

THE THREE SYSTEMS of VEDANTA

An Introduction

PREFACE

Vedānta is neither recondite nor impractical. If presented properly, studied earnestly and understood with an unsophisticated heart, it can be a source of inspiration here and now. The holistic view of the universe that it offers, with its stress on the Divine permeating or controlling every aspect, can help us to elevate our mind from the microcosm to the macrocosm, from the mundane to the mystic levels.

Though the original source of Vedānta--the prasthānatraya--is one, its interpretations are many. In this booklet, an outline of the three major--rather, more wellknown--systems is given. A brief summary of four more, has been added at the end as an appendix.

We do hope that this brochure will rouse the curiosity of the reader to study these systems more comprehensively.

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ADVAITA VEDĀNTA DARŚANA

PREAMBLE

Man is often described as a rational animal. Once the animal in him is reasonably satisfied by the provision of basic biological and some psychological needs, the rational part gets an opportunity to evolve to higher levels. Philosophy, including metaphysics, is one of the highest aspects of this evolution.

DARŚANAS

The Indian philosophical systems have developed not only as a result of intellectual speculation but also of mystical intuition. Hence the name 'darśana' (lit., seeing'), usually applied to them. The topics most commonly discussed by these darśanas are generally four: (a) nature of the physical world, its origin and evolution; (b) nature of man and other living beings; (c) existence of God, his nature and attributes; (d) the goal of human life and the way of attaining it.

Different standpoints and differing views of these topics of discussion have naturally led to a variety of schools. These schools are broadly divided into two classes: the āstika and the nāstika. The former accept the authority of the Vedas whereas the latter do not.

VEDĀNTA DARŚANA

The Vedānta Darśana is the last of the former schools but has gained the most important place among them. A judicious combination of reasoning and acceptance of the authority of the Vedas, as also a long unbroken tradition, are responsible for its gaining the prominent place.

Though the 'prasthānatraya' (the three great paths') viz., the Upaniṣads, the Brahmasūtras and the Bhagavadgītā, are the basis of the Vedānta Darśana, it is the Brahmasūtras (also called Vedāntasūtras and Śāṅkaraśūtras) of Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa that occupies the key position. The sūtras (aphorisms) being quite terse and often ambiguous have naturally led to widely differing interpretations, resulting in the three well-known systems of Vedānta viz., Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita.

The word 'Vedānta' itself means the end or the essence of the Vedas'. It is the Upaniṣads that mainly comprise the Vedānta since they normally form the last part of the Vedic literature and contain the quintessence of their teaching.

ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

The Advaita Vedānta Darśana owes its systematisation as a formidable doctrine, to Gauḍapāda (7th-8th cent. A.D.) who wrote his famous Kārikās on the Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad and Śaṅkara (A.D. 788-820). Śaṅkara's commentaries on the prasthānatraya as also a few independent treatises form the bedrock on which the later Advaitins built their edifices.

Brahman, the only Reality

'Advaita' means non-dual, 'one without a second'. The system derives this nomenclature from the fact that it recognises Brahman (the Absolute) as the only reality and denies permanent reality to the world as also to the individual souls.

The entire edifice of Advaita metaphysics is built upon the foundation that Brahman is the only reality, brahma satyam.' This premise is based firmly on the famous Upaniṣadic statement sadeva somya idamarga āsīt, ekamevādviṭīyam,' Dear (Śvetaketu)! In the beginning (before creation) Reality (or Brahman) alone existed, the one without a second' (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.2.1).

Anirvacanīya Khyāti

However, the world of multiplicity is a matter of our day-to-day experience. Hence it becomes necessary to offer an explanation as to how Brahman, the One without a second, appears as this world of multiple

names and forms. The explanation offered by Advaita is *anirvacanīya-khyāti*, its theory of erroneous cognition, which defies logic. Perceiving silver in nacre in moonlight or snake in rope in insufficient light are the stock examples given by the Advaitins. In both cases there is an erroneous perception brought about by the impression of silver and snake from an earlier idea of the same, now superimposed upon nacre and rope under conditions favourable to the error. This superimposition called '*adhyāsa*' or '*adhyāropa*,' is responsible for the *mithyājñāna* (false knowledge) that the object perceived is silver or snake.

The silver or the snake perceived is neither '*sat*' (real) nor '*asat*' (unreal). It is not '*asat*' or unreal like 'the son of a barren woman' since it is actually perceived. Neither is it '*sat*' or real since it disappears as soon as the substratum (the nacre or the rope) is perceived as it is. To explain such a peculiar phenomenon Śaṅkara creates, out of logical necessity, a third type of perceived objects which is '*sad-asad-vilakṣaṇa*' (different from both the real and the unreal). The '*khyāti*' or the cognition itself is described as '*anirvacanīya*,' incapable of any precise definition or description.

Ajñāna or Avidyā

The basic cause of this erroneous perception is termed as *ajñāna* or *avidyā* (ignorance) which is said to be *bhāvarūpa* (existent) and is endowed with two śaktis or powers viz., '*āvaraṇaśakti*' (veiling power) and '*vikṣepaśakti*' (transforming power). It veils the true nature of nacre and rope, and shows up silver and snake in their place by apparently transforming them. Such an apparently transformed object is called a '*vivarta*' of the original and the theory that propounds this is known as *Vivartavāda*. Since this *avidyā* does not make the nacre and the rope completely disappear from view, but only makes them appear as something else, it is described as '*bhāvarūpa*' or existent.

Māyā

An attempt may now be made to explain how this world of duality has evolved out of the nondual Reality called Brahman in the Upaniṣads. The world of duality can be broadly divided into '*dr̥k*' (the seer) and '*dr̥śya*' (the seen). Both these, again, are divided into the innumerable living beings (*jīvas*) and countless objects of creation. How does Brahman the Absolute, the One without a second, the indivisible Reality, appear divided into innumerable beings on the one side and countless objects on the other? It is *avidyā* that causes the one Ātman (the Self)-- incidentally, the Upaniṣads use both words, Ātman and Brahman, to indicate the same Reality--appear as many *jīvas* and it is *māyā* that causes the world of phenomena. *Māyā* is *avidyā* at the cosmic level.

Three Degrees of Reality

Śaṅkara accepts three degrees of reality. The first, known as '*prātibhāsika-satya*' (apparent truth, illusory appearance) is illustrated in the wrong perception of silver in nacre or snake in rope. The second, called '*vyāvahārika-satya*' is illustrated by this world of our day-to-day experience. This world appearance has a much higher degree of reality and lasts till one gets *ātmajñāna* or *brahmajñāna*, realization of Truth. It is *satya* or true for all purposes of *vyavahāra* i.e., day-to-day existence or practical life. The third, designated as '*pāramārthika-satya*', is the highest Truth and the only truth that really exists. It is Brahman or Ātman, which is *nirguṇa* (without attributes) and *nirākāra* (without forms), hence incapable of being described except in a negative way ('*neti, neti*'—'not this, not this').

