CHAPTER XIII
VEDĀNTA

INTRODUCTORY

All schools of Vedānta claim to be based upon the Upaniṣads. Whether this claim can be fully established in every case or not, there is no doubt that they derive a considerable part of their material from that source.¹ In dealing with the Vedānta, we shall accordingly have to refer to the Upaniṣads frequently; but, as we have already given an account of their teaching, it will not be necessary to go into details. It will suffice merely to refer to the relevant points or even to assume the reader's familiarity with what has already been stated. The teaching of the Upaniṣads, we know, is predominantly monistic, though it is not easy to determine what particular form of monism is taught in them. But this did not prevent dualistic interpretations being put on them, and the chief form of dualism that was traced to the Upaniṣads in olden times was the Sāṅkhya. There is a clear indication of this, as already noticed (p. 267), in the Vedānta-sūtra, which has for long been the universally recognized manual of Vedānta. One of the chief objects of Bādarāyana in his treatise is to refute this view that the Upaniṣads teach the dualistic Sāṅkhya. There is also another object equally important which he has in view, viz. the refutation of ritualistic Mīmāṁsā, according to which the essential teaching of the Veda is contained in the Brāhmaṇas; and the Upaniṣads, though as a part of revelation are not unauthoritative, are only of secondary significance and should be finally construed with reference to some ceremonial act or other (p. 319). They may for instance be looked upon as speaking of the self which is the agent in the performance of rites or as glorifying the deities whose propitiation is their aim. In any case it is

¹ The Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Vedānta-sūtra are known as the prasthāna-traya or, as we might say, the triple foundation of the Vedānta.
certain, the Mimāṃsaka contended, that karma is the sole theme of the Veda and that the Upaniṣads, which form a part of it, cannot be taken to point to Brahman or any other principle as the highest entity whose realization constitutes the end and aim of man.1 The inherent ambiguity of the Upaniṣads, the glaring contradiction between the pūrva- and the uttara-kāṇḍas of the Veda and, we may add, the growing power of heterodox beliefs, thus account for the attempts made in the Vedānta to systematize the teaching of the Upaniṣads.

There is evidence to show that this systematization was effected in more than one way. In the Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa there is reference to as many as seven Vedāntic teachers—whether they were his predecessors or contemporaries is not known; and he alludes to differences of view among them in respect of essential points like the nature of mokṣa2 and the need of saṃnyāsa3 for the spiritual aspirant. Even in regard to such an important question as the relation of the jīva to Brahman, Bādarāyaṇa mentions two views other than his own,4 both implying vital distinctions in general philosophic outlook. Differences like these on fundamental issues show that the teaching of the Upaniṣads was from very early times understood in several ways by Vedāntic teachers. Bādarāyaṇa’s exposition is only one; and, in all likelihood, the most influential of them. All current schools of Vedānta, though differing from one another in important matters, alike claim to represent precisely what Bādarāyaṇa himself taught. The extremely laconic form of his sūtras has rendered such variety in interpretation possible. In fact, they are more cryptic than the Upaniṣads, and it is consequently much more difficult to get at their meaning than at that of those old treatises. The result is that even as regards the most essential points there is ambiguity. We do not for instance know for certain whether, according to Bādarāyaṇa, the world actually emerges from Brahman (parināma) or is only

1 Cf. VS. I. i. 4 and Śaṅkara’s com. on it. The Mimāṃsakas are styled ‘deniers of Brahman’ (Brahma-nāstika) in Rāmānanda’s gloss on the latter.
2 VS. IV. iv. 5–7.
3 VS. III. iv. 18–20.
4 VS. I. iv. 19–21.
a phenomenal appearance of it (vivarta). There seem to have been once commentaries on the *Vedaṅta-sūtra* upholding both these views with all their implied differences under theory as well as practical discipline; but they were all superseded by Śaṅkara’s great commentary upholding the latter view and are now lost. Attempts were made later to revive some of the superseded views wholly or in part by commentators like Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa, but without much success. Though these interpretations do not abolish the conception of God, they prefer to look upon Brahman as the Absolute and may therefore be described as predominantly philosophic. There have also been purely theistic interpretations of the *Sūtra*, especially subsequent to Śaṅkara; and among them again we find distinctions due to the identification of the supreme God with Viṣṇu or Śiva. Thus Rāmānuja and Madhva uphold the supremacy of Viṣṇu, while Śrīkanṭha exalts Śiva above him. Of these various schools of Vedānta, we shall consider here only two—one, that of Śaṅkara to represent the philosophic interpretation and the other, that of Rāmānuja to represent the theistic. Before proceeding to this consideration, we may add a word about the relation between the *Mīmāṃsā* and the *Vedaṅta-sūtras*. The two are regarded by all Vedāntins now as complementary to each other and as together exhibiting the totality of Vedic teaching, though they differ in regard to the place that should be assigned in the scheme of Vedāntic discipline to karma as taught in the former. Historically the two treatises were probably independent with different authors—Jaimini and Bādarāyaṇa respectively; and they were later put together with suitable emendations by someone who is described as Vyāsa—‘the arranger.’

Upavarsa, the Vṛttikāra to whom we alluded in the previous chapter (p. 301), seems to have commented upon them in this combined form. The date of the original work by Bādarāyaṇa is now believed to be about 400 A.D.

1 See Dr. S. K. Belvalkar: *Vedaṅta Philosophy* (Poona) Lecture v.
The particular type of monism taught by Śaṅkara is very old, though in its final form it owes a great deal to his contribution. Its most distinguishing feature on the theoretical side is its conception of nirguṇa Brahman as the ultimate reality with the implied belief in the Māyā doctrine, the identity of the jīva and Brahman and the conception of mokṣa as the merging of the former in the latter; on the practical side, it is the advocacy of karma-saṁnyāsa or complete renunciation with its implication that jñāna and jñāna alone is the means of release. The earliest extant formulation of this doctrine is found in Gauḍapāda’s Karikā, which purports to summarize the teaching of the Māndūkya Upaniṣad, but really accomplishes much more by giving an admirable summary of advaitic teaching. The main points of Śaṅkara’s philosophy—its basic principles such as the inapplicability of the notion of causality to the ultimate reality—are already there. The most important of Śaṅkara’s works is the bhāṣya on the Vedānta-sūtra, which is as remarkable for the charm of its style as for the logical consistency of its arguments. We have already mentioned that he therein maintains the vivarta-vāda or the doctrine that the world is a phenomenal appearance of Brahman. According to him, the belief to be refuted before the Advaita is established is not so much the Sāṅkhya or Prakṛti-parināma-vāda as Brahma-parināma-vāda. On account of the fact that the treatise on which he comments alludes so frequently to the Sāṅkhya, Śaṅkara also considers it at length and shows how far removed it is from the Upaniṣadic doctrine; but his real objective is to establish the vivarta-vāda or Maya-vāda as against the pariṇāma-vāda of certain commentators on the Vedānta-sūtra, especially Bhartṛ-prapañca that preceded him. Śaṅkara has also another aim in his bhāṣya: Owing to the resemblance, though only seeming, of his doctrine of nirguṇa Brahman to that of the śūnya or ‘void’ of the Mādhyamika form of Buddhistic idealism, one might

1 Cf. Yat śūnya-vādainaḥ śūnyam tadeva Brahma māyinah. Madhva: Anubhāṣya on VS. II. ii. 29.
identify the two and regard the Advaita as alien to the Upaniṣads. So he emphasizes now and again the fact that his teaching is not negative or nihilistic. How far this contention can be maintained, we shall see later. He does not expressly mention this phase of Buddhism except in one place and there he dismisses it summarily; but there is no doubt that he throughout tries to steer clear of these two doctrines opposed to his own, but yet so similar to it, viz. the Brahma-parināma-vāda of some Vedāntins and the sūnya-vāda of the Mādhyamikas.

Besides the bhāṣya on the Vedānta-sūtra, Śaṅkara wrote commentaries on the principal Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad-gītā. Those especially on the Brhadāraṇyaka and Chāndogya Upaniṣads treat of several points that are not dealt with in detail in the Sūtra-bhāṣya and are of immense value in the comprehension and appreciation of the doctrine of Advaita. In addition to them, we have his Upadeśa-sāhasrī, which, though somewhat terse, gives a splendid account of his views. Śaṅkara’s doctrine was defended and amplified in matters of detail by various thinkers after him, and this has given rise to some diversity of opinion among his followers. Two of the schools resulting from such divergences of view are in particular well known—the Vivaraṇa school which goes back to the Pañca-pādikā, the fragment of a commentary on Śaṅkara’s Sūtra-bhāṣya by his own pupil Padmapāda, and the slightly later Bhāmati school represented by Vācaspati (A.D. 841). The Pañca-pādikā was commented upon by Prakāśātman (A.D. 1000) in his Vivaraṇa, from which the first school takes its name. The Vivaraṇa has a gloss known as Tattva-dīpana by Akhaṇḍānanda, and its teaching has also been most lucidly summarized by Vidyāranya (A.D. 1350) in his Vivaraṇa-prameya-samgraha. The Bhāmati has been explained by Amalānanda (A.D. 1250) in his Kalpa-taru, which in its turn has been annotated by Appaya Dīkṣita (A.D. 1600) in the Parimala. There are also various other commentaries of greater or less value on the Sūtra-bhāṣya, such as the Brahma-vidyābharaṇa of Advaitānanda (A.D. 1450). Of the numerous hand-books written to

1 VS. II. ii. 31.
explain the Advaita system, we may mention here the *Naiškarmya-siddhi* of Suresvara, who was at first probably a Mīmāṁsaka, and the *Samkṣepa-śārīraka* by his pupil, Sarvajñātman. Another work of particular value, especially in regard to the Māyā doctrine, is the *Īṣṭa-siddhi* of Vīmuktatman (A.D. 1050). Later still are the *Nyāya-makaranda* of Ānandabodha (A.D. 1050) and the *Paṇca-dāsī* of Vidyāraṇya, a popular treatise. The *Siddhānta-lesa-samgraha* of Appaya Dīkṣita describes the divergences of view, already mentioned, which arose within the doctrine as a result of its wide expansion in the centuries following Śaṅkara. The *Vedānta-परिभाषा* of Dharmarāja Adhvarindra gives a technical and systematic exposition of the doctrine, especially on its logical and epistemological side; and the *Vedānta-sāra* of Sadānanda (A.D. 1550) is an easy introduction to Advaita philosophy. Among the exclusively polemical works written on the system should be mentioned the *Khaṇḍana-khaṇḍa-khādya* of Śrīharṣa (A.D. 1100), the poet of the *Naiśadhiya-carita* and the *Advaita-siddhi* of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (A.D. 1650) with its commentary, the *Laghu-candrikā* by Brahmananda, whose study is now regarded among the pundits as quite essential to true advaitic scholarship.

