

after the gross body falls, on account of its finer Upâdhis, the Antaḥkaraṇa etc. which accompany it even after death (4. 2. 1-6), it still continues to be individualized (2. 3. 30), and so there is no confusion in fruits of actions done in the gross body (2.3.49 and 50). It is only when this Upâdhi also, which being something created and not eternal (*vide* 2. 4) and therefore liable to destruction, is rent asunder, that the Jīva attains its real nature and is all-pervading. As such, Rāmānuja's refutation of Advaita falls flat. Śaṅkara's interpretation of these Sūtras on the other hand is happy. The Sūtrakāra, having established that the Jīva in its relative state is atomic and an agent but in reality all-pervading, refutes the view of those who hold that the Jīvas are many and all-pervading in their relative state itself. Nimbārka and Vallabha also see the same subject in this topic which shows that Rāmānuja's attempt to refute Advaita is far-fetched and not at all what the Sūtrakāra (aphorist) means.

Nimbārka too regards the Jīvas and Prakṛti as effects of Brahman; but while matter undergoes further modification after creation, the souls do not and in this sense the soul is said to be eternal by him also. Such a view stands refuted by the same arguments as are applied against Rāmānuja's view. Coming to Sūtra 43 which says the Jīva is different as well as non-different from Brahman, it has already been shown by Śaṅkara in 2. 1. 14 that such a thing is not possible in the same entity and that non-difference alone is real.

Let us now conclude this topic by considering the reasonableness or otherwise of taking Sūtras 19-28 as the decisive view of the author. According to this view the soul is atomic, for the Śruti declares it to be so

(Mu. 3. 1. 9) and other texts mention its passing out of the body, going to heaven, etc. But then the Śruti also describes the supreme Self as atomic in texts like, "Smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley" etc. (Ch. 3. 14. 3). So how can we say that the Jīva alone is atomic and not the Lord? It may be said that texts say that Brahman is all-pervading. "All-pervading like the ether and eternal" etc.; "Greater than the sky, greater than heaven" etc. But then the Śruti texts describe the soul also as all-pervading: "He is indeed the great unborn Self" (Br. 4. 4. 22); "Just as when a pot is carried, the pot alone is carried, not the ether inside it, even so is the Jīva compared to the ether," which expressly says it is all-pervading. Nor will it serve any purpose to say that Brahman, being the material cause of the world, must be all-pervasive for even the atomic Jīva creates several bodies (Kāyavyūha) and rules them and so Brahman though the material cause can yet be atomic. So neither by the Śruti texts nor by reasoning can the differentiation of Brahman and the Jīva as all-pervasive and atomic be justified. But, according to Advaita, there is no disparity in its reasoning in the two cases. Brahman due to Upâdhi (adjunct) appears atomic but in reality it is all-pervasive. So also is the Jīva in its real nature all-pervading and therefore identical with Brahman, though it appears to be atomic, an agent and so on owing to its limiting adjunct, the Antaḥkaraṇa. The primary texts say that Brahman and the Jīva in its real nature are all-pervading. The texts which speak of atomicity etc. are of a secondary import and so have to be explained otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Siddhāntaleśa*, Jīvānūtvavivāra.

*Is Brahman with or without attributes?*

Now let us take up the Sûtras in Chapter III, Section 2, where Bâdarâyana describes the nature of Brahman. Sûtras 11-12, according to Śaṅkara, deal with the reconciliation of texts which describe Brahman both as attributeless and as possessing attributes and mean that even from difference of place a two-fold characteristic cannot be predicated of Brahman, because the scriptures teach throughout that Brahman is without attributes (11). If it be said that such difference is taught by the scriptures, we deny it because with respect to each form the Śruti declares just the opposite of that. The Śruti explains at every instance that the form is not true and that behind all Upâdhis there is one formless principle (*vide* Br. 2. 5. 1.) (12). Moreover, some teach thus (*vide* Ka. 4. 11) (13). Verily Brahman is formless, for that is the purport of the texts (14). And as formless light takes form, so does Brahman take form in connection with Upâdhis which serve the purpose of Upâsanâ (meditation) (15). It is pure Intelligence (16). The Śruti and Smṛti teach that It is attributeless (17). Therefore we have with respect to Brahman comparisons like the images of the sun. The forms are mere reflections, they are not real (18).

Râmânuja and Nimbârka on the other hand see quite a different subject discussed in these Sûtras. The topic is not whether Brahman is attributeless or possesses attributes, but whether It is polluted by imperfections owing to Its being inside everything as the inner Ruler, even as the soul being embodied is subject to imperfections due to its states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep described in Sûtras 1-10. Therefore according to Râmânuja the Sûtras mean that even

on account of place such as matter and soul there is not the possibility of the supreme Lord being contaminated by imperfections, since everywhere in the scriptures Brahman is described as having a two-fold characteristic, *viz* freedom from imperfections and possessing all blessed qualities (11). If it be said that since the soul also by nature possesses according to Ch. 8.7 the two-fold characteristic of Brahman and yet is subject to imperfections due to its connection with a body, the inner Ruler will likewise be subject to such conditions owing to its connection with bodies, we deny it, for the Śruti at every place denies it by saying the Brahman is immortal and therefore free from imperfections (*vide* Br. 3. 7. 3-22). The imperfections in the soul are due to Karma and the Lord who is not subject to it is therefore free from such imperfections (12). Brahman can be said to have no form, as It is the originator of name and form and therefore is not subject to Karma like the souls which being embodied are subject to it (14). To an objection that the differentiated form of Brahman is false, Sûtra 15 answers thus: Even as on account of texts like "Brahman is Existence, Knowledge, Infinite" we have to accept that intelligence constitutes the essential nature of Brahman, so also we have to admit that It possesses a two-fold characteristic, as otherwise such texts become meaningless (15). And the texts say that much only, *i.e.* that Brahman has intelligence for its essential nature, and does not negative the other attributes of Brahman (16). The Śruti and Smṛti state thus (17). For this very reason are comparisons such as reflected images of the sun. Brahman, although abiding in manifold places, ever possesses the two-fold characteristic

and is not contaminated even as the sun reflected in dirty water is not polluted (18).

Nimbârka also more or less follows Râmânûja's interpretation as regards Sûtras 11-14. Sûtras 15 and 16 he interprets in a different way, and sees in them an argument for establishing the authority of the Śruti as absolute in the matter discussed in 11-14. Sûtras 17-21 he interprets like Râmânûja, though he reads 21 as a separate Sûtra and not as a part of 20 as Râmânûja does.

