# THE METAPHYSICAL PARADOX ON DIFFERENCE- IN- IDENTITY IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

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The Upaniṣads are recognized as the theoretical doctrinal foundations for the model constructions of Advaita Vedānta. The verse 'Ekam sadviprā bahudhā vadanti' is a unique account of Reality given to us allowing a substantiated wide-ranging constructive approach on the possibility of It in its nature and constitution. The position that Reality exists is no doubt a metaphysical argument that cannot be ignored. In Advaitic terms, the scriptural knowledge which is the sole evidence to this 'beyond perceptive realm' of Reality do not allow us to venture into It, except in a peculiar state of existence (intuition). Even then it forms only an integral experience (as flashes of light) which opens the door for plausible vision of the ultimate Reality, the highest self beyond descriptions which is referred to as Brahman. Śankara conceives It as ending in the integral experience.

A discerning inquirer of Truth only can understand the real implications of the Vedāntic thoughts. The peculiarity of Vedānta is that it is interested only in giving its adherents the tools to search the Truth rather than prescribing a set of rules. This is the significant conceptualization of Advaita Vedānta in the relativity concept of Māyā. Though, such a kind of approach seems to be one of 'emerging out of matrix of hardcore abstraction', one may truly encounter the risk of obscuring the significant problems. As a philosophical doctrine, what Gaudapāda and Śankara had constructed as Advaita philosophy culling the ancient advaitic thoughts traced to the Guruparamparā starting from Nārāyaṇa Himself stands unchallenging even in the modern spectra of philosophy. The fundamental un-alterableness of its quest for unity in all jivātmaikya coinciding with the unfaltering core of the Absolute makes it undisputable and undeterred. The changes or explanations offered by the later Advaitins represent only the temporal flux in the cultural milieu and it can be said that the later philosophical adventures express only an interpreter's claim which is nothing but pre-eminently a product of time only.

The nature of changes brought to the supplementing concepts without touching the core, Brahman, can be witnessed in the Advaita structure itself which marks the two major divergences in the form of Vivaraṇa and Bhāmatī are exclusive in this regard. Again, the application of logical reasoning to justify the non-dual stand marks the advent of Advaita into a deeper realization of truth which was questioned by the theistic Vedāntins as well as the Naiyāyikas. Further the integration of Bhakti into its thought process follows the social necessitation still not deviating from its foundational concept. The contention of thought here is regarding the nature and locus of ignorance- either Brahman or Jīva. Such infusive problems can be traceable to the root that while Gaudapāda, Śankara and Sureśvara framed the structure of Advaita on the true 'intuitional experience' just like the ancestral teachers of Advaita. It is not so in the case of later Advaitins. The influence of Sāmkhya is visible much in some later Advaitic doctrines assuring greater significance to Prakrti. Further the influence of Nyāya in the form of logical reasoning is more evinced in some Advaitins. It is not therefore to be concluded that modifications or changes in the doctrinal growth of this philosophical system deserve analytical significance. The system even as it is viewed in logical interconnectedness requires a sequential evaluation. With this aim in mind the major concepts of Advaita are put forth and the progressive development was subjected to deeper analysis. The re-orientation of Advaita into modernity breaks the crux of the problem of alleged non-social orientation of the philosophy. Standing on the support of 'Ātmā so is Paramātmā' or the self and God are one Advaita has reached the ineffable height of its excellence in the world of philosophy. It is also equally necessary that a near related Advaita stream of thought, the Śivādvaita/ Kashmir Śaivism which is the theo-philosophical system is taken into confidence to build the monolithic structure of Vedānta, indebting to its interpretative techniques.

**A Review of Schematization of the Advaita 'System':**

In an inquiry concerning the advaitic scheme of thought which involves mainly the system of Vedānta developed by the school of Śankara and the one which is called Kashmir Shaivism- these two cannot be said as mere systems of faith and belief of great antiquity but rather as true philosophical systems. The Advaita phi-

losophy can be said as living in the sense that issues raised and the answers given can still become issues of great consequence for the total life of those who are attached to it. Śankara's thought-construction has given such a wide literary expression that has no parallels in discussing many possible issues from time to time without touching the crux of the philosophy – 'the non-duality' affirmation it has addressed the concepts such as the reality of the world, jīva, manifestation of the world, concept of Māyā and nature and locus of avidyā (ignorance). To know its liveliness it is required to analyse the old and traditional thinking on this non-duality conception and the contemporary contextual relevance such an evaluation is carried out in the present work.

