

# Védānta Prabódha



Swāmi Paramānanda Bhārati

Maha Parivrajaka



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## List of Abbreviations

<b>Ai.</b>	Aitaréya Upaniṣad	<b>Ai.Bh.</b>	Aitaréya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>Br.</b>	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad	<b>Br.Bh.</b>	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>Ch.</b>	Chāndógya Upaniṣad	<b>Ch.Bh.</b>	Chāndógya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>G.</b>	Bhagavad Gīta	<b>G.Bh.</b>	Bhagavad Gīta Bhāṣya
<b>Īśa.</b>	Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad	<b>Īśa.Bh.</b>	Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>Ka.</b>	Kaṭha Upaniṣad	<b>Ka.Bh.</b>	Kaṭha Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>Ké.</b>	Kéna Upaniṣad	<b>Ké.Bh.</b>	Kéna Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>Mā.</b>	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad	<b>Mā.Bh.</b>	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>Mu.</b>	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad	<b>Mu.Bh.</b>	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>Pr.</b>	Praśna Upaniṣad	<b>Pr.Bh.</b>	Praśna Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
<b>Sū.</b>	Brahmasūtra	<b>Sū.Bh.</b>	Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya
<b>Tai.</b>	Taittirīya Upaniṣad	<b>Tai.Bh.</b>	Taittirīya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya

Others like Samhita, Āraṇyaka, etc, are indicated in detail in the text.

# The Essential Teachings of Ādya Śaṅkarācārya

## (Misconceptions cleared)

1. Is the creation ever possible by Jīva the finite and limited individual being?
  - The Jīva who is not Īśvara (the Almighty) is not at all capable of making manifest the many and varied names and forms of mountains, rivers, oceans and the like. (Sū.Bh.2.4.20).
  - Even the Siddhas who have acquired the siddhis (supernatural powers) of Aṇīma, etc., cannot effect the manifestation of the creation and manage its affairs. (Sū.Bh.4.4.17)
2. Is the creation unreal like the snake illusion in rope? How is Brahman, which has no transaction be born as many forms by the creation?
  - 'Just as the rope appears to be born in the form of volitional snake, so is the creation born.' 'Then, is the creation non-existent like the non-existent rope-snake?' 'It is not so. Even as the rope-snake is non-different from the rope, the creation is not other than Brahman' (Ch.Bh. 6.2.3).
3. Is the creation false like the dream?
  - Creations of Īśvara universally perceived in the waking state such as Ākāśa are objective; the dream creation is not objective and publicly transactionable. (Sū.Bh. 3.2.4).
  - The dream world is indeed unreal. There is not even the smell of reality in it. (Sū.Bh.3.2.3)
4. Are the forms perceived in the world imaginary or not?
  - Even the forms are indeed of the nature of the cause; because there cannot be an effect coming into existence, if it is not of the nature of the cause. (Sū.Bh.2.1.18)



5. Does the world lose its existence at least during the deluge or not?
  - As even Brahman as cause does exist in the past, present, and future, even the world of effects does exist in the past, present and future (Sū.Bh.2.1.16).
6. By whom is the creation made? For whose sake?
  - The Nature consisting of 3 Guṇas which is subservient to and within the fold of Brahman transforms into all effects, the instruments of life, and the objects of experience and gets assembled in the form of body and Indriyas for the bhóga and apavarga of Puruṣa. (G. Chap. 13. linkate Bhāṣya).
  - All the vedāntic statements teach about the creation as that which has Īśvara as (the rationally valid and acceptable) Hétu the cause of creation. That Īśvara is Hétu means, He creates the Jīvas according to their own Karma. (Sū.Bh. 3.2.41).
  - By the order of Paramātmā the Jīva in his Avidyā state comes to live his life of bondage endowed with doership and enjoyership. By His Grace alone the Wisdom dawns and Mókṣa, Liberation, is accomplished. (Sū.Bh. 2.3.41).
  - Īśvara creates the unequal world only in accordance with some requirements. What are the requirements? The Dharma and Adharma of the Jīvas. (Sū.Bh. 2.4.20).
7. What is the purpose of creation of the world?
  - If it was not created, it would not have been possible to realize the true adjunctless nature of this Ātman as Prajñānaghana. (Sū.Bh. 2.5.19).
8. What does Satyam mean? What does Asatyam mean?
  - A characteristic which once determined will remain as such always is Satyam; that which does not remain the same as once determined is Asatyam. (Tai.Bh. 2.1.1).

9. What is the Svarūpa (nature) of the world?

- Before creation, the Jagat remained subject only to one word and one thought namely Ātman; Now after creation Jagat is available for many words and thoughts and also is available to one and only Word and thought, Ātman. (Ai.Bh. 1.1.1).
- If anybody sees the world in front as Non-Ātman, then the world would reject and throw out such a one as ineligible for Mókṣa, liberation.
- The Brahman itself is presented as object of word and thought such as ‘This’. (Ch.Bh. 6.2.2.)

10. How can Advaitam be accomplished if the Creation also exists?

- “The Śruti statements such as ‘one without a second’, ‘Not an iota of plurality here’ will be contradictory if the Nama-Rūpa adjuncts exist. Is it not so?” No, it is NOT SO. The clay pot is non-separate from clay. When this fact is observed and understood, the awareness that there is only clay dawns. So too, when the fact that the world is non-separate from Brahman is realized. Pot seen as mere pot also means seeing many and varied transactions. Similarly creation seen as (Names and Forms) adjuncts also means seeing plurality. (Br.Bh. 3.5.1).

11. What is Māyā?

- Two-fold Prakṛti is my Māyā. With these two I the Omniscient Īśvara am the cause of the Jagat. (G.Bh. 7.4-6.)

12. Is Māyā permanent or impermanent?

- Being endowed with Parā and Aparā Prakṛti is the insignia of Īśvara and Īśvara is always Īśvara. Therefore, Īśvara’s Prakṛti also always exists. (G.Bh. 13.19).
- That Bhagavān (Īśvara) is always endowed with Jñāna, Aiśvarya, Śakti, Bala, Vīrya and Téjas (G.Bh. Introduction).

- Does it need to be mentioned that Īśvara who is Nitya Siddha possesses Nitya Jñāna about the Sriṣṭi-Sthiti-Laya?! (Sū.Bh. 1.1.5).

13. Does Māyā exist in Pralaya or not?

- The Jagat undergoes Pralaya retaining its power potentialities. There cannot be creation without the (causal power-potentialities) in the cause.

14. How is non-duality possible if the Brahman and Māyā are permanent?

- As the effect is non-separate from the Power and the Power is non-separate from its possessor. (Sū.Bh. 2.1.18)
- That Power is the Brahman, that is I. The Power and its Possessor are not different. (G.Bh. 14.27)
- This Māyā is of the nature of My Svarūpa. (G.Bh. 14.3)
- ‘Once it is mentioned that Avyākṛta became Vyākṛta by itself and now it is told that Paramātma made Avyākṛta into Vyākṛta. How can this be tenable?’ There is nothing wrong. Because it is Paramātma himself in the form of Avyākṛta Jagat. (Br.Bh. 1.4.7).

15. Is Brahman omniscient or not?

- To say that Brahman which is capable of always illumining all objects is not omniscient would be self-contradiction. (Sū.Bh. 1.1.5)
- Omniscience is its own nature (Ai.Bh. 1.1.1)

16. What are Parabrahman and Aparabrahman ?

- The Brahman communicated without considering the Jagat [which is the effect of the Brahman] is Parabrahman. Referring to the Jagat it is Aparabrahman. (Sū.Bh. 4.3.14)

17. What is Avidyā?

- Even a hair-split sense of ‘this is not I’ as against Sarvātmabhava is the state of Avidyā. (Br.Bh. 4.320).
- Whether it is called absence of knowledge of non-duality, or doubtful knowledge about it, or opposite knowledge, whatever be the names, all these disappear with Jñānam, the knowledge. (Br.Bh. 3.3.1)

18. To whom belongs Māyā, to whom Avidyā?

- The Lord tells Arjuna: Bygone are many lives of You and I. I know them all. Because I am of ever Eternal-Pure-Free-Divine Nature. My Power of Knowledge does not wane. But you know not. Because your knowledge is affected by the defects of Dharma- Adharma. The Māyā under which all Jīvās are, is under My control. By this Māyā I appear to be born. (G.Bh. 5-6)
- Greater than and different from the Jīva, the creator of Jagat is omniscient, omnipotent and of Ever-Pure-Free-Divine Nature ....The Jīva is not so. (Sū.Bh. 2.1.22)
- Īśvara is for ever free from Avidyā. (Sū.Bh. 3.2.9)

19. What does it mean when Jagat is called Avidyākalpita?

- The Jagat in front appears as something other than Brahman for those who have Avidyā. This appearance of Abrahman-Pratyaya is Avidyākalpita like the rope-snake. But the Jagat in front is not that. It is Brahman alone. (Muṇ.Bh. 2.2.11)

20. Will the Jagat be lost immediately when the knowledge of Advaitam is attained?

- The Jagat is not lost by Brahmavidyā. But the notions about Jagat conceived by the one who has Avidyā are gone... Brahmavidyā does not create or destroy a thing in front. (Br.Bh. 1.4.10).

