Proudhānubhūti - The Epistemic Intractability and Self-Reflective Viability

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Abstract

The Upaniṣadic literature emphasizes the importance of experience and knowing in understanding the subject-object relation inherent in self-consciousness, also known as the 'Truth'. The value of Truth emerges from the subjectivity dimension, which is the highest level man can target for and search in a context of objectivity. The 'pure' form of Truth can only be understood when it is freed from representations of myths in the world. The implicit destruction between self-consciousness at the subjective and objective levels must be legitimized before one trends towards the 'experience' of the 'Truth.' Actively engaged in the experience visualizes it as 'given' in experience, not as limited or constrained by pragmatic considerations. The constraints of the ego cause sins and evils to interfere with the realization of the goal of self-consciousness, leading to a substantive theory of inference emphasizing the multi-angled aspects of the 'Truth.' The content of 'Proudhānubhūti' is presented as remembrance from a preceptor who had dropped off from the material world of duality through his unique intuitive experience of self-realization. This experience is unique in the material universe of duality, and the doubling of the word 'praudha' implies the rare state of the experience in its most vibrant terms. For those whose intellect is submerged in the abyss of evils and falls into the Pray of sins and cruel deeds, such an experience is impossible. However, for those whose efforts are directed towards keeping their intellect unaltered by evils and possessed of unaltered pure nature, the Truth, the real self of the whole universe, is truly accessible

Keywords— .Praudhanubhuti, Advaita, Vedanta, Indian Philosophy, Consciousness, Brahman, Jiva, Universal Real

1 Introduction

The concepts of experience and knowing are epitomized in the Upaniṣadic literature as the centralized theme essential to the understanding of the subject-object relation inherent in 'self-consciousness' otherwise described as the 'Truth' from the point of human existence. The value of Truth emerges solely from the subjectivity dimension and it is the highest level man can target for and search in a context of objectivity. What is apprehended and experienced at this level of self-consciousness eludes complete objectivity and has a 'universality' dimension. This Truth can be expressed in the form of similes or metaphors only. The 'pure' form can be understood only when It is freed from the representations of myths in the world not through any mode of conveying, the latter having in-built objective concurrence, bringing in subtle variations in presentation where it will subject to modulation, combination, merger and fusing of one idea with another. Expressing the inexpressible, sometimes the expressive thoughts may pale into insignificance and the 'actual' requiring subsequent apprehension in conjecture with the actual may be pursued without the effectiveness of the apprehension of the 'Truth'. The implicit distinction between the self-consciousness at the subjective level and that at the objective level has

to be legitimized before one trend towards the 'experience' of the 'Truth'. Those who are actively engaged in it visualize it as 'given' in experience and not as 'limited' or 'constrained' by any pragmatic consideration, as they appear in them. The 'constraints' are the functional aspects of 'ego' that causes sins and evils interfering in the realization of the goal of self-consciousness and turning into the concept of 'myths' on the 'Truth' and paving way for a substantive theory of inference emphasizing the multi-angled aspects of the 'Truth'. This is where the 'givenness' of the Truth disclosed in the scriptures can be utilized as a guide in the experience- what is to be experienced and what that is experienced.

The content of 'Prouḍhānubhūti' is presented in the form of remembrance from the part of a preceptor who had already dropped off from the great magic of the material world of duality thanks to his unique intuitive experience of self-realization. By visualizing the reality of one's own self through the most sublime metaphysical experience, the preceptor is freed from the bonds of the material world. That experience is far from reach for those who stay with the intellect indulged with the mass of sins and cruel deeds. The experience of 'visualization of one's own self' brings in the superb, the most sublime intuitive experience of the individual soul, the 'consciousness' that is the foundation of everything in this universe. By analyzing the nature of the great myth of the universe and discarding the effects of those myths, one can have the experience of 'self-consciousness' that is unique in this material universe of duality. The doubling of the word 'prauḍha' in this context implies the rare state of the experience in its most vibrant terms that brings in the great nobility of it. For those whose intellect is submerged in the abyss of evils and falling into the prey of sins and cruel deeds, such an experience will be impossible. But one cannot claim that he is completely inaccessible to that, for, it is hidden in the individual, gūḍha, ambiguous for the ignorant and crystal-clear for the realized ones. For those whose efforts are directed towards keeping their intellect not swayed by the currents of evils and possessed of unaltered pure nature, that Truth which is the real self of the whole universe is truly accessible. Therefore it is necessary to generate the awareness regarding this Truth and it is possible solely to the intellect of the virtuous disciples. For this reason, virtuous disciples can achieve this spiritual experience of Reality.

