

**PRACTICAL VEDĀNTA:
PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND POINTS OF DEPARTURE**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (ARTS)
IN PHILOSOPHY**

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2024

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Introduction The main objective of this thesis is to present the theory of "Practical Vedānta" and to draw out its distinctive features. In 1896, Swami Vivekananda had delivered a series of four lectures on the topic "Practical Vedānta". He maintained that his philosophy was derived from the teachings of his master Sri Ramakrishna which was based on the philosophy of Vedānta, one of the ancient schools of Indian philosophical thought. Though Swami Vivekananda had several works on various kinds of yoga, yet he had named his philosophy after Vedānta and not any other like Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya or Mīmāṃsā. He had also inserted a very significant adjective to it namely 'practical'. The philosophy of Vedānta as expounded by Mahārṣi Vyāsa in the Brahmasūtra had been commented upon by nine principal commentators thus giving rise to different sub-schools of Vedāntic thought. Hence, any researcher on this topic will have to deal with several questions namely: a) why did Vivekananda term his philosophy as 'Vedānta' and b) which school of Vedānta had impact on his philosophy? c) what is the reason behind naming his version of Vedānta 'practical'? (d) is it a reformulation of any of the classical theories or is it an entirely new thought put forward by Swami Vivekananda? (e) what was the mission of the Swami behind propagating this philosophy? At the very outset, it is necessary to analyze the terms 'practical' and 'Vedānta' before going into the discussion of the principal tenets of the philosophy "Practical Vedānta". The two terms will frequently arise throughout the entire thesis and when necessary. To start with, the term 'practical' carries two lexical meanings. First, as opposed to the term 'theoretical', the term 'practical' is concerned with practice and secondly, it refers to something whose application is feasible i.e. which is effective in real circumstances. It can be accomplished by conscious effort (prayatnasādhya). Vivekananda felt that the knowledge of Vedānta, like that of any other religion, can be utilized in real life. Its principles can be transmuted into action in everyday living by people. When only can the knowledge of Vedānta be brought down from the caves and the forests to the living rooms and such practice will bear immense benevolent impact on earth. The two meanings of the term 'practical' have a close connection between them. Even one can be reduced to the other. The term 'practical' as something concerned with practice implies itself that its application is feasible i.e., it can be carried out in practice. A question might crop up in our minds regarding the practicality of the philosophy which subscribes to the stand that the Supreme Reality is one and immutable. How can that Reality be dragged down to the level of mundane world of daily existence? Had it been able to produce an effect and if the latter were ultimately real too, then that would have led the philosophers to admit a second real entity. In that case, the Supreme Reality would have ceased to be one and immutable. It follows then that the Supreme Reality cannot have any effect and consequently cannot be brought down to the ordinary level of practical experience. Yet Vivekananda argued in favour of the thesis that life can be built in the light of that philosophy. We notice that the Upaniṣad-s abound in the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. But, in the Bhagavadgītā, we notice that the sublime teachings of the Vedānta were revealed to Arjuna by Lord Krishna in the wake of the war at Kurukshetra where the doubts of the former were dispelled by the latter in order to instill in him the spirit of 1 2000, The Concise Oxford Dictionary, ed. Judy Pearsall, New Delhi: Oxford University Press courage befitting a warrior and thus engage him in the battle. Thus, Srimadbhagavadgītā is a clear demonstration of the fact that the teachings of the Vedānta can be applied in real-life situations by means of a person's conscious efforts. Swami Vivekananda himself anticipates an objection against his own conception of Vedānta. An objection may arise that what Vedānta teaches is ideal and the ideal is beyond the real. The teachings of Vedānta may be realizable but not actually realized. So, then how can Vedānta be called 'practical'? Before answering this question, we need to answer yet another question: what is the ground behind the statement that what Vedānta teaches is ideal? If the teachings of Vedānta were

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*om sthāpakāya ca dharmasya sarvadharmasvarūpiṇe /
avatāravariṣṭhāya rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ //*

*om namoḥ śrībhagavate rāmakṛṣṇāya namo namaḥ
om namoḥ śrībhagavate rāmakṛṣṇāya namo namaḥ
om namoḥ śrībhagavate rāmakṛṣṇāya namo namaḥ //*

*om yathāgnerdāhikā śaktiḥ rāmakṛṣṇe sthitā hi yā /
sarvavidyāsvarūpāṁ tām sārādāṁ praṇamāmyaham //*

*namaḥ śrīyatirājāya vivekānandasūraye /
saccitsukhasvarūpāya svāmine tāpahāriṇe //*

PREFACE

At the outset, I wish to pay my salutation to the Almighty without whose grace, completion of this research work of mine would not have been possible. I wish to dedicate this thesis to my departed parents - Late Minati Saha (mother) and Late Narayan Chandra Saha (father) who had long wished to see this work done but unfortunately could not. I would equally pay my respect and gratefulness to my supervisors Professor Samar Kumar Mondal and Professor Rupa Bandyopadhyay. In this project, I am deeply indebted to them without whose initiative and guidance, this work would not have taken a material shape. Last but not the least, I would pay my heartfelt gratitude to my elder sister, Ms. Sangita Biswas who has stood by my side in every moment of my life and has been a constant source of inspiration in every possible way.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I	
Practical Vedānta: An Exposition of Swami Vivekananda's	
Fundamental Tenets	6
CHAPTER II	
Practical Vedānta and <i>Advaita</i> Vedānta	43
CHAPTER III	
Practical Vedanta and The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna	115
CHAPTER IV	
Practical Vedānta as the Philosophical Basis of a Universal Religion	138
CHAPTER V	
Practical Vedānta and Yoga	170
CONCLUSION	217
BIBLIOGRAPHY	224

Introduction

In the November of 1896 a young monk delivered a series of four lectures in London entitled ‘Practical Vedānta’. In course of time this young monk, who was given the name ‘Swami Vivekananda’ by his preceptor, came to be recognized in the entire world as one of the most important philosophers of modern times and his philosophy came to be known as ‘Practical Vedānta’.

This epithet “Practical *Vedānta*” itself gives rise to a series of questions. It is well-known that ‘Vedānta’ is the name of one of the major orthodox philosophical systems of ancient India which was systematized by Maharṣi Vyāsa in his *Brahmasūtra*. These aphorisms of Maharṣi Vyāsa were commented upon by nine principal commentators, each of which gave rise to a different system of Vedānta. Any researcher who intends to do research in Practical Vedānta, thus, has to face a number of questions

One might wonder why did Swami Vivekananda call his own philosophy ‘Vedānta’? Did he consider his own teachings to be essentially the same as that of one of the classical systems of Vedānta? If a researcher arrives at an affirmative answer to this question, then a further question arises: Which system of classical Vedānta does Practical Vedānta represent? On the contrary, if a researcher reaches the conclusion that a negative answer to the aforementioned question is more likely, then also he would be faced with several alternatives: Does Practical Vedānta combine the elements of more than one system of ancient Vedānta? Does Practical Vedānta synthesize more than one system of classical Vedānta into a higher unity? Or, is Practical Vedānta an entirely new system of Vedānta created by the original thinking of Swami Vivekananda? Scholars and researchers have given different answers to these questions. So, it is quite clear that no straightforward prima facie interpretation can be given of the term ‘Vedānta’ that forms

part of the epithet ‘Practical Vedānta’. In like manner, one needs to answer the question why the Swami called his version of Vedānta ‘Practical’?

The problem is aggravated by the fact that Swami Vivekananda, although formally trained in Philosophy, was not an academic philosopher. He was not exactly concerned with giving a well-organized systematic presentation of his thoughts where concepts would be subjected to hair-splitting analysis and rival theories would be refuted with clinching arguments.

His mission was something else. In fact, one might have a clearer understanding of the basic tenets of Practical Vedānta if one has some preliminary idea of the goal which the Swami sought to achieve through his life-long endeavor.

Thus, we are faced with the question: What are the main objectives of Practical Vedānta?

Swami Vivekananda offered a very clear statement of the goal of his life and work in the 1893 address at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago:

“Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilizations and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come, and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.”¹

¹ Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Nineteenth Edition, 2016, First reprint, 2018, p.4

Therefore, the end to achieve which Swami Vivekananda dedicated his entire life was not exactly an academic or speculative goal. Evidently, his main objective was not to advocate a well-formulated and rigorous theory, but to actually eradicate the evils of sectarianism, bigotry and fanaticism from the face of the earth. He believed that this can be done only if all so-called religions propagating sectarianism, bigotry and fanaticism are replaced by a true religion that spreads the message of universal love, tolerance and service to all sentient beings living on this earth. He also had the conviction that the Vedānta philosophy of ancient India can be the basis of such a universal religion. It remains to be explored what are the grounds on which this conviction of Swami Vivekananda was based. We shall also seek answers to the questions, “what version of Vedānta was upheld by him?”, “why is this variety of Vedānta called ‘Practical?’” and “how is this Practical Vedānta related to the ancient schools of Vedānta?” in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Needless to say, thousands of pages have been written on the writings and the mission of Swami Vivekananda. So, what problem does this thesis intend to address?

This thesis proposes to address mainly two problems.

First, this thesis wants to explore the philosophical foundations of Practical Vedānta. For this purpose we shall have to ascertain the main tenets of Practical Vedānta and the main arguments which Swami Vivekananda puts forward in favour of these tenets. To understand the essence of Practical Vedānta we shall have to go back to the sources from which Swami Vivekananda drew his fundamental ideas. Researchers in this area put forward diverse theories regarding the philosophical doctrines which influenced and

² His lectures on *Vedānta* were profoundly influenced by the teachings of his preceptor, Sri Ramakrishna

³ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, “Practical Vedānta” Lecture I, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,

shaped the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda. We shall explore these theories and shall try to assess their merits in the first part of the thesis.

Second, even a preliminary reading of Swami Vivekananda's works clearly reveals that he was not merely a missionary whose aim was to transform the lives of his fellow beings, but he was also an extremely original thinker. He not only based his teachings on the fundamental wisdom of the classical Vedānta system, but he introduced new ideals and new values which brought about a transformation of the ancient doctrine on which he based his teachings. Thus, in the second part of the thesis we shall explore the original distinctive features of this theory.

The thesis will consist of the following chapters:

Introduction

In this introductory chapter the main objectives of Practical Vedānta and the problems to be addressed by the present thesis will be stated.

Part I

Philosophical Underpinnings

Chapter I

Practical Vedānta: An Exposition of Swami Vivekananda's Fundamental Tenets

This chapter will give an exposition of Practical Vedānta based on Swami Vivekananda's essays and lectures.

Chapter II

Practical Vedānta and Advaita Vedānta

This chapter will explore the relationship between Practical Vedānta and Advaita Vedānta.

Chapter III

Practical Vedānta and the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

This chapter will analyse the relationship between Practical Vedānta and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

Chapter IV

Practical Vedānta as the Philosophical Basis of a Universal Religion

This chapter will explore some of Swami Vivekananda's original contributions, especially his idea of *sevāyoga* and universal religion.

Chapter V

Practical Vedānta and Yoga

This chapter will investigate the concepts of *jñānayoga*, *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *rājayoga* and their role in Practical Vedānta.

Conclusion

The main conclusions arrived at in the foregoing chapters will be mentioned in this concluding chapter.

Chapter One

Practical *Vedānta*: An Exposition of Swami Vivekananda's Fundamental Tenets

The objective of the present chapter is to give an exposition of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy. Swami Vivekananda gave the name 'Practical *Vedānta*' to his own philosophy. The epithet 'Practical *Vedānta*' consists of two words of which *Vedānta*' is the name of one of the sixth major philosophical systems of classical India that is derived from the *Veda*-s. The philosophy of *Vedānta*' can be traced back to Vedas and later developed in the *Upaniṣad*-s, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahmasūtra*. The adjective 'practical' was coined by Swami Vivekananda himself. He gave four lectures on 'Practical *Vedānta*' in England in 1896. These four lectures will be the main basis on which we shall give an exposition of Swami Vivekananda's philosophical theory in this chapter.².

1. Vedanta as a 'Practical Philosophy'

The first question that arises is why did Swami Vivekananda employ the adjective 'practical'?

In answer to this question is this he observess that his philosophy is not a utopian one. It is not utopian in the sense that it can be applied to ordinary living situations. Swami Vivekananda views *Vedānta* as a religion also. We shall later consider in what sense he considers *Vedānta* to be a religion, that is, what is the exact sense in which he uses the term religion. But at the very outset, Swami Vivekananda remarks that a theory cannot be a religion unless it is profoundly practical. So, this is the condition which must be

² His lectures on *Vedānta* were profoundly influenced by the teachings of his preceptor, Sri Ramakrishna

fulfilled by any theory if it is to qualify for the status of religion. We quote him here: “... theory is very good indeed, but how are we to carry it out into practice? If it is absolutely impracticable, no theory is of any value whatever, except as intellectual gymnastics. The *Vedānta*, therefore as a religion, must be intensely practical. We must be able to carry it out in every part of our lives”.³

Swami Vivekananda observes that in ordinary parlance religion is normally differentiated from everyday life. On ordinary usage, religion is placed on a high alter and it is considered as something different from ordinary practices. But Swami Vivekananda observes that this conception of religion is a mistaken one. He says, ‘...the fictitious differentiation between religion and the life must vanish for *Vedānta* teaches oneness, one life throughout’.⁴

From the above quotation of Swami Vivekananda three points become very clear. First, he wants to derive a religion out of *Vedānta* (what does he mean by religion will be considered later). And he thinks that the philosophy of *Vedānta* has the potentiality of becoming a religion, because, it teaches the philosophy of oneness. So, apparently, the philosophy of Vedanta does not make any differentiation between religious creeds and theories and between everyday life. So, Swamiji expects that a religion can be developed out of *Vedānta*. And he has his own conception of religion that a religion should be practical and he believes that the religion which can be built out of *Vedānta* will meet these standards.

³ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, “Practical Vedānta” Lecture I, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.-2, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, p.-285.

⁴ Swami Vivekananda, “Practical Vedānta”, 285.

The question which immediately arises that, can the philosophy of Vedānta be made practical? Or, is there any difficulty in translating or applying the teachings of Vedānta to actual life?

Now, in order to understand how *Vedānta* can be made practical, we first must understand the meaning of the term practical in details. J.N. Mohanty in his book *Theory and Practice* had tried to show that there is a sharp distinction between theory and practice. The term '*theoria*' has been used by Aristotle to mean intuiting or seeing anything to ascertain their causes as the word '*theoritiker*' means 'spectator at games.' A person who is theoretical merely observes, intuites or contemplates. The purpose of a theory is only to state a matter of fact, its essence. It has nothing to do with its effectiveness. On the other hand, the concept 'practical' consists of two parts - *techné* and *praxis*. *Techné* is concerned with the skill or the expertise of a person in accomplishing an act just as a potter is capable to build up an earthenware. *Praxis* is related with carrying out the action well. Thus, we can conclude that a theory is related with laying down a principle while practice relates to something which can be translated into action. Thus, ethics and politics are considered as practical sciences as they are related to overt practice.⁵ Dineshchandra Bhattacharya Shastri in his book *Vivekanander Vedāntachintā* has offered two lexical meanings of the term 'practical'. First, as opposed to the term 'theoretical', the word 'practical' means something which has realizability. Secondly, in accordance with the first meaning, the term 'practical' denotes something which is 'feasible' which means that it is not impossible and can be accomplished by conscious effort (*prayatnasādhyā*)⁶. Thus, when we say that 'anything is practical' we mean that it

⁵ Mohanty, J.N., 1994, *Theory and Practice*, Kolkata: Allied Publishers Limited in collaboration with Jadavpur University, p.-3.

⁶ Shastri, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, 2014, *Vivekanander Vedāntachintā*, Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture p.-140

can be transmuted into action apart from being confined only to a theory or an idea. Here, a pertinent question might arise as to how can a theory be laid into practice? Vivekananda himself was quite aware of this problem that a theory being sublime in thought cannot be brought down to the level of practice. Yet, he maintained that life can be built in the light of the principles of that theory (*Vedānta*) and the principles must be laid into practice. He was of the opinion that any theory which cannot be put into practice turns out ultimately to be a mere intellectual exercise.

Vivekananda himself anticipates an objection against his own conception of *Vedānta*. There may be an objection that what *Vedānta* teaches is ideal and the ideal is beyond the real. The teachings of *Vedānta* may be realizable but not actually realized. So, how can *Vedānta* be called “practical”? Before answering this question, it is necessary to answer a further question: What is the ground behind the claim ‘what *Vedānta* teaches is ideal’? If the teachings of *Vedānta* were not ideal, then the objection that the adjective “practical” cannot be meaningfully applied to *Vedānta* would be quite pointless.

A question might arise regarding the practicability of the philosophy of *Vedānta*. It is common knowledge that *Vedānta* advocates only one supreme reality and that supreme reality is one and immutable. Swami Vivekananda also holds the clear knowledge of the fact that the Supreme Reality propounded by the *Vedānta* system cannot have any effect. If the supreme reality were capable of producing a real effect then the effect would have been a second real entity and in that case the supreme reality would cease to remain one and immutable. It would neither be one nor immutable. So, the vedāntins advocate the

thesis that the supreme reality that they admit is one and it does not produce any effect. Since, it does not produce any effect how can we translate it to practical experience or how can it be applied to practice. Swami Vivekananda observes that there are two ways in which a theory which preaches an ideal can be made practical.

The first way is to lower the ideal and modify it to make it compatible with one's own selfish purposes or to make it compatible with the requirements of ordinary life. That is, in this case the ideal is changed or compromised to fit the requirements of the mundane life of a person. There is a second way of making an idealistic theory practicable, that is, to elevate one's own life in order to reach that level. In that case, one's own practical life has to be transformed in the light of the ideal preached by the theory. Swami Vivekananda is of the opinion from the very outset that the ideal should not be compromised, rather, the person who wants to translate the theory into one's own life must change his own life in the light of the ideal. In order to understand The Swami's prescription that one's own ordinary life is to be transformed or to be elevated to the level of the ideal we need to understand the theory or the main philosophical hypothesis preached by *Vedānta*. It is to be mentioned here that the connection between *Advaita Vedānta* and *practical Vedānta* would be explored in detail in the second chapter of this thesis. For the time being we shall try to give a summary of the teachings of *Vedānta* in Swami Vivekananda's own work. So, in this chapter, we shall give an exposition of the teachings of *Vedānta* following the writings of swami Vivekananda and in the next chapter we shall try to explore the relation, if there is any, between Swami Vivekananda's *Vedānta* and the *Vedānta* system of ancient India. It needs to be remembered that the *Vedānta* system of classical India is not a monolithic system. There were nine to ten principal commentaries on the vedānta sūtra of Maharṣi Vyāsa. So, it remains to be seen that the practical *Vedānta* of Swami Vivekananda is based on which *vedānta* system.

Whether it is based on Advaita Vedānta', Viśiṣṭadvaita Vedānta or Dvaita Vedānta. Apparently, it seems that Vivekananda talks of Vedānta as the philosophy of oneness. So, Prima facie, it seems that Swami Vivekananda by the term Vedānta means Advaita Vedānta. But whether his own philosophy is based entirely on Advaita Vedānta or whether he has drawn upon the teachings of another Vedānta also will be discussed in the second chapter.

So, the question we need to address here is, what does swami Vivekananda means by Vedānta' and which teachings of Vedānta he accepts as central. Swami Vivekananda himself observes that the central thesis of Vedānta is expressed by the Vaidik *mahāvākya*-s, the scriptural statements. Namely, *Tattvamasi*. The statement *Tattvamasi* states Thou art that. That is, you are that pure consciousness. Now, if this *mahāvākya* expresses the central teaching of Vedānta, why did Swami Vivekananda consider this teaching to be an ideal. The reason is an ordinary person, never experiences himself of herself as identical with the divine consciousness or pure consciousness. So, this identity with pure consciousness can be real but it does not appear as real to any ordinary person. So, even if the ordinary person is in reality identical with pure consciousness that identity will not be realized by him, that is, he is not aware of that identity. When he becomes aware of that identity the teaching of Vedanta will be realized by his life. So, by realizing the ideal in a person's life the swami means the person must become aware of the identity between his own individual self and the divine self. Unless and until he becomes aware of the identity the teachings of Vedānta will not be realized in his life and it will not become practical. So, by the phrase making the ideal of Vedānta practical, Swamiji means that a person has to become aware of this identity which on the vedāntic view, actually exists in his individual self and the divine self.

When the Swami says that the ideal of Vedānta is practicable or realizable he means that every individual should become aware of this identity unless one become aware and also convinced of this identity one cannot shape one's own life in the light of this ideal. Shaping one's own life in the light of this ideal means to translate the philosophy of oneness and immutability into action. To translate the philosophy of oneness into action means every creature should be treated as one with that divine self. So, the swami observes that when the scripture says that 'you are That' it is imperative that we ought to know the identity rather than only being identical with pure consciousness.⁷ The real identity between pure consciousness and the individual consciousness is there. It already exists. So, there is no need to bring about the identity. The identity is not something which needs to be brought about. It is not a matter of transformation of the individual self. The individual self is already pure consciousness. But the individual must become self-conscious. He must become conscious of the identity of his own self with pure consciousness. Once man knows the identity of his individual self with *Brahman*, he strives to attain that state. The bone of contention of *Vedānta* is that man or any other living being is essentially one and the same soul, though apparently, they differ in their respective body-mind complexes and the degrees of manifestation of pure consciousness through those body mind complexes. But, as man is higher in the scale of evolution, he ranks above all other living beings. Vivekananda has remarked that the human soul in a human body is the only God to worship. At the same time, the Swami has specified that though each living being is veritably a temple, man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples.

⁷Mohanty, J.N., *Practical Vedānta*, p.-839

If the God seated in the temple of a human body can be realized and revered, then from that moment, there will be no bondage. But, if that God is not realized, then worship in any temple will not be fruitful.⁸ A question arises at this point if man is conscious of the presence of the divine self within him then why is not the identity between the individual self and highest consciousness already realized. Is he already aware of that identity but if the individual self is already aware of that identity then he must be liberated. Then, why does he suffer from pleasure, pain and all the contingent events of the ordinary bound existence?

The answer to this objection is present in classical Vedanta. The answer is every individual is conscious. Every sentient living being is conscious to a certain degree. If the individual were not consciousness, he would not have realized himself as I, as an individual. Man being the highest in the ladder of evolution, he is also conscious of himself as a sentient being, as a conscious individual. But, being conscious is not the same as being aware of one's own identity with the highest divine self. When one realizes one's own identity with the highest divine self, one also realizes the changes, the transformations and the miseries pertaining to the body-mind complex do not actually belong to his conscious self. When, man realizes all transformations all sufferings pertain either to the body, or the mind, or to the senses, he becomes conscious of the fact that no suffering, no change, no transformation actually pertains to his essentially inner consciousness. Only when he realizes, no suffering, no transformation pertains to his inner conscious essence, he becomes free from all sufferings and becomes liberated. As long as a person is not liberated, as long as a person exists in his bound state of existence,

⁸Swami Vivekananda, 2018, "Practical Vedānta" Lecture II, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.-2, p.-313.

he is not fully conscious with his identity with the divine self. But that does not imply that he is fully unaware that he is conscious. He is aware of the fact that he also is conscious. Unless, he were aware of his own consciousness, the world outside and the inner world could not have been presented to him. Because, the individual is the conscious subject, the world outside is visible to him and the inner world of the mind is also immediately presented to him. So, because the self is conscious, he can be aware of the external world and of the internal world of the mind. Thus, the individual is not fully unconscious, the individual is also conscious to a very high degree but this does not mean that the individual has fully realized his/her own potentiality, has become fully self-conscious and has realized her own identity with divine self. Thus, the self is realized at every stage of consciousness. ‘*pratibodhviditam matam*’⁹ In one word, we can state that *Vedānta* preaches monism where there is one life running throughout the entire universe. The same truth has been echoed in the *Upaniṣad*-s. *Chāndogyopaniṣad* says that everything is verily the *Brahman*. They are born out of *Brahman*, reside in it and at the end merge with it. This Truth is to be meditated upon quietly.¹⁰ Its significance lies in its realizability. In this sense, the term ‘practical’ can be applied to the *Vedānta* philosophy or to the philosophy of *Upaniṣad*-s. If the objective of the Vedanta philosophy is to realize the identity between the pure consciousness and the individual consciousness, then a further question arises that, are all the differences that appear to the individual consciousness real or not? The classic Vedanta says that the world is not ultimately real.

⁹ -,2015, Kenopaniṣad 2/4, in *Upaniṣad Granthāvalī*, ed. Swami Gambhirananda, Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya.

¹⁰ -,2015, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3/14/1 in *Upaniṣad Granthāvalī*, ed. Swami Gambhirananda, Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya- ‘*sarvaṁ khalvidam brahman tajjalāniti śā nta upā sita...*’

It is not as real as pure consciousness. Swami Vivekananda also remarks that the world appearing to us as many is actually not so, it is nothing but the manifestation of that One Self which is no other than *Brahman*. This theory has been expressed in the *Upaniṣad*-s in multiple ways.¹¹ In other words, the One is manifesting itself as many.¹² At the very beginning of his first lecture, Vivekananda has pointed out that the truths of the *Vedānta* have been realized by the sages who did not live a life of seclusion in the forests and caves. Rather, they led a busy, worldly life carrying out many duties. Yet, they had succeeded to discover the Highest Truth and had lived their lives accordingly. Citing this example, Swamiji had emphasized that the message of *Vedānta* can and must be realized and put into force by people from different walks of life. We quote here from The Complete Works: “These conceptions of the *Vedānta* must come out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the pure man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman and child, whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be.”¹³

Swami Vivekananda has given an argument in favor of his contention that the teachings of Vedanta can be realized in actual life. The Swami showed that there are actual instances in the history of the philosophy where the teachings of Vedanta employed to solve a real critical issue. Swami Vivekananda gave the example of *Bhagavadgītā* where

¹¹ -,2015, *Brhadaranyakopaniṣad*, 4/4/19 in *Upaniṣad Granthāvalī*, ed. Swami Gambhirananda, Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya- ‘*neha nanasti kincana*’.

¹² -,2015, *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 2/7/1 in *Upaniṣad Granthāvalī*, ed. Swami Gambhirananda, Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya- ‘*tadātmānam swayamkuruṭ*’.

¹³ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, “Vedānta in its application to Indian Life”, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.-3, p.-259

with the help of an example it was shown how the teachings of Vedanta can be translated into ordinary life.

The *Bhagavadgītā* is the advice of lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna motivating Arjuna to take part in the battle. .

Lord Kṛṣṇa reminds *Arjuna* of his solemn duty as a *kṣatriya* to engage in the ensuing battle in order to save the good, chastise the wicked and restore righteousness. Here, a question might arise as to why did Swami Vivekananda bring up the example of *SrīmadBhagavadgītā*.

Swami Vivekananda regarded *Bhagavadgītā* as the only authoritative commentary (*ekmātra prāmāṇika tīkā*) of the *Veda-s* narrated by Srikrishna. Krishna has also imparted Arjuna the lesson of performing duty with a disinterested (*niṣkāma*) mind without cherishing any desire to enjoy the fruits of the action performed. This lesson from the *Gītā* reminds us of Kant who says that we should undertake any task out of the sense of duty only with a detached spirit. Only such act will be considered as moral. The thought of any act which is driven by passion is aimed at the fruits it produces. As an obvious consequence, it loses its moral value. Again, keeping this thought in mind, there is a probability for any person not to opt for undertaking any action at all. Here, Lord Kṛṣṇa has cautioned Arjuna not to refrain from performing actions as that would lead to inactivity (*naiṣkarmya*) which is not at all desired. He maintains that duty should be undertaken with a mind of performing it for its own sake and for that to take place, calm of mind is foremost required. Citing the example from the *Gītā*, Vivekananda claims that the more a man is calm and balanced, the more is he able to accomplish any action perfectly as his mind is not ruffled by the turbulence of various passions. This is the secret of work (*karmarahasya*) as preached in the *Bhagavadgītā*. Attaining this state is

the goal of *Vedānta*, claims Vivekananda.¹⁴ It is the only philosophy which promotes the practice of disinterested action (*niṣkāma karma*) with the motive of pursuing duty for the sake of duty only. This is the only path through which an individual is able to serve humanity on the one hand and realize his own nature and thus attain the Highest Truth on the other hand.

Vivekananda has very aptly claimed that if Arjuna has been able to follow the message of *Vedānta* in the battlefield against all odds, ordinary men must try to carry out this message of *Vedānta* thoroughly in their relatively much less troubled lives.

Swami Vivekananda was aware of the fact that though every individual is capable of attaining this highest knowledge, but attaining this knowledge is not an easy task. It can be achieved only by an *adhikarī*, that is, by a person who is entitled to pursue the path of *Vedānta*. This realization can be attained only by a person who has already acquired the four sadhanas or *sādhana-chatuṣṭaya*. This four sadhanas are *nityānityavastu-viveka*, *ihāmutraphalavogavirāga*, *śamadamādiṣatsampatti* and *mumukṣutva*.

‘*Nityānityavastu-viveka*’ means the ability to distinguish the eternal from the non-eternal.

ihāmutraphalabhogavirāga means renunciation of all, this worldly and other worldly pleasures.

Śamadamādiṣaṭṣampatti refers to the six treasures of the mind. They are *śama* (control of the internal sense organs), *dama* (control of the external sense organs), *uparati* (renunciation), *titikṣā* (forbearance), *śraddhā* (reverence to the Guru and *Vedavākyas*) and *samādhāna* (concentration of the mind towards *śravaṇa* and its related affairs).

¹⁴ Swami Vivekananda, “Practical Vedānta”
Lecture 1, p.-286

śamādayastu śamadamoparititikṣā samādhāna
śradhyākhyāḥ/śamastāvachhṛavaṇadivvyatiriktaviśayebhyoḥ manaso
nigrahaḥ/damobāhyendriyānām tad vyatiriktaviśayebhyo nivartanam/nivartitānāmeteṣām
tad vyatiriktavisayebhya uparamanamuparatirathavā vihitānām karmaṇām vidhinā
parityāgaḥ titikṣā śītoṣṇadvandvasahiṣṇutā/nigrhitasya manasaḥ śravaṇādou
tadguṇaviśaye ca samādhi samādhānam/gurupadiṣṭavedāntavākyeṣuviśvāsaḥ
śraddhāḥ/mumukṣatvam mokṣechha”¹⁵

Swami Vivekananda observes that after becoming entitled to pursue the path of Vedānta an Adhikari must try to attend the highest, immediate awareness of Brahman by following the injunction *ātmā vai are draṣṭavyaḥ*....Here this *niyamabidhi* enjoins the *Adhikarī* to follow *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* which are particular forms of *tarkas* to attain *darśana* or *brahmasākṣātkāra*; *brahma-sākṣātkāra* which alone is the direct cause of liberation. Thus, by attaching the epithet ‘practical’ to *Vedānta*, the Swami means that the highest state is achievable by a person who pursues the path of Vedānta. It is by undergoing these practices that an individual is able to cleanse his mind of all impurities and then proceed to gain the knowledge of the self. A chapter titled as *sadhānadhyāya* is incorporated in the *Brahmasūtra* which deals with the means of attaining the knowledge of the *Brahman*. Mere theoretical doctrines fail to make a man

¹⁵ Yogīndra, Sadānanda, 2014, *Vedāntasāra*, ed. Loknath Chakraborty, Kolkata: Pashchimbanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, p.-70.

realize the Highest Truth. The scriptures echo the same point. ‘*yastu kriyāvān puruṣaḥ sa vidvān*’.¹⁶

By citing the example of *Śrīmadvagavadgītā* and by referring to the ways in which the identity with the supreme self can be realized even by an ordinary individual, Swami Vivekananda tries to establish his thesis that *Vedānta* does not preach any impracticable notion. The Supreme Truth is ideal no doubt but it can be realized and its knowledge can be applied in everyday life. When *Chāndogyopaniṣad* says ‘*tattvamasi*’ which means ‘That thou art’, it is implied that it is possible for an individual to realise that his self is identical with *Brahman*, the highest Reality. Since *Brahman*, being an established entity (*pariniṣṭhita vastu*) is eternal and its absence is inconceivable, it cannot be brought into existence just as an action is brought into existence by its performance by an agent. Hence, there is no question of *Brahman* being unreal or non-veridical owing to non-performance (*ananuṣṭhānavaśataḥ apramā*).

A person who has been able to comprehend the meaning of the phrase ‘*ayamātmābrahma*’ (this self is *Brahman*) or ‘*tattvamasi*’ (you are That) is one who has earned the capability of seeing *Brahman* or *ātmā* in all living beings and along with that, he regards everything to be an object of worship. “*sadā janānām hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ*”.¹⁷ *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* has explained this point clearly by saying that the seer who has been

¹⁶Shastri, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, 2014, *Vivekanandera Vedāntachintā*, Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture p.-145

¹⁷-, 2010, *Kaṭhopyaniṣada*, 2/3/17, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

able to restrain his sense-organs, gets rid of all types of sin and is bereft of hesitation, being engaged in serving the good of all creatures attains *Brahmanirvāṇa*. “*labhante brahmanirvāṇamṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇakalmaṣāḥ/ chhinnaidvadhā yatātmanaḥ sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*”.¹⁸

Vivekananda was of the firm conviction that if every man is made aware that his self is identical with the Divine Self, then he will be able to build faith upon himself. To do so, it is necessary to acquire knowledge of the self so that man can recognize who he really is. He will, then, notice that there is practically no distinction among people on the basis of race, caste, religion and even sex and also among different species of living beings. In fact, India was a country riddled with casteism at the time when Vivekananda lived. Indian society was hierarchical then where the *śūdra*-s were the down-trodden people deprived of all social amenities and treated inhumanely. Vivekananda claims strongly that each soul is potentially divine, but so long as man lacks that knowledge, he reposes faith in a personal God who is bestowed with human qualities. Had man been taught to repose faith in himself, then, the world would have been much more benefitted. Here, we must take note of one crucial point where Vivekananda differs widely from ancient Indian thought. In ordinary parlance, a man who lays faith in a personal God is regarded as an orthodox (*āstika*) person as against a heterodox (*nāstika*) who has no faith in such God. But Vivekananda has offered a novel interpretation by saying that a man who reposes faith in his own self is an orthodox person and a heterodox is one who lacks that faith. By saying this, he has laid ultimate emphasis upon ‘man’ who is the repository of infinite power in himself and has simultaneously tried to imbibe this spirit in every man so that he can prosper in all respects.

¹⁸-, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavagītā*, 5/25 ed. Nalinikanta Brahma Kartṛka, Kolkata: Navabharata Publishers.

2. Practical Vedānta as a Religion

In the first section of this chapter, we have shown following Swami Vivekananda that philosophy of ancient Vedanta was not only practicable but was also practiced in ancient times and can be practiced in modern times also. It can be applied to practice by every ordinary individual and by doing so, every individual can proceed towards the attainment of self-realization.

In this section of the paper, we shall show that this ancient philosophy of Vedānta is not only practical and practicable but a religion can be derived out of this philosophy of practical Vedānta and not only this philosophy of practical vedānta can be treated as a religion but this religion is a very special one. It has its differences from other religions.

The Swami notices a significant difference in the postulates of *Vedānta* from other religions.

Vivekananda lays emphasis on the point that *Vedānta* ignites the inner strength present in man whereas in some faiths, man is considered as a sinner, a miserable creature. The latter impression mars the spontaneous spirit of an individual. We are aware that individual self (*jīvātman*) is identical with the Absolute Self (*paramātmān*). It is in this sense that Vivekananda speaks that each soul is potentially divine. According to him, it is utter folly to ascribe weakness or sin to our own selves by saying or thinking that ‘I am weak’ or I cannot’ or I have committed a sin’. Human being commits mistakes and errors in his life. But life offers him huge scope to rectify himself. This is how he can progress forward. The more he will brood over his weakness and folly, the more will he be

drowned in the ocean of negativity. There is no concept of sin in *Vedānta* as it proclaims the divinity inherent in man. So long a man is not aware of the glory of the self within him, the life he leads is false and luring. It is only when he is aware of it that he will shine in his own radiance. Vivekananda maintained that man, the child of Immortality should abandon the feeling of weakness and sin from his heart. As the soul is ever-pure and blissful, it is desired of man to think of the inner strength, as that will revitalize him. We need to imbibe in us the glory of the eternal self which is encased with the mortal physical frame. Vivekananda has given a clarion call to throw back the concept of weakness and sin as these are very low degrees of manifestation of the ever-shining, eternal soul. Thus, the ideal of *Vedānta*, though quite sublime in thought, is thoroughly practical because it is not merely realizable but can be realized too if we seek to go beyond all suffering and negativity that apparently shrouds ordinary human existence. As said earlier *Vedānta* speaks of oneness. That the Truth is one but is considered as many has been iterated in the *Rg Veda* as “*ekam sadviprāḥ bahudhā vadanti agniṁ yamaṁ mātariśvanamāhuḥ*”¹⁹ long ago. It is imperative thus that the Truth in the form of *sat* (existence), *cit* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss) is present in manifold objects and termed as many by learned people. We can thus say that the same soul is present in a saint as well as in a dacoit, in a wealthy man as well as in a beggar, in a man and in a woman alike, or even in a man, an animal and a plant. It is the degree of its manifestation which varies from one person to another and even from one living being to another. The concepts of virtue and vice, weakness and strength, heaven and hell - all rest on that principle. Vivekananda has tried to bring out the ethical implication of the *Advaita* thesis

¹⁹ *Rg Veda* 1/164/46
<http://rgveda.en.wikipedia.org/archives/entries/rgveda>

that all beings are, in essence, one and the same. In his own words, "...in all our actions we have to judge whether it is making for diversity or for oneness. If for diversity we have to give it up, but if it makes for oneness, we are sure it is good.... Everything that makes for oneness is truth. Love is truth, and hatred is false, because hatred makes for multiplicity. It is hatred that separates man from man; therefore, it is wrong and false. It is a disintegrating power; it separates and destroys. Love binds, love makes for that oneness.”²⁰ So, in fact, we are in no position to humiliate other people as all are but different manifestations of the one and only soul and all are proceeding towards the same goal, sooner or later. It is through constant effort that man can ascend to a higher stage or he can even roll down if he manifests a lower degree of the power of his soul. Here, we are reminded of a sloka from *Śivamahimnaḥstotra* which declares that there are different paths like those of the three *Veda*-s, *Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, *Pāśupata* and *Vaiṣṇava*. While one man proclaims one path to be the best, another man claims the other path to be so. Thus, it can be seen that men of different temperaments and choices endeavour to reach the same goal following different routes just as different rivers flow into the same ocean.

“trayī sāṅkhyam yogaḥ paśupatimatam vaiṣṇavamiti

prabhinne prasthāne paramidamadaḥ pathyamiti ca

rucīnām vaicitryādṛjukuṭīlanānāpathajūṣām

nṛṇāmeko gamyastamasi payasāmarṇava iva.”²¹

²⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, ‘Practical *Vedānta*’ Lecture 1, *Collected Writings of Swami Vivekananda*, p.-298.

²¹ *Śivamahimnastotra* 7

<http://śivamahimnastotra.hi.wikipedia.org/archives/entries/śivamahimnastotra>

Vivekananda claims himself to be a *Vedāntic* socialist as he speaks of the unity of all souls and speaks in favor of abolishing the division among men on the grounds of race or religion or other discriminating factors. He says that a person practising the principles of *Vedānta* cannot but be a socialist. In fact, whatever privilege a man claims over another man is based upon his social status, possession of wealth or that of knowledge and above all in spiritual matters. But he reminds that each man is unique in his own way and each work performed earnestly yields great result. One might question as to how can the knowledge of the *Upaniṣad*-s reach people of all standards. Here we notice that the scriptures devise ways suiting each man's way. He says that if a man has the firm conviction that he is the self, then he will excel in any field of work he is engaged with. He says: "...whatever you do sincerely is good for you...let every one do what little he can. If the fisherman thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better student. If the lawyer thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on,"²² It is to be noted that Vivekananda did not do away with casteism as he felt that it is the nature of the society to be divided into several castes to facilitate its effective functioning. At the same time, he pointed out that there must not be any kind of sense of domination based on that caste division as the Lord is seated in the hearts of all men. Caste is a natural order; I can perform one duty in social life, and you another; you can govern a country, and I can mend a pair of old shoes, but that is no reason why you are greater than I..."?..."Wherever you go, there will be caste. But that does not mean that there should be these privileges....If you teach *Vedānta* to the fisherman, he will say, I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me as you have in you. And that is what we

²² Swami Vivekananda, 2018, "Vedānta in its application to Indian Life", *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* Vol. 3, p.- 260

want, no privilege for any one, equal chance for all; let everyone be taught that the divine is within, and every one will work out his own salvation.²³ Here we are reminded of the Kant's first categorical imperative: "Act and so act that the principle of your action may at the same time be willed to be a universal law". It stresses that the principle must be universalizable. At the same time, it speaks of the inherent dignity of human beings as rational agents. Each man should treat another as an 'end in himself' and not as means to the end.²⁴

Vivekananda has laid special emphasis on the point that the lives of animals are immortal too. The lowest animal and the highest man are the same with regard to the soul they each possess. Animals feel pleasure when adored and pain when abused just as men do. He maintained that *Vedānta* does not endorse the practice of using animals for food. Injuring an animal entails violence (*himsā*) which affects its brotherhood with human beings. Here, some may object that wild animals kill tame animals for food. The answer to this question is that nature has devised this food chain for healthy maintenance of the eco system. But man as the highest being in the order is able to comprehend that the same soul resides in all beings with difference in its manifestation. It is the feeling of love that binds man to other living beings, thinking them to be also a part of his greater self. Vivekananda was bold enough to declare that a God who is partial to some of his children called men and others called beasts is worse than a demon.²⁵ Here, we can recall the position of the materialist *Cārvāka* who has vehemently opposed the killing of animals in

²³ Vivekananda, Swami, "*Vedānta* in its application to Indian Life", p.-260

²⁴ Mohanty, J.N., 1994, 'Practical Vedānta' in *Swami Vivekananda A Hundred Years since Chicago*, ed. R.K. Dasgupta, Howrah: Ramakrishna Math, p.-841

²⁵ Vivekananda, Swami, 'Practical Vedānta', *Collected Writings of Swami Vivekananda*, p.-16

sacrifices following the scriptural injunctions which prescribe that animals thus slain will reach heaven. *Cārvāka* even dared the *Brāhmaṇa*-s to sacrifice their own parents to ensure their safe entry to heaven.

Another salient feature which distinguishes the Vedantic religion from other religions is the optimism inherent in the Vedantic philosophy. Swami Vivekananda maintained that belief in the infinite powers of the soul makes a man self-reliant. So long he is ignorant of it, he degrades himself to the lowest extent. But once he is aware of the presence of the all-powerful self in him, he is awakened and strives to raise himself beyond this petty life and develop all his potentials. We all know that each child is born with some or other potential. An all-round development of a child into an adult is necessitated by the blooming of all the potentials that lie dormant in him. For the potentials to flourish, an individual must, first of all, be taught to have faith in his own self, so that he can feel the presence of an infinite store of energy in him which can elevate him and change the entire course of his life. How can we feel the majesty of the soul? While the scriptures speak of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyasāna*, Vivekananda explains in a similar manner that man should, at the beginning, be left to hear that he is the Soul, the *ātman* which is the birthless, the deathless, the blissful, the omniscient, the omnipotent, the ever-glorious Truth behind everything “*ātmā vai are draṣṭavyaḥ*”.²⁶ Scriptural sentences proclaiming the glory of the self (*ātman*) are to be heard of *śrotavyaḥ śrutivākyebhyaḥ*²⁷ Repeated hearing of it will then run through his veins and

²⁶ Śāstrī, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, 2014, “Vivekanander Practical Vedānta”, *Vivekanander Vedāntachintā*, Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, p.157

²⁷ Śāstrī, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, “Vivekanander Practical Vedānta”, p.157

blood and merge with his very breath. Then the sentences should be analysed by rigorous reasoning.²⁸ Meditation on that Truth will fill the heart and it will bear marvelous fruit through speech and work. This realisation will transform an individual from an ordinary man to a saint, a deified human being. Swami Vivekananda warns us not to be meek and timid crying of one's own weakness only and praying to Gods seeking help. He emphasizes that all help and strength come from within.

3. Practical Vedanta as the Harbinger of Social Change

Vivekananda was born in the age of Indian renaissance. Nineteenth century was the age when pan-India was awakened by the clarion call to rise up and free India from the chains of foreign slavery. Vivekananda and other great men realized that common people were immersed in the slumber of ignorance of the glorious past of Mother India when she was prosperous in almost every sphere of life. They were oblivious of their own rich national heritage. Many social reformers came up with their unique ideas of reforming India in different fields of life. Swami Vivekananda, the wandering monk of India has travelled the length and breadth of India to have first-hand knowledge of her people, her culture. Through his journey, he had come across the fact that Indian people were totally oblivious of their own tradition of the *Veda-s* and *Upaniṣad-s*. The *Upaniṣad-s* abound in the knowledge of the Self, the primordial substance. What the *Upaniṣad-s* have preached has been realised by the ancient sages of India and have been transmitted from the

²⁸ Śāstrī, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, "Vivekanander Practical Vedānta", p.157

preceptors to the disciples down the ages. Vivekananda felt that the rich treasure of the *Upaniṣadic* wisdom need to be brought at the doorstep of the householders so that they would be enlightened and that would bring about a huge transformation in their lives. He has uttered the famous mantra from the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* “*uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nivodhata*”²⁹ to relive the sleeping spirit of his countrymen in order to awaken their consciousness so that they are inspired to reach the goal without halting. In the words of Swami Vivekananda “Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached”. In his own words – “Let the world resound with this ideal, and let superstitions vanish...You are the Pure One; awake and arise, O mighty one, this sleep does not become you....it does not befit you. Think not that you are weak and miserable. Almighty, arise and awake, and manifest your own nature”.³⁰

While Vivekananda lays emphasis on oneness, he stresses on the point that love is the binding factor. Just as love ties a mother to her child, a friend to another friend, it ties all men together and even animals too as all share the existence of the common thread of the self within them. Love is all-encompassing. Once hatred creeps in a man, the process of breaking apart starts. Someone might question as to why we should love each other and unite, refrain from inflicting harm on any fellow-being including men and animals. This question brings in the concept of *Vedāntic* morality. The answer to this question is that man should love his neighbour or his fellow being or even animals because all are his own selves reflected in other bodies only. Love comes out of the feeling of nearness.

²⁹ -, 2010, *Kaṭhopaniṣada*, 1/13/14, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

³⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, ‘Practical Vedānta’, Lecture I, *Collected Writings of Swami Vivekananda*, p.-297.

When someone loves another person, he feels the other person to be close to him. He feels his sorrow as well his happiness. It is in this sense that Vivekananda says “They only live who live for others...”. To cause harm to others is tantamount to inflicting injury upon one’s own self as there is no such entity as different from the self. Thus, whatever results in unification is a moral act and its opposite is considered as immoral. A question may arise as to how can we experience the presence of the self within us. The answer is self-evident. It is in and through the self that the world is known to us. First, I perceive myself and then do I perceive anything else present before me. Thus, my self is the closest entity to me and so with others too. This why *jīvātman* or the individual self is known as *pratyagātmā*. It is the one and only substance which permeates the entire universe. If we take it off, nothing remains. The self of *Vedānta* is the Almighty God, the only real thing in the universe. Everything except it is unreal. Vivekananda has placed man at the centre of all creation and has ascribed prophethood to him. He assured man of his inherent purity and strength and said in reverse that the greatest sin is to cherish the idea of weakness and sin in the heart. As the soul is beyond any bounds, its strength is limitless too. Since the Vedantic religion preaches the philosophy of love, it is the best creed to eradicate social injustice and to establish the ideals of equality and fraternity.

4. Practical Vedānta as a Non-dualistic and Non-ritualistic religion

In the second section of this chapter, we have shown following Swami Vivekananda that the vedāntic religion is a religion of love and in the third section we have shown that this religion of love can be deployed to bring about an egalitarian society.

In this section it will be shown that the religion of Vedanta is a non-dualistic religion that does not adhere to any essential distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped. Since this religion is essentially non-dualistic, it is non-ritualistic also, because all rituals presuppose duality.

We find several narratives in the *Upaniṣad*-s through which the description of *Brahman* is brought out. The God of *Vedānta* is the individual self (*jīvātman*) present in every living being. *Ācārya* Saṅkara has described the body as the abode of God and has described the self as residing in the body as *sadāśiva* God. “*deho devālayaḥ prokto jīvo devaḥ sadāśivaḥ*”.³¹ Vivekananda states candidly that though people build temples to worship God, the better, a much higher God resides in the living, conscious human body. He has gone to the farthest extent by saying that the whole universe is a temple where a man can worship as the *Brahman* or the self (*ātman*) is present everywhere, but human body is the highest of all temples, the Taj Mahal. In his own words, “the greatest of all altars is the living, conscious human body. To worship at this altar is far higher than any dead symbols”.³² Here we notice a paradigm shift from the usual notions of religion where the deity is placed on an altar in a place of worship and people worship him/her. By saying that the Lord is present in everything, Vivekananda has sought to explore the practical possibilities of religion. The light which is found shining in the eyes of a man who is pure at heart belongs to the Soul. It is the same light which shines in the celestial bodies too.