I

The Advaita resembles the Sāṅkhya-Yoga in regard to its conception of the psychic apparatus; and it also believes like the other in the theory of representative knowledge. The only difference that may be noticed is that while, according to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, the ten senses are traced to aham-kāra, here they are supposed to be derived from the elements much as in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.¹ The internal organ (antah-karaṇa) also is here conceived as bhautika and as constituted of all the five elements. Though it consists of all the five elements, tejas predominates, which accounts for its

¹ It may be noted that the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika does not recognize karmendriyas, and explains their functions as those of prāṇa or vital air.
being sometimes described as taijasa (‘made out of tejas’). It accordingly partakes more of the character of that element than of any other and is unstable—always liable to alter its form either where it is or where it reaches by ‘streaming out,’ as it is said, through a sense. That is, the antah-karaṇa is always active, except only in states like suṣupti, where it becomes latent. Each of the forms it assumes by exercising this activity is known as a vṛtti as in the Sāṇkhya-Yoga. The explanation that all these organs are bhautika is important on account of the recognition it implies of the indispensableness of physical aids for the manifestation of consciousness. Though indispensable, their distinction from the psychical element is not in the least ignored. It is in fact the constant association of these two incompatibles as implied in common experience that forms, as we shall see, the crux of the philosophic problem according to Śaṅkara.

As regards the nature of the conscious element also, the explanation is almost the same as in the Sāṇkhya-Yoga. It is conceived as extraneous to the apparatus, which yet in some way helps its manifestation. It is not, however, ultimately different from the apparatus here as in the other system; for according to the Advaita the apparatus goes back eventually to the same source, viz. Brahman or spirit, the sole reality acknowledged. For this reason, the interaction between the two—the physical apparatus and the psychical principle—is more satisfactorily explained here than in the other doctrine. But, whatever the metaphysical difference, it does not affect the explanation with which we are concerned in this section. Accordingly we may assume for our present purpose that the two are distinct as in the Sāṇkhya-Yoga. The psychical element is viewed as wholly inactive. The activity it manifests only seemingly belongs to it and is in reality to be traced to its physical accompaniment, viz. the internal organ. The element of consciousness is known as the sākṣīṃ1 and corresponds to the puruṣa of the Sāṇkhya-

1 The word means ‘witness’ or a disinterested looker-on. The conception is thus relative; and the sākṣīṃ as such is not therefore Brahman.
Yoga—the passive observer of the states of the internal organ as they unfold themselves. It appears never by itself, but always in association with the internal organ in its latent or manifest form. The reverse also is true and no internal organ is conceivable without involving a reference to some sākśin or other. Thus it is only the unity of the passive sākśin and the active antah-karaṇa that is real for all practical purposes. That is what knows, feels and wills. In this complex form it is known as the jīva or the empirical self. Such a conception satisfactorily accounts for what would otherwise be wholly unintelligible, viz. the double character of subject and object which one and the same jīva exhibits in so-called self-consciousness. But for the presence within it of the objective complement of the antah-karaṇa one could not, it is said, speak of knowing oneself, since what knows can never be the same as what is known—a view which is entirely opposed to that of Kumārila who regards the ego to be simple and yet ascribes this double character to it (p. 305). This complex entity is believed to endure in one form or other till the time of release. When at last it breaks up, the internal organ is absorbed by or loses its identity in its source, Māyā, which for the moment we may take to be the same as the prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, and the sākśin losing its sākṣi-hood, as will become clear later, becomes Brahman indeed. The sākśin and the jīva are thus not identical, though at the same time they are not quite different either. While the jīva may become the object of self-consciousness on account of the objective element it includes, it is wrong to speak of the sākśin as knowable, for it is the pure element of awareness in all knowing; and to assume that it is knowable would be to imply another knowing element—a process which leads to the fallacy of infinite regress. But the sākśin does not therefore remain unrealized, for being self-luminous, by its very nature, it does not require to be made known at all. Its presence is necessarily equivalent to its revelation and it is therefore never missed. 'That is self-luminousness,' says the Pāṇcadasī, 'which is revelation without any aid.' In other words,
the \( jiva \) is spirit as immanent in the \( antah-karana \), while the \( saksin \) is spirit as transcendent.¹

By \( jnana \) or knowledge in general we must understand in the system neither a \( vr\text{rtti} \) of the internal organ nor the \( saksin \) by itself, but a blend of both—the \( vr\text{rtti} \) as inspired by the \( saksin \). In \( jnana \) thus understood, the \( vr\text{rtti} \) element is contingent; the other, viz. the element of consciousness, is eternal, being intrinsically Brahman itself which, owing to its association with the \( vr\text{rttis} \) that appear and disappear, only seems to be characterized by change, but is really untouched by it. It is sometimes termed \( saksi-jnana \) to distinguish it from \( vr\text{rtti-jnana} \) or empirical knowledge which is a result of the interaction of subject and object. It is present always and it is impossible to think it away. It is 'the light of all our seeing' and does not cease to be even in deep sleep. The \( antah-karana \) may have modal transformations (parināma) other than \( vr\text{rtti-jnana} \), such as pain and pleasure. In fact, all internal states are viewed as its modes. But the system does not in theory regard those other states as states of consciousness so that they have to be known through a \( vr\text{rtti-jnana} \). This distinction does not mean that pain and pleasure, for instance, may exist and yet be not experienced; for as states or modes of the internal organ they are necessarily illuminated by the \( saksin \) and are therefore known as they arise just as \( jnana \) itself is.² It only shows that the doctrine differentiates the cognitive from the other phases of the mind. If we take this explanation with what we have already stated, viz. that except in states like sleep the internal organ will be ceaselessly operating we see that the \( jiva \) is never without some \( jnana \) or other.

Knowledge may be mediate or immediate, the distinction between the two being that while in the former only the 'that' of an object is known, in the latter, the 'what' also is revealed.³ Both kinds of knowledge are alike \( vr\text{rttis} \) of the

¹ This is expressed as follows in Sanskrit:—\( Antah-karana-vi\text{si\text{\textsto}} jivah; antah-kar\text{\textnopahita}h s\text{\textaksi} \): VP. p. 102.
² VP. pp. 79–82.
³ Mediate knowledge removes only the ignorance concerning the
internal organ in which the sākṣin is immanent. Knowledge which gives the object directly is not here equated with sensory perception, and there may be immediate knowledge not involving sense-perception. The empirical self for instance is immediately known, but it cannot be said to be *presented* to any sense. Hence the word pratyakṣa, which literally means 'presented to a sense,' is here usually replaced by the wider term aparokṣa or 'not mediate.' If the following conditions are satisfied, knowledge will be immediate, no matter whether it comes through a sense or not. First, the object must be such as can be directly known (yogya). For example, a table can be so known but not virtue. This is not so much a condition of immediacy as an indication that not all things are perceivable. Secondly, the object must be existent at the time; otherwise even a perceivable object will not be immediately known. Our recollection of a table that no longer exists cannot for this reason be immediate. Lastly, there should be established a certain intimate relation between the subject and the object in question. The means of such relation is the vṛtti which flows out in the case of external objects, but remains within where it originates in the case of internal ones like pain or pleasure. It will be convenient to take the former variety of immediate knowledge for finding out the meaning of this condition. The subject and object are here by hypothesis removed from each other and occupy different positions in space; and the vṛtti which relates them brings about for the time being what may be described as an identity of ground for the two. The exact manner in which this takes place is stated as follows: When an organ of sense is brought into contact with an object, the antah-karaṇa, like a searchlight as it were, goes out towards it and gets itself determined by it or assumes the 'form' of that object. The existence of the object previous to the appearance of knowledge is thus necessary so that existence of an object (asattvāpādakājñāna); immediate knowledge, that regarding its exact nature also (abhānāpādakājñāna).

See SLS. pp. 94 and 147; *Pañca-dāsī*, vi. 16.

* The metaphor is drawn from water in a tank flowing through the sluice to a field to be irrigated and assuming its shape. VP. p. 57.
psychologically the theory is realistic. When the vṛttī coincides with the object, perceptual knowledge arises. The coincidence of these two, since the vṛttī is a mode of the internal organ, is really the coincidence of the jīva and the object. They thus come to have the same ground; or the being of the object, as it is stated, ceases then to be different from the being of the subject.\(^1\) It is their identification in this manner that constitutes the third and the last of the conditions for an object being known immediately. Perception as conceived here is accordingly the result of a communion between the knower and the known; and it would therefore be more appropriate to describe the object as ‘felt’ than rather than known.\(^2\) In the case of internal perception, when the first two conditions are satisfied, i.e. when the object is perceivable and is actually present at the time, the last condition is invariably fulfilled, for internal states like pain or pleasure are not, as already explained, different in fact from the vṛttī through which they are supposed to be experienced. So if those states admit of being directly perceived at all (yogya),\(^3\) they do become immediately known whenever they exist. If knowledge occurs when one or more of these conditions are lacking, it will be mediate. The table beyond the wall can be known only mediatel, for the vṛttī cannot flow out to it to bring about the needed relation, contact with one or other sensory organ being a necessary condition for the starting out of the antah-karaṇa towards the object. But even here, we should remember, a vṛttī is recognized, though it remains internal.

The above view of knowledge implies a classification of objects into those that can be directly known and those that cannot be so known. They may belong to the external world or may be states or modes of the internal organ. External

\(^1\) VP. p. 77.

\(^2\) ‘The theory of perception adopted by the Advaita Vedānta is rather crude on the scientific side, though its metaphysical insight is valuable.’ IP. vol. ii. pp. 492–3.

\(^3\) For example, religious merit (puṇya) and demerit (pāpa), which also are regarded as modes of the antah-karaṇa, are not perceivable because they lack this condition of yogyatva or fitness. They are only inferable or knowable through verbal testimony.
objects may be perceivable and may also be present at the
time; yet they may or may not be directly known. Internal
states, on the other hand, when they satisfy those two
conditions are necessarily known immediately. To these two
kinds of objects must be added a third which is not only
necessarily known immediately but is always so known.
That is the empirical ego—the jiva or aham padārtha as
the same is sometimes designated. It is no doubt the object
side that is commonly attended to in knowledge; but it does
not mean that the subject remains unrevealed in it, although
it may not always show itself quite explicitly. As in the
Prabhākara school, all knowledge alike involves a reference
to it; and since the jiva, according to the Advaita is never
without some jñāna or other, the consciousness of self
becomes a constant feature of all experience. It is this sense
of self that explains how one person is able to distinguish his
experience from that of others. It is absent only in states
like susupti or fainting.

