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HOLINESS AS CULMINATION OF YOGA

1.1. A Religio-Philosophical Theme

The inter-relation between the ascetical disciple and holiness is a fact unmistakably found in all religious literature. The epithet 'His Holiness' (*divya*) referring to high dignitaries in the world religions unwittingly betrays an implicit philosophy that those who adopt ascetical methods of achieving liberation from the ills of the world (*samsara*) will gradually attain higher grades of holiness and a consequent union (*yoga*) with the divine essence in proportion to their holiness. Approximation to the divine is the standard of measuring holiness. The philosophical world in general and the Indian thought in particular have spent, in the past, enormous time and human speculative energy to give a detailed account of the progress of the imperfect to the fullness of perfection or reality which is also fullness of life and light (Br. Up. 1,3,28). The self perception that the present condition of the self is not the ideal one is the motivating force for one to seek the fullness of perfection and union with it. The mind-boggling metaphysical issue in this connection is to settle on a satisfactory definition of the nature of this relation between the imperfect (the human soul, *atman*) and the perfect (the Reality, Brahman)

The variety of views expounded by the *vedanta* schools in Indian Philosophy itself is a historical testimony that a unitary vision about it is not easy. The non-dualism (*advaita*), qualified monism (*visishta-advaita*), dualism (*dvaita*), the difference-in-non-difference theory (*bhedabheda*) advanced by the great teachers and propounded by their commentators reveal the honest and the serious intent of these authors to treat this vital spiritual issue in all its dimensions. In this article, I have singled out the position of *advaita vedanta* as it is expounded in "The Crest Jewel of Discrimination (*Vivekacudamani*), of Sankara¹ to explain the nature of the inter-relation between Yoga and Holiness.

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1.2. The Crest Jewel of Discrimination²

Sankara, the author of *Vivekacudamani* (The Crest Jewel of Discrimination), taught the philosophy of *Advaita* as the central truth of the Upanishads, the *Brahmasutras*, and the *Bhagavad Gita* known as the *prasthanatraya* of Indian philosophy. Sankara wrote commentaries on the above three sources to establish the truth of the *advaita* for the adepts. For the purpose of instructing the less gifted souls, he wrote what are called *prakarana-granthas* in verse and prose, varying from a single *sloka* (verse) to a thousand. The more important among these are the *Satasloki* (a work of a hundred verses), *Upadesa Sahasri* (thousand verses), *Sarva Vedanta Sara Sangraha* (a mixture of prose and verse) and the *Vivekacudamani* (a work of 581 verses). All these teach the quintessence of *Advaita Vedanta*. *Vivekacudamani* is written in the form of a dialogue between the Guru and the Sishya, a characteristic method of transmitting knowledge in the Indian tradition in the *mathas* of (ashrams) that Sankara established.

Vivekacudamani, which expounds the cardinal truths of *Advaita Vedanta*, holds that liberation from bondage can be secured only through *jnana* (knowledge) which, in the first instance, begins with the discrimination between the eternal and the transient (*nityanityavastu-viveka*). In the Hindu scheme of knowledge, however, a distinction is made between higher (*para*) and lower (*apara*) knowledge (*vidya*). The latter includes all the sciences and all that pertains to the experiential world. It only gives knowledge of the perishable, and it would not bring the liberation of the atman. The really liberative knowledge is *para vidya*, which is also *atma-vidya*. The pursuit of any *vidya*, be it secular or spiritual, involves the Guru-sishya relationship. This is supposed to culminate in the ecstatic experience of the sishya of his non-difference from Brahman and the realization of his *mukti*.

1.3. Attainment Versus Discovery of Unity

The experience of the impermanence or the transience is, as already indicated, the motivating force for the search for the perman-

2. Sankara, *Vivekacudamani* (The Crest Jewel of Discrimination) with the commentary by Chandrasekhara Bharati svaminath, trans. by P. Sankaranarayanan, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1979 X/III + 503). The present article is based on this text.

ent and the eternal. In this spiritual quest of mankind, the distinct reality of the seeker is usually a recognized position. The paths of *Jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma*, singly or conjointly, according to the seeker's disposition, could help to achieve the integration of the self, either by discovering his own identity with the Supreme Reality or by attaining his union with the same. Of these two positions, Sankara teaches the former.

