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## SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND THE ADVAITIC LIBERATION

The present paper confines itself to the understanding of self-knowledge and its implications for the Advaitic concept of liberation according to Samkara. This study seems important to me in order to examine the question of self-knowledge in all its meanings in a way that makes it central to the general problem of existence rather than something outside and exclusive of it. Also this kind of study leads us to another very plausible hypothesis which can be shared by all great religions of India that self-knowledge is neither a pure intellectualism nor a simple moralism and therefore to understand it in the ordinary logical and ethical sense will be a grave injustice to the spirit of these religions. In other words, the value and validity of experience of any type can be legitimately accepted within the general framework of self-knowledge so far as they seek to interpret and help the religious goal of life but they cannot be regarded as substitutes for it. What is sufficient is self-knowledge backed by revelation. J.G. Arapura's following statement is closely related to the subject under discussion:

Transcendent self-knowledge and revelation constitute the two Archimedean points in religion's own epistemology. Undoubtedly, even Buddhism as religion—which it is—is based on these too, a matter that can be convincingly demonstrated by a correct study of the sources of authoritative knowledge in the Buddhist texts...that the Upanishads present the most perfectly consistent and by far the most thoroughly developed doctrines of self and self-knowledge is indisputable. (Buddhism must be understood as representing the diverse side of these doctrines, and in the last resort as making them more meaningful by challenging them to their ultimate foundations and hence radicalizing them). And a goodly position of these famous sacred texts are about these. Because of its wholly transcendental chara-

cter, knowledge of the self can be appropriated, it is argued by Yajnavalkya, the greatest of its spokesmen, only negatively as *neti, neti* (not thus, not thus). The highest expression of this line of thought is found in the greatest upanishadic text of all which says *tat tvam asi* (That Thou art). But such a knowledge, it is also said elsewhere, does not come except through revelation, as stated in the *Katha Upanishad* (I.2.23): "This self cannot be attained by instruction nor by intellectual power, nor even through much hearing. It is to be attained only by the one whom he (the self) chooses. To such a one the self reveals its own nature."<sup>1</sup>

Characteristically enough, self-knowledge constitutes the essentials, the intrinsic and the most fundamental religious or transcendent experience and as a consequence everything else becomes secondary or of peripheral value in relation to such an experience. It is because of this reason that the self-knowledge in *Advaita Vedanta* necessarily culminates in renunciation.<sup>2</sup> In his commentary on the *Mundaka Upanishad*, Samkara remarks that the self-knowledge perfected and realized by *Samnyasa* (renunciation) will yield *moksha*.<sup>3</sup> Anandagiri claims that renunciation implies the surrender of all profane activities (*sarvasvatyāga karmasannyāsāni-shtā*).<sup>4</sup> This ultimate condition is shared by all great religions,

1. J.G. Arapura, *Religion as Anxiety and Tranquillity*. (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1972), p. 38.

2. *Renunciation*, to my mind, has been taken by Samkara in two senses namely as the discipline or means of realization and also as an end in itself i.e. self-realization. As a means, it is an act related to the secular experience and responsibility and as an end it would indicate a spiritual attitude having no superficial concern with the secular experience and consequences thereof after the dawn of self-realization which transforms the nature of the universe and everything associated with it so radically (to the extent of their disappearance as if) that man becomes virtuous by nature, free from all anxieties born of egotism and self-aggrandizement. See Sri Suresvaracarya, *Naishkarmyosiddhi*, trans. S.S. Raghavachar (Mysore: University of Mysore, 1965), p. 172. In his commentary on the *Gita* Samkara says that immediate freedom accrues, to those, renunciants who have attained *sadyomuktirukta*. *Bhagavadgita* V. 3: III. 8.

3. *Mundaka Upanishad Bhasya* III, 2 .6.

