Dr. M. A. VENKATAKRISHNAN,
Department of Vaishnavism, University of Madras

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FOREWORD

Dr. M. Narasimhachary,
Professor and Head, Department of Vaishnavism,
University of Madras, Madras - 600 005

I have immense pleasure in writing this Foreword to the work "Jñānadhidhikaraṇa of Śrībhāṣya - A Study" prepared and submitted by my valued colleague and student Dr. M. A. Venkatakiran, to the University of Madras for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sanskrit in the year 1988. This study actually comprises a detailed study of the "Jñāna-adhidhikaraṇa" of Śrī Rāmānuja's Śrībhāṣya. (Brahmasūtra I-1-1: athāto brahmañājñāna).

It is a matter of common consent that God, man and matter form the basic topics of philosophical speculation in all schools of thought. Each system has of course developed its own tradition and position in tackling these issues covering and concerning the exact nature of these categories, their mutual relationship, relative reality, means of liberation etc. As is well-known, Śrī Rāmānuja's system stands in contrast with other schools like Advaita and Bhedabheda which were looming large on the philosophical horizon in his times. His Viśiṣṭadvaita which believes in the non-dual supremacy of the Lord also accepts the reality of the world of sentient and insentient entities, in so far as it goes. In his grand and majestic conception of the Divine, he sees the entire universe as the 'body' of the Lord which He supports, controls and uses for His own exclusive benefit. In other words the entire world of men and matter has no independent value, than
to be subordinate (depa) to Him, who is their master (depin). It is this unique conception of the varia-varia-bhaava or depa-depa-bhaava that makes Rāmānuja’s school significant among other schools of philosophy. Rāmānuja’s interpretation of the Upaniṣads speaking of Bheda and Abheda in a synthetic manner, making use of the Ghaṭaka-texts again speaks for the genius of Śrī Rāmānuja.

It has to be noted in this context that some modern critics tend to treat Rāmānuja’s philosophy as a ‘dreamland poetry’ since he speaks of the highest abode of Viṣṇu, Vaikuṇṭha, in poetic style, following the Kaṭṭakakī Upaniṣad. One is prone to mistake it to be ‘light-veined theorisation’ of a ‘serious’ philosophical problem. But all this loses much of its force when one understands, or rather, believes that Śrī Rāmānuja was also a ‘saint’, more than a ‘theologian’ or ‘philosopher’. He was a ‘parama-yogin’ as Śrī Sudarśana Śrī would prefer to refer to him, who had a deep yogic and mystic vision into what he believed, practised and preached.

The present study embodies Rāmānuja’s discussions on such topics as the Doctrine of Māya, the Nature of Reality, the Nature of the World, Means of Liberation etc., arranged into different chapters with logical precision and rationale. Rāmānuja’s interpretation of several important Upaniṣadic passages assumes a new dimension in the commentarial tradition, in the light of our observations made above. Dr. Venkatakrishnan who has a very good grounding in the Ubbaya Vedānta tradition is eminently suited for carrying on this study. His thesis is marked by lucidity of thought and clarity of expression, backed up by deep conviction. I congratulate him on this publication and would urge him to come up with many more works of this nature for the benefit of scholars and students alike.
AN APPRECIATION

T. C. A. Ramanujam, I.R.S.
Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Madras-34

The various Philosophical Schools of Hinduism which derive from the commentaries on the Vedas especially the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bagavat Gita are known by the compendious term Vedanta. The Schools differ in their views on the nature of Brahma and the individual soul but have in common the belief in reincarnation, the truth of the Vedas, the law of Karma and the need for spiritual release. They believe Brahma to be the cause of the world. The founder of the Advalia School, Sri Adisankara, made major contributions to the Vedanta/philosophical traditions believing that the physical world relates to the ultimate reality as a state of ignorance does to knowledge. Acharya Ramanuja ("the single most influential thinker of devotional Hinduism" according to the Religious Encyclopaedia of the World) diverged sharply from the tradition in Vedanta associated with Shankara insisting upon the value and reality of the physical world. In religion, he provided an influential philosophical basis for devotional worship (Bhakti) based upon the concept of a personal God epitomised by Sri Mahavishnu. He provided an Intellectual basis for the devotional worship in his three major commentaries; the Vedanta Sangraham (on the Upanishads), Sri Bhasyam (on the Brahma Sutra) and the Bhagavad Gita Bhashyam (on the Bhagavad Gita). His chief contribution to the philosophy was his emphasis that
discursive thought is necessary in man’s search for the ultimate verities that the phenomenal world is real and provides real knowledge and that the exigencies of daily life are not detrimental to the life of the spirit. He is the anti-thesis of Shankara of whom he was sharply critical and whose interpretations of the scriptures he disputed. By allowing the urge for devotional worship (Bhakti) into the doctrine of salvation, the Acharya alligned the popular religion with the pursuits of philosophy and gave Bhakti an intellectual basis. Bhakti, as we all know, has ever since remained the major force in the Hindu religion.

In the Acharya’s world view, there is no doubt an ultimate identity of Matter, Soul and God but this non-duality for him asserted of God who is Qualified (Visishta) by the orders of Matter and Soul. Hence, his doctrine is known as Visishtadwaita (Qualified non-duality) as opposed to the unqualified non-duality of Shankara. In his view, just as the body modifies the soul, has no separate existence from it and yet is different from it, the same way, the orders of Matter and Soul constitute God’s body modifying it, yet having no separate existence from it. Just as the body serves the soul, the human soul has to serve God. All the phenomenal world is a manifestation of the glory of God (Vibhuti) and to detract from its reality is to detract from its glory. To the philosopher, Sri Ramanuja is the Bhashyakara and his Sri Bhashyam is the exposition par excellence of the Vedanta Sutras.

Dr. M. A. Venkatakrishnan is well known in the Srivaishnavite world as Editor of the Tamil monthly Geethacharyan published from Trivandrum, Madras. He took his Post Graduate Degree in Sanskrit in 1977 and was the Asst. Prof. in the Vivekananda College for nine years. He joined the
Department of Vaishnavism of the University of Madras in 1986 and submitted his Thesis on Sri Bhashya of Ramanuja. He has published a number of works in Tamil, like the commentaries on the Thiruppavai, Nachiyar Thirumozhi, Periyazhvar Thirumozhi and the original work Vennalkkadum Pillai. The present work fulfills a longfelt need. While there are number of works on the Shankara's School of Philosophy in English, the Ramanuja view of the Vedantas as expounded in the original works of the Manipravala commentaries from the South, is not widely known outside Tamil nadu. The Late Professor P. N. Srinivasacharlar published a monumental work, the Philosophy of Visishtadvalta in 1943 and it was not followed up for half-a-century by any other author of repute. Dr. Venkatakrishnan's work on the Visishtadvalta School is original and refreshing and keeps up the tradition known to the Vaishnava savants from the South. He sums up the central philosophical position of the Advaita even in the beginning of the work and goes on to expound the difference in interpretation of the Bedha Abedha Sruthis. His explanations of the Upanishadic text 'Tattvamasi', 'Satyam jnanam anantam brahma' (Taittriyya 2-1) and 'Vijnanam anandam brahma' (Bhadaranyaka 3—28) will be read with acute interest. He concludes his magnum opus with the following words:

"A study of the Sri bhashya of Sri Ramanuja shows that Philosophy which is the work of human spirit upon the revealed texts in India grows and develops; fresh vistas are opened up by new lines of approach or application to new problems. His work shows that Indian Philosophy does not denote a static and complete body of principles and applications insusceptible of development or modification; and his work is an abiding
monument to the richness and variety of Indian thought."

Dr. Venkatakrishnan drew inspiration even in his early formative years from the writings and lectures of Maha Mahimopadhyaya Prativadi Bhayankaram Sri Annangarachariar Swami of Kanchi. It can be said of Dr. Venkatakrishnan that in bringing out this doctoral thesis in English has proved that he is to Sri Prativadi Bhayankaram Annangarachariar Swami as what Acharya Ramanuja was to Sri Alavandar.
JIJÑĀSĀDHIKARANA OF THE ŚRĪBHĀṢYA - A STUDY
INTRODUCTION

The present work entitled—THE JJNÂSA DHIKARÂNA
OF THE SRI BHÂSYA—A STUDY—is the research
work undertaken by me as a part-time research scholar
attached to the Department of Sanskrit, University of
Madras. The text investigated constitutes a critique of
Advaita Vedânta. (Hence the folio title has been given as
Advaita and Visiññadvalta.)

This work is a study of the JJnâsadhirakaraṇa portion of
the Brahma-sūtra-bhâṣya of Śrī Râmânuja. This very
first section of Śrī Râmânuja’s commentary on the Brahma-
sūtra contains a systematic and detailed presentation of the
doctrines of Visiññadvalta. Brahman, mâyâ, jiva, jagat and
mokṣa as conceived of in Visiññadvalta are explained clearly.
In propounding the Visiññadvalta system of Vedânta, Śrī
Râmânuja had to contend against the earlier and established
Advaita School of Vedânta. Hence he offers as a preliminary
to his teaching in regard to every concept the Advaita view
in a brief and in a detailed manner (laghu and maha-pûrva-
pakṣa) and criticizes it. This work, therefore, contains not
only Śrî Râmânuja’s exposition of Visiññadvalta but also his
refutation of the Advaita point of view.

This work is divided into five chapters dealing with the
concepts of Brahman, mâyâ, the soul, the world and liberation in sequence. Each chapter begins with the presentation
of Advaita as the purva-pakṣa and follows it up by what is sought to be established (siddhānta), namely, Viśiṣṭādvaita.

Brahman, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, is sarguna – endowed with infinite auspicious attributes. The idea of Brahman as nirguna according to Advaita is not only an unreal abstraction but also detrimental to ethical and religious practices. If Brahman is unknowable, as the Advaitins hold, there is no point in teaching it. It is as good as non-existent and so Advaita is not different from Buddhistic nihilism. Again, that which cannot even be thought of cannot become an object of worship or an incentive to moral discipline. Hence Brahman is savisega and He is Viṣṇu. The idea of sarguna Brahman is not a concession to a supposed human weakness. It is the idea of the ultimate reality as it is.

Māyā in Advaita is the principle which explains how the non-dual Brahman appears as the many. Such an idea is fraught with difficulties such as where it resides and what its status is. Moreover, how can we deny the realm of plurality which is actually experienced? The conception of māyā as it is presented in Advaita is neither useful nor needed. The proper interpretation of the term māyā mentioned in scripture is that it is the indescribable mysterious power (acintya-sakti) of the Lord – the power by which He performs all His sportful deeds in regard to the world and souls.

The Jiva, according to Advaita, is identical with Brahman. If the Jiva is nothing but Brahman, it would come to this that there is no need for it to strive for release. Actual experience in life also does not bear this out. Again, to equate the Jiva with Brahman would be to question the perfection of Brahman. This does not mean that the Jiva is totally different from Brahman. We can feel the presence of
God with us. Hence the Jiva is more properly the body or vesture of Brahman who is the antaryāmin or the soul of souls.

Like the Jiva, the world, the existence of which cannot be dealt, is another vesture to the Supreme Lord. It is manifested and retracted periodically by the Lord from out of himself without himself undergoing any change. Hence the Lord is both the efficient and the material cause of the world. The inseparable relationship aprthaksiddhi which the world and souls bear to Brahman is like the relation of attributes to a substance. Thus the non-duality of the qualified Brahman is maintained without denying the distinct character of the souls and the world.

Liberation consists in the soul attaining a state of proximity to God, not in merging in God. Intense devotion (bhakti) informed by the knowledge (jñāna) of God’s perfection is the ultimate means to liberation. Karma purifies the soul and makes it fit for bhakti. In fact karma performed in a spirit of dedication itself becomes an act of worship.

This in essence is the teaching of Śrī Rāmānuja which is represented in the jijñāsādhikāraṇa. We shall deal with his teachings in detail in the following pages.

I am deeply grateful to the authorities of the University of Madras for permitting me to work in the Department of Sanskrit for the Ph. D. Degree.

I am greatly indebted to the authorities of the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College, for their kind permission to conduct part-time research in the University of Madras, when I served there as Assistant Professor in the Department of Sanskrit.
I am greatly indebted to Professor M. Narasimhachary, Head of the Department of Vaishnavism, University of Madras, for the kind interest he has always shown in the preparation of this thesis and also for his scholarly Foreword.

I will be falling in my duty if I do not record here my great indebtedness to Professor N. Veezhinathan, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, University of Madras, for the choice of the subject and for all the trouble he has graciously undertaken to help me study the text and prepare the thesis.

I also express my sincere thanks to Sri T. C. A. Ramasujam, I.R.S. (Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Madras) for his keen interest in my career and also for his keen interest in the publication of this work and for his appreciation to this book.

In fine, let me thank the Members of the Managing Committee of Sri Ramanuja Vedanta Centre, particularly Sri M.N. Krishnaswami, for taking keen interest in publishing this work serially in their Quarterly Journal "Sri Ramanuja Vani".

Madras
1991

M. A. Venkatakrishnan
CHAPTER I

The Nature of Reality

God, soul and the world which constitute the subject matter of many an orthodox school of Indian Thought are distinct realities according to Visīṣṭādvaṅga while they are the seeming diversifications of a transcendental entity known as Brahman or Atman in the Upaniṣad-s according to Advaita.

The central philosophical position of Advaita may be summed up as follows: (1) The logical significance of the Upaniṣad-s is Brahman — the partless Ultimate which is free from all attributes (nirviṣeṣa); (2) avidyā or māyā which is indeterminable is responsible for the appearance of Brahman as God, soul and the world; (3) the soul which is the content of the cognition 'I' is only an illusory blend of Brahman and mind; (4) the world is indeterminable either as real or as an absolute nothing; (5) the direct knowledge of Brahman is the sole means to liberation; and (6) liberation consists in realizing here and now one's true nature as Brahman.

The above fundamental doctrines of Advaita are critically examined and finally rejected by Śrī Rāmānuja. According to him (1) the Upaniṣad-s speak of Brahman as the ultimate reality endowed with all auspicious attributes; (2) the so-called māyā or avidyā is a pseudo-concept; (3) the soul which is the content of the cognition 'I' is the pure self and not a false blend of Brahman and mind; (4) the world is real; (5) bhakti is the sole means to liberation; and (6) liberation consists in becoming God-like in the world of God.

In the present chapter we shall deal with the nature of ultimate reality according to Advaita and Viśīṣṭādvaṅga. We have earlier said that the Advaitin holds the reality to be nirviṣeṣa while the Viśīṣṭādvaṅga takes it to be savīṣeṣa. This difference in the viewpoint is due to the difference in the manner of interpretation of the Upaniṣadic texts.
Broadly speaking there are five sets of Upaniṣadic texts which appear to be contradictory to one another. These texts are as follows:

(1) There are certain texts in the Upaniṣad-s which speak of Brahman as being without imperfections, without qualities or attributes, without change, without activity and being of the nature of consciousness and bliss. The Kaṭhopaniṣad in its passage — *aśabdam asparṣam arūpam* (3–15) etc., states that Brahman is free from sound, touch, form etc.

The Bṛhadāraṇyaka text —

*āsthūlam anāṇu ahrasvam adirgham... ovṛyu anēkaśom... arasam agandham acakṣuṣkam āśrotram* (3–8–8) etc.

which states that Brahman is neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long... It is neither air nor space... It is without taste or smell, without eyes or ears, without tongue or mind, etc., imply that Brahman is free from all phenomenal elements. In the same way, Kaṭhopaniṣadic text — *neha nānāsti kiṃcana* (4–11) declares that there is no duality in Brahman. Another text of the same Upaniṣad —

*mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nānava paśyati* (4–10)

which states that one who sees duality in Brahman would experience phenomenal existence incessantly, implies that duality is non-real. These and other such texts deny the existence of the many. These are negative in character and they negate all phenomenal elements in Brahman and thereby confirm that the latter is absolute. And, these are to be understood along with the texts —

*satyam jñānam anañ̄ham brahma* (Tait. Up. 2–1) and

*vijñānām aññānam brahma* (Bṛha. Up. 3–9–20)

which give us the knowledge of Brahman — the ultimate reality as of the nature of consciousness, bliss and absolute. Thus this set of the Upaniṣadic texts conveys Brahman to be nirviśeṣa.

(2) There are other Upaniṣadic texts which, however,
The Nature of Reality

speak of Brahman as endowed with quality. The Chandogya text—sarvakarmā sarvakāmāḥ sarvagandhaḥ sarvarasāḥ (3.4.2) states that Brahman is the creator of the world and that it cherishes all (righteous) desires, contains all (pleasant) odours, and is endowed with all (pleasant) tastes. The same Upaniṣad in another text—

ya atmā apahataparyām vijarō vimṛtyugha viśokah
vijīghatsaḥ api pāsaḥ satyakāmaḥ satyasankalpaḥ (8.1.5)
states that Brahman is free from sins, from old age, from death, from sorrow, from hunger and thirst and is one who possesses desire and resolve that never go unfulfilled.

The Mundaka text—yaḥ sarvaśnāḥ sarvarit (1.1.9) declares that Brahman possesses omniscience, that is knowledge of everything in its general as well as specific aspect.

The above texts deny the existence of faults and imperfections and affirm the existence in Brahman of positive qualities and attributes like omniscience and omnipotence. Thus these texts convey Brahman to be saviṣeṣa.

(3) A third set of passages in the Upaniṣad-s states that the souls and the world are non-different from Brahman. The Chandogya text—tat tvam asi (6.8.7) specifically mentions the non-difference of the soul from Brahman. Another text of the same Upaniṣad—sarvaṁ khalu idam brahma (3.14.2), the Brhadāraṇyaka text—idam sarvaṁ yadayam atmā (2.4.6) and, the Mundaka text—brahmaivedam viśvam (2-2-11) affirm the oneness of the world with Brahman.

(4) There are, however, other Upaniṣadic texts which proclaim that Brahman is different from the world and the souls. The Īśvāsvarūpa text—

prthagātmanaḥ preritāraṁ ca matvā
jūṣastatastena amṛtatvam eti (1.6), states that the soul can attain immortality by realizing that the soul is different from Brahman which inspires and controls it. The Brhadāraṇyaka text—sarvasya vasi sarvasya itāṁ (4.4.22)
by stating that Brahman has all things under its control and rules over all implies the difference between the world of objects that is ruled over and Brahman that rules.

(5) Other Upaniṣadic texts declare that the relationship that exists between Brahman and the world consisting of the sentient and insentient beings is that which exist between the soul and the body. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka text —

yah prthivyām tiṣṭhat prthivyāḥ antaraḥ yah prthvi na veda yasya prthvi sarīram yah prthvimantaro yamayati
eṣa te ātmā antaryamyaṁpatiḥ (3.7.3 ff.), etc., declare that the earth is His body, the waters are His body, Light is His body, the soul is His body. He is the self of all beings and controls them from within.

It follows from the above that there are apparent inconsistencies in the Upaniṣad-s in regard to the essential nature of Brahman. Since no part of the Upaniṣad-s can be treated as invalid, we have to interpret the above texts in such a way that there will be no contradiction among them.

The Advaitin explains away the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions in the following way: the Upanisads prescribe two forms of Brahman - a higher one (para) without attributes and without activity, change or modification and a lower one (apara) which has all the attributes and activities mentioned in some passages. This lower Brahman is God who is a blend of Brahman—the attributeless reality and māyā or avidyā which is an indeterminable entity. The soul too is a blend of the higher Brahman and mind—a product of avidyā. The world is a false appearance of Brahman. It comes to this that God, soul and the world are the apparent diversifications of Brahman—the attributeless entity. The factor that is responsible for the above apparent diversifications is known māyā or avidyā.

When it is said that God, soul and the world are the apparent variations of Brahman, it should not be concluded
that the three are of the same nature. The world is totally false. No part of it is true. But in respect of God and the soul which are the complex factors of Brahman and avidya, and Brahman and mind respectively, the spiritual element of Brahman is true and the insentient elements of avidya and mind alone are indeterminable. Avidya presents its characteristics of omniscience, etc., upon Brahman and the latter as associated with these extraneous characteristics is known as God. Mind too presents its characteristics of agency, etc. upon Brahman and the latter as endowed with these extrinsic features is known as the soul. Thus although God, soul and the world are not distinct realities, yet the former two are different from the world.

The Advaitins recognize three levels of reality; and, they are: pāramārthikasatya (absolute reality), vyāvahārikasatya (empirical reality) and prātibhūtikasatya (apparent reality). Of these three, the first constitutes the essential nature of Brahman—the attributeless reality. It is defined as that which does not suffer sublation in the three divisions of time—past, present and future. Empirical reality pertains to the objects of the waking state such as pot, etc. The latter continue to exist till there arises the direct knowledge of Brahman. In other words, they are sublated only by the direct knowledge of Brahman. Apparent reality pertains to objects like shell-silver, etc., in the waking state and also to the objects of dream. They are removable by the cognitions that are different from the direct knowledge of Brahman. Shell-silver is removed by the direct knowledge of its substratum, namely, the shell. The dream objects too are removed by the cognition of the waking state.

From what has been said above, it follows that God, soul and the world are real for all practical purposes (vyāvahārikasatya). When avidyā which is the cause of the manifestations of Brahman, as the above three is removed by the
direct knowledge of Brahman, the world as such will be removed, and God and soul will become free from the characteristics presented upon them by avidyā and mind. They would, therefore, cease to be God and soul and would remain as pure Brahman—the attributeless reality which is liberation.

Now we are in a position to explain the different Upaniṣadic texts referred to in the beginning of this Chapter. We mentioned two sets of Upaniṣadic texts one setting forth Brahman to be nirviśeṣa and the other presenting it as saviśeṣa. Brahman by itself cannot have these two contradictory features as it is opposed to experience. It may be said that Brahman by itself is free from all attributes but by its association with some limiting adjunct it acquires certain characteristics which are real. But this contention is wrong. It is because the true nature of an object cannot undergo any change because of its association with some limiting adjuncts. Crystal is colourless: but, it acquires the characteristic of redness on account of a red flower placed by its side. And that redness is not real. In the same way, the qualities such as omniscience, etc., in Brahman which is nirviśeṣa are caused by avidyā and hence it is not real. Of the two aspects of Brahman set forth in the Upaniṣadic texts, we have to take that which is nirviśeṣa as its true nature. The other aspect of Brahman is falsely presented upon it by avidyā and hence it is not real. This we have to admit on the basis of the Upaniṣadic texts themselves. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka text—dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe mūrtah caiva amūrtam ca (2.3.1) states that there are two factors which define Brahman; and, they are those which possess form, namely, earth, waters and fire, and those which do not possess form, namely, air and space. This text thus confirms the existence of the world in Brahman. The same Upaniṣad in the subsequent text—athāta, ādeto neti neti
(2.3.6) negates the existence of the world in Brahman. From this it follows that the world is falsely presented upon Brahman; for, otherwise its negation would not be possible.

The distinctive qualities like omniscience, etc., are mentioned in Brahman — the nirviśeṣa entity for the sake of meditative worship. Śrī Saṅkara emphasizes this position of Advaita thus:

ekamapi brahma apekṣitopâdhisamânbandham
nirastopâdhisamânbandham ca upâsyatvena
jñeyatvena vedânteśùpadâdyâte (Brah. Sūtra Bhāṣya 1.1.12)

This text means that the Upaniṣad-s impart the knowledge of Brahman as nirviśeṣa for the purpose of realization as identical with the true nature of the soul and as saviśeṣa for the purpose of meditation.

So far we have set forth, from the Advaita standpoint, the manner of interpretation of the two sets of the Upaniṣad-s — one proclaiming Brahman to be nirviśeṣa and the other as saviśeṣa.