³¹ *Atmapūjā*, 8

³² Vivekananda, Swami, ‘Practical Vedānta’, Collected Writings of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.2, p.-307.

The *Mīmāṃsā* and the *Vedānta* schools of thought base their doctrines on the *Veda*-s. The former school deals with the *karma kāṇḍa* of the *Veda*-s, which are replete with various kinds of sacrifices which need to be performed by men who harbour various desires pertaining either to this world (*īhaloka*) or the other world (*paraloka*). They are instructed to perform them to attain their coveted objects. Strict adherence to the method of performance of various sacrifices is required for a man to attain his desired goal. Just as the desires are transient, so also are the durations of the fruits of the sacrificial acts. The desires propel them to undertake various sacrificial rites, which, in turn, yield fruits. All these are finite, the cause as well as the effect. Heaven and hell are finite as they have a name and form (*nāma-rūpa*). A finite cause will never produce an infinite effect, nor will an infinite cause yield a finite effect. On the other hand, the latter school abounds in the philosophical discussion of the Ultimate Truth. The veil of *māyā* (cosmic ignorance) covers the Truth which is present there already. The *Upaniṣad*-s speak of realising the eternal Truth, the Lord present in heaven and in hell, in life as well as in death alike by casting off the *Māyā*.

Another salient point is to be discussed. The dualists perform worship in a different form where there are two concepts of a worshipper and the worshipped. In the *karma kāṇḍa* of the *Veda*-s, we come across various kinds of sacrifices prescribed towards different deities to incur their blessings and thus fulfil the desires men cherish. These acts are not to be taken lightly. Those who perform these sacrificial rites reach the Absolute sooner or later as men proceed from lower truth to the higher Truth gradually. This point has been elaborated by Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavadgītā* “*yehapyanyadevatā bhaktā yajante sraddhayānvitāḥ/ tehapī māmeva kaunteya jyajantyavidhipūrvvakam*”³³ and also

³³ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, 9/23 ed. Nalinikanta Brahma Kartṛka, Kolkata: Navabharata Publishers.

in *Chāndogyopaniṣad* where Sanatkumara has taken Narada step by step (*sopānārohaṇanyāya*) towards *ākāśatattva* “*ākāśo vāva tejaso bhūyanākāśe vai sūryācandramasāvubhau vidyumnaḥsatrānyagnirākāśenāhuyatyākāśena śṛṇotyākāśena pratiśṛṇotyākāśe ramata ākāśe na ramata ākāśe jāyata ākāśamabhijāyata ākāśamupassveti*”.³⁴

To consider all living beings as equal in status with respect to the soul is known as *śamatva buddhi*. This idea has been explicated in the *Śrīmadbhāgavata*. In the latter text it has been stated clearly that worship of the idols only without serving the God present in all living beings in the form of the self (*ātmā*) spoils the very purpose of the act. It is like adding clarified butter (*ghī*) to the ashes (*bhasma*). “*yo mām sarveṣu bhūteṣu satyamātmānamīśvaram/hitvārthā bhajate maudyād bhasmanyaiḥ juhōti sah*”.³⁵ The Lord says in the *Bhagavadgītā* that a person who after restraining his sense-organs dedicates his life in the service of all the living creatures is able to attain Him *saṁniyamendriyagrāmaṁ sarvatra samabuddhayah/te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*”.³⁶ *Ācārya Śaṅkara* in his ‘*Vivekacīḍāmaṇi*’ has beautifully brought out the features of a knowledgeable person (*jñānī*) as one who is calm and gracious and does good to others like the spring with a spontaneous spirit. Having crossed the ocean of birth and death himself, he helps others achieve it without having any ulterior motive himself. *śāntā mahānto nivasanti santo vasantavallokaḥitam*

³⁴ -, 2010, *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 7/12/1, in *Upaniṣad*, Dvītiya Bhāga, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

³⁵ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, 3/29/22 ed. Nalinikanta Brahma Kartṛka, Kolkata: Navabharata Publishers.

³⁶ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, 12/4 ed. Nalinikanta Brahma Kartṛka, Kolkata: Navabharata Publishers.

carantaḥ/tīrṇā svayaṁ bhīmaḥbhavārṇavaṁ janān ahetunān yānapi tārayantaṁ".³⁷

Vivekananda has inherited this principle of seeing God (*śiva*) in all living beings from his *guru* (preceptor) in Sri Ramakrishna. He has expressed this view in the poem '*Sakhaṛ a Prati*' composed by himself in which he has spoken of serving living beings as the manifestation of the Lord (*śivajñāne jīva sevā*) :

Brahma hate kīta-paramāṇu, sarvabhūte sei premamaya

manaprāṇa śarīra arpaṇa kara sakhe, e sabāra pāye

Vahurūpe sammukhe tomara, chāḍi kothā khujicha
īśvara

*Jīve prema kare yeijana seijana sebiḥe īśvara*³⁸

Vivekananda has called mankind to surrender totally at the feet of the Lord who is present in every living being – from *Brahman* to the tiniest creature. The Lord, he says, is present in various forms before us and yet we search for him in vain. Only the person who loves His created beings are serving Him in the truest sense. In Vivekananda's interpretation, the Lord assumes many forms. We are grateful to Him for giving us the opportunity to serve Him in various forms. This theory is known as '*śiva jñāne jīva sevā*'. It implies serving all creatures with a mind to serving *Śiva*, the Lord. It is the Lord who takes the form of many and presents Himself before us. At the same time, Vivekananda cautions us that we have, practically, no power to help others. We can only do good to others in the name of serving the Lord present in them. According to him, a person, who gives alms to

³⁷ Srīmat Śaṅkarācārya, 2022, *Vivekaḍḍāmaṇi*, (tr.) Swami Vedantananda, Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya

³⁸ Swami Vivekananda, 1960, *sakhāra prati*, Swami Vivekananda *Vāṇī o Racanā, śaṣṭha khaṇḍa*, Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya, p. - 210

a beggar should be grateful to the latter as the Lord has assumed the form of a beggar to give him an opportunity to serve. We should be grateful for having this rare privilege to serve God which others have not. In the lecture delivered at the Ramesvaram temple Swami Vivekananda has clearly spoken that the best of all worship is to be clean in mind and doing good to others. Whoever sees *Śiva* in the poor, weak and sick people is able to worship *Śiva* in the true sense.³⁹ In the words of the *Kena Upaniṣad*, wise men, knowing the presence of *Brahman* in all living beings and objects, restrain themselves and attain immortality by crossing over the ocean of birth and death “...*bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicitya dhīrāḥ pretyāsmālokaḥ bhavanti*”.⁴⁰ Thus, the lesson which Vivekananda imparted was in line with the *Upaniṣad*-s (*ayamātmā Brahma*), the *Bhagavadgītā* (*sadā janānām hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ*), the *Bhāgavata* and even *Śaṅkara*’s statement (*jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ*). *Bharṭṛhari* in his *Vairāgyaśatakam* has advised people to engage in *Vedāntic* thought till he falls asleep or faces death. *asupterāmṛteḥ kālāṁ nayedvedāntacintayāḥ*.⁴¹ We find prescription of *karma* in *Pañcadaśī* where a seeker of Truth is asked to practice meditating on *nirguṇa Brahman*. This is how the scriptures have encouraged people to practise the attainment of the Supreme Truth which is manifested through living beings. It is true that the *Vedāntic* truth must be analysed through rigorous reasoning. Then it should be felt at heart that the God of *Vedānta* resides in all. It is the feeling for others which distinguishes a *yogī* from an ordinary person, says the *Bhagavadgītā*.
ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yoharjuna/ sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham saḥ

³⁹ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, “Address at the Rameshwaram Temple on Real Worship”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.- 3, p. - 157

⁴⁰ -, 2010, *Kenopaniṣad 2/5in Upaniṣad*, Prathama Bhāga, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁴¹ Bharṭṛhari, 2004, *Vairāgyaśatakam*, (tr.) Swami Madhavananda, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.

yoḡ paramaḥ mataḥ”.⁴² A person who is able to rejoice at other’s happiness and feel sorrow at another person’s grief is the only person who is to be called a *yogī* in the true sense of the term because only he has been able to establish a communion between his self with that of others. His heart becomes expanded to embrace all others’ hearts as his own. *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* is a text where we notice God to be imparting the knowledge of *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga*, *abhyāsayoga* which are but different ways of realising God, the Ultimate Truth hidden beneath finite beings. The term ‘*yoga*’ signifies a relationship which is to be built between the individual self and the Ultimate Reality.

Vivekananda emphasizes repeatedly that God resides in our own hearts from the beginning. His existence is the only truth and all the rest are false. The soul resides in everything present before us. It is present in the man and also in the woman, in the girl as well as in the boy. It is present in the old man walking with the help of his stick and also in a young man walking boldly. The soul is the living God, the only fact in the universe, says the *Śvetāśvaropaniṣada*, “*tvam strī, tvam pumānāsi, tvam kumāra uta vā kumārī/tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi tvam jāto bhavasi viśvatomukhaḥ*”.⁴³

While preaching the doctrine of Practical *Vedānta* and advocating the presence of the soul (the impersonal God) in everything in the universe, Vivekananda had hit out at the priestly class who had brought in the concept of the personal God to befool the ordinary mass and made them lay belief in that which would aid them in earning their livelihood. The trade of priestcraft in the temples and churches can only be stopped, he maintained, if a child is taught that the self in him/her is the only God that is to be worshipped day and

⁴² -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, 6/32 ed. Nalinikanta Brahma Kartṛka, Kolkata: Navabharata Publishers.

⁴³ -, 2010, *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4/3 in *Upaniṣad, Prathama Bhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

night. This practice will help regain self-confidence and fearlessness (*abhīṭh*) in people. The *Upaniṣad*-s preach us the message of *abhīṭh* (to be fearless) and ask us to shed cowardice and stand erect with vigour and strength as we are consciousness personified, birthless and immutable. Fear arises when a common man is taught to pray to God, an external entity is an authority who dispenses reward and punishment. But when man realises that the self in him is the only real thing in the universe and everything else is false, he is able to realise himself. Then he will be able to see the God in every living being which will eventually free him from all the shackles of bondage. The God of *Vedānta* is present before us in a concealed manner. He is the Eternal Witness (*sakṣī*) of the universe. He existing, the whole universe exists, says Vivekananda.⁴⁴ It is the only task of man to realise his own true nature and help others to do so.

Vivekananda was impressed by Lord Buddha's preaching, his all-embracing love towards all beings on earth. Though Buddhism does not lay belief in the *Veda*-s, his philosophy of suffering (*duḥkha*) and redemption from it through the attainment of *nirvāṇa* is close to the philosophy of the *Upaniṣad*-s. He does not endorse the theory of the self as an eternal substance but admits it to be a series of consciousness which is changing every moment by leaving a trail behind. Lord Buddha was silent on the question of the presence of God. Vivekananda was of the opinion that the Infinite Bliss can be grasped if we can ignore the finite, petty pleasures of our lives. In fact, Infinity which is our true nature is only re-discovered which lies dormant within us. So long we are ignorant of it, we undergo worldly suffering and remain bound. Vivekananda says '... It is better for us that we know we are God and give up this fool's search after Him; and knowing that we are God we become happy and contented...Give up all these mad

⁴⁴ Vivekananda, Swami, "Practical Vedānta" Lecture I, *The Complete Works*, Vol.- 2, p.-51

pursuits and then play your part in the universe, as an actor on the stage.’⁴⁵ In fact, the world presented before us is not real as it seems to be as we, the ignorant mass, is veiled by *Māyā*, the cosmic ignorance. The sooner we realise this fact, it is good for us and all apparent divisions on the basis of religion, caste, etc. will lose its ground. It is the outlook that matters most. All our search after God...was a search after our real nature.⁴⁶

It is a common practice among ordinary men to lay faith on a personal God but Swami Vivekananda questions as to how can a man worship an unmanifested God in an idol if he cannot worship the God manifested as his brother? Here, we notice Vivekananda speaking in line with the Christ who says that worship must first begin from home where God is vividly present in one’s own brother. In fact, it is utter folly to worship images as God without considering our dear ones like parents, spouse, children and friends as visible manifestations of the living God. Vivekananda remarks that in this manner human relationship can be deemed as divine while on the other hand God can be looked upon as our father, mother, child or even our beloved. It is a common practice to consider God as our near one. The idea of worshipping God as our mother is even higher than the concept of worshipping Him as our Father. To consider Him as our friend is a higher form of worship but to regard him as the Beloved is the highest form of worship where the lover is seen in perfect union with his beloved. Thus, the presence of God can be felt in everything we see around us. Those who worship God in idols and through ceremonials will reach the Truth no doubt, but it shall take more time. Those who worship God in His creation are able to attain the Truth directly. The truth of *Vedānta* is verily within us. It is

⁴⁵ Vivekananda, Swami, “Practical Vedanta” Lecture I, p.-57

⁴⁶ Vivekananda, Swami, “Practical Vedanta” Lecture I, p.-57

our solemn task to make it manifested in tangible form. It is in this sense that *Vedānta* speaks of the goal not as salvation but as realisation of the Truth which was already there, lying hidden and unrealised so long.

Vivekananda has tried to infuse the glory of the eternal self-lying within us in numerous ways. His first instruction was to be bold and steady as the self is ever-pure and luminescent. It is only when we forget our own magnificence that we feel ourselves to be weak. We are born human. Vivekananda insists repeatedly that we should uplift ourselves in order to make our lives divine by realising our own nature. As the same self is present in every being, it is imperative that we have no right to look down with contempt upon others. The same point is also reiterated in *Īśopaniṣad* that a person who views all living beings in his own self and himself in others too in like manner is a person who has no hatred or aversion towards others. *yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanyevānupaśyati/sarvabhūteṣu cātmānam tato na vijugupsate*⁴⁷

The *Upaniṣad*-s explain the nature of the Truth through various stories. In the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, we find vetaketu asking his father ṛṣi Uddālaka about the nature of the self-same Truth and his father replying with the help of various examples. ‘That which is the fine cause in all these things, of It are all these things made, That is the All, that is Truth, thou art That, o Śvetaketu. ...As a bee,...gathers honey from different flowers, and as the different honeys do not know that they are from various trees, and from various flowers, so all of us, having come to that Existence, know not that we have done so.....,that which is that subtle essence, in It all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self and thou, O Śvetaketu, art That. As the rivers, when they are in the ocean, do

⁴⁷ -, 2010, *Īśopaniṣad* 6 in *Upaniṣad*, Prathama Bhāga, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

not know that they have been various rivers, even so when we come out of that Existence, we do not know that we are That. O Śvetaketu, thou art That.’⁴⁸

While asking us to have faith in our own selves, Vivekananda has tried to part away with any theistic religion which lays belief in a personal God and has urged to test that religion with the tool of reason. He claims that if that God is beyond nature and again if this nature is produced out of the command of that God from nothing, then this theory will sound unscientific. So, the source of religion cannot be traced beyond the physical world. It has to be searched within. Anything should be explained from its own nature and then only can any scientific conclusion be arrived at. In this manner, it can be said that though the cause and the effect are in reality two entities, they are in principle one and the same. The difference between them lies in that the effect is nothing but the cause in another form.

The world which we see before us every day is in continuous change and is known as the phenomenon. And there is also something behind it which does not undergo any change. It is known as noumenon. While the dualists admit both the phenomenon and the noumenon as real, there are others who admit either the phenomenon or the noumenon. The monistic theory of *Vedānta* admits that there cannot be two realities. It explains by saying that there is, in reality one principle which is unchangeable. But it appears as changing. When we mistake a rope to be a snake, the snake appears to us as real. It is the phenomenon. But, when the knowledge of rope comes into being, the snake disappears. It implies that once the noumenon is revealed, the phenomenon is obliterated. The realist

⁴⁸Vivekananda, Swami, “Practical Vedanta” Lecture I, p.-62

sees the phenomenon or the world as it appears to us. It is ever-changing. But the idealist searches for the noumenon, the unchanging reality behind all changing events. The personal God is limited but the impersonal God transcends all limitations. When Uddālaka points out to his son Śvetaketu ‘You are That’ (*tattvamasi*), he refers to the Impersonal Being⁴⁹ present in him which is akin to the God whom we search throughout our lives in the universe. The bone of contention of the entire philosophy of the *Vedānta* philosophy is that though living beings are countless, each having a name and a form, they share a common basis or origin in terms of the one and unchanging reality. Among all creation, man is the only thinking being who has the capability to distinguish between the real and the unreal, the transient and the intransient, the true and the false. So long we think ourselves to be separate from each other, we are not secure. But when we think ourselves to be in conformity with the One, it is of utmost beneficence to us. We have stated earlier that Vivekananda endorses belief in one’s own self as that is the only tangible reality. Later he affirms that instead of laying belief in millions of fictitious gods, it is far better to be an atheist (where atheism means disbelief in God).

We are, in reality, that Infinite Being who is being manifested through innumerable forms. It is through thorough analysis and critical thinking that we are able to acquire knowledge of our own strength and repose faith in it. All knowledge comes from within. It was already there in our minds and is gradually unfolded.

Regarding the existence of the soul, the *Vedāntist*-s and the Buddhists share radically different views. The former sect believes in the presence of an eternal, unchanging substance called soul which can be validated by the argument of self-identity – ‘I am I’

⁴⁹ -, 2010, *Chāndogya Upanisad* 6.8.7 in *Upaniṣad, Prathama Bhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, ‘*saḥ yaḥ eṣo haṇimaitadātmyamidaṁ sarvaṁ tat satyaṁ sa ātmā tattvamasi Svetaketo iti bhūya eva mā bhagavān vijñāpayatviti tathā somyeti hovāca*’.

(the 'I' of yesterday is the same as the 'I' of today and again the 'I' of today is the same as the 'I' of tomorrow. When it is said 'I do' or 'I go', doing or going are activities which change with respect to the subject 'I'. Herbert Spencer advocates this view. The other sect does not believe in any unchanging substance as the only real entity and claims to know only the changes. According to them, the unchanging can neither be felt nor known. The modern Comtists and the modern agnostics follow this view. The Buddhists' view of knowing only the changing qualities like the feelings and sensations is termed as the 'soul'. The *Advaitin*-s reconcile by saying that the two concepts of substance and qualities cannot be separated from one another and that they are simultaneously known. In reality 'substance' and 'quality' are not two distinct entities. Just as noumenon is not different from phenomenon and that the former takes the form of the latter, similarly the soul as an unchanging substance and the feelings and perceptions and the body itself which keep on changing seem to be different but are actually not so. The soul cannot be conceived of without conceptualising the body and its functions.

From time immemorial there have been two layers of personality. The first group consists of those who are born to think for the welfare of others and serve them good and to do so, they do not hesitate for a while. They are not bound within the narrow limits of individuality and are the benefactors of the human race. On the other hand, there are still others who are bound only within their own circle and think of nothing else except their own benefit and progress. The more a man thinks for others and executes good to them, the less time he finds for his own self. Thus, we find the presence of two factors 'I' and 'not-I'. While the former is engaged in selfishness and acquisition; the latter is inclined to selflessness and renunciation. Vivekananda recalls Lord Buddha who, though a non-believer in the existence of a personal God and a permanent entity called soul was a philanthropist. He preached a philosophy in which ethics played a major part in shaping

the lives of human beings rather than engaging in useless metaphysical arguments. He said that if someone is found lying hurt, it would be a prudent action to start his treatment first instead of wasting time in useless talks in enquiring about the cause of his injury.

At length, *Vedānta* shows man his inherent strength. As man is ignorant of his own nature, he commits mistakes over and over again and remains where he was. It is when he starts knowing his inner nature that he starts to free himself from the bondage he is in and finally liberate himself from the cycle of life and death and attain immortality. Vivekananda wishes that ‘every one of us had come to such a state that even in the vilest of human beings we could see the Real Self within, and instead of condemning them, say, Rise thou effulgent one, rise thou who art always pure, rise thou birthless and deathless, rise almighty and manifest thy true nature....Truth is the nature of all souls....But it has to be made practical, to be made simple,... so that it may penetrate every pore of human society, and become the property of the highest intellects and the commonest minds of the man, woman and child at the same time.’⁵⁰

⁵⁰Vivekananda, Swami, “Practical Vedanta” p. 106-108.

Chapter Two

Practical *Vedānta* and *Advaita Vedānta*

In the first chapter of the present thesis, I have tried to give an exposition of the main thesis of Practical Vedānta following Swami Vivekananda's lectures and writings.

Swami Vivekananda's account of his own philosophy makes it quite evident that the Swami characterized his own line of thought after one particular philosophical system of classical Indian philosophy, namely Vedānta. Though he always tried to ground his thought in the wisdom of ancient India, yet he highlighted the difference between his own thinking and the classical philosophical system by adding the epithet 'practical', to the title 'Vedānta'. The addition of this epithet implies that the philosophical system of Vedānta is not merely practicable but also should be practiced. In fact, Swami Vivekananda showed the way how a religion for the entire humanity can be developed out of the ancient philosophy of Vedānta. This religion will have the potentiality of acting as a guiding force for mankind across castes and creeds, borders and civilizations. This religion will be a non-dualistic, non-ritualistic one that does not recognize any essential difference between god and man, because it ascribes divinity to the lowest of creatures.

The foregoing account of Practical Vedānta, however, gives rise to some points.

First, the term 'Vedānta' does not stand for a single unilinear philosophical system. Several scholars of Vedānta were prevalent in ancient India and it is not clear at the outset after which school of Vedānta Swami Vivekananda wanted to baptize his own philosophy.

Second, it is quite likely that Swami Vivekananda draws upon several lines of Vedāntic philosophy. But if this is true then a further issue arises: 'Whether these different strains

of thought combine in Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of Practical Vedānta to form a coherent whole.

I shall try to explore Swami Vivekananda's thoughts more closely with a view to finding answers to the very basic and foundational issues. In short, I shall endeavour to look into the philosophical foundations of Practical Vedānta in this chapter and also in the next chapter.

One might argue that the answer to the first question is so evident that it is not a genuine question. Swami Vivekananda has emphasized on innumerable occasions that the Vedāntic philosophy is a non-dualistic philosophy preaching oneness of all conscious beings, this philosophy identifies every sentient being with the supreme being. Advaita Vedānta is the only school of Vedānta that admits the identity of every sentient being with the one, non-dual pure consciousness.

Advaita Vedānta alone preaches oneness of all sentient beings and the oneness of all beings with the absolute supreme being. Thus, there can be no doubt about the fact that the practical Vedānta of Swami Vivekananda bears the legacy of Advaita Vedānta.

Hence there is no point in raising the question 'On which school of Vedānta the Swami based his own thoughts?'

The answer to this objection is not as obvious and simplistic as the objection is. The tour de force of the great Vedāntins like Mahārṣi Vyāsa, Ācharya Śaṅkara, Padmapādācārya, Vācaspati Miśra, Prakāśatmayati led the philosophy of one supreme being propagated in the upaniṣads to the logical outcome, where the world is considered as *mithyā* or *anīrvacanīya* and our ordinary waking experience of the world is treated as equally falsifiable as illusory or dream experience. The only difference between world experience and dream or illusory experience is that the latter is falsifiable in the waking state, but our

world experience is not. It remains to be investigated whether Swami Vivekananda endorsed all these technical and counter-intuitive doctrines of classical Vedānta. The present chapter on Practical Vedānta and Advaita Vedānta purports to address this and other related issues, before addressing these issues we need to have a brief exposition of these features of Advaita Vedānta which set it apart from other schools of vedānta. This brief exposition is not meant to be an introduction to the very well-known philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. Rather, it aims at placing the classical version Advaita Vedānta vis-à-vis Swami Vivekananda's version of Practical Vedānta, so that the commonalities and differences between these two theories become quite evident.

This chapter falls into two major subsections, the first of which gives a brief exposition of the distinctive features of the classical version of Advaita Vedānta and the second attempt is to track these strains of thought in the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.

1. Advaita Vedānta: Salient Features

The Vedānta philosophy is also known as *uttarmīmāṃsā* or *Śārīrakamīmāṃsā* and is contrasted with the *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* school whose aphorisms are composed by Maharṣi Jaimini.

But why is the Vedānta philosophy also known as the *uttarmīmāṃsā darśana*?

The answer to this question lies in the meaning of the term *mīmāṃsā*. Vācaspati Miśra defines this term as “*pūjītavicāravacano mīmāṃsa śabdaḥ par mahapurūṣārthahetubhūtasūkṣmatamārthanirnayaphata vicārasya pūjitatā*”⁵¹ This definition identifies mīmāṃsa with the debate regarding the meanings of those scriptural

⁵¹ Vācaspati Miśra, 1982, *Bhāmatī*, in *Brahmasūśāṅkarabhāṣyam*, Anantakṣṇa Sāstri (ed.), Vārāṇasī: Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office, 1.1.1, p.46

sentences which are extremely difficult to comprehend and which lead to the knowledge of that reality, knowing which a subject may attain the highest end of human life (*paramapuruṣārtha*). Thus, both the *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* of Maṇḍiśi Jaimini and the *uttarmīmāṃsā* of Maṇḍiśi Bādarāyana aim at a coherent interpretation of the Vedas, with a view to attaining knowledge of the highest end of human life and the means to attain that end.

Before I proceed to explain the meaning of the term Vedānta we need to have some idea of the scriptures which are interpreted by both the Pūrvā and the Uttara Mīmāṃsakas and which are considered as the repository of highest wisdom by Swami Vivekananda.

2. The Primary Sources of Uttaramīmāṃsā

The *Veda*-s are considered to be the sourcebook of Indian culture and civilisation. The term ‘*Veda*’ is etymologically derived from the verbal root (*dhātu*) ‘*vid*’ which, in the primary sense, means knowledge (*jñāna/vidyā*) and, in the secondary sense, denotes the *Vedic* sentences

(*vedavākyarāśi*). Still a formal definition of the term ‘*Veda*’ has been provided as ‘*mantrabrāhmaṇayorvedanāmadheyam*’⁵² by Āpastamba meaning that the *Veda*-s are constituted of *mantra* and *brāhmaṇa*. In his *bhāṣya* on *Mīmāṃsā sūtra*, Śāvaraswāmī has stated in similar line ‘*mantrāśca brāhmaṇam ca vedah*’.⁵³ The *Veda*-s are considered to be without any flaw (*bhrama-pramāda-vipralīpsā-karaṇāpaṭava śū nya*) which are

⁵² Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra 24/1/31

⁵³ Śāvarabhāṣya 2/1/33

<http://mīmāṃsā-darśana-of-Jaimini-with-śāvara-bhāṣyam.hi.wikipedia.org/archives/entries/mīmāṃsā-darśana-of-jaimini-with-śāvara-bhāṣya/> (visited on 15.02.2024)

committed by human beings. It is the highest source of knowledge and is self-validating. (*svataḥpramāṇa*).

The *Veda*-s are broadly divided into two parts - the *karma-kāṇḍa* and the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. *Maharṣi Jaimini* has composed the philosophy of “*Pūrvvamīmāṃsā*” in order to ascertain the significance of the *karma kāṇḍa* after refuting the objections raised against it. *Bhagavāna Vādarāyaṇa* has, on the other hand, composed the philosophy of “*Uttaramīmāṃsā*” to establish the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* after refuting the objections raised against it. We find the presence of various deities in the *karma kāṇḍa* to whom various sacrificial acts are ordained to be performed by man who cherishes various desires in his mind. But, in the *Upaniṣad*-s which comprise the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, we notice the turn inwards towards the knowledge of the self (*ātman*) which is most dear to man.

The *Upaniṣads* constitute the concluding parts of the *Veda*-s and are hence known as *śruti-prasthāna*. The *Bhagavadgītā*, as narrated by Śrīkṛṣṇa, constitutes the *smṛti-prasthāna* where different paths of achieving the highest truth are laid down namely that of action (*karma*), devotion (*bhakti*) and knowledge (*jñāna*). Last but not the least, the *Brahmasūtra* of *Vyāsa* constitutes the *nyāya-prasthāna*. It is involved in the analysis of the *Upaniṣadic* sentences by means of logical reasoning and establishing the position of the *Vedānta* after refuting the objections raised by the opponents. Though there is a saying “*sarvvopaniṣatsamādhānārthaṁ pravṛttaḥ sūtrakāraḥ*”⁵⁴ which means that a person who composes the aphorisms (*sūtra*) endeavours to strike a balance among the various *Upaniṣad*-s, in fact, there exist different interpretations of *Vyāsa*’s *sūtra* and each school claims its own interpretation of *Vādarāyaṇa sūtra* to be the only valid one.

⁵⁴ Śrīśrīmanmaharṣikṛṣṇadvaipāyanavādarāyanabhagavadvedavyāsa, 1999, *Vedāntadarśanam, śāṅkara bhāṣya*, prathamah adhyāyah, ed. swāmī Chidghananananda Puri o vedāntavāgīśahḥ Sri Ananda Jhā nyāyācārya, Kalikata:Udbodhan Karyalaya, p.-28

Ācārya Gauḍapāda the most notable Vedāntin after Vyāsa is the author of the *Māṇḍūkya kārīkā* which is a text on *advaitavāda* based on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. The *Brahmasūtra*, also known as *Vedantasūtra* or *Śārīrakasūtra* or *Vyāsasūtra* has been commented upon by nine commentators, each giving rise to a school of *Vedāntic* thought. Of them, the principal schools are monism (*advaitavāda*) of *Ācārya* Śaṅkara, qualified monism (*viśiṣṭādvaitavāda*) of *Ācārya* Rāmānuja and dualism (*dvaitavāda*) of *ācārya* Madhva. *Ācārya* Śaṅkara is the author of the *Śārīrakabhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtra* where he has taken different *Vedic* sentences as the subject matters in different chapters and analysed them.

3. The Meaning of the term Vedānta

Now, we must first try to know the connotation of the term ‘*vedānta*’. Sadānanda Yogīndra in his text *Vedāntasāra* has offered the definition of ‘*vedānta*’ in the following manner - “*vedāntonāma--upaniṣatpramāṇam tadupakāriṇī śārīrakasūtrādīni ca*”.⁵⁵ The meaning stands as follows: The primary meaning of the term *Vedānta* is upaniṣad pramāṇa and its second meanings are texts such as *Śārīrakasūtra* and *Śārīrakabhāṣya*. The term ‘*Upaniṣad*’ is composed of two prefixes ‘*upa*’ and ‘*nic*’ along with the verbal root ‘*sad*’ which is followed by the suffix ‘*kvip*’. The prefixes ‘*upa*’ and ‘*nic*’ denote proximity or *sāmīpya* and definitive knowledge or *niścayātmakas jñāna* respectively. The term ‘*upaniṣatpramāṇam*’ bears two meanings. In the first case ‘*upaniṣada eva pramāṇa*’, the verbal root form ‘*sādayati*’ present in the term ‘*Upaniṣad*’ bears three meanings: - (a) *saṃsārasāratamatim śithīlayati* (loosening the belief in the reality of the worldly tie, (b) *saṃsāravījam avidyām unmūlayati* (eradicating *avidyā* or ignorance

⁵⁵ Sadānanda Yogīndra, 2014, *Vedāntasāra*, ed. Loknath Chakraborty, Kolkata: Pashchimanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, p.-3.

which is the root cause or *vīja kāraṇa* of *saṃsāra* or this worldly life) and (c) *ātmavarūpaṃ gamayati* (leading us to the knowledge of the nature of the self). The Supreme Being (*Parameśvara* or *Brahmacaitanya*) also known as *pratyagātmā* is closest to an individual (*jīva*) and hence the prefix ‘*upa*’ designates the *jīvātman* (individual self). Thus, *Upaniṣad* itself denotes such direct knowledge (*aparokṣa jñāna*) of the self (*ātman*) which, by eliminating our ignorance aids in renouncing the worldly bondage and eventually leads us to the knowledge of the Supreme Self. In the second case ‘*Upaniṣada yatra pramāṇa*’, those concluding texts of the Vedic literature are meant which embody the knowledge of the self. The *Brahmasūtra* is also known as *Śārīrakasūtra* in which the term ‘*śārīraka*’ refers to *jīvātman* or the individual self who is present within the body or *śarīra* and manifests himself from within - ‘*śarīre bhava iti śārīrah*’. The treatise *Śārīrakasūtra* expounds the nature of the self which is encased within the body (*śarīra*). The word ‘*śārīra*’ is derived from the word *śarīra*. It refers to the consciousness as manifested through the body of a sentient organism. The term ‘*śārīraka*’ is derived from the word ‘*śārīra*’ with the suffix ‘*ka*’ added to it. The suffix may mean either of the following two things. First, it may express the same meaning as the word ‘*śarīra*’ or it may signify ugliness. The body of an individual (*jīva*) through which consciousness manifests itself is considered as ugly (*kutsīt*) when it is subject to decay, disease and death. It is to be noted that the consciousness which is manifested through the body is not treated as ugly. Next, the *Bhagavadgītā* is also considered as a sourcebook on the knowledge of the self. Thus, we can say that the primary meaning of the term ‘*vedānta*’ is ‘*upaniṣatpramāṇa*’ and in secondary sense, the term ‘*vedānta*’ refers to those texts where the knowledge is contained. The term ‘*Upaniṣad*’ refers to *ātmavidyā* or the direct knowledge (*aparokṣa jñāna*) of the self or *ātman*.

4. The Superimposition between the Self and the Not-self

Based solely on the *Śruti*, *Ācārya* Śaṅkara has propounded the theory of *advaitavāda* (monism) in which he subscribes to the position that, apart from *Brahman* which is without any form or attributes (*nirākāra*, *nirguṇa*, *nirvviśeṣa*), there is no other substance which is transcendently real (*pāramārthika sat*).⁵⁶ The term ‘*advaitavāda*’ denotes the philosophical position where the Highest Reality (*Brahman*) is devoid of any division or parts. Whatever is divided into two parts is called *dvītam* (*dvidhā + itam*). The term ‘*dvaitam*’ means that which has two parts (*dvītasyabhāvaḥ=dvaitam*) and that which is devoid of any division is monistic (*na dvaitam=advaitam*).⁵⁷ By the term ‘*advaita*’ is meant the *pratyagātmā* which stands out to be real only as the locus of everything (*sarvvādhiṣṭhānabhūta*) after the negation (*niṣedha*) of all duality. He is bereft of the three kinds of difference – homogenous (*svajātīya*), heterogenous (*vījātīya*) and internal (*svagata*) and is complete by itself (*svataḥ paripūrṇa*).

The first chapter known as *jijñāsādhikaraṇam* starts stating that in order to attain *mokṣa*, the ultimate goal of human life, *vicāra* of *Brahman* is required. There is a doubt (*saṁśaya*) whether *Brahman* is to be judged or not. The statements of *Vedānta* namely “*ātmā vai are draṣṭavaḥ śrotavyaḥ...*”⁵⁸ are the subject of discussion. Where *ātmadarśana* (realization of the self) is the *phala* (fruit) to be attained, its *sādhana* (means) namely *śravaṇa* (hearing of the *Vedānta* sentences) is ordained in the scriptures. By *śravaṇa* is meant *anukūla nyāyavicāra* (favourable analysis) of the *Vedāntavākya*-s

⁵⁶ Śrīśrīmanmaharṣikṛṣṇadvaipāyanavādarāyanabhagavadvedavyāsa, 1999, *Vedāntadarśanam*, *śāṅkara bhāṣya*, prathamah adhyāyaḥ, ed. swāmī Chidghananananda Puri o vedāntavāgīśah Sri Ananda Jhā nyāyācārya, Kalikata:Udbodhan Karyalaya, p.-27.

⁵⁷ “*dvidhetam dvītamityāhustadbhāvo dvaitamucyate tanniṣedhena cādvaitam pratyagvastvabhīdhāyate*”, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Bhāṣya Vārttika*, 4/3/1807

⁵⁸ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣada*, 2/4/5 in Upaniṣad, DwitīyaBhāga, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

which ascertain the significance of the one-and-only (*advitīya*) *Brahman*. Then a doubt crops up whether the *Brahman* whose significance is ascertained by the *Vedāntavākya*-s can be judged (*vicāryya*) or not (*avicāryya*)? The *pūrvvapakṣin*-s raise an objection here. They contend that as the material body (*jaḍa deha*) and the immaterial self (*ajaḍa ātmā*) are radically different from each other (*viruddhasvabhāvasampanna*) just like light (*āloka*) and darkness (*andhakāra*), there cannot be any *adhyāsa* (superimposition) of one on the other. We notice that *Brahman* is unanimously ascertained through the *śruti* “*satyaṁ jñānāmanantam brahma*”⁵⁹ and the self (*ātman*) through the feeling “*ahaṁ manuṣyaḥ*” (I am a human being). Even by analysing *Brahman*, *mukti* (liberation) cannot be attained through the identity of *Brahman* with the self. As an obvious consequence, in the absence of any doubt and the fruit, *Brahman* is not eligible to be analysed and there is no use in taking up such a study. The *siddhāntin*-s, in reply, say that the self-cognition (*ahambuddhi*) in the form “*ahaṁ manuṣyaḥ*” suggests the relation of identity (*tādātmyādhyāsa*) between the two by imposing the knowledge of the self on the body and creates the knowledge of the self. This superimposition is established through the knowledge in the form of “I”. The *Māṇḍūkya śruti* “*ayamātmā brahma*”⁶⁰ establishes *brahma* as *asaṅga* (who is solitary). Thus, we notice a doubt regarding the nature of *Brahman* and the self. The *śruti* “*tarati śokam ātmavir*”⁶¹ and the direct experience of learned men corroborate the truth regarding the nature of *mukti*. It signifies attainment of the knowledge of *Brahman* by means of the *Veda*-s. Thus, the *Veda*-s are required to

⁵⁹ -, 2010, *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 2/1/1 in *Upaniṣad*, DwitīyaBhāga, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁶⁰ *Āgama Prakaraṇa* 2

<http://māṇḍūkya śruti āgama prakaraṇa.youtube.com/entries/māṇḍūkya śruti āgama prakaraṇa/>

⁶¹ 2010, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* 7/1/3 in *Upaniṣad*, DwitīyaBhāga, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

analyse *Brahman* and hence study of this scripture is justified. Thus, we notice that from the standpoint of the opponents, *brahmavīcāra* need not be commenced and *mukti* is *upāyantarsādhya*, not *vicārajanya jñānasādhya*. On the other hand, the proponents advocate that *brahmavīcāra* needs to be started and *mukti* is *brahmavīcārajanya brahmajñānasādhya*.

5. The Definitions of Brahman

Janmādyadhikaraṇam is the second *sūtra* of the first *pāda* of the first *adhyāya* where the characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of *Brahman* are delineated. In the arena of philosophical discussion, any object is established with the help of *lakṣaṇa* (characteristic mark) and *pramāṇa* (proofs for its existence). Here a question arises as to how can the existence of *Brahman* be established if no *lakṣaṇa* can define it. Two sentences from the *Taittirīyopaniṣada* - ‘*yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante*’⁶² (from this *brahman* all these objects are born) and ‘*satyaṁ jñānāmanantaṁ brahma*’ (*Brahman* is the truth, the knowledge and the infinite) are taken into consideration in this regard. A doubt arises as to whether any of these sentences point to the *nimittopādānakāraṇa* (efficient and material cause) of *Brahman*. As a result, a question remains as to whether the *svarūpa lakṣaṇa* and *taṭastha lakṣaṇa* of *Brahman* are denoted by these sentences or not.⁶³ The

⁶²-, 2010, *Taittirīyopaniṣada*, 3/1 in Upaniṣad, DwitīyaBhāga, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁶³ *svarūpameva lakṣaṇaṁ svarūpalakṣaṇaṁ*’ is the defining characteristics of *svarūpa lakṣaṇa*. Anything which being the own nature of an object distinguishes the latter from other objects is known as *svarūpa lakṣaṇa*. ‘*satyaṁ jñānāmanantaṁ brahma*’ is the *svarūpa lakṣaṇa* of *brahmaṇ* as the substance like *satya* etc. being the nature of *Brahmaṇ* marks it as distinct. Śrīmad-dharmarājadhvarīndra, 1377 baṅgābda, *Vedānta-Paribhāṣā*, ed. Srimat Panchanan Bhattacharya Tarka-Sāṅkhya-Vedāntatīrtha, Kalikata:Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, pp.228-231

pūrvapakṣin-s are of the opinion that the phenomenon of birth, creation etc. presuppose the existence of the world which is different from *Brahman* and hence the sentence ‘*yato va...jāyante*’ cannot assert the *taṭastha lakṣaṇa* of *Brahman*. Likewise, the unabated (*akhaṇḍa*) *Brahman* cannot be grasped by *satya* (truth) and hence the sentence ‘*satyam...brahma*’ cannot be the *svarūpa lakṣaṇa* of *Brahman*. In answer, the *siddhāntin*-s reply that just as snake hood, even not being the property of a garland (*puṣpamālā*) signifies the latter owing to the imposition of the property of the former on the latter, similarly, being the cause of this imposed (*kalpita*) world is the *taṭastha lakṣaṇa* of *Brahman*, though this *taṭastha laksana* of *Brahman* is not an actual property of *Brahman*. Again, just as the same man named *Devadatta* can be designated differently as father, son, brother or son-in-law without any inconsistency, likewise, the terms ‘*satya*’ etc. refers to the Supreme Entity as its *svarūpa lakṣaṇa*.

The *sūtra* ‘*janmādasya yataḥ*’⁶⁴ means ‘from which it is caused’. The sentence ‘*yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante*’ (from where all this material world is born) is the topic of discussion here. When a doubt arises as to whether this is the *lakṣaṇa* of *Brahman* or not, the *pūrvapakṣin*-s argue that as *Brahman* has no attributes (*dharma*) and its nature is not established (*siddha*), phenomenon like birth (*janma*), being associated with the world (*jagat*) is not the *lakṣaṇa* of *brahman*. In reply, the *siddhāntin*-s state that the term ‘*asya*’ means the world which is present to us in perception, the term ‘*janmādi*’ means that which is *janma* or origination (*utpatti*) is *ādi* (first) along with *sthiti* (existence) and *nāśa* (destruction) and the term ‘*yataḥ*’ means from which omniscient (*sarvvajña*) and omnipotent (*sarvvaśaktimāna*) cause, this takes birth.

⁶⁴ Vyāsa, 1982, *Brahmasūtra*, 1.1.2

Though *Brahman* is basically devoid of any attribute (*nirguṇa*) at the transcendental level, it possesses attributes and becomes *saguṇa* at the transactional level under the power of ineffable (*anirvacanīya*) *māyā*. Thus, there is no inconsistency between its two natures. In the phrase ‘*yato...jāyante*’ the *śruti* has maintained the ordering of the phenomena of *janma* (birth), *sthiti* (existence) and *nāśa* (destruction) in the life of an individual. This universe (*jagat*) is expressed with name and form (*nāmarūpa*). It is associated with many agents (*karttā*) and enjoyer (*bhoktā*) and is the locus of space (*deśa*), time (*kāla*), *nimitta kriyā* (*kāryakāraṇa*) and *phala*. The nature of the creation of the universe is beyond the mind’s capacity of conception.

Brahman is said to be the cause of its origination, existence and annihilation. It is to be noted that the omniscient and omnipotent *Brahman* is the efficient cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*) of this universe. *Brahman* as the material cause (*upādāna kāraṇa*) of the universe has been dealt with in another chapter named *prakṛtyadhikaraṇa* (1/4/7). How can the attribute less (*nirguṇa*), *nirviśeṣa* and *aparīṇāmī* *Brahman* be both the causes of this universe? In reply to this question, the *siddhāntin*-s reply that just as in the case of *śuktirajata* (shell-silver), whatever presented to us as silver is shell indeed and that the ascribed silver is indeed the *lakṣaṇa* (defining mark) of shell, likewise, whatever is the cause of this universe is *brahman*. The ascribed (*kalpita*) universe which is non-existent at three times (past, present and future) is caused by *brahman*, its efficient cause. A question arises as to how can the *svayamprakāśa nirguṇa brahman* be the cause of this universe? In answer from the transactional point of view, the *siddhāntin*-s reply that, with the assistance of *viśiṣṭaguṇayuktā anirvacanīyā māyāśakti*, the *svayamprakāśa cinmātra nirguṇa brahman* appears to be *saguṇa*, *sarvajña* and *sarvaśaktimāna* and the *māyā*, with the aid of *brahman* transforms into the form of *jagat* (the universe). *Māyā* is thus the *parīṇāmī upādāna* and *Brahman* the *vivarta upādāna* and *adhiṣṭhāna* (locus) of the world

(*jagat*). The *sarvvajña*, *sarvvaśaktimāna Brahman*, accompanied by the power of *māyā* becomes the *nimitta kāraṇa* (efficient cause) of the universe. The world is created out of *Brahman* which is associated with *māyā*, exists in it and finally merges with it at the time of dissolution (*pralaya*). Thus, it is established that *Brahman* as the *nimitta* and *upādāna kāraṇa* is one. *Yāska*, in his *Nirukta*, has spoken of six modifications which a positive, material substance undergoes namely *jāyate* (is born), *asti* (exists), *varddhate* (grows), *vipariṇamate* (undergoes change), *apakṣīyate* (wears out) and *naśyati* (is destroyed). All the stages take place in *Brahman*, as pointed out in the *Upaniṣad*. That the world is created out of *pradhāna* (*prakṛti* or the primordial nature) or from the atoms (*paramāṇu*) or from absence (*abhāva*) or even from the first *jīva hiraṇyagarbha* cannot be accepted. The creation of the universe cannot be caused by *svabhāva* either as the unconscious (*acetana*) *svabhāva* needs a conscious agent to work in different *deśa* (space), *kāla* (time) or *nimitta* for different kinds of material objects. Just as the *śruti* admits *brahman* to be that conscious entity, the *Naiyāyika*-s admit *īśvara* (God) who creates the world as an effect (*kārya*) with the help of *deśa*, *kāla* and *nimitta*. It is a wellknown fact that an effect (*kārya*) does not take place without an agent (*karttā*) and there is a relation of *vyāpti* (concomitance) between the former and the latter. Taking this relation as a precedence, the *Naiyāyika*-s postulate an inference in the form “*jagadidaṁ, sarvvajñeśvarakarttṛkaṁ, acintyaracanārūpatvesati kāryyatvāt, yannaivam tannaivam*” which states that this world is created by an omniscient God as it is an effect and its mode of creation is inconceivable by living beings like us. (Whatever is not created by God is not an effect capable of conception.) By citing this inference, the *Naiyāyika*-s claim the existence of the God as the creator of the world. But the *Advaitin*-s do not admit this inference and say instead that an effect is necessarily caused by *kṛti* or *prayatna* (volition) in an embodied self (*śarīrāvachhinna ātmā*). But as *parameśvara* or

supreme God is devoid of any body, He cannot be accepted as the creator of this world. According to them, the *śruti*-s are *pramāṇa* only with respect to objects lying beyond the senses and inference only acts as an aid to the *śruti*-s. The *Advaitin*-s say further that from the deliberation of the *Upaniṣadic* sentences, *brahman* is ascertained and finally *brahmajñāna* is established which is not possible from any inference. *Tarka* (reasoning) has been accepted only as an aid to *śruti*. Just as a man blind-folded by some robbers in the jungle is able to reach his home by following the instruction of a helpful person, likewise, an ordinary person who is immersed in the ocean of *saṃsāra* (worldly life) is able to ascertain the goal of life by adopting reasoning (*tarka*) of his preceptor's advice (*guropadeśa*) and is finally able to realise his own nature (*svavarūpa*).⁶⁵ Above all, *puruṣabuddhi* is also required according to the *śruti*. *Dharma* as well as *brahman* – both are known from *Vedic* sentences, But the difference lies in that while *dharmajijñāsā* is the subject matter of the *Mīmāṃsā* philosophy while *brahmajijñāsā* is the topic of discussion in the *Vedānta* philosophy. Hence, in the former case, *liṅgādi* sentences are *pramāṇa* while in the latter case, both *śruti* as well as *anubhava* are treated as *pramāṇa*. *Śruti* refers to the *Upaniṣadic* sentences while *anubhava* refers to the direct realization of *Brahman* by a person through the faculty of *antahkarana* in the form of 'ahaṃ brahmāsmi', inference in the form of *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. All these realisations endorse *Brahman* as a *bhūtavastu* which is *pūrvvasiddha*. This *antaḥkaraṇavṛtti* is produced from *śruti* *liṅga vākya* and *anumāna*. By destroying the nescience (*avidyā*), the *vṛtti* with the *pramāṇa*-s like the *Vedāntavākya*-s and the auxiliary aids like *nididhyāsana* produce *brahmajñāna* which is the *phala* (result). If an objection is raised that *dharma* in the form of a *Vedic* act like *yajñādi* is related to *antaḥkaraṇavṛtti* responsible for *brahmasakṣātkāra*, the objection is ruled out because an act like a *Vedic* sacrifice does

⁶⁵ 'paṇḍito medhāvī gandhārāneva upasampadyeta, evameva iha ācāryavān puruṣo veda...

not imply *anubhava*. Veridical cognition (*yathārtha jñāna*) of an object (*vastu*) is based on the object itself (*vastutantra*). As *brahmajñāna* is *pūrvvasiddha* (pre-established), it is also based on the nature of the object. The *pūrvvapakṣins* object saying that if *Brahman* is a material object (*bhūtavastu*) like a pot (*ghaṭa*), then, it is capable of being known by means of other *pramāṇa*-s like perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*) over and above by means of *śruti* only. In that case, *vicāra* (careful examination) of the *Upaniṣadic* sentences will turn out to be futile. The *siddhāntin*-s reply that *brahman*, incapable of being perceived by the senses is naturally not an object of sensory perception (*indriya pratyakṣa*). The *janmādisūtra* only points to the *vedāntavākya*-s which speak of the creation (*utpatti*), sustenance (*sthiti*) and dissolution (*laya*) of the world (*jagat*) in it (*Brahman*). The sentence ‘*yato...jāyante*’ was narrated to Bhṛgu by his father Varuṇa when asked by him. This sentence is further corroborated by another sentence “...*ānandāt hi eva khalu imāni bhūtāni jāyante, ānandena jātāni jīvanti, ānandaṁ prayanti abhisamviśanti iti...*” (from bliss is the universe produced, in bliss it survives and in bliss it is dissolved).⁶⁶ Being *nityaśuddhabuddhamukta*, it becomes the cause of this universe after being associated with the *upādhi* named *māyā*.

