

## **Seeing self (jiva), seeing as Self (Atman) and seeing Self called Ultimate Consciousness (Brahman)**

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(Professor George McLean suggested us in his last email a few days ago that we could put a special emphasis on the relation and continuity between the sessions and papers as mutually reinforcing and deepening one another as regards moving beyond cultural closer and conflict to the positive interrelations needed for global times. I immensely like the approach of Professor McLean that it recognizes the methodological necessity of the plurality of thought but I am sure it does not forcefully contest the idea of 'heterogeneity' which however, completely subordinates the commonalities of thought and the relationship between the self and the other. The methodology of Professor McLean definitely avoids the two extremes:

Incoherence of chaotic scattering of flowers, and Reductionist, homogenized universals.

After all any intellectual pursuit of such big dimension of thought as envisaged by Professor McLean highlights the thinking patterns of the East and the West and it also tends to go beyond these confines of two parts of this earth and moves towards the total world, which is

definitely one but we have sadly divided it into fragments: first, second and the third world.)

Philosophers when discussing metaphysics often focus on the notion of Self as an important aspect of reality. Metaphysics offers an account of the general nature of reality with reference to such phenomena as consciousness, mind, knowledge, belief, etc. These phenomena, as said by R. C. Pradhan in his paper, 'Rediscovering the Metaphysical Self' (1), cannot be explained unless we presuppose a subject or self to which they are attributable. Consciousness, mind and knowledge are concepts which immediately raise the questions, 'whose consciousness, whose mind and whose knowledge?', and these questions can't be answered unless we introduce a subject or self as the locus of the phenomenon. It is an elementary principle that locus cannot be a part of the phenomena of which it is the locus. Therefore it is always treated as a metaphysical category.

So at the outset we need to recognize that because of a semantic inadequacy, we say the Self is Consciousness (2) albeit we acknowledge that there is no duality between Self and consciousness, nor is consciousness distinct from Self, any more than light is from the sun, or heat from

fire. The embodied self also has knowledge (consciousness) but it is lower knowledge or the knowledge of the material world. On the other hand the higher knowledge or the knowledge of Brahman is known as pure consciousness which is reality transcending the subject-object distinction and also which is beyond all duality.

My reference point here is the concept of Advaita, non-duality of Shankaracharya or Shankara ( 8<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) of Indian philosophy who stated that the empirical self realizes itself as Consciousness. Since consciousness has categories, it will be better to say that self realizes itself as Ultimate Consciousness which is to be understood both as Cartesian duality as well as Vedantic oneness of the empirical self and the Supreme Self. It can also be understood as the progressive movement of the empirical self from its position of embodied self or jiva or empirical ego to metaphysical Self (*atman*) or Pure Consciousness. At the same time inversely *atman* or Pure Consciousness goes on inspiring, without making it obvious, this progressive movement of empirical self or empirical ego to the ultimate realization of the Self as pure consciousness.

This notion of Pure Consciousness (chit/chaitanya) , the pivotal concept in Vedanta, would come quite close to the concept of ‘transcendental consciousness’ in Husserlian phenomenology. However Husserl’s intentionality theory of consciousness goes against the non-intentional framework of Advaita. Shankaracharya explicitly refers to ‘*pratyagatman* (self realization)’ as the state of pure consciousness and explains it as ‘*sakshi*’ witness (without any involvement) (*asesa svaprachara saksi*). While remaining non-involved (*asanga*) it illumines *atman*, can be called as self-illumination, as well as illumining the empirical ego or *jiva*. Swami Vidaranya compares the witness- consciousness with a lamp on the stage which illumines equally the patron, the audience and the dancer and at the same time also illumines itself even in their absence – ‘*tadabhavapi dipyate*’ (3) This self-luminosity (*svaprakasatva*) of the conscious self without any intentionality is highlighted at several places in the Upanishads. Shankaracharya uses the term *prajna* knowledge also for consciousness.

One becomes conscious of a thing when one has the knowledge of it and hence consciousness is the very basis of the world of objects, (*prajna pratistha sarvasya jagatah*, Aitareyaopanisad Bhasya, 3.13) and it is therefore identified as Brahman (“*tasmat prajnanm*

*Brahma*”) It is *prajna* or in fact *samyak prajna* or comprehensive knowledge which reveals this meaning of self as *Self/Atman* or Brahman or pure consciousness. Like pure radiance, pure consciousness remains unrelated and unaffected by the objects which it lights up or reveals. This centrality of the pure consciousness of *Atman* is a unique feature of Advaita Vedanta. The entire world is revealed through the light of Brahman/*Atman* which is the same as pure consciousness or *chaitanya* which in its turn is not dependent on any object whatsoever for its self-revelation. (4)

The *Atman* which is *advaita* (one without a second) is regarded as the ultimate reality in the Vedantic framework of Shankara. *Atman* is not only of the nature of pure consciousness; it is also of the nature of pure bliss, *sacchidananda svarupa*.

