

**Vedanta and its Modern Understanding:**  
**A Critical Study of the Concept of Anekānta Vedanta**

A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts)  
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By  
Santu Kandar

Under the Supervision of  
Dr. Dipayan Pattanayak

Department of Philosophy  
Jadavpur University  
Kolkata, India

2024


**Certified that the Thesis entitled**

I hereby declare that the work which is being presented in the thesis, entitled **“Vedānta and its Modern Understanding: A Critical Study of the Concept of Anekānta Vedānta”** submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of Prof. Dipayan Pattanayak, and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere / elsewhere.

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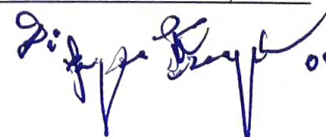
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*Santu Kandar*  
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## **Vedanta and its Modern Understanding:**

### **A Critical Study of the Concept of Anekānta Vedanta**

#### **Introduction**

No one can deny the profound influence that Vedanta has had on the development of Indian philosophical thought. Taking Indian Philosophical schools as different branches of a tree, we find that they are extended from the same stem, namely the Veda. As springs come down from the mountain peaks, similarly, the schools of Indian philosophy have been developed from their origin– the Vedic scriptures. There are four parts of the Vedas, namely Samhitā, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upanishad. The last part of the Vedas, i.e. Upanishad, is comprised of Vedic wisdom, which receives varied expressions in the philosophical literature of India. In the last two, emphasis is given mainly on knowledge, and that's why they are familiar as jñānakāṇḍa of the Vedas. The first two, popularly known as karmakāṇḍa of the Vedas, deal with the principle of action. Among the philosophical schools of Indian tradition, it is Vedanta, which is founded directly on the Upanishads, where Mīmāṃsā, the action-centric philosophy, has developed from Samhita and Brāhmaṇa parts of the Vedas. The other orthodox schools like Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣikas, although they have their different ontological and epistemological theories, also maintain the same Vedic tradition in some way or other. Apart from the Vedantic or Brāhmaṇist tradition, a Non-Brāhmaṇist or Śramaṇika tradition has also developed, particularly in the Jain and Buddhist literature. While retaining the theory of action and liberation recognised by the orthodox schools, they denied the authority of the Vedas. Both traditions– the orthodox and the heterodox– have played a considerable

role in the development of Indian philosophy. The purpose of the orthodox system was mainly to restore the Vedic claims, while the Śramanikas endeavour to dismiss those claims to provide alternative interpretations of life and the world. However, it is the same Veda, assertion or denial of which had given rise to both traditions. So, in a sense, the originations of both have taken place from a common source. Thus, the influence of the Vedas is prevalent throughout Indian philosophical literature.

Leaving the philosophical literature aside, if we concentrate on understanding the ethos of the Indian society and culture, a clear impact of Vedantic tradition would be apprehended easily; it would be realised that the secret stream of Vedanta is finding its way underneath. In ancient Indian culture, Vedanta reigned supreme. It had absolute dominance over Indian societies from the time of antiquity. Perhaps it is owing to the failure to make the subtle thoughts of Vedanta accessible to the common people, a large part of the society was gradually becoming disinterested in the Vedic culture; it encouraged the Nihilists, Bāuls, Sahajiyā, etc., to flourish and influence the Indian societies in their ways. The commentators often view the rise of this new culture as anti-Vaidantic. However, to this researcher, it would be a great mistake to see this new tradition as anti-Vaidantic. It can be viewed as a correction of classical Vedāntic tradition to find its expression in a modest and easier version. Taking rest in a heterodox culture, the Brāhamanika tradition received its reinforcement and ultimately got modest expression in the thoughts of nineteenth century philosophers. In the nineteenth century, the Indian mind was swept away by the new tide of Vedanta. However, this revival of classical Vedanta did not traditionally take place. There were many great minds in the century— including poets and essayists, politicians and social workers, seers and monks— who nurtured and cultured the

Vedanta thought in their ways. Vedanta has received its modest version of modern philosophical thought through this nourishment and articulation.

The Modern Indian Philosophy, in which period Vedanta debuted in its various forms, is the current research context. However, confusion centres on the description of 'Modern Indian Philosophy'. When could a Philosophical thought be considered as 'Modern'? And what makes that thought 'Indian' in a stipulated sense? These queries need to be addressed. The term 'Modern' is always used with reference to a particular span of 'Time'. But no particular period of thought can be called 'Modern' forever. In the course of time, human thought and understanding have crossed so many phases. The understanding that seems 'Modern' in a given time loses its modernity as soon as time passes. The thought, which was once considered the most innovative one, is presently counted as obsolete. So, there is some sort of vagueness in the concept of modernity. The expression 'Contemporary' seems to be a better substitute. But, though simpler, it is not free from complications at the very outset. Just as the word 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow' refers to a specific time frame, the term 'Contemporary' is used to refer to a specific period. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, if one speaks of contemporary understanding, it is supposed that the period he wants to mean is extended up to 2000 AD. But where does the starting point lie? It is really difficult to mark the starting point. The same holds true in the use of the expression 'Modern' or 'Modernity'. Where does it start, and to what extent is it extended? The division between ancient, medieval and modern is not as clear in philosophy as it is in the case of history or literature. It is true that even in the philosophical society of the West, a division is often made between modern and post-modern thought. But in the case of Indian philosophy, it is really difficult to point out a clear-cut demarcation between ancient and medieval or modern and post-modern.

Let us return to the phrase ‘Indian Philosophy’. What is the mark of being ‘Indian’? In what sense would a philosophical thought plausibly be designated as ‘Indian’? Would it be wise to consider the thought nurtured in the Indian Territory as Indian Philosophy? The answer will be in the negative. There are many thinkers of the Indian subcontinent who practice the philosophical traditions of Europe and America. On the other hand, there are many thinkers who are not living in the Indian Territory, but they are engaged in philosophical practice about Indian culture and heritage. There is no reason not to call their philosophical thoughts as Indian. In short, any philosophical discussion or study concerning Indian philosophical culture and heritage would aptly be called Indian philosophy.

Admitting this notion of Indian philosophy, let us see what period of philosophy we can call ‘modern’ or ‘contemporary’, standing at the end of the twentieth century or the second era of the twenty-first century. In the traditional books of contemporary Indian philosophy, we observe a tendency to mark the period nineteenth and twentieth centuries as ‘modern’ or ‘contemporary’. Taking that popular interpretation for granted, in this work, the expression ‘contemporary Indian philosophy’ would be used to mean the development of philosophical thought that has taken place starting from the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century.

Before exploring the philosophical thought that developed in the nineteenth century in India, we should keep the socio-political scenario in consideration. Since 1757, India was under the control of the East India Company and thereby under the ruling of the British Government. Being influenced by English culture, a group of English-knowing people began to express their distrust over traditional Indian culture and conventions. They began to disrespect the authenticity of Indian scriptures like Vedas, Upanishads, Purāṇas, etc. and engaged in adducing hard criticism against

conventional rules and prohibitions. They didn't think of rectifying the dogmas and superstitions that Indian society was suffering from. Ignoring the duty they should have played to their nation and culture, those 'Neo-English People' paid all attention to the removal of Indian heritage. There was another group of English-knowing educated thinkers who stood steady amidst these erosions and decided to establish the contemporaneity of Indian culture by bringing out many corrections in the social structure. There were many social workers, politicians, poets, essayists, philosophers and religious persons in this group. All of them joined in a new movement and have made positive contributions in their own fields with a view to making it clear that Indian thought and culture have not lost their importance. The result of these combined efforts began to bear effect from the beginning of the nineteenth century in the works and writings of Rammohan, Debendranath, Bankimchandra, Vidyasagar, Rabindranath, Vivekananda and others.

It is undoubtedly true that they are not all Vedantīns in the same sense. It would be a blunder to explain each of them as a follower of orthodox Vedanta. Moreover, as most of them were not philosophers in the strict sense, the thoughts embedded in their literary works are not articulated philosophically. But knowingly or unknowingly, the same Vedantic spirit is maintained in their poetic expression, political activity, and religious perching. If we look at their thoughts and actions, it becomes clear that the ideal they were nurturing covertly in their minds is the ideal of Vedanta. One of the aims of this research work is to see how much the Vedantic ideology has influenced their thoughts and writings and to judge within which branches of ancient Vedanta their metaphysical positions belong.

It is observed that in most cases, the metaphysical framework they advocated fits with one or another of the schools of Vedantic tradition. But there are exceptions



also. Particularly in the case of Professor Kalidas Bhattacharya, no such allegiance to any particular school is observed. In his writings, Kalidas has tried to give Vedanta a new shape where ‘Vedanta’ would incorporate not only the so-called sects of Vedanta but would enable us to bring other Non-Vedantic Indian schools under the umbrella of Vedanta. Although the aim of this research work is to observe the impact of Vedanta in modern Indian thought in general, the main focus of this study is to go through a critical examination of the concept of ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ introduced and propagated by Professor Kalidas Bhattacharya. It should be mentioned here that Professor Bhattacharya’s understanding of Vedanta, raises many issues: Vedanta is generally known as a one-ended discipline (Akānta). Although there are different variants of it, each of those variants is directed towards the ultimate truth of its own. Whereas, the Vedanta proposed by Prof. Bhattacharya is manifold in nature. The question raises, how or on what logic Vedanta can be viewed as manifold? Do the expressions ‘Anekānta’ and ‘Vedanta’ not exclude each other? Is there any inconsistency in this conjunction? What is the novelty of such thinking? How far does this ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ resemble with the ‘Anekāntavāda’ of Jain’s? A kind of religious pluralism was also initiated by Sri Sri Ramakrishna. Has his ideal of ‘Jata mat tata path’ left any influence on the concept of ‘Anekānta Vedanta’? Leaving aside other impacts on it, one may challenge its novelty in other way. Pointing out the influence of his father Krishnachandra on his thought and ideology, one may question is his concept of ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ not a parallel to his father’s Non-Absolutism? In this connection, it should be mentioned that it is in Krishnachandra that we first witnessed the tendency to shape philosophy in an alternative manner. The theory of alternation introduced by Krishnachandra may naturally affect the thought of his son. Particularly, the alternative standpoint, which Kalidas Bhattacharya implemented in

the case of Vedanta, might have some noxious with the ideology of his father. So the question crops in, is this concept of ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ a logical outcome of Krishnachandra’s philosophy? Or is there some originality in Kalidas Bhattacharya’s line of thinking? Granting it as original to Prof. Bhattacharya, one may enquire the source of this unique approach. What understanding invokes such exceptional thinking in Kalidas’s mind? Even if it is recognised as a unique and original idea of Kalidas’s own, the question remains: how logical is it? Do we have any right to place it with the traditional Vedanta’s side by side? Is it plausible to give priority to such a new type of thinking in Vedanta?

It is also necessary to determine the acceptability of this novel idea of Vedanta, taking the principles of logic into consideration. The novelty of an idea does not always establish its efficacy. Last but not the least, how much justice Professor Bhattacharya has done to the Vedantic tradition by looking at Vedanta from the point of view of ‘Anekānta’. Attempts would be made to deal with these questions in this research work.

This is a qualitative research work. The conceptual analysis, along with a historical survey, would be followed in carrying out this research work.

This entire research work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter of this research paper is dedicated to the analysis of traditional schools of Vedanta. Although ‘Brahmasūtra’ of Vādarāyaṇa is the common philosophical source, different schools originated based on commentaries written on that text. In this chapter, the conventional commentaries of Vedanta, which have been written on ‘Brahmasūtra’, are to be discussed. Before understanding how much Vedanta has been reflected in contemporary philosophy and how far Professor Bhattacharya’s idea of ‘Anekānta

Vedanta' fits with the traditional idea of Vedanta, it is necessary to have an understanding of what exactly Vedanta traditionally means. From this compulsion, the literal and traditional sense of the expression 'Vedanta' is elaborated in this chapter. After clarifying the concept of Vedanta in this chapter, the researcher has endeavoured to reveal the differences among the schools of Vedanta that are developed on various commentaries written on 'Brahmasūtra'. In the very next step, an attempt has been made to go through the accounts founded and propagated by different commentators, namely by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhava, Vallabha, Bhāṣkara, Baladeva. After highlighting points of differences by which Dvaita is separated from Advaita, Advaita from Viśiṣṭādvaita, or Viśiṣṭādvaita from Śuddhādvaita etc. and all of them from Dvaita particularly, an attempt would be made to find out those points where they may converge.

The second chapter of this work aims to establish the impact that classical Vedanta left on contemporary philosophical thought in India. It is undoubtedly true that classical Vedanta has left an indelible impression on contemporary Indian thought. Particularly, the philosophical thoughts developed in India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been greatly influenced by Vedanta. To establish this claim, the researcher has gone through an analysis of the writings of some contemporary Indian philosophers. The metaphysical views of some philosophers of the time have been briefly presented in this chapter to see how they were influenced by the traditional schools of Vedanta. The views of Rammohan, Debendranath, Rabindranath, Bankimchandra, Vivekananda and others are to be discussed in this connection. Highlighting their views concerning Brahman, the world, māyā and liberation etc., the researcher would endeavour to observe their allegiance to Vedanta– especially to review how close they are to any particular

school or how liberal or conservative they are in maintaining their traditions. A comparative study would also be made after giving the accounts they endeavour to defend covertly or overtly through their writings, works or preaching.

The main focus of this research work is the appraisal of the exceptional notion of Vedanta advocated by Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya. Prof. Bhattacharya has arrived at an alternative thought of Vedanta without following the path of other contemporary thinkers. This alternative thought is called ‘Anekānta Vedanta’. The exploration of the principles of this Neo-Vedantic thought has gained significance in this third chapter. There is a need to consider whether Vedanta can be explained as ‘Anekānta’ or Vedanta can ever be treated as ‘Anekānta’. To put it in other way, whether a pluralistic view of reality can be tied with the monistic trend historically associated with Vedanta. It is also necessary to judge how far this ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ is in agreement with Jain ‘Anekāntavāda’. With a view to make it obvious, the researcher has given a brief summary of the pluralistic realism of Jain’s. And after that, he has tried to point out the points of difference between the two views.

Every exceptional or innovative thought has a background of its origination; it crops out in the mind of a thinker in a typical situation. The same holds true in the origination of Prof. Bhattacharya’s modern understanding of Vedanta. The alternative Vedanta he tends to defend has its roots also, which branched out and took the form of a banyan tree through the long journey of philosophical understanding. This perspective or the land of thought where this novel view grew up and nurtured is worth noting. To have a better understanding of the concept of ‘Anekānta Vedanta’, Prof. Bhattacharya introduced, we are to give emphasis on the historical background around which his alternative approach has been evolved.

The fourth chapter of this research work is an attempt to proceed in this direction, i.e., unfolding historical, social, and philosophical perspectives that gave birth to such a unique type of thinking. In this connection, it should be acknowledged that Prof. Bhattacharya has an inclination toward Western philosophy; hence, it is natural to expect that this search for alternation would centre on Western philosophical tradition. But in reality, he took inspiration from both traditions– East and West. Although it was western thought, to a great extent, which led him to reconcile the conflicting epistemological and metaphysical claims to reach his philosophy of alternation, there are contributions of classical Indian schools in giving birth to his noble view.

Mere exposition and interpretation of any theory are not sufficient to establish its veracity until and unless it undergoes through cross-examination. Naturally, after providing exposition and explanation of Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya's concept of 'Anekānta Vedanta', it is mandatory to enquire justification in its favour. It is also necessary to show that the view Prof. Bhattacharya endeavoured to defend is neither a baseless imagination nor is it coined from any other philosophical thought. In the conclusion, the researcher has tried to establish the plausibility and originality of the thought by nullifying the claims like– it is an application of Jain 'Anekāntavāda' in the domain of Vedanta or a slide modification of the view of religious pluralism of Sri Sri Ramakrishna. Finally, it is also shown that though his father's philosophy of alternation cast a spell on his mind, the credit for applying this method of alternation in the field of Vedanta absolutely goes in favour of Kalidas. Side by side, the researcher has tried to establish that the modern understanding of Vedanta is not only a discovery of Kalidasa's own; it is also perfectly compatible with the pluralistic views of Indian life.



## First Chapter

### Introducing Vedanta

#### 1.1 Vedanta: Its different Schools

Vedanta is one of India's orthodox philosophical schools, closely related to social and public life. To a great extent, Indian culture or civilization is a reorientation of the thought embedded in Vedantic tradition. The 'Veda' is traditionally considered as the source of all knowledge. It is the eternal and infinite collection of words and knowledge, signified by the word 'Veda'. Four parts are parting to each Vedas, of which Upanishad is the last. This Upanishad contains the Vedantic philosophy and the direction of the Indian way of life. All the philosophical developments based directly on the Upanishad are known as Vedanta philosophy. All though Vedanta is rooted in Upanishada mainly, the philosophical understanding of Vedanta starts with 'Brahmasūtra' authored by Maharṣi Kṛṣṇadvaipāyaṇa Vedavyāsa or Vādarāyaṇa. In this sense, he is the creator of Vedanta philosophy. It may be mentioned here that there is another philosophical school propounded by Maharṣi Jaimini, which emphasizes the Saṁhitā and Āraṇyaka part of the Vedas, and that school is popularly known as Purvamīmāṃsā. On the other hand, taking foundation on the last part, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyaṇa Vedavyāsa authored a book to judge the meaning of the Upanishads and to dispel the anti-Vedic doctrines. This philosophical tradition is called 'Uttaramīmāṃsā' or 'Vedanta'. In this text, Vādarāyaṇa explained the logical significance of the thought contained in the Upanishads. This text, which is familiar as 'Brahmasūtra', is also known as 'Śārīrakasūtra', 'Vādarāyanasūtra', 'Śārīrakamīmāṃsā', 'Brahmamīmāṃsā', 'Uttarmīmāṃsā', 'Vyāsaśūtra' and the like.

The ‘Brahmasūtra’ is divided into four chapters, namely Samāṇvaya, Avirodha, Sādhana and Phala; hence familiar as Caturādhyayī also. There are five hundred and fifty-five aphorisms in those chapters. In the first chapter, i.e. Samāṇvaya, the nature of one unique nirguṇa Brahman is presented through the synthesis of various Upanishadic sentences. Along with this, the relationship between the living beings (jīva) and the world (jagata) with Brahman has also been established. The second chapter is mainly an attempt to justify the three levels of being– viz. Prātibhāsika, Vyavahārika and Pāramārthika admitted in Upanishadic tradition. Avoiding all contradictions or misunderstandings, the author has endeavoured to maintain these three levels of existence in this chapter. In the third chapter, the means of attaining knowledge of Brahman, namely– Upāsanā, Sādhana, etc. are discussed at a great length. Finally, in the fourth chapter, discussion is observed about the form of Brahman or Mokṣa achieved in Tattvajñāna or Brahmajñāna.

It must be mentioned here that apart from the Upanishads and the ‘Brahmasūtra’, another important source of Vedanta philosophy is the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. The Srimad Bhagavad Gita is the wisdom (jñāna vānī) spoken by Lord Krishna to Arjuna about the living beings (jīva), world (jagata) and Supreme soul (Paramātmā). Whereas the main source, Upanishad is called Śrutiprasthāna of Vedanta, the Srimad Bhagavad Gita is popularly known as the Smṛtiprasthāna. There is another prasthāna of Vedanta, which lies in ‘Brahmasūtra’, and their commentaries are the Nyāyaprasthāna. This Nyāyaprasthāna aimed at justifying the thought embedded in Upanishadic culture.

Vedanta Darśhan is closely related to Indian public life, that’s why it is much studied in the history of Indian philosophy. This philosophy mainly deals with Brahmanism (Brahmavāda). The nature of Brahman, the nature of living beings, the

nature of the world, the relationship between Brahman and living beings and the world, etc. are discussed here. However, the commentators beg to differ from one another in interpreting the principles mentioned. Some say Brahman is nirguṇa, infinite. Some say Brahman saguṇa, sopādhika. Others say that Brahman is devoid of all bad qualities. Similarly, there is no end of opinion about the relationship of Brahman with the world.

Therefore, in the initial stage or at the very outset, Vedanta has received various forms in its commentaries. Various thinkers have been involved in formulating commentaries on this philosophy. In the case of other Indian schools, only one commentator seems to interpret the sutra, but in the case of Vedanta, commentators are numerous. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, Vallabha, Bhāṣkara, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa etc. various Acāryas explained the Vedanta according to their own understanding. Thus, a multifaceted field of Vedantic style has been created. To understand this diversity of commentaries and thoughts, it is necessary to shed light on the discourses of each community on Brahman, jiva, jagata, māya and mukti. Let us go through the account put forward by the commentators one by one—

## **1.2 Advaitavāda and its basic claims**

The first and most important school of Vedanta philosophies developed on the commentary of Gaudapāda is called Advaita Vedanta. It is one of the most important doctrines developed on the ‘Brahmasūtra’. According to Advaita Vedanta, there is no transcendental being except the formless, nirguṇa, immaterial Brahman alone. So, this doctrine is also called Kevlādvaitavāda. Vārtikākara of Brihadāranyaka Bhāṣya thus says—

*Dvidhetam Dvītamityāhustdbhāvo Dvaitamucyate* |

*Tanniṣedhen Cā Dvaitam Pratyagvastvabhīdhīyate* ||<sup>1</sup>

That is, that which is joined by two parts is dual, and its expression is dual. Pratyagātmā, who remains by banning that duality, is worshipped as non-dual.

Although this Advaitavāda is closely associated with the name of Śaṅkarācārya, the doctrine originated even before him. Acāryas like Gaudapāda, Dravidācārya, Govindapāda, Bhaṭṭaprapaṇca etc. were known as non-dualists before Śaṅkarācārya. Gaudapāda founded Advaitavāda by writing ‘Advaitakārikā’ or ‘Māṇḍukyakārikā’ based on Upanishads, ‘Brahmasūtra’ and Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita. So, Śaṅkara is not the originator of Advaitavāda or Monism; this doctrine has been propagated in the guru tradition. Acārya Śaṅkara’s guru Govindpāda was a disciple of Gaudapāda. Śaṅkara composed a commentary on the ‘Brahmasūtra’ of Maṇḍarāyaṇa. But Śaṅkara’s Advaitavāda or Monism is not merely a repetition of the Monism of his predecessors. He developed a coherent philosophy based on Upanishads, ‘Brahmasūtra’, Gita and Advaitakārikā of Gaudapāda by his extraordinary wisdom and spirituality. That’s why, among all the existing commentaries on Vedānta Philosophy, Śaṅkara is the most famous and he is universally recognized as one of the foremost Acāryas of Advaitīnism. Śaṅkara’s commentary on the ten Upanishads, Sāṅkarakabhāṣya and Gītābhāṣya are an invaluable resource for Vedānta Philosophy. Apart from this, he composed many books and hymns. While expressing the salient thought of Advaitavāda Śaṅkara said—

*Ślokārdhena pravakṣyāmi yaduktam granthakotibhiḥ* |

*Brahmastyaṁ jaganmithyā jīva Brahmaiva nā paraḥ* ||<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Bhāṣyavārttika*— 4/3/1807

<sup>2</sup> *Brahmajñānāvalīmālā*— 21

That is, the truth that millions of books are trying to establish, he claimed to express it in half of a verse. Brahman is the ultimate truth, the world appearance is illusory and what we call living being is not apart from Brahman.

We have already seen Brahman as the only truth in the Advaita system. So, it is necessary to explain the nature of Brahman from the Advaitīns point of view. The term ‘Brahman’ is derived from the root ‘Bṛha’, which signifies the greatest. ‘Brahman’ is the greatest reality which does not have any limits. As there is no limit to its reality, no differences can be ascribed on Brahman. It is devoid of differences (akhanda). Different again are three types— homogeneous (svajātiya), heterogeneous (vijātiya) and internal (svagata). In the Śrutis it is said about the nature of Brahman— *Adṛśyama avyavahāryama agrāhyama alakṣanama*<sup>3</sup>, *Na tatra cakṣurgacchati na bāggacachati no mana*<sup>4</sup>, *Na cakṣuṣā gṛhyate nāpi bācā*<sup>5</sup> etc.

According to Śaṅkara, this Brahman is nirguṇa, nirviśeṣa, sopādhika, mukta (free from all titles), and free from all distinctions (bhedas). In a word, it is eternal, pure, conscious and free (nitya-suddha-buddha-mukta) in nature. The mantra *Ekamevādvitīyam Brahman*<sup>6</sup> includes the term ‘Ekama’, which means that Brahman is free from Svajātiyaveda; ‘Eva’ means Brahman is free from Svagataveda and ‘Advitīya’ means Brahman is free from Vijātiyaveda. The rendering of this undifferentiated Brahman is the only significance of the Śruti. From the words— *Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman*<sup>7</sup> etc., it is clearly evident that there is no existence other than Brahman, which is free from all kinds of distinctions. *Svato vā parato vāpi na kiñcidvasta jāyate*<sup>8</sup>— i.e. nothing arises from this Brahman evidently or traditionally.

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<sup>3</sup> *Māndukyopaniṣada*— 7

<sup>4</sup> *Kenopaniṣada*— 1/1/3

<sup>5</sup> *Mundakopaniṣada*— 3/1/8

<sup>6</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣada*— 6/2/2

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*,— 9/14/1

<sup>8</sup> *Māndukyokārikā*— 4/22



This doctrine is, therefore, sometimes called ajātism (ajataavāda). Again, in the Taittirīya Upanishad, it is said about the nature of Brahman— *Satyam Jñānam Anantam Brahman*<sup>9</sup>. That means Brahman is truth in nature (satyasvarupa), knowledge in nature (jñānasvarupa) and essentially infinite (anantasvarupa). Brahman is also free from triple division, namely, deśa pariccheda (free from spatial division), kāla pariccheda (free from temporal division) and vastu pariccheda (free from material division). Any worldly thing is limited to some space or place. But Brahman, as infinite in nature, is free from all limitations. Again, material thing is limited by time, but Brahman has no temporal limitation, i.e. Brahman is eternal.

Here, a question may arise: are these three— Truth (Satya), Knowledge (Jñāna) and Delight (Ānanda) identical with or different from Brahman? If they are said to be synonymous, mentioning these three becomes redundant. On the other hand, if they are claimed as different, then Brahman does not remain entirely free from all differences as there are internal differences (svagataveda) within Him. However, in Advaita Vedanta, it is said that Brahman is free from all distinctions. To explore this dilemma, Advaitīns would take the help of secondary senses (lakṣārtha) of the expression mentioned instead of taking those words in their literal senses. By the word ‘Truth’, he intends to mean something which is different from falsity. Similarly, he would take ‘Knowledge’ and ‘Joy’ as negations of ignorance and suffering, respectively.

All though, featureless, and qualityless in nature, Brahman is presented as Sat (Truth), Cit (Conscious) and Ānanda (Joy). Only after having first-hand knowledge of saṁguṇa Brahman, one can upgrade himself to have a better understanding to reach in the understanding of Avaiṁmānasagocara and Saccidānanda Brahman. This realisation

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<sup>9</sup> *Taittirīyopaniṣada*– 2/1

tempted advaitīns to speak of Brahman as both determinate and indeterminate (saguṇa and sirguṇa).

The first aphorism of catusutrī is *Athāta Brahma jijñāsā*.<sup>10</sup> If one does not know what Brahman is— there would be no quire regarding Brahman in him. To quench his thirst, the second aphorism has been revealed— *Janmādasya jataḥ*.<sup>11</sup> i.e. from which everything is coming out, who is the beginning of all births. The same thing has been reetartated in Taittirīya Upanishad— From which all animals are born, by which they live and to which they return in death, is Brahman.<sup>12</sup> Brahman is described as the root of the world. It is not the essential feature (svarupalakṣaṇa) of Brahman, rather, mere accidental one (taṭasthalakṣaṇa). The mark or lakṣaṇa which remains in an object throughout its existence is called svarupalakṣaṇa or essential feature.<sup>13</sup> Humanity, for example, is an essential feature of human beings, and it remains constant in man; man can never exist without humanity. In the same way, Truth, Consciousness and Infinity are the essential marks of Brahman.<sup>14</sup>

The marks being present for a period, differentiate its qualificandum from other entities is known as an accidental feature or Taṭsthalakṣaṇa.<sup>15</sup> Smell, for example, is the accidental mark or taṭasthalakṣaṇa of the earth. At the time of its origination, smell remains absent in the earth; nevertheless, being present for a particular period, differentiates the earth from other things. In the same way, the property of being creator, sustainer, destroyer, etc. are accidental properties by which Brahman becomes different from all other beings.

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<sup>10</sup> *Brahmasūtra*– 1/1/1

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*,– 1/1/2

<sup>12</sup> “Yato vai imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jivanti, yat prayanti abhisamviśanti, tat vijijñāsasva, tat Brahman iti”– *Taittirīyopaniṣada*– 3/1

<sup>13</sup> “Svarupaṁ sat vyāvarttakam.”– Maharshi Krishnadvaipāyana vedavyāsa, *Vedantadarshanam* (1<sup>st</sup> part), trns. Swami Vishvarupānanda (Kolkata: Udbodhon Karyalay, 2014), 97.

<sup>14</sup> “Satyam jñānam anantam Brahman”– *Taittirīyopaniṣada*– 2/1

<sup>15</sup> “Jāvallakṣyakālmanvashittve sati yad vyāvarttakam”– Srimada Dharmarajādhvarīndra, *Vedanta Paribhāṣā*, trns. Srimad Pañcānan Bhattacharya (Srinath Bhavan, Contai, 1377 bangāvda), 262.

According to Advaita Vedantīn, Brahman does not undergo any change. The world appearance we experience is nothing but vivarta or a disguised presentation of Brahman. When a rope appears to us as a snake, it does not really transform into the snake. The snake we experienced has an illusory appearance. In the same way, the multitude of things we experience in the world is nothing but miss-presentation or false appearance of one and only reality– Brahman. But, though false or illusory in nature, the world is not totally unreal like a hare's horn or the object of a dream. The object of experience can not be claimed unreal, like the sky lotus. On the other hand, as it is contradicted or vanished at the dawn of true knowledge, the world could not be given the status of true reality. In this sense, it is neither real nor unreal, not both nor neither. It is beyond ordinary description and hence Anirvacanīya (Indeterminate) in nature. Owing to this reason, the advaitīns designate the world as false or mithyā.

In order to understand the true nature of this world, one must first understand the three realities (Sattātraividhya) admitted in Advaita Vedanta. The Advaitīnns speaks of three levels of reality– the Absolute or transcendental entity (Pāramārthika Sattā), the Empirical entity or Vyāvahārika Sattā (received in awakening experience) and the Superficial or Deluded entity (Prātibhāsika Sattā) like dreamed object. Brahman is the absolute transcendental entity, which is all-pervading, eternal and uncontradicted in three laps of time. The things, we experience in practical life, like jar, pat, etc. are considered as true belonging to the second level of reality. The third level includes the objects which are grasped in delusion, dream or hallucination. Though real in a sense, the delusory objects are denied in empirical experience. As soon as one wakes up, the objects of his dream are vanished.

Similarly, the objects of waking experience that are witnessed in practical life are contradicted by the knowledge of Ultimate or Transcendental Reality. Until we

have the knowledge of Brahman, the phenomenal world seems to us as true. But once the knowledge of supreme reality is apprehended, one can realize the illusory, instantaneous nature of the world phenomena. However, the reality of the Absolute or Brahman remains uncontradicted. In case of snake-rope illusion, when the perceiver realizes the true nature of the object, snakesness (which was wrongly ascribed on rope) is denied, leaving the rope itself undenied. Similarly, when one realizes that the world is wrongly ascribed, he can not but admit the locus on which it is ascribed. This locus, to an Advaitīnn, is Brahman, which is the ultimate truth— devoid of all contradictions.

Thus, it is clear that Brahman is the only reality, and the world appearance is its superimposition on Brahman. When the knowledge of locus or adhiṣṭhāna is apprehended, the falsity of the imposed object is realized. Such as the ascription of silverness in the snail, the snail is the adhiṣṭhāna and silverness is the āropya. As soon as we realized the true nature of the snail, the silverness which was imposed is cancelled. In the same way, the imputed world appears to be true until there is knowledge of adhiṣṭhāna Brahman. As the cognition of the silver is resulted from ignorance, so also belief in the existence of this world is caused by our ignorance. However, the Advaitīn believes that until the non-dual nature of Brahman is apprehended, one should accept this worldly process as true.

Until non-duality is realized, the mundane existence and activities would be continued. If there is no mundane sense, the practical application can never be accomplished. To make it clear, Śaṅkara says in ‘Adhyāśabhāṣya’— *Prāk ca tathābhutātmavijñāt pravarttamānam śāstram avidyāviṣayatvam na ativarttate*.<sup>16</sup> Annihilation of duality is possible, only when the mind is removed through self-

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<sup>16</sup> Maharshi Krishnadvaipāyanavedavyāsa, *Vedantadarshanam* (1<sup>st</sup> part), trns. Swami Vishvarupananda (Kolkata: Udbodhon Kāryalay, 2014), 59.

examination and introspection. Until then, the practical world can not be denied. To Śaṅkara, the world process is endless and hence, in a sense, eternal.

The question remains what is the source of this world? Though illusory in nature, it should have some causal conditions. According to Śaṅkara, Brahman conditioned with māyā is both the material and efficient cause of this universe. What we think of the world is nothing but the superimposition of the magical power of Brahman, called 'Māyā'. It is 'Māyā', which covers the true nature of Brahman and reflects the world appearance on it. It is neither real like Brahman nor unreal like sky lotus. It is a collective ignorance whose nature is described in this way—

*Ajñānam tu sadasadabhyām arnivacanīyaṁ triguṇātamakam jñānabiradhi bhāvrupam yatkiñcita iti vandanti; aham ajña ityādyanubhavāt, devātmamāśaktiṁ svaguṇaih nigudhām.*<sup>17</sup>

As it is different from real and unreal, it is inexplicable in nature. It is the root of this world. It is composed of three guṇas namely— Sattva, rajaḥ and tamaḥ. Though it is called ignorance (ajñāna) and such opposite to knowledge (jñāna), it is not the absence or non-existence of something. It is positive in nature, and its presence is realized in perceptions like, 'I am ignorant', 'I do not know myself and others, etc.' This ignorance, or māyā as it is already mentioned is endowed with two powers— (1) The power of Concealment (Āvaraṇa śakti) and (2) The power of Superimposition (Vikṣepa śakti). As the cloud covers the sun and depict rainbow in the sky, so also by the former power māyā conceal the nature of Brahman and superimposes the world appearance on it by the later.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the living being (jiva) imposes the features of inanimate matter on the soul and starts thinking that I am the doer, I am the enjoyer, I am happy, etc. Not only this, but this ignorance also creates the celestial

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<sup>17</sup> Sri Sri Sadānandayogindra Saraswati, *Vedantasāra*, trns. Bipadbhanjan Pal (Kolkata: Sanskrita Pustak Bhāṇḍar, 1420), 79.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*,— 109.

world phenomena with the help of its own energy. This ignorance is twofold— Collective ignorance (Samaṣṭi Ajñāna) and ignorance in particular (Vyāṣṭi Ajñāna). Samaṣṭi Ajñāna is the epithet of God and Vyāṣṭi Ajñāna is the epithet of Jiva. As the predominance of Sattvaguna is present in samaṣṭi ajñāna, the power of expression here is high. On the other hand, in vyāṣṭi ajñāna, rajaḥ and tamaguna predominate over sattvaguna; hence, the manifestation is relatively low. As a result, God is considered as omniscient and jiva is counted as wise or prājña only.

God creates the world for the accomplishment and enjoyment of the jiva or individual self. The creation process of the world runs as follows— Initially, from Atman or Brahman emerges the five subtle elements in this sequence: ākāśa (ether), vāyu (air), agni (fire), apa (water), and kṣiti (earth). These subtle elements then blend into five combinations to generate the corresponding five gross elements. The gross elements are formed through a specific ratio of the subtle ones.

The composition of each gross element is as follows:

Gross ether:  $\frac{1}{2}$  ether essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  air essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  fire essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  water essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  earth essence.

Gross air:  $\frac{1}{2}$  air essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  ether essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  water essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  earth essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  fire essence.

Gross fire:  $\frac{1}{2}$  fire essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  ether essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  water essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  earth essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  air essence.

Gross water:  $\frac{1}{2}$  water essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  ether essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  air essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  fire essence +  $\frac{1}{8}$  earth essence.

Gross earth: 1/2 earth essence + 1/8 ether essence +1/8 air essence +1/8 fire essence +1/8 water essence.<sup>19</sup>

This process, known as the combination of the five (pañcikāraṇa), yields the gross elements. According to Sankara, this creation process aligns with his theory of vivarta or (adhyāsa), where the gross is perceived as a superimposition on the subtle. Thus, both the subtle body of humans and the gross body, along with all physical entities in nature, originate from these subtle and gross elements, respectively.

According to Śaṅkara, jivas (individual selfs) are identical with Brahman. But owing to its ignorance, the individual self felt to realize its divinity and guides himself by ego consciousness. This ego consciousness, which is realised as 'I' in earthly life (saṃsāra dasā) becomes the agent of knowledge, action and enjoyment. This segregation gives rise to the judgement, like 'I know', 'I wish', 'I feel,' etc. In reality, Brahman, who is identical to jiva, is neither a doer nor a consumer. It is pure consciousness in itself. Thus, it is said in the 'Brahmasūtra', *Nāṭma, aśrute: nityātvat ca tāvyah*.<sup>20</sup>

Here, an opponent can raise an objection by saying that if the individual self is identical with Brahman or Pure consciousness, then how is the non-duality of Brahman maintained? Either Brahman like jivas is innumerable in number or like Brahman the individual self would be one only. The advaitīn removes this dilemma in different ways. They have developed various doctrines like, Avacchedavāda, Prativimvavāda, and Āvāsvāda etc. to reconcile the monistic account of Brahman with the pluralistic account of the jiva.

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<sup>19</sup> Swam Vidyāranya, *Pancadashi*, ed. Swami Baneshananda (Kolkata: Udbodhon Karyalay, 2012), 8-12.

<sup>20</sup> *Brahmasūtra*– 2/3/17

According to Avacchadavāda, one and the same object appears as many according to ascription of different delimiters (avaccheda). The sky for example though one and infinite, it appears as many when covered with jar, cloth etc. In the same way, Pure-conscious Saccidānanda Brahman also manifested as a multitude of selves when limited by antaḥkaraṇa. But in reality, as the sky is never limited by the conditions, Brahman, too, is not limited by the delimiters of antaḥkaraṇa. What we call antaḥkaraṇa is nothing but a creation of ignorance. As soon as ignorance is removed there remain only one and infinite Brahman— Saccidānanda by nature.

Prativimvavāda, on the other hand, is another alternative doctrine by which the plurality of jivas is made intelligible. According to this theory, the same thing may appear as many when reflected in transparent objects. The sun, for example, seems to us as many when we look at its reflection in different water points. In the same way, one and infinite Brahman appears to us as innumerable individual self when reflected in different antaḥkaraṇas.

In addition to Avacchadavāda (delimiter theory), Prativimbavāda (reflection theory), another theory is provided by advaitīns to explain the relation between jiva and Brahman; it is known as Āvāsvāda. In this theory jiva is nothing but appearance (āvāsa) of Brahman. This appearance is the consequence of ignorance. When the ignorance, the cause of āvāsa is removed, āvāsa ceases to exist and only Sacchidānanda Brahman remains that time.

Thus, it is clear to Advaitīn that there is no intrinsic difference between jiva and Brahman. However, due to ignorance, we make a cleavage between the two. To establish the non-difference between jiva and Brahman, Advaitīn point out four noble statements (Mahāvākayas) namely— ‘*Tattvamsi*’<sup>21</sup>, ‘*Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi*’<sup>22</sup>, ‘*Prajñānam*

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<sup>21</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣada*– 6/8/17



*Brahman*’<sup>23</sup>, ‘*Ayamātmā Brahman*’<sup>24</sup>. The first ‘*Tattvamsi*’ claims that there is one soul or Brahman, the all-pervading consciousness in all things in the world. So, every living being is a self or Brahman. It is said in Mahāvākya ‘*Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi*’ that Nirguṇa Brahman is the innermost soul of the living being. In ‘*Prajñānam Brahman*’, the supreme man or Brahman who is present in all things, jiva is one and identical with Him. Again, it is said that the innermost soul of the living being is in the form of unitary consciousness or Nirguṇa Brahman in ‘*Ayamātmā Brahman*’.<sup>25</sup>

Now let us see how the Mahāvākya ‘*Tattvamsi*’ give rise to the realisation of undifferentiated consciousness. The word ‘Tat’ in the phrase ‘*Tattvamsi*’ refers to omniscient (sarvajña), omnipresent (infinite) consciousness and ‘Tvam’ to ignorant (alpajña), non-omnipresent (finite) consciousness. Clearly, there is an opposition between the two types of consciousness signified by the two expressions ‘Tat’ and ‘Tvam’. It is impossible to convey the unity of jiva and Brahman from the literal senses referred to this Mahāvākya.

To remove this incompatibility, the vedantins conceived of secondary senses (lakṣaṇā) of the expressions mentioned. Excluding the primary senses of the expressions ‘Tat’ and ‘Tvam’ partially, they proceed to admit rest part of that sense by jahatajahat lakṣaṇā. Both of these expressions have a common significance—consciousness. Whether limited or unlimited as consciousness, jiva can not be differentiated from Brahman. Thus, the non-distinction of jiva and Brahman is rendered by the exclusion of the opposite adjectives (omnipresent-non-omnipresent, omniscience-ignorant) and adoption of the non-opposite adjectives (consciousness in both cases) of the statement.

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<sup>22</sup> *Bṛihadāraṇyakopaniṣada*– 1/4/10

<sup>23</sup> *Aitareyopaniṣada*– 3/1/3

<sup>24</sup> *Māndūkyopaniṣada*– 2

<sup>25</sup> Swami Satprakashananda, *Dhyan Sadhana Siddhi*, trns. Swami Devrajananda (Kolkata: Udbodhan Kāryalay, 1992), 187.

Likewise, the ‘*Tattvamsi*’, the other three Mahāvākyas also represent the non-differentiation of jiva and Brahman. However, apart from lakṣaṇā or lakṣa-lakṣaṇabhāva sambandha, it is also possible to know the sameness of jiva and Brahman through samānādhikaraṇya (collocatedness) and viśeṣya-viśeṣanabhāva sambandha (qualifier-qualificandum relationship).

An aspirant of liberation (mokṣakāmī) attains this self-realization (Brahmansvaruptā) by understanding the meaning of Mahāvākyas through listening, meditation and contemplation (śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana). The same is vehemently declared by the Sruti—

... *Ātma vā ore draṣṭavya: Śrotavyo Mantavyo Nididhyāsitavya*<sup>26</sup>. That means, first, by listening to the text of Vedānta authored by Acāryas, then judging through argumentation and finally through continuous meditation or contemplation of the said theory by Acāryas. Aspirant (mokṣārthī) receives the identity with Brahman. What we call attainment of liberation (mokṣa) is nothing but one’s awakening that he himself is undifferentiated with Brahman. So, it can be said that salvation or liberation is not a new achievement for the living being; rather, it is the awareness about the divinity he already possesses (prāpteri prāpti). In another word, it is the realisation of one’s own nature.

In Advaita Vedānta, two types of liberations are recognized— Jivan mukti (embodied liberation) and Videha Mukti (disembodied liberation). The emancipation of the living being while he is in the bodily stage is called jivan mukti and the emancipation after the destruction of the body is called videha mukti. Actually, jiva attains the liberation as soon as the accumulation of karma ends. But even after cessation of the accumulation of the karmas, the jiva has to live earthly life until and

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<sup>26</sup> *Bṛihadāraṇyakopaniṣada*– 4/4/5

unless the enjoyment of the fruits of previous karma comes to an end. After completion of enjoyment of fruits, the gross and subtle body of the jivas is destroyed and it can receive disembodied liberation.

### **1.3 Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda and its Metaphysical views**

Ramanuja's Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda is one of the prominent commentaries written on 'Brahmansūtra'. It was a reaction against Śaṅkara's Advaitavāda. In Śaṅkara primacy was given on knowledge, whereas in Rāmānuja, it is bhakti or devotion that plays the role of the main key to proceed along the way of liberation. At a time when the whole country was deeply influenced by Śaṅkara's non-dualism, it is Rāmānuja who proclaimed it not by knowledge but by bhakti and karma that one can attain his liberation. Although the position of Śaṅkara was challenged by many others like Śaiva Ācāryas, Bhāṣkara and others, it is Rāmānuja who appeared as the most important opponent of Śaṅkara in Vedānta school. Even though knowledge centric monism of Śaṅkara was given a higher status in philosophical discussions of that time, it failed to evoke spiritual satisfaction in the common mind.

It is this inability of Śaṅkara Vedānta that prompted Rāmānuja to establish a new Vedānta following bhaktimārga, which took the form of Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda. Here, it should be acknowledged that even before the Rāmānuja Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition was prevalent in ancient India. However, Rāmānuja, by his own excellence, was able to compile that Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda in his own way in his 'Śrībhāṣya'. That's why he is revered as one of the leading Ācāryas, reformers and compilers of Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda. The credit for establishing 'Sri Sampradāya' also goes to Rāmānuja.

In his philosophy, Rāmānuja speaks of three principles (tattvas), namely—Brahman, Cit and Acit. Brahman is the ultimate reality, embodying countless divine virtues while being free from any impurities. Brahman stands as the singular supreme

reality characterized by truth, knowledge, and bliss– infinite in nature and attributes. To Śaṅkara, Brahman was devoid of all differences– homogeneous, heterogeneous and internal. But Rāmānuja admits internal differences in Brahman. Admitting Brahman as the Supreme Reality, Rāmānuja begs to differ from Śaṅkara by declaring Cit and Acit as its two parts.

The material world, according to him, is the modification of the Acit part of Brahman, and the individual self is the modification of his Cit part. Rāmānuja conceive Brahman as saguṇa or qualified being. It is true that the term nirguṇa is seen to be used in scriptures to describe the Supreme Reality. But to Rāmānuja, Brahman is called nirguṇa in this sense that Brahman is devoid of all kinds of bad qualities. It is in ‘Śribhāṣya’, Rāmānuja clarify his position– *Nirguṇavādaśca parsya Brahmano heyaguṇa asamvandhāda upapādyante*<sup>27</sup>.

Brahman is the possessor of infinite believe. He is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, self luminous and the sole controller and sustainer of creation. That’s why He is described as God or Puruṣottam. In the philosophy of Rāmānuja, Brahman is described as ‘Saccidānanda’ as well as ‘Saguṇa’. ‘Sat’, ‘Cit’ and ‘Ānanda’ signified not only the nature of Brahman but also its qualities. In his view, Brahman is not only ‘Sat’ or ‘Existence’ in itself but ‘Sattāvāna’ or ‘Existant’ also; not only ‘Jñānam’ or ‘Knowledge’ in itself but ‘Jñānavāna’ or a Being, having knowledge in possession; again not just ‘Ānanda’ or ‘Joy’ in itself but a being endowed with joy. Rāmānuja, like Śaṅkara, denied the homogeneous or heterogeneous distinction of Brahman. However, he accepted the internal distinction or svagataveda of Brahman. Differences between two individuals belonging to the same class are called homogeneous difference (sajātiyaveda). The difference between

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<sup>27</sup> Śribhāṣya– 1/1/1

the two trees, for example, is known as Sajātiyaveda. Again, the difference between two individuals belonging to two different species, a cow and buffalo, for example, is called heterogeneous difference (vijātiyaveda). When we speak of the differences between parts of the same thing, viz., the difference among branches, trunks, flowers, fruits, etc. of the same tree, is considered as svagataveda or internal difference. According to Rāmānuja, this internal difference is only possible in the case of Brahman, as He is characterised by Cit and Acit parts.

In qualified-monism of Rāmānuja, neither Cit or Individual soul nor Acit or Material world, have been considered as false or illusory manifestations of Brahman. As two forms of Supreme Reality– Brahman, they are equally real (sat) and eternal. It should be noted here that although Rāmānuja admits the reality of Cit and Acit, he is never in favour of their independence from Brahman. Cit and Acit, in his view, are solely dependent on Brahman and controlled by Him too.