2 Unveiling the 'I'

The fact that the unmanifest Truth remains inexpressible implies that it can be imparted only through symbolic narratives such as self-effulgent luster or consciousness. The first principle behind this multitude of universe is but one and non-dual to which the creation beginning with the Hiraṇyagarbha to the microcosmic animals can be ascribed. In the concept of knowledge, man has the capability to experience it and to derive theories on it. While all forms of knowledge drawn from the inherent faculty of the mind are imagined, conceptualized and carried out within the thematic and methodical framework of perception, inference, reasoning and experience, the 'supreme' knowledge is beyond the psychic constituents and the psycho-temporal boundaries. The general dictum of the Upaniṣadic lore is that if there is commonality of experience of knowledge, it is the Absolute and it is the Truth. This knowledge when becomes explicit, it has a duality content. Explicitness itself requires some other thing, like the mind to structure the knowledge in its own way. This leads to the impressions of 'I' and 'mine' which itself is duality. In fact, this superimposition took place in the mind and hence considered as false. It is like the feeling of water in a mirage. Here the water felt due to false apprehension is truly absent. Given such a falsity in the perceived state, the factors leading to perception are all but phenomena that cannot be accepted as truth. Further validation of this truth becomes possible only through experience of the real. What is more significant is the arbitrariness of the falsity in perception can be validated in the experience of the highest order. Then concerning with the issue of truth, who am 'I'? its answer is: 'prouḍhānandadacidekasanmayavapuh'- I am of the nature of the pure and non-dual sublime existence of consciousness which is inseparable from the abundant bliss (cidrūpa and ānandaghana) devoid of all kinds of limitations. By experiencing this principle of Reality, the preceptor remembering its value, presents it before the world through the media of a disciple of enriched aptitude towards self-realization. Understanding of the 'I' in its full

potential will be had when the constraints of ego are completely unfolded. Every ego-driven prejudice erratically influence cognitions and comprehensions brought out through body, mind, prāṇa, intellect and vijñāna that present an 'other'. This has to be confronted with the true or inherent 'I'. In the Absolute understanding it is said that the Vedas become no Vedas[1]. Therefore all the means of knowledge can be used as a guide to further progress towards the Absolute. Hence it is evident that in order to have the authentic understanding of the 'I' the inquiry must be focused on the thing-in-itself in such a way that it may be experienced as it were, the pure 'I'. This final point will explain how the 'I' constitutes our very being. Two things happen when this warranted notion of 'I' confronts the new experience of 'oneness'. On the one hand, it experiences that 'I am not the ignorance like the blind darkness' and on the other, the new horizon of self-effulgence appearing in limelight involving all the dual aspects in its non-dual nature.

In order to maintain the critical vision of 'I', ample reason is required. Reason justified through the scriptural contexts appealing to different opinions, saves the true one from the falsely represented notions of 'I' emerged from the limitations created by ego. Our being in this world depends on the 'elements' constituting the universe- earth, water, fire, air and space. But the world has its conceptual roots in the 'I'. Hence any notion of life must include this 'I'. The relating of the 'elements' with life and 'I' is crucial for understanding the purport of the relation between 'I' and 'mine'. Sri Śankara observes that every experience of the principal elements has implicit distinction in the form of 'I' and 'mine'. When the flow of experience has a character of the universal consciousness out of which all the particulars are truly given in common experience, does there arise the awareness of the oneness as 'I'. Here Śankara makes a metaphorical presentation- The 'I' is evidently similar to the water illumined in the desert land. My true nature is absolutely different from the elements. I am the witness of the whole universe. I am ever-effulgent and all-illuminating as sunlight. I am of the nature of the complete existence, and all-pervaded like the ether. I am devoid of any kind of relation with the perceived world, but I am the foundational principle of it. As ocean is never different from waves and foam, the universe in its entirety is but 'I' alone. One who succeeds in understanding this self-effulgent light within is the true enlightened one.

3 Shells of Ego

In the intuitive experience of the 'I', the ego-born constraints are totally eliminated. Our cognitions and comprehensions are brought out through the basic factor of ego and then the sensory organs and then the body as a whole. Impact of their unseen but accurate workings misleads human intellect and the self is erroneously cognized as those material objects. By realizing these as the apparent expressions different from the true self, one can experience the definite nature of the 'I' that is discriminative of the self from all other ego-born effects. That enjoyable experience is the content of this verse. I am not the body which stands still as the wall. Here the self is described as different from the food sheath, the annamayakośa. I am not that air which always carries clouds. Here the sheath of vital airs is pointed out as different from the self. I am not the mind which is always restless, fluctuating and flickering. By this statement, the self is indicated as different from the mental sheath. I am not the ego-driven intellect that is aware of its own evil intentions. Here the self is shown as distinct from the apprehensions of common man that relate it to the material world of objective nature in the form of the sheath of intellect embracing all kinds of difference. This sheath though famous in the name 'vijñanamaya', it displays the versions of apprehension mixed with ignorance and its effects. Therefore the cognitions evolved within the material realm passed through the sheath of intellect are in fact different from true knowledge that is Brahman itself.

The perceived universe of multiplicity finds validity and remains beneficial for common man who keeps a kind of possessive nature towards it. He enjoys this objective world of transitory pleasures in the series of experiences. A huge amount of pain when confronts day-to-day life in an irresistible manner, man enquires the way to escape from them and begins to seek more

[1]Brhadaranyakopanisad. IV.iii.22

blissful nature of life far from objectivity. Till then, man was under the strong hold of objective world and lived a life as of a magically created being. Realizing this fact when he starts to find out a remedy for the experience of pains, he approaches those great persons enriched with the true knowledge. In the beginning stage of this enquiry after Truth, the preceptor makes the disciple aware of the superimposed nature of Atman, the underlying consciousness of everyone and the whole universe. The elimination of this superimposition is narrated in this verse.