I plan to give a synchronic (studying at a point of time and not historically) interpretation of empirical self, metaphysical Self and Ultimate Consciousness based on Shankara’s Advaita Vedanta, which, for its part, rests on Upanishadic philosophy. The Upanishads seem to contain two streams of thought: one which recognizes the diversity of the objective universe, the subjective individual and the ultimate reality (Brahman) and another which emphasizes their unity. (5) Shankara thinks that

anything which affirms the reality of diversity is only a concession to empirical modes of thought. All diversity being thus only conditionally true, the only teaching of the Upanishads according to him is that of unity. Since, however, there can be no unity apart from diversity; he does not describe his teaching as monism but only as “non-dualism” (*advaita*). (6) By calling it “non-dualism” Shankara is accepting the existence of diversity on empirical level.

### **Jiva: the empirical self**

The most striking feature of Vedic thought and Indian philosophy is its emphasis on the divinity of a human being and the immortality of his self. The Vedic philosophy speaks of an individual as a combination of the perishable material body and the imperishable inner spirit which is the essential immortal self. (7) Although death is a certain destiny for all human beings, yet a mortal can transcend it and attain immortality by knowing the Self or Atman. Because of ignorance and also due to lack of knowledge or true knowledge (*prajna* or *prakista jnana*) the empirical self - the *Jiva* - cannot realize that he is the immortal soul or Atman.

The *jiva* lives in *jagat* or the objective universe and it is a *vyabaharic satya* or empirical reality. The empirical reality about the *jiva* is created by its involvement in the process of *samsara* (worldly affairs), bound by its *karma* or actions. The objective universe and individual self are both identical with Brahman.

In Advaita Vedanta this world (*jagat*) is false or an illusion (*maya* or *prakriti* or matter) like the illusion of a person who sees a serpent at a distance when in actuality it was just a rope. When the illusion of ‘serpent’ is overcome there will be nothing left of it. Similarly, like the serpent, this world called *jagat* or *prakriti* or matter is false, or *maya*, but this *maya* is the creative power of Isvara or God. The concept of Isvara or God is complex, because it involves both the concept of the absolute (Brahman) and that of *Prakriti* (*maya*), matter. The world which is full of variety and change cannot be explained in terms of the absolute alone, which is, invariable, immutable and identical.

The grand statement about it is ‘**All this is verily Brahman**’. (8) The *maya* or *prakriti* or matter, which is the source of change and difference, cannot by itself produce the world, for it is unconscious or unintelligent.

An Advaitin (a devotee/student of Advaita) believes that to produce anything a cause must itself be intelligent or it must be guided by intelligence.

So the cause of the world must consist of the Brahman, the pure unchanging intelligence and *prakriti*, matter or the unconscious changing element.

Both change and permanence characterize the world. Hence its cause must itself have both these characteristics.

The Brahman in God is the principle of consciousness and permanence and the *prakriti* in God is the changing unconscious and dynamic element. Isvara/God combines the two principles of Brahman and *prakriti*, matter. (9) It is through God that the connection between the Absolute and the world is established. (For Jews, Christians and Islamists God is the 'Ultimate Absolute' or ultimate cause and cannot be equated with Isvara or the God of Vedanta.) The Absolute in Vedanta is invariable, immutable and identical and non-dual whereas God in Shankara's Vedanta involves the concept of matter or *maya* in him and hence God is introduced in the concept of Vedanta. Brahman is non-different from Isvara or God. Non-different does not mean identical but it means dependent. (Isvara or God is dependent on Brahman).



Hence in Shankara's Vedanta instead of just God and the universe, we have the Absolute, and then God and then the universe.

Shankara who was highly religious and who has since been regarded as the chief preceptor of the Advaita school of thought, had to provide a place for God in his conceptual scheme otherwise with reference to his grand statement '**All this is verily Brahman**', Brahman will have to be accepted as the sole reality but It cannot be the creator as It is beyond all these, It is, invariable, immutable and identical and non-dual but if It becomes creator it will prove duality where Absolute will become the cause of the changing world and hence Shankara brings the concept of God who is the creator of the universe.

The *jiva* or the empirical self, as said in another grand statement, is also Brahman, "**I am Brahman**". The empirical self or *jiva* and *atman* (*jivatman*) are different according to Shankara but at the same time both are together. *Jiva* or the empirical self is an individual or a person, a knower, a doer, and a reaper of the consequences of its actions. It is in bondage. It is involved in the cycle of births and deaths until it becomes free from

bondage with the realization of the self. *Jiva* is not false or illusory as the world is; rather, it is its limitations which are false. (10)

These limitations, which are really its empirical adjuncts, appear as if transferred to it, as a person looking at a white conch through a sheet of yellow glass, of whose existence he is not aware, takes it to be yellow. In other words the yellowness of the glass appeared as transferred to the conch. In the case of the rope and serpent, the serpent is illusory but in the case of the white conch it is not illusory; only attribution of the yellowness is illusory. With true knowledge the self realizes that it is Brahman itself. When this fact is realized in one's own experience, what is denied is not the *jiva* as a spiritual entity, but only certain aspects of it, such as its finitude and its separateness from other selves, as says the Mundakopanishad about the liberated *jiva* or the embodied self:

*Yatha nadyah syandamanah samudrestam*

*gachanti namrupe vihaya|*

*tatha vidvan mamarupad vimultah*

*paratparam purushamupaiti divyam||*

(As rivers, flowing, disappear in the ocean losing name and form, so the wise man free from name and form goes unto the highest of the high – the Supreme Divinity.)