6. The Vedas are the only Valid Sources of Knowledge of Brahman

Stating in the second *sūtra* that the universe is created and hence an effect, *Vādarāyaṇa* has laid down his third *sūtra* as “*śāstrayonitvāt*” which means that the

⁶⁶-, 2010, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 3/6 in *Upaniṣad, DvitiyaBhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

scriptures (*śāstra*-s) namely the *Veda*-s originated by *Brahman* and hence He is stated to be omniscient (*sarvajñ a*). But there lies a problem here. But, the *Veda*-s, being eternal cannot have any agent. Thus, if *Brahman* cannot be admitted as the composer of the *Veda*-s, how can it be the cause of the universe (*jagatkāraṇa*) and be omniscient (*sarvvajña*)? This chapter starts to mitigate this problem. “*Asya mahataḥ bhūtasya niḥśvasitametat yat ṛgvedaḥ*”⁶⁷ is a *Bṛhadāraṇyaka śruti* which means that the *Ṛg Veda*-s and others are produced out of this *mahat bhūta* i.e., *Brahman* like its breath. Just as breath is inhaled and exhaled without any conscious volition, likewise *Brahman* has created the *Veda*-s through his spontaneous exhalation. This *śruti* is the bone of contention of this *adhikaraṇa*. Here, a doubt arises as to whether the *Brahman* is the agent of the *Veda*-s or not? The *pūrvapakṣin*-s raise an objection here. They contend that the *Ṛk Samhitā* “*Virūpa, nityayā vācā*”⁶⁸ describes the *Veda*-s to be eternal and asks to praise with the help of the eternal sentences. Thus, as the *Veda*-s are described to be eternal, *Brahman* cannot be said to have created the *Veda*-s, nor is he omniscient. In reply, the *siddhāntin*-s reply that *Brahman* is indeed the creator of the *Veda*-s. That the *Veda*-s have been born out of *Brahman* like His breath have been supported by the sentences of the *śruti* and the *smṛti* too “*anādinidhanā nityā vāgutsṛṣṭā*”⁶⁹ “*Tasmāt yajñāt sarvvahūta ṛcaḥ sāmāni jajñire*”⁷⁰ – this Vedic sentence clearly spells out that *Brahman* is that entity to whom everything is sacrificed in a ritual and by the term ‘*yajña*’ is meant the *Brahman* from whom all the *Veda*-s like are *Ṛk* and *Sāma* are born. If a question arises as to how is the eternity of the *Veda*-s possible? In answer it is said that there is a

⁶⁷-, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2/4/10 in Upaniṣad, DvitiyaBhāga, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁶⁸ *Ṛk Samhitā* 8/64/6-

⁶⁹ Vedavyāsa, 1994, *Mahābhārata*, Vol-35, ed, Haridasa Siddhantavāgiśa, *Śānti Parva*, Viswabani prakashana, Kolkata 231/56

⁷⁰ *Ṛk Samhitā* 10/90/9

similarity of the *Veda*-s in the prior *kalpa*-s (period-s) which ensures its eternity (*nityatā*). *Brahman*, making the entire universe explicit (*sarvvāvabhāsaka*) has composed the *Veda*-s and is thus omniscient (*sarvvajña*). Thus, it is found that while to the *pūrvvapakṣin*-s, as *Brahman*'s omniscience is not established, *Brahman* cannot be established as the conscious cause (*cetana kāraṇa*) of the universe, the *siddhāntin*-s admit *Brahman* to be both to be omniscient as well as the cause of the universe. The cause (*yonī*) of the scriptures i.e., the *Veda*-s is the *Brahman*. Hence *Brahman* has *śāstrayonitva* or *Vedakarṭṛtva* and is thus omniscient (*sarvvajña*).

Ācārya Śaṅkara in his *bhāṣya* has elaborated the point that *Rgveda* and other scriptures are enriched by various *Purāṇa*-s, *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Dharmaśāstra*, the *Vedāṅga*-s etc. It reveals all type of knowledge like a lamp emanating light and making everything visible. Though the scriptures are unconscious and yet the storehouse of all knowledge (*sarvvajña*), its material (*upādāna*) and efficient (*nimitta*) *kāraṇa* is *Brahman*. *Brahman*, as an obvious reason is omniscient (*sarvvajña*) too as the scriptures are omniscient, their cause *Brahman* cannot but be omniscient. The *Rg Veda* and other *śāstra*-s having numerous divisions like *deva*, *tiryak*, *manuṣya*, *varṇa*, *āśrama* etc. have all originated from *Brahman* like its spontaneous breath.

In the second *varṇaka* of *Śāstrayonitvādhikaraṇam*, it has been stated that the knowledge of *Brahman* can be acquired from the *Veda*-s. It is well-known that the nature of an object (*vastu*) is determined by its *lakṣaṇa* (defining mark) and its *pramāṇa* (source of knowledge). While the *lakṣaṇa* of *Brahman* has been ascertained in the second *adhikaraṇa*, its *pramāṇa* has been determined in the third *adhikaraṇa*. Thus, as both the

adhikaraṇa-s aim at the discernment of the nature of *Brahman*, there is *ekatvaphalasaṅgati* (consistency in the one and the same consequence) between the second and the third *adhikaraṇa*.

In this *varṇaka*, the *śruti* “*taṁ tu aupaniṣadaṁ puruṣaṁ pr̥cchāmi*”⁷¹ states that the Absolute Being (*parabrahmarūpa puruṣa*) *Brahman* can be known only from the *Upaniṣad*-s. There arises a doubt as to whether *Brahman* is known only from the *Veda*-s or through other sources of knowledge. The *pūrvvapakṣin*-s contend that *Brahman*, being an established object (*siddha vastu*) like a pot can be known through other means of knowledge too. But, the *siddhāntin*-s refute such objection saying that as *Brahman* is bereft of *rūpa* and *rasa* (colour and taste), he cannot be verified by the sense organs and as he has no *liṅga* (determining mark/*jñāpaka cihṇa*) and is bereft of any sort of similarity (*sādṛśya*), he is not a subject of *anumāna* and *upamāna pramāṇa*. A person who has no knowledge of the *Veda*-s is unable to grasp this great being (*mahān puruṣa*).⁷² Thus, it is clear that *Brahman*, who is the cause of this universe, can be known only through the *Veda*-s (*ataḥ brahma vedaikameyam*). *Brahman* is said to be the cause of the creation (*utpatti*), sustenance (*sthiti*) and dissolution (*laya*) of this universe.

7. Brahman as the Sole Subject Matter of the Vedas

⁷¹ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3/9/26 in *Upaniṣad, Dvitiya Bhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁷² “*Nāvedavinmanute taṁ br̥hantam*” *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 3/12/9

The fourth aphorism (*sūtra*) of the first section (*adhikaraṇa*) of the first chapter (*adhyāya*) of *Brahmasūtra* is known as *samanvayādhikaraṇam* as it aims to establish consistency or synthesis among the different *Upaniṣadic* statements. This chapter is so named as it tries to establish the thesis that *Vedānta* signifies *Brahman* as *jñeya* and does not signify different Gods pertaining to the rituals as held in the *karma kāṇḍa* of the *Veda*-s. In the preceding section *Śāstrayonitvādhikaraṇam*, it has been established that the *Veda*-s are caused by *Brahman*. Now, a question arises as to what does the *Vedānta* signify – the agent and the Gods (*kartā o devatā*) or the *Brahman*? The opponents (*pūrvapakṣin*-s) contend that the *Upaniṣadic* sentences denoting *jīva* (individual self) generate the sense of an agent (*karttā*), those denoting *Brahman* (Supreme Self) generate the feeling of Gods (*devatā*) and those denoting *śṛṣṭi* (creation) generate the feeling of the means (*sādhana*) respectively. In this manner, the *Vedānta* sentences denote the agent who is eligible to perform ritualistic actions (*karmamānuṣṭhāna*). The proponents (*siddhāntin*-s), in reply, contend that all the *Upaniṣada*-s substantiate *Brahman* and *karmakāṇḍa* is discussed in a different section. They argue that there are six probanses (*hetu*) enumerated in the *Bṛhatsamhitā* which ensure that the *Upaniṣada*-s provide the knowledge of the *Brahman* “*upakramopasamhārāvabhyāsohapūrvvatāphalam /arthavāadopapattīca liṅgam tātparyanirṇaye*”⁷³ *Upakrama* and *upasamhāra* refer to the beginning and to the end respectively. The sixth canto of the *Chāndogyopaniṣada* starts with the sentence “*sadeva somyedadagra āsīdekamevādviṭīyam...*”⁷⁴ which says that this world was inherent in the one and only existent Reality prior to its manifestation. The

²¹ Śrīśrīmanmaharṣikṛṣṇadvaipāyanavādarāyanabhagavadvedavyāsa, 1999, *Vedāntadarśanam, śāṅkara bhāṣya*, prathamah adhyāyaḥ, ed. swāmī Chidghananananda Puri o vedāntavāgīśahḥ Sri Ananda Jhā nyāyācārya, Kalikata:Udbodhan Karyalaya, p.-123.

⁷⁴ -, 2010, *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 6/2/1 in *Upaniṣad, DvitiyaBhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

same canto ends with the description of the same substance *Brahman* with the following line “*aitadātmyamidamsarvva...*”⁷⁵. It explains that this real entity is, indeed, the self. It is the Truth, says sage Āruṇi to his son Śvetaketu. *Abhyāsa* here means repeated utterance of the same subject. The phrase ‘*tattvamasi*’ which speaks of the unity of the *jīva* and *Brahman* has been stated nine times in *Chāndogyopaniṣada*. Repeated mention of the epithet ‘*tattvamasi*’ in this *Upaniṣad* implies that *Brahman*, which is the only subject matter of the *Upaniṣad*-s is identical with *jīva*, the living being. The term ‘*apūrva*’ signifies not being able to be determined by any other source of knowledge. In fact, the one and only *Brahman*, as stated in *Chāndogyopaniṣada* is capable of being ascertained only by means of the *Śruti*. Just as the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* starts with the enquiry of *dharma* with the sentence ‘*athāto dharmajigñāsā*’ (1/1/1), the *Vedānta sūtra* begins with the following line ‘*athāto brahmajigñāsā*’ (1/1/1) whereby the nature of *Brahman* is to be ascertained. Thus, it is evident that only the *Śruti* or the *Veda*-s are the *pramāṇa* with regard to the knowledge about *dharma* and *Brahman*. *Phala* here refers to liberation which is the ultimate objective. The *Chāndogya* statement ‘*yāvanna vimokṣyehatha sampatsya iti*’ (6/14/2) emphasizes that so long as an individual is not freed from his material body, his liberation is delayed. But once his body is cast off, he merges with *Brahman*. *Arthavāda* refers to those statements which speak in praise of what is to be established. In *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 6/1/2, we find a statement ‘*uta tamādeśamaprākṣyaḥ*’ where a question has been placed by sage Āruṇi to his son Śvetaketu regarding receiving the ‘*ādeśa*’ from the preceptor. In fact, ‘*ādeśa*’ refers to the advice from the *guru* (preceptor) which opens up the knowledge of the Self. Every other knowledge (*aparāvidyā*) is subservient to *Brahmajñāna* (*parā vidyā*). Finally, *upapatti* refers to

⁷⁵ -, 2010, *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 6/16/3 in *Upaniṣad*, DwitīyaBhāga, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

citing reason in favour of any statement. For example, the *Chāndogya śruti* in the statement ‘*yathā Soumyaikena mṛtṭpiṇḍena sarvaṁ mṛṇmayam vijñātaṁ syād vācārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyam mṛttiketyeva satyam*’ (6/1/4) says that just as all objects made of clay can be known from one lump of clay (which is the material cause), similarly everything present before us can be known when that Supreme Being is known. The *Mīmāṃsā sūtra* ‘*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvādānarthakyaamatadarthānam*’ (1/2/1) claims that the Vedic sentences which do not speak of *kriyā* (action) are useless and thus, according to it, the *Upaniṣadic* sentences, which do not deal with any such *kriyā* turn out to be futile. But we notice that the *prakaraṇa* of *Chāndogyopaniṣad* which contains those six aforesaid *liṅga*-s provide proof that the subject matter of the *Upaniṣad*-s is to establish the significance of *Brahman* and also its identity with *jīva*. The opponents object that a *pariniṣṭhita vastu* like *Brahman* cannot be established as such an object needs to be established by *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*. The term ‘*pariniṣṭhita vastu*’ designates a positive entity which has no relation with any action (*kriyā*). When an object is being produced, its relation with the volition conducive to its production is known as *sādhyaṁvasthā*. When the object is produced, it has no relation with any action. That state is known as *siddhāṁvasthā*. The object is thus known as *siddha* or *pariniṣṭhita* or *bhūta vastu*. The *siddhya vastu*, *Brahman*, being bereft of *upādeyatā* (acceptability) or *heyatā* (contemptibility) cannot be known by any *puruṣārtha*. The opponents argue that the *Upaniṣad*-s speak of the agent of a sacrificial deed (*karttā*) and the gods (*devatā*) through the *vidhi*-s (injunctions). They claim further that the *Upaniṣad*-s abound in deeds of worship (*upāsanā*), and other acts of *śravaṇa* and *manana*. They do not explain the origin of *Brahman* from the scriptures (*śāstra*-s) and simultaneously the origin of the universe (*jagat*) from *Brahman*.

In reply, *Vādarāyana* lays down the sutra ‘*tattu samanvayāst*’ (1/1/4). The term ‘*tu*’ refutes the opponent’s position saying that the *Vedānta* does not signify any agent related to any act. The term ‘*tat*’ refers to *Brahman* which is omniscient (*sarvajña*), omnipotent (*sarvaśaktimāna*) and is the cause of the origination (*utpatti*), existence (*sthiti*) and dissolution (*laya*) of the universe as established through the *Upaniṣad*-s. Finally, in answer to the question ‘how’, it has been said that the term ‘*samanvayāt*’ denotes that the sentences of the *Vedānta* concord with *Brahman* which is established as eternal (*nityasiddha*) and the object of knowledge (*jñeya*), and do not signify any agent related to any action (*karmāṅgabhūta kartā*). The world is said to be present as one and real entity prior to its birth.⁷⁶ That immediately perceptible (*aparokṣa*) *Brahman* is without any cause or effect (*apūrvva* or *anapara*) and is devoid of internal (*svagata*) difference (*anantara*) and is *avāhya* (bereft of homogenous or *sajātīya* and heterogenous or *vijātīya* difference). This self is *Brahman* and it is the locus of everything and experiences everything.⁷⁷ The *Upaniṣadic* sentences should not be interpreted as referring to sacrificial acts (*karmāṅga*) as that will lead to the fallacies called *śrutahāni* (for not referring to subjects laid down in the *Śruti*-s) and *aśrutakalpanā* (for taking up subjects which are not discussed in the *Śruti*). The *Brahman*, being a *pariniṣṭhita vastu* (a positive and eternal entity) is not the object of perceptual cognition as the knowledge of the identity of *Brahman* with *jiva* in the form of ‘That Thou Art’ (*tattvamasi*) can be attained only from the scriptures. Moreover, as *Brahman* can neither be perceived (*grāhya*) nor be

⁷⁶ -, 2010, *Chāndogyaupaniṣad*, 6/2/1 in *Upaniṣad, DvitiyaBhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*sadeva somyedamagra āsīt, ekamevādvitīyam...*”
 -, 2010, *Aitareyopaniṣada*, 1/1/1 in *Upaniṣad, DvitiyaBhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*ātmā vai idameka evāgre āsīt...*”

⁷⁷ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 2/5/19 in *Upaniṣad, DvitiyaBhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*„tadetad Brahma apūrvvam anaparam anantaram avāhyam ayamātmā Brahma sarvvānubhūtaḥ”*”

abandoned (*tyājya*), knowledge of its identity with the self assists in absolute cessation (*ātyantika nivṛtti*) of all sorrow (*duḥkha*) and thus *puruṣārtha* is attained. Thus, the sentences which speak of the deities in the *Upāsanāprakaraṇa* of the *Upaniṣad*-s pertain to worship as a practice. The practice of *upāsanā* requires two entities – the worshipper and the worshipped. But *Brahman*, being devoid of any qualities can neither be accepted nor be abandoned and hence cannot be the object of worship. Its realization as identical with one's own self helps to eradicate the dual knowledge of the agent (*kāraka*) and the action (*kriyā*). As the knowledge of the self (*ātmavijñāna*) results in *mokṣa* (liberation), the authoritativeness (*prāmāṇya*) of the *Vedānta* cannot be denied. Just as the *Vedic* sentences are *pramāṇa* with respect to certain results which cannot be known otherwise, the *Upaniṣadic* sentences are *pramāṇa* with respect to *mokṣa* which can be known only from the scriptures.

In the second *varṇaka* of *Samanvayādhikaraṇam*, it has been shown that *Vedānta* signifies *Brahman* which is an object of knowledge (*jñeya*) and not one which is an object of worship (*upāsya*). At the beginning of this chapter, we find a doubt regarding the status of the *Vedānta* sentences. Such as the following example from the *Chāndogyopaniṣada* “*sadeva somya idamagre āsīt ekamevādvitīyam*”, there is a question as to the nature of *Brahman*. The opponents claim that *Brahman* which is discussed in the *Upaniṣad*-s is an object of worship as emphasized in the statements “*mantavyaḥ, nididhyāsitavyaḥ*” following “*śrotavyaḥ*”. The Advaitins, on the contrary, argue that all the *upaniṣads* converge to establish a single reality, namely *Brahman* or *ātman* and this reality is established as an object of knowledge and not as an object of worship. The main argument on which the Advaitins base their thesis runs as follows. The *Upaniṣads* clearly state a person can attain liberation only if he has an immediate awareness of pure consciousness. Thus, liberation which is the highest end of human life is produced by the

knowledge of Brahman and not by the mere worship of Brahman. In fact, the means to attain liberation is prescribed by the *niyamavidhi* found in the Brhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad, “*ātma vā're draṣṭavyo śrotovyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo*’. This Vedic injunction clearly states that the final immediate knowledge of Brahman or ātman (*ātmadarśana*) can be obtained by practicing *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. This *niyamavidhi* does not prescribe *ātmadarśana* or the final immediate knowledge of Brahman; because knowledge cannot be commanded or enjoined. The reason is knowledge does not solely depend upon the volition of a voluntary action of a sentient being. Knowledge arises only when all the requisite conditions of knowledge assemble at a particular point of time. If knowledge were attainable simply by desiring or willing it, then everybody could have attained any knowledge. Besides, if the genesis of knowledge were dependent solely upon the voluntary action of a conscious individual, no one would have to encounter any bad news in one’s entire life. So, the genesis of knowledge depends on conditions which do not depend only upon over voluntary actions. But even though knowledge cannot be enjoined, *Vicāra* or the means to attain knowledge may be enjoined by this injunction. In this injunction ‘*śravaṇa*’, ‘*manana*’ and ‘*nididhyāsana*’ do not stand for any variety of knowledge; but they represent various kinds of tarka or *vicāra*. Hence, they can be enjoined. Of these three prescribed way *śravaṇa* is the *aṅgī* or the main component leading to knowledge whereas *manana* and *nididhyāsana* are *aṅgas* or subservient to *śravaṇa*. This is the view of the Vivaraṇa school of Advaita Vedānta. The Bhāmati school, however, subscribes to the theory that the final knowledge of Brahmasākṣātkāra and the main compotent (*aṅgī*) among the three ways to attain the final immediate awareness of future consciousness that is not bound by any object. The Vivaraṇa school also subscribes to the theory of *śābdāparokṣavāda*, according to which scriptural statements can produce immediate awareness, if the content (*viṣaya*) of that awareness is

immediate (*aparokṣa*). Thus, the Vedāntins subscribe to a new concept of immediacy where immediacy of a cognition depends upon the nature of the content or entity manifested (*viśaya*) and not upon the nature of the epistemic instruments. The opponents might object that the knowledge of *Brahman* is available from those scriptural statements scriptures where it is discussed in the context of sentences denoting worship (*upāsanāvākya*). Just as mention of *yūpa* (the sacrificial wood) and *āhavanīya* (the sacrificial fire) is found in the scriptures only, likewise the mention of *Brahman* is found in the *upāsana vākya*-s of the scriptures. We notice that the scriptures specify the injunctions and the prohibitions. There are several such sentences like “*dr̥ṣṭah hi tasyārthaḥ karmmābodhanam*” (the intent of the *Vedas* is to denote action)⁷⁸, “*codanā iti kriyāyāḥ pravarttakam vacanam*” (the Vedic sentences which drive an agent into action are known as *codanā*)⁷⁹ “*tasya jñāmmupadeśaḥ*” (those Vedic sentences like ‘*yajeta*’ are the source of knowledge of sacrificial acts like *agnihotra*)⁸⁰, “*tadbhūtānām kriyārthena samāmnāyaḥ*” (it is imperative to pronounce the sentences which carries the verbal forms like *lin*)⁸¹, “*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānām*” (those Vedic sentences which do not speak of an action while corroborating an established object are useless)⁸². The scriptures which initiate an agent into action and prohibit an agent from another action are useful. The *Upaniṣad*-s bear significance based on those injunctive and prohibitory Vedic sentences. Just as the sacrifices like *Agnihotra* are ordained for those who desire heavenly pleasure (*svarga sukha*), similarly, the knowledge

⁷⁸ *Śāvara bhāṣya*, 1/1/1

[http://mīmāṃsā](http://mīmāṃsā-darśana of Jaimini with śāvara bhāṣyam.hi.wikipedia.org/archives/entries/mīmāṃsā darśana of jaimini with śāvara bhāṣya/(visited on 15.02.2024))

⁷⁹ *ibid*, 1/1/2

⁸⁰ *Jaimini sūtra*, 1/1/5

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1/1/25

⁸² *Ibid*, 1/2/1

of the *Brahman* is prescribed to those who are desirous of attaining immortality (*amṛtatva*). An objection is raised here. The proponent anticipates that while *dharma* (righteousness) is the *jigñāsā* (enquiry) of the *pūrva Mīmāṃsā*, *Brahman* is enquired in the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā*. It is said to be *siddha* (established) and *nitya nirvṛta* (always present, indestructible). Thus, the fruits of the two *kāṇḍa*-s of *Vedānta* are different from each other. Thus, if *Brahman* is taken to be the fruit of worship (*upāsānā*), it will cease to be indestructible. Thus, *Brahman* cannot be considered to be the consequence of *upāsānā*. They state that in the statement “*athāto Brahmajigñāsā*”, *Brahman* has been mentioned in the *vidhi*-s denoting acts like *upāsānā*, and not in *Vedānta*. Sentences like “*ātmā vai are draṣṭavyaḥ*” (the Self is to be seen),⁸³ “*yaḥ ātmā apahatapāpmā saḥ anveṣṭavyaḥ vijigñāsitavyaḥ*”⁸⁴ (the Self which is bereft of sin is to be searched and to be enquired), “*ātmā iti eva upāsīta*”⁸⁵ (worship the self in this manner), “*ātmānam eva lokam upāsīta*”⁸⁶ (worship the self as the fruit), “*brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati*”⁸⁷ (who worships *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* himself) signify worship. If any question arises as to ‘who is

⁸³ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 2/4/5 in *Upaniṣad, Dvītiya Bhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*„tadetad Brahma apūrvvam anaparam anantaram avāhyam ayamātmā Brahma sarvvānubhūtaḥ*”

⁸⁴ -, 2010, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad*, 8/7/1 in *Upaniṣad, Dvītiya Bhāga*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*„tadetad Brahma apūrvvam anaparam anantaram avāhyam ayamātmā Brahma sarvvānubhūtaḥ*”

⁸⁵ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 1/4/7 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*„tadetad Brahma apūrvvam anaparam anantaram avāhyam ayamātmā Brahma sarvvānubhūtaḥ*”

⁸⁶ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 1/4/15 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*„tadetad Brahma apūrvvam anaparam anantaram avāhyam ayamātmā Brahma sarvvānubhūtaḥ*”

⁸⁷ -, 2010, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 3/2/9 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*„tadetad Brahma apūrvvam anaparam anantaram avāhyam ayamātmā Brahma sarvvānubhūtaḥ*”

the Self’ or ‘what is *Brahman*’, there are sentences which provide the indirect knowledge of *Brahman* as eternal (*nitya*), omniscient (*sarvvajña*), all-pervading (*sarvvagata*), ever-contented (*nityatrpta*), eternal-pure-enlightened-free natured (*nityaśuddhabuddhamukta svabhāvaḥ*) and as knowledge (*viññānasvarūpa*) and bliss (*ānandasvarūpa*). Thus, by worshipping *Brahman*, fruits like *mokṣa* (liberation) which are envisaged in the scriptures only and not through other means of knowledge are obtained. The statements of *Vedānta* apart from those pertaining to worship thus turn out to be futile (*anarthaka*). It is further anticipated on the part of the opponents that just as sentences like ‘This is a rope, not a snake (*rajjuhḥ iyaṁ nāyaṁ sarpah*)’ eradicate fear arising out of false knowledge, the sentences substantiating *brahman* eradicate the falsity regarding the *saṃsāritvarūpa bhrānti* of the self and establish the validity of the *Upaniṣadic* sentences. But the answer to it is that though through hearing about the rope, the false knowledge about the snake is eradicated, the early attachment and pleasure and pain arising out of it is still experienced by a person who has heard about the *brahman*. No fruit arises out of the knowledge of *brahman* which is an established object. Thus, *Brahman* can be known only through the sentences of worship (*upāsanābodhaka vidhi*) mentioned in the scriptures. Those scriptures prescribe injunctions (*pravṛttirūpa kriyā*) and prohibitions (*nivṛttirūpa kriyā*) and the practices of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*.

The proponents reply that the persons eligible (*adhikārī*) for *dharma* and *mokṣa* are different from one another. The physical (*kāyika*), verbal (*vācika*) and mental (*mānasika*) actions ordained in the scriptures like *śruti* and *smṛti* are righteousness (*dharma*), and not liberation (*mokṣa*). It has been spelt out in the *Jaimini Sūtra* 1/1/1 “*athāto dharmajigñāsā*”.⁸⁸ Even the prohibitory sentences which dictate violence (*himsā*) are also ordained in the scriptures. Thus, the Vedic sentences which speak of injunctions (*vidhi*)

⁸⁸ Mīmāṃsāsūtra, 1.1.1

and prohibitions (*niśedha*) are all *codanā*. They are performed with the help of contact between the sense-organs and the object in the form of physical, verbal and mental actions producing pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (⁸⁹*duḥkha*) as consequences. This rule is in vogue from the *Brahmā* to the living beings born out of the material elements. We can say thus that human beings under the spell of ignorance (*avidyā*) perform good and evil actions. As an obvious consequence, merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharma*) are accrued which, in turn, produce pleasure and pain respectively. This *saṁsāra* (world) is non-eternal (*anitya*). But the being which lies within the body is eternal and is without a body (*aśarīra*). It is not touched by the pleasure and pain experienced by the body. At this point a question arises. *Mokṣa* is the consequence of the *vidhivākya*-s which speak of worship (*upāsanā*). But it is characterized by pleasure (*sukha*) which arises out of merit (*dharma*). Hence, the property of being without a body (*aśarīratva*) can be claimed to be the result of merit (*dharma*).

The *siddhāntin*-s argue that *mokṣa*, the state of liberation, is the original nature of the *jīva*, the individual self. It is not, at all, the fruit of meritorious action (*dharma*). In the *Kaṭhōpaniṣada*, it has been stated that the self is the only eternal (*nitya*) entity without any form/body (*nirākāra*). It resides in many non-eternal bodies and is great (*mahānta*) and all-pervading (*sarvavyāpī*). It is eternal too (*vibhu*). The wise men, after knowing this self, overcome all grief.³⁷ That Self is described in varied ways in different *Upaniṣad*-s. It is devoid of *prāṇa*, the vital air and even *manas*, the internal organ. It is the purest being.⁹⁰ This Being (*puruṣa*) has no relation (*asaṅga*) with the gross and subtle bodies.⁹¹

⁸⁹ -, 2010, *Kaṭhōpaniṣada*, 1/2/22 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*aśarīraṁ śarīreṣvanavastheṣvavasthitam/ mahāntaṁ vibhumātmānaṁ matvā dhīro na śocati*”//

⁹⁰ -, 2010, *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad*, 2/1/2 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*aprāṇo hyamanāḥ śubhro...*”

All the aforesaid descriptions in the *Upaniṣad*-s point to the fact that the self is devoid of any body or form (*śarīra*). Thus, it is established that *mokṣa* is not the fruit of any action and being bereft of any form, it is eternal too. *Mokṣa* is said to be *pariṇamī nitya* i.e., even after undergoing transformation (*vikāra*), it appears to be the same for example the earth (*pṛthivī*) according to the *Mīmāṃsaka*-s and three *guṇa*-s of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* according to the *Sāṃkhya* philosophers. But, *mokṣa* is concerned with the Ultimate Reality which is eternally uniform (*kuṭasthanitya*), omnipresent like *ākāśa* (*vyomavat sarvvavyāpī*), devoid of any transformation (*sarvvavikriyārahita*), ever-contented (*nityatr̥pta*), formless (*niravayava*), ever-luminescent (*svayaṃjyotiḥsvabhāva*). *Mokṣa* which is bereft of any form is different from *dharma* (merit) and *adharma* (demerit), their effects *sukha* (pleasure) and *duḥkha* (pain), from *kṛta* (effect) and *akṛta* (cause) and also from *kālatraya* (past, present and future), says the scriptures.⁹²

Had *mokṣa* been the effect (*utpādyā*) of *upāsanā kriyā* (acts of worship), it would have been non- eternal (*anitya*) like heaven (*svarga*) which is the best fruit of an action (*utkr̥ṣṭakarmmaphalaviśeṣa*). Hence, *mokṣa* is regarded as eternal as it is not produced. Just as a lamp removes all darkness, similarly, the knowledge about the self (*ātmaajñāna*) drives away ignorance (*ajñāna*) and thus *mokṣa* is attained. There are several sentences in the *Upaniṣads* which proclaim that the knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahmajñāna*) leads to *mokṣa* (liberation). They are as follows: “*brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati*” (one who knows *brahman* becomes *brahman*

⁹¹ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/3/15

in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*asaṅgo hi ayam puruṣaḥ*”.

⁹² -, 2010, *Kathopanishad*, 1/2/14 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*anyatra dharmāt, anyatra adharmāt, anyatra asmāt, kṛtakṛtāt anyatra bhūtācca bhavyācca*”.

himself)⁹³, “*kṣīyante cāśya karmmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare*” (all the actions of a person who has been able to know *Brahman* as the cause as well as the effect are destroyed)⁹⁴, “*ānandaṁ Brahmanaḥ vidvān na vibheti kutaścana*” (a person who has experienced the bliss of *Brahman* is not perturbed by any kind of fear)⁹⁵, “*abhayaṁ vai janaka prāptohasi*” (*Janaka*, a man who has realized *Brahman* has overcome all sort of fear)⁹⁶, “*tat ātmānameva avet ahaṁ Brahmāsmi iti, tasmāt tat sarvvaṁ abhavat*”⁹⁷ “*tatra kaḥ mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvamanupaśyataḥ*” (a person who has been able to see the one and only self in everything has neither attachment nor grief)⁹⁸. These *Upaniṣadic* sentences provide proof to the thesis that *mokṣa*, which is attained after having the knowledge of *Brahman* is not the effect of any action like worship. A nice example has been cited by *ācārya Śaṁkara* in his *bhāṣya* to depict the spontaneous relation between *brahmajñāna* and *mokṣa*. When it is said “*tiṣṭhan gāyati*” (he is singing while standing), the two acts of the agent namely ‘standing’ and singing’, are not treated differently. It pertains to the same agent at the same time. Likewise, ‘*brahmadarśana*’ and ‘*sarvvātmabhāva*’ are not two acts considered separately. A sentence from the

⁹³ -, 2010, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 3/2/9 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁹⁴ -, 2010, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 2/2/8 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁹⁵ -, 2010, *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 2/9 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁹⁶ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/2/4 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁹⁷ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 1/4/10 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

⁹⁸ -, 2010, *Īsopaniṣad*, 7 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

Praśnopaniṣad explains that the disciples acknowledge their preceptor as their father as the latter has led them to the other side of ignorance i.e., towards *Brahman* from where there is no return (*punarāvṛttisūnya mokṣasamjñak Brahman*).⁹⁹ In the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, we find *Nārada* saying to *Sanatkumāra* that he has learnt from people like him that a person knowledgeable about *Brahman* is able to overcome all grief and hence, as he himself is grieving, he urges *Sanatkumāra* to relieve him from all sorrow.¹⁰⁰ In another sentence from the same *Upaniṣad*, it has been said that *Sanatkumāra* has made pure-hearted *Nārada* overcome all grief resulting from ignorance and thus enabled him to experience *Brahman*. It is thus evident that *mokṣa* which is eternal is attainable when all obstacles to the knowledge of the self are removed.¹⁰¹ The above-mentioned arguments prove that the direct cause of *mokṣa* is *brahmajñāna*.

That *tattvajñāna* (knowledge of the reality) which is the same as *brahmajñāna* is the cause of *mokṣa* (liberation) has also been endorsed by *Maharṣi Gautama* with the help of reasoning in his text *Nyāya Sūtra*. He has stated in the first aphorism that *tattvajñāna* is the cause of *mokṣa*. In the following *sūtra*, he has explained “*duḥkhaḥjanmapravṛttidoṣamithyājñānānām uttarotarāpāye tadanantarāpāyāt apavargah*”.¹⁰² The knowledge of the reality (*tattvajñāna*), when attained, eradicates all

⁹⁹ -, 2010, *Praśnopaniṣad*, 6/80 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*tvaṁ hi naḥ pitā yaḥ asmākaṁ avidyāyāḥ param pāram tārayasi*”

¹⁰⁰ -, 2010, *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 7/1/3 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*śrutam hi eva me bhagavaddṛṣebhyaḥ tarati śokaṁ ātmavid iti, saḥ ahaṁ bhagavaḥ śocāmi taṁ mā bhagavāna śokasya pāram tārayatu...*”

¹⁰¹ -, 2010, *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 7/26/3 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*tasmai mṛditakaṣāyāya tamasah pārāṇ darśayati bhagavāna sanatkumārah*”.

¹⁰² Maharṣi Gautama, 2003, *Nyāya sūtraḥ* 1/1/2 in *Nyāya Darśana Vātsyāyana Bhāṣya*, Pratham Khaṇḍa, ed. Mahamahopadhyay Pait Sriyukta Phanibhusana Tarkavagisa, Kolkata: Pashchimabanga Rajya Pustak

false knowledge (*mithyājñāna*) like ‘I am the body’ or ‘I am fair’ etc. As a result, its immediate precedent cause ‘*doṣa*’ (defect) namely *rāga* (attachment), *dveṣa* (aversion) and *moha* (infatuation) are destroyed. Its annihilation leads to the destruction of *pravṛtti* (volition) in the form of *dharma* and *adharma*. As a consequence, *janma* (birth) is stopped which puts an end to *duḥkha* or suffering. Obliteration of *duḥkha* is termed as *apavarga* or *mokṣa*. Thus, when false knowledge is uprooted, the identity (*ekatva*) of *Brahman* and the individual self (*jīvātman*) is established and *mokṣa* is attained. But, by the term ‘*tattvajñāna*’, that which is denoted by the sixteen categories (*padārtha*-s) like *pramāṇa*, *prameya*, *saṃśaya*, *prayojana* as admitted by *Gautama* in his *Nyāya sūtra* 1/1/1 is not intended as that would lead to admitting a second object other than the self. There is a basic difference between the *Nyāya* and *Vedānta* concepts of *tattvajñāna*. According to the former view, with the help of the categories like *pramāṇa* etc., the knowledge of *ātman*, the *prameya* and *anātman* like the body and the sense-organs are attained which distinguishes the ‘*tat*’ from the ‘*tvam*’ and which again generates apathy towards worldly interests (*vairāgya sampādana*) and finally acts as an aid to *manana* or philosophical reflection. *Maharṣi Gautama* regards *mokṣa* as a negative substance or *abhāva* which is caused by the amelioration of sorrow (*duḥkha*). But, according to the system of *Vedānta*, *mokṣa* refers to the realisation of one’s own nature (*svasvarūpa*) in the form of eternal bliss. One’s own nature cannot be an *abhāva* substance. Phenomena like birth, death, sorrow etc. ascribed to the locus, the self are false and hence when they are destroyed, the locus remains as it was. *Brahmātmaikatvajñāna* (the knowledge of the identity between *Brahman* and *ātman*) is *pramāṇajñāna* (veridical cognition) and the cause of eradication of *avidyā* (nescience). This knowledge is *vastutantra* (based on the nature of the object).

Brahman and its knowledge are not related to any activity. *Brahman* is not the action of *vidikriyā* (subject matter of knowledge from testimony, *śābdajñāna*) too. It is different from both the cause which is unknown (*avidita*) and effect which is known (*vidita*). In fact, how can *brahman* be known when this all-revealing consciousness (*sarvvaprakāśaka caitanya*) makes everything else known, says the *śruti* (“*yena idam sarvvaṃ vijānāti, tam kena vijānīyāt*”)¹⁰³? In like manner, *nirguṇa nirupādhika Brahman* is not the subject matter of *upāsana* or worship as that activity requires two entities namely the *upāsaka* (the worshipper) and the *upāsya* (the worshipped).

The *siddhāntin*-s argue that the scriptures explain *Brahman* as *pratyagātmā* (the inmost self in all beings) who, not being the subject matter of knowledge (*aviśaya*) from testimony (*śābdajñāna*) removes all difference among *jñeya* (knower), *jñātā* (object of knowledge) and *jñāna* (knowledge). To those who have *samyagjñāna*, *Brahman* is *avijñātā* (i.e., not the object of knowledge as *phalavyāpya*) and to those who are *ajñānī*, *Brahman* is *vijñātā* (object of knowledge as *phalavyāpya*).¹⁰⁴ The *śāstra*-s state too that the seer (*draṣṭā*) who sees objects through the medium of sense-organs (*indriyavṛttirūpa loukika drṣṭi*) cannot be seen (“*na drṣṭe draṣṭāraṃ paśye*”)¹⁰⁵ and the witness or the *vijñātā* of *vijñānakriyā* cannot be known (“*na vijñāte vijñātāraṃ vijānīyāt*”)¹⁰⁶

Brahmātvajñāna, as described in the scriptures, after destroying *saṃsāra*, which is created out of *avidyā*, reveals the nature of the self which is known as *mokṣa*. The false

¹⁰³ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 2/4/14 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

¹⁰⁴ -, 2010, *Kenopaniṣad* 2/3 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited-“*Avijñātāṃ vijñānatām vijñātāṃ avijñānatām*”

¹⁰⁵ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 3/4/2 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

saṃsāra being destroyed, the self, its locus remains as before and thus, *mokṣa* cannot be said to be non-eternal. But, to those *mokṣa* is produced (*utpādyā*), it is dependent to physical, verbal and mental effects. *Mokṣa*, being the nature of one's own self, cannot be attainable (*prāpya*) like acquirement of something (*prāpti*) which is not acquired (*aprāpta vastu*). It is also said that *mokṣa* is not subject to *saṃskāra* (reform) which takes place either by generating qualities (*guṇotpādāna*) or by elimination of defect (*doṣa apanodana*). *Mokṣa* is termed as '*anādheyātiśaya brahmasvarūpa*' which means that the uniform (*kuṭastha*) and eternal (*nitya*) *Brahman* is not subject to any elevation. Even removal of *avidyā* does not cause any reform in *mokṣa* as it is *nityaśuddhabrahmasvarūpa*. This *anādheyātiśayatā* and *nityaśuddhatā* is explicated in the following two *mantra*-s from the *Upaniṣad*-s. This one God, lying hidden in all beings as their own selves governs all actions, is the witness, conscious, one without a second and devoid of all properties. That self is ubiquitous like ether is radiant, without any subtle body (*akāya*), pure (devoid of *avidyā* and hence of *kāraṇaśarīra* too) and without sin. ¹⁰⁷

An objection is raised saying that just as grazing a mirror helps remove its dirt and improves its transparency, similarly, acts like worship (*upāsanā*) enables the self to be cleared of *avidyā* and thus, it can be said that *mokṣa* is evolved. In answer, the *siddhāntin*-s say that the self is not the repository (*āśraya*) of any action and any action (*kriyā*) involves conjunction (*saṃyoga*) and disjunction (*vibhāga*). Had the self been subject to any action, then it would have undergone reform and as a consequence, it would have

¹⁰⁷ -, 2010, *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* 6/11 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited "ekoḥ devaḥ sarvvabhūteṣu guḍaḥ sarvvavyāpī sarvvabhūtāntarātmā/karmādhyaḥ saḥ sarvvabhūtādhivāsaḥ/ sāksi cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca"

-, 2010, *Īśopaniṣad*, 8 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited "saḥ paryyagāt śukram akāyam avraṇam asnāviraṇ śuddham apāpavidham"

ceased to be *avikārī* (devoid of any transformation) and the scriptures will lose their authority (*prāmāṇya*).

It can also be objected that the self undergoes reform (*saṃskāra*) when an individual performs bath (*snāna*) or *ācamana* (formal method of purification of the body by sprinkling water) or bearing sacrificial thread (*yajñopavīta dhāraṇa*) which are different acts pertaining to the body. The *siddhāntin*-s answer that *saṃskāra* is related to *jīvātman* who feels identical with the body (*tādātmyabuddhisampanna*) and has *dehābhimāna* (feeling that “I am the body”, but pure self (*śuddha ātmā*) is beyond any such reform. A similar example can be drawn from an instance where after undergoing certain medical treatment (*cikītsārūpa nimitta*) we say that ‘I am free from ailment’ (“*āmi rogamukta*”). Here, we equate the self with the body which has undergone treatment. If a question is posed regarding the necessity of reform (*saṃskāra*) of the self which is identical with the body (*dehābhinna ātman*), as after the death of the latter, the former cannot enjoy the fruits of the other-world (*pāraloukika phalabhoga*) the answer to it is that the person who has the conviction (*pratyaya*) that ‘I am the agent’ (“*āmi karttā*”) performs all funeral rites and enjoys the consequences of those actions. Of these, the individual (*jīva*) enjoys the fruits of actions whereas the other (*sākṣī, paramātmā*) just acts as the witness of everything, says the *Upaniṣad*.¹⁰⁸ *Mokṣa* is *brahmabhāva* and hence bereft of all activity like *utpatti* (generation), *āpti*, *saṃskāra* and *vikāra*. Thus, the charge that it is non-eternal is removed. It is made known by the *śāstra*-s through knowledge (*jñāna*). In fact, there is a basic difference between *dhyāna* (meditation) and *jñāna* (knowledge). Though both are mental activities (*mānasī kriyā*), *dhyāna* is the subject matter of *vidhi* and is *puruṣatantra* (related to an individual’s effort) while *jñāna* is not discussed in *vidhi* and is produced

¹⁰⁸ -,2010, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 3/1/1 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited - “*tayoḥ anyañ pippalaṃ svādu atti, anaśnan anyañ abhicākaṣīti*”

from *pramāṇa*. *Brahman* is *jñānasvarūpa* but here *ṛttijñāna* is under discussion. *Māyā*, which is an everactive and changing principle gives rise to *antaḥkaraṇa* which is the conglomeration of the *sattvaguna* of the *pañcatanmātra*-s. As it is transparent, *Brahman* which is knowledge in nature is reflected in it. When *antaḥkaraṇa*, as a *ṛtti* (disposition) undergoes change of state (*pariṇāma*), *Brahman* reflected on it undergoes same consequences. Change in *antaḥkaraṇa* in which *Brahman* is reflected is known as *ṛttijñāna*. *Brahman*, itself has no activity or *pariṇāma*. But, owing to superimposition of *antaḥkaraṇa* and the self (*jñānasvarūpa ātman*) on each other, the *ṛttijñāna* of *antaḥkaraṇa* is known as *mānasī kriyā*. This is the result of *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*, and hence based on the nature of the object (*vastutantra*) and not the subject matter (*aviśaya*) of *vidhi*. Whatever is produced out of action like a pot is non-eternal. *Mokṣa* which is the same as *Brahman* is the *ṛtti* (subject matter of *kriyātmaka vastutantra jñāna*) and is thus not produced and hence not non-eternal.

Sentences which speak of the identity (*ekātmata*) between *jīva* and *Brahman* like “*ātmā vai* are “*draṣṭavya śrotavya*”¹⁰⁹ (this self is to be seen), “*brahma taṁ viddhi*”¹¹⁰ (you know this *Brahman*), “*ātmānam paśyet*” are applied *vidhiliṅ* but they refer to knowledge of the *Brahman* which is already present (*sadāprāpta*). Sentences like “*ātmānam paśyet*” revert an individual’s natural propensity from ordinary sensuous objects towards generating *cittapravṛtti* on *pratyagātma* which, in turn, creates volition (*pravṛtti*) towards *śravaṇa* and *manana* which are acts conducive to *brahmajñāna*. Various *Upanisadic* sentences provide knowledge of *brahman* which is neither acceptable (*agrahaṇīya*) nor refutable (*avarjjanīya*). Once *brahmajñāna* is attained, there is absolute destruction of *kartavya* and *kṛtakṛtyatā*. In the *śruti* which says “*saḥ eṣaḥ neti neti ātmā*”, all objects

¹⁰⁹ -,2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 2/4/5 in Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited

¹¹⁰ -,2010, *Kenopaniṣad 1/1/3 in Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

gross (*sthūla*) and subtle (*sū kṣma*) are negated and only *Brahman* or *ātman* is spoken of. As the self cannot be negated, there is no such thing as the self and the person who negates the self is the self himself.

In the *śruti*, sentences like “*sākṣī cetā*” (*Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 6/11), the self is referred to as the witness of the knowledge of ego-consciousness (*ahamjñāna*). He is neither known in the *karmakāṇḍa* with the help of *vidhi*-s nor in the *tarkaśāstra*-s. *Puruṣa* or *Brahman* is indestructible (*avināśī*) in the absence of the cause of destruction and is *kuṭastha nitya* (uniform and eternal), *nitya śuddha*, *nitya buddha* and *nitya mukta* in the absence of the cause of transformation (*vikṛti*) because by nature, *puruṣa* is not subject to change. There is no other object which is superior to *puruṣa* and all objects barring *puruṣa* are subject to destruction. It is the end of all cause and effect and is not the subject matter of *vidhi*. Thus, *puruṣa* is not knowable from another *pramāṇa*-s except the *Upaniṣad*-s (*Vedāntaika-gamya*).

If a question arises that the *Veda*-s serve no purpose, we should take resort to *Śābara Swāmī*’s statement “*drṣṭaḥ hi tasyārthaḥ karmāvbodhanam*”¹¹¹ we find that the *Veda*-s are not known from other *pramāṇa*-s, yet they refer to established subjects. Hence, they are not useless. *Dharma* as expressed through *karma* in the *Veda*-s serve the purpose of an individual though they are not known through the established *pramāṇa*-s. On the other hand, the *Brahman* as described in the *Upaniṣad*-s is also not knowable from other *pramāṇa*-s and the *Veda*-s serve the purpose of attaining *mokṣa* by an individual. Thus,

¹¹¹ *Śābara bhāṣya* 1/1/1

Brahman is known only from the *Vedas* like *dharma* and thus there is no conflict with the view of Śābara Swāmī.

Brahman, an established entity (*siddhavastu*) which is unrelated with any activity, has been described in *Vedānta* which accounts for the removal of *avidyā* (false knowledge). There is a prevalent view that as the *Veda*-s establish objects only which are related to actions, those which do not are useless. In the *Veda*-s, many sacrificial rites are ordained in which curd and *soma rasa* are advised to be poured (as *āhuti*) in order to complete the sacrifices. These are not *kriyāṅga*, but *bhūtavastu*. Any such object is devised in the *Veda*-s as a part of some activity.