Common man understands himself non-different from the body, sense organs and the mind that brings actions and thinkings with them naturally. His being in this world depends upon the elements constituting the universe- earth, water, fire, air and space. But the world has its conceptual roots in the 'I'. Hence any notion of life must include the 'I'. The relating of the elements with 'I' and 'life' is crucial for understanding the purport of the relation between 'I' and 'mine'. Śankara observes that every experience of the principal elements has implicit distinction in the form of 'I' and 'mine'. When the flow of experiences acquires the character of a universal consciousness out of which all the particulars are truly given in common experience, there arises the awareness of 'oneness' as the 'I'. Here Śankara metaphorically presents the superimposition for a clearer view of the self reflected everywhere. The feeling of 'I' is similar to the water illumined on the desert. 'I' am not the elements such as ether or others. The word 'kha' can be taken in the sense of sense organs also. This will also disclose the non-material nature of the self. The 'I' is absolutely different from the elements and sense organs, being self-effulgent and all-illuminating as the sunlight. I am of the nature of the complete existence, all-pervaded like ether. I am devoid of any kind of relation with the perceived world of objects where the mind, sense organs and body reign as influential factors. Here the fact that the material aspects of sense organs and the mind encompassing the bodily existence of man is far from the true self though he feels pride within them as the self. In this way, by analyzing the real state of the experienced world, the true principle of 'I' is to be realized as non-different and underlying consciousness of this visible world exposed with ignorance and its effects. The world of multitudes is but the perceived form like the waves, foam and such other things in the ocean that never loses its own identity among all those transitory sights. The true self remains impervious in the midst of all kinds of externally felt forms of the universe. That is to be realized through intuitive experience.

4 Realisation of Oneness

By carefully attending to the various projections and interactions of our being, a thorough probe into the real nature of the 'I' follows the intuitive insight that brings in one's unaltered nature as the self itself. This mediation involves different confrontations with the limitations caused by ego and that hinders our access to the 'I'. only by overcoming these limitations the true experience of 'oneness' can be had in the form of 'eko'hamasmi' and it is the sublime non-dual knowledge of the self. Here a doubt may arise- whether it is 'eka eva asmi' or 'eka iva asmi'? Distinction between such considerations is very hard to decide. Sankara resolves the problem by asserting that it is 'eka eva asmi' which favors oneness. The purport of the statement 'eka iva asmi' is that it is 'one', not oneness. The truth of this statement is understood only when the intuitive experience is had. This experience leads man to the 'oneness' of everything and since there is no subject-object duality, this cannot be distinguished except in its essential nature as 'oneness'. Empirical considerations such as reason also cannot hold in this horizon of the supreme knowledge.

Parallel with this assertion of inevitability of knowledge of the 'oneness', Śankara conceptualizes that the 'I' is devoid of dual existence altogether categorically asserting the oneness of the Absolute. He conceives that the 'I' is the pure ether of consciousness and is complete in all respects. It is different from the body, senses and the group of vital airs. It is devoid of all evil impressions within the mind. Further he says that the 'I' is the sheath of intellect which is about to fall down and is different from ignorance. 'I' is the continued existence of all and is the great all-pervading luster that can be experienced alone and cannot be described by words. The indeterminacy constituting the inevitable aspect of the 'I' envisages the possibility of probing

the beyond. Reaching this indeterminacy is only a beginning of the process of opening up of the true nature of the 'I'. To have the complete enlightenment of it, constant meditation is required from the part of the disciple. By following the strict discipline of attending to the inward self alone and rejecting the objective world of impressions the noble and unique luster within can be experienced in the intuition.

What characterizes the first account of consciousness or the self as 'I' is its subjectivity and its being as self-referring. It is this feature that brings in the self-awareness of myself in saying 'I am so & so'. This self-awareness is the basic trait of the self-consciousness that cannot be alienated from one's self. Whenever there is a manifestation of the self, it is in the mental phenomena and is ubiquitous, showing variance in degrees of consciousness in its manifestation. The self is the first conscious being that can be referred to as 'I' whereas the others are included in the 'you'. The self-awareness thus dispenses off the distance between oneself and others. At the same time, the self as reality accounts for the fact that there is a relation between me and other beings in the universe. This self is identified as the knower, the thinker and the doer. The world or the universe stands opposed to the self and is the not-self. It is inclusive of all that exists and being other than the self it includes the physical as well as mental worlds. The self remains outside the purview of both physical and mental facts. The mind plays an active role in initiating creation of the material world of objects.