The Upanishads declare that those who know the Brahman become Brahman (Mu. Up. 3, 2, 9). The *Gita* enumerates a number of sacrifices (karmas) through which the atman could be poured into the Brahman (IV, 23-30). The *bhakti* tradition conceives of this union (yoga) in terms of self-surrender to the Lord (*Gita* 18, 57). Yoga, both in the sense of discipline of the body and mind and union with the object of knowledge or devotion, implies a liberation from impurity, inaction, ignorance and sin and an integration or discovery of the self. Self is then pure, holy, and is in union with the Divine or completely merged in it. Thus, a spiritual seeker attains holiness gradually through *yoga* or discovers his identity with the Absolute which is absolute being and holiness. The disciplines (*sadhana*) enjoined for attaining the goal in both the schools of thought are much the same. We shall, therefore, give a brief account of the *advaitic* discipline (*yoga*) for attainment of holiness.

1. 4. The Institution of Guru - Sishya Relationship

As in the Greek tradition where Socrates and Plato had used the method of dialogue to teach the truth, Sankara also used a similar method with a difference that here, the disciple (*sishya*) himself is asking the master questions (*guru*). Nobody could be a qualified candidate (*adhikara*) unless he has the desire to know (*jiijnasa*) with appropriate or humble (*vinaya*) disposition. As for the teacher, he should possess relevant knowledge, compassion and benediction (*anugraha*). "The guru is well-versed in the Vedas; he is sinless....withdrawing himself into Brahman, he is ever at peace; he is like a smouldering fire unfed by fuel. He is an ocean of spontaneous compassion that asks for no reason. He is a friend to the pure who make obeisance to him" (34,35).³ A master should

3. The numbers in this article refer to the verses in *Vivekacudamani*.

teach a pupil who approaches him with the required qualities: "He should mercifully initiate into Truth, the sishya who approaches him in a proper manner, who longs for release, who duly practises the prescribed austerities, whose mind is peaceful and who has acquired the qualities of *sama* etc" (44), that is, possessing the six virtues beginning with self-control. The *guru* and sishya in *Vivekacudamani* are taken to be ideal characters and the *sishya* raises his doubts in the name of all seekers of truth: "O Lord I am tormented by worldly woes as by the tongues of a forestfire....(41). How shall I cross this ocean of *samsara*? I know nothing....(42). To this perplexed and inquiring pupil the master said: "Fear not, O! learned one! There is no danger to you. There is a means to cross the ocean of *samsara*. I shall show to you the way...."(45)

How did the *guru* himself attain this knowledge? In answer to this, Sankara writes: The supreme wisdom arises from inquiry into the meaning of the *Vedanta* texts. Following it, arises the complete destruction of the sorrow of *samsara*. "The words of the *sruti* declare that *sraddha* (faith), *bhakti*, (devotion), *dhayana* (meditation) and *yoga* (mind-control) are the direct means to liberation. To him who practises them, release is secured from bondage of the body caused by *ajnana* (ignorance)" (47,48). To evoke further questions, the *guru* gives the pupil, in the first instance itself, the Supreme truth he knew: "For you who are the *Paramatman* in reality, association with *ajnana* produces bondage with the *anatman* whence arises *samsara*. The fire of knowledge of their distinctness will completely burn away the effect of *ajnana* with its roots"(49). At this, the pupil raises the following six questions. "What is bondage? How did it arise? How does it continue to exist? How is one to get rid of it? What is this *anatma*? Who is the *Paramatma*? How is one to distinguish between the two? Pray, vouchsafe all this to me" (51). The remaining portion of *Vivekacudamani* is an attempt to give a comprehensive reply to these questions.