So far we have treated of knowledge during the waking
state. But there is dream experience as well and even sleep
is not quite bereft of experience. We have now to consider
these states specifically. As already stated in the chapter on
the Upaniṣads, the essential distinction between dreams and
waking is that the senses co-operate in the latter, but not in
the former. Further, unlike waking, dreaming is not marked
by an association with the gross body. Yet there is in it the
feeling that the senses are co-operating and that a gross
body—not necessarily similar to that of the waking state—
is also present. We may dream of an elephant and we may
feel that we are riding on it. The consequence is that we
experience objects as existent at the time. This peculiarity
precludes the explanation of the state as due to a mere
revival of past impressions. Dreams are really more than
revived impressions; they are new creations. A revival of the
impressions left by previous experience is of course necessary
for them, but it does not furnish their whole explanation.
Dreams, so far as they are direct experience, should be placed
on a par with waking; and it is accordingly assumed that
objects are present then, apart from their knowledge. In
memory on the other hand that is not the case, the reference in it to things as past being quite clear. The character of dream-objects, however, is held to be different from that of the objects of wakeful experience; but the explanation of this point we have to postpone till we reach the next section.

If the internal organ functions by itself in dreams unaided by the senses, that also becomes latent in sleep. Of the two elements that make up the jīva, one, viz. the antaḥ-karana, is lost in its cause Māyā or, to state it more definitely, in that part or aspect of it called avidyā which constitutes the adjunct of individual jīvas.¹ What endures then is the sākṣin plus avidyā which is known as the kāraṇa-śarīra or the ‘radical adjunct’ of the self as distinguished from its subtle body (liṅga-śarīra).² Consequently there is in sleep no subject at all as such and no states of consciousness as in dreams or waking. This makes the ‘experience’ of dreamless sleep quite unique, though occurring normally and almost universally. What we have in that condition is the sākṣin—not the jīva—associated with its own avidyā, in which the internal organ has provisionally merged. In this state also, we must remember, individuality persists; but the individuality then is due to the union of the sākṣin with avidyā and not with the internal organ. The avidyā operates in sleep only partially. It obscures the true character of reality, but does not split it up into a variety of ‘names’ and ‘forms’ as in dreams or in waking, since the discontinuous and mutually excluding vṛttis of the internal organ are absent there. The experience of sleep involves a reference to both these elements—continuance of personality and absence of all variety—as is shown by the later reminiscence³ that one was asleep and did not know anything. Over and above these there is felt in sleep bliss which, according to a fundamental postulate of

¹ There is some divergence in the use of these terms—Māyā and avidyā. We confine them here respectively to Māyā in its cosmic character and in its ‘incidence,’ so to speak, on the individual.
² In place of the two adjuncts of the self as conceived in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, we thus have three here: (1) kāraṇa-śarīra, (2) liṅga-śarīra and (3) sthūla-śarīra.
³ The recollection by the jīva of what was experienced by the sākṣin is possible as the two are not really different. See SLS. pp. 155-6.
the system, is the very nature of the self and which, owing to
the absence of all distractions then, becomes manifest. This
unalloyed happiness survives even after waking, as shown
by the state of repose that continues for a while; but it
disappears as man lapses back into the vortex of common
life—a belief which is Wordsworthian in its character.¹ 'All
beings visit that Brahma-world day after day, but not one
realizes it.'² None of these features of sleep, it must be noted,
is 'known' at the time, for no knowledge, whether mediate
or immediate, is possible in the absence of the internal organ.
But they are nevertheless realized then as shown by the fact
of their being recalled afterwards.

II

There seem to be strictly but two views in regard to the
implication of knowledge—either to deny, like the Yogācāra
school of Buddhism, that it ever points to an object outside
or to admit that it does so always. To postulate the object
where knowledge is true while denying it either directly or
indirectly where knowledge is erroneous is self-contradictory.
To Śaṅkara, all knowledge in the common acceptance of the
term points to an object as it does to a subject, and there
is no knowledge which does not involve this double implica-
tion. Where there is no object, there can be no knowledge.³
The 'round square' and the 'barren woman's son' are unreal
(asat) and there can consequently be no knowledge of them
beyond a merely verbal one. But it may be asked how, if all
knowledge alike points to an object, illusions occur. In
answering the question it will be necessary to refer to the
example given in the previous chapter to illustrate the pramāṇa
known as arthāpatti which the Advaitin also recognizes. If Devadatta
continues to be strong and healthy, though not eating by day, we do not at once modify or give
up our belief about the need of food for living beings, but try
to reconcile the observed fact with it, and in so doing we

¹ Pañca-dāsi, xi. 74-5.          ² Ch. Up. VIII. iii. 2.
³ See e.g. com. on VS. II. ii. 28.
assume that he must be eating by night. That is, when we are face to face with a fact which contradicts a well-tested view, we do not all at once revise that view, but endeavour to harmonize the new fact with it by means of a suitable hypothesis. In the present case, since it is inconceivable that knowledge should arise without an objective counterpart to it, the Advaitin assumes that there is an object even in the so-called illusion; and, in order to distinguish illusion from non-illusory knowledge, postulates a difference between the types of objects cognized in them. The distinction between illusion and ordinary knowledge is not accordingly due to the absence and presence respectively of an object outside corresponding to its content, but to the difference in the character of the object that is pointed to in either. Objects of illusion are not common to several or general, their presence not being vouched for by collective experience. The serpent (say) which a person sees in the dark where there is only a rope is special to him and may not be seen by others. It may therefore be described as ‘private’ or personal to him, while objects of common knowledge such as a real serpent are public, for they are cognized by others as well. A second difference between the two types of objects is that while an object of illusion lasts only as long as its knowledge lasts—neither for a longer nor for a shorter period—that of ordinary knowledge is more enduring. The latter is already there before it comes to be apprehended and, generally speaking, continues to be after its apprehension ceases, as is shown for instance by our recognition of it later; the former on the other hand comes to exist as we apprehend it and ceases to be when our apprehension of it ceases. The one is described

1 See Gaudapāda-kāraṇa, ii. 14. An object may of course disappear and cease to be as we are apprehending it.

2 It is possible to say that this feature characterizes illusion also, and that so far the distinction of the objects of ordinary knowledge from those of illusion vanishes. For example, the ‘rope-serpent,’ once seen, may be recognized after some time, if in the meanwhile the mistake has not been rectified. Such a position cannot be proved to be false; and there have been Advaitins who maintained it (Cf. SLS. pp. 105-6). But it lands us eventually in solipsism and is not the commonly accepted advaitic view.
as vyāvahārika or empirical; the other as prātibhāṣika or apparent. Dream objects, to whose difference from those of the waking state we have already referred, are of the second type.

The objects which we have described as private, it is necessary to remember, are not mere ideas or purely subjective. If they were, the advaitic theory of knowledge would be the same as the Yogācāra one which Śaṅkara unreservedly criticizes, viz. that there is no object apart from its knowledge and that the commonly recognized distinction between them is a fiction. No private object can indeed be conceived except as dependent upon a particular individual; the point to be noted is that it is not mental, but an object of mind. This is brought out clearly in the explanation given of the origin and nature of prātibhāṣika things to which we shall soon refer. For the present we merely note that the foregoing account shows how mistaken is the common belief that Śaṅkara views the objects of everyday experience to be false or unreal. So far from doing this, he claims some kind of reality even for objects of illusion. To be perceived is for him to be, and his theory may therefore be described as an inversion of the one associated in western philosophy with the name of Berkeley. This explanation has one great merit. It accounts for illusion as it occurs. What we experience in it is that we see the serpent or silver; and this fact of knowing an object as present then and there is not explained, but is rather explained away in other theories of illusion.

In the light of this distinction among the objects of knowledge, we may explain error as arising when different types of things are related in a judgment. In the example ‘This is silver,’ the ‘this’ (i.e. shell) is empirically real and ‘silver’ which is superposed upon it is only apparently so. In other words, error is ‘illegitimate transference’ or adhyāśa as Śaṅkara puts it in his celebrated Introduction to the Vedānta-sūtra. Though the empirical and the apparent

\[1\] VS. II. ii. 28-32.
spheres are both objective, we, for the reasons assigned above, take that which is superposed as less real than that on which it is. The falsity of such knowledge is not realized until we become conscious of the disparity between the objects related in it. When a person is seeing silver where there is only shell, he certainly does not know it to be false. On the other hand, he then feels convinced that it is quite as valid as any other knowledge. But when he approaches the object, picks it up and discovers that it is too light to be silver, he at once realizes that he was in error. What leads to the discovery is therefore this other knowledge\(^1\) whose object, because it is of the empirical kind, is not similarly sublated.\(^2\) Now as regards the relation between the two terms involved in error: It cannot be identity, for things belonging to different levels of being cannot be identified. Nor can it be difference, for then the terms would not appear as subject and predicate in the same judgment as ‘This is silver.’ We cannot take it as identity-in-difference either, for that conception, as we shall see in the next section, is self-discrepant. The relation is therefore regarded as unique and is called tādātmya.\(^3\) It is not real, because it obtains between terms that belong to two different orders of being. The water that is quaffed in a dream will not quench actual thirst. At the same time the relation is not unreal, for it is experienced. It is therefore like the lower of the two objects it relates, apparent, not empirical. We may further remark that the relation is such that negating the higher of the two relata necessarily negates the lower. But the reverse is not true. If the shell is denied, the silver is not; but the negation of the silver is quite conceivable with

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\(^1\) Parataḥ eva aprāmāṇyam: VP. p. 338.

\(^2\) It should be noted in this connection that pain, pleasure and other modes of the antah-karaṇa, though ‘private,’ are not thus sublated and are therefore not prātibhāsika. The same remark applies to the antah-karaṇa also.

\(^3\) Literally the word means ‘identity’ and is used in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika in the sense of the abstract identity of a term with itself. It is also used in the sense of ‘identity-in-difference’ by some like Kumārila. Here it has neither of these senses.
the affirmation of the shell. This is what constitutes appearance. We accordingly describe the shell as the ground of which the silver is an appearance.