5 Oath of Upanishad

The difficult problem to be solved is: why there is the need for the concept of the Self or Consciousness? Even if one can provide a functional explanation from the point of empirical world and that of mental states, one cannot exactly explain the cause of mental phenomena and the manner by which it can be related with the self. The most important fact to be noted here is that the denial of self means the denial of the whole existence as nothing will come out of nothingness. So the presence of consciousness entails the presence of the universe. Consciousness is the Reality that requires deeper explanation from the special category of experience beyond the realm of the physical and mental phenomena. It is here where scriptures as direct revelations of the Being play a significant role and it is the only evidence in the case of understanding the Consciousness. Considering the deliberations provided by the scriptures, the self is verily real and infinite. It is not limited by anything. It is all-pervading, complete and is unconditioned as the ether. It is the homogeneous pure intelligence. Chāndogyopaniṣad declares: "Everything that is there and can be there is verily the 'I', the self or Brahman, since it is from that all things come forth, in which everything is dissolved and in which everything breathes. Whatever there is other than the self is but with imposed characters"[2]. Certainly if there is anything illumined due to the power of consciousness, it is due to this imposed character- the limitations and hence a false illumination; false in its real sense. The implication here is that no other entity than the self is admitted as the author of ignorance or the limitations effectuated from the ignorance. Hence the Upaniṣads declare that I am alone the Self, who is the seer of sight, the hearer of the heard, the thinker of thought and the knower of knowledge. The 'I' is the root principle underlying the whole material universe of objects that is caused by the erroneous thoughts in the mind like the fire underlying the firewood. It is harmonious, calm and devoid of all sins; harmonious in the sense that it is 'oneness without a second'- the 'Advaita'. However, it can be ascertained that the universe manifested from this 'self' by itself, consists of means and ends. The relative universe is without beginning and end and is like the seed and sprout created by ignorance and consists of a superimposition of actions, its factors and its results. The self mistakenly when it feels itself related to them becomes evil in its nature. The constituents of the universe are name, form and action. The manifested result of all action is but the universe. These three factors are in a complete undifferentiated state before manifestation. The differentiated and undifferentiated universe consisting of gross and subtle worlds and their essence, falls within the category of ignorance and as a consequence, becomes superimposed by it on the self as actions, its factors and results. In this manifestation, the self appears as opposite to the pure, eternal,

[2]'Sarvam khalvidam Brahma tajjalaniti'. III.xiv.1

free enlightened nature to the ignorance-bound minds. When the evils produced by ignorance are realized as evils, transitory, painful and impure, the true knowledge of the experience of Atman is discriminated against. Śankara makes it clear that a man under the spell of delusions can never feel that he is in such a miserable state. This is the very character of delusion and one cannot know and cannot believe the nature of this delusion until the veil of it is lifted. Only by knowing the true nature of the Self as 'I', the confusion between the 'I' and the 'not-I' can be discriminatively realized.

In the intuitive experience of Brahman, controversy in the concept of consciousness as witness self and the Supreme self experienced in the form of self-effulgent light is totally denied. Being the witness self, consciousness itself functions as the principle of individuation. This leads to the unique experience of each person in this world. This experience is to be reconciled with the higher realm of experience strictly based on the Upaniṣadic deliberations that form the most prominent part of the Vedas. This reconciliation is also materialized with a non-parallel notion of reasoning. The continuum of experiences presenting the Absolute as Consciousness alone has the universal horizon out of which every other particular experience emanates. But a different understanding of the particular experience is an 'imposed factuality'. In such a context the absolute consciousness remains the sole self-effulgent principle.

6 Fivefold Universe

To focus on the experience part, five characteristics are described- existence (asti), manifestation (bhāti), lovability (priyam), name (nāma) and form (rūpa). Of these the last two vary from object to object. They are inconsistent and products of ignorance. They constitute the whole world. But the first three constitute the essential nature of Brahman [3]. The elements and the objects born from them are existing (asti) as manifest (bhāti) and are attractive (priyam). These characteristics really belong to Brahman. ether that has the characteristic of Brahman as asti, bhāti and priyam, spatiality which is the distinctive attribute of it is made of ignorance. Spatiality is a product of delusion because prior to the manifestation of ether, it did not exist and when ether is destroyed, spatiality also ceases to exist. Even then, the essential nature of Brahman persists for all times. Brahman, the principle of existence, has no internal modes since it is not a whole of parts. It is infinite and partless. There is neither external relation nor internal differentiation in the case of Brahman. it cannot be delimited by determinations and relations. It is self-luminous, for, it manifests everything while it cannot be manifested by anything else. Hence experience is self-luminous. The self is witness-intelligence which while being self-luminous, illuminates all objects. The self is but one in all bodies since everywhere it is known by the cognition 'I' with a single form. The difference of bodies cannot be the ground for assuming difference in selves. This is implied in the statement 'prajñanam Brahma'. The same intention is disclosed in this verse. Common people consider things known due to the sunlight. They will never doubt the sun. In the same way there should not be any doubt regarding the witness-self illuminating the whole universe. The scriptures make this idea clear: 'Through His light all shines' [4] , 'kindled by which light the sun shines'[5] , 'Know that light to be mine which is the seer and which illumines the whole universe' [6].

At the heart of the notion of the Absolute there is a paradox that is fruitful in spiritual terms as it is concerned with the unmanifest state and the manifest one that is fathomable on the pure mental plane. That which is outside the realm of pure mental state is the highest one or the ultimate knowledge and is consciousness- the absolute. The individual has access to the manifest knowledge that can be described in terms of ignorance. In one sense it is the light that illuminates and clarifies. But in another aspect the light that has very high very high

[3]Asti bhati priyam rupam nama cetyamsapancakam Adyam trayam Brahmarupam jagadrupam tato dvayam. Drgdrsyaviveka. 20

[4]Brhadaranyakopanisad. IV.iii.22

[5]Kathopanisad. II.ii.15

[6]Taittiriya Brahmana. III.xii. 9

brilliance dazzles, blinds and ultimately extinguishes the 'knower' in its absolute nature. This light demands the effacement of being and demands the ultimate being as 'not this, not this'. This is realized as the undifferentiated unity of the Absolute. The finite is annihilated in this state by the ultimate one. This is the identity of the Absolute self with the individual self. Thus the goal of man is to seek for the eternal, indescribable, invincible, inconceivable, infinite divine Being to be cognized in experience of the pure mental state. The fact to be noted is that this goal is realized only as a flash of lightning and then lost, the impression of that experience alone will remain. With the help of such a strong impression, the preceptor imparts the reality behind every creature and the universe.