Those who believe in duality like the *Madhvas*(disciples of Madhvacharya 13<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.), think that the liberated souls retain their individuality.

Even if we follow *Advaitins* when they say that one can realize itself as the metaphysical Self or pure consciousness in his life time we must remember that until the *jiva* or the empirical self is alive, he lives in this world with his internal adjuncts. When the realization comes and the internal adjuncts become immaterial he is *jivanamukta* (in a state of realization) and turns to be a *jivasakshi* (witness).

There is a difference in the way in which the internal adjuncts are related to *jiva* and *jivasakshi*.

The internal adjuncts are a part of an invariable distinguishable feature of the *jiva* or the empirical self, but they are an external condition or separable feature of the *jivasakshi*. So long as the ego is in bondage its *sakshittva* (the witnessing quality) is associated with the internal adjuncts. However in the state of realization the

*jivasakshi*, the pure consciousness, remains without the internal adjuncts. Similarly *maya* is an invariable feature of Isvara, but a separable condition of *Isvarasakshi*. (11)

*Jiva* or the empirical self is eternal in two senses: (i) It is eternal in the sense that it is part of the *samsara* (empirical reality/mundane existence) which as a process is eternal; (ii) It is eternal in the sense that it is identical with Brahman, which is eternal. It is perhaps because it is eternal in both the senses that it can be referred to as *jivatman* or the eternal Self or, as said, it is Brahman appearing in an empirical self. (12) As the permanently still witness to its eternally fluctuating fortunes the *jivatman* is known as the *sakshi* or witness; the permanent as the witness of the constant. (13)

But this leads to the view that there can be two kinds of eternalities: one, *Kutastha nityata*, unchanged for ever like a rock (permanent) and two, *pravaharupa nitya*, though incessantly changing yet it does not alter its pattern (constant) (*niyati*) as a flowing river keeps its form. The first eternity is ‘enduringly real’ and the second, ‘mutably real’.

The whole concept of *jiva* as a *sakshi* has emerged out of a very accepted, oft-quoted couplet from Mundakopanisad:

*Dwa suparna sayuja sakhaya*

*Samanam vriksham parishasvajatel*

*Tayornyah pipallam swadvatti*

*Anasnannayah abhichakashitill 5.1*

(Two birds bound one to another in close friendship, perch on the self same tree. One of them eats the fruits of the tree with relish, while the other looks on without eating)

One of the birds, who is eating the fruit, is the *jiva*, limited by ignorance and therefore bound by body, mind, attachment and action. The other is untainted by the passing phase of life or by the forms of enjoyment and is only a witness, *sakshi*, but both are bound one to another in close friendship and *jiva* is nothing but the image of the *Paramatman/Brahman*. They are inseparable from each other as is the sun's image from the sun, and when *jiva* sees the other perching on the same branch and also his glory (*justam yada pashyatanyamishamasya/mahimanamiti vitashokah, Mundako, 5.2*), he becomes free from dejection and attains to the unbroken eternal bliss of his own self.

But this does not happen on its own. He attains this through **veracity** (*satyena, Munduko, 5.5*), **concentration and austerity** (*tapasaa, ibid, 5.5&8*), **the comprehensive knowledge** (*samyak jnana, ibid, 5,5*), **thought** (*chetasaa*), **refinement and purification of understanding** (*jnana prasedana, ibid, 5.8*) and with **purified nature** (*vishudhah svattah, ibid, 5.10*).

But the sages are cautious not to give too much of importance to knowledge, thought and *buddhi* or intellect as all are empirical, worldly knowledge - *apara vidya* or *avidya* which can make the mind haywire and so it is said that ultimately this realization of the Self is not attained through discourses, nor through intellectuality, nor through much learning. It is gained only by him who longs for it. To such a one the Self reveals Its own nature.

The Upanishadic sage is not describing a schizophrenic personality but the normal division of the self into an acting self and a witnessing self. The acting self is the bird who is eating the fruit, who is the self with the material adjuncts and hence not-self. The Atman alone cannot cause individuality for it is differenceless while individuality implies differences. The Atman being universal and indivisible is equally present in all persons. According to S. Radhakrishnan, Shankara agrees that a not-self remains an integral element of personality. The

jiva is subject-object, self and not-self, reality and appearance. It consists of the Atman united or individuated by the object. It is the Atman in association with ajnana, ignorance. (14) It is therefore jivatman.