Creation

Brahman associated with *māyā* is *Saguṇa Brahman* (Brahman with attributes) or *Īśvara* (Lord of creation, God). It is this aspect of Brahman that is responsible for creation, preservation and destruction of the

world. As for the actual order of evolution of the created world, the descriptions given in the Upaniṣads are accepted.

For Śaṅkara who holds that the world process is only a vivarta (illusory appearance) due to adhyāsa (superimposition on Brahman), the very attempt to describe the various steps of evolution is a futile exercise. However, since the śruti (revealed scripture, the Upaniṣads) has done so, a place of honour must somehow be accorded to it. So he characterises such descriptions as giving 'tatasthalakṣaṇa' (accidental or casual characteristics) of Brahman helping us to be directed towards it, even as the branch of a tree helps us to locate the crescent in the sky. On the other hand, Brahman as it is, can be comprehended only through its 'svarūpalakṣaṇa' (integral or essential characteristics), which is 'sat-cit-ānanda.' 'Sat' (eternal reality), 'cit' (pure consciousness), and 'ānanda' (unalloyed bliss) are not really its characteristics but its very essence.

Jīva

This Brahman or Ātman which is sat-cit-ānanda, has inexplicably got itself involved in the body-mind complex, the involvement being due to avidyā. Since the origin of this involvement can never be logically or satisfactorily explained, avidyā is stated to be anādi or beginningless. The involved Ātman is designated as jīva.'

This jīva, the Ātman in bondage, has five kośas or sheaths, three śarīras or bodies, performs actions motivated by desires, experiences pleasure and pain due to karma and undergoes transmigration until liberation. Śaṅkara declares that this jīva, when shorn of its upādhis or limiting adjuncts like the body and the mind, is identical with Brahman, since its essential nature also is sat-cit-ānanda.

Sādhanaś and Mukti

The main trouble with the Ātman become jīva is the tādātmya or false identification with the mind and the body, brought about by adhyāropa or adhyāsa (superimposition). Hence the only way of remedying it is by apavāda or desuperimposition, by denying this identification. For this, one has first to prepare oneself by the preliminary fourfold discipline or sādhanacatuṣṭaya viz., viveka (discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal), vairāgya (dispassion), śamādiṣṭka (cultivation of the six virtues like self-control) and mumukṣutva (desire for liberation). Then one has to approach a competent guru (spiritual preceptor) and learn the truth from him by śravaṇa (hearing), manana (reflection) and nididhyāsana (contemplation). The most important part of the guru's teaching will be in the form of 'mahāvākyaś' (great sentences) like tat tvam asi ('That thou art') or aham brahmāsmi ('I am Brahman'). Śravaṇa and manana produce the deeprooted conviction that one is the spirit. Hence in nidi-dhyāsana, desuperimposition in the form of I am not the body, nor the sense-organs, nor the mind, nor even the ego and so on, can be practised leading ultimately to the realization that one is the Ātman. This realization resulting in mukti or liberation can be had even while one is living in this body. It is known as 'jīvanmukti.' He will attain 'videhamukti' (liberation from future bodies) after the body falls off, the continuance of the body between the two states being due to prārabdha-karma (actions that have caused this body).

Mukti or liberation from transmigration is not the gaining of a new state but recognising the already existing original state.

Jīvanmukti and Videhamukti

Two kinds of mukti--jīvanmukti and videha-mukti--are envisaged in the Advaitic works. The Vivaraṇa school upholds the theory that mukti is simultaneous with jñāna. Hence Jīvanmukti is not only possible, but the only mukti that can be recognised. Continuance of the body for some more time, due to

prārabdhakarma, has no effect upon jñāna. On the other hand, the Bhāmatī school holds that even after jñāna, if the body continues due to prārabdhakarma, this imposes a limitation, thereby implying the existence of a trace of avidyā. The death of the body puts an end even to this trace of avidyā and real mukti is obtained then. Since this comes after the death of the body, it is called 'videhamukti.'

Locus of Avidyā

A favourite topic of discussion that frequently crops up in Advaita metaphysical works is the locus of avidyā. Since Brahman is the only reality that exists, it alone is the āśraya (locus) as also the viśaya (object) of avidyā. This is one school. Sureśvara and Padmapāda are the main protagonists of this school. According to them, avidyā is one only.

Since Brahman is pure consciousness, avidyā can never exist in it nor act on it. This is the opposing school propagated by Vācaspati Miśra. For him, the jīvas are the loci of avidyā and there is one avidyā for every jīva.

POST-ŚAṆKARA ADVAITA

Though Śaṅkara wrote profusely, clearly enunciating the main doctrines of his school, there are certain places in his writings wherein the important aspects of certain doctrines are either vague or are capable of more than one interpretation. This has naturally, resulted in the growth of quite a voluminous post-Śaṅkara Advaita literature leading to different prasthānas or schools of thought. 'Vārttika-prasthāna' of Sureśvara (9th cent. A.D.) comes first in the series. This school gets its designation from the exposition contained in the 'vārttikās' or commentaries in verse, of Sureśvara on Śaṅkara's bhāṣyas on the Brhadāraṇyaka and the Taittirīya Upaniṣads. According to this school, Brahman is the material cause of this world, and not māyā. The locus of avidyā is Brahman and not the jīvas. Avidyā is one only and not many. The mahāvākyas or the great Vedic dictums are capable of producing immediate cognition of the self as Brahman. Hence dhyānābhyāsa or practice of meditation on the meaning of those dictums is not necessary. The jīvas are but ābhāsas or fallacious appearances of Brahman in the individual minds. (This has earned this theory, the designation of Ābhāsavāda as opposed to Pratibimbavāda and Avacchedavāda of other schools.)

The 'Vivaraṇaprasthāna' of Padmapāda (9th cent. A.D.) and Prakāśātman (A.D. 1200) comes next. The name is derived from the work Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa of the latter, it being a voluminous commentary on the Pañcapādikā of Padmapāda. Though this name suggests that it covers five pādas or sections of the Brahmasūtras, only the commentary on the first four sūtras is now available. The chief doctrines of this school are: Avidyā is a jaḍātmikā śakti (a force of material nature) and is the material cause of this world. It is bhāvarūpa, a positive entity, but not real. Māyā, prakṛti, avyakta, avyākṛta, tamas, śakti etc., are all its synonyms. It is called avidyā when āvaraṇa power is predominant and māyā when vikṣepa power becomes dominant. Alternatively, it is māyā at the cosmic level and avidyā at the individual level. Avidyā rests on Brahman but acts on the jīvas. The jīvas are pratibimbas or reflections of Brahman in the antaḥkaraṇa (mind). The reflected images have no reality other than that of the original (bimba) Brahman. This theory is called Pratibimbavāda as contrasted with Ābhāsavāda.