A glance through these three commentaries on these Sûtras convinces one of the superiority and reasonableness and also of the logical consistency of Śaṅkara's interpretation. Moreover, it has the merit of dealing with the solution of an important doubt that arises in the mind of even a casual reader of the Upaniṣads, viz as to the nature of Brahman—whether it is qualified or non-qualified; for the Śruti texts seem to support both views though they are contradictory. Râmânûja and Nimbârka ignore such an important subject and see a less important subject discussed in these Sûtras. Secondly, they fail to bring out the force of the words of the Sûtras in bold relief as Śaṅkara does, e.g. 'two-fold characteristic' of Sûtra 11 which refers to contradictory qualities in Śaṅkara, but not so in the other two. They therefore seem to overlook what is actually taught in the Sûtras and bring in a subject-matter not meant by the aphorist. We shall be doing an injustice to Bâdarâyaṇa to think with Râmânûja and Nimbârka that he had omitted to discuss such an important subject in his work meant to systematize the teachings of the Upaniṣads. No doubt Râmânûja broaches this subject in Sûtras 15 and 16 and says that both these views are to be accepted; but his interpreta-

tion of Sûtra 16 is indeed stretched and cannot be accepted, while Nimbârka does not discuss the subject at all. We cannot think with Râmânûja that Bâdarâyaṇa disposed of such an important subject in one or two Sûtras in a topic which deals with quite a different subject-matter and of less importance. Râmânûja's introducing this subject in Sûtras 15 and 16 is against the spirit of the Adhikaraṇa (topic) even according to his own interpretation. It is something which he forcibly introduces out of all relation to the context, as anybody can easily see.

In fact, according to their interpretation of this Adhikaraṇa the whole of it looks redundant after what has been stated by them in 2.1.13. Finally the simile of the reflections of the sun is happier according to Śaṅkara's interpretation than according to that of the other two and the text cited by Râmânûja in Sûtra 18 holds good according to Śaṅkara's view also and more aptly.

Sûtras 22-30 Śaṅkara takes as a separate topic and interprets 22 to 24 as follows: What has been mentioned up to this (i.e. the two forms of Brahman mentioned in Br. 2.3.1) is denied by the words "Not this, not this" (Br. 2. 3. 6) and the Śruti says something more than that afterwards. It does not deny Brahman but Its forms mentioned earlier, their transcendental reality (22). The objection that Brahman is denied because It is not experienced is not reasonable, for the Śruti says that Brahman exists, though It is not manifest on account of ignorance (23). And moreover It is realized in perfect meditation, so say the Śruti and Smṛti (24). Therefore the Jīva becomes one with the Infinite when Knowledge dawns, for thus the scripture

indicates (26). In the next two Sûtras an objection is raised against Sûtras 25 and 26. But on account of both difference and non-difference being taught by the Śruti, the relation between them is as between the serpent and its coil (27), or like that between light and its orb (28). Sûtra 29 refutes this view and says: Or the relation is as given before in Sûtras 25-26. And on account of the denial of everything else besides Brahman by the Śruti texts (30).

Râmânuja continues the previous topic up to 26. Sûtras 22-26 according to him mean: The text (Br. 2.3.6) denies the previously mentioned thatmuchness and says more than that. The two forms of Brahman (Br. 2.3.1) do not exhaust Its attributes, for the text states further qualities after that. "For there is nothing higher than this 'not this'. Then comes the name, 'the Truth of truth'; for the Prâṇas are true and It is the truth of them." 'Prâṇas' here mean the souls, because they accompany the latter at death. The souls are true, because they do not undergo any change in their essential nature. The Lord is the Truth of these true souls, for these contract and expand with respect to intelligence while He is unaffected. Thus the subsequent part of the text connects Brahman with some qualities. The clause "Not this, not this" does not deny the attributes of Brahman, but denies that Its nature is confined to these two forms only (22). The Śruti instruction is not unnecessary here, for though the world is seen, yet it is not known as a Prakâra or mode of Brahman and that is what can be gathered only from the Śruti texts. So declares the Śruti (23). And Brahman's being differentiated by these two forms is realized even as Its being of the nature of intelligence is realized by

repeated meditation (25). For all these reasons Brahman is regarded as Infinite, *i.e.* as possessing infinite attributes; for thus the attributes hold good, *i.e.* the two-fold characteristic of Sûtra 22 (26). Sûtras 27-30 are treated by Râmânuja as a separate topic. Sûtras 27 and 28 give the Pûrvapakṣa, as Śaṅkara also says, and 29 gives the Siddhânta; but the words 'as before' in the Sûtra refer not to Sûtras 25 and 26, but to 2.3.43.

Nimbârka follows Râmânuja in Sûtras 22-24. The next two Sûtras he interprets somewhat differently. Just as fire is manifested through the rubbing of wooden sticks, so is Brahman manifested in meditation (25). On realizing Brahman the soul becomes one with It (26). Sûtras 27 and 28 he takes as the author's and not as the opponent's view. Sûtra 27 describes that the relation between Brahman and the insentient world is as between the serpent and its coils (27) and the relation between the soul and Brahman is as between the orb and the light (28). But to an objection of the kind raised in Sûtra 2.1.25 the answer is as before, *i.e.* 2. 1. 26 (29). Moreover, the supreme Self is not affected by the imperfection of the soul (30).

Śaṅkara thus interprets "Not this, not this" as a denial of the two forms of Brahman mentioned in Br. 2.3.1. Brahman can be described only as "Not this, not this," *i.e.* It is not what we see. Whatever we see is not Brahman as It is. Brahman is something different from all this manifested world. This interpretation is in keeping with scriptural teaching. Râmânuja and Nimbârka interpret that "Not this, not this" denies only the limitation of Brahman's nature to only these two forms, in other words It has many more attributes than these two. The two forms are real and are only

two of the infinite attributes of the Lord. This seems to be a total denial of the Upaniṣadic teaching. "Not this, not this" occurs in four different places in the Br. Even if Rāmānuja's explanation be allowed in Br. 2.3.6—however strange and twisted it might seem, Br. 4.2.4, 4.4.22 and 4.5.15 do not by any means yield to such an interpretation. These texts after saying, "This Self is that which has been described as 'Not this, not this,'" says, "It is imperceptible" etc. Other texts also describe the Self or Brahman as beyond comprehension. "There goes neither the eye, nor speech nor the mind; we know It not nor do we see how to teach about It. Different It is from all that is known, and is beyond the unknown as well" (Ke. 1. 3-4); "Whence speech returns along with the mind without realizing It" (Tai. 2.4); also *Ibid.* 2.9 and Ka. 1.3.15. From these texts we find that nothing can be predicated of Brahman. From the Kena Upaniṣad texts we find that we cannot say that Brahman is this and this in a positive way. It is not what we see and therefore It can only be described as "Not this, not this" by denying everything we see in It. It is true that we do find the scriptures dealing with both difference and non-difference; but with what object, is the question. It is not to establish that both are true, for they are mutually contradictory. A careful study of the scriptures convinces one that duality is taught in order to take the aspirant step by step through it to non-duality. Rāmānuja in his Bhāṣya on these Sūtras criticizes Śaṅkara saying that the Śruti could not have described these two forms only to deny them later on. But that this is process the Śruti adopts is clear from Prajāpati's instruction to Indra in the Chândogya or Varuna's teaching to Bhṛgu in the

Taittirīya Upaniṣad. The aspirant is gradually taken to higher and higher truths. Through duality he is led up to non-duality, the goal or final truth. Duality has not been praised anywhere in the scriptures, and no fruit is ascribed to it. On the other hand it is censured (*vide* Ka. 2.4.10-11; Br. 4.4.9; Mai. 4.2, and 6.3), which shows that the scriptures do not intend to posit duality. But non-duality is praised and immortality is said to be achieved by the knowledge of unity. According to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā principle, that which has no result of its own but is mentioned in connection with something else which has a result, is subordinate to the later. Therefore duality which has no fruit of its own is subsidiary to non-duality which is the main purport of the Śruti texts. Again we have texts like "The Ātman is smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest" (Ka. 1.2.20); "Neither gross nor fine" etc.—which negate all duality and establish the Infinity of Brahman beyond all doubts.