It is necessary to eludicate further the idea of adhyāsa. From the fact that wherever there is adhyāsa, there is a confusion between two orders of being, we deduce that it presupposes ignorance. It is because we are oblivious of the shell that we see silver in its place. There are other causes also, such as the previous experience of silver, defective eye-sight, etc., to account for the mistake; but it will suffice for our purpose to confine our attention to the most important of them, viz. ignorance or avidyā. Now avidyā, which is only another word for ajñāna, implies, like jñāna, some person to whom it belongs (āśraya) and some object to which it refers (viṣaya). The notion of ‘knowledge’ is not complete until we mention the subject that knows and the object that is known. Similarly, in the case of avidyā, there must be someone whom it characterizes and an object which is misapprehended in it. In the present case, the person that mistakes the shell for silver is its āśraya, and the shell is its viṣaya. It is avidyā3 thus determined that is described as the cause of silver4; and it operates in a double manner. It conceals the fact of shell and shows up silver in its place. To see silver where there is only shell, a necessary condition is the concealment of the shell. Suppression precedes substitution. These two aspects of it are respectively termed āvarana or ‘veiling’ and vikṣepa or ‘revealing.’ As the avidyā does not put the shell entirely

1 For this reason the silver is described as ananya with reference to the shell which Śaṅkara explains as ‘not existing apart from.’ Ananyatvam vyatirekena abhāvah. See com. on VS. II. i. 14.
2 That is, the proximate ground. The ultimate ground is always spirit or caitanya.
3 This avidyā should not be confounded with the one described above as the radical adjunct of the jiva. That is constitutive of the jiva; this is only a passing characteristic of it. The one continues till mokṣa is attained; the other disappears with the error it has occasioned.
4 Avidyā is directly the cause of the illusion, but all knowledge has by hypothesis an object and that object, viz. ‘silver,’ here is ascribed to the same avidyā, not being traceable to any other source. See VP. p. 137.
out of sight, it is not lack of apprehension—a mere gap in thought—but misapprehension and is therefore described as positive (bhāva-rūpa). It is the contrary of vidyā, not its contradictory; and the condition for the resulting error to disappear is the removal of avidyā which happens when vidyā arises in the self-same person in regard to the self-same object. It is the reference to a particular individual and to a specific object which this avidyā involves that explains the uniqueness of the silver of which it is described as the source. Because it has a specific external object as its basis, the silver to which it gives rise appears out there—spatially determined—and is not a mere idea; and, because it has a particular person for its āśraya, the illusion which it occasions is special to him. It is this personal character that distinguishes private objects from the empirical ones which, as we shall see later, spring into being directly from Māyā and are ‘public’ or verifiable by others also. Though the objects we are now considering form an order by themselves, they are not altogether sundered from the other, for avidyā which occasions private objects is dependent upon the same source to which the common order of nature is due, viz. Māyā,¹ and is therefore described sometimes as tūlāvidyā or auxiliary avidyā.² It is owing to this sameness of the source that when Māyā is overcome in mokṣa both realms of objective being disappear alike. Otherwise though the common order of nature may cease to be then, the other might persist.

There is one important instance of adhyāsa which we must specially consider now—the ego or aham-padārtha. Systems like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṁsā regard it as a simple and ultimate entity. It is in fact synonymous with the self (atman) in those doctrines. But the Advaitin denies the integrity of the self in this sense and takes it, we know, to be a complex of the sākṣīn and the internal organ. His reasons in favour of this position are chiefly two: One is the fact of self-consciousness which by showing in the same self the contrary features of subject and object indicates its mixed character. The other is the uniqueness of sleep experience.

¹ SLS. p. 140. ² VP. p. 168. Māyā is then termed mūlāvidyā.
If the ego or jīva were simple and endured throughout, all experience would alike involve a reference to it. But that is not the case, for sleep as interpreted here is without such reference. We are therefore compelled to explain it as consisting of two elements one of which, viz. the sākṣīn alone, endures through the three states. The other, viz. the internal organ, is common only to waking and dream; and to it accordingly should be ascribed all the specific features of those states. ‘Love, desire, pleasure, pain and so forth are experienced when the internal organ functions, but not in sleep; hence they must be of the internal organ.’

Now the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṁsā, which hold that the ego is not analysable, maintain that it is distinct from the body, senses, etc. But there is ordinarily an implied identification of these distinct entities, as for instance when one says ‘I am stout,’ ‘I am blind,’ where ‘stoutness’ and ‘blindness’ which are respectively the characteristics of the body and the sense of sight are predicated of the self. These systems explain the identification as more or less consciously made, as for example when we describe a man as a ‘giant’ and as therefore having only a secondary or rhetorical significance (gauna)—supporting their position by reference to the equally familiar experience finding expression as ‘my body,’ etc., where the distinction appears explicitly. The Advaitin does not accept this explanation. He contends that the characteristic of gauna or secondary usage, viz. the consciousness at the time of the distinction between the objects identified, is lacking here and ascribes the identification to an unconscious confusion between the entities involved, viz. body, senses, etc., on the one hand, and the sākṣīn on the other. It accordingly involves, in his view, ignorance of the true character of those entities and is a case of error or adhyāsa. There are indeed occasions, he admits, when we do distinguish between the two, as when we speak of ‘our body,’

Rāgechā-sukha-duḥkhādi buddhau satyāṁ pravartate: 
Suṣuptau nāsti tannāśāt tasmāt buddheshu nātmanah.

These are all vṛttis as inspired by the sākṣin and it is their vṛtti aspect alone that belongs to the antah-karaṇa. The resemblance to the Śāṅkhya-Yoga here is clear.
but he explains them as only flashes of the truth which are soon veiled from us. This argument is applicable to the antah-karaṇa also and when a person feels pain, for example, and says ‘I am suffering,’ he is illegitimately transferring to the true ātman what according to the previous reasoning belongs to the antah-karaṇa. If the ego is complex and is an instance of adhyāsa, the entities constituting it must belong to different orders of being. We get a hint here of a third kind of reality; for the internal organ, one of the two involved in it, is an empirical reality being an effect of Māyā and as such stands higher than appearances having avidyā for their source. The higher reality is the sākṣin or more strictly sākṣi-svarūpa which is Brahman itself. It is designated true or pāramārthika reality.

If error signifies that the objects related in it belong to different orders of being, truth by implication should consist in relating objects of the same order; but, for reasons to be explained presently, we shall take this definition as holding good only within the sphere of empirical things and not in the case of appearances which are contradicted when we judge them in relation to that sphere. A dream-judgment like ‘This is an elephant’ is not true although its two terms alike stand for realities of the prātiḥāsika type, because both are set aside so soon as one awakes.

1 The Nyāya-Vaiṣeṣika and the Mīmāṁsā also admit that the manas which corresponds to the Advaitin’s antah-karaṇa is different from the self; but they view pain, etc., as features directly characterizing the ātman. There is therefore nothing, according to those doctrines, that is out of the normal in the experience ‘I am suffering’ to need an explanation.

2 The notion of the sākṣin, as already pointed out, is relative to an antah-karaṇa and cannot therefore be regarded as ultimate. Sākṣi-svarūpa means the essence of the sākṣin.

3 Some recognize only one kind of being. See VP. pp. 221-3. Some again do not make any distinction between vyāvahārika and prātiḥāsika being. According to the latter, the reality of the waking state does not stand higher than that of the dream state—what is true according to either being sublated in the other. See Note 2 on p. 350.

4 The ground of the adhyāsa here is taken to be spirit or caitanya, as indeed it is in the case of ‘shell-silver’ also eventually (VP. pp. 162-3). The only difference is that in the latter the illusion is mediated by an empirical object, viz. the shell, while in the former it is direct.
accordingly define as that which leads to knowledge whose content is not sublated (abādhita) as the result of later experience. The silver seen where there is only a shell disappears the moment we scrutinize it, but the shell does not vanish in the same manner. The knowledge of the silver is therefore bhrama and that of the shell, prama. True, even the latter may prove a delusion from a higher standpoint; but such a consideration may be excluded when we are contrasting empirical things with appearances. What is meant when we say that the knowledge of the shell is prama is that, unlike that of the silver, it justifies its claim for truth throughout empirical life—not that it is ultimately real. As regards the question whether novelty (anadhigatatva) should be regarded as a necessary element in truth (p. 313), the Advaitin is indifferent; but with his partiality for the Bhāṭṭa view, he would prefer to include it among the conditions of validity. In accordance with the orthodox view of revelation (p. 180), this condition is necessary in the case of śruti.

The Advaita recognizes all the six pramāṇas mentioned in connection with the Kumārila school of Mīmāṁsā and generally agrees with it in matters of detail also. Of the points of difference between the two, it will suffice to touch upon only the following here, all of them having reference to verbal testimony:

(i) The Mīmāṁsā rejects the view that the Veda was ever composed by anybody (p. 312), and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ascribes its authorship to Iśvara (p. 258). The position of Śaṅkara in regard to this point, like that of the other Vedāntins, is midway between the two. Like the Mīmāṁsaka, but unlike the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, he admits that the Veda is apauruṣeya; but he re-defines that word so as to make it signify not that the Veda has no author and is eternal, but that it is produced or, more properly, resuscitated at the beginning of each kalpa by one that cannot interfere either with its content or with the order of its words. In the case of works like the Raghu-vaṁśa, the author composes it just

1 VP. pp. 19 ff.  
2 VP. pp. 36–8.  
3 VP. p. 298.  
4 Compare the saying: Vyavahāre Bhāṭṭa-nayāḥ.
as he likes. Here, on the other hand, the first promulgator of
the Veda in every cycle who is God repeats it anew, but
precisely as it was in earlier cycles. That is, the Veda is self-
existent in this view also; only it is not the self-same Veda
that always is, but a series of what may be described as
re-issues of an eternal edition which goes back to beginning-
less time. This, it will be seen, is not in substance different
from the Mīmāṃsā view, excepting that it finds a place for
God in the doctrine.

(ii) Śāṅkara, following Kumārila, admits śabda to be a
pramāṇa outside the Veda also; but he does not restrict its
independent logical validity, within the Veda, to injunctive
statements (p. 318). Assertive propositions found there may
be equally valid, so that there is nothing in the nature of the
Veda as verbal testimony to preclude it from treating directly
of matters of fact (bhūta-vastu) like Brahman or the highest
reality. Statements like Tat tvam asi which occur in the
Upaniṣads thereby acquire independent logical value here;
and there is no need to subordinate them in one way or
another to ritualistic commands as in the Mīmāṃsā.