4. *Ibid.*

whether they are embedded in theistic, supra-theistic or even non-theistic contexts such as Buddhism and Jainism. The denial of "givenness", *a priori* rests upon, a reality behind the self-descrepant givenness. Samkara in his commentary on *Kenopanishad* calls it *nirupādhika* (unconditional) and the essence of *Atman*, "save for that, nothing is worth knowing."<sup>5</sup> Self-knowledge here is transformed into a meditation and metaphysics becomes soteriology.<sup>6</sup> Vidyāranya the author of the *Pañcadasi* also *postulates* such as knowledge (*samvid*) as a necessary pre-condition of all knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

The one legitimate conclusion that follows from the above discussion is that the self-knowledge which is soteriological in *Advaita Vedānta* is transcendent to thought and that it cannot be conceived in terms of the empirical. Should it mean then that the empirical knowledge, and everything associated with it, is discarded? As indicated earlier, any knowledge would be impossible without there being self-knowledge at the back of it. Therefore, every knowledge pre-supposes self-knowledge without exhausting it. To put it simply, such knowledge serves to reveal, though partially, the metaphysical knowledge but does not "represent" it. The whole complex of knowledge and phenomenal existents is based on the delusive structure of *vrti-jñāna* (reason) which because of its inherent nature understands the unconditioned as conditioned and equates the empirical with the metaphysical. The *Advaita Vedānta* rejects this confusion and in doing so, it does not reject or displace anything but only the misconception about it. The rejection of this confusion is done for soteriological reasons because every knowledge whether of the universe, society, ethics or morality in the form in which it is experienced by us is due to the lack of self-knowledge which results in isolating the realm of experience from its basis, i.e. *Atman* or *Brahman* and mistaking the "isolation" or "abstraction" for the real. *Jñāna* that is capable of removing this metaphysical error, is the very nature of the self but appears to have been forgotten for the time being. The task of renunciation lies in installing the forgotten self-know-

5. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 1. 12: *etad jneyam nityam evatmāc —samsthānā nātā param viditavyam hi kincit*

6. For details, see M. Eliade, *Yoga—Immortality and Freedom*, trans. W.R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 13.

7. Sri Vidyāranya, *Pañcadasi*, trans. Hariprasad Sas'tri (London: Shanti Sadan, 1956), p. 9. For a good introduction, see Swami Abhedanada, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Pañcadasi* (Calcutta: 1948).

ledge. Here the philosophical attitude is generated purely by *Jñāna*. Renunciation, therefore, is not withdrawal in the ordinary sense; it is withdrawal from the imperfect aspect of the world which constitutes the profane existence and it is accomplished by already participating in a mode of sanctified existence of which we are assured by the *Sruti* (Revelation). In the absence of this assurance, the categorical and unconditional renunciation would have been possible which is certainly not the case with the Advaitic tradition of India. The unity ideal which is the expressive motif of the Vedānta itself is opposed to the negative aspect of renunciation.

The reasons for taking this position are two-fold: firstly the *Advaita Vedānta* is a reaction against any negative philosophy or religion, whether heterodox or orthodox.<sup>8</sup> Wherever the Vedānt explains *Brahman* in negative terms, it is done, directly or indirectly along with the positive ones, like *Aham Brahma Asmi* (I am Brahman) *tat tvam asi* (That Thou art). M. Hiriyanna aptly remarks:

If according to the *Mādhyamika* it is impossible for thought to rest in the relative, it is equally impossible for it according to *Samkara*, to rest in absolute nothing. To use the terminology of the Upanishads, the *Advaita* denies "names and "forms", but not that which appears under their guise or as an old writer has observed while the *Advaitin* negates only distinction (*bheda*) the *Mādhyamika* negates it as well as the distinct (*bhidyamāna*).<sup>9</sup>

Further light on *Brahman* as *Sat* may be gathered from Samkara's remark on the text of the *Chāndogya Upanishad sādēva somyēdamagrāsīdekamevādvitīyam*.<sup>10</sup> Such a view is obviously different from that of the *Vāiseshika* and also that of the *Samkhya*. The *Samkhya* takes *Puruṣa* in isolation from *Prakṛti* which amounts to saying that *Prakṛti* being real is com-

8. A thorough appraisal of Indian religious tradition shows that if any trend of thought exhibited any exclusively other-worldly direction, there was sharp reaction against that tradition. *Advaita Vedānta* in this sense may be regarded as a sharp reaction against some of the earlier religious systems including Buddhism and the *Samkhya*.

9. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), p. 373.

