RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF SREE NARAYANA GURU: SPIRITUAL ASPECT

Chapter III

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"Religion and Philosophy, when integrated, constitute a call for realisation of the sole reality of God who is timelessly present in the depths of human personality."

Amongst the illustrious Acharyas of Hindu religion like Adi Sankara and Sree Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Sree Narayana Guru occupies a no less important place. He can be regarded without doubt as an illustrious religious philosopher, courageous social reformer, preceptor devoted to peace and a great saint whose teachings have a universal appeal and a perennial value. His life and teachings gave a new impetus to the religious and cultural evolutions of large masses of people in Kerala and his actions and messages have vital significance and universal value. Romain Rolland, the renowned French writer and philosopher in his 'The life of Ramakrishna' explains Sree Narayana Guru's beneficent spiritual activity of universal value after having read some of the essays by Nataraja Guru in the Sufi Quarterly-Geneva published during 1928. "India has never lacked messengers of God, founders of sects of religions and they were continually appearing

through out the period. Glassenapp says nothing of the appearance of new religions in Southern India, but they were no less numerous. Such was the religion of the great Guru, Sree Narayana, whose beneficent spiritual activity was exercised for more than forty years in the State of Travancore over some million faithful souls. His doctrine was impregnated with the monist metaphysics of Sankara, but tended to practical action showing very marked differences from Bengal mysticism, whose Bhakti effusions filled him with mistrust. He preached, if one may say so, a jñānin of action, a great religious intellectual, having a very lively sense of the people and their soul needs. He has contributed greatly to the elevation of the oppressed classes in South India, and his work has been associated at certain times with that of Gandhi.  

The philosophy and religion of Buddha and Sree Sankara gave inspiration to the philosophy and religion of the Guru. This inspiration paved the way of the Guru to harmonize all religions in the world based on One God without any iota of caste system.

All our prophets have started their work by reforming religions and they ended up by founding new religions, which is inevitable. When the fervour of reformation dies down, they realise that it is easier to found a new religion than to reform an old one. But Narayana Guru took this difficult task and reformed the religion, and found out solutions for the problems facing the society in Kerala. He tried to cure it not from outside

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2 Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*. (Almora: Advaita Asrama, 1930) p. 147
but from inside. He used his quintessential message 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for man' as a means to achieve this end. Narayana Guru understood the fact that by applying the essential principle of religious teaching to their daily lives, people could come out of their poverty and social degradation, and attain a new outlook and a better standard of living. He, therefore, initiated measures of religious and social reform by establishing common temples of worship with different deities and by building schools and educating people. Sree Narayana Guru endeavoured to reconstruct religious and social life on the basis of man's inherent dignity and worth. Religion, according to him, was a prerequisite of good life but it mattered not to what religion and individual belonged so long as he strived for goodness and truth. It was in this theme that Narayana Guru used to say 'whatever the religion it suffices if it makes a better man'.

Religion, he found, was the base of everything and the Guru started his work on religion. Swami Vivekananda was of the opinion that "If you want to speak of politics in India, you must speak through the language of religion." Sree Narayana Guru was using religion to organize the under privileged communities.

The Guru laid the foundation of all progress in the reformation of religious practices, social customs and the daily habits of the people. Religion itself has to be contemplatively understood as seeking to better

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man's relations with his fellows endeavouring to raise him to a truly higher status as Man. Guru's religious philosophy can be categorised into spiritual aspect and social aspect. Spiritually, we should discover the divine in us and let it penetrate the human. Socially, society must be subdued to the image of the Divine. The individual should recognize the dignity of every man. Now we can examine these two sides-spiritual and social aspects of religion in the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru.

SPIRITUAL ASPECT:

Narayana Guru was an illustrious religious teacher who gave an illuminating piece of advice and we are grateful to him for the idealistic perspective of life he has bequeathed to humanity in general and to Keralites in particular. The best example of religious philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru is the wisdom text entitled Ātmopadeśa Śatakam, which contains one hundred philosophical verses. By the careful study of that work we can understand that the Guru had fulfilled his intention to compose a work, which treat philosophy and religion unitively. In this work he gives importance to self-realization rather than the adoration of any deity. This work is a wisdom discourse addressed to or about one's own self.

The principles of Advaita Vedānta are implied in his quintessential message 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for man.' Vedānta generally deals with four topics- Brahman, Ātman, creation of world and
Moksha. So now we can examine Guru Narayana's views on these concepts.

3.1 BRAHMAN:

"The word 'Brahman' is derived from the root 'Brh' which means great and it is the greatness of Brahman that it is Omniscient and endowed with all powers and its nature is internal purity, intelligence and freedom."4 "Sankara defines Brahman saying that Omniscient and Omnipotent cause from which proceed the origin, subsistence and dissolution of this world which is differentiated by names and forms, contains many agents and enjoyers, is the abode of the fruits of actions which have their definite places, time and causes and the nature of whose (world's) arrangement cannot be conceived by the mind, that cause is Brahman."5

In Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy Brahman is a ubiquitous, eternal and grand concept of the self-consciousness. "It will become evident that the ultimate principle when viewed philosophically is the knowledge, psychologically is the self, metaphysically is the eternal divinity and ethicoreligiously it is the brotherhood and compassion."6 It will be easily seen that the very same principle acts in various forms and

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4 Rama Murthi Sharma, *Some Aspects of Advaita Philosophy*. (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers) p. 2
5 ibid.,
expressions. That which has no origin or end is *Brahman*. The ever luminous, non-originating, non-terminating principle is nothing other than *Brahman*. *Brahman* is the nature of Existence - Consciousness-Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Ānanda*). The *Brahman* due to *Māyā* appears as God, individual soul and phenomenal world. The difference between God (*Īśwara*) and individual soul (*Jīva*) is due to the differing or limiting adjuncts. The former is due to *Māyā*. The latter is caused by avidya. Ultimately there is no difference between *Māyā* and individual self. The Guru illustrated this truth through his life and explained it through conversations and written works. The principles 'truth knowledge bliss is *Brahman*' and 'knowledge is *Brahman*' are in unison (harmony) with the reality, intelligence, and bliss principle of the Self.