A question, however, may arise: If everything is negated, what will be left? We shall by such a process arrive at a nonentity. Not so. We cannot go on negating *ad infinitum*, but have to come finally to some basic reality, and this basic reality behind everything is the Ātman or Brahman. When we remove an object, space is left behind. Similarly, when everything we see is removed or negated, Brahman is left behind, which cannot be negated and which is the witness of everything. We cannot say that by negation we come to nonentity, for the very fact that we comprehend this nonentity shows that it is being illumined by the witnessing consciousness, the basic reality even behind this idea of nonentity. In this Sūtra the Sūtrakāra

solves this doubt, showing that the negation concerns not Brahman, but only the two forms of It. To turn the drift of this discussion topsy turvy and establish the reality of the two forms is to ignore the spirit of scriptural teaching.

*Mâyāvâda in the Upaniṣads:*

There is a common belief that Mâyāvâda is not found in the scriptures and that it is Śaṅkara's own doctrine borrowed from the Buddhists. But such a statement is scarcely justified. In the Bṛhadâraṇyaka text under discussion we have, "Now its name: 'The Truth of truth.' The vital force is truth, and It is the Truth of that" (Br. 2.3.6). If the vital force, *i.e.* Prâjña (the soul in a state of deep-sleep) of which the vital force is an Upâdhi is true or real, Brahman is the Truth or Reality of this real. In other words, Brahman's reality is of a different grade from that of the universe. If this world is real and not Mâyâ, as Śaṅkara would call it, then Brahman is the Reality of this real, which shows that the world's reality is of an inferior kind from that of Brahman and when It is realized this world is no more. A similar idea is conveyed by Ch. 7. 24. 1 where Brahman, the Infinite, is said to be immortal and the world, the finite, is said to be mortal. But this is exactly what Śaṅkara too says—that the two, Brahman and the world, have two grades of reality, even as the dream world and the world we experience while we are awake have two grades of reality, and as a result we are justified in saying that the dream world is Mâyâ, as the Sûtrakâra says in 3.2.3, or unreal as compared with the waking state. Similarly, this world we experience is Mâyâ or unreal as compared with the reality of

Brahman. The dream world has a reality for the time being; so has this world so long as we are in ignorance; and Śaṅkara nowhere denies the Vyâvahârika (phenomenal) reality of this world. The scriptures explain this difference between the reality of the two, Brahman and the world, by using symbology, as for example in Ch. 6.1.4, which we had occasion to explain in Sûtra 2.1.14 where the Śruti tries to explain that the one, the clay, is more real than the many, which is identified with name and form only. We find the same idea again in Br. 1.6.3: "This immortal entity is covered by truth (the five elements): The vital force is the immortal entity, and name and form are truth; (so) this vital force is covered by them." Name and form, *i.e.* the world we experience, are called truth, but Brahman is distinguished from them by saying that It is immortal—Its reality is of a different grade from the reality of that which is called truth. And as the reality of this world is of a lesser grade or illusory as compared with that of Brahman, It can be the cause of such an illusory world of manifoldness without undergoing any change in Itself; for an illusory manifoldness can exist in It without in any way affecting Its immutability, like a snake in a rope or the manifold dream world in the dreaming self, as the Sûtrakâra exemplifies in 2.1.28, which brings us to the conclusion that this world is a Vivarta of the non-dual Brahman, as Śaṅkara says.

Coming to the interpretation of Sûtras 27-30, Śaṅkara connects "or as before" in Sûtra 29 with what immediately precedes in Sûtras 25-26 and so it is happy. Râmânuja connects it with Sûtra 2. 3. 43 and so it is not so apt. Nimbârka's explanation is still farfetched; for while Râmânuja refers for the Siddhânta only to a

previous Sûtra, Nimbârka refers for an objection as well as a decision to Sûtras in 2.1. His interpretation of the whole topic thus appears to be much stretched.

That Śaṅkara has followed the Sûtrakâra faithfully in his interpretation of Sûtras 11-30 will be clearer if we just try to see the reason why the latter treats of dream and deep-sleep in this section which deals with the nature of Brahman. Śaṅkara at the beginning of Chapter III, Section 1, says that the transmigration of the soul is taught in order to generate a spirit of Vairâgya (dispassion).

Sûtra 1-10 of Section 2 treat of the soul's states of dream and dreamless-sleep. According to Śaṅkara the very fact that the dream world does not fulfil the conditions of the time and space factors as in the waking state, shows that the dream world is illusory and therefore a creation of the soul and not of the Lord. From this he shows that the real nature of the Jîva is self-luminous and beyond all these states. Thus Sûtras 1-10 elucidate the real nature of the 'Thou' in "Thou art That". Sûtras 11-21 give the nature of 'That' and Sûtras 22-30 identify the two. Thus the place of Sûtras 1-10 in this section is very significant. Râmânuja and Nimbârka say that the creation of the dream world belongs to the Lord and not to the soul. If it were so, it should be as real as this world. Granting that it is the Lord's creation, of what significance is this subject in a section that deals with the nature of Brahman? It would have been apt in 2.3 where creation is the Lord's creation, of what significance is this Râmânuja says at the beginning of Chapter III, then it ought to have been included in Section 1 which treats of the soul's transmigration with the same object

and thus be separated from Section 2 where it is out of place.

The above analysis of Sûtras 3. 2. 1-30 shows that Śaṅkara has rightly grasped the spirit of Bâdarâyana, while Râmânuja and Nimbârka have sadly missed it.

*A two-fold knowledge of Brahman established:*

Finally, let us consider Sûtras 4.2.12-14 and Sûtras 4.4.1-7. The former set of Sûtras as they stand are interpreted better by Râmânuja and Nimbârka than by Śaṅkara. According to Śaṅkara they run as follows: If it be said (that the Prâṇas of a knower of Brahman do not depart), on account of the Śruti denying it (we say) not so, for the Śruti (Mâdhyandina recension of the text) denies the departure of the Prâṇas from the soul and not from the body (12). For the denial is clear in the texts of some schools (13). So in Sûtra 12 the Siddhânta view is first expressed on the basis of Br. 4.4.6, Kâṇva recension, and the objection against this is raised by the opponent in the second half of the Sûtra, basing his argument on the Mâdhyandina recension of the text, which is answered again in Sûtra 13 by Br. 3.2.11, Kâṇva recension. By such an interpretation the significance of 'some schools' is lost, for it ought to have referred to some text of the Mâdhyandina school and not of the same Kâṇva school on which the Siddhânta is based in Sûtra 12.