The Chāndogya text—sarvam khalu idham brahma (3.14.2), the Bhādārāṇyaka text — idam sarvam yadayamātmā (2.4.6) and the Muṇḍaka text — brahmaiva idam viśvam (2.2.11) which seem to convey the oneness of the world with Brahman are interpreted by the Advaitin thus: these texts are to be interpreted like the statement ‘(what was mistaken for) a post is a man’. The words constituting this sentence stand in appositional relation to each other. The appositional relation need not necessarily be in the view of identity. The import of the statement, therefore, is: ‘What appeared to be a post is only a man and there was really no post’. In the present case, the words idam sarvam or idam viśvam and Brahman or Ātman are in appositional relation to each other. They cannot convey the sense of identity between their senses because the world which is the sense of the
expression *idam sarvam* and Brahman which is the sense of
the word Brahman or Ātman cannot be identical as the
former is inert and latter, sentient. Hence the appositional
relation between the words must be taken in the view of
*badha* or sublation. Thus the above text convey Brahman
as that wherein there is the absence of the world. Brahman,
therefore, is *nirviśeṣa*. It must be noted here that the
absence of the world in Brahman shows that the world is
not real by being a projection by *avidya* or *māyā*.

The text — *tat tvam asi* conveys the sense of identity
between the soul and Brahman. This is characterized as a
*mahāvākyā*. The senses of these two words are conveyed
by the *Upaniṣadic* texts which are designated as *avāntara-
vākyas*. There are two senses which a word may have and
they are primary and secondary. The primary meaning of
the word *tat* is God — the blend of Brahman and *avidya* and
that of *tvam* is the soul — the blend of Brahman and mind.

The *Taittiriya* text :

> yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti yat
> prayantyabhisahāśvati tad vijijnāsasva tadbrahmaṇī (3.1.1)

and the *Chāndogya* text — *satyakāmaḥ satyasankalpaḥ* (8.1.5.)
convey Brahman — the meaning of the word *tat* as associated
with attributes such as the characteristics of being the cause
of the world, desires and resolves.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* texts —

> tadyathā mahāmatsya ubhe kūla anusaṃcarati pūrvam
> ca aparam ca evamevāyam puruṣaḥ etau ubhau antau
> anusaṃcarati, svapnāntam ca buddhāntam ca (4.3.18) and,
> tadyathā asmin ākāśe śyeno vā suparno vā
> viparipatya śrāntaḥ samhatya pakṣau samlayaṇyāvā
> dhriyate evamevāyam puruṣaḥ (4-3-19)

convey the meaning of the word ‘*tvam*’ as the soul which is
associated with the three states of waking, dream and deep
sleep. They also refer to it as an agent and an experient.
In the same way, the Taittiriya text —
\[ \text{satya}m \ jhœ\text{n}am \ anantam \ brahma, \ (2.2) \] and
the Brhadâranyaka text —
\[ \text{vijnœ\text{n}am} \ \text{anandam} \ brahma \ (3.9.28) \]
convey the secondary meaning of the word \textit{tat} as of the nature of reality, consciousness, bliss and absolute. These words are in appositional relation to each other. They are therefore intended to convey the identity of their senses. It cannot be said that these words convey Brahman as associated with the qualities of reality, consciousness etc. In that case Brahman cannot be viewed as absolute; for, the term 'absolute' signifies the absence of difference from objects, similar and dissimilar and also internal differences. If Brahman were admitted to be possessing the reality, consciousness, etc., as its attributes then there is difference between Brahman and the qualities and this would be against the concept of absolute nature itself. Hence it is held that these words convey Brahman not as possessing reality etc., as its characteristics, but as of the nature of reality, consciousness, etc.

One objection may be raised in this connection. When it is said that the words such as \textit{satya}m and the like convey one and the same entity — Brahman, then they are synonyms.

The Advaitin overcomes this difficulty by pointing out that the words \textit{satya}m, \textit{jhœ}n\text{i}m, \textit{anantam} and \textit{anandam} respectively convey that Brahman is other than the non-real, non-sentience, finitude and misery. Since the purpose served by the words in conveying one and the same reality differs, they are not to be taken as synonymous in nature. (See \textit{Sri Bhaşya}, Vol. I, Page 19.)

It might be added here that negation or \textit{vyœ\text{ṣ}ṭi} of non-reality, non-sentience, etc., in Brahman are neither positive characteristics or negative features but are reduced to the nature of Brahman itself. Hence Brahman is \textit{nirœ\text{ṣ}epa},
It comes to this: the secondary sense of the term \( \text{tat} \) is the attributeless reality which is consciousness, bliss and infinite.

The secondary sense of the term \( \text{tvam} \) too is pure consciousness. The \textit{Bhadrāranyaka} text —

\textit{yo'yaṁ vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hṛdi}
\textit{antarjyoṭih puruṣah} (4-3-7)

states that the self is identified with intellect, is present as the inner ruler of the senses of knowledge and action and of vital-air, and is immanent in the mind as self-luminous consciousness. This text conveys the secondary sense of the word \( \text{tvam} \) to be self-luminous consciousness and distinguishes it from the intellect, the sense-organs and vital-air by stating that it is \textit{identified} with intellect, that it is \textit{present} as the inner ruler of the sense organs and vital-air and it is \textit{immanent} in the mind.

To sum up this part of the discussion: the primary sense of the word \( \text{tat} \) is God and that of \( \text{tvam} \) is the soul. And the secondary sense of the word \( \text{tat} \) is Brahman — the pure consciousness which is bliss and that of \( \text{tvam} \) too is pure consciousness.

We shall now discuss the logical significance of the \textit{mahāvyākya} — \textit{tat tvam asi}. The word \( \text{tat} \) conveys through primary signification, the sense of God who is Brahman as associated with the characteristics of being the cause of the world and of omniscience, etc. The word \( \text{tvam} \) signifies through primary signification, the soul which is Brahman as associated with the states of waking, dream and deep sleep, as an agent and an experient and as one possessing limited knowledge. These two senses cannot be identical in view of the mutually contradictory features present in them. Hence the two words through secondary signification, leave out a part of their primary meanings, namely, the characteristics of being the source of the universe, omniscience, etc., and the
relation to the states of waking, dream and deep sleep, and convey another part, namely, the pure consciousness. The sentence as a whole conveys the identity or non-difference of the one from the another. This sense is known as the partless ultimate (akhañḍārtha) (See Vedaṭa Saṅgraha, Page 47).

The above mode of interpretation is known as jahad-ajahallakṣaṇa. This is adopted in the case of ‘This is that Devadatta’. The word ‘that’ primarily conveys the person—Devadatta as related to past time and a different place. The word ‘this’ conveys primarily the person—Devadatta as related to present time and a particular place. The sentence as a whole cannot convey the identity between the two word-meanings as the latter are opposed to each other by having opposite characteristics. The words, therefore, leave out a part of their primary senses, namely, the spatial and temporal relation and conveys another part, namely, Devadatta-in-himself.

The Advaitin holds that the knowledge that arises from the major texts of the Upaniṣad-s such as tat tvam asi, etc., and the texts like ‘This is that Devadatta’ is indeterminate (nirvikalpaka) in the sense that it does not apprehend relation. (See Vedaṭa Paribhāṣa P. 77)

The question now arises as to the role of the Upaniṣad-s as the pramāṇa in respect of Brahman. The Brhadāraṇyaka text — tam tu aupaniṣadām puruṣam pṛcchāmi (3.9.26) states that the Upaniṣad-s constitute the pramāṇa in respect of Brahman. But this is in conflict with the Advaitin’s view that Brahman is self-luminous. Self-luminosity of an object consists in the latter not dependent upon any other factor for its manifestation. Hence when it is admitted that Brahman is self-luminous it means that it does depend upon any pramāṇa for its manifestation. So the Upaniṣadic statement that the scripture is the pramāṇa in respect of Brahman is in conflict with the Advaitin’s view that Brahman is self-luminous.
The above difficulty is resolved by the Advaitin in the following way: in the case of pot, for example, sense of sight gives rise to the mental state (vṛtti) in the form of pot. Thus pot is vṛttivyāpya. Being inspired by the reflection of the consciousness conditioned by the pot, the vṛtti removes the ignorance present in the latter. The consciousness—element which is present in the vṛtti and which is known as phala manifests the pot. Thus pot is phalavyāpya too. When it is said that phala manifests the pot what is meant is that it gives rise to verbal usage that the pot exists.

In the case of Brahman, the Upaniṣad-s give rise to the mental state in the form of Brahman. The latter is vṛttivyāpya. It removes avidyā present in Brahman. The consciousness—element in the vṛtti which is phala is not required to manifest Brahman because the latter would manifest of its own accord when avidyā is removed. Thus Brahman is not phalavyāpya. An entity is considered it be an object of knowledge only when it comes within the range of phala. Since Brahman is not so it is not an object of knowledge. It is said to be known through the Upaniṣadic texts in the sense that it comes within the range of vṛtti that arises from them.

The above account is based upon Śri Śaṅkara’s commentary on the Brahma sūtra (1.1.4) which is as follows:

\begin{quote}
\text{aviṣayatve brahmaṇaḥ sāstrayonitvānupapatīrītī cet na, avidyā kalpitabhedānivṛtti paratvāt sāstrasya; na hi sāstrodayatāḥ aviṣayabhūtam brahma pratipūdayati, kṣmtarhi, pratyahātmavenaviṣayatāḥ pratipūdayat avidyākalpitam vedvaveditvavedanādi bhavamopanayati}
\end{quote}

The text means: “the scripture is valid in respect of Brahman by removing the duality that is fancied by avidyā. Never indeed does the scripture convey Brahman as ‘This is Brahman’.”
It comes to this: the Advaitin admits that the scripture is the prāmaṇa in respect of Brahman in the sense that it removes avidyā present in Brahman by giving rise to vṛtti in the form of the latter. And when he admits that Brahman is self-luminous what he means is that Brahman manifests of its own accord when avidyā is removed. Thus there is no inherent contradiction between the two positions, namely, that Brahman is self-luminous and the scripture is the prāmaṇa in respect of it.

It is in the above light, Śrī Śaṅkara interprets the following text of the Kenopanisad:

\begin{align*}
\text{yasyāmatam tasya motam matam yasya na vedasaḥ} \\
\text{avijñātām vijñānatām avijñātām avijñātām} \ (2.3)
\end{align*}

Brahman is realized by him (tasya matam) who has the ascertainment that it is not manifested by phala (yasya amatam). He who has the ascertainment that it is manifested by phala (yasya matam) has not realized it (na veda saḥ). Those who have the cognition that Brahman is the content of phala (vijñānatām) do not know the true nature of Brahman (avijñātām). Those who have the cognition that Brahman is not the content of phala (avijñānatām) know its true nature (vijñātām)

So far we have explained the Advaitin's position that Brahman is self-luminous and at the same time it has scripture as its source.

Now we have to discuss the question as to how are we to account for the view set forth in the Upaniṣad that words do not convey Brahman. The text is;

\begin{align*}
yato vācō nivartante \ (Taitt. Up. 2.4.1)
\end{align*}

The above text, according to Advaita negates the function of words through primary signification in regard to Brahman. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka text—

\begin{align*}
tam tu aupaniṣodam puruṣam prechāmi \ (3.9.26)
\end{align*}

affirms the function of words in respect of Brahman through
secondary signification. The primary signification of words is applicable only if the sense that is conveyed possesses a relation or a quality or an activity or a class-characteristic. For example, the expression ‘A king’s servant’ conveys the sense of a servant through the medium—the relation of being a servant to the king that exists in the sense that is conveyed. The word ‘blue’ in the expression ‘blue lotus’ conveys the sense of lotus through the medium—the quality of blue colour present in the lotus. The word ‘cook’ conveys the sense of a person who cooks through the medium—the activity of cooking. The word ‘cow’ signifies the animal ‘cow’ through the medium ‘cow-ness’ which is present in the animal that is conveyed. Thus the power through which the words convey their senses through the above media is known as the primary signification.

In the present case Brahman lacks the above media on the following ground; relation quality activity and class-characteristic in order that they may be present in an object must be related to that object. So we require a relation. The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣadic text—

asāṅgohyayam puruṣah (4.3.15)

affirms that Brahman is supra-relational. Hence it lacks the above media without which no word could convey a sense through primary signification. It is precisely on this ground that the Taittiriya text—

yato vā vā navartante (2.4)

negates the function of words through primary signification.

This part of the discussion may be summed up by saying that Brahman is nirviśeṣa. It does not become the object of knowledge arising from the Upaniṣadic texts. The latter give rise to the mental state in the form of Brahman which removes avidyā. Brahman then manifests of its own accord.

The concept of Brahman as a nirviśeṣa entity implies that
the objects of the world are not real. The presence of non-real entities does not in any way impair the nirvidësa character of Brahman.

It might be objected that perception gives us the knowledge of the objects of world in the form of ghatah san, patah san, etc. This perceptual cognition shows that pot, etc., are real. So how could we say that Brahman is free from all differentiations or nirvidësa.

The Advaltin refutes the above objection by stating that perception comprehends only the element of reality or sat and pot, etc., are only illusory manifestations upon the sat element. It is thus: after the rise of the knowledge of pot, there does not arise doubt in the form whether this is pot or not; nor does there arise any contrary notion in the form 'This is not pot; it is only a cloth'. The absence of doubt or contrary notion shows that the pot is being comprehended as distinct from all other objects of the world.

Now the knowledge of pot involves the knowledge of difference from all other objects. And the knowledge of difference which is perceptual is based upon the perceptual knowledge of the counter-correlate of difference which in the present case consists of the entire objects of the world. Hence in order that there may be the perceptual knowledge of difference from all objects of the world other than pot, what is required is the perceptual knowledge of the latter. But that is not possible. It is because certain objects are far removed by time as well as space. There are certain other objects which never come within the range of perception. So it is not possible to have the perceptual knowledge of the objects of the world. In the absence of that knowledge, one cannot have the knowledge of difference. The absence of the latter implies the absence of the knowledge of pot as associated with difference. If we do not have such a knowledge, then
there is a possibility of the rise of doubt and erroneous cognition in regard to pot. We, however, do not have the latter. So, to account for the absence of doubt and erroneous cognition we must admit that pot is comprehended as different from all other objects. But we cannot admit so on the ground set forth above. It is this logical difficulty that has led the Advaitin to hold the view that perception merely comprehends the sat element and the perceptual cognition of pot, etc., is only illusory. The result of this argument is that Brahman is free from the world and hence it is nirviśeṣa. This view is admitted by Maṇḍana in his Brahma-siddhi (4,3) and Sri Rāmānuja records this in the Sribhāṣya (Vol. I. p. 21)

The Advaitin confirms his basic tenets, namely, that Brahman is nirviśeṣa, the soul is identical with Brahman and the world is non-real on the basis of the texts of the Bhagavad gīta and the Viṣṇupurāṇa. The Bhagavad-gītā text—

na tadasti vinā yatasyāt mayā bhūtam carācaram (10.39) states that apart from Me (the pure consciousness) there is no entity either movable or immovable. This text implies that Brahman is nirviśeṣa and the objects of the world are non-real as they receive their existence and manifestation from it.

The other text of the Bhagavad-gītā—

kṣetrajñam cāpi mām viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhūrata (13.2) declares that Brahman - the pure consciousness is identical with the soul immanent in all the bodies.

The Viṣṇupurāṇa text—

pratyastamitahedam yat sattāmātrām agocaram vacasām ātmasamvedyam tajñaṇam brahmasamjñitam (6.7.53.)

states that Brahman is of the nature of consciousness which is free from all duality and which is mere existence. It transcends all speech and it is self luminous.
Another passage of the same text —

\[ \text{Jñānasvarūpam atyanātīrmanalāḥ paramārthātāḥ}
\]

\[ \text{tadeva arthasvarūpeṇa bhūntidārasanātāḥ sthitam (1-2-6)} \]

affirms that consciousness which is free from all duality is the only reality. It alone erroneously appears in the form of sentient objects.

Yet another passage of the same text —

\[ \text{tasya ātmoparadeheṣu satopī ekameyam hi yat}
\]

\[ \text{viṣṇunam paramārtho hi dvaitino'śtathyadarśinoḥ (2-14-31)} \]

declares that pure consciousness which is one and which is immanent is the bodies of all beings is indeed real. The dualists are those who do not realize the truth.

Another passage of the same text —

\[ \text{so'ham sa ca tvāḥ sa ca sarvametā tāmasvarūpāṁ}
\]

\[ \text{tyajja bhedamoham ititrītaḥ tena sa rājavyah}
\]

\[ \text{tasyājajahedam paramārtnadgṛṣṭiḥ (2-16-24)} \]

states: “yourself, myself and the entire world are of the nature of Brahman. Leave out the illusory cognition of duality”. When instructed thus, the revered King attaining the knowledge of reality gave up the cognition of duality.

Another passage of the same text —

\[ \text{vṛturandhravibhedena bhedah saḍjātisamjaṅkitaḥ}
\]

\[ \text{abhedavyāpino vāyoḥ tathāsu paramātmanāḥ (2-14-32)} \]

declares that just as the air which is all-pervasive and one and which when passes through the different openings of the flute emerges as seven distinct primary musical notes, in the same way the one and the same self appears to be different by being associated with different limiting adjuncts.

Finally the passage of the same text —

\[ \text{vibhelajanake'jñāne nāśam atyantikam gate itmano}
\]

\[ \text{brahmaṇo bhedam asantaṁ kaḥ kartasyati (6-7-94)} \]
states that when avidyā which causes the distinction between the soul and Brahman is fully annihilated, no one can cognize the distinction between the two - the distinction that does not actually exist.

It would have become clear from the foregoing account that the Advaitin on the basis of the texts of the Upaniṣad-s, the Bhagavad-gītā and the Viṣṇupurāṇa maintain the view that the ultimate reality is nirviśeṣa, the soul is identical with it and the world is non-real. Śrī Rāmānuja interprets the above texts in an altogether different manner and concludes that the ultimate reality is saviśeṣa, the soul and the world are different but inseparable from it and they are real. We shall deal with Śrī Rāmānuja’s view now.

The Viśisṭādvaita View

Śrī Rāmānuja is a realist. To him, Brahman which he identifies with God is real. To soul too is real. Further matter or prakṛti with all its evolutes is real. Thus there are three reals or Tatvā-s, namely, Brahman or God, the soul and prakṛti inclusive of its evolutes.

The Śvetāsvatara text —

pradhānāṇaśetrāṇapatiḥ guneśaḥ (6-26)

speaks of God as the Lord of the prakṛti and the souls.

The Bhagavad-gītā texts —

kṣaraḥ sarvāni bhūtāni kūṭasthāḥ aksara ucyate, (15-16)

and uttamāḥ puruṣastvanyāḥ paramātmeyuḍāḥprabhōḥ (15-17)

state that God is the Supreme Person different from the evolutes of prakṛti and the sentient souls.

Speaking of God, Śrī Rāmānuja is emphatic in declaring that the Upaniṣad-s do not speak of the existence of two forms of Brahman - the higher and the lower as the Advaita thinks. He holds the view that Brahman described in the Upaniṣad-s has infinite auspicious qualities. Those passages which seemingly deny the attributes in Brahman and are often designated as nirguna-ātruti-s deny the existence in
Brahman only of the three qualities ascribed to prakṛti, namely satya, rajas and tamas and also imperfections. Sri Rāmānuja argues that the above interpretation must be admitted on the basis of the Chāndogya text —

\[ ya \text{ ātmā apahatapāpāṃ vijaro vimṛtyuḥ } \\
\text{viśokah vijighatsaḥ api pūsah satyakāmaḥ } \\
satyasaṅkalpaḥ (8-1-5) \]

which states that Brahman is free from all sins, oldage, death, grief, hunger and thirst and it has desires which are true and resolves which too are true provides the clue to ascertain the scope of the texts that speak of Brahman as free from attributes (nirviṣeṣa) and those that describe Brahman as endowed with all attributes (sviṣeṣa). In this text, the first part beginning with apahatapāpāṃ and ending with api pūsah comes within the range of nirguna-śruti-s and it refers to Brahman as free from all blemishes and imperfections. The concluding part satyakāmaḥ satyasaṅkalpaḥ specifies the extent of saguna-śruti-s. Thus Sri Rāmānuja resolves the apparent contradiction between the two sets of the Upaniṣadic texts - the nirguna-śruti-s and the saguna-śruti-s in this manner and feels that there is no need to interpret the saguna-śruti-s as referring to Brahman as associated with qualities that are falsely attributed to it by avidyā as the Advaitin thinks.

The Advaitin has said that the Taittiriya text—

\[ satyam jñānam anantam brahma (2-1) \]

and the Brhadāraṇyaka text—

\[ vijñānam ānantam brahma (3-9-28) \]

carry Brahman to be of the nature of consciousness, bliss and infinite and not as one possessing consciousness, etc., as its qualities.

Sri Rāmānuja argues that the words satvam, jñānam, etc, are in grammatical co-ordination or appositional relation. Those who know the true nature of the latter declare that if
exists when words expressive of different meanings apply to the same object. From this it follows that by grammatical co-ordination is understood only the identity of entities with their respective attributes as they are. When viewed in this light, the words constituting the above Upaniṣadic texts convey the identity of the meanings with their attributes, namely consciousness, bliss and infinitude. Brahman, therefore, is the one associated with the qualities of consciousness, bliss and infinitude and as such it is saviṣeṣa.

It may be added here that since consciousness, bliss, etc., are the essential qualities of Brahman or God, the latter is referred to as of the nature of consciousness, etc. The Brahma-śūtra —

िद्गुणसेरत्वात तद्वयपodesaḥ prajnavat (2–3–29)

emphasizes this view. The Bhādaranyaka text —

ह्रदयान्तर्ज्ञोतिः puruṣah (4–3–7)

speaks of the soul as of the nature of consciousness. It must also be understood in the sense that since consciousness constitutes the quality of the soul, the latter is referred to as of the nature of consciousness. It comes to this: the texts like saiyam jhanam, anantam, etc., do not convey Brahman as of the nature of consciousness but as one possessing the qualities of consciousness, etc. Brahman, therefore is saviṣeṣa.

So far we have set forth the method Sri Rāmānuja adopts in reconciling the apparent contradictory statements of the Upaniṣad-s that speak of Brahman as nirviṣeṣa and also as saviṣeṣa.

We have already referred to two more sets of Upaniṣadic texts, one stating that Brahman is identical with the souls and the world and another stating the difference between the two. The Advaitin has said that the texts that speak of the identity between Brahman and the soul are valid and they declare the identity between the true nature of God which is pure consciousness and that of the soul which too is pure
consciousness. The texts that speak of the difference between Brahman and the soul refer to the difference between the lower Brahman, namely, God who possesses the characteristics of being the source of the world, omniscience, etc., and the soul which is a blend of Brahman and mind and which possesses the characteristics of agency, etc., and also limited knowledge. The texts that speak of the identity between the world and Brahman are to be understood in the sense that the world is nonreal as it has no independent existence apart from Brahman and the latter is, therefore, one where there is the absence of the world.

It emerges from the above that the Advaitin in order to explain the texts that speak of the identity of Brahman and the soul has to resort to secondary signification. In the same way, he has to admit the sense of budha or sublation in the case of the texts that refer to the identity of Brahman and the world.