The Guru says, the pure *Brahman* is not 'perceptible'. *Saguna Brahman* or conditioned *Brahman* alone is 'perceptible' and thus it is unreal. In *Darśanamālā* the Guru says that One alone is real without a second. The unreal seems to be real.

"The One is real, not a second;
the unreal indeed appears to be real;
the Śivalingam is stone alone;
not a second made by the sculptor." 7

*Brahman* is pure consciousness and any thing other than Pure Consciousness or *Brahman* is false.

Brahman has been described as the creation, the Creator, the created and created substance.

"Are you not creation, the Creator too,
As also the magic variety of Created things?
Is it not You again, O God, who is the very stuff
Of which all creation is made?"\(^8\)

"The search of the contemplative begins to realize unity and sameness. The duality between Creation and Creator, between spirit and matter, is abolished. It is all one undivided wholeness or Absolute."\(^9\)

That which has no origin or dissolution is none other than the Supreme Absolute. And there appears to have origin and dissolution in the Self through Māyā.

Brahman is Māyā, the Wielder and enjoyer of Māyā and the grand non- Māyā element is also Brahman.

"Are you not Māyā, the author of it,
As also the enjoying agent thereof
Are you not even One who can cancel Māyā
To grant us that state of union Supreme?"\(^10\)

"It is a central secret in Vedanta that Māyā, the principle of error, making mistakes, appearance is none other than the Absolute. Error is


necessary in order to reveal the truth, appearance has to be there so that reality can be known. Food cannot be enjoyed without a real hunger. To understand the unity behind both these aspects is the next stage in this contemplative prayer."\(^{11}\)

_Brahman_ is Reality, Intelligence and Bliss. The Guru adds that,

"You are Existence, Subsistence and Value,

You are the present verily, and the past and future,

Are no other than you. Even the spoken word considered,

Is nothing else than You at all."\(^{12}\)

"These values here are all of a numinous content, beyond empiricism. Being intelligence and happiness, time and the meaning we give to words are all a priori in content, the one implying all the others constituting the wonder and mystery of reality which is none other than a definition of the Absolute or "God" as intended in verse 7 given above."\(^{13}\)

_Brahman_ to the Guru is also the past, present and future. The meaning is that _Brahman_ is the eternity, which refutes all negations.

Pure _Brahman_ is self-luminous Reality. _Sruthi_ says "that which is by itself directly cognized is _Brahman_. _Brahman_ is the basis of the whole phenomenon and it is self-revealed. And it is pure consciousness, which is real and directly cognisable. The self-luminous consciousness is beyond the three-fold view (the subject, object and knowledge- tribasic

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\(^{11}\) Nataraja Guru, _Values_. Op. Cit., p. 671


\(^{13}\) Nataraja Guru, _Values_. Op. Cit., p. 672
conditioning or *tripuṭi*) that ever brighter burns up surging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds (heaven, inferno and the human world)."

"The light, rid of three-fold view, that ever brighter burns
Up surging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds,
Remember, that it will never come within the reach
Of a hermit untrue, as Upanishadic secret lore declares."\(^{14}\)

The Guru says 'consciousness alone shines everywhere, and nothing else. Hence there is nothing apart from pure Consciousness.'

"Consciousness alone, not another, shines;
Therefore, there is nothing other than consciousness;
What does not shine—that is unreal;
And what is unreal- that does not shine."\(^{15}\)

Pure Consciousness is Absolute, and the consciousness that 'I am Brahman' is acclaimed as the consciousness of the Absolute. This is the considered view of the great Advaita teachers. The vision of Advaita (*Bhāna*-consciousness) is an important view of Sree Narayana Guru.

All ideas of non-Brahman are but ignorance like the ideas of snake superimposed on a rope. *Brahman* alone is the Supreme Truth. The Guru indicates the unity of non-dual *Brahman-Ātman* in all the Jīvas, One only without a second. The individual soul is none other than the Pure Consciousness- *Brahman*.

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The Guru states that "the Absolute Brahman is the real and 'That Thou Art'. This is the finalised doctrine of the Vedanta as taught by the guru."\(^{16}\)

"Thou verily art Brahman, not senses, not mind,
Neither intellect, consciousness, nor body
Even life and ego have no reality, being but conditioned
By nescience, superimposed on the prime self..."\(^{17}\)

3.11 SAGUNA BRAHMAN- CONDITIONED BRAHMAN OR GOD.

Narayana Guru had a deep faith in God. The Guru considered God as the embodiment of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. To him truth, virtue, mercy and love are synonymous with God. The obvious message contained in various temple installations initiated by the Guru is that we examine ourselves, forsake sins, develop virtues and thus become a person worthy to offer worship. He expected us to become conscious of the fact that God is not within the idols and religious rites, but is right within us.

God, according to the Guru, is an ever-attainable shelter and inspiration for a life of goodness. He is eternal truth and infinite wisdom. In the ten slokas about God (Daiva Dasakam) the Guru lucidly gives his own concept of God. It is written for daily prayer and is very popular. In his work the Guru compares God as a captain in the sea of Existence (Bhavābdī). He is not different from inner self (drṣṭa) of the seeker.

\(^{16}\) Nataraja Guru, Life and Teaching of Narayana Guru. op. Cit., p. 379
"O God, from over there beyond do keep watch on us here,
Never letting go Your hand: You are the Captain
Of the mighty steamer for crossing the ocean of change
Which sole refuge is no other than your foot."\textsuperscript{18}

"Whether the people think of him or not, the Captain is there at the control of the great ship which is the world itself hurling through space and time, here in the body looking after the circulation of the blood, digestion, breathing and so on, as well as directing the principles governing the distant nebulae and the planets. The image here is modern and is an instance of the Guru's immediacy of thought."\textsuperscript{19}

The Guru further illustrates the nature of God and His relation with individual selves by comparing God with deep ocean and the individuals with its waves. God is also identified with the creation, Creator, objects of creation and materials of creation. Following the doctrine of cause of any effect; explained in Vedānta,

we can say that the Guru considered God as both the occasional cause of creation and also the $upādāna$ karana.\textsuperscript{20} In the 4th verse Daiva Daśakam" the Guru equates the depth aspect of the ocean with the Absolute, God or Reality while the surface aspect of the ocean is meant to be analogous to the collective and overt aspect of the consciousness of humanity conceived as a unit.

