and the other is subtler or finer. The Reality transcends both. As long as man is in Avidya or ignorance, he experiences the world as real whether on the scientific level or on the ordinary level of common-sense.

Advaita Vedanta maintains that the world is real as long as Avidya persists in man and states that the reality ascribed to the world of phenomena is not of an absolute character. The real is the transcendental and the world of phenomena is only relatively real. Therefore, the search for the Real is not to be made in the realm of objective phenomena but within the seeker. The real within us, gives a colour of reality to the world of phenomena. The Srutis declare that the Reality is the background of the phenomenal. Unless one is awakened to this conception of Reality, he is not fit or qualified to tread the path of Advaita Sadhana. He must become absolutely certain about the illusory character of all phenomenal appearances, both subjective and objective, and be established in the Atman, the Real within.

It is only then that he would get the strength and courage to go through the process of de-super-imposition—Apavada.

The insight into the illusory character of phenomenal existence may come to an individual in the flash of a moment. But, yet, it is the result of the cumulative effect of experience and knowledge gathered by him in innumerable rounds of births and deaths. A trifling incident or a sad bereavement or a painful disappointment, is enough to bring about this change in one's consciousness. This awakening comes unawares and under different types of circumstances and conditions. There is no uniformity in its occurrence. It came to the Buddha while he was in the royal palace enjoying the best of comforts and luxuries. The transformation this awakening brought in his life and through him in the world, is the greatest miracle in history.

This awakening is a pure psychical process by which, all of a sudden, the person concerned loses all attachment for the things of the world and turns his mind away from them with disgust. He begins to feel an emptiness within himself and yearns for an abiding and permanent experience. This change

does not remove the objects of experience from his field of consciousness, but, it only removes the emotional reaction towards them. He continues to perceive the things of the world and to act in relation to them, but of course without any emotional reactions. To the one who has experienced such an awakening, an analytical study of the nature of phenomena will help a good deal to strengthen his intellectual certainty regarding the unreal nature of the phenomenal universe. Unless the sense world of everyday experience, is negated by the process of analysis, the mind cannot be directed towards the Real—the Absolute of Mystical Experience. The Real is the Atman or Brahman. All subjective and objective phenomena based on dual experience are unreal. The Advaita Sadhaka should fully know that the world is illusory and that Brahman alone is real. The un-real is transitory, illusory, casual and changeful. The Real is abiding, Eternal and Blissful. The aim of Advaita is to realise the Atman by the process of negating all that are unreal and phenomenal. Therefore, the whole edifice of Advaita Sadhana is built on Discrimination between the Real and the unreal—Nityanitya Vastu Viveka.

DESIRELESSNESS (Ihamuthrārtha-Pala- Bhoga - Viraga)

The second essential requisite for a Sadhaka is the attainment of the state of complete desirelessness. It is said in the scriptures that one should not even desire to possess God.

ஆசையறுமின்கள் ஆசையறுமின்கள்
நசுனோடாயினும் ஆசையறுமின்கள்
ஆசைபடப்பட ஆய்வருந் துன்பங்கள்
ஆசைவிடவிட ஆனந்த மாமே.

(Destroy desire, destroy desire,
destroy, even, desire for God.

The more you desire, the more miserable art thou!
Cessation of desire is Bliss)

The spiritual aspirant should not only cease to desire worldly pleasures, but also heavenly states of happiness. All enjoyments, whether of this world or of the next, are finite and relative and hence, un-real and transitory.

The objects of enjoyment hereafter, such as heavenly abode, etc., being as transitory as the enjoyment of such earthly objects as a garland of flowers, sandal paste and sex-pleasures, which are transitory, being results of action—an utter disregard for all of them is renunciation of the enjoyment of fruits of action in this world and hereafter.

(Vedantasara. Ch. 1. 17.)

Abode in heaven is as impermanent and transitory as abode on earth.

And as here on earth, whatever has been acquired by exertion perishes, so perishes whatever is acquired for the next world by sacrifices and other good actions performed on earth. (Chand. Up. 8-1-6)

Possessions take different forms for different people. Some aspire to possess riches and material comforts; others desire to possess intellectual abilities, leadership and fame in the field of religion or politics or scholarship. The actuating motive behind all endeavours is one and the same, tendency of possession. The individual who goes to a temple for worship with a view to obtain prosperity and health, and the individual who seeks favours from persons placed in better positions in life and from institutions are both impelled by the same selfish desire to possess. The means may be different but the purpose or aim is the same. Therefore, both are worldly in out-look. Because one seeks health and wealth through worship and rituals, it does not follow that he is more religious than the other who seeks them by other means. That is why religious scriptures emphasise on **desirelessness** as an **essential qualification** for a

truly spiritual life. The tree of spirituality cannot grow, blossom and bear fruits in the hearts of those who do not possess desirelessness.

The mystics of all ages and of all faiths agree that voluntary poverty is indispensable for the mystical quest or self-realisation. By poverty, we mean the utter self-stripping, the casting off of all desires for things of this world and that of the next—a complete detachment from all objects of experience whether subjective or objective. He who wants to realise the Transcendental, should even renounce the idea of service to others whether religious or social or political. "First seek ye the Kingdom of God" is the advice of Jesus and he further says that everything else will be added unto you later. In another place he says "Blessed are the poor in spirit for their's is the Kingdom of God". This means poverty in mental attitude and not in physical possessions. The inner man should be free from the desire for possessions. One may live in the midst of wealth and plenty, but what is required is absolute detachment for the things of the world. In detachment, the spirit finds quiet and repose, nothing wearies it by elation nor oppresses it by

dejection. It is the idea of possession that poisons the relation between the self and the external world and divides the world into "mine" and "not - mine". Poverty is that celestial virtue whereby all earthly things are trodden underfoot and whereby all hindrances are removed so that the soul may freely join itself to God the Eternal.

SHAT-SAMPATTI - Six Means.

The third essential requisite for an aspirant is the acquirement of the six means—Sama (tranquillity), Dama (control of the senses), Uparati (renunciation), Titiksha (patient endurance), Samadhana (self-settledness) and Shraddha (faith).

SAMA

The instruments of objective knowledge and action are of two kinds—internal and external. The internal organs are Manas (unifying faculty), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (faculty of feeling), and Ahankara (faculty of egoism). They are collectively known as Antahkarana. The external organs are Gnana-indriyas (five senses of preception): Sight, Hearing, Taste, Touch and Smell, and the Karmendriyas (instruments of action): organs of speech, the hands, the feet, the organs

of evacuation and generation. Sama is the endeavour or practice of keeping the vrittis of the Antahkarana perfectly under control. What Western psychology calls the mind, Indian psychology calls the Antahkarana. Modern psychology divides the activities of the mind into various groups of faculties and what is known as mind is the collective name for the various functions of the inner organ of knowledge and understanding. In Indian or Hindu psychology, the inner faculties of knowing and understanding are known as Antahkarana which is divided into Manas, the unifying principle involved in sensation, Buddhi, the faculty of reasoning, Chitta, the faculty of feeling and Ahankara, the faculty of I-ness. Whatever is ushered in by the Gnanendriyas, organs of preception, is acted upon by the inner faculties and thereby knowledge of the external world or objects is attained.

