

Viśiṣṭādvaita as a Philosophy of Religion

In the previous chapter an attempt was made to explain the nature of the Reality. It was shown to be a unique unity of the three categories of Īśvara, jīva and prakṛti, the first among them being the supporter, controller and sustainer and enjoyer of the other two, and in that sense being their immortal self, inner ruler. Technically they are known as the śarira, body of God or Īśvara. Inseparable relationship subsists between the prakṛti and Īśvara, on the one hand and between the jīva and Īśvara on the other hand. But the relationship between the jīva and prakṛti is not of the same kind. This of course must be considered at length and shown how two inseparable attributes of a particular substance can be separable from each other. This of course it is not difficult to show in a logical manner. All P is M, All S is M: and it cannot be concluded that All P is S because there is what is known as the fallacy of the undistributed middle. Accordingly there is no necessary relationship between prakṛti and jīva.

The entire process of religion then is the process of realizing that one is different from and ought therefore withdraw from prakṛti. Prakṛti or Nature is the source of misery and bondage to the soul (jīva): whereas Īśvara is the source of joy and freedom and the soul should seek to realise its eternal inseparable oneness with Him. If this view is held then the process of realising this goal or end becomes the main preoccupation of the human individual. This is the *puruṣārtha* and the means most fitted and adapted to realise this goal are called *hita*. Religion is thus the consideration of the means and ends. This knowledge involves five things: firstly the nature of that which is to be attained; the nature of the attainer; the means, the fruits and the obstacles to be overcome. These five are known as the *arthapañcaka*. One who knows these five is a knower.

God is the object of our knowledge, with whom we seek union. It is clear that this Godhead whom we seek to know fully must be known in His substantial nature as well as in His modal nature--that is its related inseparably with his modes (jīva and prakṛti). His substantial svarūpa is transcendent saccidānanda and Lordship (*īśitṛtvam*). It is through the qualities of satyam, jñānam, ānandam, anantam and amatvam that we know God as God. These are known as svarūpa-nirūpaka dharmas. By another set of qualities we do recognize the Godhead--these are attributes of aiśvarya, vīrya, tejas, śakti, jñāna and bala these are found in the Godhead; these are all in immeasurable measure in Him. That is why He is ananta. Surely also these are kalyāṇaguṇas auspicious in so far as they bestow utter beauty to the knower, auspicious in so far as they reveal the Divine Godhead as refuting, all degrading and inauspicious things in Himself and wherever He manifests Himself (heyapratyanīka). He is easily accessible to those who surrender to Him (Pranata saulabhyatvam.)

But God has further statuses, being a personality not an impersonality. He is *saguṇa* and not *nirguṇa*. He is above all our knowings, ineffable, inexhaustible beyond every category of our mind and senses. He is described as *nirguṇa*, *nirākāra* *niranjana*, *akāla*, *guṇatita*. He is nothing that we know as such and such. Unless he reveals Himself to us we hardly can know Him. He is thus *Para* : Transcendent.

But He is also known as the creator, sustainer, destroyer according to the synoptic *sūtra* : *Janmādyasya yatah* (V. S. I i. 2). All these creative and other processes are His doings even as play for his own enjoyment: *lokavattu līlā-kaivalyam* (V. S. II i. 33), and as the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* says: *Krīdā Hareh idam sarvam: krīdato bālakasya eva*. God as the origin of all manifests or conceals His mode, which are eternally present within Him and are of Him. They are in two possible conditions or states of either *sūkṣma* or *sthūla*, subtle or gross, otherwise called *kāraṇa* (causal) or *kārya* (effectual) states. Thus God is the *cid-acid-viśiṣṭa -Brahman*.

He is thus the material as well as the efficient cause of the Universe. The supreme power resides in Him or is immanent in Him. It is in religion that this philosophic concept of the Brahman becomes more dynamic as revealing this power to be the power of Grace supporting all the processes of creation, sustention and withdrawal and redemption. The experience of Brahman reveals the ever present factor of Grace of God, the *śrī-tattva* which is the supreme grace-principle of God over and above the *svarūpanirūpaka* and *nirūpita-svarūpa* factors. *Śrī* is the inseparable companion of the Divine Nature and Personality, not easily identifiable with the two modes (*prakaras*) *Prati* and *Jīva*(*Puruṣa*).