\textsuperscript{18} Sree Narayana Guru, Daivadasakam. Trans. Nataraja Guru, Verse 1
\textsuperscript{19} Nataraja Guru, \textit{values}. Op. Cit., p. 191
\textsuperscript{20} In Aristotelian Logic, the four main causes of any effect are the material cause, efficient cause, instrumental cause and final cause. In Vedanta, the basic principles of the efficient, instrumental and final cause are all contained in one cause called as occasional cause of creation and material cause as called $Upādāna$ kārana. The concept of upādāna contains within itself, the material cause and also the inherent possibilities of every thing that might be fashioned from it.
"Like the sea and the wave, the wind and the depth,
Let us within us see
Ourselves, Māyā, Thy Power and Thee Thyself
respectively."\textsuperscript{21}

3.III ĀTMAN:

In the literature of Narayana Guru (Ātmopadeśa Satakam, Brahmavidya Panchakam and Darśanamāla) Ātman is conceived and explained more frequently than Brahman. He regards knowledge of Atman as the source and the substratum of all other knowledge. In order to make individual surrenders before the self-consciousness; he tried to obviate the duality between God and man. The sense of egoism is negative and detrimental in the pursuit of man’s quest for self-realisation (Ātmasakshatkāra). The Advaita (non-dualism) of Narayana Guru gives equal importance to the divine and human values.

In this world there is nothing to be rejected or accepted; as for the Atman, it is the self-luminous i.e. consciousness. The Guru says, “there is no difference between the will and the mind. What is called nescience or darkness is nothing but the mind which is wonderful as indrajala – the magic of Indra”.

“There is no difference between will
and mind: that mind, which is called

\textsuperscript{21} Sree Narayana Guru, \textit{Daivadaśakam}. Trans. Nataraja Guru, Verse 4
ignorance and darkness, is a wonder,
like Indra's magic"\textsuperscript{22}

Sree Narayana Guru clearly substantiates the views of Advaita that the Ātman is the non-dual Reality and the duality is only maya or illusion. Narayana Guru realised Brahman as Ātman. Even though the Ātman is self-luminous and unattached it does action, assuming different shapes through māyā.

"Prior to action the Self alone is; nothing else is known; therefore, actions are done by itself with its own māyā"\textsuperscript{23}

The Guru states that "what appears is mere superimposition and hence the ego of 'I' is also superimposed like the shell-silver. The one Ātman only remains above all things, and for all time."

"Because 'I' is seen as an object of awareness, I-conscious is also a superimposition, like the silver in the mother of pearl; above everything else, today and tomorrow the one alone exists."\textsuperscript{24}

That which has no origin and dissolution is none other than the Self. And the Self is the Brahman- the Supreme Absolute.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Nitya Chaitanaya Yati, \textit{The Psychology of Darśanamālā}. Op. Cit., p. 177
\textsuperscript{23} ibid., p. 299
\textsuperscript{24} ibid., p. 322
\textsuperscript{25} ibid., p. 122
Atman has two forms- Arya (good or honorable) and Anārya (evil or dishonorable). Arya and Anārya can be conceived as 'sacred' and 'profane', which refer to twin ambivalent aspects of personal spiritual life. One feels holy or sinful according to his ego consciousness. It is conditioned by one or the other of these poles. This is because it is connected to Brahman on one side and to the body on the other side. With the 68th verse of Atmopadeśa Śatakam the Guru enters into a series of verses dealing with the inner structure of contemplative consciousness viewed both chronologically and psychologically. In this verse the Guru makes use of the classic vedantic example of the case of the superimposition in consciousness of the illusion of the snake on the reality of the pure thing-in-itself represented by the rope. This example has been worked upon by Vedantists over and over in their literature and it has become such a favourite that Vedanta can no more do without it. The reason for this is to be sought in the fact that this particular example has much protolinguistic value attached to it.26

The 68th verse of Atmopadeśa Śatakam is:

"As the ego sense enters into the double snake-rope-like scheme

Now as knowledge and now as the limited body agent,

It becomes sacred at one time or profane again,

Thus should be understand the intuitive man."27

27 ibid., p. 642
In the Upanishads (Katha Upanishad; Švetasvatara Upanishad; Maitri Upanishad) the Self is compared with the charioteer and the senses with the horses. The very same comparison is made by the Guru in Ātmopadeśa Šatakam- verse 69, in a more complete and coherent form to serve as the basis of an integrated notion of the Self in a fully contemplative and absolutist context with a scientific status given to it.

"With hearing and such as horses linked, carrying within
The self-image and ruled over by the master of thinking powers
Such in the libido chariot mounted whereon the "I" sense
Unceasing deals outward with each form of beauty as it proceeds"28

The cause of 'no-self' doctrine, according to the Guru, is due to the non-discrimination between those that are eternal (sat) and the non-eternal (asat). The subject of the layman's concept of 'I' is the soul or atma. Ātman is the one eternal and true light that is shining all the time. Ātmopadeśa Šatakam verse 10 explains so:

"Who sits there in the dark? Declare! Says one,
Where upon another, himself intend to find, in turn,
Asks, hearing the first: "who may you can be?"
For both the word of response is but one
The repeated "I, I" contemplated from within
Is not many but remains One; divergent egoity

28 ibid., p.645
Being multiple, with the totality of such
The Self-substance too continuity assumes.  

The unitive and all embracing nature of the self is explained poignantly by the Guru in these verses. Two men sitting in the dark questioning each other in the name of knowledge about the self in each, the word of response is ‘One’. In these two verses there is the notion of unity in terms of self-consciousness. A truly wise man sees all as one in the context of non-dual or unitive understanding of the Absolute.

The Guru also says that prior to the knowledge of Self, one is in darkness, but its presence once felt, dispels the same darkness. Self is the eternal light itself and so long with its illumination, it illuminates the things embedded along with it.