The 'Bhāmatīprasthāna' of Vācaspati Miśra (A.D. 840) is the third and the last of these major schools. Bhāmatī is his celebrated commentary on the Śaṅkarabhāṣya of Brahmasūtras. This school is built round the Bhāmatī along with its subsidiary commentaries Kalpataru of Amalānanda (13th cent. A.D.) and Parimalā of Appayya Dīkṣita (16th cent. A.D.). The views of this school can be briefly

summarised as follows: Brahman is the material cause of the world, not as the locus of avidyā but as the object of avidyās supported by the jīvas. Māyā is only an accessory cause. Avidyā cannot abide in Brahman. It abides in the jīvas and is plural since the jīvas are plural. Vācaspati advocates two varieties of avidyā: the mūlāvidyā or kāraṇāvidyā (primal nescience); the tūlāvidyā or kāryāvidyā (derivative nescience). It is the latter that is responsible for bhramasamśkāras or error impressions. Also, Vācaspati appears more inclined towards the Avacchedavāda or the theory of limitation with regard to the appearance of the jīvas. Just as a pot limits the infinite sky in itself, avidyā of the individual limits Brahman and makes it appear like a jīva. Another point of importance in this school is that the mahāvākyas do not produce anubhava (immediate cognition). It is the mind seasoned by meditation that gives such experience.

Mention may also be made here of Dr̥ṣṭiśṣṭivāda which advocates that the world is created simultaneously with its perception; and, Ekajīvavāda, which propounds that there is only one jīva which is in bondage and when it gets liberation, everything else disappears. Prakāśānanda (15th-16th cent. A.D.) is the chief exponent of these schools.

Advaita was subjected to continuous criticism by other Vedāntic schools as also the Buddhists and hence the growth of polemical literature became inevitable. Mention must be made of two most important works of this type: the Khaṇḍana-khaṇḍa-khādyā of Śrīharṣa (12th cent. A.D.) and the Advaita-siddhi of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (16th cent. A.D.).

CONCLUSION

It should be said to the credit of Advaita Vedānta that even now it is attracting the respectful attention from scholars of the highest calibre, both Eastern and Western.

VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA VEDĀNTA DARŚANA

INTRODUCTION

Among the wellknown philosophical systems of India, the Vedānta system--called the Vedānta 'Darśana' and based mainly on the prasthānatraya --viz., the Upaniṣads, the Brahmasūtras and the Bhagavadgītā --has carved out for itself, a pre-eminent place. This system has, in course of time, branched off into three main streams: Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita.

The Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta Darśana, the subject of this essay, is not the creation of Rāmānuja (A.D. 1017-1137), but much older than him. The twelve Āḷvārs like Nammāḷvār, Kulaśekhara and Āṇḍāḷ (A.D. 600-900), as also the Ācāryas like Nāthamuni (A. D. 824-924), Yāmuna (A.D. 918-1038) and Rāmānuja evolved the system out of the more ancient teachings contained in the prasthānatraya and gave it a definite shape. However, Rāmānuja was its best exponent. The pioneering and stupendous work he has turned out in the cause of this system, perhaps, justifies in its being sometimes called 'Rāmānuja Darśana'.

The demise of Rāmānuja was followed by a period of sectarian split among his followers (generally called as Śrīvaiṣṇavas) which ultimately ended in a permanent division of their ranks into two sects of Vaḍagalais and Teṅgalais. These words literally mean the followers of the northern and the southern schools respectively. The two sects developed separate sets of works, separate lineage of gurus or teachers and separate traditions in many matters of practical importance.

Mention should be made here, of the following apostolic successors of Rāmānuja who were responsible for establishing the system on a firm foundation: Vedānta Deśika (A. D. 1268-1370), Piḷḷai Lokācārya (A. D. 1264-1327) and Māṇavāḷa Māmuni (A. D. 1370-1443).

LITERATURE

The canonical works of this system are: Gītārthasaṅgraha of Yāmuna; Vedārtha-saṅgraha , Śrībhāṣya and Gītābhāṣya of Rāmānuja; Tātparyacandrikā, Īśāvāsyabhāṣya and Rahasyatrayasāra of Vedānta Deśika and Śrutaparakāśikā of Sudarśana Sūri (A. D. 1200-1275). The Tamil compositions of the Āḷvārs (called Nālāyira-prabandham) and quite a few compositions of other teachers like Raṅgarāmānuja (A. D. 1600) are also considered as very authoritative.

Viśiṣṭādvaita is essentially a philosophy of religion. In it, reason and faith coalesce to become 'reasoned faith'. It is often identified with the older 'Seśvara Mīmāṃsā,' and is also called 'Ubhaya Vedānta,' (ubhaya = both) since it accepts both the Sanskrit prasthānatraya and the Tamil prabandhams as equally authoritative. Pāñcarātra treatises are also put on a par with the Vedas.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Rāmānuja accepts knowledge in all its levels of sense perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), and scriptural testimony (āgama or śabda) as valid, and also that it affirms reality. The principle of dharmabhūtajñāna, the logical rule of apr̥thak-siddha-viśeṣaṇa, the grammatical rule of sāmānādhikaraṇya, and the realistic view of satkāryavāda are the special features of his theory of knowledge.

Dharmabhūtajñāna is the consciousness of the individual soul as its attribute, through which it comes to know the nature of the external world, Self, and Īśvara or Brahman. It is eternal and all-pervasive in respect of Īśvara and the jīvas. However, owing to the limitation imposed by karma, it has become contracted in the latter. When it is purified, it expands into infinity and brings about an immediate intuition of God.

The logical rule of apr̥thak-siddha-viśeṣaṇa states that a viśeṣaṇa (quality) subsists in the viśeṣya (the qualified substance) and is apr̥thak-siddha or has an inseparable existence. Of course, it is not absolutely identical with it. It is separate and yet inseparable. For instance, when we say that man is rational, the quality of rationality is inseparable from man, though it is not man himself. In the view of Rāmānuja, dharmabhūtajñāna is an apr̥thak-siddha-viśeṣaṇa of the jīva; the jīvas and prakṛti are apr̥thak-siddha-viśeṣaṇa of Brahman or Īśvara.

This very truth is brought out by the grammatical rule of sāmānādhikaraṇya or co-ordinate predication, which means the application of two terms to a single entity through connotation of its two modes. For example, in the sentence 'This is a cow,' different words connoting genus and quality (i.e. jāti and guṇa) also connote individual (vyakti) and substance (guṇin) respectively. Same is the case with the Upaniṣadic text 'Tat tvam asi' ('That thou art'). A substance may become the body or quality of another substance and a word connoting the body (śarīra) may connote the Self, its possessor (śarīrin) also. Therefore, in the above example, the term 'tvam,' which connotes the jīva as the śarīra, connotes also Brahman, the śarīrin. Thus, in the highest Vedāntic sense, all terms connoting a thing or a person or a god connote also Brahman as the source, support, and the ultimate Self of all.