(iii) The truth revealed by the scriptures, contrary to
what the Mīmāṃsaka thinks, is here the fundamental unity
of Being. We shall see later in what sense this unity is to be
understood in the Advaita, and may now consider the place
in the scheme of pramāṇas of perception which seems to
vouch for the truth of diversity and thus to come into con-
flict with the teaching of revelation that all is one. The
primary aim of perception, like that of the other pramāṇas, is,
according to Śāṅkara, to serve empirical purposes. It gives
no guarantee for metaphysical validity,¹ so that what we
commonly hold real may not be truly so. ‘Common knowledge
is true,’ he says,² ‘so long only as the identity of oneself with
Brahman is not realized, as dreams are until one does not
awake.’ In other words, the transcendental ideality of the
world does not exclude its empirical reality.³ Such a view
considerably modifies the notion of inherent validity (svatah-

¹ Cf. Naiṣkarmya-siddhi, ii. 5; iii. 44 and 83-6.
² VS. II. i. 14.
prāmāṇya) which the Advaitin, like the Mīmāṃsaka (p. 307), accepts. That knowledge is true requires, according to the Advaita also, no explanation, for by its very nature it is so. This self-validity, however, for the reason just mentioned, is to be understood here as relative and not absolute as in the Mīmāṃsā. Even the validity of the Veda, generally speaking, is only such. When it teaches that svarga can be attained through the performance of a certain sacrifice, it is of course true; but the Veda does not thereby vouch for the ultimate reality of either the svarga or anything connected with it. The fact is that the Advaita recognizes a higher, viz. the absolute standpoint from which all pramāṇas alike, inclusive of the Veda, lose their relative validity. An exception is made only in the case of Upaniṣadic statements that teach the unity of all being. These statements are pramāṇa in the absolute sense, for the knowledge which they convey is never shown to be wrong. But it does not secure for the pramāṇa itself ultimate reality, for in mokṣa where nothing but Brahman remains, even that pramāṇa as such must disappear. It signifies that a false means may lead to a true end—a position which may appear untenable; but there are many instances in life where this happens. The image of a person as reflected in a mirror is not real, but it does not therefore fail to serve as the means of showing to him so many facts about his appearance. The roaring of a lion in a dream is not real, but it may wake the dreamer to actual life. It is necessary, however, to remember in thus admitting the utility of error that nothing here is absolutely unreal so that even a false means is not without a nucleus of truth.¹

So much about vṛtti-jñāna or knowledge as it is commonly known to us. But according to the advaitic analysis of it, empirical knowledge is a complex consisting of a physical factor and a psychical one, neither of which by itself is adequate to explain experience as we are familiar with it. We have now to point out the full implication of this analysis on its psychical side. The sākṣin which is the psychical element is always present like an ever-luminous lamp, the enduring and changeless element in experience which does

¹ See Śaṅkara on VS. II. i. 14; Naiṣkarmya-siddhi, iii. 108–9.
not cease to be even in deep sleep. It is individual and determinate, being defined by reference to the particular internal organ with which for the time being it seems associated. It is accordingly termed jīva-sākṣin. What comes within the range of one sākṣin—through the medium of its own antahkaraṇa in the waking and dream states and through avidyā in deep sleep—is not necessarily within the experience of other sākṣins. But existent objects as a whole can be understood only as presented to some sākṣīn, for consistently with the eventually idealistic position of the Advaita there can be no reality outside what either knows or is known. This line of reasoning leads to the postulating of a cosmic sākṣīn or absolute consciousness (Īśvara-sākṣīn) which sustains everything that is. It is, in reality, the ground of the whole universe and is, as we shall see more fully in the next section, the Brahman of the Advaita. It is designated svarūpa-jñāna or pure consciousness. The vṛtti-jñāna draws its breath and substance from it, and the whole complex of empirical or finite knowledge would be nowhere without the light of this absolute or infinite consciousness.

To sum up: Our analysis of experience has led us, on the one hand, to an infinite consciousness or absolute spirit (anubhūti or caitanya); and, on the other, to two realms of objects which, however, have no being apart from that spirit. We may deduce this principle from the nature of the sākṣīn as we have just done or from the nature of those realms of being. We may argue that just as the pratibhāsika reality points to a vyāvahārika one, the vyāvahārika in its turn does, to a pāramārthika reality. If an appearance lasts only as long as its jñāna lasts and the empirical persists ever afterwards, this higher reality is timeless. Thus we have altogether three orders of being of which two alone are related to time. The third, which is the same as the svarūpa-jñāna referred to above, is the Brahman of the Vedānta. The recognition of this higher reality reveals a new form of error. The one we have drawn attention to thus far is that in which a pratibhāsika object is superposed upon a vyāvahārika one. It is error as is familiarly known. But if error is illegitimate

* VP. pp. 102 ff.
transference, the superposition of an empirical 'what' on the highest Being also should be erroneous. This is not, however, error which occurs within the world of experience like the other, but lies at the root of it. It is involved in the very notion of the ego or the knowing subject (pramātā) because in it two incompatibles are, as we have seen, confounded with each other. It therefore vitiates all our knowledge at its source. The whole of the universe in the form in which it is experienced by us is due to this metaphysical error wherein the empirical is mistaken for the real, and is an abstraction apart from its ground, viz. Brahmaṇ.¹ That is, there is a higher standpoint from which even empirical things are only appearances. It is in this sense that the Advaita maintains that the world is not real (mithyā) and that Brahmaṇ is the sole truth. The conception of truth and error in the system thus becomes relative, and it is essentially wrong to speak of any knowledge as true or false without mentioning at the same time the sphere with reference to which it is adjudged. It was for this reason that we defined truth above relatively to a particular level of being, viz. the empirical. Really, however, even this 'truth' is an error. Only we should not forget that, according to the Advaita, all error is but partially so, for it contains a core of truth—the shell for instance in the case of silver and in the case of the shell itself when we regard it as not real, the higher reality of which it is an appearance.

III

The ontological position of the Advaita has already been indicated generally in dealing with its view of knowledge. We shall now restate the same, adding some details. Of the three types of being mentioned, we need treat only of two here, viz. the empirical and the true or the metaphysical. The former, we have already stated, is common to all and exists independently of individual consciousness. It also, as experienced by different individuals, is no doubt partly

¹ Contrast the Sāṅkhya-Yoga view where the elements constituting the empirical ego are independently real.
divergent, for each cognizes only so much of the world as is within the reach of his limited faculties and is in kinship with his particular temperament. To give the illustration of the *Pañca-dāsa*,¹ a father may think that his son who has gone away from home to a distant place is alive while as a matter of fact he is no more. One and the same object again may occasion different and even opposite feelings in different persons. But these worlds as given in the experience of individuals are not entirely separate. They have, as indeed we ordinarily take for granted, a common basis unlike the dream-worlds, for instance, of two or more persons. That is the world as it is; and it is termed Īśvara-sṛṣṭa ('God-created'), while the same as it exists in the medium of one's individual consciousness is described as jīva-sṛṣṭa² ('jīva-created'). Such a view implies that we accept many selves. There is of course nothing preventing us from criticizing this position as a begging of the question, but the only alternative to it is solipsism, which, though as a theory it may be irrefutable, is repugnant to thought and really stultifies all effort at philosophizing. We shall accordingly take for granted the plurality of selves so far as our present discussion goes. These selves or jīvas differ from the common objects of experience in being coeval with time and not in it like them³—a belief which the Advaitin shares with the followers of the other orthodox systems. Thus each of the indefinite number of selves we have assumed has been there from the beginning of time or is anādi. The empirical world which is vouched for by collective experience presents both unity and diversity, there being a common and enduring element along with different and changing ones in it. It may be described as a systematic whole, for it exhibits a causal order. It also involves a purpose inasmuch as its creation, as explained in the chapter on the Upaniṣads (p. 79), rests upon a moral necessity. Such indications of physical and moral order in it, no doubt, are not altogether conclusive; but there is the significant fact

¹ iv. 20–35.
² It is the world as it exists for an individual that is the source of bondage to him, not the world as it is. See *Pañca-dāsa*, iv. 32.
³ Cf. Śāṅkara on VS. II. iii. 16 and 17.
that they become more numerous and clearer with the advance of knowledge and the growth of human institutions. When once the cosmic character of the world is admitted, we trace it back to a source which, though simple, accounts for all aspects of it. This source or the first cause is Māyā which symbolizes to us the unitary character of the physical world. Diversity is only implicit in it, while in the objective world that develops from it, it is quite explicit. There is, however, one important difference between Māyā and its products. The latter, as their very description as ‘products’ testifies, have all a beginning in time; but the former being the first cause can obviously have no such beginning. It also is therefore anādi like the jīvas alluded to above. Jīvas and Māyā thus form a new type of entities and differ from common objects which are all in time; but they are not, it should be added, altogether unrelated to time like Brahman or the ultimate reality.

It has been stated that the sphere of empirical objects is independent of individual consciousness. On the principle, however, to which we have already referred (p. 54) that whatever is, if not itself mind, must be for mind, it should depend upon some consciousness; for otherwise the statement that it is would be meaningless. Granting such an all-sustaining consciousness, it is easy to see what conditions it must satisfy. It should last as long as the world in its causal or effect form lasts. That is, it must be anādi. It cannot be any finite consciousness in the sense in which a jīva is, for it must know the contents of the entire universe. Not only this, whatever is known must also be correctly and directly known by it, for error and mediate knowledge which imply limitation of one kind or another are, by our hypothesis, excluded in the case of that consciousness. That is, its experience must be direct, complete and correct. This cosmic subject, as we may term it, to whom the whole of existence is related as an object, is the Iśvara of Advaita and it is the third of the entities coeternal with time along with Māyā and the jīvas. Here we find the triple factor forming the subject-matter of all philosophy and religion. To them we may add a fourth, viz. time itself to which we have all along
been alluding but which cannot be brought under any of the other three heads.

We shall now briefly state the nature of these four entities which, though they are not distinct from the empirical universe, stand on a footing of their own:—

(1) Jīva.—This is the empirical self, the true nature of which has already been considered. It is manifold, each jīva having its own peculiar features, although agreeing with the rest of its class in many respects. It represents the spiritual element in the universe; but it is the spiritual element appearing not by itself, but invariably in association with physical adjuncts such as the antah-karana. Its essential associate, however, is avidyā, the individual’s share of Māyā which is the adjunct of Īśvara. Just as the whole universe is the effect of Māyā, the portions of the universe which constitute the gross and subtle bodies of an individual self are conceived as the effects of that particular self’s avidyā. In fact, the relation of Īśvara to the world is exactly parallel to that of the jīva to its own organism. Considered apart from these individual and cosmic accompaniments, the jīva and Īśvara are one or, more strictly, are not different. That is the significance of Tat tvam asi. The jīvas which we have assumed to be many are in consequence only empirically so; and the individuality characterizing each is due to its adjuncts such as the body and the senses. Intrinsically they are but one, for each is alike the supreme reality.