Beginning from the Vedic and Upaniṣadic intuitive experiences that clearly elaborate the Non-dual doctrine of the Reality and the appearance of the World as an effect of the camouflage of Māyā the 'Advaita' scheme of thought was unchallengeable and accepted by most of the intellectuals in India. Evident in the old pre-Bādarāyaṇa conceptualization on 'Non-duality' is the thinking of such as those of the revered sages like Kāśakrtsna, Āśmarathya, Bādari etc who had a glimpse of the reality of appearance an intuitive experience. This intuitional experiential exegesis continues up to the lineage of Śankara and Sureśvara and then getting diluted into the interpretative mechanism inclusive of logical reasoning. The intuitional experience is analysed with the sole object of discriminating the real from the apparent, the true from the false. The purpose of the quest is centred on achieving transcendence. The feeling of reality from the primary immediate datum, communion or feeling of co-presence of Reality is reflected in these.

The main philosophical appreciation in Advaita is that the real (Absolute) involves the negation of appearance, the unreal/ the other than real. But this negation has a fixed limit- In intuition where one feels the awareness of transcendence and co-presence with the real. This intuitive experience affirms the real or the Being-Brahman in Śānkara Vedānta and Śiva in Kashmir Shaivism. The intuitional method is the means to the Advaitins apodictic certitude (siddhānta) with its implicit claims to universality and necessity. This is acknowledged in the form of accepting the authority of Revelations- Vedas and Āgamas- which point to the necessity of rising

to the higher level of intuitive experience and experience the truth in ourselves. The Advaita is based on the three main principles- the Absolute (the Reality), the avidyā/Māyā (that causes bondage) and the world including jīvas.

The Vedas provide us the maximal sets of individual versions on Reality whereas the Upaniṣads provide the modal notions of necessity of recognition of the uniqueness of the multifariousness of It. Even then it forms only an integral experience (as flashes of light) which opens the door for the Ultimate Reality, the highest Self beyond description- Brahman. Regardless of what one might believe, Reality is like, it is obvious that It does not contain any differentiated objects or parts or any structure within It. The novelty of argument does not rest here; it rests on the threefold approach to It- 'Existence- Knowledge- Bliss-' – the most plausible approximation to It as per the scriptural revelation conjoined on the 'experience' (intuition) factor that involves disjoined selves.

**Brahman-Ātman – The Syntax Theorization:**

A syntactic theorization points to the intuitive experience of the absoluteness of the Reality. According to the Vedas, intuition leads to a glimpse of the Reality, for, it comes only as a flash of light. Again, it can be understood that the scriptures do not accept a complete knowledge of Reality, for, It is beyond any perceptual limit. This superior intuitive experience is possible for only a few. Reality is also conceived as unlimited or infinite, indefinable, but is consciousness-bliss. Then, how can one know or affirm the existence of such a Reality? It is peculiar that the Vedas declare the Absolute to be Ātman. Does this mean that Ātman that has 'existence' is the Absolute? Does there exists any other beyond the Ātman? An analysis of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic statements bring to focus on such a possibility and these suggests the Brahmātmaikya as a state of final release. Then in such a state of indefinability of Brahman, Ātman becomes the equivalent of Brahman which is manifest either in part or whole, again indefinable. This sets in the notion of Atman to be the highest possible extent of any intuitive experience on the knowledge of the Reality. Further it is said- the highest liberation or unity with Brahman comes only as a 'grace' of the Absolute which implies the unknowability of Brahman even in intuition.

In such a context, a syntactic theorization can be made for to explain the differentiation within the unity- 'difference-in-identity'. The Vedic Ātman being the manifest Brahman comes as the 'absolute existence' (not essence). This manifestness of Brahman into Ātman is unknowable, for, nothing else than Brahman exists prior to this for explaining the 'how' of manifestation. The manifestness also brings into focus the power which is explained under the head of 'Īkṣā'- a desire for creation or projection of the world etc. [1] It is Existence, for; it has a subtle body which is power itself. It is this Reality that is the subject-matter of the concept of Ātman in Vedas and the intuitive experience. There is no fault in saying that the Absolute does not undergo any change. The real import of Brahmātmaikya is that this can be possible only through the grace of Brahman as stated in the Muṇḍakopaniṣad: 'Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyah.....' [2] The individual soul attaining perfection reaches the state of Ātman which is bliss and enjoys the bliss waiting for grace for unity with Brahman. Vedas had formulated the idea of Ātman as the aesthetic one to satisfy the human mind for the knowledge of Reality at the same time declaring the unknowability of Brahman. The knowledge of Ātman is enough to secure a blissful nature and Brahmavicāra can lead to Brahmaikya.

The statement: 'Ātman is to be realized' [3] implies realization of such a manifest Brahman as Ātman. When knowledge dawns, an individual soul realizes its identity with Ātman waiting for grace to favor. Though all plurality vanishes, the Brahmaikya does not happen, for the want of favor of grace. In this context, the manifest Brahman is to be the creator of the world whereas the immutable unknowable Brahman is the Absolute- the difference-in-identity.