The Sāṅkhya theory of satkāryavāda, the theory of pre-existent effect, is accepted by Rāmānuja. Consequently, the world which is a transformation (pariṇāma) of Brahman, is real and not illusory as

asserted by the Advaitins.

ONTOLOGY

Viśiṣṭādvaita accepts the three entities, viz., Brahman or Īśvara, jīva or cit, and prakṛti or acit as the ultimate realities. Hence, these three together are called 'tattvatraya.' Of these, however, Brahman is the absolute, independent Reality, whereas the other two are dependent realities. It is for this reason that this philosophy is known as 'Viśiṣṭādvaita' (Viśiṣṭa Advaita), a philosophy which accepts only one Reality, but with attributes or modes.

Brahman of Viśiṣṭādvaita is both the Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion at the same time. Truth (satya), knowledge (jñāna), infinity (anantatva), and bliss (ānandatva) are his attributes. He is the repository of all virtues and perfection. He is the progenitor, the protector, and the destroyer of this universe. He is also the indweller and controller of everything that exists in this universe. He is the śeṣin (the whole) of whom all the jīvas and the prakṛti are śeṣa (parts). He is the granter of all boons, whether it is righteousness (dharma), worldly gain (artha), and enjoyment of pleasures (kāma) or the attainment of freedom from births and deaths (mokṣa). His form is most wonderfully beautiful, absolutely free from all imperfections and defects. Out of his infinite mercy, he incarnates himself in moments of cosmic crisis, into humanity, in order that he may recover the lost jīva. He is the master of Śrī or Lakṣmī, Bhū, and Nīlā. Śrī is of the nature of mercy.

He enjoys the cosmic līla or play of creation. He creates this universe out of the cit and the acit portions of himself and yet remains unaffected in his essential nature. Since he creates in accordance with the past karma of the individual souls, he can never be accused of partiality or hardheartedness. He has a five-fold form, viz., para, vyūha, vibhava, antaryāmin and arca. The first is his form in Vaikuṅṭha, along with Śrī, Bhū, Nīlā, Ananta, Garuḍa, Viṣvaksena and others. The avatāras of Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha, who are his partial manifestations and who are the objects of contemplation by the devotees, go by the name 'vyūha.' The incarnations of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Kūrma, etc., are called vibhava. As the indwelling spirit of each and every object (animate or inanimate), he is called the antaryāmin. The descent into the forms, symbols, or idols worshipped by his devotees, in order to bless them, is known as arcāvatāra.

The next tattva is cit or the jīva. The jīvas are innumerable but of identical form and nature. Each jīva is essentially different from the body, mind, prāṇa, buddhi, and dharmabhūtajñāna. He is blissful (ānanda-svarūpa), atomic (aṇu), unmanifested (avyakta), unthinkable (acintya), homogeneous (niravayava), immutable (nirvikāra), substratum of consciousness and knowledge (jñānāśraya). He is (niyamyā) controlled by Īśvara, and is a part of him (śeṣa). He is knower of knowledge, doer of actions, and experiencer of their results (jñātr, kartṛ and bhoktr).

The jīvas can be divided into three groups: the bound (baddha), the liberated (mukta), and the eternally free (nitya). The bound souls are those who are constantly going through this transmigratory existence being attracted by and attached to the prakṛti in all its forms. Those of the bound souls who awaken to the evils of saṃsāra owing to their previous good karma and get liberated by doing spiritual practices and by the grace of God belong to the second category. Those like Ananta or Garuḍa who are never bound by the shackles of saṃsāra form the third category. The jīva, though essentially free, becomes bound in saṃsāra by the proximity of prakṛti, avidyā, karma, vāsanā and ruci. Avidyā is ignorance which manifests itself in various forms like anyathā-jñāna (knowing a thing in a way that is different from what it

really is), viparīta-jñāna (knowing a thing as the opposite of what it really is), etc. Karma is what is performed by the body, the senses, or the mind, whether good or bad. Doing anything unintentionally is vāsanā. Ruci is the inordinate desire created by vāsanā. Through bhakti and prapatti and the consequent grace of God, these bondages are destroyed.

The last tattva is acit or prakṛti. It is the insentient substance out of which this material universe is evolved. It is everchanging and can never be the substratum of knowledge. It is of two kinds: śuddhasattva and miśrasattva. The first is the material which is absolutely free from rajas and tamas, which is eternal, which is not subject to karma but only to the will of God. It is the substance out of which all things in Vaikuṅṭha (which is called nityavibhūti, as opposed to this temporal world, called mīlavibhūti) are made. The second, viz., miśrasattva, comprises the three guṇas--sattva, rajas and tamas. It is this which is evolved as this universe.

Out of these, Brahman or Īśvara is the independent reality, and the other two are dependent realities which inhere in him by the principle of sāmānādhikaraṇya. Just as skin, flesh, seed, colour, taste and smell can all exist in the same mango simultaneously, so also cit and acit can exist in Brahman.

MEANS OF LIBERATION

The mumukṣus, or those desirous of liberation, have to know three things: tattva or Reality, hita or the means of attaining that Reality, and puruṣārtha or the nature of attainment. Of these, tattva has already been described.

As regards the hita, the scriptures have described it in various ways. These things can be grouped under five headings, and are consequently known as 'arthapañcaka'. They are: sva-svarūpa (one's own nature), parasvarūpa (nature of God), puruṣārtha-svarūpa (nature of the four ends in life), upāya-svarūpa (nature of the means to liberation), and virodhi-svarūpa (nature of the obstacles in spiritual path).

Out of these, the first two have already been delineated while describing the tattvatraya. Puruṣārthas, or the things desired for by men, are four in number: dharma (practice of righteousness); artha (economic gain); kāma (enjoyments of the pleasures of life); and mokṣa (freedom from saṁsāra). Of these, the mumukṣu should know that the real puruṣārtha is mokṣa.

Upāya, or the means of liberation, is five-fold: karma, jñāna, bhakti, prapatti, and ācāryābhimāna. Karma includes all such acts like yajña, dāna, sandhyā, pañcayajñas, dhyāna, tīrthayātrā, etc. Jñāna or Jñānayoga consists of self-renouncement (vairāgya) and ceaseless practice of contemplation on Lord Nārāyaṇa. This leads to the realization of the Self, but not that of the Lord.