Śrī Rāmānuja argues that when the primary meanings of the words constituting the above texts would hold good there is no need to adopt secondary signification. In order to explain his position, Śrī Rāmānuja relies upon the texts of the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad which are as follows:

\[
yah prthivyāṁ tīṣṭhan prthivyāḥ antaraḥ yaṁ prthvi na veda yasya prthviśariram yaḥ prthvim antaro yamayati eṣa te ītāṁ antaryāmyamṛtaḥ, \text{ etc.}
\]

(3-7-3)

The above texts constitute what is known as the antaryāmi-brāhmaṇa in the Brhadāraṇyakopanisad. These texts say that the world of matter or non-sentient things is the body of Brahman and that Brahman is its self. Likewise they say that all sentient beings or souls constitute Brahman's body, Brahman being their self. This relationship between body and soul existing between the world of sentient and insentient beings is the key-doctrine of Śrī
Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita system. According to it, Brahma or God has *cit* and *acīt* which are as real as God Himself as His body. He is their inner self controlling and directing them from within. On the basis of this doctrine which is explicitly stated in the *aṇṭara-yāmibrāhmaṇa*, Śrī Rāmānuja reconciles all the divergent texts referred to above, without any need for resorting to the interpretation of them in a secondary manner. Since God is the inner self of all, He with *cit* and *acīt* – the sentient and non-sentient things as His body, forms a unity or the One Real. There is nothing else apart from Him, for the world of sentient and insentient beings with all its variety is included in God as His body. The body is an attribute or *prakāra* of soul. In ordinary experience we speak of the soul of a man with its body as a single thing or unity. In the same way, God is, according to the texts constituting the *aṇṭara-yāmibrāhmaṇa*, the One Real and there is nothing else, for all else form His body. Thus the texts —

*īdam sarvaḥ yadayamātmā, (Bṛh. Up. 2–4–6)* etc.,

which in the view of the Advaitin, teach Brahma as free from any relation to the world which is indeterminable, find an easy explanation without denying the reality of the world and characterizing it as indeterminable. At the same time, the body of man is different from his soul. Hence the world of *cit* and *acīt* which is the body of God is different from their inner self which is God. It results from this explanation that the *Śvetāsvatara* text —

*pṛthogūmānām preritāroh ca maṇīs juṣṭah tataḥ tena ampiṭavateti* (1–6)

which speaks of the difference between the soul and Brahma and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text —

*sarvasya vasi sarvasya labhaḥ* (4–4–32)

which affirms the difference between the world consisting of the souls and insentient beings and Brahma can easily be
explained as being consistent with the texts of the antaryāmibrāhmaṇa. (Sri bh., Vol. I, pp. 100 ff.) The Advaitin, however, has to explain the above texts as referring to the difference between Brahman on the one hand and the souls and the world on the other which has only empirical reality or vyāvahārikasatva. The text — tat tvam asi according to Advaita conveys the identity between the true nature of the soul which is pure consciousness and the true nature of God which too is pure consciousness. The word tat primarily conveys the sense of God who is omniscient and all-pervasive. The word tvam primarily conveys the soul which is ignorant and limited. No identity is possible between the two in view of the contradictory features present in them. Hence the words, through secondary signification, leave out a part of their primary meanings, namely, omniscience and all-pervasiveness, ignorance and limited-ness, and convey another part which is pure consciousness.

Sri Rāmānuja rejects the above view of the Advaitin by stating that it involves secondary signification. He states that the word tvam does not stand for the mere soul. On the authority of the texts of the antaryāmibrāhmaṇa referred to earlier, we have to admit that it conveys the soul as the body of God and as one which has God as its self. The logical significance of the text tat tvam asi, therefore, is: 'You (the soul) are the body of God'. This interpretation does not involve secondary signification and hence it must be preferred to the interpretation of the Advaitin.

The Advaitin has said that the cognition that results from the text - tat tvam asi is pure consciousness which is non-relational in character. And this cognition is known as nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa.

Śri Rāmānuja argues that the Advaitin is wrong in maintaining the view that in nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa, the object is manifested without being related to any other
feature. He states that even though an object is manifested as associated with its specific configuration. Hence it does not comprehend an object unrelated to any factor. But that object is not known to be present in many objects of the same kind. In savikalpaka-pratyakṣa, however, the configuration is noticed to be present in many objects of the same kind. Thus, according to Sri Rāmānuja, there is no cognition that could be characterized as referring to a non-relational entity. The Advaitin, therefore, cannot assert that Brahman is nirviṣeṣa by being the content of the mental state arising from the Upaniṣadic texts.

The Advaitin in order to emphasize his view that Brahman is nirviṣeṣa has said that perception comprehends only the sat-element and the perceptual knowledge of objects is only erroneous. He explains this position by saying that soon after the rise of the knowledge of pot, for example, there does not arise any doubt as to whether this is a pot or not or a contrary notion that it is not a pot. This shows that the pot when comprehended is known to be different from all the other objects of the world. Thus the knowledge of pot involves the knowledge of difference from all other objects. The knowledge of difference can be had only when we have the knowledge of all other objects which constitute the counter-correlate of difference. Since objects which are far removed by time and space cannot be perceptually comprehended, we cannot have the knowledge of difference from other objects. In the absence of this we cannot have the knowledge of pot as different from all other objects. This would result in the rise of doubt or contrary notion regarding the pot which we, however, do not have. It is this logical difficulty that has led to the Advaitin to hold the view that the knowledge of pot is illusory. This means that Brahman is not associated with any other real object and in this sense it is nirviṣeṣa.
Sri Ramanuja disproves the above contention of the Advaitin by stating that perception comprehends the object as associated with its specific configuration. The knowledge of the latter itself is enough to distinguish the object from other objects. Hence since the object is known as distinct from other objects on the basis of the specific configuration it possesses there does not subsequently arise any doubt or contrary notion regarding the object. It will be clear from this that the Advaitin’s contention that the objects are illusory is quite unwarranted.

The Advaitin has said that the Bhadāraṇyaka text — neti neti (2-3-6) negates the existence of the world in Brahman and thus confirms that Brahman is nirviṣeṣa.

Śri Rāmānuja argues that the above text conveys that God cannot be considered as being limited to ‘this’ or ‘that’ but that it is these and an infinity of others as well thus defying adequate enumeration. (Sri bh., Vol. I. p 54).

The Upaniṣadic text—yato vāco nivartante (Taitt. Up. 2-4) does not say that Brahman is nirviṣeṣa as it transcends speech as the Advaitin thinks. On the other hand, it states that since Brahman or God possesses infinite auspicious qualities it does not admit of succinct analysis. (Sri bh., Vol. I. p. 55)

In the same way, the text —

neha nānāsti kiñcana (Kath. Up., 4-11)

which according to the Advaitin speaks of Brahman as nirviṣeṣa by denying multiplicity in it must be interpreted in the sense that apart from God with the sentient and the insentient beings as His body there is nothing else. (Sri bh., Vol. I. p. 56)

The text —

yaśāyānataṁ tasya matam matam yaśya na veda saḥ
avijnātām vijnāyatām vijnātām avijnātām (Ken. Up. 2-3).

has been interpreted by the Advaitin in the sense that
Brahman is vr̥ttr̥yāpya and not phalavyāpya. Śrī Rāmānuja interprets the above text in the sense that those who know that Brahman is of such and such nature do not know it well and have no true knowledge of it as the latter possesses countless qualities. (Śrī bh., Vol. I, p. 55).

The Advaitin has said that the Bhagavad-gitā texts—

na tadasti vinā yat syat mayā bhūtām carācaram (10-39),
and kṣetrañam cahi mām viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhūrata (13-2) speak of the non-reality of the world and the identity of the soul with Brahman. Since the world is non-real and the soul is non-different from Brahman, the latter is nirvāṣeṣa.

Śrī Rāmānuja states that the Bhagavad-gitā specifically states that Brahman or God is saviṣeṣa. The Bhagavad-gitā text—yo mām ajam anādīm ca vetti lokamahēśvaram (10-3) affirms that God is the Lord of the universe. The two texts cited earlier must be understood in the light of the texts of the antaryāmibrāhmaṇa cited earlier according to which there is nothing apart from God who has the sentient souls and the insentient world as His body. (Śrī bh., Vol. I, pp. 57 ff.)

The Viṣṇupurāṇa text—

pratyastamitabhedam yat sattāmātram agocaram
vacasāmātmamasvedyam tajjñānam brahmamajñātam (6-7-53), does not affirm the nirvāṣeṣa-Brahman as the Advaitin thinks. On the other hand, it deals with the nature of the released soul. The latter has become God-like and has acquired innumerable auspicious qualities that defy adequate enumeration (vacasāmagocaram). It is of the nature of infinite intelligence (sattāmāṭrim). It is free from the distinction caused by its association with body-mind complex (pratyastamitabhedam). It manifests of its own accord. Thus this text does not refer to Brahman as nirvāṣeṣa. (Śrī bh., Vol. I, p. 61)

The other text of the Viṣṇupurāṇa—

tasyātmāparadeheṣu....................dvaitino’tathyadarśinah
The Nature of Reality

does not speak of the falsity of the world as the Advaitin thinks. On the other hand, it states that the souls are uniform in nature by having infinite intelligence, etc., as their essence. He who thinks that the souls are of varied nature on the ground of their association with different bodies is said to have erroneous knowledge. (Śrī bh., Vol. I, p. 67).

Another passage of the Viṣṇupurāṇa —

\[\text{so'ham sa ca tvam........tatyāja bhedam}\]

\[\text{paramārthadṛṣṭिः (2-16-24)}\]

does not state that the knowledge of reality removes the cog- nition of duality and thus affirms the nirvīṣṭa character of Brahma as the Advaitin thinks. On the other hand it states that the souls in all the bodies have the uniform nature of infinite intelligence, etc., and the king when instructed thus gave up the false notion that the souls are of different nature on the ground of their being associated with different bodies. (Śrī bh., Vo. I p-68)

The Viṣṇupurāṇa text - Venurandhra-prabhedena (2-14-32) etc., does not speak of the oneness of the soul as the Advaitin holds. On the other hand, it states that there is no difference in the nature of the souls in view of their association with varied bodies. (Śrī bh., Vol. I, p-67)

Finally the text — vibhedajanake Jñāne, (Viṣnu Purāṇa 6-7-94) etc., does not speak of the difference between the soul and God as caused by ajñāna. On the other hand, it states that the true nature of the soul is concealed by its past karma (ajñāna) due to which the soul has the false notion that it is quite independent of God. When that karma is removed, no soul can ever entertain the notion that it is independent of God.

To sum up the whole discussion: the Upānta-pad of the Bhagavad-gitā and the Viṣṇupurāṇa teach Brahma or God as associated with attributes. The soul and the world are real and they constitute the body of God.
CHAPTER II
The Doctrine of Mâyā

The Advaitic View—An analysis of the nature of the world has led the Advaitins to postulate the principle known as mâyā. The world is not real in the sense in which Brahman is. The latter is real because it is not conditioned by space, time or objects. The world is not so and hence it is not real. Nor is it unreal or an absolute nothing. It is because an absolute nothing like a flower sprung from the sky can never come within the range of cognition. The world is cognized and on this ground it is not an absolute nothing. It cannot be real and an absolute nothing at once as it is a pseudo concept. Hence the world is considered to be indeterminable or mâyā or anirvacaniya. Since the world is occasional (kāddisīka), its cause must be referred to. And it must be of the same nature of the world. It is mâyā.

The Concept of Mâyā

The principle of mâyā is to be admitted on the basis of the Upaniṣad-s too. The latter convey Brahman to be non-dual. (Chand. 6-21) And non-duality would hold only if the world given in perception is treated to be indeterminable. The presence of the non-real world would in no way contradict the non-dual nature of Brahman. Thus in order to maintain the validity of the Upaniṣad-s which speak of Brahman as non-dual we have to maintain the world to be non-real. And the non-reality of the world could be explained only by admitting the principle of mâyā.

Further the Upaniṣadic text —

yasto va imānī bhūtānī Jayante (Taitt. Up. 3-1)
speaks of Brahman as the cause of the world. But the Śvetāmbara text — nīkālam nīkriyām tāntam (6-19)
states that Brahman is free from action and is not composed of parts. This means that Brahman cannot be the cause of the world. In order to explain as to how the partless
ultimate - Brahman could be the cause of the world, the Upaniṣad-s introduce the principle of māya.

The Svetāvata text — te dhyānayogānugatāḥ apāśyan devamāṣaktim svagūpār nigūḍham (1-3) states that the sages absorbed in meditation discovered the creative power present in the self-luminous consciousness inexplicably blended with the three strands of sattva, rajas and tamas. The same text in another of its passage—
māyāṁ tu prakṛtim vidyāt māyinaṁ tu mahēśvaram (4-10) speaks of māya as the primal cause of the world and God as its controller.

From the above it follows that Brahman associated with māya appears as the world. The Advaitin holds that māya is present in Brahman and it makes the latter appear as the world. Māya gets itself transformed into the world of objects and Brahman being the substratum of māya whose transformation is the world is viewed to be the transfigurative material cause of the world. In other words, Brahman is spoken of, by courtesy, as the cause of the world.

The author of the Brahma-sūtra in the aphorism—
māyāmātram tu kārtṣnyena anabhivyakta
svaṛuṣṭvāt (3-2-3)
uses the word māya. Sri Śaṅkara interprets this aphorism thus: the dream objects are only illusory (māyāmātram). The characteristics of a real object are that it manifests at an appropriate time and place; it is created with an appropriate material; and, it is not sublated during phenomenal existence. All these three factors are known as kārtṣnyam and they are not present in the case of dream objects. Hence the latter are illusory. It follows that the author of the sūtra-s uses the word māya in the sense of illusion.
Identity of Maya and Advaita

Maya is identical with avidyā or ajñāna. The Bhagavad-gītā text —
ajñānena avṛtāṁ jñānāṁ tena muhyanti jantavāḥ (5–15)
states that the absolute reality (jñānam) is concealed by
ajñāna and hence the individual souls experience pheno-
menal existence. The passage of the same text —
nāham prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ (7–25)
declares that māyā which is under the control of God veils
the true nature of Brahman and hence the latter is not
manifest to all.

Thus these two passages ascribe the common charac-
teristic of veiling the true nature of Brahman in the case
of māyā and avidyā. Hence the latter are identical.

In the same way, the Bhagavad-gītā texts —
(i) jñānena tu tadajñānam yeṣāṁ naśītam atmanoḥ (5–16)
(ii) māmeva ye propadyante māyām etāṁ taranti ten(7–14)
state that the direct realization of Brahman removes
māyā-avidyā. This common characteristic of being remo-
vable by the direct knowledge of Brahman that rests in
māyā and avidyā shows that the latter are identical.

Śrī Śaṅkara too favours the identity of māyā with
avidyā. In his commentary on the ānumānikāhdkaraṇa —
avidyātmikā hi bijaśaktīḥ avyakta śabdānirdeśyāḥ... ...
tadētat avyaktaṁ kvacīdvākāśabda nirdiṣṭaṁ... ...
kvacīdvākṣaraśabdoditam... ...
kvaśī śaṅkaraśuścitaṁ (1–4–3)

Herein Śrī Śaṅkara refers to avidyā which is designated as
avyakta and further states that this avyakta is sometimes
referred to in the Upaniṣad-ś as akṣara and at other times
as māyā. From this it follows that according to Śrī
Śaṅkara the words avyakta, avidyā akṣara and māyā are
synonyms.
Is Avidyā One or Many

Prakāśātman in his Vivaraṇa maintains the view that avidyā is one only and it is the primal cause of the world. This raises the question whether this avidyā itself can be considered to be the material cause of the illusory appearance of shell as silver, etc. It cannot be admitted to be so because in that case illusory silver would be removed only by the removal of avidyā which according to the present view is its cause. But avidyā will be removed only by the direct knowledge of Brahman. Hence silver too will be manifested till there arises the knowledge of Brahman. This, however, is not the case. In ordinary experience we find that silver is removed by the knowledge of its substratum which is shell. Hence something other than avidyā must be admitted as the cause of silver upon a shell. And that cause is model ignorance or avasthājnāna or tūlājnāna. It is a derivative of avidyā. It is present in the consciousness conditioned by the object—shell. And it is removed by the direct knowledge of the latter. Model ignorances are many while primal avidyā is one only.

According to Vācaspatimiśra, the primal nesciences are many. According to him, the souls are the substrata of māyā or avidyā. Since the souls are many, avidyā-s too are many. But Vācaspati too has to admit tūlājnāna-s or the derivatives of mūlājnāna to account for the rise of silver, etc., upon shell, etc.

It may be added here that in the Svetāsvatara text—
māyāṁ tu prakṛtim vidyāt (4-10)
the word māyā is used in singular number. And in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka text—
indramāyābhīḥ pururūpa iyaṁ (2-5-15)
the word māyā is used in plural number. Prakāśātman who advocates the view that the primal nescience is one would explain the usage of the word māyā in plural number in the
second text as referring to the manifold powers of avidyā which is one only. Vācaspatimisṭra who maintains the view that avidyā-s are many would explain the usage of the word māyā in singular number in the first text as referring to the class-characteristic or the universal avidyāśva which prevailing in each and every avidyā is one.

Thus according to Prakāśatman the primal nescience or avidyā is one while, according to Vācaspatimisṭra there is plurality of avidyā-s. But according to both modal ignorances which are the derivatives of primal nescience are many.

The Indeterminable Nature of Avidyā

Avidyā cannot be admitted to be real; for, in that case there would be two real entities—Brahman and avidyā and this is against the spirit of Advaita that there is only one reality. Further the real is that which does not suffer sublation at any point of time. Avidyā is said to be removed by the direct knowledge of Brahman and on this ground it can not be real. It cannot be viewed as an absolute nothing; it is because an absolute nothing will never come within the range of cognition. But, avidyā, as we shall presently see, comes within the range of cognition ‘I am ignorant’. Hence it cannot be an absolute nothing. It cannot be real and an absolute nothing at once; for, such a notion is a pseudo one. Hence avidyā is held to be indeterminable or mithyā or anirvacaniya.

The Powers of Avidyā

Being indeterminable, avidyā cannot function by itself unless it is related to a sentient element. Brahman is the only sentient principle according to Advaita. Avidya and Brahman cannot be identified because of their opposite nature. Hence it must be admitted that avidya is falsely related to Brahman. The cause of the false relation of avidya to Brahman is avidya itself.
If it is admitted that some other cause brings about the relation of avidyā to Brahman, then the question would arise as to whether that cause is related to Brahman or not. If it is not related, then it cannot bring about the relation of Brahman to avidyā. If it is related to Brahman, then what is the cause of its relation to Brahman. If we admit another cause, then we land ourselves in the fallacy of infinite regress. Hence it must be held that it is avidyā that is responsible for the relation to Brahman.

Avidyā thus falsely related to Brahman acquires a twofold power of concealment (avarana-sakti) and projection (vikṣepa-sakti). It is said in the Saṃkhṣepa-sūtrāka (1–20) thus:

"Avidyā owing to the strength of having pure consciousness as its locus and content, acquires a veiling and a transfiguring faculty. It veils the ever-luminous consciousness, and then projects it illusorily in the form of embodied souls, God and the world".

Of these two powers, avarana-sakti is that power which gives rise to the usages such as 'Brahman does not exist', and 'Brahman is not manifest'. Vikṣepa-sakti is that power which gives rise to erroneous notions such as 'I am an agent' etc., and also to the appearance of the world.

The text of the Varāhopanītad (2–67):
sūstrenā naṣyet paramārthadṛṣṭibh
kāryakṣamā naṣyatī ca āparokṣyāt
prārabdhanāsāt pratibhāsaṁsāt
evaṁ tridhā naṣyatī ca utmamātā.

states that the vikṣepa-sakti has three aspects. Of these, the first one gives rise to the notion that the universe is absolutely real. The second one gives rise to the notion that the universe
though not absolutely real, is empirically real. This means that the objects of the world can be adapted to practical needs of life. The third one gives rise to the notion that the world is apparently real like a dream. The first one is removed by the study of Vedanta; the second one, by the direct knowledge of Brahman. To the aspirant who has attained the knowledge of Brahman, the third power makes the world of objects appear as illusory because of his fructified deeds. When the fructified deeds are exhausted by the experience of their fruits, the third aspect also is removed and there will be no manifestation of the world. The aspirant will be dissociated from the psycho-physical organism and would remain as Brahman.

The Locus and Content of Avidya:

Like knowledge, avidya implies a locus in which it abides and a content to which it refers.

All the Advaitins agree that the content of avidya is only pure consciousness - Brahman. This is as it should be; for, the fruit of concealment is only the obscurcation of contingent luminosity which gives rise to empirical usages such as 'The object does not exist', 'It is not manifest'. The Advaitins argue that contingent luminosity is possible only in the case of pure consciousness - Brahman. Avidya conceals it and thereby gives rise to empirical usages such as 'Brahman does not exist', 'It is not manifest'.

As regards the locus of avidya, there are two different views in Advaita, one advocated by Vacaspatimiśra and the other by Prakāśātman.

Vacaspatimiśra is of the view that the soul is the locus of avidya. He argues that the locus of avidya must be one from whom the true nature of Brahman is concealed. It is only from the soul that the true nature of Brahman is concealed and so the soul is the locus of avidya. To the question

1 VPS, p. 21
as to how the soul which derives its notion from the operation of avidyā could be the locus of the latter, the followers of the Vācaspatimīśra school answer that since both the soul and avidyā are beginningless, there is nothing wrong in viewing the soul to be the locus of avidyā. 1

Prakṛtisattva argues that pure consciousness is the locus of avidyā. His argument in favour of this view may be stated as follows: In the state of deep sleep, avidyā is experienced and this is known from the recollection which one has after coming back to the waking state in the form ‘I did not know anything when I was asleep’. Sense-organs do not function in that state and mind provisionally merges in avidyā then. And, what we have in that state is avidyā and pure consciousness. There must be a locus to which avidyā could belong. And, it is pure consciousness that serves as the locus of avidyā. 2

The experience ‘I am ignorant’ which Vācaspati has cited as the authority in favour of his view that the soul is the locus of avidyā can be explained as follows: avidyā present in the pure consciousness in the state of deep sleep is not determinately manifested in the form ‘I am ignorant’. It is because mind which is the revealing medium of avidyā is provisionally merged in the latter. When one comes back to the waking state, mind is superimposed on the pure consciousness. It reveals avidyā; and, while doing so, it reveals it as present in itself and consequently in the consciousness delimited by it, namely, the soul. Hence there is the recollection of avidyā in the form ‘I am ignorant’. Avidyā, however, is present in the pure consciousness.

The Positive Nature of Avidyā:

Avidyā as such cannot be manifested by any pramāṇa. It is because a pramāṇa is that which gives rise to the knowledge of a thing that is unknown hitherto. And unknown-ness

1 Bh. p. 235  2 V. p. 210
consists in the concealment of the concerned object by avidyā. Thus if we assign any pramāṇa in respect of avidyā, then it goes without saying that that pramāṇa acquires its status of being a pramāṇa by giving rise to the knowledge of avidyā which is unknown hitherto. This would hold good only if we admit that avidyā is characterised by another avidyā. If we assign a pramāṇa in regard to the latter avidyā, then we have to admit that this avidyā too is characterised by another avidyā. And so an ad infinitum. So we must hold that avidyā is not manifested by any pramāṇa.

Although avidyā is not manifested by any pramāṇa yet it is manifested by the witness-self (sākṣi) like happiness, misery and other mental states. Witness-self, according to the prevalent view in Advaita, is the consciousness that transcends the mind while the soul is the consciousness that is immanent in the mind.¹

To sum up this part of the discussion: avidyā is manifested by sākṣi and not by any pramāṇa like perception, etc.

Although avidyā as such does not come within the range of any pramāṇa, yet some aspects of it are comprehended by pramāṇa-s. For example, there arises the doubt whether avidyā is positive in nature or mere absence of knowledge. And doubt would arise in respect of that which is the content of modal ignorance. When the positive nature of avidyā thus becomes the content of modal ignorance, it follows that proofs like perception, inference, verbal testimony and presumption could function to remove the modal ignorance through mental state and manifest the positive nature of avidyā. It comes to this: the pramāṇa-s manifest the positive nature of avidyā. And the pramāṇa-s are perception, inference, verbal testimony and perception.

¹ PP. p. 88
the positive nature of avidya. This experience cannot refer to absence of knowledge. It is because the latter would never become the content of perceptual knowledge. It is thus: negation of an object presupposes the knowledge of the latter. Pot, prior to the moment of its negation, must invariably remembered. Otherwise there cannot arise the knowledge of its non-existence. In the same way, if the perceptual experience 'I am ignorant' is said to refer to the negation of knowledge, then we must have the knowledge of the thing that is negated which is knowledge itself in the present case. If we have the knowledge of 'knowledge', then knowledge itself exists and so it cannot be negated. If we do not have the knowledge of the knowledge that is negated, then also we cannot have its negation, because negation presupposes the knowledge of the thing that is negated. Hence the perceptual knowledge 'I am ignorant' involves reference not to absence of knowledge but to positive entity which is avidya. ¹

2. The positive nature of avidya is proved through inference which is as follows:

vivädadyäsitam pramäjaññam, svapragabhäva vyatirikta-
svavigayāvaraṇa - svanivartya - svadeśagatavastvantara-
pūrvakam, aprakṣāsitärtha prakāṣakatvāt, andhokāre
prashamotpannopradipaprabhāvat. ²

This argument may be explained as follows: the subject of inference (pākṣa) is valid knowledge. The thing that is sought to be established (sādhya) is the entity which is different from the antecedent negation (prāgabhāva) of knowledge. It veils the object with reference to which valid knowledge has arisen. It is removed by the valid knowledge. And the valid knowledge as well as that entity relate to one and the same substratum. And that entity

¹ V. p. 74 ² V. p. 85.
is avidyā. The ground of inference (hetu) is the characteristic of manifesting the hitherto unknown objects. The illustrative example is the light of the lamp during the first moment of its existence in the place where darkness exists.