Râmânuja and Nimbârka on the other hand read these Sûtras as one, which runs as follows: "If it be said that the Prâṇas of a knower of Brahman do not depart on account of the denial by the Śruti text (Br. 4.4.6. Kâṇva), we deny it; for the Śruti says that they do not depart from the soul (i.e. they accompany the

soul) and this is clear according to some, viz the Mādhyandina recension of Br. 4.4.6." We cannot but say that this is more happy, as the force of 'some school' and the word 'hi' (because) in the Sûtra are well brought out.

Though the interpretation according to the letter of the Sûtrâ forces us to side with Râmânûja and Nimbârka, yet if we consider the Śruti text, viz Br. 4.4.6, on which the discussion is based and also the arrangement of the Sûtras in this Section 2 up to Sûtra 16, we find that Śaṅkara is more reasonable than the other two and it looks as though the Sûtrakâra himself had made a slip, though he meant otherwise. Br. 4.4.6 says in the first half of the text how one who is attached transmigrates, and concludes the first half by saying, "Thus does the man who desires transmigrate." The second half speaks of the man without desires and says, "Of him who is without desires...and to whom all objects of desire are but the Self—the organs do not depart. Being but Brahman, he is merged in Brahman." Here it is quite clear that the Śruti contrasts the two cases of one who is attached and one who is not attached and so does not transmigrate but is merged in Brahman. Now it is well known—both from the scriptures and the *Vedânta-Sûtras* itself that a transmigrating soul at the time of death goes out with the organs and so when in contrast to this it is said, "His organs do not depart," it is quite clear that the denial of departure of the Prâṇas is from the body as in the case of one who is attached, and consequently the expression 'from him' in the Mādhyandina recension even ought to mean the body and not the soul.

From what has been stated above we find Śaṅkara

more reasonable and consistent and therefore we can safely say that his interpretation of Sûtras 12-14 as establishing a two-fold knowledge is after Bâdarâyana's view, though according to the wording of the Sûtras it is not so happy. This sort of interpretation of the Sûtrakâras is not without its precedent, as we find Upavarṣa and Śabara do the same in their commentaries on the *Pûrva Mīmāṃsā-Sûtras*.

We now come to the last section of the work where the state of the released soul is described. Sûtras 1-3 describe that on the attainment of Knowledge the soul manifests itself in its own nature. Sûtra 4 says that it attains non-distinction with Brahman. The question as to what the nature of that state is naturally arises after this and Sûtras 5-7 attempt a description. The views of Jaimini and Auḍulomi are given and finally in Sûtra 7 Bâdarâyana says that both these views are true, for they are not contradictory. The question is, whether the views of Jaimini and Auḍulomi are true of the released soul in succession or simultaneously. Bâdarâyana's decision is that they are true at one and the same time according as the subject is viewed from the relative or transcendental standpoint. Śaṅkara makes this clear in his Bhâṣya. His critics find fault with him here. They say that he is obliged in this Sûtra to ascribe to the truly released soul qualities which clearly cannot belong to it, since for such a soul no Vyavahâra exists. They say thereby that his interpretation is not faithful. Such a criticism shows that they have failed to understand what Śaṅkara means here. He does not say that the released soul is conscious of itself as possessing all the qualities described by Jaimini, but that we who are in bondage are obliged in describing



the state of such a soul to have recourse to such a description. In reality the soul when released exists as pure Intelligence, but as pure Intelligence is beyond our conception, we in our ignorance view it as identified with Īśvara, for that is the highest reading of pure Intelligence or the nirguṇa Brahman that we can possibly conceive. Certainly there exists no Vyavahāra at all for the released soul, which is free from ignorance; but it exists for us who are in ignorance; and Jaimini's description of the state of a released soul is our description of it. Īśvara's possession of powers is not like that of an ordinary Jīva which being subject to Nescience thinks of itself as an experiencer, an agent, and so on. He is beyond all taint and therefore not subject to Nescience, and consequently does not think of Himself as possessing all these lordly powers; but these powers exist in Him, because we in our ignorance ascribe them to Him. Even so are these lordly powers ascribed to the released soul by us and it is regarded as identical or having attained non-distinction with Īśvara. This is the full import of Sūtra 7 both according to Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara. So till all souls are released, the state of the released partakes of a two-fold characteristic according to the view-point from which it is described—transcendental or relative, even as Brahman has a two-fold characteristic of which one is illusory or real from the relative standpoint (*vide* 3.2.11-21). This attainment of lordly powers by souls on identification with Īśvara is not the same as the attainment of such powers by the knowers of the saguṇa Brahman who go to Brahmaloḥa, for it is made clear in 4. 4. 17 that their lordly powers do not include the power of creation etc., but only power to create objects of enjoyments at

will (4. 4. 8), while this power is not negated in the case of souls which get identified with Īśvara according to Sūtra 4. 4. 5 and 7.

That the Sūtrakāra makes a distinction between the attainment of Liberation by the knowledge of the nirguṇa Brahman and that by the knowledge of the saguṇa Brahman, is clear from Sūtra 4.1.19, where he makes no reference to any going forth in the case of a Jīvanmukta, but simply says that on the exhaustion of the Prārabdha Karma he attains Brahman and this is also in keeping with texts like Br. 4.4.6 and especially Ch. 6.14.2 where it is clearly stated that his merging in Brahman is delayed just as long as the body lasts. But going to Brahmaloḥa by "the path of the gods" is also a kind of Liberation, for from there the soul does not return to this mortal world, but gets merged in Brahman at the end of the cycle together with Brahmā, as stated in Sūtra 4.3.10. As the author is concerned in this section with the result of Upāsana, *viz* Liberation, he describes the result of the knowledge of the nirguṇa Brahman in Sūtras 1-7 and from 8-22 the result of the knowledge of the saguṇa Brahman. If, as according to Rāmānuja and Nimbārka, there is no such distinction at all, but the description is of one kind of Liberation only, then when it is said in Sūtra 4.4.5 that the released soul attains a nature like that of Brahman, there is no further necessity of saying that it can create at will all objects of enjoyment. Moreover, if being free from sin, old age etc. (Ch. 8.1.5) are qualities of the soul as well as of the Lord, then they will cease to be the defining characteristic of the Lord. In this case the objection raised in the first part of Sūtra 1.3.19 will not be answered by the second half of the Sūtra. The Sūtra