The two birds are, in fact one and the same. In the next sloka (couplet) it is said that seated in the self-same tree i.e. the body, one of them, the personal/worldly self – sunken in ignorance and deluded - grieves for his impotence. But when he sees the Other – the Lord, the Worshipful – as also his glory, he becomes free from dejection. (15) When the individual comes to realize the transcendental reality of his own self, which is the Lord of all beings untouched by the passing phenomenon of life, even as the sun is not really tarnished by the dust and dirt of the materials on which it reflects – then his dream of suffering and enjoyment disappears, and he attains to the unbroken eternal bliss of his own self. Both the birds are important if one is to understand this deep philosophy of the *Atman*. We will have to convert the Cartesian “I think therefore I am” to “I am, therefore I think”. Man therefore seeks to discover what he is.

The *jiva* suffers the illusion that its apparent individuality is a genuine individuality.

Shankara's argument is that the difference between *jiva* and *Atman* is an unreal difference apparent to the unliberated, who understands only from the point of view of *apara vidya*, or worldly knowledge whereas the liberated with the help of *para vidya*, (16) or higher knowledge realizes that the *jiva* is *Atman* but that could not be realized because of false qualities of the *jiva*.

Let me argue here that both Ramanujacharya's 'Vishitadvaitavada' or qualified non-duality and Madhvacharya's 'Dvaitavada' concept of duality-non-duality explain the whole issue under the framework of a theistic, personalistic interpretation of Vedanta and preserve the identity of and difference between Atman and Brahman. For Ramanuja and Madhva, salvation does not result in the loss of the self or its individuality. On the contrary, the liberated self retains its individuality and consciousness and enjoys eternal bliss in the infinite glory of the Paramatman. (17) Can you see this as the arrival of modernity in Indian thought? Some say so, though many do not think in that way. (?)

For instance the distinguished psychologist Sudhir Kakkar's challenge to the claim that Hindus are unique in self-knowledge and self-development looks erroneous and his contention that Hinduism encourages men and women to be members of groups rather than self



determining individuals is incorrect. Indian philosophical thought presents the self transcending individuality to realize its higher level of existence and ultimately inspires one to be a good individual. It is the realization of the limitless infinite in the finite and hence emancipation; in this way the individuality of the self as well as its sublimation fulfills one of the biggest demands of the modern times, i.e. sublimation of one's ego. *Advaita tattva*, says Gaudapada in his magnum opus, *Mandukya Karika*, if properly understood does not oppose any duality whatsoever. (18)

### **Atman: the metaphysical Self**

The very notion of the self as an individual represents an embodied existence; hence body is stated to be the abode of Atman. In Indian philosophy, as said earlier, two kinds of eternity are distinguished, i) *Kutastha nityata* and ii) *pravaharupa nityata*. A thing is *kutastha nityata* if it is unchanged for ever like a rock. While a thing is *pravaharupa nityata* that incessantly goes on changing like a river but its pattern (*niyati*) does not alter. The river is mutably real like the *pravaharupa nityata* and represents the *jiva* part of the *jivatman* and the *Atman*

element in it is the *kutastha nityata* like a rock which is enduringly real. (19)

Thus when it is said that '**I am Brahman**', it is not the *jiva* but the *Atman* element of the complex which is referred to.

Wittgenstein has a similar thing to say which is that the metaphysical Self is not the human being (20) nor is it the psychological self because by Self/Atman we do not mean the human organism or the mind which is attributable to the human organism. Human organism cannot be the Self because we can still ask whose organism it is. Similarly, the mind is not the Self because we can ask whose mind it is. Thus Self, man and mind do not belong to the same category. Man and mind are empirical concepts whereas Self Atman is a non-empirical, metaphysical category. (21)

According to Advaita philosophy, Self is the primal source of the universe and designates it as Brahman. And at other times, they describe it as the innermost essence of man (22) and refer to it as *Atman*. The Self stands for both *Brahman* and *Atman*. One needs to remind oneself that as a result of going outward into the universe, the Upanishadic seers identified its real basis as *Brahman*,

while looking inward the Upanishad seers realized the inner self to be *Atman*. (23) In the macrocosm of the universe, the sages saw Brahman, in the microcosm of their own being they saw the Atman. The realization that there is no distinction between the two, that the ground of one's own being is identical with the ground of the universe, says Embree, is the great discovery of the Upanishadic thinkers. "Whoever thus knows, I am Brahman," declares the sage, becomes this all. Even the gods have not the power to prevent him from becoming thus, for he thus becomes the Self." (24)

According to Charles Taylor death can be a way to breathe the air beyond. It gives a renewed affirmation of transcendence of something beyond flourishing and it recurs again and again in Western culture. In Indian culture Patanjali's yoga sutra was brought within the realm of common people by a siddha (enlightened) yogi (2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD). In one of his mystical esoteric poems Gorakhnath, by comparing the Ultimate Self as ocean and the self as a rain drop which becomes a part of the ocean, says that the small constricted life of a drop broke, and the drop became the ocean. Yes, when the drop falls into the ocean it is certainly dying in one sense, it is dying as a drop while in another sense the drop attains for the first time to the great life – it lives as the ocean. Dissolve, die

– then comes the divine manifestation the union or realization of the oneness. However self is not merely a drop that can merge with the ocean, the Brahman, but a drop than contains the ocean, a microcosm that contains the macrocosm.