21. Is mind control told in Yóga a means for Mókṣa or not?
- Śruti does not say mind control is a means for Mókṣa (Br.Bh. 1.4.7) Sānkhyas and Yogīs are not believers in oneness of Atman. The words Yóga and Jñāna used in Śruti mean only Védic means and Védic knowledge respectively. (Sū.Bh. 2.1.3)
22. Does the activity seen in a Jñānī imply there are remnants of Avidyā in him?
- Looking at his activities, common people attach doership to him. But he is a non-doer in his personal experience (G.Bh.4.22).
  - Knowledge of Brahman and retainment of body is an experience in the depth of his heart. Others cannot deny it. After describing the features of stitahprajna, does not Gita also tell the same thing? (Su.Bh. 4.1.15)

Swāmi Paramānanda Bhārati

## DEDICATION

|| श्रुतिस्मृतिपुराणानामालयं करुणालयं |

| नमामि भगवत्पादशङ्करं लोकशङ्करम् ||

|| शङ्करं शङ्कराचर्यं केशवं बादरायणम् |

| सूत्रभाष्यकृतौ वन्दे भगवन्तौ पुनः पुनः ||

*To the Parabrahman in the form of Sriman Narayana;*

*When Lord Narayana time and again, having taken many Avataras for the purpose of destruction of evil and establishing the path of Dharma and as if in exasperation, did not take another Avatara once again at a time of delusion,*

*To the Acharya Sankara, who is the Lord Sankara himself, who with an extraordinary wisdom alone resurrected the glorious Vaidika Parampara,*

*To the Guru who enjoined me in the same Parampara His Holiness Jagadguru Sringeri Srimad Abhinava Vidyaateertha Mahaswamiji,*

*I with reverence and prostrations, humbly offer this small treatise at their Holy feet, which is a flower of their own garden.*

## What did Śankara Really Teach ?

### *A Selective Exposition of Swāmī Paramānanda Bhārati's Vedānta Prabodha*

(The following is an excerpt from an 18 page review by Prof. Srinivasa Rao of the book *Vedānta Prabodha*, ICPR Jour., 2008, Volume 25, Number 2, Pages 109-126)

If there is one Indian philosopher whose teachings have been so subtle that their unity and import have successively eluded clear understanding even by his ardent followers for centuries, it is undoubtedly Sri Śankara Bhagavatpāda. In the long history of Advaita, several attempts have been made by commentators and writers to "reconcile" what appeared to them clearly contradictory statements in Śankara's writings. But the truth is that such contradictions are perceived because of failure on the part of those writers to properly understand the teachings and not because Śankara's writings are unclear or ambiguous.

Śankara simultaneously executes at least three different tasks in his writings, formulating the doctrine of Advaita in a very systematic way, teaching that doctrine in a systematic way to those who wanted to understand it and also adopting many techniques and arguments to resolve confusions and doubts. These three different tasks require different ways of speech and expressions and sometimes require even the same expression to be used with an entirely different meaning. Added to this, we pass through the process of understanding the doctrine and as our knowledge becomes clearer and clearer, newer levels are reached and we begin to see in an entirely new way. These newer ways of seeing are also communicated by using the same expressions as before, but they are now laden with entirely new meanings. While someone who is able to see in a new way encounters no difficulty, someone else who does not encounter a sudden change of meaning that is puzzling. This someone struggles to resolve his puzzlement by advancing his own ideas and theories to make Śankara's teaching clear.

The history of Advaita is thus largely the history of continual attempts at making Śankara's teachings "clear" to the readers. Such attempts have led to the arising of new problems and questions that originally did not exist in Śankara, and also to equally new answers and theories that are not logically required by the original teaching. Thus there has been a profusion of commentaries and supplementary works over the centuries, adding more heat than light in the process.

It is at this juncture Swāmī Paramānanda Bhāratī enters the scene with his *Vedānta Prabodha*. It is such a beautiful and path-breaking work that it deserves to be brought to the notice of scholars all over the world. This 286 page work is written almost entirely on the basis of Śankara's commentaries on the *Brahmasūtra*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Upaniṣads*. There is almost no reference to any other work of Śankara or of any other writer. He has constantly kept in view the "three different tasks" undertaken by Śankara on many an occasion in arriving at the different meanings of the same expressions in different contexts. The important consequence of this practice is that it helps showing that there is "unity" ("ekavākyatā" as he put it in a private conversation) in Śankara's teachings. When such "unity" is seen and accepted, no additional concepts and theories become necessary to demonstrate the clarity of the teaching. The teaching is already clear as it stands. What Swāmiji is doing in his work is to just show us that Śankara's teaching is clear and consistent. He does this by drawing our attention to what Śankara himself has said and many times by what he has repeatedly said in his central writings.

*Vedānta Prabodha* (hereafter abbreviated as VP) is in nineteen sections that are sub-divided into 183 subsections in all, each of which addresses a specific issue or topic and offers a clear and original information on it from Śankara's works. The structuring of the work seems to be focused primarily on the needs of liberation seekers (*mumukṣu*) but even plain knowledge seekers can benefit greatly from it. Nearly two dozen major questions (which are listed at the beginning of the work) are discussed in detail. It is not possible to give even a very



brief summary of all of them and, therefore, only a kind of a sample is offered here.

## IS ANUPALABDHI PRAMĀNA ACCORDING TO ŚANKARA

It is common knowledge that some *Mīmāṃsakas* accept *Anupalabdhi* as a *pramāṇa* yielding us knowledge of the absence of things. This is due to their treating both things and the absence of things (*abhāva*) as distinct things of knowable entities (*padārtha*). They distinguished four types of *abhāva* and regarded them all as knowable. Many Advaitins also tend to accept *Anupalabdhi* as a *pramāṇa* on the ground that in matters of *vyavahāra*, the *Bhāṭṭa* school of *Mīmāṃsa* is followed (*vyavahāre bhāṭṭanayaḥ*). This is unacceptable to Swāmiji. His support for this stand is derived from Śankara's statement that one must realize all the *lokas* to be unsubstantial by examining them with *pramāṇas* (*tānetān pariśya pratyakṣānumānopamānāgamaiḥ.....* ..... *Muṇḍakopaniṣhad-bhāṣya*, 1.2.12, IDBS, pp.508-509). Here, the unsubstantiality (*nissārātā*) of the *lokas*, being *abhāvarūpa* in character, should have allowed elicited the mention of *anupalabdhi* if that had really been considered a *pramāṇa* by Śankara.

## ANANYATVA OF KĀRYA-KĀRANA

While what serves as a cause can exist all by itself without necessarily giving rise to its effects, the effect cannot similarly exist by itself in the absence of its cause.

On this Swāmiji writes: "If the cause is destroyed, the effect does not exist at all. For example, if the cause, the threads, are removed from the effect, the cloth, there will be no cloth at all. In the same way, if we remove from the thread, its cause called cotton fibre, there will be no thread at all. That means, *the effect is non-different (ananya)* from the cause. But even when the effect is destroyed, the cause continues to exist. For example, even when the cloth is destroyed, the threads continue to exist. Even when these threads are destroyed, the cotton fibres continue to exist. That means, *the cause is different (anya)* from its effect."

## BRAHMAN THE CAUSE AND PRAPAÑCA THE EFFECT

Very analogous to the above statement on the *ananyatva* of cause and effect, Śankara also makes another profound statement about Brahman and the world. It runs as follows : “Though the world is of the same nature (*svabhāva*) as Brahman, Brahman is not of the same *svabhāva* as the world.

On the basis of the above, Swāmijī says that we have no alternative but to accept the *ananyatva* of the world from Brahman and consequently (and unconditionally) accept Śankara’s statement: “Just as the *kāraṇa*, Brahman, never ceases to be in the three points of time like past, present and future, the *kārya*, the World, too never ceases to exist in the three points of time.”

The vital point made by Śankara here is that the world always exists whether it is still not created, or created or dissolved after creation, it exists as identical with Brahman, its cause (*kāraṇatmakatā*), exactly as it exists after dissolution. After creation and before dissolution it again exists as identical with its cause, Brahman, but “appears to be existing differently from Brahman” is due to the superimposition of *nāmarūpa* (*vikāra* or *viśeṣa*) on Brahman who is by nature *nirviśeṣa* or *nirvikāra*. All these *vikāras* are rooted in Brahman which is their cause (*viśeṣasca vikārah avikāram ca brahma. Sarvavikāra hetuṃvat, Taittirīyopaniṣadbhāṣya, 2.7, IDSB, p.375, p.116 middle para*).