Now the light of the lamp during the first moment of its existence removes darkness. The latter is not absence of light but a positive entity. It conceals the objects like pot, etc., and thereby gives rise to the experience that the objects do not exist. It is removed by the light. And it exists in the place where light too has come into existence.

On the basis of the above analogy the Advaitin proves that the valid knowledge of Brahman removes avidyā which is different from its antecedent negation. It is thus: an effect is nothing but the destruction of its antecedent negation. Pot is only the destruction of its antecedent negation—ghaṣaprāṇabhāva. In this sense knowledge too is the destruction of its antecedent negation. Thus at the time of the existence of knowledge its antecedent negation does not exist. If it is held that avidyā is the antecedent negation of knowledge, then it cannot exist at the time of the origination of knowledge and so there is no possibility of knowledge destroying avidyā. Hence it must be held that avidyā is something different from the antecedent negation of knowledge. It is a positive entity. Further avidyā conceals the true nature of Brahman in the sense that it gives rise to the experience that ‘Brahman does not exist’, and ‘It is not manifest’. The valid knowledge of Brahman removes avidyā and gives rise to the experience that ‘Brahman exists’, and ‘It is manifest’. Further both avidyā and the knowledge of Brahman has Brahman as their content. It is thus that avidyā is proved to be positive in nature on the basis of inference.

The Upaniṣadic text – ‘The true nature of Brahman is
concealed from the souls by anṛta' (Chāṇḍ. Up. 8.3.2) states that the true nature of Brahman is concealed by an indeterminable entity (anṛta). The latter must be positive in nature because abhāva or absence cannot conceal anything. Here the indeterminable entity is said to conceal Brahman and on this ground it must be a positive factor. ¹

4. Presumption too proves that avidyā is positive in nature. The identity of the soul with Brahman which is the significance of the great-sayings of the Upaniṣad-s would hold good only when the soul is admitted to be none other than Brahman with certain characteristics such as agency, etc., superimposed upon it by avidyā. And superimposition of agency, etc., upon Brahman would hold good only when the true nature of the latter is concealed by avidyā. Since abhāva cannot conceal any entity, what conceals Brahman must be a positive entity.

Thus perception, inference, verbal testimony and presumption go to prove that avidyā is a positive entity and is not mere absence of knowledge.

The Annihilating Factor of Avidyā:

Avidyā or ignorance will be removed by vidyā or knowledge. And, in order that ignorance and knowledge may be opposed to each other, what is necessary is that their content must be the same. Here avidyā has Brahman as its content and so for its removal what is required is the knowledge of Brahman.

Knowledge of Brahman is not svarūpa-jñāna. The Advaitin makes a clear distinction between svarūpa-jñāna and vṛtti-jñāna. The former constitutes the essential nature of Brahman and hence eternal. The latter is only mental state or the modification of mind and so non- eternal. It is only Brahman reflected in the mental state arising from the major text of the Upaniṣad-s. ² Brahman which

⁴ V. p. 91     ² V. p. 452
is pure consciousness of 

The Annihilating Factor of the Knowledge of Brahman:

Closely allied with the above is the question regarding the removal of the knowledge of Brahman. The latter being a modification of mind which is the effect of avidyā is illusory. Hence it must also be removed. If any factor is admitted as bringing about its removal, then for the removal of that factor we must admit another; and, so on ad infinitum. Nor can it remove without being removed; for that would contradict the non-dual nature of Brahman.

The Advaitin answers the above objection by saying that the knowledge of Brahman gets itself removed after removing avidyā. Just as the clearing nut mixed with water causes the precipitation of mud already conjoined with water and causes its own precipitation as well, in the same way the knowledge of Brahman removes and gets itself removed. In other words, the knowledge of Brahman in its aspect as a valid knowledge (pramāṇa) removes avidyā and in its aspect as a known entity (dṛṣṭya) it gets itself removed.

The Nature of the Removal of Avidyā:

The removal of a superimposed entity is but its being reduced to its substratum, avidyā is superimposed upon Brahman; and, so its removal must necessarily be of the same nature of its substratum, namely, Brahman. Maṇḍana in his Brahma-siddhi advocates this view.

1 SLS. p. 363  2 SLS. p. 363  3 Br. St. 3-106
To sum up:

1. *Māyā* is the transformative material cause of the world;

2. It is identical with *avidya*;

3. It is one according to Prakāśātman and many according to Vācaspatimīśra;

4. It is indeterminable or *anirvacaniya*;

5. It is characterized by the two powers of *avarana* and *vikṣepa*;

6. Its locus is pure consciousness according to Prakāśātman and the soul according to Vācaspatimīśra;

7. It is manifested by the *sākṣi*; and its positive nature proved by perception, inference, verbal testimony and presumption;

8. It is removed by the knowledge of Brahman which gets itself removed thereafter; and

9. Its removal is nothing but Brahman.

The Visiṣṭādvaitic Criticism:

Sri Rāmānuja critically examines the doctrine of *māyā* as expounded by the Advaitin and finally rejects it. He argues that the word *māyā* or *avidya* does not stand for something indeterminable as the Advaitin thinks. The word *māyā* signifies the wondrous power of God and it is real. It stands for that which has the power to produce variegated objects. The word *prakṛti* is a synonym of *māyā* and as such it signifies the same sense. In the Upaniṣadic text —

*māyāṁ tu prakṛtim vidyāt māyinam
tu maheśvaram* (Svet. Up. 4–10)

God is said to be the *māyā* as He possesses *māyā* which is the power to create variegated objects. The Advaitin considers that *māyā* is a synonym of an indeterminable entity and so it is indeterminable. But it is not so. Never indeed is the word *māyā* used in respect of indeterminable objects. Indeed
It is used to refer to real objects like the weapons of demons. In the text of the Viṣṇupurāṇa (1-19-20):

tena māyāsahāram tat sāmbarasya atugāminā
bālasya rakṣatā deham ekākaśyena sūditam

it is said that by the swift-moving disc of the Lord that protects the body of Prahlāda, the innumerable weapons directed against the latter by Śāmba are destroying individually. In the text of the Bhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (4-6-19):

indro māyābhīḥ pururūpa iyate

by the word māyābhīḥ what is conveyed is the supranormal powers that are real. In the text of the Bhagavad-gītā (7-14):

datvā hi eṣā guṇamayi mama māyā

by the word guṇamayi, it is only the prakṛti which constitutes the body of God, which is real and which is characterized by the three factors of sattva, rajas and tamas. ¹

It may be added here that the concept of prakṛti in the Viṣṇūdāvaita system differs from that in the Sāṅkhya school. According to the latter, sattva, rajas and tamas are the constituents of prakṛti and the latter is only the complex of all. ² But according to Viṣṇūdāvaita, sattva etc., characterize the prakṛti. They are distinct from the latter, although inseparable from it. Moreover, according to the Sāṅkhya, prakṛti is totally independent of the Puruṣa; but according to Viṣṇūdāvaita, it is under the control of God. ³

During the period of dissolution, prakṛti exists in a subtle state devoid of distinctions of names and forms. At the beginning of creation, God resolves to become many; and, resolve on the part of God is only the transformation of His attribute consciousness-dharmabhūtajñāna. It is only the prakṛti which is God's body that undergoes change. And, God – the substantive part does not undergo

¹ Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 66  ² STK. p. 97  ³ OIP. p. 408
any change whatsoever. 1 Since prakṛti is real, the world
too, which its transformation, is real. It is not indetermi-
nable as the Advaitin thinks.

Further the Advaitin holds that māyā and avidyā are
identical. Sri Rāmānuja, however, holds the two to be
distinct. Māyā is real and it is the body of God possessing
wondrous powers. Avidyā too is real and it stands for the
past merits and demerits of the soul. 2 In this connection,
Sri Rāmānuja cites as authority the Vīṣṇupurāṇa text —

avidyā karmasāṁjñā anyā 3

It follows from the above that the Advaitin’s concep-
tion of māyā-avidyā as an indeterminable entity is unsound.

Having thus shown that the doctrine of māyā or avidyā
has no scriptural authority, Sri Rāmānuja proceeds to show
that its conception is against reasoning also. We shall
now set forth his arguments.

1. In the first place, Sri Rāmānuja argues that the
Advaitin cannot explain the locus of avidyā. It is thus :
the soul cannot be viewed to be its locus. It is because
the notion of the soul is derived from avidyā; and, if the
latter is considered to be located in the soul then there
would arise the fallacy of interdependence. 4

It cannot be said that Brahman is the locus of avidyā.
It is because Brahman being self-luminous consciousness
is opposed to avidyā and hence it cannot serve as the locus
of the latter. 5

The Advaitin might say that Brahman as self-luminous
consciousness is only the witness of avidyā and so it can
be the locus of the latter. It is only the knowledge of
Brahman that arises from the Upaniṣad-s that is the
annihilating factor of avidyā. 6

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1 Sri Bh., Vol. II, p. 138  2 Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 80
3 Vi. Pu. 6-7-61; vide Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 60
4, 5 & 6 Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 73
Sri Rāmānuja argues that Brahman is admitted to be self-luminous consciousness in the sense that it cannot become the content of another knowledge. So there cannot be the knowledge of Brahman according to Advaita. Hence if the Advaitins say that knowledge is opposed to ignorance, then since Brahman is of the nature of knowledge, it will be opposed to ignorance, namely, māyā or avidyā and so the latter cannot be present in the former. ¹

The Advaitin might say that it is only the knowledge that everything apart from Brahman is indeterminable is the annihilating factor of avidyā and not Brahman which is knowledge. Hence Brahman can be the locus of avidyā.²

Sri Rāmānuja asks whether the knowledge that everything apart from Brahman is indeterminable is opposed to ignorance relating to the true nature of Brahman or to ignorance in the form that the world is real. It cannot be the former because knowledge relates to the indeterminable nature of the world, while ignorance or avidyā relates to the true nature of Brahman. As such, knowledge and ignorance (avidyā) do not refer to one and the same content. In order that they may be opposed to each other, the two must have one and the same content.²

In order to get over the above difficulty, if the Advaitin contends that the knowledge that everything apart from Brahman is indeterminable is opposed to ignorance in the form that the world is real, then it is only the latter that would be sublated and that ignorance relating to Brahman would remain.²

It might be said by the Advaitin that ignorance relating to Brahman is nothing but the experience of second entity apart from it and it will be removed by the knowledge that everything apart from Brahman is indeterminable; and, the essential nature of Brahman is manifested of its own accord.²

¹ Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 73 ² Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 74
Sri Rāmānuja argues that the true nature of Brahman as one without a second is manifested of its own accord according to the Advaitin and as such there can be neither the ignorance which is opposed to that true nature nor can there arise any multiplication of that ignorance. 1

On the above grounds, Sri Rāmānuja argues that Brahman, which according to the Advaitin is of the nature of self-luminous consciousness, cannot be the locus of avidyā. The unintelligibility pointed out here is termed Āśrayānupāpatti.

2. Sri Rāmānuja next proves that avidyā cannot conceal the consciousness which is Brahman. It is because concealment may mean either of the two things: (i) the prevention of the origination of consciousness, and, (ii) the destruction of consciousness. Brahman which is self-luminous consciousness is not admitted to be originated by the Advaitin. Hence concealment in the sense of prevention of the origination of consciousness is not possible. Concealment in terms of the destruction of consciousness also is not possible. It is because the assertion that Brahman is concealed by avidyā would then amount to admitting that the essential nature of Brahman is lost. It comes to this: Brahman cannot be concealed by avidyā. The unintelligibility pointed out here is known as Tirodhānaṇupāpatti. 1

3. The Advaitin admits that avidyā is a defect present in Brahman and it is responsible for the latter experiencing the world of duality. Sri Rāmānuja asks whether this defect is real or non-real. If it were real, then there will be two real entities—one Brahman and other avidyā and this would be against the fundamental position of Advaita that there is only one reality. Hence it must be held that avidyā is non-real. In that case, just as the world which is non-real requires a primal defect, namely, avidyā in order that it may be cognized, in the same way, avidyā too in order that it may be cognized

1 Sri Bh, Vol. I, p. 74
would require another avidya. And so on ad infinitum.  

The Advaitin may get over the difficulty by holding that avidya is beginningless and hence it requires no explanatory defect as cause. The result of this argument is that the fallacy of infinite regress pointed out above is not applicable.

Sri Ramanuja, however, says that according to Advaita the distinction between God and the soul, although beginningless, is dependent upon the defect, namely, maya or avidya. Hence the argument that that which is beginningless requires no explanatory defect as cause is unsound. The Advaitin thus is forced to admit a cause for the manifestation of avidya. And that cause could only be Brahman and not another avidya as the admission of the latter would land the Advaitin in the fallacy of infinite regress. Brahman being eternal, its manifestation of avidya too will be an enduring feature and thus there will be the contingency of non-release. The unintelligibility focussed here is known as Svarupanumapatti.  

4. The Advaitin considers that avidya cannot be taken as real as it is sublated and not as an absolute nothing as it is presented in a cognition. Nor can it be viewed as real and an absolute nothing at once as it is a discrepant notion. Hence it is indeterminable or anirvacanīya.

Sri Ramanuja rejects the Advaitin’s view by saying that the nature of an object is to be ascertained on the basis of its cognition. And the things of the world are always cognized either as real (sat) or non-real (asat). No object is ever cognized as different from being real and non-real. The shell silver, for example, is not anirvacanīya as the Advaitin thinks. It is real and this we shall explain while discussing the theory of error according to Sri Ramanuja in the chapter on The world. The unintelligibility suggested by Sri Ramanuja here is known as Anirvacanīyanumapatti.

1 Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 74.
5. Sri Ramanuja rejects the view of the Advaitin that the proofs like perception, etc., prove avidya as a positive entity.

(a) The Advaitin has said that the perceptual experience ‘I am ignorant’ has for its content not absence of knowledge but the positive entity – avidya. It cannot have absence of knowledge as its content because absence or negation presupposes the knowledge of the thing that is negated. In the present case, the thing that is negated is knowledge. If we have knowledge of the thing that is negated which is knowledge in the present case, then we have knowledge itself and hence there cannot be its negation. If we do not have the knowledge of the thing that is negated which is knowledge then we cannot have its negation. Hence the content of perceptual experience is not absence of knowledge but a positive entity which is avidya.

Sri Ramanuja argues that the difficulties pointed out by the Advaitin in regard to the view that the content of the perceptual experience ‘I am ignorant’ is absence of knowledge will be equally applicable in the case of the view that such a content is the positive avidya. It is thus: the locus and content of avidya, namely, Brahman—the pure consciousness must be known in order that there may be the experience of avidya. In that case, avidya will be removed and so there cannot be its experience. To get over this difficulty if it is held that pure consciousness which is admitted to be the locus and content of avidya is not known then there cannot be the manifestation of avidya. ¹

Sri Ramanuja, therefore, argues that the content of the perceptual experience ‘I am ignorant’ refers to absence of knowledge only. The latter is removable only by the knowledge where in its object is clearly manifested. When

¹ Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 74
absence of knowledge is manifested knowledge which is the
counter-correlate is definitely known. But its content is not
clearly manifested then. ¹

It follows that the content of the perceptual experience
'I am ignorant' is only absence of knowledge and not positive
avidyā as the Advaitin thinks.

(b) The Advaitin has said that inference also goes to
prove the existence of avidyā as a positive entity. Sri
Rāmānuja says that if the knowledge arising from inference
should have for its content the positive nature of avidyā then
it should have avidyā also its content. And inference, if it
should be viewed as a pramāṇa, it should give rise to the
knowledge of an object unknown hitherto. Unknownness
consists in being characterized by avidyā. It comes to this
that avidyā with reference to which inference gives to know-
ledge must be characterized by another avidyā. This
argument would lead to the fallacy of infinite regress. Hence
inference cannot be cited as a proof in regard to the positive
nature of avidyā. ¹

Further in the inferential argument put forward by the
Advaitin the ground of inference is 'the state of manifesting
the unknown object'. And the illustrative example is the
light of the lamp. ¹

Sri Rāmānuja argues that the illustrative example is
devoid of the ground of inference. The light, of the lamp
does not have the power of manifesting the unknown object.
It is only knowledge that can manifest an object. Even when
there is light, if there is no cognition, there can be no
manifestation of object. The light of the lamp is only a
factor that contributes to the rise of knowledge from the
sense of sight by removing darkness.

¹ Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 74
And it is spoken of as a manifesting factor, only by courtesy, as it helps the rise of knowledge from the sense of sight through the removal of darkness. Thus since the ground of inference is not present in the illustrative example there is the fallacy of sādhanavaikalya. This means that one cannot prove the existence of avidyā as a positive entity on the basis of the illustrative example that is cited.  

From the above it follows that inference cannot prove avidyā to be a positive entity.

(c) The Advaitin has said that the verbal testimony proves that avidyā is positive in nature. The Chāndogya text ‘All the beings become one with Brahman during deep sleep; yet they do not realize Brahman, because its true nature is veiled by anṛta’ (Chānd. Up. 8-3-2) states that anṛta or avidyā is the concealing factor of Brahman. Since an abhāva cannot conceal any object, and since avidyā is said to conceal Brahman, the latter is a positive entity.

Śrī Rāmānuja argues that the word anṛta in the above text does not mean avidyā. It is because in the text of the Kathopanishad (1-3-1):

ḥṣaṁ pibantu sukṛtasya loke, etc.,

the word pīta is used in the sense of the deed performed as an offering to God. Hence the word anṛta should be taken in the sense of the deed that is performed with a desire for its fruit and not in the sense of avidyā. The Chāndogya text cited above, therefore, means that the souls are not able to attain Brahman as they perform deeds with a desire for their fruits. Hence verbal testimony too does not refer to avidyā.

(d) The Advaitin has said that śrutārthapatti too proves avidyā to be positive in nature. The text tat tvam asī speaks

1 Sri Bh., Vol I, p. 74  
2 Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 87
of the identity between Brahman and the soul. And identity will not be possible if the soul is distinct from Brahman. Hence it must be held that the soul is none else than Brahman with certain characteristics like agency, etc., super-imposed upon it by avidyā. It is in this way avidyā is established.

Śrī Rāmānuja states that the text tat tvam asi conveys that the soul has Brahman as its body and it does not signify the identity between Brahman and the soul.\(^1\) This has been explained in the First Chapter of the this book.

The unintelligibility pointed out in the foregoing paragraphs is known as Pramāṇanupapatti.

6. The Advaitin has said that the knowledge of Brahman which is different from Brahman which is knowledge is the annihilating factor of avidyā.

Śrī Rāmānuja argues that this knowledge of Brahman being different from Brahman which is knowledge is anirvacaniya according to Advaita. Hence the Advaitin must admit a factor that annihilates the knowledge of Brahman. If some other factor is admitted to be removing the latter, then for the removal of this other factor we must admit another; and so on ad infinitum.

The Advaitin, however, says that the knowledge of Brahman removes avidyā and then gets itself removed.

Śrī Rāmānuja maintains that this contention is wrong. It is because since the knowledge of Brahman which causes the cessation of avidyā is other than Brahman, its being, origination and destruction are indeterminable according to Advaita. In order that indeterminability of the destruction of the knowledge of Brahman may hold good what is necessary is the presence of avidyā. It is because indeterminability can be explained only in terms of avidyā. Hence there will be

\(^1\) Śrī Śi., Vol. I, p. 87
another avidyā and a cause of its cessation must be thought of. If this argument is pursued further, then it will lead to the fallacy of infinite regress.

Śrī Rāmānuja further asks as to who is the knower or the substratum of the knowledge that annihilates avidyā. The soul cannot be the knower because according to Advalta it is a superimposed entity by being a blend of Brahman and mind. Being so it also is to be negated by the knowledge of Brahman. As such it is an object of the knowledge that annihilates avidyā and it cannot be the knower of the latter. It might be said that Brahman is the knower. Śrī Rāmānuja asks as to whether the characteristic of being a knower constitutes the essential nature of Brahman or it is falsely attributed to it. If it is the latter, then for the false attribution of it upon Brahman we would require another avidyā for which we do not have another annihilating factor. The result of the argument is that avidyā would continue to exist and there is the contingency of non-release. If the characteristic is essential to Brahman, then the latter cannot be viewed as nirguṇa.¹

It follows that the conception of the annihilating factor of avidyā is unsound. The unintelligibility emphasized in the foregoing paragraphs is known as Nivartakāṇupapātī.

7. The removal of avidyā, according to Advalta, is identical with Brahman. Śrī Rāmānuja argues that since Brahman is ever-existent, the removal of avidyā too is ever existent. In other words the removal of avidyā is had even before the knowledge of Brahman acquired from the Upaniṣadic texts. Hence the view of the Advalta that the knowledge of Brahman causes the cessation of avidyā and that bondage is due to the absence of that knowledge would stand contradict-d ² The unintelligibility suggested here is known as Nivṛttiyanupapātī.

¹ Śrī Bh, Vol. I, p. 106  ² VS. p. 85
CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF JIVA

The Advaita View:

1. The Soul—The Blend of Brahman and Avidyā and Mind

The Advaitin seeks to explain the nature of the soul in two different ways; and, they are: pratibimba-vāda and avaccheda-vāda. These may be explained as follows:

Pratibimba-vāda: This view is advocated by Padmapāda in Pañcapādikā and by his commentator Prakāśātman in his Vivaraṇa. According to this view, avidyā which is superimposed upon Brahman—the pure consciousness receives the reflection of the latter. The pure consciousness which serves as prototype (bimba) is God and He is not affected by the defects pertaining to the limiting adjunct—avidyā. The pure consciousness that is reflected in avidyā and its product—mind is the soul. The latter is thus a blend of the spiritual element of consciousness and the insentient element of mind. The latter possesses the characteristics of agency, etc. And these characteristics are falsely attributed to the sentient element of consciousness. The blend of the consciousness and mind is the content of ‘I’ and it is a knower, agent and an experient. The consciousness that is associated with the characteristic of being a bimba is God and the latter is omniscient, omnipotent and is the cause of the world. It must be added here that the characteristics of agency, etc., and also omniscience, etc., are falsely presented upon Brahman by avidyā and its product—mind.¹

The unique feature of the pratibimba-vāda is that the reflected image is real and is identical with the original. But the reflection which is only immense of pure consciousness in the limiting adjunct and the limiting adjunct—these two are indeterminable. When avidyā and its product—mind are removed by the direct knowledge of Brahman,

¹ PP., pp. 108, 111; V. pp. 287, 294
the reflected image would remain in the form of the original. Here too the original will become free from the characteristic of being a original as it is derived from avidyā which has been removed by the knowledge of Brahman. Hence what would remain then is pure consciousness as such and it is liberation.

Avaccheda-vāda: This view is advocated by Vācaspati mīśra. He does not favour the theory of reflection of pure consciousness on the ground that reflections are always possible in the case of objects which possess colour. Brahman the pure consciousness is not conditioned by colour and hence it cannot undergo reflection. In his commentary Bhāmati on the Adhyāsa-bhāṣya, Vācaspati mīśra states that there cannot be any reflection for sound, taste, smell, etc.1

The pratibimbā-vāda argues that sound does not have colour; yet it undergoes reflection in the form of echo in the space conditioned by a cave, etc. And, space—the reflecting medium in the present case does not possess colour. In the same way, pure consciousness which does not have colour may get reflected in avidyā or mind that is not conditioned by colour.2

Thus the pratibimbā-vāda is free from any defect. Vācaspati mīśra should have felt so and so he subscribes to the pratibimbā-vāda by stating that Brahman which is one undergoes manifold reflections in māyā-s. He states:

"The defects present in a mirror are transferred only to the reflected face and not upon the original one. In the same way, the characteristics of avidyā will be presented upon the reflected image, namely, the soul and not in the original, namely, Brahman."3

Whatever may be the mode through which the nature of the

1 Bh. p. 8, 2 SLS. p. 95, 3 Bh. p. 623.
soul is explained, one point is common and it is that the soul is only a blend of pure consciousness, avidya and mind. It is on the sentient element of consciousness, the characteristics of the mind such as agency, etc., are falsely presented.