The Taittiriya Upanishad, (hereafter TU) 2.1.1. speaks about the one who realizes the Self and also sets forth the nature of the Self “*satyam, jnanam anantam Brahma*”. All the four words herein have the same case-ending referring to one and the same thing. The Self (*Brahman* or by implication *Atman*) is the thing defined, and the other three words viz. *satyam* (reality), *jnanam* (knowledge), and *anantam* (infinite) convey its essential nature.

These three words in the text, according to N. Veezhinathan, cannot be taken as conveying the relation among their meanings. For, in that case, the Self/*Atman* will be qualified by the attributes of reality, knowledge, and infinite. An entity which is qualified or circumscribed by attributes cannot be viewed as infinite. The Self, however, is said to be infinite in this text itself in the sense it is unbounded (*anantam*). Further, a qualified entity invariably comes within the range of speech and mind. A subsequent text of the TU, “*yato*

*vaco nivartante, aprapya manasa saha*', declares that the Self transcends both speech and mind.

On these two grounds, it must be held that the text, “*satyam....Brahma*” conveys the Self as not qualified by the attributes such as reality etc, but as Self itself having reality, consciousness and infinitude constituting its very nature or essence. (25) Hence all these three words are not qualifying attributes (*visesanas*) but defining characteristics (*laksanas*). The words ‘*satyam*’, ‘*jnanam*’ and ‘*anatham*’ (reality, knowledge, infinitude) having been used in the defining sense distinguish the Self from objects which are non-real, insentient, and finite and thus dissimilar to it. They also distinguish it from objects such as space, time and *avidya* (ignorance) which are falsely imagined to be similar to the self in virtue of their being immeasurably great like it.

Self is real (*satyam*). A thing said to be real if it does not leave out its essential nature which is ascertained as its own. *Satyam* or reality is the essential nature of the Self. About Self as *satyam* (reality) scholars generally, by way of an illustration, refer to a text of Chandogya Upanishad: *yatha sommaikena mritpindena sarvam mrinmayam vijnaanatamsyaadaachaarambhanam vikaro namadheyam mrittiketeya satyam* (6.1.4) and explain that clay alone is real and modifications such as pot are non-

real. But if clay is to be taken as Self and both to be understood as real, Self is to be viewed then as cause and also as insentient but clay is insentient not the Self.

By defining Self as of the nature of Knowledge (*jnanam*) the false notion that the Self is insentient is no doubt removed but the mistaken belief that it would be instrumental in bringing about action denoted by the verbal base '*jna*' will not be dispelled. A detailed study of the issue explains that *jnanam* or knowledge in the empirical sense can be derived provided there is a i) knower *jnata*, ii) the object known *jneya*, iii) the instrument of knowledge i.e. mind and senses *jnanendriya* and iv) knowledge itself i.e. *jnaptiriti jnanam*.

The text "*tat srstva tadeva anupravisat*" (TU, 6.1) speaks of the Self/Atman as present in the body-mind complex as the *jiva*, the empirical self which is non-different from that which is well-known as the knower, i.e. the agent of the act of knowing, from (?) looking for the object of knowledge and is dependent upon factors instrumental (mind and senses) in bringing about knowledge . The result of this argument is that knowledge, which is stated to be the nature of the Self which is non-different from the *jiva*, must also be non-eternal. (26)

To solve this knotty issue Shankaracharya in his commentary on Taittiriya and the Brhadaranyaka Upanishads brings out the difference between consciousness which is the essential nature of the Self, and empirical knowledge which *jiva* comes to acquire through the interaction of the mind and the organs of cognition with their respective objects. (27) Self is eternal and self-luminous and is the ultimate revealing principle and is not revealed by anything else. The empirical knowledge, which is derived by instruments of cognition like mind and the organs of cognition like senses is ultimately revealed by Self or *Atman*. According to Advaita philosophy, there are only two categories, viz., *drk*, the Self which is the revealing principal, and *drsya*, the not-self which is the revealed object.

The epistemological and the metaphysical enquiry of *jiva* and *Atman* proceed in Advaita on the axis of difference and unity. The knowledge acquired empirically creates the difference between *jiva* and *Atman* but when the true knowledge (*samyak jnana*) leads to *para vidya*, or revelation of the supreme knowledge, then the *jiva* realizes the unity and turns into *jivatman*.