## MĀYĀ AND ISSUES CONNECTED WITH IT

Some basic questions that arise in the context of Advaita doctrine are like “How does the One give rise to the many?”, “How can *cetanabrahma* create an *acetana jagat* out of itself?” and so on. The central issue here is how the effect is connected to a cause that is so completely opposed to it in its basis nature. Swāmijī thinks that the connection between such diametric opposites is usually established in any Śāstra only with the help of a special kind of power which is quite objective and real and not just the imagination of anyone. “Māyā” is this special power in Advaita doctrine.

Swāmijī’s answer to this objection runs as follows: The description of *Māyā* as *upādhi* and *anirvacanīya* are both done keeping in view the needs and state of the *sādhaka*. The third description of *Māyā* as *ananya* from Brahman is the description of what it really is. A *sādhaka* in the early stages knows that Brahman is only the *nimitta kāraṇa* of the world. Therefore he looks upon *Māyā* as an *upādhi* or a material adjunct of Brahman. When he progresses in his quest and hears the Śāstra declaring *Māyā* to be the śakti of Brahman, due to the persistence of his earlier thinking, develops the ambivalent view that *Māyā* is really undecidable (*anirvacanīya*). When he progresses even further he develops the capacity to renounce *upādhibuddhi* which is responsible for all *vyavahāra*. When he thus frees himself and contemplates on *Māyā*, he has the realization of its *ananyatva* with Brahman. Only this realization constitutes correct knowledge (*yathārtha jñāna*) about *Māyā*; the earlier thinking that *Māyā* is *anirvacanīya* is doubtful cognition (*samśaya jñāna*) about it; and the thinking about *Māyā* as *upādhi* of Brahman is just working knowledge (*mithyā jñāna*) about it.

### MITHYĀ JAGAT

Nobody normally recognizes the world as the effect of Brahman. People usually identify the world as an independent entity existing by itself and not as something non-different from Brahman. Therefore Swāmijī says that our wrong knowledge (*mithyā jñāna*) about the world consists in our identifying it as an independent existent and not as Brahman itself. The referent (*jñeya*) of such wrong knowledge is what is called “*mithyā*.”

Śankara distinguished between *satyam* (truth) and *anṛtam* (falsity) in the following way: “Once determined to be of a certain form, what never deviates from that form, is the truth; and once determined to be of a certain form, what deviates from that form is falsity.” In this sense, only Brahman is *satyam* and the world of names and forms which is an appearance of Brahman (as deviating from its *vikārah rahita svarūpa*) is *anṛtam* (falsity or *asatyam*). It must be noted that this *anṛta prapañca* is still bound to Brahman, its sole cause, by a *tādātmya* relation.

But “mithyā jagat” is very different. It is the world believed to be existing quite independently, all by itself. Since nothing whatever can exist independently of Brahman according to Śankara, such an independent world is purely the work of imagination (*kalpita*) and never exists in reality.

## NIRVIŚEṢABRAHMA

According to Advaita, Brahman is absolutely without any *viśeṣa* or *vikāra* and Śankara makes a profound observation that Brahman is *nirvikāra* because it is the source of all *vikāras*. Swāmiji endorses this by saying: “..... if all *guṇas* must come from it, it must be *nirguṇa*. Is not light, which contains all colors, itself colorless? Is not clay which can assume all sorts of forms, itself formless?” He argues that we imagine *viśeṣaṇas* in the case of Brahman only because of our wrong understanding involved in our thinking of *namarūpa* as *upādhi* of Brahman while they are actually non-different from it. Therefore, when we get rid of this wrong understanding concerning *namarūpa*, we become aware that Brahman is *nirviśeṣa* in its *svarūpa*. That is why Śankara asserts that Brahman who is bereft of all *viśeṣas* is still the source of the world.

## AVIDYĀ

Very great confusion exists regarding *avidyā*, *adhyāsa* and *Māyā* although these concepts have been expounded with great clarity in their respective contexts by Śankara. One question repeatedly raised is whether *Māyā* and *avidyā* are the same or different. There is also an equality persistent query as to where they are located in Brahman or in the *jīvas*.

Swāmiji says: “In Vedanta Śāstra..... The *jīva*’s not knowing that he himself is Brahman is called the *avidyā* of that *jīva*. The terms *ajñāna* and *agrahaṇa* also mean the same thing. It is the *avidyā* that paves the way for the wrong understanding about oneself. This wrong understanding alone is “*adhyāsa*.” But objects are not made by that *jīva*. All objects in the world are created by the *Māyāśakti* of Brahman so that the *jīvas* may work out their individual karma. Thus not only is the world

the basis for *samsāra vyavahāra* but it is also of assistance in working towards *mokṣa*. That is why Śankara says: “if Brahman had not made the world at all, the *nirvikāra svarūpa* of Brahman would not have become known at all.”

Śankara says that such *avidyā* is not a natural feature of Atman (*sa ca avidyā na’ tmanah svābhāviko dharmah, Bṛhadāraṇyakopanisad bhāṣya, 4.3.20, IDSB, Part II, p.261*). That is why, if *avidyā* is there, it can be destroyed simply by bringing in *vidyā* (knowledge) in its place. Such destruction is complete and absolute. Śankara says that if *avidyā* were to be of a positive nature (*bhavarūpa*), this kind of total and absolute destruction would not have been possible at all because “it is impossible for existence entities to get destroyed without a trace” (*na hi bhāvānām niranvayo nirupākhyo vināsaḥ sambhavati, BSSB, 2.2.22, p.194*).

Since *avidyā* of the *jīva* concerns his own *svarūpa* (which is Brahman), a question gets asked: “Is this *avidyā* of the *jīva*, or indeed of Brahman?” In answering this question Swāmijī uses one of his famous triads: “Although *jīva* is of the *svabhāva* of Brahman, Brahman is not of the *svabhāva* of *jīva*.” Since *avidyā* is found in *jīva* and since Brahman is not by its very nature a *jīva*, *avidyā* must belong to *jīva*. Just as *Māyā* belongs to Brahman *avidyā* belongs to *jīva*.

## AVIDYĀKALPITA

The world which Brahman creates through his *Māyāsakti* is basically real and is non-different from Brahman. Therefore, this world is not *mithyā*. The world continues to appear even to the one who has attained *vidyā* as *brahmaMāyā*. Therefore it is impossible for the world to be *mithyā*. But the ignorant person does not know the world as it really is, namely, as Brahman but knows it as a-Brahman (*anātman*). Therefore we must say that it is this “a-Brahman world” which is *mithyā*, which means it is imagined through *avidyā*. The clinching insight is “When *vidyā* comes, the *namarūpa* do not go. They will remain even now exactly as they were always. Only our point of view about them becomes different.”

## SARVĀTMABHĀVA AS SAMYAGDARŚANA

According to Swāmijī, only the realization that the Atman is all and all indeed is the Atman constitutes *vidyā* or *samyagdarśana*. He says: “Knowing that the world that is before oneself is non-different from oneself is *sarvātmabhāva*. Such a world must first be negated or eliminated and such elimination is called “*prapañca pravilaya*” by Swāmijī. We must note that it is only the “*vidyākalpita prapañca*” which can be eliminated in this way and not the actually existent world which, as an effect of Brahman which is produced by the *Māyāśakti* of Brahman-is always existent as identical with Brahman.

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Maha Parivrajaka



## INTRODUCTORY PRAKARAṆAM

This Prakaraṇa discusses about the four indispensable constituents of Vedāntic study, namely Anubandha Catuṣṭaya, the four-fold eligibility criteria of Sādhana, Guru and Pramāṇas the means of knowledge. The prime purpose of this text is to provide the doctrine and the discrete knowledge of the Advaita Siddhānta directly as expounded in Śāṅkara Bhāṣya [commentaries on Prasthāna Trayam-triad of sources of Védānta]. Logical reasoning employed in this text in the context of the Pramāṇas is subservient to this purpose. However the need for Śraddhā (faith) in Śruti is elaborated a little here for the reason that Śruti happens to be the only means of knowledge regarding Siddhānta the established conclusion.

# CHAPTER 1

## ANUBANDHA CATUṢṬAYA

### Four-fold Indispensable Components

A text of any science (Śāstra) begins with the descriptions of the topics covered, that is, the subject matter, the benefits, the interlinks among the components, so for the eligible student-seeker who wants to pursue the study, the subject matter is unfolded. Only after understanding these components can the reader get inspired to proceed further (Anu-afterwards) (Badhnāti-binds to the pursuit). Therefore the phrase Anubandha Catuṣṭaya is true to the sense.

According to the tradition of Vedāntic learning a text should adumbrate the **Anubandha Catuṣṭaya** at the outset itself. (Tai 2.1 Śānti pāṭha).

