

## ISHVARA, JIVA AND SAKSI (साक्षी)

The ultimate reality for Vedanta is the non-dual, unconditioned, indeterminate and highest Brahma which is transcendent to senses, thought and language and is the non-dual eternal Self which is self-shining as Immediate Experience-Bliss and self-proved as the undeniable foundation of all knowledge, of all assertions, denials and doubts. This pure, non-dual, eternal and unconditioned Consciousness (*shuddha chaitanya*) called Brahma or *Atma*.

God, is the conditioned *Brahman*; the conditioning principle is called *maya*. God is 'called lower *Brahma* or *Ishvara*.

The same pure Consciousness appearing as limited by the internal organ (*antahkarana*), which is objective and physical and is a product of *avidya* is called individual self or *jiva*. *The jiva is a subject-object complex*. This complex is the jiva who thinks, feels and wills. Jiva is the empirical knower (*pramata*), the doer of all actions (*karta*), the enjoyer of the fruits (*bhoktā*), endowed with the notion of the 'I' (*ahankara*) and the 'mine' (*mamakra*) and is the object of self-consciousness. *Its subject-element is pure consciousness and is called **saksi**, while its object-element is the antahkarana, the internal organ which is a product of avidya. Saksi is, like Brahma, pure Consciousness, self-luminous and self-proved, unqualified, indeterminate and unknowable as an object, but, unlike Brahma, it appears in association with the upadhi of avidya or antahakarana as a witness or a disinterested looker-on illuminating itself and everything presented to it as an object.*

When jiva is awakened by shruti which says, 'tatvam asi' (That thou art), then he realises that he is not the body, senses or internal organ, but is the non-dual internal Self or Brahma and attains liberation.

Brahma is the transcendent ground-reality (*adhithana*) on which, through *maya and Avidya* which is the transcendental Illusion, *Ishvara, jiva and jagat* (objective world) are super-imposed, and when this *avidya* is dispelled by non-dual experience of the Self, all these vanish leaving only the non-dual Brahma. God, individual selves and the objective world are appearances of Brahma. These are non-different from Brahma. They appear when *maya* arises and vanish when *maya* is dispelled.

*Ishvara* or God is the personal aspect of impersonal Brahma. As *saguna Brahma*, He is the abode of all good qualities. He is the Perfect Personality. He is the material (*upadana*) as well as the efficient (*nimitta*) cause of this universe. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe. He is immanent in the entire universe which He controls from within. As the

immanent inner ruler of this universe, He is called *Antaryami*. He is also transcendental, for in His own nature, He transcends this universe. He is the Giver and the Governor of the moral order.

- He is the inspirer of moral and spiritual life.
- He is the object of devotion.
- He helps the devotees in their spiritual realisation by showering His Grace (*anugraha*) on them.
- Even when God is referred to as the lower (apara) Brahman, what is meant is not that Brahman has become lower in status as God, but that God is Brahman looked at from the lower level of relative experience. These are two forms of Brahman and not two Brahmans : as-it-in-itself, and Brahman as-it-in-relation-to-the-world. The former is the unconditioned Brahman; the latter is Brahman as conditioned by nomenclature, configuration, and change.
- As *Ishvara* is essentially identical with Brahma, Brahma-realisation is also the realisation of the essential nature of *Ishvara*. In fact, *jiva* also is essentially identical with Brahma (*jivo Brahmaiva naparah*), for its objective component comes from *avidyā*. The subject-element in *jiva* is *sāksi* which is pure Consciousness and is identical with Brahma. Hence *Ishvara*, *saksi* and *jiva* are in fact non-different from Brahma; their difference is due to their association with *Māyā* or *Avidya* in different degrees and this association, too, is finally unreal as the fact of illusion is also illusory. So, if a person in phenomenal life demands a reality higher than God that person does not know what he or she is seeking.

*Achārya Shankara* makes it clear that *Ishvara* is proved only by *shruti* or scripture and not by finite thought or inference. In Western philosophy, Kant has rejected the proofs for the existence of God offered by Descartes. *Shankara* has criticised the proofs given by Nyaya for the existence of God. The cosmological proof can give only a finite creator, who is no creator at all. The teleological proof can only point to the fact that a conscious principle is working at the root of creation. The ontological proof can give only an idea of God and not a real God. The Acharya has also made it clear that creation is apparent, not real and that God is not a real creator.