## Self as Ultimate Consciousness

Shankaracharya argues that if the word '*jnanam*' is taken in any sense other than that of consciousness itself (*jnanpitha*), the Self would cease to be *ananta* (infinite). The Self is infinite in the sense that it is not conditioned by time, space and object or absence of limitation by time, space and objects; that accounts for the infinite nature of the Self. (28) Shankara observes that the word "anantam", by conveying the absence of any form of limitation in the Self, distinguishes it from finite entities which are always conditioned by time, space and objects. The author of the Vedanta-sutras, in the aphorism – *ato anantena thatha hi lingam*(29)- states that the *jiva* realizes it's true nature as infinite i.e. , the Self. Herein he identifies the Self as infinite.

The words "*satyam*", "*jnanam*" (reality, knowledge and infinitude) convey the Self as real and consciousness and thus distinguish it from that which is non-real and insentient. Unlike the word "*anantam*" these do not convey the absence of anything. (30) The Self is thus real, consciousness and infinite in nature. The role of Yajnavalkya's description of the Self /Atman as "*asthulam*", etc in negative terms is to negate the duality of the Self and thereby confirming its infinite nature



known through the affirmative text, “*satyam, Jnanam, anatham Brahma*” (31)

Purva-Mimamsa holds the view that knowledge is never known, but that it is self-revealing (*svaprakasa*). A piece of knowledge can be analyzed into three factors. There is the object, and the self that knows, and knowledge itself that relates to the other two entities. Of these three factors, knowledge occupies a special position. It reveals the object, it reveals the self, and it reveals itself – all at the same time. The example given is that of an earthen lamp with oil and wick. When the wick is lighted, the light given by it lights the objects outside. It also lights the whole paraphernalia of the lamp containing the light. And lastly, it reveals itself. We do not require another light to reveal the light of the original lamp. The same is true about knowledge. It is like light simultaneously revealing itself, the object and the subject. There is no knowledge of knowledge. (32) Malkani in this connection adds that the knowledge which is self-revealing in this sense is not a mental act or *vritti*, which is itself in a way known. It is pure consciousness alone. Further, this consciousness does not reveal the knowing self. It is the real knower in the last analysis. There is no other knower. This knower reveals the subject, understood as an act or function of mind, and through the subject it reveals the object. But no

one reveals it. For who can know the knower? It is truly self-revealing – being unknown, it is capable of entering into our use and in our speech as what is quite immediate (*ajnate sati aparoksa vyavaharayogyatam*). (33)

In other words, and in line with the central insight of the Upanishads, one realizes that Atman and Brahman are not two distinct realities but two different levels for one and the same reality. Knowledge of Brahman coincides with knowledge of Atman but this knowledge is not *vyavaharika satya* or practical knowledge or *apara vidya* (lower knowledge), or the knowledge of appearances, but this is *paramarthika satya* or absolute knowledge and truth or *para vidya* (higher knowledge). This higher knowledge is non-perceptual, non-conceptual, and hence non-propositional. It is *svayamprakashya*, self-revealed. It is the knowledge of the real, of *Brahman (Atman)*. It is to be obtained through intuitive (34) mystical insight of the *nirbijasamadhi* of Yogic discipline.

The higher knowledge is neither subjective nor objective and therefore transcends all three categories of lower knowledge, the knower, the known and the act of knowing.(35) “And,” says Shankara, “when parts that are due to nescience (ignorance) are dissolved through

knowledge, it is not possible that a remainder should be left. The parts therefore enter into absolute non-division from Brahman.” (36)

In other words where all distinctions between the external and the internal vanish, the distinction between the Self and the non-Self vanishes, and one experiences Pure Being as Pure Consciousness (Pure Intelligence). Knowing this true nature of the Self, says Shankara, as pure intelligence is knowing itself to be of the nature of unchangeable, eternal Cognition; it thus lifts itself above the vain conceit of being one with this body, and itself becomes the Self whose nature is unchanging eternal Cognition.(37)

Such an experience is one of pure bliss. Shankara says,” The Self consisting of bliss is the highest Brahman.” (38)

Commenting upon the Taittiriya text, “*raso vai sah, rasam hi eva ayam labdhvaanandi bhavati*” i.e.the Supreme Consciousness is bliss (*rasa*), Shankara says that having achieved that *rasa* a person becomes fully blissful. *Rasa* as a concept is mostly used in the critical analysis of theatre and denotes the aesthetic experience of bliss of the play. *Rasa* is not to be admitted in this context only as the source of worldly pleasure because in the *rasa*

experience the worldly cause and effect relationship does not work and also the spectator loses his/her particular identity and becomes universal (?) (*samanya*) and hence Viswanatha describes this rasa experience as *brahmasvada sahodara* i.e, like the realization of Brahman as supreme bliss. It is joy of the higher mind not of the worldly mind but still different from the bliss of the Self which is transcendental and so Shankara speaks of *paramananda*, the highest bliss of the Self or Brahman, which is also *nityananda*, the eternal bliss, as distinguished from the common pleasure of the senses or the experience of the theatric joy of the higher mind.