7 Traveling from Dualism to Monism

Whatever be the span of experience of the Absolute, it reveals that I am the eternal, ever-effulgent, quiet ether in the form of unadulterated existence. I am the eternal bliss with the abode in the abysmal darkness of ignorance. Though covered by darkness I am ever freed from the dreadful darkness of ignorance. Hence it is inaccessible to the insatiable human quest except in the very pure mental state that is strong enough to overcome ignorance. This pure Absolute in its fundamental aspect is disclosed in the intuitive experience in the form that I am the Absolute principle far from all kinds of fluctuating knowledge and therefore indescribable. I am devoid of inauspicious instincts. I am accessible solely to the liberated souls who reject all kinds of notions of difference. This state is termed kaivalya, solitude or salvation. I am the existence owned by everyone but beyond one's perception, conceptualization and imagination and therefore unknowable or ungraspable to one who is subjugated to the limitations created by ignorance. It is called eternal because it has no boundary and is the 'whole'. In the experience of this Absolute, one identifies himself with the ever-effulgent eternal principle of consciousness. I am the pure ether of existence itself beyond all kinds of limitations. I am verily the bliss underlying all perceived duality. I am the true knowledge raised from the dreadful darkness of ignorance. Here the true self of mine is realized in its exact sense. Here the implied sense of scriptures such as 'satyam jñānamanantam Brahma [7] and 'vijñānamānandam Brahma' [8] are evidently explained. Not mere understanding by reading or going through the words is enough but the experiential realization of the sense within them as one's own self is to be acquired. By the true experience of the meaning of those words, there will be no chance to the occurrence or influence of dual feelings and worldly life of differentiated notions. This is the state of liberation experienceable while living in this world, though it cannot be admitted as the liberation in its purest terms.

Due to the experience of the subject-object duality in the mind, man fails to understand the Absolute within him. This duality creates an unbridgeable gulf between the subjective absolute and the objective universe. It is, however, possible to ward off this duality by discarding the ego and its associated limitations. When the ego is brought under control and made powerless, the duality integrates itself into unity whereby the very being of the individual can be realized in clear terms. Thus it can be stated that the Absolute is not at all alien to the original nature of the objectively felt individuals or universe. It is the ultimate ground and constitutes the very being itself. The persisting experience of the individual is similar to that presented in the dream state. These two states of waking and dream are created out of the mind itself and show the inevitable traits of duality as subject and object. A deeper inquiry into this domain brings out the unity of existence. It is only through recourse to the highest existence by rejecting the normal experience of duality one can reach the ultimate experience of Reality which discloses the perspective of unity as 'everything empirical is in fact the Self alone'. Hence all kinds of objectivity are to be rejected as false whereby there will be total passage into the domain of Reality wherein all diverse stimuli merge into one unique unanalysable unity. Here the subject-object distinction ceases to exist. The individual then becomes aware of the fact that he is the pure unadulterated mind devoid of objectivity pure in itself and is the Self- the Absolute. He becomes

[7] Bhagavadgita.XV.12

[8] Taittiriyopanisad. Brahmanandavalli. 1.

strong enough to reject the vast ocean of the objective universe as contentless and apparently felt due to the working of impressions out of ignorance. This discriminative knowledge reveals the potency within one to accept the real and discard the false. This experience brought out through intuition makes one brave to know that I am complete in myself and the deep principle underneath all objective presentations. In this way, the individual exalts himself in the supreme nature of self in the intuitive experience of Reality.

The intuitive experience transforms the thinking style of man from the generally felt objective mode. The unique unity of existence when identified reveals the unfathomable status of the mind. On the one hand, it is the highest knowledge to which the individual has clear accessibility, but on the other hand, in the ultimate context it transcends the individual coming under the pretext of ignorance. The realized man is free from all kinds of limitations of space, time and object and therefore complete in all respects. Then there remains no other place to go in search of his roots of existence and thereby all 'otherness' get effaced. For such an individual the omnipresent principle of consciousness is evident and so there is no need to go anywhere. He counts himself devoid of any kind of action because he clearly understood the self as far from actions. Since there is perfect harmony with the Absolute and absence of differentiation of any sort, it is the non-dual existence. There is nothing to receive or reject. Everything is the representation of myself, my grace itself. I am calm and pure as the clouds after rains which had freed themselves from the water held within them. The subtlety of the expression here lies in the fact that the Absolute could not be experienced as an object. By eradicating the ego, the Absolute becomes experienced in the intellect and not elsewhere. This experience of one's own being demands no further action as it is the true nature of an individual devoid of actions. Since ego belongs to the realm of mind, it has to do nothing with the ultimate experience of the Absolute. This state is verily called liberation emerging from the intuitive experience.