Sama deals with the control of the inner faculties. By the practice of Nitya - nitya-Vastu - Viveka (Discrimination) and Ihamuth-rartha - Pala - Bhoga - Viraga (Desirelessness) a sadhaka acquires a mental state by which the mind or the Antahkarana effortlessly gets detached from the objects of experience. This attainment helps him to keep the mind in

perfect tranquillity and to direct it towards the only real object, Brahman. Sankara defines Sama thus:

The resting of the mind steadfastly on its Goal (viz: Brahman) after having detached itself from the manifold of sense-objects by continually observing their defects, is called Sama or calmness.

(Vivekachudamani. 22)

Sama is also a vritti or activity of the Antahkarana. But, this activity is the curbing of the mind from all objects except the thought Brahman, the Real. One should absolutely be irresponsive to the message of the external organs of perception and be concentrated on the Real and the way to realise It. Sama is not attainable without Dama.

DAMA

Dama is the control of the external organs of perception and action. Sama and Dama are interdependent activities. For a man well established in Sama, proficiency in Dama is not very difficult. When the mind is not attached to the things of the world, the organs of perception, by themselves, do not get attracted towards the objects, nor do

the Karmendriyas function without direction from the Antahkarana (mind). The senses do not function, unless, they are urged by the Antahkarana or mind.

Turning both kinds of sense-organs away from sense-objects and placing them in their respective centres is called Dama or self-control.

(Vivekachudamani. 23.)

In Dāma the sense of hearing is the only organ which functions. It is utilised for hearing the attributes of Brahman to enable the mind to dwell on it perpetually.

UPARATI

Uparati is that tendency of renouncing everything worldly, which obstructs the realisation of Brahman. It is not the act of giving up every form of activity and living a life of idleness. No man in the world can give up activity or work as long as he lives. As long as we possess a body, we form a part of nature, and our body is governed by the laws of nature. One essential characteristic of nature is its incessant activity. Everything in this world is in a perpetual state of motion. Nature knows no such thing as rest. Therefore, if anyone

thinks that he can be inactive physically, or mentally it is only a delusion born of absolute ignorance of the laws of nature. It is said in the Gita:

For no one can remain even for a moment without doing work; every one is made to act helplessly by the impulses born of nature.

He who restrains his organs of action but continues in his mind to brood over the objects of sense, whose nature is deluded is said to be a hypocrite (a man of false conduct).

Ch. 111. 5 & 6.

Therefore, Uparati, does not mean giving up all activities and desires. It means the giving up of only worldly activities and desires. It is the performance of action without attachment, after controlling the senses. No man can attain spiritual freedom by the mere renunciation of action.

Do thou thy allotted work, for action is better than inaction; even the maintenance of the physical life cannot be effected without action.

Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform action which is duty, for by

performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the Supreme. Let him (jnānin) not unsettle the minds of the ignorant who are attached to action. The enlightened man doing all works in a spirit of Yoga should set others to act (as well).

Ch. 111. 8. 10. 26.

Says Sri Krishna in the Gita.

Work is absolutely essential for mental purification and eradication of past Samskaras. Uparati, therefore, is not a negative path of lazy inactivity in the name of religion, but a path of activity based on non-attachment and self-control. It is the positive act of abandoning all selfish motives of action and the performance of action with the sole aim of Self-Realisation. It is a life of discrimination, self-control, detachment and contemplation and such a life cannot be said to be one of inactivity.

TITIKSHA

Titiksha is the patient endurance of all forms of pains. By the practice of Titiksha, one acquires the capacity to bear heat and cold, pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow without any emotional disturbance. He who

is proficient in Titiksha develops an even mindedness towards all pairs of opposites.

The bearing of all afflictions without caring to redress them, being free (at the same time) from anxiety or lament on their score, is called Titiksha or forbearance.

(Vivekachudamani, 24.)

SAMADHANA

Samadhana or self-settledness is the activity of constant concentration on the Real—Brahman. He who is fully endowed with the qualities enumerated above, will naturally be free from doubts and difficulties regarding the real purpose and aim of life. He will be calm and collected and cannot be deceived by any rewards pertaining either to this or to the next world. His mind will be fully concentrated on the Supreme Reality. His interest in the Reality is not like that of the intellectual philosopher who is drawn to the study of the Reality out of curiosity. His thirst for the Reality is the outcome of his realisation of the emptiness of the world and the need for something enduring which could bring solace and happiness to his psychic personality. Because the world has ceased to have an absolute value for him,

it cannot disturb his equilibrium. When one is attuned to the one thought of Self-Realisation, then he is said to have attained the state of Samadhana.

Not the mere indulgence of thought (in curiosity) but the constant concentration of the intellect (or the affirming faculty) on the ever pure Brahman is what is called Samadhana or self-settledness.

(Vivekachudamani, 26.)

The sādḥaka who has attained Samadhana will be at peace within himself and with everybody else. Nothing will disturb him. His sole activity will be towards the pursuit of Truth.

SHRADDHA

Shraddha is rationalised faith in the words of the Guru and the teachings of the Scriptures. What is required is not a blind faith in the doctrines and dogmas of religious institutions, but a faith in the Srutis which deal with the path of realisation and the words of the spiritual teacher who has experienced the highest mystical state of absolute one-ness. There are two kinds of religious scriptures, the Srutis and the Smritis. The Srutis are books which deal with the eternal

principles which guide and regulate the life of a sadhaka. They are utterances of saints and mystics who have had the highest spiritual experience. The Smritis deal with religion in its social aspect, and as such, are not absolute in character.

A spiritual aspirant should study the Srutis in a rational way and convince himself of the truth of their teachings. After a proper study and understanding of the Srutis under a competent teacher one should form his judgment about them. A conviction born of patient study, research and understanding can only foster the growth of faith and stabilise it firmly.

In addition to faith in the Srutis, devotion to one's own Guru is an absolute necessity. Without the guidance of a Guru the goal of self-realisation cannot be attained. Only through the Grace of the Guru, the yearning for freedom is satisfied. The Guru is the visible symbol of God on earth. The Grace of God manifests more fully through a Guru than through anything else. The Scriptures and the Guru are the two indispensable factors in the life of a sadhaka which constantly help him and guide him towards the Ideal.

Acceptance by firm judgment of the mind as true of what the scriptures and the Guru instruct, is called by the sages Shraddha or faith, by means of which the Reality is perceived.

(Vivekachudamani. 25.)

MUMUKSHUTVA

The fourth essential requisite for those who seek to tread the path of Advaita Sadhana is Mumukshutva—the yearning for liberation, in this birth, here and now. The aspirant who has acquired the first three qualifications will naturally be anxious to obtain liberation or Mukti. He cannot rest until he attains the Goal. An intense yearning to be free from bondage is Mumukshutva.

Mumukshutva or yearning for Freedom is the desire to free oneself, by realising one's true nature, from all bondages from that of egoism to that of the body—bondages super-imposed by Ignorance.

(Vivekachudamani. 27)

It was said in the section dealing with Desirelessness, that an Advaita Sadhaka should not have any desire, not even the desire to attain heaven. Therefore, a doubt may natur.

ally arise in the minds of the readers as to how one could possess the desire for liberation, when all desires are considered barriers for Self-Realisation. The longing for liberation is not a worldly desire for the possession of anything or for the attainment of any state foreign to one's own nature. The aim of an Advaita Sadhaka is to be free from ignorance and the Upadhis which limit his true nature. The real nature of the Soul or Atman is Divine. The Self, in its true aspect, is beyond all Upadhis and limitations.