The Guru indicates that the unity of non-dual Brahman-Ātman in all the Jīvas, is one only without a second. What is empirically known as the individual soul is none other than the transcendental reality. Jīvas or empirical egos are many. But the spirit of consciousness is one. The true nature of Jīva is the sole ultimate reality, i.e. Ātman. According to the Guru creativeness, finitude, ignorance and misery are only adventitious attributes of Jīva and are not the constituents of its permanent nature. In the vision of Vedānta, the assertion of the identity of the individual soul, jīva with the Brahman, is also expressed as Sachidānanda in four memorable majestic utterances called Mahāvākyās of Vedaś.

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29 ibid., pp. 488, 493
Tattvamasi (that thou art) of the Sāma-Veda- Chandukyo -
Upanishad- VI. VIII-7;

Prajñānam Brahma (consciousness is Brahman) of the Rg Veda-
Aitarya- Upanishad. III. 3 ;

Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman) of the Yajur Veda- Bṛhadaranyaka
Upanishad. I. IV-10. and

Ayamātmā Brahma (the self is Brahman) of the Adharva Veda –
Mandukya Upanisad.

Thus we can understand that Brahman-Atman, the pure
consciousness denotes one and the same truth. The Guru also leads us
to the reality of the One Absolute Self from an analysis of the human
self.

The Guru states that Brahman is intelligence, and that 'thou art'.
That Brahman is the self, according to the Guru as explained in the
Science of the Absolute (Brahma Vidya Panchakam).

"Intelligence Supreme, even That I am! That verily Thou art!

That Brahman is the self here! Singing thus full well,
And so established in peace of mind;
And reborn to pure ways in life by the dawn of Brahman-
wisdom"30

Atman is not the body, mind, ego etc. for they are only
superimposed on Atman by nescience (avidya). The Guru says that in
this world what exists is subject to six forms of becoming or six phases.

30 ibid., pp. 374, 375
These six phases mentioned by the Guru are existence, birth, growth, change, decay and extruction. These phases are true of consciousness as well as physical organisms. Ātman, according to the Guru is always detached. But one performs action as if he is attached, owing to Māyā or ignorance.

"The Self is always detached alone;
by ignorance action is done as if attached;
"I am not acting" - thus
the seer remains detached in action"\textsuperscript{31}

The supreme aim of the vision of the Guru is to dispel the mistaken notion that Atman is finite and particular, and disclose the truth of the non-dual Reality.

3.IV SELF-REALISATION

In \textit{Darśanamālā}, Narayana Guru explains a positive discipline called ātmavidya, which means knowledge (science) of the Atma or Self. Ātmavidya or Self-realization is a discipline of understanding evolved by seers over a period of thousands of years. Ātmavidya release individuals from ignorance. Man can be freed from sorrowful conditions, which are bound to arise during the span of his life on earth, only through the acquisition of self-realization or ātmavidya. Ātmavidya accepts

materialism as well as spirituality. Sree Narayana Guru strove his best to implement ātmavidya in his life.

Self-knowledge is the foundation for all other knowledge and through this self-realization the duality of man and God is abolished. The one who knows the Brahman attains the status of Brahman itself. Thus according to the Guru knowledge is Brahman; the Absolute Brahman is the real and 'That thou art'. The Guru says that self - knowledge is the knowledge of destination. The ultimate essence of all existence is the same self-knowledge.

"Apart from awareness I have no being;
As distinct from me awareness cannot remain
As mere light; both knowledge and knower, contemplation
Reveals beyond doubt as of one substance alone."

The Guru thinks of the self-knowledge which is the ultimate essence as knowledge. That is knowledge of self is the only worthy knowledge. This is some times equated as witness-consciousness (sakṣi caitanya) and this is the same and eternal in every being.

"People here on earth, they sleep, wake and think
Various thoughts; watching over all of these with intent eye
There dawns a priceless light, which never shall dim again;
Led onward by this, one should forward wend."

33 ibid., p. 462
A man of knowledge (jñāni) is one who meditates on the Sakṣi Caitanya. According to the Guru those who are in the pursuit of self-consciousness may be conceived of the fact that the self is nothing other than the witness-consciousness.

"There is not one thing here that we have not already once known;
Veiled by form, knowledge fails: wakefully to know all
There is none here boundless as it is;
0' who can know at all this wonder dear!"34

According to the Guru a whole-hearted interest with intellectual curiosity is needed for the task of self-realisation. The Guru brings wisdom and action, as in Gita, together in his treatment of the subject of self-realisation and yogic disciplines. The first verse of Ātmapadeśa-Śatakam is contemplative hymn, which concerns the self to be located neither inside nor outside the contemplator.

"Rising even above knowledge, what within the form
Of the one who knows, as equally without, radiant shines
To that core, with the eyes five restrained within,
Again and again prostrating in adoration, one should chant."35

Self-knowledge is to be sought in terms of consciousness, which is both subjective and objective. An attitude of ceaseless adoration is needed so as to attain self-realisation. Here the Guru refers to a central

34 ibid., p. 636
35 ibid., p. 439
reality, which transcends the two aspects of the visible and the intelligible. The Guru in Ātmapadeśa Śatakam 10th and 11th verses, which were stated earlier, brings the self or the soul, or the paramātma together with the jīvatma of vedic lore under close and related scrutiny.

Vedānta is Brahmavidya (Science of the Absolute) and at the same it is Ātmavidya (Science of the self) also. According to it the Self and Consciousness or Knowledge are not different. Thus Ātmavidya naturally turn out to be the Science of knowledge. A special emphasis is given to this aspect in the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru. He was aware of the necessity for presenting Vedanta philosophy with an epistemological point of view and he fulfilled it in the work 'Arivu'. This is a great contribution of Sree Narayana Guru to the world of philosophy. Nataraja Guru extols this poetic work as a "masterpiece of contemplative workmanship unrivalled in literature any where in the world." In the first verse of 'Arivu' Sree Narayana Guru assigns to knowledge or gnosis the dignity and status of the Absolute, the One without a second.

The Guru defines the Self as “the knowledge which sits in the dark and knows. The Guru says that primary knowledge which is the only knowledge behind all forms of knowledge and which reveals to us all the several items of perception and conception is in reality we ourselves.” The knowledge that animates the mind is only a

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modulated knowledge and what is primary to modulated knowledge is
pure knowledge or primary knowledge. This pure or primary knowledge
is the self according to the Guru.

