

STRUCTURAL AND INSTRUMENTAL CONTENT OF ADVAITA VEDANTA

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What stands legitimate for Advaita Vedānta is necessarily the Absolute unity in Ātman, the one Reality, plundering all duality for an illusory manifestation reducing itself into the oneness of every manifestation. It does not call upon man to transcend the limits of his existence but to realize in oneself the uniqueness as everything becomes oneness the Brahman. It is distinct from all other philosophical systems in India. The absolute identity of God and the Individual souls is the main perspective of Advaita. The realization of this unity of existence or 'Jivātmaikatva' is the real mokṣa or liberation for it. The liberated self here has no distinct existence from the highest self. But it is unique that Advaita also sees one self in all. The whole world which appears as real is only an illusory appearance for it in its absolute sense. Advaita makes it clear that truth cannot be arrived at by the intellect of the senses alone. But an inward turning of these can make it realize the oneness of Ātman alone and nothing else. The Advaita Vedāntin did an attempt to read the human experience in forms of this grand Revealed Truth what brings in differentiation in the so called experienced world is to be investigated and explained and that was the main goal of the Vedāntins who used their consummate skill to invoke the internal evidence to justify the position of Advaita Vedantic Truth tracing the appearance of beings to avidya or māyā that brings in the limitations. Advaitins successfully countered all questions on the inquisitive problems of the world.

From an understanding of the development of civilization in India it can be succinctly arguable that Advaita Vedānta stands as the most significant and accepted philosophy in India. The word 'philosophy' means the understanding and explanation of all things. The special beauty of the Vedānta is its trifold nature of elucidating the philosophical engagement and it brings in the most aesthetic presentation of its inquisitive knowledge in the form of poetry, as well eliciting the most sublime philosophy and the most satisfying existential consequence of Religion. This philosophy begins with the idea of God standing for the true knowledge of Brahman. It establishes the theory of one 'One Only' (BE) - without a second or secondless. Vedānta establishes the 'BE' or one only as the Absolute Reality underlying the phenomenal universe. This philosophy tries to reveal the Lord, the cause of the world and the oneness of God, man and the universe. It removes darkness occurred due to the nescience (Māyā) and guides one to the most blissful knowledge of Sat —Cit- Ānanda Brahman — the infinite.

Vedānta is not a religion or a religious philosophy; but also it stands for the investigation into the total existential Reality and the real nature of man's Being. It is spiritual Science, encompassing all science. It is meta-physics, philosophy, axiology, epistemology, cosmology religious ethics, science and psychology all in one. The excellence of this philosophy is that it represents the progressive thought of Men, beginning with dualism, passing through qualified non-dualism and ending in absolute non-dualism. It deals with the doctrine of total identity of the subject and object, beyond which, human reason, thought and experience cannot go. The Vedānta philosophy begins with the idea of God. It contains the true knowledge of Brhman. 'Brahman' according to Vedānta is unknowable and the 'Supreme Being'. It believes in BE - (one only)- without a second or secondless.

The Brahmasūtras is an early exposition of the Vedānta interpretation of the Upaniṣads. It is an attempt to systematize the various stands of the Upaniṣads,

Sadvidya

which forms the background of the orthodox systems of thought. It is intended to be a summary of the teaching of the Upaniṣads. It chiefly deals with the nature of Brahman, the status of the world and the Individual self. Its attempt is to determine the exact nature of the three entities. So the Brahmasūtras is also called as Nirṇaya śāstra. It is written for the easy realization of Mumukṣūḥ-
मुमुक्षूणां सुखबोधाय ।

Brahmasūtras systematize the Jñānakānda portion of the Veda. It combines the two tasks-one of concisely stating the teaching of the Veda and argumentatively establishing the specific interpretation of the Veda adopted in the sūtras. They also discuss the role of karma and God. The Brahmasūtras consist of 555 aphorisms or sūtras in four chapters (adhyāyās). Each chapter is divided into four quarters (pādās). Each pādā consists of several group of sūtras which are called Adhikaraṇās or topical sections. An adhikaraṇā usually consists of several sūtras, but some have only one sūtra. The first chapter is called 'samanvaya' or harmony. In this chapter the author explains that all the Vedic texts uniformly refer to Brahman - the Ultimate Reality and find their samanvaya (reconciliation) on Him.

The central theme of the Vedānta lies in 'Brahman.' He is 'Sarveśvara, Sarvajña and Advitīya. The word 'Brahman' is derived from the root 'Bṛh' बृहत्त्वात् बृंहणत्वात् वात्मैव ब्रहमेति गीयते । 'महत्त्वात्', 'बृंहणत्वात् देहादीना परिणमयितृत्वात्' 'बृहत्त्वात् सर्वात्मत्वाच्च ब्रहम,' and एतत्सर्व- are the interpretations which denote Brahman. He is 'स्वप्रकाश', 'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं चेत्यस्तीह बहलक्षणम् ।'- Brahman should be realised by the words- स्वतः पूर्ण and परात्मा ।

सर्वोपाधिरहितशुद्धब्रह्मवाचिनःशब्दाः यथा-नित्यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वगतो नित्यतृप्तो नित्यशुद्धबुद्ध- मुक्तस्वभावो विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्म'- this is one of the definition that can be given to Brahman, which is in Brahmasūtras.