10. *Chāndogya Upanishad*, vi. 2. 1.

pletely destroyed in the process of isolation: the position which is not only logically absurd but also unhelpful in providing rational grounds for experience as well as the possibility of a world. N.K. Brahma remarks:

Hence if we thoroughly understand this vedāntic conception of transcendence we are not at all entitled to raise the question that so often seems to puzzle us, viz., what becomes of the world or of the body of the *Jñānin* after liberation is attained? The answer is plain and the reason evident. Nothing happens to the world: the world remains what it was, an eternal *anirvacaniya*; only the previous erroneous conception of it as real is now supplanted and corrected...<sup>11</sup>

Samkara continues the Vedic tradition along its metaphysical lines, although the genius of the *Advaita Vedānta* is slightly different from the Rigveda. In the Rigveda, despite the fact that the renunciation doctrine has been recognised, the *Jñāna* doctrine is not metaphysically linked with it. The *Vātarasanā* of the Rigveda<sup>12</sup> who by the time of the *Āranyakas* took the title of *Sramana* are the *Atyāsramin* of the *Svetāsvatara Upanishad* (vi. 21) and as H.D. Sharma suggests, they belonged to the fourth *āsrma* of the *sannyāsa*.<sup>13</sup> It is certainly true that the systematic exposition of either the theoretical structure of renunciation or the practical aspect of it could not be legitimately expected in the Vedas; but in the background of the above discussion at least one thing is clear, that the *Vedānta* being rooted in the Vedas interpreted renunciation in line with *Jñāna* for its culmination in self-knowledge from the transcendental point of view and at the same time it also preserved the importance of renunciation as the means of true knowledge from the empirical point of view. Only in this sense the tradition of self-knowledge along with the doctrine of renunciation in the Advaita is a continuation of, as well as an advancement over, the Vedic tradition. H.P. Chakravarty of Calcutta in his recent work supports this contention:

11. N.K. Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd. 1932), p. 192.
12. *Munyo vatarasanah bisanga vastemala vatasyonudhva—jim yanti gad devsa avikshatah*. (Rigveda X. 135. 2).
13. H.D. Sharma "History of Brahmanical Asceticism" in *Poona Orientalist* Vol. III, No. 4 (Jan. 1939), p. 43.

Samkara draws our attention to the importance of *sannyāsa* which may be said to be of two classes. One class is meant to be the means of true knowledge which every seeker aims at and the second class is resorted to by the man who has already had the vision of Truth and who desires to relish the blissful state of liberation even while living (*Jivan-mukti*).<sup>14</sup>

J. C. Oman also confirms:

By the Hindu speculative theologians asceticism with a view to the repression of animal passions is regarded as means to the purification of mind, such purgation being an essential condition for the attainment of a complete knowledge of *Brahman* with its attendant freedom from *samsāra* i.e. embodied existence.<sup>15</sup>

Considered accordingly, self-knowledge resolves not self into the self, and nothing but the self or *Brahman* is real. Samkara establishes his position not by positing *Brahman* against *Prakṛti* as the *Samkhya* does because in the latter case the aloofness and withdrawal of the self from the not-self will be real and categorically negative, but by positing the only reality of the self and denying only the separate existence of the not-self from self which gives very positive significance to self-knowledge and renunciation. *Jñāna* and *sannyāsa* in this sense are nothing but the positive feelings—if one may say so—of a vast expansion of the spiritual horizon which is essentially and eternally there but in need of realization.

For the Advaitins, self-knowledge is not negative withdrawal from a real universe but is only correction of our vision of the nature of the world. Put simply, the *Vedānta* only spiritualizes the conception about the world and does not negate the world. In the *Vedānta* directly and in the Mahāyāna Buddhism perhaps indirectly, it was found necessary to understand the reality and renunciation not by isolating them from the universe but making

14. Haripada Chakravarti, *Asceticism in Ancient India* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustaka, 1973), p. 19.
15. J.C. Oman, *The Mystics, Ascetics and Saints of India* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1905), p. 9.

them the ground (*pratisbthā*) of the universe.<sup>16</sup> Let us more closely examine the implications of the Māyā doctrine in the *Advaita Vedānta* to see whether such a position is tenable.