Experience of the revelational order (*śāstra*. or *śabda*) alone is capable of revealing the identity between the philosophic Absolute (Causal) and the Religious Redemptive Absolute (*Sriyahpati*).

The third status of God is certainly the nearest to the religious experience of the Selfness of God in oneself and of oneself and also of all things that are. The immanence of God is the intimacy of union, but it is an immanency which reveals itself in the philosophical and ethical statuses of the individual at the beginning. One feels oneself to be entirely dependent on the inner principle or presence and thus as a mode of that Presence. One experiences and listens to the voice of this presence as the conscience or deamon, the categorical imperative, or guide of Goodness. But in religious experience one confronts this inner principle as the *vīrya*, by which one lives and moves and has one's being. All activities seem to find their source and inspiration and guidance not from oneself but from that One Self of all things, the cosmic and transcendent One Being, the *Antaryāmin*, seated in the hearts of all.

The fourth status of Godhead and the fifth are more nearly related to the objective world of experience. The historical experience of Godhead who exalts and restores the truth and goodness and sense of real values to their real relationships with Himself, and intervenes whenever these are about to be lost, is a very vital one for the social life of the universe. The Descent Avataṛaṇa of God from His exalted transcendent and cosmic statuses to fulfill and establish dharma (divinely ordained cosmic order) in the world is an epochal thing. It has the purpose of arresting if not destroying all movements which tend to disrupt the Ṛta and Dharma, and to protect all who stand for them. It may even go far beyond these known results, but substantially it is to restore to men who seek the good life, the confidence in the ultimate triumph of satya and dharma: satyam eve, jayate: dharmād eva prabhvati sarvam. These avatāras are innumerable, though ten of these are considered to be most important. These occurred at the most crucial periods in world-history and form the subject matter of the purāṇas and itihāsas. These descents are either temporary or permanent.

The fifth status of the Divine is called the Arcā: the worshipable, auspicious, excellent, accessible object of Meditation, dhyāna. This is the pratīka-- the God who is facing the devotee as Grace, one who has become amenable to the devotee's desire for an object of adoration and love, one who confronts the devotee as the be-all and end-all of Life. These forms are again innumerable and historically amenable for installation in the shrines in the forms of pañca-loha, or wood or stone specially selected for their spiritual worth. These forms are those which the devotee who instals has experienced as his object adorable, capable of leading him to the highest experiences of the Para (transcendent), vyuha (cosmic), hārda antaryāmin (inner ruler immortal) and vibhava (historical descents). Thus we have shrines spread allover with images which at one moment, were real experiences of the sages or saints or devotees, and which now do the same duty for posterity.

The first three forms are in a sense amṛte, whereas the fourth is mūrta. The Agamas have expounded the manner of attaining to the mūrta experiences and how to make and install and worship them.

The fifth form is the murta form *par excellence*. Most religious thought moves between the extremes of the formless and the formed. But truth lies in the reconciliation and understanding of the integral unity of both the Formed and the Formless, even as there should be the understanding of the inseparable unity of the personality and the impersonality of the Divine. This is the meaning of the Viśiṣṭādvaita insistence on the Ubhayaliṅga nature of God. The bi-unity is only more fully explored and explained as the quintunity of God.

It is necessary to emphasize the aspect of the Arcā a little more. The Arcā is a supreme exemplification of the Grace-descent for the sake of the individual devotee in

response to his continuous meditation of the intensest kind wherein he gives himself upto Him. The devotee attains the revelation of God. The supreme form of God is revealed or opened to his vision 'tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām' (Kath. Up;II. 23). Once this presentation has happened, this supernal form of illumination got through adhyātmayoga, becomes contemplated upon and even represented in matter. Temples grow round these images and these images become objects of grace-distribution to all people. There is a sharing of the experience of God with all who could rise to the levels of religious experience, further the aesthetic aspect of the experience of God becomes dominant. It is a creative aesthetic enjoyment and not merely a passive receptive enjoyment, and in one sense the yearning for beauty in the antaryāmi-experience finds fullest representation or objectification in the Arcā-experience. This theory of the growth of the temple is mystical as contrasted with the anthropological theory of the modern day. Arcā is the unique contribution of the Southern Seers to religious History, though its existence in the Vedic and Epic periods cannot be seriously contested.