***Jiva, in contrast to Ishvara***, is subject to the cycle of birth and death, while *Ishvara* is ever-free. *Jiva* is the slave of *Avidya* (*Maya-dasa*) while *Ishvara* is the Lord of *Maya* (*Mayapati*) on whom the *avarana shakti* or the covering power of *Maya* does not operate and the *viksepa shakti* or projecting power functions under His control. *Jiva* is subject to all the three *gunas* of *avidya*, while in *Ishvara* there is only pure *sattva guna*. *Jiva* is limited by *antahkarana*, senses and body, while *Ishvara* is not limited by physical body, senses and internal organ, He is Will-

Consciousness and His body is not physical, but divine and conscious. Jiva is limited, finite and bound and cannot be the cause of this universe, while Ishvara is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this world and showers His Grace on the jivas or withdraws it from them. Jiva is a mixture of being and non-being, knowledge and ignorance, pleasure and pain, while Ishvara is Being-Consciousness-Bliss. Jiva, due to his subjection to avidyā, performs actions (kartā) and reaps their fruits (bhoktā), while the creativity in Ishvara is due to His control over Māyā and as agency really belongs to Māyā, Ishvara does not imagine Himself as the doer and so the question of His enjoying the fruits of activity does not arise. Jiva is subject to the false notion of the 'I' and the 'mine', while Ishvara is Perfect Personality free from egoity and attachment. Jiva, as a finite ego has limited existence, knowledge and power, while Ishvara, as Concrete Universal, is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. The Achārya emphasises that as Ishvara is, in His essential nature, Brahma itself for His association with Māyā is only apparent, similarly the jiva too is essentially Brahma itself because, his finitude or bondage is due to his association with psycho-physical organism generated by avidyā, which vanishes when avidyā is dispelled by immediate realisation of the real Self. Shaṅkara says that he who maintains a real difference between jiva and Brahma and thus wants to preserve the reality of finitude and bondage, is indeed lowest among the learned).

**Sāksi**, like Brahma, is pure eternal consciousness, self-luminous and self-proved being the presupposition of all knowledge and experience, unqualified (nirguna) and indeterminate and is the pure subject unknowable as an object. But while Brahma is unconditioned (nirupadhika), **saksi**, unlike it, is sopadhika as it appears in association with the upadhi of *maya* or *avidya* or *antahkarana*, though it is not involved in or limited by this upadhi. It appears to be associated with upadhi (upahita) and is not limited by it. It is called the witness Self, a disinterested looker-on illuminating itself and everything presented to it as an object. Ishvara is full of qualities and is immanent in māyā as its controller, but sāksi, unlike Him, is the pure self devoid of qualities and uninvolved in upādhi. Jiva is the subject-object complex; *jiva* is consciousness limited by *antahkarana* which is objective and is a product of *avidya*. *Jiva* is empirical ego (*pramata*) who is a doer of actions (*karta*) and enjoyer of their fruits (*bhokta*). *Saksi*, unlike *Jiva*, is the pure subject, a disinterested looker-on, associated with but uninvolved in *upadhi*. *Saksi* is the pure eternal consciousness appearing in Ishvara as associated with *maya* and in *jivas* as associated with *antahkarana*. The former is called *Ishvara-saksi* and the latter *Jiva-saksi*. Though the witnessing consciousness arises with the experience of object, it is not the result but the presupposition of this experience. *Saksi* is self-luminous and illuminates all objects presented to it. Everything, known or unknown, is an object for *saksi*.

## MOKSA

*Moksa*, for Acharya Shahkara, is the immediate experience of the real nature of the self. It is absolute and eternal freedom. It is not freedom *from* something to be given up (e.g., this world), nor it is freedom *to* gain something worth achieving (e.g., liberation), nor it is freedom *for* someone (e.g., the empirical self); it is freedom *itself*, pure and eternal. There is no 'becoming' in *moksa*; the individual self does not really 'become' Brahma for it always is Brahma itself. There is nothing to be left or acquired here. As Buddha identifies *nirvana* with the Absolute, so Shahkara identifies *moksa* with Brahma. '**He who knows Brahma becomes Brahma**' means that Brahma can not be known by finite thought as an object, but is to be experienced directly by realising one's unity with it.