1.5. Tvam and Tat Padardhas (Thou and That Reality)

Both Religion and Philosophy, through the ages, struggled to find a solution to the problem of the co-existence of the relative and the absolute or the one and the many. The many is not what is really real (*satyasya satyam*), but is only the unreal appearance of the non dual, the Real (Brahman). The human reality, however,

is something unique. Sankara says, "To those who take birth, birth as a human being is difficult to get, more difficult than is birth as a male, and more than that is birth as a Brahmana....(2). It is believed that birth as a male human being can be secured only as a result of merit earned through many lives in the past. An adult male Brahmana is regarded as the most appropriate candidate to search for liberation. "Liberation will not arise even after hundreds of *brahamakalpas* without knowledge of the unity of atman" (6). "The *sruti* declares that there is no hope on immortality merely by worldly goods. Hence it is clear that *karma* cannot be the cause of liberation". (7) "*Karma* is intended for purification of the mind, not for understanding the nature of an object. Knowledge can be obtained only by reflection; not even a little bit of it can be known by performing even a crore of *karmas*". (11)

The traditional means of prayer and devotion (*bhakti*) is also subordinated to the way of knowledge. "Among the material aids of achieving *mokṣa*, *bhakti* is the greatest. Continuous contemplation (*anusandhanam*) of one's essential nature (*svarupa*) is said to be *bhakti*. Others say that the continuous contemplation of the truth of one's atman is *bhakti*" (32) In both, knowing and devotional praying and reflective contemplation are the common factors. Knowing here is a purificatory process by self-control (*yoga*) and its result is absolute purity or holiness of the *sat* (reality).

In the great saying of the Upanishad "thou art that" (*tatvam asi*. Ch. Up. 6,8,7), the reality of the seeker of knowledge is designated by "*tvam*" (thou) and the goal of all search as "*tat*" (that) *Advaita* Vedanta offers a detailed analysis of these two realities (*padardhas*) and discusses the prerequisites for this search and its result, namely *Brahmanishta* (Brahman-realization) and *jivanmukti*. These issues are briefly touched upon in the remaining part of this article.

1.6. Unity and Union

Advaita Vedanta has a two tier conception of the "*tat*" (real) as *Isvara* (personal God) and attributeless Absolute (*nirguna Brahman*). Religion finds the former and the philosophy the latter. What is called union in religion is spoken of as unity or identity in philosophy,

"Religious practices and attitudes which are necessary and meaningful at one level cease to be so and fall of their own accord on the dawn of *atmajnana* (i.e., identity perception). But, they are not valid and serviceable at a higher level will not warrant or justify their being given up or given a subordinate place by a people for whom, and in a sphere in which they are relevant and essential".⁴ Religion even, however, annuls that duality between soul and God in the oneness of mystic union. Therefore, ultimately, "the saint of religion and the seer of metaphysics are one in their synoptic view which sees the many as manifestation of the One Reality".⁵

2. Qualification for Study

Reference has already been made to the qualities of a pupil who seeks self-knowledge (*atmavicara*). It is the only means to *mukti*: "The conviction of the truth is seen to arise only from enquiry and the trustworthy upadesa, not by bath or gift or by hundreds of breathing exercises (*pranayama*)" (13). The one who skilled in *uha* (positive reasoning) and *apoha* (negative reasoning) is competent to embark on the pursuit of *atmavidya* (16).

"The wise have spoken of four preliminary requisites (*sadhana-chatushtaya*) (18, 19, 19 1/2). The experience of the Real is possible only if they exist and impossible in their absence" (18). First, there is discrimination between the everlasting and the transient (*nityanitya-vastu-vivaka*) (20). After that comes detachment from the enjoyment of the fruits of *karmas* (*vairagya*, 21 1/2). It is to be followed by the possession of the six virtues (*samadishatka*) such as *sama* (mind-control 22 1/2), *dama* (withdrawal of senses 23 1/2), *uparati* (non-dependence of mind on anything external 24), *titiksa* (endurance of all afflictions 25), *sraddha* (faith in the scripture and the words of the guru 26), *samadhana* (peace; the perfect establishment of intellect and will always in the pure Brahman, 27). The fourth prerequisite is the desire for release (*mumukshutva*). It is the desire to free the mind from the bonds extending from the *ahamkara* to the body created by *ajnana* (ignorance), by means of knowledge of one's real nature.

4. *ibid.*, op. cit. p. xxx.

5. *ibid.*, p. xxxi.