Mention of unknown *ātmavastu* is also made like curd and other sacrificial items. Just as different sacrifices are enjoined in the *Veda*-s for fulfilling various desires pertaining to this life or other-worldly life (*ihaloka/paraloka*) like attainment of heavenly pleasure (*svargasukha*), mention of *Brahman* has been made as a panacea against eradicating false knowledge (*mithyājñāna*) which is the cause of *saṁsāra* (the worldly life). Thus, it can be said that advice of *siddhavastu* like *Brahman* is as justified as the advice of curd etc. which are conducive to certain actions.

An individual who has the realisation in the form “*aham brahmāsmi*” (I am *Brahman*) is a *jīvanamukta* (a person who has attained liberation in this life). Unlike before, he does not view the world in the ordinary sense. On the reverse, an individual who has the consciousness of ‘I’ (ego-consciousness) in the body is subject to sorrow and fear as usual. A wealthy man mourns at the loss of his wealth but a monk or a person who has no egotism (*abhimāna*) over wealth never feels sad at its loss. The *śruti* explains the characteristics of a *brahmavit* (person possessing the knowledge of *Brahman*) or a

jīvanmukta (a liberated person in this life) as follows: “*aśarīram vāva santam na priyāpriye sprśataḥ*”¹¹² (a person bereft of any feeling towards his mortal body is neither touched by pleasure nor by pain). The *pūrvvapakṣin*-s object that *śarīrābhimānarāhitya* (absence of egotism over one’s body) occurs only after death of an individual when the body is cast off. But the *siddhāntin*-s answer that an individual has the feeling of equating his body with the self in the form ‘I am the body’ as a result of false knowledge. But, in fact, the self is eternally free from the body as it is not caused by any action. The *pūrvvapakṣin*-s argue that execution of *dharma* and *adharma* by a self is the cause of body egotism (*saśarīratva*). In answer, the *siddhāntin*-s reply that as the relation between the self and the body is caused by false ignorance/*mithyā ajñāna*, the notion of the self’s performing *dharma* and *adharma* is not tenable. They argue that a fallacy named *anyonyāśraya* (circular reasoning) is caused when on the one hand it is held that *dharmmādharmma* is produced out of the relation between the self and the body whereas on the other hand, it is held that the self is related with the body only in the presence of *dharmmādharmma*. They also argue that *dharmmādharmma* causes generation of body and that in turn causing *dharmmādharmma* again leads to infinite regress. *Ācārya Śaṅkara* has provided the solution in the following manner. When the *pūrvvapakṣin*-s say that the cause of *śarīra* in the present birth is the merit and demerit of the previous birth and the *śarīra* of the previous birth is further caused by its previous *dharmmā dharmma*, the *siddhāntin*-s answer that it may prevent *anyonyā śraya* (reasoning in a circularity), but not infinite regress (*anavasthādoṣa*) which is termed by *Śaṅkara* as *andha paramparā*. The relation of dependence between a seed (*vīja*) and a sprout (*aṅkura*) is well-known. But the same relation of circularity is not applicable to the relation of the

¹¹² -, 2010, *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 8/12/1 in *Upaniṣad*., ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

self with the body with respect to merit and demerit because the self has no companion (*asaṅga*). The *śruti*-s describe the self as “*asaṅga hi ayaṁ puruṣa*”¹¹³ (this Supreme Being is companionless) and “*anyatra dharmāt, anyatra adharmāt*”¹¹⁴ (this self is different from *dharmma*, the sacrificial rites enjoined in the scriptures as well as from *adharmma*, the prohibitions laid therein). Thus, the relation between self and the body as caused by *dharmmadharmma* is not established. This relation between the two is contrived by false ignorance (*mithyā ajñāna*). That ignorance can be destroyed only by *brahmātmajñāna* (knowledge of *Brahman* being equal to the self) and thus *sadyomukti* is attained.

Another important point has been raised by the *siddhāntin*-s. A king, as an *adhipati*, exercises authority over his servants as he pays them. Here his domination (*kartṛtva*) is quite justified. But, the same authority over one’s body by the self in the form ‘I am the boss of the body’ or ‘This body is mine’ cannot be claimed. In fact, owing to false knowledge we identify the body with the self and thus, the self is claimed to be the agent (*karttā*) of any sacrificial act.

Seeing a shell (*śukti*) on the shore, men often mistake it as ‘this is silver’ (*rajat*) and has the knowledge of the latter. Similarly, the aggregate of body (*dehādisamaṣṭi*) is often referred to by the term ‘I’ because of the absence of the knowledge of discrimination (*aviveka*) between the self (*ātman*) and the not-self (*anātman*). Laymen do not have the

¹¹³ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/3/15 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

¹¹⁴ -, 2010, *Kāthopaniṣad*, 1/2/14 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

knowledge of the self as different from the body. Thus, their knowledge of the self in the body (*śarīre ā tmabuddhi*) appears to be true (*satya*) but is indeed false (*mithyā*). Even those who have the distinctive knowledge (*vivekajñāna*) of the self and the not-self (*brahmātmavijñānī*) experience the nondetached (*avivikta*) conviction of the self in the body (*śarīre āmi*). But, in fact, their self is characterised by *aśarīratva*. To an individual who has had the indirect knowledge of *Brahman* in the form ‘*ahaṁ brahmāsmi*’, the knowledge of the world (*jagatprapañca*) though negated as false is still experienced by him as true just as knowing the magic as false, man still regards it as true and feels joy out of it. This phenomenon is termed as *vādhiter anuvṛtti*. But, to an enlightened individual, there is no trace of *samsāra* and his body lies without the self just as the slough of a dead snake is interpolated on termites. Thus, a *jīvanmukta puruṣa*, having the knowledge of *Brahman* after destroying all his desires, becomes immortal, *aśarīra*, *prāṇasvarūpa*, *brahmasvarūpa*, *jyotiḥsvarūpa*.¹¹⁵ Those who do not possess that knowledge of the unity of the self with *Brahman* (*brahmātmabhāva*) is steeped in *samsāra* (worldly life).

Manana and *nididhyāsana* are equally important for having the knowledge of *Brahman*. Once *brahmātmajñāna* is attained, a *jīvanmukta puruṣa* does not possess the feeling of identity of the body with the self (*dehātmabuddhirahita*) and he has no actions to perform. *Brahman*, though the subject matter of *śravaṇa* and other *vidhi*-s, is not *vidhiśeṣa* (not a component or *aṅga* of an action like *vidhi*). Just as *prayāja* is *aṅga* and *darśapūrṇamāsa yajña* is *aṅgī*, similarly *Brahman* is *aṅgī* and its *sādhana śravaṇa* etc are *aṅga*. *Asambhāvanā*, *viparītabhāvanā* and absence of *cittaśuddhi* are the three impediments (*pratibandhaka*) in the acquirement of *brahmātmajñāna*. If, after the first

¹¹⁵ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 4/4/7 in Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*tadyathā ahinirbhayanī valmīke mṛtā prastatā śayīta, evameva idaṁ śarīraṁ śete, atha ayaṁ śarīraḥ amtaḥ prāṇaḥ brahma eva tejaḥ evaḥ*”

hearing, there is no generation of indirect knowledge of *Brahman*, an individual is made to hear the *Upanisadic* sentence time and again. This activity deletes all defects of *asambhāvanā* arising out of *pramāṇa*. *Manana* eradicates all impediments related to *prameya* regarding the identity of *jīva* and *Brahman*. Finally, *nididhyāsana* eliminates obstacles which are, in nature, *viparītabhāvanā*. These repeated activities help in accruing of *adṛṣṭa* which obliterates all sin. Then, *brahmātmajñāna* ushers after clearing off *avidyā* and hence *śravaṇa* as *aṅgī* and *manana* and *nididhyāsana* as *aṅga* are known as *antaraṅgasādhana* (means). Disinterested actions which cleanse the mind of an individual of all impurities act as *bahiraṅgasādhana*. Thus, *Brahman* is *svatantra* (independent) as it is not an *aṅga* of any *kriyā* and is known only from the scriptures. Thus, a harmony is maintained throughout all the *Vedāntavākya*-s. The knowledge of monism (*advaitavāda*) falsifies *pramāṇa*, *prameya* and *pramātā* as all *vidhi*-s aim at the conclusion ‘I am *Brahman*’. All sorts of *vyavahāra* like *upāsanā* etc. are possible only before attaining *brahmajñāna* and thus *Brahman* is not a part of any activity. A person who has the knowledge of *Brahman* has the realisation that the ‘the real (*avādhita*) self which is of the nature of *Brahman* is he himself’. Once he has that feeling, his feeling for his sons and his body etc. are nullified. An individual knows his wife and son as separate entities from him but regards them as his own and equates their sorrow and happiness to those of his own. This is referred to as *gauṇa ātmatva* (secondary feeling of the self). And when an individual considers his body as his own and regards himself as an agent (*kartta*), that notion is regarded as *mithyā ātmatva*. So long as *brahmātmajñāna* is not realised, the individual self is regarded as the knower (*jñātā*) of *vidhiniṣedha* and its agency (*karṭtrtva*) and the world with its objects appear to be true to him in the transactional (*vyavahārika*) sense. But once *brahmajñāna* is attained, the *jīva* becomes

free from all defects like *rāga* (attachment) and *deṣa* (aversion) and qualities like merit (*puṇya*) and demerit (*pāpa*).

8. The Identity of the Jiva with Brahman

The identity between *jīvātman* and *paramātman* has been depicted in two chapters of *Brahmasutra Śāṅkarabhāṣya*. In *Vākyānvayādhikaraṇa* of *Śāṅkarabhāṣya* we notice that the *Brahman* as identical with *jīva* is the subject-matter of *Maitreyī Brāhmaṇ* and that *Brahman* is the object of *śravaṇa* and *manana*. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* elaborates that every object in this world is dear to a person not because of that object itself, but only because it is dear to his own self. This Self is thus to be seen, heard of, reflected upon and eventually to be meditated upon. It is only by knowing the self (*ātman*) that everything in the universe is known to an individual.¹¹⁶ A valid question arises here as to whether the term ‘*ātman*’ denotes the *jīvātman* or the *paramātman*? Though the opponent (*pūrvapakṣī*) argues in favour of *jīvātman* as only the embodied self (*jivā tman*) is capable of enjoyment (*bhoga*), the proponent (*siddhāntin*) claims that the self spoken of here is *paramātman* as the knowledge of the self leads to knowledge of everything else.¹¹⁷ The *pūrvapakṣin*-s argue that the self to which many objects such as husband, wife, son, wealth, etc. are dear is the embodied self which enjoys (*bhoktā jivātman*). This self is omnipresent and pure knowledge, is born out of the material elements and perishes when

¹¹⁶-, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 2/4/5 in Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvaṁ priyaṁ bhavatyātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṁ priyaṁ bhavati/ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyyātmano vā are darśanena śravaṇena matyā vijñānenedaṁ sarvaṁ veditam*.”

¹¹⁷, *Śāṅkarabhāṣya*, 1/4/19

Śrīśrīmanmaharṣīkṣṇadvaipāyanavādarāyanabhagavadvedavyāsa, 1999, *Vedāntadarśanam, śāṅkara bhāṣya*, prathamah adhyāyaḥ, ed. swāmī Chidghananananda Puri o vedāntavāgīśaḥ Sri aAnanda Jhā nyāyācārya,

Kalikata:Udbodhan Karyalaya – ‘...tathā ātmavijñānena sarvvavijñānenopadeṣat paramātmopadeṣaḥ iti’

the elements perish.¹¹⁸ In answer to this, the *uttarapakṣin*-s conclude by saying that there is a consistency between the sentences which point to the *paramātmān*. After learning from *Yājñavalkya* that wealth cannot ensure immortality, *Maitreyī* says that she does not desire anything which fails to provide her immortality. She rather wants to know what *Yājñavalkya* is knowledgeable of. Then we find the latter proceeding to impart her the knowledge of the Supreme Self which is the source of immortality. All the *Śruti* and the *Smṛti* speak of the knowledge of the Absolute Self as the cause of immortality.¹¹⁹ It is further stated that the *brāhmaṇa*-s and the *kṣatriya*-s refuse permission to the highest path to that person who know the *brāhmaṇa*-s as different from the self. All the objects present before us are identical with the self.¹²⁰ The *Veda*-s have been revealed as natural breath of that Supreme Self. The entire world emerges from it, stays within it and finally merges with the Self at the time of destruction. The Self is *anantara* i.e devoid of *svagata bheda* and *avāhya* or devoid of *sajātīya* and *vijātīya bheda* and is in the nature of the knowledge of the Supreme philosophical reality.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ibid- “*patijyāputravittādikaṃ hi bhogyabhūtaṃ sarvvaṃ jagat ātmārthatayā priyaṃ bhavati iti...madhye api “idaṃ mahadbhūtaṃ anantaṃ apāraṃ vijñānaghanaḥ eva, etebhyaḥ bhūtebhyaḥ samutthāya tāni eva anuvinaśyati na pretya samjñā asti”*”.

¹¹⁹ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣada* 2/4/2 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*evaṃ prāpte kramah-paramātmopadeśaḥ eva ayam/...vākyānvayāt/ vākyam hi idaṃ pourvāparyena avekṣyamānaṃ paramātmānaṃ prati anvitāvayavaṃ lakṣyate/...tat upapādyate- “amṛtatvasya tu na āśā asti vittena”*”
-, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣada* 2/4/3 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- *iti yājñavalkyāt upaśrutya “yena ahaṃ na amṛtā syām, kim ahaṃ tena kuryāṃ, yadeva bhagavāna veda tadeva me vruhi”*

¹²⁰ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣada* 2/4/6 - “*yaḥ hi brahmakṣatrādikaṃ jagat ātmanaḥ anyatra svātantryena labdhasadbhāvaṃ paśyati, taṃ mithyādarśinaṃ tadeva mithyādrṣṭaṃ brahmakṣatrādikaṃ jagat parākaroti iti bhedadrṣṭim apodya “idaṃ sarvvaṃ yad ayam ātmā”*”

¹²¹ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣada* 2/4/10-“*asya mahataḥ bhūtasya niśvasitam etat yat ṛgvedaḥ*”
-, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣada* 2/4/11- “*ityādinā ca prakṛtasya ātmana nāmarūpakarma prapañcakāraṇatām vyācakṣāṇaḥ paramātmānaṃ enaṃ gamayati / tathaiva ekāyanaprakriyāyāṃ api”*

In the chapter *ārambhaṇādhikaraṇam* of the second *adhyāya* of his *bhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtra*, *Ācārya Śaṅkara* has endeavoured to establish the thesis that *Brahman* is the only reality and in proving so, he has established his tenet of *vivartavāda* in which he states that the world is not real. It is only superimposed on *Brahman* and appears to be real to us. In other words, the world is the *vivarta* (appearance) of *Brahman*. The subject matter of is to synthesise all the *Vedāntic* sentences with respect to the *Brahman* which is the one and only reality. Thus, all differences present before us appear to be real only at the transactional (*vyavahārika*) level but at the

transcendental (*pāramārthika*) level, *Brahman* is the ultimate reality. A doubt arises as to whether the nature of the relation of difference as well as non-difference (*bhedābheda*) of *Brahman* as cause and the world (*jagat*) as effect is transcendental (*pāramārthika*) or transactional (*vyavahārika*). The *pūrvvapakṣin*-s object that just as the sea and the waves are present before our perception and their difference as well as non-difference are admitted by us, the same relation between the world (*jagatprapañca*) and *Brahman* can be admitted as transcendently real as there is no obstacle in admitting their difference as well as nondifference. In reply, the *siddhāntin*-s cite a *śruti* which states that there is no multiplicity or difference/*bheda* here. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* states “*neha nānāhastikiñcana*”¹²² which means that there is no multiplicity here i.e., in the *śruti*, no difference is intended. Just as the one and only moon is seen as two which is not really so, similarly difference (*bheda*) and nondifference (*abheda*) cannot co-exist. This difference as well as non-difference (*bhedābheda*) is falsified by the *śruti* and *smṛti* as *vyavahārika*. The *Chāṅgyopaniṣad* sentence “*yathā somya ekena mṛtṭpiṇḍena sarvaṁ mṛṇmayam vijātam*

-, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4/5/13- “*saviṣayasya sendriyasya sāntaḥkaraṇasya prapañcasya ekāyanam*

‘*anantaram avāhya kṛtsnam prajñānaghaṇam*”

¹²² -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4/4/19

syāt vācārambhaṇam vikāraḥ nāmadheyam mṛttikā ityeva satyam”¹²³ explains that just as from a lump of clay, all earthen objects can be known, likewise all produced objects (*janyavastu* or *kāryavastu*) are designated with name and form (*nāmarūpa*), but clay remains the only true substance behind them. Similarly, the *śruti* endorses only the cause as real and emphasizes that the effect is not different from the cause though in ordinary perception, the cause and the effect appear to be different just as the waves appear to be different from the sea but are in essence the one and the same. Hence, the one and only *Brahman* is the only transcendental reality (*paramārtha satya*).

In this chapter, a doubt arises at the very outset. The opponents argue saying that as our perceptions present different opposing pictures, the *Vedāntic* sentences cannot be synthesized into one and only *Brahman*. In reply, the proponents answer by saying that the cause (*Brahman*) and the effect (*jagat*) are not different. The effect is presented with name and form in our speech but is, in essence, the same like a lump of clay with respect to earthen objects. In 2/1/13, it has been stated though *Brahman* is the only material cause, the world appears to be different in the form of enjoyer and the enjoyed (*bhokṛṭbhogyātmaka jagatprapañca*) just as even today, though clay is the material cause, objects produced out of it are designated by different names like *ghaṭa*, *śarāva*, *udañcana* etc. The difference in names, forms and utility are all present in our day-to-day living but with respect to the material cause, they are all the same. The cause and effect are essentially the same element (*ananya*). The *param Brahman*, for example, is the cause of the universe (*jagatprapañca*) whose beginning is the space (*ākāśa*). The term ‘*ananya*’ has been used by *Ācārya Śaṅkara* in order to rule out the fallacies raised by the *Vaiśeṣika*-s. (i) If it is said that the universe and space (*ākāśadi jagatprapañca*) are non-

¹²³ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 6/1/4

different, then all the defects of the universe will fall upon *Brahman*. (ii) If the cause and the effect are the same and the latter is present always like the former, then the contribution of the person who is responsible for the transformation of the former into the latter (*kāraṅkavyāpāra*) will turn out to be futile. (iii) As the cause and the effect have different properties, they cannot be easily discerned from their contradicting properties. For example, fire and water share equal status with respect to substance hood, but they are different with respect to their distinct individual properties of fire hood and water hood. But, *bhāṣyakāra Śaṅkara* has introduced the term ‘*ananya*’ to prevent all these fallacies. In admitting the effect to be not different from the cause, he has upheld *vivartavāda*, in which only *Brahman* is admitted to be real only and the entire world is superimposed (*adhyasta*) on the former and are only real at the transactional (*vyavahārika*) or illusory (*prātibhāsika*) level. (i) First, whatever is deemed as effect is but superimposed (*kalpita*) on the cause just as the universe is superimposed on *Brahman* and appears to be as it is. As a result, there is no possibility of the cause being infected by the superimposed object. (ii) As the effect is superimposed on the cause, no question of any agent (responsible for the transformation of the cause into the effect) arises. (iii) Lastly, as the effect has no different existence other than the cause, no contradiction as to their properties arises. The *bhāṣyakāra* points out that effects of *Brahman* like fire, water and earth possess the colours of red, white and black respectively. Their colours are determined by the subtle elements which are the only true substances. Their specific properties like fire hood etc. are eliminated.¹²⁴ The term ‘*ārambhaṇa*’ has been used to denote that *Brahman* is the first and only substance. This thesis has been expressed through different sentences from the *Upaniṣads* – “*aitadātmyam idaṁ sarvvaṁ tat satyaṁ saḥ ātmā tattvamasi*” (the

¹²⁴-, 2010, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad*, 6/4/1 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*apāgāt agneḥ agniṁ vācārambhaṇaṁ vikāraḥ nāmadheyaṁ trīṇi rūpāṇi ityeva satyaṁ*”,

subtlest object is the self of the entire world; it is the truth. You are That)¹²⁵, “*idaṁ sarvvaṁ yad ayaṁ ātmā*” (everything is that self)¹²⁶, “*brahma eva idaṁ sarvvaṁ*” (all this is *Brahman*)¹²⁷, “*ātmā eva idaṁ sarvvaṁ*” (the self is everything),¹²⁸ “*neha nānāhasti kiñcana*” (this *Brahman* is devoid of all difference and plurality)¹²⁹. The proponents of *vivartavāda* advocate ‘*ekavijñāne sarvvavijñāna*’ (one consciousness is in every consciousness) whereby they explain that the space enclosed within a pot (*ghaṭākāśa*) is identical with the empty space without (*mahākāśa*). Being *dr̥ṣṭa* (symbolic), *naṣṭa* (non-eternal) and *anupākhya* (having no separate entity and incapable of being described as real or unreal), water in a mirage (*mṛgtr̥ṣṇikā*) is identical with a wild desert (*ūṣara marubhūmi*) just as the universe (*jagatprapañca*) has no separate entity other than *Brahman* which is eternal and one without a second.

There can be an objection against this position stating that the proponents are speaking of *brahmapariṇāmavāda* or *anekāntavāda*. It is postulated that *Brahman* can be thought of many e.g., a tree is one in number, but its branches are many, a sea is one but it has many foams and waves (*phenataraṅga*), a lump of clay can produce many earthen objects. Even practice of *mokṣa* is one but secular (*laukika*) and religious (*vaidika*) activities following the ritualistic portions of the *Veda*-s (*karmakāṇḍāśrayātmaka*) are many in number. Thus,

¹²⁵ -, 2010, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* 6/8/7

¹²⁶ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 2/4/6 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited

¹²⁷ -, 2010, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, 2/2/11 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited

¹²⁸ -, 2010, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad*, 7/25/2 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited

¹²⁹ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/4/19 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

if *jīva*, *jagat* and *Brahman* are accepted as different from each other, then, all earthen objects will be treated as different from the original clay and dualistic arguments will not be falsified.

The *siddhāntin*-s reply back saying that such an objection is not tenable. In the nature, only the material cause like the earth is only true. The term ‘*vācārambhaṇ*’ itself denotes the falsehood of all types of effects which are but different names and forms. But, as effects cannot be proved as false just with the aid of examples, it is necessary first to prove the truth of *Brahman*. It is, in this sense only, that the supreme cause (*paramakāraṇa*) is accepted as the Truth and hence this self (*ātmā*) is *Śvetaketu* himself, says the *śruti* (*saḥ ātmā tattvamasi Śvetaketo*). If the *saṃsāra* (the worldly life) is considered as true, then the individual selves (*saṃsārī jīva*) cannot be accepted as being identical with the *Brahman*. The *śruti* states that the identity of the self with *Brahman* is spontaneous and not caused by any conscious volition. Had it been so, then the *Upaniṣadic* statement would have been ‘*tat tvam bhaviṣyasi*’ instead of ‘*tat tvam asi*’. But with the destruction of the *avidyā* ascribed on the self which makes it distinct from *Brahman*, the *jīva* (individual self) and *Brahman* are proved to be identical just as the knowledge of the snake is falsified by the cognition of the rope. Thus, the use of the term ‘*tat tvam bhaviṣyasi*’ is not justified. When the nescience (*avidyā*) is destroyed, all differences vanish and *Brahman* remains as the only reality. The *śruti* says that when everything merges into the self, then who will perceive whom i.e., there will be no distinction between the seer (*draṣṭā*) and the seen (*dṛśya*).¹³⁰ The state of identity between the *Brahman* and the self (*brahmātmabhāva*) in the state of *mokṣa* is self-established

¹³⁰ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/5/15 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- “*yatra tu asya sarvvaṃ ātmaiva abhūta tat kena kaṃ paśyati*”.

(*svataḥsiddha*). Knowledge and usage of the state of being the knower (*pramāṭṛtva*) is not real but only imposed at the transactional level. That is why, the state of *samsāra* (*samsārāvasthā*) of the *jīva* (individual self) is falsified when *mokṣa* (liberation) is attained. A story from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is referred to by the *bhāṣyakāra* to illustrate this point. Two persons convicted of theft are bound to hold a red-hot axe in their hands. Both are claiming themselves to be innocent. The person who has really stolen burns his hands while the one who has not, stood safe. With this example, the *Upaniṣad* has tried to explain that the person who has stolen has taken resort to lying and is thus suffering from burn which is symbolized as the suffering which is inevitable in the *samsāra* but the person who was really innocent stuck to truth and hence relieved from the burn as having stuck to truth, he has overcome all the pains of *samsāra*. While the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣada* speaks of the identity of the individual self with the Supreme Self in the statement ‘*neha nānāhasti kiñcana*’, it has also iterated that he who sees the multiplicity in this, (*ekarasa prajñānaghana Brahman*) is subject to death¹³¹ as here, difference of the self (*jīva*) from *Brahman* is condemned. The claim of the *brahmapariṇāmavādin*-s as to the difference (*bheda*) between the self and the *Brahman* cannot be entertained as false knowledge can be obstructed by veridical cognition (*samyagjñāna*). *Bhedābhedavāda* is not the topic of discussion in *Vedānta* as it acknowledges the transactional authoritativeness (*vyavahārika prāmāṇya*) of the scriptures and *pratakṣa pramāṇa* etc. which are real only for that time being just as knowledge from our dreams are.

The *siddhāntin*-s claim that so long as an individual does not possess the knowledge of identity (*ekatva*) of the *jīvātman* with the *paramātman*, he does not acknowledge the

¹³¹ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/4/19 - “*mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyomāpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati*”.

knowledge of *pramāṇa*, *prameya* and all other effects as false as all secular (*laukika*) and religious (*vaidika*) behaviour is justified. It is natural in all beings to discard the natural identity with *Brahman* (*brahmātmabhāva* in the form ‘I am *Brahman*’) owing to *avidyā* (nescience) and falsely identify all effects like the body (*deha*) as myself (*āmi*) and their sons (*putrādi*) etc. as mine. Even the knowledge from dreams seems to be real so long as an individual is asleep. The *siddhāntin*-s claim that unlike the sentence ‘*yajeta svargakāma*’ which brings in the questions ‘*kim*’, ‘*kena*’ and ‘*katham*’, the *Vedāntic* sentence ‘*tattvamasi*’ which proposes the supreme identity between the self and the *Brahman* is the ultimate (*antya*) *pramāṇa* knowing which man has no further aspiration as the subject matter of *brahmā tma vijñāna* is to be merged in *Brahman*.

In reply to the objection by the *bhedābhedavādin*-s that the world is a consequence (*pariṇāma*) of the *Brahman*, the *siddhāntin*-s claim that there are ample evidences found in the *Upaniṣad*-s in favour of the *kūṭasthātā* (uniformity) of *Brahman* - “*saḥ vai evaḥ mahān ajaḥ ātmā ajaraḥ amaraḥ amṛtaḥ abhayaṁ brahma*” (that self is great, without birth, without decay, without death, without any change, and without any fear)¹³², “*sa eṣaḥ neti neti ātmā*” (‘*na iti =neti*’, ‘not this, not this’ i.e., negatively characterised)¹³³, “*asthulam anaṇu*” (neither gross, nor minute)¹³⁴. These sentences prove that the *Brahman* is *pariṇāmaśūnya* (bereft of any transformation) and is *nityanirvikāra* (ever-immutable). In answer to the objection that *Brahman* is not *kūṭastha*, the *siddhāntin*-s state that the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka śruti* 4/4/25 lays proof in favour of the thesis that *Brahman* is *kūṭastha*. Thus, *Brahman*, being devoid of any part (*avayava*) and reaction (*vikriyā*) cannot be said

¹³² -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4/4/25

¹³³ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 3/9/26

¹³⁴ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* , 3/8/8

to assume the form of the universe as a *pariṇāma* (consequence) and thus the cause and the effect are identical (*abhinna*) in the instance of clay and its products and the world is a *vivarta* (illusory existence) like shell-silver (*śuktiroupya*). If *Brahman* is admitted to be *pariṇāmī* (subject to change), then all the *Upaniṣadic* sentences which speak of *mokṣa* will lose their utility.

Again, the second sūtra “*janmādasya yataḥ*” cannot be contradicted as *īśvara* who is ascribed (*kalpita*) is the controller (*niyantraka*) and *śāśaka* (administrator) of the *jīva-jagat* (the mundane world) which is the *śāśita* (administered). From the sentence “*tasmāt vai etasmāt atmanaḥ ākāśaḥ sambhūtaḥ*” (*Taittirīyopaniṣada* 2/1) which means that from the self, ether is created, it follows that the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world is carried out from the *īśvara* (who is *nītaśuddhabuddhamuktasvarūpa*, *sarvva-jñā* and *sarvvaśaktimāna*) and not from the unconscious *pradhāna*. This *sūtra* refers to *īśvara* as the qualified efficient cause (*aupādhika nimitta kāraṇa*) of the world. In the *sūtra* “*tadananyatvādi*”, the *nirupādhika tāttvika svarūpa* of *parameśvara* is intended. *īśvara*, who is consciousness (*ajāḍa*) is real (*sat*) whereas the world (*jagatprapañca*) present in name and form (*nāmarūpa*) is unconscious (*jaḍa*) and hence unreal (*asat*). The *jaḍa* and the *ajāḍa* cannot be identical and hence this unconscious name and form cannot be said to be non-different (*abhinna*) from *īśvara*. Again, the *ajāḍa* cannot attain its fruition independent of *īśvara* and thus, it cannot be said to be different also from *īśvara*. Owing to this characteristic, the name and form which is qualified by *avidyā* and yet the same as *īśvara* is *anirvacanīya* (beyond description) and the cause of the universe (*samsāraprapañca*) has been explicated in the *śruti* and the *smṛti*. If an objection is raised that *īśvara* will be a *jaḍa padārtha* if the *māyāśakti* is the same as *īśvara*, the objection can be refuted by referring to a *śruti* from the *Chāndogyopaniṣada* – “*ākāśaḥ vai nāma nāmarūpayoḥ nirvahitā, te yadantarā tat*

brahma”¹³⁵ which means that that self (*ātmā*) which is known as *ākāśa* and expresses *nāma* and *rūpa*, is called *brahma* in which *nāma* and *rūpa* are situated (*avasthita*). “*Nāmarūpevyākārvaṇi*”¹³⁶ (*nāma* and *rūpa* will be expressed), “*sarvvāṇi rūpāṇi vicitya dhīro nāmāni kṛtvā abhivadan yadānte*”¹³⁷ (I know that being who is present after expressing the multifarious *rūpa* with their corresponding names (*nāma*) as ‘this is god’, this is man’ ‘this is animal’), “*ekam vījaṁ bahudhā yaḥ karoti*”¹³⁸ (who transforms a seed, *vīja* [*māyāśakti*, the seed of the *jaḍa* by *pariṇāma* and *svarūpacaitanya*, the seed of the *jīva* through reflections and images {*bimbapratibimba*}] as many) – are the *śruti*-s which speak of the difference of *nāmarūpa* from *īśvara*. This expression of the *nāmarūpa* is governed by *īśvara* and here lies his majesty (*aiśvarya*). A question might arise that if the majesty of the *īśvara* is natural, then how can he be the controller of *nāma* and *rūpa*? The answer is that pure consciousness (*śuddha caitanya*) becomes *īśvara* when it qualifies *nāmarūpa* which is, by nature, false. *Mahākāśa* (infinite space) is, likewise, represented as *ghaṭākāśa* etc., when it is qualified by the *upādhi* (qualifier) ‘*ghaṭa*’ or ‘*kamaṇḍalu*’. The consciousness (*caitanya*) which is reflected in *avidyā* (nescience) and its effect *antaḥkaraṇa* is *jīva* (individual self) and the reflected consciousness (*bimbabhūta caitanya*) is *īśvara*.

At the transcendental (*pāramārthika*) level, dual concepts of *īśvaratva* as (*śāsakatva*) and *jīvatva* (as *śāsitatatva*) are not conceived in pure consciousness (*śuddha caitanya*). This thesis is laid down in several *Upaniṣads* – “*yatra nānyat paśyati, nānyat śṛṇoti,*

¹³⁵ -, 2010, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* 8/14/1 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited

¹³⁶ Ibid, 6/3/2

¹³⁷ *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 3/12/7

¹³⁸ -, 2010, *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* 6/12 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited

nānyat vijānāti, saḥ bhūmā”¹³⁹ (that is infinite where nothing else is seen, nothing else is heard and nothing else is known). Absence of all kinds of ordinary usage (*vyavahāra*) is noted in various *Upaniṣads*. In the *Gītā*, it has been said that *parameśvara* or the Supreme Being does not administer results of actions performed nor does it accept the merit (*puṇya*) and demerit (*pāpa*) of anyone. In fact, true knowledge is veiled by ignorance (*avidyā*). The *śruti* speaks of the usage of *īśvara* at the transactional level – “*eṣaḥ sarvveśvaraḥ eṣaḥ bhūtādhipatiḥ eṣaḥ bhūtapālaḥ eṣaḥ seturvidharaṇaḥ eṣāṁ lokānāmsambhedāya*”¹⁴⁰ (this self is the master of all beings, he is the wall who prevents the mixing of different categories of people divided on the basis of *varṇa* and *āśrama*). In the *Īśvaragītā*, difference of *jīva* and *īśvara* in transactional usage (*vyavahārāvasthā*) has been explicated – “*īśvaraḥ sarvvabhūtānām hr̥ddeśeḥarjjuna tiṣṭhati /bhrāmayan sarvvabhūtāni yantrāruṇāṇi māyayā*”//¹⁴¹ (O Arjuna, the *īśvara*, with the aid of *māyā*, resides in the hearts of all beings and seated in the machine known as the body, he makes the beings work in their respective fields.) At length, it is to be said in conclusion that the effect in the form of the universe (*kāryyaprapaṇca*) is not to be denied and *saguṇa upāsanā* is prescribed and hence *pariṇāma prakriyā* is accepted. Those who are inferior (*mandabuddhi*) accept *pariṇāmavāda*, but others whose all sins have been eradicated (*kṣīṇapāpabuddhi*), accept *vivartavāda*. The nature of *parameśvara*, the Supreme Being is qualified as well as nonqualified by *upādhi* and thus there is no conflict between the *sūtra*-s ‘*janmādasya yataḥ*’ and *tadanannyatvādi*. The world (*jagat*) and the *Brahman*

¹³⁹ -, 2010, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* 7/24/1 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited

¹⁴⁰ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4/4/22 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited

¹⁴¹ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 18/61, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers

who is immutable (*kuṭastha*) and one without a second (*advitīya*) are thus, proved to be non-different (*ananya*).

9. The Eternal Nature of the Individual Self

In the chapter *Ātmādhikaraṇam* (2/3/17), we notice the discussion about the beginninglessness (*utpattirāhitya*) of the *jīva* (living organism). *Jīva* is eternal but its birth and death with respect to a body are qualified by *avidyā* (ignorance) and hence it cannot avoid suffering the consequences of its deeds committed in another life. In this regard, we find contradictory statements in the *śruti* regarding the self (*ātman*) and its relation with *Brahman*. In the sixth chapter of the second part (*Brahmānandavallī*) of *Taittirīyopaniṣad*,¹⁴² the *śruti* explains that *Brahman* which is beyond any transformation creates *jīva*, penetrates into it and assumes its form. In another *śruti*¹⁴³, it has been stated that He is present here (in the body) even at the tip of the nail. This shows that *Brahman* is not only the efficient cause, but it serves the purpose of the material cause too. The *Brahman* permeates the individual self (*jīvātman*). Yet another sentence of *Bṛhadāraṇyopaniṣad*¹⁴⁴ states that the self is beyond the phenomenon of creation and hence does not undertake birth. The aforesaid *Upaniṣadic* sentences establish the thesis that *Brahman* takes the form of the *jīva* without undergoing any transformation itself.

¹⁴² -, 2010, *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 2/6 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- "...tat sṛṣṭvā tadevanupravisat..."

¹⁴³ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyopaniṣad* 1/4/7 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- "...saḥ eṣa iha praviṣṭaḥ ānakhāgrebhyah..."

¹⁴⁴ -, 2010, *Bṛhadāraṇyopaniṣad* 4/4/25 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited "...ajah ātmā..."

Again, we come across another sentence from *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*¹⁴⁵ which states that just as a little spark (*vispūliṅga*) emanates from fire, likewise all sense-organs, all living beings, all gods and all regions (*loka*) like heaven and hell are all ejected out of the Self in different directions.

Thus, while the opponents claim that the living beings are born out of *Brahman* in one *kalpa* (ruling time) like a spark of fire and that *Brahman* is one without a second (*ekamevādvitīyam*) prior to creation, the proponents rule out saying that there are *śruti*-s claiming that *Brahman* creates individual selves (*jīvātman*) out of Himself and after *buddhi* (intellect) is created, it penetrates into them and is reflected through them. Thus, even if individual selves are not created, *Brahman* still remains one without a second. The individual selves created out of *Brahman* are conscious in nature as described in the *śruti*. Thus, the *jīva* is not created at the beginning of a *kalpa*. If the *jīva* is considered as an effect (*kārya*) for being created, it will undergo destruction (*vināśa*) too and then a fallacy called *kṛtanāśādi doṣa* will occur. The *Śruti*, citing the example of sparks emanated from fire explain the birth of *jīva*-s as *oupādhika*. The *sūtra* “*nātmāhaśruternityatvācca tābhyah*” (2/3/17) explains that the *jīva*-s are not produced as creation of the *jīva*-s has not been mentioned in the chapters which speak on the creation of the gross elements (*mahābhūta*). Thus, when it is said that *Brahman* enters into the *jīva*-s, it does not necessarily mean that they are produced as there are ample *śruti*-s¹⁴⁶ which speak in favour of the eternity of the *jīva*-s. *Ācārya Śaṅkara* in his *bhāṣya* states that the individual self (*jīvātman*) is the Lord or master of the cage (*piñjara*) built up by the body

¹⁴⁵ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* *Mādhyah* 2/1/20 - “*yathā agneḥ kṣudrāḥ visphūliṅgāḥ vyuccaranti, evam eva etasmāt ātmanaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ, sarve lokāḥ, sarve vedāhsarvvāṇi bhūtāni, sarve ete ātmānaḥ vyuccaranti*”

¹⁴⁶ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/4/25 - “*saḥ vai eṣaḥ mahān ajaḥ ātmā*”

-, *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 1/2/18- “*...ajaḥ nityaḥ...*”

-, *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 6/11/3 - “*...na jīvaḥ mriyate...*”

and the sense-organs and it is related to the consequences of the actions performed. There is an inconsistency among the different *Upaniṣadic* sentences regarding the ontic status of *jīvā tman* or the individual self as to whether it is created out of *Brahman* like the *ākāśa* or it is non-created like the *Brahman* itself, as pointed out by the opponents. While some sentences explain that the individual self is created out of *Brahman* just like the sparks are born out of fire, there are others which speak that the Supreme Self, having created the individual selves penetrates into them and assumes their forms. Thus, it is imperative that the individual selves are born though their creation is not distinctly spelt out. Hence, these contradictory statements fail to establish the authenticity of the *Upaniṣad*-s. The *Ekadeśī* philosophers contend that the individual self (*jīvātman*) is produced. In support of their view, they state that sentences in *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*¹⁴⁷ and *Chāndogyaopaniṣad*¹⁴⁸ advocate ‘*ekavijñāne sarvavijñāna*’ which means that knowing one thing, everything else is known. It is quite evident that if everything is created out of *Brahman*, then by knowing *Brahman*, everything else can be known. When it is said that the immutable *Brahman* has become the *jīva*-s, then it is clear that the *Jīva*-s cannot be other than the *Brahman*. But an objection is raised that the immutable *Brahman* cannot be known as *jīva* because the characteristics of *Brahman* and *jīva* differ. *Brahman*, unlike *jīva*, is bereft of all kinds of defects. Moreover, *jīva*, being produced out of *Brahman* like an effect is different from Him. Just as ether (*ākāśa*) is produced as an effect (*kāryya*), the *jīva*-s must have been created at the time of creation of this universe (*jagatprapañca*). The individual self is distinct in each body and is accompanied by the qualities of virtue and vice and enjoy happiness or suffer from misery accordingly. Citing the example of sparks being

¹⁴⁷ -, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 1/1/3 – “...*kasminnu bhagavo vijñāte sarvavidam vijñātam bhavatīti*”

¹⁴⁸ -, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* 6/1/3 - “*yenāśrutamśrutam bhavatyamataṁ matamavijñātam vijñānamiti katham nu bhagavaḥ sa ādeśo bhavatīti*”//

emanated from fire, the *Upaniṣad*-s state that the *prāṇa*-s (vital air) and the individual selves (*jīvātmāsakala*) are produced separately. That the individual selves are born out of *Brahman* and finally merge into that Supreme Being (*akṣara Brahman*) has been elaborated in the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*.¹⁴⁹ That Supreme Being is the Truth. Here, the term ‘*bhāvāḥ*’ denotes the individual selves which are linked to the Absolute Self through consciousness. Just as clay is present in its effect, an earthen pot, likewise *Brahman*, after creating the *jīva*-s enters into them. In other words, *Brahman* manifests Himself through His creation (*prapañca*).¹⁵⁰ In this sense, the *jīva*-s are considered to be produced out of *Brahman* and thus there is practically no inconsistency in the different *Upaniṣadic* sentences, claims the proponents. The *Ekadaśī* philosophers hold that the *Upaniṣadic* sentences which speak of the individual selves as being created out of *Brahman* and the latter, having produced them, enter into them should be treated as the *Brahman* having undergone transformation as *jīva*-s. The *Upaniṣadic* sentences¹⁵¹ which speak of the beginningless character of the self-affirm that unlike *ākāśa*, the individual self is not born in each *kalpa*. Just as the cause clay (*mṛttikā*) and its effect a pot (*ghaṭa*) is identical in nature (*mṛdbhinna ghaṭa*) but different in form, likewise the sentence “*tattvamasi*” (That Thou Art, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad*, 6/8/7) speaks of the identity of an individual self with the Highest Self though the *jīvātman* is overtly manifest in a distinct form. If it is held that the *jīva*-s are the effects of *Brahman*, then the sentences which speak of the *Brahman* as entering into *jīva*-s should be interpreted as *Brahman*, having created the bodies (*śarīra*-

¹⁴⁹ -, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 2/1/1 “*tadetat-satyam-yathā sudiptāt pāvakād visphūliṅgāḥ sahasraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ/ tathāhakṣarādvividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpiyanti*”//

¹⁵⁰ -, *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 2/7 “*asadvā idamagra āsīt/tato vai sadjāyata/ tadātmānamsvayamakurut*”/...

¹⁵¹ *Kaṭhcopaniṣad*, 1/2/18 - “...*ajo nityaḥ*..”
Bṛhadāraṇyopaniṣad, 4/4/25 - “...*ajāḥ ātmā*...”,

s), assumes the form of the *jīva*-s as effects (*kāryya*) just as clay (*mṛttikā*) assuming the form of a pot (*ghaṭa*) enters into it. The proponents (*siddhāntin*-s) hold that the self in the form of *jīva* is never born as there are no *śruti*-s in its favour and even the chapter on creation (*utpatti prakaraṇa*) does not make any such claim. Different *Upaniṣadic* sentences state that the immutable (*avikṛta*) and eternal (*nitya*) *Brahman* is situated in the *jīva*-s. That the *jīva*-s are eternal too and devoid of creation (in the form of birth) and destruction (in the form of death) have been iterated in the *Upaniṣad*-s in multiple ways.¹⁵² The Self is immortal (*amṛtasvarūpa*), and hence fearless (*abhayaṃ*) and extensive (*mahānbrahma*). He is *purāṇa* (primordial). The *Brahman* which is *nityaśuddhabuddhamukta* (eternal, pure, enlightened and free) penetrates into the individual selves and manifests them with name and form (*nāma-rūpa*). The Self (*ātmā*) which perceives everything is the *Brahman*. These sentences like ‘*tattvamasi*’ (That Thou Art) and ‘*aham brahmāsmi*’ (I am *Brahman*) corroborate the truth that the self being eternal in nature does not undergo birth as we understand the phenomenon in the ordinary sense. It is anticipated that when *Brahman* takes the form of *jīva*, it undergoes division (*vibhāga*) and the *jīva*-s are produced as its effect (*kārya*). The *siddhāntin* finds the fallacy of *svarūpāsiddhi hetvābhāsa* in the argument of the opponents because the locus *jīva* is devoid of the *hetu*, *brahmavibhaktatvarūpa* (being divided from *Brahman*) because there is practically no division of *Brahman* into *jīva*-s as the *Śruti*-s explain it is as one

¹⁵² -, “...*na jīvaḥ mriyate*...”-*Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 6/11/3

-, “*saḥ vai eṣaḥ mahān ajaḥ ātmā ajaraḥ amaraḥ amṛtaḥ abhayaḥ brahma*...”- *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/4/25

-, “*na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścit*” *Kāṭhcopaniṣad*, 1/2/18

“...*tat sṛṣṭvā tadevānuprāviśat*...”*Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 2/6

-, “...*anena jīvena ātmanā anupraviśya nāmarūpe vyākaravāṇi*” *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 6/3/2

-, “*saḥ evaḥ iha praviśtaḥ ānakhāgrebhyaḥ*” *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1/4/7

-, “*tattvamasi*” -*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 6/8/7

-, “*aham brahmāsmi*” ,*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1/4/10

-, “*ayaṃ ātmā brahma sarvvānubhūtaḥ*” *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 2/5/19

without a second (*advitīya*) and it is the radiant Supreme Self (*jyotiḥsvarūpa paramātmā*) which is present in a hidden (*prachhāna*) form in all the *jīva*-s. It is through the qualifier intellect (*buddhi*) that the *jīvātmā* appears to be divided from *Brahman* just as *ākāśa* (ether) acts as the qualifier between *mahākāśa* (absolute space) and *ghaṭākāśa* (space enclosed within a pot). Moreover, another fallacy named *dr̥ṣṭāntāsiddhi doṣa* is committed because even the example ‘pot’ (*ghaṭa*) is not separated from the all-pervading *Brahman*. This Eternal Self is *Brahman* indeed. It is *vijñānamaya* (qualified by *buddhi*), *manomaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *cakṣurmaya* and *śrotramaya*¹⁵³ and when it is accompanied by the faculties of mind, life, sight and hearing, the self is posed as one who sees and hears. The *siddhāntin*-s admit many individual selves which are qualified by intellect. To this, when the opponents raise objection that ‘*vijñānamaya*’ means transformation (*vikāra*), the *siddhāntin*-s answer that just some men are totally under the control of their wives (*strīmaya jālma*), likewise the *jīva* which is, by nature *Brahman* indeed, is engulfed by *antaḥkaraṇa*. They say further that where different *Upaniṣadic* sentences speak of the creation and destruction of the individual self (*jīvātmā*), it is mentioned as related to the *upādhi* named ‘*antaḥkaraṇa*’. Thus, when *antaḥkaraṇa* takes birth, *jīva* is posed to be created and when *antaḥkaraṇa* is destroyed, *jīva* is said to have been destroyed. The self which is of the nature of philosophical reality (*prajñānaghana*) takes the form of *jīva*-s and is dissolved with the dissolution of the elements (*bhūtavarga*).¹⁵⁴ Thus, with the destruction of the fundamental elements, the *upādhi*-s undergo dissolution, not the self. This self is beyond the phenomenon of destruction (*vināśa*) as it has no end (*uccheda*). Thus, when the *upādhi*-s like the body and the sense-organs undergo death, the self being detached from the worldly objects has no qualified knowledge (*viśeṣa jñāna*). When the

¹⁵³ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/4/5- “*saḥ vai ayaṁ ātmā brahma vijñānamayaḥ manomayaḥ prāṇamayaḥ cakṣurmayaḥ śrotramayaḥ*”

¹⁵⁴ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/5/13- “*...prajñānaghana evaitebhyoḥ bhūtebhyoḥ samutthāya tānyevānūvinaśyati na pretya samjñā asti iti...*”

opponents claim that the *pratijñāvākya* ‘*ekavijñāne sarvavijñāna*’ assert the production of *jīva* from *Brahman*, the *siddhāntin*-s explain that the immutable *Brahman* assumes the form of the *jīva*-s and thus the *pratijñāvākya* is not falsified. This self is without any companion of all types of *saṃsāra* and is the Supreme Being.¹⁵⁵ But, when different properties of *jīva* and *Brahman* are spoken of, their characteristics differ in conformity with the *upādhi*-s of *bimba* and *pratibimba*. Just as the sun is reflected in different containers of water and appear as many, likewise, the Supreme Consciousness is reflected in different *antaḥkaraṇa*-s present in different bodies (*śarīra*-s), thus giving the effect of the creation of the individual selves (*jīva*-s). Again, the main subject matter of the *Veda*-s (*śruti*) is *mokṣa* (liberation). If the *jīva* is admitted as being produced (*utpanna*), then being an effect (*kāryya*), it is subject to destruction (*vināśa*) too. Then, the question of its attaining liberation would turn out to be futile. With these words, the *siddhāntins* were able to establish their own position that the individual self (*jīvātman*) is beyond creation and destruction.