2. The Soul – The Agent of Actions

The Sāṅkhya school maintains that intellect (buddhi) is the agent and not the soul. The latter is only an enjoyer (bhokta) in the sense that it is reflected in the modes of intellect. Agency is present in the buddhi only and it is taken to be present in the soul owing to non-discrimination between the soul and the intellect. There does not exist agency in the soul. It is the case of akhyāti – absence of discrimination between the soul and the buddhi. As a result, the usage ‘I am an agent’ involves a reference to the soul as an agent only in a figurative sense like the usage ‘Devadatta is a lion’. The Upaniṣadic texts – ‘The self is supra-relational’ (Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4–3–15) and the like convey the soul to be free from agency, etc.

The Pūrva-māṁśā school rejects the view set forth in the above paragraph. Jaimini in his Pūrva-māṁśā-sūtra (3–7–18): śāstraphalam prayoktari tallakṣaṇatvāt affirms that the soul is the agent of actions. This aphorism means that the fruit conveyed by the injunctive texts (śāstraphalam) belongs to the agent of the sacrifice (prayoktari). It is because the injunctive text would give rise to the knowledge of the means of the fruit which the agent of the sacrifice experiences (tallakṣaṇatvāt). From this the view that emerges is that the soul is the agent of actions. If the buddhi is the agent of actions then the fruit of actions would pertain only to it and not to the soul and so the import of the aphorism cited above would be contradicted.

The author of the Brahma-sūtra too affirms that the soul
is the agent of actions. In the aphorism

_karta dāstrārthavalvat_ (2-3-33)

he states that the Vedic texts such as 'One should perform agnihotra' and the like would become significant only would the soul is an agent. If it were not so, then the above Vedic texts would become purportless.

Further the experiences such as 'I go', 'I eat', etc., point to the fact that the soul is an agent in respect of actions like going, eating, etc.1

On these grounds it must be held that the soul is the agent of actions. Now we have to discuss the question whether agency on the part of soul is real or indeterminable. In other words, is it intrinsic to the soul or extrinsic to it? The Advaitin holds the view that agency is indeterminable in the case of the soul.

3. Agency — Indeterminable in the case of the soul

Sri Śaṅkara prefaces his commentary on the _Brahma-Sūtra_ with an exposition of super-imposition of mind and its characteristics upon Brahman and Brahman and its nature on the mind. The author of the _Brahma-sūtra_, however, does not state the concept of superimposition explicitly; yet, he should be taken to presume it. It is thus: the first aphorism of the _Brahma-sūtra_ 'aśhato brahmajijnāsā' enjoins the inquiry into the nature of Brahman with reference to the soul. The fruit of enquiry is the direct knowledge of the subject that is inquired into. Knowledge, however, is not an end in itself. Its fruit is to remove ignorance. In the present case since inquiry into the nature of Brahman resulting in the direct knowledge of the latter is enjoined with reference to the soul, the knowledge of Brahman must have a definite impact upon the soul. Since knowledge cannot remove anything excepting ignorance or avidyā and its products, it must be held that the

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1 ESB. 2-3-33
knowledge of Brahman removes agency, etc., on the part of the soul. Further, since by the knowledge of something else, ignorance relating to some other factor cannot be removed and since in the present case, the author of the Brahma-sūtra affirms that by the knowledge of Brahman ignorance relating to the soul is removed, it is implied that the soul is identical with Brahman. And agency, etc., which are removed by the knowledge of Brahman must be illusorily presented by avidyā upon Brahman. This illusory presentation of agency, etc., upon Brahman would not be possible unless there is the identification of mind with Brahman. It is because agency, etc., are only the characteristics of the mind. Hence it must be admitted that there is identification of mind with Brahman. The former is inert, the latter is sentient and so there cannot be any real identification between the two. There could only be a false identification between the two and it must be caused by avidyā. Thus the characteristics of mind such as agency, etc., are illusorily presented upon Brahman which thereby attains to the state of the soul. The knowledge of Brahman would remove avidyā, mind and its characteristics presented upon Brahman. The latter would remain as Pure Being which is liberation. Thus the first aphorism of the Brahma-sūtra implies the theory of the false presentation of agency, etc., which are the characteristics of mind upon Brahman which has attained to the state of the soul. In other words the soul is Brahman with agency, etc., therefore are indeterminable.

It emerges from the above that Brahman itself attains to the state of the soul when associated with mind. And in the soul which is essentially identical with the soul, the characteristics of the mind such as agency, enjoyership, finitude, etc., are superimposed. The association of mind to Brahman is brought about by avidyā. And so the characteristics of the mind presented in the soul which is identical with Brahman
too must be illusory or indeterminable. The Kaṭhopaniśad(3.4) in its passage—

ātmendriyamanyuktāṁ bhoktetyāhurmanisīīnāṁ

emphasizes the fact by stating that Brahman itself when associated with body, mind and senses is viewed as an experient by the wise ones.

The Brhadāraṇyakopaniśad text (2-4-14)—

yatra hi dvaitamiva bhavati taṣṭitara
itaram jighrati taṣṭitara itaram paśyati

uses the expression as it were and states that duality is illusory and it is only in the realm of avidyā there arises the characteristics of agency, enjoyership, etc., on the part of the soul. The same Upaniṣad in the next passage—

yatra vā asya sarvam śmaivābhūt
tat kim kena jighret kena kam paśyet

states that when everything has become the self whom one could see and through what means. According to this text, when one is liberated there is the absence of agency, enjoyership, etc. Liberation is only Brahman free from any relation to avidyā. It is agency, etc., are negated by the Upaniṣad. Hence Brahman which is spoken of as identical with the soul in the texts such as tat tvam asi cannot be taken as agent. On the other hand, the soul must be taken as not having agency, really.

In the same way, another text of the Brhadāraṇyaka states that the soul being an agent and experient is exhausted in the waking and the dream state and it passes on to the deep sleep state where it becomes free from any pain that would arise out of its being an agent, etc. And that text (4-3-19) is: ‘just as a falcon roaming in the sky becomes tired, folds its wings and hastens to its nest, so does this self hasten to this state of deep sleep where falling asleep, it cherishes no more desires and has no more dreams.’ In this
state, the individual soul is associated with avidya but free from agency, etc. — the characteristics of mind — as this state is free from mind. The Upaniṣad states 'That really is its true form' (Bṛh Up. 4-3-21) and concludes by saying 'That is the highest goal' (Bṛh. Up. 4-3-32). The characteristics of being an agent, etc., are found in the soul in the waking and dream states because the soul then is in relation to mind. These characteristics are not found in the soul in the state of sleep because the soul is not related to mind then, as the mind provisionally merges in avidya.

So far the account given in the Upaniṣad-s in regard to the nature of agency. The author of the Brahma-sūtra confirms the view that agency is indeterminable on the part of the soul in the aphorism —

*yathā ca takṣobhayata* (2-340)

This sūtra uses the analogy of a carpenter who is viewed as an agent when he uses tools and lumber and as a non-agent when he does not use them to explains agency as well as non-agency spoken of with reference to the soul in the Upaniṣad-s. A carpenter when he works with his tools is an agent and he feels pain on account of doing work. And the same carpenter when he does not work with his tools is a non-agent and he does not experience pain that may arise by doing work. In the same way, the soul when it is associated with mind in the waking and the dream state is an agent. And in sleep, the soul which is free from association with mind is no longer an agent. It follows that the soul is an agent when the mind is operative and it remains a non-agent when the mind ceases to function. Hence agency on the part of the soul is due to association with mind and is not natural to it. The Upaniṣad-s and the Pūrva-māṃsā-sūtra which are cited in favour of the view that the soul is an agent affirm so. But they are to be taken as referring to the soul having agency, etc., brought about by the false association with mind.
We have already said that in the state of deep sleep there is no manifestation of the soul as ‘I’ because mind provisionally merges in avidyā. The concept of ‘I’ is not the pure consciousness but only the latter as associated with mind. In the state of liberation too, the cognition of ‘I’ is not present as the mind ceases to exist then. Sri Śaṅkara in his commentary on the Brahma-sūtra (2-3-30) states:

“As long as the jīva is associated with the adjunct-mind, so long only is the jīva a jīva. In reality, however there is nothing like jīva-hood apart from what is fancied to be such by reason of this adjunct.”

He proceeds to point out:

“This relation of Brahma with mind has but avidyā as its source, and this avidyā cannot be removed by anything apart from the direct knowledge of Brahma. The relation of Brahma would not cease so long as the soul is not realized as identical with Brahma.

To sum up: the soul according to Advaita is Brahma associated with the characteristics such as agency, etc., that are presented upon it by its association with mind. The latter is brought about by avidyā. The soul, therefore, is a blend of pure consciousness and mind. It alone is the content of ‘I’. There is no cognition of ‘I’ either in the state of deep sleep or in that liberation. In the former mind provisionally merges in avidyā while in the latter it is totally removed by the knowledge of Brahma.

The Viśīṣṭādvaita View:

Sri Rāmānuja does not favour the view of the Advaita that the soul is the same as Brahma with the characteristics like agency, etc., falsely presented upon the latter by its association with mind through avidyā. He argues that the Advaita’s contention that the mind possesses agency, etc., which are then falsely presented upon Brahma is wrong on the ground that mind being an insentient entity cannot have
agency, etc., as its characteristics. As a result there cannot be the transference of agency, etc., to Brahman.¹

The Advaitin, however, argues that the characteristics of being a knower, an agent and an experiencer do not exist either in the pure consciousness, namely, Brahman or in mind. But when the mind receives the reflection of Brahman in it, it acquires the above characteristics and then transfers them upon Brahman.

Śrī Rāmānuja argues that the above contention is wrong. The consciousness which is self-luminous cannot be revealed by mind which is insentient. In this connection Śrī Rāmānuja cites a verse from the Ātmasiddhi of Yāmuna which is as follows:

śāntāṃgra iva ṣādiyam ohāṅkaro jaṅkchina
svayamśyotiṣam uteṇam vyanakiti na yuktimat

This text means: just as a charcoal is not capable of reflecting the sun, in the same way the mind which is inert cannot reveal the self-luminous consciousness.

Further if the pure consciousness is admitted to be manifested or revealed by the mind, then it must be held that it is not self-luminous in nature like pot, etc.

Śrī Rāmānuja then asks as to what exactly is meant when the Advaitin says that the pure consciousness is manifested by mind. Is it origination of the pure consciousness, or is it mere illumination? To either of the views there are difficulties. Since consciousness is eternal, it cannot be originated. And since it cannot come within the range of any cognition it cannot be illuminated too.²

The Advaitin has said that in the state of deep sleep the soul is not manifested in the form of ‘I’ in view of the fact that mind provisionally merges in avidyā. Hence the soul which is the content of the cognition ‘I’ must be a blend of pure consciousness and mind.

¹ Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 41
² Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 41-42
Sri Ramanuja argues that there is definitely the cognition of 'I' in the state of deep sleep. This cognition does not involve any reference to the mind. Its content is the soul as such. He who comes back to the waking state has the recollection 'I did not know anything when I was asleep'. Recollection always presupposes experience. Since the above recollection involves reference to the 'I', it goes without saying that there has been the experience of 'I' in the state of deep sleep too. The latter, however, is characterised by the absence of the functioning of mind. Even then there is the manifestation of 'I'. It follows then that the content of 'I' is the soul as such not involving any relation of mind.  

The Advaitin contends that in the state of deep sleep there is the non-recognition of one's soul. It is thus: one comes back to the waking state has the recollection 'I did not know even myself in the state of sleep' (mamapi aham na jnatavan). This shows that the soul which is the content of 'I' is not manifested in the state of deep sleep.

Sri Ramanuja rejects the above contention thus: the corresponding expression of one's recollection after coming back to the waking state from that of deep sleep is 'aham mam na jnatavan'. The meaning of the word mam is the soul who is associated with body belonging to a particular class of life, etc. The meaning of the aham is the soul which experiences the deep sleep state and which is devoid of any cognition of its association with body, etc. Hence the significance of the expression and the corresponding experience in the form aham mam na jnatavan is only the absence of the knowledge that the soul is associated with a particular body, etc. What Sri Ramanuja wants to emphasize is that in the state of deep of sleep, the soul is

1 Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 44
manifested. Otherwise there cannot be the recollection of it in the form ‘I did not know anything when I was asleep’ after one comes back to the waking state. But in the deep sleep state the soul is not manifested as associated with body, etc., as in the waking state. Since in the deep sleep state there is the manifestation of soul even in the absence of mind, the conception of soul does not involve within itself the element of mind. In other words, the soul is not a blend of the pure consciousness and mind as the Advaitin thinks. It is the content of ‘I’.

The Advaitin holds that in the state of liberation the soul as such does not exist. It is because the soul is Brahman as associated with mind. This association is due to avidya. And when avidya is removed, mind too is removed and the so-called soul ceases to be a soul. It remains as Brahman. The point that is of importance here is that in the state of liberation there cannot be the cognition ‘I’ whose content is the blend of Brahman and mind.

Śrī Rāmānuja who has rejected the view that the soul is a blend of Brahman and mind argues that if the soul which is the content of ‘I’ does not persist in the state of liberation, then the latter must be characterized as one involving the total destruction of the soul with reference to whom the Upaniṣad-s prescribes the means to liberation. The Taittiriya (2-1-1) text —

soteṣu sampan kāmān saha, brahmaṇā vipāściteti
which states that the released soul attains all auspicious qualities along with the omniscient God implicis that the soul retains its individuality in the state of liberation too.

To sum up this part of the discussion: the soul is the content of ‘I’; it is not a blend of the pure consciousness and mind as the Advaitin thinks. The soul is manifested

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1 Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 44
in the state of deep sleep and also in that of liberation.

Having thus rejected the view of the Advaitin regarding the nature of the soul, Śri Rāmānuja explains his view. According to him, the soul is as real as God and it is different from the latter. The Mādhvanātha recension of the Bhadāranīyaka (2-7-22) text —

\[
yah ātmani tiṣṭhān ātmāntaroḥ
yah ātmā na veda ātmā sariram
yah ātmānam antaro yamayati sa te
ātmā antaryami amṛtāḥ
\]

states that God is the indwelling self of the soul. He resides in the latter and is immanent in it. The soul is not aware of Him. To Him the soul is the body and He controls the soul from within. It follows that the soul is the body of God. The significance of the term ‘body’ is explained in the passage — yah ātmānam antaro yamayati which means that God controls the soul from within. Thus when the soul is said to be the body of God what is meant is that is supported and controlled by God and that it exists solely for the fulfilment of the purposes of God. It is in this sense Śri Sudarśana Suri understands the term ‘body’.

The soul is essentially a knower and is not mere knowledge. This view is in sharp contrast to the view of the Advaitin that the soul is of the nature of knowledge and it acquires the characteristic of being a knower by its association with mind — the association that is brought about by avidyā. The Upaniṣads declare the soul to be a knower both in the state of bondage and freedom. The Chāndogya (8-12-4) text —

\[
ātha yo veda idam jighṛṣṇītī sa ātmā
\]

states that he who knows ‘I smell this’ is the soul. The text of the Praṇāpaniṣad (4-9) —

\[
esa hi draṣṭā śrotā ghrātā rasayitā mantā
buddhā kartā viññānātmā puruṣaḥ
\]

1 SP. p. 272
specifies that the soul is the knower. The above two texts speak of the soul as a knower in the state of bondage. The text (Chāndogya Up. 8-12-4) —

manasaiva etān kāmān paśyan ramate ya ete brahma-loke

which states that the released soul sees the objects of his desire by mind and reveals in them implies that the soul is a knower in the state of release too.

It might be said that the Brhadāraṇyaka (4-5-23) text —

na pretya samjñāasti

states that in the state of release there is no knowledge at all on the part of the soul.

Śrī Rāmānuja argues that the above text does not mean that there is no knowledge in the state of release, but it only means that the soul does not remember the body it had in the state of bondage.¹

So far it has been shown that the soul is a knower. Now it is argued that if the soul is a knower, it being all-pervading there will be cognition at all places and at all times.²

The author of the Brahma-sūtra and following him, Śrī Rāmānuja state that the soul is atomic in size. The Brhadāraṇyaka (4-4-2) text —

eṣa atma niṣkrāmati cakṣuso vā mūrdhno vā

anyebhyo vā sarira deśebhyaḥ

states the ascent of the soul from the body to the other world. In the same way, the text of the Kauśitakya-paniṣad (1-2) —

ye vai keca asmāt lokāt prayanti candra-

masameva te sarve gacchanti

declares the movement of the soul from this world to the world of the moon after the fall of its body. The Brhadāraṇ-

yaka (4-4-6) text —

¹ ² Śrī Bh., Vol. II, p. 140
tasmāt lokāt punaḥ etya asmai lokāya karmaye
states that the soul returns to this world to perform karma.

Thus the above Upaniṣadic texts speak of the soul’s
passing out of the body, going to the other world and returning
from there. These functions on the part of the soul
imply that the soul is atomic and not all-pervading as an all-
pervading entity cannot have the functions of passing out of
the body, etc.

It might be said that the soul is not atomic as the
scriptures declares it otherwise. The Bhadāranyaka upaniṣad
in the text (3-4-7) —

yo’yaḥ vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu
introduces the soul as the subject-matter and subsequently
declares in the text (4-4-22) —

sa vā eṣa mahān aja ātma
that the soul is all-pervading. Hence the view that the soul
is atomic in size is not sound.

Śrī Rāmānuja states that the author of the Brahma-
sūtra (2-3-22) in the aphorism —

nā añuḥ atacchurteriti cet na, itarādhikārāt
rejects the view that the soul is all-pervasive. According to
this aphorism, the self referred to in the Bhadāranyaka text
(4-4-22) — sa vā eṣa mahān aja ātma
is not the soul; but it is the supreme God. It is because it
is the latter that is introduced as the subject of discussion in
the text (4-4-13) — yasya anuvitataḥ pratibuddhaḥ ātma
This text means that God who is the self of the soul remained
unknown but later on realized. And it is God who is referred
to as all-pervasive in the text — mahān aja ātma.

Śrī Rāmānuja further states that the Muṇḍaka text
(3-1-9) — eṣaḥ añuḥ ātma cetasa veditavyah
directly states that the soul is atomic in size. Further the Svetasvatara (5-9) text—

valagrasataabhagasya satadha kalpitasya ca,

bhugo jivah sa vijheyaḥ

which means that the soul is to be known as a part of the hundredth part of the tip of a hair divided a hundred times shows that the soul is of infinitesimal measure.

The soul, though atomic in size, has no difficulty in experiencing sensations throughout the body with the aid of its variable accompaniment, namely, dharmabhūta-jñāna or attributive consciousness. As a light placed in a corner of the room illumines the whole room, so the dharmabhūta-jñāna of the soul that is atomic pervades the whole body and thus experiences pleasure and pain throughout the body.¹

The dharmabhūta-jñāna in the case of the soul is contracted owing to the past karma of the latter. The past karma is referred to by the term avidyā in the Viṣṇupurāṇa text (6.7.60) - avidyā karmasamjña. Consequently, the soul identify itself with the body-mind complex and undergoes transmigration. In the state of liberation, past karma is removed and the dharmabhūtajñāna expands to the maximum. The soul whose innate nature of infinite knowledge and bliss remained concealed because of the contraction of the dharmabhūtajñāna during phenomenal existence would not manifest in its full glory.²

The term dharmabhūtajñāna or attributive consciousness implies the existence of substantive consciousness. This means that the quality of knowledge constitutes the essence of the soul and the latter is designated as of the nature of knowledge. Śrī Rāmānuja emphasizes this fact in his commentary on the Brahma-sūtra (2.3.29) —

tadguṇasāravat tadvyapadesāh prajñāvat

¹ Śrī Bh., Vol. II, p. 143
² VS., p. 79
Thus we have two sets of Upaniṣadic texts—one proclaiming that the soul is of the nature of knowledge and the other affirming that the soul is the knower or the substratum of knowledge. The Brhadāraṇyaka (4-3-7) text—

yo’yaṁ vijnānamayoḥ praṇesu hydyant arjyotiḥ puruṣah—which speaks of the soul as of the nature of knowledge must be understood in the sense that knowledge which is the essential quality of the soul is referred to as the essence of it. Śrī Rāmānuja explains this on the basis of an analogy. Earth which has smell as its essential quality is spoken of as the essence of smell. In the same way, the soul having knowledge as its essential quality is spoken of as of the nature of consciousness in the texts like the one above. At the same time, another text of the Brhadāraṇyaka (4-3-30)—

na hi vijnāteḥ vijnāteḥ vijnāteḥ viparilopu vidyate—which states that the knowledge of the knower is never lost makes a specific mention of the distinction between ‘knowledge’ and its ‘knower’. The aphorism of the Brahma-sūtra (2-3-28)—prśhagupadesat emphasizes this position.

It comes to this: the soul is of the essence of knowledge and at the same time it has attributive consciousness.

The Upaniṣad-s make a distinction between the nature of Brahman (God) and that of the soul. God is the controller (niyānta) and the soul is the controlled (niyāmya). The God is omniscient (sarvajña) while the soul is endowed with fragmentary knowledge (kīnijña). And, yet the soul is treated to be an anāta or part of God in the sense that it is the part of a complex whole and not in the sense that it is the part of the self-same object. We have said in the previous chapter that God is a complex whole having the sentient soul and the insentient world as His modes (prakāra). The mode, namely, the soul is an anāta of the complex whole (vīśīkaparāranya). A complex whole consists of the prakāra or vīśīkapara
Advaïta and Viśistadvaita

— the adjectival part and the praśāsi or the viśega — the substantive part. And we cannot make any distinction between the viṣeṣaṇāṁśa and the viṣeṣyaṁśa. On the basis of this viṣeṣaṇa-viṣeṣya-bhūva it is possible to justify all reference to the soul as an aṁśa of God.¹

The soul must be admitted to be an agent; for, otherwise the scriptural injunctions prescribing sacrificial duties and meditation for the attainment of heaven and liberation would become non-significant. But the agency which is real on the part of the soul is dependent upon God; for, the Taṁtiṁya Āraṇyaka text (3-11-10) — antah praviṣṭaḥ śāsa janānām states that God — the self of all; residing within all the souls controls them.

It might be said that if the soul were really an agent, then since the instruments of action are always present there would result eternal activity on the part of the soul.

The aphorism —

yathā ca takṣobhayathā (Brahma-sūtra 2.3.39) refutes the above contention. This aphorism means that although the soul possesses the instruments of action always, yet it is sometimes active and at other times not as it pleases it. In this regard, it is similar to a carpenter who possessing the instruments may or may not be active according to his desire.²

To sum up: the soul is different from God and yet is inseparable from it. It constitutes the body of God and is inseparable from it. It is really an agent and a knower. The characteristics of agency, knowership, etc., are not indeterminable in its case as the Advaitin thinks. The soul is atomic in size and through its invariable accompaniment—the dharma-bhūtajñāna it experiences the sensations throughout the body. The dharma-bhūtajñāna is contracted during mundane life going to the past karma of the soul which is known as avidyā.

CHAPTER IV
THE WORLD

Introduction

The world according to Advaita is non-real or indeterminable either as real or as an absolute nothing. It is an appearance of Brahma through avidyā. The theory that explains the appearance of Brahman in the form of the world is known as vivartavāda or the theory transfiguration. According to this theory, the cause appears as the effect without itself undergoing any change whatsoever. Brahman, being the substratum of avidyā whose transformation is the world, is viewed as the transfigurative material cause (vivartopādāna) of the latter.

The Advaitin’s theory of causation known as vivartavāda proceeds on the basis of the criticism of the theories of causation admitted by the schools of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya. The former school subscribes to the theory of asatkāryavāda or ārāṃbhavāda, while the latter, to the theory of satkāryavāda or parināmavāda. We shall deal with these two theories now.