Of the four disciplines (*sadhana*), detachment (*vairagya*) and desire for release (*mumukshutva*) have primacy over others. "It is only in the case of one who is determined in his detachment and yearning for liberation that *sama* etc. become meaningful and fruitful. Where detachment and desire for release are dull, *sama* etc. are unreal like water in a mirage" (30, 31). If the *viraktata* (renunciation) and *mumuksha* (desire for release) are not intense (*tivra*), then they are transient appearances like water in a mirage.

The *mumukshutva* is of three kinds, namely, *manda*, *madhyama* and *pravardha*, the inferior, the middling and the well-developed. "Even though it is inferior and middling, if this *mumukshutva* grows into a well-developed state by detachment and control of mind etc., with the grace of the guru, it bears fruit" (29). The mere desire (for liberation) that arises in the mind when listening to the exposition of vedantic scriptures is sterile and of no effect. This is purely *mandamumukshutva*. It becomes middling when a man gives up all *karmas* in the prescribed manner and approaches a guru for earnest inquiry. It becomes a *pravardha mumukshutva* when uncompromising detachment arises in the mind of a seeker which comes to a state of being at peace. Therefore, amidst the *sadhanacahustaya*, the four-fold means to *mokṣa*, if the second and the fourth exist, if everything is provided, not otherwise.

3. TVAM PADARTHA: (ATMAN)

3.1. The Self (Atman)

To the question of *sishya*: "What is this atman? The guru gives the following reply: "That which you must know in the matter of the discrimination between the atman and the *anatman*, that is now told to you" (73). It is through the *anatman* that the *atman* is to be known. The *atman* is first known as it is gross. The state of the gross body is specially to function as the experiencer of bodily pleasures and pains. The time of such experience is known as the *jagara*: the waking condition (90).

a) The Gross Body (*sthula sarira*) "is despicable as it consists of skin, flesh, blood, blood vessels, fat, marrow and bones and urine and the faeces" (89). "He who wishes to realize the atman through

the indulgence of the body is the one who wishes to cross a river on the back of a crocodile thinking that it is a log of wood" (86). Therefore, "if you ever desire liberation, fling away all desires as if they are poison. Drink daily with great eagerness the nectar of contemplation, compassion, forbearance, truth, straightforwardness, calmness and self control" (84).

b) *The subtle body (sukshma sarira)*

The Vedantins call the combination of the following eight-fold aggregate as the *sukshma sarira* (subtle body)". (i) The five (*karmendriyas*) beginning with speech (vocal organs, hands, feet, the anus and genitals), (ii) The five (*jnanendria's*), beginning with hearing (the ear, the skin, the eyes, the nose and the tongue), (iii) The five forms of breath beginning with *prana* (*apana, vyana, udana, samana*), (iv) The five elements beginning with space (air, fire, earth, water), (v) *Antakarana* (internal organ – the four elements: beginning with *buddhi* (*manas, ahamkrticittam*), (vi) *avidya*, (*adhyasa* –super-imposition), (vii) *kamah*: (desire), (viii) *karma* (action of the nature of *dharma* and *adharma*) is said to be the subtle body" (98). The subtle body also called *linga sarira* is not the atman. It is in the dream state (100). In the dream state, the *antahkarana* shines by itself, i.e., without the aid of an external stimulus by the various *vasanas* (impressions) of the waking stage.

"The *ahamkara* is to be known as thinking of itself as the enjoyer by its conjunction with *sattva* and other qualities (*rajas*, and *tamas*) and as assuming the three states" (of waking, dream and dreamless sleep) (106). "The atman is ever blissful, it never suffers misery. In dreamless sleep there are no sense-objects; but the bliss of the atman is experienced then. This is attested by *sruti*, sense-perception, tradition and inference, in the walking state" (109).

c) *The Karana Sarira*

It is *maya*. "*Maya* is called *avyakta* (the unmanifest power of Isvara). It is beginningless *avidya* (nescience) and is made up of three *gunas* (110). It is the cause of the universe and is wonderful and of a form which is inexpressible (*anirvacaniya*) (111). It

has *vikshepa shakti* (the power of projection and *avaranasakti* (the concealing power) which pertains to *rajas* and *tamas* respectively (113, 115). These *gunas* are the causes of bondage. *Suṣupti* (deep sleep) is a distinct aspect of the unmanifest (*avyakta* or *karana sarira*). In *suṣupti*, all *pramanas* are still. The *buddhi* remains in the form of a seed (123). The *guru* concludes saying: "Know that all these, *maya* and its effects, from *mahat*, up to the body are *asat* and of the nature of the *anatman* like a mirage" (125).