The Shruti declares: 'This self is Brahma' (*ayam atma Brahma*) and 'That thou art' (*tat tvam asi*).

Sharikara gives the following three definitions of *moksa* which really mean the same thing:

**(1) Moksa is the realisation of Brahma (*Brahma-bhava*)**

**(2) Moksa is the cancellation of *avidya* (*avidya-nivriti*), and**

**(3) Moksa is eternal unembodiedness (*nityam ashanratvam*).**

Realisation of Brahma and cancellation of *avidya* are the same for both reveal the Absolute as eternal consciousness and bliss. Unembodiedness means the utter unrelatedness of the self with the three types of bodies, gross, subtle and causal. It is not the absence of the body, but the absence of the relationship with the body. Hence *Jivan-mukti* is admitted.

The self is really never bound and so the question of its real release does not arise. The self, through *avidya*, is imagined to be finite, to be an agent and enjoyer, to be subject to the cycle of birth-and-death, and this constitutes its bondage. When this *avidya* is cancelled by immediate spiritual experience, the self is realised as infinite, ever-pure and ever-free, and this is said to be its release from bondage. But in fact the self is neither bound nor released; it is only *avidya* which appears and *avidya* which vanishes. The self is always pure, eternal and transcendental reality. *Atma* and Brahma are one. In the rope-snake illusion, the rope does not become a snake even during illusion when it is so mistaken, and does not shed off snakehood and regain its ropehood when this illusion is removed by knowledge of the rope. *Moksa* is the cancellation of transcendental Illusion by the immediate experience of the Real (*avidya-nivriti*). Though the passage from the state of illusion to the state of knowledge involves temporal sequence, yet time is not a constituent element or an intervening factor in illusion and its cancellation, because the illusory object is unreal at all time. Knowledge of the ground-reality and cancellation of illusion happen simultaneously. Removal of *avidya*, immediate experience of Brahma

and realisation of *moksa* are one and the same. Immediate experience of the absolute Self does not produce *moksa* as its effect; it simply removes *avidya* which acts as an obstacle to *moksa*. *Moksa* is the realisation of the eternal nature of the Self as pure being and bliss.

Shankara brings out the **nature of *moksa*** in the following passage: This is the ultimate reality, the changeless eternal, all-per vading like space (but beyond it), free from all causal modification, ever-contented pure bliss, indivisible, self-luminous by nature, untouched by actions in the form of virtue and vice along with their effects (in the form of pleasure and pain), and beyond time in its three tenses of past, present and future; this unembodied reality is called *moksa* or absolute freedom.<sup>1</sup> The following points, mentioned in this passage, about the nature of *moksa* may be noted. *Moksa* is the ultimate reality, the Absolute which is Pure Being. It is absolutely eternal in the sense of being totally free from change. It is infinite and all- pervading. Though it is said to be all-pervading like space, it is beyond space as it is the universal spirit. It is beyond causation and causal modifications. It is ever-contented eternal bliss. It is bliss itself, not parted by subject-object-duality. It is transcendental unity, indivisible and unique. It is self-proved and self-shining non-dual spiritual experience which is the undeniable foundation of all our empirical knowledge and experience. It is the timeless eternal. It is the cancellation of *avidya* and the phenomenal world projected by it. *Karma* and its results do not touch it. It is beyond virtue and vice, beyond empirical pleasure and pain. The Self has no real association with body, gross, subtle or causal. It is absolute freedom and spiritual independence which is the own nature of the Self. It is the fearless. It is the highest end in human life.

*Moksa* is not an *effect (karya)* of anything. It is eternal reality and therefore cannot be produced by anything. It cannot be the result (*phala*) of action (*karma*) or meditation (*upasana*). If it were something to be achieved by action or meditation, then it would be certainly perishable (*anitya*). And '*perishable moksa*' is a contradiction in terms. All those who believe in *moksa* take it to be eternal. *Moksa* is eternal bliss which is different from and beyond empirical happiness, worldly and heavenly. The shruti declares, and reason confirms, that pleasures are produced by the efficacy of good actions (*dharma*) and last as long as that efficacy lasts and perish along with it. Even (the promised) pleasures in heaven, however great and comparatively more lasting these may be, are perishable by nature as they are generated by the energy of *Karma*. No empirical pleasure can be eternal, for it is an effect produced by *Karma* and no effect can be eternal. Also, no empirical pleasure can be unmixed as it is always accompanied by pain, for virtue is necessarily related to vice. Moreover, empirical pleasure can be enjoyed only by embodied beings. Hence, if *moksa* be regarded as the effect produced by action or meditation, it is bound to be perishable, mixed with pain and enjoyable only in an embodied state. Hence *moksa* cannot be produced by action or meditation. Nor can *moksa* be treated as an effect produced by knowledge of Brahma. Immedi-