The relation of identity between the *jīva* and *ī śvara* has also been portrayed in the chapter *Aṃśādhikaraṇa* of *Śāṃkarabhāṣya*. The *mahāvākya* “*tattvamasi*” in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* speaks of the identity of the *jīva* with *Brahman*.¹⁵⁶ Yet another sentence from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* “*ātmā vai are draṣṭavyaḥ*”¹⁵⁷ points to the distinction between the *jīva* and the *Brahman* as the seer (*draṣṭā*) and the object seen (*draṣṭavya*). These two contradictory sentences raise doubt in our minds regarding the relation between the two.

¹⁵⁵ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/3/16 “*asaṅgaḥ hi ayaṃ puruṣaḥ*”
-, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, 4/4/22 “*...esa sarvesvarah...*”

¹⁵⁶ -, *Chandogya Upaniṣad*, 6/8/7- “*saḥ yaḥ eṣohaṇimaitadātmyamidam sarvaṃ tat satyaṃ sa ātmā tattvamasi śvetaketo iti bhūya eva mā bhagavan vijñāpayatviti tathā somyeti hovāca //*”

¹⁵⁷ -, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2/4/5- ... “*śrotavyo mantavyo nidadhyāsītavyo maitreyyātmano vā are darśanena śravaṇena matyā vijñānenedam sarvaṃ viditam*”

If we admit that *jīva* and *īśvara* are identical, then either *īśvara* will be affected by innumerable sorrow from numerous *jīva*-s or all *jīva*-s would have the same enjoyment (*bhoga*) as they are identical with *īśvara*. And if we admit them to be different, then those fallacies would not occur, yet the Vedic sentences advocating their indifference would lose their justification. Hence, the *pūrvapakṣīn*-s argue that no concrete decision could be arrived at. They also contend that *jīva* and *īśvara* share a relation of servant (*bhṛtya*, *upakāryya*) and Lord (*prabhu*, *upakāraka*) and that they are not identical as some Vedic sentences claim. There cannot be any relation of conjunction (*saṁyoga*) or inherence (*samavāya*) or even identity (*tādātmya*) between them as the two relata neither have any part (*avayava*) nor is one the cause (*kāraṇa*) and the other the effect (*kāryya*). The relation between them is one of *īśitṛ-īśitavya* or *śāsaka-śāsita*. In reply, the *siddhāntin*-s offer the following argument. The *jīva* and *īśvara* are not totally different from one another as a cow (*go*) and a buffalo (*mahiṣa*) are. The scriptures determine the relation of difference between them on the basis of *upādhi*. When it is said that the *jīva* in the form of the eternal self is my part, then their relation is one of parthood (*aṁśatā*). Again, when it is said that He, being *Vijñāna* is identical with the *vijñānamaya Jīva*, then it is meant that he is being limited like *ghaṭākāśa*. Yet again when it is said that the self being one is present in all *jīva*-s, then it seems that it is like the moon being reflected in different *jīva*-s differently. The *siddhāntin*-s answer that the relation of difference (*bheda*) between *īśvara* and *jīva* is imagined (*kalpita*) just like *ghaṭākāśa* (space enclosed within a pot) is a part of *mahākāśa* (infinite space) and a spark (*visphuliṅga*) is a part of fire (*agni*). Though fire has parts, *Brahman* is devoid of any part (*avayava*). The knowledge of *Brahma* is to be obtained from the scriptures (*śāstra*-s) and the advice (*upadeśa*) of the preceptors (*ācārya*). The *jīva*-s, though different in themselves are, in fact, identical with *Brahmana*. This idea has been elaborated in several branches of *Brahmasūkta* of the *Atharva Veda*

where it has been said that *Brahma* is *dāśa* (fisherman), *Brahma* is in the form of slave (*dāśa*) who serve his master and *Brahma* is also in the form of *kitava* (deceiver).¹⁵⁸ Thus, *Brahman* is present in different categories of *jīva*-s having name and form in a composite of body and sense-organs (*śarīrendriyasamaṣṭi*). Thus, the proponents conclude that *Brahman* resides in the *jīva*-s. Consciousness present in the *jīva*-s and *īśvara* is one and the same just as fire and its spark are equally hot.¹⁵⁹

10. Advaita Vedānta as the Foundation of Practical Vedānta

At the very outset, a question may hover in our minds as to why did Vivekananda term his philosophy as *Vedānta*. In answer it is said that he felt that as the *Veda*-s are the sourcebook of the eternal (*sanātana*) religion (*dharma*) of India, her inhabitants should better be known as ‘*Vaidika*’ or more specifically ‘*Vaidāntika*’ instead of being referred to as ‘*Hindu*’-s, a name given by the foreigners in the sense of being the inhabitants residing on the banks of the river Indus. *Vedānta* is the culmination of the philosophy of the *Veda*-s which is laid down principally in the *Upaniṣad*-s and secondarily in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Vyāsa-sūtra*. The ‘*advaitavādin*-s’, the ‘*dvaitavādin*-s’ or the *vaiṣṇava*-s - whoever claim themselves as the followers of the eternal doctrine (*sanātana matāvalambī*) accept the *Upaniṣad*-s, the *Gītā* and the *Brahmaasūtra* as their authoritative texts. He had a firm belief that if the truths enshrined in the *Upaniṣad*-s are visualized and then its knowledge applied to practical life-situations, then India will definitely be

¹⁵⁸ *tathāhi eke śākhinah dāśakitavādibhāvaṃ Brahmaṇaḥ āmananti ātharvārṇikāḥ Brahmasūkte* - “*Brahma dāśaḥ Brahma dāśaḥ Brahma eva ime kitavāḥ ityādinā*. *Śāṃkarabhāṣya*, 2/3/43

¹⁵⁹ *Sarvāṇi rūpāṇi vicitya dhīraḥ nāmāni kṛtvā abhivādana yadāste iti ca... caitanyaṃ ca aviśiṣṭaṃ jīveśvarayoḥ, yathā agniviśphūliṅgayoḥ ouṣṇam*. *Śāṃkarabhāṣya*, 2/3/43

uplifted.¹⁶⁰ In order to know what *Vedānta* is, we first need to know about the *Veda*-s, the sourcebook of Indian culture and civilization. Based on the belief in the authoritativeness (*prāmāṇya*) of the *Veda*-s, the different systems of Indian philosophy are classified as orthodox (*āstika*) and heterodox (*nāstika*). Unlike the other religions of the world, the *Hindu*-s (or more specifically, the *Vaidāntika*-s) hold the *Veda*-s as self-authoritative *svataḥpramāṇa*). *Ācārya Śaṅkara* has said that the knowledge of *Brahman* cannot be accessed through either perception (*pratyakṣa*) or inference (*anumāna*) which involves reasoning (*tarka*), though both are established *pramāṇa*-s. Citing a verse from *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya vārtika* “*svaviśayaśūrāṇi pramāṇāni*” he says that each *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge) is capable of making its own object (*viśaya*) known. But, though a *pramāṇa* is incapable of proving the existence of an object pertaining to another *pramāṇa*, it does not contradict it either. In fact, all *pramāṇa*-s are capable of expressing different truths without contradicting each other. It can thus be claimed that *Brahman*, which is imperceivable to the sense-organs and inaccessible even by *tarka* (logical reasoning) is known only through *śruti* (testimony). Yet its knowledge is not contradicted by *tarka*. *Ācārya Śaṅkara* has stated “*nanu śabdenāpi na śakyate viruddhaḥ arthaḥ pratyayitum*”¹⁶¹. It means that contradictory meaning is not established even by *śabda* (testimony). The novelty of Vivekananda’s preaching of *Vedānta* lies in that he has made every effort to explain the message of *Vedānta* in a rational manner so that even the western minds can grasp it.

¹⁶⁰ As quoted in *Vivekananda Vedāntachintā*, p. -58

¹⁶¹ *Śāṅkarabhāṣya*, 2/1/27

The principal message of *Vedānta* is liberation (*mukti*). It is the only philosophy in the world which speaks of liberation (*mukti*) and not salvation (*paritrāṇa*) or deliverance (*uddhāra*).¹⁶² The *Upaniṣad* shows us that liberation is present in us from time immemorial. It is only to be unearthed. Here lies the significance of the *Upaniṣad*-s.

Vivekananda has studied *Vedānta* intensely and has made all efforts to preach the tenets of *Advaita Vedānta* in India and abroad in order to make man aware of the divinity lying inherent in him. He maintained that if the knowledge of *Vedānta* is brought at the doorstep of each home then the dormant spirit of man will be roused. Vivekananda felt strongly that among all the divisions of *Vedānta*, *Advaita Vedānta* is the most rational and scientific in temper. It is the sole philosophy which serves as the basis of all ethical thinking.¹⁶³ In his words, “*Advaitism*.. is the salvation of the world, because therein alone is to be found the reason of things...Dualism and other *isms* are very good as means of worship, very satisfying to the mind, ... but if man wants to be rational and religious at the same time, *Advaita* is the one system in the world for him....in spite of this continuous change in the body...and in the mind, there is in us something that is unchangeable.....which is neither the body nor the mind,...something permanent, upon which all our ideas, our sensations fall to form a unity and a complete whole; and this is the real soul, the *Ātman* of man.”¹⁶⁴ In a lecture on the theory of the self, Vivekananda has stated that whenever we think upon anything, that idea is treated as an object because

¹⁶² Vivekananda, Swami, ‘*Vedānta* in its application to Indian Life’, *Complete Works of Swāmī Vivkananda*, Vol. – 3, p. 253

¹⁶³ Vivekananda, Swami, ‘*Vedānta* in its application to Indian Life’, *Complete Works of Swāmī Vivkananda*, Vol. – 3, p.-120

¹⁶⁴ Vivekananda, Swami, “The *Vedānta*”, *The Complete Works of Swāmī Vivekananda*, Vol.-3, pp. 418-19

we portray it as being situated outside us. Or if I look at a table, the table serves as an object of my knowledge (*viṣaya*) and I am its subject (*draṣṭā* or *viṣayī*). But *Īśvara* or *Brahman* is the eternal subject (*nitya viṣayī*) of my soul, *nitya draṣṭa*, *nitya jñātā*. He cannot be made the object of my knowledge as he is the inmost being (*antarātman*) of myself and identical with myself. This lesson has been imparted to *Śvetaketu* by sage *Āruṇi*, his father in *Chāndogyopaniṣad*.¹⁶⁵ Thus, He is neither *jñeya* (object) of my knowledge nor even *ajñeya* (non-cognisable). In the *Kenopaniṣada* *brahmātman* has been described as being devoid of all *upādhi*-s (qualifications).¹⁶⁶

From time immemorial, the question regarding the creation of this universe has perturbed human minds. Question was raised as to from where was this universe created. When there was no question of “existence” (*asti*) and “non-existence” (*nāsti*), when darkness was covered by darkness, who did create this universe? How was it created? Who knows this mystery?¹⁶⁷ Vivekananda has sought answers to these questions by following the views of the scriptural texts as well as the opinions of material science. Noticing that plants and human beings are born out of seeds and microbes respectively and merge in them at the end, it can be inferred that cause is the unmanifested form of an entity and effect its manifested form. *Maharṣi* Kapila has proved that destruction is caused by the

¹⁶⁵ -, *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 6/8/7,- “*sa ya eṣo haṇimaitadātmyamidam sarvaṁ tat satyaṁ sa ātmā tattvamasī*”

¹⁶⁶ -, *Kenopaniṣad* 1/4, - “*anyadeva tadviditādatho aviditādadhī*”

¹⁶⁷ *Rgveda* 10/129/6 - “*ka avdhā veda kuta iyaṁ viśṛṣṭī*”,

Rgveda 10/129/1 – “*nāsadāsīnno sadāsīttadānīm*”

Rgveda 10/129/3- “*tama āsīttamasā gūḍamagre*”

dissolution of the cause (*nāśaḥ kāraṇalayaḥ*)¹⁶⁸ The conclusion is thus drawn that the cause and the effect are one in essence but different in form. Likewise, it is inferred that the universe must be caused by something, which was initially present in the cause in a subtle form. After creation, it has assumed an explicit or gross form and finally, after dissolution, it will merge with the cause and be subtle again. The cycle goes on in this way.¹⁶⁹ He emphasized that all the energies (*śakti*) of the physical world are reducible to one energy which is called *prāṇa* (life force). By the word '*śṛṣṭi*' is meant not production as used by us in the ordinary sense but manifestation of something which lies latent in the cause. This process of creation and dissolution is an unending process. Having no beginning (*idaṁprāthamikatva*) is declared by the *Veda*-s and *Vedānta* and also endorsed by *Swāmī* Vivekananda. Vivekananda has written in a letter that according to *Advaita Vedānta*, individual self (*jīva*) has no advent or departure (*āśā* or *jāwā*). When an individual self assumes a manifested form (after his birth), it becomes bound by *māyā* (the cosmic ignorance) and the world (*jagat*) appears before him. With the attainment of liberation, the world ceases to exist before him though the world remains the same for other bound selves (*baddha jīva*-s). Following the *Advaitic* point of view, Vivekananda has admitted that the individual self is the witness consciousness (*sākṣī* or *draṣṭā*) of all the phenomena like *śṛṣṭi*, *jīvana*, *mṛtyu* etc which are presented before him. Yet Vivekananda has not denied the physical world altogether. He has remarked that all actions, physical, mental or verbal - either good or bad, bear their consequences and the individual selves cannot avoid them.

¹⁶⁸ Shastri, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, 2014, *Vivekananda Vedāntachintā*, Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, p.-105.

¹⁶⁹ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 8/18, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers 'avyaktādvayaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavāntyaharāgame/rātyrāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaktasamjñake' -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 8/19, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers *bhūtagrāmaḥ sa evāyam bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate/rātrāgamaihavaśaḥ pārtha prabhavatyaharāgame*,

If a question arises in our minds as to why can't we know the secret of the universe, the answer to it is that we are immersed in sense-pleasures which is why we are unable to unravel the reality lying behind all ephemeral existence. Just as mist covers our sight, the *Upanishads* speak of a principle called *māyā* which acts as a veil covering the real nature of things. The world which is present before us is real only in the empirical (*vyavahārika*) sense of the term. It has existence with respect to our mind and the sense organs with which we interact. It has no absolute (*pāramārthika*) or infinite existence. Once we are born in this world, we are subject to death, the inevitable consequence of life. It is applicable to all beings. Knowing that death will bring an end to this life, we still cherish life and cling to it. This is caused by *māyā*, the primordial principle. It is simply a statement of facts that exists.¹⁷⁰ Life is full of contradictions, happiness as well as sorrow. If we choose to avoid sorrow, we have to choose to avoid happiness too. They are both intricately intertwined. Thus, as a river rushes into an ocean, similarly all lives, with their joys and sorrows are rushing towards that infinite ocean of perfection and freedom. In one of the forest retreats (*āranyaka*-s), a young voice is found saying "...By knowing Him who is beyond darkness, we can go beyond death"¹⁷¹ *Māyā* brings in the concept of a personal God who is the Creator of the universe and the Ruler of *Māyā*. We, the living beings are all, the slaves of *māyā*. But, at one point of time, man endeavours to know the truth behind all reality. The truth is that he himself is the reality within him which he has been searching for outside him. He is free, but who, through limitation thought he was bound.

¹⁷⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, 2028, 'Jñāna Yoga: Māyā and Illusion', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.- 2, pp.-95-96

¹⁷¹ Vivekananda, Swami, 2028, 'Jñāna Yoga: Māyā and Illusion', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.- 2, p.-102

The identity of the self (*ātman*) with the Absolute Reality (*Brahman*) is portrayed in the *Upaniṣad*-s through the four *mahavākya*-s (great sentences) of which “*āyamātmā Brahma*” (this self is *Brahman*) and “*aham Brahmāsmi*” (I am *Brahman*) clearly point to the identical relation between the self and the *Brahman*. Vivekananda has insisted man to cherish the notion of being identical with *Brahman* so that all other thoughts of weakness will be driven out. He emphasized that if man is infused with the thought that he is essentially the *Brahman*, then he will be able to muster up courage and live his life accordingly. *Advaita Vedānta* advocates that man is that *Brahman* indeed because he is complete (*pūrṇa*) within him from the very beginning. The state of *Brahman* is not a goal to be attained. It is to be realized what is already there. Just as the sun is reflected in every dew-drop (*yathā vivasvān apah praviṣṭaḥ*) and appears to be numerous tiny suns, likewise *īśvara* (*saguṇa Brahman*) appears as different individual selves (*jīvātman*). In a lucid style, he has explained that the infinite (*asīma*) and eternal (*ananta*) *paraBrahman* (the Highest Reality), being entangled by the intellect (*buddhi*) appears as finite (*saśīma*) individual selves. In yet another way he has said that the nature of all individual selves is the *Brahman*, which is the prime entity in the universe ... You are That - “*Tattvamasi*”.¹⁷² That *jīva* and *Brahman* are one is told by the *Veda*-s *Brahman* is described as such, it means he is Existence infinite (*sat*) which describes the objects as being present. He is Consciousness infinite (*cit*) without which nothing can be known and last but not the least he is Bliss infinite (*ānanda*), the consummation of Existence and Consciousness.¹⁷³ Though in some *Upaniṣads*, *Brahman* is described as *saccidānanda*, yet in others, the sages have used the phrase ‘*neti neti*’ (not this, not this). In fact, it is claimed that *Brahman* is *avāṇmanasgocara* (incapable of being grasped by speech and mind) and

¹⁷² Vivekananda, Swami, *Vani O Rachana*, p.-77.

¹⁷³ Shastri, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, 2014, *Vivekananda Vedāntachintā*, Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, p.-78.

cannot be described in positive terms as that would limit Him. He is better defined with the negative epithet ‘*neti neti*’ as that means he is not false (*sat*), not material (*cit*) and not sorrow (*ānanda*). When the great Emperor of the west, Alexander the Great lured one of the *sannyāsin*-s of India, the latter exclaimed saying “...I am Spirit unborn and un-decaying; never was I born and never do I die;

I am the Infinite, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient.”¹⁷⁴

Thus, we see the same message of *Advaita Vedānta* being echoed in the voice of a recluse in ancient India. Vivekananda was bold enough to declare that the *Vedic* statement “That which exists is One; sages call it by various names” is the most wonderful idea which she has in store for the world.¹⁷⁵

Concluding Remarks

In the previous section it has been shown with many examples that the entire system of Practical Vedānta is a direct legacy of the philosophy of oneness (*ekatva*) propounded in the Upaniṣads. On the metaphysical plane, this philosophy admits only one reality and all sentient beings are considered as identical with this supreme being. Since all individual selves are identical with Brahman, there is no essential difference between one individual self and another.

Still, one might ask that the philosophy propounded in the *Upaniṣad*-s has been interpreted in different ways by the different schools of Vedānta. So, how can it be said

¹⁷⁴ Vivekananda, Swami, ‘*Vedānta in its application to Indian Life*’, *Complete Works of Swami Vivkananda*, Vol. – 3, p. 253

¹⁷⁵ *Rgveda* 10/129/3 - “*Ekam sat bipra bahudhā badanti*”

that it is the system of Advaita Vedānta which forms the foundation of Vivekananda's Practical Vedānta?

To answer this question, we would consider three crucial questions and we shall see how Swami Vivekananda answers these questions. These questions are crucial because the different schools of Vedānta differ among themselves in their answers to these questions.

The first question that needs to be answered in this context is : Does Swami Vivekananda admit the falsity (*mithyātvā*) of the world? Regarding the status of the world, Swami Vivekananda was the opinion, that when it is said that “the world does not have reality”, what is meant that this world has no absolute existence. That is, the world, unlike pure consciousness is not ultimately real. Unlike Brahman it will be falsified in the ultimate experience of a liberated person. Swami Vivekananda states that the existence of the world is dependent upon the mind of every individual.

If we had possessed one more sense-organ, then the world would have appeared as having some more features than it appears to possess now. Thus, it does not have any real, unchangeable, infinite existence. Again, the world cannot even be said to be unreal as it exists before us and we live in it and work through it. That's why Vivekananda describes “it is a mixture of existence and non-existence.”¹⁷⁶

The next question we need to consider is : How does The Swami explain the difference between one individual self and another? Vivekananda has always proclaimed that the central idea of Vedānta is oneness. In continuation with this thesis he asserts that there is one life, one existence, one world. The difference among one individual self and another

¹⁷⁶ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.-2, p.-90

lies in the degree of manifestation of pure consciousness¹⁷⁷ in each genre of being and not in kind. Just as the soul of a saint is more manifested than that of an ordinary man, the soul of a man is more manifested than other animals.

The next question which must be considered in this context is: Does he conclusively and definitively uphold the thesis that *jīva* is Brahman?

Initially, Vivekananda has said that Brahman is an impersonal principle. In his own words, “so God is Personal and Impersonal at the same time. And Man, the Infinite Impersonal Man, is manifesting Himself as person. We, the infinite,...have limited ourselves into small parts...by our karma...”¹⁷⁸

It is on account of this impact of karma that *jīva* or an individual self is entangled in this world and has confined himself. If he is able to break away the shackles of karma, he will regain his identity with the Infinite Existence, Knowledge and Bliss which is the true nature which has so long seemed to have been lost.

¹⁷⁷ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.-2, p.-290-91

¹⁷⁸ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.-2, p.- 315-16

Chapter Three

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and Practical *Vedānta*

In the last chapter I have explored the relation between Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedānta and Advaita Vedanta, one of the six major orthodox systems of classical India. We have also seen that although Swami Vivekananda drew heavily upon the classical Indian system of Advaita Vedānta, the mission of his life was to develop a practicable and practical philosophy and religion out of this ancient philosophical system.

However, the Swami's philosophical thinking was moulded not merely by one or more philosophical systems of classical India, but also by his preceptor Sri Ramakrishna. In this chapter, I shall endeavour to show that Sri Ramakrishna's verbal teachings may be considered as the point of departure of Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedānta in as much as all the main strands of thought that can be identified in Sri Ramakrishna's teachings developed into full-fledged doctrines in Vivekananda's philosophy.

1. The Development of the Philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna:

'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' was composed by Mahendranath Gupta alias Sri M. (a name to be used from now onwards), in which he has described Sri Ramakrishna as 'the ideal Man for India and the World' and himself as 'a son of the Lord and disciple'. Sri M. had the practice of writing down notes of his visit to Sri Ramakrishna. Those notes contained the advises of Sri Ramakrishna to those who visited him and the discussions Sri Ramakrishna had with them. His spoken words are available to all almost just as he

uttered them. According to Nagendranath Gupta, a learned person of that age, ‘The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna is a record taken at first hand. The words were taken down as they came fresh from the lips of the Master.’¹⁷⁹ Following huge demand, the Gospel was later published in Bengali by the name *Śrīśrīrāmākṣṇakathāmṛta*. The *Kathāmṛta* begins with a *śloka* from the *Bhāgavata* which is stated as follows:

tava kathāmṛtam taptajīvanam kavibhirīḍitam kalmaṣāpaham

śravaṇamaṅgalaṁ śrīmadātataṁ bhuvi grṇanti ye bhūridā janāḥ//10/31/9¹⁸⁰

The verse maybe explained explained thus. Addressing God, it is said “Your (*tava*) words or advice are like nectar” (*kathā-amṛtam*) showering on the lives of human beings who are distressed by misery (*tapta*) in their worldly lives (*jīvanam*). Your words are described (*īḍitam*) by learned men (*kavibhiḥ*) and they dispel the filth (*kalmaṣa-apaham*) from the minds of common people. On listening to your words, spiritual good (*śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ*) is showered upon the living beings. Filled with spiritual power (*śrīmat*), those words are spread all over the universe (*ātataṁ*). Those who (*ye*) chant and spread (*grṇanti*) His words in the material world (*bhūvi*) are the most benevolent (*bhūridā*) persons (*janāḥ*). Before going into the philosophical discussion on the text, a glance at the life of Sri Ramakrishna is worth having.

Sri Ramakrishna was a man intoxicated in the love of God. Born of pious and humble-natured parents in a village of 19th century Bengal, his mind was naturally bent on spiritual matters right from the days of his childhood. Later he came into contact with preceptors belonging to different religions sects and the teachings of these preceptors belonging to different religions sects moulded the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna.

¹⁷⁹ Lokeswarananda, Swami, 1392(Bengali Year), *Tava Kathamritam*, Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, p. - 21

¹⁸⁰ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 10/31/9, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers.

While lecturing in New York and England in 1896 about his Master, Swami Vivekananda said “The one central idea which is perhaps peculiar to the religions of India, is the idea of realization. Man must realise God, feel God, see God, talk to God. That is religion. The Indian atmosphere is full of stories of saintly persons having visions of God...and they can be understood only by men who have raised themselves to the same height. They say there is such a thing as realization even in this life, and it is open to everyone, and religion begins with the opening of this faculty, ...”¹⁸¹

A westerner might question about how can the idea of realisation be central to religion in the Indian context? The Swāmī explains that there is one hard truth about life and that is its temporary nature. Life is momentary – to an angel or to an ignorant animal, to the poorest man or the richest living person, to an ordinary man or an Emperor, to a saint or to a wicked person. Amidst all these dichotomies, a Hindu finds his solution in God and religion. Religion and God lie beyond the capacity of reasoning. Vivekananda claims that the most demonstrable facts of physical sciences are mere probabilities. In his words “Facts are only in the senses. Facts have to be perceived, and we have to perceive religion to demonstrate it to ourselves. We have to sense God to be convinced that there is a God. We must sense the facts of religion to know that they are facts...No amount of reasoning, but our own perception can make these things real to us...”¹⁸² Swami Vivekananda emphasized that his Master was an exceptional soul who did not let go his life in the usual way. He insisted that such souls like that of his Master lead their lives to conquer the lower man and thus solve the problem of life and death, of good and evil?¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “My Master”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-4, p.- 160-61

¹⁸² Vivekananda, Swami, “My Master”, p.- 162-63

¹⁸³ Vivekananda, Swami, “My Master”, p.- 164-65

These statements of Swami Vivekananda make it quite clear that truth can only be realized. Reason has no access to truth.

Sri Ramakrishna's life bears testimony to the above belief that truth can be realized even in this life. He had a strong intoxication towards God and longed to realise Him through various paths adopted by men of different faiths. His such wish was perhaps fulfilled by the Divine Will in myriad ways. *Bhairavī Brāhmaṇī*, a woman Tantric saint arrived at Dakshineswar who initiated him in *Tāntrism* and taught him that the Universe is the manifestation of the Divine Energy, called *śakti*. Two principles are admitted by this philosophy, – the static being named as *Śiva* and the dynamic being named as *Kālī*.

Thus, Sri Ramakrishna's teachings were influenced by Śaiva Tantra also. Sri Ramakrishna was drawn towards *Vaiṣṇavism* by Vaisnavacharana. On this view, *Viṣṇu*, the God can be approached by a devotee through several paths namely that the creator and the all-loving parent (*śānta bhāva*), of the servant and the Master (*dāśya bhāva*), the parent and the child (*vātsalya bhāva*), the friend and another friend (*sakhya bhāva*), between the lover and the beloved (*madhura bhāva*). Sri Ramakrishna was initiated into *vātsalya* attitude and the God was his child. This made Sri Ramakrishna realise that God was the all-pervading Reality who dwells in the heart of every incarnate being as well as in all living beings.¹⁸⁴ Divine Incarnation is the principle in which the Supreme Spirit is manifested in human form with all His grace, love, wisdom and purity.

Totāpurī, a great teacher of *Advaita Vedānta* taught Sri Ramakrishna his wisdom of *Advaita Vedānta*. Being versed in *Tāntric* practices, Sri Ramakrishna visualized the entire universe as the manifestation of the Divine Mother. This made him transcend his body-consciousness while he attained the state of *samādhi*. Totāpurī was convinced that such a

¹⁸⁴ Satprakashananda, Swami, 1976, *Life and Message*, pp. -17-18

mind is capable of realizing the individual spirit to be identical with the Supreme One.¹⁸⁵ He advised Sri Ramakrishna to concentrate his mind entirely upon the non-dual *Brahman* which lies beyond all forms. Though Sri Ramakrishna was initially unable to reach that non-dual state, eventually he succeeded to attain that state in which his mind rose to the highest level in which the entire universe was lost to him.

That his life had a divine purpose was clearly evident to Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna's mission was to establish, first, the reality of God's existence as the only reality and ultimately to show that the truth behind all religious practices is one and the same.

He had practised Mohammedanism under the tutelage of a Mohammedan teacher. Following three days of arduous meditation on the sacred formula given to him, he eventually succeeded in realizing God through that approach. Finally, he turned to Christianity. He listened to the reading of the Bible and meditated upon Christ. At last, he had the vision of Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁶ While practising Islamic and Christian practices, he withdrew from his usual religious practice for the time being and did not even visit the temple. Thus, he tried to realize the ultimate truth following the paths prescribed by several religions. The teachings and guidance of these religious practitioners made him realize that the ultimate truth cannot be accessed by human reason. But different religions have prescribed different ways to realize the ultimate truth. For this reason Sri Ramakrishna actually practised all the means that are preached by the various contending religions. It is this first hand experience which later took the shape of the doctrine stated by Sri Ramakrishna as "*Yata mata, tata patha*". That is, 'As many creeds

¹⁸⁵ Satprakashananda, Swami, 1976, *Life and Message*, p. 20

¹⁸⁶ Satprakashananda Swami, 1976, *Life and Message*, p. 21-23

so many ways'. We have mentioned here a few milestones in the development of Sri Ramakrishna's thought with a view to having a better understanding of his later teachings as recorded in the Ramakrishnakathāmṛta.

2. Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings on Vivekananda's Philosophy:

Sri Ramakrishna was a man whose entire life was a vivid manifestation of the truths and the principles of *Vedānta*, one of the major philosophical systems of ancient India. Advaita Vedānta admits only one reality which is pure being, pure consciousness and pure bliss (*saccidānanda*). It is impersonal, formless and devoid of any attributes. Yet we perceive the world around us in manifold names and forms. But that Being is the inmost reality of everything present in this universe and is yet transcendent. But so long as an individual retains the "consciousness of his 'ego' (the sense of 'I'), the objective, relative universe is present before him¹⁸⁷ as usual and he is unable to realise the presence of the underlying reality in everything. Sri Ramakrishna was the only man who was able to quench the spiritual thirst of Vivekananda when he was frantically in search of the Truth in his youth. In his reply to the latter's question whether he has seen God or not, the former replied in the affirmative saying "I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense."¹⁸⁸ This bold assertion made Vivekananda feel that religion is not mere theories and doctrines. It is a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. It is that which relates the soul and the God.¹⁸⁹

There are men of different tastes and temperaments and there are different paths (suited to each of them based on their individual capacity and aptitude) devised for them to realise the truth. The paths are different religious disciplines prevalent in the world which

¹⁸⁷ Satprakashananda Swami, *Life and Message*, p. -39

¹⁸⁸ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, "My Master", *The Complete Works*, Vol.-4, p.- 174

¹⁸⁹ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018 "My Master", p.- 174

lead to the same Supreme Being. *Vedānta* admits one single reality which is eternal and universal. It endorses the essential aspect of every religion and sets aside its dogmatic nature. *Vedānta*, for example, accepts the salient features of Christianity namely the worship of the supreme divine being, but not its ‘Churchianity’. A *Vedāntist* is essentially a Buddhist for his worship of Buddha, a Mohammedan for his worship of Mohammed and a Zoroastrian owing to his worship of Zoroastrianism.¹⁹⁰

The Divine Being assumes different forms to different strands of spiritual aspirants. On being worshipped by a devotee in a specific form, he manifests himself in that particular form to the latter. Thus, God is personal when he appears to his devotee in a specific form.

The salient point of religion is not to study the scriptures only to cherish some belief or even to perform certain rituals in order to appease the Gods so that they bestow favour on us. Its sole purpose is to realise the presence of the Divine within us. Sri Ramakrishna’s entire life was devoted to the realization of the Divine Mother whom she worshipped at the temple. He had the firm conviction that if Mother Goddess is the highest truth, then she must manifest herself before him. He made ardent efforts to visualize Kālī, the Divine Mother and was eventually successful in realizing her as a “mass of spiritual Consciousness” (*cinmayī cetanā*).¹⁹¹ When his realization of the Divine Consciousness surpassed ordinary limits, Sri Ramakrishna was often immersed in *samādhi*, a state of union with the divine being and it is in this state of union with the divine being Sri Ramakrishna realized the nature of the ultimate reality and also became aware of the truth that all paths lead to the same end.

¹⁹⁰ Satprakashananda Swami, 1976, *Life and Message*, p. - 42

¹⁹¹ Satprakashananda Swami, *Life and Message*, p. - 44

3. The Summum-bonum of Human Life:

When a yogi attains union with the supreme being, he not only realizes the ultimate truth, but this realization also transforms his outlook towards entire life. He looks at the world around himself in the light of this knowledge and performs all ordinary activities enlightened by this knowledge.

The scriptures, too, preach this highest knowledge. Ordinary men too read the scriptures but he is not convinced of the things that are taught by the scriptures merely by reading the scriptures.

The scriptures lay down many injunctions but seldom do men follow them. The scriptures ask men to love God with all heart and to depend on him with complete self-surrender. But men seldom tread that path. He is much more engaged in worldly matters which occupy his mind and the senses. But if we cast a glance at the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and other spiritual leaders, we notice the sayings of the scriptures to be the best exemplified in their lives. Sri Ramakrishna's entire life was dedicated to the quest of the mother, Goddess Kālī and her worship, not just following scriptural injunctions stereotypically but just as a little child behaves with his mother. He was totally directed by the mother in every matter and sought her divine advice at every step.

His monastic disciple Swami Shivananda was of the opinion – “I still do not understand what an Incarnation means...The realisation of Him is the highest goal of human life. Different religions lead to the same ultimate goal. These are the truths which Sri Ramakrishna has exemplified in his life. I look upon him as the very embodiment of the

Bhagavad Gita, as the very embodiment of the Upanishads as a mass of spirituality.... here is the demonstration of the spiritual truths.... We want you to understand his life.”¹⁹²

We must remember that Sri Ramakrishna had no academic knowledge of any scripture on *Vedānta*. Yet he was so much intoxicated towards God that he spent half of his life in realizing God through different paths which finally led him declare in his later life that all the religions are nothing but different pathways to realise the self-same goal. Hence there is practically no point to fight with followers of different faiths.

In simple terms it can be said that God realization is nothing but the realization of one's own self. In his simple way of speaking, Sri Ramakrishna declared that *Brahman*, the Highest Truth is beyond words and thoughts (*avāṇmanasagocara*). Brahman cannot be expressed in words neither can He be grasped in thought. He can only be realized internally by an aspirant. In his own inimitable language, Sri Ramakrishna has said “Everything has been defiled (*ucchiṣṭa*), more or less, because it has been expressed by the human tongue; but *nirguṇa Brahman* cannot be expressed anyway, and so it is not defiled”.¹⁹³

Sri Ramakrishna's teachings can be summarized in two points – (1) that the goal of human life is to realise God, the inmost spirit inherent in all of us and (2) different religions take up different paths to reach the same goal of human life namely God-realisation.

In Sri Ramakrishna's words, knowledge of mundane affairs is rooted in *ajñāna* (*aparā vidyā*). On the other hand, knowledge of the one God residing in many objects is *jñāna* (*parā vidyā*). The *Upaniṣad*-s echo the same point. Just the moon shining in the sky is reflected in different places like a pond, a river or an ocean thus appearing to be many but

¹⁹² Satprakashananda Swami, *Life and Message*, p.-48

¹⁹³ Satprakashananda Swami, *Life and Message*, p.-50

is indeed one, likewise the same self (*ātmā*) or *Brahman* being present in different forms with different names appear to be many, but is indeed one (*ekadhā bahudhāścaiva dṛśyate jalacandravat*).¹⁹⁴ The *jñānī*-s look at everything as one just as *Śvetāśvararopaniṣada* says “*eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍaḥ*”¹⁹⁵ (that one and only *paramātmā* is present in a very subtle state in all living beings). At the very beginning of the *Srisriramakrishnakathamrita*, we notice that Sri M, the author of the book, after meeting Sri Ramakrishna for the first time, had a unique experience altogether which shattered his prior arrogance of which he had no knowledge. He came to know that mere textual knowledge is not *jñāna* and its absence *ajñāna*. Rather, Knowing God is *jñāna* and not knowing Him is *ajñāna*.¹⁹⁶

4. Manifestation of Scriptural Knowledge in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna:

A pertinent question arises at this juncture, In the second chapter of this thesis it has been shown that the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda draws heavily upon the classical Indian systems of Advaita Vedānta.

In this chapter, it is being shown that Vivekananda’s thoughts were greatly impacted by Sri Ramakrishna’s teachings. But then the question arises : What sort of relation exists between these two primary sources on which Swami Vivekananda founded his philosophy. In this section I shall address this question and I shall show that every statement of the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna reflects the philosophy propounded in the

¹⁹⁴ *Amṛtabindu-Upaniṣad* 12 as quoted in “*jñānapatha*”, *Tava Kathāmṛtam*; Lokeswarananda, Swami 1392(Bengali Year), *Tava Kathamritam*, Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, p. -305

¹⁹⁵ -, 2010, *Śvetāśvararopaniṣad* 6/11, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

¹⁹⁶ M. Sri, 2021, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, p. – 80.

upaniṣads, the gītā and in the ancient repertoire of knowledge, in spite of the fact that he was not formally trained in these ancient systems of knowledge.

According to the *Advaita* philosophy, knowledge (*jñāna*) is the only means to overcome the bondage and to attain liberation. *Ācārya* Śaṅkara explains that by observing many rituals and other practices like *vrata* and *dāna* (charity), men might acquire merit (*puṇya*) but unless *jñāna* is acquired, liberation (*mukti*) cannot be attained even through hundred births “*kurute gaṅgāsāgaragamanam, vrataparipālanamathavā dānam/jñānavihīne sarvamanena, muktirna bhavati janmaśatena*”.¹⁹⁷ Knowledge liberates us from the bondage of the life cycle. In Sri Ramakrishna’s terminology, realization of the statement ‘*brahma satya jagat mithyā*’ is *jñāna* while the realization ‘*brahmamayaṁ jagat*’ (the world is permeated by *Brahman*) is known as *viññāna*. “It is required at first to reach the rooftop by judging ‘*neti neti*’. When I am going to the rooftop, it is, to me, the only truth. ... Once the rooftop is reached, it is noticed that the rooftop as well as the stairs are all composed of the same stuff namely the bricks, lime and brick-dust. Then it is realised that *Brahman* has transformed itself into all these individual selves and the universe (*jīva-jagat*).¹⁹⁸ In his own way Sri Ramakrishna has illustrated the nature of *jñāna*. Potters build pipkin-s (*hāṇḍi*) and keep them under the sun to dry up. Once they are dried up, they are set aside. If any dried-up pipkin is broken it is thrown away as it can be of no use. Those which are not adequately dried up are again put

¹⁹⁷ *Carpaṭpañjarikāstotra* 18 as quoted in “*Jñānapatha*”, *Tava Kathāmṛtam*; Lokeswarananda, Swami, 1392(Bengali Year), *Tava Kathamritam*, Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, p. -306

¹⁹⁸ Lokeswarananda, Swami, 1392(Bengali Year), *Jñānapatha*”, *Tava Kathamritam*, Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, p.-317

into fire for processing. Thus, so long as we lack that self-knowledge, our passions are not burnt away and hence we are bound to take birth again to complete the cycle.¹⁹⁹

Ācārya Śaṅkara, in his *bhāṣya* on the first *sūtra* has discussed that a person who has the four types of *sādhana* (*sādhanacatuṣṭayasampanna*) is only capable of having the knowledge of the *Vedānta*. The first *sādhana* is to be able to distinguish between the eternal and the non-eternal (*nityānityavastuviveka*). Whatever we see around us are all temporary. We need to differentiate the eternal from the non-eternal just as an ant separates sand from sugar. The other steps are dispassion towards enjoying the fruits in this world and the other-world (*ihāmutraphalabhogavirāga*), the six treasures (*ṣaṭsampada* namely *śama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titikṣā*, *samādhāna* o *śraddhā*) and finally earnest desire to achieve liberation (*mumukṣatva*). After completing these stages, an aspirant is cleansed of all impurities of the mind. *Ahaṁkāra* or the sense of the ego in the form ‘I am rich’ or ‘I am pretty’ obstructs the generation of the knowledge of the self. Sri Ramakrishna calls this as ‘*kāncā āmi*’ (narrow self) or *choṭo āmi*’ (petty self) or even ‘*avidyāra āmi*’ (ignorant self). But, when an aspirant has the conviction that he is *saccidānanda svarūpa*, he loses the sense of his body and its associates. Just as there is no shadow at mid-day when the sun is just above our head, likewise when knowledge is attained, there is no trace of *ahaṁkāra* (ego-consciousness). That sense of ego is not selfish, but is of knowledge (*vidyāra āmi*) or of devotion (*bhaktira āmi*) or of servitude (*dāsa āmi*).²⁰⁰ Sri Ramakrishna has also spoken of several *pāśa*-s (hindrances) like *lajjā* (shame), *ghrṇā* (hate), *bhaya* (fear), *jāti* (caste), *abhimāna* (pride), *gopana icchā* (secret wish) etc. which need to be cast away otherwise for the attainment of *brahmajñāna*.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ M. Sri, 1392(Bengali Year) Śrīma-Kathita, *Śrīśrīrāmakrishṇakathāmṛta*, 2/13/1, Kolkata: Śrīma'r Thākurbādī, p. -95

²⁰⁰ M. Sri, Śrīma-Kathita, *Śrīśrīrāmakrishṇakathāmṛta*, 2/24/7, p. 215

²⁰¹ M. Sri, Śrīma-Kathita, *Śrīśrīrāmakrishṇakathāmṛta*, p. -108

Śrīmadbhagavadgītā explains the characteristics of a *Brahmajña puruṣa* as being untouched by pleasure and pain alike (*duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigatasprhaḥ*) and separated from attraction and aversion (*rāgadveṣaviyuktaḥ*). He is the person who has washed off all stains like virtue and vice and has arrived at equality, shorn of discriminative mentality “*pun̄yapāpe vidhūya niranjanaḥ paramam sām̄yamupaiti*”.²⁰² He is thus said to be *dvandātīta* (having overcome all conflict). Such a person treats an educated cum polite *brāhmaṇa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a pig equally and sees no difference amidst them, says the *Gītā* “*vidyāvinayasampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitā samadarśinaḥ*”.²⁰³

It has been said in the *Īśopaniṣada* that he who sees everything in himself and himself in everything has no hate towards anything “*yastu sarvāṇi bhūtānyātmānyevānupaśyati sarvabhūteṣu cātmānam tato na vijugupsate*”.²⁰⁴ Usually we hate someone else. But, if I see myself in everything and everything in me, then whom can I hate? The vilest person who hates me is viewed as myself too. Thus, *brahmajñāna* opens up the door within oneself as there is *samatvadarśana* (viewing everything as equal). A saint who came to Dakshineswar when Sri Ramakrishna was there remarked that true knowledge is said to have ushered when a man sees Ganges water and filthy water in a drain to be the same.²⁰⁵ A *jñānī* sees himself in every being. His love for every being is spontaneous. We can,

²⁰² -, 2010, *Muṇḍakopaniṣada*, 3/1/3, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

²⁰³ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 5/18, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers

²⁰⁴ -, 2010, *Īśopaniṣada* 6, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

²⁰⁵ Lokeswarananda, Swami, “Jñānapath”, *Tava Kathāmṛtam*, p. -315.

thus say that *ātmajñāna* culminates in universal love which cannot be thwarted in any way.²⁰⁶

Vedānta speaks of one eternal entity residing in every being. An individual, having attained the knowledge of oneness, develops *prema* (love) towards every being. It is owing to this reason that we find great men have dedicated their lives to the well-being of others. *Ācārya* Śaṅkara has, at once, agreed to give up his life to a *tāntrika* who has wished to kill him in order to perform his specific rituals. This incident proves that Śaṅkara was devoid of any concern for himself and he had no contrary feelings towards the *tāntrika* who had an evil design against the former. Again, we find that he has composed commentaries on the *Upaniṣad*-s, the *Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtra* and many more and has established *math*-s in the four corners of India only to revive the age-old *Vaidika* tradition for the posterity. Lord Buddha was a large-hearted personality who stood to give up his life in order to save the life of a goat. Chaitanyadev, the saint of the *bhakti yuga* during medieval period was famous for his all-embracing love for humanity. Being an ardent worshipper of Lord Krishna, he spread the message of love at every doorstep without any discrimination. He was an *advaitika* saint whose knowledge of monism has found expression through his love for all. Having attained *advaitajñāna*, Sri Ramakrishna viewed the world and its creatures as permeated by *Brahman*. As a result, he viewed everything as unified with his own self. Thus, he feels pain himself when a person thrashes another person on a boat on the river. There is a verse in the *Śvetāśvetaropaniṣada* “*sarvataḥ pāṇipādantat sarvatoḥakṣīsiromukham/ sarvataḥ*

²⁰⁶ Lokeswarananda, Swami, “Jñānapath”, *Tava Kathāmṛtam*, p. -317

śrutimalloke sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati”²⁰⁷ which says that the legs and hands, eyes, head and face, the ears of the Divine Being - all are spread everywhere. He pervades everything. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna manifested that truth in reality. He felt for others. Even when he was suffering from the terminal disease, he did not feel tired in speaking to his devotees in imparting them spiritual lessons. He made his holy consort Sri Sarada Devi aware that she has to carry on the task which thus would remain unfinished by him. Before parting away, he transmitted his spiritual wisdom as legacy to Narendranath who, in his later life, became Swami Vivekananda. Last but not the least, Sri Ramakrishna says that he would be born again to redeem mankind. Swami Vivekananda, in his early life has once wished to be immersed in *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Though he was rebuked initially, he had the experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi* by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna. In later life, Swamiji was heard saying that he wished to be reborn again to serve the good of others. Again, once, the Swami’s heart was pained to see people burning in sorrow. Before venturing abroad, Swami Vivekananda told his brother-disciple Swami Turiyananada: “Haribhai, I understand nothing of dharma – but my heart has become much enlarged, I have learnt to feel sorrow at others’ sorrow.” Yet, in another instance, on being asked by a gentleman to give a message, Swamiji advised him to believe in ‘oneness’ and to look upon all as the manifestation of that ‘one’ as the ‘one Supreme’ Reality permeates everything. The *Advaita math* at Mayavati in the Himalayas was built up where, according to his instruction, there is no image for worship as idol worship points to a dualistic practice where the idol and the worshipper are two entities. But if monism is to be strictly maintained, no image, even of Sri Ramakrishna should be there for worship. This was the vision of Swami Vivekananda.

5. Reflections of the *Upaniṣad*-s in the Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna:

²⁰⁷ -, 2010, *Śvetāśvaropaniṣad* 3.16, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

We have discussed in an earlier chapter that Vivekananda has devised ways of applying the knowledge of *Vedānta* in the everyday lives of men. The principal subject-matter of discussion in the *Upaniṣad*-s is about the individual self (*jīvātman*) and the Highest Self (*Paramātman* or *Brahman*). The *Upaniṣad*-s have tried to show in innumerable ways that all living beings possess a self within them which is eternal. It is the self which constitutes the essence of man. It is eternal, ever-pure and luminescent. The limitations of the body and the sense-organs do not affect the self in any way. Owing to ignorance about its true nature, men impose the feelings of the body, the mind, the sense-organs and the intellect on it and behave in that way. The *Upaniṣad*-s show the paths following which man is able to acquire the knowledge of the self.

The novelty of Vivekananda's message lies in that, by knowing the magnificence of the self, the inner spirit of man be roused which will enkindle his confidence. He asserted boldly that if the knowledge is applied in everyday life situations, marvelous result will follow. In fact, his thought-process has been shaped by the teachings of his master.