When a person, for reasons unknown to him, finds himself caught [in a room or an enclosure, he will naturally endeavour to free himself from that bondage. No one can maintain that his effort to free himself is unnatural or wrong. The desire to be free from limitations or bondage is the law of one's own being (Dharma). Free movement towards the realisation of an aim or purpose is the chief characteristic which distinguishes the living from the non-living. The desire to be free is a universal urge found in all live-beings and living true to that urge is the law of life. Therefore, the endeavour to realise this fundamental nature of the Self cannot be considered an act of selfishness and should not be ranked along with other world-

ly desires which are obstructions to Spiritual Freedom—Self-Realisation.

Advaita Mukti or Liberation is not an attainment of a new state foreign to the Self, nor a union with some object other than the Self. It is the full realisation of one's own true nature. The moment one gets this realisation, he is free from all Upadhis which limit the Self. Advaita Texts give the example of the "pot - space" and the "space outside the pot" to illustrate the union of Atman and Brahman. They are both one. Though, both spaces appear to be different, yet, they are one and the same. The pot-space moves about and appears finite and limited because of the upadhi—the pot. The moment the pot is broken, the finite appearance of the pot-space vanishes. The change is only the disappearance of the upadhi, the clay form called the pot. Similarly, the union of the Atman with Brahman is not a thing to be attained. It is already there. What actually happens is the removal of the upadhis which make the One appear as the many.

There are some critics of Advaita who ridicule Mumukshutva as the highest form of selfishness, and state that it makes man self-centred and egoistic in outlook. This type of

criticism is the result of prejudice and a lack of proper understanding of the teachings and aim of Advaita philosophy and religion. An Advaiti is not anxious to sojourn in heaven, nor is he anxious to reach the feet of God who is far away in a Loka. He endeavours to understand himself and to realise his own true nature. The experience of Self-Realisation cannot be related in terms of empirical knowledg. The only way to realise the Transcendental Absolute is to realise the true nature of the Self, the Atman. St Thayumanavar says:

தன்னை யறிந்தாற் றலைவன்மேற் பற்றலது
 தின்னையொரு பற்றுமுண்டோ பேசாய் யராபரமே.

Realisation of one's true nature.

Brings him to God much closer, Oh, Supreme.

In the light of what we have said, Mumukshutva should not be treated as a desire to preserve one's own individuality or ego, or as a selfish endeavour to possess something which will give one comfort and consolation in this life and the life to come. It is a yearning to annihilate the selfish ego which is the source of all error and misery. Saints describe the highest experience as a state beyond the I-conscious ego.

ஊன்கெட் ஓயர்கெட் ஓணர்வுகெட் டென் உள்ளமும்போய்
நான்கெட்டவா பாடித் தெள்ளேணக்கொட்டாமோ

(மாணி)

In Him my body, Soul, and thought, and mind
were merged;

How all myself was lost, sing we, and beat, Tellenam.

அதுவென் றுன்னும துவமுற நின்ற
முதிய ஞானிகள் மோனப் பொருளது

(தாயு)

'That is, this is He', said not the sages of old.
Sat they, in Silence, enjoying Him.

A true Mumukshu, therefore, is one who has realised the unreal nature of all phenomena both subjective and objective, and has attained a state of desirelessness. He has no attraction for the things of the world. He yearns, day and night, for spiritual freedom which is the realisation of his Divine Nature.

CHAPTER IX

STEPS TO REALISATION

TAT-TVAM-ASI.

The Mumukshu who has acquired the necessary qualifications for the contemplative life will be deemed fit to be initiated by the Guru. The Guru will teach him the meaning and significance of the Mahavakya—Tat-Tvam-Asi, and set him on the path of contemplation which will ultimately lead him to the Unitive experience of Supreme Identity. The contemplative life is divided into four stages: Sravanam (Hearing), Mananam (Reflection), Nitithiyasanam (Meditation) and Samadhi (Absorption or Identity).

SRAVANAM

The first step or stage in the contemplative life is Sravanam, the act of hearing the sacred formula of Supreme Identity. The Mahavakya consists of three parts: Tat, Tvam, Asi. 'Tat' means That which denotes Brahman, the Absolute, the background of everything. 'Tvam' means the Self or Atman, the background of the ego. 'Asi' is the word which denotes the relationship that exists between the 'That' (Brahman) and the 'Thou' (Atman).

That-Art-Thou is the full meaning of the Mahavakya—Tat-Tvam-Asi.

The Srutis (Upanishads) declare that the Reality behind the phenomenal universe and the subjective ego are identical. The Reality behind the cosmos is Brahman; the Reality behind the subjective ego is Atman. The mystic ideal of the Upanishads is not the delight of absorption in God which has an appearance of an identity, but the attainment of that Supreme Silence and Peace which passeth all understanding.

For, where there is duality, as it were, there one sees another; there one smells another; there one tastes another; there one speaks to another; there one hears another; there one thinks another; there one touches another; there one understands another. But where everything has become just one's own self, then whereby and whom would one see? then whereby and whom would one taste? ** speak ** hear, ** think ** touch * and understand? whereby would one understand him by means of whom one understands this All?

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. IV-5-15)

Where nothing else is seen, nothing else is heard, nothing else is known that

is the Bhuma, the unlimited: but where something is seen, something known, that is the finite; the Bhuma, the limitless, dies not, the limited dies.

(Chandogya Upa. Chap: 7. 24.)

Tat-Tvam-Asi indicates the transcendental experience spoken of in the Upanishads. This experience is not a new revelation for the Self, or a new psychic expanse or a joy of God-Consciousness in some form of fellowship. It is the Delight-Supernal which is the true essence and nature of the Self which It becomes conscious of or aware of in the state of Supreme Identity,

The Sadhaka should reverently take to heart the full meaning, significance and implication of the Mahavakya,* and begin to think over it in constant reflection.

MANANAM.

The second step, in the contemplative life is the process or act of reflection on the truth of Tat-Tvam-Asi. The Sadhaka should constantly visualise the state of identity and direct all activities in such a way as not to have a negative effect on his practice. The mind should always dwell on Brahman, the One without a second. All ideas and aspir-

* See page 45.

ations which are foreign to the promotion of Supreme Identity should be negated. When reflection on the nature of Brahman, the Atman and the Supreme Identity becomes a settled habit, then, meditation becomes easier and natural.

NITITHIYASANAM

When all our thoughts and ideas become clear-cut and definite, not hazy and vague, then, we are in a state fit for meditation. Meditation is the very centre and heart of spiritual life. All religions of the world emphasise on the necessity of meditation for religious progress and experience. An intuitive insight into the real nature of the Self or Atman is only possible by the aid of Dhyana or Meditation. Concentration should not be confused with Meditation. Concentration is a mental act of effort. It is the process by which the mind excludes everything else but one idea or object. Meditation is that process of introversion by which the mind transcends itself. Concentration is called Dharana in Yoga, and Meditation is Dhyana. What actually happens in the state of meditation or Dhyana is that the mind visualises the ideas or the object of contemplation, and tries to get absorbed in it. In meditation,

the self feels the edge of its own personality, its separateness from the Reality, the object of its pursuit. In deep meditation, the self gently slips into a dreamy consciousness of the Infinite. When one attains proficiency in meditation, he gradually slides into the next stage of absorption. The following stanzas are eminently suitable for contemplation by the Sadhaka:

Om. I am neither the mind,
 intelligence, ego, nor chitta;
 Neither the ears nor the tongue,
 nor the senses of smell and sight,
 Neither ether nor air,
 nor fire nor water nor earth:
 I am Eternal Bliss and Awareness
 I am Siva! I am Siva!