(2) Māyā.—This is the first cause of the physical universe and consequently corresponds to the prakṛti of the Sāṇkhya-Yoga; but there are important differences and metaphysically the two are poles asunder. From it spring into being not only organic bodies that house jīvas but also all inorganic nature. The things arising from Māyā we commonly regard as real; but truly they cannot be described as either sat or asat. They are known (dṛṣya) and to that extent at any rate cannot be unreal, for the absolutely unreal, like ‘the hare’s horn,’ is only words. Nor can they be regarded as real in their own right, for they are objective (jāda) and hence depend entirely upon spirit for their being. This characteristic of not being finally classifiable as either real or unreal (sadasadvilakṣaṇa)
constitutes the uniqueness of the things of experience and should naturally be found also in their cause, Māyā. They are neither something nor nothing, and are therefore termed mithyā. They are not unreal as commonly assumed by the critics of the doctrine; only they are not ultimate. Or, in other words, their reality is relative and they may be regarded as appearances when contrasted with the higher reality of Brahman. In giving rise to such things, Māyā resembles avidyā, the source of common illusions, and is therefore described as the principle of cosmic illusion. In this it differs from the prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga which is real in the full sense of the term.

(3) Īśvara.—We described Māyā as the source of the physical universe. But this source, for reasons already assigned, being altogether dependent upon the cosmic sākṣin, cannot act by itself. In strictness, therefore, the two elements should together be reckoned as giving rise to the world. Here we find another point of difference from the Sāṅkhya-Yoga where prakṛti is supposed to be endowed with the spontaneity required for manifesting of itself the whole of the physical world. It is the cause of the world in this complex form or spirit together with Māyā that is the Īśvara of Advaita. Or as it is somewhat differently expressed, Māyā is the potency (śakti) inherent in Īśvara through which he manifests the objective world with all its diversity of names and forms.1 But he at the same time sees through the diversity, so that he never misses its underlying unity as we do. Though the universe as emerging from Īśvara is not around but within him, the exercise of this potency gives rise to a sense of ‘the other’; and Māyā may therefore be regarded as the principle of self-consciousness or self-determination. It interpolates a distinction where really there is none. In this sense, Māyā cannot be the source of the universe, but is a mere accessory to Īśvara in bringing it into existence out of himself. For reasons similar to those adduced in explaining the parallel conception of avidyā—the source of ordinary illusions, Māyā or the principle of cosmic illusion is conceived as more than a negation of

1 See Śaṅkara on VS. I. iv. 3.
The very fact that it serves as the cause of the visible universe shows that it should be so far positive. It is again, on the analogy of avidyā, described as having two powers—āvaraṇa and vikṣepa. In its vikṣepa phase it projects the aggregate of names and forms constituting the world. The function of āvaraṇa is to obscure the unity of Being; but since that unity is never concealed from Īśvara, Māyā in its āvaraṇa aspect is stated to be powerless over him. Nature does not veil spirit from him. This sets a vast gulf between the jīva and Īśvara. It, in fact, accounts for the bondage of the one and the freedom of the other. Owing to the power which the āvaraṇa phase of Māyā or avidyā wields over it, the jīva believes in the ultimacy of mere variety, and to this belief, as also to its fragmentary view of the world already mentioned, should be traced all the evil to which it is subject. It ordinarily identifies itself with the organism with which it is bound up and looks upon the rest of reality as wholly external. It develops likes and dislikes for a small part of it, and assumes an attitude of indifference towards the rest. In the case of Īśvara, on the contrary, such preferences and exclusions are impossible according to our hypothesis. He identifies himself with the whole world and the identification is not, as in the case of the jīva and its organism, due to any confusion (adhyāsa) between the self and the not-self, but is the outcome of a continual realization of the true nature of both. The ideal of morality as conceived in the Advaita, we may state in passing, is gradually to replace the narrow view held by the jīva by one like that of the cosmic self, whose interests coincide with those of the universe.¹ ‘Considerations of “mine” and “thine” weigh only with the little-minded; to the large-hearted, on the other hand, the whole world is like a single household.’²

Such a conception naturally lends itself to a two-fold presentation, and that is why it is described not only as Īśvara or ‘the Lord’ but also as the saguna Brahman. The former being personal may be taken as the ideal of advaitic

¹ See Śaṅkara on Ch. Uṣ. III. xiv. r and on VS. I. ii. r–8. ² Ayam nijah paro veti gananā laghu-cetasam: Udāra-caritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam.
religion—standing for an all-knowing almighty God, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world; the latter, not being so, as that of advaitic philosophy—standing for the Absolute which explains the world-system as it is. When we consider the universe in reference to this supreme subject, there is only one type of reality in place of the two found in the case of the jīva; and that is of the phenomenal or prātibhāsika type. For by hypothesis whatever is, is known to Īśvara and no part of it lasts longer than the time during which it is experienced. In this sense, Īśvara may be described as an eternal dreamer. But we must not think that he is deluded. That would be so if he did not realize the identity of the objective world with himself, or if any aspect of the truth about it remained unrevealed to him. What is meant by describing Īśvara’s world as prātibhāsika is that its unity with himself being always realized, all variety as such is known to him to be a mere abstraction. It is just this distinction between the relation of the world to Īśvara on the one hand and to the jīva on the other that critics overlook when they say that according to Śaṅkara the objective world is unreal. It is no doubt an appearance to Īśvara, but not to us who have not realized its unity with ourselves. Till we are able to do so and make our life a mirror of our new convictions, we must view it as real whatever its ultimate nature may be.

(4) Time.—We have so far assumed an entity like time and taken it as lying outside the remaining three. It really represents the relation between spirit and Māyā.¹ Of these, the former alone is completely real and not Māyā also. Hence the relation between them, like that between the shell and silver, cannot be fully real. That is, time is phenomenal. In this connection it is necessary to point out the advaitic view of space. It is regarded as an offshoot of Māyā and the first object to be created,² so that the Advaitin does not place time and space on the same footing. Its conception presupposes the principle of causation already at work, but not so the conception of time. While all things born, excepting

¹ See Vana mālā on Śaṅkara’s com. on Tait. Up., p. 131 (Śrīrangam Edn.).
² Tait. Up. ii. 1.
space, are in time and space, space is in time only. Jīva, Īśvara and Māyā are neither in time nor in space.

These are the fundamental entities of the Advaita considered from the empirical standpoint. It is not necessary to enter here into cosmological details, for they are practically the same as those mentioned in the chapter on the Upaniṣads. These entities, it should be clear from their description given above, are not disparate. They are interrelated and together constitute a system which, as time is included in it, may be taken to be dynamic in its character. The question now to consider is whether such a conception is satisfactory enough to remain final. The conclusion of the Advaita is that it is not, whether we judge it from the standpoint of practical religion or from that of speculative philosophy:—

(1) Thus to view it as representing a theistic ideal: There is the well-known difficulty—to mention only one—of reconciling God's assumed goodness and power with the presence of physical and moral evil in the world.¹ Even supposing that evil exists only from our standpoint and not from that of God or Īśvara as defined above, the theistic position does not become fully comprehensible. We cannot, for instance, understand why God should have created the world. To ascribe a motive to him would be to admit that he has ends to attain; and that would be to question his perfection or all-sufficiency (paritṛpta-tvam). To deny a motive and ascribe the work of creation to his intrinsic nature or to some sudden impulse in him would be to reduce God to an automaton or attribute caprice to him; and either way his supposed omniscience is compromised.² There are solutions of such difficulties suggested in the Advaita as in theistic doctrines generally; and these attempts at justifying the ways of God to man are not without their appeal to the religious mind. But, as Śaṅkara observes, they are not final because they 'have reference to the world of names and forms founded upon avidyā.'³ In other words, such solutions, like the problems they solve, keep us tied to the realm of relativity and, as the essence of the relative is to point beyond

¹ VS. II. i. 34–6.
² Ibid., 32–3.
³ See com. on sūtra 33 ad finem. Cf. Bhāmatī on sūtra 34.
itself for its complete explanation, the theistic conception cannot be regarded as ultimate.

(2) The same conclusion is reached when we regard it as the philosophic Absolute. The relation for instance which appears to constitute its several elements into a system will on examination be seen to be not really intelligible. Let us consider first the place of the jivas in it: Since, according to the doctrine, the jivas do not originate and are anādi like the saguṇa Brahman itself, the relation between the two should be anādi. So much is certain. But what is the nature of this relation? It is not identity, for the saguṇa Brahman cannot be the same as any of the jivas with its fragmentary experience. Nor can it be regarded as a collection of all of them, for that would give us only a collection of individual experiences and not, as required, an integral one which alone can serve as the ground and explanation of the whole universe. That is, we cannot identify the saguṇa Brahman with either any of the jivas or with the totality of them. Equally impossible is it to think of it as altogether different from or outside them, for in that case there would not be that intimate connection between the two which is implied in the description of the whole as a system. A similar reasoning applies to the relation between the saguṇa Brahman and the physical universe emerging from it; only as the latter unlike the jivas has a beginning, being produced, the relation is not anādi. It cannot be identity, for an effect as such is not the same as its cause; nor is it difference, for then the two cannot be represented as cause and effect.