Even though there is a dual difference between Cit and Acit Brahman, they are not separate from Brahman. They are bound by an inseparable relation with Brahman. In the case of the blue lotus, although, as a principle, blue is different from the lotus, in reality, or in fact, blue doesn't exist apart from the lotus. Just as blue is inseparable from the lotus, Cit and Acit are inseparable from Brahman in the same way. They are nothing but qualifiers by which Brahman is qualified. Being different from the qualificandum theoretically, practically, they are identical to Brahman. That's why the relation between Brahman and Cit-Acit is often called 'Aprithaksiddhi' or 'Identity in difference'. Brahman, being indivisible, cannot be partitioned, and the jivas cannot be separated from Him.

Hence, Brahman, though, endowed with a qualifier, is free from spatial, temporal and substantial limitations. Like Śāṅkara, Rāmānuja conceives Brahman as

Saccidānanda. To Śaṅkara, ‘Truth’, ‘Consciousness’ and ‘Joy’ signify the nature of Brahman only. But to Rāmānuja these three represent the quality as well as the nature of Brahman. That’s why He is called the material and efficient cause of the World. As material cause, He transforms into jiva and jagata, not just appears as them. Jiva and jagata are not disguised appearance of Brahman, but real transformation of Him.

Brahman often assumes various forms to grace the worshippers. He holds five types of idols in the form of Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antrayāmī and Arccāvatāra. So, according to Rāmānuja, Brahman is pure but not passive. He gives direction to the jiva being according to karma, guides him in his worship and gives him liberation too.

This Brahman creates jiva by the dispersion of his power called Cit Śakti and the world is also created by Him by another power called Acit Śakti. Just as a spider (urṇināva) creates webs from the material inside his body, so Brahman created living beings and worlds from within. Brahman is the material cause which undergoes modification and takes the form of jiva and jagata. As subtle form He is the cause or kāraṇa Brahman and as gross manifestation He is the effect or kārya Brahman. During the time of deluge, living beings and the world exist in an unmanifested form within the Supreme Brahman. As if, He is the soul and living beings are His body. He is the ruler, whereas Cit and Acit are ruled by Him. It is in ‘Śribhāṣya’ Rāmānuja describes Brahman as—

*Ataḥ Sarvvajñāḥ Sarvvaśaktiḥ Sarvveśvaro nirasta-samastadoṣagandho Anavadhikaḥ  
Atiśayāsaṁkhyeya kalyāṇaguṇaganyeghamahārṇavaḥ Puruṣottamo Nārāyaṇa ebo  
Nikhilajagadekakāraṇaṁ jijñāsayāṁ Brahmeti ca sthitama.*<sup>28</sup>

As it is mentioned earlier to Rāmānuja, the world is not false or unreal; it is the creation of Acit or Prakṛti. This inanimate prakṛti, which is the body of Brahman, is

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<sup>28</sup> Śribhāṣya— 1/1/12

composed of three qualities, namely– sattva, rajas and tamas. When the equilibrium among these three is destroyed, there is the creation of world. Though Prakṛti of Rāmānuja resembles that of Sāṃkhya, there is a great deal of difference too. The Prakṛti recognised in Sāṃkhya is also endowed with three guṇas and the uncaused cause of worldly things. But in Sāṃkhya, Prakṛti is viewed as an independent reality and Rāmānuja would not advocate this claim. Though eternal and uncaused, being a part of Brahman, Prakṛti could not be independent here. Unlike Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja explains māyā as the real power of Brahman (not just a magical power) which gives rise to real creation.

It should be mentioned in this connection that Rāmānuja was the follower of satkāryavāda, more specifically, its one variant known as pariṇāmavāda. Satkāryavāda is a view which acknowledges the prior existence of an effect in its material cause in a subtle manner. To Rāmānuja Brahman is the ultimate reality in which the entire world pre-exists in subtle form. And being advocate, of pariṇāmavāda, he recognizes the world– creation as a real modification of the real cause. Thus, he maintains that the creation is as real as its cause, Brahman. That is, everything in this universe is Brahman. Thus, it is said in Śvetāśvatara Upanishad–

*Yo yoniṃ yonima adhiṣṭhāti ekḥ yasmin idaṃ saṃ ca bi caiti sarvamaḥ*

*Tamīśānaṃ bardaṃ devamīdyaṃ nicāyeymāṃ śāntima anantyaṃ eti*||<sup>29</sup>

That is, God is one and unique. He is the root of everything. When the world is revealed, it is He who maintains that world. Again, during the deluge, the world is absorbed in Him. He is the controller of everything. He alone gives boons to devotees. He alone is adorable. Realizing this, God leads us to eternal peace.

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<sup>29</sup> Śvetāśvatarapariṣada– 4/11

To Rāmānuja, like the world, the living being or jiva is a part of Brahman and eternal. The soul of the living being is the Cit part of Brahman and the body is the Acit part. According to him, the empirical soul is limited, atomic and innumerable in number. However, it is not conscious in itself; rather endowed with consciousness. But consciousness is not considered as its accidental property, it is recognised as an eternal quality of Brahman by Rāmānuja. Jiva is self-manifested or jñānasvarupa. The jiva, or embodied soul, is distinct from Brahman. Brahman is the creator, sustainer, destroyer, moral governor, and Ultimate Lord, possessing omniscience, independence, purity, and auspicious qualities. In contrast, the jiva is created, controlled, sustained, and governed by Brahman, existing within Brahman but ignorant, dependent, impure, and imbued with inauspicious qualities. The jiva is subordinate to Brahman, worshipping Him and ultimately attaining Him. Thus, the jiva is not Brahman but rather a part of Brahman, akin to light emanating from a luminous source— a part that occupies a distinct place within Brahman. While the jiva is an attribute or viśeṣana of Brahman, there exists a clear distinction between a part and a whole, as well as between an attribute and a substance. This differentiation underscores the jiva's inherent difference from Brahman. The phrase 'that thou art' (tat-tvam-asi) does not denote the identity of the jiva with Brahman but rather highlights Brahman as the foundation of the jiva. While the subject and predicate in this phrase are distinct, they share the identity of the ground (sāmānādhikaraṇya), coexisting within the same substance. Thus, the jivas are attributes or parts of Brahman, maintaining a unique relationship with Him.

In Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda, jivas are admitted as three types— Bound, Free and Eternal. Bound souls are those who are not yet freed from the bindings of karma (deed) and saṁsāra (life process). All living beings are examples of bound souls. This



bound souls or jivas are of four types— superhuman, human, animal and immobile. Boundness of living beings is due to avidyā. There is an aspiration in every bound soul to be liberated from the life cycle. What would be the way of attaining liberation? The devotee or aspirant of liberation is a person who has become acquainted with mīmāṃsā through the study of Vedas, Vedānta and is engaged in the constant realization that Brahman is a source of infinite goodness. Those who, through the process of constant meditation, can overcome the abode of the gross body and have reached in Baikuntha to achieve the association of Brahman would be counted as free souls. Liberation necessitates continuous prayer, remembrance, reverence, worship, effort, chanting the name of God, hearing and uttering His qualities, and meditating upon Him. In the liberated state, the liberated soul becomes autonomous, enjoying God's divine play at will. God grants liberation through His grace, dispelling avidyā accumulated as karmas due to the jiva's devotion and surrender, freeing it from the cycle of birth and death.

#### **1.4 A brief outline of Madhva's Dualism**

The Dualism or Dvaitavāda introduced by Madhvācārya (who is known as Ānandatīrtha or Puṇḍarīkabhāṣya) is a notable one among the doctrines developed on 'Brahmansūtra'. However, Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda, Bhedābhedaśāstra, etc., are also included in Dvaitavāda. Even the Sāṃkhya sect is also dualistic. But, Madhvācārya's dualism is different from all these dualisms. In dualistic Sāṃkhya, there are two substances—Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Both this Puruṣa and Prakṛti are eternal and real. On the other hand, Rāmānuja accepts the internal distinction between Brahman and jiva, but does not accept the homogeneous and heterogeneous distinctions. Bhedābhedaśāstra is also similar to Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda. But according to Madhva, jiva and Brahman are two separate substances. Worship-worshiper (Sevya-sevakabhāva) relation exists between

Brahman and jiva. And the servant can never be identical with the object of service. It needs to be said here that in the 13th century, when the whole country was under the influence of jñānavada, at that time, to attack the monism or jñānavāda, the dualism was developed by Madhvācārya. Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda and Bhedābhedavāda were largely influenced by Śaṅkara's ideas. However, the dualism propounded by Madhva was completely opposed to Śaṅkara's view.

According to Madhva, Vishnu is Supreme Lord. And the Supreme Lord, the enjoyer jiva and the world of consumption are very different and pure substances. Brahman is full (pūrṇa), but jiva is an atomic (aṇu). The living beings and the world are completely subordinate to God. Madhva distinguishes between two types of reality: independent (svatantra) and dependent (paratantra). Lord Vishnu (God) represents the independent reality, while individual souls and the world, which is under Lord Vishnu, and belong to the realm of dependent realities. God transcends all imperfections and possesses infinite, sublime spiritual qualities. Unlike being attributeless (nirguṇa), God is free from the attributes of prakṛti. This is the essence of texts describing nirguṇa Brahman. He embodies existence (sat), consciousness (cit), and bliss (ānanda), along with the six qualities of Lordship, infinite knowledge, power, strength, rulership, vigour, and glory. These qualities exist in perfect harmony within God, proving their identity with him. Serving as the cause of creation, sustenance, dissolution, control, knowledge, ignorance, bondage, and liberation, God acts as the efficient cause of the world, while prakṛti serves as the material cause. God's indescribable nature stems from the inability to comprehend him fully.

Lord Vishnu is completely different from the living beings and the world. Śaṅkara asserts that Brahman lacks homogeneous, heterogeneous, and internal differences. However, Madhva acknowledges the presence of difference in reality.

While Śaṅkara promotes absolute monism, Madhva advocates pluralistic theism, emphasizing the reality of five kinds of differences that are eternal and inherent. These differences include distinctions between God and individual souls, God and matter, individual soul and matter, one soul and another, and one material thing and another. Matter, soul, and God are distinct and irreducible to each other in Madhva's pluralistic universe, where God reigns as Lord.

The fivefold difference is not merely an illusion (*māyāmātra*), as *māyā* represents the will of God. *Māyā*, or *Prakīti*, embodies God's knowledge (*prajñāpti*), characterized by bliss, comprehending and preserving all. As such, it cannot be a false appearance, and duality cannot be dismissed as imaginary. God's omniscience precludes the possibility of illusory knowledge, as an illusion stems from a lack of perception of specific qualities of an object. Since God has no equal or superior, the scriptures assert, in reality, that there is non-duality, not implying that duality or plurality is an illusion.

The reality of difference lies in perception. We see blue and yellow as distinct, perceiving their difference. However, some argue that perception cannot grasp difference alone without apprehending the entities involved. Difference arises from the distinction between separate entities, if these entities aren't perceived, their difference cannot be either. Therefore, perception either apprehends the entities first and then their difference or it comprehends both entities and their difference simultaneously. Difference, according to Madhva, constitutes the essence of the object itself, an intrinsic feature thereof. Essence, difference, and individuality are all apprehended within a single act of perception. The perception of difference is not illusory.

Madhva says the existence of difference is established not only by direct evidence but also by inferential evidence. The form of this estimate is–

Supreme reality or God is different from individual self – Pratijñā.

As He is worshipped or served by Individual self – Hetu.

Whoever the worshipped or served by whom is always different from that, for example, a king is different from his servant – Udaharaṇa.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Madhva, the world is real and eternal but inert. Lord Vishnu is the ruler of this world. Śaṅkara spoke truth to the world from a practical point of view but said false to it from a transcendental point of view. Again, to Rāmānuja, the world is created from the Acit part of Brahman. But according to the dualist Madhvācārya, Supreme Lord Vishnu and the world are completely separate. Advaitīns said that this world phenomenon is created by māyā or avidyā. For them, duality is only imaginary; non-duality is the only truth. Madhva replied that this five-fold phenomenon can never be false because it is eternal.

This world is eternal and true because it is created by māyā. By māyā, Madhvācārya means the will of the Supreme Lord (Bhagavadicchā). It is by the will of the Supreme Lord that the creation, status and destruction of this world phenomenon are taking place. That is, duality is never false. But even if the difference is true, the Supreme Lord is the best, there is nothing equal to Him or better than Him.

The individual soul, known as jiva, assumes roles as the knower, enjoyer, and doer. Although atomic in size, it can experience sensations throughout its entire being, akin to how a lamp illuminates a room. While dependent on God, the individual soul is an active agent, capable of both right and wrong actions and accruing merits and demerits. God is the revered master, while the jivas serve as worshipping devotees.

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<sup>30</sup> Sayan madhava, *Sarvvadarshana Saṁgraha* (1<sup>st</sup> part), trns. Satyajyoti Chakraborty (Kolkata: Sāhityashree, 1419), 116-117.

The Deity and the devotee maintain distinct identities. God is characterized by omniscience, omnipotence, and perfection, contrasting with the finite knowledge and limited power of the jiva, which remains entirely dependent on God. Although dwelling within the individual soul, God remains unaffected by its joys and sorrows. According to him, the individual soul is distinct from God, and this distinction is perpetual. Understanding the disparity between the jiva and God leads to liberation. God assumes the role of the Moral Governor. Like an impartial judge, God bestows rewards and punishments according to the merits and demerits accrued by each soul, adhering to the Law of Karma inherent in his nature without exception.

If one says, I will attain all kinds of happiness like Lord Vishnu; I will have no sorrow, then he will never attain happiness. If one wants to attain the equal status to the Lord, it is not good for him. Moreover, he who considers himself to be different from Him and sings the praises of God by expressing his lowliness and leanness; God is pleased with him and grants all desired things. If the living being considers himself identical to God or thinks of himself as *Aham Brahmāsmi*, then God degrades the living being. Whoever thinks himself a king, the king kills him. And the one who thinks of himself as small and praises the king's excellence, the king is pleased and gives him all the good things. So those who imagine themselves to be non-different from the Supreme, preach the infinite quality of Vishnu as a false like a mirage. As a result, they bring their own misfortune. To attain the pleasure of the Lord is the sole purpose of the jiva. Monsters are eternally cursed for being anti-Vishnu, i.e. thinking themselves identical with God. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu fulfils those who spend their lives in the service of God. Therefore, according to Madhvācārya, living beings should not be so arrogant as to think of themselves as identical to God. So he would spend his life in the service of Lord Vishnu. And where there is a question of

service, the difference is well established. If the servant and the served are not different, then there is no service at all. Service always implies duality. So, the sole aim of the Asvatantra living beings is to attain the pleasure of the Lord Vishnu. And it is not possible to attain Param Puruṣārtha without the superior knowledge of the Supreme Lord Vishnu. The awakening of this knowledge does not arise by hearing Mahāvākyas like ‘Tattvamsi’, but through service to Vishnu.<sup>31</sup>

Madhvācārya speaks of three types of service to Vishnu, namely— drawing, naming and chanting or singing. Remembrance of the form of Nārāyaṇa and the marking of his weapons on the body is called drawing. The living being serves this drawing to achieve their desired things. Generally, the right to heaven belongs to those who live a life of passion (vitṛāga). One who embodies Vishnu’s Chakra on his body moves in Suraloka like the passionate (vitṛāga) people. By drawing the ‘Sudarśana chakra’ in the arms, the Gods enter the heavenly world, and by drawing that chakra, human beings achieve success in them, too, in this world. The persons depicted are devotees and attain heaven. Various sayings can be observed regarding this Vishnu’s Cakra. As it is said to the ‘Sudarśana chakra’—

“O Sudarśana, the great effulgence! Show me eternal Vishnu’s pada from unconscious darkness. In the case of the conch, it is said, O Pāñcajanya, you were formerly born from the ocean and placed in the hands of Vishnu. The worshipper of all Gods, praṇāms to you.”<sup>32</sup>

Incidentally, it should be noted that the Pāñcajanya, in the hands of Krishna, used to initiate and direct the war. However, if we consider the philosophical interpretation, Pāñcajanya has a controlling value, not only in the Kurukṣetra war but

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*,— 116.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*,—118.

also in our lives. If we can be controlled by the Pāñcajanya, then we can get the grace of the one who holds the Pāñcajanya.

This service to Lord Vishnu is also done through naming. Naming means the naming of sons like Keshav, etc. by parents always to remember Vishnu's name. But each of the names we notice of Vishnu or Krishna reminds us of their particular pastimes (līlā). For example, one of Vishnu's aṣṭatara satanāma, one of his līlā, has been glorified. So, this naming is not only for identification but also for their fond remembrance. Keeping in mind this līlā or glory, the Supreme Lord is given various names. This is also a form of service of a devotee to Lord Vishnu.

Similarly, Madhvācārya describes bhajan or chanting or singing as another means of service. This bhajan is done in ten forms. When we speak the truth through words, it is a form of service to Vishnu. Not only speaking the truth, when we speak something beneficial to humanity, it is also considered as a form of service to Lord Vishnu. However, words that are beneficent or benevolent to people and at the same time enthralling are rare in today's world.

So Madhva says, not only satyabhāṣaṇa or hitbhāṣaṇa service, but Priyabhāṣaṇa is also a kind of service. Moreover, a person who recites the Vedas regularly is also serving the Supreme Lord. When one donates something with his body, or saves someone from any danger or solves any problem, then he is serving God. Moreover, if a person devotes his mind to someone with kindness, respect and love, then that too can be called service. In this context, Madhvācārya must remind us of one thing that, after performing each of the above tasks, surrendering to Nārāyaṇa can only be accepted as bhajan. If there is no surrender to Nārāyaṇa anywhere, then the actions would only be an expression of personal pride, not bhajana.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*,— 121.

The jiva attains liberation through the grace of God. The liberated soul achieves a semblance of similarity with God, retaining its individual identity within him. Despite its liberation, the released soul remains susceptible to experiencing afflictions. Liberation is achieved through understanding the supreme qualities of God, rather than realizing identity with God. It is attained through recognizing the soul's distinction from and subordination to God, requiring divine grace for its fruition. When a devotee surrenders and seeks refuge in God, divine grace bestows the saving knowledge of differentiation, leading to liberation. Devotion, knowledge, and fulfilment of duties serve as pathways to liberation. Cultivating virtues such as truthfulness, scripture study, charity, compassion, desire for God, meditation, righteousness, faith, devotion, and worship, alongside yogic practices, is essential.

There exist three categories of souls: (1) eternally free (nitya) souls, (2) liberated (mukta) souls, and (3) the bound (baddha). Among the bound souls, some are eligible for liberation, while others remain perpetually bound to the cycle of saṁsāra (nityasaṁsārin), and still others are destined for hell (tamoyogya).

### **1.5 The Śuddhādvaita theory of Vallabha**

Criticizing Śaṅkara's monism, Ācārya Vallabha founded Śuddhādvaitavāda on the 'Brahmasūtra'. His commentary on 'Brahmasūtra' is known as Aṇubhāṣya. According to Vallabha, Brahman is singular, formed, omnipotent, omniscient, the cause of all, and embodies being, consciousness, and bliss. Lord Krishna is the Brahman. This Brahman is devoid of all distinctions. He is the essence of bliss and possesses six qualities of Lordship. It wields an unfathomable power to create and govern all things. The various qualities and powers located in the living beings, world and Brahman are all one and identical to Brahman. There is no duality in him. So He is Śuddhādvaita in nature.



Śaṅkara denied the world and other attributes and powers of Brahman, but to Vallabha, they were all true. By accepting the existence of all things, he founded Śuddhādvaitavāda. According to Him, Brahman is both the material cause (samavāyikāraṇa) and the efficient cause (nimittakāraṇa) of the world. He is the cause of creation, status and destruction of this world. He is the doer, he is the enjoyer. He is the creator but silent. Although he is the material cause, domestic responsibilities (saṁsāra dharma) are not imposed on Him. His creation is not created by the desires of bodies. We need a worldly authority for body's desire. But his creation of this world is miraculous. So there is no need for bodies; there is no connection of saṁsāra dharma. Vallabh thus said,—

*Aneka-bhuta-bhautika-deva-triyaṇa-manuṣyāneka-lokatbhuta-racnā-yukta*

*Brahmānda-koti-rupasya-manasyā-pykalayitumaśkyā-racanāsyānāyāsenotpatti-sthi-bhaṅga-kāraṇaṁ na laukikam.*<sup>34</sup>

Brahman is the direct Lord of both prakṛti and individual souls. Prakṛti, the substance of the world, is the manifestation of God's power, while Individual souls are eternal fragments and emanations of Brahman. The universe and Individual souls collectively constitute Brahman, which is synonymous with God. Brahman is not an illusory appearance or a product of māyā; it is the ultimate reality. Māyā is the power of Brahman, constituting his creation. Brahman acts as the knower, enjoyer, and doer, devoid of a physical body, yet capable of assuming bodies for the sake of his devotees in playful endeavours. He is the Supreme Person (Puruṣottama), while pure Brahman stands as the sole reality. Authority and enjoyerism are present in Brahman as natural

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<sup>34</sup> *Aṇbhāṣya* – 1/1/2

qualities (svābhāvika dharma). In his words,— *Tasmāda Brahmagateva kartṛtvam bhokṛtvameva*.<sup>35</sup>

To Vallabh, Brahman is both qualified (saguṇa) and attributeless (nirguṇa). He is qualified (saguṇa) as the shelter of numerous auspicious qualities and He is attributeless (nirguṇa) as devoid of all kinds of bad qualities. Just as the coiled snake and the stretched snake are one and the same, so the form and qualities of Brahman are the same. In this sense, Brahman is nirguṇa. This Brahman is infinite and immeasurable. He can be everything. So, it may also contain an assembly of anti-qualities or anti-sentences. Thus Vallabha said in his *Aṇubhāṣya—Acintyānantaśakti mati sarvabhāvaṇā samarthe Brahmani virodhābhāvācca*.<sup>36</sup> That means Brahman is infinite and unthinkable powerful. Taking refuge in the opposing character is His ornament.

Brahman, as the cause, is undifferentiated, true, knowledgable (jñānasvarupa), infinite, one unique being and beyond the world. On the other hand, as an effect, Brahman is specific and worldly in nature. Vallabha says that Brahman, with the help of His infinite and unthinkable power, transforms Himself into the form of jiva and jagat. Therefore, Brahman is independent and not self-differentiated as cause but it is specific and self-differentiated as action. It encompasses being, consciousness, and bliss, with the ability to conceal and reveal these qualities voluntarily. He hides his bliss and qualities of Lordship within individual souls, as well as his consciousness within matter. Matter represents Brahman with suppressed bliss and consciousness, whereas the jīva embodies Brahman with suppressed bliss. Being, consciousness, and bliss find complete manifestation in Brahman alone, with the qualities of Lordship exclusively evident in God. Being manifests in matter, consciousness in the jiva, and

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, – 1/1/2

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, – 1/1/1

bliss in the inner soul (antaryāmin) within the jīva; all these qualities are fully realized in Brahman.

Different degrees of reality exist, representing varying stages of concealment and manifestation of the divine qualities of being, consciousness, and bliss. Due to the evolution (āvirbhāva) and involution (tirobhāva) of these qualities, matter, jīva, and God exhibit distinctions from one another. However, when consciousness and bliss are fully manifested by Brahman, they assimilate into Brahman. Matter and jīva share an essential nature with Brahman, yet differ from him when his qualities are partially concealed within them. The creation of the world and the emanation of jīvas represent a partial self-concealment (tirobhāva) of God, while self-manifestation (āvirbhāva) fulfils the destiny of matter and jīvas. These processes of self-concealment and self-manifestation are distinctive features of Suddhādvaitavāda. Matter, jīva and inner souls (antaryāmin) each represent parts of being, consciousness, and bliss of God, respectively.

God is singular yet chooses to manifest as multiple entities for the sake of divine play. His act of creation is not determined by an external purpose but is a voluntary and playful endeavour. In creating the world, God veils his consciousness and bliss, assuming the form of the world without undergoing any modification. Creation represents a process of concealment (tirobhāva), while dissolution entails a process of manifestation (āvirbhāva). Creation involves enfolding, while dissolution involves unfolding. God willingly transforms into the world, akin to a serpent coiling itself, yet remains unchanged in nature, similar to gold being fashioned into various ornaments without altering its essence.

Vallabha advocates the doctrine of immutable transformation (avikṛta pariṇā mavāda), wherein the cause remains unchanged (avikṛta) despite being transformed into the effect (pariṇāma). Brahman remains immutable even as it is expressed in the world. Vallabha addresses the question of how non-eternal material things can be considered Brahman by explaining that they are essentially eternal Brahman, appearing non-eternal due to the suppression of consciousness and bliss within them. Material entities are directly created by God, with no physical causation involved; all causation is spiritual. Plurality arises from divine will, and God encompasses contradictory qualities. Plurality and contradiction find reconciliation within the unity of God.

According to Śaṅkara, the world is a deceptive appearance (māyika) generated by Brahman in relation to māyā. Brahman, when not associated with māyā, does not serve as its cause. The world constitutes an illusory manifestation (prapañca), born out of ignorance (ajñāna). Hence, the idea of Brahman as the creator is deemed apparent, with only nirguṇa Brahman being considered real. Saguṇa Brahman, or God, is perceived as an illusory manifestation. The Vallabha challenges this notion. According to him, nirguṇa Brahman is not the ultimate reality. Brahman is saguṇa, or qualified, possessing being, consciousness, bliss, and the six qualities of Lordship. He serves as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the world, as well as the Moral Governor. God is genuine and real. Therefore, the world he created is also real. Both the cause (God) and the effect (world) are equally real.

According to Vallabha, like Brahman, the world is eternal, true and the same with Brahman. The world is a part of Brahman. Brahman is the cause and the world is its function. This world originates from the truth (Sat) part of Brahman. However, the world is real like Brahman but not conscious (Cit) and joyful (ānanda svarupa) in

nature. It is by the will of Brahman that this world appears, and by his will, it ceases. Brahman has become the world for his līlā. So, the world is Brahman. Since this world is identical to Brahman, it is real (Sat). Līlā alone is not possible, so He created the living being and the world for His līlā. That is, before creation, only Brahman existed. At that time, his joy (ānanda) was not fully developed. So, He created the living beings and the world for the full outpouring of His pleasure. Brahman creates the world by his Sat virtue and living beings by virtue of Cit. Even though Brahman himself becomes the living being and the world, there is no disorder or change in his form. This result of it is an unaltered result. So, just as Brahman, living beings and the world are also true and eternal. So, even if monists call the world as false, he does not accept it. According to him, māyā or avidyā is the power of Brahman. With the help of this power, he creates various worlds. So, this world created by māyā can never be false.

However, false knowledge can arise due to māyā in the living being. But it never produces a false object. Because māyā or avidyā only beguiles the intellect of the living being by its illusory power (Vyamohikā śakti) and the covering power (Accādikā śakti) of māyā only covers the true nature of the object. That is why we have false knowledge about something. But the object does not falsify itself. In the words of Vallabha,—

*Yadvavastu svarupe anyathā pratibhāsate, tadātmanam jivānām vyāmohikā yā māyā purvaṁ nirupitā, tasyām kāryam. Sā hi jīvaṁ vyāmohayitvā satsambandhinamastahkāraṇabuddhyādikamapi vyāmohayati. Tayā vyāmohitā buddhiḥ padārthānanyathā mnyate, na tu padārthā anyathā bhavasti. Māyā ca dvidha*

*bhramam janayati—vidyāmānam na prakāśayati, avidyāmānañca prakāśayati deśakālavṛtyāyena.*<sup>37</sup>

Here, the question may arise— Is māyā a product of creation, or is it eternal? If māyā is created, then Brahman must be its origin, resulting in Brahman becoming determinate and qualified. However, if māyā is not created, it implies that it exists eternally alongside Brahman. This compromises non-dualism and fails to explain the occasional appearance and disappearance of the world. Furthermore, if māyā is eternal, it cannot be destroyed, rendering the doctrine of māyā irrational and untenable. Māyā represents the divine power of God, inseparable from him. Contrary to being mere illusions, jivas are genuine manifestations of pure Brahman, with concealed bliss. They constitute real fragments of Brahman, devoid of avidyā. The world, regarded as real, is identical to Brahman in essence.

Due to ignorance or avidyā, living beings perform fruitful actions, and as a result, saṁsāra is produced. Therefore, even though this saṁsāra is false due to ignorance of living beings, this world created by God is not false. At the time of liberation, even though the destruction of the saṁsāra may occur, the world remains unchanged. Because this world is the creation of Brahman, it is as true and eternal as Brahman. Thus, he pointed out the difference between avidyā or māyā of living being and the māyā of God.

Vallabha says that jiva is a part of Brahman. He is eternal and free from the attributes of prakṛti, surpassing prakṛti in their essence. They embody conscious souls, inherently self-luminous, exerting control over their bodies, sense organs, life, and internal faculties. Their existence is apprehended through self-awareness, devoid of

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<sup>37</sup> *Subodhinī Tikā* – 2/9/33

intrinsic natural qualities. However, they assume relationships with nature, capable of severing all ties with it and attaining readiness for liberation.

Despite its atomic nature, it permeates the body through consciousness, experiencing sensations throughout. Individual souls differ from one another, constituting distinct parts of Brahman, diverging from him due to the suppression of bliss. Yet, in their fundamental essence, they are identical to him, transcending mere appearances to embody reality. The proclamation ‘That thou art’ (tat-tvam-asi) signifies the jiva’s identity with Brahman, serving as Brahman’s inherent part, reflecting a genuine identity between them, a true non-difference (abheda) between the whole and its constituent parts. Although living being is limited in size, it pervades the entire body as it is the form of knowledge. In Vallabha’s words,–

*Aṇutve sarvaśarīravapyi caitanyam ghaṭata iti birodha na bhavati candanavat. Yatha, candanamekadeśasthitam– sarvvadehasukham karoti. Mahātaptatāilasthitam bā tāpanivṛttim.*<sup>38</sup>

That is to say, just as sandalwood produces happiness in all bodies even though it is located in one part of the body, similarly, even though jiva is atomic in nature, it spreads its influence on all bodies or bodies through the quality called Caitanya. Jiva is a part of Brahman and Brahman is a part holder. Just as the spark of fire emanates from fire, so the material world arises from the Sat part of Brahman and the living beings from the Cit part. When the property of joyfulness from Brahman is gone, he attained living beingness (jivabhāva). In other words, although the living being is real (sat) and conscious (cit), it is not joyful in nature (ānanda svarupa). Brahman allocates a portion of divine freedom to jivas to uphold morality and religious principles.

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<sup>38</sup> *Aṇbhāṣya* – 2/3/23

Similar to Śaṅkara, Vallabha locates avidyā within the worldly soul. Liberation results from a genuine realization of the non-difference (abheda) between the world and the jivas from Brahman, a point on which Vallabha concurs with Śaṅkara. True knowledge of Brahman eradicates avidyā. The liberated soul sheds its incidental qualities of prakṛti and regains its inherent purity, establishing a harmonious connection with God without losing its distinct identity. Becoming God is not the outcome; rather, the means lead to the end of liberation. God enables the dependent soul to attain closeness with him and experience supreme bliss, through boundless grace, demonstrating divine compassion toward his devotees.

There exist three types of souls: pure, worldly, and liberated. A pure soul remains untainted by avidyā, while bondage arises from its connection to avidyā, an eternal condition. Through divine grace, the bound soul gains fivefold vidyā—dispassion, discrimination, yoga, austerities, and devotion—ultimately achieving liberation. Liberated souls establish a deep connection with God but do not attain lordship over him. They may be either jivanmukta, liberated while embodied, or mukta, liberated after death.

Souls are categorized as godly (daiva) or demoniac (asura), with the godly souls further divided into two types. Some follow the path of maryadā-bhakti, cultivating karma (action), jñāna (knowledge), and bhakti (devotion) to attain Akṣara Brahman. Others pursue the path of puṣṭibhakti, cultivating pure love for God and forsaking all desires except affinity with Him, ultimately attaining the Supreme Person, Purushottama, through His grace.



## 1.6 The Bhedābhedavāda of Bhāṣkara

Ācārya Bhāṣkara founded Aupādhika-Bhedābhedavāda based on ‘Brahmasūtra’ to attack Śaṅkara’s Jñānasticism just when the entire country was flooded with the power of Śaṅkara’s doctrine. The commentary he wrote on ‘Brahmasūtra’ is known as Sārīraka Mīmāṃsā Bhāṣya. According to Bhāṣkara, Brahman is the Supreme reality. He is qualified (saguṇa). Being qualified, He is sat and sattāvna, jñasvarupa and jñānavāna. Two forms are present in this Brahman— one is the causal form (kāraṇarupa), and the other is the functional form (kāryarupa). In his words,— *Brahmaiva hi kāraṇātmānā kāryātmanā dvirupeṇāvasthitamityukttama.*<sup>39</sup>

Brahman is formless as cause and Brahman is jīva and world as action. He is both the material and efficient cause of the universe. He is the cause of creation, status and destruction. Brahman as cause is one in form, but Brahman appears in many forms in action. Various forms of Brahman exist. Infinite and unimaginable power resides in Brahman. There are two types of power in Brahman— (1) Bhogya Śakti and (2) Bhoktṛī Śakti. Bhogya Śakti becomes unconscious matter like the sky, etc. and Bhoktṛī Śakti takes the form of the conscious jīva. But even though Brahman has two forms, his causal form is true and natural. His functional form is nominal (aupādhika). This form is his new form (aguntuka rupa). Though, the functional form is stranger (aguntuka), it is not false. This is also completely true like, causal form. In the words of Bhāṣkar— *Sa cābhinnābhinna svarupohbhinnarupaṁ svābhāvikamaupādhikaṁ tu bhinnarupama.*<sup>40</sup>

Brahman as the cause is regardless (nirviśeṣa), without name and form (nāmarupavihīna), one, unique and omnipotent. In the form of action, he is associated with the determinate (sviśeṣa) and self-differentiated (svagatahedahīna). Although,

<sup>39</sup> Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā Bhāṣya— 1/1/11

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.,— 2/3/43

there is no existence other than Supreme Brahman in the form of action Brahman, but as a causal form, Brahman exists beyond the world. Jiva, in action, is a part of Brahman, so there is an identity-in-difference relation between jiva and Brahman. There is no difference between Brahman, the material world and living beings in the causal state; they are the same. Just as there is a relationship between Śakti and Śaktimāna, similarly, there is a relationship of identity-in-difference between Brahman and the living being and world. Ocean waves being oceanic are identical to the ocean, but in wave form, they are different or separate from the ocean. Similarly, the relationship between Brahman, the living being, and the world is also associated with such identity-in-difference.

Bhāṣkara says that it is Brahman who becomes jiva form in action. So, jiva is a part of Brahman. Consuming power (Bhoktṛi Śakti) of Brahman becomes the living being or jiva. In the saṁsāra dasā, the living being is surrounded by bodies and considers himself different from Brahman. But when this bond of jiva is severed, i.e., during the deluge, jiva and Brahman become identical. Therefore, the difference between jiva and Brahman is not natural but nominal (aupādhika). The identity of jiva and Brahman is natural. That is, because of this upādhi, Brahman and jiva seem to be different. It is this upādhi that separates jiva from Brahman. Therefore, jiva is bhinnābhīna from Brahman. Jiva is identical to Brahman in nature or cause but different from Brahman in terms of upādhi. In other words, the relationship between Brahman and the world in the saṁsāra state is a Bhedābheda relationship. Hence, this view of Bhāṣkara is known as Aupādhika-Bhedābheda-vāda. He thinks that the coexistence of this identity and differences is possible. If we look at our daily lives, coexistence of difference and non-differentiation is clearly witnessed. For example, one person as a person is different from another person, but as a human being, they

are the same. But the distinction, though true, is not permanent, as long as the upādhi exists, the distinction is true.

According to Bhāṣkara, cause and effect are identical. Just as there is no difference between a coiled snake and an extended snake, so there is no distinction between cause and effect. Action is only a special state of causation. In this sense, cause and action are identical. On the other hand, cause and action are different, for example, ocean and ocean's waves. A wave, as a wave, is different from the ocean, but the wave is also identical to the ocean because it is oceanic. So, the relationship between cause and action is not completely different, nor is it identical. The relationship between them is identity-in-difference. Similarly, the relationship between Brahman and the living being and the world is also the relationship of identity-in-difference. As jiva jagat originates from Brahman, they are identical to Brahman. Again, since the entity of the living being and the world and the entity of Brahman are different, they are also different. Bhāṣkara says that the upādhi is the reason for this difference of Brahman with the living beings and the world. Because of this upādhi, the living being and world considers itself different from Brahman even though it is identical to Brahman. The living being and the world are also as real as Brahman. In his words,— *Na Caupādhika Kartṛtvam Apāramāṛthikam*.<sup>41</sup>

Just as the spark of fire is not false, upādhi is also not false. Just as the natural form of Brahman is true, so is the nominal form (upādhi) true. But, the difference between the normal form and the nominal form is that the normal form is eternal, but the nominal form is non-eternal. Similarly, the difference between Brahman and jiva is nominal. This distinction is true but not eternal. Non-differentiation between Brahman and jiva is natural. It is true and eternal.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*,— 2/3/40

As long as the upādhi of ignorance is present among us, this difference or bheda exists. The jiva becomes identical to Brahman when the upādhi is annihilated. Then, jiva also becomes omniscient and omnipotent like Brahman. So, the authority of the living being and enjoyers is not natural but nominal. For if these were natural, the dominion and consumption of the living being would continue forever, but this is not the case. The multiplicity of living beings also depends on the upādhi. Brahman and jiva are not different. That is, jiva is also jñānasvarupa like Brahman. The world is Brahman (Brahmātmaka). Brahman is both the material and efficient cause of the universe. Therefore, the world is identical to Brahman in its causal form. Brahman is the cause of creation, status and destruction of this world.

Talking about liberation, Bhāṣkara says that the result of worship is liberation. Attainment of liberation is not only the end of sorrow but also a state of complete bliss. Brahman is the subject of knowledge. Brahman is met by worship, and the jiva and Brahman become identical. Śaṅkara called Brahman void of all four vikars like, upapādy, vikārya, saṁskārya and āpya. But according to Bhāṣkara, even if the first three are not possible, Brahman is āpya. Free beings attain Him. That is, if knowledge is gained with action, Brahman is attained. Brahman is a matter of āpya or attainment. So he called the liberation that Śaṅkara spoke of as tasteless, unattainable and he preferred śṛgālatva to such liberation. In his words, –

*Nisambandhā nirāsvādestvatpakṣe mokṣaḥ syāt caitanya-mātrāvaśeṣāt. Vadanti kecit śṛgālatvaṁ bane baramiti.*<sup>42</sup>

He says that when the bodies are destroyed, the self-intelligence in the body ceases, and the living beings become emancipated by joining the omniscience. According to Bhāṣkara, the living being is not free from the beginning. Salvation is a

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, – 1/1/4

matter of attainment. Mokṣa is attained by sādhanā. The freed jiva attains the Brahmaness, attains the power of omniscience of Brahman. He did not believe in jivanmukti. He was a videha muktivādi. He spoke of two types of liberation—Sadyomukti and Kramamukti. Those living beings that attain the same form as Supreme Brahman through the worship of Supreme Brahman and become omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent like Supreme Brahman attain Sadyomukti. And the liberation of those who first attain kārya Brahman Hiranyagarbha through worship and then dissolve into Parabrahm along with Hiranyagarbha is kramamukti.

### **1.7 Nimbārka and his Dvaitādvaita theory**

The doctrine established by Ācārya Nimbārka based on the ‘Brahmasūtra’ is known as Dvaitādvaitavāda. He wrote a commentary on ‘Brahmasūtra’ called ‘Vedanta Pārijāta Saurabha’. Although Nimbārka’s doctrine was similar to that of Bhāṣkara, he interpreted the ‘Brahmasūtra’ from a completely different perspective. According to Nimbārka, Brahman is the Ultimate, Supreme Being (Puruṣottama), endowed with boundless, incomprehensible natural essences, qualities, and abilities. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and omnipresent, adorned with infinite sublime attributes. Completely devoid of imperfections, he is the creator, sustainer, and destructor of both conscious souls (cit) and unconscious matter (acit) within the world. As the sovereign ruler, he governs all finite entities and bestows the consequences of their deeds, possessing limitless knowledge, boundless bliss, and unparalleled willpower. He is Boundless (bhūmā), self-existent, and absolute. Endowed with transcendental bliss and eternal life, He is indestructible (akṣara). As the foundation of all past, present, and future effects, he upholds the world, ensuring its stability and harmony. His essence is eternal manifestation, simultaneously transcendent and immanent. Beyond the world, yet pervading it, he is apprehended solely through the Vedas. The

ultimate goal of human pursuit is that he is the supreme destination for individual souls, who partake in his divine bliss. Acting as the inner controller (antaryāmīn) of both world and souls, he is the knower and master of all phenomena and entities.

Brahman is the ultimate; there is no one superior or equal to Him. Jiva and the world are the result of Brahman. According to Nimbārka, Brahman is omniscient and omnipotent. There are no limits between Brahman like, spatial, temporal and material limitations; that is, He is eternal. In the words of Nimbārka,— *Anantacintya svābhāvika svarupa guṇa śakttyādibhi brihattamo yo.*<sup>43</sup>

There is no other entity in the world than Brahman but Brahman is beyond the world. That is, the world is different from Brahman and also identical. Since the world is Brahman, Brahman and the world are identical. Again, Brahman is different from the world because it has an existence beyond the world. Therefore, the world is different from Brahman in function, but Brahman as cause is identical with the world. So, the relation of the world to Brahman is the relation of identity-in-difference. He is Omnipotent. He manifests Himself as the world by His power to see His own metaphysical world individually.

According to Nimbārka, Brahman is both attributeless (nirguṇa) and qualified (saguṇa). He is attributeless because there is no distinction in Him as knowledge, knower, or knowable. Even though Brahman transforms himself into the world with his energy, he is still formless (nirākāra). At the time of deluge, the world is absorbed in Brahman, and then there is no difference between quality and qualificandum (guṇa and guṇī). That is, He is attributeless by nature. Again, he is qualified as the cause of the world, etc. But according to him, Brahman's qualifiedness is the main one, and these attributes are transcendental. Brahman is beyond the living beings and world. At

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<sup>43</sup> *Vedanta Pārijāta Saurabha* – 1/1/1

the time of the deluge, the living beings and the material world, though dissolved in Brahman, do not transmit their quality (dharma) to it. Brahman is infinite and infinite in quality and power.

The World is a līlā of Supreme Brahman. He created the living beings by the Cit Śakti inherent in Him and the world by the Acit Śakti. These Cit and Acit Śakti are latently embedded in Brahman during the deluge. That is, creation means only the manifestation of what was previously hidden or unmanifested. Brahman is not only omniscient, omnipotent, sustainer or destroyer of this world but also supremely merciful. He created the world for the enjoyment of His pleasure. Brahman manifests Himself in the form of the world with the help of Acit Śakti within His infinite power. At the time of deluge, even though the world is absorbed in Brahman, no disorder arises in Brahman; Brahman remains in an unaltered form.

Talking about jiva, Nimbārka says that jiva is a part of Brahman and Brahman is a part holder. Jiva is jñānasvarupa. Knowledge is both the nature and quality of the living being. As a part of Brahman, the jiva shares both the distinct and inseparable relationship with the divine. However, there exists a significant difference between the individual soul and Brahman. The individual soul, as the worshipper, undergoes the consequences of its actions, whereas Brahman, as the worshipped, remains unaffected by such experiences. Jiva, being a part of Brahman, cannot be identical to Brahman. Even if liberated, the living being remains a part of Brahman. Living beingness of a living being is eternal. Hence, the distinction between jiva and Brahman is clear. Although Bhāṣkara speaks of Bhedābheda-vāda, his difference with Nimbārka is that according to Bhāṣkara, through worship, the living being attains Brahmān-bhava or becomes identical with Brahman. And attaining this uniformity is liberation. But Nimbārka says that even after liberation, the jiva does not become

identical with Brahman. Even in liberation, the living beingness of living being is not destroyed. Jiva still remains a part of Brahman. The inherent knowledge and bliss of the individual soul may be obscured by ignorance, but through the grace of God, this ignorance can be dispelled.

‘Tattvamsi’ etc., Mahāvākyas express the identity of jiva and Brahman. That is, there is a distinct and inseparable relationship between jiva and Brahman. As an illustration, he mentions the sun and the sun’s rays, as well as the sea and the waves of the sea. Just as the sea and waves of the sea are different yet the same, the sun and the sun’s rays are different and the same, so the enjoyer jiva is different from Brahman and the same. Nimbārka says that the relationship between the living being and the world with Brahman is a relationship of identity-in-difference. Because Brahman is the cause and the living being and the universe are its functions. And the relationship between action and cause is the relationship of identity and difference. Cause and action are identical because the action is implicitly absorbed by its material cause before its origin. Again, the separate entities of cause and effect are also recognized, so they are different. Brahman and jiva are identical in nature. Because the living being and the world are the function or result of Brahman, they are Brahman. In this respect, they are identical with Brahman. Again, jiva jagata is different from Brahman because jiva, jagat and Brahman— each has a separate existence i.e. the relationship between Brahman and jiva is the relation of identity and difference.

Again, from the characteristics, the living being and the world is identical to Brahman, because just as Brahman is true and eternal, the living being and the world are also true and eternal. Jiva, like Brahman, is Saccidānanda in nature. Again, there is a difference between Brahman and jiva. All the attributes of Brahman are not



present in the living being and the world. Brahman Vibhu, the all-pervading but living being, is atomic. Brahman is the creator, sustainer and destroyer, but there is no creative power in living beings, so living beings and Brahman are different from each other. Like the jiva, there is a difference between Brahman and the world— Brahman is conscious and animate in nature but jagat is unconscious and inanimate in nature. The living being and the world are dependent on Brahman. But Brahman is independent and free. So it is clear that just as there is a difference between Brahman and the living being and world, there is also non-differentiation. And this difference and non-differentiation are eternal and normal. Hence, Nimbārka's doctrine is known as Svābhāvika Bhedābheda or Dvaitādvaitavāda.

Regarding liberation, Nimbārka says that even if the living being attains liberation through sādhanā, the living being remains in the form of a living being. Jiva is always eternal, even in the bound state. The difference between a bound jiva and a free jiva is that in the bound state, the jiva cannot realize himself and the world as Brahman. But jiva is able to realize it in a free state. That is, in the free state, the living being sees himself and the world as Brahman. He says that the word 'Tattvamsi' refers not to the identity of jiva and Brahman, but to similarity. In his words— *Brahmasākṣyātakāddhetostena saha sāmyaṁ yati*.<sup>44</sup>

In liberation, the living being realizes his own nature. Although the living being is jñānasvarupa, but in the bound state, it is covered by ignorance; it considers itself identical to the body and suffers the mundane tribulations of hunger, thirst, happiness and sorrow etc. All these conditions of the living being are destroyed in liberation. The living being is able to realize the Atmasvarupa, i.e. Brahmasvaruptā, or the living being realizes himself as Brahman. In liberation, the jiva attains the form

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*,— 3/2/26

of joy. So, to Nimbārka, liberation is not only the annihilation of sorrows, it is a blissful state. He was a Bideha Mukti-vādi.

He spoke of devotion as a means of attaining liberation. Bhakti is the main means of liberation. Bhakti is the best love. Bhakti emerges when the devotee is freed from all forms of egoism by the grace of God. Brahman gives salvation to those devotees who please Him by their sādhanās by taking away their sins.

That is, when purity, self-restraint and love are manifested in the devotee's heart, the devotee begins to think of himself and the world as Brahman.

### **1.8 Baladeva's account of Vedanta**

One of the most important doctrines of Vedanta based on the 'Brahmasūtra' is Acintya-Bhedābheda-vāda. Theoretically, this doctrine was developed by Ācārya Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. He presented Vedanta in a completely new form by composing 'Govinda Bhāṣya' on the 'Brahmasūtra'. Although Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa is the theoretical founder of this philosophy, the centrepiece of this philosophy is Sri Chaitanya deva. He did not give any philosophical analysis or theory, but he chanted the glory of God to the devotees, imparting love. Thus, his philosophy became prominent in his biography. Later, it became theorized by his disciples. One of those disciples was Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. Even before Sri Chaitanya, such signs of love for God can be seen in the devotional songs of musicians like Vidyāpati, Chandidas, Jayadeva, etc. But, Baladeva gave this theory a beautiful philosophical form. He was inspired by Sri Chaitanya himself.