3.2. Atman

As the answer to the sixth question of the sishya "What is the atman," the guru gives the following reply: "There is something which exists by itself as the substratum of the consciousness of "I". Being the witness of the three states it is different from the five sheaths (This is the *atman*)" (127). The atman is the knower of the modifications of the mind the *ahamkara* and the activities of the *buddhi*, *indriyas*, and the breath... It is not born; it does not die; it does not grow or decline; it does not change. It is eternal. Even if this body is destroyed, it does not become extinct..." (135, 136). By directly realizing atman as the "I", the seeker can cross the sea of *samsara* (138). The bondage of the atman is due to its identification with the *anatman* (140). It arose by (a) *tamoguna* concealing the effulgence of the atman and (b) by *rajoguna* causing atman's identification with the body and its qualities (141, 146).

The atman does not shine clearly, being covered by material and other sheaths (151). "When the five sheaths are set aside, this atman which is pure, ever blissful, indwelling supreme and self-effulgent, appears clear" (untouched by *anatman*) (153). "The sheath of the gross body is *anna* (matter), born and annasustained.... It does not deserve to be the ever - pure atman" (156). "This *prana* in combination with the five organs of action constitutes the *pranamaya - kosa*".... (167). This *pranamaya kosa* can never be the atman..." (168). "The organs of knowledge and the mind form the *manomaya kosa* which is the cause of the sense of the "I" and of the "mine" and of the varying conceptions...." (169). It is the sacrificial fire into which the organs, that is, the sacrificial priests, pour the various *vasanas* of the body as fuel and thus it burns out the world (170). "Therefore, the man who earnestly desires liberation

must purify his mind" (183). But in reality "the *manomaya kosa* cannot be the *paramatma* as it has a beginning and an end as it is subject to modifications, as it is of the nature of suffering, as it is an object...." (185).

"Buddhi with its organs of knowledge and its actions having the characteristics of an agent is known as the *vinjanamaya kosa*. This is the cause of *samsara*" (186). "It is luminous as it is in exceedingly close proximity of the *paramatma*" (190). Hence, it is the most proximate *upadhi* of the atman. The atman is unattached, actionless and formless, without delusion, there can be no connection of it with the objects of the world (1979). The *paramatma*, under the influence of the *upadhis*, assume jivahood. But this jivahood is the product of delusion; it is not real; it vanishes with the removal of the delusion (197-200). "This, which is called by name *vijnanamaya* cannot be the *paramatma*. Because it is liable to change, it is insentient, it is limited, it is an object of perception, and it is not constantly present" (208). "The *anandamaya kosa* is the modification of *avidya* and appears as a reflection of the atman which is compacted of absolute bliss...." (209). It is fully manifested in dreamless sleep (210). It is not the supreme atman, because it is produced by limitations (it is connected with *upadhis*) (211). "Upon the elimination by analysis of five *kosas*, on the culmination of such elimination, the witness of the form of pure intelligence remains" (212). But the sishya raises the doubt: "When these five *kosas* are negated as being unreal, I do not see anything except absolute void" (214). The guru states that which sees the modifications of the *kosas* and also the void when they are eliminated is the atman (215). "Whatever is experienced by any one has that person as the witness to it (*sakshikam*). In respect of an object which is not experienced by any one, there is no meaning in speaking of a witness who perceives" (218). "The fool, looking at the reflection of the sun in the water contained in a jar, thinks that it is the sun itself. Even so, the stupid man, by his delusions, imagines that the reflection of the *chit* in the *upadhi* is his atman" (220). One who has realized the atman's non-difference from Brahman does not again return to *samsara*, and so this truth has to be well realized (226).