The unique experience of the simultaneous reality of the fivefold Divine is again a contribution of immense magnitude which Viśiṣṭādvaita has made. It is the great merit of the entire system.

The Ālvārs have laid a great test of realisation, fully and completely as far as human powers or rather the powers of the soul are concerned, that is, that a knower or seer is one who has experienced the simultaneous presence of the fivefold Divine. Every hymn of the Ālvār could be scanned and shown to contain the immediate confrontation of the fivefold Divine. Yamuna and Rāmānuja have made this the cardinal test of religious experience and thus brought together the sundered unity of the Godhead in philosophic speculation. Any one who perceives in these difference perishes. *Ekam sat viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti*. The Truth is One, men speak of it variously. This is truly a synthesis in the nature of the Godhead which makes for the synthesis of the individual in relation to the Divine. Religion arrives at an integral synthesis only in and through the awareness of the unity of the many forms of the Divine as well as of Nature and the Souls, who are in several degrees of bondage and liberation.

The Hita or the Means to the experience of this integral Oneness which was possible to the Ālvārs (who were known as the divers of the Deep of God) is God alone, even as the Goal to be reached (puruṣārtha) is God alone. But the human individual (or soul) has several modes in him, which are jñāna, (cognition) affection, and conation. Through his association with Nature his qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas, purity, activity and inertia begin to predominate. These have to be regulated in such a way as to increase the purity and decrease and eliminate the other two. This process is also called Yoga. Thus there are many means or yogas which take care of the physical, vital mental and other parts of the body. There is no doubt that these

practices all insist on purity in every way. Satya, asteya, aparigraha, ahimsa, tapas, śouca, brahmacarya, and Īśvarapraṇidhāna, are important ingredients of all yoga. The Yoga sutras divide these into yama and niyama: self-control and observation (discipline). Then there has to be the practice of Āsana (posture) and praṇāyāma (breath-regulation or control) which help the increase of energy of meditation. Senses then come under regulation in pratyāhāra and the mind under dhāraṇa. Meditation (dhyāna) begins really at this step and passes on, when directed towards God-contemplation through love, to samadhi which is characterized by two steps: one in which the Personality and the powers of the Supreme Self and God become realised as in antaryāmi-vidyā and this is savikalpaka samādhi, and the other step is nirvikalpaka samādhi when the realisation is of the supreme Self as the self of all things and in whom one finds one's union by losing oneself in the Divine, even as the waters of the rivers mix with the Divine Ocean. Many thinkers however interpret this experience differently, but dhāraṇa and dhyāna require the love of God or bhakti or priti in order to get ordered fulfillment. If not, they lead to bondage to the powers of Nature. This Yoga of bhakti is superior to and indeed necessary for the other two yogas of jñāna and karma. In a sense it is that which renders success on these lines possible.

Karma yoga is the practice of selfless action, rites and rituals and other activities prescribed by the scriptures. Such actions cover a wide field of nitya and naimittika, daily and occasional, works. They are the dharma, righteous or right actions which liberate man from bondage to matter (prakṛti) and its formations (vikṛtis) and bring about jñāna and ātma-sāksātkāra. Jñāna yoga is the practice of knowledge of self which leads to self realization - Viśiṣṭādvaita following the teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā reconciles jñāna and karma (Sāmkhya and Yoga) in bhakti, for bhakti includes God-devotion and God-service exclusively for the sake of God-realisation alone. Further the synthesis of philosophy and Religion is Followed up by the synthesis of Knowledge and works. As the Īśāvāsyopaniṣad chants: both should be practiced together in order to give fundamental results of crossing over death and attainment of the Immortal. Thus Śrī Rāmānuja clearly envisages also that some people may be devoted to God and practice bhakti without the saving knowledge-mūdhā bhakti. But the saving bhakti is that which knows who the Ultimate savior and God is. Thus devotion becomes right devotion only when it is devotion to the Supreme Being described as capable of being the fivefold sovereign of all existence. It is that which is supported by the knowledge of the relationship of dependence which one exclusively has to the Divine [śeṣataikasvarūpam]. This is the minimum required at the beginning, for it is basis of faith which leads one on to the richer experiences of the nature and form and body of God. Once selflessness grows as a consequence, it leads to selfless action and such selfless action even shares the quality of altruism for God who is the real alter ego. Karma-yoga naturally flows from bhakti even as jñānayoga becomes firm and secure in the knowledge of the One Divine who is the Self of all and in whom all have their being. Divyadrīsti becomes

possible as a matter of Grace of the Divine and one sees all as in Him as His body [tanūm]. This is the synthesis of para-bhakti, parajñāna and paramabhakti.