ate realisation of Brahma does not generate *moksa* ; it simply removes *avidya* which obstructs the revelation of *moksa*. Cancellation of *avidya*, realisation of Brahma and achievement of *moksa* happen simultaneously and are one and the same. Time is not an intervening factor between immediate knowledge of Brahma and cancellation of world-illusion, which obstructs *moksa*? Brahma is the pure Self and cannot be known as an object. It cannot be presented as an object of the knowing act. Knowledge of Brahma is not a mental act (*manasi kriya*) like meditation. Transcendental knowledge is beyond subject-object duality. It is pure experience or pure revelation. The Vedanta Shastra does not present Brahma as an object; its purpose is to declare Brahma as the pure Self, the transcendental subject, which is to be realised through immediate experience by removing difference of known, knower and knowledge falsely imposed by *avidya*.' Hence immediate experience of Brahma removes *avidya* which acts as an obstacle to *moksa*, but does not produce *moksa* as an effect.

If *moksa* cannot be treated as an effect (*karya*) produced by anything, it cannot also be regarded as a result of causal modification for in both cases it would be perishable. Nor can it be taken to be a result of some purification. Purification is possible either by addition of some excellence or by removal of some defect. Neither is possible here, for *moksa* is eternally pure. Nor can it be regarded as something to be attained. It is the eternal nature of the Self. It is not a new acquisition, but the realisation of one's own nature. *Moksa* is eternally there and the consciousness of its achievement is an appearance.

For Shankara *jivanmukti* is real liberation. *Moksa* is not reserved for the dead. *Moksa* is to be obtained here and now. We must enjoy it in this very life. *Moksa* is the unembodied nature of the Self and it can be realised even in this life. The Self is really 'unembodied' even when housed in a body. *Moksa* is the cancellation of transcendental Illusion by immediate experience of the Self. And it is possible to have this experience in our life and cancel *avidya in toto*. When a person realises Brahma *avidya* along with its effects is completely destroyed and the world-illusion vanishes for good never to appear again. The Self is an unembodied eternal reality. Unembodiedness is not a state of the self. A state is a phase which is passed over and the self cannot pass over its own nature. Moreover, a state cannot be eternal, while unembodiedness is eternal. The self, due to *avidya* appears to undergo the various states of embodied existence. This happens due to the superimposition of body, senses, life and mind on the self. This superimposition makes the transcendental self appear as finite ego (*pramata*) who is a knower, an agent and an enjoyer of the fruits of action and who undergoes transmigration. No real relation between the self and the body can be established, for the self is really beyond *avidya* and *karma*} The apparent relation between the self and the body can be due only to superimposition, and not due to *karma*.- The self passes through embodied states due to its false identification with the body (*dehddhyasa*). So when the attachment to the body due to

superimposition is destroyed through the realisation of the absolute Self, *moksa* is attained even during life. The identification of the self with the body is false (*mithya*) and not secondary or figurative. Figurative identification of two terms is possible only where the difference between the two is known (*bhedagraha*).

The identification of the self with the body which is due to non-discrimination between the two is possible only as an error and cannot be figurative. As the embodied state of the self is solely due to false knowledge, it is conclusively proved that the saint who has realised the Self through immediate spiritual experience is unembodied even though alive. The shruti declares : 'Him, who has lost attachment to his body and has become unembodied, empirical pleasures and pains do not touch'. 'He who has realised the unity of the Self experiences no delusion and no sorrow.' 'He who enjoys the bliss of Brahma knows no fear from any quarter. 'O Janaka! you have reached the fearless goal'. 'When the Supreme is realised, the knot of the heart is loosened, all doubts are set at rest, and all *karmas* are destroyed.' 'As the slough of a snake lies dead and cast off on an ant-hill in the very same way lies this body (of him) who has realised the Real; and he is the unembodied immortal Brahma itself.<sup>5</sup> In the Gita also the realised saint is described as completely detached from the body etc.: 'Pains do not trouble him, pleasures do not attract him; he is free from attachment, fear and anger, and his knowledge is firmly rooted in the self.' In the Bhagavata we find: 'As a person heavily intoxicated with wine does not know and is not troubled by the fact whether his garment per chance remains on his body or drifts away. Similarly a saint who has realised the self does not know and is not troubled by the fact whether his mortal body stands or falls'. After the death of the body, *videhamukti* is achieved.