But it may appear to us that the relation in question is one of identity-in-difference. Such a conception itself, according to the Advaitin, is self-discrepant. This is a point which is discussed at great length in advaitic works. It is not possible to enter here into all the details of the discussion; so we shall content ourselves with drawing attention to its main features. Let M and N be two entities between

1 If we take, instead of the visible universe, its source Māyā, the relation is anādi.
2 See e.g. BUV. IV. iii, st. 1637–1787; Bhāmaṭī, I. i. 4.
3 Cf. Iṣṭa-siddhi (Gaekwad's Oriental Series), pp. 18–22.
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which the relation in question is supposed to exist. Now neither of them can as such be both identical with and different from the other. It would mean that M is both N and not-N and that N similarly is both M and not-M, which is a violation of the law of contradiction. When two things are distinct in fact, they cannot be the same. We cannot accept both sides of a contradiction to be true. But it may be said that this deficiency, if it be one, is vouched for by experience and that, since experience is our only guide, we must acquiesce in it (p. 161). Such an argument seems to the Advaitin like a refusal to think. He admits that we finally depend upon experience for determining the truth about things, but he does not therefore relinquish the right to re-examine the meaning of experience when it results in a palpable self-contradiction and seek for a new explanation of it, if possible. The data of experience, merely because they are such, put us under no constraint to accept them under all circumstances as logical verities. Further, it may be granted for the sake of argument that there is no valid ground for doubting the reality of the content of experience as it ordinarily occurs, when there is agreement among thinkers about it. But the point in question is not one about which we find any such agreement. Even the realist Naiyāyika, we know, postulates the new-fangled relation of samavāya in such cases with a view to avoid the necessity for admitting the real to be self-contradictory. Whatever view, therefore, we may hold about the verdict of experience in general, the present case at any rate is not one where it can be accepted without scrutiny. If M and N do not constitute an identity in difference directly, it may be thought that they do so mediatly through features or elements in them—some of which are identical and others different. Thus we may say that M and N possess one or more common features which may be represented by a and, at the same time, exhibit differences represented by x and y respectively. According to this explanation, what is identical is quite distinct from what is different; yet the entities, viz. M and N, by virtue of such features, it may be said, are identical with and, at the same time, different from each other. Such an explanation may seem to solve the difficulty,
but the solution is only apparent, for it merely shifts the
difficulty to another set of things. It assumes that M and N
are characterized by $a\ x$ and $a\ y$ respectively, and the
assumption leaves us where we were, for we cannot satisfac-
torily explain the relation between a thing and its so-called
characteristics. Now the relation between M and $a\ x$, to
take only one of the entities, cannot be identity, for then
the distinction between $a$ amd $x$ would vanish, both
being identical with the same M; and with it also the
relation of identity-in-difference between M and N. Nor
can $a$ and $x$ be different from M, for then their character,
whatever it may be, will cease to affect M and therefore
also its relation to N. So we are driven to think of identity-
in-difference as the only possible relation between these.
That is, in explaining the relation in question between
M and N, we presuppose the same relation within each of
them; and pursuing the inquiry further will only lead to an
infinite process.\(^1\)

For such reasons the Advaitin views the relation between
the saguṇa Brahman and its constitutive elements as unique
or as tādātmya in the sense explained in the previous
section—not to be characterized as identity or difference
or identity-in-difference. Hence the conception of saguṇa
Brahman involves adhyāsa, and like that of Īśvara cannot
be regarded as ultimate. Or to state it differently, the saguṇa
Brahman includes not merely reality but also appearance,
which is something less than the real. The element of reality
in it is the ultimate of Advaita. It should be carefully noted
that this reality is not the mere unity underlying the diversity
of the universe, for unity and diversity are relative to each
other, and it is impossible to retain the one as real while
rejecting the other as an appearance. Both of them are alike
appearances and the advaitic Ultimate is what is beyond

\(^1\) It does not alter the matter if M and N, instead of being two
objects, are two moments in the history of one and the same object,
say P. The argument would still be applicable to them, the only
difference being that what are described as identical features are
truly so in the latter, but are only similar and remain separate in
the former.
them—their non-phenomenal ground (nirvīśeṣa-vāstu). It is for this reason that Śaṃkara describes his doctrine as advaita or ‘non-duality,’ and not as aikya or ‘unity.’ By discarding the notion of bhedābheda or, more specifically, by refusing to accept a changing Brahman as ultimate, Śaṃkara differentiates his doctrine from Brahma-parināma-vāda advocated by other Vedāntins according to whom both the physical universe and the jīvas actually emerge from Brahman.¹ Brahman according to him does not evolve in this sense, but only gives rise to appearances which, though entirely depending upon it, affect it no more than the silver does the shell in which it appears. He thus enunciates a new view of causation which is different from both the parināma-vāda and the ārambha-vāda with which we are familiar. According to it, the cause produces the effect without itself undergoing any change whatsoever. It is vivarta-vāda or the doctrine of phenomenal development. Viewed in the light of this theory, Brahman only appears as the world. It is the original of which the world, as it has been said,² may be regarded as ‘a translation at the plane of space-time’; and Brahman depends as little for its being on the world as an original work does on its translation. This is what is otherwise known as the Māyā doctrine.³ Though the doctrine as it appears here naturally shows considerable development in matters of detail, it has, as we have pointed out (p. 63), a definite basis in the Upaniṣads. The charge that it is alien to the Vedānta is therefore really without foundation. Again, by postulating a Reality behind the self-discrepant world of experience, Śaṃkara differentiates his doctrine from the śūnya-vāda of the Mādhyaṃikas. The discrepancy characterizing the saguṇa Brahman or its relativity only degrades it to the level of appearance; it does not dismiss it altogether. If according to the Mādhyaṃika it is impossible for thought

¹ Some like Bhāskara take the universe alone as the parināma of Brahman and not the jīvas also.
² IP. vol. ii. 570.
³ If the Advaitin sometimes uses terms implying belief in parināma, he should be understood as speaking from the empirical standpoint. See Śaṃkara on VS. II. i. 14 and Bhāmati on I. iv. 27.
to rest in the relative, it is equally impossible for it, according to Śaṅkara, to rest in absolute nothing. To use the terminology of the Upaniṣads, the Advaita denies only ‘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 distincts (bhidyamāna).¹ That there is a Reality at the back of all empirical things again is not a mere assertion, for it is maintained here, as we know, that the thinking subject in us is not different from it so that its being becomes an immediate certainty. If we denied it, the very fact of denial would affirm it.² We may not know what it exactly is; but its presence itself, owing to the basic identity of ourselves with it, can never be doubted.

What is the nature of this Reality? As indicated in an earlier section, it may be represented on the one hand as the infinite Consciousness implied by empirical knowledge or as the infinite Being presupposed in all finite existence. But it is neither empirical knowledge nor phenomenal being, for each of them has appearance superadded to the real and so far fails to represent the latter in its purity. Such knowledge and being, though revealing the ultimate, do not represent it truly and the same is the case with all empirical things. While they are not apart from it, they cannot either singly or in combination stand for it. That is why Brahman as the ultimate is termed nirguṇa or ‘indeterminate,’ which does not amount to saying, as it is ordinarily assumed, that it is nothing, but only means that nothing which the mind can think of can actually belong to it. Whatever we think of is for that very reason objective (dṛṣya) and it cannot therefore be an element in that which is never presented as an object (dṛk). The familiar categories of thought therefore are all inapplicable to it. Hence no direct description of it is possible. But we can indirectly point to it utilizing the appearances as aids; for an appearance, which can never be independent, necessarily signifies a reality beyond itself. In this sense every

¹ See SAS. iv. 20.
² Ya eva hi nirākartā tadeva tasya svarūpam: Śaṅkara on VS. II. iii. 7.
percept and every concept can be made to indicate the Absolute. The Upaniṣads prefer to direct our attention to it through terms like tvam or aham denoting the subject, for unlike other terms they, besides dispelling all doubt about its being, afford a better clue to its nature. When such terms are combined with another like tat or Brahman in an assertive proposition like Tat tvam asi or Aham Brahmasmi, the reference to Reality becomes ensured. For the attributes which they respectively connote of the individual and of the cosmic subject—such as the bondage of the one and the freedom of the other—being mutually incompatible, our mind abandons the explicit sense of the terms, and travels beyond those attributes to that in which they are grounded (nirviśeṣa-vastu) as constituting the true import of the proposition. The dropping of these attributes, we should add, signifies little because they are but illusive barriers erected by Māyā between the jīva and Īśvara. It should also be pointed out that we do not here identify the ground of one set of attributes with that of the other, for such identification would be meaningless without some difference equally real between them. To avoid this implication we merely deny the distinction between the two, so that what the proposition in strictness means is that the jīva is not other than Brahman.

The advaitic Absolute is not merely indefinable; we cannot know it either, for the moment it is made the object of thought it becomes related to a subject and therefore determinate. That is another important reason why the idea of Īśvara or saguṇa Brahman is rejected as inadequate to be the true goal of philosophy which the Advaita, like the other Indian doctrines, views as not merely arriving at a speculative notion or a conceptual formula of the ultimate reality, but to realize what it is in itself. The ideal of the determinate

1 Cf. Naǐṣkarmya-siddhi, iii. 100–3. All objects alike reveal being (sat) of some type or other. The subject which cognizes them reveals not only being but also thought (cit). Thus we may say that the Advaita recognizes kinds as well as degrees of reality.

2 As other examples of distinction between the two, we may mention the following: The jiva's knowledge has many limitations, while God is all-knowing; God is mediately known, while the jiva is immediately realized.
Brahman has been elaborated in thought and it therefore remains a reality for thought. It is Brahman in ‘an empiric dress’—the Absolute as it appears to us, and not as it is in itself. Its internal self-discrepancy to which we have drawn attention is in fact the result of its relation to thought. It is, as it is expressed, jñeya Brahman or Brahman that can be known. In itself, it excludes all relations (asaṁsrṣṭa), including that between subject and object, and is therefore unknowable. But though it cannot be known it can, as we shall point out presently, be realized.

One should therefore be careful in understanding what exactly is meant when the Upaniṣads describe Brahman as nirguna and therefore as indefinable and unknowable. It is not in every sense beyond the reach of words. To suppose that it is so would be to deprive the Upaniṣads of the whole of their purpose. Even granting that the negative definition is the only possible one, it does not follow that the nirguna Brahman is a blank.¹ For all propositions directly or indirectly refer to reality and negation necessarily has its own positive implication. As a matter of fact, however, the Advaitins assign Upaniṣadic statements like neti neti—‘Not this, nor that’—a secondary place while the primary place is given to those like Tat tvam asi, which point to the reality in us as the ultimate. That is, the negative statement is not to be understood in isolation, but along with positive ones like Tat tvam asi. Negation is only a preliminary to affirmation.² It means that the Absolute is not conceived here objectively—as merely inferred from outer phenomena; but as revealing itself within us.³ This alters totally the significance of the negative description, for we are thereby constrained to admit not only its positive character but also its spiritual

¹ Being the Absolute in the true sense of the term, it may appear as ‘nothing’ to the dull-witted (manda-buddhi) as Śaṅkara says (see com. on Ch. Up. VIII. i. 1). Compare: ‘I still insist that for thought what is not relative is nothing’—Bradley: Appearance and Reality, p. 30.
² See Samkṣepa-śāriraka, i. 250–6.
³ If an objective reality be negatively described and all knowable features are abstracted from it, we may conclude that there is nothing of it left behind. The observation that ‘pure being is pure nothing’
nature. It is not thus a bare or contentless being for which the Absolute stands here. Nor should the statement that Brahman is unknowable lead us to regard the doctrine as agnostic. It, no doubt, rules out all discursive thought as inapplicable to Reality; but it does not represent it as extra-empirical—as something wholly outside the world of experience. The nirguna Brahman is not the negation or the antithesis of the saguna, but is its very truth and is immanent in everything that goes to constitute it. Hence every aspect of experience, whether on the subject or object side, reveals it. Indeed irrepressibility (svayaṁ-prakāśatva) is its very essence and, like the sun behind a cloud, it shows itself in a sense even in being hidden. We seem to miss it ordinarily on account of the bewildering mass of appearances. But that is like not seeing the ocean for the waves. It is true that it cannot be grasped as an object of knowledge. But there may be other ways of 'experiencing' it; and the whole tenor of the advaitic theory of perception as well as its scheme of practical discipline, to which we shall refer in the next section, shows that there is such a form of experience and that we can 'know' Brahman by being it. This higher type of experience is not altogether unfamiliar to us. There are moments, though all too rare, when we transcend ourselves and when even the experience that is being lived through is not cognized. We pass in it not only beyond common consciousness in which the thought of self is implicit, but also beyond explicit self-consciousness to where thought merges in experience. It may be taken as a distant analogue of the attitude of the sage who, having through long discipline learnt to feel his identity with all that exists, at last succeeds in passing beyond even that state, and losing sight of the objective world and of himself as such, is straight away installed within Reality. That constitutes the consummation of Advaitic teaching.