Sri Ramakrishna had the firm conviction that a man's character and behaviour are profoundly affected by his thoughts. According to him, whatever a man thinks, he becomes so. If a man thinks himself to be free (*mukta*), he is free indeed and reversely, if he considers himself to be bound (*baddha*), he is bound indeed. In his natural way of speaking, Sri Ramakrishna warns that one who always regards himself as 'a sinner' is definitely doomed to destruction. He insists that a person must dare to say that, having chanted the name of God, I am above all bondage and sin. ... "a man becomes free just by uttering 'I am free' A man who says 'I am bound' several times becomes bound indeed. Who repeats always 'I am a sinner, I am a sinner, is one who degrades. Rather, it should

be said ‘I have chanted the name of God, how can I be bound, a sinner’!²⁰⁸ The same point has been reiterated by Swami Vivekananda to his disciple (*śiṣya*) Saratchandra Chakraborty. Citing the example of *Hanumāna*, he said that time has come to adopt the chivalric attitude of *Mahāvīra* who, on the advice of his Lord Sri Ramachandra, has taken a giant leap to cross the sea. The latter had an attitude of servitude (*dāsyabhāva* and as a consequence, *sevābhāva*) towards Śr Ramacandra as well as an indomitable strength (*trilokasantrāsī śimhavikrama*) to carry out his word at the cost of everything. When his disciple spoke of losing courage at times, he reminded him to think of himself as being the child of the Lord so as to muster up courage in order to ward off low spiritedness “*takhan erūpa bhāvbi – ‘āmi kāra santāna’? Tnāra kāche giye āmār emon hīna buddhi, hīna sāhasa! ‘...āmi vīryavāna’, ‘āmi medhāvāna’, ‘āmi brahmavit’, ‘āmi prajñāvāna’ balte balte dnāḍiye uthbi. ‘Āmi...kāmakāñcanajit thākurer sangīra sangī’*.”²⁰⁹ Swami Vivekananda cited a famous song of Rāmprasada, a worshipper of *Kālī* where he sings – “Whom do I dare in this world, where the king is Mother Maheśvarī” meaning that in this world whose Lord is Mother Maheśvarī, he has none to be afraid of. Swami Vivekananda encourages his disciple to enkindle his inner spirit by taking note of these invigorating words. Some members of the *Brāhma Samāja* were frequent visitors at the Dakshineswar temple. In one such conversation with them, Sri Ramakrishna said, in an indignant tone, that the Bible contains frequent reference to sin and even the *Brāhma* ideology is quite similar to that.²¹⁰ While discussing with the *Brāhma*-s, Sri Ramakrishna said that their (*Brāhma*) ideology speaks of sin only and questioned whether it resembles Christian ideology. He went on saying that once he was offered a Bible. Hearing it being

²⁰⁸ M. Sri, Śrīma-Kathita, *Śrīśrīrāmakrishṇakathāmṛta*, 2/13/1.

²⁰⁹ Gambhīrānanda, Swāmī, 1398 (Bengali Year), *Yuganāyaka Vivekananda*, Dvitiya Bhāga, Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya, p. –343

²¹⁰ M. Sri, Śrīma-Kathita, *Śrīśrīrāmakrishṇakathāmṛta*, 1/12/4.

read out, the Master discovered that it contained discussion only of sin. In fact, there is a basic difference between Christian and Hindu ideologies. Christianity speaks of the original sin committed by Adam and Eve, the first man and woman of the creation. All human beings are their descendants and they carry on the legacy of the first sin (*ādimā pāpa*) ever committed. God has sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ on earth as the saviour of mankind. Hence, it is imperative that man should worship Jesus in order to be relieved from sin. Hinduism differs from this ideology altogether. The self which is present in all living beings in a manifested form is eternal, ever-pure, enlightened and ever-free (*nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta*). The God resides in each of us. The life we pass through is not real, but merely a temporary phase. Our true nature is the ever-shining self. Though it is hidden apparently by the cloud of ignorance, it can be realized once the veil is cast off. Just as a river finds its way to the ocean, all living beings are moving on towards the same goal of liberation. Those who follow the righteous path reach there sooner than others but all will definitely reach there at the end. Vivekananda maintained that the manifestation of the self in different degrees accounts for the qualitative and quantitative difference prevailing among living beings. As man is the most advanced species in the scale of evolution, his self is the most manifested in its glory than that of other living beings. Again, the same self is manifested the most in righteous persons whose minds are cleansed of all impurities whereas those who resort to immoral ways of living have their souls less manifested. In the arena of Hinduism, there is no such word as 'sin'. Man commits mistakes in his life. At a later point of time, when he realises it, he feels penitent and strives to improve himself by turning round his direction. Swami Vivekananda has aptly remarked "The remedy of weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength"²¹¹. In fact, *Vedānta* points to the divinity inherent in

²¹¹ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-II, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, p.-294

man from the very beginning. A sentence from the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* states: Those who are present in this world, listen to me, you all are the children of Immortal Bliss “*śrñvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā a ye dhāmāni divyāni tasthūḥ*”²¹² Swamiji says assertively that there is no sin in the world other than thinking of oneself or another as a sinner.²¹³ His message instils courage in every mind. He asks us to learn lessons from our mistakes so that we can proceed ahead. He has offered a wonderful justification of the principle of *Vedānta* to a Christian mind. He emphasizes that before Adam committed the original sin, he was pure at heart. Thus, Christianity hints at original purity too, though in a concealed manner which is overlooked. This is the crucial point. In his words, “Be not deluded by your religion teaching original sin, for the same religion teaches original purity. Purity is our real nature, and to regain that is the object of all religion.”²¹⁴ It is, in this sense, that Vivekananda has defined religion as the manifestation of Divinity already in man.

All the noble men of the world like the Christ, the Lord Buddha and *Chaitanyadev* have forgiven those who tread the wrong path. There can hardly be found any man who has not committed any wrong in his life. Man usually commit mistakes in his youth. At a later point of time, that individual can rectify himself and tread the right path. What is called virtue or vice does not affect the self at all. It is ever-pure. It is only the mind which is filled with good or bad thoughts which finds expression in benevolent or evil action. Lord Buddha had initiated Āmrapāli, a dancing girl. Sri Ramakrishna has blessed Girish Ghosh and Nati Binodini though they were theatre personalities, a profession

²¹² -, 2010, *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 2/5, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

²¹³ Vivekananda, Swami, *The Complete Works*, p.-120

²¹⁴ Vivekananda, Swami, *The Complete Works*, Vol.- 7, p.- 405

which was scorned at by the educated Bengali society. Sri Ramakrishna had once gone to the house of a pariah and wiped his place which showed that he was even-minded even towards that class of people. It is worth-mentioning that when Sri Ramakrishna was terminally ill, he appeared before his devotees on the 1st January, 1886 to bless them all with the saying “*tomāder caitanya hok*” which means ‘be enlightened, you all’. He gave this message to one and all to make us realise the presence of the soul in us which is consciousness. It is our real nature which is covered by the veil of ignorance under the five sheaths (*kośa*). It is necessary here to mention a fact. Once when Swami Vivekananda learnt from a letter from one of his brother-disciples that the prostitutes frequently visit the room where Sri Ramakrishna stayed, he wrote an eye-opening reply that *Sri Ramakrishna* had arrived on earth to deliver the ‘fallen (*patita*) and the destitute’. He is *patitapāvana* (one who delivers the sinners from damnation).²¹⁵ Hence, they shall definitely visit His room. Indeed, Swamiji had followed the footsteps of his Master. He said once that Sri Ramakrishna used to provide inspiration to those people who are looked down upon and made them tread the right path. There is a song which describes Thakur aptly.

“*tumi kāṅgāla beśe esecho hari kāṅgāle karuṇā karite he*

prema vitarite marusama cite, patita jane tārite he”²¹⁶

6. The Programme of Transforming: Human Conditions through Selfless Service

Addressing Sri Ramakrishna as Hari which is another name for Sri Krishna, it is said He has taken birth on the soil of the earth in the garb of an indigent man to shower kindness

²¹⁵ Sri Birendramohan Dasgupta (ed.), 1982, *Samsada Bengali-English Dictionary*, Kolkata: Sāhitya Samsada, p. -532

²¹⁶ Lokeśwarānanda, Swami, *Tava Kathamrtam*, p. – 152.

to the destitute, to spread love in the hearts of those who are deserted, and to save those whose have been socially cast out. Swamiji emphasized that if positive ideas are instilled in a person, it will help him stand on his own feet. At the same time, he said that pointing out only the negative aspect of a person makes him feel inferior and leaves no scope for him to rectify or improve. We find the same message being imparted by Sri Sarada Devi. She did not differentiate between *Swāmī* Saradananda, a monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and attendant of her and Amjad, a Muslim dacoit (having served in prison too) who used to visit her frequently. She treated him with equal love and care defying others' objections in the-then caste-ridden rural Indian society. In this perspective, we are reminded of her wonderful statement that she is the mother of the virtuous and also of the vicious. She held firmly that anyone can break something down, but who can construct? She added that everyone can make fun and speak ill of evil persons, but how many can offer solution to uplift them? She justified that if her child is smeared with dust and dirt, she has to undertake the task of picking up the child on her lap after wiping off the dust. Our appearing on earth is to serve only this purpose.²¹⁷ Vivekananda once refused to listen to a song to be sung by a *Bājī* (professional singer). The singer was pained at this attitude of the *Swāmī*. Her pain was beautifully expressed with a pathos through the famous *bhajan* (devotional song) of Suradāsa, a *bhakti* poet of the 16th century:-

“prabhu mere avaguna chit na dharo

samadarashi hai nam tihaaro, chaahe paar karo //

ik lohāa pujaā me rakhat, ik rahat vyaadh-ghar paro,

paaras ke man dvidha nahi hai, dnuhu ek kanchan karo....//”

²¹⁷ Lokeśwarānanda, Swami, *Tava Kathamrtam*, p. – 152.

The poet addresses the Lord with the song in a doleful urge as not to consider his flaws. The Lord looks is known as a samadarashi for looking upon all his creation with an eye of equality and can deliver him across this ocean of *samsāra*. A piece of iron is placed in the place of worship, and another in the house of a hunter. A philosopher's stone (*paraśmaṇi*) does not differentiate between the two and transforms both into gold. On hearing this song sung by that woman, Vivekananda felt sorry because even being a monk he had not been able to overcome then still the sense of discrimination. Later the Swami, in a letter to Mr. Francis Leggett whom the Swami used to address as Frankincense on the 6th of July, 1896, Vivekananda confided "At twenty years of age, I was the most unsympathetic, uncompromising fanatic; I would not walk on the footpath on the theatre side of the streets in Calcutta. At thirty-three, I can live in the same house with prostitutes and never would think of saying a word of reproach to them."²¹⁸ In fact, he looked upon them as the visible manifestations of the Divine Mother. This attitude clearly points out that he was deeply influenced by the lesson obtained from his master. In fact, the theory of monism as preached by *Advaita Vedānta* finds its implementation through the attitude of considering everyone as the visible manifestation of the soul that lies within.

Concluding Remarks

From the foregoing brief study of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, the following conclusions maybe drawn.

²¹⁸ Vivekananda, Swami, 2002, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, p.- 296

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna is a storehouse of ancient wisdom. It deeply imbibes the knowledge of the ancient system of *Vedānta*.

The main feature of the Gospel is that it makes the knowledge of the scriptures accessible to the common man through extremely insightful, allegories and narratives. Thus, the programme undertaken by Vivekananda of translating the Vedāntic truth to a practicable ideal that has the potentiality of transforming ordinary human existence has its beginning in the Gospel itself.

Indeed, it can be concluded that although Practical Vedānta has its philosophical underpinnings in the ancient system of *Advaita Vedānta*, Swami Vivekananda's project of transforming the ancient speculative philosophical system of Vedānta into a practicable philosophy, has its roots in the teachings of his preceptor.

Chapter Four

Practical Vedānta as the Philosophical Basis of a Universal Religion

1. Religion: Necessity and Development

In the first part of this thesis, I have investigated the philosophical foundations of Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedānta. There we have explored the connections between Practical Vedānta and the ancient system of Advaita Vedānta and also the very deep relation between Vivekananda's philosophy and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

In the third chapter we have observed that the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna contains the germ of the idea that Vedānta is not an esoteric doctrine that should remain confined to the scriptures and perused only by the academic philosophy. The Vedāntic philosophy should be spread among humanity so that this philosophy may transform the lives of ordinary mortals by affording them a glimpse of their own inner selves.

Swami Vivekananda developed this idea latent in the verbal preachings of his master and claimed that this philosophy can become a religion for the entire mankind. With a view to developing a religion out of this ancient philosophy, the Swami highlighted the practical aspect of Vedānta and named his own philosophy ' Practical Vedānta'. Following the age old tradition, the Swami never claimed that this Vedāntic religion is the creation of his own. Rather, he showed that the Sanātana dharma of ancient India is based upon the philosophy of Vedānta. He also claimed that Practical Vedānta has the potentials of

becoming a universal religion that can guide and govern the lines of human beings across cultures and civilizations.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I have remarked that Swami Vivekananda's concept of religion would become clearer as and when we comprehend his idea of universal religion.

In this chapter, I propose to present The Swami's concept of universal religion. Indeed, we shall see that, this concept of universal religion is one of the most important contributions that Swami Vivekananda made to the Vedāntic tradition.

Before starting this chapter, we need to know first what religion is. In lexicographical terms, the term 'religion' is defined as 'the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power especially a personal God or gods'. It is also defined as 'a particular system of faith' or a 'pursuit or interest followed with devotion'.²¹⁹ If we cast a look backward in time from the dawn of civilization on earth, we notice that two theories have evolved through time with respect to the origination of religion. The first is the idea of the spirit as forming the basis of religion. The other theory pertains to the evolution of the idea of the Infinite. In the first case, we notice the ancient worship of the spirit amongst the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese, other American races and elsewhere. The Egyptians cherished the notion of a soul in the form of a double which is contained within the material body. At the time of death, they believed that the double leaves the physical body but stays intact so long as the obsequious rites of the body are not performed. This idea of theirs led them to build pyramids where they used to preserve the dead bodies after embalming them. It was believed that any injury to the external body

²¹⁹ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2000*, ed. Judy Pearsall, Tenth Edition, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, Fifth Impression, p.- 1209

has a simultaneous impact on the double. The Babylonians, on the other hand, maintained that once the body dies, the double becomes alien to the body. It loses love, care and affection to its near ones and frightens them. The practice of ancestor worship was also in vogue among the Chinese and the ancient Hindus in order to propitiate the dead spirit.²²⁰ The other view of religion advocates the worship of different natural forces and phenomena like the storm, the sun, the moon, the dawn, the dusk, the rivers, the mountains and similar things in the form of human bodies with a soul so that knowledge can be ascertained about them. Worship of these personified natural forces and phenomena can be noticed among the ancient Greeks and Germans, the Scandinavians and other Aryan races. These two ancient customs hint at the point that ancient man, from the early days, had an inquisitive mind to transcend the limits of his senses as he felt that the senses cannot provide him with all the knowledge. He was keen to know what happened to man after death and also the workings of different forces of nature. According to Swami Vivekananda, the dreams too serve as a useful tool to know about the birth of religion. It is through the medium of dreams that the mind works even when the body falls asleep and appears to be lifeless. In the state of dreams, the mind rises to higher levels than the level of ordinary working experience. Modern science says that the experiences of the awakened life are just recapitulated in dreams and the long-cherished desires lying hidden in the darkness of the mind surface in the form of dreams.

The Vedic tradition, however, subscribes to the view that in dream experience, the individual self ceases to experience gross objects and can only enjoy subtle objects by means of this subtle body. During the state of dream the gross body and the external senses cease functioning and only the mind remains operative along with, the other constituents of the subtle body. One might ask why does Swami Vivekananda think that

²²⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, "The Necessity of Religion," *The Complete Works, Vol. - 2*, p.-57-58

the state of dream must be analysed in order to understand the process of development of human religions?

One answer to this question may be given from the ancient Indian perspective. The Upaniṣads recognizes four pādas or states of consciousness. Of these four states, the first three are not real stages, but are mere apparent conditions superimposed on consciousness by māyā or avidyā, the principle of nescience, while the fourth stage is the real essence of the conscious self. In the Upaniṣadic terminology, the first three states are known as Jāgrat, Svapna, and Susupti and are respectively identical with the waking state, the state of dream and that dreamless sleep, while the fourth state is called turīya which is identified with the state of liberation. This last state is the real essence of the self and it is called 'pāda' in the sense of 'padyateyaḥ' or that which is to be attained. On the other hand, the same term pāda applied to the first three states may be analysed as 'padyate aneṣa' meaning the path or the way which must be traversed to attain the final state of turīya or liberation. Of the first three states the state of dream occurs between the waking state and the state of dreamless sleep. From the cosmic point of view, the state of dream represents that state of universe when only the collective mind (samaṣṭi manas) and the fine subtle elements (pañcatanmātra) have made their appearance from their material cause (parināmī upādāna) avidyā. In this stage the individual consciousness is not bound by the gross body, but only by the subtle body through which the self enjoys the subtle entities. The state of dream serves as the passage to the state of dreamless sleep in which the individual becomes united with the divine self or God and gets a glimpse of its own blissful essence. Thus, the state of dream followed by the state of dreamless sleep makes the individual aware of the fact that the waking state is not its real essence but is only a means to attain the final state of liberation. In the state of dream, the individual

leaves his gross body behind, thus having a first glimpse of his unity with the supreme being.

Hence, the state of dream may be looked upon as the gateway to the higher state which is the goal of all religions.

Second, the states of dream may be considered as a tool to understand the origin and meaning of religion from another perspective too. Sigmund Freud, the 19th century neurologist and psychologist, put forward the psycho analytic theory of the mind. This theory upholds a three-tier theory of the mind of which only the uppermost tier is available to introspection, this uppermost tier being called, 'the conscious mind'. Apart from the conscious layer, there are two more layers of the mind, namely, the foreconscious and the unconscious.

The unconscious mind is the storehouse of all cravings and desires, fears and anxieties, that are driven away from the conscious layer of the mind by the process called, 'repression'. On the psychoanalytic theory, religion has its origin in the cravings and desires, fears, complexes and insecurities stored in the unconscious mind. These unconscious desires and anxieties make their appearance in the state of dream, because during the state of dream, the controlling process which ban these cravings and desires from the realm of the conscious mind get loosened. Thus, the state of dream makes it possible to know the repressed cravings and aspirations which lead to the emergence of religion. So, Vivekananda thinks that dream is a tool which may be employed to understand all the religions prevalent in different cultures and civilizations.

As man has progressed through the passage of time, he has endeavoured to find the Ultimate Truth which lies beyond the phenomenal world. He has long searched for the truth in the external world but all in vain. Then, he turned his attention towards his inner

life in search of the soul or the God. Ancient men started to search for the supernatural entity within himself. He continued his search by delving deep into the various stages of the mind to have a glimpse of the supernatural. It was found by him that beyond the waking and dream experiences, there lies a still higher state of mind which is known as ecstasy or inspiration. This highest state of mind has been recognised in all the major religions of the world in which the prophets, messengers or the founders have been able to realise the Truth. This realisation is far more intense than ordinary perception and it opens up the door to the vast spiritual kingdom. In this quest, man has been successful to found religion. Just as there are many social organisations to address various social issues, religion as an institution has been established to provide light on spiritual matters. The knowledge enshrined in the *Veda*-s are the compilation of the direct experiences of the Truth by the *ṛṣi*-s (the sages). It is in this sense that the *ṛṣi*-s are termed as the *draṣṭa* (seer) or *aviṣkarta* (discoverer) of the Truth. Lord Buddha, after a long search for truth, has been able to attain *bodhi* (enlightenment) which is a super sensuous state. In fact, the truth which is attained not by reasoning and intellectual argument, but through direct realisation is stated as a matter of fact by all the religions. It is thus evident that the supernatural does not exist anywhere in the physical world but can be traced in the depths of the human mind which is beyond the senses and the power unravelling the realm of the mind.²²¹ All the religions have projected an abstract concept of the Supreme Reality either in the form of a personal God who is omnipresent or a Moral Law or an Infinite Abstract Essence lying beneath all existence. All men are constantly striving to attain the state of the ideal by uplifting themselves. Every human being, claims Vivekananda, is an immense store of infinite power and infinite pleasure. But the Infinite cannot be reached

²²¹ Vivekananda, Swami, 'The Necessity of Religion', *The Complete Works*, Vol.- 2, pp.-60-61

through the medium of the finite and hence the finite should be renounced. This endeavour marked the beginning of ethics.

The watchword of ethics is “Not self, but non-self”.²²² So long as man is inclined towards his own self, he cannot be said to be ethical or moral. He looks after his own good only. But only when he is able to forsake his own interest and think of the well-being of others, he is eligible to have the glimpse of the Absolute. Ethics is concerned with the destruction of individuality in the material level and building up of collective mentality. Though it may seem difficult to cast off the ‘ego consciousness’, yet it is the only path to seek the Divine, the Infinite. Religion consists of the search for the Infinite by mortal human beings. But in order to pursue religion and reach out for the Super sensuous, man needs to transcend his petty selfishness. We can say thus that religion is the end which is to be practised through adopting morality or ethics as the means. The significance of attaining self-knowledge is “*atmano mokṣartham jagaddhitaya ca*” i.e., to attain liberation for one’s own self and also to serve the good to the world.

It is well-known that the *Carvaka*-s are proponents of materialism. Thus, apart from matter, they do not admit the existence of the supernatural. To them, the physical world we live in is only true and nothing exists beyond it. Accordingly, they accept only perception as the source of knowledge and maintain that attaining pleasure from material objects is the highest goal of human beings. They decried the idea of the supernatural and the spiritual. Even at the time of the Chinese sage Confucius long back, it was held “Let us take care of this world: and then, when we have finished with this world, we will take care of the other world.” But it should be taken note of that the pleasures derived from the material world are subject to destruction at one point of time. Thus, excessive

²²² Vivekananda, Swami, ‘The Necessity of Religion’, *The Complete Works*, Vol.- 2, pp.-62

attachment to the objects of this world is sure to end in disappointment and despair. The attraction of material pleasures is so luring that it will never cease. There is a popular Sanskrit saying that enjoyment of sensual pleasures breeds more the same than its cessation (*na jatu kamaḥ kamanamupabhogena śamyati*). It is hence, necessary, to bring an end to the longing for sensual pleasures and yearn for the spiritual which is everlasting. The nature of man, is not merely physical, but something much higher than that.

That ‘man is a rational animal’ has been taught to us from childhood. We possess the rational power to analyse, judge, think and reason than other living beings do. But we possess the animal nature in us too. Only when we are able to overcome it can we be called ‘human’ in the true sense. The supernatural can only be realised by human beings and the concepts of ‘religion’ and ‘spiritualism’ finds meaning only in a man’s life. It is hard, no doubt, to conquer the external forces of nature but harder still to conquer the internal propensities. We need to conquer our passions and emotions. We are primarily concerned with the external world but there is a subtle world within, which awaits to be explored. Religion is the gateway to the entire realm of the spiritual. The strength of a race, asserts Vivekananda, depends on its spirituality. Once this trend is surpassed by materialism, the race is subject to downfall.

The pleasures derived from the senses are far more intense than the emotional and the spiritual ones. An animal enjoys its food with tremendous gusto. It is beyond his capacity to think of higher pleasures. Even some men rejoice the most in pursuing the material pleasure from food, wealth and other objects. The more a man is cultured and sophisticated, he finds pleasure in appreciating art, philosophy and the sciences. And the

man who finds happiness in pursuing the spiritual reality enjoys the highest and the subtlest form of pleasure. Thus, religion is utterly required to strive for the spiritual.

There have been two opposite forces working in the universe always. The centripetal force draws everything towards the centre whereas the centrifugal force draws away from the centre. They are love and hatred, good and evil, attraction and repulsion etc. Religion is the power which has the highest impact on a man. There have been men who are moral. They serve highest good to the highest amount of humanity. But those souls who appear on earth with a flame of spirituality are able to ignite the same in others and lead them to their ultimate destination. Religion is the power which helps man realise his own nature, build up a steady character and serve the good and promote peace amongst all. But that religion must not be sectarian. Rather it should be all-embracing. A man who regards only his faith to be true and the best above that of others is a fanatic. Such ideas breed hatred and hence needs to be abandoned.

With the advance in science and technology, the world has come much close. It is now high time that we uplift our minds so that we can proceed further in future. All the religions of the world must be wide enough to embrace the good element in others and thrive prosperously.

Being born in colonial India, Vivekananda was well aware of the subjugation of India under the British rule and witnessed also the Christian missionaries' untiring efforts to propagate their religion by scorning Hinduism as practising idolatry. History has also taught him that even the Mohammedans have taken up sword to convert people practising different faiths into their own fold. These experiences made him come to the point that no religion is complete by itself. Each projects a particular principle which is just one aspect of the entirety. Men must be trained to accept the good elements in other religions and the

bad ones in their own ones. He kept the scope of religion open so as to accommodate any other religion which might spring up in future. Just as fresh air and light enter a room and enliven it, similarly religions must keep their windows open to accept the good already there and also let fresh thoughts flood the world. Each religion must be broad enough to accept new thoughts and ideas present in other religions and must be inclusive so that no one is looked down upon for professing a different faith.

As a matter of fact, all religions existing on this earth aim at solving varied queries of human minds. But the irony is that though religion has succeeded to bring people together in some respects, at the same time, it is also condemned to bring a split and hatred among members of different religious communities and even sometimes within a particular community also. Religion fosters brotherhood no doubt but at the same time it has bred enmity among adherents of different faiths. While religion has prompted many charitable acts it has caused huge bloodshed too.

2. Specific Religions: Common Characteristics

All religions share some points in common. First, they believe in a supernatural entity who is regarded as having Supreme Authority and there is a mythology which supports it. Secondly, they all possess a scripture which enshrines the principal tenets of that religion. Lastly, their religion is propagated through a human being who is deemed as the messenger of that Supreme Being. Every religion is based on a noble idea which is unique to it. The unique idea lying behind any religion is its contribution to the world. Thus, each religion needs to be preserved for the well-being of the entire human race. Its utility lies not only in laying down prescriptions by any Godhead, but also in practising the rules by its followers earnestly in order to keep it living. Each religion holds up only one side of the universal truth and builds up its entire philosophy based on it. Followers

of that faith observe the norms and codes of conduct pertaining to it. Just as the *Jaina* philosophy advocate the doctrine of *anekantavada* which advocates that the reality has many facets or angles and each man holds on to one of them, claiming his view to be right only, similarly various religions portray different pict of the same spiritual truth. It is man's utter folly to regard the religion he professes to be true only and discard other religious beliefs as ridiculous or absurd. With the sole exception of Zoroastrianism, all the religions of the world are growing and expanding. In accordance with the scientific maxim of the survival of the fittest, they are still alive as they have stood the test of time and are still observed by their adherents. So long as man is evolving and progressing forward, religions will remain active. Religion is also dependent on the geography and economy of the country in which it is born.²²³ The semitic religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam regard God as the Supreme Being and their ultimate goal in life lies in attaining prosperity (*abhyudaya*) whereas religions born in India namely Hinduism or

Sanatana Dharma, Jainism and Buddhism regard liberation (*niḥśreyasa*) as the supreme goal to be cherished in life.²²⁴ Here, a salient point is to be noted that the religions differ widely in their ritualistic practices but in essence, they echo more or less the same point i.e., uplift of humanity from this worldly entanglement and attaining the Supreme Truth. Thus, apparently, the world religions differ, but at the very core, they are, not at all, contradictory. No religion ever professes any false notion. As civilizations and cultures progress with ongoing time, many new ideals are added to the existing ones. Man always progresses from lesser truth to higher truth.²²⁵ He acquires knowledge the more he ages,

²²³ <http://www.youtube.com/@PRANARAMBangla> *manah śuddhi prakaraṇa* by Swāmī Ishaṭmananda

²²⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/@PRANARAMBangla> *manah śuddhi prakaraṇa* by Swāmī Ishaṭmananda

²²⁵ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, "The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion", *The Complete Works*, Vol.-2, p.-357

but that does not signify that he had no knowledge in his childhood. Whatever knowledge we acquire is an addition to what we had earlier. The same truth is looked upon by different individuals from different perspectives. The difference in views is shaped by the birth, education and external surroundings through which an individual has to pass through.

3. Specific Religions: Differentiating Characteristics

As mentioned earlier, every religion has a unique characteristic of its own which is noteworthy. When a man adopts Islam as his religion, all other adherents of that religion accept the new entrant as their brother wholeheartedly. No distinction comes in the way of embracing him as one of the members of that faith. In Islam, each member is a brother to another member and all are, thus, equal. This is the quintessence of Mohammedanism. The Christians, on the other hand, are imbued with the idea “Watch and pray, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand”²²⁶. This makes them purify their minds so that the God descends on earth to salvage them. In this regard, they undertake philanthropic activities so that by cleansing their minds, they become eligible to welcome the Lord. The Hindus are unique in presenting before the world the marvellous concept of spirituality. In fact, India is the land of spiritualism. In their scriptures, we notice vivid description of the soul and the God as the omnipotent entities. But the ideas of soul, God and heaven are not far away from this earth. The heaven and God spoken of are present in this material world in our realization. Thus, religion is not something restricted within the scriptures and doctrines nor in intellectual discussions. Its essence lies only in realizing the Truth. In order to realise it, renunciation and austere practice are of utmost importance. Thus, spirituality and renunciation are the key words in Hinduism.

²²⁶ Vivekananda, Swami, “*The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion*”, p.-364

Different religions have taken birth on the soil of this earth in order to suit the tastes of different people living across the globe. Thus, the entire human race has not and will never converge on a single method of thinking. It will be a total failure if it is so. Even in every religion, there are numerous sects which have sprung up each providing a different interpretation of the holy text of that religion. No two sects think alike. As a result, strife among them is quite common. In spite of all differences, every religion grows and spreads too. The religions which had once converted men into their faith with the help of the sword and the dagger may, undoubtedly, have multiplied in number but their so-called prosperity is sure to come to a halt in future as there is lack of spontaneity among those who are subject to conversion by force.

4. The need for a Universal Religion

Let us have a look at how Vivekananda offers a solution to the problem of eradicating religious disharmony. His first remedy was to refrain from inflicting any harm to any religious belief. Everyone has his own convictions to which he adheres. It is not desirable to criticise them so far as they are sincere. Iconoclastic reformers aim to criticise and thus destroy the existing beliefs prevailing in a society. It promotes evil rather than any good. Vivekananda opines that even if no help can be rendered, it is wise to stand aloof instead of causing any obstruction. We find that Sri Sarada Devi, his spiritual mother has spoken in similar terms. She says that everyone can destroy, how many can construct? All can speak ill of or mock at, but how many can say how it can be corrected? The next important point which Vivekananda emphasizes is that every child grows on his own and learns himself. Hence, it is only required that he be given opportunities to develop and his obstacles be removed. In the realm of religion, God is the centre of all religions and all men are proceeding towards Him from different directions. They intend to reach the same

goal, however adopting different paths. Thus, spiritual development ushers from within an individual and he alone paves his own way towards fulfilment. Other can only offer him help from outside.

Vivekananda finds that human minds can be classified into four types. First, he speaks of the active man who is energetic in physique and at heart. He engages himself in rendering service to the society in the name of charity or philanthropy. He thinks less of himself and plunges in selfless activities only for the sake of doing work. Secondly, we come across the emotional man whose heart is filled with love. He loves God and His creation and is inclined towards the great souls who lived on earth – the prophets of different religions and the incarnations of God on earth. He is least interested in finding out reason or proof behind any historical data. The third type of man is the mystic whose mind is inquisitive. He tries to find out the workings of the human mind and seeks to exercise control over it. The last of the kind is the philosopher who exercises his intellect to solve out the mysteries of nature. The problem is that no religion can address all the four classes of men. No sect can fulfil the aspirations of the other sect. They are at loggerheads with each other and think their view to be the only viable one.

Vivekananda proposes to bring out a religion which will combine all the characteristic traits of a philosopher, a mystic, an emotional person and a worker. A universal religion should be one which has space for all types of people. It should be able to realise the underlying philosophy which points to the one Existence lying behind the diversity present in the universe. The mystic will be presented the science of human mind and its workings. The emotional man will love God and enjoy His company as Vivekananda remarks “we must drink the cup of love and become mad”.²²⁷ Lastly, it will be wise to work with the enthusiastic worker. Though each human being possesses only one of these

²²⁷ Vivekananda, Swami, “The Idea of a Universal Religion”, p.-379

four traits, Vivekananda dreamt of an ideal, perfect man who will be the torch-bearer of the universal religion. The four inherent natures of men must be present in every man in a harmonious balance. This beautiful blend of contrasting characteristics can be had from the practice of Yoga, an Indian concept which, literally means, 'union'. It will serve the purpose of all characteristics. The worker will seek union between human beings and the whole of humanity. He practises *karma-yoga*. The mystic aims at the union between his lower and the Higher Self. His practice is known as *raja yoga*. The emotional man tries to unite himself with the God of Love. His method is known as *bhakti yoga*. The philosopher endeavour to trace the unity lying beneath all existence. He is a *jñāna yogī*.

If we want to look at all beings, we will see that there are three established instruments of knowledge. The activities of the most highly developed animals are guided by instinct which is the lowest instrument of knowledge. Instinctive actions have a limited extent. Reason is the second instrument of knowledge which is highly developed in man. Its scope is undoubtedly larger than instinct but it has its limitations too. Beyond a certain level, reason or logic fails to work and ends up in confusion and argument in a circle. But man does not remain contented up to reason only. He strives to know further. The world which is perceived by our senses and felt by our minds is just an atom of the Infinite Consciousness within which reason works but cannot fetch it. Last of all the instruments is the inspiration which enables us to reach the transcendental plane. Inspiration is possessed by 'God-men', a term used by Swami Vivekananda. Every human being has, within him, the germ of inspiration over and above instinct and reason. One instrument is a development of the next one and hence the former is not contradicted by the latter. For example, reason develops into inspiration. Whatever is not known through reason is made known through inspiration. Thus, inspiration is the fulfilment of reason. A child

grows, in course of time, into an old man. What a child was unable to attend is fulfilled by the old man. Thus, the old man does not contradict the child.

The essence of true teaching is that it transcends reason but does not contradict reason. This point is the foundation of all the prescribed *Yoga*-s in the scriptures. The *Raja Yoga* refers to the psychological path to union. For acquiring any knowledge or for accomplishing any work, we need to concentrate our mind on the object concerned. We all are aware of the fact that our external sense-organs are directed outwards to gain knowledge of the physical world. The mind accompanies them one at a time. Hence, we lack single concentration on one object. The one and only method of acquiring knowledge is to learn the practice of concentrating the mind inwards after withdrawing it from the temptations of the external world. Every man in his field of work needs to concentrate his mind for securing the best result. It is the only key to success. The more a man concentrates on one object of his concern, the less distracted is his mind towards other objects. We need to focus our attention on one matter so that our energies are directed onto it. Attempts are constantly made by our unbridled impulses and thoughts to distract our pinpointed attention. To master the art of bringing our mind under control is the subject matter of *Raja-Yoga*.

Karma Yoga is the path to attain God through actions performed in a specific way. All men have some potential or the other. But many waste away their energies without any concrete plan of materialising them. But there are many who devote their energies in carrying out their vision and mission of helping others in the form of providing relief and other necessities. *Karma Yoga* shows us the way we should channelise our energy in the best possible way. At the same time a *karma yogī* must be aware of the possible obstacles he might face. It is well known that every work carries with it pain and misery. But an

active worker must not stop doing his work out of fear for that. He might face criticism and discouragement. A *karma yogi* is a person who performs his duty without any attachment with the fruits of the action and has learnt the art of doing work only for its own sake. A *karmayogī* is one who fulfils his duties without any desire or concern for its good or bad consequences.

The path of *bhakti yoga* is for the man who is emotional in nature. He loves God with his whole heart and tries to worship him with flowers and incense and performing rituals. The rituals are performed as a mode of worship of the Lord. Vivekananda has stated boldly that religions which worship God without any form or ceremony have dealt a blow to those religions who worship God with form and ceremony, which are an integral and beautiful aspect of religion. He held that a God is a real and tangible object to a *bhakti yogi* and he loves Him, sees and hears Him feels His presence too. His mystic experience is, at most times, ridiculed by a rationalist but he is least bothered about it. He loves God just a mother loves her child selflessly. He does not pray to God asking for any boon or favour. He loves to love God. *Bhakti Yoga* imparts the lesson that God himself is love. God is manifested in every form of love – be it the love for a husband to his wife, a mother for her child, a friend for another friend and even a man who wishes to serve mankind. This love is the essence of *bhakti yoga*.

The *jñāna-yogi* is the thinker, the philosopher who, not satisfied with the usual life of eating and drinking, seeks to go beyond the visible limits and strives to attain something higher. He is in search of the Reality underlying all existence. Not only does he realise the Reality, but also does he become one with the Universal Being. He does not view the God as the creator of this universe or its protector nor as his Father or Mother. God is his inmost soul. Nothing exists except God Himself. With the help of an example Vivekananda explains the crux of *jñāna yoga*. Two birds are seen sitting on a tree, one on

a lower branch and the other on a higher branch. The bird seated on the higher branch is calm, peaceful and majestic whereas the bird on the lower branch is eating sweet as well as bitter fruits by turns and becoming happy and sorrowful by turns while hopping from one branch to another. The latter bird is engulfed by the pleasures and pains of ordinary life alternatively while the former is satisfied with his own self. Being distressed by the bitter fruits, the bird on the lower branch approaches on the higher branch and ultimately finds himself the same with the other bird. The upper bird is God, the lord of the universe whereas the lower one is the human soul engrossed in the ocean of *samsara*. When the individual receives a dead blow, he finally turns towards God, and approaching near and near, at length finds his own self being merged with the Divine Self. He exclaims saying: “He whom I have described to you as the Life of this universe, as present in the atom, and in the suns and moons – He is the basis of our own life, the Soul of our soul. Nay, thou art That.”²²⁸ Thus, the lesson taught by *jñāna-Yoga* is that men are essentially divine in nature. Each life on the earth, from the tiniest creature to the highest being, is the manifestation of the Lord of the universe.

These four *Yoga*-s should be carried out in practice. Mere knowledge will not suffice. They should, first of all, be heard off, then thought upon and analysed by our power of reasoning and finally meditated upon until they become a part and parcel of our entire life. Religion is, nothing, but realisation of this sole Truth. It is being and becoming.

The nature of these four *yoga*-s will be discussed in detail in the next chapter of the thesis. Here I have referred to them very briefly because no one can pursue the path of the universal religion without performing these four *yoga*-s.

²²⁸ Vivekananda, Swami, “*The Idea of a Universal Religion*”, p. 387

Vivekananda traces the different religions to the varied tastes and dispositions of human beings. There are different religions in the world to suit men of different tastes. No one religion can suit the temperaments of all men across the globe. We notice that Sri Ramakrishna has imparted his advice according to the varying natures of his devotees who used to hear him. Man should cultivate the habit of loving another man even if the latter practises a different faith and cherishes a different opinion. All men, though varying in respective individualities, share the common bond of humanity. Religion, instead of being confined only to mere temple, churches, mosques or synagogues, ceremonials or rituals and dogmas, must cross that boundary and regard all men cutting across narrow barriers as brothers. Every man must endeavour to reach out to every other man based on the possession of the spirit in them which is the real and universal essence in all. Thus, religious harmony can be attained only when the Infinite, the Absolute can be realised above the senses and the mind.

We have discussed earlier that every recognised religion has some points in common. One, they have a scripture which enshrines the principal teachings. Second, they have a symbology and a mythology too which illustrate their religion. And above all they have a philosophy which defines the periphery of their religion. Vivekananda had the conviction that as Vedanta does not have any specific scripture of its own which may lead to strife among people and also a corresponding mythology, it can be accepted as the universal religion. In reply to the two addresses by the local Hindu community, Kumbakonam and the Hindu students of the town, Swami Vivekananda delivered an address named as ‘The Mission of Vedanta’. There, he has expressed candidly his views on Vedanta. It is quoted here: “I think that it is Vedanta, and Vedanta alone that can become the universal religion of man, and that no other is fitted for the role. Excepting our own almost the other great religions in the world are inevitably connected with the life or lives of one or more of

their founders.”²²⁹ In fact, the god of Vedanta is a principle and not a person. It is to be worshipped in spirit²³⁰ “The second claim of the Vedanta upon the attention of the world is that, of all the scriptures in the world, it is the one scripture the teaching of which is in entire harmony with the results that have been attained by the modern scientific investigations of external nature.”²³¹ Vedanta denies the authority of any book over any other book. The Upaniṣads say repeatedly “Not by reading of books can we realise the self.”²³² “The other great idea that the world wants from us today...is that eternal grand idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe....the real Soul is one, throughout the universe, One Existence....”²³³ When it will be possible for a man to realise that one spirit running behind all existence cutting across sex, sect or creed, colour or birth, then we will be said to have attained universal brotherhood and be aptly termed as Vedantist.”²³⁴ Vivekananda sums up the role of Vedanta in future through the following lines “If caste is thus unavoidable, I would rather have a caste of purity and culture and self-sacrifice,...let your hearts open. Work out the salvation of this land and of the whole world,...Carry the light and the life of Vedanta to every door, and rouse up the divinity that is hidden within every soul....you will have this satisfaction that you have lived,

²²⁹ Vivekananda, Swami 2016, “*The Mission of the Vedanta*”, The Complete Works, Vol.- 3, p. - 197

²³⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “*Is the Vedanta the Future Religion?*”, The Complete Works, Vol.- 8, p.- 133

²³¹ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, “*The Mission of the Vedanta*”, The Complete Works, Vol.- 3, p. - 199

²³² Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “*Is the Vedanta the Future Religion?*”, The Complete Works, Vol.- 8, p.- 118

²³³ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, “*The Mission of the Vedanta*”, The Complete Works, Vol.- 3, p. - 203

²³⁴ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “*The Spirit and Influence of Vedanta*”, The Complete Works, Vol. - 1, p.- 381

worked and died for a great cause. In the success of this cause, is centered the salvation of humanity here and hereafter.”²³⁵

5. The Philosophical Basis of Universal Religion

Vivekananda felt that time has come for all of us to understand each other's religious beliefs without making mockery of it. We must have the mentality to accept others' views as true too. He insisted on universal acceptance. All men irrespective of castes and creeds are on the same boat. They are all progressing towards the same goal, sooner or later. So, it is high time that an ideal religion be founded where each and every religious faith must have a place.

In this context, Vivekananda has stated that he has deep respect for all religions of the past as well as for those in the present and worship them all in the forms they are worshipped. To state in his own words: “I shall go the mosque of the Mohammedans; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of everyone.”²³⁶ He vows to open up his heart to embrace the religion which might come in future. He salutes before the prophets of all religions of the past, of the present as well as of the future. It is, worth mentioning in this context, that Swamiji had inherited this characteristic trait from his preceptor Sri Ramakrishna who has very thoroughly practised different religious codes of worship which made him declare boldly

²³⁵ Swami Vivekananda, 2016, “*The Mission of the Vedanta*”, The Complete Works, Vol.- 3, 2016, pp. - 213-14

²³⁶ Vivekananda, Swami, “*The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion*”, p.- 365

that all religions are true and they are but different ways to reach the same goal (*yata mata tata patha*).

Vivekananda has made a striking claim about man and religion. He remarked that amidst all differences and strife existing among different religions of the world, ‘universal religion’, a concept dreamt of by thoughtful men is always present. Universal religion is primarily based on the notion of universal brotherhood. This invisible thread of universal brotherhood is already existing not only among followers of a particular religion but also among all people cutting across all religious faiths, races, creeds, languages and other differentiating parameters. It is noteworthy to state that as a monk of the most ancient order, Vivekananda has addressed his western audience in his maiden speech at the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago on 11th September, 1893 with the following words “Sisters and Brothers of America...”.²³⁷ One might question that a monk, by nature, regards all men and women as his brothers and sisters. Hence, his address to the American audience is nothing remarkable.

But it has been noticed that his maiden speech with such an all-embacing address has left a indelible imprint in American minds. Later in a lecture on “The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion” delivered in the Universalist Church, Pasadena, California, 1900, he has stated that he has found brothers and sisters all over the world.²³⁸ He felt that the priests and other fanatics who have undertaken the task of preaching religions from a narrow perspective stand in the way of generating the feeling of universal brotherhood and sisterhood among people. In his own words universal religion, too, is already existing. If the priests and other people that have taken upon themselves the task of

²³⁷ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, “Response to Welcome at the World’s Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 11th September 1893”, *The Complete Works*, p.-3

²³⁸ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-2, p.-358

preaching different religions, simply cease preaching for a few months, we shall see it is already there. They are disturbing it all the time, because it is to their interest.²³⁹ At the same time, Vivekananda has applauded those precious souls who, having seen the truth themselves, follow the Light and enlighten common people. The main objective of religion is to promote peace and harmony among people irrespective of the difference in their religious ideologies. It should, first, be inculcated at the physical level and later at the mental level.

Let us first discuss about the components of a recognised religion. First, each religion has a philosophy of its own which is comprised of the principal doctrines. It lays down a goal and prescribes a means to attain it. Next, mythology is the second part where the philosophy has been illustrated through some legends concerning the lives of human and supernatural beings. Each religion has its own mythology which is held as true by its followers and is regarded as mere superstition by the followers of other faiths. Ritualism is the third part of any established religion which consists of ceremonies and physical gestures like praying to God, offering Him flowers and incense etc. A ritual which is regarded as holy in one religion is regarded as superstition by a follower of another faith. While Christians mock at the worship of idols by the Hindus, the Hindus consider the Christian sacrament of killing a man, eating his flesh and drinking his blood in order to acquire the good qualities of that man as cannibalism. From the above discussion, it is evident that there is no universal philosophy, neither mythology nor ritualism amongst all the recognised religions of the world.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Vivekananda, Swami, *"The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion"*, p.- 359

²⁴⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, *"The Idea of a Universal Religion"*, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-2, p.- 369-371

If every man is considered only as a human being and all differences with respect to religion, caste, creed or sex etc. are not taken into consideration, then every man would be regarded as equal to one another. There would be no point in talking of universal brotherhood separately. But, in actual scenario, it is found that followers of a particular religious community regard only the members of their own community as brothers and the nonmembers of their community as infidels. They try to convert the non-believers into their own sects or even go to the extent of executing them with their swords and daggers. But there are, indeed, some people who are silent workers and do not show off. They truly believe in universal brotherhood and, with love and sympathy for all, carry out their philanthropic activities. They *live* their lives in accordance with the principles they believe in. So, what is required is sincere work with less talk.

There are numerous differences between one human being and another. They differ in sexes, complexions, appearances, languages, religious, social and cultural beliefs, nationalities and many other factors. But, in all of them is found an abstract concept called 'humanity'. This invisible, yet inevitable concept is universal to all human beings. Similarly, different religions of the world unite on the universal principle of God who, like an invisible thread, existing through eternity, runs through all the different pearls denoted by religions or sects or communities. Two men are alike with respect to humanity but differ on the basis of their individual characteristics. A man is different from a woman with regard to gender but they are both equal with regard to being a human being. As living beings, human beings (men as well as women), animals, and plants are all on the same footing. As existence, all living beings are one with the entire universe. This entire existence is God, the ultimate unity throughout the universe.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Vivekananda, Swami, "*The Idea of a Universal Religion*", p.- 372

Thus, it is evident that the universe is full of diversity. No two men are alike in all respects. Each man has his own way of thinking and own way of living. There are many religions and many cultures which suit the purpose of different kinds of individuals existing in different regions on this vast earth. There is a popular saying: 'Variety is the spice of life'. So long as there is variation, there is progress in life. Destruction comes only when there is stagnancy. As said earlier, the same truth is realised differently by different people. The same object can be viewed from different standpoints while remaining the same. Similarly, all human beings are progressing towards the same goal of Truth having difference in the philosophy, mythology and ritualism in their respective religions. Different minds experience the Truth of religion, the God in different ways. Minds are like different vessels where the vision or the realisation of God occurs in different modes. Thus, amidst all diversity there is a central unity and it is this central unity which forms the basis of a universal religion. In the words of Swami Vivekananda: "...Through high philosophy or low, through the most refined ritualism or arrant fetishism, every sect, every soul, every nation, every religion, consciously or unconsciously, is struggling upward, towards God; every vision of truth that man has, is a vision of Him and of none else."²⁴²

'All religions are true' - this thesis has long been accepted in various parts of the world. Attempts have been made to propound a harmonious religious doctrine which will embrace all men cutting across all religious creeds and bring them under one umbrella. But, as those attempts were merely theoretical, they all have failed in their mission. If a practical plan is chalked out in which the individuality or uniqueness of every religion is

²⁴² Vivekananda, Swami, "*The Idea of a Universal Religion*", p.- 375

maintained and its unity with other religions is pointed out, then the plan will be a success.

Swami Vivekananda's concept of Universal religion and the Concept of Service

While Vivekananda has given a sketch as to what is meant by 'universal religion', he has also provided a very novel concept of 'service' based on humanism. Right from the days of his boyhood, we notice his attitude of extending his hand out for helping others even at the cost of his own life. In his later life, he was profoundly influenced by the scriptures and above all by his preceptor Sri Ramakrishna who has shaped his mind. The *Upaniṣads* have, in numerous ways claimed that God is present in the hearts of all living creatures.²⁴³ In the *maṅgalacaraṇa* of his text *Advaitasiddhi*, Madhusudana Saraswati has proclaimed the self-revealing nature of the *jīva* and the essential identity of the *Jīva* with Brahman. Chandidasa, a Bengali *Vaiṣṇava* poet of the fourteenth century has declared the supremacy of human beings above everything. Keeping all these views in mind, Swami Vivekananda has propounded his theory of *sevā* in the light of *advaitavada*. It was not the fruit of Western concepts of humanism and utilitarianism, as some held. Vivekananda strongly held that India was quite rich in philosophy, psychology, religion and spirituality which she need not have to borrow from Western nations. Rather, she needs to learn material science, technology, organisation and discipline from them.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ -, 2010, *Śvetaśvataropaniṣad* 3/13, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited- "sada jananam hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ".