Realisation of Brahma takes place when the knowledge generated by the Vedanta texts culminates in immediate experience, when the '*upadesha-vakya*,' 'Thou art that' (*Tat tvam asi*), becomes '*anubhava-vakya*,' 'I am Brahma' (*aham Brahmasmi*). An example of how verbal knowledge culminates in immediate experience is given in the 'Parable of Ten Fools'. In this story ten fools crossed a stream hand-in-hand lest some one of them may be swept away by the swift current. When they arrived at the other bank, they started counting themselves, and each of them who counted left out himself and counted only nine. Thus they started bemoaning that one of them was swept away by the current. A wise man who came there told them that they were ten and that they need not lament the imagined loss of one of them. But this verbal knowledge did not convince or console them. So the wise man himself started counting and when he came to the tenth, he petted him and said: 'You *are* the tenth.' And then the person immediately realised that he was the tenth and that he forgot to count himself. Similarly, the verbal knowledge of '*tat tvam asi* should culminate in immediate experience of the unity of the self with Brahma. Sharikara explains this text as advocating pure identity and not identity-in-difference 'Tat' signifies the unconditioned Brahma or Atma, the ground-reality, while *tvam*

signifies the individual self (*jiva*), who is a subject-object complex of *saksi* and *antahkarana*. The text asserts total and absolute identity between the two. The reality of the individual ego is the transcendental Self or Brahma on which its egohood is superimposed by transcendental *avidya*. This imposed egohood is false (*mithya*) and not figurative (*gauna*). The text negates the superimposed false egohood and reaffirms the true nature of the ego as pure *Atma* or Brahma. For this, Vedanta prescribes the triple discipline: (1) *shravana* which means a serious and sustained study of Vedanta texts through hearing or reading; (2) *manana* which means critical exposition of the pretensions of thought to know the Real and strengthening of the faith in the shruti; and (3) *nididhyasana* which means actual realisation of the Real through moral, yogic and spiritual discipline.

### **JNANA, KARMA AND UPASANA**

All these three may be used in the relative or the absolute sense. Jnana, relatively, means determinate and mediate knowledge which is generated by the categories of finite thought and involves subject- object duality. Ultimately, Jnana means pure immediate experience (*aparoksanubhuti*) beyond the subject-object duality. The Acharya makes it clear that knowledge ultimately culminates in immediate experience and knowledge of Brahma is the direct spiritual realisation of Brahma or *Atma* and is identical with it. It shines in the highest indeterminate *samadhi* and at once removes *avidya*, which obstructs the nature of the Real. *Karma*, relatively, means an action performed with a motive by a conscious person who has freedom to choose and which action is subject to moral judgement and gives rise to its result which is to be enjoyed by the doer in the form of pleasure or pain. Ultimately, *karma* culminates in *niskama karma* or absolutely disinterested action which does not bind (and is therefore not an action in the ordinary sense) and which can be performed only by a realised saint who has risen above subject-object duality. And *upasana*, relatively, means *dhyana* or concentration or meditation involving the trinity of the person who meditates, the object meditated upon and the act of meditation. Ultimately, *upasana* culminates in the highest indeterminate *samadhi* which transcends this trinity. It is clear from the above that *karma* and *upasana* (which is mental activity) are possible only within the trinity of the subject, object and their relation which is the sphere of *avidya* and finally both have to cease and yield place to indeterminate knowledge. It is true that empirical knowledge too is within the sphere of *avidya*; yet, as consciousness, it is ultimately one with pure consciousness which alone can remove *avidya* which obstructs the nature of the *Atma*. Hence the superiority of knowledge over action and meditation is self-evident.