4. Tat Padardha: Brahman

"Brahman is absolute existence and knowledge. It is infinite, pure, supreme, self-established, compacted of eternal bliss, non -

different from the inner atman, and remains absolute without parts" (227). The world is not real apart from Brahman (231). If this world were real, the infinitude of the atman will be affected and the vedas will be rendered unauthoritative. It is neither good nor desirable to the great (234). Here, the atman is in a state called *turya* (self-luminous state). The true nature of the *tat padardha* is well defined in the following two slokas: "Therefore, the Supreme Brahman is the real, without a second; compacted of pure intelligence; free from defect; serene; without beginning and end; actionless; of the nature of unremitting bliss; free from all differences wrought by *maya*; permanent unchanging; pure; beyond the faculty of reasoning; formless; subtle; without name; immutable; such an effulgence, Brahman shines". (239-40). It is devoid of the trichotomy of the knower, knowledge and the known" (241).

5. REALIZATION: BRAHMATMANA SAMASTHITIH

After examining and determining the significance of the two *padardhas*, *Tvam* and *Tat*, the guru proceeds to deal with the meaning of the sentence: *tat tvam asi* (Ch. Up. 6, 8, 7). "Of Brahman and atman thus indicated by the words *Tat* and *Tvam* and whose meanings have been thus examined and determined, the oneness alone is repeatedly well established by the *śruti-tatvamasī*" (243). The two terms are to be properly understood by their implied meanings in order to obtain the import of absolute identity between them (249). In the following words, the guru gives the assurance to his sishya: "Because there is nothing apart from *Sat*, that is the true, that is itself the atman. Therefore, That thou art the Supreme, the peaceful, the defectless, the non-dual Brahman" (253). "Meditate on It in thy mind" (257). In slokas 257 - 264, this exhortation is repeated as the refrain of a hymn. "By that one will get ascertainment of the established truth" (265). In the cave of *buddhi* (*buddhau guhayam*), there is the Supreme non-dual Brahman which is the ultimate truth, distinct from the perceivable and the unperceivable. For one who lives in this cave as that Brahman, there is no more entry for him in the cave of the body" (267).

Despite knowledge of the Real, the *vasanas* causing the sense of doer (*karta*) and enjoyer (*bhokta*) may persist. They must be attenuated with effort by living in a state of turning inward (268, 277). This turning inward and getting established there, this emphasis on

interiority is a unique feature of this search for the real. "The fragrance of the paramatman is hidden by the dust of *vasanas* productive of evil. When it is purified by being rubbed against *prajna* (steady concentration on atman) it is clearly felt like the smell of sandalwood" (275).

Mistaken perceptions arise from a) following the world (*lokānuvaranam*), b) seeking bodily pleasures (*dehānuvartansam*) and c) sticking to scriptures (*sastrānuvartanam*). One has to give up the reading of books other than those which will be useful to the attainment of liberation. Elsewhere, Sankara writes: "The concourse of words (constituting scripture) is a great forest which will confound the mind" (*sabdajalam maharanyam cittabhramanakaranam*). "Therefore, by special effort, one must learn the truth about the atman from him who has known it" (62). A seeker, therefore, has to make a sincere effort to get rid of super-imposition (*adhyasa*) of distinction of body and atman to nullify the *vasanas* (278-288).

It is not easy to stay in the identity-consciousness of the atman with Brahman. Innumerable are the obstacles to Brahmanishtha - the one established in Brahman. It is here that the *advaita* scheme presents the arduous struggle of a seeker of liberation to maintain his *atmajnana* and thus, finally, to attain the goal of *jivanmukti*. Being a Brahmanishtha involves many factors: a) He should not yield to forgetfulness of atman, b) should not think of the body to be the atman (289,290), c) should transfer the sense of the "I" from the body to the atman (293), d) should realize that everything that is "seen" is only the appearance (294), and e) should give up attachment to the flesh (296). This is the only way to attain peace (298).