The intuitive experience makes man powerful to analyse the meaning of human life in terms of true knowledge. The gains and losses experienced here are but non-sense in their exact nature. Life in this world persuades man to think of pleasure and pain related to the self. The empirical experiences full of sorrows and miseries along with transient pleasure influence man to inquire into the more meaningful phases of life. In this advancement towards eternal bliss and overcoming miseries, he finds a way by going reverse in the path of life. Here the significance of the external objective world is gradually withdrawn with great effort and the fluctuating states of mind are brought under control. In a more mature state of having the mind under control, man could realize the objective experiences as worthless and the factor behind those wrong cognitions is discovered in the form of ignorance. Ignorance leads man to the way of objective thinking and thereby he neglects or forgets the real self within him. This play of ignorance is to be restrained with powerful steps born out of knowledge in its subjective nature. This knowledge is experienced in the advancing stages of intellect involved in śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana. Even though the Absolute in terms of ego would not be the completeness it can in no way be limited. A whole without parts cannot be under the privilege of the relative as parts necessarily are relative and a relative has no existence apart from the whole. There are no distinctive parts in the Absolute and if any, is conceived it is due to the limitational determinants of the individual. Those limitations come from the mental state and thereby make the inexpressible Absolute expressed. It should be understood that all expressions of the Absolute are but false for the Absolute is without name and form. Any expression possible in this regard should be symbolic. Thus the most prominent assertion here is that only intuition can bring in the true experience of the invisible Absolute. Here it is clearly stated in the verse that if there is ego associated with the mental states it works as the impediment in the way of experiencing the unity of the Absolute. There it is to be born in mind that whatever obtained or experienced before the dawn of true knowledge is false in the real sense. The intuitive knowledge of the self brought out through śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana reveals the effulgent principle of the self in the form of bliss. Hence the questions relating with the constraints in the form of false feelings and objects are not all to be relied upon because they are all born out of ignorance and remain as apparent apprehensions. They belong to the realm of ignorance against the experience of the Absolute which is harmonious and far from objective inclinations. This discriminative knowledge generates the power of harmony within him who

discovered the self within. Then there is no need of any kind of communication to the external objective world which is found meaningless as the darkness before the effulgent sun. Therefore the best response from the part of the man of intuitive experience is in the form of keeping silent.

In this verse, focus is on the pathways to the experience of Reality. Upaniṣads put forth śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana as the possible paths to humans living in this world of multiplicity. The final and ultimate ascendance to the Absolute is had when It is experienced as one with the individual. The attainment of identity with the Absolute might be said to follow from these ways of hearing, analyzing and meditation. Treading through these paths, the illusion of the world-appearance and the effects of ego are completely effaced. The remarkable feature in this context is that duality in the form of the universe is totally negated in the Absolute which is oneness alone without a second, i.e. the individual self leaves its distinction from the Absolute self. In this state, it is said: 'I am the Truth'. Because of the absence of all subject-object dichotomy it is said: 'for me who is clear and lustrous, who is felt indirect due to false notions, what is there to be heard?, for me who is the luster beyond doubts, what is there to be thought of?'. Again 'for me whose nature is devoid of all kinds of differentiations like dhyata, dhyana and dhyeya what is there to be meditated upon?' further, for me who is always the self of all selves is the great experience differing from those objective ones. This great experience of harmony with all selves and the whole universe is always the same and therefore it differs even with the state of Samadhi which occurs in the individual mind in certain special contexts. The intuitive knowledge transforms the intellect of man in its purest terms whereby the divine essence within him can be discriminatively experienced. There is no match for this state of self-realization which embraces the whole universe in an undifferentiated manner.

8 'I' and 'Non I'

With so many deliberations on the nature of 'I' mystery has propelled on this state of identity of I and myself. One should remember that any attempt to provide explanation on the 'I' requires self-experience at the highest level of intuition that has incommensurable division of I and myself or more aptly, the Ātman and the non-Ātman conceptualization. How this intuition could discover the reality behind Ātman is a matter of fact and is one encountered at the highest level of intuition completely denying the adjuncts of objectivity. The question why one cannot have the accessible vision of the Reality or Ātman is that this can be answered only by seeing or 'experiencing' the Absolute infinite unity wherein there is complete submergence of the normally visualized objective nature of the universe. Experience of this intuitive kind makes man strong to see Atman everywhere, nothing else. Then there can be no distinction between Ātman and non-Ātman as conceived in the objective plane. Because of this non-distinction, it is said that the differentiation of Ātman and non-Ātman is the product of deceptive thinking of some scholars who are proud of their textual knowledge. It is not reasonable. Certainly, there is nothing as non-Ātman. If there is one that is associated with the body, such a conceptualization cannot be accepted because it is outside the Reality and is not a part of it. Alas, to talk of a non- Ātman is the act of those who have claim in the experience of Ātman but not had that experience and hence are actually mad people. Whoever thinks of the false and recognizes it as the true 'I' makes things complicated. Their knowledge is in fact at the objective level. But those who have the experience comprehending the Ātman in their intellect visualize the 'Atman' and remain steadfast in It and they are ever silent as stone. It is the most radical way of understanding the Truth and is completely devoid of all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience by the mind resulting from the dogmatic objective premises.