According to Acintya-Bhedābheda-vādīns, Brahman is the only Supreme Being. Lord Krishna is the Supreme Brahman. This Brahman embodies Truth or Existence, Knowledge, and Infinite Bliss (Saccidānanda svarupa). He is omniscient, qualified (saguṇa), determinate (saviseṣa) and devoid of all kinds of bad qualities. Not

only that, but He has infinite and inconceivable power. Everything is included in Him. There is none more powerful than him or equal to him. He created various things, like world, etc. with the help of his power. That is, He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of this world. He is the Supreme Being, in whom all the space and times are included. Limiting an infinite being to space and time is self-contradictory. But this is not true in the case of Supreme Brahman Krishna. He is the Supreme Being; in Him, the space and time are included forever. So, his form is not like the form of space and time. He is infinite in form, and he can assume any form at any time. In his case, no difference can be made between form and spirit.

According to the Gaudiya Vaishnavācāryas, in Supreme Krishna, the infinite and unimaginable power is present. Among these eternal and unthinkable powers of Brahman, three powers are the main ones. They are— Cit Śakti, Jiva Śakti and Māyā Śakti.<sup>45</sup>

The various varieties of these three powers are known as the eternal and unimaginable powers of Lord Krishna. These powers are eternally present in Supreme Brahman. So these are the natural powers (svābhābiki śakti) of Brahman. Just as the burning power (dāhikā śakti) of fire cannot be separated from the fire, so also, these powers of Supreme Brahman cannot be separated from Him. They are eternally inseparably connected with Brahman. Among these powers, Cit Śakti is the natural power (svarupa śakti) of Supreme Brahman. This form of power is the supreme power of Brahman. It is also known as Parā Śakti. With the help of this Cit Śakti, Supreme Brahman performs his various intimate activities (antaranga līlā). That is why another

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<sup>45</sup> *Krishner ananta śakti, tāte tin pradhāna. Cicchakti, Māyāśakti, Jīvaśakti nāma. Sri Chaitanya Charitāmṛta— 2/4/116*

name of this power is Antarangā Śakti. The Vṛttis of this inner power (Antarangā Śakti) or Svarup Śakti are of three types— Sandhinī, Sambit and Halādinī.<sup>46</sup>

Sandhinī Śakti is the power of sat part of Saccidānanda Para Brahman Sri Krishna. It is also known as Sattā Sandhinī Śakti or Āadhar Śakti. With the help of this power, Supreme Brahman preserves his own and others existence. The power of the Cit part of Supreme Brahman is Samvit Śakti. It is also known as Jñāna Sandhinī Śakti. With the help of this power, Supreme Brahman knows himself and communicates to others. On the other hand, the power of the Ānandāmśa of Supreme Brahman is the Halādinī Śakti. This power is also known as blissful power. Supreme Brahman himself experiences joy through this power and makes others experience joy. Sandhinī, Sambit and Halādinī of Svarup Śakti— these three Śaktis or Vṛttis cannot be separated from each other. However, even if these three powers are present simultaneously, their magnitude may vary. When Sandhinī Śakti is more pronounced than Sambita and Halādinī Śakti, it is called Sandhinī Pradhan Svarupa Śakti. And when Sambit is predominant, then it is called Sambit Pradhāna Svarup Śakti. It is also called Ātmavidyā. And when the Halādinī Śakti is more than the two above, then it is called the Halādinī pradhāna Svarupa Śakti. It is also known as Guhyavidyā. But when the three powers are in equal measure, it is called murti.<sup>47</sup>

Jiva Śakti is the Taṣṭha Śakti of Supreme Brahman. Conscious jiva is part of this jiva Śakti of Brahman. The question is, accepting this multiplicity of Supreme Brahman, how can we understand his non-duality? It has been answered in different ways in different philosophies. Advaitains have established non-dualism by asserting the falsity of this world through māyā. On the other hand, in the philosophy of Rāmānuja, Brahman is non-dual even though it is differentiated. But the Acintya-

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<sup>46</sup> *Saccidānandapurṇa Kṛṣṇer svrupa. Ekai cicchakti tānr dhare tin rupa. Anandāmśe Halādinī, Sadāmśe Sandhinī, Chidāmśe Samvita yāve 'jñān' kari māni. Ibid.,—1/4/54-55.*

<sup>47</sup> *Yugapat Śaktitraya Pradhānām Murti. Bhagavata Sandarbha— 98.*

Bhedābheda-vādins explained it on the basis of the relation of Śakti and Śaktimāna. Just like the relation of Śakti with Śaktimān, so is the relation of the living being and the world with Brahman. Śakti and Śaktimāna may appear to be different, but they are actually the same. For example, apparently the difference between fire and its heat and light is magnified to our eyes, but actually, fire has the same identity as heat and light. Heat cannot be separated from fire and light and its source. On the other hand, the separate existence of heat and light is also accepted from fire. Such is the relationship between the phenomenon creating power and the transcendental Lord Krishna. The relationship between them is the relationship of identity-in-difference (bheda sahiṣṇu abheda). That is, as difference is true, non-difference is equally true. Brahman is transcendent when He manifests the manifold worldly phenomena by His power. Diversity is an expression of strength, but it does not touch the stronger (Śaktimat). On the other hand, there is no separate existence of power from a source of power. As such, Śakti is identical to Śaktimat. Thus, his non-dualism can be maintained even by considering the world as the source of manifestation. He can be the cause of worldly phenomena even though he is the same with the transcendent power everywhere. This manifestation is real, not false in any sense. Although this world is changing, it cannot be called as false.

But the question is, if the change is true, if power divides itself into ever-changing masses, then it must be affected by that change. And since Śaktimat is identical to Śakti, will it not touch Śaktimat? As a result, this transformation or change in power will become a change in the source of power itself. In that case, the Supreme Being will have no self-nature. But according to pantheism, God is eternally one in all situations. To avoid this problem, monists talk about illusionism (māyāvāda) and evolutionism (vivartavāda) while explaining the phenomenon of false

world. But the Vaishnava sect of Bengal or the Acinta-Bhedābheda-vādīns, abandoned māyāism and evolutionism and accepted the true effect (pariṇāma) of the Supreme Being through Śakti and presented the theory of Acinta-Bhedābheda-vāda. Śakti is different from Śaktimat in one respect and identical in another respect. And because of this difference, the change of power touches Śaktimat. But from the point of view of uniformity, there is no difference between power and source of power. It cannot be understood how these two opposing theories of difference and non-difference (bheda and abheda) can co-exist. Since it cannot be explained with the help of logic or evidence, it is called Acinta. The logic with which we usually explain experience has a limitation. Beyond that, logic is useless. Causes are affected and exhausted by change— this is true for all relative causes that are limited in time and place. Spatial and temporal objects not only touch the cause but also destroy the cause. It is absurd to apply this spatial and temporal rule to absolute causes.

In order to explain this inexplicable character of change, monists resort to māyā and speak of evolutionism. But Acinta-Bhedābheda-vādīns saw māyā as the power of Brahman. So, it cannot be false in any sense. Therefore, they call the relationship between māyā and Brahman or the relationship between Śakti and Śaktimat as Acintya. The coexistence of immutability, change, unity and multiplicity in the same subject is apparently beyond our thinking or self-contradictory. But this coexistence is explained in the scriptures. The scriptures say that there is a divine place where these opposite entities can reside. But that does not wait for any proof. For example, there is no proof that sugar is sweet. Nevertheless, we would say to those who seek logic here that the evidence here is actually semantic (arthāpatti) evidence. Because meaning of arthāpatti is actually an imagination of meaning to resolve two apparent conflicts. Similarly, here also, on the one hand, he who is the

Absolute truth, on the other hand, he is many. This inconceivable theory is imagined to explain the apparent conflict between the absolute theory and the multiplicity. The conflict between non-dual ultimate entity and multiplicity cannot be explained if this evidence is not accepted.

The Acintya-Bhedābheda-vādīns say that jiva śakti is the tatstha śakti of Brahman. Crores of living beings are part of this jiva śakti of Brahman. Jiva is atomic in nature (anuparimāṇa) and eternal. Even after attaining mokṣa, the separate existence of living beings can be observed. Even though the jiva is conscious, it is not svarupa śakti. Even in the nature of living being does not have svarupa śakti. The living beings are many in number, knower, knowledgable and doer. But this authority of living beings is under the supreme Lord Krishna, as living beings are servants of God. These living beings are of two types— eternally free (nitya mukta) and eternally illusory (māyābaddha). As a result of eternal avidyā, the living being is bound by the bonds of saṁsāra and suffers by being bound by the sorrows of birth and death. But by the grace of God (Bhagavad kṛpā), even this illusory being is capable of liberation. By worshipping and chanting the Supreme Being, one can attain liberation from the bonds of the world and become one's own self. Although jiva śakti is the power of Parabrahman, it does not exist in the nature of Brahman. But it may touch with Brahman as it is conscious.

Māyā Śakti on the other hand is jadarupā śakti. This śakti cannot touch Brahman. Because Brahman is the form of knowledge, and māyā is the form of ignorance. This śakti always resides outside of Brahman; hence, it is also known as Varhīṅgā Śakti. In māyā— sattva, rajas, tamas, three qualities are present; hence, it is also called triguṇātmaka. This illusion is called nīkṣhṭā or aparā as the form of saṁsāra bandhanātmika and jadarupā. It is the Lord Krishna who creates balances and

destroys the world with the help of this ‘Māyā Śakti’. So this world phenomenon is not false, but true. But this world is impermanent. Brahman is the uniform material and efficient cause of this world. Brahman created this world with the help of his infinite and inconceivable ‘Māyā Śakti’. Even though Brahman becomes the world with the help of his ‘Varhiraṅgā Śakti’ or ‘Māyā Śakti’, he himself remains uncreated with the help of his infinite and unthinkable power.

The Gauḍiyya Vaiṣṇavācāryas say that the relation of the living being and the world to Brahman is the relation of Acintya-Bhedābheda-vāda. Just as there is a relationship between Śaktimāna and Śakti, so is the relationship between Brahman and the living being and the world. Jiva is a part of Brahman’s ‘Jiva Śakti’ and the world is the result of Brahman’s ‘Māyā Śakti’. And the Bhagavad-dhāmas are the luxuriance (vilās) of Brahman’s ‘Cit Śakti’ or ‘Svarup Śakti’. That is, the relationship of Brahman with all these powers of Brahman is also similar to the relationship of Śakti and Śaktimāna. The question is, how exactly is the relationship between power and source of power? In reply, Acintya-Bhedābheda-vādīns say that just as there cannot be a distinction between Śakti and Śaktimāna, neither can there be a mere non-differentiation. Again, difference and non-distinction exist simultaneously— this cannot be denied. In a sense, there is no difference between fire and its burning power. Because wherever there is fire, there is its burning power. Again, we feel its burning power or heat outside of fire. And in this aspect, they seem to be different. The relationship between living beings and the World with Brahman is exactly the same.

Speaking of liberation, Acintya-Bhedābheda-vādīns say that emancipation means being free from the bonds of māyā. It is under the influence of māyā that the living being is bound by bodies and perceives a form different from its own form.



When this māyā is removed, the living being attains liberation. Devotion is the main means of attaining salvation. It is through devotion that the devotee is able to attain God. They believed that only through the companionship of devotion, all paths of action are capable of yielding their respective results. According to the Gaudiya Vaishnavācāryas, there are two virtues of Cit Śakti— Sādhyaabhakti and Sādhanabhakti. This Cit Śakti alone can remove māyā. When the devotee takes shelter in the Lord and worships the Lord with devotion, the Lord frees him from māyā. In this context, it is said in the Gita –

*Daivī heṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā ।*

*Māmeva ye prapadyante māyāmetāṁ taranti te ।*<sup>48</sup>

The Gaudiya Vaishnavācāryas say that only through pure devotion one can attain Param Puruṣārtha. There are nine limbs of pure devotion— śravaṇa (hearing), kirtan, smaraṇa (remembrance), pādasevana, arcana (worship), vandan, dāsyā, sakhya and ātmanivedana (self-sacrifice). A saint's mind can be purified by any one of the nine limbs. But which organ the saint chooses depends on the taste of the saint. But according to Gaudiya Vaishnavācāryas, Naam Sankirtan is the best form of devotion. Sādhana bhakti takes two forms, depending on the state of mind of the sādha— rāganubhakti and vaidhībhakti. Sādhana bhakti for the service of Supreme Brahman Shri Krishna is rāganubhakti and sādhana motivated by fear of scriptural rules is vaidhībhakti. But Devotee generally prefers rāganubhakti. It is possible to get the love service of Braj through rāganubhakti. The Gaudiya Vaishnavācāryas accepted jivanmukti. They say that all the karmas of the living being are destroyed as a result of chanting the name of Lord Krishna, Sādhanābhakti, etc. but if the devotee wishes to live, then the Lord keeps the devotee alive. The devotee then lives only for the

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<sup>48</sup> *Srimad Bhagavata Gitā*— 7/14

kirtan and bhajan of God's name. And devotee lover Bhagavan also keeps the devotee alive to nourish this sādhana knowledge of the devotee. God is so merciful that whatever He does is for the pleasure of the devotee, He does nothing for Himself. It is also to give pleasure to the devotee that he accepts the service of the devotee.

### **1.9 A comparative analysis**

So far we have discussed the different schools that have been developed in Vedanta tradition. We have seen that various Vedantists have maintained their subtle differences on the question of what exactly is the nature of Brahman, jiva, jagata and the relation of the living being and world to Brahman. Śaṅkara denied the transcendental existence of the living being and the world beyond Brahman. He showed the world as false and living beings as identical to Brahman. But Rāmānuja recognized the theoretical difference between the jiva and the world and explained them as non-different from Brahman. He claimed that the living being and the world are dependent on Brahman, just as adjectives are different from nouns but dependent on nouns. Vallabhācārya's interpretation is much closer to Rāmānuja in that sense; it does not deny that the jiva and the world are transcendental. According to him, māyā or avidyā is the unthinkable power of Brahman. With the help of this power, he creates various worlds. So, this world created by māyā can never be false. And as such, the position of Vallabha is at a different point from Śaṅkara's position. But while Rāmānuja accepted the theoretical uniqueness of the living being and the world, Vallabhācārya did not. Although the theoretical entities of the living being and the world are recognized in Śuddhādvaitaism, their theoretical differences are not allowed. Vallabha did not believe that jiva, jagat are a different theory from Brahman, just as the spark of fire is not different from fire or the straight snake from the coiled snake. Śaṅkara also said that jiva is not different from Brahman. But the theoretical

status of jiva was not recognized in his explanation. There, the jiva is explained either as a reflection of Brahman or as a subsisting consciousness or as āvās. But to Vallabhācārya, jiva is not an image or a reflection; it is only a state of Brahman itself.

Again, Madhvācārya says that deity-devotee relation exists between Brahman and jiva. And the servant can never be identical with the object of service. According to him, Lord Vishnu is Paramatattva. And this Supreme Lord, the regular enjoyer and the world of consumption are very different and pure substances. Lord Vishnu is the ruler of this world. Śaṅkara spoke truth to the world from a practical point of view but lied to it from a transcendental point of view. Again, to Rāmānuja, the world is the result of Brahman. He is created from the eternal part of Brahman. But according to the dualist Madhvācārya, Supreme Lord Vishnu and the world are completely separate. Advaitīn said the world phenomenon, created by māyā or avidyā, is false. To them, duality is only imaginary, non-duality is the only truth. But to Madhvācārya, this fivefold phenomenon can never be false because it is eternal and true.

On the other hand, Bhaskarācārya accepted two forms of Brahman, namely the causal form (kāranrupa) and the functional form (kāryarupa). In the form of cause, Brahman is formless and in the form of action, Brahman is the living being and the world. Causal form Brahman is true and natural but function is nominal. This form is his new form. The Functional form is new but not false. This is also completely true, like causal form. Jiva, in action, is a part of Brahman, so jiva is different as well as non-different from Brahman. But there is no difference between Brahman and the material world and consuming living beings in the causal state; they are one and the same.

Like Bhāṣkara, Nimbārka also accepts the relation of Bhedābheda or identity-in-difference, between living being and the world to Brahman. Brahman is the cause and the universe is its function. And the relationship between action and cause is the relationship of Bhedābheda. Brahman and Jiva are identical in nature. The living being and the world are the function or result of Brahman, so they are Brahman. In this respect, they are identical with Brahman. Again, jiva-jagat is different from Brahman because jiva, jagat and Brahman— each has a separate existence. That's why his doctrine is called Dvaitādvaitavāda.

Again, according to Acintya-Bhedāvedavāda, Lord Krishna is Supreme Brahman. He is infinite and immeasurable. There are eternal and unthinkable powers in Brahman. Just as the burning power (dāhikā śakti) of fire cannot be separated from the fire, so also these powers of Supreme Brahman cannot be separated from Supreme Brahman. Advaitīns have established non-dualism by asserting the falsity of this world through māyā. On the other hand, to Rāmānuja, Brahman is non-dual even though it is differentiated in cit and acit. But the Acinta-Bhedābhedaavadīns have explained the living being and the world on the basis of the relationship between Śakti and Śaktimāna. Just like the relation of Śakti with Śaktimāna, so is the relation of the living being and the world with Brahman. Acinta-Bhedābhedaavadīns saw māyā as the power of Brahman. So it cannot be false in any sense. Therefore, they call the relationship between māyā and Brahman or the relationship between Śakti and Śaktimat as Acintya. On the one hand, He, who is Absolute, is many on the other hand. The coexistence of immutability, change, unity and multiplicity in the same object is apparently beyond our thinking or self-contradictory. But this coexistence is explained in the scriptures. The scriptures say that there is a divine place where these opposite entities can reside. But that does not wait for any proof.

Differences between different Vedantīns can also be observed in the matter of liberation. According to Advaitīns, Mokṣārthī attains self-realization or Brahmanśvarupatā by understanding the meaning of Mahāvākyas like ‘*Tattvamsi*’ through hearing (śrabaṇa), meditation (manan) and nididhyāsana. That is, first by listening to the Vedānta text from the Ācārya, then by reasoning or thinking about its rationality and finally through continuous meditation or nididhyāsana on the theory said by the Ācārya, Mokṣārthī attains liberation or Brahmanśvarupatā. To them, salvation or liberation is not a new achievement for the living being; it is the achievement of the one who has received it before. Advaitīn speaks of two types of liberation— Jivan mukti and Videha mukti.

Rāmānuja, on the other hand, says that when the soul is attached to the body as a result of action, it considers itself identical to the body and attains stagnation. Mokṣa is to be free from this state of being. Mukti is possible only if you attain God’s servitude. This liberation is achieved through meditation and worship of Puruṣottama. According to Rāmānuja, Mukta jiva resembles Brahmanśvarupya but is not identical to Brahman. He did not believe in jivan mukti. According to him, jivan mukti is not possible in any way. As long as the living being has a body, it is bound. Liberation is possible only after the destruction of the living body. Worship is the realization of liberation.

Again, Madhvācārya says that liberation cannot be attained without the appeasement of Lord Viṣṇu. If Lord Viṣṇu can be satisfied through service and he gives the living being its desired result. When He is pleased, nothing remains unattainable. According to Madhva, jivan mukti and nirban mukti is not real liberation. Attainment of Vaikuṇṭha is the real liberation. That is, liberation is the attainment of sāloky and śārūpya of Lord Viṣṇu. Among the pursuits, Dharma, Artha

and Kāma are impermanent, but salvation is eternal. But even after attaining liberation, the living being remains a servant of God.

On the other hand, Vallabh said living being considered himself different from Brahman because though jiva is identical to Brahman but is covered by ignorance or avidyā and attained saṁsāra dasā. Therefore, when this ignorance of the living being is removed, the living being become liberated. He said that though knowledge is spoken of as the means of liberation, proper liberation is not possible through knowledge alone. By the grace of God, the living beings attain liberation. Liberation is possible only through the service of Lord Krishna and devotion.

Again, Bhaskarācārya says that the result of worship is liberation. Brahman is attained by worship and the jiva and Brahman become identical. According to him, liberation is a matter of attainment. Jiva mokṣa is attained by sādhana. He did not believe in jivan mukti. He was a Videha muktivādī. He spoke of two types of liberation— Sadyomukti and Kramamukti.

On the other hand, Nimbārka says that even if the jiva attains liberation through sādhana, the jiva remains as a jiva. Jiva is always eternal. The difference between a bound jiva and a free jiva is that in a bound state, the jiva cannot realize the real nature of itself and the world, but can realize it in a free state. That is, in the free state, the living being sees himself and the world as Brahman and attains the same intellect. In liberation, the jiva realizes a resemblance to the Brahman. The relationship of living being with Brahman is bhedābheda or bhinnābhinna relationship. He was a Videha muktivādī.

Again the Acinta-Bhedābhedavadīns, say that freedom from the bonds of māyā is liberation. It is under the influence of māyā that the living being is bound by bodies

and perceives a form different from its own form. When this māyā is removed, the living being re-establishes its own form or attains liberation. Bhakti is the main means of salvation. It is through devotion that the devotee is able to attain God. The Gaudiya Vaishnavācāryas say naam sankirtana is the best form of devotion. According to them, there are two virtues of Chit Śakti— Sādhya bhakti and Sādhana bhakti. Sādhana bhakti takes two forms, depending on the state of mind of the sādhanā—rāgānubhakti and vaidhībhakti. The Gaudiya Vaishnavācāryas accept jivan mukti.

## **Second Chapter**

### **Impact of Vedanta on Modern Indian thinkers**

#### **2.1 Revival of Vedanta in Modern India**

The Brahmanical tradition, which reigned in ancient India, was slightly curved down in the medieval period. In medieval India a rise of non-Brahmanical tradition is witnessed. This tradition includes the Buddhists— particularly, the Śūnyavādīns, the Vaiṣaṇavas, Bāuls and many others. From the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a gradual change in the Śramanical influence is found. In the writings of the thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries an urge is seen to return to the root of Indian philosophical thought, i.e. to the Upanishadic tradition of ancient India. In most of the Indian thinkers who appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, we observed a tendency to follow either Advaita or Viśiṣṭādvaita or some other sect of Vedanta. Although in their writings we do not find the classical convention of defending the original text with sufficient elaboration, however in developing their poetical, political or social-literary works, they have maintained the Vedantic traditions of ancient India in some way or other. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to go through the philosophical worldviews of some of those thinkers of modern India, particularly the metaphysical views of Rammohan Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Sri Ramakrishna, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Krishnachandra Bhattacharya and Radhakrishnan.



## **2.2 Rammohan Roy and Revival of Vedantic Consciousness**

Rammohan Roy was one of the pioneers of Bengal's renaissance in the 19th century. To spread Vedantic thought in Bengali society, going beyond the conventional norms, he translated and discussed Vedanta in Bengali language. He developed a new Vedantic awareness by going against various blind superstitions, rituals and customs prevailing in the Bengali society at that time. Traditionally, Vedanta was considered as Mokṣaśāstra (or the lesson of liberation), and it was not open to the ordinary people. The culture of Vedanta was limited to the higher classes, particularly to the Sanskrit-knowing people. This prevailing tradition was changed by Rammohan Roy. He wanted to open up Vedanta not only to renouncing monks but also to all classes of society. He spoke of raising above all the distinctions prevailing in the society at that time to attain an all-pervasive sense of Brahman. No matter apparently how many differences and discriminations there are between us, at the root, that one Brahman exists. Through this sense of unity people can overcome all differences and superstitions and attain liberation. That is, he turned the theory of strict Brahmanism and emancipation into the theory of emancipation of social divisions and bonds. Instead of seeing man only as a social being, he developed a tendency to see him in a holistic background through his Vedantic thought. Later, we noticed that different thinkers carried this thought of Rammohan differently.

Rammohan wrote various books like Vedanta Grantha (1815), Vedanta Sāra (1815), Kenopanishad (1816), Īshopanishad (1816), Kathopanishad (1817), Māndukyopanishad (1817), Ātmānāmātma Viveka (Written by Saṅkarācārya, Original and Translation, 1819) etc. Vedanta should not only be confined to the scholars of toll or around recluse monks but it should also be spread in the lives of people from all walks of life. A review of history shows that at one time, the practice

of Vedanta scriptures in our country had reached the bottom. Purāṇas, Smṛti, Grammar, Literature, Alankāra and Nyāya were practiced but Vedanta was not practiced in the same way. Interest in Vedanta gradually waned. Although Nyāya was practiced, it was not understood by common people. As a result, people at that time were constantly attracted to the ritualistic scripture, Smṛti, which was confined to the caste system and various rituals. As a result, there was no way to develop a sense of unity. Estimating the number of Vedanta students in toll's curriculum, educationist Ward said,—

“Amongst one hundred thousand bramhuns there maybe one thousand or thereabouts who learn the grammar of the sungskritu. Of this one thousand bramhuns who have learnt the sungskritu language, four hundred or five hundred may read some part of the Kavyu shastrus, and fifty some part of the ulunkaru shastrus. Four hundred of this thousand may read some of the smritees of these one thousand persons, ten persons may read parts of the tuntrus. Three hundred out of these one thousand bramhuns may read parts of the Nyayu shastrus. Out of one thousand persons who learn the sungskritu, five or six may read parts of the meemangsu shankuy, vedantu, patunjulu, voishashiku, shastrus and the vedus.”<sup>1</sup>

To get rid of this situation and to free the common people from the divisions prevailing in the society and establish unity, he tried to make the ancient Vedanta in a new form that would be acceptable to all. As a result, the Vedanta scripture almost extinct, reached the common people of the society in a new form. However, it is not that Bengali people did not practice Vedanta before this. The sixteenth century saw the emergence of two Bengali Vedantists— Ācārya Madhusudan Saraswati and Sri

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<sup>1</sup> W. C. Ward, *Religion and Manners of the Hindus* (Vol-1) (Serpore: Baptist Mission Press, 1811), 98.

Chaitanya Deva. Madhusudan Saraswati had the path of pure knowledge, while Sri Chaitanya Deva's path was the path of bhakti. Madhusudan preached Advaitaism to the people of the society at that time. But his strict Advaita view was not suitable for common people. They were not able to accept his views. On the other hand, Chaitanya became popular among the common people very easily through his devotional path. Even Chaitanya Deva turns a Vaidāntika into a devotee through his devotional love. At that time, there was a flood of devotion in the life of Bengalis. As a result, the followers of the path of knowledge became one-sided. Somehow, Advaitin wandered within the scholar's quarters. So, this monistic thought of Vedanta could not make any special impact on the society at that time. Rammohan, therefore, realized that Vedanta needed to be applied to the lives of people at all levels of society. Vedanta is not only the theory of mundane renouncing monks; this Vedantic thought needs to be inculcated among people from all walks of life. If Vedanta can be practiced in everyday life of the common man, only then it will be possible to eliminate all kinds of social discrimination and establish the theory of non-discrimination. Therefore, according to him, Vedanta is not only the theory of liberating the world but also the theory of getting rid of all kinds of narrowness, bigotry, separation and division in life.

Now let's see what exactly Rammohan means by Vedanta. By Vedanta, he here mainly means Advaita Vedanta. 'Vedanta' is the philosophy based on the last part of the Vedas or Upanishads. But it is not only Advaita that is mentioned in the Upanishads. There are different schools such as Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Śuddhādvaita, Dvaitādvaita and Acintya Bhedābheda etc. have emerged based on the 'Brahmasūtra'. Even Gita is seen as Vedanta. Rammohan believed that it is possible to find the ideal form of society and human life in all these Vedantic views.

The expression of this Vedantic view is also observed in the thoughts of other thinkers, but Vedanta thought of Rammohan has some uniqueness. This Vedantic thought helps man to transcend the small limits of his activities and conduct himself in a larger world. Rammohan did not speak of renouncing the world and practising Vedanta to attaining liberation. His aim was to remove the orthodoxy, narrow-mindedness and irrationality prevailing among the people and to establish a sense of unity among all the people in the society. He believed that it was possible through the Vedanta practice. So, Rammohan wanted to bring the spirituality inherent in Vedanta back to the ideals of all humanity. Mahit Lal Mazumdar has rightly said—

Rammohan was a fierce rationalist— he tried to declare the freedom of man by destroying all doubts with the sharp weapon of logic or scientific intellect. Rammohan had no question or need about the spiritual nature of man. In society, state and religion (moral life), he established the relationship of man with man on justice, reason and personal freedom, and he gave importance to the intellect over the heart.<sup>2</sup>

Rationalist Rammohan's Vedantic thought aimed at presenting a universal perspective. Although Vedanta was practiced in some Tolls and Catushpāthis in the middle ages, it had no place in practical life. It was Rammohan, who was the first to establish the Vedanta in practical life. A look at his discussions on Vedanta shows that, like Śāṅkara, he believed in the non-differentiation of jiva and Brahman. Hence, he established his Vedanta philosophy by rising above the prevailing divisions of the society. But he did not want to give any sectarian interpretation of Vedanta. Following Śāṅkara, his aim was to establish an all-humanistic theory of life. So he discussed the Vedanta theory in Bengali, so that people from all walks of life would be able to study it without the help of a guru or teacher.

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<sup>2</sup> Mahitlal Majumder, *Banglar Nabayug* (Kolkata: Jñānadāy Press, 1352), 34.

Instead of worshipping self on the pretext of Brahman and conscience, if we extend logic a little more, it leads to atheism; it is logical to place the direct God-Man in the place of Brahman and worship him.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, by linking Vedanta with humanism, Rammohan was opened a new horizon. When many things were being reformed in India at the hands of the English, Rammohan reformed in the old Vedantic thought. Mohitlal has described this very beautifully—

India has worshipped Man; Avatarism is a proof of it. In European theology, Brahman is great, and Man is small; from the traditional ‘Tattvamsi’ of India to the declaration of Greatness of that day, jiva and Brahman are inseparable. There are many ways of realizing this principle of non-differentiation in knowledge, love and action. But that theory has been shrouded in much filth over the ages until finally, man has become a ghost instead of God— the pattern of individuation in life or meditation has disappeared.<sup>4</sup>

By this quote, Mohitlal wants to remind us of those who brought the essence of Vedanta to us in a new form. In this list, the name mentioned first is Bankimchandra. By conveying the lost formula that the true meaning of Vedanta lies in the attempt to ennoble man, he gave a new direction to the path of non-dualistic thinking, which has resulted in almost all contemporary Indian thinkers.

Rammohan founded Vedanta School and Vedanta College to spread this Vedantic thought among the common people. Brahnavidyā was taught there as applicable to practical life. The establishment of the Vedanta College and School

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*,— 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*,— 33.

shows his interest he was in spreading Vedanta thought among people from all walks of life. But, the colleges and schools founded by the liberal Rammohan taught Vedanta as well as western epistemology and theology. He brought harmony between ancient scriptures and modern contemporary curriculum in his institution. Thus, Vedanta, which was confined to Catuspāthī and Toll for so long, he presented to the common people as useful for life. That is, he opened the doors of Vedanta to people from all walks of life, from monks to householders.

He believed that, no particular community had a monopoly on the practice of Vedanta. Any deserving person can get this great wealth. In the introduction to Īshopanishad, he therefore said,—

If the worship of the soul is prescribed by the scriptures, and the worship of the Gods is also agreed by the scriptures, but the worship of the soul is the duty of the ascetic and the worship of the God is the duty of the householder, in that case, such an apprehension can never be answered. As there are many proofs in the Vedas and Vedanta and in the Smṛtis like Manu, etc. that the householder's duty is self-adoration. ...It is not only by becoming a monk that one becomes liberated, but such householders also become liberated.<sup>5</sup> He was the first person, who opened the great wealth of Brahman knowledge to all, irrespective of caste and creed. Rammohan was inspired by Śaṅkara's monism. He said at the beginning of his Vedanta book,—

Because the Vedas promise again and again that the Vedas refer to Brahman and Brahman is the theme of the Vedas, Lord Śaṅkarācārya made the scriptures accessible to the people again through commentary. The need for Vedanta scriptures is salvation, and its meaning is the unity of knowledge of the world and Brahman.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ishopanishada: Bhumika*, Granthābalī—1, 198-99.

Therefore, the epithet of this scripture is Brahman and this scripture is the exponent of Brahman.<sup>6</sup>

But Rammohan never told false to the created world like Śaṅkara, even though he was inspired by him. He thought that if we can fulfil our duty towards the world, only then we can realize Brahman. That is, to believe in one God within the creation of the universe and realize the unity of the entire world, Rammohan considered fulfilling our duty towards society and life as one of the ways to realize Brahman.

Like Śaṅkara, Rammohan also said that when Brahman is realised, one can able to understand that he is Brahman. This is reflected in his utterance,—

“...ei bhābe mon ahaṁkāra o citter adhisthātā ebong sarvavyāpi athaca indriyer agocor Parabrahma hoyen, ihāi nitya dhāroṇā koriben. Pore moroṇānte eirup jñānanistha byaktir jiva anyatra gaman nā hoiya upādhi haite sarvaprakare mukta haiya tatkṣaṇāt Brahma svarup prāpta hoy.”<sup>7</sup>

In this way, Parabrahman, being the locus of mana, citta and ahaṁkāra and being ubiquitous and non-sensible— would be realised in all time. Subsequently, at the end of life, such a man of wisdom, being absolutely free from all conditions, immediately realizes his nature as Brahman. Rammohan also believed in the unity of jiva and Brahman, like Śaṅkara, and also supported the idea that one can do work even after attaining salvation. In other words, it is not necessary to give up work only after attaining liberation (mokṣa). Advaitaīns say that after transcending the illusionary world and establishing the undifferentiated knowledge of jiva and Brahman, there is no further need for Sādhana. But Rammohan did not accept it. Because it is said in the Vedas—

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<sup>6</sup> Rammohan Roy, *Vedanta Grantha*, ed. Dr. Ajit Kumar Ghosh (Kolkata: Haraph Prakāshani, 1973), 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Māṇḍukyopanishada: Bhumika*, Granthābalī – 1, 267.

One should worship self, till liberation (mokṣa), but even after liberation, one should not give up worshipping God, as we see in the Vedas one should worship till liberation and even after liberation<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore, Rammohan did not agree with Śaṅkara. He believed that the world is not obstructed by the knowledge of Brahman. He refuses to accept Śaṅkara's claim that, this world is like a dream or an imagination after the knowledge of Brahman.

He was a monotheist. He had no doubts about the non-duality or unity of the Supreme Being but disagreed with Śaṅkara about its quality. Śaṅkara spoke of saguṇa Brahman, God for the realization of nirguṇa Brahman. So he first made the tatstha lakṣaṇa of Brahman and then the svarupa lakṣaṇa. But Rammohan speaks of the worship of the formless, all-pervading one. However, despite being a formless Brahmanist and monist, he believed in the reality of the world. One of the goals of Rammohan's Vedanta practice is to acknowledge one God behind the entire creation and to realize the unity of the world and to undertake proper duties towards society and life. Rammohan explained Vedanta in a completely novel way. He expounded the Vedanta in the ancient manner, gathering evidence from the Upanishads. All our commentators, scholars of Toll, Catusṣpāthī have practised the scriptures by adopting this method. But Rammohan's intentions were completely different from theirs. Earlier commentators and scholars only read and interpreted the scriptures, but he wanted to establish scriptural faith and religion in life. He did not want to establish a new religion, but wanted to establish the old traditional truth in our daily life, so that our behaviour is consistent and ethical.

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<sup>8</sup> *Brahmasutra*– 4/112, *Ram Mohan Bhāṣya, Vedanta Granthaḥ*, Granthābalī – 1, 101.



He did not stop at studying the Vedanta scriptures, but tried to apply the things available in the scriptures to social life. His aim was not to establish a new religion, but to revive ancient traditions and traditional culture. Although Swamiji's Vedanta became more famous as Practical Vedanta or Karma Vedanta, but it was Rammohan who first started to apply Vedanta to practical life, action and realization. Thus, he introduced a new humanism by incorporating human love and service into Brahmanism, which was not observed in any of the earlier Ācāryas of Vedanta philosophy.

### **2.3 Vedantic thought of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore**

Maharshi Debendranath Tagore's name is not as well known as Vedantīn. However, his contribution was very significant as the spearhead of Bengal's renaissance in the 19th century. Through his insight, he presented the objects of the Upanishads in a new light to the public. For that purpose, he founded 'Tattvabodhinī Sabhā' in 1839. The purpose of which was to explain the esoteric theory of the scriptures and to promote the concept of Brahman in the Vedanta. Rammohan developed the 'Brāhma Samāj' by applying Vedantic practice to the common people rather than confining it to the circle of Pandits and mundane renouncing monks. That trend continued in Debendranath's thinking. But, the Vedanta he talked about is not the same as the Vedanta spoken by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, etc. The bedrock of his Vedantic thought was not the 'Brahmasūtra', but the Upanishads, which were the main mantras of his Vedantic discussion. But it is not that he was influenced by the Upanishads from the beginning. Early on, he was influenced by the works of various Western philosophers. At that time, he considered man as a creature dependent on nature. But, the writings of those philosophers could

not able to remove the doubts in his mind. One day, he was enthralled by reading a mantra of Īsponishad,—

*Īśāvāsyamidam Sarvaṁ Yatkiñca Jagatyām Jagat ।*

*Tena Tyakttena Bhunjithā: Mā Gṛidha: Kasyasiddhana||*<sup>9</sup>

Ramachandra Vidyābāgish explained to him the secret meaning of this Mantra. After that, he studied the Upanishads of Īsha, Kath, Kena, Mundaka, Māndukya, Taittirīya, Śetāsvatara, Chāndogya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka etc. and realized the Indian metaphysics through the deep inspiration of his heart. That is, with the understanding of the heart, he took various mantras from the Upanishads and discarded those which were not in accordance with the understanding of the heart, and built a new Vedanta Dharma. Thus, with the understanding and intellect of the heart, he wrote ‘Brāhmadharma Vija’ and ‘Brāhmadharma Grantha’ in 1848.

He even studied Vedanta philosophy (Śaṅkara’s monism). But he did not support that. He thought that jiva and Brahman can never be identical. He is not even willing to call the world a manifestation of Brahman or the world as false. Even though he accepts the theoretical uniqueness of the living being and the world, his position is not entirely identical with Rāmānuja. He did not accept jiva and the world as part of Brahman like the Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda. So, Debendranath was not a monist, nor did he support qualified monism. While refuting Advaitaism, he said,—

We used to accept Upanishad as Vedanta. We did not respect Vedanta philosophy. Śaṅkarācārya has made jiva and Brahman identical in it. We want to worship God. Who will worship to whom if the devotee and deity become one? Therefore, according to Vedanta philosophy, we could not give an opinion. We are

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<sup>9</sup> *Īshopanishad* - 1

against Paganism as well as Monism. We could not fully accept Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on the Upanishads, because he interpreted the whole of it in favour of non-dualism. This is why, instead of commentaries, we renewed the writings of the Upanishads, so that the relationship of the devotee and deity is maintained. I recited it in the same Sanskrit language and started writing its translation in Bengali.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, he is not willing to accept Śaṅkara's pure Brahmanism, and he also does not accept the identity of jiva and Brahman. Although he respects the distinction between deity and devotee, he abandons the practice of worshipping that deity in the form of an idol.

Debendranath believed in the independent thought and consciousness of the individual. He took lessons of various Upanishads from Ramachandra Vidyābagish. But when he came to know in the Upanishads 'Sa Aham', he is me, 'Tattvamsi', he is you etc. then he got into trouble and doubts arose in his mind. Later, he considered various judgments and realized that the things mentioned in the Upanishads cannot be accepted arbitrarily. It is not infallible in all cases. So, he said to accept only those words in the Upanishads, which are clearly understood by the pure heart with the help of intellect and not all other words. That is, he emphasized on thoughts and feelings. At that time, while expressing his mental conflict, he said,—

But when I saw in the Upanishads, 'Sa Aham' He is me, 'Tattvamsi' He is you, then again became disappointed with those Upanishads as well. The Upanishad cannot remove all our needs, cannot fill our hearts. But now, what do we have to do? What is our way? Now, where do I give shelter to our Brāhma Dharma? In The Vedas, it did not find a place; in the Upanishads, it did not find the place; where will

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<sup>10</sup> Devendranath Thakur, *Sri Maharshi Devendranath Thakurer Svaracita Jivan Carit o Pariśista* (Kolkata: Banarjee Publishers, 1898), 30-31.

we find its place? I saw that its birthplace is a pure heart full of self-confidence and knowledge. Brahman resides in the pure heart. The pure heart is the birthplace of Brahman. With that heart where the Upanishads are similar, we can accept the words of the Upanishads. And we cannot accept the words that do not agree with the heart. Now, we have this connection with the Upanishads, the best of all scriptures. God is revealed through the dialogue of the mind with the pure heart and undoubtedly, the intellect. As the light of the pure intellect shines upon the innocent tranquil heart, so through that mind God is manifested.<sup>11</sup>

Debendranath shows that in the Upanishad, the Supreme Lord is mentioned in various forms, such as controller of nature, king of kings, parents, and friends, etc. He understood Brahman, Supreme Reality, and God all in one sense. He wanted to get God not only in the light of knowledge but also in the form of joy. He thought that in happiness, we can fulfil all our senses. But he, who perceives this universe as full of God, delights not in enjoyment but in renunciation. *Tena Takttena Bhunjithā*— this ideology of Īsopanishad influenced him greatly. He gave various interpretations of the Upanishads. Indian society at that time was influenced by Derozio. As a result, Western religion and culture, imbued with anti-Upanishadic attitudes, had a great impact on the Bengali society as well as on the Indian mind. Debendranath was eager to give a new twist to the mantras of the Upanishads in order to turn the Indian society away from this state of affairs and re-interpreted Vedanta. He believed that if the people of India could properly understand the meaning of the ancient scriptures, Upanishads, then their sense of originality and independence would be awakened, and all forms of isolation would be removed.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*,— 102-103.

He believed that the material world, individual soul, and Supreme Reality are all separate from each other. According to him, the Supreme Reality is more different than the individual soul; rather, the individual soul is different from the material world. Śaṅkarācārya preached the unity of jiva and Brahman. He said I am that Supreme Brahman (*'Sa Aham'*). But just as Debendranath did not accept the identity of jiva and Brahman, he also did not call jiva and jagat as a part of Brahman. His sarcasm to the non-dualist Śaṅkara—

What can be more surprising than to think that you are freed natured, bound by the hundred objects?...Śaṅkarācārya has made India's mind spin by preaching jiva and Brahman are identical. According to his advice, monks and householders are also uttering the delirious words, *'Sa Aham'*, 'I am the Supreme'.<sup>12</sup>

Debendranath, like Madhvācārya, says that there is a deity-devotee (*upāsya-upāsaka*) relationship between living being and God. He is my Lord, I am His worshipper, He is my Lord, I am His servant, He is my Father, I am His Son. So, even though Individual self is superior to material things, Supreme Reality is supreme among all. In his words—

Brahman has to be realized in these three places by devotees. You will see him in your heart, you will see him outside and you will see him in Brahmapura, where you are in yourself. When I see Him within my soul, I say— You are the innermost, You are my father, You are my friend, You are my companion.' When I see Him outside, I say— 'the King throne of you is in the infinite sky,' When I see Him in myself— Seeing that Absolute Truth in its own abode, then say— 'Tumi Śāntam

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*,— 136.

Śivamdvaitam'<sup>13</sup>. Although living beings and inanimate objects are created by the Supreme Reality, they are not of the Supreme Reality, nor are they even part of the Supreme Reality.

Debendranath respected people. He gave importance to his free will. His fear is that if the living being is the Supreme Soul, then no moral judgment of his actions will be possible. Because He (Brahman) and I (jiva) are identical, in that case, there is no freedom of will of the jiva and there is no such thing as moral life. He, therefore, emphasized on the individual freedom of people. He did not believe in imposing anything from the outside. He emphasized on the development of personality rather than judging people based on their transcendental aspects. He respected the sense of independence, so he did not put any obstacles to individual's freedom. In this context, what Rabindranath said in analysing the father's character deserves mention—

Who else but us will know the extent of freedom he has given us! The religion which he has found through searching, the religion which he has protected even in the midst of great danger, he has not made that religion an object of rule even in his house. His example was in front of us; we were not deprived of his advice, but he did not bind our intellect and our actions to the rule of any rule. He does not want to impose any particular opinion on us by habit or discipline— He has opened before us the way to seek God and religion independently.<sup>14</sup> Thus, he spoke of the development of the individual's personality to establish his relationship with the whole world.

Like the value of the individual, he recognized the value of the universe. He believed that just as many things are not one, one is never many. He accepted the

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*,— 93.

<sup>14</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Rabindra Racanābālī* (Caritra Puja- Maharshi Devendranath Thakur) (Kolkata: Sri Saraswati Press Ltd., 1368), 372.

existence of one as well as the existence of many. So, one and many are separate things. They can never be one. So, he believed in the existence of this world as well as in the eternity of God. He said—

Not being able to experience this wonderful miraculous power of God, some people think that He has become this world. What can be the result of the Supreme Being who is formless? Can it be accepted by an intelligent person that he himself has become wind, water, light, earth...<sup>15</sup>

Debendranath used to say that the living being and the world are neither a part of the Supreme Being nor of the nature of the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being never became the living being and the world. According to him, he created this world by staying in his eternal form. Even before the creation of this world, the Supreme Being existed. At that time, there was nothing more and nothing less than Him. He is the one who created the world, i.e. He made the world manifest from the unmanifest state. According to him, creation is the manifestation of God's power. And when this power of God returns to God, it is called deluge. Even after creation, there is nothing greater than God. In his words—

Formerly, there was only one Supreme Brahman; there was nothing else; He created this community. He is the form of knowledge, infinite form, goodness, eternal, controller, omniscient, omnipresent, all-sheltering, sole, unique, all-powerful, independent and perfect; He is not comparable to anyone. Divine and material well-being is achieved through His worship alone. To please Him and to do work according to His will is His worship.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*, Baisākh, 1373 shak, 33-34.

<sup>16</sup> Maharshi Devendranath Thakur, *Sri Maharshi Devendranath Thakurer Svaracita Jivan Carit o Parisista* (Kolkata: Banarjee Publishers, 1898), 138.

Advaitīn introduced the term ‘Māyā’ to explain worldly things. But for Debendranath, this world is neither a dream nor an illusion. This world is very true. As a true determination, God determined the atoms to create the universe and immediately, the atoms came into being and he created the universe by connecting them. Although the Supreme Being is eternal, immutable, unchangeable and independent, the world created by Him is impermanent, changeable, perverse and impermanent. He created the Sun to manifest this created world and living beings to enjoy this beautiful world. He used to say Supreme Reality; Īśvara is full of joy, an ocean of bliss. He continues to enjoy this joy by himself. He resolved to give pleasure to the living beings that were the object of His love. When we get pleasure from any pleasant thing, we also want our loved ones to share that pleasure. In the same way, Supreme Reality also created the world for the happiness of all his beloved living beings.

He used to say that the connection of living beings with Ultimate Reality is the connection of love. To do God’s favourite activity is his worship. In Indian scriptures, there are various ways to attain God, like knowledge, action, devotion, etc. But Debendranath thinks that all these paths are one-sided or biased. He always emphasized on harmony. Wherever there was inconsistency, he opposed it. So, he criticized all the three views— knowledge, devotion and action. He said that a pure heart born of intelligence is one of the ways to realize the Supreme Being.

Debendranath believed in the dual nature of jiva and Brahman. He never accepted monism. But this rigour is somewhat lessened in his later thought. Because if the matter and God are taken as completely separate, there can never be a spiritual bond between them. If we are to experience this bond, then we must call one God the all-spiritual spirit. He spoke of the unity of God and jiva in his Brāhma dharma.



That's why he called God as Absolute truth and the world as relative truth. The living being is driven by his free will towards the Supreme Lord. In this way, connections between one and many are established in Debendranath's thought.

He believed that creation is not complete without living beings. God has different purposes for different people. In the glorification of this intention of His, the living beings move from superior to superior according to their respective virtues. In this way, the living being finally attains liberation by ending all desires. As a result, the living being is freed from all kinds of diseases, sorrows and enjoys eternal bliss with Immortal Supreme Being. That is, Liberation is the supreme state in which the living being attains the lovable Supreme Being and enjoys complete bliss. This state is the absolute state of the Individual soul.