The next step is bhakti. Bhakti or Bhaktiyoga marks the consummation of moral and spiritual endeavour as attained in the other two yogas. The Viśiṣṭādvaita constructs a ladder, as it were, from ethics to religion and from religion to mystic union. The seven aids to bhakti are: viveka (purification of the body as the living temple of God); vimoka (inner detachment); abhyāsa (ceaseless practice of the self-presence of God as the inner Self); kriyā (service to all beings); kalyāṇa (practice of virtues); anavasāda (freedom from despair); and anuddharṣa (absence of exultation).

Prapatti is complete self-surrender, and is meant for those who are unable to follow either Karmayoga, Jñānayoga, or Bhaktiyoga. Its main characteristics are: to conceive what is in conformity with the will of God; to reject what is disagreeable to him; to seek him alone as the protector; and to surrender one's self to him in all meekness.

Ācāryābhimāna is strong faith in the guru and his affectionate attachment to the disciple. The

obstacles to the spiritual path (virodhi), which are the last of the arthapañcaka, are again five-fold: obstacle to the realization of the Self; to the realization of God; to mokṣa; to the means of realization; and to the attainment of the goal.

STATE OF LIBERATION

The liberated soul has a direct vision of Brahman in Vaikuṅṭha and is absorbed in the eternal bliss of union with him (sāyujya). To him the pluralistic world remains, but the pluralistic view is abolished. The distinction between him and Brahman still remains, and there is no loss of personality. He will continue for ever to enjoy this state of bliss by serving Brahman.

CONCLUSION

Viśiṣṭādvaita is thus not a dry metaphysics, but a philosophy of religion. In it, reason and faith have been nicely synthesized. It guarantees the vision of God and salvation to all finite beings—human, subhuman, or celestial. The view that God is immanent in all for the purpose of cosmic redemption inspires the feeling that the God of all religions is ultimately one, though the various seers and sects may give different accounts of him.

DVAITA VEDĀNTA DARŚANA

INTRODUCTION

The Vedānta-darśana, the last of the six well-known systems of Indian philosophy, has three main branches: Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita. The Dvaita Vedānta system, vigorously propounded and propagated by Madhva* (A. D. 1238-1317) is the most powerful reaction to the extreme idealism of Advaita as taught by Śaṅkara (A. D. 788-820) and his followers. The division of reality into two tiers viz., the vyāva-hārika (empirical) and the pāramārthika (absolute), the doctrines of Nirviśeṣa-brahman (attributeless Supreme Being) and mithyātva (falsity) of the objective world as asserted by the Advaitins, have all received a very severe treatment at the hands of the dualistic philosophers, especially Madhva.

DVAITA LITERATURE

Contrary to the general understanding, the literature on the dvaita philosophy of Madhva is quite extensive. Madhva has to his credit 37 works in all, generally known as Sarvamūlagrantha. Apart from the commentaries on the ten Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā, he has left three treatises on the Brahmasūtras: Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, Aṅubhāṣya and Anuvyākhyāna. Some of the other works that may be mentioned are: a special class of literature known as the Tātparyanirṇaya on the Bhagavadgītā, the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata; Viṣṇutattva-vinirṇaya, R̥gbhāṣya and Māyāvādakhaṇḍana.

Some more important works of this school are:

- (1) By Jayatīrtha (13th cent. A. D.):-- Nyāya-sudhā (on the Anuvyākhyāna), Tattva-prakāśikā (on the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya), Nyāyadīpikā (on the Gītātātparyanirṇaya) and Prameyadīpikā (on the Gītābhāṣya).
- (2) By Vyāsatīrtha, also known as Vyāsarāya (A. D. 1447-1539):-- Nyāyāmṛta, Tarka-tāṇḍava and Candrikā.
- (3) By Rāghavendra (A. D. 1598-1671): á—Nyāyasudhāparimalā.

PHILOSOPHY

Generally, the Indian systems of philosophy discuss their subject under four broad categories: pramāṇa (means of knowledge), prameya (what is to be ascertained by the pramāṇas), sādhanās

(spiritual practices) and mokṣa (liberation from transmigratory existence).

PRAMĀÑAS

Like most of the other schools, the Dvaita Vedānta of Madhva, accepts the three pramāṇas viz., pratyakṣa (direct perception), anumāna (inference) and śabda, śruti or āgama (scriptural testimony). However, it gives very great importance to pratyakṣa as far as the things of this world are concerned. It never concedes that this world of sensory experience is mithyā (illusion) since it has been a universal and direct experience. This direct experience attains certainty due to its being illumined by the energy of the jīva (the individual soul) called sākṣī in this system. The analogy of the snake being perceived in a rope in semi-darkness cannot be extended to this world-experience since that snake never existed and was only an illusory perception and hence, it was sublated by the later, correct, perception of the rope. This 'khyāti' or the theory of illusory perception has been named here as 'abhinava-anyathākhyāti' (ultra-new theory of false 'perception').

However, as far as the things beyond the ken of our sensory perceptions and inferences based on them are concerned, the śabda or the scripture (the Veda) is our ultimate authority. It is true that the Upaniṣads contain statements which support the theory of Brahman, the Absolute, being attributeless and also his being a Person (God) with infinitely great and auspicious qualities. Whereas the Advaita Vedānta treats the former as the main import of these statements and gives a lower status to Personal God in its two tier theory of vyāvahārika-satya (the empirical reality) and pāramārthika-satya (the absolute Reality), the Dvaita Vedānta of Madhva considers the latter as the main import and the former as supporting the same in a round-about way. The latter texts are called 'upaḥjīvyā' (basic) and the former as 'upaḥjīvaka' (dependent or explanatory). Since the world of multiplicity is a fact of universal experience, certified by the sākṣī, its denial by the upaḥjīvaka texts should be construed rather in a symbolic way, as just asserting the unity of the many in the one (God, the absolutely independent Reality on whom all the other categories depend). This assertion of the unity must needs presuppose the many!

PRAMEYAS

Coming to the prameyas, the following ten are the ultimate categories as accepted by this system: dravya (substance), guṇa (quality), karma (action), sāmānya (class character), viśeṣa (particularity), viśiṣṭa (the qualified), amśī (the whole), śakti (power), sādṛśya (similarity) and abhāva (negation).

Dravya or substance is the substratum of attributes and the material cause of evolution of some entities like prakṛti and the emanation in others like Brahman and the jīva.

Dravya, again, is of six types: Brahman or Viṣṇu (God), Lakṣmī (Consort of God), jīvas (individual souls), avyākṛta-ākāśa (unmodified space), prakṛti (the insentient material cause) and the three guṇas (sattva, rajas and tamas).

Guṇas are attributes. They are countless. They may be physical, mental or spiritual. But they always depend on the substances they qualify. God, However, is never touched by the bad guṇas.

Karma or action is of two kinds: puṇya (meritorious) and pāpa (sinful). They are responsible for the pleasant and the painful experiences of the jīvas.

Sāmānya or universal is that property by which we see something common in a plurality of objects, as for 'instance tableness' in several tables, which are all different individual pieces.