### *Māyā, Brahman and Samnyāsa*

The ontological position of the Advaita Vedānta has been indicated in dealing with the problem of self-knowledge. The object of right knowledge is *Brahman* which is the integral part of one's nature. Renunciation, metaphysically speaking, is not the renunciation of one's real nature, as something that is real cannot be renounced or abandoned. It is, therefore, the correction of the error—removing form of the individual and in a sense is even a technique to preserve the glory and purity of the individual. Manu remarks: "If he keeps both his organs and his consciousness under subjection he can attain his goal without tormenting his body."<sup>17</sup> According to *Mundaka Upanishad*, "The knots in the heart are cut asunder, all doubts are completely eliminated, all forms fade away, when one sees the Atman."<sup>18</sup>

It is well to remember in this connection that, according to the Vedānta, *māyā* is a positive power (*avidya-sakti*) and not a mere misconception or wrong knowledge (*viparyaya* of Nāgārjuna). *Brahman* with its *māyā* is regarded as the material cause of the world (*avidyā-sabitā-brahmopādānam*). Self-knowledge, therefore, aims at the proper discrimination between *Brahman* and *māyā*: hence the exhortation that one shall have an initial sense or discrimination of the eternal one and non-eternal one (*nityānityavastuviveka*).<sup>19</sup> *Māyā*, therefore, is not merely a state of privation.

16. *Mul Madhyamikakarika*, XXII, 16. For details see T.R.V. Murti *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1960), p. 233. And also M. Sprung (ed.) *The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta* (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel, 1973).

17. G. Bühler *The Laws of Manu. Tr. with extracts from seven Commentaries*: F. Maxmüller (ed), SBE. Vol. XXV (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1886), p. 48.

18. *Mundaka Upanishad*. II, 2. 9.

19. Samkara's Comm. *Brahmasūtras* I: 1. 1. It is useful to note here that Samkara uses the term 'nitya' as a synonym of 'Sat' and 'anītya' as its opposite. The point is that the same manner of opposition (*virodha*) that the terms 'Jnana' and 'ajnana' too should be understood. For details, see Swami Madhavanda, *The vivekacudamani of Sri Sankaracharya* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1970), p. 7.

It is what masquerades as knowledge of the Real while in itself it is but ignorance. It is associated with the self in the form of sub-conscious expressions (*vāsanas*) and apotheosised as the congenial feeling of "I-ness" (*vāsana-abamīkarasabitam*). When self-knowledge removes *māyā*, the latter is said to be cancelled as such (*bādha*), by which is implied that it is transformed. The "falsity" of its claim, its "bluff", is called off and pure self-knowledge that stands underlying it, illuminating it, emerges to the surface. Such an interpretation is quite in keeping with the general trend of the Vedantic thought according to which the work (*māyā*) is not negated at the dawn of knowledge; it is simply re-interpreted as *Brahman*. This position also has its implication for renunciation which being grounded in self-knowledge does not stand for the rejection of the world but simply re-interpretation of it. If this interpretation is not taken seriously then the Upanishadic assertion that *Brahman* is the ground of the world loses its significance. If *Brahman* is only real and interprets the world as the cause of it,<sup>20</sup> the world is unreal in the sense of the absence of knowledge and not wrong knowledge. If the world is taken in the latter sense, it cannot be associated with *Brahman*. It is easy to see that this view of *māyā* has a positive significance and does not ignore the philosophical understanding of the phenomenal world, which is not an object of the *jñāna-abhāva* but *mithyā-jñāna*. The world is not merely a subjective sensation or false idea but it has a status which can be further enriched by removing *avidyā* associated with it in the scheme of the self-knowledge in order to realize its original purity. It must be noted, however, that Samkara's own writings do not always give a clue to this type of understanding and there are many passages which are explicitly against our interpretation but the general tendency of his thought cannot be quite irrelevant to the approach under consideration. The sole object of explaining the cosmic world in this manner is to provide it a significant status for realization of *Brahman* as is evident in the several passages of the *Isa Upanishad* (18) *Brhadāranyaka Upanishad* (1. 3. 28) and the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (1. 10). In the acceptance of the beginninglessness of the world along with the eternal *Isvara*, the *Vedānta* has safeguarded not only the purity of *Isvara* but also the responsibility of the *jivas* towards the world. The *jivas* have been freed

20. Samkara's commentary on *Brahmasūtras* I: 1, 2, 3, 4.

from the limitations of fatalism or predestination. Put simply, whatever truth the world or the *Jiva* has is because of *Brahman*. The experienced world of phenomena which for any philosophical or religious system cannot remain unexplained, can only be explained not by explaining it away as false knowledge but establishing its status in the structure of self-knowledge. The *Advaita Vedānta* is not an exception to it.