(a) The Asatkāryavāda of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika

According to this theory, the effect is non-existent in its cause prior to its creation. It is by the causal opera-
of the efficient cause, like the viewer, the effect, namely, the cloth which is non-existent prior to its production comes into existence through the relation known as samavāya or inherence over and above its cause, namely, the threads. Since the effect is a de novo creation according to this theory, the latter is known as ārāṃbhavāda.

The above theory is wrong on two grounds. In the first place, not all effects come from a given cause but only such effects as pre-exist in the cause. Pot comes into existence only from clay and not from threads. This forces us into the conclusion that the effect must pre-exist in its cause.
In the second place, if the effect is totally non-existent before it is produced, then it is similar to an absolute nothing like a flower sprung from the sky and hence it cannot be produced on any account. Hence the theory that what is created is non-existent in its cause prior to its production does not stand to reason.\(^1\)

(b) The Sākhyavāda of the Sāṅkhya

According to this theory, the effect pre-exists in its cause so that cause and effect are in some sense identical. The product is nothing else than the material of which it is composed. According to this theory, the things of the world are looked upon as the result, not of new creation, but of transformation within the cause.

It might be objected that if the effect pre-exists in the cause, then, as it is existent, it need not be and cannot be produced and so causal operation becomes futile. To overcome this objection, the Sāṅkhya school argues that the effect prior to its creation exists in a latent form in the cause and the causal operation makes it gross. Hence causal operation is absolutely essential and not futile.

The above contention is wrong. It is because when it is said that the causal operation manifests what is latent into a gross form, then it could do so, either by eliminating certain unwanted features or by adding some desired ones. The latter are existent according to the fundamental tenet of the Sāṅkhya system. Hence they can neither be eliminated nor be added. Hence causal operation is futile.

It follows from the above that if the effect is not existent in its cause before its production, then it cannot be created because it is non-existent. A non-existent entity like a flower sprung from the sky cannot be produced. In order to obviate this difficulty if it is admitted that the

\(^1\) Sri Bh., Vol. II, p. 24
effect is existent in its cause before it is produced, then also it cannot be produced because it is existent. An existent entity cannot and need not be produced as it is already existent. Thus the theories of causation admitted by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Saṅkhya are untenable.¹

(c) The Vivartavāda of the Advaitin

According to this theory the cause appears as the effect without itself undergoing any change. Brahman without being affected in any manner whatsoever appears as the world. The principle that accounts for the appearance of Brahman as the world is avidyā which is present in Brahman and which thereby conceals its true nature. Brahman is admitted to be the transfigurative material cause (vivartopādāna) of the world in the sense that it serves as the substratum of avidyā and its effect—the world. The world is only the vivarta of Brahman.

The concept of vivarta can be well understood in relation to the concept of pariṇāma. Pariṇāma is that which possesses the same characteristic as that of the material cause. And vivarta is that which has the characteristic that is different from the one that is possessed by the material cause. When viewed in this light, avidyā and the world have the common characteristic of jādyā or insentience. Hence the world is the pariṇāma or transformation of avidyā and the latter is the pariṇāma yuṣpādāna or the transformative material cause of the world. Brahman is the substratum of avidyā whose transformation is the world. The characteristic that is present in the world is jādyā and the one that is present in Brahman is citrā. Thus the world and Brahman possess different characteristics. And so the world is considered to be the vivarta of Brahman and the latter is said to be the vivartopādāna of the world. It must be noted here that

¹ Sri Bh., Vol. II, p. 24–25
Brahman is spoken of as the vivartopādāna of the world: in the sense that it is the substratum of avidyā whose transformation is the world. And Brahman does not undergo any change whatsoever. This theory which explains that Brahman remains as the substratum without undergoing any change is known as the vivartavāda.¹

We have to maintain that avidyā is the pariṣāmyupādāna and Brahman is the vivartopādāna of the world in order to have no contradiction between two sets of Upaniṣadic texts, one stating Brahman as the material cause and the other referring to avidyā to be so. The Taittiriya text (3-1) —

‘That from which the world arises, from which it derives its existence and manifestation and into which it lapses back at the time of dissolution — seek to know That; That is Brahman’.²

speaks of Brahman as the material cause of the world. But there are other Upaniṣadic texts which convey that Brahman is supra-relational,³ unattached,⁴ partless and actionless,⁵ precluding the possibility of viewing it as the material cause of the world. To resolve this apparent contradiction between the two sets of the Upaniṣadic texts, the Svetāsvatara text (4-10) — ‘Know māya (avidyā) to be the material cause and Brahman as the substratum of avidyā.’ introduces the principle of avidyā or māya. Brahman although partless, yet as associated with avidyā is viewed as the material cause of the world.

Now there arises a contradiction between the Taittiriya text and the Svetāsvatara text referred to above as according to the former the material cause of the world is Brahman, while according to the latter, it is avidyā. And this contradiction must be resolved by admitting that Brahman is the

¹ *Sri Bh., Vol. II, p. 25*  
² *Bṛh Up., 4-3-15*  
³ *Bṛh. Up., 4-4-22*  
⁴ *Svet. Up., 6-1-9*
vivartopādana of the world and avidyā is the pariṣamyupādana of it.

Brahman must be admitted to be the efficient cause of the world too. An efficient cause is the one who has the desire to create an object and who reflects upon the creation of that object. The Taittiriya text (2-6) —

so'kāmayata bahusyām prajāveveti sa tapo tapyata
which states that Brahman desired to become many and considered the process of creation, attributes desire and reflection on the part of Brahman associated with avidyā. In the cause of the soul, desire and reflection are the modifications of mind — its limiting adjunct. In the case of Brahman, these are the modifications of avidyā — its limiting adjunct. Hence Brahman associated with avidyā possesses desire and reflection and it is the efficient cause of the world.

Further, Brahman must be admitted to be the efficient cause of the world on the ground that the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (6-2-1) states that prior to the creation of the world there existed nothing apart from Brahman that is associated with avidyā. Hence nothing apart from Brahman could be considered as the efficient cause of the world.

The world is indeterminable or mithyā either as sat or asat. Sat is that which is not sublatable in the three divisions of time — past, present and future. Asat is that which is not capable of being perceived as existent at any time. The world according to the Upaniṣad 1 is sublated by the direct knowledge of Brahman. Hence it is not sat. It is given in perceptual cognition as existent and so it is not asat or an absolute nothing. It cannot be both and hence it is characterised as mithyā or indeterminable. It is also designated as anirvacaniya.

1 Chān. Up., (7-1-3)
The Advaitin argues that an analysis of the promissory statements in the Upaniṣad-s confirm the view that the world is mithyā. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (6-1-3), we have the following promissory statement: “Have you ever sought after that principle which could be known only through instruction and by knowing which that is not heard will become heard, that which is not deliberated will become deliberated and that which is not ascertained will become ascertained.” Thus this promissory statement conveys that by the knowledge of Brahman there would result the knowledge of everything.

The question that suggests itself at this stage is: how could there arise the knowledge of everything by the knowledge of Brahman? It is answered that Brahman is the cause of the world and the knowledge of the causal principle would result in the knowledge of the effect. This point is explained in the Upaniṣad on the basis of the illustrative example of the knowledge of the effect such as pot, jar, etc., that results from the knowledge of the cause, namely, the clay. The text of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (6-1-4) is:

\[\text{yatha saumya ekena mṛtipiṇḍena}
\text{sarvam mṛṇmayam vijñātām syāt}
\text{vācārambhāṇam vikāro nāmadheyaṃ}
\text{mṛttiketyeva satyam}\]

This text states that pot - the effect is merely referred to in the expressions such as ‘The pot exists’. It is not real. It is thus: we have thus the expression mṛdghaśaḥ. The words mṛd and ghaśaḥ are in appositional relation to each other. It is because they have similar case-erdsins and are juxtaposed to each other. This appositional relation between the two words would not hold good if the senses of the two words are totally different from or identical with each other. Never do we have the words aśva and mahīṣa or ghaśa and ghaśa used in appositional relation to each other. From this it
The World

follows that pot is neither identical with nor different from clay. It is indeterminable. It falsely appears in the consciousness conditioned by the clay. This is what is meant when it is said \textit{vācārambhānam vikāraḥ}.

Like pot, the difference between the cause and effect noticed in the verbal usage ‘The pot has come into existence from the clay’ is indeterminable. This is the significance of the word \textit{nāmadheya} in the Upaniṣadic text cited above.

The Upaniṣad further states that it is clay alone that is real (\textit{mṛttiketyeva satyam}). This is as it should be; for, the clay exists prior to the origination pot, at the time of the existence of pot and also after the destruction of pot. The import of the whole text, therefore, is that the causal factor alone is real and the effect is \textit{anirvacaniya} or indeterminable.

It must be noted here that the text \textit{mṛttiketyeva satyam} refers to the reality of the cause - clay as an example for the reality of the cause of the world, namely, Brahman. It is because the clay too when compared to Brahman is an effect and hence indeterminable.\(^1\)

Being \textit{anirvacaniya}, the pot has no independent existence apart from its cause, namely, the clay. The world too being an effect does not have any independent existence apart from its cause, namely, Brahman. And the knowledge of the cause would result in the knowledge of the effect. The latter is of the form that the true nature of the effect is the cause only.

It comes to this that the validity of the promissory statement could be maintained only if we admit that the effect has no independent existence apart from Brahman - its cause and so indeterminable or \textit{mithya}.

It may be added here that we have a similar promissory statement in the \textit{Bhadāranyakopaniṣad} (4–5–6) wherein Yajñavalkya instructs Maitreya that by knowing Brahman

\(^{1}\) \textit{Ka.}, pp. 48, 49
through Vedantic study, reflection and meditation everything else will become known. And this text should also be interpreted in the above light.

The Chāndogya texts—sarvam kholu idam brahma (3.14.1) and cittadāmyam idam sarvam (6.9.4), the Brhadāraṇyaka text (2.4.6) idam sarvam yada yaṁ matā and the Mṛgāka text (2.2.11) brahmaivedam viśvam state that the entire world given in perception is Brahman or Ātman. These texts should not be interpreted as conveying the identity between the world and Brahman under the mistaken notion that the words idam sarvam or idam viśvam and Brahman or Ātman are in appositional relation to each other. It is because there cannot be any identity between the world which is inert and Brahman which is sentient. Hence the appositional relation that exists between the above words must be taken in the view of bādha or sublation. The import of the above statements, therefore, is that Brahman is that wherein there is the absence of the world.

The Brhadāraṇyaka text (2.3.6) —

"There are only two factors which define Brahman; and, they are those which possess form, namely, earth, water and fire, and those which do not possess form, namely, air and other."

confirms the existence of the world in Brahman only. Further the same Upaniṣad in its text — ‘Not this, not this’ declares the non-existence of the world in Brahman. Thus the above Brhadāraṇyaka text by precluding the possibility of viewing the world as existing elsewhere than in Brahman and later by negating the existence of the world in Brahman give us the knowledge that the world is non-real or indeterminable.

The Advaita explains the nature of the world on the analogy of silver that appears in a shell. The shell—silver is

1 PP., p. 118
not real as it is sublated later on by the cognition 'This is only shell'. It is not an absolute nothing as it is presented in the cognition of the form 'This is silver'. It cannot be real and an absolute nothing at once; for, it is a discrepant notion. Hence it is indeterminable or anirvacaniya. The theory that explains the erroneous cognition of silver is known as anirvacaniyakhyāti. This may be explained as follows:

The Theory of Error — Anirvacaniyakhyāti:

when a defective sense of sight comes into contact with the shell in front, there arises the cognition of the object in the form 'this' and not as shell. In other words there arises the cognition of the general nature of the shell and not the specific aspect of it. Then, owing to the latent impression of silver which is revived on account of the perception of the glitter — aspect and which is aided by imperfect vision, the ignorance present in the consciousness conditioned by the 'this-element' undergoes transformation into an object of the form of silver and into an apparent cognition of silver of the form 'This is silver'. The latter is a cognitive modification of avidyā. The Advaitins regard erroneous cognition as a complex consisting of two cognitive factors, one of them being a mode of mind in the form 'this' and the other being a mode of ignorance in the form 'This is silver'. The content of erroneous cognition, namely, silver is not real as it is sublated later on; nor is it an absolute nothing as it is presented in a cognition. Hence it is indeterminable or anirvacaniya. This being so, the theory that explains the nature of error, according to Advaita, is known as anirvacaniyakhyāti.

The Practical Efficiency of the Illusory:

The world being an appearance of Brahman is indeterminable or illusory. Now the question arises whether an

1 VP., p. 118
Illusory object can be adapted to practical needs of life. Never indeed does a shell-silver have practical efficiency as is appropriate to the well-known silver. When viewed in this light, scripture too which forms part of the world is illusory and so it cannot have practical efficiency in the form of conveying the ultimate reality.

Sri Śaṅkara in his commentary on the Brahma-sūtra (2.1.14) — tadanyatvam arambhaṇasabdādibhyah states that the author of the Brahma-sūtra propounds the theory that the world is an appearance of Brahman and so is illusory from the standpoint of the ultimate reality. He further states that till there arises the knowledge of Brahman, the world is treated to be real and the ordinary course of sacred and secular activities would go on undisturbed. This is similar to the phantoms of a dream which are considered to be true till the sleeper awakes.¹

The point that is of importance here is that just as the objects of the dream state are real as long as the sleeper is in that state, in the same way the objects of the waking state too are real as long as the individual soul is in the realm of avidyā. And just as the objects of the dream state are known to be non-real only when the sleeper comes back to the waking state, in the same way, the objects of the waking state too will be known as non-real only when the soul wakes back to reality at the dawn of the direct knowledge of Brahman.

It must be noted here that the silver seen in dream does have practical efficiency as is appropriate to the well-known silver. But the silver that appears in a shell during the waking state does not have such a practical efficiency. It is because the silver in the latter case is destroyed in the waking state itself the moment its

¹ BS., 1-4-23
substrate is known specifically. The silver seen in dream is not destroyed in the state of dream itself. That is why it does have such practical efficiency in the dream state as is appropriate to well-known silver in the waking state. It follows that the objects of the world although indeterminable or illusory can have practical efficiency.

To sum up:

The world is non-real or indeterminable either as real or as an absolute nothing. Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the world though māya or avidyā. The latter is the transformative material cause of the world. Brahman, by being the substratum of avidyā whose transformation is the world is the transfigurative material cause of the world. And, by being the substratum of the modes of avidyā, namely, the desire to create the world and reflection upon the process of creation, Brahman is viewed as the efficient cause of the world. The state of being the material and the efficient cause of the world being thus adventitious, the attributeless nature of Brahman is not contradicted. The objects of the world, although illusory, do have practical efficiency.

The Viśiṣṭadvaitic View:

Śrī Rāmānuja considers the world to be real and holds that the promissory statements found in the Upaniṣad s can satisfactorily be explained even by admitting the world to be real. He is of the view that the Advaitin maintains the theory that the world is indeterminable and is an appearance of Brahman in the wake of his basic position that the latter is attributeless. It has already been proved that the concept of Brahman as an attributeless entity is a pseudo one.

Śrī Rāmānuja advocates the view that prakṛti and the souls constitute the body of God and the latter is their self.
Prakṛti is considered to be lower in nature as it is insen-
tient, while the souls are regarded as higher in nature as
they are sentient. The prakṛti and the souls exist in a
subtle state devoid of distinctions of names and forms in
God during the period of dissolution.

In his commentary on the aphorisms —

(i) prakṛtiśca pratijñādṛśitāntānuparodhāt,¹
(ii) tadānanyatvam āraṃbhānapāsadabdādibhyoḥ,² and,
(iii) nāmāsruteh niyativācda tābhyaḥ³

Śrī Rāmānuja emphasizes that in the state of dissolution,
the souls and the prakṛti exist in such a subtle state that
they can hardly be said to exist at all. God at this stage
subsists as the cause. During creation, the prakṛti gets
itself modified into gross matter and evolves into various
forms like earth, water, fire, air, space, the senses, etc.
The soul too becomes associated with the physical body in
accordance with the past merits and demerits. At this
stage, God subsists as the effect by having the souls and
the world in their manifested form. According to Viśiṣṭā-
valta, cause is the substance that is characterized by a partic-
icular mode and the effect is the same substance characterized
by another mode. It comes to this that God associated with
the souls and the prakṛti in their subtle form is the cause and
God as associated with the souls and the prakṛti in their
gross form is the effect. And there is thus an identity
between the cause and the effect.

Śrī Rāmānuja further states that there is a difference
between the sentient souls and the insentient prakṛti in their
attainment of a new condition at the time of creation. The
prakṛti undergoes change in its essential nature and produces
the objects which serve as the field of enjoyment for the souls.
And the souls without undergoing any change in their

¹, ² & ³ BŚ., 1-4-23, 2-1-15 and 2-3-18 respectively.
essential nature attain expansion of their dharmabhūtajñāna as a result of their taking a new body which makes them fit for the enjoyment of the objects as a result of their past merits and demerits. The Taittiriya text (3-1-1) —

"From whence these beings are produced" states in a general way the origination of all beings—both sentient and insentient. This text which declares the origination of the soul must be taken to refer to the latter's taking a gross body and thereby having its dharmabhūtajñāna expanded. And the Kaṭhopaniṣad (1-2-18) passage—

"The soul is neither born, nor does it cease to exist" which denies origination in respect of the soul declares that there is no change in its essential nature.\(^1\)

Further, according to Śrī Rāmānuja, it is only prakṛt in its subtle form that is the direct cause of the world. The relation of the God to prakṛti is one of sarira-sariri-bhāva. God is the self of the prakṛti and the latter is the body of God. It is the body in the sense that it depends upon God and is controlled by Him. God is the self of the prakṛti in the sense that He is its controller. Thus Śrī Rāmānuja admits that God is the material cause of the world; and at the same time he holds that God does not undergo any change and He is the material cause only through prakṛti which actually undergoes change in the form of the world.

The Chāndogya text (6-2-1) —

\begin{quote}
\textit{sadeva saumya idam agra āsit}
\end{quote}

is intended to explicate the promissory statement that by knowing which everything else will become known. The

\(^{1}\text{Śrī Bh., Vol. II, p. 138}\)
word *agre* refers to the specific point of time, namely, the period prior to the creation of the world. The term *idam* refers to the world of sentient and insentient beings that is perceived. The expression *sadeva* states that the world consisting of the sentient souls and the insentient *prakṛti* remained in such a subtle form in God — *sat* that they can hardly be said to exist at all. In other words, the world remained in the form of *sat* only.¹

The complement of the above text —

*ekameva advitiyam*

states that *sat* or God is one only and apart from Him there is no other principle that could be considered as the efficient cause of the world.² Thus according to Śrī Rāmānuja this text denies the existence of any principle other than God.

We have already said that God is in His causal or effected state according as He has for His body matter and souls either in their subtle or gross state. The effect is as real as the cause and it is non-different from the latter. Hence the promissory statement that by the knowledge of one everything else will become known holds good. God has the souls and the *prakṛti* as His body. Since the body is inseparable from God, by knowing God there will result the knowledge of His body which consists of the entire world of the souls and the insentient matter.³

The Advaitin holds that the promissory statement in the *Upaniṣad*-s that by knowing Brahman everything else will become known could be satisfactorily explained only by admitting that every object of the world is an appearance of Brahman through *māyā* or *avidya* and it does not have any independent existence apart from Brahman. Hence it is illusory. Śrī Rāmānuja has, however, proved

¹ VS., p. 59  
² Sri Bh., Vol. II, p. 137-138
that the promissory statements could be explained even by admitting that the world is real.

The Čhāndogya text (6-1-4) —

\textit{vācārambhaṇāṁ viśāro nāmadheyam}

does not convey that the objects like pot, jar, etc., are illusory as the Advaitin thinks. It conveys this much: the same substance, clay, in a part of itself, becomes modified into a multitude of forms and conditions and acquires a multitude of names for serving different practical purposes. Even then these different products are nothing other than particular forms of clay. Hence the original substance — clay itself exists in these several conditions. The products are not entities other than clay. It is on this basis that it is affirmed that by knowing the lump of clay, all its varied configurations like pot, jar, etc., are known. Thus the illustrative examples of jar, pot, etc., do not go to prove that the world is illusory as is maintained by the Advaitin.\footnote{\textit{Sri Bh., Vol. II, p. 40}}

The Advaitin has said that the Čhāndogya texts —

\textit{sarvam khalu idam brahma} (3-14-2) and \textit{aitadātmyam idam sarvam} (6-9-4), the \textit{Bṛhadāraṇyaka} text (2-4-6) — \textit{idam sarvam yadayam ātma} and \textit{Mundakopaniṣad} text (2-2-11) — \textit{brahmaivedam viśvam} affirm that Brahman is that wherein there is the absence of the world. He has argued that the appositional relation that exists between the words such as \textit{sarvam brahma} and \textit{idam} and the like are to be taken in the view of \textit{badha} or sublation. These texts thus predicate the absence of the world in Brahman wherein it appears. Hence the world is illusory.

Śrī Rāmānuja, however, argues that God is the \textit{Self of the souls and the world which constitute His body}. The world with all its variety of sentient and insentient beings is
included in God as His body. The body is an attribute or prakāra of the soul. In ordinary experience, one refers to the soul of a man with its body as a single unity. In the same way, the Upaniṣadic texts cited in the previous paragraph refer to God with His body of the souls and the world as a single unity. Hence the texts mentioned above do not convey the world to be illusory as the Advaitin thinks.\(^1\)

The Advaitin has further argued that the Brhadāraṇyaka text (2-3-6) —

“There are only two factors which define Brahman; and, they are those which possess form, namely, earth, water and fire, and those which do not possess form, namely, air and ether”.

confirms the existence of the world in Brahman. And the same Upaniṣad in its text (2-3-6) —

‘Not this, not this’ declares the non-existence of the world in Brahman. Since the absence of the world is predicated of in Brahman where it is said to exist, we have to take that the world is illusory.

Sri Rāmānuja states that the first text cited above refers to the world as the body of God. And the second text states that God cannot be considered as being limited to ‘this’ or ‘that’ but He is these and an infinity of others as well thus defying adequate enumeration.\(^2\) Thus this Brhadāraṇyaka text also speaks of the world to be real and not illusory as the Advaitin thinks.

The Advaitin explains the nature of the world on the analogy of the erroneous cognition of silver upon a piece of shell. The theory that explains the latter is known as adhvacanīyakhyāti. Sri Rāmānuja critically examines and finally rejects this theory and propounds his theory known as sātīkhyāti.

The Theory of Error - \textit{Satkhyāti}

Sri Rāmacaṇuṇja argues that the view of the Advaitin that silver that appears in a shell is not real as it is sublated later on and is not an absolute nothing as it is presented in a cognition and hence is illusory or indeterminable is wrong. The silver that appears in a shell does not appear to be \textit{anirvacaniya} or indeterminable; on the other hand it appears to be real. If it appears to be \textit{anirvacaniya} then it is true and so the cognition of silver cannot be viewed as erroneous. Further, there would be no possibility of such a cognition of silver being sublated later on. Hence the argument of the Advaitin that the content of the erroneous cognition is indeterminable or \textit{anirvacaniya} is wrong.\(^1\)

Having thus rejected the theory of erroneous cognition as advocated by the Advaitin, Śri Rāmacaṇuṇja propounds his theory of error which is designated as \textit{satkhyāti}. Following the Prabhākara school Śri Rāmacaṇuṇja holds the theory that all knowledge is valid.\(^2\) The knowledge including the so-called erroneous one like the shell-silver is absolutely valid. It is thus: the glitter-aspect which is common to both shell and silver is manifested and as a result we have the shell-silver illusion. Likeness is the partial identity of the material. The silver is present in an extremely limited extent in the shell. Hence when one perceives silver in a shell he perceives what is actually present and hence the theory of error is known as \textit{satkhyāti}.\(^3\)

Śri Rāmacaṇuṇja further states that in the case of the perception of a barren land as white sheet of water the latter is actually present therein. It is thus: according to the vedantic theory of quintuplication or \textit{pañcikarana} there is an element of water in the barren land and it is this that is

\(^1\) \textit{Sri Bh., Vol. I}, p. 82  
\(^2\) \textit{Sri Bh., Vol. I}, p. 83  
\(^3\) \textit{Sri Bh., Vol. I}, p. 84
perceived. Thus since there is the perception of what is actually present, the cognition of barren land as water too is a case of satkhyāti. 