### 1.1 Subject Matter

The subject matter is the topic that the concerned text deals with. The present text deals with the fundamental Vedāntic topics that is, Jagat, Brahman, Jīva. The popular opinion is that these three are different entities. The Vēdas do contain statements that support this opinion. These statements related to Karma and Upāsana are however contextual (AvāntaraVākyas) and therefore they are not absolute and final. This is because the Śruti has an entirely different purport in view. It is apparent that the three entities mentioned above appear to be presenting pluralistic ideas about them. But proper enquiry into the true and essential nature (Svarūpa) of Jagat-Brahman-Jīva in the light of Vēdānta Śāstra would reveal that Jagat and Jīva are not other than the Brahman. From the point of view of the content what exists is only the Brahman even though empirically Jagat and Jīva are seen as different entities. (For the definition of Svarūpa see 5.1). The Śruti does have statements pointing to this. These are called the Mahāvākyas the great sayings. The apparent differences are denied by such sentences. Nothing

is greater in dimension than the Brahman. Hence the name Brahman बृहत्तमत्वात् ब्रह्म (Tai. 2.1.1). This term is neuter in gender. It is also called Para-Brahman. It should be carefully noted, on the other hand that the term Brahmā is in masculine gender which means Hiraṇyagarbha as mentioned in the Śruti itself. This is one of the Godheads in the array of deities. He is identified as the four-headed Brahmā in the Purānas.

## 1.2 Benefit

The study of any text benefits the studious reader. What is the benefit here? It is: every human being normally thinks oneself to be distinct and different from fellow beings, the Jagat and Brahman. All daily transactions are undertaken with this understanding of plurality, individuality and differences. Saṁsāra the life of Puṇya-Pāpa (virtue and sin), pleasure and pain, loss and gain, the life of dualities and pairs of opposites is the result of such transactions. The human beings set for themselves the four basic goals in the pursuit of life. They are Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mōkṣa (Puruṣarthas Caturvarga). The desire to enjoy physical and mental pleasures and the desire to ward off all sufferings and pain here and hereafter is called Kāma. Artha is the means to fulfill these desires. At different stages of life, the definition of pleasure changes from time to time and from person to person. And also, every pleasure is entangled with an inseparable element of pain. Certainly, there would be fear of losing the pleasure in course of time, for obvious unavoidable reasons. Mundane pleasure is thus bound by time, place and is person-relative. Besides it is ephemeral and usually impure. Purer the effort and the means the greater and lasting would be the joy. Hence the person puts forth efforts towards permanent joy here and hereafter. The laws governing the pursuit of pleasures are called Dharma both individual (Vyaṣṭi) and collective (Samaṣṭi) (see 14.6 for further details). But the acts of Dharma do not ensure everlasting absolute enjoyment (Ānanda). In contrast to it there is Ānanda synonymous with Mōkṣa which is ever pure and unparalleled, unbound by time, place and relative factors. The Śruti prescribes two disciplines, namely, **AparāVidyā** and **ParāVidyā** for those who seek appeasement of desires and for those

who want Mókṣa, freedom from desires and dependence, respectively. That is, the Śruti treats Dharma-Artha-Kāma-Mókṣa pursuits in two different vidyas. Karma and Upāsana portions contain AparāVidyā. Aparā means not Parā, meant for the fulfillment of desire lower than Parā, which is higher and greater. The present text teaches ParāVidyā which is meant for Mókṣa; the benefit of study is Mókṣa.

### 1.3 The Linkage

The linkage to be understood is that of the Seeker-Subject, Subject-Benefit, Seeker-Benefit. What obstructs the Mókṣa of the seeker is his ignorance of Mókṣa. The elimination of this ignorance is the linkage between the seeker and the benefit. The knowledge of Brahman is itself Mókṣa and hence BrahmAjñāna is the linkage between the subject and benefit. The real nature of the seeker is Brahman itself. So the linkage between the seeker and subject is one's own real nature. These will be easily understood by studying the figure of a triangle as marked below in Fig 1.3.

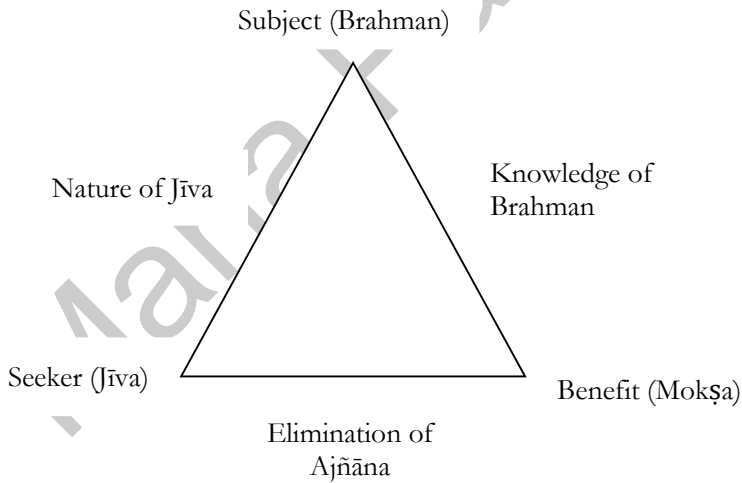


Fig 1.3

The three corners of the figure 1.3 appear to be never-can-be-identical before the study is undertaken. But in course of time with proper conviction, the deep study eliminates the Ajñāna- ignorance in the seeker. Finally when Brahma-Atman Ekatva, the oneness of the Brahman and Jīva, is discerned, the triangle disappears into the vision of oneness.

The present text systematically unfolds the subject strictly following a scheme which provides contextual development of topics with relevant and sufficient details as the context demands. No assertions or affirmations are made in advance, prior to or before the context and hence the text neither confounds the reader nor makes the study repulsive. Technical terms employed in the chapters are clearly explained in the beginning itself. To a great extent common words are used and even so the matter is not discussed superficially. This enables the novice to pursue the study with depth and seriousness.

It should be noted that the treatment of the subject is based entirely on the authentic commentaries of Sri Śāṅkara on the Prasthāna Traya (a triad of source works of Védānta). Yet the modern questions and doubts are critically analyzed here while the old issues are given new approaches and answers. Extra care is taken to derive the fundamental Śruti- based conclusion that Brahman is Non-dual and is arrived at by following the Nēti-Nēti method of Upaniṣadīc teaching. Those who have already studied the Védānta Śāstra will find that this text serves to verify their clarity and validity of vision.

#### **1.4 Adhikārī the eligible student-seeker**

All readers will not derive the ultimate benefit of Mókṣa by means of this text. It is because of the simple rule that to derive the benefit of any branch of knowledge, one has to have the prescribed qualifications which ensure the accomplishment of the goal. Take for example, the Mīmāṃsa Śāstra. It states clearly the eligibility criteria as follows: ‘अर्थी समर्थो विद्वन् शास्त्रेण अविपर्युदस्तः’ - One should have the desire

to perform Védic Karma (rites) (in order to acquire desirable objects), be competent, learned and should not be excluded by the Śāstra.

This text also deals with Mókṣa Śāstra containing the teachings of Bhagavatpāda Śaṅkara based mainly on the Upaniṣads. Very few are interested in Mókṣa because the majority live under the illusion that happiness is the result of fulfilling worldly desires while living with the worldly relations. The very idea of Mókṣa frightens them because it doesn't have any sign of the world in it! So they think that it is not their cup of tea!

Does the study of Védānta Śāstra presuppose that the student has completed the study and practice of Védic Karma? Sri Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda firmly replies with a 'No'. But one should have the four-fold means of accomplishment Sādhana. These are unavoidable and yet sufficient. However this is far from being simpler or easier than Védic Karma and Dharma Jijñāsa. Sādhana is the result of the accumulation of purifying Karmas in the past lives of the seeker. 'By the non-performance of Karma one does not accomplish the state of no action that is, freedom from action (Mókṣa) 'न कर्मणानारंभानैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्रुते' (G. 3.4); 'One is prompted and propelled towards Mókṣa Siddhi by the impact of pursuit of Sādhana in the past lives 'पूर्वाभ्यासेन तेनैव हियते ह्यवशोऽपि सः' (G. 6.44).

## CHAPTER 2

### SĀDHANA CATUṢṬAYA SAMPATTI

#### Well accomplished four-fold qualifications of Sādhana

Discriminative knowledge (understanding) of what is permanent and what is impermanent, dispassion towards the enjoyment of fruits of action here and hereafter, six-fold virtues like mastery over one's mind (Śama), sustained desire to achieve Mókṣa these are the Sādhana-Catuṣṭaya, the four-fold qualifications.