#### **2.4 Sri Ramakrishna and the Ideal of Synthesis**

Over the ages, many great men have appeared in India; Sri Ramakrishna is one of them. Even though Sri Ramakrishna did not discuss any traditional philosophy, in his words and sayings, we find some directions included in conventional philosophies such as Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, etc. Even in many cases, he has surpassed them. It is difficult to say whether Sri Ramakrishna had any philosophical doctrine of his own. From the nineteenth century to the present time, commentators have interpreted Sri Ramakrishna's philosophical doctrines from various perspectives. Eminent personalities such as Swami Omkarananda, Swami Dhirshananda, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, Arpita Mitra etc. have argued that 'Advaita Vedanta is the ultimate standpoint of Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy.'<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, according to Mahendranath Gupta, author of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita', 'Sri

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<sup>17</sup> Swami Omkarananda, "Brahma o Śakti Abhedā", *Udbodhan*, 66, no.5 (1764): 227-232.

Ramakrishna's doctrine was close to Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda.<sup>18</sup> Again, Heinrich Zimmer and Walter Nevel, said Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy as *Tantric philosophy*<sup>19</sup>. Some also include Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy in dualism.

Rejecting all the above differences regarding Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy, the commentator Narasingha Sil says that 'Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy is unsystematic and inconsistent. Therefore, it cannot be said that Sri Ramakrishna had any philosophy.'<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, sages like Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda, who were the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo did not want to include the philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna in any sect. According to them, to subsume Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy into any sect is only an attempt to narrow his philosophy. However, in recent times, some exponents of Sri Ramakrishna philosophy such as Satishchandra Chatterjee, Swami Tapasyananda, Swami Shraddhananda, Swami Bhajananda, etc. have identified Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy with different names without including any sect, namely, *Samnavī Vedanta*<sup>21</sup>, *Samnavi Advaita*<sup>22</sup>, *Neo-Vedanta*<sup>23</sup>, *Integral Vedanta*<sup>24</sup> etc.

Now, the question is whether we can include Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy in any of the traditional Vedanta philosophy. Or can we include in any philosophies said by Satishchandra Chatterjee, Swami Tapasyananda and others? Or can it be given a new name? However, here an attempt has been made to highlight some of Sri

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<sup>18</sup> Mahendranath Gupta (Srima), *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita* (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 698.

<sup>19</sup> Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), 560-602.

<sup>20</sup> Narasingha Sil, "Is Ramakrishna a Vedantin, a Trantrika or Vaishnava? An examination.", *Asian Studies Review* 21, no. 2 (1997): 212.

<sup>21</sup> Satishchandra Chatterjee, *Classical Indian Philosophies: Their Synthesis in the Philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1985), 104-152.

<sup>22</sup> Swami Tapsyananda, *Bhakti Schools of Vedanta* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1990), 33.

<sup>23</sup> Satishchandra Chatterjee, *Classical Indian Philosophies: Their Synthesis in the Philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1985), 104-152.

<sup>24</sup> Swami Bhajananda, "Philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna", *University of Calcutta, Journal of the Department of Philosophy* 4, no. 2 (2010): 1-56.

Ramakrishna's sayings in 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita' to show that the traditional Vedanta, especially all three doctrines— dualism, monism and qualified-monism is supported by Sri Ramakrishna. Not only that, it is also shown that he reconciled these three views.

A glance at the spiritual life of Sri Ramakrishna shows that he started his saintly life by worshipping Jagadambā Maa Kali as Brahman after coming to Dakshineswar from his birth place Kamarpukur. We note his various experiences about Maa Kali. Sometimes, he would pray longingly for a glimpse of Mother in the still and graceful form of the Jagadambā. He even had a darśana of the radiant living image of the Mother (Jagadambā). He realized that he and Jaganmātā were two different entities. Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual life began with this realization of duality.

He believed that God can be attained only through devotion. And restraint of the senses is indispensable for attaining God. To realize God requires firm vows, long waits and longings. Explaining the matter, he spoke about the story of master and disciple—

A disciple asked his guru, Sir, how can I find God? Master replied, 'Come, I will show you'. Saying this, he led the disciple to a pond and suddenly submerged him in the water. After a while, the disciple surfaced, gasping for air. The master asked, 'how did you feel?' The disciple replied, 'I felt the life was going away.' The master then said, 'when your soul is as devoted to God as you were to air, will find Him without delay.'<sup>25</sup> It is possible to attain God only by calling out in this way.

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<sup>25</sup> Mahendranath Gupta, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita* (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 534.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that devotees never seek knowledge of Brahman. They want to confine themselves as servants of God. In this context, he talked about Shri Chaitanya Deva and the Gopis— saying that Chaitanya Deva had both knowledge of Brahman and devotion. The Gopis also had knowledge of Brahman, but they did not seek Brahman. Some of them wanted to enjoy God in Bātsalyabhāva, some in Sakhyabhāva, some in Madhurbhāva and some in Dāsibhāva.<sup>26</sup>

He thought there was no fault in ‘I am a devotee’, ‘I am a servant’, ‘I am a child’. Ego can be eliminated by knowledge (jñāna yoga)— it is true, but it is not possible for everyone to eliminate carnal desire through the practice of jñāna yoga. Sri Ramakrishna thus said—

“But in the Kaliyuga, man, being totally dependent on food for life, cannot altogether shake off the idea that he is the body. In this state of mind, it is not proper for him to say, ‘I am He’. When a man does all sorts of worldly things, he should not say, ‘I am Brahman’. Those who cannot give up attachment to worldly things, and who find no means to shake off the feeling of ‘I’, should rather cherish the idea, ‘I am God’s servant; I am His devotee’. One can also realize God by following the path of devotion.”<sup>27</sup>

Those who have the attitude of being a devotee, a slave, cannot be disturbed by lust and anger. Even if you don’t know God, you have to try to think like ‘His servant’ or ‘His devotee’ by imposing the words ‘I am a devotee’, ‘I am a servant’. By thinking like this, when this thought is fulfilled, the devotee attains God.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, - 534.

<sup>27</sup> *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2016), 103.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, “God is omnipotent. He can give Brahmajñāna to the devotee if he wishes. But the devotee does not want knowledge of Brahman. He separates himself from the Lord and wants to enjoy Him in any way like, Śānta, Dāsyā, Bātsalya, Sakhya, Madhurbhāva.”<sup>28</sup> This is the intention of the devotee. He who is omniscient, omnipotent cannot give knowledge of Brahman to the devotee? However, devotees don’t want to get it. He wants to enjoy Him (God) through His service for eternity.

To describe the nature of devotee, he said— “Do you know how a lover of God feels? His attitude is: ‘O God, Thou art the master, and I am Thy servant. Thou art the mother, and You are Lord, I am servant, You are mother, I am Your child, You are my father or mother, and I am Thy child.’ Or again: ‘Thou art my Father and Mother. Thou art the Whole, and I am a part.’ He doesn’t like to say ‘I am Brahman’.”<sup>29</sup>

God is the doer, everything happens according to His will. But we do not understand His will. We cannot understand God’s will because we perceive our will as separate from God’s will and confine ourselves within a limited boundary. As a result, we experience various sufferings. The path of devotion is the easy and natural path. Once God can be accepted as a vessel of love or habituated to accept it, the mind no longer has to struggle and try to move it towards God. This is how the Gopis knew God.

Analyzing the above facts, we see that Sri Ramakrishna wants to establish dualism here. When he says— ‘God is the doer and everything is non-doer’<sup>30</sup>, he seems

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<sup>28</sup> Swami Bhuteshananda, *Sri Sri Ramakrishnakathāmrita Prasanga* (1<sup>st</sup> part) (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 692.

<sup>29</sup> *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2016), 134.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*,— 98.

to be moving towards dualism. In his concept devotees and God are revealed. The essence of Sri Ramakrishna's thought is *Tumi yantrī am yantra*.<sup>31</sup> i.e. the relationship between master and servant. The dualist branch of Vedanta also sought to express Brahmanism in this way.

The dualists never considered themselves identical to Lord Vishnu. They even thought that only through the service of Lord Vishnu one can get the meaning of life. In other words, the Deity-devotee relation that the dualists believed in was revealed in the words of Sri Ramakrishna. If someone says, I will have all happiness like the Supreme Lord; I can have no sorrow, then he is not happy. If one wants to attain equal status to the Lord, it does not bring him well, but harm. On the other hand, he who considers himself different from God, reveals his inferiority and praises his excellence; God is pleased to him and gives him all the things he desires. And Sri Ramakrishna said exactly the same thing.

Along with dualism, we find some sayings of Sri Ramakrishna in 'Kathāmrita' which is like Viśiṣṭādvaitaism. Mahendranath Gupta of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita' himself called Sri Ramakrishna a Viśiṣṭādvaitavādī. In 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita' we see that Sri Ramakrishna has presented the basic principles of Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda in a very simple manner by resorting to some very simple and beautiful metaphors without going into the difficult syntax of Vedanta philosophy. When Sri Ramakrishna's renowned disciple Swami Vivekananda asked him what is Qualified Non-dualism?

Sri Ramakrishna replied: "It is the theory of Rāmānuja. According to this theory, Brahman, or the Absolute, is qualified by the universe and its living beings.

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<sup>31</sup> Mahendranath Gupta, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita* (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 38.

These three—Brahman, the world, and living beings—together constitute one. Take the instance of a bel-fruit. A man wanted to know the weight of the fruit. He separated the shell, the flesh, and the seeds. But can a man get the weight by weighing only the flesh? He must weigh flesh, shell and seeds together. At first it appears that the real thing in the fruit is the flesh, and not its seeds or shell. Then by reasoning you find that the shell, seeds, and flesh all belong to the fruit; the shell and seeds belong to the same thing that the flesh belongs to. Likewise, in spiritual discrimination one must first reason, following the method of ‘Not this, not this’: God is not the universe God is not the living beings; Brahman alone is real and all else is unreal. Then one realizes, as with the bel-fruit, that the Reality from which we derive the notion of Brahman is the very Reality that evolves the idea of living beings and the universe. The Nitya and the Līlā are the two aspects of one and the same Reality; therefore, according to Rāmānuja, Brahman is qualified by the universe and the living beings. This is the theory of Qualified Non-dualism.”<sup>32</sup>

Viśiṣṭādvaitavādīns say that the same Brahman can manifest Himself in many forms by His power. For example, a tree is a tree with its trunk, branches, flowers, and fruits. Just as there is a tree within the tree trunk, there is also a tree within the branches, flowers, fruits, leaves— everything. Such as living beings, the world is the fullness of Brahman with everything, so none can be left out. If left out, the weight will fall. The Viśiṣṭādvaitavādīns call Cit (jiva) and Acit (jagata) as the body of Brahman. As I am identical with my body, so Brahman pervades living beings and the world, identical with them.

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<sup>32</sup> *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2016), 733-34.

Therefore, it can be said that even though Viśiṣṭādvaitavādīns believe in a supreme theory, they accept the living being and the world as a part of that supreme theory, that is, they accept internal differences (svagataveda). In the ‘Pantheism’ of Western philosophy– as it is said that God is true, God is omnipresent– this is also true. Viśiṣṭādvaitavādīns also said the same thing, as Brahman is true, so is the living being, the world, which is part of him. Jiva, the world is eternal and true like Brahman. Mahendranath Gupta of ‘Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita’ said–

Thākur does not call this world a dream. He said, ‘then the weight falls short’. It is not Māyāism, but Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda. Because the living being and world are not saying illusions, it is not saying mind mistakes, God is true, and man is true, the world is true, the living being and the world are a part of Brahman. The entire Wood apple is not available if you leave the seed and outer part of the wood apple.<sup>33</sup> Thus Sri Ramakrishna used to say–

“The Nitya and the Līlā belong to the same Reality. Therefore I accept everything, the Relative as well as the Absolute. I don’t explain away the world as māyā.”<sup>34</sup>

So, it is clear that the similes and facts that Sri Ramakrishna used effortlessly while explaining Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda to scholars like Narendranath and others– is a well-crafted explanation of Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda. Sri Ramakrishna has tried here to present the Vedantic theory called Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda in a practical way. In Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda, Brahman is the Supreme Being and Cit and Acit– two parts exist in Brahman. Jiva is the Cit part of Brahman and jagata is the Acit part of Brahman–

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<sup>33</sup> Mahendranath Gupta, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita* (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 698.

<sup>34</sup> *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2016), 652.



neither part is false. Like Brahman, the living being and world is also eternal. Sri Ramakrishna's words also convey the same feeling.

Like Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda, in 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita' we find some directions from which it seems that Sri Ramakrishna is a monist.

He said—

“What Brahman is cannot be described. All things in the world— the Vedas, the Purāṇas, the Tantras, the six systems of philosophy— have been defiled, like food that has been touched by the tongue, for they have been read or uttered by the tongue. Only one thing has not been defiled in this way, and that is Brahman. No one has ever been able to say what Brahman is.”<sup>35</sup> He expressed the matter beautifully through an analogy—

“A man had two sons. The father sent them to a preceptor to learn the Knowledge of Brahman. After a few years they returned from their preceptor's house and bowed low before their father. Wanting to measure the depth of their knowledge of Brahman, he first questioned the older of the two boys. ‘My child,’ he said, ‘you have studied all the scriptures. Now tell me, what is the nature of Brahman?’ The boy began to explain Brahman by reciting various texts from the Vedas. The father did not say anything. Then he asked the younger son the same question. But the boy remained silent and stood with eyes cast down. No word escaped his lips. The father was pleased and said to him: My child, you have understood a little of Brahman. What it is cannot be expressed in words.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*,— 102.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*,— 102.

To make this idea stronger he said again—“Once a salt doll went to measure the depth of the ocean. (All laugh.) It wanted to tell others how deep the water was. But this it could never do, for no sooner did it get into the water than it melted. Now who was there to report the ocean’s depth?”<sup>37</sup>

That’s why it is said in the scriptures to know Brahman step by step with negation. If we express the objects which are beyond our words, we limited it. But the infinite Brahman cannot be limited by words. That is why he is called ‘Avānmānsa gocaram’ in the scriptures. Brahman cannot be seen by the eyes or heard by the ears. In short, He cannot be known or understood with the help of any sense.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, when there is knowledge of Brahman, there is no more doubt, then all doubt ends. He used to say that conflict arises because every person wants to know the truth according to their own point of view. Actually, the object is one. Being eternally ignorant or delusional, the living being cannot know the real truth. Explaining the nature of this māyā, he says—

“This māyā, that is to say, the ego, is like a cloud. The sun cannot be seen on account of a thin patch of cloud; when that disappears, one sees the sun. If by the grace of the guru one’s ego vanishes, then one sees God.”<sup>38</sup>

Through the story of a wise farmer, Sri Ramakrishna proved that this world is false, and there is no transcendental entity in this world. This world only lasts as long as it lasts practically. This world is proven false when the knowledge of the transcendental being is attained. For example—

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*,—103.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*,—169.

In a country, there is a farmer. He was very wise. He lives in farming, has a family, and has a son; Haru. They love their son very much. One day, while working in the field, a person came and discovered that Haru had cholera. The farmer went home and gave a lot of treatment but the boy died. Everyone in the house was mourning, but nothing happened to the farmer. The family said, ‘You are cruel– did you not cry for the boy?’ The farmer then became firm and said, Why don't I am crying? I had a heavy dream yesterday. I saw that I became a king, and became the father of eight sons – I am very happy. Then, I fell asleep. Now I am in great thought – shall I mourn for those eight sons of mine, or shall I mourn for your one son Haru? Farmer was wise, so he saw that the dream state is also false, the waking state is also false; only one eternal thing is the soul.<sup>39</sup>

The best explanation or statement about Advaitaism obtained from the above similes and explanations of Sri Ramakrishna. The greatest is because no one else has presented the most complex theory of Vedanta so eloquently. When Sri Ramakrishna says that Brahman is not leftover– there is no distinction between the original tone of Advaitaism and Sri Ramakrishna’s statement. Advaitins say that as long as man is surrounded by avidyā, he remains ignorant of his nature. But he cannot explain the Brahman when he attains the Brahman by destroying avidyā. Brahman is ‘Avān mānasa gocaram’ (‘vākya moner otīt’). Sri Ramakrishna supports this statement with the analogy of measuring the ocean with a doll of salt.

Before the arrival of Sri Ramakrishna, the three main views of Vedanta philosophy namely– Dvaitavāda, Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda and Advaitavāda were regarded as opposed to each other, but, Sri Ramakrishna has shown by his life and achievements that these three views are not mutually exclusive. These thoughts appear alternately

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<sup>39</sup> Mahendranath Gupta, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita* (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 691.

within the same saint at different levels of human spiritual realization. But once the Advaita is realised, the one can occupy different levels according to his will.

Just as Sri Ramakrishna felt that all religions are true– ‘*Jata mat tata path,*’ in the same way, he accepted the necessity of all the different sects of Vedanta philosophy without accepting only one as true. So, everything was right for Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Sardananda in his book ‘Sri Sri Ramakrishnalīlā prasanga’ says:

Thakur accepted Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita– all views. However, he used to say that those three types appear one after the other according to the progress of the human mind. In a state duality comes– then both the other two states seem to be false. At the higher stage of religious development comes Viśiṣṭādvaita. Then, it is felt that the eternally emanating object is constantly being associated with the līlā. Then dualism seems to be false, and the truth that lies in non-dualism is not realized in the mind. And when man reaches the ultimate limit of religious advancement, he realizes only the nirguṇa form of Sri Sri Jagadambā and stays in it non-dually. Then you-me, jiva-jagata, bhakti-mukti, pāp-puṇya, dharmādharmā– all are one.<sup>40</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna believed that Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita– these three senses come in sequence in the life of a saint. But once the Advaita is realised, the one can occupy any of these three levels as per his will. Sri Ramakrishna illustrates the point with a beautiful anecdote of Sri Ramachandra and Hanuman. Sri Ramachandra asked Hanuman, Hanuman, how do you see me? In reply, Hanuman said–

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<sup>40</sup> Swami Saradananda, *Sri Sri Ramakrishnalīlāprasanga* (Vol-1) (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2011), 57.

*Dehabuddhyā tu dāsohaham jīvabuddhyā tadamśakaḥ*।

*Ātmabuddhyā tvamebāhamiti me niścatā matiḥ*।<sup>41</sup>

That is, O Rāma, as long as I feel the sense of “I”, I perceive that You are the whole and I am a part; You are the Master and I am Your servant. But when, I attain the knowledge of Truth, I realize that Thou art I, and I am Thou.<sup>42</sup>

Even towards the end of Rāma sādhanā, Sri Ramakrishna had this feeling of Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita. He expressed his feelings through a traditional Hindi Doha –

*Ohi Rāma Daśarathaki betā,*

*Ohi Rāma Ghat Ghatme Letā,*

*Ohi Rāma Jagat Paśerā,*

*Ohi Rāma sab se niyārā*.<sup>43</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna also had this realization during Krishna Sādhana. Swami Sardananda, in his book ‘Sri Sri Ramakrishnalīlā Prasanga’ has expressed the matter as follows:

I have heard from him– at that time, he lost his separate sense of existence and sometimes he thought of him as Lord Krishna, and sometimes he looked at everyone as Sri Krishna Vighraha– Brahman.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Vidyāranyakṛta Śankardigvijayer 41 sloker dhanapatisurikṛta tīkāy udhṛta slok.

<sup>42</sup> *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2016), 105.

<sup>43</sup> Mahendranath Gupta, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita* (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 129.

<sup>44</sup> Swami Saradananda, *Sri Sri Ramakrishnalīlāprasanga* (Vol-1) (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2011), 157.

Sri Ramakrishna also gave an excellent explanation of ‘Vijñāna’, a new concept in Indian spirituality. In addition to the so-called ajñāna or person without knowledge and the person with jñāna or supreme knowledge, Sri Ramakrishna also speaks of the state of ‘Vijñānī’. An unenlightened person considers the eternal world to be true. Again, the wise, realizing the true nature of this world, considers the world as a dream. But Sri Ramakrishna added a new class called ‘Vijñānī’ in the hierarchy of Brahmajñānī and said that after attaining Brahmajñāna, the ‘Vijñānī’ work for the benefit of the people by God’s will. Then this world appears to him as the Līlā of Parabrahman. That is, the ‘Vijñānī’ does not think the world is false like the wise. The world appears to him as the Līlā of the Supreme. He sees Parabrahman in all that exists. That’s why Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘jñāner por o ache. jñāner por vijñāna’<sup>45</sup> Sri Ramakrishna himself was a ‘Vijñānī’. Therefore, this world was not a ‘Dhokār tāti’<sup>46</sup> for him, but a ‘Majār kuthi.’<sup>47</sup> In this way, taking refuge in various sayings and similes, Sri Ramakrishna reconciled Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita and explained that there is no conflict between them.

## 2.5 Trend of Vedantic thought in Bankimchandra

Bankimchandra was one of the famous Bengali thinkers of the 19th century. Bankim’s discussion of Vedanta differed slightly from the Rammohan and Debendranath. Rammohan and Debendranath found the meaning of life in the realization of Brahman. To them, all the people of society have the right to practice Brahman. Rammohan was a jñānavādī, Debendranath was a Bhaktivādī but Bankimchandra was a Karma Yogīn. While the former two gave emphasis on

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<sup>45</sup> Mahendranath Gupta, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita* (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 266.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p - 534.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p - 534.

cognition and devotion, to Bankim, execution was most important. He associated the pursuit of Brahman with motivation for action. That is, he did not stop only at the relationship between Brahman, living beings, and the world, but also associated the practice of karma with them. He applied Vedanta to People's welfare. If we look at the traditional Vedanta, we can see that the main aim of that philosophy is self-liberation. But the goal of Bankim's Vedanta was not individual's self-interest, but social welfare was his main aim. That is, he realized the ultimate achievement of life in the welfare of all the people of the society and the welfare of the world.

Bankimchandra, therefore, established human religion as the main mantra of his life. He used to say that the new age religion is human religion. He placed humanity above all. To him, humanity and religion are synonymous. He believed that religion is the way to upliftment of humanity, which makes human life happy. That is, human life is meaningful only when humanity is fully developed. It was the human love that helped him in his spiritual realization. Through this realization, he reached to the Absolute. That is, his human love turned into spiritual understanding. He was influenced by French philosopher Auguste Comte's Positivism or scientific humanism. We do not find anyone before him who respected people as much as he did. The image he tries to portray in his 'Krishna Caritra' is like a glorious image of man. Not only that, he has tried to understand human nature in almost all his works. He was an artist. By exposing all the narrowness, failure and imperfection of human love and character, he re-established the glory of man in a form suitable to the religion of the modern age. He thought—

If India has given priority to the soul, it is to make it true and useful in this bodily life. If you want to live truthfully— if you want to overcome all fears, all sorrows and all weaknesses in this life and drink all the joys of this creation, then

realize the truth and take refuge in it in life. For this only, the gaze has to be turned a little. It is that truth that India accepted as a mantra. Your existence is not just a small part of the world– the world does not contain you; you contain the world. You are an impersonal entity separate from the world– this knowledge is the root of all fear, sorrow and weakness; it is called ‘Avidyā’. Where, all that are living, whatever exists in the form of a scene, exists in your being. In the ‘self-knowledge’ of this universality, your mind will be so excited, the joy of that self-exploration is such that there will be no vestige of selfish thoughts like profit, loss, victory, defeat, etc.; Then, with a completely unbound and fearless heart, within this short span of life, you will enjoy eternal life, and there will be no fear of death.<sup>48</sup>

He believed that the human body is the place of all our prayers (sādhana), and material knowledge is the first step to the knowledge of Brahman. He observed with wonder all the limits of human humanity and came to the realization that the shelter of humanity is the body, and the institution is the soul. And at the intersection of these two truths, the absolute truth has been composed.

Bankim was aware of the confusion that has arisen among people in the sense in which the word ‘religion’ is used in our country. But he didn’t accept any of those meanings. Instead, he defined ‘religion’ as the excellence of humanity. Humanity can be developed in man by providing proper impulse, consequence and harmony to the physical and mental faculties that exist in human beings. And if you understand humanity, you can easily understand what religion is. Explaining the religion of man, he said, –

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<sup>48</sup> Mahitlal Majumder, *Banglar Nabayug* (Kolkata: Jñānadāy Press, 1352), 26.



What is man's religion or nature can easily be found through an enquiry. It is that, by achieving which a man becomes a man, and in the absence of which a man fails to be considered as man, this is the true essence of a man— named 'Manuṣatva'.<sup>49</sup>

So, according to Bankim, it can be said that religion is desirable for all people. It is embedded in the form of seed in all people. We should guide this religion toward ideals and develop it fully. But the question is, what is this ideal? In his view, this ideal is also the full development of man and his human nature. This ideal is the full development of all the faculties of the human body, mind and soul. His 'Dharmatattva' (theology) is concerned to establish this ideal. Once you reach this ideal, everything will be achieved by itself. The ideal is the full development of human nature. Bankim named this ideal 'God'. But this 'God' is not an external being; it is limited to human nature. That is, His 'God' is 'personal God', which is completely humanistic, is not a supernatural spiritual being. Thus, Bankim descended God to the land of humanity, placing man on a higher plane. In one word, it can be called 'Anthropomorphism'.

But there are many questions about such an ideal man, such as where can we find this ideal? In front of whom I will try to reach on the pure land of humanity? Bankim's answer— "If there are no men, there is God. Make Him your model, for He is the sole and supreme example of excellence and perfection."<sup>50</sup>

Here, behind the word 'God', he has put 'Shri Krishna's character in his thoughts. Only in Shri Krishna all the qualities are there— in body, in speech and in

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<sup>49</sup> Bankimchandra Chattapadhyay, *Srimadbhagavadgitā*, *Bankim Racanabali* (Kalkata: Sāhitya Samsad, 1361), 694.

<sup>50</sup> Bankimchandra Chattapadhyay, *Dharmatattva* (Kolkata: Sāhitya Samsad, 1361), 593.

mind. It is clear that the Supreme Being (God) he speaks of is not the nirguṇa Brahman of Śaṅkara, but the saguṇa Brahman recognized by Ācāryas like Rāmānuja. Because the Supreme Being cannot be called nirguṇa, as we have seen while analysing Debendranath's view. Worship fails if the distinction between worship and worshiper (upāsy-upāsaka) is not respected. Exactly this is expressed in different language in his statement—

“In the nirguṇa God of Vedanta, dharma does not attain dharmatva; because, who is nirguṇa, he cannot be our ideal. The ‘Ekamevādvitīyam’ Caitanya of the monists or what Herbert Spencer called ‘Inscrutable Power in Nature’ is established in God i.e. who is only a philosophical or scientific God, whose worship does not complete religion. The worship of God is the root of religion as told in our history of Puraṇa or in the book of Christian religion, because, he can be our ideal. The worship of the so-called ‘Impersonal God’ is futile; Succeeded in the worship of what I call ‘Personal God’.”<sup>51</sup> He believed that Godhood can be achieved only when the faculties of body and mind are fully exposed.

Nature was the basis of Bankim's ‘Dharmatattva’ (theology). So, he gave more importance to life and the world. In his ‘Dharmatattva’, the body is central, and the world is completely true, not false. The world is known only by knowing Saccidānanda. It is clear in ‘Guru śiṣya samvāda’ of his ‘Dharmatattva’—

“Master— ...what is there in the Universe?

Disciple— Whatever that is there.

Master— What is it called?

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, -593.

Disciple– Sat?

Master– Or Truth. But this universe is nothing but a conglomeration of inanimate matter.

Disciple– I do.

Master– Where?

Disciple– In an inexhaustible, ineffable energy– that which Herbert Spencer called, ‘Inscrutable Power in Nature’

Master– Let Him be called Universal Consciousness. What is the result of the presence of Chids (Consciousness) in Truth (Sat)?

Disciple– Utility of life or happiness of living beings.

Master– Name him Ānand (Joy). Knowing this Saccidānanda, I knew the world. ... That is, the Real or Truth (Sat) must be known by knowledge; Consciousness (Cit) will be known by meditation; Then will you know the joy by what?– Those are Cittaranjinīvr̥ttis.<sup>52</sup>”

Apart from ‘Dharmatattva’, he also explored a new ideal of religion in ‘Krishna Caritra’ and ‘Gitār byākhyā’. He was a true humanist. He believed in the cleanliness of the human body. He considered the highest human religion to be the balance between instinct (pravṛtti) and cessation (nivṛtti). Therefore, asceticism had no place in his religion. Although the Upanishads or commentaries of Brahmasūtra talk about the pursuit of knowledge, Bankimchandra did not accept it. In his words,–

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<sup>52</sup> Bankim Chattapadhyay, *Dharmatattva*, trns. Apritim Ray (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 225-26.

The third revolution was brought by philosophers. They are almost Brahmanists. They saw that the search for the infinite causal consciousness of the world they were engaged in was extremely dangerous. If we can know that Brahman— if we can know our relationship with the inner soul or Paramātmā of that world, then we can understand what we have to do with this life. It is difficult— knowing it, is religion. Therefore, knowledge is religion— knowledge is liberation. The portion of the Vedas which can be called the Upanishads is the achievement of the jñānavādī. Brahmanirupaṇa and self-knowledge are the objectives of all Upanishads. Then, in the six philosophies, this jñānavāda is further enlarged and propagated.<sup>53</sup>

But Bankim believed that the ultimate goal of life is not in achieving personal liberation. So, criticizing jñānavādī he said,—

The greatest men of India were in the path of knowledge. Having decided that there is no action for the path of knowledge, they were devoted to action. And following that example, all of India is dispassionate in action. So, filled with iniquitous people, this degraded state has been attained.<sup>54</sup>

He was an activist (karmavādī). So he linked the Brahmanism of Vedanta with karma, even though Upanishads, Brahmasūtras etc. predominated on knowledge. We find instructions of action in the Srimadbhagavadgītā as well. The Srimadbhagavadgītā is an outgrowth of the Brahmanism of the Upanishads. Although the Gītā mentions jñānyoga, bhaktiyoga, etc. still, the ideal of selfless action is predominant there. That is, being selfless in all ways, feeling oneness with all beings, and working for the sake of humanity is its main goal. It is said in Gita, —

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<sup>53</sup> Bankimchandra Chattapadhyay, *Srimadbhagavadgītā*, *Bankim Racanabālī* (Kolkata: Sāhitya Samsad, 1361), 729.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, — 758.

*Karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhimāsthītā janakādayaḥ ।*

*Lokasaṁgrahamevāpi saṁpaśyana kartumarhasi । ।*<sup>55</sup>

In other words, the sages like Janaka also achieved salvation through selfless actions. That is why you should do selfless actions for the sake of people's welfare.

It is further said in the Gita,—

*Karmaṇyebādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana ।*

*Mā karmaphalaheturbhurmā te sangohastvakarmāni । ।*<sup>56</sup>

That is, you have the right to action, not to result. So do action. But don't do action for result. Don't let your inclination to quit work again. So you have to do action selflessly.

We notice the various meanings of the word action (karma). Basically, what we do and what can be done is the general meaning of the word karma. But by the word 'karma', the ancient commentators understood the action of sacrifices (yajña), which is indicated by Vedas. That is, not all actions can be called actions, or all actions are not actions. Veda or scriptural sacrifices (yajña) are karma. So, here the above verse can be interpreted— the scriptural sacrifices (yajña) will be made but without desiring the heavens.

Bankim says that by the word karma or action, we should not understand actions like sacrifices, as indicated by Vedas. Because actions like sacrifices (yajñādī karma), prescribed by Vedas are not intended for selfless work (niṣkāma karma) of Gita. Because it is clearly mentioned in the third chapter of the Gita—

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<sup>55</sup> *Srimadbhagavadgītā* – 3/20

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*,— 2/47

*Na hi kaścīt kṣṇamāpi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛit ।*

*Kāryate Hyabaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ ।*<sup>57</sup>

That is, no one can remain without action even for a moment, because all people are uncontrolled by the influence of natural qualities and are forced to act.

No one can exist without action. Even if he does not do any other work, he must do some work by submitting to nature. It is said in Gita,—

*Niyataṁ kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hyakarmaṇaḥ ।*

*Śarīrayātrapi ca te na Prasiddhyedakarmaṇaḥ ।*<sup>58</sup>

That is, you do the scriptural duties. Because action is better than not doing any action, and if you don't do action, your body's journey will not be fulfilled. So Yajñādi karma should not be understood by the word karma or action. So, we have to do action, but that action will be fruitless, devoid of any desire of fruit.

But again in the third chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita mentioned that,—

*Yajñarthāt karmaṇoḥnyatra lokaḥayaṁ karmabandhanaḥ ।*

*Tadartham karma kaunteya kuktasaṅgaḥ samāchar ।*<sup>59</sup>

That is, the karma other than the yajña is the cause of the bond. Therefore, O Kaunteya! Do all actions only for the sake of yajña without any attachment.

Here is a conflict between the two above statements. But we will understand that really here is no conflict only if we analyse the meaning of the word 'Yajña'. Although the word 'Yajña' is used in various meanings, Bankim has here accepted the

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*,— 3/5

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*,— 3/8

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*,—3/9

meaning given by Śaṅkarācārya by the word ‘Yajña’. According to Śaṅkarācārya, ‘Yajño vai Viṣṇuriti śrurteyajña Ísvara’<sup>60</sup>

That is, if we take the meaning of the word ‘Yajña’ mentioned by Śaṅkarācārya, the meaning of this verse is that all actions other than those aimed at God are merely bonds for the enjoyment of karmic result. Therefore, be unattached and work only for God. That is, Bankimchandra did not accept the word ‘Yajña’ here in a general sense. By ‘Yajña’, he understood the action towards God. In his words,— In the karma yoga interpretation, what is usually called karma, that is, action is the intention of God, not the Vedic Yajña.<sup>61</sup>

But the question is that there are certain actions which we call good actions, e.g., doing well to others. There are certain actions which are called dishonest actions, e.g., stealing. There are also some actions that cannot be called righteous or unrighteous, such as eating or lying down. Which of these actions should be done and which action should not be done? Bankim says that we have to perform righteous actions (sat karma) and those actions that cannot be called righteous (sat) or unrighteous (asat). Although he says good actions (sat karma) must be selfless. This virtue (sat karma) is the main ingredient of humanity. And performing this righteous action (sat karma) is the real rule of human life. But he says that if one does benevolence in the desire of virtue, in the hope of recompense, or in the desire of fame, that action cannot be called proper good action (sat karma). It is not selfless action (niṣkāma karma), but action with desire (sakāma karma). Thus it is said in Gita—

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<sup>60</sup> Bankimchandra Chattapadhyay, *Srimadbhagavadagītā*, Bankim Racanabālī (Kolkata: Sāhitya Samsad, 1361), 755.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*,—736.

*Yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya ।*

*Siddhāsiddhyoḥ samo bhutvā samtvam yoga ucyate ।*<sup>62</sup>

That is, O Dhananjay! You do all actions by giving up attachment and being equanimous in success and failure. This equality is called yoga. By the word ‘Yoga’, Bankimchandra means ‘Parameśvaraikaparatā’. You have to leave the company and do the work. That is, one should act knowing that God is the master, abandoning the attachment of authority. Not only that, you have to act with the knowledge that success is equal to failure. That is, you will not express joy at the accomplishment of the result of the action, and also will not feel sorrow at the failure. And this knowledge of equality is yoga. According to him, the sole purpose of all karma yogīs actions is to benefit all beings. It is said in Gita,—

*Sarvabhutasthamātmānam sarvabhutāni cātmāni ।*

*Īkṣate yogayuktātāmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ ।*<sup>63</sup>

That is, the yogi who is united in the all-pervading infinite consciousness and sees everywhere his own soul in all beings and all beings in his own soul.

The Gita further states,—

*Ātmoupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yohrjuna ।*

*Sukham ba yadi ba dukham sa yogī paramomataḥ ।*<sup>64</sup>

That is, O Arjuna! He who looks everywhere and feels the happiness and sorrow of all the demons as his own happiness and sorrow is, in my opinion, the greatest Yogī.

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<sup>62</sup> *Srimadbhagavadgitā*– 2/48

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*,– 6/29

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*,– 6/32



He was the first person to turn Vedantic Brahmanism into a motivation for action. He thought,— The advanced Brahmanism contained in the Upanishads, the Gita is a complete translation of it, and the jñānavāda quoted in the Gita has been compiled and expanded many times and has been harmonized with the pure actionism and devotionism.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, he reached actionism from Vedantic selfism. That is, the sense of Brahman in all beings— with this Vedantic vision, he reconciled the ideal of selfless action.

## **2.6 Impact of Upanishad and Vedanta on Tagore's writings**

Rabindranath Tagore is not as well-known as a philosopher as a poet. He saw himself not as a philosopher but as a poet. Despite this, we notice the expression of philosophical thought everywhere in his poems, novels, stories, dramas etc. Every sphere of life has been exposed to the light of his aesthetic creations. If you look at him with a little inquisitive mind, you will see that although he did not discuss any systematic philosophy such as epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, etc., in his songs, poems, novels, dramas, poetry, etc., there are some patterns that indicate philosophy. So, he is not a philosopher in the literal sense or in the sense in which we call philosophy or philosophizing, but he is a philosopher in the true sense. He used to say,—

I have no right in Metaphysics. If any argument arises between Dualism and non-dualism, I will remain unanswered.<sup>66</sup> He was not an academic Philosopher. His views on life and the world suggest that he is a philosopher-poet. His philosophy was pragmatic. Commenting on him, Radhakrishnan said— “It is a sigh of the soul rather

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<sup>65</sup> Bankimchandra Chattapadhyay, *Srimadbhagavadagītā*, *Bankim Racanabālī* (Kolkata: Sāhitya Samsad, 1361), 728.

<sup>66</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Ātmaparicay*, *Rabindra Racanāvalī* (vol- 27<sup>th</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1974), 195.

than a reasoned account of metaphysics; an atmosphere rather than a system of Philosophy.”<sup>67</sup>

Rabindranath’s thought was not developed conventionally way or centred on any prasthāna like Śruti, Smṛti or Nyāya. He expressed the truth obtained through his intuition through his poems, songs and other writings and quoted various Upanishads supporting that truth. He quotes many verses from the Upanishads like Īsha, Katha, Kena, Praśna, Mundaka, Māndukya, Bṛhadāranyaka, Svetāsvatara, Chāndogya, and Taittirīya etc. in explaining his realized truth. He even quoted various verses from Bhagavad Gita, Purāṇas etc. Just as his father, Debendranath, sought the support of various Upanishads to resolve the conflicts in his own mind, Rabindranath was also influenced by the Upanishads. He was born in a family where the influence of the Upanishads was very deep. But there is no answer as to whether he received Upanishad lessons from anyone. He often quoted verses from the Upanishads in support of his available truths. However, Rabindranath did not explain his understanding according to the commentaries of any particular sect of Vedanta. At the core of his Vedantic understanding was his philosophy of life. Rabindranath was very close to Vedantic scholars like Father Debendranath, elder brother Dwijendranath, Pandit Kalibar Vedanta Bagish, etc. but was never completely influenced by their thoughts.

Different people have spoken about the multiple forms of truth of the Upanishads in different ways, but Rabindranath did not accept all these views. It is true that he has used various verses of the Upanishads in his works, but he has interpreted them according to his own feelings. Talking about that feeling, he wrote,—

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<sup>67</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (London: Macmillan & Co.Ltd., 1919), 6.

I am speaking only by feeling that there is in me the joy of a manifestation of my inner God (Antardevatā)— that joy, that love, that has flooded all my limbs, my intellect, this universe that is close to me, my eternal past and eternal future. I don't understand anything about this līlā, but this love always exists in me. The light that feels good to my eyes, the cloudiness of the dawn and dusk, the greenness of the grass, the face of the loved one feels good— all these are the impulsive waves of love. In this, all the happiness and sorrows of life are playing in the shadow of light and darkness.<sup>68</sup> Thus, his real feelings are revealed in his various writings.

Like his father, Debendranath, Rabindranath was inspired by self-confidence and self-realization, but his conception of Brahman was somewhat different from that of Debendranath. He accepted him with the sweetness of his heart. According to Debendranath, Brahman is completely separate from the living beings and the world, but Brahman, though separate from the living beings and the world, is bound to the living being and world by joy and love. He was a dualist and devotee. Although there are various manifestations of truth in the Upanishads, all of them are different forms of that one truth. And Debendranath realized this non-dual truth or Brahman through the vision of duality. But Rabindranath did not think so. In his view, Brahman can never be separated from the living being and the world. He is manifested in everything in this world. That is, in this world, animals, plants, happiness, sorrow, good and bad— Brahman exists in everything. Everything in this material world is Brahman. In one word, Brahman is the world; the world is Brahman. He believed that the soul and body are not completely separate. Only situational differences exist between them. The dormant state of the soul is inertness, and the conscious state of the inert is the soul. In his words,—

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<sup>68</sup> Thakur, Rabindranath, *Ātmaparicay*, *Rabindra Racanāvalī* (vol- 27<sup>th</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1974), 195.

Gradually, when a man has learned to see the universal law as generally the same everywhere, he learns that what seemed extraordinary is not corrupted by a little law. It was then that he got the right to see the manifestation of Brahman in one piece pervading everywhere. And he found joy and refuge in the idea of that great, unbroken unity. It was then that man's knowledge, love, and action were freed from delusion and became expansive and joyful. Stupidity and pettiness began to disappear from his religion, society, and state. This seeing is seeing Brahman everywhere, seeing it in its own way.<sup>69</sup> So the life and philosophy of Rabindranath is a song of joy.

That is, one can know Brahman only when one is able to understand the rules, principles of causality, etc. of this diverse material world. Brahman has no existence outside this material world. In his words,— The entirety of this world is filled with the knowledge of Brahman and embraced with the love of Brahman. That knowledge and his love are flowing through the living being as an eternal stream, never exhausted.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly Rabindranath was a monist. He saw Brahman in everything in this universe. He used to say that everything in this material world is true. But it is true only as part of an integral material world. And when we see this full truth as fragmented, it is called Avidyā or Māyā. We cannot realize the full truth under the influence of illusion or Avidyā. But he did not accept Māyāism. In his words—

What name can be given to this thing which does not exist in the form of Brahman yet exists? Vedanta gives it the name of 'Māyā', i.e., Brahman is truth, but it is not that truth. This is Māyā. Whenever one goes to merge with Brahman, it is no longer seen. From Brahman's point of view of, all these are completed in an infinite

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<sup>69</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Syabhāvalābh*, Kolkata, *Rabindra Racanavalī* (vol-14<sup>th</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1349), 406.

<sup>70</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Samagra ek*, Kolkata, *Rabindra Racanavalī* (vol-14<sup>th</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1349), 414.

sphere. From my point of view, the difference between the conflicts is divided into the various particulars among the many. Therefore, those who practice integral non-dualism know Brahman as pure and free from particularity, know Brahman independently. And this independent realization aims at the ultimate goal of knowledge. This is the great pursuit of non-dualism; people are engaged in it in different ways. That is what people call liberation. Apple picking was once known as a unique event. Then, by linking him to a universal super speciality, he loosens the bonds of knowledge.<sup>71</sup>

Rabindranath, therefore, called ‘māyā’ as worldly ignorance. Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedanta talks about non-distinction between jiva and Brahman. Even the world has been called false as it is created by māyā. But Rabindranath did not accept māyā in Śaṅkara’s sense. He did not dismiss the world’s happiness, sorrow, hope and joy as illusion or māyā. People were at the centre of his discussion. So he criticized Śaṅkara’s māyāism. That which separates us from everything else was an illusion to him. He was a world Brahmanist. So, he did not need to go anywhere outside the world for liberation. He wants to taste the taste of liberation in the midst of the happiness, sorrow and joy in this world. He said thus,—

“Vairāgya sādhanē mukti, se āmār noy.

Asaṅkha bandhan mājhe, Mahānandamaya

Labhiva muktir svāda.

Ei vasudhār mrittikār,

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<sup>71</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Nirbiśeṣa, Kolkata, Rabindra Racanavalī* (vol-14<sup>th</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1349), 304.

Pātrakhāni bhari barambāra...”<sup>72</sup>

Rabindranath did not believe in abstract Monism or nirguṇa Brahman. He believed that one Supreme Person is controlling the entire universe— He is God. But this God of his is not an abstract thing; it is a concrete ideal of all human life. In this connection, Radhakrishnan said— “He gives us a ‘Human God’, dismisses with contempt the concept of world— illusion, praises action overmuch and promises fullness of life to the religious soul.”<sup>73</sup>

Rabindranath thought that there is no interest in things that are not under human control. The God he spoke of was a personal God. Because he thought that God was the object of human worship or hope, love and faith. So, this God needs to be someone with whom people can establish an emotional relationship. This personal God is called his ‘Life God’ (Jivan Devatā). In the words of Rabindranath,—

The poet, who has been composing my life by taking all my good and bad, all my favourable and unfavourable materials, I have given the name ‘Life God’ (Jivan Devatā) in my poetry.”<sup>74</sup>

Rabindranath was influenced by the Gaudiya Vaishnava sect. Bhakti is found in many of his poems. He spoke of the relationship of love and joy between the devotee and the Lord. So, as a devotee, he spoke of unity with this world. Explaining the relationship between devotee and God, he says,—

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<sup>72</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Ātmaparicay*, *Rabindra Racanāvalī* (vol- 27<sup>th</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1974), 203.

<sup>73</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (London: Macmillan & Co.Ltd., 1919), 4.

<sup>74</sup> Thakur, Rabindranath, *Ātmaparicay*, *Rabindra Racanāvalī* (vol- 27<sup>th</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1974), 193.

*“Āmrā dujane bhāsiya esechi*

*Yugal premera srote*

*Anādi kāler hriday utsa hate.*

*Āmrā dujan kariyāchi khelā*

*Koti premiker mājhe*

*Birahabidhura nayana salile,*

*milan madhur lāje –*

*purātan prem nity natun sāje.”<sup>75</sup>*

He used to call this relationship between devotee and God, the līlā of finite and infinite. This līlā of finite and infinity or duality and non-duality is realized in the individual’s consciousness. And it is in the consciousness of the person that māyā originates and changes. In his words, –

“We have seen that forms of things and their changes have no absolute reality at all. Their truth dwells in our personality and only there is it real and not abstract. We have seen that a mountain and waterfall would become something else, or nothing at all to us, if our movement of mind changed in time and space.”<sup>76</sup> So, in Rabindranath’s thought, we find both wisdom and devotion.

Although Rabindranath was engrossed in the teachings of dualism and non-dualism, he gradually moved away from dualism to non-dualism. He said–

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<sup>75</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Ananta prem, Mānasī, Rabindra Racanāvalī* (vol- 1) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1387), 408.

<sup>76</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Personality* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1917), 77.

There is an ideal of integral unity within our souls. Everything we know, known in some form of unity. This is the abode of the one who thinks in wisdom in our soul; when the one is full of *līlā*, when he wants to be happy with the creation, he wants to make the one outwardly clear, and then the object becomes an integral person, sheltering the material. In poetic imagery, in song, in art, in the Greek artist's pot of worship, in the swirling of strange lines, when we see the Absolute one in extreme form, our inner one meets the outer one.<sup>77</sup>

Rabindranath believed that this universe is the manifestation of the infinite God. But his God was *saguṇa*. God enjoys himself through this creation and relishes the taste of joy. So creation is His *līlā*. He creates for the full taste of His pleasure. That is, behind this universe, there is an all-pervading being who has bound the world in a chain. One integral entity exists throughout the universe. Even though the living being is an integral being, there is no loss of its individuality and uniqueness. But if the living being is separated from this sense of oneness and integral being and is driven by his ego, he has to suffer. Because realizing Him within the integral being is liberation. In his words,—

My body, soul, mind, and heart are all one. This wholeness is completeness; it knows itself and loves itself as a single object.

Not only that, but everywhere he looks for the One and rejoices when he finds the One. Isolation troubles him— he craves wholeness.

In fact, what he wants is to find this wholeness in some form. He wants to make the small one big by binding the surrounding many with his own. It is by the power of

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<sup>77</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Tathya o sāhitya, sāhityer pathe, Rabindra Racanāvalī* (vol- 23<sup>rd</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1354), 383.



this unity that each of us has achieved within ourselves that we can realise all the unity of the world.<sup>78</sup>

Rabindranath believed that Brahman can be achieved only if one understands the integral world. So he talks about realizing the great puruṣa within you without abandoning you. He is the soul of the entire human being. Without Him, we cannot attain any inhuman or superhuman truth. Because my mind is a human mind, my heart is a human heart, and my imagination is a human imagination. So no matter how much we forgive them and purify them, they can never leave the human. What we call science is also the science proved by the human intellect; even what we call Brahmānanda is the joy manifested in this human consciousness. That which we perceive in this intelligence in this joy is the human land (Mānavika Bhumā).