runs as follows: "If it be said that from the subsequent texts which refer to the Jīva 'small Ākāśa,' means the Jīva, we say that the reference to the soul is in so far as its real nature is made manifest (*i.e.* as non-different from Brahman)." In the previous Sūtra it was established that the 'small Ākāśa' in Ch. 8.1.1 is Brahman and not the Jīva, in spite of the reference to the Jīva in Ch. 8.3.4, for 'free from evil' etc. which are said to be qualities of the 'small Ākāśa' are not true of the soul. At the end of his commentary on Sūtra 18, Śaṅkara says that Sūtra 20 will make it clear why the individual soul is referred to in Ch. 8.3.4. In Sūtra 19 cited above a fresh objection is raised that subsequent texts also refer to the Jīva (*vide* Ch. 8.7-11 in which the waking, dream, and deep-sleep state of the soul are described) and therefore 'small Ākāśa' means Jīva. The second half answers it by saying that the reference to the Jīva is in so far as its real nature is made manifest (*vide* Ch. 8.12.3). The reference to the individual soul in Ch. 8.3.4 is to show that in reality it is beyond the three states of waking, dream, and deep-sleep and non-different from Brahman. If under the circumstances 'free from sin' etc. are its qualities even as different from Brahman, as Rāmānuja says, then 'small Ākāśa' cannot be established to be Brahman against the objection raised in Sūtra 1.3.19. Moreover, in Sūtra 1.3.20 (according to him 19) the explanation given by him for the reference to the Jīva in Ch. 8.3.4 is not at all satisfactory. He says, "This reference to the Jīva serves the purpose of giving instruction not about the Jīva, but about the nature of that which is the cause of the qualities of the individual soul, *i.e.* qualities specially belonging to the Lord. The reason is that such infor-

mation about the released soul helps the doctrine with respect to 'small Ākāśa'. The individual soul which wants to attain Brahman must also know its true nature, so that it as being endowed with auspicious qualities will finally arrive at the intuition of the Lord who is a mass of auspicious qualities raised to the highest excellence." But according to Śaṅkara we have seen that its reference is to identify the two—the released soul and the Lord. It is quite apparent that between the two explanations Rāmānuja's falls to the ground. Such an argument does not at all fit in as an explanation for the reference to the released soul in Ch. 8. 3. 4 and is against the spirit of the teaching of the whole of chapter 8 of the Chāndogya. Śaṅkara's critics find fault with him taking into consideration only Sūtra 1. 3. 19; but if they only try to understand the Sūtrakāra taking into consideration Sūtras 18-20 and the Śruti texts to which they refer, they will find that Śaṅkara's interpretation is by far the best.

The defects that are shown in Rāmānuja's interpretation of Section 4 hold good in the case of Nimbārka also.

*Śaṅkara's interpretation justified by the Gītā:*

Thus a comparative study of these three commentaries on the most important topics treated by Bādarāyaṇa in his work establishes a strong case for Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Sūtras. We find similar views also expressed in the Gītā. And if, as has been shown at the beginning, the author of the Gītā had a hand in the Sūtras—and this fact is not questioned by Rāmānuja and Nimbārka, for according to them it is the same person Veda-Vyāsa—then it goes all the more to show that Śaṅkara's interpretation is correct.

for we cannot expect that the same author has expressed different views in the two works. We shall cite a few texts from the Gîtâ which tally with Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Sûtras.

"I shall describe that which has to be known...the beginningless supreme Brahman. It is called neither being nor non-being...Without and within all beings...Impartible, yet It exists *as if divided* in beings" (13.12-16)—these texts describe the attributelessness of Brahman. The text says that the one Immutable appears *as if divided* into many and not in reality. It Itself, therefore, is "the sustainer, generator, and devourer of all beings" (13.16); also 7.6 and 7. That Brahman has a two-fold nature, the Nirguṇa which is Its real nature and the Saguṇa which is the creation of Mâyâ, is made clear by Arjuna's question in 12.1 and the Lord's answer in 12.2-5, where He recognizes the Nirguṇa aspect, but says at the same time that those devoted to the Saguṇa aspect are better versed in Yoga, as devotion to it is easier and, therefore, best suited to Arjuna and the generality of mankind, even as He says in 5.6 for the same reason that Karma Yoga is better than Jñâna Yoga.

The individual soul in its real nature is described in 2.11-25. Specially verses 16-18 say that it is real all-pervading, changeless, immutable, indestructible and illimitable, while verse 24 again says it is all-pervading. Again 6.31 establishes the identity of the self and Brahman contained in the Vedic dictum, "That thou art," verses 29 and 30 having described the real nature of 'thou' and 'That'; while 13.29-34 describe the real nature of the soul as identical with Brahman. But the soul in its state of bondage being deluded considers

itself an agent and experiencer, atomic and a part of the Lord. "The Guṇas of Prakṛti perform all action. With the understanding *deluded* by egoism, man thinks, 'I am the doer'" (3.27). See also 14.23 and 15.7.

The doctrine of Mâyâ is clearly referred to in the following texts: "Knowledge is enveloped in ignorance, hence do beings get deluded" (5.15); "This world knows Me not, being deluded by the modifications of the Guṇas. Verily this divine Mâyâ of Mine is difficult to cross over...deprived of discrimination by Mâyâ they follow the Āsuric ways" (7.13-16); "I am not manifest to all, being veiled by My Yogamâyâ" (7.25); "The Lord dwells in the heart of all beings causing them to revolve by His Mâyâ" (18.61). Finally, though stress is laid on Bhakti in the Gîtâ, nowhere does it say that Bhakti is superior to Knowledge. On the other hand we find Knowledge highly praised. "The fire of Knowledge burns all Karma to ashes. There exists nothing so purifying like Knowledge" (4.37-38); "Supremely dear is the wise man to Me. I regard him as My very Self" (7.17-18).

#### Conclusion:

In conclusion, we would like to state that from what all has been said above we do not mean to suggest that Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Sûtras is the only true one. Rather our object has been to show that Śaṅkara too, like the other great commentators, is justified in interpreting the Sûtras in the way he has done. The fact is, Bâdarâyaṇa has systematized the philosophy of the Upaniṣads in his work, and like them his Sûtras also are all-comprehensive. The Upaniṣads, we must remember, do not teach throughout any particular

doctrine. They contain various doctrines which are meant for people at different stages of spiritual evolution. They are not contradictory, but rather they are based on the principle of Adhikâribheda, as all are not capable of apprehending the same truth. The old idea of Arundhatî-darśananyâya<sup>1</sup> applies. Nearly every chapter in the Upaniṣad begins with dualistic teaching or Upâsanâ and ends with a grand flourish of Advaita. God is first taught as a Being who is the creator of this universe, its preserver, and the destruction to which everything goes at last. He is the one to be worshipped, the Ruler, and appears to be outside of nature. Next we find the same teacher teaching that God is not outside of nature, but immanent in nature. And at last both ideas are discarded and it is taught that whatever is real is He; there is no difference. "Śvetaketu, thou art That." The Immanent One is at last declared to be the same that is in the human soul.<sup>2</sup> This fact is recognized by Bâdarâyana too and so commentators make a mistake when they think that the Sûtras propound only their doctrine and nothing else.

This grand principle of Adhikâribheda is the foundation on which the teachings of the Upaniṣads, the *Brahma-Sûtras*, and the Gîtâ are based and that is the reason why they have been universally accepted by the Hindus of all classes and denominations. From this point of view we are inclined to think that of all the commentators Śaṅkara has done the greatest justice to the Sûtrakâra by his two-fold doctrine of the absolute and phenomenal reality.

<sup>1</sup> The method of spotting the tiny star Arundhatî with the help of bigger near it, calling them Arundhatî.