I am neither the prana,
 nor the five vital breaths,
 Neither the seven elements of
 the body, nor its five sheaths.
 Nor hands nor feet nor tongue,
 nor other organs of action.
 I am Eternal Bliss and Awareness
 I am Siva! I am Siva!

Nothing of pleasure and pain,
 of virtue and vice, do I know,

Of mantra or sacred place,
 of Vedas or Sacrifice;
Neither am I the eater,
 the food nor the act of eating:
I am Eternal Bliss and Awareness
 I am Siva! I am Siva!

I have no form or fancy:
 the All-pervading am I;
Everywhere I exist,
 and yet am beyond the senses;
Neither salvation am I
 nor anything to be known:
I am Eternal Bliss and Awareness
 I am Siva! I am Siva!
(From Sri Sankara's Nirvana Astakam)

SAMADHI

Samadhi is complete absorption or union of the Self with Brahman. Advaita Texts speak of two types of Samadhi: Savikalpa and Nirvikalpa. In Savikalpa the mind takes the form of the object of contemplation and rests on it. In this type of merging or absorption, the subject-object relationship continues to exist. The Reality is experienced in its relative aspect and the spiritual experience is still determinate. Brahman is experienced as the Cosmic Self which vibrates

through all beings. The Reality is felt and experienced in its immanent aspect. In Savikalpa, the soul feels the identity but never loses its individuality. The soul sees the beatific vision, feels the ineffable joy (Ananda) of it and blissfully reposes in it but never transcends it. All theistic religions consider this state as the highest form of mystical union and are satisfied with it. The union is so complete that it gives the feeling of a perfect oneness, of a fusion or transformation. According to Theism, "no matter what the appearances, the subjective impression, and the sometimes exaggerated expressions of the mystics, the end remains always the same in reality as it was at the beginning; the creature remains really distinct from the Creator both in nature and personality."

But, Advaita is bold enough to surmount this duality in the Transcendental Calm known as Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI

The state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi is devoid of all characteristics and concepts. What exists in that state is beyond expression in terms of worldly knowledge. In Nirvikalpa, the jiva loses all limiting Upadhis and attains its true nature. Some explain that in the

Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the mind takes the form of Brahman and exists as Brahman. It is incorrect to describe the experience in this way. Nirvikalpa is not a state where the mind exists and assumes the form of Brahman. It is in Savikalpa that one gets the experience of the delight of or the awareness of God-Consciousness. In Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the experience transcends all forms, names, and characteristics and the Self plunges into the Ocean of Supreme Peace and Silence. The wise one who has attained this Supreme State is called a Jivan-Mukta—one who has attained complete freedom from all Upadhis though living in the world.

The wise one realises in his heart, through Samadhi, the Infinite Brahman which is undecaying and immortal, the positive Entity which precludes all negations, which resembles the placid ocean and without a name, where there are neither merits nor demerits,—which is eternal, pacified and One.

(Vivekachudamani, 410)

CHAPTER X

JIVAN-MUKTI & VIDEHA-MUKTI.

JIVAN-MUKTI

He who has attained the Supreme Identity while living in the world is called a Jivanmukta. He enjoys Eternal Bliss and Peace internally and externally. Though, the world with its manifold activities continue to exist for him, he is not perturbed by it. A person who knows what a mirage is, never gets deceived by its appearance, because, he is fully aware of its unreal nature. Similarly a Jivanmukta, though he lives in the world with his senses active, never gets attracted by its enticing appearance. The Jivanmukta's experience, though, it cannot be objectively proved or expressed in terms of empirical knowledge, yet subjectively it affords him a certitude which is unshakeable even unto death. There are examples of men of realisation facing death with a smile, defying worldly power and might, bearing with patience persecution born of sectarian wrath, vindicating the supremacy of Spirit over Matter. The Jivanmukta attains an inner harmony and freedom and engages himself in the pursuit of unselfish service to humanity until

his body lasts. The inner experience of a Jivanmukta is not discernible through physical or bodily signs, nor can be measured through his psychical attainments. It is an experience that can only be felt by those who are awakened in spirit. The transforming power of his presence and the unselfish life that he leads are the only factors by which we could measure his exalted experience. Sri Sankara defines a Jivanmukta as follows:

He whose illumination is steady, who has constant bliss, who has almost forgotten the phenomenal universe, is accepted as a man liberated in this very life.

He who, even having his mind merged in Brahman, is nevertheless quite alert, but free at the same time from the characteristics of the waking state, and whose realisation is free from desires, is accepted as a man liberated-in-life.

He whose cares about the phenomenal state have been appeased, who, though possessed of a body consisting of parts, is yet devoid of parts, and whose mind is free from anxiety, is accepted as a man liberated-in-life.

The absence of the ideas of 'I' and 'mine' even in this existing body which follows as a shadow, is a characteristic of one liberated-in-life.

Not dwelling on enjoyments of the past, taking no thought for the future and looking with indifference upon the present, are characteristics of one liberated-in-life.

Looking everywhere with an eye of equality in this world full of elements possessing merits and demerits, and distinct by nature from one another, is a characteristic of one liberated-in-life.

When things pleasant or painful present themselves, to remain unruffled in mind in both cases, through sameness of attitude, is a characteristic of one liberated-in-life.

He who through his illumination never differentiates the Jiva and Brahman, as well as Brahman and the universe, is known as a man liberated-in-life.

Men of realisation have neither likes nor dislikes. They transcend all social rules of conduct and are called Athivarnashramis

(அதிவர்க்கிரமிகள்). They do not care to place themselves within the limits of a particular sect nor do they observe the rules of caste. Their conduct should not be judged by the ordinary rules which regulate society. They live in tune with the Infinite and the Divine works in and through them. They vindicate the great truth that every one can attain the highest spiritual illumination in this birth, here and now.

The body and mind of a Jivanmukta are the abode of the Supreme Reality. In and through him the world perceives the Divine in action. God or the Reality is an abiding fact and a living presence for Jivanmuktas. In their company, those who are awakened to the reality of spiritual values, will taste the peace of spiritual calm. They are the beacons of light who lead the struggling souls to the eternal haven of Peace and Bliss. The ocean of Samsara can only be crossed with their grace and guidance. "Blessed are those who have gained the protecting care of a perfected sage (Jivan-mukta)," says Sri Sankara.

Karmic Samskaras of individuals are divided into three groups: Sanchitam, Prarabdham and Akamiyam. Sanchita Karmas are

accumulated Samskaras of past lives which are in store, awaiting their time to be converted into Prarabdham. Prarabdha Karmas are those which determine the present life of an individual. That portion of Sanchitam which has already assumed a physical body with a setting of its own, is Prarabdha. No person, however exalted he may be in spiritual experience, can escape the rigours of Prarabdham. Religious literature of the world is full of incidents connected with the lives of saints who, inspite of their spiritual attainments, have undergone untold sufferings in their lives. The sufferings they had experienced in the pursuit of their ideal might have been necessary factors to strengthen them in their ideal. But, yet, the fact of their having suffered physical pain is a proof of the inevitable operation of the law of Prarabdha Karma.

Akamiyam is the result of one's own actions performed in this birth. An individual, no doubt, suffers for his past Karma in this birth; but, it cannot be maintained that he has no freedom to shape his future in a better way. This inherent freedom, therefore, enables him to acquire fresh Karma-good or bad-and such newly acquired Karmas are called Akamiyam.

Jivanmuktas who attain the highest spiritual illumination, destroy their Sanchitam and neutralize the reaction of Akamiyam by the power of Jnana; but, retain Prarabdha Karma and suffer physical pain and pleasure in the process of exhausting it, till they give up their bodies. Although they live in the world after realisation, they do not lose themselves in the activities of the world. They may live a life of intense activity or lead a life of blissful absorption according to the tendency of their Prarabdha Karma.