That is, Rabindranath's Brahman is a human Brahman. Realization of the Absolute Self or Universal Self is possible only by realizing the Self. The living soul is part of the world. His place is in God (Paramātmā). The entire material world is manifested as Brahman. This sense of Brahman is the source of his sense of universal humanity. He gave a special form to Brahmanism. Rammohan wanted to popularize Vedanta and open it up to the masses. Rabindranath presented this world as Brahman. He thought that liberation is possible only in this world. In his word—

*“Āmār mukti āloy āloy ei ākāse*

*Āmār mukti dhulāy dhulāy ghāse ghāse |”*<sup>79</sup>

He was a traveller who lost himself in the love and beauty of the world nature. He described this diverse manifestation of the world as the manifestation of the One

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<sup>78</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Ātmapratyay*, Kolkata, *Rabindra Racanavalī* (vol-14<sup>th</sup>) (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1349), 414.

<sup>79</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Gītavitana* (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Grathanvibhāga, Vaiśākh 1400), 141.

in his poetry called ‘Citrā’. He thought that emancipation is possible only if he works for the welfare of all by uniting himself with the world. And here is the speciality of Rabindranath. The realization of Brahman, which is identical to the world, is possible not only by knowledge but also by action. He used to say,—

Karma without Brahman is darkness and Brahman without karma is emptiness. It can be called atheism. Seeing Brahman, from whom all things are blissful, devoid of all these things, all are renounced, and he is also renounced. If the religion of joy is action, then only through action, we can unite with that blissful Brahman. This is what called Karma Yoga in the Gita.<sup>80</sup>

In other words, Rabindranath wanted to realize Brahman as Sat, Cit and Ānanda as mentioned in the Upanishads through the joy of action. We are all bound by karma to the material world. And this action was developed by Rabindranath as a platform for liberation. None of us can ignore the bond of action. We should not do things that are against unity. Unity in diversity will be our aim. A man should abandon his self-intelligence and perform selfless actions in the eyes of humanity. Thus Rabindranath transformed the Brahmanism of Vedanta into universalism through action.

## **2.7 Vivekananda’s Concept of Practical Vedanta**

Swami Vivekananda is one of the great thinkers who have appeared in India at different times. The highly intelligent Vivekananda is deeply engrossed in the contemplation of various spiritual matters at various times. Is there any God at all? If yes, what is the nature of it? What is the secret of this empirical world? Who is the

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<sup>80</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Ātmapratyay, Santiniketan, Rabindra Racanavalī* (vol-14<sup>th</sup>) (Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 1349), 291.

creator of this phenomenon? How is liberation possible? Various questions often made him agitated. He always wanted to find that power that would free him from all bonds. So one day, after hearing about Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa dev from Professor William Hastie of the General Assembly Institution, when he went to Dakshineswar to meet him, he asked him– “Sir, do you believe in God? ...Can you prove his existence?”<sup>81</sup> In reply Sri Ramakrishna said– “Yes. ... I see him just as I see you before me, but more clearly, more brightly.”<sup>82</sup> He was impressed to hear such words from Sri Ramakrishna. Since then, a radical change took place in his life. But he did not believe in the words of Sri Ramakrishna easily; he surrendered himself to him only after testing him in various ways at different times.

He employed himself for the spiritual awakening of the common people by presenting the truths found in his beliefs and feelings. The most profound influence on Vivekananda’s thought is the ancient Vedanta philosophy. Upanishads and Vedanta were the main foundation of his thought. A deep belief in one absolute truth is at the root of all his beliefs. He saw everything from one point of view. He was a monist. His views on the world, the difference between the worldly and the transcendental objects, the various explanations of māyā or avidyā– all these are given by him in the perspective of Advaita Vedanta. But he gave a new interpretation of Vedanta that fits the needs of the age and time. That is, he believed in Advaita Vedanta but presented a new form of it in public.

Talking about Vedanta, he said,— The Vedantist says that man neither takes birth nor dies nor goes to heaven and reincarnation is a mere story for the soul. An illustration can be given that it is like turning the pages of a book; As a result, page

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<sup>81</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Vivekananda* (vol-2) (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2011), 179.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*,— 179.

after page of the book ends, but nothing happens to the reader. Every soul is omnipresent; so where does it go or where does it come from? In all these births and deaths, nature itself changes and we mistakenly think of it as our change. Reincarnation is the manifestation of nature and the development of God within.<sup>83</sup>

According to him, Brahman is an immutable infinite entity that is beyond space, time and causality. Brahman is immutable does not mean that it remains the same at all times— it means that the question of time is irrelevant to Brahman. Like the monists, Vivekananda also called Brahman, the form of ‘Sat-Cit-Ānanda’. However, he interpreted the words ‘Sat’ (Existence) and ‘Cit’ (Consciousness), according to Advaita Vedanti, but in explaining the word ‘Ānanda’, he took a different view from the non-dualists. By ‘Ananda’, he understood ‘love’. Speaking about Brahman, he said—

There is only one thing— which is manifesting in various forms. Call it spirit or soul or matter or call it something else; it alone exists in the world. In the language of non-dualist, this soul is Brahman, appearing as ‘many’ only in different names and forms. Look upon the waves of the ocean; not even a wave is separate from the ocean. But why does the wave look different? Name and Form— The shape of the wave is the form, and we have given it the name ‘Taranga’, it is this name-form that separates the wave from the ocean. When the name-form goes away, the waves become the ocean. Who can distinguish between the waves and the ocean? Therefore, this entire world is one entity. The name form alone has made all the difference. Just as the sun is reflected on millions of water particles and creates a complete image of the sun on each water particle, so that one soul, that one entity is reflected in the points of countless names and forms and is realized in various forms. But in essence, it is the

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<sup>83</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Vānī o Racanā* (vol-3) (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 233.

same. There is no real 'I' or 'You' – all is one. Either say- everything is me or say- everything is you.<sup>84</sup>

Vivekananda's concept of God is also innovative. Advaita Vedantīn spoke of God, but it was born of ignorance or avidyā. According to Advaita, God is saguṇa Brahman. From the transcendental point of view, this saguṇa Brahman or God does not exist. But for Vivekananda, there is no difference between the infinite Brahman and God. Even to him, God is not born of avidyā. Actually, behind such division is our ignorance and limited understanding. When true knowledge arises, we realize the truth that God is as true as the infinite Brahman. There is no difference between them. In his words,–

Saguṇa Ishvara is none other than nirguṇa Brahman seen through māyā. When object to māyā or nature, that nirguṇa Brahman is called 'jivātmā' and as Māyādhīśa or the controller of nature, that nirguṇa Brahman is 'God' or 'Saguṇa Brahman'. If a person travels from here to see the sun, he will first see the sun as small. As long as he reaches to the original sun, it will gradually appear larger and larger. As he progresses, he may think he is seeing different suns, but we do not doubt that he is seeing the same sun. Thus, all that we see are different manifestations of that nirguṇa Brahman, so they are also true. None of these are false, but we can say that they are only low-level states.”<sup>85</sup>

He believed that God is present everywhere, in everything. The sky, the wind, and the sun all perform their functions under the control of this God. Vivekananda had a deep belief in God. He thought that life is impossible without faith in God. It is

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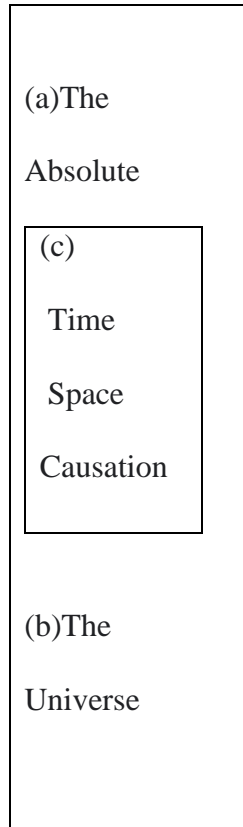
<sup>84</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Vānī o Racanā* (vol-2) (Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalay, 2012), 38.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*,– 266.

not possible to know the truth of the soul and the world apart from God. And the direct realisation of this God is possible. His Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, perceived God.

There is also uniqueness in his discussion of world affairs. Looking at this beautiful world full of crops and greens, we notice that it is adorned with a strange beauty. Every human being is constantly enjoying beauty of nature. Fascinated by this strange form of nature, many questions have arisen repeatedly in the human heart—Who is the creator of this world? How did he create this? What is the real secret of this world? Every human heart has been haunted by these questions since ancient times to till today. Although a believer in Advaita Vedanta, Vivekananda's view of the world differed from that of the non-dualists. Advaitīns accepted the existence of the world from a practical point of view, but they did not believe in any existence of the world from the transcendental point of view. But Vivekananda wanted to strike a balance between the practical and the transcendental. Although he believed in monism, he was never in favour of denying worldly truths. According to him, God is the only truth; He is the creator of all things. And it is true that in terms of perception, there is no difference between the creator and the created thing. For all practical purposes, the creation must be accepted as true. Explaining this dual character of the world, Vivekananda says that,—

“How has the infinite, the Absolute, become the finite? I will now take up this question, and, in order to illustrate it, I will use a figure.



Here is the Absolute (a) and this is the Universe (b). The Absolute has become the Universe. By this is not only meant the material world, but the mental world, the spiritual world—Heavens and earths, and in fact, everything that exists. Mind is the name of a change, and body the name of another change, and so on, and all these changes compose our universe. This Absolute (a) has become the universe (b) by coming through time, space and causation (c) this is the eternal idea of Advaita.”<sup>86</sup>

So, it is clear that the world is a form of Brahman. Brahma is manifesting as the world through Space-time-causation. But Vivekananda did not admit the existence of these three things simultaneously, nor did he say that they are completely false or non-existent. Just as the waves of the ocean are identical to the ocean, they are also different from the ocean. Behind this separate thought is the name-form.

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<sup>86</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Vivekananda* (vol-2) (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2011), 130.

So, the consciousness that is revealed to us as the universe or the world is an expression of that ever-shrinking, all-pervading consciousness. And this all-pervading consciousness is God. Everything we see in the world, matter, energy, mind, consciousness, etc. are manifestations of that consciousness. Everything we see, hear or feel is created by God, more precisely, everything is He.

Discussing about ‘Māyā’, he said that since ancient times, the word ‘Māyā’ has been used in different sense. In the ancient Vedic period, the word ‘Māyā’ was used to mean ‘Cave’ (‘Kuhaka’). There, we noticed the various forms of Indra through this ‘Māyā’. By ‘Māyā’, there was meant magic or something similar. Later, the word ‘Māyā’ is again used in a different sense. In the Setāsvatara Upanishad, the word ‘Māyā’ refers to nature, and the word ‘Mayī’ refers to ‘Mahesvara’. Again, in Buddhist philosophy, ‘Māyā’ is called imagination. The monists called Māyā the power that creates illusion. According to them, it is through this illusion that the false world appears to us as true. But Vivekananda understood no such thing as ‘Māyā’. ‘Māyā’ to him is only a description of worldly events or facts. That is, whatever is happening around us or the way all the events of this world are happening; Māyā is only a description of it. In his words,—

“...Māyā is not a theory for the explanation of the world; it is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being contradiction, that everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that wherever there is good, there must also be evil, and wherever there is evil there must be some good, wherever there is life, death must follow as its shadow, and everyone who smiles will have to weep, and vice versa.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*,— 97.



Every human being is going through such conflicts. There is no way to cure it. Our whole life is a collection of opposites like right and wrong, good and bad. We cannot speak of a world where there is no sorrow, only joy. Worldly things sometimes appear to be true and sometimes appear to be false. Sometimes it is happy and sometimes sad. Sometimes we seem awake and sometimes we seem asleep. Thus, the play of light and darkness that is constantly going on - only the description of that is *māyā*.

Every human being is somehow bound by *māyā*. This world is a combination of opposite things like happiness, sorrow, good, bad, evil etc. As one increases, the other also increases. In this world, we do not get only happiness or sorrow. Because happiness and sadness, – are not completely different entities. So, we do not find any object in this world which is wholly auspicious or wholly inauspicious – such a notion is self-contradictory. What seems good today may be bad tomorrow. An event that seems auspicious today may seem inauspicious tomorrow. The same thing that brings happiness to one person can bring sorrow to another. The fire that burns can again prepare food for the starving person. If one wants to die, he must also take life. Happiness without sorrow and life without death is in no way possible. What is happy for me today may be sad tomorrow. So, our current state is neither entirely true nor entirely false – a combination of both. That is, our life is just a combination of happiness-sadness, good-bad, etc. We all are bound by such illusions.

But the question is if *samsāra* is a combination of such contradictory things, then why do we do work? That is, if welfare cannot be found without harm, if happiness is produced, and sorrow is also produced, then what is the necessity of action?

In answer, Vedanta says, we have to journey towards perfection. We are not only human beings bound by the five senses, but we have a higher position. And we should move towards that higher level and perfection. That is, not only does good-bad exist, but there is a higher being beyond that, which is our true nature. So, each of us should liberate ourselves. None of us are slaves to nature, never were and never will be. Although nature appears infinite, it is actually not infinite, but finite. Compared to the sea, it is only a dot. And man is the form of the sea itself. Whenever man is able to realize this, he will be able to conquer good and bad. The darkness seems to be covered by the hand of the man over his own eyes. As soon as he removed his hand, he saw the light. That is, you yourself are capable of creating your fate. Man looks at the world around him and feels that he is a prisoner. He also feels that there is someone in his heart who wants to break away from this confinement and taste the taste of freedom. So it is said in Śvetāsvatara Upanishad,—

*Śṛṇvnttu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ|*

*Ā ye dhāmāni divyāni tasthūḥ||<sup>88</sup>*

That is, the sons of Amrita who live in Divyadham! Listen, I have found the way; one can go beyond death only by knowing him who is in darkness.

Vivekananda used to say that only the eternal soul is true in the world. He is the only pure being. He continues to reflect himself in everything from the lower animal insects to the higher animal man etc. He is the only truth in the world. Every person in the world is Brahman itself. Being enveloped by māyā, man cannot perceive

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<sup>88</sup> Śvetāśvatara Upanishad– 2/5

his nature. Only if we can get rid of this māyā or ignorance or avidyā, we will be able to realize our true nature. So, discrimination is a false pretence.

The human body is comprises three parts– body, mind and soul. The body is the outer part of the soul and the mind is the inner part of the soul. It is this soul that drives the body through the mind. But the soul really has no birth, no death. Even though He has no bonds, He is an eternal being. We often see clouds of various colours appearing in the sky, but the position of those colourful clouds in the sky is temporary. It stays for a while but the next time it is gone, but the blue colour of the sky does not change. Similarly, the soul does not change. It is an unchanging, eternal being. But Vivekananda said that the soul, though eternal, immutable and passes through various states.

Man is liberated when he can break his bonds. Like the monists, Vivekananda believed in two types of liberation– jivan mukti (embodied liberation) and videha mukti (disembodied liberation). Liberation during bodily life is called jivan mukti. And the liberation from the destruction of the body is the videha mukti. All the actions performed by jivan mukta puruṣa do not affect him. He works with the unattached. Even as a lotus leaf rests in water, the water cannot wet him, so also does the jivan mukta puruṣa. He performs action but is never bound by action.

He prescribed four paths to attain liberation– Jñānayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Karmayoga and Rājyoga. In Jñānayoga, he spoke of the destruction of ignorance or avidyā by following the path of knowledge and he spoke of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana as its means. Realization of the real truth is possible through these ways.

In Bhaktiyoga, he talks about the realization of truth through devotion. He spoke of respect, love, separation etc. as means of devotion. He talks about different types of devotion. Through all these devotions a devotee attains liberation.

In Karmayoga, he talks about purification of mind through action. But by action he understood desireless action. If a person works with the feeling of unity with God, then he achieves the good of the world. If the mind is purified through action, that person is able to realize his own nature.

Again, in Rājyoga, he talks about realizing oneness with God through yoga. Through yoga, a person can control his body and mind. In Rājyoga, he spoke about the eightfold paths of yoga, namely yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyama, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi. Liberation is possible only through the practice of this yoga.

Vivekananda prescribed four paths to attain liberation because not everyone's foundation is equal. Different paths are better for people of different natures and abilities. Man will choose the path according to his ability. We know that the path of knowledge is the most difficult path. This path is not for everyone. So, for salvation, man has to take one of the paths of knowledge, devotion, action or raja yoga according to his own capacity. But they are not opposed to each other, but interconnected.

Vivekananda believed in monism. We notice its influence in all his thoughts and utterances. But with his non-dualism, he linked the motivation of action and the value of the individual. Through action, he sought liberation in this world created by māyā. When action moves the individual towards the greater being for a sense of wholeness, then the bonds are broken and the path to liberation is paved. That is,

through action, a person is able to attain liberation. A person's work is not only for his sense luxuries but for the welfare of all mankind. So he told the individual to overcome his petty limitations and move towards the greater good. His Vedanta discussions were always world and life centred. He gave a new interpretation of Vedanta through four lectures called 'Practical Vedanta' or 'Vedanta in Action'.

In the first lecture, he said that the ultimate goal of our lives is to attain non-dualism. For that, he spoke of devoting all human hearts to the welfare of other human beings. Only when the sense of humanity awakens, we will be able to realize unity. So, he spoke about the awakening of love in the hearts of all people.

In the second discourse, he spoke of non-dual worship, where man was the prior. He saw God in every human being. If we can realize God in every human being, only then liberation from all kinds of bonds is possible.

In the third lecture, he discussed the relation of science and ethics to Vedanta. He applied scientific reasoning while discussing his Vedanta. So he used to talk about various subjects of physical science as examples in Vedanta discussions. In other words, even though he was a follower of Śaṅkarācārya, he relied on experience and logic. Not only that, but ethics is also included in his Vedanta. So, he used to tell everyone to be united rather than isolated. And this unity is the basis of non-dualism.

In the fourth lecture, he discussed the relationship between the particular and the impersonal. He always talked to the individual to reach in a sense of infinity. That is, he spoke of the journey of the individual consciousness towards the greater consciousness. Because in this journey towards infinity, the nature of the individual will be revealed, the sense of unity will be revealed. In short, he applied Vedanta in practical life. Thus, he transformed the Vedanta from the world of meditation to the

world of action, or from the forest and cave to the poor man's cottage, the student's home, the fisherman's home, into an integral feeling of human love and non-dualism, as no one before Vivekananda had done.

## **2.8 Development of Integral non-dualism in the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo**

Sri Aurobindo's contribution to Indian philosophy is noteworthy. He enriched the philosophical mind with his novel analysis of philosophy. Indian philosophy is a synthesis of practice and analysis and we notice a combination of these two in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of life. Because he didn't just stop talking about philosophy, he also followed it in his life. He was both a revolutionary and a yogi. His philosophy is known as 'Integral non-dualism'<sup>89</sup>.

According to Sri Aurobindo, just as matter is true, consciousness is also true. Materialists consider the matter as the only truth. According to them, everything in the world is rooted in matter, consciousness is completely dependent on matter. Spiritualists, on the other hand, say that consciousness is the only reality and that matter is nothing but an illusion of consciousness. That is, consciousness is not true for materialists, and Spiritualist does not accept matter as truth. Sri Aurobindo has denied these two in his works. In *The Life Divine*, these two denials are called, respectively, '*The Materialistic Denial*'<sup>90</sup> and '*The Refusal of the Ascetic*'<sup>91</sup>.

To Him, both the views— Materialist and Spiritualist are real. That is, he accepted the co-existence of matter and consciousness. According to him, they are

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<sup>89</sup> Haridas Choudhary and Frederic Spiegelberg, ed., *The integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), 19.

<sup>90</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (New York City: The Sri Aurobindo Library, 1951), 8.

<sup>91</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (New York City: The Sri Aurobindo Library, 1951), 18.

just two different sides of the same truth. Not only that, he accepted their disputes and also indicated the way how to eliminate those disputes. Thus, he said,—

“The affirmation of a Divine Life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognize not only eternal spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansions”.<sup>92</sup>

According to Sri Aurobindo, Saccidānanda, the ultimate reality is both material and conscious. He accepted the coexistence of matter and consciousness. He got the idea of this Saccidānanda, the ultimate reality, from the idea of Brahman in Vedanta. He says that Nirguṇa Brahman and Saguṇa Brahman are not opposite and different concepts; they are only two aspects— negative (neti) and positive (iti) of Brahman. He used to say that there is a meeting place of matter and consciousness in our world. Where the inanimate is true to the consciousness, the consciousness is also true to the inanimate. In world, all souls and minds are manifestations of one single entity. Conflict arises as we do not understand the nature of this body and mind. When our mind becomes enlightened by world consciousness, all conflict ends. Before the creation of the world only Brahman existed. From Him the world originated— *Asadvā idamagra asit. Tato vai sadajāyata*<sup>93</sup> That is, Brahman is omnipresent. He is the sustainer and bearer of this world. So, Brahman is both ‘Sat’ and ‘Asat’ simultaneously. He is ‘Sat’ as the institution of the whole world and He is ‘Asat’ as an absolute individual entity, free from the division of this world. Therefore,

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<sup>92</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (New York City: The Sri Aurobindo Library, 1951), 8.

<sup>93</sup> *Taitirīya Upanishad*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Mayavati: Advaita Ashram, 1986), 123.

pure Brahman is indeed one. He cannot be divided into self - non-self, material - non-material, good - bad etc.

The question is the one who is Saccidānanda in nature, the one who is supremely real, is perfect, so why did He go to create this world? What is the purpose of this creation? Not only that but how did Brahman, Saccidānanda, create this world phenomenon? Sri Aurobindo said the root of this world is one Brahman. Saccidānanda Brahman is the main reason for the creation of this world. He is not only holding and carrying the world as the ādhār or adhisthāna of this world but also the material cause of this world. Sri Aurobindo says that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Saccidānanda, became incarnate by His great power. But the question is why Saccidānanda created this? Sri Aurobindo replied that this is his Līlā Vilās. However, he is the master and all the equipment of this Līlā. In his words,—

“... if we look at World Existence rather in its relation to the self–delight of eternally existent being, we may regard, describe and realise it is Līlā , the play, the child’s joy, the poet’s joy– the actor’s joy, the mechanician’s joy of the soul of things eternally young, eternally inexhaustible, creating and recreating Himself in Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation, Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the playground.”<sup>94</sup> So, this world phenomenon is the Līlā Vilās of Paramārtha.

He says that even though the Ultimate Reality is one, it can be manifested in an infinite form. He also said that if the life force had not been dormant in inanimate matter, then the emergence of life from inanimate matter would never have been possible. So what we think of as inert is not just inert. There lies in him the latent

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<sup>94</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (New York City: The Sri Aurobindo Library, 1951), 96.



power of Sacchidānandamoyī. But the question is how did this energy come into matter? According to Sri Aurobindo, the path to ultimate reality is two-way. On one side, there is descent, and on the other side, there is ascent. He again called it involution on the one hand and evolution on the other. The eternal manifestation of Saccidānanda takes place through eight levels- Existence (Sat), Consciousness force (Cit), Bliss (Ānanda), Super mind (Ātimānasa), Mind (Mon), Psyche (Caityapuruṣa), Life (Prāṇa) and Matter (Jada). The first four are called Upper Hemisphere and the last four are called Lower Hemisphere. The two Hemispheres are not opposite in nature. So Saccidānanda, the Ultimate reality, is the root of all this.

In descent, this Ultimate Reality descends step by step and finally attains an inert form. The steps in this descending process are Existence (Sat), Consciousness force (Cit), Bliss (Ānanda), Super mind (Ātimānasa), Mind (Mon), Psyche (Caityapuruṣa), Life (Prāṇa) and Matter (Jada). And in the ascension, consciousness gradually evolves step by step from the inert to the Supreme Being. That is, the steps of evolution or ascension process are exactly opposite to the process of descent. In the evolution from Matter (Jada) to Life (Prāṇa), Life (Prāṇa) to Psyche (Cityapuruṣa) and Psyche (Cityapuruṣa) to Mind (Mon), this evolutionary process will gradually progress towards Super mind (Ātimānasa), Bliss (Ānanda), Consciousness force (Cit) and Existence (Sat).

Sri Aurobindo says, the development of consciousness in the lower hemisphere is very little, but the flow of consciousness in the upper hemisphere is more. There is a veil between these upper and lower level. The day when people will be able to break this veil, that day they will become a divine man. He says that this pursuit of transformation is best. The Prākṛta jiva wants to establish itself in full glory within body, soul and mind. But that is not the goal of our pursuit. Our goal is to

uncover consciousness and replace the entire being with a higher level of consciousness. Sādhana does not end even after reaching the highest level of consciousness. But that higher consciousness creates a generosity in our lives and creates a new environment, thereby reviving the power within us. Even if man's intelligence is weakened by the influence of inanimate and animal forces, his victory is sure. But for this he needs the knowledge of the bodhī mārga. In order to attain the knowledge of this bodhī mārga, he spoke of three transformations of man– (1) transformation of Psyche, (2) spiritual transformation and (3) supra-mental transformation.

The transformation of the psyche or mental transformation is the first phase of transformation. The main function of the psyche in this phase is to govern the entire entity. In this state three paths are open to the sādhanika– (1) the path of knowledge or the path of intellect, (2) the path of the heart or the path of emotions and (3) the path of determination or the path of action. At this level of transformation, all that is tainted and false in the being is removed; a flow of spiritual feeling spontaneously descends in the entity. As a result, the saint is able to remove his mind from material nature and develop it inwardly.

The second stage of transformation is the stage of spiritual transformation. At this level, the sādhanika's self is exposed to the limitless soul, the Eternal Being, the Eternal Truth, Cit and Bliss. As a result, a new consciousness emerges in this stage. New powers of meditation and vision are revealed and the true ascension begins. In this phase of ascension, the levels of human consciousness are passed step by step. First from the Mind to the Higher Mind, then from the Higher Mind to the Illuminated Mind, from Illuminated Mind to the Intuitive Mind, and finally from the Intuitive

Mind to the Over mind. Man can only come so far by his realization, i.e. Over mind is the last limit of man's ascent by his own efforts.

The true place of the mind is the body with the human soul. Meditation is the power of the natural mind. This mental power is clear in the human body but is obscure in other animals. Intelligence is revealed in this land of meditation. The main function of intelligence is thinking. However, this intelligence has another characteristic— it is self-aware. But the natural mind is only capable of indirect knowledge with the help of inference by analysing data based on experience. That is, the power of the natural mind is a limited power. His world is the world of experience, and his knowledge is also limited to this world. His position is about the parts. But the Ultimate reality is the integral theory. However, since the mind is self-aware, the mind is aware of its limitations and tries to overcome those limitations. His efforts resulted in the emergence of a higher mind. In the higher mind, logic and judgmental analysis are irrelevant. Here the relationship of concept with concept, truth with truth is established. In this mind, spiritual awakening is capable of achieving true vision. But this ability of his is partial because it is partially covered by knowledge and partially ignorance.

The difference between the Illumined mind and the Higher mind is in the expansion of energy and consciousness. The power of the higher mind and the weakness of consciousness are largely compensated in the Illumined mind. Illumined Mind's resort is vision, not contemplation. It expands the limits of consciousness with insight. But it does not possess intuition. Not even able to achieve full expansion of consciousness.

Intuitive Mind is full of intuition. According to Sri Aurobindo, Intuitive Consciousness can never be called zenith (parākāsthā) of Consciousness. He mentions two weaknesses of the Intuitive mind— first, it is entirely ignorant and mixed with reasoning. They distort the intuitive form. The manifestation of intuition is also sudden and momentary. As a result, his message is difficult to understand.

Again the Over mind is better than the higher mind, illumined mind and intuitive mind. It is the representative of Super mind (Atimānasa). Like the super mind (Atimānasa), its source is the spatial entity of Saccidānanda. At this over mind level the whole consciousness of the saint and the individual nature is transformed and ignorance is removed. As a result, the saint can become radiant with the light of world truth and world knowledge. Even so, the root of ignorance remains in consciousness. So, the Super mind (atimānasa) descends for the purpose of continuing and establishing the divine result (Divya Pariṇāma).

The third stage of transformation is supra-mental transformation. To complete the spiritual transformation, to perpetuate the spiritual creation, a radical transformation of the non-cognitive nature is necessary. This is only possible at the supra-mental level. In this stage, the soul's long journey through ignorance ends. The soul establishes all its streams of consciousness, life, energy and manifestation based on full self-knowledge. And seeing the evolving nature, that true consciousness descends into nature and liberates the transcendental or spiritual stream inherent in nature. As a result, the earthly manifestation of the spiritual soul arises.

According to Sri Aurobindo, creation is the līlā vilāsa of Paramārtha and avidyā is its root. This created world is not false or illusory, even though it is manifested as an entity of ignorance. He says Brahman is Saccidānanda in nature and it is the

supreme truth. However, various manifestations of this Brahman can be observed. Brahman can be active and inactive at the same time. From the active Brahman, all creations are created. But the question is, how does this creation happen? And is this creation constantly active? The answer is that this creation is within Saccidānanda. This creation happens with the help of the Cit Śakti of Saccidānanda. But this power is not doing everything randomly. This power controls the various manifestations of the world in an orderly manner. This revelation of Him is to know Himself in many ways. The activation of this Cit Śakti is ‘Māyā’– which is controlling the manifestation of this world. The creation process of Saccidānanda is as follows–

‘Existence

Consciousness-force

Bliss

Super Mind

Mind

Psyche

Life

Matter’<sup>95</sup>

The question is, if Brahman is the form of knowledge, how can he have ignorance or avidyā? Sri Aurobindo replied that this avidyā or ignorance is not opposed to vidyā or jñāna but is also a form of jñāna or knowledge. That is, Ignorance

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<sup>95</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2010), 278.

is actually a power of Brahman itself. It is part of what we called of Brahman's Cit Śakti. This māyā or avidyā is called 'Devīmāyā' from the point of view of Brahman and 'Adevīmāyā' from the point of view of the living being. 'Devīmāyā' is the creative power of Brahman— what is called 'Yogamāyā' or 'Mahāmāyā' in Purāṇas. That is, the same māyā is 'Devīmāyā' in the integral vision and 'Adevīmāyā' in the fragmented vision of the mind. According to him, integral knowledge is true knowledge. This is the knowledge of intuition. In this knowledge, the cessation of ignorance takes place and we can know the ultimate truth.

## **2.9 Krishnachandra and his Philosophical ideal**

One of the modern Indian philosophers is Krishnachandra Bhattacharya. He gave a new form to Indian philosophy by his extraordinary talent. He had a profound knowledge of ancient Indian philosophies, particularly Advaita Vedanta, Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Jain philosophies. His originality is revealed in each of his works. He has always tried to find new ideas through his works. Thus, he developed a novel philosophical doctrine based on his own philosophical insight. However, it is very difficult to incorporate his philosophical thought into any conventional philosophy. Even identifying his philosophy with a name is not an easy task. Nevertheless, his philosophical approach can roughly be called 'Transcendental Idealism'. Krishnachandra related everything to experience and understood truth as the ultimate prior recognition of experience. Ultimate being or truth is neither subjective nor objective and relating Principle between the knower and the knowable will be neither subjective nor objective. Krishnachandra regards the ultimate truth as a transcendent entity. That's why his philosophy is called transcendental. On the other hand, his philosophy can also be called abstract idealism. His Supreme Being or Ultimate Reality is not like Spinoza's substance or Advaita Vedanta's Brahman, but highly

abstract. Only when the highest limit of abstraction is reached, the Ultimate Truth can be arrived at.

It is generally believed that philosophy is a view of life and the world; its aim is especially to free people from all their sufferings. For this, it is necessary to gain proper knowledge of the difference between real and unreal. That is, the task of philosophy is to discover the truth from various untruths in the world by analysing the nature of the world. But Krishnachandra did not agree with this general view of philosophy. In this respect, his position was similar to that of the philosopher Kant and the Logical Positivist. Like them, he believed that it was not the task of philosophy to form a coherent or synthetic view of the world. He believed that philosophical statements are not factual; they never claim facticity like empirical statements.

Many are of the opinion that philosophy does not provide any real knowledge, only real knowledge can be found in science. But Krishnachandra says that both science and philosophy are cognitive matters. By cognitive matter, he understood the understanding of the meaning of a speakable or at least systematically communicable. According to him, the statements of science are related to the facts. Philosophy, like science, is also an expression of Theoretical Consciousness. They deal with statements that are speakable or at least systematically communicable. Theoretical consciousness is theoretical because such consciousness is considered independent of its manifestations. It is theoretical because it has only 'believed Content', no 'meant content'. Thus Krishnachandra says—

“Theoretic Consciousness, at its minimum, is the understanding of a speakable.”<sup>96</sup> That is, the minimum manifestation of theoretical consciousness is the sense of what speakable is. Speakable content at this level has no meaning content; it is simply believed. In his words— “What is spoken must be in the first instance believed.”<sup>97</sup> Even which is not trustworthy has to be trusted by somebody first. In this context, Professor Bhattacharya gave the example of a square circle, a square circle is neither believed nor disbelieved, and even it has no spoken content. So, it cannot be part of Theoretical Consciousness. Only that which is speakable and has believed content can, therefore, be part of Theoretical Consciousness. For example, a false statement can also be part of Theoretical Consciousness because its content is believed when it is said, even if it is false. When a person tells a lie, the first word that is implied is ‘trust me’; i.e. faith is given form here too. And the sense of this Spoken Content forms the shape of Theoretical Consciousness.

But this consciousness is not knowledge. But he has faith that something is known. Knowledge is a clear understanding of an actual or potential event. But this sense is not clearly expressed in Theoretical Consciousness. Theoretical consciousness, on the other hand, consists of a belief. Krishnachandra thus says that the theoretical consciousness is not related to the verb ‘knowing’ but rather related to the understanding of the speakable object. It can be understood, known but not clearly.

All forms of Theoretical Consciousness related to the sense of speakable matter are considered as one aspect of thought. Four forms of thought exist. One of which is *prākṛta* or empirical thought, literal thought and others are Symbolic. But all

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<sup>96</sup> Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, *Studies in philosophy* (vol-2), ed. Gopinath Bhattacharya (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 1958), 101.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*,— 101.



those kinds of thoughts include the four forms of pure thoughts. Consequently, there are four levels of Theoretical Consciousness, namely– (1) Empirical or Experiential level (2) Objective level (3) Subjective or Spiritual level and (4) Transcendental level. Now the different levels are briefly discussed.

**Experiential Level–** Prākṛta or experiential consciousness always refers to some cognitive object. This instruction is not superficial or casual. This instruction is the instruction that constitutes the object's meaning. Such consciousness is a kind of awareness of the object in which the object is perceived or imagined to be perceived. It is this direction to the object that constitutes the meaning of the object. Here the object is sensed as an event.

**Objective Level–** This consciousness is also objective. But the difference between such consciousness and experiential consciousness is that in experiential consciousness there is an orientation towards sense perception, which makes the cognizable object appear as an event. But no such instruction is essential in objective consciousness. Also, there is no reference to the knower or subject in empirical consciousness. But in objective consciousness the object is directed in relation to the subject. So, in the experiential consciousness, things are known as events. But in the objective consciousness, the knowledge is not manifested as an event but it is manifested as self-subsistent.

**Subjective or Spiritual Level–** At this level, consciousness is purely subjective. There is no objectively thinkable content in this consciousness. Here, consciousness is the consumer. In the first two stages of consciousness, the object of consciousness is observed either as an event or as a cognitive object in relation to a

knower. But in spiritual thought, the object of thought is enjoyed in a purely subjective manner. The object of such consciousness is called reality.

**Transcendental Level**– No objective or subjective aspects dictate this level of consciousness. Such consciousness transcends the distinction between subjective and objective. The object of transcendental consciousness is therefore, transcendental and is called Truth.

Thus, it was seen that the contents of the above different levels of consciousness are of different types– Fact, Self-Subsistent, Reality and Truth respectively. According to Krishnachandra, philosophy is not related to experiential consciousness. Only the content of natural (prākṛta) knowledge is empirical or factual. Such elements of consciousness are the object of science. The remaining three levels comprise content of philosophy. As a result, we get three levels of philosophy like, (1) Philosophy of Object (2) Philosophy of Subject and (3) Philosophy of Truth.

**Philosophy of Object**– According to Krishnachandra, the object of philosophy is not factual. It is only indicative of an objective attitude. If we deny an object as fact (which is the realm of science), we have to accept the object as self-subsistent. And the self-subsistent matter of objective philosophy speaks of the inadequacy of science. In his words–

“It is the theoretical inadequacy of its approach to the object ...it is the irrationality of our beliefs in the ultimate truths of matters of facts that leads to the more rational belief in the pure object, or the self-subsistent”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> G.R Malkani, *Some Points in K. C Bhattacharya's Concept of Philosophy*, Philosophical Qly, July 1950, 44.

So, it is only a form of objectivity, not knowing the object. In logic, we discussed in this form. So it can be said that logic is not a science, it is only a branch of philosophy of object. Even this is found in Metaphysics. That is, logic and Metaphysics are two branches of philosophy of object. Philosophy, like science, emphasizes subjective experience rather than discussing things objectively. Philosophy admits that “...the concepts of matter, life and mind must have their counterparts in certain subjective experiences and derive all their meanings from those experiences.”<sup>99</sup>

So, the philosophy of object deals only with empirical matters or matters of self-subsistent. But without prior knowledge of the subject, there can be no concept of the object. For example – ‘I am’ so ‘you are’. If I had no knowledge of myself here, I would not understand what ‘you are’. But we can know the object without being clearly aware of the knower. But in that context, the prohibition of the knower as ‘not the knower’ and the symbol of the knower make sense of the object. That is, the object must be regarded as the essential symbol of the subject. The objectivity of the event is factual, not structural or formal. But the objectivity of self-subsistent is formal. Philosophy falls into error when we believe in impersonal and external existence without distinguishing between objectivity, existence, or the self-subsistent and the factual.

**Philosophy of Subject**– Krishnachandra, while discussing the philosophy of subject, says that metaphysics explains the object in relation to the knower. And this proves that no metaphysical assertion can be understood without reference to the knower or soul. These are the livelihoods of the Philosophy of the Subject. But the

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*,— 50.

question is, how do we develop our consciousness about the elements of being or subjective philosophy?

In reply, Krishnachandra says that existence can only be perceived or felt. It is an enjoyable consciousness or introspection of the knower or subject. And this enjoying consciousness or introspection always refers to the 'I'. Krishnachandra thinks that this introspection represents the clearest form of spiritual activity. The body cannot be its element because the body is factual. The mind is also not its element or object because it creates self-subsistent forms. Its component is 'I'. That is, the Philosophy of the Subject is totally opposite view of the purely objective view of science. As 'I' where there is a clear reference to the knower, the discussion of all objects is included in the Philosophy of Subject. In the words of Krishnachandra—

“Introspection proper is a form of the theoretic consciousness that implies an abjuration other objective attitude”<sup>100</sup> As it is the subjective knowledge of the 'I' or knower, it is introspective.

Krishnachandra says that an analysis of my subjective consciousness or introspection reveals that the Self or I is never perceived as a single entity, with something else subsuming it. He mentions three levels of it— (1) the enjoying consciousness of the knower in the form of the gross body. We understand the Self or the subject to be related to the gross body or body but cannot explain how this relationship came about. (2) we also have contact with other souls or the consciousness of other souls. And (3) finally, the consciousness of a transcendental or extracorporeal soul. This transcendental consciousness is called the religious form of

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<sup>100</sup> Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, *Studies in Philosophy* (vol-2), ed. Gopinath Bhattacharya (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 1958), 113.

spiritual consciousness. That is, the Philosophy of subject is the philosophy of the multi-layered knower, including the discussion of religious consciousness.

**Philosophy of Truth**— Regarding the Philosophy of Truth, Krishnachandra says that religious consciousness or transcendental consciousness is the highest form of spiritual consciousness. Here, there is no theoretical denial of the knower as ‘I’. But the negating consciousness of this ‘I’ is possible. Truth is the element of such consciousness. This Consciousness is completely above Knower, Knowable or subject-object discrimination. This is called consciousness of truth or consciousness of the Supreme Being. This supreme entity is different from the transcendental entity available through pure subjective vision. The physical being constitutes the element of the religious consciousness. Religious consciousness is a self-centred introspection process in which neither the self nor the knower is rejected. But the Supreme Being is the highest form of theoretical consciousness. It cannot be a part of pure subjective life. It is understood only negatively by absolute notation. Krishnachandra thus says –

“The consciousness of truth as what is believed in but not understood either in the objective or in the subjective attitude, as not literally speakable at all but speakable only in the purely symbolistic way, is extra religious or transcendental consciousness.”<sup>101</sup>

That is, the consciousness of truth can be believed, but objective or subjective is by no means intelligible. Not literal at all, speakable, but only speakable in a purely symbolic way. The consciousness of truth is transcendental. In this way, the Absolute is transcendental from subjective and objective form; it is a matter of philosophy of truth. Krishnachandra calls this Supreme Being Brahman. According to him, even

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*,— 116.

though this Brahman is a positive object (bhāva vastu), it has to be understood by negating it through the process of 'neti neti'. But if we say that Brahman exists, the word 'exists' here means truth, not entity. Because being is self-perceived, truth is not. We believe in truth but it cannot be understood objectively or subjectively. That is, it is not speakable; beyond the word and mind. If you want to say something about him, you have to say it with the help of symbols. So, it is called extra religious or transcendental knowledge. This Brahman or Truth is self-manifested. This Brahman or truth is a different entity from me.

According to him, the Supreme Being cannot be characterized by any adjective, such as subject or object. Western philosophers have erred in describing the attributes of the Absolute. Kant was the first to realize that attempts to describe the Absolute are futile. But he also mistakenly called the Supreme Being unknown and unknowable. To call the Supreme Being unknown and unknowable is to describe it. Therefore, Krishnachandra says the Supreme Being is indeterminate and cannot be described as a being. Plato's Nothing, Buddhist Madhyamika's Void, Bergson's Indeterminate Elanvital, and Dark Chamber of Hegel's Being— all are different approaches to the Indeterminate, but none of them can adequately explain the Indeterminate. They place the indeterminate either in a subjective world or an objective world or a neutral but definite world. But the Supreme Being can only be believed in, not known. It can only be spoken in negatively and symbolic terms. It is only an indefinite form.

Krishnachandra says that knowledge is a form of awareness. In his words— "It is in introspection into knowledge ...that we realise that we believed before we knew — and that there was then no awareness of the distinction of the object believed from

the belief. Knowledge as distinct from mere belief involves the awareness of distinction.”<sup>102</sup>

That is, in introspective knowledge, we realize that we believed before knowing. But we had no awareness or understanding of the difference between faith and trust. This distinction is what separates knowledge from belief. Awareness can be of two types– (1) Objective awareness and (2) Subjective awareness. In the first, the knower is independently related to the object. This consciousness is the knowledge included in the philosophy of object. But subjective consciousness is true or spiritual insight, which completely abandons objective vision. It is the appreciative or introspective knowledge of the knower. But an analysis of this enjoying consciousness reveals that something else is available to our soul in enjoying itself. That other thing may be physical or mental or it may be any other soul with which that soul is related. Or there may be a supernatural or transcendental spirit, whose instructions we receive in religious consciousness.

But the first two of these three are not pure subjective because when the body is realized in self-realization or the enjoying consciousness of the ‘I’, there is also the enjoyment of individuality. In other words, self-devotion and objectivity are connected there, so it is not pure subjectivity. On the other hand, we become aware of ourselves in relation to others when the ‘I’ becomes aware of other souls in the exploratory or introspective consciousness. So this, too, is not pure subjectivity. Consciousness of the transcendental being is the highest state of pure subjectivity. Here, the perception of ‘I’ transcends its introspective limits. It is the highest form of

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<sup>102</sup> Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, *The Subject as Freedom* (Bombay: The Indian Institute of Philosophy, 1930), 56–57.

our knowledge. And when the 'I' is completely denied, there is only pure subjectivity. According to Krishnachandra, this pure subjectivity is pure liberation. This Supreme Being cannot be the subject of our knowledge; it can only be understood indirectly. This does not mean that it is unknown and unknowable. He thus says that truth, being indeterminate, cannot be an object of knowledge. In his words– “Knowledge is primarily of a definite object and is to be distinguished from the awareness of the Indefinite.”<sup>103</sup>

It would be appropriate to say that just as the dialectical movement was at the root of philosopher Hegel's metaphysical thought, so also negation (neti) is at the root of Krishnachandra's metaphysical thought. He even spoke of 'neti' as the basis for attaining the Supreme Being. He says– “The region of Negation is the region of the Indefinite.”<sup>104</sup>

Absolute being should be understood as absolute negation. Because if a known object is qualified in a positive religion, it becomes definite. Only by reaching the highest limit of this process of 'Neti' or 'Negation' one can attain the Supreme Being.

In general, the concept of 'Neti' or 'Negation' is associated with the concept of illusion. Illusion is to think something to be what it really is not. That is, 'Neti' is illusory. But Krishnachandra understood the 'Neti' or 'Negation' differently from the conventional concept. To him, 'Neti' means to reject something that is illusional. We apply this principle when we deny the existence of the snake in the rope. In this case, the snake is rejected as misleading. Now, the question is how is the existence of an illusory object rejected? The answer is that (1) illusion has no objective existence.

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<sup>103</sup> Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, *Studies in Philosophy* (vol-2), ed. Gopinath Bhattacharya (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 1958), xviii.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*,— 208.



That is, it can have a non-objective existence. (2) It has no objective or subjective existence, i.e. it has no existence at all. Explaining this in detail, Krishnachandra says—

“Illusion may be regarded (1) as having some kind of abstract being or (2) contradiction itself.”<sup>105</sup>

That is, illusion can be regarded as (1) a kind of abstract entity or (2) self-contradiction or self-inconsistency. Ācārya Śaṅkara, while explaining his theory of ‘Māyā’, analysed the three-level illusion, but Krishnachandra here spoke of two types of ‘Neti’ or ‘Negation’. However, the first negation recognized by Krishnachandra speaks of three types of negation. That is, there are a total of four types of rejection. These four types of rejection can be explained in four philosophical standpoints. That is, “illusion (i) may be a being only to be denied, (ii) a being as positive as fact but different from it and positively related to it, (iii) identical with fact relation being that of identity, or (iv) no being at all but negation transcending all being.”<sup>106</sup>

Regarding liberation, Krishnachandra says that the common man is a knower, living in this empirical world. So, he is free in this empirical world. However, this liberation is a limited liberation of him. He spoke of two types of freedom or liberation – (1) freedom of the elective will or freedom of choice and (2) noumenal freedom. The first type of liberation is the initial state of liberation because there is objectivity. The realization of the knower as ‘I’ is the realization of the knower’s own nature. Krishnachandra calls it the knower’s sense of enjoyment. But this is not full liberation because there remains a sense or awareness of self or I. Therefore, this sense also needs to be negated to attain full liberation. And the negation or rejection

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*,— 205.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*,— 235.

of this feeling is not an impossible matter. The soul is able to transcend itself in the religious sense of the other soul or the transcendental soul. So Krishnachandra made a distinction between the subject as free (mukta jñātā) and the subject as freedom (Muktirupi jnata). A subject as free (mukta jñātā) means a knower who is freed to attain Supreme Destiny. On the other hand, the subject as freedom (muktirupī jñātā) is Svarupa Mukti. This is the ultimate state of liberation. In this case, there is no specific material for negation or rejection. So, there is no question of overcoming this condition. This level of liberation is the transcendental level. This realm of indeterminacy is the realm of the Supreme Being and the ultimate destiny of the knower.

## **2.10 Radhakrishnan on Vedanta**

One of the most famous modern Indian thinkers is Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. He developed a philosophy of synthesis combining the traditions of the East and the West with his extraordinary wisdom. But the main basis of his philosophical thought was rooted in the Indian tradition; especially from the ancient Indian Vedanta philosophy, he took the main ideas of his philosophy. He presented ancient Indian traditional thought in a novel way. His philosophical position is a combination of Advaita Vedanta and Absolute Idealism. He takes the monistic aspect of Vedanta and combines it with Absolute Idealism. Like the monists, he believed that truth is one and like the extreme idealists he showed that everything is a necessary aspect of that one. So, his philosophy can roughly be called Monistic Idealism.