<sup>2</sup> *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III. pp. 281, 397, and 398.

## ADHYĀSA OR SUPERIMPOSITION

The whole of Śaṅkara's philosophy may be summed up as follows: ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ।—The Brahman of the Upaniṣads is the only Reality, and everything else—this world of manifoldness—is unreal, is a mere appearance; the individual soul (Jîva) is identical with Brahman, the One without a second, which the scriptures define as Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. "Brahman is Existence, Knowledge, Infinity" (Tai. 2.1); "Brahman is Knowledge, Bliss" (Br. 3.9.28). This identity of the Jîva and Brahman is clearly stated by the scriptures in texts like: "Thou art That, O Śvetaketu" (Ch. 6.8.7), "I am Brahman" (Br. 1.4.10), and "The Self alone is to be meditated upon" (Br. 1.4.7).

The question then naturally arises: If Truth is one, whence arises this many which we experience through the senses? Truth cannot contradict experience. So Śaṅkara had to explain this apparent contradiction between Truth and our everyday experience. He says that this plurality is an illusion (Mâyâ). It has no reality, for it disappears when the knowledge of the true nature of Brahman is realized. It is just like seeing a snake in a rope in the dark. This wrong perception is brought about by ignorance (Avidyâ), which is beginningless. It is this ignorance which is the cause of all this duality, Brahman being mistaken for the world. On account of this ignorance the individual soul identifies itself with its adjuncts (Upâdhis) viz the body,

ses, etc., which are only superimposed on it. This identification makes the soul think that it is the doer, enjoyer, etc.—though the truth is that it is none of these—and thereby it comes under the sway of birth, death, happiness, misery, etc., in short, becomes bound to this world (Saṃsāra).

When Śaṅkara says that the world is false, he does not mean that it is absolutely nothing, but that our experience is liable to be stultified by means of knowledge of things as they are. The world has a relative existence; it is true for the time being, but disappears when true knowledge dawns. It is not real all times, in other words, it is not real from the absolute standpoint. Mâyâ or ignorance is not a reality. We can neither say that it exists nor that it does not exist. It is a mystery which is beyond our understanding; it is unspeakable (Anirvacanîya). As Mâyâ is not real, it cannot be related to Brahman, the reality, in any way whatsoever; for any relation between truth and falsehood is impossible. The relation is only apparent, and therefore Brahman is in no way affected by this illusion which is superimposed upon It, even as the rope is not affected by the snake that is assumed to exist in it.

Therefore the only way to liberation from this worldly existence (Saṃsāra) is to get rid of this wrong notion through the real knowledge of Brahman. Just as in the case of the rope and the snake, it is the

go by" Śv. 3.8); "He comes not to death who sees that one". Pilgrimages, austerities, worship and charity—these by themselves, without Knowledge, cannot help us to attain Liberation. Their utility lies only in purifying our mind (Cittaśuddhi), cleansing it of all worldliness, and thus making it fit to comprehend the Truth. When Brahman is realized this phenomenal world disappears automatically, without any further effort on the part of the individual. Knowledge of Brahman being thus the only way to Liberation, an inquiry into Brahman through the study of the *Brahma-Sûtras* is absolutely necessary.

Śaṅkara's explanation of the world as an illusion has given his philosophy the name of Mâyāvâda or Anirvacanîya Khyâtivâda. It is also known as Vivartavâda, the doctrine of the apparent modification of Brahman into this phenomenal world, as opposed to Pariṇâmvâda or the doctrine of the actual modification of Brahman into this phenomenal world, as held by some other schools of Vedânta like the Viśiṣṭâdvaitavâda of Râmânuja.

Śaṅkara anticipated that this method of explaining the phenomenal world would raise a protest from the various other schools of his time. So at the beginning of his commentary on the *Brahma-Sûtras*, he writes a masterly introduction, which is well known as the Adhyâsa Bhâṣya or the section dealing with superimposition, wherein he establishes superimposition as a statement of fact and not a mere hypothesis. He

are opposed to each other as darkness and light cannot be identified. Hence their attributes also cannot be identified. Consequently the superimposition of the object and its attributes on the subject, whose essence is pure intelligence, and *vice versa*, ought to be a logical impossibility.

If the world phenomena are a case of superimposition, like the snake in the rope, then which is superimposed on which? Is the world superimposed on Brahman, or is it the reverse? In the latter case, the world, which is the substratum, like the rope in the example, would be a reality. If it is the other way—the world on Brahman—it is not possible, for Brahman is not an object which can be perceived by the senses like the rope. A thing becomes an object when it is limited by time, space, and causation. Since Brahman is unlimited, It is beyond these, and so cannot be an object of perception: as such It cannot be the substratum of a superimposition. Brahman is also the inner Self of everyone and therefore can never be separate and in front of a person like a rope, when alone the world can be superimposed on It.

Neither can Brahman be both subject and object of the thinking process, for one and the same being cannot both be the agent and the object of its activity at the same time. An object is that on which is concentrated the activity of the agent and hence it must be different from the agent. If, again, Brahman is manifested by some other knowledge and thus becomes an object, It ceases to be self-luminous and becomes limited, and this the scriptures do not accept. Further, in all cases of superimposition there is an antecedent real knowledge of the object which is superimposed,

as of the snake in the example. So to superimpose the world on Brahman a *real knowledge* of the world is necessary, and this would make the world a reality, with the result that the cessation of the world phenomena would be an impossibility and Liberation would be impossible. Thus in whatever way we may try to establish the theory of superimposition, we are not able to do so.

Yet, says Śaṅkara, it is natural (a self-evident fact) on the part of man, because of ignorance, not to distinguish between the two entities (the subject and the object), which are quite contradictory, and to superimpose the one on the other, and their attributes as well, and thus mixing up the real and the unreal to use such phrases as "That is I", or "This is mine". The Self again is not altogether a non-object, for it is the object of the notion of the Ego. The Self does not entirely elude our grasp. Though the inner Self is not an object and is also without parts, yet owing to ignorance, which is unspeakable and without a beginning, attributes like mind, body, senses, etc., which are products of ignorance, are superimposed on the Self, and it behaves as if it were an agent, enjoyer, possessed of parts, and many—although in truth it is none of these—and thus becomes an object. The real Self can never be an object of knowledge. Self-consciousness is possible only with respect to a Self already qualified by these adjuncts (Upâdhis). This sounds like an argument in a circle; for to establish superimposition we have to accept the Self to be an object and the Self can be an object only through the superimposition of adjuncts (Upâdhis); it is actually not so. It is a case like the seed and the tree. The seed gives rise to the

tree, which again produces the seed, the cause of the future tree, and so on. So in this series of illusions without a beginning, the Self, which is the substratum of the present superimposition, is an object on account of a past superimposition and that one had for its substratum the Self, which had become an object of a still earlier superimposition, and so on *ad infinitum*. The pure Self without the limiting adjuncts is never the substratum of a superimposition. It is the difference in the limiting adjuncts, as shown above, that makes it possible for the Self to be at the same time an agent and the object of action.