Jivanmuktas are of different types. Some are full of Bhakti or Devotion and spend their time in joyful singing of the Ineffable Experience symbolising It as Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesha, Kartikeya, Allah, Buddha, and Christ. Others lead a life of vigorous activity rendering service to fellowmen. A few others, well versed in the religious scriptures of their sects, go about preaching the gospel of true religion and spirituality as against crude sectarianism and narrow minded bigotry. They help and guide devotees to distinguish between institutionalism based on rituals and ceremonies, and true spiritual life based on universal love, self-sacrifice, truthfulness, purity and devotion. Such men are adored and

respected as Acharyas (teachers) and religious sects grow out of their teachings after their death. There are, yet, a few who completely isolate themselves from human surroundings—dead to the world of activity—and get lost in the Infinite Bliss of Brahmanubhava or God-Consciousness. These men live unknown and pass away unsung. Despite these differences, they all possess the same inner experience, enjoy the same beatitude, proclaim to the world by their lives the importance of spiritual values and disseminate an atmosphere of Holiness, Purity, Universal Love, Humility, Peace and Devotion. They live in the world as images of the Divine Reality reflected in the mirror of human existence. "The true sages possess the inner joy and peace which are independent of outer circumstances. Their happiness is not dependent on outer things. They have passed beyond the forms of social life. Their renunciation is spontaneous and does not involve any idea of sacrifice. They work for the fulfilment of the Purpose. They are one in consciousness and action with the Divine."

VIDEHA-MUKTI

As long as a Jivanmukta lives in the world and performs actions in fulfilment of the Law of Karma (Prarabdha), his attain-

ment cannot be of an absolute character. Though, he attains complete identity with the Supreme, yet, his experience will have a certain amount of limitation due to the upadhis connected with the body and mind. With the destruction of the physical body alone, one attains Kaivalya Mukti or Videha-Mukti.

“After the exhaustion of the Prarabdha work his vital force is absorbed in the Supreme Brahman, the Inward Bliss, and ignorance with its effects and their impressions is destroyed. Then he is identified with the Absolute Brahman, the Supreme Isolation, the embodiment of Bliss, in which there is not even the appearance of duality.”

(Vedantasara. 226)

It is an unprofitable venture to speculate on the nature of Videhamukti. What actually is Videhamukti and what happens to a Jivanmukta in that state and after it, is beyond human comprehension. As long as man lives in the physical body, he cannot fully imagine the state of Videhamukti. Speculation on such metaphysical questions has no practical use, and that is why Lord Buddha observed silence whenever such que-

stions were put to him by his disciples. The only statement that could be logically made about it is, that in the Kaivalya State or Videhamukti. **The One Exists without a second.**

CHAPTER XI

NON-ADVAITIC SYSTEMS.

In the course of our study of the Advaita, we had occasion to refer to the other Hindu systems of thought. It is proposed, in this chapter, to outline briefly the cardinal tenets of the other schools of thought so that a student of comparative religion may know exactly the position of Advaita in relation to them. The most popular non-Advaitic religious systems of South India today are the Visistadvaita of Sri Ramanujacharya, Dvaita of Sri Maddvacharya and Saiva Siddhanta of Sri Meikanda Deva. Saiva Siddhanta is a non-Vedantic system.

VISISTADVAITA—QUALIFIED-MONISM

Sri Ramanuja (1019—), the Vaishnava Saint, Reformer and Philosopher, is the greatest exponent of the philosophy of Visistadvaita. He wrote commentaries on the Vedānta Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gita. His views on the teachings of the Upanishads are embodied in his book "The Vedartha Sangraha." In addition to the Prasthāna Traya, he accepts the Pancharatra Agamas and the Hymns of the Alvars as authoritative. His philosophical doctrines are more influenced by the Bhagavad Gita and the

devotional hymns of the Vaishnava mystics. The life and teachings of Saint Nammalvar influenced Ramanuja to a very great extent.

According to Ramanuja, God has three essential qualities which are known as Adharatva, the quality of being the ground; Vidharitva, the quality of being the supporter; Seshitva, the quality of being the whole. Brahman or Reality has essential qualities and can be described by enumerating them. Dualism insists on the separateness of the world and God. Absolute-Monism denies the reality of the world and insists on Brahman as the changeless Reality. But, Visistadvaita of Ramanuja speaks of God, the Reality, as full of qualities and considers Chit (Spirit) and Achit (matter) as inseparable qualities of God. The three—Iswara, Chit and Achit—are inseparably connected to one another as a complete organic whole, and Brahman expresses Itself in their intimate relationship. Chit and Achit connote the Absolute and are parts of it. The distinction which exists between Chit and Achit and Iswara comes under the type known as "Swagatabheda". It is like the distinction that exists between the limbs and the body. The limbs are not separate from the body, because they form part of it.

Brahman is the sole reality without a second and wills to become the many and differentiates Itself into the manifold of sentient and non-sentient beings. Though Brahman is the ground of all changes, It in Itself does not change. The Jiva is not an entity existing by its own right. It is really a part of Brahman. Brahman the super-subject of all experience is distinguishable from the finite self (jiva) and the world of matter (Achit) but cannot be separated from them. Brahman is the all-inclusive Reality which has Chit and Achit as its eternal and inseparable modes or attributes.

Visistadvaita, in its religious aspect, insists on the idea of God or Iswara, as the ruler and redeemer, and lays down the path of Bhakti or Prapatti (self-surrender) as the means to the attainment of Eternal Bliss. The whole scheme of Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga elaborated by Ramanuja is but a preparation to Bhakti. Karma Yoga finds its consummation in Jnana Yoga: Jnana Yoga finds its consummation in Bhakti Yoga. In Bhakti Yoga, the centre is shifted from self-consciousness to God-consciousness. Mukti or liberation is not only the immediate apprehension of Brahman but also the attainment of His Paramapada (Supreme Status).

The Jiva realises its essential and eternal nature and is deified and thus attains the being of its being.

According to Visistadvaita, Brahman is not only the efficient cause of the universe but also the material and the instrumental cause as well. Therefore, Ramanuja's theory of philosophy is known as Nimitto-upadhana-parinamavada. The Parinama spoken of is not for Brahman as Iswara, but to Brahman as Chit and Achit. The Iswara aspect is changeless. Chit and Achit only manifest as the universe of spirit and matter.

Sri Ramanuja is the greatest exponent of philosophical Theism. Visistadvaita is the meeting ground of philosophy and religion. The absolutism of philosophy and the dualism of religion get reconciled in Visistadvaita. The Advaita of Sankara has very little sympathy with the needs of the purely religious minded individuals. But, the philosophy of Ramanuja not only satisfies the yearning heart of a religious devotee but also tries to satisfy the rationalism of his intellect. It gives the supreme place to Bhakti or devotion to God. The writings of Ramanuja provided the necessary philosophical background for the development of Vaishnava Mysticism in India. The

philosophical mysticism of the Upanishads and the devotional mysticism of the Vaishnava Alwars, found in Ramanuja an able and erudite exponent.

The teachings of Ramanuja brought into existence a type of devotional mysticism which satisfied the emotional as well as the rational nature of man. The passive, incomprehensible Absolute of philosophy was substituted by a Supreme Being who is full of Grace, Goodness, Love and Power and with whom man could establish a relationship through devotion and service. This attitude enriched life and brought a new sense of values to life and its aim. Things of the world were not considered illusory; Beauty, Goodness, Grace, Love, Charity and Service were all given a place in life.