In the case of the perception of the white conch as yellow, Śrī Rāmānuja argues that the yellow colour is actually present in the conch. It is tuus: when one with jaundiced eyes looks at the white conch, the yellow colour of the bile present in the eye-ball goes along with the rays from the eyes to the region of the conch. Consequently the yellow colour obscures the white colour that is natural to the conch. The latter for the time being actually becomes yellow. Hence when the conch is perceived as yellow in colour, what is perceived, namely, the yellow colour is actually present there. Hence this too is a case of satkhyāti.

An objection may be raised regarding the above view; and, it is this: when a person with his eyes affected by bile sees the conch, then the yellow colour of the bile goes forth together with the rays from the eyes to the region of the conch and envelops the latter. Since the conch is associated with yellow colour, it will be perceived to be so by others too.

Śrī Rāmānuja gets over the above difficulty thus: one could perceive a bird when it flies at a lofty height, only when one sees it starting from the ground to fly upward and watches its further movement throughout. In the same way, he alone could perceive the yellow colour in the conch who follows its course from the region of the eye to that of the conch. It is only the person whose eyes are affected by bile sees the yellow colour of the bile in the above manner and not others. So there does not arise the contingency of the yellow colour in the conch being perceived by others when the conch is looked at by a person with jaundiced eye.

1 & 2 Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 84 & 85 respectively.
In regard to dream, Śrī Rāmānuja says that objects like the elephant, etc., seen then are actually present there for the time being. The author of the Brahma-sūtra in the aphorism—
māyāmātram tu kārtyṣṇyena anabhivyaktasvarūpatvāt (3–2–3)
states that the dream objects are created by God with a view to provide suitable means for the soul to experience pain or pleasure according to its past minor deeds of virtue or vice. The above aphorism is interpreted by Śrī Rāmānuja thus: the expression māyāmātram means that which gives rise to wondrous objects (māyāmātram). And the expression—
kārtyṣṇyena anabhivyaktasvarūpatvāt means ‘since the soul is not manifested in its true nature’. The aphorism as a whole means : since the soul is not manifested in its true nature, it cannot be the creator of such wondrous ones like the dream objects. Hence the latter are the creations of God.¹ The point that needs emphasis here is that in dream too what is perceived is actually present although for the time being. It is real and not illusory as the Advaitins thinks.

It follows from the above that according to Śrī Rāmānuja all knowledge is valid. Now the question arises as to how are we to explain the distinction between valid knowledge and erroneous cognition—prama and bhrama—the distinction that is well-known in ordinary experience?

Śrī Rāmānuja holds that knowledge is always of what is actually present. And that knowledge is valid whose content can be adapted to practical needs of life. For example, the cognition of pot is valid as pot—its content serves the purpose of bringing water. The knowledge of shell-silver is is characterized as erroneous as its content—silver does not serve any practical purpose.²

¹ Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 85 ; Vol. II, p. 220
² Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 84
The Real alone is Practically Efficient

Sri Ramanuja maintains the view that it is only real object that could have practical efficiency. The important result of this view is that scripture, being illusory, according to Advaita cannot have practical efficiency in the form of giving rise to the knowledge of Brahman.

The Advaitin has said that the dream objects like serpent, etc., are illusory; yet they are practically efficient in the sense that they give rise to fear, etc. In the same way, scripture too, although illusory can give rise to the direct knowledge of Brahman.

Sri Ramanuja argues that what causes practical efficiency in the case of the dream objects is only the knowledge of the latter and it is real. It is knowledge which is real that causes fear and not the mere objects. Hence the contention of the Advaitin that an illusory object in the waking state can have practical efficiency like a dream object is unsound.¹

To sum up:

The promissory statements found in the Upaniṣad-s can be satisfactorily explained by holding that the world is real. The theory of vivartavāda accepted by the Advaitin to explain the nature of the world is unsound. The world and the souls constitute the body of God and they are as real as God Himself.

¹ Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 49.
CHAPTER V
THE NATURE OF MOKSHA AND
THE MEANS THEREOF

Introduction

Liberation is the ultimate value for all schools of Indian Philosophy except the Carvaka. It is for the soul and its conception in any particular school depends on the conception of the soul and its relation to the two other metaphysical concepts of the ultimate reality designated as Brahman and the physical world. We have a range of thought within the family of the schools of Vedanta from the idea that the soul is different from though dependent on Brahman, to the idea that it is absolutely non-different in its true essence from Brahman.

The Advaitic View:

(a) The Nature of Liberation

The soul according to to Advaita is none other than Brahman—the ultimate reality which is non-dual, pure consciousness and bliss. The latter by its association with mind and other factors comes to acquire falsely the characteristics of being an agent, enjoyer and knower and is thus viewed as the soul. The association of mind to Brahman is caused by avidya which is indeterminable either as real or as an absolute nothing. Consequently the characteristics such as agency, etc., too that are presented in Brahman are indeterminable. When avidya is removed, the relation of Brahman to mind also will be removed. The so-called soul would become free from the characteristics of agency, etc., and would remain in its true nature of Brahman. And this is liberation. The point that is of importance here is that liberation can be attained here and now.

(b) The Knowledge of Brahman—The Sole Means to Liberation

Avidya has Brahman as its content. It will be removed
only by the knowledge of Brahman. For, in order that avidyā and knowledge may be opposed to each other what is required is that both must refer to one and the same content. The expression 'the knowledge of Brahman' stands for the knowledge that the true nature of soul is non-different from Brahman. It is also known as self-realization. Since the manifestation of avidyā is immediate in such experiences as 'I am ignorant', knowledge too which is admitted to be the annihilating factor of avidyā must be immediate. It comes to this that the direct knowledge of Brahman brings about the removal of avidyā.

The Upaniṣadicle texts such as 'He who realizes (veda) Brahman remains as Brahman' (Mund. Up. 3-2-9), 'Only by realizing (viditva) Brahman, one transcends avidyā; there is no other means to liberation' (Svet. Up., 3-8) and the like affirm the view that knowledge is the only means to liberation.1

(c) Karma—The Remote Means to the Knowledge of Brahman

Sacrifice, etc., when they are performed with a desire for their fruits such as heaven and the like, yield forth the latter. And when they are performed without any desire for their fruits finally lead to the knowledge of Brahman. In the smṛti texts such as the Bhagavad-gītā (3-9), it has been stated that sacrifices, etc., when performed without desire for their fruits becomes the means to the knowledge of Brahman. Performance of karma without any desire for its fruits is known as karma-yoga.

The merit arising from the pursuit of karma-yoga removes the sin in the mind of the aspirant preventing the rise of the desire to have the knowledge of Brahman (vididhi). It then gives rise to the ascertainment that everything apart from Brahman is non-eternal by being an

1 Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 6
effect, and Brahman alone is eternal as it is not an effect. This ascertainment is known as nityāntāyavastuvivēka. This leads to detachment towards enjoyment of objects here and in a hereafter. This is known as ihāmutārthiṣṭdhāmbhogaavirāgā. This, in turn, leads to samādisampat. These are six of which the first two, sama and dama respectively represent the control of mind and the control of external senses. Uparati which is the third factor stands for the abandonment of even obligatory duties on the authority of the scriptural injunction. This is only the adoption of asceticism. The fourth one is titikṣā which is endurance of opposites like heat and cold, etc. Samādhāna and śraddha which are the last two respectively stands for the concentration of thought and faith in the teachings of the Upaniṣad-s. Then there results mumukṣutva—an intense desire for liberation. This one gives rise to vividiṣa or the desire to attain the knowledge of Brahman which is the sole means to liberation. Thus the merit arising from the pursuit of karmayoga leads to the desire to have the knowledge of Brahman (vividīṣa). The Bṛhadāraṇyaka text (4-4-22), ‘Man of spiritual birth desire to have the knowledge (vividīṣanti) of Brahman by the study of one’s veda, by the performance of sacrifice and the offering of gifts and by austerity in the form of fasting’ speaks of the causal relation between sacrifices, etc., and the desire to have the knowledge of Brahman.

The expressions ‘study of one’s veda’, ‘performance of sacrifice and offering of gifts’, and ‘austerity in the form of fasting’ respectively denote the stages of the celebrant of the house-holder and of the hermit. Performance of karma must be given up when the heart is cleansed. Hence karma is only distinctly conducive to the rise of the knowledge of Brahman. It is only its remote means. This is the import of the aphorism (BS. 3-4-26) — sarvapokṣa ca yajñadīṭruteḥ śūdvaḥ.
Sanātana-Dharma

(d) Sanātana - A Primate Means to the Knowledge of Brahman

The sanātana is the proximate means to the knowledge of Brahman as affirmed in the Upaniṣad-s. The Śvetāsvatara text (6-21) states that the preceptor Śvetāsvatara imparted the knowledge of Brahman which is noble and supreme to those who have transcended the obligation to perform karma (atyāṣṭramibhiyaṁ). The Kaivalyopaniṣad in its passage (2) "it is neither by progeny nor by wealth but by renunciation alone some have realized Brahman" speaks of renunciation as the essential condition for the acquisition of the knowledge of Brahman.

The Chāndogyopaniṣad (2-23-1) states: "There are three stages of life with dharma or merit as the predominant factor. The first one is that of a house-holder which is characterized by the observance of sacrifices, study of the Veda-s, and the offering of gifts. The second one is that of a hermit which is characterized by the observance of tapas, that is, fasting which consists in limiting one’s food as a religious observance. The third one is that of a celebate. Those who pursue the duties relating to these three stages of life attain the propitious worlds. He who is devoted to the meditation upon the propane and its content - Brahman attains immortality.

Sri Śāṅkara states that the above Upaniṣadic text makes a clear reference to the distinct fruits such as propitious worlds in the case of those who adopt the three stages of life, and immortality in the case of one who is devoted to the meditation upon Brahman. Hence the distinction between the former three stages of life and the stage of life where one is devoted to the meditation upon Brahman is quite evident.¹

That sanātana is an essential qualification of an aspirant to pursue vedāntic study, reflection meditation which

¹ RSR, 3-4-20
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constitute another group of the proximate means to the knowledge of Brahman is set forth in the following texts of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (3-5-2):

(i) ‘Having attained the mediate knowledge of Brahman and having abandoned the desire for wife, children and wealth, men of spiritual birth lead the life of a mendicant in order to attain the direct knowledge of Brahman’.

(ii) ‘Therefore a person of spiritual birth having pursued vedāntic study and reflection should pursue meditation; and, having pursued these three he would become a realised soul’.

From the above texts we could ascertain that sannyāsa is the essential qualification of one to pursue vedāntic study, etc., which are the proximate means to the knowledge of Brahman. Sannyāsa too is, therefore, a proximate means to the latter.

(e) Śama, dama, etc. — Another group of the proximate means to the Knowledge of Brahman

The Bṛhadāraṇyaka text (4-4-23) —

tasmāt evaṁvita sānto dāntaḥ uparataḥ titikṣuḥ
samāhito bhūtvā ātmānyeva ātmānam paśyati

states that since the knower of Brahman is not tainted by any evil, one knowing this fact should attain the knowledge of Brahman through sāma and other factors. We have described the latter earlier.

It may be added that the text cited above is in accordance with the Kāṇva recension. The Madhyandina recension of the text reads śradhāvitto bhūtvā in the place of samāhito bhūtvā and paśyati in the place of paśyati. Taking these two readings together, we arrive at six factors of sāma, etc. referred to earlier.

The point that is of importance here is that sāma and other factors are prescribed in this text as the means to the
Knowledge of Brahman. Hence they are the proximate means to the latter.

(f) Sravana, Manana and Nididhyāsana — Yet another group of the proximate means to the Knowledge of Brahman

The Brhadāraṇyaka text (2-4-5) —

śrāvaṇaṃ va are ṛṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ
nididhyāsitavaḥ

prescribes sravana, manana and nididhyāsana as the means to the realization of Brahman. Of these sravana is the ascertainment of the fact from the realized souls that the Upaniṣad-s convey the non-dual reality.¹ Manana is arguing within oneself on the basis of reasoning that the Upaniṣadic truth is not stultified by perception, etc.² Nididhyāsana is intense meditation upon the truth arrived at from sravana and manana.³

Sravana removes the false notion that the Upaniṣad-s do not convey the non-dual reality. Manana overcomes the false notion that the truth of non-duality is not in conformity with the teachings of the other schools and is stultified by perception and other proofs. Nididhyāsana helps one to overcome the contrary notions of 'I' and 'mine'. The pursuit of these three thus makes the mind of the aspirant free from false and contrary notions.

(g) The Instrumental Cause of the Knowledge of Brahman

The Upaniṣadic texts such as 'I ask about that Puruṣa who could be known only from the Upaniṣad-s' (Brh. Up. 8-9-26), 'He has realized the self following the instruction of the preceptor' (Chānd. Up., 6-7-6), and the like state that the Upaniṣadic texts constitute the instrumental cause of the knowledge of Brahman. Prakāśātman in his Vivaraṇa favours this view.⁴

¹, ² & ³ Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 6. ⁴ V. p. 403
The Nature of Mokṣa and the means thereof

Vācaspatimisra is of the view that the Upaniṣadic texts being sentences partake of the nature of ordinary sentences and so they could give rise only to mediate knowledge. Immediate knowledge could arise only from sense-organs. Mind is a sense-organ and so it gives rise to the immediate knowledge of Brahman. What Vācaspatimisra means is this: a formal study of the Upaniṣad-s would give rise to the mediate knowledge of Brahman which is known as śravaṇa. The knowledge which arises on the basis of reasoning on the Upaniṣadic truth is also mediate in character and it is termed manana. When the mediate knowledge arisen from the Upaniṣad-s and confirmed by reasoning is maintained continuously then it is known as nididhyāsana. This leaves out its traces and the mind aided by the latter gives rise to the direct knowledge of Brahman.¹

Prakāśātman argues that it is not correct to maintain that sentences as such could give rise only to the mediate knowledge of an object. The mediacy or immediacy of knowledge does not rest upon the instrument of knowledge but on the object. If the object is immediate then there would arise the immediate knowledge of that object from sentences too. Brahman being identical with one’s self is the most immediate and so there would arise immediate knowledge in respect of it from the Upaniṣad-s.²

It may be added here that Śrī Rāmānuja, while recording the view of the Advaithins, sets forth the above view of Prakāśātman.³

It come to this: there arises the direct knowledge of Brahman from the texts of the Upaniṣad-s like tat tvam asat, etc., in the case of an aspirant whose mind has become free from the false and contrary notions by the pursuit of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana.

¹ Bh, p. 57  
² V., 403  
³ Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 6
(h) The Removal of Avidyā

The direct knowledge of Brahman which arises from the major-texts of the Upaniṣad-s removes the āvaraṇa - phase of avidyā and not the vikṣepa-phase of it. The soul becomes free from doubt and contrary notion regarding its true nature and perceives the world of objects, and agency, etc., which are projected by the vikṣepa-phase of avidyā without being deluded by them.

The vikṣepa-phase of avidyā is not removed by the knowledge of Brahman because of the continuance of the fructified karma that has given rise to the present body by remaining in which the soul has attained the knowledge of Brahman. The merits and demerits accumulated in the previous lives as well as in this life prior to the rise of the knowledge of Brahman are removed by the latter. The Chāndogya text (5–24–3) states that the sins of the knower of the truth are burnt away like the upper part of a reed thrown into the fire. The word ‘sin’ must be taken in the sense of merits too as the latter when compared with the knowledge of Brahman is insignificant. The Brhadāraṇyaka text (4–4–22) is specific in saying that one who has attained the knowledge of Brahman transcends both merit and demerit. The Brahma-sūtra (4–1–13) —

_tadadhigama uttarapūrvāghayoh asleṣavināsau tadvyopadesāt_

discusses the import of the two texts referred to above.

Further the direct knowledge of Brahman prevents the rise of any fresh merit or demerit. It is because merit or demerit will pertain to the soul, only when the latter performs an act with a sense of agency in the form ‘I am not agent of this act’. The knower of the truth, however, has the realization in the form ‘I am the pure Brahman free from the characteristics of being an agent or an experient in the three divisions of time’.
Such being the case, there is no possibility of his being rendered pure or impure by merit or demerit that would result from any act that he may do in future. The Čāndogya-text (4-14-3) emphasizes this view by stating that just as water does not stick to a lotus-leaf, in the same way, she does not cling to one who has realized the self. The Brahma-sūtra (4-1-14)—itārasyāpyaśamēṣah pāte tu discusses this problem.

It would have become clear from the above that the direct knowledge of Brahman removes the accumulated merits and demerits of the past and prevents the accumulation of any fresh merit or demerit. But it does not remove the fructified karma, that is, the portion of the accumulated karma which has started yielding forth its result in the form of the body by being present in which the soul has attained the knowledge of Brahman. The force of the fructified karma is like that of a potter's wheel or of a discharged arrow and it must be allowed to work itself out through its results being experienced. Since its force cannot be checked in the middle, the knower of the truth should wait till its force is exhausted. The fructified karma is sustained by the vikṣepa-phase of avidyā. When it is exhausted by the experience of its fruits, the continuing knowledge of Brahman removes the vikṣepa-phase of avidyā.

Śrī Śaṅkara explains the above position on the basis of the analogy of one moon that appears to be two because of the revealing medium, namely the vessel filled in with water. The appearance of the two moons is contradicted by the perceptual knowledge that it is one. Yet, one-
continuous to perceive the two moons because of the presence of the revealing medium although one has the knowledge that it is false. The appearance of the two moons will be removed by the knowledge of the oneness of the moon at the time of the removal of the revealing medium. In the same way, the appearance of the world is contradicted by the direct knowledge of Brahman which is free from all duality. Yet the knower of the truth perceives the world because of the presence of the vikṣepa-phase of avidya. The latter is removed by the continuing knowledge of Brahman which remains unimpeded when the fructified karma is exhausted by the experience of its fruits. The psycho-physical organism then falls off and the knower of the truth remains as Brahman which is liberation. The Chāṇḍogya text (6-14-2) —

"For the knower of the truth, the delay is so long as he is not dissociated from the body"

affirms this view.

The knower of the truth who is free from the accumulated merits and demerits and who lives out only his fructified karma is known as a jivanmukta. He is not influenced by the world of objects as he has once for all realized its falsity. When the jivanmukta is dissociated from his psycho-physical organism, he would remain as pure Brahman. This is videhamukti.

It must be noted here that since the soul is none other than Brahman which is all pervasive, liberation which is identical with the latter is attained here and now.

(i) Karma-mukti

Those who meditate upon God — the conditioned Brahman reach the world of Hiranya garbha through the path of light (arçirādimārga). The latter is characterized

BSB. 4-1-15.
by the presence of deities who are employed to lead the soul to the world of Hiraṇyagarbha. The deities in the path of light are: (1) light, (2) month, (3) year, (4) the divine world, (5) Vāyu, (6) Sun, (7) Moon, (8) Lightning, (9) Varuṇa, (10) Indra and (11) Prajāpati.

Here just like Vāyu, Sun, Moon, Varuṇa, Indra and Prajāpati, light, month, year, the divine world and lightning also stand for the deities presiding over them respectively. These deities come under the domain of creation by Manu—the manifestation of viṇā-puruṣa. That the soul is taken through the path of light by the deities who do come under the domain of creation by Manu is known from the Chāndogya text (5-13-2) which states that when lightning takes charge of the soul, an amānava-puruṣa, that is one who does not come under the domain of creation by Manu comes and lead the soul to the world of Hiraṇyagarbha. Varuṇa, Indra and Prajāpati are only subordinates to the amānava-puruṣa assisting the latter in leading the soul to the world of Hiraṇyagarbha.

Those who reach the world of Hiraṇyagarbha through the path of light attain the knowledge of Brahman there and are liberated along with Hiraṇyagarbha at the end of this cosmic age. It is to be noted in this connection that one reaches the world of that deity—the deity upon whom one meditates. The content of meditation is conditioned Brahman and so the worshipper reaches the world of conditioned Brahman—the world of Hiraṇyagarbha. Since liberation which is Brahman is attained after attaining the world of Hiraṇyagarbha, this process of attaining liberation is known as karma-mukti.

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1 SB on Chānd. Up., 4-15-5
2 BS., 4-3-6
3 BS., 4-3-10, 11; 4-4-22.
Sri Ramanuja sums up the Advaita view on liberation thus: Brahman attains to the state of the soul because of its false association with mind. This false association is caused by avidya. And avidya is removed by the direct knowledge of Brahman. The major texts of the Upaniṣad-s constitute the instrumental cause of the latter. In order that the major texts may give rise to such a knowledge what is necessary is that the mind of the aspirant must be free from the false and contrary notions by the pursuit of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana associated with the cultivation of the qualities such as the control of mind, etc. Samyāsa is an essential condition to pursue śravaṇa, etc. And performance of karma without any attachment towards its fruit cleanses one’s heart and gives rise to the qualities like the control of mind, etc. ¹

The Viśiṣṭādvaita View:

(a) The Nature of Liberation

According to Viśiṣṭādvaita, the soul is infinite in its intelligence, blissful in nature and is self-luminous. Yet owing to avidyā — past merits and demerits it comes to be associated with the psycho-physical organism, identifies itself with it and undergoes transmigration. Its dharmabhūtajñāna is contracted during phenomenal existence. Liberation consists in the soul reaching the world of Lord Narayana through the path of light (arcirādimārga) wherein its dharma-bhūtajñāna expands to the maximum. It becomes free from all its past merits and demerits and so it manifests in its innate nature of infinite intelligence and bliss.² The Gītā-govinda text (8-12-3)—‘Having reached God, the soul becomes manifest in its true form’ emphasizes this view. This text is discussed in the Sribhāṣya on the Brahma sūtra (1-3-48)—uttarāt cet āvibhūtasaṃvarupastu. The soul becomes God-like

² Sri Bh., Vol II, p. 469–470.
and this, however, does not extend to cosmic activity such as the creation of the world, etc. The point that is to be noted here is that liberation according to Viśiṣṭādvaita is attained only in a hereafter and not here and now as in Advaita.

Śrī Rāmānuja cites the following texts in favour of his view.

(1) The Bhagavad-gītā (14-2), ‘Depending upon meditation (upon My true nature), those who attain sameeness of nature with Myself are not born at the time of creation and are not destroyed at the time of dissolution’ states that the released soul attains the sameeness of nature with God.

(2) The text of the Viṣṇupurāṇa (6-7-10), ‘The Lord by His power, makes the worshipper attain His nature in the same way in which a magnet makes the metal acquire its own magnetic character’ affirms that the soul becomes God-like and it does not become one with the reality as the Advaitins think.

(3) The Brahma-sūtra (1-3-2)-muktopaśyapyavopadesa states that Lord Nārāyaṇa is taught to be that which is to be attained by the released souls. The relation of the one that attains and the one that is attained is said to exist between the soul and the Lord implies that the soul does not become one with the Lord or the reality but it becomes God-like.

(4) The commentator Dārāmāna states that the released soul becomes capable of enjoying all desirable objects like the Lord Himself on account of its close association with the latter.

(5) The Taittiriya text (3-10-5) — ‘The released soul having reached the Lord moves about in all the three worlds, enjoys whatever things it likes, assumes whatever form it desires and gives expression to its experience of God’, implies

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1 Sri Bh., Vol. II, p. 489. 2 Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 70.
that the released soul does not become one with the reality as the Advaitin holds.

(6) The *Mundakopanishad* (3-2-8) states that just as the rivers flow into the sea and lose their names and forms, in the same way, the aspirant who meditates upon God reaches the latter and becomes freed from name and form. From this it is implied that liberation consists in attaining the world of Lord.

(7) Śaṅkara — the author of the *Vākyā* has said that the object that is to be attained is what is possessed of qualities because meditation relates to that which possesses qualities.¹

It follows from the above that the reality is not attributeless but is endowed with all auspicious attributes. The soul is different from it. By meditation upon the reality of such nature, the soul attains it and becomes similar to it.

(b) Knowledge of Brahman is not the Sole Means to Liberation

The Advaitin is of the view that the major-texts of the *Upaniṣad-s* gives rise to the knowledge of the non-dual reality designated as Brahman. *Avidyā* is removed thereby and Brahman which is free from *avidyā* is Liberation.