Viśeṣa (particularity) translated more often as 'difference-identity' by the Mādhva scholars, is a special contribution of Madhva to the group of categories. When we say that we see a table, it also means

that we see it as different from the floor on which it is placed. Again, we also see it as different from all other objects. There is only one process of knowing involved in the perception of both the entity as such and its difference from all others. This is *viśeṣa*, the self-linking capacity of substances, that enables them to assimilate the attributes into their very nature without obstructing the capacity of the attributes to display themselves. For instance, a ripe mango has several attributes: red colour, softness, sweet taste and a flavour of its own. This substance mango is not only identified with them but also different from them. Not only that, even these several attributes are different from one another. This special quality of the substance, of being different and also being identified with the attributes is inherent to it and is called *saviśeṣa-abheda*'.

The *viśiṣṭa* or the qualified, is the thing-in-itself (*viśeṣya*) with the qualifying adjuncts (*viśeṣaṇas*), seen together in a single perception as one. The subtraction or addition of any *viśeṣaṇa* will produce a new *viśiṣṭa*. Hence the whole is something more than its parts.

Aṁśī is the entity that has *aṁśas* or fractions or parts. A cloth is an *aṁśī* whereas its threads are its *aṁśas*. Incarnations of God are called '*svarūpāṁśa*' (a fraction of potency) whereas the *jīvas* are termed as '*bhinnāṁśa*' (a potency in separation).

Śakti is the capacity or power and is said to be of four kinds: Brahman's capacity beyond human comprehension, induced power as in consecrated images, the super-sensory power in causes that helps them to produce their effects and the power of words to produce their meanings.

Sādṛśya is resemblance or similarity. After seeing one cow, when we see another, we see not only a new cow but also the resemblance between the two. Since resemblance as such cannot reside in either of the cows, it must be recognised as a separate category.

Abhāva or negation, though not positive, is considered as a category in this system. The four varieties--same as accepted by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika-system--are: *prāgabhāva* (perception of nonexistence before a thing is produced), *pradhvaṁsābhāva* (perception of its absence after it is destroyed), *anyonyābhāva* (perception of the mutual nonexistence of one thing in another) and *atyantābhāva* (absolute nonexistence). The absence of a pot before its production and after its destruction is the example for the first two *abhāvas*. The reciprocal negation between a jar and a cloth is the example for the third. The son of a 'barren woman' or the 'horns of a hare' are the illustrations for the last.

THEOLOGY

The doctrine of *pañcabhedas* or five-fold differences is fundamental to the *dvaita* philosophy of Madhva. According to this doctrine Brahman is different from the *jīvas*, and the *prakṛti*, the *jīvas* are different from one another and from the *prakṛti*, and, the various objects evolved out of *prakṛti* are also different from one another.

BRAHMAN OR GOD

Dvaita metaphysics divides the ultimate categories into two groups: the *svatantra* (absolutely free Reality) and the *asvatantra* (the dependent reality). Brahman or God alone is *svatantra* and all the others--*Lakṣmī* (God's consort), the *jīvas* or the individual souls and *prakṛti* or nature--are *asvatantra*. Though God does not create them (they being coeval with him) he is their absolute master and controller both from within and from without.

God is personal, but has no physical body, no anthropomorphic form. He is all-pervading. He is *Viṣṇu*, also called *Hari*, *Nārāyaṇa*, *Puruṣottama*, *Kṛṣṇa*, *Vāsudeva* and by several other names. He is not

only the creator and destroyer of the universe but also the controller in each and everyone of its aspects. He is full of infinite, auspicious, attributes as described in the scriptures. He is the quintessence of all perfection. No imperfection in the asvatantra categories can ever touch him. Māyā is his acintya-śakti (inconceivable power) by which he performs all cosmic activities like creation, sustenance, dissolution, control, enlightenment, obscuration, bondage and release of the souls. Grace is one of the most important of his attributes that helps a jīva devoted to him, to be redeemed. He can incarnate himself as avatāras. All the avatāras are equal, though the manifestation of his power may be different in them. The Vedas are the only source of information about God. Though he can be apprehended by them, he can never be comprehended. The authority of secondary scriptures like the Mahābhārata and the purāṇas should also be accepted since they too are works of Vyāsa, the editor of the Vedas.

LAKṢMĪ

Lakṣmī, represented as the consort of Viṣṇu, is the foremost among the conscious entities. Though absolutely dependent upon him, she has no bondage and is co-eval with the independent Viṣṇu and is hence called Samānā' (his equal).

Like Viṣṇu she is omnipresent and has no material form. But she can manifest in infinite forms. Viṣṇu has bestowed on her, his own cosmic powers, through which she can control the destinies of the jīvas and also the modifications of prakṛti, the insentient nature.

JĪVAS OR INDIVIDUAL SOULS

A jīva or an individual soul, is the centre of the I-sense which is endowed with consciousness and will. It has the powers to know, to act and to enjoy. It is atomic in size, but can pervade the body it occupies. It is a knower with an inherent capacity to know itself and others. It is a pratibimba or a reflection of God and hence gets a faint colouring of some of his attributes like self-luminosity and bliss. However, it is ever dependent on him.

The jīvas are infinite in number and are all different from one another as also from all the products of prakṛti. Each is unique. Its ignorance of its real nature as the centre of consciousness, different from the body-mind complex, is called 'avidyā' and is due to the will of God. It is this that has brought about its saṁsāra or transmigratory bondage.

Unlike the other systems of Vedānta, the dvaita system of Madhva categorises the jīvas into three permanent groups: mukti-yogyas (those which are fit for salvation), nitya-saṁsārins (the eternally transmigrating ones) and the tamo-yogyas (the damned ones). The jīvas of the first group are receptive to spiritual values. By concentrated spiritual disciplines and the grace of God, they can get salvation. Those of the second group are worldlings who delight only in worldly values and feel no need for ethical and spiritual life. Hence they undergo transmigration eternally. The jīvas of the last group are positively evil by nature, go on progressively degenerating, finally ending in eternal perdition.

PRAKṚTI OR NATURE

Prakṛti or nature is the ultimate source of the physical universe. It is eternal but insentient. The three guṇas--sattva, rajas and tamas--are regarded as its first products. From them emerge in succession the mahat (intellect), ahaṅkāra (egoism), manas (mind), the indriyas (sensory organs) and the five bhūtas (elements like earth, water etc.). This evolution of prakṛti is similar to that in Sāṅkhya philosophy. However, being a dependent reality, it evolves, not by itself but by the will of God, who again, exercises his will as per the karmas or deserts of the jīvas.