Superimposition, again, is due to ignorance and hence it is not necessary that the knowledge of the object superimposed must be a real knowledge. It is enough if we have a knowledge; it need not necessarily be real; it can itself be another illusory knowledge. That the Self exists is proved by the intuitive knowledge we have of it. This is well known and but for it nothing would have been cognized in this world. "He shining, everything else shines" (Ka. 2. 2. 15). We know things in and through it; no consciousness or experience is possible independently of it. Everyone is conscious of his own Self, for no one thinks, "I am not". Nor, again, is it necessary that the object to be a substratum of a superimposition should be before us, for we see that Ākāśa (sky), which is not visible to the senses, becomes a substratum for superimpositions by the ignorant, who impute blueness, spherical shape, etc., to it in such expressions as, "The sky is blue", and "It is spherical". Thus superimposition is an established fact.

But then direct perception, which is the best of all proofs—since it is the basis of all other means of knowledge like inference etc.—affirms this world of manifoldness. How can the scriptures that deny it carry conviction as against direct experience? They cannot. Hence scriptural texts that deny the many and uphold unity will have to be interpreted in a manner so as not to contradict our experience. This view cannot stand, for the scriptures (Śrutis) are impersonal, eternal, self-luminous, and so on. Their validity is direct and self-evident and therefore infallible. They constitute by themselves an independent source of knowledge. Hence they too are to be accepted as authoritative. The fact is that each evidence of knowledge has its own sphere wherein it is absolutely authoritative. Perception has its supreme validity in knowledge through the senses. There a hundred texts cannot prevail against it. The scriptures (Śrutis) on the other hand have their absolute authority in a province where perception cannot be of any avail. Their province is transcendental knowledge, which cannot be attained in any other way. Here revelation, which does not depend on other sources of knowledge, is the final authority, and not perception or even reason. The scriptures do not deny the empirical validity of perception; they deny only its absolute or transcendental validity.

#### SUPERIMPOSITION DEFINED

Superimposition, says Śaṅkara, is the apparent presentation to consciousness, by way of remembrance, of something previously observed in some other thing.

It is an *apparent presentation*, that is knowledge which is subsequently falsified; in other words, it is illusory knowledge. According to Vācaspati Miśra this is the fundamental characteristic of superimposition, and the rest of the definition only differentiates it from those given by other schools of philosophy. But the author of the commentary *Ratnaprabhā* takes *apparent presentation in some other thing* as the characteristic mark of superimposition, and this seems to be more in keeping with Śaṅkara, who says in his commentary: "But all these definitions agree in so far as they represent superimposition as the apparent presentation of the attributes of one thing in another thing."

As it is impossible to have illusory knowledge without the mixing up of two things, we find the words *something previously observed* in the definition. These words, together with the words *apparent presentation*, make it clear that the thing superimposed is not the real object seen some time before, but something like it. A mere experience, and not the reality, is what is necessary; hence the word *observed*. The experience should not be a present one, but a past one, and that is the significance of the word *previously*. So the thing superimposed is a false or unreal thing. But the thing on which it is superimposed is a real thing. The words *by way of remembrance* excludes all cases of recognition where the object previously observed again presents itself to our senses, as when a person seen at a particular place is again seen at another place. In remembrance the object previously observed is not in renewed contact with the senses. It is mere remembrance that operates in the case of superimposition.

This definition of superimposition meets an objection of the Mīmāṃsakas, who say that an unreal thing cannot be an object of experience. According to them all knowledge is real; there can be nothing like false knowledge. They uphold the intrinsic validity of all knowledge, for every knowledge produces a sense of certainty in us and we have no doubt about it at the time. If it were otherwise, then we should always be in doubt and never arrive at any certainty. So every knowledge is true for the time being, though subsequent experience may prove that it was wrong, as in the case of an illusion. But from the definition of superimposition given by Śaṅkara we find that because a particular thing is experienced it does not for that very reason become real. A thing may be unreal and at the same time may be experienced. Otherwise the water in a mirage would be a reality, which in fact we know it is not.

The Prābhākara school of Mīmāṃsakas raise a fresh objection. How can the world be unreal or non-existent? Non-existence is not a category by itself; it can be conceived only in relation to a real object. We speak of non-existence when one *real* object is predicated in terms of another real object. When we think of a pot in terms of a cloth, we say *the negation of the cloth* is the pot. That is all that is meant by non-existence; apart from this, it has no reality. An unreal object can never be the object of our experience. So this world, if it were unreal, could never be the object of our experience.

Applying this argument in the case of a mirage, we find that the reality, the sun's rays refracted by layers of air, is, according to the Mīmāṃsakas, nothing but



*the negation of water*, and it is therefore self-evident that the phenomenon we experience cannot be water. Neither can they say that the water in the mirage is not real, since it is experienced. So the water in the mirage is neither real nor unreal, nor can it be both at the same time. Therefore we have to accept the phenomenon as something beyond our comprehension (Anirvacanîya), which is exactly the view of Śaṅkara.

Śaṅkara says that the nature of objects is two-fold, real and unreal. The first manifests by its very nature, depending on the object itself; the second, the unreal appearance, depends on some other thing for its manifestation. In a mirage the rays of the sun are a reality, but their appearance as water is unreal and depends on something else, the impressions (Saṃskâras) produced by seeing water elsewhere before. That which is real always continues to be so, but the unreal is ever changing. Brahman, the Reality, remains unchanged; but Mâyâ and its products, which are assumed to exist in Brahman, are unreal and therefore everchanging, yet experienced by us. The world phenomena are neither real nor unreal, nor both; they are unspeakable (Anirvacanîya).

#### DEFINITION OF SUPERIMPOSITION ACCORDING TO OTHER SCHOOLS

The four schools of philosophy in Buddhism define superimposition as "the superimposition of the attributes of one thing on another." They maintain that in superimposition forms of cognition, or modes of the internal organ in the form of the object, are superimposed on an external object which itself may

be real or illusory. The Prâbhâkaras refute this definition, for according to the Buddhists there is no separate entity called the Self apart from consciousness (Vijñâna). The Self is but a form of consciousness. If in an illusion, where a rope is taken for a snake, the snake also be a form of cognition, then our experience ought to be of the kind "I am a snake" or "My snake", and not as "This is a snake". Therefore Prâbhâkaras define superimposition as "an error arising from the non-perception of the difference of that which is superimposed from that on which it is superimposed". There is no positive wrong or illusory knowledge, but a mere non-perception of the difference between two real experiences, one of which is a past experience. Where a mother-of-pearl is taken for silver, the difference between the mother-of-pearl seen at a moment and the silver remembered is not perceived. Naiyâyikas refute this definition on the ground that mere non-perception of the difference cannot induce us to action. But as a matter of fact we are tempted to possess the silver seen in a mother-of-pearl. Where there is no positive knowledge, as, for example, in profound sleep (Sûpti), there is no activity. It is positive knowledge that is responsible for our activity, as we find from our experience in the dream and waking states. Nor can a mere remembrance induce us to action. So in illusion we are conscious of silver as a reality present before us, and not as a mere remembrance.