#### 2.1 Nitya-Anitya-Vastu-Vivéka

##### (Knowledge of the Permanent & Impermanent)

This is the discriminative knowledge (understanding) of what is permanent and what is impermanent. Vivéka is the ability of a human being to accept what is conclusively decided to be right rejecting that which is identified as wrong after proper analysis. This is arrived at through a thought process. Human mind always has an unbroken series of thoughts flowing like a river current. Every action is preceded by its conceptual abstract Kalpana. This undergoes many volitional changes before it takes the shape of a decision Niścaya. These volitions which are many and varied Vikalpas are due to various types of doubts entertained on the selected course of action or set goal or object under observation. Thus the human instrument of knowledge functions in a very complex manner. Its functional abilities are catalogued and defined in the Śāstra as follows:

- a) सङ्कल्प विकल्पात्मकं मनः -Manas is the functional form of conceptual abstract of an action, goal or an object under observation along with the doubts entertained whether it is right or wrong, good or bad and such pairs of horns of dilemma.

- b) निश्चयात्मिका बुद्धिः -Buddhi is the functional form of decision when a given conceptual abstract is accepted after all other known possibilities are rejected in the process.
- c) धारणात्मकं चित्तम् -The storage and the retrieval aspect of memory.
- d) अहं भावात्मको अहङ्कारः -The doership and enjoyership agency.
- Items c & d will be elaborated later.

What is the nature of Vivéka which is required for pursuing Mókṣa?

First of all let it be clear that indeed Mókṣa is of the nature of permanent, untainted, unparalleled Ānanda Happiness. But the happiness experienced in the Jagat is not of this nature. In fact, worldly happiness is momentary, meagre and conditioned by many limitations. Hence it is not pure. It demands physical/actual contacts of sense objects which are time-bound. It causes exhaustion and hence the joy sustained is not unlimited and lasting. Desire for an object seems to disappear when it is fulfilled and yet the fulfillment also disappears before long. Strangely, the fulfilled desire does not occur again for some time. Therefore a seeker of Mókṣa comes to the firm belief that everything in the Jagat is Anitya, not a permanent source of happiness. Keeping this always in mind a seeker gives up the craving for anything which is fleeting. Such a seeker reminds himself or herself of the words of wise men that Brahman alone is permanent. There takes place detachment from the impermanent and attachment towards the really permanent. Detachment from the impermanent develops gradually.

This is the discriminative understanding of what is Nitya and Anitya. However, this Vivéka does not manifest in those who are sinful in thought, word, and deed.

Only those who are released from the deluding pairs of opposites, having terminated their sins by virtuous deeds, will pray to me with firmness, so said Lord Kṛṣṇa. 'येषां त्वन्तगतं पापं जनानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् | ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ता भजन्ते मां द्रढव्रताः' (G.7.28).



Hence it is clear that only those who have earned the grace of Īśvara through performing good deeds are capable of successfully sustaining the Vivéka (discriminative understanding).

It would suffice to mention that sincere seekers of Mókṣa should invoke the grace of Īśvara through Puṇya-Karma (actions sanctioned by the Śāstra which accumulate spiritual merit) and direct contact with the Mahātmas, the association with the saintly men who are already blessed by Īśvara.

## 2.2 Dispassion

Dispassion towards enjoyment of fruits of actions here and hereafter is इहामुन्नार्थफलभोगविरागः |

As the discriminative understanding (Viveka) gets more and more rooted, detachment towards momentary pleasures becomes prominent and perpetual. The classical examples for the delusive trapping nature of sense enjoyments are the deer to the hunter's sound, the tusker to sense of touch, the fish to the bait, the moths to the colour of the flame, the blue bottle fly (Bhrṅga) to the fragrance of lotus (Vivékacūḍāmaṇi 78). What to say of human beings who hanker after all the 5 sense objects of sound, touch, taste, form and smell!

The ability to control the choices of mind is called **Maniṣā**. Its function will be put to best use only when it is directed by Vivéka. Any other way would be its abuse. Compared to these worldly physical pleasures, the heavenly subtle enjoyments one can experience through Védic Yajñas (sacrifices) like Jyótiṣṭóma are indeed lavish and lasting. Yet they are also time-bound and hence impermanent. "They fall again into the world of mortals after enjoying the vast heavens when the Puṇya is exhausted 'ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यं लोकं विशन्ति' (G.9.21). Mature Vairāgya means letting things of pleasures fall away without provoking any desire for enjoyment. Vairāgya matures to this state only when one lives with minimum possessions to keep life going purposefully to pursue the path of final liberation without much

dependence on external sensual crutches. 'यल्लभसे निज कर्मोपात्तं वित्तं तेन विनोदय चित्तम्' (Bhaja Góvinda Stótram.)

Vairāgya in varying colours and degrees, does not really bear any fruit. The Sāstras give different instances of such semblances: Vairāgya in the absence of the means of enjoyment, on the death of someone dear, during the pain of child delivery, and so on. It is none of these; it is total abandonment of every worldly possession as an act of firm free will.

**2.3 Śamādi Śaṭka:** These are six qualities;

(i) **Śama:** Man first thinks of worldly means of pleasure, gradually develops a desire for it. It grows further in steps finally resulting in its enjoyment. The goal of Mókṣa is forgotten. It is necessary to keep the mind firmly fixed on the goal of achieving it. The firmness of mind is Śama, that is controlling the mind.

(ii) **Dama:** This is controlling of sense and motor organs. God has carved out the sense organs outwards; so man sees only outside and not inside. 'पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयंभूः तस्मात् पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन्' (Ka. 2.1.1). Therefore, one who desires Mókṣa has to control these organs.

(iii) **Uparati:** Material things are enjoyed by sense organs and desire is fulfilled by Karma to get them. So, common people enjoy only such actions. But, one desiring Mókṣa refrains from such Karma and enjoys the proximity of God within. This is Uparati. It culminates finally in Sannyāsa abandoning everything.

(iv) **Titikṣā:** There are three types of stress ताप. They are called तापत्रय Stress within oneself is Ādhyātmika Tāpa; that due to nature like heat and cold is Ādhidaivika Tāpa; that caused by others like mosquitoes, etc., is Ādhibhoutika Tāpa. All these happen due to Prārabdha the previous Karma. Generally one tries to escape from them if he can or hates them. Forbearance, the ability to put up with them, to endure them is Titikṣā.

(v) **Śraddhā:** Two things are to be remembered in understanding the role of Śraddhā. Mókṣa is not understood by inference, because it is beyond the mind. So it is to be understood only by Śruti. This is the first point. None can independently study Śruti, however intelligent he or she may be. It is to be understood only through the Guru. This is the second part. So one desiring Mókṣa has no choice but to surrender to the Śruti and the Guru. Total faith in these two is essential. Śrat means truth, Dhā means bearing. Only one with Śraddhā can obtain knowledge 'श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानम्' (G 4.39).

(vi) **Samādhāna:** Ādhāna keeping the mind in Sama equilibrium is Samādhāna. All interactions result in churning the mind chaotically. It is only the interaction with God and Guru that can keep the mind in equilibrium. Samādhāna is this equilibrium.

## 2.4 Mumukṣutva

Generally there is grief in life. Trying to put an end to it by committing suicide is foolish; actually it increases grief. Reason is: grief is a result of sin which should be allowed to work itself out by grief. To put an end to it in the middle is like escaping from the prison in the middle. Punishment for this is greater. With faith in God one should expend it of a term and turn towards Mókṣa which is a state free from all grief. This is obtainable even while alive. Intense desire for Mókṣa gives the ability to bear grief.

## 2.5 One doubt

Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa says that Gita should not be taught to one who is not a Tapasvi (i.e., not intelligent according to Yāska), a non-devotee, a non-server of Guru and one who is jealous of God (G.18.67). Does it mean that these are another set of qualifications for competence in the search for Mókṣa? No. These are subsumed in Sādhana Sampatti.

Devotion, service, non-jealousy are included in Śraddhā and intelligence in Vivéka. Though Sādhana Catustaya speaks of different qualities, it is a matter of experience that desire itself for Mókṣa leads to

Śama, etc. Śama, etc., leads to Vairāgya and Vairāgya makes Vivēka more firm. Therefore desire for Mókṣa is the first step in Sādhana. After obtaining Mókṣa, the other qualities become his nature: then all Karma drops off. Bad Karma can never happen in this case because ignorance has left him. One who recognized a pit even at night would never fall in it during the day.