Acharya Shahkara repeatedly asserts that the Absolute can be realised through knowledge and knowledge alone; action and meditation are subsidiary. Good actions (*karma*) purify our

mind (*chitta-shuddhi*) and meditation (*upasana*) leads to the concentration of the mind. Thus, *karma* and *upasana* may indirectly prepare our mind to receive the light of pure knowledge (*jhana*) when it dawns. Knowledge of Brahma which leads to eternal bliss is immediate spiritual experience and does not depend on the performance of any act. Knowledge is not an act, not even a mental act. It is revelatory and it merely removes *avidya* and does nothing else, and then the Real shines in itself. There is no succession in knowledge. Once it dawns, it dawns for ever and at once removes all Ignorance and consequently all bondage. *Brahma-jnana*, *avidya-nivrtti* and *moksa* are one and the same.

The Acharya says that knowledge and action are opposed like light and darkness. Action results in its performance (*karaka*), while knowledge merely instructs. Action is subjective and depends on the sweet will of the agent and it may be done, misdone or left undone, while knowledge is objective and depends on the object itself; it is not given to us to know a thing or to know it otherwise or not to know it at our sweet will, if the conditions generating valid knowledge are there. Again, action binds a person in the cycle of birth and death, while knowledge enlightens and frees him from this cycle. Further, the fruit of moral actions is happiness or prosperity here and hereafter, which is perishable (*anitya*), because it is produced by the efficacy of actions and lasts as long as that efficacy lasts, while the fruit of knowledge of Brahma is absolute freedom which is eternal (*nitya*) Bliss (*moksa* or *nishshreyas*).

Shahkaracharya refutes different views and shows that knowledge alone, not action or meditation, is the import of the Veda. *Karma* and *upasana* are subsidiary and lead respectively to purification and concentration of the mind so that it may receive the light of knowledge when it dawns. Action, meditation and empirical knowledge are all based on subject-object duality and presuppose *avidya*. Realisation of Brahma cancels *avidya* and all duality for ever. It is therefore clear that the Vedanta texts which teach the unity of the self with Brahma can, in no way, be connected with action or meditation, either directly or indirectly; nor can they be treated as subsidiary to texts enjoining action or meditation.' Realisation of Brahma is the highest end in life as it completely cancels Ignorance and all suffering for ever and is eternal Bliss in itself.

### **SHRUTI, TARKA AND ANUBHAVA**

Shankara says that shruti or the Vedanta-texts alone can reveal Brahma. The scripture is the only means to Brahma-realisation; for Brahma cannot be grasped by tarka or finite thought or intellect. Brahma is not an object of sense-perception for it is super-sensible (*atindriya*); it is also not an object of thought for it, being indeterminate (*nirvikalpa*), cannot be grasped by the categories of thought nor can it be inferred; it cannot be expressed in language for it is indescribable (*anirvachaniya*). Shruti or the Vedanta-texts are the verbal expression of the

spiritual experience of the sages who have realised Brahma and are, therefore, helpful in Brahma-realisation. Tarka or logical thought is helpful in interpreting shruti and in supporting it with rational arguments, but its place is secondary to scripture. Sutarka or valid reasoning is accepted; only kutarka or logical quibbling or 'reason run amock' is condemned. Shahkara admits that the authority of thought cannot be questioned in the empirical world. Here, 'you obey while you rebel'. Even the statement 'thought stands condemned' can be made only by thought. Only a rational being can understand the meaning of shruti. Shahkara never asks us to accept shruti blindly. The apparent contradictions in shruti can be resolved by reason in the light of its central teaching. If shruti contradicts reason, reason must be our guide for it is nearer our experience. Even if hundred shrutis declare that fire is cool and without light we cannot accept them.

The ultimate criterion of truth in Shahkara is immediate Experience or *svanubhava*. Shruti and reason both point to it. The teaching of shruti (*upadeshavakya*) should be converted into immediate experience (*anubhva-vakya*) in order to realise Brahma. And self-conscious reason knows its limitation and points to immediate experience to realise the Real.