In the first chapter Samanvaya Bādarāyaṇa teaches that Brahman is the plenary reality and the world ground. It is the supreme object of meditation and

final end to be realized. The second chapter of Brahmasūtras is entitled as 'Avirodha'. As the name suggests, this chapter solves the objections raised by other schools of Indian philosophy. In the third chapter of Brahmasūtras, Bādarāyaṇa discusses the means to release. The chapter is named as 'Sādhana'. The concept of Individual Soul is the central theme. Bādarāyaṇa declares that the soul is non-material, non-physical and it does not perish with the diseases of the body. The Individual soul continues its samsāragati through various upakaraṇās by entering into various bodies. So the Individual soul has to go through certain अवस्थाभेदा ।

Depending on God, Individual soul gets बन्ध and मोक्ष । Till understanding the nature of Ātman, बन्ध will be there and after realizing the true nature of Brahman, मोक्ष is obtained. When the Individual soul has contact with the body then it has to experience the ज्ञानैश्वर्यतिरोभाव. The soul is non-different from Brahman. Due to nescience, it imagines that it is different; When nescience is removed through knowledge, the soul realizes the truth of non-difference. Endowed with the knowledge of Atman one decides to indulge in performing actions and he reaches the extinction of action. Hence it is proved that knowledge is independent. The person who cleared his mind of karmās will become competent for Ātmajñāna. For him there is no need of fire and firewood which are necessary in the routine actions of the first three āśramās. Actions are to be performed till the acquiring of vidyā. The Third chapter discussed about the nature of Individual soul, the nature of Ātmavidyā and the methods to attain it.

In the fourth chapter (named Phala) the fruits of this Ātmajñāna is discussed. The Knowledge should be attained only through repeated practices of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana. These are the ways of 'sākṣātkāra'. Upāsana (worship) and dhyāna (meditation) are to be practiced in the mind such as "I worship preceptor, I worship the king" etc. The Upaniṣads proclaim that these two- (Upāsana and dhyāna) are to be practiced together, because they are not

Sadvidya

essentially different. In some other context it starts with knower and ends with worshipper. Then what is to be reflected on is the 'Ātman'. The Ātman is equal to the 'Paramātmān', this sentence is to be repeatedly reflected on in the mind. The scriptures also consider the God as Ātmasvarūpa.

Advaita philosophy also reveals the significance of karma. Any action, where there is free will involved and which creates पुण्य as well as पाप is called karma. Literally karma means invisible, unseen, potency, destiny etc. Thus, the actions performed by human beings are called karma. Human beings are doubtful in what karma is to do and not to do. Therefore the Vedas explain various types of karmās. Actions prompted by the desire for artha and kāma are generally known as kāmya karmās. 'नित्यानि (obligatory duties) अकरणे प्रत्यवायसाधनानि सन्ध्यावन्दनादीनि ।' Human beings are born with three debts: 'पितृ ऋण', 'ऋषिऋण' and 'देवऋण' । Nitya karma is meant to fulfill these obligations. Nitya karma helps to overcome self - centeredness. It also helps to ward off the unpleasant effect of past actions.

Anyway the Vedas declare that an aspirant who is desirous of liberation should avoid kāmya karma. To avoid kāmya karma, one has to realize the limitations of kāmya karma. Vedānta, in fact, asks to understand the nature of our desires. Anyway the result of the desire- prompted actions are limited.

The Vedas sanction the fulfilment of our legitimate desires through legitimate means. The Individual soul who is situated in the heart will move towards the light which is shining in the forefront. This journey is also similar to both jñāni and Ajñāni. But the jñāni, by his power of knowledge moves towards the मूर्धा and vanishes. This is obtained by the grace of the परमात्मा । This Jīva goes through the 101th nerve- the सुषुम्ना ।

Jñānin who worships without the help of प्रतीक will be directed to the कार्यब्रह्म by the पुरुष । The fruit will be the same. Those who are depending upon other vikārās, except those who depend on pratīka will be led to Brahmalōka.

Those who have determination to attain Brahman will have Brahmaṃprāpti (ब्रह्मप्राप्तिः). The ultimate goal and destination of every Soul is to become free from the cycle of births and deaths. According to Advaita Vedānta a soul can be liberated either while living or after death. Basically it is the end of the Soul's journey. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka declares-

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः । अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्मसमश्नुते ॥

The word Videhamukti means liberation without the body. It also refers to Mokṣa or liberation. It is attained by a person only after death. The souls who are liberated before death and after death can experience the Infinite Bliss.