## 2.6 Who are all entitled for Mókṣa?

All the qualifications essential for Mókṣa are mental. None of them is related to the gross body. This clearly implies anyone having Sādhana Sampatti, belonging to any Varṇa or Āśrama or gender, is entitled for Brahmavidyā. ‘ज्ञानमात्रे यद्यपि सर्वाश्रमिणाम् अधिकारः’ (Mu.Bh. Introduction); ‘स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम्’ (G 9.32). ‘Even widowers, etc., are graced by Vidyā by doing the Karma of Japa, fasting, worshipping God, etc. not contravening Śāstra विधुरादीनामविरूढैः पुरुषमात्रसंबन्धिभिः जपोपवास देवताराधनादिभिः धर्मविशेषैः अनुग्रहो विद्यायाः संभवति’ (Sū.Bh. 3.4.38). Even gods who have no competence for Karma are entitled for Mókṣa. This is also very much true in the case of Ṛṣis. Vidura, Dharmavyādha, were not Brāhmaṇs. Sulabha, Maitréyi, Gārgi were all women; Indra, Bhrigu were gods; Nārada was a Ṛṣi; Viśwāvasu was a Gandharva; Mārkaṇḍeya, Nachikéta were Brahmachārins; Raikva and Samvarta were without any Āśrama. But all of them were graced by Brahmavidyā. Sādhana Sampatti is necessary for a Mumukṣu of any Varṇa. It is more essential for a Brāhmaṇa. His Varṇa Dharma itself very much includes Vivēka, Vairāgya and Śama etc. In fact the very purpose of his life is Mókṣa. So, a Brāhmaṇa who is not keen on Brahmavidyā is chastised as a Brahmabandhu- that is, his relations are Brāhmaṇs but not himself !

## CHAPTER 3

### GURU

#### Guru Unavoidable

The necessity of Guru, characteristics of a Guru, nature of Guru-Śiṣya relationship and so on are described in this chapter.

#### 3.1 The need for a Guru

Why is it imperative that Mókṣa Vidyā should be learnt at the feet of Guru (2.3.v)?

It is a matter of common sense that to pass a course of discipline one has to have the guidance of a teacher, who has already passed the same course, whether it be Medicine, Law or Business. Then what to say of Mókṣa Vidyā? In the common parlance of elders there is an expression “Is it such a Brahma Vidyā?!” when a young student complains that one of the academic subjects is tough. Thus it is popular enough that Brahma Vidyā is difficult when compared to any other branch of knowledge. Lord Kṛṣṇa states ‘Just one among thousands strives for Siddhi of Brahma Vidyā and yet among such seekers only one comprehends ME correctly ‘मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये | यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मा वेत्ति तत्त्वतः|’ (G.7.3). Brahma Vidyā is the Knowledge of one’s own self. For this very reason it is very difficult. The idea of obtaining self through knowledge is in fact due to ignorance of the real Self. There is an ocean of difference between the former and the latter. And the Real Nature of the Self does not fall within the scope of available worldly means of Knowledge (Pramāṇam). Therefore it is clear as to why the Guru is unavoidable and his grace too. Not recognizing this, some so-called modern educated people deny this. They are wrong. ‘Even a scholar should not seek Brahman’s knowledge independently ‘शास्त्रज्ञोऽपि स्वातन्त्रेण ब्रह्मज्ञानान्वेषणं न कुर्यात्’ (Mu.Bh. 1.2.12.); आचार्याद्वैव विद्या विदिता साधिष्ठं प्रापत्- Only when learnt from an accomplished Master, Self-Knowledge will be fruitful’ (Ch.Bh. 4.9.3).

आचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद | (Ch.Bh.6.14.2). One who has a teacher understands. A teacher from whom one understands clearly is indeed the Guru. Gu the darkness of ignorance Ru eliminator thereof.

### 3.2 Characteristics of a Guru

How to identify and approach a Guru? The Śruti gives the answer. ‘तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम्.’ The seeker of Brahma Vidyā should approach holding the sacrificial firewood twigs, the token of surrender, only a Guru who is Śrótṛiya and Brahmaniṣṭha (Mu.1.2.12). Śrótṛiya is one who has studied the Védas in the traditional way and lives according to the Védic tenets. Brahmaniṣṭha is one whose mind always steadily reposes in the Brahman. Such a Guru will not licentiously interpret the Śruti according to his own whims and fancies. Hence there would be no contraindications, confusions and blunt expressions in his teachings as they clearly reflect the one and only purport of the Śruti. Any disciple would find answers to the questions with a Śrótṛiya-Brahmaniṣṭha. Even unthought of questions would be raised and answered by such a Guru. A mere Śrótṛiya cannot totally satisfy the questioning intellect of the disciple because of lack of direct, immediate experience. Scriptural text books do not come to his rescue. One who is free from different preconditioned concepts alone can liberate the seeker’s intellect from the thralldom of speculative thoughts and the consequent doubts. Lord Kṛṣṇa points out that this knowledge is communicated by those who know and invariably *See* what they know. ‘उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः’ (G.4.34). Here Jñānī means Śrótṛiya and Tattvadarśi means Brahmaniṣṭha.

The contentment of a true Guru is always evident in the calm smile and composure of the sense organs. He is totally free from worries. Looking at Satyakāma the disciple, the Guru Hāridrumata spontaneously said “Dear one, indeed you shine as a Brahmavit” ‘ब्रह्मविदिव वै सोम्य भासि’ (Ch.Bh.4.9.2). Somya means calm and pleasant like the moon. A Master of this kind has equanimous vision, is without ego and attachment, has

risen beyond the pairs of opposites, does not expect any benefits or return, does not accept anything, is always clean, is efficient in action, is compassionate, is devoid of hypocrisy, and therefore is capable of communicating Brahma Vidyā without any kind of reservation. Saint Sarvajña aptly mentions about a true Master as “a Guru who is not one amidst the mortal beings, as even the heavenly tree is not just a tree, the heavenly cow is not just a cow, the philosopher’s stone is not just another stone.” The Guru who has realized the nature of Viṣṇu realizes it to be his true nature. It is for this reason that total faith in the words of a Guru is said to be very essential. It is mandatory on the part of the Guru to rescue a disciple, who has approached him in the proper manner and is well qualified, from the ocean of sorrows. (Mu.1.2.13). ‘न्यायत उपसन्नाय योग्याय जानता विद्या वक्तव्यैव’ (Pra.6.1). But then, even as a goldsmith purifies the gold in fire, the Ācārya tests the character and conduct of the student. ‘यथा हि कनकं शुद्धं तापच्छेदनिघर्षणैः | परीक्षेत तथा शिष्यान् ईक्षेत् शीलगुणदिभिः |’ (Śānti Parva.329).

### 3.3 How to get the SadGuru?

There are two reasons for not getting the SadGuru. The ignorance of the fact that there is no easier or a quicker method to Mókṣa other than the one indicated in the traditional Mókṣa Śāstra. ‘नान्यः पन्था अयनाय विद्यते’ (Śve.3.8).

Lack of knowledge of the fact that with Sādhanasampatti one has to himself struggle towards the spiritual goal- ‘उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम्’ (G.6.5). Besides, the contact with an enlightened Master is a matter of God’s grace even for a totally qualified seeker. Hence a seeker must free himself or herself from the above said deficiencies and seek the grace of God.

### 3.4 Service to the Guru

The Śruti provides the mode of approach to the SadGuru. The seeker of knowledge should offer the dry twigs-Samit, to the SadGuru and prostrate. The dry twigs are meant for offerings into the fire. The seeker of liberation from the bondage of Karma understands that there

is nothing one has to accomplish with any type of Karma symbolized by the Samit. Hence the seeker surrenders to the SadGuru so that all the Karmas be burnt in the Fire of knowledge kindled by the teaching. In the Gītā the Lord mentions that the Jñānāgni, the fire of knowledge burns all the Karmas to ashes, as even the dry twigs are burnt by the fire to ashes- 'यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात् कुरुतेऽर्जुन | ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात् कुरुते तथा |' (B.G 4.37). There are hundreds of statements and examples in the Scriptural Literature (Védas, Purāṇas and Epics) regarding the right conduct of a seeker towards the Teacher. On the whole it can be summarized as follows. The eight-limbed prostration, humble presentation of doubts in order to gain clarity, obeying the commands and rendering any form of service-these are part and parcel of the life at the feet of a Master, a Guru. The conduct mentioned here is well stated in the Gītā. 'तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया' Gītā (4.34). Praṇipāta points to the surrender expressed through prostration, Paripraśna points to the virtue of humility in presenting the doubts and sevā points to devoted service. What makes the seeker a complete disciple is service unto the Guru.

A disciple who is not a renunciate (Sannyāsi) ought to offer Dakṣiṇa to one's Guru, which is earned through legitimate means. [Tai.1.1]

### 3.5 A word of caution

An innocent seeker may surrender to a person whom for the time being he considers as a Guru. But later on if that person is found to be unauthentic in terms of teaching and not disciplined in conduct according to the Scriptures, such a person should be courageously abandoned without any doubt and delay. Otherwise great will be the loss, in course of time. Bhagavān Védavyāsa very clearly gives similar mandate in the Mahābhārata (Śāntiparva577). 'गुरोरप्यवलिप्तस्य कार्याकार्यमजानतः | उत्पथ प्रतिपन्नस्य परित्यागो विधीयते।' A person deserves to be abandoned even if he be a Guru whose chāraacter is arrogant, indiscriminate regarding right conduct and good behaviour, imprudent, and who has recklessly taken to immoral ways of living.