²⁴⁴ Shastri, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, 2014, "Vivekananda Mānavatavāda", Vivekananda Vedāntachintā, Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, p. - 309

If we go through different *Upaniṣad*-s we will observe that how the individual is identical with the collective at all the three levels. At the level of the gross body (*sthula deha*), the *viśva* as the individual (*vyaṣṭi*) and *vaiśwanara* as the collective (*samaṣṭi*) are identical with respect to the gross aspect of *Parameśvara*. At the subtle (*sukṣma*) level of the mind and the intellect (*manabuddhi*), *taijas* as the individual and *hiraṇyagarbha* as the collective are identical with respect to the subtle aspect of *īśvara* or *paramatman*. At the level of the causal body (*karaṇa śarira*), the individual (*vyaṣṭi*) *jiva* (*prajña*) and the collective (*samaṣṭi*) *īśvara* are identical and known as *jagadīśvara* or *sarveśvara* (God of the universe or of all).²⁴⁵ Thus, it can be deduced that the collection of all the *jiva*-s (individual selves) is *Īśvara* (Supreme Being). The same conclusion has also been upheld in other scriptures. The *Īśopaniṣad* says that he who sees himself in other beings and others too in himself has no hate towards anyone.²⁴⁶ In the Gita, Lord echoes the same point that a person who views every living being as his own self in pleasure and pain alike is a *yogi*.²⁴⁷ In the *Manusmṛiti* (1/86), it has been emphasized that penance is the highest duty in the *satya* age, self-realisation in the *treta* age, sacrifice in the *dvapara* and charity in the *kali* age; *tapah param kṛtayuge tretayam jñanamucyate/dvapare yajñamevahurdanamekam kalau yuge*// Worship of God in the form of living beings is

²⁴⁵ Shastri, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, “Vivekananda Mānavatavāda”, p. - 209

²⁴⁶ -, 2010, *Īśopaniṣad*, 6 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited - “yastu sarvaṇi bhutanyatmanyevānupaśyati / sarvabhūteṣu catmanam tato na vijugupsate”

²⁴⁷ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, 6/32 ed. Nalinikanta Brahma Kartika, Kolkata: Navabharata Publishers- “atmaupamyena sarvatra śamam paśyati yoharjuna/sukham va yadi va duḥkham sa yogi paramo mataḥ //”

considered as the best form of worship in the *Śrīmadbhagavata* and it has also been pointed out that performing worship of the *arca/ vighraha* (physical form of the deity) is condemned as mere adding clarified butter (*ghi*) to the ashes (*bhasma*) signifying nothing.²⁴⁸

In fact, Vivekananda claims that the question of morality and the principle of service- to all living beings finds its solution only in the *Advaita* theory. If a question crops up in our minds as to why we should, at all, be moral or why we should help others or refrain from inflicting harm on anyone, the answer is quite clear that as because *advaitavada* treats everything as one entity, helping others leads to helping one's own self and reversely causing harm to others is tantamount to causing harm to one's own self.

Vivekananda has learnt this lesson of *advaitavada* from his guru Sri Ramakrishna as well. He advocated that we are, in no position to help others. At best, we can only serve others. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, we should treat all human beings as visible manifestations of the God. Thus, we should not have the mentality of showing mercy or having pity on living beings. In fact, we have no right to do so. Rather, we should cultivate the spirit of serving all living beings as living embodiments of Siva, the God. In the Gita, such people who see God as present in all living beings and everywhere do not envy their own selves and are said to reach the supreme goal of human life.²⁴⁹

Though we notice that Lord Buddha has emphasized on service and charity in preaching his philosophy, it is only regarding amelioration of sorrow from one's life which is

²⁴⁸ "yo maṁ sarveṣu bhuteṣu santamatmanamiśvaram/hitvarccaṁ bhajate mauḍhyadbhasmanye va juhoti saḥ/

²⁴⁹ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, 13/28, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma Kartṛka, Kolkata: Navabharata Publishers- "samaṁ paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitamiśvaram/na hinastyatmanam tato yati param gatim//"

unpleasant. *Duḥkha* is the first key truth in every life and as it has a cause, it can be eradicated once its cause is wiped off. It is in this regard that Buddha has preached the significance of service and charity towards all. But Vivekananda has drawn the concept of service from the *Advaita* principle of oneness of all souls. We notice his spirit in a letter written to Miss Mary Hale on 9th July 1897 “...and may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls – and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.”²⁵⁰ Vivekananda has expressed his view of oneness of all beings in a poem which is stated here:-

“...These are His manifold forms before thee,

Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?

Who loves all beings without distinction,

He indeed is worshipping best his God.”²⁵¹

The notion of service has a close relation to *bhakti yoga* too. A devotee has boundless love towards God. He loves God so much so that he identifies himself with God. In doing so, he loves the entire universe and equates himself with everything present therein. He accepts the good and the evil with equal spirit. He develops a sense of equanimity and feels nothing to be against him. This feeling is known as *apratikulya* where a *bhakta* is bereft of any sort of selfish interest. In this state of mind, he loses his sense of attachment towards his physical body and even does not hesitate to offer it as a piece of food to a

²⁵⁰ Vivekananda Swami, *The Complete Works*, vol.-5, p.- 129

²⁵¹ Vivekananda, Swami, “To a Friend” (Rendered from a Bengali poem composed by Swami Vivekananda), *The Complete Works*, Vol. - 4, p. - 496

hungry animal. We have discussed this point elsewhere in chapter three that great men never hesitate to offer even himself for the benefit of any other living being. Vivekananda felt that man must build himself up in such a manner that knowing his body to be subject to decay and destruction someday, he must be prepared to sacrifice it for the service of others. To him, such lives are blessed which ends in a good cause.

Every religion is accompanied by some moral precepts. These help the followers to develop themselves. The sense of morality must be embedded in the minds of every person in such a manner that its practice will be spontaneous and not imposed. *Śauca*, internal and external purity is enumerated as a *dharma*. While the body is to be cleansed of external impurities, the mind too needs to be cleansed of evil inclinations. Apart from abstaining from falsehood or theft or incontinence, it is also required to render service unto others. In his words, the Loving God has filled the universe without which it is not possible to thrive even from a second. And man must find that he is born for service unto God leaving all the fruits at His feet.²⁵² This service should be taken as a sort of worship.²⁵³

In May 1898, a plague broke out in Calcutta in which many fear-stricken residents were fleeing the city. In that grim situation, Swami Vivekananda wrote 'The Plague Manifesto' in

Bengali in which he spelt out clearly to the citizens of Calcutta that being the servants of Lord Ramakrishna, they would consider themselves fortunate enough even if they perish while serving and nursing them because they are viewed as embodiments of God. In fact, serving the distressed is a noble duty. He makes it clear that those who act out of vanity

²⁵² Vivekananda Swami, *The Complete Works*, Vol.- 8, p. - 217

²⁵³ Vivekananda Swami, *The Complete Works*, Vol.- 8, p. - 128

in such cases offend God and his creation and as a result incur sin on their parts.²⁵⁴ At the end, Vivekananda asks the citizens to inform them in times of need when the latter will stretch out their helping hands to extend physical help. He even assures that by the grace of the Mother, extending monetary help will not be impossible.²⁵⁵ Following the footsteps of her master, Sister Nivedita devoted herself to the service of the plague-stricken people of the-then Calcutta.

In an interview with a member of the Prabuddha Bharata on “The Revival of Hinduism on a National Basis” in 1898, Swami Vivekananda has categorically outlined ‘renunciation’ and ‘service’ as the national ideal of India.²⁵⁶ Again, in a question-answer session, he has opined that serving the well-being of others out of compassion is good, no doubt but if that service is carried out in the name of the Lord, it would be far better.

Thus, it is to be concluded that the idea of seeing God everywhere and rendering service to Him in every form is the crux of the philosophy of *Vedanta*. This principle is the justification of all morality. The Western concept of ‘universal fraternity’ is not the ultimate word as it fails to provide a satisfactory answer to the problem of ethics. It is quite evident that the doctrine of service as advocated by Vivekananda was firmly based on the Advaita principle of “...*jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ*”, the injunctions of Manu with respect to charity and service and above all through the lessons imparted by his preceptor Sri Ramakrishna.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Vivekananda Swami, 2018, “The Plague Manifesto”, *The Complete Works*, Vol. – 9, p. - 330

²⁵⁵ Swami Vivekananda, “The Plague Manifesto”, p. - 332

²⁵⁶ Vivekananda Swami, 2016, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-5, p. -221

²⁵⁷ “Shastri, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, 2014, “Vivekanander Mānavatavāda”, Vivekanander Vedāntachintā, p.-212.

Thus, the Swami transforms the ancient speculative philosophy of Vedānta, which is essentially a philosophy that prescribes the path to liberation through self-realization, into a universal religion that has the power to govern all forms of human behaviour and introduces the concept of sevāyoga as the best and the unique way to achieve the goals of that universal religion. It needs to be remembered that the path of sevāyoga, or pure detached selfless service to all sentient beings cannot be pursued by a human individual unless one pursues the four other yogas. It is true that all individuals do not have the power and ability to pursue this extremely difficult path. But Swami Vivekananda does not consider any goal to be unattainable by the human individual who in essence, is identical with the supreme being.

Chapter Five

Practical Vedānta and Yoga

In the last chapter, we have seen that Swami Vivekananda's mission of life was to transform the ancient philosophy of Vedānta to a universal goal whose only goal would be to render service to all living beings. The life of selfless service, however, cannot be pursued by a person who does not have adequate knowledge of the nature of one's own self, who does not act in detached manner, who is not detached to the divine being that pervades the entire universe and resides in all sentient beings and who does not have control over his own mind and his own sense organs. In short, the life of *sevā* or service cannot be pursued unless one also pursues the four yoga-s, namely *jñāna yoga*, *Karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *rājayoga* to the best of one's ability.

In this chapter we shall review Swami Vivekananda's conception of these four yoga-s and we shall observe how far Vivekananda's conception of these four yoga-s draws upon classical Indian texts such as the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā and the yoga system of ancient India.

1. The Meaning of the term Yoga

Among the schools of Indian philosophy which lay allegiance to the Veda-s, the system of Yoga as propounded by *Maharṣi* Patanjali starts with the *sūtra* “*atha yogānuśāsanam*”²⁵⁸ in which he ventures to explain the notion of yoga. By the term

¹Maharṣi Patañjali, 2002, *Yoga Sūtra* 1/1 in *Yogadarsana*, ed. Sāṅkhyayogācārya Śrīmad Dharmamegha Aranya o Ray Yajnesvar Ghosh Bahadur, Kolkata: Damodar Ashram

‘yoga’ is meant *samādhi* and the term ‘*anuśāsana*’ refers to the conduct of noble men. The second *sūtra* elaborates ‘yoga’ as control of the dispositions of the *citta*.²⁵⁹ The *citta* constitutes the mind, which, in the form of waves, is constantly fleeting in nature owing to the impact of turbulences of the external and internal world. The dispositions of the *citta* ought to be restrained by yoga in order to withdraw it from the external as well as the internal world and concentrate within so that it is balanced. Control of the mind is considered to be the highest power without which attainment of liberation is not possible. There is a saying which states that there is no knowledge equivalent to Sāṅkhya and there is no power equivalent to yoga.²⁶⁰

Just as there are advances in different domains of knowledge like history or physics, man did not stop venturing into the sphere of religion too. He wondered that if there is any supernatural entity like God or the soul, then He must be known to man in his consciousness because the physical world has failed to provide any knowledge about Him. The workings of our material body can be examined with the help of experiments using physical machines. But the functions of the mind e.g., the thoughts, the emotions and the feelings cannot be examined in such manner though they can very well be felt. At most, the workings of the brain can be observed as certain types of vibrations or electro-chemical changes.

²⁵⁹ Maharṣi Patañjali, 2002, *Yoga Sūtra* 1/2 in Yogadarsana, ed. Sāṅkhyayogācārya Śrīmad Dharmamegha Aranya o Ray Yajnesvar Ghosh Bahadur, Kolkata: Damodar Ashram -“*yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ*”.

²⁶⁰ Maharṣi Śrīkṛṣṇadvaipāyanavedavyāsa, 1400(Bengali Year), *Mahābhāratam*, Śānti Parva, ed. Srimannilakantha Bharatabhavadipa o Srimad Haridasasiddhantavagisabhattacharyena, Kalikata: Vishwavani Prakasani-“*nāsti sāṅkhyasamāṁ jñānaṁ, nāsti yogasamāṁ valaṁ*”.

When we analyse our mental states, we notice that consciousness is a series of sensations. In fact, we, men, are like animals who are swayed away by the command of nature.²⁶¹ A question naturally harps in our mind as to whether consciousness is merely a continuous flux or is there any permanent substance behind it which is immortal. It is well-known that apart from the Buddhists who do not lay belief in the concept of a permanent soul or God and the *Cārvāka*-s who are hard-core materialists and believers in nothing which transcends the physical world, all the other systems of Indian philosophy maintain that there is indeed a permanent substance called God or soul which remains intact amidst all the changes.

Yoga is the science of mastering the art of stopping the flow of these changes in the *citta*. Once an individual is able to lay control over the dispositions of his mind and delve inside, he is said to have known himself, his true nature. The argument behind this proposition is that the substance known as ‘I’ is something absolutely different from the changes and stands apart from all the changes. It is due to this reason that the substance called ‘I’ does not change and is thus not affected by the changes. From this it follows that the ‘it’ can stop the changes. But this would not be possible if ‘it’ were the same as the changes. The phenomenal world is constantly undergoing change but the noumenon is that Absolute, changeless Reality behind it. We are all embodied selves. But we are so enchanted that we identify the body with the soul and think ourselves as bodies only. The science of yoga lies in the training of the body as well as the mind so that we learn to

²⁶¹ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “The Science of Yoga”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-7, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama. p. 418

recognize the soul as distinct from the body. Then the spirit manifests himself. The solution lies in the power of concentration and also of meditation.²⁶²

We shall see how Swami Vivekananda's conception of the four yoga-s is based upon the ancient texts and systems as the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā.

2. Swami Vivekananda's Conception of Karma Yoga

Swami Vivekananda has given lectures on the four *Yoga-s* – *karma yoga*, *rāja yoga*, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*. The word '*karma*' is etymologically derived from the Sanskrit root '*kr*' which means 'to do'. By *karma*, Vivekananda means all sorts of action - biological, physical and mental. Just as our breathing or other metabolic actions are *karma*, so are walking or running as well as thinking or feeling. Swami Vivekananda holds 'every pulsation of the heart is work' (*karma*).²⁶³ Some actions are overt while others are covert. Metabolic actions are involuntary while physical actions are voluntary. Mental actions are of both voluntary and non-voluntary nature. It is the will of a person which brings about actions in a man. Voluntary actions which an individual undertakes bear an impact on his character. It is also worth mentioning that character is formed out of the assimilation of the inherent tendencies (*saṃskāra-s*) present in man. We are all aware that life is a mixture of happiness and sorrow. It is misery and not happiness which shapes our character the most. The blows we receive in our life ignites the fire in us which propels us towards constructive action. The lesson which the great men of the world preached has been accumulated through the ages and then poured down on mankind as a panacea of all evils.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Vivekananda, Swami, "The Science of Yoga", *The Complete Works*, Vol.-7, p. 430

²⁶³ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, "Karma Yoga", *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p - 31

²⁶⁴ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, "Karma Yoga", *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. – 30-32

Swami Vivekananda's thought process was profoundly influenced by the teachings of his master. He held that our wishes and desires shape our destiny. What we think, wish and strive for, we attain. Thus, while our present life is shaped by the wishes and efforts we undertake in our past lives, our future life is similarly determined by the actions of our present lives.

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks of proper technique doing work with cleverness (*kauśala*). In the same line, Swami Vivekananda insists that any work which a man performs must be an endeavour to bring out all the powers of the soul. In fact, our soul has immense potentiality. By doing work, our soul is to be stirred up so that all its potentials are manifested. Men have various motives in their minds and they work to fulfil such motives. But there are men also who do not work with any selfish motive. They believe in doing good for its own sake and they love to do so. This unselfishness has its own value. It is a matter of self-restraint to forsake petty desires and cherish noble ideals. Vivekananda remarks that if we run after petty self-interests, our energy is lost in vain. Here Swami Vivekananda draws upon the ideal of *niṣkāma karma* (disinterested action) as preached in the *Bhagavadgītā* by Lord Kṛṣṇa which says that man has the right to work only but not to expect for its consequences. Once an individual works with a desire in his mind, that action will be *sakāma* (laden with self-interest) for which he has to bear the consequence, whatever it may. On the contrary, there is another life of renunciation in which there is retirement from work. That sort of life is not desired too. The ideal man is one who strikes a balance between the two. He remains calm and serene amidst intense activity and again remains active amidst all calm.²⁶⁵ Man is advised to cast off selfishness in a persistent manner and acquire unselfishness so that all the powers of his soul are manifested to the highest extent.

²⁶⁵ Vivekananda, Swami, "Karma Yoga", p. - 36

The way in which any person performs an action, be it an action with desire (sakāra karma) or without desire (nişkāma karma) is largely dependent upon the predominance of three gunas sattva, rajas and tamas in the mind of an individual.

The *Sāṅkhya* philosophy speaks of three attributes that constitute prakṛti (*guṇa*-s). They are *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*. *Sattva* is characterized by knowledge and gentleness, *rajaḥ* by activity and *tamaḥ* by inertness. Man's character is determined by the predominance of these forces one over the other. If we take up human society, we notice that morality and duty are prime factors but they vary from one country to another. What is good and acceptable in one society is not so in another. The wise man understands that this difference is caused by the mental constitution and the different planes of existence in which men are.²⁶⁶

If we go back to the teachings of Practical Vedānta of Swami Vivekananda which have been discussed in the first chapter, we notice that he has urged us to repose faith in our own selves. Without that first step, it is not even possible to have faith in God. Reposing faith in one's own self implies abolishing the thought of hating one's own self.

We are aware that all religions teach us 'not to resist evil'. Yet we seldom practise it Here one salient point is to be taken note of. A lazy, inert person hesitates to resist as his nature is meek. But a strong man can easily resist by striking a blow to his opponent. That will cause him sin. Yet if he abstains from resisting, he is applauded.²⁶⁷

In Indian scriptures, non-resistance or more simply non-violence has been preached as a virtue. Again, the people belonging to the warrior class (*kṣatriya*-s) are entrusted the duty of fighting the enemy and thus saving the countrymen. In the context of the

²⁶⁶ Vivekananda, Swami, "Karma Yoga", p. – 37-38

²⁶⁷ Vivekananda, Swami, "Karma Yoga", p. – 40

Bhagavadgītā, Arjuna has been found to lose his nerve after beholding his kith and kin. His task is to resist the evil. But being engulfed with pity, he is reluctant to resist and that is the greatest sin for him as a warrior. In normal life situations, man must confront his enemies and resist them. At length he will reach the life of calmness.²⁶⁸

Ancient Indian society was divided into *varṇa*-s (class) and *āśrama*-s (station in life). The *varṇa*-s were determined by the predominance of the forces (*guṇa*-s) in each man and the *āśrama*-s were determined by the age of an individual. Each *varṇa* and *āśrama* was assigned some duties to abide by. Each man, irrespective of his *varṇa* and *āśrama*, is great in his own place because each has a definite duty to perform which is specific to him. The householder's task is far more challenging than a monk as he has to dispense all sorts of duties to each member of the family and also to a recluse who comes up to him for alms. The duty of a householder is also to serve God and also the poor. Similarly, the duty of a mendicant seer is to impart religious knowledge to ordinary men.

Charity is one of the most primary values in the life of any man but what is most desired is to do it without expecting anything in return. It is because once we have that expectation, we are bound to be tangled by its consequence. The act will no longer remain pure. The only point is to do one's duty earnestly and surrender all the fruits at the feet of the God. The watchword of all duty is fearlessness (*abhiḥ*) so that there is no place for weakness of the will or physical might.

Extending help to others is undoubtedly a noble act. The nature of the need and its effect is directly proportional to the help extended. For example, supplying food to a hungry man is good indeed. but hunger arises again. So, we find that this need is temporary. Next, intellectual help is of immense importance. Knowledge is an important requisite in the life

²⁶⁸ Vivekananda, Swami, "Karma Yoga", p. – 40

of a man. A man who is not knowledgeable remains in the dark. Above all, spiritual knowledge is of the highest form. A man who is spiritually sound is able to lead a sound life as spirituality is the highest faculty in any person. It provides the highest satisfaction as all miseries of mundane life are eradicated. Man needs to be pure and spiritually educated.

In the Gita, man has been advised to be engaged in work without fail. In fact, no one can thrive without doing actions. Each action produced entails some good and some bad effects. These good as well as bad effects bear their respective consequences as *karma* as the actions are associated with desires. They set men in bondage. A chain made of gold has the same binding capacity just as a chain made of iron. It is only when men forsake the desires and work only for its own sake are they freed from the cycle of this life.

The actions which every man performs leaves a psychical trace in the mind which, in Sanskrit, is called *saṁskāra*. It is the innate tendency in a man. Good actions create good *saṁskāra*-s and bad actions bad *saṁskāra*-s. A man who is accustomed to doing good actions is hardly moved by evil motives and likewise another man who is tempted mostly towards evil-doing seldom wishes to do benevolent actions. Such is the motive power of the *saṁskāra*-s. In order to rise above both good and evil, it is necessary to control our sense-organs and direct them inwards towards the self.

When the mind is controlled as enjoined in the scriptures, there is a communion established between the *jīvātman* (individual self) and the *paramātmā* (Supreme Self). Then, the individual self is detached from all worldly ties, however good or bad they are.

To emphasize the importance of ‘non-attachment’, Vivekananda calls upon man to act like a stranger in the world, a sojourner, being untouched by the ripples of happiness and

sorrow created in the life. He says that the world is just a stage which we are passing.²⁶⁹ How can the sense of non-attachment be attained? Vivekananda answers that we should perform any work without expecting anything in return. Once we expect something, we are bound by it. So, we should perform any act with a sense of worship as if we are surrendering all our actions at the feet of the Lord. Just as a lotus leaf is not touched by water even though it grows in water, ordinary man is advised to work with the same unselfish motive so that actions do not bind him. The secret of work to mankind lies in selflessness. Man should not expect anything rather he should remain grateful for giving him a chance to serve. Our prime duty is to educate the soul by acquiring knowledge so that it can be freed from bondage.²⁷⁰

Man should be the master over his sense-organs and not be a slave to them. He should conquer the temptations of the senses which drag him down to ordinary life. When a man acts for selfish gains, he is a slave to the petty selfish interests. But when he overcomes such selfish thoughts, he becomes free and is able to act with all-embracing love, peace and happiness.

In the study of *Karma Yoga*, the question of duty necessarily finds a place. The term ‘duty’ is relative in the sense that it differs among cultures, religions and sects. What is duty in a culture is not at all in another culture. Difference in these practices among cultures creates bitterness among people cutting across different cultures. But still there is a uniformity regarding duty irrespective of different parameters. The ordinary idea of duty everywhere is that every good man follows the dictates of his conscience.²⁷¹ In fact, conscience is the most important factor in the life of every man. It shows him the right

²⁶⁹ Vivekananda, Swami, “Karma Yoga”, p. – 56-57

²⁷⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, “Karma Yoga”, p. – 57

²⁷¹ Vivekananda, Swami, “Karma Yoga”, p. – 63

path to tread on. That duty differs in different situations is quite common. Almost all religions accept non-violence as a duty of prime importance as life is considered as of utmost value and thus inflicting harm or injury to it is severely condemned. If a man suddenly comes out of his home with a weapon and shoots someone, he will definitely be accused and tried. But if a soldier opens up his arms in a regiment and kills even more than one man, he will not be reprimanded even. Thus, we see that duty varies in different situations. There is, in fact, one central idea in the notion of duty. At large, ‘duty’ can be summed up as any act which ennoble us and lead us to the highest truth while that action which degrades us is derogatory in nature.

Duties and value systems are relative terms and vary from one region to another. In order to live in a peaceful atmosphere, it is imperative on each individual not to judge someone according to his/her own standard. It will be utter folly to judge the world through one’s own lens.²⁷² Vivekananda explains that we should, first of all, do the duty which is ours by dint of birth. Next, we should do the duty which pertains to our position in life and in society.²⁷³ In doing our duties, we face many troubles which are posed by nature. Man needs to stand the test with dexterity and competence. Above all, an individual is to be judged not merely on the basis of the nature of his duties but also in the manner he performs them. In fact, no duty is mean. All are equally good. Man must strive to perform his duty with a detached spirit but not in a careless manner. Duty should be viewed as work of worship of the Lord.

While we are speaking of duty, it is essential to keep in mind that the world does not owe anything to us. Rather we owe everything to the world. Vivekananda’s intent in saying this is that by serving good to the world, the world is not benefitted. If we think so, we

²⁷² Vivekananda, Swami, “Karma Yoga”, p. – 66

²⁷³ Vivekananda, Swami, “Karma Yoga”, p. – 66

are absolutely wrong. By stretching out our hand of service, we are, in a sense, helping our own selves as the scope of doing charity is placed before us to give us a chance to serve others who are in need. This noble act of serving others is a golden chance to purify our own selves provided we are not inclined to getting praise or benefit for the same. By giving some money to the beggar, the donor is benefitted though apparently it might seem that the beggar's need is fulfilled. The man who is served is to be treated as a visible God who has come as the saviour of the donor. This sentence reminds us of Sri RamaKṛṣṇa's saying '*śiva jñāne jīva sevā*' (serving living beings as the visible manifestations of the Lord). He is not to be looked upon with pity. Any work done without attachment to its fruits is necessarily good and pure. It elevates man towards God.

There is presence of the Almighty God in the universe who is infinitely watchful. The universe is designed by Him with all His changes and manifestations. As the thesis of Practical Vedānta of Swami Vivekananda is an endorsement of the thesis of *Advaita* Vedānta which speaks of oneness, it is required that all men should treat others with an equal eye as all are one and the same in essence.

Just as every action we do has a simultaneous reaction, similarly any action which we perform are acted on other people and theirs on us. When an individual does a benevolent action, other men who have the same tendency are affected by it and repeat such actions. Likewise, evil actions send a negative vibration which affect men of the same tendency and they act evil too. Thus, we see that benevolent actions as well as evil ones multiply themselves. It is needless to say that while we act evil, we injure others as well as ourselves too and when we do something good, it helps others as well as us too.

The theory of *Karma-Yoga* is that every voluntary action bears some fruit which we cannot evade. This theory goes with the popular saying ‘As you sow, so you reap’. Here another salient point comes into consideration. While we do something good, we cannot avoid any evil being simultaneously done. For example, when we breathe in air for our survival or speak to someone else, thousands of microbes get killed in the process. Thus, perfection can never be attained as this association of good and evil is never-ending. Thus, though we think that poverty or any other evil will one day subside, it will never be so. It is a good endeavour that we keep on trying to alleviate the evil but at length we find that it cannot be. Thus, though we strive for a perfect life, it is a utopian idea. Life is itself a continuous struggle for existence in which we, its inhabitants have to constantly combat with the forces of internal and external nature. Life will come to a halt only when all its resources come to an end.

How can we do good to others? It is possible only when we forget our own petty selves and possess a strong will to extend our helping hand to solve others’ misery. Here again we are reminded of Sri RamaKṛṣṇa’s teaching that we can only serve others and have no capacity to help them. The highest ideal is self-abnegation where the thought of ‘I’ is totally dissolved and the thought of ‘thou’ takes its place. This is the teaching of the highest morality which is applicable to all men, animals, plants and even angels. They think of good only and with a feeling of surrender everything at the feet of God, they say always “Thy will be done”.²⁷⁴

While discussing on morality, two terms come up – ‘*pravṛtti*’ and ‘*nivṛtti*’. ‘*Pravṛtti*’ is the positive feeling with which an individual ventures to possess anything as his own. Thus, here he is concerned only with his own self. ‘*Nivṛtti*’ is the negative feeling which helps an individual to recede from anything. Here, in this case, he withdraws himself

²⁷⁴ Vivekananda, Swami, “Karma Yoga”, p. – 87

from possessing anything. This is the crux of all moral thinking. There are a class of people who are ready to sacrifice even their lives to serve good to others. They are the ideal *karma-yogī*-s. They may not believe in any God nor has they read any scripture. But their spirit of doing good to others make them God-men.²⁷⁵ The philosopher attains the same truth after attaining knowledge, the devotee through his prayer and the worker through his selfless service. The medium through which they arrive at the goal of rendering service to others is self-abnegation.²⁷⁶

The main point of *karma-yoga* is non-attachment. How can we be non-attached to the world? It does not mean being indifferent to worldly duties. But man should not feel that his importance is indispensable. This mentality brings in him vanity. The world goes on in its own way. In the words of Swami Vivekananda “Do not give up the world; live in the world, imbibe its influences as much as you can; but if it be for your own enjoyment’s sake, work not at all....First kill your self and then take the whole world as yourself...”²⁷⁷ A popular example of non-attachment is often cited by Sri RamaKṛṣṇa in his teachings. A nurse cares for her master’s child so dearly as if the child is her own. But when she is given the notice to quit, she takes no time to pack up her luggage.²⁷⁸ This should be our attitude even towards our own children.

It is therefore necessary to lay control over our own minds so that we can reach the goal of self-perfection. Our mind is our internal teacher who gives us the right direction to move on. The feeling in us is turned into willing. This willing is converted into the tremendous force which permeates our entire being and makes us fit to undertake yoga as the medium of our uplift.

²⁷⁵ Vivekananda, Swami, “Karma Yoga”, p. – 85

²⁷⁶ Vivekananda, Swami, “Karma Yoga”, p. – 87

²⁷⁷ Vivekananda, Swami “Karma Yoga”, p. – 88

²⁷⁸ Vivekananda, Swami “Karma Yoga”, p. – 88-89

Every living being is born in chains and it makes efforts to free itself. Freedom is the goal of human nature. The philosopher tries to acquire knowledge about the Real Self, the devotee loves God and tries to be one with him. The worker works with his whole heart to feel the presence of the Lord in every being. The notion of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ is the root cause of all bondage. The task of morality is to root out this self-centeredness. The definition of morality can be given thus: “That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral.”²⁷⁹

In this line, Swami Vivekananda cites Lord Buddha as the only *karma-yogī*, who had no selfish motive. His only teaching was to ‘do good and be good’. At the same time, he had incomparable sympathy for all creatures on earth. He had the greatest soul-power with the combination of heart and brain. He has set us the lesson which we should imbibe in us and live up to it and assist others too.²⁸⁰

3. Swami Vivekananda’s Conception of Rāja-Yoga

All our knowledge is derived from experience. It is either through perception or inference or any other established source. In inference, knowledge is gathered either from the general to the particular or from the particular to the general cases. Scientific knowledge is derived from direct experience or from different experiments which are conducted and conclusions derived at from experiments. Scientific truths are verifiable by each and every person to stand the test of truth.

Religion, on the other hand, is based on belief and faith in certain theories all over the world. Followers of different religions disagree among themselves with respect to the beliefs they hold. But, on further analysis it has been found that religion is also based on experience. This claim is made because the truth about God and the souls which have been experienced by the seers is not limited to them only. Any and every human being is capable of experiencing the truth if he so

²⁷⁹ Vivekananda, Swami “Karma Yoga”, p. – 109

²⁸⁰ Vivekananda, Swami “Karma Yoga”, p. – 116

desires and makes sincere effort. A man can be said to be religious only if he has succeeded to experience the truth embedded in religion himself. Vivekananda had the same question in his mind in his youth about whether God can be experienced or not. He had a firm conviction that if God exists, He must be visible to him. Otherwise, there is no point in accepting Him as existent. Only Sri RamaKṛṣṇa had been able to answer him in the affirmative. In fact, all the religions of the world have one point in common. That is, they all believe that the truth as preached therein have been experienced by the foremost persons. The Christians believe that Christ, as the messenger of God has seen Him. Lord Buddha experienced truth himself and passed it on to his followers. The Hindus believe that the age-old sages are the seers who have visualized the truth themselves.²⁸¹

We find here a similarity with the Jaina concept of perception. In almost all the systems of Indian philosophy, perception is admitted as one of the principal sources of knowledge in which we acquire knowledge with the help of the sense-organs – external as well as internal. In Sanskrit, it is termed as *pratyakṣa pramāṇa* or direct means of knowledge. The Jaina-s however differ in their nomenclature. To them, the knowledge that is derived from the sense-organs cannot be direct and infallible and hence it cannot be termed as *pratyakṣa*. It is indirect or mediate (*parokṣa*) as it takes the aid of a medium which are the sense-organs. Rather the immediate experience by a seer which takes no assistance of any sense-organ is direct (*pratyakṣa*). They are clairvoyance, telepathy and omniscience. Sensory knowledge, according to them, are indirect or mediate (*apratyakṣa* or *parokṣa*) as they use sense-organs as the medium and hence are susceptible to fallibility.

Now we come to the main point of discussion. The science of Yoga shows us the path to have the perceptions of the truths of religion directly. The Veda-s declare that it is only when the truth has been realized and felt at heart that all doubts will be cleared. “Ye children of immortality, even those who live in the highest sphere, the way is found;

²⁸¹Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “Raja-Yoga”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-1, p. - 124

there is a way out of all this darkness, and that is by perceiving Him who is beyond all darkness; there is no other way.”²⁸²

The sages of all ages and in all countries have practiced the methods of Yoga. They were pure at heart with a motive to do good to others. They declared boldly that the truth they have derived at through rigorous spiritual exercise is higher than that which the senses can provide us and is more vivid.

Every science has its own method of investigation. In the process, the researcher observes and then collects information. At last generalization is made. In this case, effort is made to study the mind and its workings in order to have a glimpse of the internal world. It is the general tendency of the mind to go outwards with the aid of the external sense-organs. As an obvious consequence, the mind is tempted towards the fancies of the external world which are impermanent in nature. Thus the mind remains scattered. It is only with the power of attention that the mind can be concentrated inwards so that the internal world can be discovered. This way of looking into our own minds is termed as ‘introspection’. When we analyse our minds, we come face to face with our internal states of affairs. Swamiji claims that when man confronts his own mind, he comes to the truth that there is something which is ever-pure and perfect. There is no misery and fear of death. It is the phenomenon of mind studying mind wherein the concentrated mind delves into its innermost secrets. We thus arrive at the basis of our belief. It is the real, genuine religion.²⁸³

We all know that the body and the mind are intimately related to each other. When the body is ill, the mind is affected too. Likewise, when the mind is sick, it affects the body

²⁸² Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “Raja-Yoga”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-1, p. - 126

²⁸³ Vivekananda, Swami, “Raja-Yoga”, p. - 129

too. A balanced person is one who has a healthy body-mind set-up. But, as ordinary man is much swayed away by his desires, he has too little control over his mind. So, in order to have control over our minds, we need to have control over our bodies too. It is owing to this reason that Patanjali has prescribed physical disciplines before internal procedures in his eightfold path of yoga so that the body is tuned with the mind. It is by practising yoga that the *yogī* gets control of the internal forces and thereby the whole of nature. A *yogī* is required to avoid both the extremes of luxury and austerity as the balance is thereby hampered.

4. Swami Vivekananda's Conception of Jñāna Yoga

Before speaking of *jñāna*, we start with *māyā*. Its oldest mention is found in the Vedas in the sense of delusion.²⁸⁴ But later in the *Śvetāśvatara* Upaniṣada, we find that *māyā* has been described as nature and its ruler is the Lord Himself.²⁸⁵ When in Vedānta it is said that the world has no existence, it is meant that the world is not absolutely real. It is real only with respect to our minds.

When we come down to ordinary existence, we notice that life is a mixture of both good and evil. A child is born and he grows up. In his youth, a man is optimistic as he has many dreams to fulfil. But as his age advances, he becomes physically weak which makes him mentally weak too. And Again, life is not all good to a man who has no money to sustain him. Swami Vivekananda says so touchingly “Death is the end of life, of beauty, of wealth, of power....Saints die and sinners die, kings die and beggars die.

²⁸⁴ Vivekananda, Swami, 2018, “The Jnana Yoga”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-2, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, p.-87

²⁸⁵ Vivekananda, Swami, “The Jnana Yoga”, p.-88

They are all going to death, and yet this tremendous clinging on to life exists. Somehow, we do not know why, we cling to life; we cannot give it up. And this is *Māyā*.²⁸⁶

Yet Vivekananda says that *māyā* is a statement of fact of this universe.²⁸⁷ The world is present before us with name and form (*nāma-rūpa*). We are all running after the pleasures of the senses knowing not that it will not last for long. The sense-feeling of an animal is much keener than that of a human being. It is due to this reason that they can endure more torture of the senses than we can. Still we are bound on this earth. But amidst all misery in this earthly existence there is a ray of hope. There is an inner voice which can be heard saying “This My Maya is divine, made up of qualities, and very difficult to cross. Yet those that come unto Me, cross the river of life....”²⁸⁸ We presume that God is in heaven, far from us and can be reached only after death. But Vedānta says that the God of heaven is the God in nature. He is nature and is present in the temple of the body and is ultimately the temple Himself.²⁸⁹ But when we say that the God, the Absolute can be known, it no longer remains the absolute. It becomes finite. But the *Advaita* answers that God is not merely knowable, He is our inmost self. We know the internal as well as the external world in and through Him. Brahman as God is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of this universe and the world which appears to us many is also Brahman transformed as its effect. It is when man is able to analyse the truths of the scriptural sentences and meditate on them that he is able to realise his own self.

5. Swami Vivekananda's Conception of Bhakti Yoga

²⁸⁶ Vivekananda, Swami, “The Jnana Yoga”, p.- 92

²⁸⁷ Vivekananda, Swami, “The Jnana Yoga”, p.- 93

²⁸⁸ Vivekananda, Swami, “The Jnana Yoga”, p.- 122

²⁸⁹ Vivekananda, Swami, “The Jnana Yoga”, p.- 127

Bhakti (devotion) is defined as a real, genuine search of the Lord, a search beginning, continuing and ending in love.²⁹⁰ It is a fact that so long as we are engaged in this mundane world of petty matters, we cannot turn ourselves inward. But the sages down the ages have been in constant search of God after relinquishing the world of the senses.

The *jñānī*-s say that *bhakti* is a medium of reaching God. But the *bhakta*-s claim that is a means as well as an end too because the means here turns to be the end too. A devotee loves God not only to reach him but in the process, he merges with God and becomes love personified.

Bhakti Yoga has two stages - the *gaunī* or the preparatory stage and *parā* or the supreme stage. In the initial stages a devotee takes the help of images or idols to concentrate upon and once he concentrates his mind, he delves deep into the thought of the Lord. Concentration is a vital part in this tradition as there is every chance of the mind to be distracted. But a devotee should have the firm determination that he would direct his mind only towards the way of the Lord.

We once again remember that Swami Vivekananda speaks of loving one's own self first which will foster self-confidence in him. This attitude will help him repose faith in God. All religious teachers have taught 'Resist not evil'.²⁹¹ It does not mean that evil is to let go off. But it implies that even if we have the power to resist evil, we must refrain from doing so. In other words, non-resistance is preached as the highest value. A man who is weak cannot put up resistance. It is nothing new to him. But a man who can resist restrains himself, that action is laudable.

²⁹⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, "The Bhakti Yoga" *The Complete Works*, Vol.- 3, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, p.- 33

²⁹¹ "Karma Yoga", *The Complete Works*, Vol.-1, 2018, p.-38

In his natural way of speaking, Vivekananda lays stress on his point of man's inherent strength. From our childhood, we are taught to believe in ghosts, devils, gods and the priests, but unfortunately not in our own selves. This is why we become weak and timid and could not rely on our own selves as they breed fear and dependency. He tries to imbibe the spirit of *abhiḥ* (fearlessness) because the self is the only reality. According to him, fear arises only when there are two or more entities. He insists man to have faith on his own self and as said earlier, such a person can be truly called a theist and not one who believes in a personal God. His words are also echoed in the Gītā “You yourself are your only friend, you yourself your only enemy. There is no other enemy but this self of mine, no other friend but myself.”²⁹²

To restate his own point, Vivekananda held that the greatest sin is weakness. He stresses on the spirit to stand up erect and be brave come what may. His words are similar to the popular saying “cowards die many times before their death”. He speaks of strength and growth as the sign of life, weakness that of death. Death is the inevitable phenomenon which knocks at every door when the time is up. But we should not be afraid of it. He glorifies the brave as deserving the fair, the salvation and scorn the weak.²⁹³

The *Upaniṣada* iterates that the only God to believe in, resides in each heart, in a woman, as well as in a man, in a boy as also in a girl, in an old person as also in a bright young man.²⁹⁴ The *Chāndogyopaniṣada* states that there is only one entity pervading the entire

²⁹² -,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā* 6/5, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers - “uddharedātmanātmāna nātmānamavasādayet/ atmaiva hyātmano bandhurātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ”

²⁹³ Vivekananda, Swami, “The Gita III”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-1, 2018, p. - 465

²⁹⁴ 2010, *Śvetaśvataropaniṣad* 4/3, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta:Ananda Publishers Private Limited.-“ “*tvam strī tvam pumānasi tvam kumāra uta vā kumārī /tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi tvam jāto bhavasi viśvatomukhaḥ*”.

cosmos. There is no other second entity. So, there is no question of misery or unhappiness.^{295 296}

Swami Vivekananda, in his treatise on “Four Paths of Yoga” has, first of all, explained the relevance of Yoga. He points out to the main objective of Indian philosophy. The inherent nature of man is free but he is unable to realise it. It is because of the presence of the primordial ignorance (*avidyā*) which covers his real nature that he is bound in this universe (*jagat prapañca*). His struggle to be free is the quest for self-realisation (*mokṣa*). Once he realizes his own self to be ever-free, ever-perfect, pure and absolute, he is relieved from the cycle of birth and hence death too (the vicious *samsāra*).

The method of connecting our petty selves with our own Real Self is known as Yoga. This yoga is the method of removing our ignorance so that we can have a direct realization of our own nature. It is devised in four ways depending upon the nature of man and his aptitude and capability. The means of practicing yoga is primarily based on two steps of *vairāgya* (apathy towards worldly interests) and *abhyāsa* (repeated practice). Ordinary men are mostly inclined towards the temptations of the external world and this causes bondage. Unless he develops a sense of renunciation towards them, he cannot progress towards liberation. *Abhyāsa* refers to constant practice or exercises of any of the *yoga*-s. Any lesson needs to be constantly practiced so that it is internalized.

²⁹⁵ -, 2010, *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 7/23/1, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited. -“yo vai bhūmā tat sukham nālpe sukhamasti bhūmaiva sukham bhūmā tveva vijijñāsitavya iti bhūmānam bhagavo vijijñāsa iti”.

²⁹⁶ 2010, *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 7/24/1, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited. -“yatra nānyat paśyati nānyachhr̥ṇoti nānyad vijānāti sa bhūmāhatha yatrānyat paśyatyanyachhr̥ṇotyanyadvijānāti tadalpam yo vai bhūmā tadmr̥tamatha yadalpam tanmartyam sa bhagavaḥ kasmin pratiṣṭhita iti sve mahimni yadi vā na mahimnīti”.

When Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa about who is the most supreme - the *jñānī* or the *bhakta*, the Lord answers that those who with utmost faith and concentration worship Him with eternal constancy, they are His highest worshippers, the greatest *yogī*-s. He assures that those who worship Him without any attachment to anything else, he lifts them up from the ocean of ever-recurring births and deaths.²⁹⁷

6. Yoga in the Śrīmadbhāgavadītā

It is quite evident that SSwami Vivekananda's concept of *jñānayoga*, *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *rājayoga* are closely related to these concepts as used in the Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā.

In this section we shall explore the relationship between Swami Vivekananda's concept of the aforementioned four yogas and the concept of *jñānayoga*, *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga* as found in the śrīmadbhāgavadGītā. In particular, the following questions will be answered in this section.

1. How far Swami Vivekananda's conception of these four yogas is based on Śrīmadbhāgavadītā?
2. Does Vivekananda's conception of these four yogas differ from the concepts of these yogas found in the Gītā?

In the text, *Bhagavadgītā*, all the chapters bear the suffix 'yoga' to signify that they provide a lesson as to how can the communion be built between the *jīvātman* and the *paramātman*. The different *yoga*-s as enumerated in the *Gītā* are broadly classified into three major paths namely that of *karma* (action), *jñāna* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (devotion). In the

²⁹⁷ Vivekananda, Swami, 2016, "The Naturalness of Bhakti-Yoga and its Central Secret", The Complete Works, Vol.-3, p.- 87

Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, jñāna Yoga is presented first followed by discussion on Karmayoga and bhaktiyoga.

In the Gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa first presents the theory of the self (*ātmatattva*) and the knowledge of duty pertaining to one's own class (*svadharma*). Then Sri Kṛṣṇa proceeds to impart him the lesson of *karmmayoga* (the tactics of *karma* or action). The lesson on the self is about wisdom (*jñāna*) and that of duty is of action (*karma*). Wisdom and action, the *Advaitin*-s maintain, are diametrically opposite to each other just as like light and darkness are. They two cannot go together.

A question may arise that Arjuna is given the lesson on duty by Kṛṣṇa . How can the same individual be given the lesson on wisdom? The lesson on the self is about the *Puruṣa* who is referred to in the *Upaniṣad*-s as the *Sāṅkhya*. Lesson on wisdom is given to an erudite person (*vidvāna*) whereas the lesson on action is imparted to an individual who is not learned (*avidvān*). In this circumstance, Lord Kṛṣṇa proposes to give Arjuna the lesson on yoga (*niścayātmikā buddhi*) which, He says, will deliver the latter from all sorts of bondage “*eṣā tehabhihitā sāṅkhye buddhiryoge tvimāṁ śrinu/buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmmandham prahāsyasi*”.²⁹⁸

Actions which are performed with a desire for the fruits thereof entangle us as we remain bound to enjoy the consequences they bear. In this context, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to take

²⁹⁸-,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā* 2/39, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers.

up the task of engaging in the battle, which is his solemn duty, considering pleasure and pain, loss or gain, victory or defeat as equal in value which will not result in any sin.²⁹⁹

In this commentary *Gudārthādīpikā*³⁰⁰ on the verse, “*eṣā te’ bhihita sāṅkhye buddhiryoge trimām śṛṇu/ buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karnabanhaṇ prahāsyasi*”³⁰¹ anticipates and refutes an objection against the doctrine of niṣkāma karma, which states that actions done without the desire for their consequences do not entangle the performer.

A bound individual like Arjuna might object, that even though it is true that an action performed from the motive of duty. Without the desire for the fruit thereof does not entangle a person, yet why should an individual pursue the path of detached action? In the preceding verses of the second chapter of the ‘*Gītā*’, Śrīkṛṣṇa has unraveled the true nature of the self, which is essentially pure, eternal being, pure consciousness and pure bliss. Now if the individual is aware of the true nature of the self, then he knows that the individual self being essentially identical with pure consciousness cannot be an agent or an enjoyer. So, a person for whom *Sāṅkhyayoga* is prescribed cannot be a doer of detached actions. To present this objection Madhusūdana Sarasvatī writes, “*nanu bhavatu Svadharmabuddhyā yuddhyamānasya pāpābhārah, tathāpi na mām prati yuddhakartavyatopadeśaḥstavocitaḥ* ‘*ya enam veti hantaram*’ityādina ‘*katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha paṁ ghātayati hanti kam ityantena, viduṣaḥ sarvakarmapratikṣepāt nahi akartrabhoktrśuddhasvarūpo*’*hamasmi yuddham kṛtvā tatphalam bhokṣya iti ca jñānam sambhavati virodhāt, jñānakarmaṇoḥ samuccayāsambhavāt*

²⁹⁹ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā* 2/38, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers - “*sukheduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau / tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpamavāpsasi*”

³⁰⁰ Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, 1986, *Gudārthādīpikā*, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers

³⁰¹ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā* 2/39

*prakāśatamasoriva...tasmādekameva māñ prati jñānasya karmaṇaścopadeśo nopapadyata iti cit?*³⁰²

This means that *jñānayoga* prescribing the eternal, unrelated, immutable, inactive nature of the true self and *karmayoga* prescribing the doctrine of detached action cannot be prescribed to the same person, because the path of the knowledge and the path of detached action are incompatible with one another. They rest upon contradictory presuppositions and hence are diametrically opposed to one another like light and darkness. Hence, how can Śrīkṛṣṇa prescribe both *jñānayoga* and *karmayoga* to the same bound individual.

It should be remembered that in the Gītā Arjuna is the representative of all bound individuals who are deflected from the path of duty while moving through the battlefield of *Samsāra* or this world full of strives and moral dilemmas.

The answer to the objection, too, is provided in the *Gūḍārthadīpikā* of the same verse where Madhusūdana writes, ‘*na vidvadavidvadavasthābhedenā jñānakarmopadeśopapattertyāha bhagavān eṣā te iti*³⁰³

This means that both the *yogas* may be prescribed to the same individual but only with respect to different states of that individual. The same individual who is in *avidvavasthā* or who is in the state of ignorance may attain the *vidvadavasthā* when he becomes immediately aware of his essential immutable self. Such *vidvadavasthā* can be attained by a person only when his *antaḥkaraṇa* is purified of all doubts and one attains liberation in this life on re-encountering the mahāvākya “*Tattvamasi*”. The path of detached action is prescribed only for a person whose mind is full of impurities and who is in the

³⁰² Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, 1986, *Gūḍārthadīpikā*, 2/39, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers, pp.-221-222

³⁰³ Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, 1986, *Gūḍārthadīpikā*, 2/39, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers. P.-222.

avidvadavasthā or the bound state. Since *Jñāyoga* and *karmayoga* are not prescribed for a person in the same state, there is no question of any contradiction between these two kinds of *yoga*.