He considered the ultimate truth to be spiritual and the whole world system is moving towards spiritual ideals. He believed the world process is working towards a purpose. If we perceive that the universe is moving towards something, then it has

meaning and value. It is not a blind mechanical process, nor is it a continuous and gratuitous shifting of places. Rather, constant progress towards a higher goal. This thought makes us an idealist. He realized the crisis of the present civilization. People have benefited from the advancements of science and technology. As a result, mechanization has increased. He believed that this mechanical life and materialistic competition had put the human soul to sleep. Hence, our foremost need is the revival of the soul and restoration of spiritual faith. If this spiritual feeling is not awakened, human life becomes chaotic, unhealthy and painful.

According to Vedanta, the Supreme Being is Brahman. Nothing can be thought of without acknowledging Brahman. Radhakrishnan also relied on Vedanta to determine the nature of the Supreme Being. He also says that the Supreme Being is Brahman, which is the logical ground of all real and existent things.

Naturalists claim that there is no need to accept any supernatural or spiritual theory to explain the world. Everything in this world can be given a naturalistic explanation. But Radhakrishnan thinks that the foundation of the naturalist solution is the prior recognition of the reality of 'time'. Hence, such an interpretation is limited to temporal events only; there is no need to transcend time. This theory seeks to explain the order of nature by nature itself and considers it to be determined by mechanical and blind inertial forces. Radhakrishnan, therefore says that this naturalist interpretation fails to determine the nature of the Absolute. He says that the Absolute must be some spiritual concept that lies beyond this physical world. Like the Advaita Vedantists, he realized that the Supreme Being cannot be adequately explained. But with our limited language capacity an attempt can be made. Therefore, if we investigate the process of the world, we understand that there is a limit to the physical

explanation, beyond which it cannot go. So, we need to search for a non-physical theory that can explain this world process.

Radhakrishnan identified this non-physical theory or Supreme Being from both Indian and Western perspectives. In His Supreme Being, there are the seeds of both Advaita Vedanta and Hegelian thought. It is the only entity but its highest peak can never be reached through the process of abstraction. This infinite Supreme Being is transcendently one. Like the Advaita Vedantists, Radhakrishnan believed that the Supreme Being is void of internal differences. Everything in this world is a manifestation of the Supreme Being but these manifestations in no way undermine the monistic character of the Infinite. In his words—

“The same Absolute reveals itself in all these but differently in each. The ultimate reality sleeps in the stone, breathes in the plants, feels in the animals, and awakens to self-consciousness in man.”<sup>107</sup>

That is, the one Brahman is never affected by His various manifestations. He realized that a unity exists in the world process. There are no unintended or accidental events, nor is there any object that is inconsistent with other objects. A unity exists in everything in the world. Now, this unity can never be called one unless the Supreme Being is regarded as one. So it can be said that Radhakrishnan’s non-dualism has its root in teleology.

Radhakrishnan understood the Supreme Being as “Pure consciousness, Pure freedom and Infinite possibility.”<sup>108</sup> He explained the first two of these three characteristics of the Supreme Being in the Vedantic view and the last one in Hegel’s

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<sup>107</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1920), 43.

<sup>108</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1947), 343.

Absolute idealism. The Supreme Being is pure Consciousness because Consciousness is an indescribable and eternal Phenomenon. We cannot think of any existence without a connection with consciousness. The Supreme Being is an infinite possibility because, from it, the infinite universe has emerged. This universe is only a possibility of the Supreme Being. Again, the Absolute is pure freedom because its potential realization is not controlled by anything; it is completely free. The Supreme Being could have created a different world instead of this real world because it is completely independent. Radhakrishnan believed that the Supreme Being is the basis of the qualities that exist in the world, such as existence, order, development, purposefulness, etc.

According to Radhakrishnan, this Supreme Being is spiritual in nature. The known principles of this world are not sufficient to explain this world as they have a limitation. They have no power to explain anything beyond this world. So, we have to accept a spiritual being as the ultimate being which can take us beyond the known world. Hence, it can be said that the Supreme Being is a spiritual driving force.

Nothing can limit this divinity. The Supreme Being is infinite and eternal. So he is a free spirit. His freedom is unfettered. He does not even have a second. This Supreme Being lacks nothing; it is self-sufficient, eternal and is the foundation of everything in this world. But Radhakrishnan says, we cannot fully understand the nature of the Supreme Being. He can only be indicated, not described. In his words—

“Pure Being which is the Absolute can only be indicated. It can be alluded to but not described.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The recovery of Faith* (Delhi: Hindu Pocket Books (p.) Ltd., 1955), 87.

Radhakrishnan spoke of God as well as the Supreme Being or Brahman. We find a similar discussion in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. But there these two principles are essentially accepted as identical. Because what is Brahman in the transcendental view (pāramārthika dṛṣṭi) is God (saguṇa Brahman) in the practical view (vyavahārika dṛṣṭi). So, it can be said that the difference between Brahman and God is the difference between the transcendental and the practical view. Radhakrishnan distinguished between the Supreme Being and God but did not differentiate between the transcendental and practical perspectives. He realized that one theory needs to be accepted to explain the order and purpose of this universe, namely God. God is timeless yet real.

Like Śaṅkara, Radhakrishnan did not consider God as a product of ignorance or māyā. He used to say that the Supreme Being manifests Himself in two ways— (1) as the Supreme Being and (2) as God. God is the functional Supreme Being, He is the Creator. That is, when the Supreme Being is associated with creation, He is God. He realized that we need a fusion of metaphysical and religious experience. The Supreme Being is the object of metaphysical inquiry and God is the object of religious understanding. So he used to say that created things are real just like God is. God is an aspect of the Supreme Being. Again, from the human point of view, God is the Supreme Being. Thus, he said—

“We call the Supreme, the Absolute when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *An idealistic View of life* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1947), 345.

Radhakrishnan says that God is the Supreme Mind, Supreme Intelligence and Supreme Wisdom. He is also full of love and greatness. Using the analogy of the Hindu trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva he says that—

“The one God creates as Brahmā, redeems as Viṣṇu; and judges as Śiva. These represent the three stages of plan, the process and the perfection. The source from which all things come, the springs by which they are sustained and the good into which they enter are one. God loves us, creates us and rules us. Creation, redemption and judgment are different names for the fact of God.”<sup>111</sup>

He also says that God cannot be separated from the world. He is a part of this world. As this world is constantly creative, God is also constantly present as the creative entity of this world. But there is an unrealized residuum in God. That makes God transcendent of this world.

Speaking about the world, Radhakrishnan says that the world is only a manifestation of the divine plan. God is the creator of this world. There is a beginning and an end in the world. God is the past, present and future of this world. Yet, he is a being completely separate from the world. There is a difference of creation and creator respectively between the world and God. Creation is a manifestation of one of the infinite possibilities of the Absolute. If the world is the manifestation of one possibility among the infinite possibilities of the Supreme Being, then it is a particular consequence of the independent action of the Supreme Being. There is no obligation of the creator to create the world. That is, this world is not essential for the Creator.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.,— 338.

Any of the infinite possibilities could have materialized. So the world is just an accident.

Thus his interpretation of the world as an accident in his philosophy is highly significant in two respects– (1) it succeeds in preserving the monistic nature and independent nature of the Supreme Being, and (2) it establishes the line of distinction between creation and creator that his philosophy speaks of. From this point of view, it can be said that Śaṅkara's thought had a profound influence on Radhakrishnan's thought. Śaṅkara also thought that the world is not necessarily related to Brahman.

Again, we can see the influence of Western philosopher Hegel's extreme idealism in his concept of the world. Radhakrishnan says that although the world is an accident, it is true. There is no conflict between such thoughts as accident and truth. This world is accidental because it is an accidental manifestation of the infinite potential of the Supreme Being. Again, this is true because it is created by the Supreme Being. So the created world is never a false, it is God's will. If the creator is true then the created world cannot be false. We notice two entities or realities – one is non-created divine reality and the other is created reality. That is, one is Reality in itself and the other is the entity manifested in the form of the world. Both are true.

According to him, creation is the *līlā* of the Supreme Being. So, it can never be false. He called this *līlā* as real. But the question is, if *līlā* is really *līlā*, then it has to be said essential to the Supreme Being. And in that case, does the independent characteristic of being remain intact? The answer is that the world is the manifestation of the Supreme Being. The nature of the Supreme Being is manifested as the world. And from this point of view creation is a necessary matter of the Supreme Being. But



the Supreme Being does not necessarily have this creation. He says that even the etymology of the word Brahman supports this view. Thus, he said–

“We do not have the infinite and the finite, God and the world, but only the infinite as and in the finite, God as and in the world.”<sup>112</sup>

Radhakrishnan says that man is a self-subsisting and self-transcending being, in which there is universal love as well as selfishness. As much as he believed in extreme spirituality, he emphasized physical truth as well. He believed that there is no conflict between physical reality and spiritual reality; they are complement to each other. The superiority of man over other creatures of nature lies in the fact that he can move according to his will and is capable of achieving his own goals. He does nothing blindly. Radhakrishnan called it self-transcendence. He talked about two aspects of man (1) The finite aspect of man and (2) The infinite aspect of man. He called the physical side of man the finite aspect, which he called Physical Man, Empirical Man, and Natural Man etc. He called the spiritual aspect of man an eternal side. This aspect is the complete aspect of man. When elevated to the spiritual level, man gains self-awareness, the distinction between the knower and the knowable disappears, and man attains liberation. So spirituality is the true nature of man. So man’s goal is to search for eternal spirituality from within the physical state. Liberation is a state that is free from all kinds of sufferings. In this state man is able to realize his true nature, experiencing oneness with God. In his words–

“The destiny of the human soul is to realize its oneness with the Supreme”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Reign of religion in contemporary philosophy* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1920), 442.

<sup>113</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 96.

He says that a person can get liberation while still having a body. But that liberated person is not affected by any worldly matter. He works selflessly for the welfare of others. However, Indian philosophy talks about Videha mukti (Disembodied liberation) of soul after Jivan mukti (Embodied liberation). Videha mukti occurs only when the jivan mukta breaks all the bonds of karma. Then the soul is no longer tied to the body. But Radhakrishnan did not accept it. He says that even if a person attains liberation, his work is not yet complete, he has to help other people to attain mokṣa. Gaining individual liberation can never be the goal of human life. That is, we have to work for liberation of all. For this, it is necessary to awaken the divine sense in the human heart.

### **2.11 A comparative analysis**

So far, we have tried to give an outline how the contemporary thinkers of India have been influenced by traditional Vedantic culture. It is seen that they are not a follower of the same sect of Vedanta. In Rammohan, primacy is given mainly to jñāna or knowledge. However, he was not a pious person, rather a social activist who wanted to remove the superstitions that were embedded with the observation of Vedantic as well as Hindu culture. Even being a hard core follower of Śaṅkara Vedanta, Rammohan didn't deny the reality of this world, nor considered it as illusory reflection of Brahman.

Debendranath, on the contrary, was deadly against the interpretation of Upanishads put forward by Śaṅkara. Like Rammohan he belongs to Brahmasamāj but instead of jñāna (knowledge), he gave emphasis on bhakti and anubhuti (devotion and feeling) in his writings. At the very outset, he seems to be a follower of Madhva, but

in his later writings, a tendency is seen to go beyond the binary of Svatantra and Paratantra, which fits better with the philosophy of Rāmānuja.

Unlike the former two, Bankimchandra was a hard core follower of Hinduism. He was clearly an advocate of qualified monism, who observed the relation between worshiped and worshiper as *sānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *madhur*. He believed in the reality of Krishna, who is endowed with all sorts of good qualities. A harmonious culture of all knowledge, devotion and action is prescribed by him in his ‘Dharmatattva’. However, preponderance to *niṣkāma* karma, i.e. renunciation in action, is the hallmark of Bankim’s Vedanta.

The advocacy of almost all variants of Vedanta is noticed in Sri Sri Ramakrishna’s teaching and preaching. Hence, it is really puzzling to conclude about the position he was in favour of. But if we do justice to Pramāṇsa’s thought, it can aptly be said that his philosophical position is the synthesis of all Vedantas.

From the poetic writings of Tagore, it is really difficult to judge in which school he belongs. It is true that he believes in the non-duality of everything. In man’s universe, he has described how, through the process of evolution, everything has come out from one ultimate reality. But unlike Śāṅkara he admits this world and the worldly life as real and non-illusory. The type of liberation he aspires is not transcendent but a matter of having the feeling of oneness of all in this earthly life, that leads a person to attain ‘*Ānanda*’, i.e. the feeling of joy, love and bliss together. So, the form of Vedanta he is in favour of would be described as one type of ‘Concrete Monism’ or ‘Mukta Advaitavāda’.

Vivekananda unlike the formers has laid an ascetic life. It is vehemently declared by Swamiji himself that he is a follower of Advaita Vedanta. But many

points of departure from Śaṅkara's Vedānta are also noticed in his writings. His life was an experiment to put Vedānta in practice. That's why the type of Vedānta he follows is often called neo-Vedānta or practical Vedānta.

Sri Aurobindo was exceptional from his predecessors to a great extent. In his integrated monism unification is proposed between matter and consciousness. It is in matter, he believes, the pure consciousness is expressed in a synchronized form. Hence, there can be evolution and liberation in the case of matter also. The type of Advaita theory he attempted to defend is popularly known as Puraṇadvaitavāda or Perfect Monism. Tagore was in favour of giving emphasis to a particular state of mind, only knowledge or feeling or action. In Vivekananda, we observed an alternation of those mental states. In addition to Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma yoga, Swamiji spoke of Raja yoga too. While in Sri Aurobindo, a way of Integral yoga is prescribed where Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma all ways are incorporated together.

To Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, Ultimate reality is beyond understanding or intellectualisation. At this point, his claim resembles with the view of Śaṅkara. However, he is not in favour of approaching that reality through any positive means, like, jñāna, bhakti, karma etc. In his opinion it is only through negation or denial that one can reach to that ultimate. The researcher finds some sort of similarity with Śaṅkara in this approach also. In Śaṅkara's non-dualism, the entire world view is fabricated on the basis of adhyāropa or illusory ascription. As snakesness is ascribed on rope in the same way the world appearance is wrongly fabricated on Brahman. Only when one proceeds through the path of apavāda, i.e. denial or negation of the predicate, he can reach to the reality.

Radhakrishnan's understanding is an admixture of Advaita Vedanta of Śaṅkara and the Absolute idealism of the West. Like Śaṅkara, he admits consciousness as one and supreme reality which is beyond attributes and forms. However, it is expressed in different ways in the form of animate and inanimate things. Like Brahman of Śaṅkara, Absolute to Radhakrishnan is not a distant, unknowable entity, rather, it is pure conscious that permeates everything. Neither by sense nor by intellect we can have awareness about that ultimate reality; it is only by intuitive feelings for a type of mystical experience that one can be aware about this all-pervading consciousness. One would be able to achieve his goal of life only by transcending the illusion of dualism.

## **Third Chapter**

### **Kalidas Bhattacharya and the Concept of Anekānta Vedanta**

‘Vedanta’ we have already seen, does not simply refer to Śāṅkara Vedanta or Advaita Vedanta. There are other forms of Vedanta, viz. Davaita, Dvaitādvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, etc. which are developed on different commentaries on Brahmasūtra. In addition to these traditional forms, Vedanta has emerged in one form or another in sects like Vaishṇava, Śākta and Śaiva and other schools. Each of them has its glory and uniqueness in the philosophical tradition. And in the writings of contemporary Indian thinkers, we find re-appearance of those Vedantic schools in different ways. These thinkers, however, were not academic philosophers in the true sense. There have been many thinkers like Rabindranath, Vivekananda and others, whose thoughts were loaded with philosophical understanding, although they were reluctant to be familiar even as philosophers. But the last two centuries gave birth to many academic philosophers also. It is worth noting that in this academic and non-academic philosophical tradition, Vedanta received its revival. Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya is such a philosopher of the academic tradition, in whose writings we witnessed a modern and unique interpretation of Vedanta that has not been seen in any of his predecessors. The philosophical approach witnessed in his writings makes him different from all other thinkers of the time. In this chapter, an attempt would be made to go through the philosophical approach of Kalidas Bhattacharya, particularly the modern interpretation he introduced in the field of Vedanta. But before introducing his modern interpretation of Vedanta, it is necessary to be acquainted with his identity.

### **3.1 Life and Works of Kalidas Bhattacharya**

Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya was born on 17th August 1911 in Barisal, presently in Bangladesh. His father, Krishnachandra, was one of the great thinkers of modern India. Prof. Bhattacharya was philosophical from his childhood. The seeds of philosophy were in his blood. He completed Matriculation from Serampore, where his father resided. He then joined Presidency College, Calcutta, for his Intermediate Examination. Later, he got admission in BA class as a philosophy student there. As he had an urge for higher education, he was also concerned about the country and society. The sadness of subjugated India haunted him. So, at that time, his young mind actively dragged him into the mainstream of the freedom fight. As a result, he fell under the bad list of the foreign authorities and was consequently expelled from the college. At that time, his father Krishnachandra Bhattacharya was a professor of philosophy at Hooghly Mohsin College. He was admitted there under his supervision and graduated with the highest marks in Philosophy. He then received his MA and PhD degrees from Calcutta University. Title of his dissertation was ‘Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy’. He received the prestigious Premchand Roychand Scholarship from Calcutta University as a meritorious student and researcher. Basically, he had a deep connection with Western philosophical thought. But his movement in Indian philosophy was also unrestricted. He received the honorary title of Mahāmahopādhyāy from the Mithilā Vidyapith for his outstanding erudition in Indian tradition. Even from the Asiatic Society, he was awarded the Gold Medal as the best philosopher of India.

In his twenties, he began his teaching career as a Lecturer at Vidyasagar College, Calcutta. At the same time, he started taking classes at the Council of Post-

Graduate Teaching at Calcutta University. In 1951, he was appointed as a graduate professor at the Sanskrit College, Calcutta, where he remained until 1956. In 1957, he joined Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, as a Professor and Coordinator of the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy. He served there till 1971. Between 1957 and 1971, he was Principal of Vidya Bhavan (PG Department) from 1962 to 1971 and was appointed as Vice Chancellor of Visva-Bharati in 1967. He held the post of Vice-Chancellor until his retirement in 1971.

After retiring, he was appointed Emeritus Professor of the Department of Philosophy at Visva-Bharati University and the Indian Council of Philosophical Research. He was also invited to Oxford University to deliver the Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecture in 1984-85. He even gave lectures at the University of Hawaii and the University of Vienna. Kalidas exemplified the Platonic ideal of ‘simple living and high thinking’ in his personal life. Primarily a dedicated teacher, he loved his students as his own children and always kept his doors open for them. He was the author of many works. A brief account of his composition is given below—

### **Books Published**

1. *Philosophy, Language and Logic*. Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1955.
2. *Possibility of Different Types of Religion*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1975.
3. *Presuppositions of Science and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Santiniketan: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Visva-Bharati, 1974.
4. *A Modern Understanding of Advaita Vedanta*. Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology, 1975.
5. *Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy*. Calcutta: Dasgupta & Co., 1953.



6. *The Concept of Cause as in India and the West*. (published in three instalments in *Our Heritage*, vol. I, Pt. I, January-June 1953; vol. II, Pt. I, January-June 1954. *Our Heritage* is the bulletin of the P.G. Dept. Research, Govt). Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1953-54.
7. *Fundamentals of K.C. Bhattacharyya's Philosophy*. Calcutta: Saraswat Library, 1975.
8. *Humanism in Indian Philosophy and Religion* (published in five instalments). Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, June-November 1978.
9. *The Indian Concept of Man*. Kolkata: Jadavpur University, 1982.
10. *The Indian Concepts of Knowledge and Self* (published in five instalments in *Our Heritage*, vol. II, pt. II, July-December 1954; vol. III, pt. I, January-June 1955; vol. III, pt. II, July-December 1955; vol. IV, pt. I, January-June 1956; vol. IV, pt. II, July-December 1956). Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1954-56.
11. *The Nation of Transcendence: The Philosophy of Gopinath Kaviraj*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1982.
12. *Object, Content and Relation*. Kolkata: Dasgupta & Co. 1957.
13. *Bharatiya Samskriti o Anekānta Vedanta*. Burdwan: Burdwan University, 1982.
14. *Māndukya Upanisader Kathā*. Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1982.

### **Papers Published**

1. "A Brief Account of the Writings of K.C. Bhattacharyya". *K.C. Bhattacharyya Memorial Volume*, Indian Institute of Philosophy (Amalner 1958):
2. "A Modern Defence of Orthodoxy", *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1 (Summer, 1957):

3. "The Advaita Concept of Subjectivity". *Visva-Bharati Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 8, No. 2 (February 1972):
4. "Advaita and Western Thought". *Indian Philosophical Annual, Madras University*, vol. VIII, (1971):
5. "The Business of Philosophy". *The Philosophical Quarterly, Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner*, vol. 28, no. 4 (January 1956):
6. "An Outline of K.C. Bhattacharyya's Philosophy". *Journal of the Dept. of Philosophy, University of Calcutta*, vol. III, (1978):
7. "Andrews, Gandhi and Tagore". *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta*, vol. II, no. 11 (November 1971):
8. "The Concept of Philosophy". *Visva-Bharati Journal of Philosophy*, vol. V, no. 2 (February 1970):
9. "The Concept of Self in Buddhism", *The Philosophical Quarterly, Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner*, vol. 34, no. 2 (July 1960)
10. "Does God Suffer?". *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, vol. 22, no. 2 (February 1971):
11. "Education in Modern India (Convocation Address at North Bengal University)". *Bharat Prativa*, vol. II, no. II (October 1978):
12. "Freedom". *Visva-Bharati Journal of Philosophy*, vol. VIII, no. 2 (February 1970):
13. "The Indian Concept of Freedom". *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta*, vol. II, no. 9 (September 1971):
14. "The Indian Concept of Self". *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta*, no. 8 (August 1971):

15. "Is Man Originally a Sinner?". *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta*, vol. 22, no. 1 (January 1971):
16. "Is Philosophy Linguistic Analysis?". *The Philosophical Quarterly, Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner*, vol. 32, no. 2 (July 1959):
17. "Language, Logic and Fact". *The Philosophical Quarterly, Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner*, vol. 30, no. 3 (October 1957):
18. "Modern Psychology and Hindu Thought", *The Philosophical Quarterly, Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner*, vol. 33, no. 1 (April 1960):
19. "Relation in Indian Philosophy", *Visva-Bharati Journal of Philosophy*, vol. VI, no. 2 (February 1970):

### **3.2 A proposal for Reinterpretation**

Many great philosophers appeared in India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Rammohan, Dayananda, Sri Ramakrishna, Bankimchandra, Tilak, Rabindranath, Vivekananda, Gandhiji, Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Krishnamurthy, Krishnachandra and others. In their writings, Vedanta received various manifestations. But in the writings of Kalidas Bhattacharya, Vedanta is presented from a unique perspective. This unique formation or presentation of Vedanta, made Kalidas different from all his predecessors.

In most of the contemporary Indian philosophers, we observed a tendency to restore the faith in one absolute being. Though this monistic approach is not equally evident in each of them, however, a tendency to sustain belief in oneness is prevalent in most of them. At the very outset, this may seem to be an oversimplification as there are varieties of thinkers, from literalists to educationists, politicians to ascetics, in the list of contemporary philosophers. And it is difficult to bring their thoughts under the

umbrella of Vedanta. But a closer look would reveal the veracity of the claim that those diversified thoughts somehow converge or meet at a point. A belief in one Absolute is underlying the thoughts of Rammohan to Bankimchandra, Sri Ramakrishna to Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan and others. Although the impact of Vedanta is prevalent in their writings, slide deviation from classical tradition is also observed. Firstly, they should not be considered as hard core follower of the traditional Vedantic schools, as they beg to differ from the tradition in many points. Moreover, all of them are not monogamous to a particular sect of Vedanta. Keeping the Advaita theory of Brahman intact, proneness is experienced in their writings to make the concepts of *māyā*, *jīva*, *jagata* intelligible in different ways. The adoption of more than one system of Vedanta is also seen in some of them. However, the interpretation of Vedanta put forward by Kalidas Bhattacharya is an exceptional and innovative one. In his account, we observed an endeavour to explain all schools of Indian philosophy irrespectively— Vedantic or non-Vedantic, orthodox or heterodox as reflections of Vedanta. Admitting the differences between Indian philosophical schools in their theories, Prof. Bhattacharya proceeds to view those differences as multi aspects and dimensions of the same Vedanta.

Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya's claim is not only exceptional, but sounds illogical and implausible at the very outset. How far acceptable it would be to unify various forms of Vedanta by admitting the stipulated definition he provides? For in the questions of epistemological, metaphysical and moral issues, sharp differences are seen not only between the Vedantic and non-Vedantic schools but among the schools belonging to Vedanta tradition. Ignoring those differences altogether, how reasonable would it be to explain all schools of Indian philosophy as different springs of the confluence of the Vedantic river?

Prof. Bhattacharya himself has raised these issues and attempted to meet those queries. He points out that Vedanta can be defined in such a way that the multifaceted Indian thoughts can be mingled into one. By providing a new definition of Vedanta, he has not only narrated the various forms of Vedanta in one unite, but also explaining almost all Indian sects, regardless to orthodox or heterodox, as variations of the same of Vedantic culture.

It does not seem practical to associate different communities with the same views or paths in such a situation. So the question comes to mind is this alternative approach of Prof. Bhattacharya as novel as it is true or reasonable? Is it logical to provide a new definition of Vedanta and the attempt to see almost all Indian philosophies as a form of Vedanta? There are also exceptional thinkers like his father, Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, Devendranath, and Bankimchandra, whom we consider to be contemporary Indian philosophers, although, at first sight, their thought does not seem to match the demands of Advaita Vedanta. Therefore, it is mandatory to be acquainted with the definition of Vedanta that Prof. Bhattacharya is in favour of.

According to his claim, the diverse philosophical tradition of India is nothing but the reflection of Vedanta; an undercurrent of Vedanta is flowing behind the philosophical and cultural tradition of India. This claim, to a great extent, is true. We cannot deny the influence of Vedanta on Indian thought and way of life. It is quite true that Indian orthodox systems are dependent on the Vedas and Upanishads directly or indirectly. But on the question of theory, can we say that those sects are identical with Śāṅkara Vedanta or the other forms of Vedanta? Buddhists, Jains, etc., who had no faith in the authority of the Vedas, in particular, have developed their own philosophical positions, which do not resemble with any sects of Vedanta. In such a situation, is it justified to view the entire philosophical tradition of India as a

manifestation of Vedanta? In other words, is it reasonable to say that Vedanta has taken various forms in Indian philosophical literature? A student of Indian philosophy, even a scholar, would not agree at this point. However, Kalidas Bhattacharya would stick to his own end on his own logic. To understand his proposed solution, it is necessary to clarify what exactly he understands by Vedanta.

### **3.3 Introducing the Concept of Anekānta Vedanta**

Traditionally by Vedanta we understand the philosophical system or systems which are founded on the last part of the Vedas i.e. the Upanishads. But this way of understanding Vedanta, which is commonly approved is not endorsed by Kalidas; not does he observed Vedanta as the extract of Prasthān trays– namely Śruti Smṛti and Nyāya. In his view, Vedanta has two foundations (lakṣana)– one is ‘tolerance to other views’ (‘paramata sahiṣṇutā’) and the other is ‘indifference’ (‘udāratā’)<sup>1</sup>. He feels that if any philosophy has influenced Indian culture, tradition and lifestyle, it is none other than Vedanta. In saying this, he draws our attention to a special feature of Indian culture. If we look into the Indian culture, he points out, it will become obvious that it is a meeting place of different castes, races and civilizations. There is an undeniable coexistence of various opposing social and spiritual doctrines. Since the distant past, this country has been repeatedly attacked by foreigners and enemies. They have ruled over this country by using their power and well-equipped forces. Indian with its insufficient equipment had tried to combat them but did not maintain its enmity with the Aliens; rather, it incorporated them into Indian culture. It is the ideal of indifference and tolerance that insisted Indians to welcome foreigner’s culture to some extent. This Indigenisation of foreign customs and habits not only enriched

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<sup>1</sup> Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Bhāratīya Sanskriti o Anekānta Vedanta* (Burdwan: Burdwan University, 1364), 2.

India culturally but also pushed the country towards a multicultural civilization. The fundamental coexistence has become a feature of Indian civilization. This tradition of co-existence is acknowledged in Tagore's poem—

“...Hethāy Ārya, Hethāy Anārya

Hethāy Drāvid, Cina-

Śaka-Hun-Dal Pāthān Mughal

Ek dehe holo līna.”<sup>2</sup>

To Tagore, this country is a secret bank of many high-soul persons, including the Areans and the non-Areans, where one sect embraces the other in a strange tolerance in spite of conflict, controversy, plunder, torture, etc. This tradition of acceptance and tolerance is still present in Indian culture. Infact India is a place of different language, opinion, religion and cultures. This cultural attitude, tradition is equally evident in its philosophical heritage. If we have a look at the philosophical history of India, we observe that it is a conglomeration of different and opposite views— from orthodox to unorthodox, theist to atheists, monism to pluralism, etc. who are fighting against one another. Each system is engaged in refuting, even ridiculing others. Śaiva and Śākta are all most alike systems. However, a follower of Śaivism would never agree to be familiar as a follower of Śākta. A Śaiva, too, would show no interest to be acquainted as a follower of pure non-dualism. Despite their opposition and theoretical conflicts, the Indian scholar did not maintain any rivalry in their social life.

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<sup>2</sup> Rabindranath Thakur, *Gītavitāna* (Kolkata: Visva-bharati Grathanvibhāga, Vaiśākh 1400), 251.

To establish this, Prof. Bhattacharya has referred to the dialogues tradition of India. India has inherited such an argumentative tradition where establishment of one's view is always preceded by the logical presentation of the view of the opponent. In the vādī and prativādī tradition of India, before refuting the claim of the prativādīn, the vādī is seen to seek out the logic behind the view of prativādīn. It is not just a matter of blind refutation of the view of the antagonist. Before stating the point of disagreement with the opponent or showing the hollowness of the opponent's position, the Indian philosophers used to acknowledge the logic, of the position which is going to be refuted.

A review of the history of thought shows, everywhere the idea or theory which is refuted subsequently is not denied altogether. There are many points and arguments where the vādī is seen to agree with the prativādīns. In the case of science, after the emergence of Einstein's theory of relativity, the theory of Newton was changed; however, it was not abandoned rather replaced. In the same way, Sāṃkhya's world theory was not completely abandoned, but it was somehow replaced by Advaitīn. Although Gautama's material theory (padārtha tattva) was criticized by Advaitī, the tradition of Nyāya of the Gautma's philosophy, the Naiyāyika style of argumentation is followed in texts such as Advaita Siddhi. That is, despite the rejection, there is recognition of it in the society.

Almost all Indian people, Prof. Bhattacharya points out, believed it in heart and soul that we should listen to the words of any serious speaker unless he is a liar. Any speaker, if he is guided by good will, must have something to tell and the roll of a listener is to judge how much truth is there embedded in his speech. A man of wisdom— even if he belongs to an unorthodox school like, Carvāka, receives respect in our society. We, the common people of India have a tendency to pay respect to any



speaker who is guided by honesty and temperance. It is not just a matter of showing courtesy to others, one type of acceptance or recognition is also associated with this behaviour. Pointing out this convention, Kalidas claimed that tolerance and indifference are the true essential marks of Indian culture, behind which there is a belief in oneness. These three, namely, tolerance, indifference and conviction in one Absolute, are taken by him as the features of the Vedantic viewpoint. In his words—

This ideal of wonderful indifference and the joyous tolerance which is not seen anywhere— are the real Vaidāntika foundations of Indian life.<sup>3</sup>

If these are counted as the marks of Vedanta, Prof. Bhattacharya, argues, not only the so called Vedantic schools like, Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Śuddhādvaita, Dvaitādvaita etc., almost all Indian systems, irrespective of orthodox, heterodox, can aptly be considered as Vedanta.

It may seem that, in this alternative interpretation, he could not keep the original line of Vedanta intact. But this objection is not entirely correct. Because by Vedanta he understood here the general features with which various Vedanta are characterized. In his opinion, believing in one Absolute and viewing many in relation to the one constitutes the essence of all Vedanta. Amidst the apparent differences, there is a belief in one underlying in all Vedanta schools, which compels them to judge the dignity of many in relation to that Absolute. This trend is present covertly or overtly in all Indian systems. This trend is not limited to Indian philosophical schools, in Indian society and culture also, this ideal of tolerance and indifference are accepted widely. The influence of these two ideals on the Indian mind gives rise to a question—

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<sup>3</sup> Ei je apurva udārata, ei je anyatra-adriṣṭa prasanna paramatasahiṣṇutā- etai holo bhāratīya jībaner āsal Vaidāntika bhitti.- Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Bhāratīya Sanskriti o Anekānta Vedanta* (Burdwan: Burdwan University, 1364), 2.

exactly what is the root of this culture? Is it the reflection of some metaphysical view? Putting this question for the reader, Bhattacharya himself proceeds forward to give answer. In his opinion, there is a strong conviction in Indian mind that—

All living beings are parts of Nārāyaṇa, everything is a manifestation of Brahman, behind everything, there is only one root cause, and the multitude of things we experienced are nothing but the expression of līlā or play-act of Mahāmāyā. Therefore, it is the goal of human life that he should realize the unity behind the diversity.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is clear that Prof. Bhattacharya's understanding of Vedanta was not limited to the ideal of tolerance and indifference, it was deeply rooted in believing in one Absolute Being: realization of the presence of that Absolute in a multitude of worldly things is the destiny of human life. In Prof. Bhattacharya's words—

The realization of the One and the establishment of the right dignity of the Many, based on that One, is the basis of Vedanta.<sup>5</sup>

So, Indian tradition as Prof. Bhattacharya thinks is clearly a tradition of monism. This monistic trend has deeply influenced the Indian way of life, even in modern times. It does not mean that there is no influence of other Vedantic schools apart from Śaṅkara. If we look into the metaphysical theories adopted by the other schools like the schools of Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Vallabha or Bhāṣkara, a clear predominance of one over many is found. Everywhere, even in Śaiva, Śākta, we observed the endeavoured to explain plurality in terms of one absolute reality. The trust in one Absolute and the tendency to judge the multitude of things in terms of that

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, - 2.

<sup>5</sup> Eker upolobdhi ebong ei eker dṛṣṭite bohur yathārtha maryādā nirdhāraṇa Vedānter asal bhitti. *Ibid.*, - bhumika.

one, according to Kalidas have given rise the idea of ‘tolerance’ and ‘indifference’. It is true that the ideal of ‘tolerance’ is emphasized mainly by the Vaishṇavas but it is there in latent manner in every Indian mind.

### **3.3.1 Polemics against the Reinterpretation**

One may beg to differ with Prof. Bhattacharya at this point. To any ordinary student of philosophy, the history of Indian philosophy is the record of the rise and fall of many isms— dualism, pluralism as well as monism. It is true to a great extent that a priority of monism over others is also experienced in Indian philosophical tradition, but from that, it does not follow that other philosophical schools have no role to play apart from paving the way for the development of Vedānta. To any student of Indian philosophy, the claim of Prof. Bhattacharya may seem overstretched and counterintuitive one. If we look back to the philosophical tradition of India, we see that there are conflicts, disputes, adversaries, and refutations with one another on epistemological, metaphysical and moral issues. Not only among the schools of different traditions, minute points of departures are noticed, even within the womb of a particular system. If we focus our attention to the nine popular schools, it is brought to our notice that while some of them are orthodox, some are heterodox, some advocate theism and some other atheism; even the theist differ from one another in many issues: whether God is only omniscient or omnipresent too, whether He is the creator of the world or not; even if God is the creator, does He play the role of efficient cause only or both material and efficient etc. Considering all these differences into account, do we have any right to claim that the schools of Indian philosophy, without having any exceptions, are manifestations of Vedānta?

Prof. Bhattacharya himself might have understood that the interpretation of Vedanta he tends to introduce is an exceptional and unconventional one, against which various questions can be raised. He anticipated the possible objections that could be levelled by his reader or audience. Let us go through the objections that he expects to be raised against his interpretation of Vedanta.

Firstly, it may be objected that Prof. Bhattacharya has wrongly taken some characteristics as the essential features of Vedanta. Although 'indifference' and 'tolerance' are associated with Vedantic outlook, these are not the only features, nor are they even the most important features of Vedanta. The identity of Vedanta lies in the aversion towards worldly life. It is familiar to the Indians as a discipline where spiritual goodness is given predominance over worldly pleasure— 'Abhyudaya'<sup>6</sup> is overridden by 'Nishreyasa'<sup>7</sup>.

To a Vedantīn, liberation or salvation is all-important to be had. He never bothers about what is achieved and what is not, what things other people are in possession or in aspiration. After all, this world appearance is illusory and hence, it is meaningless to hanker after worldly well. The only purpose of human life is to realize his oneness with Brahman as soon as possible. A Vedantīn, according to this interpretation, is so influenced by spiritual orientation that he can deny any empirical or observable fact. They have such strong convictions in spirituality; they would not hesitate to set aside the hard truth of experience for the sake of karma.

These opponents, however, are not in favour of the said attitudes of the Vedantīns. To them, the attitude of aversion from worldly life is not a blessing but a curse to the Indians. It is owing to this attitude of aversion from worldly affairs; they

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<sup>6</sup> Abhyudaya refers to the attainment of worldly happiness.

<sup>7</sup> Nishyasrayas is the attainment of transcendental happiness or liberation.

admit that India had to face attack time and again from the foreign enemies and made this land a happy hunting ground to others. The economic, political, and social deterioration of India, according to this group of opponents, was caused by the adoption of Vedantic ideology.

Therefore, the so-called ideal of ‘tolerance’ and ‘indifference’ are not the marks of greatness, rather, these are an indication of cowardice, fearness and foolish weakness. By preaching those ideals, the so-called Vedantīns have tried to make the political, social and economic exploitation of foreign powers, tolerable.

Now let’s turn to the second possible objection. Many are of the opinion that Vedanta refers to Śāṅkara Vedanta or monistic Brahmanism of Śāṅkara; particularly when the scholars acknowledge the contribution of Vedanta in Indian culture, they have that Vedanta in Mind which is concerned with knowledge only. Followers of this Vedanta are less interested in speech, action or culture, which is the reason why this Vedanta is called jñāna mīmāṃsā. If we admit this common understanding of Vedanta we cannot explain tolerance as one of its defining characteristics. A Vedantīn, in this sense, is least interested in the practice and hence, he need not be concerned about showing tolerance to others. In short, the ideal of tolerance and indifference, which are explained as the consequence of the Vedantic outlook, is clearly not the outcome of Vedanta that the Indian scholars are in favour of. Finding the path to liberation through knowledge is the main theme of this Vedantīns. And there remains no implication of afore set two ideals– ‘Sahiṣṇutā’ and ‘Udāratā’. Or it can be said that the Vedanta that we have discussed so far, under the influence of which the minds of the people of India have become tolerant and indifference, cannot be properly called Śāṅkara Vedanta.

A third objection is often adduced about the role of Vedanta in social and practical life. This objection is directed against Prof. Bhattacharya's claim that social life of the Indian is deeply influenced by Vedantic thought and culture. But to many of the thinkers, Vedanta is a theoretical exercise which does not have any impact on social life. This objection is raised by those who mainly explain Vedanta as Upanishad. In their view, as there is no account of action, culture or religion in Upanishads or the philosophy developed on Upanishads, hence, it is really skeptical what or how much role Vedanta can play in social life. Particularly, they think the Advaita philosophy, is a manual of inaction. It is true that as a preparatory of Vedanta study, one is prescribed to practice *śama*, *dama*, etc. in the text books of Vedanta. It is also true that those practices have their social implications also. Nevertheless, the opponents think that the activities advised to follow are not necessarily prerequisite for a seeker of salvation. He may follow it or may not. Moreover, those practices are not peculiar to the aspirants of liberation but common to all who seek to be purified or eradicate the seat of seen caused by wrongdoings.

So far, we have been acquainted with the possible objections that can be raised by the opponents about his concept of Vedanta. Even if it is admitted that the ideal of Vedanta is not the ideal of turning away from the worldly life, rather, it is closely associated with society and culture. Nevertheless, one may ask, why should one give priority to the Vedantic way of life? There are other philosophical systems also, each of which left an impact on the social life to some extent. In this situation, how do we talk about the impact of Vedanta only ignoring the impact of other philosophical systems?

We cannot deny that Jain and Buddhist philosophies have profoundly influenced Indian life. If we look at the Buddhist philosophy from the Middle Ages,

we will see that Buddhism was very popular during that time. The nihilistic attitude of Buddhists has influenced the lives of common men. It left an impact, particularly on Vaishnavas, Baul, etc. We can't deny the contribution of the Jain's in Indian culture. Jain's are generally said to be the bearers of the traditional tradition of non-violence in Indian philosophy. This ideal of non-violence has also greatly affected the Indian way of life. The Carvāka, too, has its own impact. Sometimes, we think that the materialistic and hedonistic attitude of the Carvāka does not bear philosophical implications. But if we notice the daily life of common people, we observed that the consumeristic and hedonistic tradition of Carvāka is approved by them. Perhaps, owing to its parity with the common way of thinking the Carvāka is often designated as Lokāyat. Of the popular orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy, it is Nyāya, which received acceptance from the early period of Indian social life. In the history of Indian logic, Nyāya has played a very important role since the Vedic period. Vākavākya or Nyāya Vistāra, which later received the name Nyāya Darshana, was considered as one of the fourteenth vidyās in ancient culture. Even in Manu Samhitā, Nyāya or Ānvīkṣikī has been mentioned as one of the Caturthīvidyās (along with Trayi, Vārta, Dandanīti). This argumentative tradition of India is highlighted by novelist Amartya Sen in his book Argumentative India recent time.

Like, Nyāya, Sāṃkhya the oldest system of Indian philosophy, has had a strong influence on Indian tradition. It is mentioned even in Mahabharata and the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. The Sāṃkhya view– the bondage of Puruṣa is owing to its relation with Prakṛti and as soon as the bindings would overcome, it will be freed– is the understanding of the most of the common people. Caught in the cycle of life, everything from objects to desire binds people. The Yoga, often called Seśvara Sāṃkhya, is often remembered as the most practical of all Indian systems, particularly

the theory of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga initiated by Patanjali found acceptance in the circle of materialist as well as the spiritualist. We all believe that life is not only a stepping stone to knowledge; it requires suitable physical and mental well-being and that well-being cannot be achieved until and unless equilibrium or harmony is established within the body, mind and soul. Mīmāṃsā, too, is not insignificant. In leading everyday life, man is often troubled with a dilemma– what to do and what should not be done. It is Mīmāṃsā Philosophy which provides us the standard of judging Vidhis and Niṣedhas of practical life.

Considering the points stated above, how can one claim that Indian tradition is the tradition of Vedanta only? Even if we admit that in the confluence of Indian culture, Vedanta left an indelible contribution, it is hard to deny the role of other philosophical schools in the enrichment of Indian civilization.

### **3.3.2 Refutation of the Polemics**

Prof. Bhattacharya responded strongly against those polemics stated above.

Firstly, he is not ready to admit this claim that aversion towards the earthly life is the mark of being Vedantīn or being Indian. On the contrary, he claims, there was a longing for earthly life and an aspiration for the fulfilment of desire in the Indians from the early period. This claim of Prof. Bhattacharya is not unfounded, so long in the list of Puruṣārtha is concerned. Conventionally, four Puruṣarthās or goals of life are set for human beings by the Indian seers, namely– Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. Primacy used to give on Kāma and Artha initially and then Dharma was attached. To ordinary people, the main objective was the fulfilment of mundane desires or Kāma, and subsequently the accomplishment of objects (Artha) became the second objective. Dharma was introduced later with a view to get control over the



employment of objects and there by the fulfilment of Kāma uninterrupted. No matter how much we try to explain Dharma as a way to get transcendental pleasure, it was initially directed towards happiness. This relation between observation of dharma and attainment of happiness is highlighted by Bankimchandra also in his 'Dharmatattva'.

The fourth, salvation (mokṣa), which is often given primacy over the other, was not aspired by rank and file. But the pursuit of salvation was not the goal of everyone in ancient India; rather, it was limited to a few in a crowd. It is acknowledged by Prof. Bhattacharya himself, '...Kotite gutiker janya tā chila unmukta.'<sup>8</sup> As the urge for mokṣa was limited to a rare number and that few persons inherited the ideal of leading ascetic life, the attitude of aversion to earthly life would not be considered as the general attitude of Indian people, or even the attitude of Vedantīns. This claim is evidenced by our ideal of Caturāshram. The four stages of human life are advocated for ordinary people by this ideal, namely– Brahmacharya (The stage of restraint and learning), Gārhastha (A state of conjugal life), Bānaprastha (A preparatory state for leaving the conjugal life) and lastly Sannyās, i.e. the state of leading ascetic life. So, total restraint or eradication of propensities is never prescribed by our scriptures. There is no scriptural evidence where asceticism is prescribed for the general people from the beginning. Not even in Vedānta.

By saying this, Kalidas is not undermining the ideal of renunciation strongly advocated by Indian seers. Life of renunciation is an ideal life and the aspirant of liberation should lead that life honestly. But what is prescribed for an ideal person should not be applied to common people. It is, however, historically true that there is a tendency to lead the life of an ideal person in ordinary Indian people; Prof.

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<sup>8</sup> Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Bhāratiya Sanskriti o Anekānta Vedānta* (Burdwan: Burdwan University, 1364), 3.

Bhattacharya never denies this perception but to him, this is not a natural practice to the people of India. At this point, he requests his reader to look back at the historical scenario of India before independence.

He reminded us about the social, political structure of India, before independence. The attitude of Indians till the fifteenth century AD was world-centric. Like all other nations, Indians at that time were engaged in the pursuit of abhyudaya or worldly happiness. But after the fifteenth century AD onwards, Indians had forgotten worldly prosperity and were attracted to spiritual welfare to an extreme extent. There is a historical background behind the change in this attitude. Before independence, India had to face the Mughal and British rule for a long time. As a result, Indians were cornered and lost their morale. Indian people were blocked from all avenues of worldly prosperity. The Indians were oppressed and suppressed economically and socially in such a way that they had been compelled to forgo their natural rights. Being failed to fulfil the natural propensities, they become accustomed to suppress them. Gradually, it was becoming harder to maintain the social life the Indians used to lead. The rulers imposed their religion and their attitude on Indians. In such a situation the urge to find out identity compelled the Indians to be habituated in an ascetic life. Aversion towards the worldly life was an outcome of that attitude. However, it was not at all the natural selection. It becomes clear when after cessation of Mughal dynasty India became a Colony of British emperor.

Although, like the Mughals, the English is also a foreign rulers but Indian reactions to these powers were different. Indians were compelled to obey the cunning and cruel Mughals who blocked all avenues of their life. But in the case of the British ruler, the Indians themselves had extended their cooperation to their master to a great extent, as instead of blocking the gulfs of enjoyment, the British encouraged their

enjoyment of pleasure. The door of enjoyment was opened widely to the common people and the Indians found the opportunity to fulfil those desires which were suppressed during the ruling of the Mughals. As the fire burned in ashes flared up in a suitable condition, in the same way, there was an outburst of the long-standing aspiration under the ruling of the British. The consumeristic culture of the British was welcomed by the Indians as the ideal of the ascetic life they had been compelled to lead is not at all desirable. Thus, Prof. Bhattacharya makes it clear that the attitude of aversion and sacrifice, which is often claimed as the mark of being a follower of Hindu or Vedantic culture, is not the characteristic of Vedanta or ancient India.

However, it is not true that he applauded this new intense desire for pleasure. Because if a country deviates from its traditional ideals and forgets its own culture and adopts the ideals of others as its own ideals, it is never a sign of progress. Prof. Bhattacharya regretted accepting and admitting that. According to him, a nation with poor health could have nothing else to do but to welcome the consumerism, which was expressed badly later. Pointing out this poor situation of the Indian of the time, Bhattacharya commented –

Indians with broken health had nothing else to do. The condition of the people of India was so degraded.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, Kalidas is in agreement with his opponents about the fact of the decadence of the Indians; however, he could never approve this claim that Vedanta was the cause of this degradation. He further observed that despite all the changes, ups and downs, crises, and invasions of foreign powers, India has not deviated from

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<sup>9</sup> Bhagna sās̥tha bhāratbās̥ir r kichui korār chilo nā...Bhāratbas̥ir obosthā hoyechil ‘Ito naṣṭa tato bhraṣṭa’ *Ibid.*, - 4.

its traditional ideals of tolerance and indifference. Admits all deterioration, it has maintained its habit of –

Accepting unknown people as noble until the contrary is seen, seeing the good side of his ideology, his philosophy and lifestyle, and listening to his speech with a view to gather as much kindness as possible.<sup>10</sup> And it has been possible to restore all these practices by following the ideal of extreme indifference and tolerance of the Indian mind, which as Prof. Bhattacharya observed are the gift of Vedanta.