## CHAPTER 4

### PRAMĀṆA

#### Means of Knowledge

The characteristic features of the Guru and disciple were brought out in the previous chapter. The seeker, Mumukṣu, should know what the Śāstra says about Jagat (world), Brahman and Jīva (embodied soul). Right Knowledge takes place only when there is doubtfree comprehension of the essential nature of these three through the Guru.

#### 4.1 Tripuṭi: Threefold factors

Knowledge, Pramā involves i) **Pramātṛ**, the Knower; ii) **Praméya**, the object, theme or discipline to be known; iii) **Pramāṇa**, the means of valid Knowledge which alone can give rise to conclusive, definite and total perception of the object. Pramāṇa is the specific and particular means of Knowledge of a given object-Praméya. The etymological meaning of the term Pramā is Pra+ma reads as very well, exhaustively + measuring the object **as it is**.

For example: The One who perceives a clay pot and knows that ‘This is a clay pot’ is the Pramātṛ, Knower (of it). It takes the eyes to perceive the pot. The eyes are Pramāṇam for seeing any visual object; here in the example, the clay pot. The definite, clear, conclusive Knowledge that ‘This is a clay pot’ is Pramā.

The threefold division of Pramātṛ-Pramā-Praméya is called Tripuṭi. This division prevails not only in Knowledge but in any form of action like eating, meditation, seeking or pursuing. The Pramātṛ, the subject gathers a relevant name accordingly like Eater-Eating-Eaten; Meditator-Meditation-Meditating; Seeker-Sought-Seeking.

There are various means of Knowledge which operate differently and provide definite Knowledge in different ways. The Advaita Védānta tradition, presented in the commentaries (Bhāṣyas) by

Bhagavān Śrī Śaṅkara, recognizes 5 different types of Pramāṇa and these are:

- i) Pratyakṣa :Direct physical sense perceptions
- ii) Anumāna :Inference
- iii) Upamāna :Analogy
- iv) Arthāpatti :Presumption
- v) Āgama/Śabda :(Word of God, the Védas) Verbal Testimony

## 4.2 Pratyakṣa Pramāṇa: Sense Perception as a means

This is direct physical sense perception. The objects in this Jagat fall under five classes namely Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell. There is nothing else besides these. These five sense objects are perceived through the five sense organs of perceptual Knowledge. The ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose respectively come in contact with each object and the contact results in the Knowledge thereof. It begins with ‘this is something’ (अव्यपदेश्यम्) and proceeds to grasp the non-negatable undeniable nature (अव्यभिचारि) of this as the object under observation through relevant sense organ. Then, there arises the definite Knowledge with which the name and the object are identified. ‘इन्द्रियार्थ सन्निकर्षोत्पन्नं ज्ञानम् अव्यपदेश्यम् अव्यभिचारि व्यवसायात्मकम् प्रत्यक्षम्’ (Nyāya Sūtram 1.1.4). The instrument which causes the Knowledge is called Pratyakṣa Pramāṇam. However, the Knowledge will not take valid place if there be any defect or error in the Antaḥkaraṇam, the inside instrument mind-intellect unit or the sense organ centres or circumstantial lacuna in the interaction between the organ and object. It is also possible that instead of Knowledge there can be i) Samsāyajñānam (Samsāyagrahaṇam), that is doubt regarding the nature and identity of the object. ii) **Mithyājñānam** (Anyathājñānam) Erroneous Knowledge, that is mistaken identity of the object, iii) **Ajñānam** (Āgrahaṇam, Avidyā) Non comprehension, that is total ignorance.

**Samyagjñānam**, that is, clear, definite and conclusive Knowledge, is totally free from these above flaws. Example: A piece of rope by the roadside seen late in the evening is a stock example used to bring home the meaning of the above terms. The occasional breeze makes one end of the rope shake like the hood of a snake. Because of these circumstantial contributive factors there can arise Mithyā Jñānam the mistaken identity of a snake instead of the perception of rope. Is it rope or is it snake? is a doubtful cognition, SamsāyAjñānam. In spite of fear, if such a victim takes the help of a bright torch and scrutinizes the object in many ways like clapping at and tapping it, it is possible to arrive at the doubtfree, clear and definite Knowledge of the real object-that it is a rope and rope alone. This verified Knowledge is Samyagjñānam. Not to know anything at all about the rope that is ignorance of the rope is Ajñānam.

### 4.3 Anumāna Pramāṇam: Inference as a means

Drawing upon partially perceived data, we often arrive at conclusive Knowledge of something which does not immediately fall within the scope of direct perception. Because of the presence of smoke, the presence of fire is inferred though fire is not directly perceived. This is possible due to the prior experience of seeing smoke and fire together many times. The already known such relation is called **Vyāpti-Pervasion**. In the example, fire is the **Vyāpaka-Pervaded**. Smoke proceeds from and spreads within fire and hence it is called Vyāpya. With the help of the already known link, after studying (=anu) the **Vyāpya-Pervader**, the assessment of Vyāpaka (=Māna) is done. Hence this is Anumāna. In colloquial expression it means guessing. This Pramāṇam is often put to use to acquire Knowledge in mundane life.

There are different types of Anumāna. When the cause (fire) is derived by observing the effect (smoke) it is **Śeṣavat Anumāna**. On the other hand, if the cause is observed (seeing the clouds) and the effect (the rains) is derived, it is **Pūrvavat Anumāna**. Even if there does not

prevail any link between the cause and effect, it is possible to infer the nature of the object under enquiry by virtue of the similarities. This is **Sāmānyatódṛṣṭa Anumāna**. To take a classical example from Śrīmad Rāmāyāṇa- the small bundle of gold ornaments shown by Sugrīva to Śrī Rāmā has nothing to do with the track of the kidnap of Sītā. But the bundle makes it possible to think in terms of identifying the route of kidnap through that aerial region. Thus this Pramāṇam is preceded by Pratyakṣam of one object and it allows deriving valid Knowledge of another object through inference. ‘अथ तत्पूर्वकं त्रिविधमनुमानं-पूर्ववत् शेषवत् सामान्यतो द्रष्टुं च’ (Nyāya Sūtram 1.1.5). However, what is gathered through inference is to be verified only through Pratyakṣam. For example, the mountain peak is seen covered with snow and somebody concludes that the weather will be chill over there. But having gone there it is proved false because that was only a suspended cloud on the top instead of snow. Here the Vyāpaka is mistaken and therefore the inference is fallacious. It can also happen when the Vyāpti is mistaken. In spite of rainy clouds, there need not be a shower of rain because it is also necessary to have cool temperature in the atmosphere for the rain to fall. Thus inferences can be corrected through direct perception. This shows that the latter has its sway over the former. However, Pratyakṣam does not have any such limitation. Hence, it is called Niraṅkuśa Pramāṇam, a means of knowledge which is free from any conditioning of any other means.

#### 4.4 Upamāna Pramāṇam: Analogy as a means

A city dweller wants to know about ‘Gavaya’, a wild animal. The forester tells him that ‘Gavaya’ is like a cow. Gavaya is Upameya, the object to be known with the help of Upamāna, the already familiar established object, the cow. The animals do not have totally identical features. Only similarities are taken into account for the purpose of identifying the object of enquiry. Thus, Upa (near), Māna (measuring) helps to know an object by virtue of a few notable popularly known

features of an already familiar object. प्रसिद्ध साधर्म्यात् साध्यसाधनम् उपमानम् (Nyāya Sūtram 1.1.6). For example, when we say a Cobra is like a water snake, we know that the former is venomous while the latter is not, or may not be.

#### 4.5 Arthāpatti Pramāṇam: Presumption as a means

It is not possible to survive without taking any food. But nobody, has seen Dévadatta taking food and yet he is strong and sturdy. How to reconcile these two facts? It is done through presumption. Though nobody has seen Dévadatta taking food, he must be eating without being noticed by anybody. Otherwise it is not at all possible to remain healthy and active as he appears to be. This is the meaning (Arthā), arrived at (Āpatti) through upapatti understandable and accepted factual reasoning.

In such cases two things are to be avoided.

- i) The reconciliation should not be arbitrary. There should not be room for another way of understanding the matter under enquiry. (अन्यथाप्युपपत्ति).
- ii) There should not be another means by which alone this can be understood. (अन्यथैवोप्युपपत्ति).