### **CRITICISM OF OTHER SCHOOLS**

Shahkara dismisses extreme scepticism and agnosticism as self- condemned. The materialistic school which maintains the reality of the object only and reduces the subject to the object is also rejected by him as below criticism. The pluralistic schools of realism, like Vaishesika, Nyaya, Sankhya, Mimamsa, Jainism and also the theistic schools of Vedanta (which though developed after Shahkara had their fundamental ideas prevalent before his time) are criticised by him. He points out that identity and difference both cannot be real. Pure identity is different from abstract identity of thought because it is the transcendental unity of the self which is the only reality. Difference belongs to *avidya* and cannot be real nor can it be combined with spiritual identity, though it has empirical validity. The subject-object duality is empirically real and transcendently ideal. Early Buddhism, representing the philosophy of pure difference, reduces the subject and the object to momentary particulars and thus contradicts all empirical life. Vijnanavada denies the object even its empirical reality and degenerates into subjective idealism, throwing overboard all empirical life. He is also opposed to Brahma- parinama-vada for, according to him, creation is only an appearance and cannot be treated as real.

We have already explained Shankara's criticism of Mimamsa<sup>1</sup> and his criticism of causation. We shall explain his criticism of Vaishesika and Nyaya in brief and shall present his criticism of Sankhya, of Sarvastivada Buddhism in some detail with special reference to its theory of momentariness and of Vijnanavada Buddhism as his criticism of these schools has become classical.

## CRITICISM OF VAISHESIKA AND NYAYA

Vaishesika and Nyaya are allied systems. The former is older and develops metaphysics while the latter develops logic and epistemology. Nyaya accepts mostly the metaphysics of Vaishesika with some difference. Sharikara criticises the atomic theory of Nyaya-Vaishesika and shows that atoms cannot be the cause of the material world. Are the atoms essentially active or inactive or both or neither? If active, then creation would be permanent; if inactive, then there would be no creation; if both, the conception would be self-contradictory; and if neither, then their activity must come from outside and this outside agency must be either seen or unseen; if seen, then it should not exist before creation, and if unseen, then it being always present near the atoms, creation would be permanent and if the proximity of the unseen to the atoms is denied, then creation would be impossible. In all cases, therefore, there can be no creation from atoms.

Against the seven categories of the Vaishesika (included by Nyaya under Prameya), Shahkara points out that these categories cannot be taken as metaphysical realities. All these can be reduced to the primary category of 'substance' which alone is independent. And this 'substance' on philosophical analysis would give place to the transcendental 'subject' as the only reality. These categories turn out to be mere assumptions and then, instead of seven, we may assume as many categories as we like.

The Nyaya-Vaishesika view of the self and of its liberation is highly defective. The self is deprived of consciousness and bliss and is reduced to a material object like a stone-slab. Again, if God is only the efficient cause of this universe He would be a mere supervisor and not a creator, nor would He have any inner and necessary relationship with atoms or souls.<sup>2</sup> Also, the arguments given by Nyaya to prove the existence of God are not conclusive proofs, because God cannot be proved through inference or thought, but only by shruti or scripture.

Relation, too, is neither internal nor external. If it inheres in one of the two terms, it would not relate it with the other term; the same relation cannot inhere in both the terms as it is indivisible; and if it falls outside both the terms, it becomes a third term which requires another relation to relate it with the first two terms and so on *ad infinitum*, And without a real relation there is no causation and hence no creation.

## CRITICISM OF SANKHYA

Shahkara takes Sankhya as the main opponent (*pradhna-malla*) of Vedanta. First, he rejects the claim of Sankhya to be based on the shruti. He makes it clear that Sankhya philosophy is based on inference (*anumana*), not on the shruti. The shruti does not teach dualism, nor does it say that an unconscious principle, the abstract object, is the cause of the world. On the other

hand, the shruti clearly declares at many places that the Omniscient, Omnipresent and Omnipotent Self or Brahma is the only cause of this universe. The shruti attributes will and desire to the world- cause in the texts like 'He willed to create the world,' 'He willed: 'I should be many, I should create'; 'He desired to become many, to create', etc.; and evidently only the Self can have will or desire. The will to create cannot be attributed to unconscious Prakrti even figuratively.