Prof. Bhattacharya's reply to the second objection runs as follows: we should not understand Vedanta only from Śaṅkara's point of view. By Vedanta, we have to understand here the general statement of all other Vedanta except the dualistic Vedanta of Madhva. Every branch of Vedanta, irrespective of Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Śuddhādvaita, Dvaitādvaita, Acintya Bhedābheda, etc., bears a common belief in One Absolute. That is the thing signified by the use of the coinage Vedanta in this writing.

We have already noticed in the first chapter that an emphasis is given to oneness in almost all schools of Vedanta. Brahman is taken as the ultimate truth nearly by all of them. In case of Śaṅkara, there is nothing apart from an unqualified Brahman. It is true that Rāmānuja admits the reality of Cit and Acit, but that Cit and Acit, in his view, are solely dependent on Brahman for their existence and implication. The same path is followed by Bhāskara, Nimbārka and Vallabha in some way or other, as primacy to Brahman over others is given in those schools. Here, Madhva definitely is an exception, as the advocacy of one type of dualism is observed in his philosophy. To Him, Vishnu– the ultimate is Svtranta (Independent), which is absolutely different from Paratrantras– jiva and jagata and this difference

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, - 4-5.

cannot be diluted. But here too it is, apprehended in a closer look, emphasis is given to Svatantra over paratantra. Here, Vishnu is viewed as only an independent entity, jiva and jagata are paratantra and subservient to Vishnu. When the paratantra jiva, pleases independent Vishnu through his service, he becomes pleased and gives the jiva its desired fruit. That is to say, although in theory, the duality of Brahma (Vishnu) and jiva has been accepted, Vishnu has been given priority in practice. Thus, it was seen that the goal of all sects of Vedanta, whether monist or dualist, or is to explain the many in terms of one.

In answering the third objection, Prof. Bhattacharya reiterates the concept of Vedanta. In this regard, he is aware that by Vedanta, there is a tendency in the public mind to mean Śāṅkara Vedanta or philosophy based on the Upanishads. But Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya never wanted to accept Vedanta in such a narrow sense. By Vedanta, he actually understood the Brahmasūtra and all commentaries based on it. To him, Śāṅkara Vedanta is as much Vedanta as Rāmānuja Vedanta, Vallabha Vedanta, Nimbārka's Vedanta, Madhva Vedanta, and all other Vedantas are. If Vedanta is taken in this broad sense, it will be seen that all except Śāṅkara speak of karma in one way or another. Rāmānuja comes first in this context. Rāmānuja is a totalitarian. In his philosophy, we witness a conglomeration of knowledge, action and devotion. He did not speak of liberation through pure knowledge, but added karma and devotion to it. In all other schools, importance is given to action; everywhere, it is an action which overpowered others ways. At a glance, it seems that Śāṅkara's Vedanta is advocating a transcendent attitude and it has no connection with practical life. At the very outset, it appears that the followers of Śāṅkara are busy in obtaining individual liberation and they do not bother about the liberation of others. Now, if somebody is least interested in the liberation of others (apart from himself), why

should he extend his support for the betterment of others? The sole purpose of a Vedantīn would be the realization of the difference between Ātma and Anātmā and thereby the attainment of Brahmānanda.

Prof. Bhattacharya is not at all ready to admit this interpretation. In his view, the Advaitīns do not insist one to engage in activities like śama, dama etc. to be freed from the bindings of sin only, but with a view to maintaining the scriptural customs. It should be acknowledged here that, like all other schools of the Indian system, Vedānta is aimed at the accomplishment of liberation and that demands purification of the mind by means of spiritual practices. Śama damādi practices paved the way to that liberation. Therefore, it is quite untrue that Advaita Vedānta is not associated with action. In this connection, Prof. Bhattacharya reminds his opponents that apart from six practices like śama dama etc. there are other prerequisites that a true possessor (Adhikārī) of Vedānta must fulfill. Besides having a general awareness of Vedas and Vedāṅgas, one should have the credit of doing nitya and naimittika karmas, refraining himself from those activities which are forbidden. An aspirant of Vedānta could be able to make a cleavage between what is eternal and what is not. The person in question needs to forgo all fruits of his action—mundane or transmundane. Attainment of these virtues is bound to be reflected on one's individual life as well as his social life. The impact of those physical and mental practices is bound to be seen in society and culture. One more thing needs to be mentioned here; in Vedāntic tradition, it is especially Śāṅkara who admit the state of embodied liberation along with disembodied liberation. Now, what is the necessity behind the recognition of this embodied liberation? The reason behind this, perhaps, is that if the liberation is not attained before one's death and it is restricted to the follower of jñānamārga only, no aspirant would get the chance to purify his soul through selfless actions. Moreover,

the path of selfish liberation cannot attract anybody to follow the path. That's why, by admitting jivan mukti, Śaṅkara endeavoured to retain the connection between individuals and his society.

One may challenge this interpretation by saying that the life after liberation is a must. For, until and unless the fruit of prāvdha (i.e. the action, enjoyment of whose fruit has started, but not finished) is exhausted, one is bound to lead the earthly life for its enjoyment. But, perhaps this is not the right solution. If the post-liberated life of a person is owing to fulfilment of the enjoyment of fruits only, there left no necessity to lead the life in such a stipulated manner. But the characteristics which are described as the traits of a jivan mukta suggest that by leading this selfless life, one actually engages oneself in moral practices. The selfless moral life, which is prescribed for the jivan mukta is directed towards the welfare of the society. Actually, self-emancipation and the welfare of society are intertwined in such a manner that one cannot be achieved without the attainment of the other. It is declared by Swami Vivekananda also— *Ātmano mokṣārtha jagat hitāya ca*.<sup>11</sup>

So, it can be said that this path of individual liberation recognized in Advaita Vedanta is actually the path of social liberation. Hence, the allegation of alienation from social welfare, raised or apprehended in the beginning, is ruled out.

Now let us see how Prof. Bhattacharya responds to the fourth objection. Prof. Bhattacharya admits that Indian society and culture are influenced not only by Vedanta but also by other philosophical systems. If we think of the fulfilment of worldly desire, he sees, even Cārvāka has some contribution. If we think about the observation of personal and social rituals, he acknowledges, Mīmāṃsā and

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<sup>11</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples. *The life of the Swami Vivekananda* (Almora: Advaita Ashram, 2913), 376.

Dharmaśāstra, have their contribution. He does not deny the great role of the Buddhists and Jains in the question of sacrifice, kindness, and friendship. Even Śāiva, Śākta, and Vaishṇava, he agrees each has its unique contribution to the culture and civilization of India. However, admitting the importance of all other philosophical schools, Prof. Bhattacharya makes his reader conscious about the fact that those schools have succeeded in influencing Indian culture only to that extent so long they are in agreement with the view of Vedānta. In short, the ideals of other philosophical schools that influenced the Indian mind must have some affinity and agreement with the ideal that Vedānta approved. Through the long history of Indian philosophy, many views had come into being and passed away. There have been many philosophical theories and ideas. Amidst them, only those views were retained, which maintained compatibility with the Vedāntic outlook— particularly the belief in oneness, the ideal of tolerance and indifference. Wherever deviated from this outlook, they failed to make the mark in Indian culture and society. After explaining the contribution of other philosophical schools in this manner, Kalidas comes to the conclusion that whatever philosophical schools appeared and survived in Indian tradition that can be viewed as a manifestation or duplication of Vedānta. The Vedāntic belief in oneness, Kalidas thinks, is transmitted to Śāiva, Śākta and Vaishṇava in some way or other. That one Absolute is conceived in the form of Shiva, Kālī and Krishna, respectively.

It is indeed true that an honest follower of Śāiva or Śākta system would never like to identify themselves as Vedāntīn; a hardcore Vedāntīn, on the other hand, would not agree to dilute his position with a Śāiva or Śākta. There are historical reasons behind it that compelled us to be over-conscious in maintaining this distinction. But in spite of these superficial differences, as Prof. Bhattacharya observes, there is a belief in oneness in the background, on which all of them are



founded. In this way, not only behind the branches of Indian philosophy, even there is an undercurrent of Vedantic thought flowing with the daily lives and spiritual practices of ordinary Indian people.

Let us be agreed with Prof. Bhattacharya that Vedanta had left indelible impression on Indian thought, culture and lifestyle. Let it be granted that those ideas or concepts of other non-Vedantic systems found reception in Indian culture, in which those philosophical schools are in agreement with the standpoint of Vedanta. Nevertheless, one may ask would it be justified to synchronize all philosophical systems within the family of Vedanta. May there be what Wittgenstein called 'Family resemblances' among the systems, but how can we dilute the subtle and gross theoretical differences that exist among the schools combatting with one another? Knowledge of similarity is always presupposed by differences. Particularly, the schools debating against one another from the time of antiquity have had innumerable points of departure. Ignoring all those points, it is really difficult to club them together and assemble them in the house of Vedanta.

In his response Prof. Bhattacharya acknowledges that there are plenty of points where Indian schools have contradicted one another but those contradictions does not undermined the essential unity of their thought. For the sake of brevity, we can take an illustration here. If we look at the way through which a river travels, it becomes clear that the flow is not remaining same throughout its way. Sometimes, it travels with vigorous speed; in some other plane, it remains quiet and nearly motionless. In the catchment it looks thin and narrow, whereas it is broadened in the delta. To the inhabitants of different valleys, it gives rise to different reactions. However, we cannot deny that it is the same river all the way. Nearly in this manner, Prof. Bhattacharya has endeavoured to explain different schools of Indian philosophy

as the manifestation of the same Vedantic thought. In his opinion, the same non-dualistic trend has been continuing in a clandestine manner behind Jainism and Buddhism, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya and Yoga.

The Jain ‘Anekāntavāda’ asserts the relativity of worldly knowledge. But side by side, it had to concede the reality of a unitary truth which is accepted to be grasped by the knowledge of Kevlī. Of the Buddhist, an echo of Advaita Vedanta is sounded behind the Mahāyāna schools. The Mādhamika concept of ‘Śūnya’ is not too far in its implication from the Advaita concept of ‘Mithyā’. Being dependant on its origination, everything is considered as devoid of intrinsic nature by the Mādhyamika. It cannot be described as real, unreal, both real unreal, neither real nor unreal. The same logic is provided by the Advaitīn to establish the falsity (mithyātva) of the worldly things. The only difference is lied in the nomenclature. Where Nagarjuna and his followers have explained Śūnyatva in terms of cotuṣkotibinirmuktatva (beyond the categorisation as real, unreal both, neither), Śāṅkara and his followers had endeavoured to explain ‘mithyā’ in terms of ‘anirbachaniyatva’ (in explicability). Describing prapañca as empty, Nargajuna and his followers maintain silence about the transcendental reality; nearly in the same manner by claiming the worldly affair as ‘mithyā’ Śāṅkara admitted such an Ultimate Reality (Brahman), which is beyond speech and mind (Avangmānasagochoram). Moreover, the position of the Yogācārya, the advocate of Vijñaptimātratāvāda, is not far away from the niṣprapañca Brahmanvāda of the Advaitīn. In both systems, consciousness has been given the status of Ultimate Reality. Sautrāntika and Vaivāsika, at the very outset, seem to maintain a realistic metaphysical account, which is different from the position of Vedantīn. But to Prof. Bhattacharya, the Sarvāstivādīns also, in some way or other, come closer to the Advaitīn when they brought Svalakṣaṇa to the level of niṣvabhāva, i.e. without having

any intrinsic nature of their own. In the realm of Svalakṣaṇa (i.e. discrete particular), there left no cleavage between grāhya (apprehended immediately) and adhyabāsāya (what is constricted in judgemental level). According to Kalidas, the concepts of flow, motion and continuation of santāna are retained implicitly in the Yogācāra system and also in the belief Sāktavādīns. This flow has been transformed into māyā by the Advaitīns. Thus, an inner unity is prevalent within those systems. In this way, nearly every philosophical vision is turned into a stepping stone of Advaita Vedanta. There is a sense of oneness inherent in them. But the moment they say something exceptional, they deviate from Indian culture and loss the penetration that they seek to attain over Indian.

### **3.3.3 Anekānta and Vedanta: Apparent incompatibility**

So far, we have given an outline of Kalidas Bhattacharya's concept of Vedanta, along with his rejoinders against the polemics that the possible antagonist would like to offer. Having an understanding of this new interpretation of Vedanta, now let us ask in what sense it can possibly be qualified as 'Anekānta'. At the very outset, the conjunction of the two expressions— 'Vedanta and Anekānta' seems bewildering. How Vedanta would be described as 'Anekānta' or 'Multi-ended'. In other words, how can an 'Anekānta' position be called 'Vedanta' at all? The term 'Vedanta' signifies the last part (Anta of the Vedas). There are four parts in each of the Vedas, namely, Samhitā, Brāhman, Āraṇyaka and Upanishad. Consequently the word 'Vedanta' signifies the Upanishad part. The Upanishad proclaims the reality of one Absolute Being called Brahman. If this lesson of Upanishad is taken into account, clearly it cannot be called diversified or many ended.

It is clearly announced in the opening verse of Īshaponishad that everything of this universe is covered by the goodness of God– *Īshavāsyam idam sarvam...*<sup>12</sup> If there is one Absolute that incorporate, everything in motion and in rest then the idea of other does not whole true. Naturally a question of multiplicity does not arise. Thus, Vedanta is intimately associated with ‘Akāntavāda’ and never in coherence with ‘Anekāntavāda’. On the other hand, the theory of ‘Anekānta’ is seems to be advocated by such a school, which does not have even any remote connection to the Vedas or the Vedanta. In Indian tradition this ‘Anekāntavāda’ was introduced by the Jain as a meeting point of externalism of the Vedantin (śāśvatavāda) and momentariness of the Buddhist (kṣṇikavāda).

### 3.3.4 Resolution of the incompatibility

This apparent incompatibility (between Vedanta and Anekānta) disappears, as soon as we look at prof. Bhattacharya’s modern interpretation of Vedanta. If we take the word ‘Anekānta’ in the sense of something having multi end, there seems nothing wrong in the concept of ‘Anekānta’ of Vedanta. As there are different commentaries of Vedanta and as different forms of Vedanta had already been developed following those commentaries, there remains nothing peculiar to describe Vedanta as multi-ended or multi-dimensional. Particularly, keeping the fact in consideration that each variant of Vedanta, like Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, etc. has its unique theory of Brahman, jiva, jagata and liberation, Vedanta can aptly be entitled as ‘Anekānta’. But the claim is not as simple as it looks in the beginning. In his writing Prof. Bhattacharya has describe Vedanta as ‘Anekānta’ in an over stretched manner. He would like to designate Vedanta as ‘Anekānta’ in such a sense where all schools of Indian philosophy would be counted as one or other variation of Vedanta.

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<sup>12</sup> *Īshaponishad*– 1

The problem centres when Kalidas makes this extravagant claim and explains the entire Indian philosophy as a reflection of Vedanta. Since the Vedic period, Indian philosophy had been enriched by the development of various ideas and world views. In the list of those views, there were orthodox systems like Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Mīmāṃsā, which had conflicting claims of their own. In this amalgamation, there were theists and atheists, dualists and pluralists. Even in the question of allegiance to Veda they are not at the same point of agreement. Though all of them agree about the authenticity of the Vedas, like Mīmāṃsā all are not founded on the Vedas directly. Each has different epistemological, ontological and ethical positions. Liberation in earthly life (jivan mukti) which is endorsed by Sāṃkhya-Yoga did not find acceptance in Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. The emphasis on logic, which is observed in Nyāya school to a great extent, is not seen in Sāṃkhya-Yoga etc. Moreover, the common belief in the existence of God as the creator of this world, which matches to Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika system, is not admitted by the Sāṃkhya or the Mīmāṃsā.

The position of Yoga in this issue is an ironical one. Admitting the existence of God Yoga has denied to consider Him as the creator of this universe. Even in opposing Vedanta they are not in the same plane. If there is no agreement among the orthodox systems on important issues; in that case, it is not expected to be found amidst the heterodox schools, the perfectionistic, positivistic, materialistic and accidentalistic attitudes of Cārvāka did not find acceptance in Buddhist or Jain culture. At the point of existence of soul no unanimous view is found among them. The advocacy of dehātmavāda and nairātmavāda are found in Cārvāka and Buddhist schools respectively; whereas, the Jain's are in favour of ātmavāda like the advocates of orthodox schools. Also, Buddhist and Jain sects have to be mentioned in particular

among the heterodox sects. The theory of momentariness strongly upheld by the Buddhist is not endorsed by others too. The realistic attitude is admitted in some way or other by the Cārvāk and the Jain. However, there is no uniformity within the Buddhist subs-sects at this point. If belief in the existence of external objects independent of consciousness is taken to be the mark of realism, then the Sautrāntikas and Vaibhāsikas both can be counted as the realists. The Yogacara School, in this criterion, is bound to be considered as anti-realist or idealist. The Mādhyamika holds a peculiar position where no serious commitment is made about the reality or unreality of the object— external or internal. However traditionally they are counted as the advocate of idealism. Apart from the points mentioned above, there are many other subtle issues on which the sects of Indian philosophy would like to differ. Viewing these points of departure, no fan of Indian philosophy, starting from general reader to scholar, would like to agree with Prof. Bhattacharya that the history of Indian philosophy is a record of the development of Vedanta, far from admitting the Indian schools as reflections of Advaita philosophy.

Kalidas has tried his best to remove the apparent inconsistencies which hitherto seemed serious to us. But to understand it, first of all we have to remember his concept of Vedanta. In this connection, it must be remembered that the Vedanta advocated by Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya is not the same as the Vedanta accepted by other contemporary philosophers. The picture of Vedanta which is recognized by other contemporary Indian thinkers, doesn't match with the Vedanta of prof. Bhattacharya. By Vedanta, contemporary thinkers have understood any particular school of Vedanta or an admixture of more than one. But Prof. Bhattacharya's Vedanta has not received any specific form. It may be taken as a new understanding of Vedanta, where along with the traditional Vedantic schools, all other systems—

heterodox as well as orthodox– are counted as various manifestations of Vedanta. The phrase ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ has been employed by Kalidas to mean that modern Vedanta. Though Prof. Bhattacharya took the idea of multiplicity from Jain philosophy but applied it to Vedanta philosophy in a unique and novel way. He justified the existence of many alternatives in one’s view in his concept of Vedanta, which proves the glory of tolerance (titikṣā) found in the Indian way of life. So, his use of the term ‘Anekāntatā’ as ‘non-absolute’ is correct.

### **3.4 The notion of acceptance: Committal and non-committal**

If we come across the history of philosophy, we witness various fundamental doctrines that contradict one another. It is impossible to wipe out the boundaries and contradictions among those doctrines; nor is it possible to recognize all of them as true simultaneously. Here, recognition means Committal acceptance and Committal acceptance of one view generally indicates the rejection of the other. But Kalidas admits possibility of a position where one can accept different, and even opposite fundamental views at a time. This committal acceptance of different fundamental views simultaneously is said to be upheld by Purnatā khyativādīn, who advocates one type of Cognition holism.<sup>13</sup>

Even if they speak of acceptance of many, almost all, rival fundamental views at the same time, however, they opine that the Ultimate Truth can be reached by accepting any one of them. Admitting equipossibility of almost all basic views in theory, they may follow one of those alternatives in practice. This ideal the Purnatā khyativādīn has affected Kalidas’s mind greatly. Kalidas acknowledges that the spiritual attitude and view which he is in favour of, though it stands in opposition with

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<sup>13</sup> Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Bhāratiya Sanskriti o Anekānta Vedanta* (Burdwan: Burdwan University, 1364), 75.

others, can be accepted in a committal way by him and there is nothing wrong in it. At the same time, by holding a position in a committal way, he can uphold another position in a non-committal manner.

In this connection it should be mentioned that Kalidas has made a distinction between committed acceptance and non-committed acceptance or in his expression—*Svkr̥ta grahaṇa* and *Asvkr̥ta grahaṇa*.<sup>14</sup> When a position is theoretically strong enough or devoid of self-inconsistency, it can be counted as basic or fundamental one. And if that fundamental view seems to provide interpretation of almost everything that can be accepted to anybody. When somebody accepts that position as a logical or satisfactory one and suggests others to recognize it without following it in his own life— that type of acceptance is called non-committal. Committal acceptance, on the other hand, is true acceptance. It is not just a matter of recognizing a position as theoretically self-consistent or logically acceptable; it is a matter of reading one's life according to that view of position. There should be commitment, from the person's perspective, to implement that theory or position in every aspect of one's life.

From this interpretation, it becomes clear that without following a position in practical life, one can recommend and recognize that position in a non-committal way. It is not a matter of mere non-opposition or non-rejection, but a positive attitude towards a view other than one's own. This is the common attitude that Indians bear with them. Being a serious follower of a particular lifestyle we often welcome the position of other unknowingly. We believe that if someone says something from an honest consideration, it is bound to be true to some extent. Even if there are conflict and contradiction among the views, we expect that there would be an agreement among them, if the contradictory parts are truncated from the views in question. This

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*,—15.



consideration leads us to admit the conflicting views either in a committal way or in a non-committal way. This acceptance and recognition is prominent in case of Vedanta schools. Even there are subtle points where the Vedantic schools differ from one another; in essential part, they recognize one another. Thus far it is clear that the recognition towards other schools– in committal way or non-committal– is permissible in Indian tradition. This attitude is described by Prof. Bhattacharya as the attitude of *Anekāntadriṣī* (viewer of multi-dimension).

### **3.4.1 The standpoint of a Super Philosopher**

It can be stated here that in the history of Indian philosophy, various doctrines are observed, which are self-consistent and that's why considered as basic or fundamental. Prof. Bhattacharya used the expression 'moula' (fundamental) to describe those systems. There is a long-standing debate among those systems in the history of Indian philosophy. Particularly, regarding the question 'what is real', they are not in agreement. Nevertheless, owing to soundness, consistency and coherence, we are not reluctant to acknowledge them as fundamental. These fundamental systems constitute the foundation of different philosophical schools and their sub-sects. It is owing to their fundamentality that each of them should be accepted as true. But though true all of them are not generally followed by any philosopher, as acceptance of one implies the rejection of other. But, a viewer of multi-dimension, an '*Anekāntadriṣī*', according to Kalidas, is endowed with the skill to accept all of them simultaneously. But how is the conglomeration of such systems possible? How can there be a reconciliation of conflicting views? Clearly this cannot be done in a conjunctive manner. However, as Prof. Bhattacharya thinks all of those basic systems could be apprehended in an alternative way. Here, the so-called '*Anekāntadriṣī*' may follow the path of disjunctive recognition. Disjunction is commonly understood as a

relation between two alternatives that are exclusive to one another. But there are inclusive disjunctions too, like ‘I will take chicken or mutton in lunch today, where both disjuncts may whole true’. The ‘Anekāntadriṣī’ of Prof. Bhattacharya is holding a ‘super philosophical standpoint’ in practice, where all opposite and self-consistent positions could be taken inclusively. Putting himself in the position of an advocate of super philosophy, Prof. Bhattacharya justify himself in this way,—

If it so happens that in solving the problems of life, I find before my original vision and fundamental foundation, there are other fundamental visions and foundations which are equally valuable, imperishable and inevitable— ignoring which no other extended ground remains to establish my position— then friendly coexistence is the only alternation left. To take this path is to admit every opinion as equally acceptable.<sup>15</sup>

### **3.5 Multi-dimensionality of truth and the possibility of Seesaw game**

He believed that ultimate truth is multifaceted. But it is not true that the ultimate truth is a collection of many truths or that one face, one foot and one head of the truth speak of one side of the Ultimate Truth, whereas the other speaks of the other side of the truth. If that were the case, neither of them could be self-contained or fundamental. To quote him,—

Ultimate Truth is multidimensional— having a thousand heads and thousand feet; but every face, every peak and every foot is endowed with its own glory, none is

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<sup>15</sup> Jīban samasyār kramalabdha samādhān pathe yadi carome emon ek abasthāy āste hoy yekhāne āmār moula dṛsti o moula bhittir sāmne thāke āro koyekti moula dṛsti o moula bhitti – yeguli samabalabāna, yāder bināśa sambhav nay...se kṣetre prītipūrṇa sahaḥsthān-i ekmātra path. *Ibid.*, - 58.

in need of other.<sup>16</sup> So every face, every head and foot of the Ultimate Truth is fully true— ‘Bhumā Brahman’, not partial.

The history of philosophy is a record of the appearance of such truths. Out of these thousands of truths we choose or accept only one. Although, this committed acceptance or selection is sometimes made through rational consideration, in most cases, it occurs unconsciously under the influence of our parental thoughts, social environment, religious beliefs, etc. Even without understanding it fully, incidentally those are welcomed by us. It is in connection with the habits or customs we used to follow from our childhood, those truths are internalized by us unknowingly. But apart from those truths internalized, there remains many other which are not chosen, however could be consider as acceptable. In this way, the truths that are highlighted and recognized by one are always surrounded by a cluster of truths like shadows. Those shadows, which are on the background, usually do not draw our attention; but once we become interested to those shadows, it is grasped in our consciousness that there are many other possible truths apart from the truth of our own. Those truths, though not internalized till now, could also be approached by us. As an alternative of the truth that I already apprehended, I can think of internalizing another which was ignored before. The way, in which I reached the second from the first, I can also proceed to a third from the second. In this way, Prof. Bhattacharya believes, we can extend our outlook in such a way that many truths may be apprehended simultaneously. As almost all truths can be discovered in this way, similarly there remains the possibility of returning back to the original truth following the shadow of a newly discovered truth. To quote Bhattacharya,—

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<sup>16</sup> Carom satya bahumukhī – sahasra śīrṣa sahasra pāda. Kintu pratiti mukh, pratiti śīrṣa o pratiti pada svagourave garīyān, keu anyer apekṣā rākhenā. *Ibid.*, - 75-76.

If we accept the chosen definite truth, we can also accept alternately other truths. A transformation from one truth to another leads us to committedly accept all the truths, which is compared to a continuous ‘seesaw game’. Sometimes, he touches the higher point as the time of going up and the lower point at the time of coming down.<sup>17</sup>

By opening the possibility of multiple truths here, Prof. Bhattacharya is going beyond the traditional approach of the Advaitīn. In Advaita Philosophy only one truth is admitted and the shadows by which that truth is surrounded are taken as mere illusory reflections. But, if the shadows are many, Bhattacharya argues, we are bound to admit the possibility of many truths. A truth-seeker can venture from one truth to another through the logic of alternation (vaikalpika nyāya). This swinging from one truth to another is possible from the perspective of a super philosopher and that play-act is described by him as one type of ‘Seesaw game’ or ‘dolācal khelā’<sup>18</sup>. However, it should be remembered that although the expression ‘dolācal khelā’ or ‘dolācal vṛtti’ has derogatory suggestions (to indicate the situation of a person who is always shifting his position) in its everyday use, Prof. Bhattacharya did not signify any restless or delusory mental state or any oscillating art by it. Rather, by ‘dolācal’ he understood the swinging of a rocking cradle. A cradle swings from one end to another, and in accordance with the changes in its position, different views are enjoyed by the person playing – the cradle; in the same way, a super philosopher has the opportunity to enjoy the taste of many truths in his way of realization. Even if there is any Absolute or Ultimate truth in reality, according to Kalidas, it is always in motion i.e. it is swinging in each moment. But he does not undermine the position of

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<sup>17</sup> Āmār nidirṣṭa satya svarup peye o yodi anya ek satya svarup pāi tāhole oi ekai paddhatite ei dvitīya satya theke tṛtīya ek satya pete pāri. Ei bhabe sobkati satye ghure āste pāri. Emanki natun pāoya satyer kona ek chāyā sutra dhare itimadhya pāoya kona satye natun kare abar phire āste pāri. *Ibid.*, -77.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, -78.

that truth seeker who is engaged in contemplation of a single truth throughout his life. Recognizing the possibility of other truths one may not show interest in apprehending them. He may be satisfied with the realization of the truth of his own. However, a truth seeker who is interested not only in the figure but ground also, may proceed to realize those alternative truths, following the shadows with which his truth is surrounded. After conquering a peak, a mountaineer usually does not stop his expedition rather prepare a plan for a new expedition; in the same way, a super philosopher may proceed to have the taste of another truth after obtaining the delight from the realization of one truth in his life. In its own right each perspective or each approach is coherent as it is directed towards attainment of Supreme Truth.

### **3.5.1 Analogy of Swinging in the Cradle**

Hence accumulation of multiple truths, according to Bhattacharya, is not impossible in reality. He has endeavoured to establish the same point from another perspective. When a person accepts the truth he chose in a committed way, he accepts other alternative truths in a non-committed manner. But following the shadow game, there is always left a possibility to approach other truths. If a person can develop this habit of swinging the cradle, eventually, he reaches to that level where all truths can be apprehended or tasted. Thus, the transition from one truth to another leads to the committed acceptance of all truths, which Prof. Bhattacharya calls 'Visvadol'. In this way, an enquirer of truth may proceed to enjoy the height degree of delight, i.e. Supreme bliss. That according to Kalidas, is the summum bonum (param puruṣārtha) of one's life. If attainment of summum bonum, Kalidas argues, amounts to the achievement of supreme delight or ecstasy, then perfection is an additional joy or delight in the form of swaying in multiple ecstasies. This unique truth touches all ultimate truths once while swinging through the 'seesaw game'; and not only touches

them a second time on the way down, touches every point of the natural world (prākṛta jagata) as well and in this descends to the lowest. Eventually, it touches those points for a second time while ascending to the higher level, and also touches every extreme truth of the spiritual world for a third time. This is how the ‘seesaw game’ goes on and on. This process of swinging over the world or ‘Visvadol’ demands that one should accept all the fundamental doctrines in a wholehearted manner. So, the attainment of holism or perfection (pūrṇatā) is a kind of surplus bliss attained by way of swinging more than one highest bliss. In Bhattacharya’s own words,–

If the ultimate human end is in the form of infinite bliss, the attainment of perfection or holism (pūrṇatā) is a surplus or an additional bliss.<sup>19</sup>

### **3.6 The ideal of Alternation and its practicability**

But how far is this ideal practicable? Where we find difficulty in the adoption of a particular truth religiously, how can one dream of apprehending multiple truths in a committed manner? Is the concept of ‘Visvadol’ a utopian one? It becomes clear from Prof. Bhattacharya’s statement that he does not think this swinging over the world as something impossible. He acknowledges –

“At the far end of my philosophical career, I feel increasingly inclined to believe that the alternation of ‘itself’ or A or B or C etc. is as much a full sympathetic understanding of the positive possibility of each of these philosophies through cultivating an authentic catholic attitude to each possibility as also not committing

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<sup>19</sup> Param puruṣārtha lābh yodi paramānanda hoy tāhole pūrṇtā lābh holo ekādhika paramānande dol khāoyā rūp atirikta ek ānanda. *Ibid.*,– 85.

oneself permanently to any one of them and thus maintaining a scrupulously neutral attitude between.”<sup>20</sup>

He strongly advocates the practicability of his ideal when he states –

“...a sort of authentic spiritual neutrality– a sort of genuine averaging ...a sort of full exclusion and full inclusion in the same attitude. The non-committal acknowledgement (asvikṛta grahaṇa) is nothing but understanding each of the philosophies to be acknowledge as alternative philosophies– each equally acceptable and yet each to be kept at an equal distance.”<sup>21</sup> In this context, he further said that,–

“In short, it is to have no special philosophy of one’s own but to maintain a sort of free sympathetic aloofness from all philosophies of the absolute developed or to be developed anywhere in the world at any time. And this itself is no philosophy. If one likes, one may call it super philosophy– a strict attitude of neutrality as transcendence equidistant from every one of these.”<sup>22</sup> Even according to him–

“The integral truth of this cosmic rhythm would contain diversity, even mutually opposing movements. Ultimate truth in any case, is meant to be a cherished goal of limitless space– a goal which could be reached through different pathways. Everyone, following a definite path, should land eventually in the truth cum bliss state that marks the ideal culmination of the path. Also on the other hand, there could be a set of other seekers of the truth who, preferring the way of infinite joy, might as well

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<sup>20</sup> Daya Krishna, ed., *Philosophy of Kalidas Bhattacharya (My Reactions)* (Pune: IPQ Publications, 1985), 152.

<sup>21</sup> Debabrata Sinha, *Kalidas Bhattacharya* (Builders of Indian Philosophy Series) (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd., 2003), 147.

<sup>22</sup> Daya Krishna, ed., *Philosophy of Kalidas Bhattacharya (My Reactions)* (Pune: IPQ Publications, 1985), 152-53.

consider the very condition of being oscillated on the crest of truth as it self the highest and most desirable end.”<sup>23</sup>

### **3.7 Anekāntavāda of the Jain and Kalidas’s Theory of Alternation: A Comparison**

So far, we have discussed about the understanding and applicability of Vedanta developed in the writings of Kalidas Bhattacharya. Having acquainted with the ‘Anekāntavāda’ of Kalidas, one may ask whether there is any difference at all between the ‘Anekānta theory’ of Prof. Bhattacharya and the ‘Anekāntavāda’ of the Jain. The theory of ‘Anekānta’ that Prof. Bhattacharya is in defence of is very different from ‘Anekāntavāda’ of the Jain. In this connection, it should be mentioned that, excluding all absolute determinations, the Jains have proposed to consider all views or judgements as equally possible. As there are innumerable qualifiers of an object and as it is not possible to grasp them all at a time by any ordinary person, the Jain suggests that one should refrain himself from making any final judgement about the nature of object. Perceiving an object from a particular spatio-temporal point of view, nothing can be claimed judgmentally about the real nature of any object. Thus, all so-called judgements about reality become relative. At the very outset, this relativity theory resembles Kalidas’s theory of Alternation.

But the ideal of ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ Prof. Bhattacharya has tried to defend is not just a reiteration of Jain ‘Anekāntavāda’. According to Kalidas, within a single spatio-temporal framework, more than one thing cannot be considered as real alternately. The Jain acknowledged this viewpoint. They embraced each perspective

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<sup>23</sup> Debabrata Sinha, *Kalidas Bhattacharya* (Builders of Indian Philosophy Series) (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd., 2003), 149-50.



as a self-contained philosophy from a specific vantage point, but in doing so, they missed Reality in its fullness. When these philosophies are amalgamated, they create a ‘bizarre fabric’ rather than a cohesive unity. Kalidas illustrates this with the traditional tale of the elephant and the blind men. Just as combining separate reports about the leg, tail, trunk, etc. don’t provide a complete understanding of the entire elephant, each of them is true yet the Jain approach lacks a comprehensive view.

Kalidas emphasizes that on the ordinary or empirical level, within a single spatio-temporal context, objects with opposing characteristics cannot simultaneously be considered real. However, Jain demonstrates that contradictory judgments can both be true when viewed from different context. The truth value can also be changed, by retaining the same statement and altering the contexts. Therefore, the statement ‘S is P’ is only conditionally true, even if the specific conditions are not explicitly stated. But in altered conditions, ‘S is not P’ may indeed become true. Kalidas has approached complete philosophies from a meta-level, viewing them as viable alternatives. Each system, including its foundational truths and contents, is self-contained and remains true and acceptable as long as internal consistency is maintained. Kalidas makes it clear that he excludes pseudo-philosophies from his consideration; he wants to focus on those perennial philosophies only that have repeatedly asserted themselves against on-going challenges.

Philosophy, as Bhattacharya thinks, operates on a Meta-level, where the fundamental categories inherent in experience are extracted and examined. The various philosophies are in alternation with each other, a concept intelligible only at the level of meta-study. This alternation is apprehended at the meta-meta level, or the

realm of ‘super philosophy.’<sup>24</sup> This ‘super philosophy’ is described as supra reflective consciousness by Krishnachandra. Kalidas asserts that the objective he is pursuing is, in an important sense, akin to that of the Mādhyamika Buddhists. Both advocate transcending all philosophies (dṛstis), yet this transcendence is not the establishment of another philosophy at par with the rest.

However, while the Mādhyamikas, the Vaitandikas, regard all such systems as erroneous, Kalidas embraces and appreciates them in their full potential from the super-philosophic standpoint. He characterizes this stage as ‘a strict attitude of neutrality,’ a state of free, sympathetic detachment. Recognizing that no single view can be accepted as the sole truth, the thinker is at liberty to appreciate the views from any perspective he chooses. This position allows the philosopher to overview all systems. Even if a thinker has internalized one system, other schools linger in the background like shadows, providing cues for acceptance and appreciation. Kalidas no longer advocates commitment to any single philosophy. He terms this final position as full exclusion, a stance comparable to the Mādhyamika position. When combined with full inclusion, it grants him the freedom to appreciate and enjoy each system as a potential alternative.

That’s why Kalidas defines his ultimate position as a ‘super-philosophical’ one. In his own words, it is,—

“Steering a safe middle course by not committing to any of these though permitting at the same time the possibility of every one of these— a sort of full exclusion and full inclusion in and the same attitude. The last attitude is precisely the

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<sup>24</sup> Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy* (Kolkata: Das gupta & Co. Ltd., 1953), 155.

awareness that these philosophies are only alternative philosophies, each equally acceptable and yet each to be kept at an equal distance.”<sup>25</sup>

The convergence of various systems is achieved through alternation, which he calls as ‘authentic spiritual neutrality.’ This position is likened to that of the *sākṣīn* (witness consciousness), which observes things, including philosophies, from a perspective of eternity, detachedly and with a sense of contentment. Kalidas has elucidated alternation as a method. Through this approach, he transcends one-sided philosophies and arrives at a philosophical conclusion, which he terms as ‘*Anekānta*’.

In this context, a theory of Gestalt community scientists needs to be mentioned. This is known as ground figure theory in Philosophy. A ground figure theory or field figure theory claims that whenever we see an object, the visual field is divided into two parts. One is the standing figure or figure that we mainly focus on. Another thing is the background. I cannot accept the figure without accepting this background. Rather, we can say that when the background changes, the figure also changes. The perception we get when we see dark blue against a light blue background becomes more striking or clear when we see blue against a yellow background. So, the idol or figure is often changed by changing the background. That is, the background affects our perception. Similarly, we cannot deny the things that we accept as committedly as well as the things that are rejected. Because what we accept as committedly, we accept it in terms of a number of basic concepts in a background. If the perspective is changed, adoption can also be disrupted. For example, we refer to the position of the sun against the background of the golden halo around the sun.

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<sup>25</sup> Daya Krishna, ed., *Philosophy of Kalidas Bhattacharya (My Reactions)* (Pune: IPQ Publications, 1985), 152.

Jain says that we cannot accept all the truths at the same time, accept one from one point of view and another from a different point of view. But the innovation of Prof. Bhattacharya is here, he says— we can accept all of them simultaneously. Accept one as committedly and accept the others as non-committedly.

We also notice the existence of this issue in daily usage. In this context, we can mention Henotheism. It is a doctrine where we accept the existence of other gods and goddesses and show allegiance to one of them. That is, in daily practice, even if one believes in a particular god or goddess, he has the belief in other gods and goddesses as well as the rest and that there is nothing wrong in that belief. Thus, an Anekāntavādī philosopher can accept all fundamental doctrines equally, says Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya.

One may still enquire whether there is any hierarchy among the alternative views. Is not the position of the super naturalist a step ahead from the naturalist? If so, then is it not true that the position which believes in the existence of supernatural is more acceptable than the position which believes in the reality of natural only? Is the same not applicable to ancient and modern materialism?

Answering this question, Prof. Bhattacharya says that it is true that spiritualists are better than materialists. But supernaturalist or spiritualist philosophers do not deny the empirical or natural beliefs of an ordinary man; however, they believe that behind all natural reality, there is something supernatural at the root. And when the presence of that supernatural is grasped, it is understood that what seemed natural before was nothing but the appearance of what is supernatural. The same applies to the field of ancient and neo-materialists. The ancient materialists falsified individuality or independence— whether natural or supernatural. According to them, individuality or

independence only follows us like a false shadow. Neo-materialist philosophers, however, accept individuality or independence as a self-contradictory process of the state of nature itself. So it can be said that the moderns are ahead of the ancients from this point of view.

But this hierarchy, according to Bhattacharya, is an apparent one, not a real one. For each system or view is self-contained and coherent within its scope and hence, can provide a complete or satisfactory picture of human life. There left no contradiction within its statement. Being self-consistent, each system is endowed with its glory. The follower of a particular standpoint is not bound to transcend his own view or to reach in a standpoint which is really higher. To make the think clear Kalidas take illustration of distance star in the sky. If, on a dark night, we try to draw one's attention to a particular star in the clear starry sky, we usually try to indicate a position by drawing straight lines from other things like a temple, tree, etc. This way of locating the star in the meeting point of a straight line drawn from the things visualized– is called *Arundhuti nyāya*. If the person in question can catch that unknown star following the instruction, it could be claimed that the person has improved his state from the earlier. But what would be the case if his eyes may fail to catch that star, what would be his reaction? Perhaps, showing reluctance to recognize such an unknown thing, he would react– be happy with your own world and please let me be satisfied with my own; I'm pretty good with my world. Now, how would we explain the position of that person? It is natural to claim that the person who can trace the star in the sky is one step ahead than the person failed to grasp that star. But if any other person sees the star in that way, he will say the same thing. However, that does not undermine the position of the first person; for notwithstanding his utmost drive,

the person failed to catch that star.<sup>26</sup> In this situation, it does not matter to him whether the star is really there or not. Therefore, it is not correct to say his position is lower or the position of the person, who succeeded in tracing the star, is higher. Kalidas feels the need of an amicable coexistence here, where nobody can override other. The same is applicable to his understanding of philosophy.

If materialists, despite their best efforts, are not able to understand spirituality, then the peaceful coexistence of materialists and spiritualists is required. It would not be right to treat the materialist's position as inferior to the position of the spiritualists, nor would it be right to ignore the position of the spiritualists by the materialists. Both are expected to maintain a state of peaceful coexistence. The same holds true in case of ancient and neo-materialism. One is free to choose any position whatsoever, though it would be odd to hold two rival positions together. For the sake of brevity, Kalidas takes the help of an illustration: While travelling in a train, a passenger should bear a valid ticket of either first class or second class, but it does not mean that it would be unfair for him to carry both the tickets. If he carries both, it would not be unfair. However, only one is sufficient; the other may have, but do not required.<sup>27</sup>

Prof. Bhattacharya would like to apply this principle in case of multiple fundamental views. In his opinion, it is enough for any truth-seeker to accept either of the fundamental views. There is no harm in accepting other fundamental doctrines that exist. Although he is not in need of that, as by accepting only one, he can obtain the taste of the Ultimate Truth. In short this is the principle Prof. Bhattacharya endeavoured to apply time and again throughout his writing.

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<sup>26</sup> Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Bhāratīya Sanskriti o Anekānta Vedanta* (Burdwan: Burdwan University, 1364), 64.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, -73.

## **Fourth Chapter**

### **Exploring the background of ‘Anekānta Vedanta’**

#### **4.1 Novelty of Kalidas’s thought**

Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya’s concept of Anekānta Vedanta has already been discussed in the previous chapter. We think that such a thought of Vedanta is a novel one. Various commentaries on Vedanta have been written over the years, and even contemporary thinkers have tried to interpret Vedanta in their own ways. It is seen that some of them are closer to the Advaita tradition, while some other have shown allegiance either to Viśiṣṭādvaita or to other earlier commentaries of Vedanta. It is also observed that the tradition which is followed by them is consistently advocated throughout their thought. Vivekananda, for example, is a follower of Advaita Vedanta, and throughout his life, he has endeavoured to maintain that Advaita spirit, although with slide variation. On the other hand, Rabindranath, although from his poetic writings it is difficult to recognize his philosophical position, is often counted as a follower of Viśiṣṭādvaita. Even he may be counted as a bhaktivādi like, Madhva and others. Sri Aurobindo’s position is called Purnadvaitaism, as he opined that not only living beings but also inanimate objects can be transformed. On closer analysis, the position of other contemporary Indian thinkers can be assimilated to one or the other form of the earlier divisions of Vedanta. However, there is some uniqueness in the thought of each of them.

But the form of Vedanta reflected in the works of Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya is truly novel and unique. His position definitely is a novel one. Here, an attempt is

made to capture all the Vedantic and Non-Vedantic views in an alternative manner, so that the inclusion of any of them does not imply the exclusion of others. In Indian tradition, it is seen that the proponent or advocate of a particular school or a follower of a particular religion usually internalised his position in such a conservative way that even being aware of the other alternatives, he tries his best in sticking to his own position. No urge is usually seen in him to reach in a philosophical conclusion while keeping other alternative positions in consideration. At best, with a view to defend his own position, he sometimes employs the analogy of other alternative schools, but the main theses of alternative views are neglected. Prof. Bhattacharya's writing is a masterpiece where the alternative views are reconciled with one's own view in such a way that the establishment of the latter is not non-coherent with the recognition of the formers. Kalidas's philosophy is familiar as the philosophy of alternation. He took a position where Vedanta could be kept alive even by recognizing the other alternative Vedantic and Non-Vedantic positions as valid and coherent. Now, the question crops in our mind: what considerations tempted Prof. Bhattacharya to reach in such innovative thought? His philosophy of alternation and its application in the field of Vedanta should be rooted in some presuppositions. The background of his modern understanding of Vedanta would be explored in this chapter.

#### **4.2 Krishnachandra's theory of Absolute and its impact**

The philosophy of alternation and diversity cherished by Professor Kalidas Bhattacharya is not an isolated thought. If we examine his philosophical tradition, especially his family tradition, we will find its source. While admitting the novelty of Prof. Bhattacharya's ideas, especially the concept of 'Anekānta Vedanta', it can be said that much of the tradition of alternative philosophy that he has carried can be traced back to his patriarchal sources. If we judge the philosophy of his father



Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, we notice one thing that, though the theory he tried to give us is apparently very complex and far-reaching; his orientation is towards a particular doctrine. In a word this can be called ‘A theory of non-absolutism’. Is there any Absolute at all? If it is, what is nature of that Absolute? These are the types of questions that troubled philosophers’ minds from the time of antiquity. Being faced with the questions, some philosophers took shelter in agnosticism, some in scepticism, and some are seen to reach in absolutism. But if there is any Absolute what would be its nature and how to lay bare it? Philosophers of different centuries have addressed these classic questions. They even searched whether there is any way to know the Absolute or to reach the Absolute. Those who are naturalists have seen the Supreme Being as a natural object. On the other hand, those who count the Absolute as supernatural took the Absolute as a spiritual entity and prescribed the way of the spiritual journey. Viewing the Absolute as spiritual is historically associated with most of the Indian philosophical schools. But the notion of one Absolute along with the tendency to consider it as spiritual was challenged by Krishnachandra Bhattacharya— father of Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya. Throughout his philosophical journey, Krishnachandra was concerned with uncovering the nature of the Absolute. There are three phases of his philosophical thought. In the first phase (1914-18), his philosophical thought was wondered within the duality between the given and the logical, actual and possible. In this stage, he discovered the Absolute as Indefinite. In the second phase (1925-32), he emphasized on subjectivity as Absolute. At the end of his philosophical career (after 1932 onwards), surpassing indefinite and subjectivity, Krishnachandra reached to his most original idea— the idea of alternation. He defined

the Absolute as alternation; is not one-dimensional in nature but has a multi-dimensional character.<sup>1</sup>

It does not mean that the same Absolute is claiming to be manifested in differently. We often speak of the different appearances (pratibhās) of the same substance, like multi-reflections of the moon. Appearance (pratibhās) are different but Absolute is the same in substance— such an idea has been carried by all philosophies, whether Indian or Western. God and Goddess are seen to be worshipped in different forms in different religions, however, there is only one Supreme Being in the background. In the same way, by alternation, one may think of multiple forms of the same Absolute. But Krishnachandra was not in favour of this monistic interpretation of the Absolute. The interpretation he intended to provide resembles, to a great extent, to the view of Jain. Jain's are familiar as the advocate of 'Anekāntavāda'. In traditional interpretation, 'Anekāntavāda' is presented as a doctrine that embraces epistemological plurality and supports material unity behind it. Particularly, the analogy of the perception of an elephant by some blind persons, which is popularly taken to explain Jain's epistemological relativism, suggests that inspite of fragmentary cognitions that we have, there is an unbroken reality left behind. Those fragmentary cognitions can be collected and integrated in such a way that one would be able to reach the idea of a united whole. The cognition of the blind person, who touched the truncated parts of the elephant, was considered as incomplete, as the objects they grasped were nothing but the discrete parts of a whole.