A shorter route open to all people who have neither the ability nor the fitness nor the time nor the idealism to know God in His plenitude is available thanks to God's infinite mercy (karuṇa and dayā). Religion is an open door to the Infinite to all and not only to some. All will enter the Kingdom of God and nobody is for all time thrown out of it. God as the Self of all is equally merciful to all. The distinctions that exist are there for the different purposes of service rather than differentiations based on partialities of treatment. But this path is for those [shall we be right if we said exclusively for those]? who have lost all sense of qualification and fitness, who are weary and afraid and lonely and lost, who have no other refuge, and who therefore throw themselves at the Feet of God for being protected. It is for those who have no other refuge, ananyaśaraṇa, and no other way out of their distress-ananyagati.

This is the path of falling down [prapatti] completely and in all one's parts without any reservation at the feet of God who is known as the one sure and unfailing means to Himself. Thus means and ends are reconciled in God alone. The one means to God is God alone, and the attainment of fearlessness [abhaya] and freedom from sin results out of His grace.

This is the prapatti-yoga or śaraṇāgati yoga which Viśiṣṭādvaita counsels. It is God-dependent and God-conducted Yoga, unlike the self-dependent and self-conducted yogas of jñāna and karma and bhakti, which require fitness and suffer from limitations arising from individual finiteness and ignorance, and possible egoism. In a sense ultimately the recognition of the individual's impotency on the path and consequent surrender to the Divine become necessary. Individual effort waits on the Divine Grace and needs self-renunciation too. This problem of individual effort and divine grace has been exaggerated by some of the schismatic thinkers but each has a place. Individual effort directed towards deserving God's grace, and God's grace not measuring the quantum of the individual effort but supremely giving itself to the individual who has thrown himself at the feet of God are both complimentary. Even as a doctor has his client carried to the ward but after restoring him to health makes him walk and indeed orders him to take exercise regularly and in a regulated way, God takes up the soul and restoring health to him puts him on a regimen of exercise, duty, worship and service, which are the yogas taught in the earlier part of the Gita. Thus the earlier Vaiṣṇava thinkers symbolised individual effort (yoga) with the Divine Grace and made all God's, own supreme Yoga. Thus by the twin concepts of saulabhyatva (accessibility) and antaryamitva (indwelling Lordship) of God, the Means have been synthesised. This is the synthesis of the Means (upāyasamanvaya).

The Upeyasamanvaya (the synthesis of Ends) is of deep concern. The paramapuruṣārtha, is Mokṣa or liberation. But it has meant so many different things. The paramapuruṣārtha or mokṣa in one consideration includes in a systematic sublimated way the liberty from and of the other three puruṣārthas of artha, kāma and dharma. In another consideration we pass beyond all these three ends.

The reconciliation which Viśiṣṭādvaita offers is that real freedom comes from the full and complete and spontaneous realisation of God who is the meaning and abode of all these values (ends). Real value comes only in and through God, and all things participate in values only through their being serviceable to God. We should remember the definition that Śrī Rāmānuja gives of the śarīra (body), yasya cetanasya Yad dravyam sarvātmanā svārthe niyantum dhārayitum ca śakyam tat śeṣataika. svarūpam ca tat tasya śarīram ; and every thing in this universe exists and gains value only by being for God: yatheṣṭavinīyogārham śeṣaśabdena kathyate.

The great meaning of the passages in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad wherein Yajñavalkya emphasises that not far the sake of the wife or husband or anybody is she or he or it dear but for the sake of the OneSelf of all, immanent and manifest in them, are they dear: na va are patyuhkāmāya patih priyo bhavati Ātmanastu kāmāya patih priyo bhavati.....precisely emphasizes the axiological reality of the Self which grants value to all else and as such one should know the Self, serve the self, dedicate oneself to that Self and realize the real freedom.