The central motive of the deliberations in this verse is the search for the firm conviction of the Advaitic Truth in the context of doubts raised against the distinction between Ātman and non-Ātman. Imbibing a spirit of rigorous experience it is possible to admit Ātman as the sole existence and what that is called not-Ātman as the mere apparent phenomena. Even though the reality of not-Ātman is completely denied, the indubitable common sense experience brings the belief in its reality that exists till the Atman is intuitively experienced. This belief in the reality

of the perceived world is a product of ego where ignorance plays at its best. Pushed by the ignorance-ridden ego and its effectuated mental states, many take part and intervene in the discussions on Ātman and not-Ātman without knowing the fact that such interventions are verily the presuppositions of the objective world. It should be admitted that the discrimination made in the empirical level remains confined to the psychic level and therefore ignorant people alone can take part in such thinking and raise doubts on the philosophical and metaphysical principle and perspectives. Such doubts and mistaken beliefs reign valid whenever ignorance remains active. When ignorance is removed and true knowledge regarding the self is experienced, all such doubts and discussions based on them can be found futile. From this the fact that can be disclosed is that ignorant and proud people themselves can involve in postulating various stands on the Reality which is essentially much far from mind, speech and body. By experiencing the sole Reality, the Ātman, true scholars keep silent due to the power of the intellect. This is the effect of the great experience in intuition.

Understanding the reality of existence in the form of 'I' through the experience of unity constituted within it that functions as the subject principle in every person, one can feel the amazing mode of supreme knowledge and it can be said: oh, wonderful that experience is. Such a man of true knowledge feels the discriminative sort of knowledge in the manner that I am not any object and even then I am felt like that. Here ego and its workings are already over and relates itself to the object of its act elsewhere. This ego may vary from person to person and therefore experiences are differently described. Thus it can be found that ego is the focal phenomenon that apprehends and stimulates the performance of varied elaborations. The absolute experience of Ātman, the witness of all is beyond the psychic premises and is uncontradictable. That experience is self-certifying and includes the Ātman within it whereby all sense of duality will be overcome and is self-illuminating. All definitions of Ātman fall outside the intended realm as it is devoid of all differences of space, time and object. Literally speaking, the 'I' is free from all adjuncts (nirupādhika) and free from all differences - whether homogeneous (sajātiya), heterogeneous (vijātiya) or inherent (svagata). Even in experience, what experienced cannot be revealed as such but can be interpreted only because when it is revealed there arises the distinction of the duality of experience and the person having that experience. It is not meaningful to talk of pains , pleasures, hopes, fears or sins, for these are the impositions of the inner sensibility brought within the mind and subject to the embedded ego. One cannot even have doubts on Atman, for these are also generated by the imposed ego or outer sensibility. Further, strangely, these doubts are supposed to be the dark marks in the way of comprehending the experience of 'I'. Then what remains in the sublime lustrous shining that can be felt in the intellect necessarily brought into the restrained mode in an indefinable manner. The implication here is that the experience of the real 'I' or Ātman in the realm of intellect by discarding all kinds of objectivity leads one to the wondrous experience of the supreme principle as the sole subjective Reality. It is wonderful, incomparable, infinite and without any distinction. By this experience, one will become aware of the fact that he is never the object though felt like that. Moreover, he realizes himself as the witness self of all and stays beyond words and mind. Devoid of sins and fears, he keeps far from the artificially created doubts that look like the dark marks in the way of self-realization. Finally, he becomes conscious in the true nature that he is the sublime, lustrous shining that is felt in the intellect in the cool and restraint mode in an indefinable manner. This is revealed in the great experience of intuition.

The sensible advice in this context is that experience of the real 'I' (Ātman) in the intellect by discarding all objectivity, one can understand and find that 'oh' It seems wonderful, incomparable, infinite and non-differentiated experience of the transcendent lustre'. Then one will become aware of himself in this manner: 'I am never any object, but felt like that. I am the witness of all and beyond words and the mind. I am devoid of sins and am fearless. I am devoid of the artificially created doubts that look like the dark marks in the path towards self-realization. I am the sublime lustrous shining that is felt in the intellect that is formed in the cool and restrained mode in an indefinable manner'. The greatness and uncanny nature of self-realization is brought into possible terms from the part of the great Ācārya Sri Śankara in this striking verse.

The principal task at this juncture is to account for the true idea of 'I' and its relation to

the 'me' if there is. 'Me' always has a connotation to that which is not 'I'. A flawless understanding of the 'I' (Ātman) is not possible in the objective premise which is preoccupied with the ego-sensuality in inner or outer modes. Therefore an inquiry into the foundational 'I' is a necessity which can provide a grasp of the 'I'. This requires the suspension of the belief in the reality of the world. What remains after this is the unity of existence in the form 'I'. A belief in the reality of the world is the premise of the psychological realm which includes cogitations such as willing, feeling, imagining and the like bringing in different aspects of experience. When these cogitations become absolutely indubitable there occurs the restraint of the mental states and thereby become entirely serene resulting in the glance of the reality, the 'I'. During that state the whole realm of objectivity blends into the unity of a single intuition and there will not be any kind of distinction/ difference. Without this unity experience one cannot claim the realization of Reality. It is immanent in this experience and makes the faithful description of 'that which appears as such' in intuition. In this state the 'I' that lives in mental life and the 'I' whom 'I' experience as myself are the same 'I'. Before this state one usually encounters the empirical ego, the ego as a 'person' and as a 'thing' in this world. When this state is overcome the empirical ego is bracketed and as a result the nature of 'I' is discovered. What is implied here is that no amount of rational argument can succeed in proving the principle behind 'I'. The credit of indicating what exists in the form of 'I' goes to self-experience even if this cannot completely explain that experience because for explaining that a distinctive mode as 'I' and 'me' is required (experience vs experiencer). Apart from this experience there is the ego conundrum paving way for differential expressions of the thought process.