This analogy and the holistic interpretation purports to be revealed by the Jain but is not endorsed by Krishnachandra. He finds error in this traditional interpretation

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<sup>1</sup> Daya Krishna, ed., *The Philosophy of Kalidas Bhattacharya* (University of Poona: I. P.Q Publications, 1985), 2.

of the ‘Anekāntavāda’ of Jain. In his understanding, the ‘Anekāntavāda’ that the Jain spoke of, does not imply multiplicity or relativity of theory or cognition only. Behind this cognitive relativity, there is a multiplicity of reality— a multiplicity of the Absolute. Corresponding to the alternation of cognition, there is alternation in the realm of reality. This theory of alternation has greatly influenced the thought and writings of his son Kalidas. And throughout his philosophical career Kalidas has tried his best to draw a complete picture of his father’s theory of alternation.

#### **4.3 The Crisis of Modern Philosophy**

In his research work, he has nurtured and nourished this standpoint and that approach received maturation in his idea of ‘Anekānta Vedanta’. An introduction to how he nurtured this alternative philosophy can be found in his research work ‘Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy’. At the beginning of the work, Prof. Bhattacharya drew our attention to the positional crisis of philosophy and philosophers. He observes that both philosophy and philosophers had to face crisis in every juncture of civilization. This can be called existential crisis. Why should one culture philosophy at all? What contribution a philosopher may put in the development of civilization?

Kalidas observes that it is a challenge to the philosopher and philosophy as a whole to sustain its existence in an era of technological advancement. Of course, it is not a new challenge that the contemporary thinkers are facing. Philosophers from the time of antiquity had to face this challenge. In every turn of civilization they had to argue or justify why they are busy in their business. Civilization has been progressing rapidly. Taking advantage of scientific and technological progress human beings are becoming accustomed with ease and comfort. As a result, old habits and old customs are becoming obsolete. This style of thinking, with which human minds were troubled

before, is no longer interesting nowadays. In the emergence of the new era the traditional habits, thoughts, cultures have been becoming obsolete. In this situation, philosophers are asked to clarify what contribution they can make to the development of the society of their time. It is this compulsion that insisted Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Kant, Hegel, empiricists of nineteenth century and many other philosophers to provide justification for continuing their philosophical venture. Not only the thinkers mentioned even those who came before Locke and after Descartes, Professor Bhattacharya points out, had to face this same problem again and again.

In the early period of human civilization, social changes took place gradually. Life was simple at that time and the culture, the society adopts remained unchanging for centuries. Philosophers have had enough time to justify their position. But in the last few centuries, civilization has been advancing rapidly and philosophers were able to cope with this changing scenario. The conventional ideas and ideals have been neglected. People are not ready to trust on ancient culture. Habits, superstitions, lifestyle, clothing and food have changed a lot. The social structure and moral course are continued to change. The philosophical thoughts, which influenced the ancient mind greatly, are no longer considered as plausible. At every juncture of this rapid change, a philosopher is facing a new challenge. He is in need of a newer justification to keep the philosophical tradition alive. As time went on philosophy had to assume more and more the responsibility of showing its own importance or necessity. In every step a philosopher is confronted with more acute and profound fundamental questions. Philosophy had to provide proof for its relevance. Newer and deeper field of explorations are discovered.

It is Descartes who hinted at a new path to philosophy by introducing the mathematical method. The dark age of scholastic and dogmatic philosophy of the

mediaeval age had come to an end by the introduction of reason-based Cartesian philosophy. Saving philosophy from superstition and the whip of church as well Descartes laid it on a scientific foundation. He realized that in order to remove the dirty particles of prejudices from the arena of philosophy, one should apply the method of doubt, and only in this way he would be able to find out what is indubitable. This Cartesian approach was more scientific than metaphysical. He taught us the lesson that the philosophy is not an aimless wandering or a mere religious orientation, rather a rational consideration which bear deeper implication.

This effort of Descartes, however, was not progressed well in the hands of his rationalist successors. This noteworthy attempt of Descartes to introduce modernity in philosophy, along with the demonstration to establish the relevance of philosophy, was overshadowed by the emergence of the knowledge-based philosophy of British empiricist John Locke. In his writings the revisionary metaphysics hitherto developed in rationalist tradition, found its epistemological foundation. And by providing that epistemological ground, John Locke tried to establish that the practice of philosophy is not fruitless.

This knowledge based metaphysics of John Locke lost its glory in the appearance of subject centric and knowledge centric philosophy of Immanuel Kant. His critique of pure reason is an epoch-making work, where the knower is given priority over the knowable. He made it clear that the so called worldly objects which we find outside of us are determined by our understanding; it is human understanding that makes the nature. In Kant's hand, philosophy is changed into the science of knowledge and its critique. He put an end in the long standing controversies like empiricism and rationalism, Idealism and realism. Admitting empirical reality his thought was reached to transcendental agnosticism. '*Object confirms to Knowledge*'—

this Kantian revolution has shocked not only the minds of the philosophers, left a profound influence on European literature as a whole. It is true that Kantian philosophy was not idealistic in the true sense, as he believed in reality in itself. But the reality that Kant was in favour of is different from the reality that the scientists usually speak of. By making a cleavage between the reality discovered by science and the noumena— beyond human understanding, Kant has tried to keep philosophical study alive. For if there were the objects of science only, philosopher would have no field left to venture. Kant kept philosophy alive by asserting that the urge to understand the reality would be there, so long the human community would cease to exist.

This philosophy of Kant, which is considered till now as one of the most influential ones, was overcast by the rise of Hegelian idealism. Even though he talked about the reality behind the phenomenon world, Kant failed to draw any picture of the reality by describing it as unknown and unknowable. In Hegel we witness the attempt to determining that indeterminate. Hegel was never in favour of subjectivism. If the purpose of subjectivism is to ignore the object, Hegel argues, such subjectivism should be avoided. According to him, just as reality is not mere subjectivity, it is also not a mere object. Rather, it is a dialectic unity of the knower and the knowable. This dialectical approach could be considered as a special contribution of philosophy. Orientation of this dialectical unity would be the task of philosophy. Thus by rescuing object from Kantian ignorance, Hegel drew attention of philosophical mind and the learned society as well. He went forward to discover something that Kant didn't notice. But the chariot of philosophy did not stop here.

Hegel's influence also faded over time by the revival of materialism— more truly modern realism. It is true to some extent that Hegel gave recognition to object

beyond subject; nevertheless his idea of dialectical object cannot be brought to light unless one begins his journey from the subject or knowing mind. Hence he is not completely free from the shadow of Kantian subjectivism.

Taking this loophole of Hegelian Philosophy the modern realist went forward to adduce objection against Hegel's position. They replaced subjectivity with matter; and declared vehemently a theory of Pan-objectivism. In the classical philosophical tradition there was the idea that the boundary of matter was created by the knowing mind. That is, the object is dependent on the knowing mind for its identity. The neo-materialists put an end to the trend of falsely stigmatizing things. The ancients believed that the boundaries of matter are actually created by subjectivity. That is, not the object, but the subject is important. And this is where the materialists objected. Such strict materialism was never imagined before. Thus, the neo-materialists surpassed the ancient philosophers by bringing the object to the centre of everything. From this exploration in the history, it becomes obvious that in the ocean of philosophy there are innumerable pitches of rise and fall. Several conflicting opinions and paths are suggested by the philosophers and the conflict didn't cease to exist. As a consequence, philosophy and philosophers had to engage in search of deeper and more fundamental theories.

#### **4.4 An urge to meet the crisis**

In spite of so many inventions and innovations Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya thinks, Philosophy is still in crisis. He realizes that a philosopher needs to look deeper for more fundamental theories in order to solve this crisis. In the face of this crisis, Kalidas Bhattacharya proceeds to think of something that would be innovative for philosophy or philosophers. He observes, in the history of philosophy, there are three

fundamental approaches— the subjectivism of Kant, the absolutism of Hegel and the uncompromising realism of Perry and others. Even after being reached in 20<sup>th</sup> century, philosophy is still searching for some other theory that would surpass all existing theories. This spirit insisted Kalidas to do something anew. He enquires whether he can develop a philosophy where conflicting yet fundamental views would be accommodated or reconciled. It is this expectation that engaged him in a detailed analysis of subjectivism, objectivism, and absolutism.

The search for Absolute, which was prevalent in the philosophy of his father Krishnachandra, is continued in the philosophy of Kalidas. To Krishnachandra consciousness and its object are implicationally related to one another, as consciousness is always consciousness of something. Hence, the consciousness of an object is a fact which is indubitable and it can be taken as a starting point of philosophical enquiry. Taking it as granted Krishnachandra has raised a query, what exactly is signified by the word ‘of’ in the phrase ‘consciousness of object’? The same question is re-iterated in a different way by Kalidas when he asked, what does the expression ‘of’ imply in the phrase ‘Knowledge of object’? Although almost all philosophers admit the ‘knowledge of object’, however they are not in agreement about the relation between knowledge and object.

#### **4.5 Knowledge-object relation: An assimilation of three-fold attitudes**

Before entering into their views, Kalidas proceeds to give an overview of the relation suggested by the expression ‘of’. Firstly, Bhattacharya thinks, it cannot be viewed as an indicator of conjunctive relation. In conjunction, a close unity between the conjuncts is depicted, what cannot be established between (what Bhattacharya calls) ‘subjectivity’ and objects. In conjunction, the things conjoined can exist



independently of one another. When we speak of table and chair or cat and dog, the relations are considered as two different things, independent of one another. But in case of 'knowledge of object' it is not that there are two such things— subjectivity on the one hand and objectivity on the other, which are conjoined with one another. In reality, knowledge is always knowledge of an object and an object is generally apprehended as an object in relation to knowledge. There is one type of (in Krishnachandra's description) 'implicational dualism'<sup>2</sup> in case of knowledge and object. Where the knower indicates the object and the object indicates the knower. Thus, it is clear that the unity would not be explained as a conjunctive one. It is, Kalidas points out, owing to our bias for understanding every unity as conjunctive; the unity between two clashing things seems unintelligible to us. However, he thinks the unity of knowledge of object is the solid datum to start with and we are to explain this unity in other alternative ways.

Apart from conjunctive unity, there are two other types of unities— namely disjunctive and dialectical unity. Any disjunctive proposition indicates some kind of union between two alternatives. One of those two alternatives is assumed to be real. And the other is either completely denied or given little importance in comparison to the other.

The third type of unity that he talks about is called Dialectical unity, where the acceptance of one is combined with the denial of the other. But here, denial does not indicate absolute negation or absence. This denial has a separate status of its own. For example, if we speak of the dialectical unity of A and B, then the establishment of A necessarily implies the denial of B. But this denial of B does not mean its rejection

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<sup>2</sup> Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, *Studies in Philosophy* (vol-2), ed., Gopinath Bhattacharya (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 1958), 125.

and acceptance of A only; rather, here, the negation of B is included in the establishment of A. It may be asked, where does the difference between dialectical and disjunctive unity lie? Kalidas points out the differences between the two when we speak of A or B, it is supposed that if one of them is rejected or proved false, the other must be accepted as true. Here, the alternative rejected or proved false does not receive any recognition— either positively or negatively. Whereas in the case of dialectical unity, if one of the two is rejected, say B, for example, this rejection is subsumed with acceptance of the other, A. The first unity suggests acceptance of one along with the exclusion of other, but in the second, acceptance of one is enriched with the negation of other or the negation of the second is merged with the adoption of the first.<sup>3</sup>

So far, we have come across several conflicting views on the unity of the subject and object. Among these competing views, the first i.e. conjunctive unity, although it creates complexities, is preferred by most. It is true that when we talk about knowledge and object of knowledge, we accept a duality between them and this duality creates impediment in the path of complete unity. Nevertheless, as we find no difficulty in the notions of spatio-temporal unity or in the unity of qualifier-qualificandum (dharma-dharmī), one may argue, we ought to welcome the unity of knowledge and object.<sup>4</sup>

Let us consider the second option. Could we view the relation of knowledge and object as a disjunctive one? It is already made clear that in case of disjunction, one must accept one alternative while rejecting the other. But as it is impossible to deny the object by admitting subjectivity, it is also difficult to reject or despise

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<sup>3</sup> Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy*, (Kolkata: Das gupta & Co. Ltd., 1953), 91-197.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, - 91-131.

subjectivity by admitting the object. If the first is accepted, it will result in Subjectivism and if the second is accepted, it will take the form of absolute Realism. Here, one may think of a non-exclusive type disjunction where it is not impossible to admit both alternatives as true simultaneously. But usually A or B demands an exclusive view, where A and B are alternatively true but both cannot be true at the same time. There are, however, some advantages in seeing subject-object unity as disjunctive; for in the case of conjunction, recognition of duality remains unavoidable and there left no escape from duality. But in disjunctive unity, that duality is no longer inevitable, as disjunction can be viewed from both points of view— inclusive and exclusive.<sup>5</sup>

Now let's consider whether there can be any type of dialectical unity between the two. Applying this notion of Knowledge of Object to analyse the concept of 'of', we have already seen that pure subjectivity enriches itself by the denial of objects. That is, by including the denial of the object in dialectic unity, the subject becomes enriched subjectivity from pure subjectivity. Here there can be a kind of intelligible unity between subject and object. The subject means the knower and to be a knower means to be informed about things that are known. When the knower attains knowable, pure subjectivity ceases to exist. The subject then becomes engrossed in object. It would be a mistake to see this dialectical unity in terms of conjunctive unity. In the case of conjunctive unity, the subject and object exist independently, whereas in the case of dialectical unity, this distinction does not exist. There denial of the object is included within subject. As a result, the duality that was inevitable in the case of conjunctive unity is being transformed into dialectical unity. That is, here not the object, rather the denial of it is connected with the subject. When the subject is

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, - 135-170.

nourished by the denial of the object, there is no pure subject as well as no pure object. Thus, duality is transformed into a dialectical unity.<sup>6</sup>

A question may arise here, even in the case of dialectical unity; does it not indicate a kind of disjunction? To raise the same issue from another point of view, does disjunction contain some sort of dialectical unity within itself? If we have a deeper look into the relation of disjunction, it becomes obvious that in case of A or B, the acceptance of one always goes with the denial or rejection of the other. Consequently if A accepted the negation of B is also melt with it. As a result, in disjunction, there is a possibility of realization of dialectical unity.

Thus, after considering the relation between subject and object from three different perspectives Kalidas proceeds forward to three possible theories regarding subject and object. Those theories can be called subjectivism—where subject receives primacy over the object, objectivism— where object receives primacy over the subject and dialecticism— where negation of object is reconcile with subject. In Prof. Bhattacharya's opinion these three views would be credited to Kant, Neo-realist and Hegel respectively. So far, the fact of subject-object relationship is a concern; these three views can be admitted alternatively.

In this context, one thing needs to be mentioned that only through logical analysis the acceptance of any theory or doctrine cannot be established unless the theory is supported by human psychology. Mere theoretical analysis cannot make a theory acceptable; nor can it be done by providing logical proof in its favour, the theory must be bearable to human feeling and it must be approved by man's heart and soul. In the classical tradition of India, we found many theories endowed with critical

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, - 170-197.

study and logical analysis; however, they did not leave any impression on our minds. Though comprised with great wisdom and higher analysis, those views had failed to make any contribution to human life. Here, one is reminded of the Humian division of two manners of human understanding. In the beginning of his enquiry, Hume spoke of two species of philosophy: 1. *Easy and obvious* and 2. *Accurate and Abstruse*. The second, though accurate and enriched with deeper analysis, was less impressive in comparison to the first. The *easy and obvious* philosophy, as it is closer to man's heart, has always the preference over *accurate and abstruse* in the history of human thinking. In describing the merit of easy and obvious thinking Hume wrote,— “It enters more into common life; moulds the heart and affections...”<sup>7</sup>

The same holds true in the acceptance of any theory regarding subject and object. Until and unless the theory in question can touch human heart and mould his conscience, it does not receives his approval or node of assent. From this consideration, Prof. Bhattacharya tried to explore the psychological elements with which each of these theories could be tied. He finds three basic elements, namely knowing, feeling and willing, that correspond to subjectivism, objectivism and dialecticism. If we enter into detail analysis of the theory mentioned above it becomes clear that in subjectivism emphasise is given mainly on knowledge. In subject-centric approach, knowledge of the object is recognized as a fact. However, here, primacy is given to the knowing mind, not to the knowable thing. On the contrary all emphasis to object is given in objectivism, ignoring the knowing mind. Here the subject becomes identified with the objects and this identification is possible only in feeling. If we consider the third, i.e. dialecticism, we see that denial of the object is reconciled with

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<sup>7</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chicago: The open court publishing co., 1900), 2-3.

the subject here; and this can be done only by one mental element, which is willing, i.e. in conation.

So far, we have seen three standpoints, namely subjective, objective and dialectic, which, according to Kalidas, are alternatively absolute. We have also seen that corresponding to those three, there are three psychological elements: cognition, feeling and conation. These three, are also counted as alternatively absolute, and the first three attitudes are identical, respectively, with the second three. The direction of knowledge is towards pure subjectivity; objects are completely neglected here. Feeling, on the other hand, is directed towards pure objectivity. In feelings, the knower or subject is ignored as the subject is identified with the object. In this pure objectivism, objects are given importance which is the fully neutral from knowing mind. Only through the path of feeling that pure object can be grasped. Third perspective is the dialectical attitude which is identical with conation. Journey of dialectical attitude is towards an enriched subjectivity. There is a strange relationship between cognition and will. Although they help each other, if one shows authority over the other, then the first rejects the second or the second rejects the first.

But if will is subordinated to knowledge, or if knowledge is subordinated to will, then there last no conflict. But if one tries to overpower the other, conflict arises. Professor Bhattacharya has highlighted Śaṅkara's monism as a true example of pure subjectivism. To Advaitīn the ultimate being is pure subjectivity, there is no such thing as object. However, in order to arrive at pure subjectivity, Advaitīn temporarily accepts the empirical world of object, super imposed by māyā. But this empirical world is nothing but an illusory one, recognized temporarily as subordinate to Brahman. As soon as the real truth is apprehended, the world illusion is vanished. Hence, there is nothing left but Brahman or pure subjectivity.

In seeking examples of pure objectivism, Prof. Bhattacharya mentions the Indian schools like Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, and the new realist of the west. They have very unequivocally and consistently realized that their fundamental ground is Feeling. They identify reality as the ultimate truth, they declare: to be knowable and nameable is to be an object; to be an object, on the other hand, is to be an ultimate stuff of reality. Everything, starting from the gross external objects to awareness, self, substance, quality, and function is accepted as real by the Indian realist. Here the neo-materialist view is also at par with the view of Indian realist differing only in the fact that, the gross objects of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika are interpreted here as collection of sense data by them. Apart from all these physical things, most of the realists admit Universal, although they do not provide the same interpretation of it. In the realism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, three other additional realities are recognized, namely, Samavāya, Viśeṣa and Abhāva, which, however, would not be claimed to exist by the neo-realist of the west; at best, they, can allow their ‘subsistence’.

In this way, by restricting existence in the case of substance, quality and functions, one may speak of Subsistence in case of the other four. However, both types of things can aptly be called real in two different senses. Here one is reminded of the interpretation put forward by Prof. Bimalkrishna Motilal in his writing has endeavoured to maintain the reality of the seventh categories by describing the first three (i.e. Dravya, Guṇa and Karma) as ‘real’, whereas the four other (Samanya, Samavāya, Viśeṣa and Abhāva) are ‘Real’.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the said two types of three fold attitudes, Prof. Bhattacharya has mentioned Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma parallel to the first two. In Indian philosophy, the

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<sup>8</sup> Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Logic Language and Reality: An Introduction to Indian Philosophical Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 2017), 76.

concepts of Jñānamārga and Karmamārga correspond preciously to the subjective and dialectical attitude, respectively. Bhaktimārga, on the other hand, represents a form of the objective attitude or feeling, with various expressions of this attitude found in different Vaiṣṇava traditions. If we define Bhaktimārga in a wide sense as identical with the objective attitude or feeling in general, we can then understand that there is alternation between the three mārgas (paths) and each mārga is alternatively absolute. The relationships among these paths are as follows: Both jñāna (knowledge) and karma (action) reject bhakti (devotion), though bhakti remains indifferent to both. Additionally, jñāna rejects karma unless it is entirely subordinates and karma holds a similar stance towards jñāna.<sup>9</sup>

So, it appears that from the modern point of view any philosophy can survive only through the logic of alternation. In this way, the validity of philosophy can be proved only by discovering the unity of knowledge and object. But in the West it has rarely been discussed so well. Looking at the history of Western philosophy, it can be seen that almost all philosophers, whether ancient or modern, have accepted one or the other of these three options. And in being too quick to accept any of them without reason, they have wandered into the maze of arbitrariness. Only in the Indian tradition have these three options been thoroughly studied. However, they are less interested in exploring these options than in accepting thoughtful alternatives. That is, they did not try the alternations of these three. But the interesting thing is that almost all Indian philosophies have started their philosophies with some form of the problem of subject-object unity. Therefore, they never thought that there is a need or necessity of philosophy, which needs to prove the acceptability of the argument. Or they seem to have rarely or almost never gone into that practice. Thus, the outline of the alternative

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<sup>9</sup> Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy* (Kolkata: Das gupta & Co. Ltd., 1953), 320.



philosophy that Prof. Bhattacharya developed throughout his life, the concept of 'Anekānta Vedānta', was its attainment of perfection.

## Conclusion

Hitherto, we have seen that the Vedanta tradition has greatly influenced the minds of contemporary Indian philosophers. Although there are certain exceptions (like the thought of Jaddu Krishnamurti, which is closer to Buddhist tradition in comparison to Vedanta), almost all philosophical views of modern India are expressions of Vedanta tradition. Not necessarily they are expressions of Śāṅkara Vedanta only, but in the writings of modern thinkers like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and others, we witness preponderance of one or other form of Vedanta. Slide deviation from classical Vedantic tradition is also observed in their writings. A tendency is also observed to reconcile two or more schools of Vedanta tradition in theory or practice. But the attempt to explain all philosophical schools, irrespective— Vedantic or non-Vedantic, orthodox or heterodox as the variants of some Vedanta traditions, which is seen in the writings of Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya, is something unique. Taking tolerance, indifference and belief in oneness as the marks of Vedanta, Prof. Bhattacharya has integrated the diverse philosophical traditions of India and explained them as multiple dimensions of the same Vedantic thought.

This modern interpretation, introduced by Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya, has received the designation ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ later. He himself also used this same designation in his lecture<sup>1</sup>.

This is clearly an exceptional and adventurous attempt. In Indian culture, it was customary to maintain the tradition initiated by the founder of a school. Addition

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<sup>1</sup> Which was given in the University of Burdwan and later published in bengali with the title ‘Bhāratīye Sanskriti o Anekānta Vedanta.’

or alteration too and slide deviation from the original text are also experienced. But by introducing a drastic change in the traditional Vedanta view, Prof. Bhattacharya, like Immanuel Kant, has introduced a ‘revolution’ in the history of Indian philosophy. It is true that, like any revolution, this modern understanding of Vedanta is rooted in some causal conditions. From its origin, philosophy has been gradually becoming a field of conflicting claims, and a field of endless battle. As a student of philosophy, Prof. Bhattacharya’s mind was travelled with the rivalry, which we observed between empiricism-rationalism, idealism-realism, subjectivism-objectivism and the like. He wanted to put an end to the process of this ceaseless battle by introducing an inclusive alternative.

It is seen that, the advocates or commentators of the classical Vedanta schools are busy in defending or explaining the position either of following Śaṅkara or of Rāmānuja or of Madhva or any other Ācāryas; their utmost attempt was to restore and maintain the specific schools and their scholastic philosophy. This dedication or devotion is not seen in the writings of modern Indian philosophers. Instead of preserving the tradition or gurukula, they engaged themselves in the modification of the classical views in their own ways, with a view to establish the relevance of that schools or systems in the changed scenario. Many of the modern thinkers were not monogamous in a proper sense. A mixture of theory and practice is often observed in their writings. Taking the theory of Śaṅkara in principle, some of them have endeavoured to put one type of dualism in practice. The concept of māyā of Śaṅkara has been interpreted by many of them in unconventional ways. But in Prof. Bhattacharya, we observed a new turn, not just initiating new interpretations of the old concepts rather a total rearrangement or reformation of the Indian tradition. It is

not merely a matter of looking at Vedanta from a unique standpoint but viewing the entire Indian philosophy from a Vedantic point of view.

Now, let us proceed to meet the objections that can be levelled against Kalidas's understanding of Vedanta. The question which automatically evokes in our mind, how or on what logic can Vedanta be viewed as manifold? How can the apparent incompatibility between Anekānta and Vedanta be removed? At the very outset, the conjunction of the two expressions— 'Vedanta and Anekānta' seems puzzling. For, the term 'Vedanta' signifies the last part of the Vedas, i.e. Upanishad, which declares the existence of one ultimate or supreme Reality, Brahman. Hence, it cannot be counted as 'Anekānta' or 'Multi-ended'. On the other hand, the theory of Anekānta, though advocated by the Jain, they never believed in the authenticity of Upanishad or Vedanta.

But this inconsistency, which seems bewildering apparently, disappears if we keep Prof. Bhattacharya's understanding of Vedanta in consideration. By 'Vedanta', he does not understand Upanishad in particular or along with Upanishad, Gita and the commentaries on Brahmasūtra in general. Bhattacharya spoke of two foundations of Vedanta, namely— 'udāratā' (indifference) and 'paramata sahiṣṇutā' (tolerance to others position), which are corollaries of the belief in the existence of one ultimate reality. Holding this unique understanding of Vedanta, Kalidas went forward to explain that all schools of Indian Philosophy, Vedantic as well as non-Vedantic, orthodox as well as heterodox, as multi aspects of Vedanta. He is also of the opinion that behind the so-called pluralistic and dualistic world views, a belief in oneness is continuing throughout the tradition of Indian philosophy. The phrase 'Anekānta Vedanta' has been used by Prof. Bhattacharya to signify those schools of Indian tradition as multiple reflections of the same Vedantic thought.

But in Indian tradition, this ‘Anekānta’ approach is not new altogether. This theory had been advocated by the Jain school from distant past. Naturally, the question is raised whether the ‘Anekānta theory’ of Kalidas has any connection or link with the ‘Anekāntavāda’ of the Jain. If it is different from the Jain theory, then where does that difference lie?

In response to this query, it can be said that the ‘Anekānta Vedanta’ of Kalidas, though it resembles apparently, is different from the ‘Anekāntavāda’ of the Jain in many respects. Firstly, although the multi-dimensionality of reality is admitted in Jainism, it does not lead to multiplicity of the reality. At best, it suggests multi aspects of the same object. Whereas, the position Bhattacharya upheld does not suggest multi reflections of a single reality, but the multiplicity of reality as such. To make it clear, we can take the illustration of the perception of an elephant by some blind persons, which is popularly used to explain the position of the Jain. After touching different parts of an elephant, the blind persons only give partial reports about the leg, tail, trunk, etc. Although the knowledge accomplished by the blinds seem exhaustive to themselves, it doesn’t provide a complete understanding of the entire elephant. In the same way, the Anekāntavādīns claim, in our empirical understanding, different aspects of an object are grasped, which does not express the actual nature of the reality; hence, the knowledge we have had is partially true, not absolutely true. That means the Anekāntavādīns are in favour of admitting an Absolute. This supposition receives reinforcement when they speak of the ‘Kevalī’. Although the Jain speaks of partial knowledge of an empirical person, in the case of ‘Kevalī’, they acknowledge the possibility of complete and perfect knowledge of an object. This suggests that, in Jain philosophy, alternation is allowed to the extent of epistemology only and not to the level of ontology. But Kalidas has carried that

alternation to the level of reality. The ‘Anekāntavāda’ of the Jains, though it corresponds to epistemological relativism apparently, seems much more compatible with monistic realism. On the contrary, in his ‘Anekānta Vedanta’, Kalidas has tried to nurture one kind of pluralistic realism, or a type of non-absolutism.

But if it were the case, is the philosophical position of Kalidas not just a reiteration of the philosophical understanding of his father Krishnachandra Bhattacharya? Or is there some point of departure from his parent’s ideal? Before entering into this discussion, it should be mentioned that Krishnachandra perhaps was the first to introduce one type of non-absolutism in the history of philosophy. If we have a look at the history of western thought, it becomes obvious that it is a record of the searches for an Absolute. In Parmenides’s notion of being, the idea of good in Plato, and the notion of pure form in Aristotle— even in the modern, rationalist and empiricist tradition, we observed the rise of the one Absolute Being. The notion of one Absolute is also embedded in Indian scriptures. It is from the writings of Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, we learn the lesson that the Absolute might be multiple in natures; at least, there is no incompatibility between the notion of the Absolute and the notion of plurality. So, the philosophy of alternation undoubtedly is a novel contribution of Krishnachandra. In this situation, would it be legitimate to recognise Kalidas as the initiator of the theory of alternation in philosophy?

Before going to answer this question, we must acknowledge that the search for alternation that we see in Kalidas was initiated by his father, Krishnachandra. Definitely, for his novel thought, Kalidas is indebted to his father. However, the alternative approach Kalidas introduced in philosophy is not just a mere duplication of his parental thought. May the alternative view of Absolute be coined from Krishnachandra, however, its application in the field of Vedanta must be credited to

Kalidas. It is in Kalidas we observe the tendency to explain the entire Indian Philosophy— orthodox or unorthodox as the multi-sectarian stream of the same secret river, Vedanta.

Although Kalidas, likewise his father, advocates the multiplicity of the Absolute, there is, however, an important point of departure from his father's view that we witnessed in Kalidas. It is undoubtedly true that Krishnachandra has recognised the alternation of the Absolute, but he never endorsed apprehension of those Absolutes at a time. Perhaps he thought, as Absolutes are different, the ways of apprehending them would also be different. In Krishnachandra, there was no way to approach those Absolutes simultaneously. As he approved a disjunctive relation among the Absolutes, in the same way, he recommended alternative or disjunctive ways to approach those Absolutes. But it seems to us, at the very outset, that Krishnachandra was in favour of conceiving one type of exclusive disjunction among the ways and the ends. On the contrary, the relation of disjunction that Kalidas was in favour of is an inclusive one. Where the possibility of approaching many truths together is left open, particularly the illustration of *Purṇatā khyātivādīn*, mentioned in his writing, suggests that for a philosopher, it is not impossible to be aware of different truths simultaneously.

The doctrine of Alternative Absolute is grounded in the psychological distinctions between the knowing, feeling and willing functions of the self, and the epistemological distinctions of subjective, objective and dialectical attitudes that correspond to them. This doctrine offers an original approach to the perennial problems of philosophy. It avoids the dogmatism that insists if one view is tenable, the opposite must be untenable, and it also avoids the irrational liberalism that tries to hold contradictory views simultaneously through compromise, hierarchical

arrangement, or supposed harmony. While we all start from the same unreflective experience, philosophical reflection leads our paths to diverge, ultimately reaching the alternative forms of the Absolute. Hence, it can be concluded that Kalidasa's philosophy of alternation is not just a reiteration of Krishnachandra's view.

Under different names and behind different philosophical structures, Kalidas finds a continuous flow of belief in oneness. Keeping this belief of unity intact and taking the multiplicity from that background, Kalidas thinks the schools of Indian philosophy have reached to its attitudes of tolerance and indifference. These attitudes of indifference and tolerance, which are upheld by Indian schools in general, Kalidas argues, can be reconciled only with non-dualistic metaphysical tradition. In this sense, all believers in tolerance and indifference would be counted as variants of Vedanta. The question would arise, and it is natural too, is this view of seeing every opinion as an alternation of Vedanta not influenced by Sri Sri Ramakrishna's thought? Here, any student of Indian philosophy is reminded of Sri Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of the 'Jata mat tata path', where one type of pluralistic view is advocated. Being faced with the question of a disciple, as to which form of Vedanta he considered to be the ideal one, Paramhansa repeatedly acknowledged that from different levels of realisation or consciousness, each of them can be considered as Ideal. Treating one of them as ultimate and understanding the other as its subordinate, according to Ramakrishna, would be a futile attempt. He said that, there are differences in Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, etc., but regardless to that, an effort to reach God is experienced in each of those religions. Sri Ramakrishna thought that the goal of all philosophies and religions is the same, no matter how different they are in their theories and practices. So, the adoption of many views in a disjunctive manner is not something new in Indian philosophy.



But if you consider both of these Views From a deeper level, it becomes clear that there left big difference between these two. It is true that Sri Sri Ramakrishna allowed several ways of approaching the Ultimate, but he did not speak of any alternation of the end. To him, the Ultimate Reality is one and that can be approached in many ways. He has had a strong conviction that no matter what a person follows, he would reach to God; in the same way, whatever form of Vedanta one administers in his life, the result would be the same— attainment of eternal bliss (Brahmānanda). And here lies the difference between the views of Sri Ramakrishna and that of Kalidas Bhattacharya. When Prof. Bhattacharya explains orthodox and heterodox schools as different forms of Vedanta, he never claims that, ultimately, all parts and views have the same goal or they are directed towards the same reality. Reality or Truth, to Prof. Bhattacharya, is multidimensional in nature. In his expression—

Ultimate truth is multi-faceted, endowed with thousand heads as well as thousand legs.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear from his statement when he speaks of the ‘thousand legs of truth’, he does not claim that those ‘legs’ lead to the same ‘peak’ or head’. He recognises the diversity of the *heads* as well as the diversity of the *legs*. To him, truth is like many peaks on the tops of many mountains. Climbing on a certain mountain one is led to a certain peak. As soon as the mountain (along with its path) is changed, the top or peak is also changed. But in reality, when an adventurer climbs on a mountain, he becomes aware of a peak; likewise, if one is supposed to proceed with one variant of Vedanta, he may, at best, enjoy the taste of one of the truths. This belief or conviction in the possibility of alternative truths— encourages and inspires a philosopher to venture in a

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<sup>2</sup> Carom satya bahumukhī - sahasra śīrṣa sahasra pāda. Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Bhāratīya Sanskriti o Anekānta Vedanta* (Burdwan: Burdwan University, 1364), 75.

new path. Thus, the possibility of having the taste of many truths remains open to a philosopher.

To a philosopher, as Bhattacharya observes, it is a matter of participation in a play-act like a ‘seesaw game’. No one from ancient to modern followers of Vedanta could have dreamed of participating in such a ‘seesaw game’, where one can accept various truths simultaneously. This game does not seem to have received Ramakrishna’s approval. It is true that Ramakrishna has approved many paths or ways of approaching God, but once a seeker becomes successful in meeting God through a path, there left no urge in him to proceed further. Once the journey is ended with success, does one think of reaching the same destination through another path? Particularly, a pious person like Sri Ramakrishna would not inspire any seeker to wander in many paths.

The same can be said about the thought of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji approved four-fold paths, namely– Jñāna (knowledge), Karma (action), Bhakti (devotion) and the Raj yoga (the path of psycho-physical control), following which one can attain liberation. Though alternative to one another, there is no conflict among those paths, and by following any of those paths, one can reach to his desired goal. So, Vivekananda, as a champion of religious pluralism, also thought of many ways of realisation, but he never advised a person to follow all of them one by one. Like his preceptor, Vivekananda also believes in the oneness of truth, which can be realised in different ways. However, after the realisation of that truth in one way, to Vivekananda, there left no urge in the seeker to travel towards the same truth through another path.

The thought of Kalidas is markedly different at this point from his predecessors. He is neither an ascetic nor a pious person like Ramakrishna or Vivekananda; more truly, he is an academic philosopher who loves to go through many thought experiments. As he does not believe in unitary truth, he does not have any compulsion to follow only one of the possible ways of realisation. The position Bhattacharya upholds resembles, to some extent, that of Rabindranath. In his song, Tagore acknowledges that there is no end or full stop in the process of realisation of one's self. This process of realisation is ceaseless. There are infinite possibilities for an individual soul, which can be realised through the infinite cycle of birth and death. Prof. Bhattacharya perhaps would not agree with the poetic thought of Tagore in every respect, and it is doubtful, too, whether the poetic mind of Tagore would be satisfied with the multiplicity of truth. Nevertheless, like Tagore, Bhattacharya is interested in enjoying the taste of truth in many ways. His philosophical mind tempted Prof. Bhattacharya to check the possibility of enjoying many truths in many ways.

Here, the question remains, is there any scope of testing different truths simultaneously? Prof. Bhattacharya has imagined truth as multifaceted. But how is that multiplicity or multifactes apprehended? Bhattacharya gives his clarification here. In the case of a Mountain expedition, whoever succeeds in climbing the top of the Mountain, standing on the peak, enjoys the opportunity to have a look at other mountain peaks. In the same way, a philosopher who has had the taste of one truth through a self-consistent fundamental system may be exulted to enjoy the taste of different truths simultaneously. When someone looks at the moon, the bright moon becomes a figure in the background of a galaxy in the sky. Though the attention of the viewer is on the brightness of the Moon, the neighbouring ring of the galaxies also draws his attention. Similarly, after having the taste of one truth through the system of

his own, a philosopher becomes aware of the truths that could be approached by other systems in alternative ways.

It is undoubtedly true that the thought of Prof. Bhattacharya is novel one. But the query remains: how judgemental or logical is this thought experiment? It is the stipulated definition of Vedanta formulated by Prof. Bhattacharya himself that enabled him to explain all the sects of Indian tradition as variants of Vedanta. In that definition, tolerance and indifference are considered as two foundations of Vedanta.

Here, one may ask, can these two be taken as defining characters of ‘Vedanta’ plausible? In Indian tradition, the term ‘Lakṣaṇa’ is generally used to signify the defining characters of a thing or a class of objects. There, lakṣaṇa signifies a peculiar property by which the object of a class or a group can be differentiated from all other objects that do not belong to that class. Jariness, for example, is the lakṣaṇa or peculiar property of a jar, which not only assimilates the jars but also differentiates all jars from non-jars. Can tolerance and indifference be considered as lakṣaṇas or defining properties in this sense? Prof. Bhattacharya acknowledged that ideals of tolerance and indifference are inherent in Indian society and culture as a whole. In that case, the entire Indian society would be levelled as ‘Vedanta society.’ Prof. Bhattacharya perhaps would welcome this proposal, but if it is taken for granted, there would be a problem of over-coverage (*ativyāpti*) in the lakṣaṇa of Vedanta. For the ideals of tolerance and indifference are preached by many great souls belonging to different cultures, races, spaces and times. And it would not be justified to explain all of them as the followers of Vedanta. Perhaps Prof. Bhattacharya himself would not like to reach such a conclusion that the premise he accepted suggests.

Moreover, it is commonly believed that tolerance and indifference are rooted in the principle of non-violence admitted in ancient Indian tradition. These are not just corollaries drawn from the principle of oneness. It is only a true votary of non-violence who can develop the attitude of bearing with the odds situation or maintain an indifferent attitude to the ups and downs in life world situation. What we call tolerance and indifference is nothing but an expression of love towards others, and this love is conditioned to the effective application of non-violence. Thus, the so-called aspect of Vedanta becomes the true aspect of non-violence. Now, this principle of non-violence, though approved by Indian schools in general, it is originated mainly in the Buddhist and Jain traditions. So, the logic on which all Indian schools are explained as alternative forms of Vedanta, in the same logic, they can be viewed as reflections of Buddhism or Jainism.

To defend his position, Prof. Bhattacharya may argue that tolerance and indifference are not two stipulated marks or lakṣaṇas of Vedanta, rather two aspects or indicators of it. It is the belief in oneness and viewing multitude of things from that standpoint that gave rise to tolerance and indifference in the Indian mind. Even in the case of unorthodox schools, Bhattacharya would find a covered belief in oneness. This solution, however, is not an unquestionable one. In the history of philosophy, we observed so many thinkers, though without having even any remote relation with Vedanta, who endeavoured to defend some sort of monism in their writings. Hence, belief in oneness and evaluation of many from that angle would not be considered as extraordinary features of Vedanta, as it is common to non-Vedantic traditions in the East and West.

After going through the writings of Prof. Bhattacharya, it seems to us that he did not use the term lakṣaṇa in the stipulated sense— in which it is used by the

classical Indian philosophers. The expression is loosely used by him to indicate those properties which are ordinarily associated with the Vedantic position in particular and Indian tradition in general. He intended to make it clear that inspite of the great diversity of ways and thoughts, a belief in oneness is underlying implicitly in the history of Indian philosophy and culture. Surpassing the hurdles of pluralism and dualism, this belief in oneness has been finding its way throughout the history of Indian philosophy. Pluralism and dualism are considered as (not to rivals, but) disguised forms of monastic thought in Bhattacharya's presentation. Just as the rise of monotheism is seen in two testaments through its battle with polytheism and henotheism, in the same way, the belief in one ultimate being paved its way over and above realism and idealism, dualism and pluralism, cognitivism and devotionism throughout the river of Indian philosophy. A follower of Kalidas may go further and extend the designation Advaita to cover all the variants of monism developed in the east as well as in the west.

Let it be accepted that there is an undercurrent of monism and, thereby, of Vedanta in Indian philosophical literature. Nevertheless, taking it for granted, one may question the possibility of multi-dimensional Vedanta, i.e., 'Anekānta Vedanta', as monism is incompatible with the notion of diversity. It should be remembered that the approach of alternation Bhattacharya (and his father Krishnachandra as well) wanted to talk about does not suggest epistemological relativism only, i.e., it is not just a matter of grasping the same truth in different ways.

Along with the path, he suggested alternations of the destination, too, particularly as he speaks of the journey from one truth to another in his writings. If this were the case, how can the so-called belief in oneness, which is claimed as the mark of being Vedanta, be restored? Either he will have to trust on the classical

Vedantic tradition by admitting the belief in oneness as the hallmark of Vedanta, or he has to abandon his claim that the belief in oneness is the salient feature of Vedanta. How this dilemma can be resolved?

In face of this dilemma, we can suggest a solution by saying that when Prof. Bhattacharya speaks of the multiplicity of Vedanta, he over views everything from a 'super philosophical standpoint.'<sup>3</sup> One who reached in this standpoint can look and judge everything from a neutral point of view. Being aware of all dimensions at a time and abstaining from being a part of any of the views, he can treat them as equi-possible alternatives. Hence, the super philosopher who has transcended all alternations of Vedanta need not have biasness to any particular School. From his standpoint, therefore, there is no inconsistency in holding a multiplicity of alternatives at a time. On the other hand, from the position of the adherer of a self-consistent and fundamental system, there is nothing wrong in holding the belief in one Absolute Reality. At the end of his journey, he expects to be acquainted with one Absolute Reality. As such, his belief in oneness remains unwavering. Thus, taking the belief in oneness a priori, followers of any school of Vedanta can judge the multitude of things. But one who has upgraded to a super philosophical standpoint enjoys the freedom of realising the multidimensional characters of truths. Thus, there left no inconsistency in taking Vedanta on one hand and maintaining multiplicity on the other.

Still, there are questions that trouble the researcher's mind, particularly about the practicability of the position in question. Is the 'seesaw game' Prof. Bhattacharya talked about playable in real life, i.e., in following an ideal in a practical situation? It is true that travelling on a new path (after finishing one expedition) always attracts a

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<sup>3</sup> Kalidas Bhattacharya, *Alternative Standpoints in Philosophy* (Kolkata: Das gupta & Co. Ltd., 1953), 155.

traveller; though challenging at the very outset, it is encouraging to him, too. In the case of mountaineers, it is observed that after the successful completion of an expedition, they tend to prepare a plan to conquer a new peak. In the same way, after realising some truth from a particular philosophical perspective, one may think of having a taste of new truth from a new viewpoint. To a man of wisdom who is indifferent and free from superstition, it may seem to be an interesting and challenging journey. In case of some exceptional thinkers, recognised as *Purnatā khyātivādīns*, Prof. Bhattacharya claims, it is possible to have a test of many truths simultaneously. Perfectionism is always a great ideal, but how far is it possible to pursue that ideal in lived life— it is always a debatable issue.

However, in defence of Prof. Bhattacharya, one may say that ideals are always ideals; which are construed in an a priori manner, without judging its applicability. A philosopher tends to set a goal according to his own. It is the outcome of a thought experiment. If there is no logical inconsistency in that thought, it cannot be set aside or looked down on the ground of its present inapplicability. Moreover, what seems impossible in a particular spatio-temporal scenario may be carried into effect in course of time. Particularly, rise in such a position does not seem utterly impossible to one who has experienced the academic freedom of venturing into the realm of innovative thoughts. The narrow boundary of a particular form of thought and life cannot forbid him in venturing new gulfs or alternatives. Here, we are reminded of Tagore's poem—

“Where the mind is without fear and

the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;



Where the world has not been broken  
up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

...Into that heaven of freedom, my

Father, let my country awake”<sup>4</sup>.

It is true that being an inhabitant of this earth, one cannot deny the boundaries of day and night. But to one who enjoys the freedom of knowledge, it is not impossible to roam about in the pure streams of rational thought. The appeal for freeing oneself from the bindings of past knowledge is also witnessed in the writings of Krishnamurti. Thus, the path of wandering in the world of thought is open to any philosopher, and that cannot be restricted by the fetters of usage.

So far, we have considered the logical and philosophical consistency of Prof. Bhattacharya’s ‘Anekānta Vedanta’. Now, let us think out the necessity or compulsions that provoked Prof. Bhattacharya to go through such a thought experiment. What motivation compelled Bhattacharya to join in such a ‘seesaw game’ of thought? It cannot be interpreted as a mere childish play-act to implement the ideal of alternative philosophy; he inherited paternally in a new field. Then what insisted him in explaining the entire Indian philosophy as a manifestation of the multiple aspects of Vedanta? Though it is easy to raise the question, but really difficult to find out the answer. This initiation, it seems to the researcher, is not a mere philosophical dream but rather an attempt linked with the fulfilment of some purpose. At the very outset, it seems to us as an attempt to justify the relevance and cogency of philosophical understanding and enquiry at the juncture of the changing social and technological scenario of the century.

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<sup>4</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), 27-28.

Just as accountability of an old custom is questioned in the beginning of a new era, the contemporaneity of philosophical enquiry is also demanded, particularly in that situation where civilisation is swept away by the tide of science and technology drastically. Thus, Prof. Bhattacharya's works may be viewed as an attempt to point out the role that a philosopher can play in a changing society. The search for novelty might have insisted Prof. Bhattacharya to think out such an ideal. Such innovative thinking might have a deeper connection with the Indian social structure and way of life. India is a meeting ground of multi-lingual, multi-caste, multi-religious people. Every religion and community has its distinct philosophical, ritualistic, and ceremonial aspects. There is uniqueness and plurality as well. If the thought or culture of a particular sect is over-emphasized, the unity and integrity of the country as a whole would be in danger. This realisation is reflected in the writings of contemporary Indian thinkers. In their Philosophy, they have also tried to maintain unity amidst plurality— find out integrity within diversity. Perhaps this realisation or compulsion has motivated Prof. Bhattacharya to find out some sort of unity among the Indian philosophical schools, keeping their respective positions unchanged. This endeavour to restore the unity resulted in his innovative thought of Vedanta. Undoubtedly, there are important points of differences among the orthodox and unorthodox schools of Indian tradition; no less difference is observed between the schools of orthodox and unorthodox. When reflected in social life, those differences give rise to disintegrity and rivalry. Keeping those differences in theory and practice intact, Kalidas has gone forward to discover the point of agreement where a multiplicity of thoughts may converge. Explaining Indian philosophies as one or other stream of Vedanta, Prof. Bhattacharya has tried to get rid of the conflicts that are likely to be occurred among the followers of different philosophical schools.

Thus, in conclusion, it can be said that if the transcendental philosophy of Krishnachandra prepared the ground for the germination of the modern view of Vedanta, it is the structure and culture of Indian society that boosted the emergence of such a novel thought in Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharya's mind.

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*Santu Kandar*  
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