The Naiyâyikas therefore define superimposition as "the fictitious assumption of attributes (like those of silver) contrary to the nature of the thing (e.g. the mother-of-pearl) on which something else (silver) is superimposed". An identity is established between the

object present before us (the mother-of-pearl) and the silver remembered, which is not here and now, but imagined, and which *exists as a reality somewhere else*. The person is not conscious that it is only a memory of silver, and not an actuality. This identity between the silver seen elsewhere and the mother-of-pearl is what gives rise to the illusion. There is thus a positive factor in this experience, which is not the case in the Prābhākaras' definition. Yet it may be questioned how the silver which exists elsewhere can be in contact with the senses, which is essential if the silver is to be experienced as an actuality in front of us and not a mere memory. If it be said that there is transcendental contact (Alaukika Jñānalakṣaṇa Sannikarṣa) of the senses with it, then where fire is inferred from smoke we can say it is also a case of transcendental contact, and inference as a means to knowledge becomes unnecessary. Therefore we have to accept that in illusion an indescribable (Anirvacanīya) silver is produced, which is a reality for the time being. It is this silver which is directly perceived by the senses and gives rise to the knowledge, "This is silver". The silver that is seen in the mother-of-pearl is not present somewhere else, for in that case it could not have been experienced as here and now; nor is it in the mind. Neither is it a mere nonentity, for then it could not have been an object of perception; nor can it be inherent in the mother-of-pearl, for in that case it could not have been sublated afterwards. So we are forced to say that the silver has no real existence anywhere, but has only an apparent reality for the time being which is unspeakable.

This superimposition is called ignorance (Avidyā) metaphorically, the effect being put for the cause. Ignorance does not mean want of knowledge, but that kind of knowledge which is stultified later on by the knowledge of things as they are. Its counterpart is called knowledge (Vidyā). When the Self is discriminated from its limiting adjuncts through Vedāntic discipline and practice (Sādhana), viz hearing of scriptural texts, reflection, and meditation on them, then knowledge dawns, which destroys this superimposition. A mere intellectual knowledge is however not meant here, but actual realization. Since through this superimposition the two objects are not in the least affected by the good or bad qualities of each other, once true knowledge dawns, it roots out ignorance with all its effects, leaving no chance of its cropping up again. The recrudescence would have been possible if owing to the superimposition the Self was in any way contaminated by the non-Self and its properties.

This superimposition (Adhyāsa) due to ignorance is the presumption on which are based the distinctions among the means of knowledge, objects of knowledge, and knowing persons, in our career of daily activity, and so are also based all scriptural texts, whether they refer to rituals (Karma) or knowledge (Jñāna). All our experience starts in this error which identifies the Self with the body, senses, etc. All cognitive acts presuppose this kind of false identification, for without it the pure Self can never be a knower, and without a knowing personality, the means of right knowledge cannot operate. Therefore the means of right knowledge and the scriptural texts belong to the sphere of ignorance (Avidyā). They are meant only for one

who is still under ignorance and has not realized the Self. They are valid only so long as the ultimate Truth is not realized; they have just a relative value. But from the standpoint of the ultimate Truth, our so-called knowledge is all Avidyâ or no knowledge at all. In the phenomenal world, however, they are quite valid and are capable of producing empirical knowledge.

That our knowledge (empirical) is no knowledge at all is further proved by the fact that we do not differ from animals in the matter of cognition. Just as a cow runs away when she sees a man with a raised stick in his hand, while she approaches one with a handful of green grass, so also do men, who possess higher intelligence, walk away from wicked persons shouting with drawn swords, while they approach those of an opposite nature. The behaviour of animals in cognition, etc. is well known to be based on ignorance. Therefore it can be inferred that man's conduct in the matter of cognition, etc., so long as they are under delusion, is also similarly based.

It may seem rather strange to say that even the scriptures belong to the field of ignorance (Avidyâ); for though in ordinary matters of cognition, etc., we may resemble animals and act through ignorance, yet in matters religious, such as the performance of sacrifices, the person who engages himself in them has the knowledge that the Self is separate from the body, since otherwise he cannot expect to enjoy the fruits of his ritualistic acts in heaven, the body being destroyed at death. But we forget that though a person who engages himself in ritualistic acts may have a knowledge of the Self as distinct from the body, yet it is not necessary that he should have a knowledge of the real

nature of the Self as given by the Vedânta texts; rather such knowledge is destructive to him. For how can a person who knows the Self to be not an enjoyer, agent, and so forth undertake any sacrifice enjoined by the scriptures? Scriptural texts like, "A Brâhmaṇa should perform a sacrifice", are operative only on the supposition that attributes such as caste, stage of life, age, and circumstances are superimposed on the Self, which is none of these. Not only is ritualism (Karmakāṇḍa) meant for persons under ignorance (Avidyâ), but even so is the Vedânta; for without the distinction of the means of knowledge, objects of knowledge, and knower it is not possible to comprehend the meaning of the Vedânta texts. A person who is conscious of these distinctions is under the sway of ignorance (Avidyâ), being in the world of duality. But there is a difference between Vedânta and ritualism. While the latter has for its goal that which is within the sphere of ignorance, like enjoyment in heaven etc., the former helps one to realize his true nature, which destroys all ignorance.

How can ignorance lead to knowledge? Empirical knowledge can produce transcendental knowledge through its empirical validity. To put it in Sri Ramakrishna's beautiful language, "When we run a thorn in our hand we take it out by means of another thorn and throw out both. So relative knowledge alone can remove that relative ignorance which blinds the eye of the Self. But such knowledge and such ignorance are both alike included in Avidyâ; hence the man who attains to the highest Knowledge (Jñâna), the knowledge of the Absolute, does away in the end with both knowledge and ignorance, being free himself from all duality." But before the dawning of real knowledge

the authority of the Vedas stands unquestioned, for a knowledge that has not been realized cannot prevent a person from entering on ritualistic activities. It is only after realization that scriptural texts cease to be operative. But before that, "Let the scriptures be thy authority in ascertaining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known what is said in the ordinance of the scriptures thou shouldst act here" (Gîtâ 16.24). But when realization dawns, then, "To the sage who has known the Self, all the Vedas are of so much use as a reservoir is when there is flood everywhere" (Gîtâ 2.46). It is only for the knower of Brahman that they have no value, and not for others.

## CHAPTER I

### SECTION I

*Topic 1: The inquiry into Brahman and its prerequisites.*

अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा ॥ १ ॥

अथ Now अतः therefore ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा the inquiry (into the real nature) of Brahman.

1. Now (after the attainment of the requisite spiritual qualities) therefore (as the results obtained by sacrifices etc., are ephemeral, whereas the result of the knowledge of Brahman is eternal), the inquiry (into the real nature) of Brahman (which is beset with doubts owing to the conflicting views of various schools of philosophy, should be taken up).

At the very beginning the utility of such an inquiry is questioned.

*Objection:* Such an inquiry is not worth the trouble. An intelligent man generally does not enter into an inquiry about an object which is already known, or the knowledge of which does not serve any useful purpose. He is always guided by utility. Now Brahman is such an object. As Brahman pure and unconditioned,