If *Jñāyoga* and *karmayoga* were prescribed for a person who is in one particular state, be it the bound state or the liberated state, then the abovementioned objection of uncompatibility between these two prescriptions could have raised. But in so far as these two *yogas* are meant for two different states, the charge of self-contradiction does not even arise. An individual whose *antaḥkaraṇa* is impure should follow the path of detached action.

It is through the pursuit of the path of *karmayoga* or *niṣkāmakarma* the individual's mind will become purified. Thus, although the pursuit of detached action or *karmayoga* is not an immediate cause of the highest knowledge, yet this path, too, is conducive to that knowledge indirectly. Hence, *karmayoga* is considered to be the *vahiraṅgasādhana* of the highest immediate reality.

When the individual mind becomes purified through the pursuit of *karmayoga* one may enter the path of knowledge and may become entitled to pursue *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* which are identical with various forms of *brahmavicāra* and are also identified the *antaraṅgasādhana* of the highest immediate knowledge of reality.

In his commentary on the next verse of *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā*, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī anticipates and refutes the main objection against the thesis that *Jñāyoga* and *karmayoga* are not prescribed for a person belonging to the same state, the latter being prescribed for a person having an impure mind and the former being prescribed for a person having a pure mind.

To raise this objection Madhusūdana Sarasvatī writes, “ *nanu ‘tametaṁ vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasānāśakena’*³⁰⁴ *iti śrutyā vividiṣāṁ jñānaṁ coddīśya saṁyogaprthaktvanyāyena sarvakarmanāṁ viniyogāt tatra ca antaḥkaraśuddherdvāratvāt mām prati karmānuṣṭhānaṁ vidhīyate. Tatra ‘tadyathiha karmajito lokaḥ kṣīyate evamevāmutra puṇyajito lokaḥ kṣīyata’*³⁰⁵ *iti śrutibodhitasya phalanāśasya sambhavāt jñānaṁ vividiṣāṁ vā uddīśya kriyamānasya yajñcidaṅgāsampattavapi vaigunyaopapatteḥ yajñenetyadi vakyavihitānāñca sarveṣāṁ karmaṇāmekena puruṣāyuṣa paryavasāne’pi kartumaśakyatvāt kutaḥ karmabandam prahāsyasīti phalaṁ pratyāśētyata āha bhagavān*³⁰⁶

The opponents are objecting that *karmayoga* cannot even be considered as remotely conducive to liberation. It has already been stated that the *Gītā* very clearly states that the path of action (*karmayoga*) and the path of knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*) cannot be simultaneously pursued by the same person in the same state of existence.

Thus, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, following the teachings of the *Gītā*, clearly refutes the possibility of any synthesis or simultaneous pursuit of the path of action and the path of knowledge.

It is precisely for this reason the Advaitins are characterized as *jñānamātravādīn-s* and not as *jñānakarmasamuccayavadīn-s* unlike most of the other schools of vedānta, such as the viśiṣṭādvaita or the Dvaita schools of vedānta.

But this stance of the Advaita Vedāntins can be defended only if it is admitted that the performance of *niṣkāma karma* is only a remote cause of liberation, *niṣkāma karma*

³⁰⁴ -, 2010, *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4/4/22, in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

³⁰⁵ -, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8/1/6

³⁰⁶ Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, 1986, *Guḍārthadīpikā*, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers

merely destroys the impurities acquired through the performance of actions with desire, thereby purifying the mind and making it ready for the highest immediate awareness of Brahman (*caramabrahmasākṣātkāra*).

But now, the opponents argue that detached action does not and cannot produce the effect purification of the mind and so cannot even be remotely conducive to liberation. But why do the opponents think that detached action cannot purify the mind?

The opponents offer the following arguments in support of their contention.

First, the scriptures have enjoined so many actions that no individual can perform all these actions in one life.

Second, whenever a finite individual performs these prescribed actions, there will always remain the possibility of some defect. For, a bound individual cannot foresee all contingencies. The Mīmāṃsakas subscribe to the view that if a *kāmyakarma* is vitiated by any defect, it does not lead to its desired consequence. When these prescribed actions are performed with a view to bringing about the purification of the mind, these actions are performed for attaining some results. So, they are not essentially different from a *kāmyakarma* or an action performed to attain some desired end. But if these prescribed actions are actions performed to achieve some desired end, then even the slightest defect will prevent them from producing the coveted result, namely, purification of the mind.

It might be argued against the opponents that detached actions do not and cannot have any effect. Since they are performed without desire, they should not be treated at par with a *kāmyakarma*, unforeseen and unavailable defects in performance cannot prevent them from bringing about purification of the agent's mind.

The opponents counter this argument by referring to two scriptural statements. The first of these is : “ *tametaṁ vedānuvacanena brāhmanā vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasānāśaken*”³⁰⁷ This statement of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad means that the Brahmins desire to know the Brahman through sacrificial rites, charity and meditation. The opponents here employ a *nyāya* formulated by the Mīmāṃsā system to arrive at the correct interpretation of the scriptural statement. A *nyāya* is a technique or rule of interpretation meant to interpret a scriptural statement. The Mīmāṃsākas, consider every *adhikaraṇa* of the Mīmāṃsā aphorism to be a particular *nyāya*. The *nyāya* employed here is called *saṁyogapṛthaktvanyāya* which means that the same object may be employed to perform two different actions and the same action performed with two different intents may lead to two different consequences. Sacrifices or Vedic rites may be performed with two different intents; they may be performed to have desire for knowledge and also to attain knowledge itself.

So, these actions do have consequences.

The opponents, then, cite another statement of the chāndogya Upaniṣad to show that just as the effect produced by a worldly action are eventually destroyed, so also the effects brought about by Vedic rites are subject to destruction. So, the consequences of the detached actions, too, are subject to destruction in course of time.

Hence, it cannot be said that these actions are indirectly conducive to liberation by producing purity of the mind; because of the purity of the mind is destructible in the long run, then that purity cannot even be a remote cause of liberation.

To answer the opponents Madhusūdana Sarasvatī shows that the effects produced by a detached action can never be destroyed “*abhikramyate karmanā prārabhyate yatphalaṁ*

³⁰⁷ -, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4/4/22

*so 'abhikranaḥ, tasya nāśastad yathehetyādinā pratipāditaḥ 'iha' niṣkāmakarmayoge nāsti, etatphalasya śuddheḥ pāpakṣayarūpatvena lokaśabdavācyabhogyatvābhāvena lokaśabdavācyabhogyatvābhāvena ca kṣayāsambhavāt, vedanaparyantāyāḥ eva vividiṣāyāḥ karmaphalatvādvedanasya cāvyavadhānenājñānanivṛttiphalajanakasya phalamajanayitvā nāśāsambhavāt iha phalanāso nāstīti sādḥuktam.*³⁰⁸

The abovementioned statement of the chāndogya Upaniṣad only established the transient or non-eternal nature of the effects of an action performed to achieve some desired end.

A detached action only leads purity of the mind and the purity of the mind is not an enjoyable state or 'loka' like heavenly pleasure. The statement, hence, "tad yutteha karmajito lokaḥ kṣīyate, evanevā mutra puṇyajito lokaḥ kṣīyate" does not speak of the destruction of the purity brought about a detached action. Since, a detached action is not a sakāma karma or an action performed with desire the rule that any defect in the performance of the action will prevent it from producing its desire effect does not apply to a detached action. Hence a detached action is capable of bringing about the purity of the mind and this purity is not an effect that will eventually be destroyed. So, detached actions are indirectly conducive to liberation.

. Lord Kṛṣṇa points out to Arjuna that as his mind is not pure yet to receive the knowledge of the self (*ātmajñāna*), he possesses the right only to perform actions with a disinterested spirit with a sense of duty. At the same time he reminds Arjuna that the latter must never have the desire to enjoy its consequences. Having these preconditions, Arjuna may lose the spirit of performing actions. With this aim of reminding Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa warns that he must not lose the urge to carry out actions.³⁰⁹ Kṛṣṇa continues his

³⁰⁸ Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, 1986, *Guḍārthadīpikā*, 2.40, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers.p.-227.

advice saying that Arjuna must abandon the company (*saṅga*) of any desire and perform the action entrusted upon him with a sense of *yoga*. Here by the term ‘yoga’, he has meant *samatva-buddhi* (equanimity) which means that no note will be taken whether the action meets success (*siddhi*) or failure (*asiddhi*). It is the usual tendency of human beings to be elated at the success of any project undertaken or be heart-broken if it meets failure. But that should not be the attitude. The secret of *buddhiyoga* is that an individual while performing actions should remain indifferent either to the success or to the failure which entails. And that attitude of *samatva yoga* (sense of equanimity) can be gained if his mind is devoted to God and he dedicates all his actions at the feet of the Lord.³¹⁰

The significance of disinterested actions is such that they are to be performed by individuals with a spirit of surrender to the Lord. Actions which are driven by petty desires are far inferior (*dūreṇa avaram*) to disinterested actions. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to take resort to *buddhiyoga* in performing his duty which will liberate him from the cycle of the worldly existence. It is even said that men who perform actions with a desire in their minds are nothing but misers (*kṛpaṇa*) as they are deprived of the grace of God which He showers on men performing detached actions. Here the adjective ‘miser’ is applied to mean those men who do not wish to spend their money in noble causes like charity and prefer rather to amass wealth for their own pleasure.³¹¹ Kṛṣṇa justifies the significance of *buddhiyoga* to Arjuna by saying that the latter should abandon the thought of merit (*punya*) and demerit (*pāpa*) arising out of attached actions (*sakāma karma*) and devote himself to practising yoga (*samatva buddhi*) which is the real

³⁰⁹ -,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 2/47, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers - “*karmmaṇyevādhikaraste mā phaleṣu kadācana /*

mā karmmaphalahetubhūrmā te saṅgohastvakarmmaṇi” //

³¹⁰ -,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 2/48, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers - *yogasthaḥ kuru karmmaṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya/ siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate*//

³¹¹ -,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 2/49, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers - *dūreṇa hyavarāṇi karmma buddhiyogāddhanañjaya/ buddhau śaraṇamviccha kṛpaṇa phalahetavaḥ*//

tactics (*kauśala*) of action (*karma*).³¹² By saying so, Kṛṣṇa is hinting that by refraining from participating in the battle against injustice by the miscreants, Arjuna is not committing any action which can be appreciated (*akuśala karma*). Rather, if he relinquishes all the thoughts of good and evil and engage himself in the task assigned to him by dint of his class (*varṇa*), he will be doing his duty which, in turn, will also sever the chains of bondage from this worldly life.

Ordinary man is swayed away by passions and various desires. His entire life is spent to fulfil such desires. This makes him bound down to this mundane level as he cannot escape the consequences of the actions which are propelled by various desires. On the contrary, a man who has relinquished all his petty desires does not care whether he succeeds or fails. He works out of the pleasure to work, not to gain any fruit. As an obvious consequence, he has no reason to rejoice for success or repent for any loss. He is said to have attained *samatva-buddhiyoga*, a state of equanimity. Such an individual is able to destroy *avidyā* (ignorance) and its effects like bondage from birth (*janmabandha*) and disease (*āmaya*) of fear (*bhaya*) and thus attain the knowledge of the self (*ātmatattva*).³¹³

When Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa the reason of his preaching about *karma* even though he advocated the supremacy of knowledge over activity, Kṛṣṇa answered that activity is of prime importance and hence no individual can evade doing it even for a moment. By performing actions, the mind is cleansed of all impurities and gets prepared for acquiring knowledge. Without taking to actions, none can attain *sannyāsa* (renunciation) Only by

³¹²-,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 2/50, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers -
 “buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte/
 tasmāt yogāya yujasya yogaḥ karmmasu kauśalam”//

³¹³ -,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 2/51, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers -
 “karmmajam buddhiyuktā hi phalam tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ /vinirmuktāḥ padam gacchantyanāmayaṁ”

performing actions can a man attain *naiṣkarmmya* or *karmmaśūnyata*.³¹⁴ Every living creature is constituted by the three qualities (*guṇa*-s) of nature which compel him to work incessantly. In fact, human beings perform actions out of the feelings of attraction and aversion (*rāga-dveṣa*) which are, in turn, created by the qualities of *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ* in them.³¹⁵ In this connection, Lord Kṛṣṇa draws a distinction between a *viśiṣṭa* and a *mithyācārī*. An individual who restrains his organs of action and remains inactive but keeps his organs of sense active to enjoy the objects of this world fails to concentrate on the self and is thus marked as a person having taken resort to lying. He is a *pāpācārī* (sinner) and is not eligible for being an aspirant of *jñāna* (knowledge) as his mind is wrapped in desires arising out of sense-pleasures. On the other hand, an individual who, by controlling his mind with the help of sense-organs, is engaged in actions with a disinterested mind is *puruṣārthaśūnya* and thus aptly called a *vivekī vyakti* who stands apart from a *mithyācārī* and is far better (*viśiṣṭa*).³¹⁶ Citing this example, Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna to be involved in activity always as being involved in actions is superior to being inactive. Performing actions is not only conducive to cleansing the mind of all impurities but it does also serve the purpose of leading a life performing one's own duty. The actions are enjoined in the scriptures (*śruti*-s and *smṛti*-s) to be performed with a disinterested mind. Arjuna, being a *kṣatriya*, is thus advised to stick to his occupational duty of fighting the battle which is of utmost importance at that point of time.³¹⁷ Kṛṣṇa

³¹⁴ -,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/4, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers - “*na karmmaṇāmanārambhānaiṣkarmmyaṁ puruṣo haśnute / na ca sannasanādeva siddhiṁ samadhiḥ gacchati*”

³¹⁵ -,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/5, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers - “*na hi kaścit jātu tiṣṭhatikarmmakṛt / kāryyate hyavaśaḥ karmma sarvvaḥ prakṛtijaigūṇaiḥ*”//

³¹⁶ -,1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/6, ed.Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata:Nava Bharata Publishers - “*karmmendriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āste manasā smaraṇ / indriyārthan vimuṣātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate*” -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/7 “*yastvindriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhateharjjuna/karmmendriyai karmmayogamasaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate*”

³¹⁷ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/8- “*niyataṁ kuru karmma tvam jyāyo hyakarmmaṇaḥ/ śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasidhyedakarmmaṇaḥ*”

reminds Arjuna that an individual who, after relinquishing all selfish desires attends to performing *nitya* and *naimittika karma* following the injunctions of the scriptures, is ultimately able to attain *mokṣa*. Such an individual is *yathārtha*.³¹⁸

The importance of doing activity (*karma*) lies also in setting an example to the common mass. It is known as the theory of *lokasaṁgraha* which has been advocated in the Gītā by Kṛṣṇa. He says that eminent *kṣatriya*-s like Janaka and Ajatasatru have continued to be engaged in activity even after acquiring knowledge of the *śruti*, *smṛti* and the *purāṇa*-s through *śravaṇa* and other means.³¹⁹ Citing this example, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that ordinary men usually follow the footsteps of great men. He continues that whatever path great men like the kings tread upon, are followed by ordinary people as they consider all the activities of the former as *prāmāṇika* or authoritative.³²⁰ So those great men need to be extra-cautious as they are followed by ordinary mass just as the behaviour of adults are followed exactly by the children. In this connection, Kṛṣṇa continues that neither has he any obligation to do any duty nor has he anything to attain in the three worlds (*loka*).³²¹ He is the Lord of the universe and hence has no need to perform any duty. Still, he is constantly engaged in performing duties. He states that if he does not engage in doing so diligently, then ordinary people will follow him blindly and refrain from engaging in any activity. That will lead to utter confusion.³²² Life is full of work and man needs to

³¹⁸ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/19- “*tasmādasaktaḥ satataṁ karmīyam karma samācara/ asakto hyacaraṇa karma paramāpnoti puruṣo*”

³¹⁹ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/20,- “*karmmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhimāsthītā janakādayaḥ/ lokasaṁgrahamevāpi saṁpaśyan karttumarhasi*”

³²⁰ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/21 “*yadyadācarati śreṣṭhastattvadevetaro janāḥ / sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokastadanuvartate*”

³²¹ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/22 “*na me pārthāsti karttavyam triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana / nānavāptamavāptavyam varttaeva ca karmmaṇi*”

³²² -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/23- “*yadi hyaham na vartteyam jāta karmmaṇyatandritaḥ/ mama vartmānuvarttante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvvaśaḥ*”

perform them so as to avoid any chaos. Kṛṣṇa goes on saying that he cannot stop working even for a moment because as ordinary people imitate the activities of great men, noticing him to have stopped working, others would also imitate him which in turn, will ruin them totally. For not doing actions as prescribed in the scriptures, Kṛṣṇa anticipates that he would be the cause of turning them as *varṇasamkara* (men of a mixed breed) which would bar them from participating in any auspicious actions.³²³ Here, Arjuna might face a question that Kṛṣṇa may continue to do actions for the good of people as he has no selfish interest in him. But ordinary people like him are not free from desires of selfish gain. So, being an ordinary being, Arjuna might be gripped by selfish interest and so his activity will not have the desired result. In order to rule out such apprehension, it is thus advised by Kṛṣṇa that just as ignorant men perform actions keeping an eye on the fruits thereof, knowledgeable people, being disinterested in nature, will be engaged in actions too to set a precedence before ordinary people as a lesson.³²⁴ After all work is of utmost importance. At first, men will perform actions prompted by selfish desire but gradually, they will realise its futility and will engage themselves in disinterested actions. Kṛṣṇa apprehends that knowledgeable persons must do their duty earnestly to set an example before others.

Every living being is bound up by the laws of nature and acts as he is made to act under its influence. None can transcend the laws of nature. By the term '*prakṛti*' is meant the psychical traces (*saṁskāra*) of merit (*dharmma*), demerit (*adharma*), knowledge (*jñāna*), desire (*icchā*) carried from the previous birth which are manifested in the present

³²³ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/24- "*utsīdeyurime lokā na kuryyām karmma cedahaṁ/ saṅkarasya ca karttā syāmupahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ*"

³²⁴ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā*, 3/25- "*saktāḥ karmmaṇyavidvāṁso yathā kurvanti bhārata / kuryyādvidvāṁstathāsaktaścikīrṣulokasaṁgraham*"

birth. Though there are many scriptural injunctions which guard men against all odds, still man pays the least heed to them and moves stray under the impact of the *guṇa*-s.³²⁵

According to Indian thought, there are two existences: nature (*prakṛti*) on one side and the Self or the *ātman*, on the other. By the term ‘nature’ is meant the external world present before us as also the internal world consisting of the body, the sense-organs, the mind, the intellect etc. The *ātman* consists of the one and infinite spirit, the light of the soul. The two entities are diametrically opposed to each other and never can one be identified with the other.³²⁶ The spirit is untouched by nature and its dualities – praise or blame, pain or pleasure etc. Yet, it is in and through the spirit that an individual interacts with the external and the internal world. Here lies the irony. Nature and its qualities are the forces which impel a man to action, be it physical or mental. Men are easily swayed by the temptations of the senses which are, in turn, influenced by attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*). This is why the *Gītā* warns people so that they are not victims of such defects because they are detrimental to spiritual development.³²⁷ But the spirit or the *ātman* remains aloof. It is the tendency of the ignorant to identify all his activities with the self and attach the sense of ‘I’ to them, says the *Gītā*.³²⁸ When we feel happy or sorrow, it is the mind that undergoes the emotions and when we undertake any physical action like eating or walking, it is the body that is involved in the action. The self is absolutely untouched by all these transformations and is the witness.

³²⁵ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 3/33, -“*sadṛśaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛterjñānavānapi /prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati*”

³²⁶ Vivekananda, Swami, “The Gita”, *The Complete Works*, Vol.-1, p. -457

³²⁷ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 3/34- “*indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau / tayorna vaśamāgachhet tau hyasya paripanthinau*”

³²⁸ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 3/27- “*prakṛteḥ kriyamaṇāṇi guṇaiḥ karmmaṇi sarvvaśaḥ/ ahaṁkāravimūḍātmā karttāhamiti manyate*”

Pointing out the difference between attached and non-attached actions, Kṛṣṇa glorified the significance of *svadharma* (duty pertaining to one's own class) with the words that it is quite better to stick to *svadharma* even if it is incomplete rather than adhering to actions that do not belong to one's own class and added further that even the act of slaying according to one's *svadharma* is superior to doing actions of other classes which might befall doom.³²⁹ Vivekananda has explained this truth more vividly through his own style : "...better die working out your own natural religion than following another's natural religion, however great it may appear to you."³³⁰ Kṛṣṇa points out to Arjuna that lust (*kāma*) and anger (*krodha*), the two salient enemies (*ripu*) of spiritual life are born out of the *rajaḥ guṇa*. Specially lust which is located in the sense-organs is very hard to be quenched.³³¹ Both are present in the senses, mind and the intellect. Lust is so devastating that it casts a spell over the intellect of an individual and thwarts its attainment of knowledge (*jñāna*).³³²

Religion is, in one word, realization of the spirit as spirit.³³³ It is realizing that we are not the body, the mind or the senses or the intellect. We are the spirit, the infinite, ever-blessed, effulgent, immortal self. It is owing to ignorance (*avidyā*) that we often mistake the body and the other elements as the soul and superimpose our actions and thoughts as belonging to the soul.

³²⁹ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 3/35- "*śreyān svadharmmo viguṇaḥ paradharmmat svanuṣṭhitāt/ svadharmanidhanam śreyaḥ paradharmmo bhayāvaha*"

³³⁰ Vivekananda, Swami, "The Gita III", *The Complete Works*, Vol.-1, p. - 461

³³¹ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 3/37- "*kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ/ mahāśano mahāpāpnā vindhyenamiha vairiṇam*"

³³² -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 3/40- "*indriyāṇi manobuddhirasyādhiṣṭhānamucyate /etairvimohayatyeṣa jñānamāvṛtya dehinam*"

³³³ Vivekananda, Swami, "The Gita III", *The Complete Works*, Vol.-1, p. - 456

In the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa proposes to impart the lesson of *jñāna-yoga* to Arjuna. He clarifies that though both Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna have taken birth many a time, still as He is the Lord of the universe, he has taken birth on this soil out of divine play (*līlā*). He knows and is able to remember everything. But, Arjuna, being a finite being is not aware of the details of his birth and works.³³⁴ Kṛṣṇa uses the term ‘*parantapa*’ to refer to Arjuna as one who treats his opponents as enemies out of sheer false impression. Kṛṣṇa explains himself one who is beyond the phenomenon of birth (*aja*) and that of destruction too (*avyaya*) and the Lord of all beings (*bhūtānāmīśvara*). Yet, he creates himself out like other beings out of his own nature with the aid of his own power of *māyā*.³³⁵ In this connection, Kṛṣṇa explains his reason of appearing on earth when righteousness is at stake and unrighteousness is rampant.³³⁶ In that grim situation, he makes himself manifested on the soil of this earth to save the pious, destroy the wicked and finally to revive righteousness.³³⁷

Lord Kṛṣṇa elaborates that as he is free, he has neither any desire to do any activity nor is he bound by its consequences. Thus, he has no pride as an agent (*kartṛtvābhimānaśūnya*) and consequently no pride as being the enjoyer of its fruits (*bhokṛtvābhimāna*). Any individual who knows me as identical with himself is not bound by action and having the knowledge of the self is thus freed.³³⁸ That performing activity is of utmost importance is

³³⁴ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/5- “*vahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjjuna/ tanyaham veda sarvvāṇi na tvaṁ vettha parantapa*”

³³⁵ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/6- “*ajohapi sannavyayātmā bhūtānāmīśvarohapi san/ prakṛtiṁ svāmadhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmyātmamāyayā*”

³³⁶ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/7- “*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata/ abhyutthānamadharmaḥ tadātmānam sṛjāmaham*”

³³⁷ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/8- “*paritrāṇāya sādhanām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām/ dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge*”

³³⁸ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/14- “*na mām karmmaṇi limpanti na me karmmaphale spṛhā/ iti mām yohabhiḥjānāti karmmabhirna sa badhyate*”

emphasized by Kṛṣṇa in again another way. He says that knowing the self to be not any agent (*akarttā*), eminent aspirants of liberation (*mumukṣu*) like Yajāti and Yadu have engaged themselves in relentless activity without any pride of being the agent. Citing their example, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to be involved in activity at all times.³³⁹ The former argues that if Arjuna has not attained the truth (*tattva*), his self will be purified by activity and else if he has already attained the truth, he will be a torchbearer for the mass. Thus, Kṛṣṇa discourages inaction at all costs and pleads for the performance of disinterested actions with no fail.

There is a general delusion in which ordinary men are involved but not the knowledgeable persons. The self is said to be bereft of any action (*karmmarahita*) and company (*asaṅga*). All the actions are performed by the body and the sense-organs and the mind. Yet lay men often mistake the self to be undergoing any activity. The actions performed by the body and its associates are superimposed on the self and bear the impression in the form “I am the agent and I shall enjoy the fruits thereof.” But only a wise man is able to maintain his calm of mind in the midst of intense activity and at the same time remains intensely active inside while overtly calm.³⁴⁰

Kṛṣṇa elucidates the characteristics of a wise man in yet another way. A man who has burnt away all selfish desires with the help of the fire of the knowledge of the self is a *pañḍita*.³⁴¹ It is desire which propel us to action. Once the action (*sakāma karma*) is complete, he is liable to enjoy its consequence, however it may be. Men even cherish

³³⁹ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/15- “*evam jñātvā kṛtāṁ karmma pūrvvairapi mumukṣubhiḥ/ kuru karmmaiva tasmāttvaṁ pūrvvaiḥ pūrvvataraṁ kṛtam*”

³⁴⁰ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/18- “*karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyeda karmaṇi ca karma yaḥ/ sa buddhimāna manuṣyesu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt*”

³⁴¹ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/19- “*yaśye sarvve samārambhāḥ kāmasaṁkalpavarjjitāḥ/ jñānāgnidagdhakarmamāṇaṁ tamāhuḥ paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ*”

desires for after-life too. Those desires bind him down to earth for their fruition. This is how the cycle of life and death goes on.

Lord Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna the lesson of acquiring the knowledge of the self from a preceptor. Here, *śraddha* (respect) towards the preceptor is of utmost importance. A pupil who is desirous of attaining the knowledge of the self (*tattvajijñāsu*) is advised to approach a preceptor by bowing down before him. The preceptor, on the other hand must have the knowledge of the self (*tattvajñānī*) over and above having the knowledge of *pada-vākya-pramāṇa*. The pupil starts with the enquiry of his own nature and about bondage. Above all, the mind-set of the preceptor and that of his disciple must be in conformity with each other for successful learning.³⁴²

The purpose of acquiring the knowledge of the self is to get rid of the sense of infatuation (*moha*). Arjuna will thus realise that he is evading his duty of chastising the wicked as he is under the grip of the false notion. For any individual, when the self-knowledge ushers, he sees the ‘*tvam*’ (Lord Vasudeva Himself) and the ‘*tat*’ (himself) to be identified. In fact, when someone is able to see the Lord in the form of the self, he gets rid of all ignorance (*ajñāna*) which he had from the very beginning. Then the identity between the individual self (*jīvātmthisan*) and the Divine Self (*paramātmman*).³⁴³ The knowledge of the self is so salvaging that even the vilest of all persons is swayed away by the waves and he will be able to cross the ocean of this life.³⁴⁴

³⁴² -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/34- “*tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā/ upadekṣanti te jñānam jñāninastatvadarsinaḥ*”//

³⁴³ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/35 “*yajjñātvā na punarmmohamevaṁ yasyasi pāṇḍava/ yena bhūtānyaśeṣāṇi draṅsyasyātmanyatho mayi*”//

³⁴⁴ -, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/36 “*api cedasi pāpebhyaḥ sarvvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ/ sarvvaṁ jñāna-plavenaiva vṛjinam santariṣyasi*”//

In his advice to Arjuna in the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa compares knowledge with fire. Just as fire has the capability of burning away all pieces of wood, similarly knowledge or wisdom (*jñāna*) has the capacity of burning away the actions of an individual and his ignorance too. Only those actions which have already started bearing fruits and those which have become ripe yet to bear fruits are exempted. The *Muṇḍaka śruti* “*bhidyate hṛdayagranthiśchidyante sarvasamsayāḥ / kṣīyante cāsya karmamāṇi tasmin drṣṭe parāvare*”³⁴⁵ states that when the knowledge of the Brahman can be known, the joint of the heart (*hṛdaya*) is torn, all the doubts (*samsaya*) are cleared and all the prior actions are destroyed (*kṣaya*). No new *samskāra* of even good or evil actions post the attainment of *brahmajñāna* are produced and hence attached to the self. Only the actions prior to *brahmajñāna* are destroyed. In this manner, when the body falls apart, *videha kaivalya* (liberation bereft of the body) is attained (“*tadadhigama uttarapūrvvāghayoraśleṣavinaśau tadvyapadeśat/itarasyāpyevyamasamśleṣaḥ pāte tu*”).³⁴⁶ The merit and demerit arising out of only those actions which have not started to bear fruits (*anārabdha karma*) are destroyed. Those actions which have started to bear fruits are not destroyed as they are the cause of the death of the body (*śarīrapāta*). Chandogya śruti 4/14/2 says that the body which cause birth of a body are destroyed along with its cause, the body itself. With the destruction of the body, a knowledgeable person is liberated “*tasya tāvadeva ciraṁ yāvanna vimokṣyehatha sampatsye*”³⁴⁷

It is thus said that knowledge or wisdom is most pure. What is other than knowledge is unable to eradicate ignorance (*ajñānanivṛtti*) and hence sin (*pāpa*) too. Thus, with the

³⁴⁵ -, 2010, *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 2/2/8 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

³⁴⁶ *Vedāntadarśanam* 4/1/13

³⁴⁷ -, 2010, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6/14/2 in *Upaniṣad*, ed. Swami Lokeswarananda, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited.

help of knowledge, ignorance is uprooted and with it sin too. Thus, the knowledge of the self (*ātmajñāna*) arises taking a long time only after *karmmayoga* is attained (“*na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitramiha vidyate/ tat svayaṁ yogasāmsiddhāḥ kālenātmani vindanti*”).³⁴⁸ How can the knowledge be attained and what are the criteria of such knowledgeable individuals. Sri Kṛṣṇa elaborates that only an individual who possesses *śraddhā* which is *āstikyabuddhi* (unswerving faith) about the utterances of the preceptor and the sentences of Vedānta is eligible to acquire the knowledge of the self. He must neither be idle (*tatpara*) nor an indulgent in the operation of the sense-organs (*saṁyatendriya*). His external behaviour must conform to his internal attitude. Such an individual arrives at the knowledge of the self without any delay and ultimately achieves eternal peace (“*śraddhāvān labhate jñānam tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ/jñānam labdhā parām śāntimacireṇādhigacchati*”).³⁴⁹ At length Sri Kṛṣṇa says that the individual who is capable of tearing off all kinds of doubts, engaged in incessant worship of the Lord and is bereft of carelessness (*pramāda*) is one to whom no good (*iṣṭa*), evil (*aniṣṭa*) and combination of both (*iṣṭāniṣṭa*) can conquer (“*yogasamnyastakarmamāṇam jñānasamchhinnasamśayam/ātmavantam na karmamāṇi nivadhnanti dhanañjaya*”).³⁵⁰ At length, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to cut off all sorts of doubts from his heart with the sword of knowledge and then immerse in yoga which is in the form of detached actions. It implies that the Lord is advising Arjuna to engage in the battle (“*tasmādjñānasambhūtam hṛtstham jñānāsinātmanah/chitvainaṁ samśayam yogamātiṣṭhottīṣṭha bhārata*”/).³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ -, 1986, *Śrīmadbhāgavatgītā* 4/38, ed. Nalinikanta Brahma, Kolkata: Nava Bharata Publishers.

³⁴⁹ -, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* 4/39

³⁵⁰ -, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* 4/41

³⁵¹ -, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* 4/42

After discussing about *karmmayoga* and *jñānayoga*, Sri Kṛṣṇa proposes to discuss *rājayoga* to Arjuna. The external world is present before our external sense-organs. Different types of external perceptions take place through these sense organs with the help of *antaḥkaraṇa*, an internal sense-organ and its *vṛtti* and assumes the shape of the external object inside us. It is the natural tendency of the sense-organs to run after the temptations displayed by the external world. To thwart this outward tendency, we need to practise the restraint of the sense-organs from running after sense-pleasures otherwise our mind can never be controlled. Ācārya Patañjali has mentioned practice (*abhyāsa*) and apathy towards worldly interests (*vairāgya*) as the principal means to withdraw our sense-organs from the objects of the external world. The next step is to fix our eyes in the midst of our brows and concentrate our mind on that point. If the eyes are closed, there is a tendency to fall asleep. Again if they are kept broad open, then there is high probability of *pramāṇa*, *viparyaya*, *vikalpa* o *smṛti*. Both the options hinder the concentration of the mind. Next, the *prāṇa* (life-breath) and the *apana* *vayu* (wind of the lower space) are to be controlled with the help of the mechanism of *kumbhaka* (holding within) so that they are circulated only within the nose. An individual who has mastered this practice is said to have restrained his sense-organs, mind and the intellect (*yatanendriya*). He is apathetic towards the world and is involved in *vicāra*. He is able to conquer attraction, fear and wrath (*vītarāgabhayakrodha*). He is a liberated being even while alive. Sri Kṛṣṇa unveils his own nature before Arjuna saying that he is the Īśvara (controller of *hiranyagarbha*) who sustains all beings. But Arjuna is unable to recognise Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Lord of the universe as he is limited to seeing Kṛṣṇa only as his companion and son of Vasudeva.

In the sixth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Arjuna says to Kṛṣṇa that the method of practising *raja yoga* as advised by the latter seems to be impracticable as he sees no

possible ways of controlling the mind which is ever-fleeting in nature. Unless the mind can be controlled, how can the *samatva buddhi* or the mechanism of equanimity be attained? The sense-organs are always restless and powerful. Where is the possibility of restraining them which is an essential step to practising *rāja-yoga* (*yohayaṁ yogastvayā proktaḥ sāmyena madhusūdana/etasyāhaṁ na paśyāmi cañcalatvat sthitim sthirām//cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ pramāthi valavadṛḍam/tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye vāyoriva suduṣkṛtam//*)?³⁵² Kṛṣṇa answers that that the mind is difficult to control is known to everyone. Still, with the help of practice (*abhyāsa*) and apathy towards the sense-world (*vairāgya*), control can be laid over the mind. Kṛṣṇa continues saying that a man who has no control over his sense-organs may find the practice of yoga to be difficult but another individual whose senses and the mind are composed will find it easy to practise the yoga and adopt in his life.

In the twelfth chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, Arjuna asks Śrībhagavāna about who is supreme - the devotee who has seen his *viśvarūpa* and known him to be omniscient and omnipotent or one who worships the formless and immutable Brahman? In answer Śrībhagavāna has enumerated the characteristics of a devotee in varied ways. He says that any person who, being engrossed in His thought is devoted to Him always with respect and worships Him in his form with qualities (*saguṇa svarūpa ārādhana*) are connected to Him “*mayyāveśya mano ye mām nityayuktā upāsate/śraddhayā parayopetāste me yuktatamā matāḥ*”.³⁵³ In yet another verse, Śrībhagavāna answers that those who, being even-minded (*samabuddhi*) in all cases and having sense-restraint worship me as one who is beyond the senses, inexpressible, omnipresent, being devoid of comprehension, eternally uniform, immovable and eternal para brahman, they, being well-wishers of all beings are finally able to achieve me. Here we notice that

³⁵² -, Śrīmadbhagavadgītā 6/33-34

³⁵³ -, Śrīmadbhagavadgītā 12/2

śrībhagavāna is present before his devotees in both forms - *saguṇa* (with attributes) as well as *nirguṇa* (without attributes). When he is *saguṇa brahma*, he is a personal god. But when he is *nirguṇa*, he is an impersonal principle “*ye tvakṣaramanirdeśyamavyaktam payyupāsate/sarvvatragamacintyañca* *kuṭasthamacala*
dhruvam//saṁniyamendriyagrāmaṁ sarvvatra samabuddhayaḥ/te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvvabhūtahiteratāḥ”.³⁵⁴ Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna that those people who worship Him in their inmost hearts with utmost devotion are rescued from the life-cycle of death very soon “*ye tu sarvvāṇi karm māṇi mayi saṁnasya matparāḥ/ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate// teṣāmaham samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarāt/bhavāmi nacirāt pārtha mayyāveśitacetasām//*”.³⁵⁵ Finally, *Śrībhagavāna* assures that those who surrender their minds and intellect at his feet, they do undoubtedly attain him after their bodies will perish “*mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya/nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrddham na saṁśayāḥ*”//³⁵⁶

Citing all the options of building the communion between the individual self and the Ultimate Self, *Sribhagavana* says that *jnanayoga* is superior to *abhyāsayoga*, *dhyāna* is superior to *jñāna* and finally relinquishing the fruits of actions (*karmmaphalatyāga*) is superior to even *dhyāna*. This leads to final peace of mind “*śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsāj jñānandhyānām viśiṣyate/ dhyānāt karmmaphalatyāgastyāgāchhāntirananantaram*”.³⁵⁷

7. Concluding Remarks

³⁵⁴ -, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* 12/3-4

³⁵⁵ -, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* 12/6-7

³⁵⁶ -, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* 12/8

³⁵⁷ -, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* 12/12

This short chapter on *yoga* started with the general observation that Swami Vivekananda's mission in life to build up a universal religion that will guide and sustain an individual through all odds of life.

Swami Vivekananda was of the firm belief that such a religion was a dire necessity of his times; because the prevalent religion acted as divisive forces instead of being unifying one. Swami Vivekananda argued that a universal religion can only be based on the ancient Indian Philosophy of *Vedānta*; because it is only the philosophy of *Vedānta* that propagates the thesis of oneness of all human beings. This universal religion will have only one creed and will enjoin human beings to practise only one duty namely that of selfless service (*sevā yoga*) to all fellow beings.

But the life of selfless service is not an easy one. It requires its follower to sacrifice everything to this altar of the service. No ordinary individual is fitted to pursue this extremely demanding goal. For that purpose the human individual should be aware of his true self, must be able to act in a selfless manner, must be devoted to this high ideal and none of these is possible unless he has absolute control over his own mind and external senses.

This clearly shows that the concept of *yoga* is central to practical Vedantā.

In the subsequent sections I have discussed the meaning of the term *yoga*, and Swami Vivekananda's conception of four yogas. In the sixth and last section I very summary of the notions of *jñānayoga*, *Karma yoga*, *Bhaktiyoga* and *rājayoga*.

Although Vivekananda's notions of *jñāna* or *karma* and *bhakti* do not significantly differ from the conception of these yogas as propounded in the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā. The Gītā is quite clear and empathetic on one point. The path of knowledge and the path of detached action cannot be simultaneously pursued by one and the same person; because

the presuppositions required to follow any of these two paths are different from one another. The path of knowledge can be pursued only by a person whose mind is purified of all attachments and all dispositions involving the sense of duality.

The path of detached action, on the other hand is meant for a person whose mind is still impure and who has not yet been able to transcend all senses of duality.

But Vivekananda was of the opinion that all acts of either *jñāna* or *karma* or *bhakti* are complementary to each other because in each path, a practitioner strives to overcome the narrowness of his own self and makes an attempt to merge his own self with that others to feel the sense of oneness as preached by Swami Vivekananda.

Conclusion

The conclusion started with the objective of finding answers to two main questions:

First, what is the philosophical basis of Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedānta?

Second, what are the specific characteristics that demarcate the philosophy of Practical Vedānta?

One might argue that the answers to these two questions are so obvious that the questions are quite redundant. The name 'Practical Vedānta' given by Swami Vivekananda to his own philosophy indicates the answers to both questions. Since, the Swami names his philosophy *Practical Vedānta*, the ancient system of *Vedānta* must be the basis of this philosophy. Swami Vivekananda adds the epithet 'practical' to the term 'Vedānta' and this adjective suggests the point of departure of this new form of 'Vedānta'.

The observation that the name 'Practical Vedānta' itself indicates the answers to the aforementioned questions is correct as far as it goes but it does not go far enough. A little reflection shows that this *prima facie* observation leaves many questions unanswered.

The term 'Vedānta' does not signify any single unilinear philosophical system; because both the scriptures and the *Brahmasūtra* of Vyāsa were commented upon by many different commentators and at least nine or ten systems of Vedānta were prevalent in classical India. Thus, the question naturally arises: Which of the prevalent schools of Vedānta' forms the basis of Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedānta?

The second question also leads to a number of issues, such as, 'Is the ancient system of Vedānta itself a practicable theory or does it require some kind of modification or transformation in order to become practicable?'

The first chapter of the present thesis gives answers to some of these questions. In this chapter a brief exposition is given of Swami Vivekananda's philosophical thoughts based on his four lectures on 'Practical Vedānta'. From these lectures it becomes quite clear that Vivekananda lays the foundation of his philosophy on Śaṅkara's system of Advaita Vedānta. Swami Vivekananda subscribes to the theory that there is only one reality.

This reality is pure absolute being, pure consciousness and pure bliss. This one supreme reality is not a divine being who transcends this world. Rather, this one supreme being permeates everything constituting the world and is identical with every sentient being living in this world. Swami Vivekananda thinks that all the scriptures of ancient India converge to establish this single reality which is called the *Brahman* or *ātman* in the Upaniṣads. Thus, this philosophy of oneness (*ekatva*) is the primary metaphysical doctrine accepted by the philosophy of Practical Vedānta.

Since, Swami Vivekananda accepts the philosophy of oneness as his main metaphysical doctrine, on the epistemological plane too, he subscribes to the doctrine '*ekavijñāe Sarvavijñānan*', which means that any seeker of truth can have immediate knowledge of the ultimate reality by knowing the conscious subject that is identical with one's own self. Thus, the true nature of reality can be known not by looking outside one's own self but by looking within.

The question which arises at the juncture is : 'Can this philosophy of oneness (*ekātva*) be considered as a practicable or viable philosophy which can be practised by ordinary human beings in their everyday lines?

The answer with Swami Vivekananda gives to this question is quite radical one. The swami thinks that this is the only philosophy that can sustain human beings through all

miseries and sufferings, can give them hope and can be a source of courage and strength to the most downtrodden human individual.

Swami Vivekananda observes that mankind in spite of social, economic and technological advancements are badly in need of a religion that will unify the entire mankind instead of dividing into small, conflicting sects. It is this philosophy of oneness which can form the basis of such a unifying religion.

To prove the practicability of the philosophy of oneness, the Swami gives a very important example, namely the example of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*. It is to be remembered that Vivekananda's allusion to the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* is not a mere coincidence and this citation is should not be considered as a mere example or an allegory. Indeed, the ancient text of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* constitutes one of the cornerstones of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda establishes the practicability of the philosophy of oneness by referring to the Gītā, where the doctrine one, immutable changeless pure consciousness was thought amidst a battlefield.

By giving this example Swami Vivekananda makes it quite clear that the philosophy of oneness is not a doctrine that can be pursued in one's leisure time. It is not a speculative theoretical branch of inquiry which men pursue after fulfilling all his commitments of everyday existence; rather, it is this philosophy which infuses him with strength and makes an individual capable of realizing the ultimate truth that all beings are one with the one supreme being through all his mundane activities. Swami Vivekananda, thus thinks that a philosophy must be a source of strength and courage and it is only a philosophy that looks upon human beings as identical with the supreme being can be a source of strength. Thus, Swami Vivekananda arrives at the conclusion that no other philosophy is

practicable or practical. Only the philosophy of Vedānta has the potentiality of being a practical philosophy and laying the foundation of a universal religion.

A philosophy, however, does not become acceptable only if the exponent of the theory gives an exposition. The theory must be defended also. The second chapter of this thesis explores the relation between the ancient philosophy of Advaita Vedānta propagated by Vyāsa and Śaṅkara and the philosophy of Practical Vedānta. This chapter not merely establishes the fact that the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda is based upon Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, but it also indirectly gives a defence of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy. Swami Vivekananda is not primarily concerned with giving a full-fledged defence of the theoretical basis of his philosophy. He, on the contrary, focuses upon the practicability of this theory. He did not spend much time and energy in giving a theoretical defence of his philosophy. Perhaps he did not endeavour to do so because he considers that the ancient proponents of the vedānta philosophy have given adequate arguments in favour of this theory and have already grounded this theory upon a strong foundation. So, his philosophy does not actually require a theoretical defence, but only practical implementation.

In the second chapter, I have laid down the salient doctrines of Advaita Vedānta following the aphorisms of Vyāsa and the commentary of Śaṅkara.

There I have mentioned that the Vedas are considered to be the only *Pramāṇa* through which one can gain knowledge of the ultimate reality. The knowledge yielded by the scriptures is not merely mediate in nature. Indeed, the Vivaraṇa school of Advaita Vedānta subscribes to the thesis that the liberated person's highest immediate awareness of Brahman is produced by *mahābākya*-s as "Tattvamasi". Thus, the theory of Advaita Vedānta has its foundation in the scriptures and is corroborated by *Vidvadanubhava* or

the liberated person's immediate awareness of the supreme reality. The exponents of Advaita Vedānta have also given clinching arguments to dispel all doubts arising out of ordinary experience and have defended the theory against the attacks of the other philosophical systems.

If practical Vedānta shares the main theses of Advaita Vedānta, then the arguments employed to defend Advaita Vedānta can also be employed to constitute a defence in favour of Advaita Vedānta.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I have investigated the connections between Practical Vedānta and the teachings of Śrī Ramakrishna. It is from his master's teachings Swami Vivekananda inherits the doctrine of "Yata matha tata Patha" meaning there are as many ways to reach reality as there are creeds. In fact, this dictum of Śrī Ramakrishna resonates an utterance of Sureśvarācārya, who was a disciple of Śaṅkara and who was the author of the very great *Bṛhadāraṇyakabhāṣyavārttika* and *Taittirīyabhāṣyavārttika*. Sureśvarācārya writes, "yayā yayā bhavet puṁsām vyutpattiḥ pratyagātmani/ sā saiva prakriyeha syāt sādhvī sā cā navasthita/"³⁵⁸

The fourth chapter of this thesis gives an exposition of Swami Vivekananda's concept of universal religion. This religion enjoins only one duty, namely selfless service (*sevā*) to all fellow sentient beings. In fact their concept of *sevayoga* may be considered to the most important and unique contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the Vedānta tradition. The ancient vedānta philosophy admitted only one Summum bonum (*parama puruṣārtha*), namely the liberation of the individual self. But practical Vedānta is directed towards attaining two goals "ātmana mokṣārthaṁ bahujanahitāya ca", that is Practical

³⁵⁸ Sureśvarācārya, 1982, *Bṛhadāraṇyakabhāṣyavārttika*, ed. Surahmaṇya śāstrī, Varanasī : Mahesh Research Institute, 1.4.402, p.-342

Vedānta not only strives to bring about the individual's liberation from all sufferings, but it is also committed to working relentlessly towards the welfare of all human beings.

The fifth and the final chapter gives a brief exposition of Swami Vivekananda's concept of the four *yogas* and also relates his concept of four *yogas* with the notions of *jñānayoga*, *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *rājayoga* as propounded in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*.

It is shown that the philosophy of oneness logically implies that pure consciousness is *asaṅga* or unrelated to anything. This doctrine of *asaṅgatva* of the inmost self implies that all actions must be performed in a detached manner without any desire or aversion towards the consequences of the action (*niṣkāma karma*). Thus, the doctrine of *karmayoga* enjoining all individuals to pursue the path of action without desire is a logical conclusion entailed by the doctrines of oneness and *asaṅgatva*. Here it is also highlighted that *yoga* means *saṁatva* or equanimity amidst all challenging circumstances.

In this chapter I have also emphasized upon one very important difference between Swami Vivekananda's conceptions of four *yogas* and the concept of these *yogas* found in the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* never prescribes *jñānayoga*, and *karmayoga* for the same individual belonging to the same state, because *jñānayoga* can be pursued only by a person whose mind is purified of all impurities whereas *karmayoga* is prescribed for the *avidvān* whose mind is not yet purified. Thus, the *Gītā* does not uphold *jñānakarmasamuccayavāda*, that is, the path of knowledge and the path of action can be simultaneously pursued by the same individual belonging to the same state.

Swami Vivekananda, on the contrary, believes that *sevāyoga* can be pursued only by an individual who has knowledge of his inmost self, practises *niṣkāma karma*, is devoted to the one supreme being and has control over his own mind and the senses. This is one of

the most important differences between Vivekananda's conception of *yoga* and the conception of *jñānayoga*, *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *rājayoga* as propounded in the *Gītā*. Indeed, the conception of yoga is itself an extremely vast topic and cannot be dealt with adequately within the span of a thesis.

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