Since prakṛti is the upādānakāraṇa or the material cause of the universe, it is necessary to describe here the dvaita view about the cause and effect relationship. When a pot is produced out of clay, clay is the cause (kāraṇa) and pot is the effect (kārya). The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view that the effect did not exist in the cause, is called 'asatkāryavāda,' the doctrine that the effect did not exist (asat) in the cause. The Sāṅkhya-Yoga view, accepted by certain schools of Vedānta also, is that the effect (kārya) pre-existed (sat) in the cause (kāraṇa) though in a subtle form. This view is called 'satkāryavāda'. The Dvaita Vedānta however, differs from both these schools and puts its own view, viz., 'sad-asat-kārya-vāda,' the doctrine that the effect is both sat (existent) and asat (nonexistent) though not simultaneously. Before production, the pot, existed as the kāraṇa or the cause but not as kārya or effect. After its production it existed as kārya or effect, but not as kāraṇa or cause. The Dvaita Vedānta, however, like other doctrines, recognizes the efficient cause (nimitta-kāraṇa) also.

AVYĀKṚTA-ĀKĀŚA OR UNMODIFIED SPACE

The dvaita system postulates an avyākṛta-ākāśa or unmodified space, as a fundamental and permanent category, co-eval with God. It is different from the bhūtākāśa or elemental space which is a product of prakṛti. This ākāśa enables one to perceive dik (direction), like east and west. It exists even in pralaya or dissolution. It is infinite.

MOKṢA OR LIBERATION

A jīva is in saṁsāra or bondage, due to avidyā or ignorance induced in him by God, the absolutely independent Reality. Hence it is only by the grace of God that a jīva can get liberation from that bondage. A jīva must first acquire jñāna or knowledge of God--his greatness and goodness--through the scriptures by approaching a competent guru or preceptor. Śravaṇa (listening to the scriptures), manana (reflecting on their teachings) and dhyāna (meditation) will induce bhakti or devotion towards God and ultimately win his prasāda or grace. Thus it is bhakti that is the primary means of salvation, in this system. The ninefold devotion that is described in the Bhāgavata (7.5.23) is strongly recommended by Madhva for liberation. Madhva does not recognise vidveṣa-bhakti ('hatred-devotion') of Hiraṇyakaśipu or Śiśupāla as bhakti and considers it as a eulogy of concentration. He does not recommend madhura-bhakti (lustful attitude towards God as by the gopis of Bṛndāvana) to ordinary mortals and declares it as fit only for the apsara (nymph-like) jīvas.

Vairāgya or a spirit of renunciation and purity of mind by the practice of Karmayoga as described in the Bhagavadgītā must precede the above-mentioned disciplines. Duties pertaining to one's life must be continued to be performed till the end.

All this applies only to the mukti-yogya jīvas and not to the other two varieties.

In mokṣa, the jīva attains its original state of freedom and bliss in accordance with its intrinsic capacity. Since no two jīvas are identical, gradation persists even in the state of liberation.

After the death of the body, such a jīva that has qualified to attain the final liberation has all of its karma destroyed, passes through several subtle regions led by the ātivāhikas or heavenly guides and goes to Brahmaloaka, the supreme abode of Brahmā, also known as Hiraṇyagarbha. At the end of the kalpa or the creative cycle when Brahmaloaka dissolves, the jīva, along with Brahmā, enters into Vaikuṇṭha, the abode of Viṣṇu, after abandoning the sūkṣmaśarīra or the subtle body and assuming a divine body made of śuddhasattva (pure, untainted, sattva).

The system also posits a fourfold distinction in mokṣa: sālोक्या (residence in the same region),

sāmīpya (being near God), sārūpya (having a form similar to that of God) and sāyujya (togetherness with him).

CONCLUSION

The contribution of the dvaita of Madhva to Indian philosophical tradition is considerable. Madhva's sharp logic cuts to pieces the snobbish attitude of some thinkers who consider devotion as secondary to knowledge, and restores it to its rightful place. For him to love is to know and to know is to love.

Though his categorisation of the jīvas into three groups as salvable, world-bound and damnable, appears a little strange, he lifts God above all the blame for the evil in the world. His theology and ethics are supported by a strong epistemology. The doctrines of sākṣī, viśeṣa and bheda are his original contribution. He has also successfully established the harmony of the Upaniṣadic thoughts with those of the itihāsas (epics) and the purāṇas (mythology).

An earnest study of his dvaita system can certainly enrich our knowledge and increase our devotion to God thus making our spiritual evolution much more easy.

APPENDIX

BHĀSKARA (A. D. 996-1061)

Bhāskara is the trail-blazer for the post-Śaṅkara schools of Vedānta which did not agree with Śaṅkara's brand of advaita based on māyāvāda, the theory of the unreality of this world. He is a strict Vedāntin in the sense that he takes his stand on the Upaniṣads and the Brahmasūtras. His commentary on the latter expounds his philosophy.

Bhāskara advocates the acceptance of the direct meaning of all the passages of the Upaniṣads without any distinction. He presents a Brahman who has innumerable auspicious attributes, but, without any particular form. He has a twofold power--the bhokṛśakti (the power of the enjoyer) and the bhogyaśakti (the power of the enjoyed). Using these two powers he transforms himself into the acetana or insentient objects and the jīvas or the sentient souls. Though this transformation is real, it does not affect him in any way. The jīvas in their essential nature are one with Brahman, but get differentiated from him in the state of bondage due to the upādhis, or limiting adjuncts--the bodies and minds--which are real. These upādhis, though real, are not nitya or eternal. They are to be considered as real since they are actually experienced. But, in the state of liberation, they become one with Brahman even as the rivers flowing into the ocean become one with it.

Bhāskara considers this world as the kāryarūpa or effect, of Brahman and hence real. As regards the sādhanās, Bhāskara recommends performance of scripture-ordained duties without any desire for their fruits and the practice of meditation on Brahman as also the jīva's oneness with him. Since he does not accept a Personal God, there is no place for divine grace in his system.

NIMBĀRKA (13th cent. A. D.)

Nimbārka's Dvaitādvaita is very similar to the Bhedābheda of Bhāskara. However, being a firm believer in Brahman with form and attributes and the path of devotion, his philosophy is more akin to that of Rāmānuja.

Nimbārka's main work is Vedānta-pārijāta-saurabha which is his commentary on the Brahmasūtras. It is rather brief but lucid, since he avoids the dialectical methods or a flowery style.

According to him there are three equally real and co-eternal tattvas or principles: Brahman, cit and acit. While Brahman is the controller or niyantr, cit (the sentient being, the jīva or the soul) is the enjoyer, bhokṛ, and acit (the insentient nature, prakṛti) is the enjoyed, bhogya.

Acit is of three kinds: prākṛta or what is derived from prakṛti or primal matter; aprākṛta or what is not derived from prakṛti, but derived from a non-material substance of which the world of Brahman is made and, kāla or time.

They are different from one another in their svarūpa or nature. But the cit and the acit are paratantra-tattvas, dependent realities.