"What is known here, when carefully considered
Is not anything other than knowledge?
As knowledge in this (as the knower and the known is one)
There is not anything anywhere apart from knowledge." 38

The Guru's philosophy is essentially man-oriented and not the
usual God-centred approach. He projects the Self as its vital core. This
is best illustrated in the 12th verse of his short poem, Arivu.

"What is knowledge - you are that
It is by investing your own knowledge that it becomes the known
What is known here is of two classes
One is conscious of knowing and the other is not conscious of the
same." 39

In his works, the Guru Narayana gives importance to the word
Arivu than to the word Brahman. His philosophical treatise Ātmopadesa
Satakam contains a lucid exposition of the self-based vision. Sree
Narayana Guru was a Jñānin of a unique kind and he dedicateo his
Arivu or knowledge to the needs of religious reforms and human
advancement.

38 ibid., p.1
39 ibid., p.22
According to the Guru, *Arivu* is the knowledge of the self, which are the substratum and the ultimate essence of all living beings. Knowledge as meant by the Guru is not one of the empirical realm, instead it is of a Trans-empirical plane. It is attainable only through integral experience and not through logical reasoning or inference. Knowledge in this sense has infinite potential.

True knowledge according to the Guru is 'Triputiless' knowledge. Thus the knowledge of the Absolute is beyond the experiences, the experiencing and the experienced. Only a seer (*Yati*) who has realized the truth of his own self can realize this knowledge.

The Guru says:

"That light, rid of three fold view, that ever brighter burns
Upsurging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds
Remember, that it will never come with in the reach of a hermit-
Untrue
As Upanishadic secret love declares."^{41}

According to the Guru there are two states of knowledge. They are the ordinary perceptual knowledge and the knowledge beyond perception. Former is the empirical knowledge and the latter is the

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^{40} Triputi: This is a technical term in Vedanta philosophy referring to three elements of cognition viz. the subjective aspect, the objective aspect and the process of perception. The Guru was of the opinion that one has to counteract this tribasic prejudice to which the human mind is naturally disposed, and gain the great knowledge of the Absolute. The primal glory of one should be to merge and become that alone.

knowledge of reality as it is. The knowledge of the Absolute, says the Guru,

"That which is beyond count on the one hand
And what is ordinary and of the work-a day world
Other than these two, there is no other form at all
Either in memory, in sleep or in the city on high."\(^{42}\)

He tells us that the two states of knowledge- the one, which does not come under the scope of empirical knowledge, is \(par\text{\text{\-}}vidya\) and the other, which is empirical knowledge, is \(apar\text{\text{\-}}vidya\). These states of knowledge are also known as \(taijasa\) and \(tamasa\) respectively. The Guru's concept of religion originates from these states or power of wisdom. Over and above these two, no another form of knowledge exists, neither in the conscious level nor in the subconscious level (dreams), not even in the unconscious level (sleep), not in any other levels of experience (\(thuriya\)). The one who has attained \(par\text{\text{\-}}vidya\) would conquer all worldly sufferings. True knowledge makes one perfect and happy. One should merge into this true knowledge and become that itself.

"Knowledge it's meaning known and the personal knowledge
Subjective together makes but one primal glory
Within the unrarified radiance of this great knowledge
One should merge and become that alone"\(^{43}\)

\(^{42}\) ibid., p. 641
\(^{43}\) ibid., p. 456
Sree Narayana Guru says that the wisdom is the Primal Sun, which removes the darkness of Māyā. The dawn of wisdom is like ten thousand suns together rising. Such is the light that wisdom brings to our mind. It is in the light of this primal Sun that one realises the true reality. This wisdom has numerous and various powers. All these power can be brought within two concepts- Sama and other Anya. We are told,

"The powers of wisdom are many, all of them under two divisions The 'Sāmā' and the 'other' could conclusively be brought Merging into that form which makes for 'other sameness' To clarify of wisdom one should awake."\(^{44}\)

Sama is vidyā and Anya is avidyā. The former is inducing 'sameness' or 'samatwa' whereas the latter is creating feeling of otherness. We have to promote 'sama' in our minds and that will lead us towards peace, clarity of vision and real awakening for social harmony. The Guru tells us that the overcoming of the influence of Anya is a difficult task. The only remedy to subdue this force is the application of our intellect and discriminative power in our thoughts and deeds. This will lead us to transcend the world of five senses.

"To subdue even somewhat the obduracy of the 'other'
Is hard indeed without wisdom's limitless power
By such do gain mastery over it and unto Her who is wisdom
The anti-sensuous one, close access attain."\(^{45}\)

This is the way of attaining wisdom according to the Guru.

\(^{44}\) ibid., p. 572
\(^{45}\) ibid., p. 575
3.V THE WORLD (JAGAT )

The Upādāna Kārana of any thing is that with which it is created. It in turn is due to the five gross elements whose source can be traced to our own consciousness. This consciousness is the cause of Being which seems to be the cause of the world. Non-existent world seems to exist due to ignorance ( avidyā).

"One thousand names, one thousand forms,
With whom, abiding therein, there are one thousand interests
Such this world, uncritically viewed;
It is real only until the dream is past;
On waking, the awakened one is all that remains."\(^{46}\)

The non-existence of the world becomes evident when knowledge is born out of Brahmatāna (knowledge of Brahman).

The Advaitins argued that the visible world is a composite of self and non-self (ātman and anātman). That which has the involvements in the subjects of knowledge, comprehension of them, assimilation of them and eternal existence, is the one that is the self (ātman). Those that do not have these essences are non-self (anātman). Arivu (final knowledge) has no such conjuncting nature. Arivu manifests in three faculties, that is the knowledge, the known and the knowers (prama, pramēya and pramāta). Narayana Guru has substantiated that this world is an amalgamation (combination) of these three, in his works Janani

Navaratna Manjeri and Ātmopadeśa Śatakam. This amalgamation of the three is explained as *triputi* or tribasic conditioning.

"Say, when, O Mother, shall my inner being regain that path of hope
To be merged within the domain of pure word import bereft of all tri-basic prejudice,
And, within the core of the radiance outspared Of reason pure,
Reabsorbed in communion cool, ever remain."