There are other hindrances to man which are causes of *samsara*. Of these, *ahamkara* is the root and the first modification (299). "So long as there is any connection of oneself with the wicked *ahamkara* (ego-sense), there cannot be any talk even in the least of liberation, which is unique" (300). Therefore, *ahamkara* is to be destroyed as one's enemy (301-316). The Brahmanishtha, the one being established in Brahman", should not be guilty of negligence (*pramada*). The divine son of Brahma spoke of negligence as death (322). From the negligence of a jnanin arises delusion; from it, *ahamkara* and from it, bondage and misery in succession (323).

A sannyasin (*yatih* to him alone can arise the state of being established in Brahman), giving up all thoughts of *asat* (what is not real) which is the cause of bondage, should take his stand on the contemplation of the atman in the form "I" am this (Brahman). Then surely, steadfast contemplation on Brahman gives rise to bliss by self-realization and removes the previously experienced intense misery by *avidya* (339). "The Truth that is Brahman is surely realized by *nirvikalpasamadhi*: Not by any other method. Otherwise, due to the inconsistency of mind it will be mixed up with other modifications" (366). Hence, the invariable advice is: "remain in *samadhi* with your sense-organs under control, with a tranquil mind ever turned inward, by realization of your identity with Brahman, and destroy the darkness of beginningless *avidya*" (367).

6. THE LIBERATED: JIVANMUKTA

"He is said to be a *jivanmukta* whose *prajna* is firmly established, whose bliss is continuous and to whom the world is as a thing forgotten" (429). The mark of a true *Jivanmukta* is well described in slokas 427-442 of *Vivekacudamani*. The mental modification which comprehends the identity of Brahman and atman after analyzing them is called *prajna*. He who always possesses this type of *prajna* is said to be a *jivanmukta* (428). Freed from awareness of any external object by reason of his ever being Brahman, consuming only what is needed for bodily sustenance proffered to him by others, like one in sleep or like a child, looking at this world when he comes to external sights like one seen in the dream, remains the blessed one enjoying infinite merit" (426). "Thus, who enjoys bliss for ever with his mind resting on Brahman only, unchanging and inactive, is a *sthitaprajna* (man of steadfast wisdom), whose mind is firmly anchored in Brahman" (427).

The above selection of texts gives a true picture of the nature of one who has attained liberation while alive (*jivanmukta*) through the steady realization of the identity of atman with Brahman. A true *jivanmukta* will have no more involvement in *samsara*. If the involvement persisted, one is not a true *Brahmavit* (445). With the dawn of knowledge - "I am Brahman" the accumulated (sancita) karma which has accrued through hundreds of crores of eons gets extinguished (448). The *yati* (the man of realization) is not affected by future actions (*bhavirkarma*, 450). The acts which have already begun (*prarabdha*

karma), having begun to bear fruit wear out only after producing its results even at the time when Brahman-realization springs. "The arrow which is released from the bow under the impression that the target is a tiger does not tarry upon the realization that it is all cow, but surely pierces its target with great speed" (453). To those who perceive the identity of the atman with the Brahman and whoever remains engrossed in it, these three (*sancita*, *prarabdha*, and *agami karmas*) do not obtain anywhere. They are very qualityless Brahman.

The *advaita* position is that there is really no connection between the *prarabdha karma* (actions which are already initiated) and the atman. "The body is fashioned out of karma: *prarabdha* may be imagined with reference to it. And it is not appropriate with reference to the atman, which is beginningless, for the atman is not fashioned out of *karma*" (459). But to explain the continued existence of a *jivanmukta* in the world, even after the realization, "the *sruti* speaks of *prarabdha* from a *vyavakarika* (empirical) point of view (463). The *sruti* is not for teaching to the learned the reality of the body etc. The import of *sruti* is related to transcendental (*paramarthika*) only. It (Brahman) is plenary, without beginning or end, beyond comprehension, changeless, one only without a second, there is no manifold here" (464-465).