Dharma - Karma

Jaimini, the expounder of Pūrvamīmāṃsā, considers dharma as the most exhaustive requirement for the highest knowledge. So the Pūrvamīmāṃsā is also known as Dharmamīmāṃsā. Jaimini defines Dharma as an injunction or command and implement for action - चोदनालक्षणोर्धो धर्मः । Jaimini gives predominance to the subject of karma or action. He says that this action or karma of the Soul results in merit and demerit. Dharma is affected by the enjoyment of fruits of merit or piety. Adharma is affected by the performance of 'Obligatory' and 'Occasional' duties. In this view the term Dharma stands wider than Religion. Dharma stands for the whole duty of man. The performance of Dharma is conducive to the welfare of man in this world and also hereafter.

According to Jaimini the Soul remains without a body and it is called as Mokṣa or release. This Mokṣa will be acquired not merely through the knowledge of the Self. So the people who desire emancipation should perform actions.

The Dharma is the 'Supreme Duty', 'the ought' and the 'categorical imperative.' It is supra-sensible and consists in the commands of the Veda. Dharma and adharma are different qualities of the Soul. There are two types of actions काम्य (optional) and प्रतिषिद्ध (prohibited). The performance of the optional actions will lead to merit and heaven. But the performance of the prohibited actions will lead to demerit and hell.

Jaimini declares that the optional actions such as darśapūrṇamāsa etc. will lead the person to heaven. The sacrifices give the fruit. The performance of a sacrifice is an action. All actions will be destroyed immediately. In this way the people who are performing actions won't get the result of action at the time of performance. Therefore, an invisible potency has to be admitted here. It is issued forth from the sacrifice and endures till the fruit is generated. This invisible potency resides in the Soul of the sacrifice. This is called apūrva. It ceases on producing the result. It is also called as 'merit' or 'demerit.' It is a power derived from the sacrifice. The apūrva is the link between the act and its fruit. It is the causal potency in the action that leads to the fructification.

According to Jaimini obedience to the Veda is an end in itself. It is the ultimate value too (Puruṣārtha). The Vedas directly or indirectly indicate Dharma or virtue and adharma or vice. He says that the Vedas do so because the persons may practice dharma and abstain from adharma.

1. श्रुतिस्मृति विहितो धर्मः इति वसिष्ठः ।
2. सुखार्थाः सर्वभूतानां मताः सर्वाः प्रवृत्तयः ।
सुखं च न विना धर्मात्तस्पाद्धर्मपरो भवेत् ।।
3. अतः वेद एव धर्मप्रमाणं इति भारतीयानां विश्वासः ।
4. चोदनालक्षणोऽर्थो धर्म इति जैमिनि । वेदेन परमप्रयोजनसाधनत्वेन विधीयमानोऽर्थो धर्मः इति तदर्थः ।

These statements highlight the importance of Dharma. Jaimini argues that the knowledge divorced from ritualistic work cannot enable a man to rise to the full stature of his being. Man is born in this world to accomplish such kind of works. The non-performance of ordained acts plunges one into deep troubles and sufferings here and hereafter. To get happiness in this world and thereafter, the practice of self-denial is important. He clarifies that the activities which result in loss or pain are not Dharmās and one assumes human freedom for otherwise the individuals will not be responsible in their acts.

Knowledge

The Mīmāṃsākās believe in the theory of स्वतःप्रामाण्यवाद । It is the theory of self -validity or intrinsic validity of knowledge. For the validity of knowledge no additional means is required. Jaimini advocates the self - validity of knowledge in respect of its origin (उत्पत्ति) and ascertainment (jñāpti). For him all knowledge is presumably valid. But sometimes the invalidity of knowledge can also be seen. This difference is due to some defect in the means or source of knowledge. Validity means the certitude of truth. All knowledge is valid in itself except the action of remembering or memory. The origin of knowledge cannot be perceived because it is not dependent on any objective fact. But all objective facts are dependent on it for its revelation or illumination. This is called the self-validity of knowledge in its production. When knowledge is produced the objects get revealed. There is no intermediate link between the rise of knowledge and the revelation of objects. Thus in accordance with the views of Jaimini knowledge is independent in its own rise and in its own action-स्वकार्यकरणे स्वतः प्रामाण्यं ज्ञानस्य ।

Brahmasūtras represent the fully authentic compilation regarding the overall insights of the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. Though they seem to be the reformed or systematized version of Upaniṣadic vision, they enclose within them a great deal of teachings and difference of opinions persisted among the scholars of that period. In this way they exhibit the cultural and historical development of Advaita Vedanta.

**“Come together, talk together / Let our minds be in harmony.
Common be our prayer / Common be our end,
Common be our purpose / Common be our deliberations,
Common be our desires / United be our hearts,
United be our intentions / Perfect be the union among us.” (R̥g Veda)**

Notes and References:

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The Ignorable....

"ye nāma kecit iha naḥ prathayanti avajñān
jananti te kim api tān prati na eṣa yatnaḥ
utpatsyate tu mama ko api samana-dharma
kālo hi ayam niravadhi vipulā ca pṛthvī ||"

Those who deride or ignore my work -
let them know: my efforts are not for them.
There will come along someone who shares my spirit:
the world is vast, and time endless.
Bhavabhūti, the 8th-century author of Mālatīmādhava