He agrees with the Vedāntins and further says that this world is a summation of self and non-self too. The non-eternal and transient objects too are one and non-dual when observed philosophically. The composite of the multifaceted and dualistic objects constitutes the world, the cause of which is Brahman. Brahman is the *upādāna kārana* of the world. The Guru stated that the world is of subtle and gross form. They are in fact and in operation experienced by the same consciousness and are generated by modifications of the awareness of the consciousness. Hence the Guru says, this world of gross and subtle form comes from consciousness.

" This world which is of gross,--
And subtle form, comes from consciousness;
If it is affirmed, everything is existence through and through,
If it is denied, it is consciousness through and through."

According to the Guru cause and effect are not two entities; they

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47 ibid., p. 154
are the two poles of complementary events or situations. We experience the phenomena of plurality only at the horizontal level of the empirical world. When our awareness is verticalized towards the Absolute there exists only the experience of a unitive state and in that state the distinction of the knower and what is known does not exist. The Guru says in his Daiva Daśakam that all the things we experience as the external world or as the world of dreams are the unceasing manifestations of our own primary consciousness in the same way as the plurality of wave forms is caused by the unending modifications of a body of water.

"As ocean, wave, wind and depth,
Let us grasp inwardly the scheme
Of ourselves, of Māyā, Your glory,
And of even You Yourself."\(^{49}\)

The world of empirical experience is structured in our minds and the constituent factors of that structuring include sense-data drawn from memories, psychological urges arising from incipient memories, and names and nomenclature, all of which are arbitrarily assigned in the formation of concepts.

"This which is unreal, being an effect,
Has a cause; it is not the world,
But the absolute alone that is real,

Which a dull mind wrongly imagines to be unreal."50

All is indeed satcitānanda (Existence, Consciousness and Bliss). There is not even a trace of many and he who sees this as many goes from death to death.

"All is indeed existence, Consciousness and pure happiness;
In this there is not even a trace of the many;
He who sees this as many,
Goes from death to death." 51

The Guru stated that the world is none other than Brahman through Avastatraya vadam, Satasat Prakriya and Māyāvada

3.V.1 Avastatraya Vadam (Trifold States Of Mind)

The waking (Jāgrat), the dream (Swapna) and dreamless sleep (Suṣupthi) states are represented to as the trifold states of mind. Besides these stages, there is a final stage of consciousness called the fourth state of mind (The Turiya State). The state of consciousness to free itself from specific transactional events and the fantasizing ideation of dreams, to remain poised in a state of unconditioned awareness without falling into the state of deep sleep. This is called the fourth state of consciousness- a state of pure transcendence.

51 ibid., p. 149
The waking state is one that is controlled by the activities of sense-organs and their effect is in the internal organ (anthakkarana). The world in this state is the visible world or Jagrat jagat.

In the Dream State, the sense-organs are at rest and their direct effects are not felt. The world known in this state is the dreams world or Swapna jagat.

In the deep sleep state or sushupti all the bodily activities and the functions of the sense-organs are at rest. No knowledge is now possible in this state.

Even though the Dream State gives the feelings of pleasures and pains likes and dislikes, its non-existence is known to every body. Dream state is not real, as it is only pulsation of the desiring mind, which has the analytic and synthetic ways of examining things.

The wakening state is also the pulsation of the mind, but aided by the activities of the sense organs. Since wakening state is only the mind-pulsatory, it too is unreal.

"A long drawn out dream is this, and like sleep each day,
It gets extinguished; dream too likewise!
We can never see extinctions thus to this; as it is
Hitched on to the pure aloneness, it goes round for ever."

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The world is an illusion because it is perceptible. It is non-conscious and it is limited. The Guru says 'the wise man in his wakeful state, sees his world as unreal like a dream world.'

"The visible is imagined by the will;
The visible is seen only where there is will,
And not where there is any will-
Like the snake in the rope."\(^{53}\)

The perceptible is non-conscious and it is unreal. The consciousness is the substratum of the phenomenal world. The perceptibility, non-consciousness and limitedness of the phenomenal world are the reasons for its falsity.

3. V.2 The Real, Unreal Nature. (*Sat*asa*ta* Prakṛiya)

The combined epithet, *Sat*asa*ta* is a technique to establish the non-existence of the world. The world, as pointed out, is a conglomerate of real and unreal- *Sat* and *Asat*. That which never undergo modification or that which is eternally existing is termed as *Sat* or eternal existence. *Asat* means that which never exist at all. From this viewpoint self (*Ātman*) is *Sat* and *Anātman* or non-self is *Asat*. The world is a composite of multifaceted objects, which undergo modifications. So it is *Asat* and unreal. *Ātman*, which never undergoes modification, is the only real entity.

"The waking state, it obtains not in sleep
And sleep again does not attain consciousness
When awake: day by day these twain are born
Of Māyā's womb and keep alternating on."54

In this verse the Guru states that Ātman is the only real, which never undergo changes in the three states of consciousness and the world is unreal. The Guru says, "the perceptible world has no reality apart from the seer-atman."55 The world is the effect which has no independent status. The world is not the ultimate real; the dull minded person mistakes the unreal (asat) for the real (sat).56 The world in Advaita is termed as Satasat Vilakshana (other than the real and the unreal). The world is not eternally existing nor is it totally non-existent. The world is neither Sat nor Asat. Because of this nature it becomes anirvachaniya or indescribable.