We have at this point just to contrast this view of Freedom with the simulacrum of the same given to us by Hegelian thought, Being concerned with the principle of Reason as the highest category of Reality (the rational is the real, one's freedom consists in obeying the dictates of reason, the God so to speak or the Absolute within each. But it promises in the context of the political state nothing more than obedience to the dictates of the State which is said to be objective Reason, the Absolute itself in realization. This view is very meagre and even cynical for man is more than the subjective and objective reason, the institutions and traditions too whose confrontation the world is. Real freedom is a fundamental participation with God in all levels of one's being which may entail a complete transformation of his vital and other irrational impulses also.

This leads us to the next important problem of realization or mukti. The ancient teaching in this matter has been that final and ultimate freedom from the transmigrating existence and that it is to be had only by a complete cessation of contact with any body (material formation) which is due to karma, and avidyā. The freedom from the body (videhamukti) is the goal of liberation. All persons who have performed the yogas of jñāna, karma and bhakti and even prapatti have to endure

the body which would fall away from them after the allotted span of life and then enter the presence of God guided by the Divine messenger (amānava puruṣa) through the devayāna, and arcirādi marga. They never return to this world of karma-avidyā. Some great thinkers however hold that one could really feel and be free even in this body and in this world because of the extreme disjunction which they have practiced and attained between the soul and the body. The body works on according to its own make-up, whereas the soul looks on without being affected by it. This is called jīvan mukti. Of course the final samādhi happens when the karma has been exhausted completely and one passes on into the Ultimate Being or the Absolute Brahman. There have been other thinkers who have seen that a richer and fuller meaning must be given to Jīvanmukti than granted by Advaita. The real liberation is a free movement in the mansions of God and an infinite capacity to live for God without any sense of bondage. The yogasiddha, claims this; but it is in the achievement of the experience and indwelling of oneself in God and of God in oneself in a steady and uninterrupted manner that makes for the fullest experience of Freedom in this life itself. The Viśiṣṭādvaita seers found in the glorious lives of the Āṭvārs this supreme living and moving and having their being in God with such spontaneousness, and care-free delight of being which was characterised by sac-cit-ananda, that this tanmaya-bhāva was almost acclaimed as jīvanmukti. This is transcendent to the body-consciousness, for the body itself is realised and reorganised as the body of God within which one moves without being bond by its ignorance and limitations.

This God-filled existence is Jīvanmukti. It is not merely the life lived in the world but untouched by it even like the water-drop on the lotus-leaf *padmapatra iva ambhasā*, it is not merely to be like a sāmkhya puruṣa who has turned away from the seductions of prakṛti; it is not merely to be a sage wrapped in the silence and depths of one's own soul or in God alone. It is to be one who make discoveries of the infinite glories of God in His Body which comprises the entire prakṛti on the one hand and the innumerable souls on the other. It is to this great experience of God's Nature and Body referred to in the Upaniṣad as the *tanu* that God opens the individual soul to whom he has chosen to reveal Himself: *vivṛṇute tanūm svām*(Katha Up.) This is the real freedom which is at once transcendent and immanent and thoroughly illumined sustained and served by devotion and service (niṣkāmakarma or kainkarya)

Thus the Vedic hope of experiencing fully the Divine both here and hereafter gets a possibility in divine experience.

Thus we can say that Śrī Rāmānuja in his philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita includes the most important synthesis of Religion which stand clearly as capable of being most satisfactory. The synthesis of the five poises or statuses of Brahman satisfies all the levels of experience divinised by the yearning for the Divine presence even on the physical, historical, immanental, cosmic and causal and transcendental levels of human consciousness. This satisfies the unconscious urge as well as conscious

reason and transcendental hope (smṛti, jñāna and apoha). The saving truth is that knowledge must be devoted to the discovery of the Divine as the Self of all, to the perception or intuitive illumination of the One Supreme Lord who is worshipped through Oneness and Manyness is All-faced: ekatvena pṛsthaktvena bahudhā vīsvato mukham mām upāsate (B.G. IX. 16). This is interpreted by Sri Venkatanātha in his *Tāt-parya-candrika* as referring to the five-forms of Pāñcarātra. Agama.