In another text “*etasyaiva anandasya anayani bhutani matram upajivanti*” (39) it is clearly delineated that the *jivas* experience only a small fraction of this supreme bliss, and thereby it clearly brings out the contrast between the Self which is unconditioned bliss and the theatric pleasure of the higher mind which is only a partial manifestation of it. It is said that the enlightened souls (*jivan-muktas*) experience bliss in the state of *nirbijasamadhi*. This state is characterized by the absence of external objects and also of the functioning of the instruments of cognition which are the stimuli ensuring sensual happiness. If, in spite of the absence of these external stimuli the *jivan-muktas* experience bliss, then it

could not be the sensory one, but the source of it, viz. the Self which is bliss. (40). This being the reason Advaita Vedanta refers to the experience of reality (Brahman, Atman) as *sacchidanada* (*sat*=Pure Being, *cit*=Pure Consciousness, *ananda*=Pure Bliss).

To conclude, Pure Consciousness is the bliss of the Self. This is the joy of being and this joy of the Self has no limit. This joy cannot be exceeded and also cannot be lost, being the nature of the Self Itself. This is a joy above the mind, where the mind rests in peace; for it has nothing to achieve and nothing to do. Such is the joy that is immanent in the nature of pure consciousness, and is that consciousness.

One of the objectives of this paper is to understand the jiva and Atman and pure intelligence which enable the jiva or the individual self to realize its real nature or transcendental state of existence. But in these post-modern times the self is lost. Whatever I am, say the moderns, I am because I have been created by outside forces. Because of the post-modernist attack on metaphysics, we have lost the world and the self. It is the age of what Foucault and Derrida call the age of deconstruction of the grand narratives of Reason and

Metaphysics. The grand narrative of the Self is replaced by the marginal elements of the psychology of consciousness; the search for a Self beyond the world is seen as a futile exercise and talk of a unified world from God's point of view is a misnomer. (41)

The world on the contrary, is pictured through the prism of multi-coloured relativistic ideologies. (42) R. C. Pradhan in his paper on 'Rediscovering the Metaphysical Self' says that the crucial reason why deconstruction of the metaphysical Self is not possible is that Self is the underlying link between what we call the different ways of understanding the world. It is the Self that links one culture with another and one paradigm with another. That is the reason why we must rediscover the self that makes us realize the underlying unity of all our experiences and thoughts. The transcendental subjectivity is the ground on which we could build the bridge between cultures, societies and life-worlds. (43). The aim, however, is not to eliminate the differences amongst the paradigms to create one systematic whole but rather to integrate them into one system of thought. Only metaphysics of Self can make room for such a unity of cultures and societies. As the Isavasyopanishad makes clear, he who knows that all sentient and non-sentient beings are in the Self, and Self is in all of them, knows truth.

To conclude, may I say that when all distinctions between the internal and the external vanish, the distinction between the Self and the non-self also vanishes and one experiences Pure Being as Pure Consciousness. Then everything becomes sacred. This is the religiousness of the Upanishads which could be understood by realizing the intertwining of the sacred with the secular and this could lead to the creation of a new humanity in which both consciousness and sensuous live together become a reality. Any split between two brings a split in the self. We are both together, we are neither just spirituality nor just consciousness – nor are we just matter. We are a tremendous harmony between matter and consciousness.

### **Notes and References**

1. R.C.Pradhan, 'Rediscovering the metaphysical Self', Self, Society and Science: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives, (henceforth SSSTHP) (eds) D.P.Chattopadhyay and A.K.Sengupta, vol xi, part 2 of the series on History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization
2. '*prajnanam brahma*', Aitareya Upanisad, 3.3 and

*'prajnanagahana eva'*, Brhadaranyaka  
Upanishad, 2.4.12

3. Cf Vidyaranya, Panchadasi, x.11
4. G.C. Nayak, 'Self and Consciousness in Vedanta and Buddhism', Please see Note 1
5. Aravind Sharma, Advaita Vedanta: An Introduction,  
p.18, 2004
6. M. Hiriyanna, The Essentials of Indian Philosophy, 1949,  
p.154
7. Amartyo martyena sayonih, Rgveda, 1/164/30, 38
8. Ainslie T. Embree says that in their quest for some ultimate ground for the world of natural phenomena, of time and space' and of human existence, the Upanishadic sages came to the conception of Brahman, an undeniable, impersonal, unknowable power, The Hindu Tradition, edited by Ainslie T. Embree, 1972, p.52
9. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy Vol II,  
p.556
10. For a good discussion of this point see John Grimes, Problems and Perspectives in Religious Discourse: Advaita Vedanta Implications, 1994