3.V.3 The Doctrine of Māyā (Māyāvāda)

The Guru established the fact that the world is unreal through Avastatraya Vada and satasat Prakṛiya. The doctrine of Māyā is meant to illustrate the fact that the world is Brahman itself. As per his doctrine of Māyā, the fundamental reality manifests in the form of the world. It is no other reality. Just as a wave and water are one and the same, so are

56 ibid., p. 131
the reality of Brahman and the world. That which creates illusion or misunderstanding is Māyā. Māyā literally means "what is not, that is (Māyā). What is not known that is Māyā."57 The feeling that creates the unreal world as real is Māyā and the world is the consequences of Māyā. Māyā is the principle of nescience or ignorance, which is not an entity. In Māyā Darsāna (Darśanamāla), the Guru defines Māyā as 'that which makes only an appearance and has no substantial existence.'58

"According to the Guru Māyā is not a reality but merely an expression to signify the category of all possible errors in philosophy before it can arrive correctly and methodically at the notion of the Neutral Normative Absolute."59

"The Guru uses the notion of Māyā as the name given to the all-possibilities of philosophical errors to which the human mind is prone."60

The eight aspects of our personal and empirical consciousness are: the principles of negation (Māyā), knowledge (Vidya), ignorance (Avidyā), transcendence (Paracytic), immanence (Aparā), darkness (Tamas), primal potency (pradhama) and nature (prakriti). The Guru explains the last seven principles as different forms of Māyā.

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57 ibid., p. 225
58 ibid., p. 198
60 ibid.,
Negation (Māyā)

From the Indian point of view negation is as much a category as substance, quality etc. So negation is included in Indian logic as a category. According to the Guru Māyā is:

'What is not known, that is Māyā; It alone shines as many forms: 
vidya, avidya, parā, aparā,
Tamas, Pradhana and Prakṛti.\(^6^1\)

Different forms of Māyā are:

Knowledge (Vidya)

Māyā is Vidya. The Guru states that the means by which such knowledge- the non-Self is unreal, the Self is real – comes, that is Vidya, like the recognition of truth about rope and snake.\(^6^2\)

Avidya

Māyā is avidya. The means by which such knowledge the self is unreal and the non-Self is real - comes, that alone is Avidya, like the erroneous cognition about rope and snake.\(^6^3\)

Transcendence (Parā)

That by which the senses, mind, intelligence and five vital tendencies are created as the subtle limbs of the reasoning Self is para alone.\(^6^4\) By its own Māyā, the reasoning Self becomes deluded as if it s

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\(^6^2\) ibid., p. 203
\(^6^3\) ibid., p. 208
\(^6^4\) ibid., p. 210
happy or unhappy. But in truth there is nothing at all. What is called Para or transcendent is subtle.

**Aparā (Immanence)**

Māyā is aparā. That by which this world, which is the object of the senses is created, is apara. What is called apara or **immanent** is gross.\(^{65}\)

**Tamas (Darkness)**

Māyā is tamas. The ignorance due to which the world is imagined in the Self is known as Tamas. The example given is the silver seen in the mother of pearl. When light is brought to shine on the mother of pearl the silver in it vanishes.\(^{66}\) Here the Guru reminds us that we should realise the efficacy of truth as the most dynamic principle to dispel darkness. When we turn to God, we are seeking light to dispel the innate darkness of Māyā described as Tamas.

When the self is properly understood we come to know that it alone is real and the world only a presentiment in the Self and is unreal. Just as darkness is the case of error in perceiving silver in the mother of pearl, so the cause of the supposition of the world in the self is that aspect of Māyā Called tamas.\(^{67}\)

**Pradhānam (Primal potency)**

Māyā is pradhānam. Pradhānam is the principle of irrefutable dynamism both to make and unmake. It is considered to be the most

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\(^{65}\) ibid., p. 214

\(^{66}\) ibid., p. 217

brilliant and dynamic aspect of Māyā. Just as a tree is latent in the seed, all are implied in the primeval cause of manifestations. By its importance or therefore the Guru calls it Pradhānam.68

Prakriti (Nature)

Māyā is prakṛiti. That which diversifies the modalities and which is of three fold modality (satva, rajas and tamas) is known as prakṛti.69

In Māyā Darśanam (Darśanamālā) the same Māyā has been described under seven items which are vidya (science), avidya (nescience), parā (the transcendent), aparā (the immanent), tāmas (darkness), pradhāna (prime potent power) and prakṛiti (nature). 'This is not the Ultimate Reality but instead it is called Māyā; because it is the basis of the discrimination of the Self from the non-Self it is called Vidyā; because it is the basis of contrary knowledge it is called Avidya; because it remains in the form of potentiality and creates the subtle limbs of the vital principle such as the indriyas it is called Para; because it remains in a gross form and creates the sense data called the world, it is called Aparā; because it remains in the form of darkness forming the basis of wrong supposition it is called Tamas; because it bears within itself the whole universe in a surprising manner it is called Pradhāna; and because it remains in the form of the three nature modalities and by its own nature it is able to separate them, it is called Prakṛiti.70

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69 ibid., p. 225
The Guru states that the world is seen as real by nescience (avidya) which is not different from the mind-stuff. This nescience perishes through the knowledge of Ātman. Then the world would seem to be a mere picture. This world arises from ignorance just as a ghost seems to the coward as emerging from darkness. The mind is the cause of the perceptible world. In other words the perceptible world is seen as a presentiment of the will.

The whole world originated from the power of Māyā of the Lord like the sprout from the seed. The whole universe became manifest from the lord. He is Brahma. The whole world is non-existent, for there is no existence of the effect apart from the cause. The cause alone is real. It is the nature of bliss itself. Everything is in the nature of Existence Consciousness and Bliss. Then the Guru concluded that the whole world is nothing but pure Consciousness devoid of Māyā.

"When all parts are separated

One by one, then one sees

Everything as Consciousness alone-

For from Māyā and not any other."

When knowledge (Brahma jñāna) arises the avidya (nescience) perishes and the world will seem to be a mere appearance.

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72 ibid., p. 140
3. VI NIRVĀṆA (EMANCIPATION)

'Nirvāṇa' literally means 'burning out or extinction'. Nirvāṇa is the cessation of one's activity or one's return to the source. 'It is the release of the imprisoned splendour of the Self from the bondage of pre-determined role-playing. 'Nirvāṇa' is sometimes compared to a roasted seed, which no longer has the potential to sprout ... Lord Buddha compares it to the merging of a dewdrop in to the infinitude of the ocean. Jesus Christ compares it to the return of a prodigal son to acknowledge the profound love and compassion of an all-knowing father.'  