Two questions are worth considering in this connection. First, what is the purpose and value of this kind of metaphysical quest in this technological age? As a matter of fact, the metaphysical quest in the privacy of one's being is no less arduous in its preparation and execution than the scientific adventures of modern man. It requires courage and strength of will far exceeding the scientific tempo of the modern man, for the results of the metaphysical quest are spiritual and internal, and that of the latter experiential/observable and practical. *Atmavicara* is no less scientific for it signifies the rigorous analysis of the atman-anatman complex and the rejection of every layer of non-atman. "Science and metaphysics are adventures of the Spirit to explore the Infinite Reality. The one is the expression of the conquest of matter, the other of the negation of or liberation from matter. The second is more exacting, rigorous, exhilarating and fruitful than the first."⁶

6. *ibid.*, p. xxxi.

The second question is: Of what use to the world are these *jivanmuktas*? A *jivanmukta* is regarded as a sign of the victory of the Spirit over matter. He is an enlightened person who has conquered his passions, who has given up his passions and is at peace with himself. His look is a benediction, his words are wisdom, and his conduct a consecration. In his presence, all physical and mental ills disappear in the sense that their edge is blunted and one is able to bear them with fortitude. This certainly a higher service to suffering humanity than what goes by the name of social service. They leaven society by their presence and raise its moral and spiritual tone. In this sense, they are really the benefactors of mankind in a truer sense.⁷ "Feeding carefree on alms got without humiliation, drinking the waters of rivers, remaining in freedom without restraint, sleeping without fear in the cremation ground or in the forest, clad in clothes unwashed and undried as such or even undressed, sleeping on the ground and wandering in the highways of the Upanishads, the wise sport in the Supreme Brahman" (539). "With his mind immersed always in the ocean of bliss, the guru (the *jivanmukta*) roamed along sanctifying the entire world completely." (578).

7. Conclusion

The metaphysical position of *advaita vedanta*, certainly is the result of a serious quest in the primacy of one's being. From the point of view of one's consciousness *jivanmukta*hood arising from the realization of the identity of atman with Brahman is the result of hearing (*sravan*), reflection (*manana*) and meditation (*nididhyasana silam*). This realization is ultimately based on the authority of sruti (438). It is an awareness one is advised to keep on to oneself firmly. It is easy to lapse from this higher state of realization. It is said that one becomes a *jivanmukta* only when there does not ever arise the sense of "I" in his body and his organs and the sense of "this" and "that" in other things (439). Even in the *nididhyasana* state of the *jivanmukta*, he is found to have external awareness as he is continuously exerting himself to establish his mind in his atman (446).

The embodied existence of the *jivanmukta* is justified on the basis of the theory of *prarabdha karma* (459) explained earlier.

7. *ibid.* p. xxxii.

It is also possible and useful to inquire about the true nature of the consciousness of a *jivanmukta*. It is said, "Thinking (*manana*) is hundred times better than hearing (*sravana*), a lakh of times better than thinking is reflection (*nididhyasana*), infinitely better than that is *nirvikalpaka*. (425). By *nirvaikalpaka samadhi* the truth that is Brahman is clearly apprehended; not otherwise for the fickle mind gets mixed with other cognitions" (365, 366). In this state, even the awareness of the external is absent. Patanjali Yoga offers, in its own way, the technique of arriving at *nirvikalpa samadhi*, which, in the words of *sisya* is "a mere void" (214). Even here, the body-consciousness is absent. What *advaita* demands over and above the *nirvikalpa* state of yoga is annulling of the super-imposition of the body, and the mind on *atman* which is permanent. This cannot be achieved by one's own effort alone. The authority of the *sruti*, and the instruction of the *guru* who has realized Brahman and reasoning are the only means (*pramana*) to attain Brahman-realization (475, 480). Even for *advaita*, it is achieved in the *vyavaharika* (empirical) realm of reality of the *jivanmukta*, whose body is subject of death. These reflections give us an assurance to say the *Brahmanishthanubhava* (realization of being established in Brahman) is a human experience while man is alive and so it can be an object of our study as a human achievement.

Man is always in search of wholeness. The question of what one's own wholeness consists is a perennial question of all philosophies and religions. In the simultaneous achievement of the everlasting fullness of being and life, we may say, philosophy finds its wholeness of reality and religion its holiness which is absolutely free from every defect and impurity. This process (Yoga for Holiness) is told and retold ever in ancient and newer stories of philosophy and religion and we are now the witnesses to and the participants in it.