Nimbārka adopts the view that the bheda (difference) and the abheda (non-difference) are both equally real. They coexist but do not contradict each other. It is something like the relationship between the sea and its waves or the sun and its rays. Cit and acit, the souls and the universe, exist in Brahman from all eternity and never get separated from him whether in the causal state or when manifested.

They retain their individuality even during salvation, or dissolution of the universe. Brahman is personal, possesses a celestial body, full of exquisite beauty and grace. Nimbārka identifies him with Kṛṣṇa

and posits Rādhā as his Śakti or consort even as Rāmānuja accepts Lakṣmī as the consort of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa.

Brahman is omniscient, the cause of the origin, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. He is all-powerful and yet all-merciful. He is gracious to his devotees and helps them have a direct vision of himself.

The jīvas are atomic and infinite in number. Each of them is a distinctive agent, a jñatṛ (knower), kartṛ (doer) and bhoktṛ (enjoyer) of the karmas he does. They animate the body they live in, even as a small lamp kept in a room lights up the whole room.

There are three destinies for the jīvas--naraka or hell for the sinners, svarga or heaven for the virtuous and apavarga or release for the enlightened ones. Apavarga is attaining the world of Brahman from which there is no return.

Constant meditation on Brahman as the inmost self of the jīva or the individual soul is the means of attaining Brahman in Brahmaloaka. There he has brahma-svarūpa-lābha, becomes similar to him in nature, except for the power of creation.

The other sādhanās recommended are: scripture-ordained work, knowledge, devotion and surrender to God, as also strict obedience to the spiritual teacher.

VALLABHA (A. D. 1479-1544)

Vallabha's philosophy is known as Śuddhādvaita. He is said to have written two commentaries on the Brahmasūtras, the Bṛhadbhāṣya and the Aṇubhāṣya, of which the former is not available now. The latter is up to the 33rd sūtra of the second pāda of the third adhyāya (3.2.33) only. The book was completed by his son Viṭṭhalanātha. Apart from the prasthānatraya, he holds the Bhāgavata in very high esteem. He wrote a commentary on it also, called Subodhinī, which too remained incomplete.

For Vallabha, God the Absolute is Kṛṣṇa whom the Upaniṣads call Brahman'. He is one without a second and is sat-cit-ānanda, (being, awareness and bliss). He has three forms: Parabrahman, Puruṣottama or Kṛṣṇa; Antaryāmin, the indwelling spirit of all the living beings, and Akṣarabrahman which is the object of meditation and the abode of Kṛṣṇa. It is this Akṣara that appears as prakṛti (insentient nature, the matrix of all created objects) and puruṣa (sentient soul, the jīva), but is beyond both. While Puruṣottama is the highest, Akṣara is an expression of his.

This Akṣara, again, appears in three more forms: kāla (time), karma (action) and svabhāva (nature).

Kāla or time is suprasensible and is inferred from its effects. It is all-pervasive and the support of all beings. Karma or action is also universal. It manifests itself as different actions of different beings. Svabhāva or nature is that which produces pariṇāma or change.

God is both saguṇa and nirguṇa (with and without attributes). He cannot be known except through his own grace. Through his māyāśakti, he can become anything at any time. He is both the material and the efficient cause of this world. He creates the world through his own nature and hence the samavāyi-kāraṇa, the inherent cause. Though he exists everywhere in his tripartite nature as being, consciousness and bliss, their manifestation in the created universe differs. Matter reflects only the being aspect (sat'), the souls reflect the consciousness aspect also ('cit') whereas as Brahman, he manifests all the three fully.

Though unmanifest and transcendent in his own nature, by creating the world through his will, he

becomes manifest and an object of comprehension. Since this world is a manifestation of Brahman, it is never destroyed but is only withdrawn into him at his will.

The jīvas or individual souls come out of Akṣara-Brahman like sparks from fire. They are eternal parts of Brahman and are atomic in size. They are of three classes: puṣṭi, maryādā and pravāha. The first are the chosen ones enjoying the grace of God, and ardently devoted to him. The second study the scriptures, perform the rites prescribed as ordained duties and also cultivate devotion. They attain God in course of time. The last are interested only in the worldly life and hence transmigrate constantly. Some of them, due to satsaṅga or good company, may attain God later.

Vallabha considers bhakti or devotion as the only means of salvation. By that, the jīva is released from the cycle of birth and death and enjoys the bliss of God in all possible ways.

Vallabha holds that the knower of Brahman is absorbed in Akṣara-Brahman and not in Puruṣottama. It is only through bhakti that the latter, the highest aspect, can be attained.

He advocates two forms of bhakti: maryādā-bhakti and puṣṭi-bhakti. The former is formal devotion to be practised as described in the scriptures and has to be cultivated by self-effort. The latter is attained by the grace of God alone, without one's effort. 'Puṣṭi' refers, not to the physical nourishment, but to the spiritual nourishment got by the grace of God. Hence the name 'Puṣṭi-bhakti'. Consequently, Vallabha's system is also called 'Puṣṭi-mārga'. Emphasis on the worship of Bālakṛṣṇa, (child Kṛṣṇa) and sevā or service to him, find an important place in the mode of sādhanā taught by him.

BALADEVA (A. D. 1725)

Baladeva is an important teacher of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism developed by Śrīkṛṣṇa Caitanya (A.D. 1485-1533). The philosophy of this school is known as Acintya-bhedābheda. Govindabhāṣya is his commentary on the Brahmasūtras, Siddhāntaratna being another work that expounds this philosophy. This school, though deeply indebted to the Dvaita system of Madhva, also differs from it.

According to this school of thought, Brahman the highest reality is Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu or Hari. He is the Personal God possessed of infinite auspicious qualities, which are 'acintya' or beyond our comprehension. He is 'nirguṇa' only in the sense that he is beyond the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas. The scriptures are the only authority to reveal him.

God has three powers: parāśakti (higher power), aparāśakti (lower power) and avidyāśakti (nescience-power). Through the first, he becomes the efficient cause, and, through the other two, the material cause. When the latter two powers are manifested in gross forms, the universe of souls and matter arises.

Creation of the world is a spontaneous act of the Lord. However, he does it as per the karmas of the individual souls.

The individual soul is eternal. It is both knowledge and knower, an enjoyer and an active agent, though not independent. It is atomic in size.

Bhakti is the sole and direct cause of salvation. Though dhyāna or upāsana (meditation) is one form of bhakti, it is through premābhakti (intense devotion) that God can be realised. Performance of duties purifies the mind. Study of the scriptures is an aid in the path of sādhanā. However, it is ultimately by the grace of God alone that he can be realised and salvation attained. The freed soul resides in the same

world as the Lord and in his proximity, attains his nature and attributes. However, it retains its separate identity.

Baladeva does not admit of jīvanmukti or liberation while living in the body here.