Jñāna and Karma and Bhakti gain finer strengths directed to the integral experience which includes the mind, the body and the actions, for it is to be realised that the one energy that operates in and through all is the supreme self- Ātmanā vindate vīryam. Thus a society of souls divinely impelled, sustained and manifesting Divine Nature becomes possible. The distinction that is drawn between the two worlds becomes more and more removed not by the compromise of the ideals and natures but by the infusion and transformation of the human world owing to the power and plenitude and light that belongs to the Divine. Neither hell is abolished nor punishment rendered impossible as statuses but that Heaven and its spirit of light and love begin to pervade the human world which is in the birth throes of the Divine Nature; and all souls have in them the possibility of ultimately attaining divine beatitude. Vaikuntham and Venkabam are the words coined to designate the eternal realm of God and the equally divine realm on Earth.

Thus far we have seen briefly- the remarkable synthesis that Viśiṣṭādvaita. Has achieved in the sphere of Religion. The problems of the past continue to be modern problems also despite the different phrasings of the ages. Man has need for the inner guidance as well as reason which almost helps the discovery of the ultimate ground. All philosophies tend to emphasise one aspect of the totality either in respect of tattva or hita or puru-ṣārtha and a real integration is impossible unless some type of organic conception informs it. But the organic conception can suffer from serious handicaps either because it is interpreted too biologically or too abstractly or metaphorically and symbolically.

Criticisms of Viśiṣṭādvaita can come either from the pure monistic stand-point which dichotomises reality only to dismiss one of the terms as negative or illusion or from the dualistic stand-point which denies inherent relationships that do exist and forge a unity between the many. The problems undoubtedly raised by the pluralistic thinkers are serious. But what is the necessity for the experience of togetherness of all devout souls even in God and is not an 'ought' which entails an 'is'?

The dilemma proposed by the dvaita-philosopher that either monism is true or dualism is true is unfortunately not a cast-iron dilemma. It suffers from the peculiar reality of the organism which is the unity of the multiplicity, a unitas-multiplex. We escape between the horns!

Further it is certainly valid to argue that metaphysically we cannot comprehend fully the nature of Reality which seems to refute all limitations. The transcendence of the metaphysical to the rational is a fact of extraordinary importance to the proper understanding of the supreme reality. It is not mere intuition nor intellect or reason that grants this insight into the nature of the unitas-multiplex organic. It is necessary to go behind the mere perishing organic conception which is an imperfect but none the less fundamental rendering of the metaphysical truth. It is necessary to go behind the fear that sustains the yearning and search for freedom from matter and organic existence itself(samsāra or bhava-sāgara).

Viśiṣṭādvaita does offer a profound solution which could be taken out of its purely scholastic past and made living by the application of the multifaced consciousness and awareness of the Divine to the most ordinary ways of life. Even here it moves as a power of unity, the unity which sustains the increasing diversity of life and all its aspects. Though mainly theistic and depending on God alone for all things and actions, yet it recognizes the profound necessity to treat every other thing and person as an embodiment of the Divine and as such intrinsically valuable--an end-in-itself to use the language of Kant. This profound moral principle is at the back of most types of humanism, but in Viśiṣṭādvaita, as in religion truly speaking, it is that which grants meaning to humanism itself. Man is valuable because of God indwelling in him and not merely as a possible step to Divinity or as a divine possibility in evolutionary nisus.

Undoubtedly too there are many problems which modern philosophers have raised. I have discussed these at length in my works and in certain contributions I have made to Journals. One such problem is clearly connected with the distinction that one makes between the spiritual life and the divine life that one leads beyond the restrictions and limitations of society of whatever age or character and climate, namely varṇa, āsrama, free and bond, aristocratic and plebian, capitalist and labour and black and white or red or yellow (coloured and white). The spiritual seeker looks forward to the ideal and finds its incompatibility with the present and presses onward to the realisation of the ideal and struggles and suffers and in many cases lives only in hope. The ideal of course gradually stirs the minds of others and grants them the incentive to pursue and realise it. Equality of all, freedom for all, and brotherhood of all are excellent mystic ideals which men cannot help pursuing in the midst of all that contradicts them. The humanist appeal is to show that such ideals are truly to be sought and should become the 'ought' of moral and political and social life. But the spiritual attitude is not merely an 'ought' of the humanist conscience, but a 'desirable ought' which grants the hierarchy of values and their slow transformation without, □liquidation□ and annulment or abolition. Thus the orders of existence with its grades gain a perfect equality in equal opportunity to grow by fulfilling the standards