It was the doctrine of Bhakti or Grace through devotion preached by Ramananda who was influenced by the teachings of Ramanuja, that provided the necessary inspiration to the people of Northern India to withstand the onslaught of Islam on Hinduism.

Sri Sankara emphasised the Transcendental aspect of the Reality or Super-conscious Experience: whereas, Sri Ramanuja emphasised

the religious aspect of Reality, in terms of Bhakti, Grace, and Service.

The pantheism of Ramanuja should not be confused with that of Spinoza. The Iswara or God of Ramanuja does not change into the manifold universe. But in the system of Spinoza, the whole universe is the transformation of God.

The Absolute of Ramanuja is not pure Brahman, but Brahman which is already involved in Maya—it is Puruṣa already united with Prakṛiti (Sakti). The only philosopher of the West who could be compared with Ramanuja is Hegel. Hegel's Absolute is not a bare one, but a many in one, an organic whole, a perfect and harmonious system of an infinite number of qualities. The Absolute of Hegel is also composed of parts which are related to one another and at the same time independent of each other.

DWĀITA OF MADDHVA,

Sri Maddhvacharya (1196—1276) expounded a purely dualistic system of philosophy basing his teachings on the Prasthāna Traya. He was also a great Vaishnava Saint. He relied more on the Puranas than on the Prasthāna Traya as authority.

Maddhva makes an absolute distinction between God, Souls and the world. He insists on the distinction between God and the individual soul, between God and the world, between one individual soul and another, between the individual soul and inanimate world and finally between one inanimate object and another. His system of thought may be said to be a philosophy of Pluralism. The chief functions of God are eight: Creation, Protection, Dissolution, Controlling all things, Giving knowledge, Manifestation of Himself, Involving the Jivas in the knowledge of the world and Deliverance.

Souls are all distinct from God and are themselves distinct from one another. They are innumerable and go through succession of existences because of ignorance and attain liberation in the end by the Grace of God.

The world is created from Prakriti which is ever distinct from the Supreme Being who is only the efficient cause and not the material cause of the world. Maddhva considers it against reason to suppose that the non-intelligent world can be produced from a being that is intelligent. God energises Prakriti through Lakshmi, His Sakti, and there is creation. Moksha is attained by the direct

knowledge or perception of Hari. Even in Moksha, Jiva cannot be one with Brahman or God. Bhakti is the means to Moksha.

Maddhva does not believe in the theory of Incarnation. He maintains that God cannot be caught in the meshes of Prakriti, and hence there is no physical manifestation of God on earth in the form of human beings bound by the laws of nature. God only appears to his devotees through His grace in His Divine Glory.

SAIVA SIDDHANTA

The philosophy of religion expounded by Saint Meikanda is called Saiva Siddhanta. He is said to have lived in the 13th Century, A. D. Although, this school accepts the Vedas, yet their chief scriptures are the Saiva Agamas. In addition to the Saiva Agamas, the 12 Thirumuraigal (பன்னிருதிரு முறைகள்) which contain the Sacred utterances of the Saiva Mystics are also treated with respect and adoration. Siva-gnana Bodham, the most important scripture of Saiva Siddhanta, is said to contain the essence of the teachings of the Agamas. Saiva Siddhanta is not a Vedantic School of thought because it is more Agamic than Vedic. As it is the most popular

philosophy of religion in the Tamil country, we deem it proper to outline its fundamental teachings, so that a student of Advaita may make a comparative study of its doctrines.

According to Saiva Siddhanta, Siva, the Ultimate Reality, is Omnipotent, Omniscient, eternally free from bonds and absolutely different from the Jivas and the world. He is only the efficient cause of the Universe. His Sakti is the instrumental cause. His functions are: Creation, Preservation, Destruction, Concealment and the Bestowal of Grace. He provides bodies and objects of enjoyment for the souls so that they may get rid of ignorance or mala and realise their nature and their relationship to God. Maya is eternally separate from God and the souls, and is the material cause of the universe.

Souls are infinite in number and are eternally in contact with Anava Mala. In the course of repeated births, the souls realise the utter futility of wordly life, and with the help of the Divine Grace (Arul) begin a religious life of spiritual practices. By disciplining themselves in the paths of Charya, Kriya and Yoga, they become fit for the final beatitude and Siva appears as a Guru and initiates them into the path of Jnana or

Saṁmarga to attain Moksha or Liberation. They take up the practice of 'Sivoham Bhavana' (Sivoham—I am Siva), and try to identify themselves with Siva and finally attain Union. Moksha does not mean complete mergence of being in God. The individuality of the soul is preserved in Mukti, but, it identifies itself with Siva in the same way it identified itself with Mala while in the world.

Saiva Siddhanta Acharyas never thought it necessary to write commentaries on the Gita, the Vedanta Sutras and the Upanishads. Arulnandhy Sivachariar rejects the Gita as a heterodox scripture that inculcates the doctrine of 'killing'. The Vedanta Sutras is rejected as a scripture that advocates Monism. The theory of Monism found in the Vedanta Sutras is considered foreign to Saiva Siddhanta by the Santanacharyas and their followers even to this day.

ADVAITA

Saiva Siddhanta is considered by its adherents as a system that advocates 'Suddha Advaita'. They give their own interpretation to the term 'Advaita'. The word is used not to denote the structure and form of the system

of philosophy which Saiva Siddhanta advocates, but to define the relationship that exists between God and Soul in Mukti. All schools of Vedanta, except that of Maddhva, maintain that ultimately in Mukti, the soul becomes one with Brahman. But, according to Saiva Siddhanta, in the final stage of liberation, soul and God become one without losing their individualities. The association is so close that they appear as One. This relationship of apparent, one-ness, they call 'Advaita Union'.

God's relationship with the souls and the world is like unto that of a king's relationship with his subjects and the kingdom he rules. God has absolute power and control over the universe and the souls. Souls, though intelligent, have no independence or initiative and will have to be moved by the Grace of God towards all endeavour and attainments.

JIVAN MUKTAS

Devotees who have attained liberation from the bonds of Anava Mala, while in the body and have identified themselves with God, are called Jivan-Muktas. They have no 'I-ness' and 'My-ness'. They are fully absorbed in the Peace and Bliss of God known as Sivanandam, God acts in and through them

for the good of the world. They are the living embodiments of spiritual wisdom and universal love, and guide humanity towards God-Realisation.

Saiva Siddhanta is more religious in outlook than philosophical. It is concerned with the way of life one should lead to attain final emancipation from ignorance or Mala, and therefore, emphasises more the practical aspect of religion than the speculative aspect of philosophy. It believes in Siva as the Supreme Reality; in Sri Panchadcharam as the highest Mantram; in Rudraksha and Vibhuti as sacred symbols of religion.

In the practical aspect of ceremonial religion, there is hardly any distinction between a Saiva Siddhanti and an Advaiti of the Sankara School of Vedanta. Sri Sankara himself was a great Siva Bhakta who observed all the Agamic injunctions of Saivism.

ABSOLUTE EXPERIENCE

Saiva Siddhanta mystics also posited an Absolute Experience which transcended all attributes and conditions.

St. Appar says:

ஒப்புடையனல்லன், ஒருவனல்லன்,
 ஒருநானல்லன், ஒருவமனில்லி,
 அப்படியும், அந்நிறமும், அவ்வண்ணமும்
 அவனருளே கண்ணாகக் காணின் அல்லால்
 இப்படியன், இந்நிறத்தன், இவ்வண்ணத்தன்
 இவனிறைவ னென்றெழுதிக் காட்டொணாதே.