#### 4.6 Āgama Pramāṇam:

**Word of God / Verbal Testimony as a means**

This is also called Śabda Pramāṇam. Śabda is reliable utterance आप्तोपदेशः शब्दः (Nyāya Sūtram 1.1.7). However, all words are sounds. The Védas also are sounds. But there is a difference. All words in vogue in social transaction are meant for the communication of mundane, material experiences which are time-bound. The Védas, however, contain the subject matter which does not fall under the category of mundane, material experiences of the mortal human being. Hence, the Védas are not Loukikam, secular. The Védas are not the product of

human intellect which has the limitations of Bhrama (delusion), Pramāda (carelessness) and Vipralipsā (deceitfulness). For these reasons the human intellect can cause false notions, AyathārthAjñānam. The Védas are called Aloukika Śabda, that is, that which does not have its origin in this finite world of time and space. The Védas communicate that which is beyond nature and matters like Dharma and Adharma, which are not cognizable by any human means of Knowledge except the Védas. The Védas alone determine the meaning of matters like Dharma and rebirth.

What is so special about the Védas? Why do the Védas have such extraordinary potential and efficacy? The answer is not to be sought outside the Védas! As even the life-breath is within the living body, the answer is within the Védas themselves. The Bṛhadāraṇyakópaniṣad proclaims that the Védas came into existence along with the creation from the Parāmātman, the Supreme Creator as naturally as the exhalation of a human being. 'अस्य महतो भूतस्य निःश्वसितमेतत् यद्ग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्वाङ्गिरसः' (Br.2.4.10). The only difference is that a human being lives by breath whereas the Védas are enlivened by and they live in Parāmātman. The Védas disappear into the Lord during the dissolution of Jagat and reappear again during the manifestation of the creation. Hence, the Védas are called **Apouruṣeya**, that which is not of human origin. The Védas are not like the books written by some authors.

The Védas are not read, they are heard and perpetuated through the oral tradition. So they are called Śruti. It is independently a Pramāṇa by itself; its validity need not be established by inference न च अनुमानगम्यं शास्त्रप्रामाण्यम् (Sū.Bh.1.1.4). Nevertheless the reader who believes strongly in inference should take note of the following five reasons why the authorship of the Védas cannot be attributed to human beings.

- i) Nowhere in the body of the Védas is there any mention about the author, or authors, of the Védas. Were there any authors, then their names would not have been ignored.

- ii) The Védas are chanted according to seven-swara system of accent intonation. If this were the product of human direction it would not have retained its form without any alteration or deformity. But the Védic chānting has stood the test of time till today.
- iii) The scope of their content is beyond human imagination and it covers all fields of Knowledge possibilities. This cannot be the product of a single author or of team work.
- iv) The contention that the Védas have different authors at different times of history and thus the Védas were compiled does not hold water. The concord found in the Védas does not provide room for any such contention. Many authors would necessarily have different contentions, views, stand points and contraindications. The Védas have unparalleled consistency and unpolluted, uncontaminated clarity throughout their content.
- v) There are many, many allusions about a variety of matters ranging from astronomy to geology covering the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Cosmos which have been recently verified by modern science. For example, in the Atharva Véda it is mentioned that there are seven Dvīpas (continents) on earth. Till 1911 only six were known and identified. Later Antartica was discovered. In the text of Purāṇam this is named as Śakadvīpa. There are very many such examples.

“In that case how is it that there are sentences in the Védas which appear to be contradictory or creating doubts? What is the clarification?” Any complicated Śāstra explains things only through sentences in which there will be an inherent flow, that is, though the language is intended to convey a fixed meaning from the integrated holistic point of view, really does not succeed and instead it expresses only partial and localized ideas. It cannot afford to be complete. This is obvious because everyone knows that it is not possible to convey the whole meaning in a single sentence. Therefore it acts only in the

following way. The sentence conveying one localized idea can only draw the attention of the listener to the total content. It cannot convey the total context itself. Also, the direction of the total content changes from one localized idea to another. It is just like the direction of the place we want to reach goes on changing from one road to another on our way to it. It is the same difficulty faced by Śruti in conveying the meaning it wants to convey. Therefore, the great sages elucidate through rules, the method of fixing the meaning of the sentences of the Védas. It is like describing the various routes one has to take in order to reach the final destination. It is only by following such rules of interpretation that the meaning of Śruti is to be fixed. Adopting this procedure, we can realize that Védas do not give rise to either doubts, or contradictions, or multiple meanings.

In this way the Védas are proved to be Apouruṣéya. All the Pouruṣéya Sāstras come forth (to light) only with the limited intellects of the people. They can never convey the total truth because the human intellect is inherently contaminated with the faults mentioned above. Parāmesvara is without fault and therefore his words, the Védas, are capable of communicating the true Knowledge.

Such a Véda is remembered in the beginning of creation by Brahma and followed by Sāptaṛṣis, who are born directly from Brahma's mind, and also their progeny. Ṛṣis like Sanaka and Sanandana are capable of remembering. This is because of the extraordinary penance done in their previous lives in previous creations (Sū.Bh. 1.3.29). They are called the seers of the Mantrās **Mantra Draṣṭāras**. They are not the composers of the Mantrās. Védas are learnt by the ensuing generations in the same traditions promulgated by these exalted souls. In this way the Védas retain their identity from creation to creation. That is why the Védas are eternal. That is the reason why Dharma, Adharma and Brahma Svarūpa and Jīva Svarūpa, which are beyond the primordial nature, are only determined on the basis of the Védas. This discussion will be resumed in section 5.11.



## 4.7 Another Pramāṇa of the Mīmāṃsakas

Mīmāṃsakas speak of another Pramāṇa called **Anupalabdhi Pramāṇam**. The Knowledge of an existing object is called Upalabdhi Pramā. According to the Mīmāṃsakas, Knowledge of the non-existence of a non-existing thing is Anupalabdhi Pramā. For example, looking at an empty vessel and then to know that it doesn't contain water is through this Pramāṇam.

These utterances have been included by some Vedāntins also in their works. It is well known that there is much difference between Védānta and Mīmāṃsa in respect of highest truth, Paramārtha. Nevertheless there is a common saying that the Védānta accepts the Mīmāṃsa in worldly affairs. Based on this saying, some Védāntin, have also accepted Anupalabdhi Pramāṇam. But this is wrong. Pramāṇam is that through which we have right cognition of an existing object. When one does not have this SamyakJñāna, but instead has invalid cognition (doubtful/illusory) संशयज्ञानम् अन्यथाज्ञानम् nobody asks for or even talks of a Pramāṇa for that.

When this is the situation, how is it possible at all to talk of either Pramā or Pramāṇa when the object itself is absent? We cannot. “But is it not a well known Pramā that there is nothing in deep sleep? Could Anupalabdhi be Pramāṇa for this?” No. This Pramā is not produced during deep sleep itself. There is no Pramātṛ (knower) at all for such a Pramā to appear in that state. However, a person presumes Pramātṛtva even in deep sleep and makes this comment after waking up. Therefore, when an object is not available for any Pramāṇa, its non-existence is automatically concluded. Therefore, it becomes very unnecessary to treat its non-existence itself as a Praméya (an object) and also concoct a Pramāṇa for this imaginary Praméya. Moreover, even the Pramā of this non-existence appears only after the question about its existence is raised, it doesn't appear otherwise directly. Śāṅkara Bhagavatpāda too mentions only the five Pramāṇas enumerated above while denying Jñāna Karma Samuccaya, (Br.Bh. 3.3.1) and while understanding the futility (Nissara) of the Lókas; he hasn't posited that these two follow

from अनुपलब्धि प्रमाणम् the means of negation (Mu.Bh 1.2.12). Nowhere in Védānta do we find the use of this Pramāṇa. Therefore we conclude this discussion by citing only the words of Śrī Surésvara.

मानाभावस्य मानत्वं मेयाभावस्य मेयता |

न्यायं न सहतेऽतीव यथा तदधुनोच्यते || (Sambandha Vārtika 938)

बोधकं यदबुद्धस्य तन्मानम् इति हि स्थितिः |

न च प्रमाणतास्तित्वम् ईद्रूक् तस्मान्नयुज्यते || (Sambandha Vārtika 939)

It is unreasonable to talk of **Pramāṇatva**, the means of authenticity for मानाभाव and मेयत्व, cognizability for the मेयाभाव, in the absence of a cognizable (object). Pramāṇa is that which sheds light on an unknown thing. मानाभाव, the absence of means is different and does not come under this category. Therefore अनुपलब्धि is not a Pramāṇam.

In that case is it wrong to say that Védānta agrees with Mīmāṃsa in the matters of worldly transactions? No. This saying may be true in general, but not necessarily true, as for example, Mīmāṃsakas say that performance of obligatory acts does not engender any meritorious form, but not doing it would lead to Pratyavāya Dóṣa, a sin. This is not a matter of परमार्थ, highest truth (Transcendent); it is only व्यवहार, a secular matter. Nevertheless according to Védānta, performance of नित्यकर्म results in पुण्यफल and if a Sannyāsi doesn't do it, it is not a sin. That is, Védānta certainly does not accept the view of the Mīmāṃsakas in this regard. There are many such examples. Therefore, it is not necessary for Védāntins to accept अनुपलब्धि Pramāṇam just because the Mīmāṃsakas have accepted it.