Sri Rāmānuja argues that the above contention is wrong. It has already been proved that *avidyā* is a pseudo-concept and it cannot conceal the self-luminous Brahman. It has also been proved that Brahman is not an attributeless entity but is one endowed with all attributes. The knowledge of the attributeless reality too cannot remove *avidyā*; for, according to Advaita, such a knowledge is non-real or *asat* and a non-real factor cannot have any practical efficiency.

Further the removal of *avidyā* is not noticed in the case of one who has attained the knowledge of Brahman from the major-texts of the *Upaniṣad-s*. It is said by the Advaitin that the knowledge that has arisen from the texts does not remove

¹ *Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 70.*
avidyā immediately but it does not so when all the obstacles are removed by the pursuit of sravana, manana and nididhyāsana. Śrī Rāmānuja argues that there is little force in this contention of the Advaśta. It is because the obstacles that prevent the knowledge of Brahman from removing avidyā immediately are, on the Advaśta theory, indeterminable or mithyā. Hence they must be removed the moment the knowledge of reality arises.

The Advaśta has defended his position by saying that the obstacles may persist even after the rise of the knowledge of Brahman, just as the cognition of two moons persists even when there is the conviction that there is but a single moon.

Śrī Rāmānuja contends that the above line of defence is rather unsound. It is because the cognition of two moons is caused by the presence of the two revealing medium, namely, the vessel filled with water and it is real. So long as the revealing medium is not removed, the illusory perception of the double moon is bound to persist, even after the rise of the conviction that there is but a single moon. But unlike the revealing medium, the obstacles preventing the removal of avidyā are illusory and are therefore, bound to be removed the moment the knowledge of Brahman arises. If the obstacles are not removed by the knowledge of Brahman, then there is no possibility of their removal at any stage. We have therefore, to conclude that the knowledge of Brahman does not remove avidyā.

The Advaśta view that the major-texts of the Upaniṣads give rise to the immediate knowledge of Brahman is contrary to experience. The Advaśta cannot say that sentences may produce mediate knowledge or immediate knowledge in accordance with the mediate or immediate nature of the object concerned. It is because, according to him, Brahman is not an object of knowledge.

1 Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 70.
The Advalta, however, contends that although Brahmān is not strictly an object of knowledge, yet it is considered to be so in a secondary sense, in so far as the mental state that attains to the major texts 'removes avidya' that is present in it. But this contention is wrong. It has already been shown that avidya cannot be present in Brahmān. Hence Brahmān cannot be viewed as an object even in a secondary sense. It comes to this that since Brahmān cannot be considered to be an object, the assertion that the major texts give rise to the immediate knowledge of it on the ground that it is immediate is sound.¹

(c) Meditation upon God or Firm Recollection is the Sole Means to Liberation.

Śri Rāmānuja maintains that the scriptural passages declare that liberation results solely from the knowledge of Brahmān possessed of all auspicious attributes. Brahmān is God who is identified as Lord Nārāyaṇa. The texts of the Mahānārayanopaniṣad such as 'All the units of time are born out of the Person who has the lustre of lightning',² 'There is no ruler over Him; His glory is indeed great',³ 'Those who know this Person, they become immortal'⁴ and the like speak of the knowledge of God who is possessed of attributes as the means to liberation. We have already said that the major texts of the Upaniṣads like tat tvam asi, etc., do not convey the attributeless reality but only God as the self of the soul. It follows that liberation results not from the knowledge of the attributeless reality but from the knowledge of God who is possessed of attributes.⁵

Śri Rāmānuja argues that knowledge is only dhyāna or upaśana. It is the latter that is enjoined in the Upaniṣads.

¹ Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 70.
², ³ & ⁴ MNU. 1-8; 1-10; and 1-11 respectively.
⁵ Sri Bh., Vol. I, p. 94.
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as the means to liberation. The Bhādārayāna text (4-4-22) - vijnāya prayām kuruṇa and the Chāndogya text (6-7-1) - anuvidyā vijnāti state that one should meditate upon God after knowing His true nature. The text of the Mundaka-paniṣad (2-2-6) - omiṣyeva atmānām dhīyate and the Bhādārayāna text (1-4-15) - atmānam eva lokamupāsita are specific in stating that the reality-God is to be meditated upon as the object to be attained. The Bhādārayāna text (2-4-5) - 'The self (God) is to be realized; for that one should pursue vedāntic study, reflection and meditation', enjoins meditation upon God as the means to liberation. Herein vedāntic study and reflection are not enjoined; they are merely re-stated. It is because the causal relation between the study of a particular text and the knowledge of its subject matter and also between reasoning and the intellectual conviction of the truth of the subject-matter are well-known in ordinary experience. Hence it is only meditation that is enjoined.

Meditation is only uninterrupted series of the knowledge of God arrived at from the study of the Upaniṣad-s. The latter use the words knowledge (vedanā) and meditation (upāsana or dhyāna) rather interchangeably. The Chāndogya-paniṣad (3-18-1) begins with the statement, 'One should meditate (upāsita) upon the mind as Brahman' and concludes by saying (in same text 3-18-6), 'He who knows (veda) thus shines and glows with fame, greatness and spiritual splendour'. The Bhādārayāna text (1-4-7), 'He who meditates (upāste) upon the vital-aira, etc., as the self does not know (veda) the self. It is because what is meditated upon is not the all-pervasive reality. Let one meditate (upāsita) upon the self as pervading the vital-aira, etc.', has each of the two words - vedanā and upāsana in the other's place. Another text of the Chāndogya (4-1-4) begins with the statement, 'Rākṣva who
knows (veda) Brahman and Brahman whom Raikva knows (veda) — these two have been explained to you by me', and concludes (same text 4-2-2) by saying, 'Impart me the knowledge of that deity whom you meditate upon (upāste)' makes an exchange of the two words vedana and upāsanā. Thus the mutual exchange of the words vedana and upāsanā in the Upaniṣad-s confirms the view that knowledge is identical with dhyāna or upāsanā.¹

Knowledge which is said to be the means to liberation is of the nature of continued meditation is set forth in the following text of the Viṣṇupurāṇa (6-7-91):

"The meditation of His form is one continued stream without attachment to any other object. Meditation upon Him can be achieved by the practice of the six limbs of Yoga."

The above passage is the subject-matter of discussion under the aphorism—liṅgaṇca.²

Meditation which is constant remembrance of the object meditated upon like a continuous stream of oil, when pursued with earnestness develops itself into the form of 'firm recollection' or dhruva anumāṇa. It is a stream of cognition unimpeled by any other contrary cognition.³

This 'firm recollection' has the likeness of the direct experience of the object that is meditated upon. The Chāṇḍogya text (7-26-2), 'On the attainment of firm recollection, all forms of bondage are removed' states that firm recollection is the means to the removal of bondage. The Munda text (2-2-8), 'When Brahman is realized, the forms of bondage such as desire, aversion, etc., doubt and contrary notion and also all accumulated merits and demerits are

² BS., 4-1-2.
³ SP., p. 32.
removed* declares that the direct knowledge of Brahman and is the means to the removal of bondage. It follows from this that the role of the direct knowledge of Brahman and firm recollection has the likeness of the direct experience of the object that is meditated upon.1

Ṭaṅka—the Vākyakāra has said that knowledge is meditation since it is so mentioned in the scriptures as to refer to that. He has also said that meditation is firm recollection because it is noticed to be so in ordinary experience and so declared in the scriptures. Thus Ṭaṅka maintains that knowledge which is meditation when pursued uninterruptedly acquires the state of firm recollection.2

This firm recollection pleases God and thereby enables one to earn His grace. The Muniṇaka text (3-2-3) — ‘God cannot be attained by reasoning (pravacana); nor by meditation (medhā); not even by extensive study; He could be attained by him alone whom the Lord chooses; and to him He reveals His true form’ denies the possibility of attaining God by mere study, reflection and meditation and affirms that He would be attained only by one whom He chooses.

It is well-known in ordinary experience that it is the dearest one that becomes worthy to be chosen. He alone is is the dearest to God to whom the latter is the object of unconditioned love. In the Bhagavad-gītā (10-10), the Lord states:

“To those who desire to have an eternal union with Me and meditate upon Me with that end in view, I bestow with love the faculty of understanding by which they attain Me”.

Another text of the Bhagavad-gītā (7-17) states:

“I am inexpressibly dear to him who meditates upon Me and he is dear to Me.

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From the above it follows that firm recollection which has the vividness of the immediate presentation gratifies God to such an extent that the devotee becomes the dearest to Him and becomes worthy to be chosen by Him for liberation.  

Firm recollection which is only constant contemplation with love is known as bhaktiyoga and it is the chief means to liberation. The text of the Bhagavadgītā (11-53, 54)—“Neither by the Veda-s nor by austerity, nor by gifts, nor by sacrifices can I be seen as you have seen Me. But by single-minded devotion, it is possible to know My nature, to see My true form and to attain union with Me”, and the same text (8-22) “That Highest Person is attainable exclusively by bhakti” affirm that liberation which consists in attaining the Lord is to be achieved by firm recollection which is bhaktiyoga.  

Thus, according to Śrī Rāmānuja, meditation which in its ripened form is firm recollection, which is a synonym of knowledge and which is known as bhaktiyoga is the sole means to liberation.

(d) Karmayoga and Jñānayoga — The Means to Firm Recollection.

Karmayoga or performance of one’s duties relating to one’s stage of life with the sole aim of pleasing God is the means to ‘firm recollection’. The Brhadāraṇyaka text 4-4-22—

“Those who seek liberation desire to know Him by the study of one’s Veda by the performance of sacrifice and the offering of gifts and by penance in the form of fasting”

1 Śrī, Bh., Vol. I, p. 10.
2 Śrī Bh., Vol. I, p. 11.
The Nature of Mokṣa and the means thereof specifically states that one's duties constitute the means to 'knowledge', which, according to Viśiṣṭadvaita is 'firm recollection'. In this text the expressions 'study of one's Veda' and the 'performance of sacrifices and offering of gifts' refer respectively to the duties relating to the stage of the celibate and that of the house-holder. The expression 'penance in the form of fasting' refers to the stages of a hermit and of an ascetic. It may be added here that, according to Śri Śaṅkara, the last expression stands for the stage of a hermit alone and not of an ascetic.

The author of the sūtra-s in the aphorism—sārvepekṣā ca vaiṇḍādiṣruteḥ aśvavat (3-4-26) discusses the relation of sacrifices etc., to knowledge which is only firm recollection. The Bhadāraṇyaka tex cited above constitutes the subject-matter of this aphorism. It states that men of spiritual birth desire to know God through the performance of sacrifices, etc. One can desire to have knowledge through the performance of sacrifice, etc., only when the latter are the means to knowledge. Śri Rāmānuja explains this by stating that one desires to kill another with a sword as the latter is the means to the act of killing. It comes to this that sacrifices, etc., are the means to knowledge.

Knowledge, as has already been said, is totally different from the one that is arrived at from the Upaniṣad-s. It is designated by the terms—dhyāna and upāsanā. It has attained to the ripened form of firm recollection having the vividness of immediate presentation. It is very dear to God. And it is achieved by the grace of God who is pleased by the performance of one's duties relating to one's stage of life. It is with this in view that Lord has said in the Bhagavadgītā (18-5) that sacrifices, gifts and

1 Śrī Bh., Vol. II, p. 63.
austerities are not to be given up. They must be performed always. For, sacrifices, gifts and austerities purify the worshipper.¹

Śrī Rāmānuja admits the stage of life known as sannyāsa. But its conception is entirely different from the one in Advaita. According to Śrī Rāmānuja a sannyāsin does not discard a sacred thread. Besides performing the obligatory duties relating to his stage of life, a sannyāsa has to perform obligatory duties like sandhyopāsana and occasioned duties. But he need not perform sacrifice, etc., that involve the consecration of fire. The scriptural texts that prescribe agnihotra and other rites till the end of one's life are addressed with reference to a house-holder and not in regard to a sannyāsin who is detached. But it is essential on the part of a sannyāsin to perform the obligatory duties relating to the class of his life. Their non-performance would incur the sins of omission.

Śrī Śaṅkara says that the distinction between the first three stages of life, namely, the stages of the celebate, the house-holder and the ascetic on the one hand, and the last stage of life, namely, the sannyāsa, on the other is quite evident as the Chāndogya text (2-23-1) makes a clear reference to the distinct fruits such as the propitious worlds in the case of the former and immortality in the case of the latter. This has been discussed earlier.² What Śrī Śaṅkara emphasizes is that a sannyāsin must devote himself to the meditation upon the praṇava and its content, namely, Brahman and for this he must be free from any obligation to perform any karma. Hence the stage of life known as sannyāsa consists in the abandonment of all activities.

¹ Śrī Bh., Vol. II, p. 375–376.
² BSB., 3-4-20.
The Nature of Mokṣa and the means thereof

Śrī Rāmānuja, however, interprets the above text in the following manner. Meditation upon God is common to all stages of life. Those who pursue merely the duties relating to their stages of life reach the propitious worlds. And if meditate upon God besides performing their allotted duties, they will attain immortality. It comes to this that karma must be pursued till the end of one's life. Unlike in Advaita, in Viśiṣṭadvaita, there is no stage in the life of a man where karma could be dispensed with. The performance of karma pleases God and through His grace one becomes free from all opposite impressions that stand in the way of attaining 'firm recollection'.

To sum up this part of the discussion: firm recollection aided by the performance of karma is the sole means to liberation.

Śrī Rāmānuja cites the following texts in support of his above view.

The Iṣṭavāsa text (11) —

vidyāṁ ca avidyāṁ ca yastad veda ubhayam saha
avidyāṁ mṛtyum tirvā vidyāṁ amṛtam aśnute
states that by performance of karma (avidyā) one becomes free from all past demerits (mṛtyum) and by meditation (vidyā) attains Brahma — the Lord.

The Viśnupurāṇa text (6–6–12) —
iṣaya so'pi subahan yajñan jaṇanavyopāśrayah
brahmavidyāmadhiṣṭhāya tattva mṛtyum avidyāya
states that the King Khaṇḍikya Janaka having the meditate knowledge of God and having firm recollection as the object in view performed numerous sacrifices in order that he might destroy the effects of past karma by means of ritual-actions.

From the above it follows that the ritual-action is the means to firm recollection. Even after the attainment of the

1, 2 & 3 Śrī Bh., Vol. II, p. 363; p. 375; and p. 377.
latter, one must perform karma. Otherwise, one would incur the sin of omission which would lead to fresh bondage.

So far we have dealt with the role of karma on the practical side of Viṣṇuadvaita. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka text (4-4-23) — ‘Since firm recollection is of great value, one knowing it to be so, should cultivate control of mind and of external senses, renunciation in spirit, fortitude, concentration of thought and should meditate upon Brahmā the self of the soul’ prescribes control of mind, etc., as the means of firm recollection. Śrī Rāmānuja states that these qualities are innately present in an ascetic but these are to be cultivated by a house-holder.¹

Brahmanandin — the Vākyakāra has said that firm recollection is the outcome of viveka — mental purity and other such qualities:

‘That firm recollection results from viveka, vimoka, abhyāsa, kriya, kalyāṇa, anavasāda and anuddharśa, because it is only so possible and because also there is scriptural authority to that effect’.²

Of these, viveka stands for mental purity that is attained by not taking impure food. The scriptural authority for this is: ‘When the food is pure, the mind becomes pure; and, when the mind is pure, there is firm memory.’³

Vimoka is non-attachment to objects of desire. The scriptural authority for this is: ‘Tranquilised in mind, let one meditate upon God.’⁴

Abhyāsa signifies constant remembrance of the form of God even when not engaged in formal meditation. The authority for this is: ‘One must have one’s mind fixed on His form’.⁵

³ & ⁴ Chānd. Up., 7-26-2; and 3-14-1 respectively
⁵ Bh. G., 3-6.
Kṣīrya denotes the performance of duties relating to one's stage of life. The scriptural authority for this is: 'He who performs karma in accordance with the scriptural injunction is the best among those who meditate upon God'.

Kalyāṇa means possession of suspicious qualities like truthfulness, straightforwardness, compassion etc. The scriptural authority for this is: 'God is to be attained by truth', etc.

Anavasāda is freedom from despondency. The scriptural authority for this is: 'God — the self of all beings cannot be attained by one who is devoid of mental strength'.

Anuddhāraṇa is freedom from elation. Santosa, no doubt, is desirable, but not too much of it. The scriptural authority for this is: 'One should cultivate control of mind and of external senses, renunciation in spirit, fortitude, concentration of thought, and should meditate upon Brahman — the soul of the soul' (Bṛh. Up., 4-4-23).

It must be noted here that the above factors prescribed by Vākyakāra involves karma-yoga and the qualities like control of mind, etc., referred to in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka text. The matter that is of importance here is that while Śrī Saṅkara holds that karma-yoga is the remote means to the knowledge of Brahman and control of mind, etc., are the proximate means to the latter, Śrī Rāmānuja holds that both are the proximate means to firm recollection — the sole means to liberation.

Karma-yoga is followed by jñāna-yoga that consists of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāṣṭana, that is, Vedāntic study, reflection and meditation. The pursuit of śravaṇa and manana gives rise to the intellectual conviction on the part of the aspirant that the soul is different from the psycho-physical organism and it is absolutely dependent upon God. That the

1, 2 & 3 Mund. Up., 3–1–4; 3–1–5; and 3–2–4.
Aspirant pursues nididhyāsana or upāsanā upon God as his Self. The Brahma-sūtra (4–1–3) —

atmeti tu upagaacchanti grāhayanī ca

emphasizes this view. Sri Rāmānuja states that just as the soul is the self of the body, in the same way God is the Self of the soul. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka text (3–7–22), ‘He who, dwelling in the soul, is within the soul, whom controls the soul does not know, whose body is the soul, who controls the soul from within — He is your inner ruler, the immortal self’ states that God is the Self of the soul. Hence the worshipper should meditate on God as His own Self.¹

Sri Rāmānuja further states that ‘when an aspirant attains firm recollection, all his merits and demerits accumulated in his previous lives and in this life too prior to his attaining firm recollection are destroyed’. The Chāndogya text (5–24–3), ‘All his sins are burnt away like the upper part of a reed thrown in the fire’ and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka text (4–4–22) ‘He transcends both merits and demerits’ confirm the above view.

In the same way, the karma which the aspirant performs after attaining firm recollection does not cause any merit or demerit in his case. This is based upon the Chāndogya text (4–14–3), ‘Sin does not cling to one who has attained firm recollection of God’. But that part of the accumulated merits and demerits which have fructified and which have given the present body are not destroyed. They will be exhausted only by the experience of their fruits. This view is based upon Chāndogya text (6–24–2) that for him who has attained ‘firm recollection’ the delay in attaining liberation is as long as he is not dissociated from the body. When the fructified merits and demerits are exhausted by giving forth their fruits, the body falls off and the soul reaches the world of God through the path of light wherein its dharmabhūta-jhāna

¹ Sri Bh., Vol. II, p. 405.
expands to the maximum. Infinite intelligence and bliss which constitute the essential nature of the soul and which are hidden by avidya—past merits and demerits during mundane life are manifested after reaching God. The Chāndogya text (8-12-3) — ‘Having reached God, the soul becomes manifest in its true form’ emphasizes this view. The soul becomes God-like and this, however, does not extend to cosmic activity such as the creation of the world, etc.¹ It acquires the other characteristics of God such as possession of desires and resolves that never go unfulfilled ²

One noteworthy feature of Śri Rāmānuja’s system is that the Pūrvamimāṃsā-śāstra which discusses the import of the karma kāṇḍa and the Uttaramimāṃsā-śāstra which discusses the import of the jñāna-kāṇḍa form a single text. The karma-kāṇḍa treats of ritual-actions which are to be performed as an offering to God with a view to earn His grace. The jñāna-kāṇḍa deals with the nature of God—the firm recollection of whom is the sole means to liberation. Thus according to Śri Rāmānuja the prerequisite work for the vedantic study or the study of the Uttaramimāṃsa is inquiry into the Pūrvamimāṃsā-śāstra. But, according to Śri Śaṅkara, the ‘four-fold aid’ consisting of nityāntyavastuviveka, etc., is the essential condition for pursuing the study of Uttaramimāṃsa.

To sum up:

(i) According to Advaita, liberation consists in the soul becoming free from its relation to mind and its characteristics and remaining in true nature as Brahman which is nirvāṇa. The direct knowledge of Brahman is the sole means to liberation.

(ii) According to Śri Rāmānuja, liberation consists in the soul reaching the abode of God and becoming God-like there. And meditation which when ripened attains to the state of firm recollection is the sole means to liberation;

¹ Śri Bh., Vol. II, p. 489. ² Śri Bh., Vol. II, p. 479;
CONCLUSION

The Śrībhāṣya on the first aphorism of the Brahmasūtra which constitutes an adhikaraṇa is a lengthy thesis wherein Śrī Rāmānuja shows the untenability of the views of Advaita and expounds a number of disputed passages in the Upaniṣad-s, the Bhagavad-gītā and the Viṣṇupurāṇa as being in favour of his own system.

Śrī Rāmānuja is mainly concerned with reconciling the apparent contradictory statements in the Upaniṣad-s. He has referred to five sets of Upaniṣadic texts. The first one refers to the ultimate reality—Brahman as free from all attributes. The second one shows it to be endowed with all attributes. The third one of the passages declares that Brahman is identical with the soul and also with the world. The fourth group affirms the difference between Brahman on the one hand and the soul and the world on the other. Finally there is the fifth set of Upaniṣadic texts which speaks of Brahman as the self of the souls and the world, and the latter as the body of the former.

The Advaitin has formulated his system in close alliance with the doctrine of māya or avidyā. According to him the texts that speak of Brahman as free from all attributes are valid and the texts that refer to it as endowed with attributes point to God who is a complex of Brahman and māya or avidyā. The soul, too according to the Advaitin, is a false blend of Brahman and mind. The texts that speak of the identity of the soul and Brahman convey the identity of the spiritual element in both God and the soul. The passages that state the identity of the world and Brahman signify that Brahman is free from the world as the latter being indeterminable, has no independent existence apart from Brahman. The passages that proclaim Brahman as the self of the souls and the world, and the latter as the body of Brahman refer to the transcendent and the immanent aspect of Brahman.
Sri Ramanuja relies upon the last set of passages and develops his key-concept of body and soul as existing between the world of sentient and insentient beings and Brahman. He considers that the texts that speak of Brahman as associated with attributes do not refer to those that are falsely attributed upon Brahman. The attributes are as real as Brahman and latter is, therefore, saviseqa. The texts that speak of Brahman to be free from attributes refer to the absence in Brahman of the attributes that are imperfect and are ascribed to prakrti. Since God (Brahman) is the self of all, and since He forms a unity with the sentient and insentient things that constitute His body, the Upanishadic texts that refer to the identity of Brahman on the one hand and the souls and the world on the other find an easy explanation without denying the reality of the world and calling it as illusory. At the same time, since the body of man is different from his soul, the world of sentient and insentient beings which is the body of Brahman is different from the latter which is its self. It is on this ground certain Upanishadic texts speak of the difference between Brahman on the one hand and the souls and the world, on the other.

Thus, according to Sri Ramanuja, there exists nothing apart from Brahman which has the souls and the world as its body. The term Viṣṇu-Advaita which refers to Sri Ramanuja's system signifies that there is nothing outside this complex whole. The qualified, that is, Brahman or God is one, while the factors that qualify Him, namely, the souls and the world are distinct but inseparable from Him.

The doctrine of maya or avidya advocated by the Advaita is subject to close examination by Sri Ramanuja and is finally rejected. The nature of liberation which, according to Advaita, has a vital bearing upon the removal of avidya too stands rejected and Sri Ramanuja proves on the basis of the
Upanisads teach that liberation is attained only in a hereafter and it consists in becoming God-like.

A study of the Śrībhaṭṭya of Śrī Rāmanuja shows that Philosophy which is the work of human spirit upon the revealed texts in India grows and develops; fresh vistas are opened up by new lines of approach or application to new problems. His work shows that Indian Philosophy does not denote a static and complete body of principles and applications insusceptible of development or modification; and his work is an abiding monument to the richness and variety of Indian thought.
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