He is not one of the mortals, and is not to be compared with any of them. He has no place, and is incomparable. We can, with His Grace alone as our eye, perceive Him. His form and nature, none can paint or describe.

St. Thirumular says:

உரையற்றதொன்றை, உரைசெய்யுமுமர்காள்
 கரையற்றதொன்றைக், கரைகாணலாகுமோ?

Ye dumb fools, that speak of the unspeakable, can ye find the limits of the limitless One?

St. Arulnandhy Sivachariar writes:

சிவனருவுருவுமல்லன், சித்தினோடசித்துமல்லன்
 பவமுதற்றெழுதிகளொன்றும்பண்ணிடுவானுமல்லன்

Siva is neither Arupi nor Rupi. He is neither Chit nor Achit. He does not create nor sustain, nor perform other functions.

St. Arunagirinathar sings:

போக்கும், வரவும், இரவும்
பகலும், புறம்புமுள்ளும்
வாக்கும், வடிவும், முடிவுமில்
லாதொன்று, வந்து, வந்து
தாக்குமனோயந் தானே
தருமெனைத் தன்வசத்தே
ஆக்குமறுமுகவா சொல்
லொணுதிந்த வானந்தமே,

That which neither goes nor comes,
knows neither night nor day, neither
without nor within; speechless and form-
less, and without end, assails me cease-
lessly, and makes me Itself conferring
tranquillity of mind. This Blissful State
is beyond expression, Oh Lord of Six
Aspects

St. Thayumanavar proclaims:

ஆங்கென்று, மீங்கென்று முண்டோ—சச்சி
தானந்த சோதியகண்ட வடிவாய்
ஓங்கி நிறைந்தது கண்டாற்—பின்ன
ரொன்றென் நிரண்டென்று ரைத்திடலாமோ?

Is there a 'there' or a 'here' when thou hast seen
the splendour of the Sat-Chit-Ananda rise infinite
and fill everywhere. Can there be said to be then
a 'one' or a 'two'?

நித்தியமாய், நிர்மலமாய், நித்களமாய். நிராமய்மாய்,
 நிறைவாய், நீங்காச்
 சுத்தமுமாய்த், தூரமுமாய்ச் சமீபமுமாய்த்துரியநிறை
 சுடராய் எல்லாம்
 வைத்திருந்த தாரகமாயானந்தமயமாகி
 மனவாக் கெட்டாச்
 சித்துருவாய் நின்றவொன்றைச் சுகாரம்பப்
 பெருவெளியை
 சிந்தைசெய்வாம்.

Eternal, free from stain, from form, from disease;
 all-filling, inseparable, pure, far, yet near—fulness
 of splendour in Turiyam— holding and supporting
 all things, Blissful, ever beyond the reach of
 mind ; on It, the Divine Space which is Bliss
 E rnal, we meditate.

The Sarvajnanottara Agama, one of the
 28 Saiva Agamas accepted by Saiva Siddhanta,
 compares Paramatma (Siva) to maha-akasha
 and Jivatma (soul) to kata-akasha and states
 that Siva and Jiva become one in Mukti,
 in the same way that the pot-space and the
 space outside it become one when the pot is
 broken, Advaitis of the Sankara School of
 Vedanta also use the same simili to illustrate
 the union of Brahman and Atman in Mukti.

கடத்திருக்கு மாகாயம் போலச் சீவான்மா
 கருதுமகா காயம்போற் பரமான்மாவிருக்கும்
 கடத்திருக்கு மாகாயங் கடமுடைந்தான் முன்னர்க்
 கருதுமா காயமா நிறைந்து நின்றற்போலத்

திடத்தினுறு பிரகிருதி சம்பந்தமாய்

தேகவுபாதிகள் முழுது நீங்கிய போதந்தச்
சடத்தமர் சீவான் மாவே பரமான்மாவாகுஞ்
சர்வஞ்ஞான மெம்மாற் சொல்லப்பட்டதிதுவே.

"The Jivatma is like the space inside the pot, the Paramatma is like the space outside it. When the Jivatma transcends the limiting adjuncts born of Prakriti, it becomes one with the Paramatma, in the same way as the pot-space becomes one with the space surrounding the pot, when the pot is broken.

Sarvajnanottara : 29.

விரிசெனன மரணத்துட் சுழலுவன் மெய்ஞ்ஞான
மேவினாற் சாந்தமாய்ப் பரமமாய் விளங்கும்
பரகதியா மப்போது சகலவுபாதியும் போய்ப்
பகர் சீவப்பிரமமே பரப்பிரம மாகும்.

"The Jivatma is caught in the cycle of birth and death. But, when it attains the highest Jnana, all limiting adjuncts (upadhis) vanish, and the Jivatma becomes the Paramatma."

Sarvajnanottara : 59

Saiva Siddhanta and Advaita Vedanta define the Transcendental Experience in the same way and St. Thayumanavar gives expression to this fact, beautifully, in the following stanza :

வேதாந்தஞ் சித்தாந்தம் வேறேன்னார் கண்களிக்கும்
நாதாந்த மோன நலமே பராபரமே.

Oh ! Supreme Silence at the end of Nada,
Thou art the delight of those who see no difference
in Vedanta and Siddhanta,

CONCLUSION

There are many philosophies of religion as many as there are serious endeavours to refer religion to its ultimates. Great mystics, saints and philosophers have been elaborating and elucidating them from various stand points. The literature of philosophy and religion is composed of expositions differing from each other in various ways, and yet each professing that it has secured the true solution of the problem of God and His relationship to nature and man. In spite of the profound intricacies of the different systems of thought, both Eastern and Western, the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, remains a hidden secret to the human understanding. The Absolute is beyond all thought :

What speech cannot reveal, but what reveals speech—know That alone as Brahman, and not this that people worship here.

What mind does not comprehend, but what cognises the mind—know That to be Brahman, and not this that people worship here.

What hearing fails to grasp, but what perceives hearing—know That alone as Brahman, and not this that people worship here.

What life does not enliven, but what directs life—know That alone as Brahman, and not this that people worship here.

Kena Upanishad.

OM: TAT: SAT: OM.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY.

1. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with Sankara's Commentary translated by *Swami Madhavananda*
2. Chandogya Upanishad with Sankara's Commentary translated by *Ganganath Jha, M.A.*
3. Mandukyopanishad with Sankara's Commentary translated by *Swami Nikhilananda*
4. Vivekachudamani of Sankaracharya translated by *Swami Madhavananda*
5. Vedantasara of Sadananda translated by *Swami Nikhilananda*
6. Jnana-Yoga by *Swami Vivekananda*
7. Science and Philosophy of Religion by *Swami Vivekananda*
8. The System of the Vedanta by *Dr. Paul Deussen*
9. The Vedanta according to Sankara and Ramanuja by *Dr. S. Radhakrishnan*

10. An Idealist View of
Life by *Dr. S. Radhakrishnan*
11. A Study of Sankara
by *Nalinimohan Mukherji Sastri, M.A.*
12. Comparative Studies
in Vedantism by *Dr. Mahendranath Sircar, M.A., Ph. D.*
13. Outline of Philosophy
by *Bertrand Russell*
14. Guide to Philosophy
by *C. E. M. Joad.*
15. The Idealistic
Thought of India by *Dr. P. T. Raju, M.A.
Ph. D.*

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

Absolute Monism: The philosophy or school of thought which denies the reality of the world and insists on Brahman as the changeless Reality.