Though the ideal of the saguna Brahman is thus inadequate may accordingly apply to another form of Advaita which is named Sattādvaita, in contradistinction to the Ātmādvaita of Śaṅkara, and takes mere Being (sattā-sāmānyā) to be the Absolute. See Naiśkarmya-siddhi, iii. 101.
to be the ultimate of philosophy, it must not be regarded as useless. We have already seen how it furnishes an ethical ideal by following which the disciple can rise above his congenital limitations and acquire that moral fitness which is indispensable for success in achieving the advaitic goal. Even from the purely theoretic standpoint, it is not without its own value, as is shown for instance by the method followed in the Advaita. This method, we know, starts with the more or less diverse worlds as given in individual experience and discovers as their basis a common one. Systematizing the variety that is manifest in it, it then arrives at unity. And it is only afterwards, since this world of unity in diversity is itself an appearance on the reasoning adopted above, that the doctrine concludes to the spirit which lies beyond it as the sole reality. The contradictions and anomalies of ordinary experience have at first to be resolved at least in the seeming orderliness signified by the ideal of the saguṇa Brahman, if we are to reach the advaitic ultimate unerringly. Without the synthesis effected in it or, to express the same thing differently, without the jīva’s avidyā being universalized as Māyā, we would land ourselves in subjectivism reducing the world to a mere private show, for there would then be no reason for postulating anything beyond what is present to individual consciousness. The Advaitin’s criticism of the saguṇa Brahman should accordingly be understood as showing only the inadequacy of that conception to serve as the goal of philosophy and not as signifying that it is valueless. But its value is restricted to the empirical sphere—a view which is entirely in consonance with the general advaitic position that practical utility need not rest on metaphysical validity. It is this distinction that has given rise to what are familiarly known as the ‘two grades’ of teaching in the Advaita—the higher one of the nirguṇa Brahman (para-vidyā) and the lower one of the saguna (apara-vidyā).

1 See Śaṅkara on Ch. Up. viii. i. 1 and Kalpa-taru, I. i. 20.
Since mokṣa, according to Śaṅkara, is not a state to be newly attained, but is the very nature of the self, we can hardly speak of a means in its ordinary sense for achieving it. It is realizing what has always been one’s own innate character but happens for the time being to be forgotten. The Upaniṣadic statement is ‘That thou art,’ not ‘That thou becomest.’ The common illustration given here is that of a prince, brought up as a hunter from infancy, discovering afterwards that he is of royal blood. It involves no becoming, for he has always been a prince and all that he has to do is to feel or realize that he is one. We might illustrate the point equally well by referring to the distinction between a solar and a lunar eclipse. In the latter, the light of the sun is actually cut off from the moon by the earth coming between it and the sun, so that the passing off of the eclipse signifies a real change in the condition of the moon, viz. the part that was enveloped in darkness becoming lit. In a solar eclipse, on the other hand, the luminary continues to be during the eclipse exactly as it was before or will be afterwards. It only appears to be eclipsed because the intervening moon prevents it from being seen as it really is. The re-emergence of the bright sun accordingly means no change whatsoever in it, but only a moving farther away of the moon or the removal of the obstacle preventing the sun from showing itself as it is. Similarly in the case of advaitic mokṣa, all that is needed is a removal of the obstacle that keeps the truth concealed from us and the discipline that is prescribed is solely with a view to bring about this result. It is therefore only in a negative or indirect sense that we can talk of attaining mokṣa here. Empirical life being entirely the consequence of an adhyāsa, the obstacle is ajñāna and it is removed through its contrary jñāna. The jñāna that is capable of effecting it should be, for the reasons mentioned more than once before, direct or intuitive (sākṣat-kāra); and it should refer to one’s own identity with Brahman, for it is the forgetting
of this identity that constitutes sāṁśāra. Such knowledge is the sole means of liberation. Neither moral perfection nor religious acts are required as direct aids to it. The cultivation of the will and the purification of the affections are of course necessary, but they are only aids to jñāna,¹ not to mokṣa. It means that the morally impure will not seriously set about acquiring the saving knowledge. When once jñāna arises, it does of itself dispel ajñāna and the simultaneous revelation of spirit in all its innate splendour is mokṣa. To state the same in another way, ethical improvement and religious discipline are necessary for mokṣa but not enough. That is what is meant by karma-saṁnyāsa as advocated by Śamkara. The conception of jīvan-mukti is the logical result of such a view of the world and of escape from it. If knowledge is the sole means of release from bondage, freedom should result the moment it is gained; and there is nothing in the psychical or other equipment of the human being which renders its acquisition impossible here and now.²

The discipline is to be undergone in two stages—one, preliminary which qualifies for entering upon the serious study of the Advaita; and the other, Vedāntic training proper which directly aims at self-realization. Of these, the former is identical with karma-yoga as explained in the chapter on the Gītā and its aim is the cultivation of detachment. The latter consists of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana. These have been already explained in the chapter on the Upaniṣads, but it is necessary to restate the position calling attention to what is peculiar to the Advaita. (1) Śravaṇa. This is study and discussion of the Upaniṣads with the assistance of a guru.

¹ VS. III. iv. 26.
² The only other level of existence where the self can be realized according to the Upaniṣads is Brahma-loka or the world of Brahmā (Kaṭha Up. II. iii. 5), the mokṣa thus achieved being designated krama-mukti as stated in the chapter on the Upaniṣads (p. 74). It results, according to the Advaita, from the combination (saṁuccaya) of Vedic karma with meditation upon the saguṇa Brahman regarding it as the highest reality, either because the disciple does not know there is a higher one or because, knowing it, he feels himself unequal to the task of realizing it.
that has realized the truth they teach. The implication of this requirement is two-fold: First, it signifies that the ultimate philosophic truth is to be learnt through a study of the revealed texts. Secondly, it emphasizes the need for personal intercourse with a competent teacher, if the study is to be fruitful and shows that mere book-learning is not of much avail. (2) Manana. This is arguing within oneself, after knowing definitely what the Upaniṣads teach, how and why that teaching alone is true. The main object of this process is not to discover the final truth, for that has been learnt already through śrāvaṇa, but to remove the doubt (asaṁbha-vanā) that it may not after all be right. It is intended to transform what has been received on trust into one’s own true conviction and brings out well the place assigned to reason in the Advaita. The recognition of the value of analytical reflection, we may note by the way, is rather a unique feature in a doctrine which finally aims at mystic experience. (3) Nididhyāsana. Manana secures intellectual conviction. But there may still be obstacles in the way of self-realization. For despite such conviction, there may be now and again an unconscious reassertion of old habits of thought (viparīta-bhāvanā) incompatible with what has since been learnt. Nididhyāsana is meant to overcome this kind of obstacle. It is meditation upon the identity between the individual self and Brahman—the central point of Vedāntic teaching. It should be continued till the desired intuitive knowledge arises and that identity becomes immediate ( aparokṣa). When it does, one becomes a jīvan-mukta. The ultimate philosophic fact is no doubt to be known through the testimony of the Upaniṣads; but if the knowledge conveyed by it is to bring real freedom, one should verify it by one’s own living experience in the form ‘I am Brahman’ or Aham Brahmadevi. It is this immediate experience or direct intuition of the Absolute, which is described as vidvadana-

1 VS. IV. i. 1-2.
bhava to distinguish it from lay experience, that accordingly becomes the final criterion of Truth here.¹

The jīvan-mukta’s life has two phases: It is either samādhi or mystic trance when he turns inwards and loses himself in Brahmān; or the condition known as vyutthāna or reversion to common life when the spectacle of the world returns but does not delude him since he has once for all realized its metaphysical falsity. Diversity continues to appear then as the sun, we may say, continues to appear as moving even after we are convinced that it is stationary. A jīvan-mukta experiences pain and pleasure, but neither really matters to him. He does not necessarily give up all activity as is abundantly illustrated by the strenuous life which Śaṅkara himself led,² but it does not proceed from any selfish impulse or even from a sense of obligation to others. Blind love for the narrow self which ordinarily characterizes man and the consequent clinging to the mere particular are in his case replaced by enlightened and therefore equal love for all. The basis for this universal love is furnished by the Upaniṣadic teaching ‘That thou art.’ We should do unto others as we do to ourselves, because they are ourselves—a view which places the golden rule of morality on the surest of foundations. ‘Who sees all beings in himself and himself in all beings—he will dislike none,’ as the Upaniṣad³ says; or as the Gītā puts it, ‘He harms not self by self.’⁴ The common laws of social morality and ritual which are significant only in reference to one that is striving for perfection are meaningless for him.⁵ The jīvan-mukta, having transcended the stage of strife, is spontaneously virtuous. Impulse and desire become one in him. He is not then realizing virtue but is revealing it. ‘In one that has awakened to a knowledge of the self, virtues

¹ Apart from the question of direct revelation, the Upaniṣads also should in the last resort be regarded as recording only such intuitional knowledge of ancient sages. See Note 4 on p. 182.
² Cf Paṅca-daśi, vi. 270–8. It is interesting in this connection to refer to Śaṅkara’s statement at the end of his com. on VS. IV. i. 15, which tradition views as an allusion to his own direct experience of the ultimate truth.
³ Iṣa Up. 6.
⁴ xiii. 27.
⁵ Cf. Śaṅkara on VS. II. iii. 48.
like kindness imply no conscious effort whatsoever. They are second nature with him.' When at last he is dissociated from the physical accompaniments, he is not reborn, but remains as Brahman. That is videha-mukti.

1 Naiśkarmya-siddhi, iv. 69.