The underlying spirit of renunciation along with self-knowledge does not require the giving up of the empirical world. Rather, it rests on a kind of harmonious relationship between the world and spiritual reality. Philosophy, for the Advaitins, is an attempt to look at things not as they appear, but as they really are; it is an elaborate explanation of the two. What is most important to note here is, not the value or significance of the world *per se*, but the spiritual insight of the renunciation who look at things. Renunciation in its ultimate analysis, is an attitude, or an enlightened attitude, which helps man to face the world without being overthrown by it. On the basis of what we have said above, self-knowledge attendant with renunciation does not exclude the life of activities. Samkara has clearly admitted that the *Jñānin* may engage in actions for the purpose of teaching others, having no purpose to be attained for oneself.<sup>21</sup> Vidyāranya also states that an enlightened person can work for others (*parecchā*).<sup>22</sup> But it is a fact that there are several references in the *vedānta* which clearly assert the irreconcilability between *karma* and self-knowledge and renunciation. The following section will deal with the metaphysical structure of this issue.

#### *Karma, Jñāna and Samnyāsa*

The main emphasis of the Vedas was on *karma* although evidences of the importance attached to asceticism and renunciation are implicit there. The Karma-Mimamsakas pursue the philosophy of action further and take it to be the main purport of the Vedas. The term *karma* is primarily used for sacrifice but in a general sense it includes all actions, physical or mental. But

21. *Gīta*, IV: 23: *Gatasangasya muktasya jnanavasthitacetasaḥ yajñaya Carataḥ karma saṅgram pravilyate. Also ibid IV: 24.*

22. Sri Vidyāranya, *Jivanmukti viveka*. Trans. and ed. S.S. Sastri and T. R. S. Ayyangar (Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1935), p. 79.

even Samkara accepts the purificatory function of *karmas* without which the spiritual attainment is regarded as impossible. The Advaita Vedānta does not go further than that and restricts the role of *karma* to the purificatory level. The reason why *karma* has been excluded from the higher level of knowledge by the Vedāntins is its incompatibility with *jñāna*. *Jñāna* means self-knowledge which is opposed to action because the latter cannot function independently of the world of multiplicities. But here, again, Samkara excludes only those actions which are brought about by desires of fruits and not bodily activities. If this interpretation is correct, Samkara stands for advocating *karmas* for the purification of the mind, which once accomplished with the dawn of self-knowledge, desire-impelled actions automatically stop and man at this stage performs virtuous actions by nature. Put in other words *jñāna* and *karmas* are compatible before the self-knowledge, and even according to Samkara after the self-realization, man becomes virtuous by nature which does not deny at any rate the performance of virtuous actions.<sup>23</sup> Samkara indirectly hints at this idea, although its development takes place in the *Gītā* which propounds the culmination of action in knowledge where action is not negated but enriched and ennobled.

In the absence of the above understanding, the whole positive implication of *Isvara*-ideal in the Vedānta falls to the ground and Samkara would have no justification for making out a case for the *avatāra* or even the *jivanamukta*. Vidyāranya, in his *Jivanamuktiviveka*, explicitly asserts that *jñāna* does not dispel all actions: "It is not to be thought, however, that for a person whose mind is free from all desires, all actions must cease, nor that the operations of the bodily organs such as the eyes etc., or mental operations, need be absent."<sup>24</sup> All that Samkara meant by the incompatibility between *jñāna* and *karma* was simply that once a person has attained self-knowledge, all the limitations of the *karmas* which divide oneself from the rest of mankind are burnt to ashes and *karmas* are reduced to *karmas* in the ordinary, narrow sense. In fact, in his commentary on the *Gītā* he clearly affirms this: "A *Jñānin* does nothing, even doing everything be-

23. *Gīta*, IV: 20 Madhusudan Sarasvati while commenting on the *Gīta* V: 8, remarks: *yasmāt sarvavyapare svapyatmano kartrtvameva pasyati atah kurvannapi na lipyate iti yuktivevoktam*

24. *Jivanamuktiviveka*, p. 142 and also Samkara comm. on *Gīta*, IV: 20.

cause of his realization of the self as non-doer.”<sup>25</sup> This spirit of egolessness, as we asserted earlier, is the characteristic of self-knowledge.