Adharatva: The quality of being the ground.

Adhyaropa: The act of falsely imagining one thing as another; mistaking a tree-trunk for a human being.

Adhyasa: Superimposition—the erroneous attribution of reality to phenomenal things.

Advaita: Vedanta as expounded by Sankara. It teaches Brahman alone is real, all else is being relatively unreal.

Ahankara: Ego or I-consciousness. One of the functions of the inner organ.

Akamiya: The new Karma that accumulates during the life of an individual.

Akasha: Space. One of the five elements.

Anirvachaniya: Indescribable; logically indefinable.

Anubhava: Experience.

Anumana: Inference.

Antahkarana: The internal organ: mind.

Apavada: The discovery of the underlying Reality.

Apara Vidya: Intellectual knowledge : lower knowledge.

Avarana: The act of hiding the Reality.

Avastha: Mental state.

Avasthatraya: Three mental states—Waking, Dream and Dreamless.

Avidya: Nescience : the veil of ignorance in an individual.

Avyakta: Unmanifested condition.

Bhakti-Yoga: The path of devotion.

Brahman: The Absolute Transcendental Reality spoken of in the Upanishads.

Buddhi: Intellect or the faculty of reasoning.

Chitta: Internal organ of feeling. One of the functions of the antahkarana.

Dama: Restraining the external organs from all objects.

Dharana: Concentration.

Dhyana: Meditation.

Dwaitadvaita: A school of philosophy enunciated by Bhaskaracharya, Nimbarka and others which admits the point of view of difference. This is known also as Bheda-bheda. Bheda—difference ; Abheda—non-difference.

Gnana-Indriyas: Organs of perception.

Ihamuthrарtha-Pala-bhoga-viraga: Renunciation of both earthly and heavenly enjoyments.

Iswara: Personal God.

Jagrat: Waking state.

Jnana: Knowledge.

Jnana-Yoga: The Path of Knowledge.

Jivanmukta: One who is liberated while in the body.

Jivatma: Individual soul.

Krama-Mukti: Attainment of Heaven.

Maddhvacharya: The founder of Dwaita school of Vedanta. He is a Vaishnavite by religion. Dwaita is pluralistic in form and assumes three eternal entities—God, Souls and Matter.

Mala: The principle of impurity or finiteness.

Maya: The Cosmic Veil by which the One appears as the many. Power or Sakti of God. According to Saiva Siddhanta, it is the material cause of the world.

Manas: Unifying faculty. One of the functions of the antahkarana.

Mananam: Contemplation.

Marga: Path.

Meikanda: The exponent of the Saiva Siddhanta school of thought. It assumes three eternal entities—God, Souls and the Principle of ignorance and matter: (Pati, Pasu and Pasa).

Mithya: Illusion.

Monism: The theory that there is but one fundamental Reality.

Mumukshu: Seeker after liberation or realisation.

Mumukshutva: The yearning for liberation.

Naimitika: Rituals and ceremonies performed on special occasions.

Nimitto-upadhana-parinamavada: The theory that the universe is the transformation of the efficient and material causes.

Nirguna: Without qualities.

Niravayava: Without parts.

Nirupadika: Unconditioned and absolute.

Niskamyā: Without desiring reward.

Nishkriya: Without activity.

Nityanitya Vastu Viveka: Discriminating the real from the unreal.

Nirvikalpa: Indeterminate: non-conceptual.

Nivriti: Returning or withdrawing: introversion.

Pantheism: The theory that everything is a projection or transformation of the Reality which is one. It is different from Theism which believes in immanence and transcendence.

Para Vidya: Intuitive knowledge: Higher knowledge.

Parinama: Actual Transformation.

Paramarthika: Transcendental; above all relative conditions.

Prajna: The self in deep-sleep is known by this name.

Prarabdha: Past karmas to exhaust which the body is taken.

Prasthan Traya: Three pillars of Vedic Dharma: Upanishads, Vedanta Sutras and Bhagavad Gita.

Pratyaksha: Perceptual knowledge: knowledge obtained through the senses.

Pravriti: External activity; extroversion.

Purva Mimamsa: One of the six major systems of Indian philosophy founded by Jaimini, rationalising Vedic Ritual and upholding the authority of the Vedas.

Ramanujacharya: Founder of the Qualified Monistic school of Vedanta. He is a Vaishnavite by religion.

Sadhana: Spiritual discipline towards perfection.

Sadhaka: One who is devoted to religious discipline.

Sama: Restraining the outgoing mental propensities.

Samadhi: Superconscious state of Realisation.

Samsara: The world of change and becoming; phenomenal world.

Samskara: Latent mental tendency acquired through past karmas.

Saiva Siddhanta: One of the schools of Saivism found in South India and Ceylon.

Sakshi Witness.

Sakti: Power.

Sankhya: The oldest of the major systems of Indian philosophy formulated by Kapila. It is realistic in epistemology, dualistic in metaphysics, assuming two ultimates—spirit and matter, both eternal and uncaused.

Sanchita: Un-exhausted accumulated past karma.

Sat: Existence.

Savikalpa: Determinate. With attributes.

Seshitva: Quality of being the whole.

Sat Sampatti: Six attainments: Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Samadhana and Shraddha.

Shraddha: Faith and self-surrender to God or Guru.

Shukshma: Subtle.

Siva-Gnana-Bodham: One of the 14 Saiva Siddhanta Sastras said to contain the essence of the teachings of the Saiva Agamas.

Smriti: Traditional knowledge, next in importance to Sruti.

Sraavanam: Hearing the truth with understanding.

Sri Kanta: Exponent of Saiva-Visistadvaita.

Sruti: Revelation or Absolute Knowledge.

Sushupti: Dream state.

Suddha-Advaita: Pure Monism. Vedanta school of philosophy founded by Vallabha-charya which considers the many as the actual transformation of the One (Brahman).

Svapna: Dream state.

Tatwa: Fundamental category.

Taijasa: The name of the self which experiences the pleasures and pains of the dream state.

Titiksha: Being unruffled by pleasure and pain.

Triputi: The state of awareness where the knower, known and knowledge exist.

Turiya: The Superconscious state where all differences vanish. State where knower, known and knowledge do not exist.

Upadhi: Limiting adjunct.

Upanishads: The knowledge portion of the Vedas—Jnanakanda.

Uparati: That function] of the mind which keeps the restrained organs from drifting back to the objects of the senses.

Upasana: Practice of devotion with the aid of a symbol or forms.

Vedanta: The conclusions of the Vedas. The system of Philosophy enunciated in the Vedanta Sutras.

Vedanta-Sutras: A treatise by Vyasa which summarises the teachings of the Upanishads.

Vaisvanara: The self which identifies itself with the body and experiences the pleasures and pains of the waking state.

Vidharitva: The quality of being the supporter.

Videha Mukti: The attainment of Absoluteness.

Vikshepa: The act of misrepresenting the Reality and making it appear as the phenomenal universe.

Visistadvaita: The Philosophy of Qualified non-dualism—a school of Vedanta—which teaches that individual souls and the universe are parts of Brahman. Its chief exponent was Ramanujacharya.

Vivarta-Parinama: Illusory transformation, e.g., the rope appearing as a snake.

Vyavakariya Sat: Phenomenal existence or relative existence.

Yoga: The path of discipline by which the union of the soul with God is effected. A school of philosophy ascribed to Patanjali.