11.S. Radhakrishnan, while explaining the *sakshittva* or the witnessing role of the *jiva*, says that ‘the internal organ enters in to the very constitution of the *jiva* while it remains outside screening the *jivasakshi*. In the former case it is *visesana*, an attribute in the latter case, *upadhi*, a limitation.’ In the foot note it is further explained that an ‘attribute is an invariable distinguishing feature, as blueness in a lotus. A limitation is a separable distinguishable feature, as the red flower standing in the vicinity of a crystal which seems to be red owing to its presence’ while the ultimate consciousness particularized by maya is Iswara, the same consciousness conditioned by maya is Isvarasakshi, S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy Vol II, p.490

12. Ibid, p.159-160

13. Aravind Sharma, advaita Vedanta: An Introduction, p. 24, 2004

14. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol II, p. 556 & 596

15. Mundakopanishad, 5, 2
16. The higher knowledge, unlike the lower, is non-perceptual, non-conceptual, and intuitive. It is immediate and direct and is attained only by those who have stilled their senses and intellect. Further the higher knowledge is neither objective nor subjective, for it transcends all three categories of empirical experience, namely the knower, the known and the knowing. Neither the performance of rituals and sacrifices nor the singing of the hymns nor the chanting of the mantras can bring one the higher knowledge. “The Self is not known through the study of scriptures, nor through subtlety of the intellect, nor through much learning. But by him who longs for himis he known, Verily unto him the Self reveal his true being.” Katha, I.ii.23, S.Radhakrishnan,, The Principal Upanishads, 1953
17. Ramakrishna Puligandla, Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy, 1975, p.273
18. Cf. Mandukya Karika, 17, “Svasiddhanta vyavasthasu dvaitino niscita drdham parasparam virudhyante tairayam na virudhyate.”

19. K.Satchidananda Murty, Revelation and Reason in Advaita Vedanta, 1974, p.40
20. Wittgenstein, 1961. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.  
D.F.Pears and B.F. McGuinness (trans), 5.631-5.641
21. R.C. Pradhan, 'Rediscovering the Metaphysical Self', SSSTHP, p.255
22. The metaphysical reason is that human being cannot be the Self because it is an organism which must presuppose a reference point by which it can be counted as an individual in the universe. The Self is the reference point which has no locus of its own in the universe but yet has to be presupposed by what we call the human individual.
23. S. Radhakrishnan, The principal Upanishads, 1992, p. 36
24. Ainslee T. Embree, The Hindu Tradition, (ed),p.55. The reference at the end of the quotation of Embree is taken from Brhadaranyakopanishad: *ya avam vedaaham brahasmiti sa idam sarvam bhavati tasya ha na devashcha nabhutya ishate*, I. 4.10

25. N.Veezhinathan, Advaita Concept of the Self, SSSTHP, p. 178
26. Shankara Bhasya on Taittiriya Upanishad, 2.1.1
27. Ibid
28. Advaita-siddhi, 1997, p.315
29. Vedanta-Sutra, 3.2.26
30. Samkara Bhasya on Taittiriya Upanisad,2.1.1
31. Taittiriya Upanishad, 2.1.1
32. G.R. Malkani, 'Comparative Study of Consciousness, 'Radhakrishnan', eds W.R.Inge, L.P.Jacks, M. Hiriyanna and P.T.Raju, 1951. p.247
33. Ibid, p.248
34. The Vedanta-sutras of Badarayana, with the commentary by Shankara, tr. By George Thiabut, 1970, II.3.21
35. Paul Deussen in this regard makes an observation that it is appropriate to dispel some misunderstandings concerning Samkara's teaching that the lower knowledge is only knowledge of appearances. Some of Samkara's opponents, both ancient and modern, interpret him as having claimed that world of appearance is an illusion and consequently that the knowledge of such a world is

false and useless. Such an interpretation is wholly groundless. For Samkara clearly maintains that the lower knowledge is valid and pragmatically efficacious in the realm of phenomena, the world of appearance, the System of Vedanta, according to Badarayana's Brahmasutras and Samkara's commentary. Tr. By Charles Johnston, 1973. P. 271

36. The Vedanta-sutras of Badarayana, with the commentary by Shankara, tr. By George Thiabut, 1970, IV.2.16
37. Ibid., I.3.19
38. Ibid., I.I.2 and also see I.1. 13-19
39. Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.3.32
40. Samkara Bhasya on Taittiriya Upanishad,2.7.1. And Balasubramaniam, R (ed), 1984, The Taittiriya- bhasya- vartika (with Introduction, English Translation and Annotation), 2.58
41. Farrell, Frank B., Subjectivity, Realism and Post-Modernism — The recovery of the World, 1994
42. Ibid
- 43 R.C.Pradhan, 'Rediscovering **the** metaphysical Self', Self, Society and Science: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives, SSSTHP, p.261