It appears to us that Samkara has, unfortunately, been misunderstood with regard to this problem. If the world forms no “other” to *Brahman*, a complete withdrawal from the world is not understandable. If the world were “other” from *Brahman* in the state of self-knowledge, as is the case with the *Samkhya*, a life of inactivity or escapism might be justified. Therefore, it seems right to hold that when Samkara talks about the diametrically opposed nature of *jñāna* and *karma*, he implies only those *karmas* which are not backed by knowledge. Since the *jñāna* transforms the whole perspective of man, reality, and the universe, the *karmas* should not be excluded from this enormous transformation. At the stage of self-knowledge, all things remain as they are except the attitude of man which constitutes his philosophy, or to put it in other words his way of life and self-knowledge is nothing but an attitude.

Secondly, if the *Advaita Vedānta* holds the doctrine of cosmic purpose which *Isvara* himself serves there is no inconsistency in regarding the *jivanamuktas* as serving the cosmic purpose without their interests being involved. Even those schools of thought i.e. the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* of Rāmānuja and the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* which do not accept the ideal of the *jivanamukta* have accepted the role of the enlightened person in the cosmic purpose. It seems to be unjustified to hold that the *Advaita* can deny such a role. It is from this standpoint that the *Gīta* says: “He who finds *karma* in *akarma*, and *akarma* in *karma* is intelligent and united to the Divine, and the doer of all actions.”<sup>26</sup> The life of activism, thus derived, is based on self-knowledge. This is only an interest of the higher order, but is interest all the same. In this respect, the *Advaita* provides a clear unitary perspective. A man of self-knowledge who has been technically called *brahmasmasmstha* or *samnyāsin* only abandons the naive attitude towards the world as a given reality independently of *Brahman* and, in doing so, he does not abandon the world. This means that man is involved with the world even before the self-knowledge and after the dawn of it, but the way he was involved and is involved is different. In the state of *ajñāna*

his involvement reflected a sense of “I-ness” (*ahamkara*) and in the state of self-knowledge his involvement is meaningless in the sense that his “I-ness” is meaningless. The realization of the meaninglessness of “I-ness” through renunciation which is an adjunct to thought does not remain in nothingness but is simultaneously accompanied by a further extension of consciousness within which man establishes his identity. With this positive awareness (if I am permitted to say so), the world serves as an arena for discharging free and unmotivated activity as there is nothing left (with the elimination of *ahamkara*) outside to generate any motive or self-seeking activity.

In the contemporary Indian philosophical thought on the subject of the world and action, B.G. Tilak has attracted a good deal of attention.<sup>27</sup> He complains against Samkara, like some other thinkers, that the *Advaita Vedānta* explains away the world and realm of action by assigning them superficial status or secondary status, as he calls it, for the purification of the mind (*citta-suddhi*). He interprets Samkara as propounding a philosophy of non-action on the part of the *ātma-jñānin* known as *samnyāsin*. He forgets that Samkara does not take action in the ordinary sense of the term, and it is futile on the part of philosophers to deny what the common sense assumes. By non-performance of action, the *Advaitins* only mean that the *brahma-vid* acts but automatically or spontaneously without any strain or struggle. He does not struggle to be virtuous but becomes virtuous by nature. Actions which are being performed by the *samnyāsins* are not the actions which Tilak has in mind, but still they are actions of the free individual. The desire for the non-performance of action, because all actions imply distractions, will be a bandage for the *Advaitins*, no less than a desire for performance. Samkara could understand it only on the basis of self-knowledge which is beyond the *sāttvika karma*.<sup>28</sup> For Samkara ethics must be established on the metaphysical foundation, which does not deny the realm of ethics based on the *Sāttvika karma* but simply enriches it.

27. B.G. Tilak, *Gīta Rahasya*. Tr. S.S. Suthankar (Poona: Lokamanya Tilak Mandir, 1965).

28. T.M.P. Mahadevan, “Can there be Ethics without Metaphysics”, *Proceedings of the Indian Philosophical Congress* (1952), pp. 284-297.

25. *Niskriyatmadarsana sampannatvate naiva kincit karoti sah*. Ibid.  
26. *Gīta*. IV: 18.

*Conclusion*

In the light of the above discussion, it would be wrong to think that the problem of self-knowledge denies any positive ideal of life through renunciation; it simply provides a metaphysical urge for a radical extension of such an ideal. The Advaitins' task is to provide an explanation which significantly lies in the transforming aspect of actions and the world by self-knowledge—a transformation whose accomplishment consists in manifesting or letting the true nature of them emerge to the surface.