and tests of each grade and level and function. Thus the dharma of the society is not merely an objective spirit which compels obedience or primacy of allegiance but is a necessary condition for the subjective spirituality awakening to the Divine voice within; and both these are not irreconcilable opposites. The saint can set at naught all norms and grow beyond good and evil only in the sense that he has arrived at a deeper core of the transcendental-immanent Self of all (pañcamūrti) as the sage Manu has stated. Otherwise he sets them at naught at peril.

Morality gains a fuller and richer meaning in Viśiṣṭādvaita than it does in Advaita or Evolutionism as such or in Dvaita.

The question of degrees of reality in respect of the Divine Personality or principle can be said to have no meaning especially when we affirm that in each status of the Supreme Being the other aspects are not suspended or veiled but more and more fully exemplified and expressed. All forms are equally real and equally perfect. It is in respect of the world and the souls this problem is pursued and even here it is seen that the inner Presence in all things it is that grants them their reality (*satya*) existence (*satta*) and power to be or become or experience the delight of being. All things are real in their relative statuses, and obviously if any one takes any partial status or point of view the rest may gain more practical reality due to utility or circumscribed purpose, and so also develop the quality of illusoriness or worthlessness or worthiness. It is true that on this point modern thinkers like Sri Aurobindo have thrown more light. But it is clear that Viśiṣṭādvaita unmistakably was the first to point out the need for the organic conception of an integral reality through the Divine.

The third problem of some interest is the problem regarding whether God knows our knowledge or us as we know ourselves. We know ourselves partially thanks to our ignorance of our unconscious states. God may know us more fully since it is He who established all things in their real nature. Would He know us as we know ourselves □subjectively (*svasmai*¹ *svarūpajñānam*)? Could we also in our transcendent state of freedom know God as God knows Himself and us? This obviously is possible only when the identity between the Divine and ourselves becomes a fact or is a fact. It is impossible if God and the soul are absolutely different in kind as Dvaita holds. Thus we can never know God except in so far as He reveals Himself to us -that is externally- *parasmai* - *jñāna* in Dvaita, and God would truly be transcendent, unknowable. Advaita is the other alternative and yet it cannot explain the *parasmai-jñānam* as illusory or relative. Viśiṣṭādvaita shows that this is possible when there is the 'opening out 'of the individual to the Divine and the opening out of

¹ I have used *svasmai* and *parasmai* almost as equal to inner subjective intuitive and outer (*bahya*) objective and perceptual knowing.

the Divine to the individual, which could happen only in the *tanmaya* state as I have already pointed out. It is an inexplicable experience, that is to say one cannot speak about it with any amount of communicable knowledge. But it is an experience even as the Vedic seer Vāmadeva was capable of declaring that his consciousness had become one with that of Manu and so on. One experiences an inward, *svasmai*, knowledge, as if it is one's own in regard to other's experiences and knowledge. This is what Sri Aurobindo called the knowledge by identity. In his cave this is rendered possible through the metaphysical view of the soul being in its highest form (*jīva*) the multiplicity albeit eternal of the *Īśvara* (Brahman)-it being the *parāprakṛtir jīvabhūta*. But this yet leaves the main question of the experience of the two statuses and the third viz. of the individual as one of the multiplicity who is the expression and manifestation of the Divine as *prakāra* (body). It does not behold the double poise of the *svasmai* and *parasmai* knowledge of each thing (the subjective and the objective view of things) in the single experience of the Divine except as a result of this unveiling of the Body of God by an act of Grace, which is not however a single act but an eternally continuing action. Professor John Laird's problem of inter-knowledge or the knowledge of the subjective knowledge or awareness of another soul gets a fuller solution and meaning by the concept of *tanmaya* in bhakti- which is of the form of knowledge-*śeṣuṣī-bhakti rūpa* or *Jñāna-rūpāpanna* bhakti.