The Jñādhikarana (the topic dealing with the self as the knower) in Taittirīyopaniṣad according to some deals with the self being referred to as knowledge also, that being the self's essential characteristic; the usage is paralleled by the appellation of knowledge (jñānam) applied to Brahman (as in "satyam jñānam anantam Brahma") [4] brings in the notion of difference-in-identity. Śankara, considers the Jñādhikaraṇa to close with sutra II, 3, 19 which is part of a different topic discussing the size of the self. In consistency with this, Śankara understands the consideration in the comprehension of Brahman according to Śankara.

Now, the question here is: Is not there a great difficulty in conceiving of a perfect Being as undergoing transformation even at

His own hands; for, transformation means impermanence, which is synonymous with imperfection? How then can pariṇāma (transformation) be predicated of Brahman? In such a case one has to put forth a unique conception of pariṇāma that it is a change, not of Brahman, but in Brahman, not of substance but of form; it is a manifestation, a development from subtle to gross. That means the change is like the growth from childhood to youth; virility which was absent from the former is manifested in the latter, though it was there, all the time latent. The world of distinctions of name and form is not a creation out of nothing. It evolves in regular order from the Lord from His śakti or power indistinct from Him which is called Māyāśakti by Śankara. The opponents argue that this Śakti is Real as Brahman but indistinct before creation for at that time Brahman alone existed, one without a second. From Him proceeded the ancient Prajñā (otherwise called Jñānaśakti) which is the destroyer of that distinctive identity- 'difference-in-identity'.

The Lord, through his Icchāśakti, desired "may I become many"; by Jñānaśakti he considered the means and instruments necessary with Kriyāśakti. These three forms of śakti are real for the opponents but Śankara strongly argues against it, for, then transformation will be real and the there comes the factor of duality. This is clarified by Sri Appayya Dīkṣita as śakti which becomes real, if the former view is accepted, can never be the energizer nor the energy alone, but the former as qualified by the latter, can be the material as well as the operative cause of the universe; He can be immanent in His creation and yet transcendent; He can take all forms, engage in all actions, and yet not suffer. He is unity-in-duality, an identity-in-difference, a personality that is unlimited, a grade of Bliss that is indescribable, a Self that is its own other. The world is not indeed "a vale of soul- making", for, souls are eternal, but it is a place for the purification and perfection of souls, where they get rid of the bonds that prevent the realization of their equality with Brahman. Since jīva is essentially pure, it does not follow that it is identical with Brahman - The texts declaring release speak of the attainment of equality and not of identity with Brahman. The predication of equality establishes the distinctness of the jīva from Brahman. According to Yājñavalkya everything else is known by the knowledge of the Ātman which itself is not known; such a qualification is manifestly not applicable to the jīva ; hence, the term denotes the Supreme Being in that context.

There is some identity between the jīva and Brahman which has been variously conceived by different sages. In the opinion of Āśmarathya, the use is indicative of the realization of the promissory statements, i.e., the promise that by the knowledge of the one thing, all else will be known, a promise which can be redeemed only if there is substantial identity between Brahman and all other beings (including jīvas) which are to be known. The relation between Brahman and the jīva is one of difference and yet non-difference (bhedābheda). Audulomi believes that the identity intended is what is achieved on final realization; while Kāśakrtsna thinks that the identical reference is possible, because of Brahman residing within the jīva, and functioning as the internal ruler.

The jīva is not originated, as the scriptures declare his eternity. The Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad likens the selves to sparks flying forth from fire [5]. What is implied by these is not an original state when souls were non-existent, but one when name and form could not be applied to them or to non-intelligent things, which together constitute the body of Brahman (the Ānandamaya). The rise of name and form is compared to the rising of sparks from a fire; generation of the souls themselves is not to be understood. If the self could be created, it could also be destroyed; and this process would be accompanied by the unaccountable lapse of karma accrued, and the influx of karma not acquired; for, the jīva is the abode of karma, and can refer to the deities as "Parameśvarātmakatayā Vāyvādīnām," etc. interpreted in various ways like tail etc.

Thus in a nutshell Sri Śankara, though argues in favour of this difference-in-identity in the non-dua, he pointsout that this difference-in-identity is 'Anirvacanīya' and any change in the Absolute is 'Anirvacanīya' or 'somehow'. Regarding this he prefers Silence based on the fact that the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman becomes Brahman Itself. He says that he opts for Non-dualism of the Absolute rather than Monism or 'One' of the Absolute. In this context Ānanda is the highest state of Being.

**References**

1. Chāndogyopaniṣat. VI. ii. 3.
2. Ibid. III. ii.3.
3. Brhadaranyakopaniṣad. II.iv.5.
4. Taithirīyopanisad. II. i.
5. Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad . III. 3.