Also, Sakhya philosophy cannot be rationally defended. The unity in the cosmos can come only from the spiritual source; unconscious Prakrti cannot introduce unity in this world. Even the design and form of a pot is the result of a potter's thinking. Houses, etc., are built with a design and a plan introduced by intelligent workmen. Hence unconscious Prakrti cannot create this cosmos.<sup>6</sup> Further, there is a purpose in this creation and purpose can be due only to a conscious source; unconscious Prakrti can have no purpose of its own nor can it consciously serve the purpose of a conscious being. The evolution of Prakrti would be mechanical not teleological. Again, Prakrti cannot account for the original impetus, the first push, which is supposed to disturb the equilibrium of the three *gunas*.<sup>1</sup> If motion is inherent in Prakrti (in the form of *rajas*), then there should be no dissolution. If motion is imparted to Prakrti by something external, then Prakrti would not be independent. Even the distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous change which Sakhya has introduced to explain evolution is not of much avail. Sakhya says that Prakrti is eternal in the sense of 'enduring through change.' (*parinami-nitya*) and that homogeneous change (*sarupa-parinama*) which means change of each *guna* into its own forms, is always going on in Prakrti. But as there is no clash among the *gunas* in this change, it does not lead to evolution. When this homogenous change transforms itself into heterogeneous change (*virupa-parinama*), in which each *guna* clashes with and tries to dominate the other two *gunas*, the process of evolution begins. But the important question: What is the cause which leads to the sudden transformation of homogeneous change into heterogeneous change? is not satisfactorily answered by Sankhya. The unconscious Prakrti is not responsible for this sudden change which ushers in evolution. Purusa has to be brought in as the final cause of evolution.<sup>1</sup> Again, even if we grant activity to Prakrti, the immanent teleology cannot be explained. The argument of Sankhya that just as unintelligent milk flows for the nourishment of the calf, similarly unintelligent Prakrti works for the emancipation of the Purusa is illogical, because the flow of milk is accounted for by the presence of a living cow and a living calf and the motherly love in the cow for the calf. Nor can the modification of Prakrti be compared to that of grass turning into milk, as grass turns into milk only when eaten by a milch cow, not when it lies uneaten or is eaten by a bull. Further, unconscious Prakrti can have no purpose; indifferent Purusa too can have no purpose. The attempt of Sankhya to solve this difficulty by pointing out that Prakrti and Purusa combine like the blind and the lame in which

case the lame person sits on the shoulders of the blind person and shows the way and the blind person moves and thus both reach their goal, is untenable, for the blind and the lame persons are intelligent and active beings and have a common goal, while Prakrti is unconscious and Purusa is indifferent. Again, if the mere presence of the Purusa is sufficient to disturb the equilibrium of the *gunas*, then Purusa being always co-present, evolution would be perpetual and the liberation of Purusa would be impossible. Further, Prakrti and Purusa can never be related. Prakrti is unconscious; Purusa is indifferent; and there is no third principle, no *tertium quid*, to relate them. The chasm which Sankhya has created between the subject and the object by treating them as two independent and eternal entities can never be bridged by it. It must recognise a higher spiritual principle which transcends and yet preserves the empirical validity of the subject-object duality.

Again there are many contradictions in the Sankhya system.' By treating Prakrti as agent and Purusa as enjoyer, Sankhya opens itself to the charge of vicarious suffering and violates the law of moral responsibility. Why should Purusa suffer for the actions of Prakrti? And if Prakrti acts purposefully why can it not enjoy the fruits of its acts? Sankhya also confuses between the empirical and the transcendental nature of Purusa which makes it believe in the plurality of Purusas. The arguments given by Sankhya to prove the plurality of Purusas are in fact arguments which prove the plurality of empirical selves and these arguments clearly contradict some of those arguments offered by Sankhya to prove the transcendental nature of Purusa as pure Consciousness. If all the Purusas are essentially the same (as Sankhya says they are), there is no sense in proclaiming their numerical plurality which makes no difference. Again, the confusion between empirical happiness and eternal spiritual bliss is responsible for the negative view which Sankhya takes of liberation. Liberation is said to be without pleasure and pain, a state where all the three kinds of pain are absent, but where there is no positive experience of joy as joy is related to pain. Sankhya forgets that spiritual bliss is beyond empirical pleasure and pain, and that it is not empirical pleasure produced by *sattva-guna*. Again, if Sankhya can reduce all objects to one Prakrti, it should also reduce all empirical souls to one Purusa by the same logic. Purusa and Prakrti should be treated as aspects of the Transcendental Purusa, the Absolute. Creation should be taken not as real, but as appearance of this Absolute.