Fourthly, the place given to anubhava in the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita rescues it from being merely a philosophy of intellect and makes it a philosophy of life, which is growing and expanding. It claims to include the anubhava of the Supreme by all in the unity of its consciousness of Organic Monism. Whatever may be the present view about the function and part played by this philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita, warped by many considerations, religious and cultural, its rich emotional (spiritual) unity has influenced all later Saints and has appealed to people all over the country.

Fifthly, modern philosophers have sensed the importance of the principle of organic relationship between the parts and the whole; especially we find this in the writings of Bernard Bosanquet. Identity in difference implies difference in Identity however and *bhedābheda* seems to have been accepted as the "logical" version of the "organic", which is said to be more metaphorical. But metaphors surely can be applied from either level, for we could well speak of the identity-in-difference as the organic version of the logical. This has been clearly recognized by writers on philosophy. Further as Professor P.N.Srinivasacharya has pointed out in his outstanding work on the subject of *Bhedābheda*, *Bhedābheda* had attempted the task of doing justice to the two divergent aspects of reality, its oneness (*ekatva*) and its manyness (*nānātva*). This two-fold standpoint, even like its avidic prototype Jaina *anekāntavāda*, multiple-standpoint theory, can be infected with serious contradiction, as Śrī Rāmānuja showed, as two contradictory attributes cannot simultaneously and in the same sense be applied to anything including God. This is a serious defect even in the Recalled *bhedābheda* attributed to Sri Aurobindo who

holds that eternal Oneness is eternally many because of the omnipotence of God which includes the coexistence of opposites - *aghatita-ghatanā śakti* or *adbhuta-śakti*. The Organic conception of Śrī Rāmānuja, whilst not denying the infinite possibility and power of God which includes the omnipotent power appealed to solve the problem of coexistence of opposites, appeals to the very significant principle of *śeṣatva*, as the principle of inherence of the contradictory real attributes of *cit* and *acit*, *ekatva* and *nānātva*, *aṇutva* and *mahatva*, etc. The logic of the finite can be surpassed not by posing a logic of the Infinite as such but by showing also how that logic of the Infinite operates in and through the Organic and comes to terms with it. Reason is helped to transcend itself through the organic conception considered as a metaphysical solution.

In so far as it is not purely a biological concept it is nearer to the mystical organic concept adumbrated by the Āṭvārs and Yajñavalkya.

There is one more problem and that the last, namely the good life aimed at by every one is a godly life of dedicated devotion. The ancient teachers of Viśiṣṭādvaita were called *pañcakāla parāyanāh* observers of the five times of worship, of the Divine in His fivefold forms, everyday. The aim was not to become gods but godly, not supermen but God's men - *haridāsas*. Such a possibility of becoming gods of the earth (*bhūsuras*) was available in the ethos of the people. But whether Viśiṣṭādvaita can ever realise the Aurobindonian ideal of the superman or not, must fully depend on other factors than the individual who strives after the Divine experience and ultimate freedom. It is clearly the Divine who decides the evolution or transformation or mutation or conversion-a gradual progress may be as truly significant as the sudden mutation. It is essentially God's Yoga, and the individual becomes a perfect instrument aware of the splendid infinity of the One integral Divine. Good life is life in God, for God and by God. This is the first condition of the supramentalisation. It is something dependent on integral surrender.

An individual so completely absorbed in God is not a social liability but turns out to be a social ornament. A soul that has not seen the real presence of the Godhead in all or has not even become darkly aware of it can never be truly social, cooperative and loyal to the values which keep all together. The dual loyalties so frequently met with in the lives of small groups and castes and clans and tribes and nations too, only disfigure our social life. Almost all find that moral life is the conflict between these two loyalties which may not be equated with either egoism or altruism. Society is not antithetical to the individual but its collective wisdom can never have primacy over the individual wisdom growing out of a close relationship with the immanent Divine. Society cannot abolish the individual much less can one individual abolish all and the society. But every individual participates with love (self-giving delight) in the corporate collective unity of all or the community of God. This participation is a fulfillment of freedom not its restriction: it is the *kaivalya* of the

individual which is the Īlā of God. Society becomes perfected in and through the individuals who have realised that all belongs to God and form His eternal body. All could attain happiness.

Thus Viśiṣṭādvaita provides a fundamental metaphysical synthesis which is in accord with the demands of Religion and Philosophy. It is its general pattern which makes it a growing and sacramental reality fully in accord with the deepest aspirations of man.