9 Enlightenment

In this context it can be clarified that one who has become serene due to the thought process in its most calm mode, who has distanced off himself from his past maligned tendencies of ego, feels that 'I am endowed with the supreme knowledge, this world is emerged from me, this is sustained by me and is dissolved in me. To that 'I' who am the substratum of all and who do not need any other substratum of its own, whose undiffered indubitable nature is but Existence, Bliss and Consciousness in their purest terms, whose intellect is overwhelming, to that 'me' I offer my praṇāms. I bow before that transcendental principle.

The only way to realize that what exists in the universe is to perceive the existence of a thing. The five sense organs involuntarily sense the existence of things. However, errors in perception have to be understood through perception only. For e.g. when we immerse a stick in water it appears bent especially due to the optical illusion. When we touch the stick it appears straight. Here the sense of touch has to be perceived as the right perception and the vision is the distorted one. Error in perception is eventually identified through another perception. Similarly the belief in the supreme is a mental act of perception that may or may not be right whereas intuitive experience is the confirmation of the supreme existence. While the presuppositions on the objective world are predictive and verifiable, those in the supreme are not, except in an intuitive experience. Reflection on experience further generates questions and subsequently leads to dialogues. Dialogical dispositions are but imposed by ego and are not true. Their sole role is to address the values of life whereas one who has succeeded in delving into the ego and related issues has the transition to the Supreme with certainty in his conceptualizations. This transition makes him aware of the Existence as 'I' alone and it is nothing other than Consciousness wherein one enjoys the extreme indubitable bliss that is indefinable. Herein emerges the sense of non-distinction between 'I' and 'thou' and the distraction of the idea of 'otherness' such as the existence of the universe. That is to say, the 'otherness' becomes false indeed. Ascertaining the continuity of experience of such a non-difference of 'I' and 'thou' in the distinctive experience, it is absurd to talk of one's identity as such and such. There is no need to think of another as everything becomes 'one' outside the premise of distinction. It is the privileged subjective way one experiences the identity of 'I' as 'thou' and it is reflected in the pure intellect (śuddhasattva) [9]. In fact a teacher can ascertain a disciple that if he who has become sinless

[9] Brhadaranyakopanisad. III.ix. 27.7

through meditation listen carefully and attentively to such a knowledge of non-difference is a possessor of pure intellect, he should never doubt in the sui-generis knowledge concerning the 'I'.

10 Conclusion

The chief mission of this literary explication 'Proudhānubhūti' is to discuss the basis and direction for instrumentalizing the identity (non-difference) of 'I' and 'thou', a total separation from the thinkings of the world of multiplicity imposed by the ego. The world endowed with the cogitations of willing and thinking cannot provide a functional ground to the ultimate basis of identity. It should be recalled that an intuitive experience, bereft of the thinking on universe with the mind/ intellect discarding of the trends of ego becomes pure and steadfast on the ultimate existence and provides the unity of existence, not a monistic oneness but an advaitic, non-dual, neither one nor two conceptualization. Most concretely, a revisioning of our understanding on this identity above space, time and complexity of objects is the dimension of knowledge in its true unambiguous terms and it is the everlasting bliss. A person endowed with such a knowledge is the real teacher who can imbibe this knowledge to the disciples desirous of realizing the only Reality in its fullness. A man, when he discovers his divine being and guided by the above sublime intuitive experience becomes the divinity itself. In this context it is said that a knowledgeable teacher can impart this knowledge only to a peculiar person whose mind keeps shining with the sound spiritual intelligence of harmony of everything in the universe. It should not be imparted to one whose intellect is submerged in the illusive ignorance and its effects which may result in doubts and other misleading tendencies. Further, such a person whose mind is directed towards evil propensities like lush and anger, this knowledge remains unacceptable, for, he is within the purview of the universe imposed with the ego. The intuitive experience will enter only into that brain which is completely devoid of the ego and its effects that ever leads to his elevation to divinity, the fullness or wholeness of Reality by the power of this knowledge. It shines by itself, without depending on any other factor.
Highlighting the context, approach and vision on intuitive knowledge, it should be remembered that if advised to ignorant people it will be a futile exercise like the fragrant flower of Saugandhika.falling in the hands of a monkey, as they ever misinterpret it. It will not shine in its original and genuine nature. In the same manner, the intuitive knowledge of experience if imparted to the ignorant people will never bring out the intellectual effect and so it will fall into oblivion. Thus intuitive experience becomes the non-contradicting dimension for ascertaining the reality of non-difference between 'I' and 'thou'.

'May the Consciousness bloom in everyone'
'Let everyone identify his indubitable divinity'

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