The Guru says, Nirvāṇa means 'the burning out of the phenomenal mark of individuation' and he clarifies them into three groups. First group is of such people who have turned to the path of the spirit with the intention of glorifying their power perch in society on the ground of having attained psychic capabilities. They are the seekers after magical powers (Siddhi kāmi). The second group is of such people who are motivated by the pure intention of releasing themselves from the snares of psychological attractions and who have set emancipation as the only goal of life. They are seekers after liberation (Mumukshu). The final group is of people who have succeeded in obtaining their liberation with varying grades of success. They are knowers of Brahman. Nirvana is equated with amṛta- immortality because death is not relevant where eternity prevails. This state of perception is glorified as purnam.

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73 ibid., p. 430
There can be traces of previous conditioning even in this state of perfection. ‘If any such vestige lingers on unresolved, the release should be looked upon as impure. On the other hand, when the attainment is without blemish – it is to be understood as pure; there are grades of purity.’

Sree Narayana Guru explains the different grades of Nirvāṇa in the first four verses of Nirvāṇa Darśanam of Darśanamālā on the basis of purity and perfection. In the first stage the Guru divides it into two varieties: pure (suddha) and impure (asuddha). The pure is devoid of incipient memories (vasana) and the impure is conjoined with incipient memories.

Nirvāṇa is of two kinds:

The pure and the impure,

That which is the pure is devoid of vasana;

Similarly, that is impure is conjoined with vasana.  

The pure (suddha) Nirvana is divided in to two – the most pure and the pure pure (suddha suddha). The pure pure (suddha suddha) is the knower of the Absolute (Brahmavit). The most pure is again categorised into three: Superior, more superior and the most superior. The superior is Brahmanidvara who is superior in the knowledge of the Absolute. The more superior is Brahmanidvariyan who is the more Superior in the knowledge of the Absolute and lastly the most superior

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74 ibid., p. 429
is *Brahmavidvaristan* who is the most superior in the knowledge of the Absolute.

The most pure is again of three kinds;
One in the Superior, one in the more superior,
One is the most superior; and thus;
The pure is established in the *Brahma*-knower.\(^\text{75}\)

**Four stages of knower of *Brahman* (Jīvan mukta)**

1. **Brahmavit**: *Brahmavit* is the *suddha nirvāṇa* or pure extinction. This pure emancipation exists in the Absolute i.e., the knower of *Brahman* exists in *Brahman*. After destroying everything with the fire of knowledge, he does action according to the injunction (What is right) for the well being of all the creatures. *Brahmavit* is the truly liberated person.

2. **Brahmavidvaran**: *Brahmavidvaran* is the *atisuddha-nirvāṇa* or more pure extinction. This is superior in the knowledge of the Absolute. The more pure extinction is in the superior knower of *Brahman*. He who renouncing all actions, always abiding in the Absolute and continues journeying the world only for keeping up of the body, is superior or excellent knower of the Absolute.

3. **Brahmavidvariyan**: *Brahmavidvariyan* is the even more pure extinction (*atisuddhatara nirvāṇa*). This state of *nirvāṇa* is seen in the still more superior knower of the Absolute. He is able to know the world

\(^{75}\) ibid., p. 433
only when informed by others, but does not know it himself. He always enjoys the Absolute emancipation.

4. **Brahmavidvaristan**: Brahmavidvaristan is the one who realises perfect identity with Brahman. He is in the state of the most pure extinction (*atisuddhatma nirvāṇa*). He is the most superior in the knowledge of the Absolute; ie, the most pure extinction is in the most superior knower of the Absolute. He is absolutely absorbed in Brahman. He knows nothing by himself or even when made to know. He is devoid of activities and is of the nature of Brahman himself.

The impure state of *nirvāṇa* is divided into impure pure (*asuddha suddha*) and impure impure (*asuddha asuddha*).

"Most pure, pure – thus
The pure is of two kinds and similarly
The impure is also is said to be
Impure-pure and impure-impure."\(^{76}\)

The impure-pure is devoid of *rajas* and *tamas* and belongs to the seeker after liberation (*mumukshu*). The impure-impure is with *rajas* and *tamas* and belongs to the seeker after miraculous power (*siddhi kāmi*).

"The impure-pure is devoid of *rajas* and *tamas*
And the other is with *rajas* and *tamas*
The former is known to be in the seeker of liberation
The latter in those who desire psychic attainment."\(^{77}\)

\(^{76}\) ibid., p. 432
\(^{77}\) ibid., p. 435
In his *Nirvāṇa Darśana*, the Guru describes a knower of the Absolute, a man emancipated while still alive, as follows:

"Having burned everything with the fire of wisdom,
Aiming the good of the world,
Doing action according to injunction,
The knower of Brahman remains firm in Brahman"\(^78\)

Those who attain these states are emancipated men. They have gained inward release. A short poem of Guru, *Nirṇīti Panchakam* (Five verses on Inward Release) in Sanskrit qualifies the state of *Nirṇīti* as one in which a person is free of all kinds of questions.

"Known and unknown same, difference none in mine and
Another’s, even indifferent to difference,
From questions such when one is free
One gains release"\(^79\)

The basic achievement of *jeevan mukta* is his capacity to reconcile the duality implied in good and evil. He can reconcile the pull of the opposites. The last verse of the *Municarya Panchakam* (The way of the Release) describes a *Jeevanmukta*. This description can also be applied to the Guru himself.

"Let him live in his own home or in the forest
Or at the water’s edge –no matter
With mind ev’r in the Absolute fixed,

\(^78\) ibid., p.438
The Yogi dwells seeing always in terms of selfhood all here,

Enjoys the bliss, that silent one,

Like mirage in desert land,

Contemplating that Supreme Absolute beyond compare.\(^{80}\)

Of this universe, there is nothing to be rejected or accepted.

Everything in this world is the verdict (decisions) of human intelligence in the light of a self-luminous principle, which functions through the envisioning of spatio-temporal configuration. Having meditated thus, one should liberate from duality by withdrawing himself from all functioning. Thereafter he does not return to it. The Guru concluded \textit{Nirvāṇa Darsāna} and \textit{Darśanamālā} by establishing the non - dual reality of Brahman – the One Absolute Reality.

"The One Brahma alone is without a second;

Nothing else is; there is no doubt.

Thus the knower should liberate from duality

Therefore he does not return."\(^{81}\)

3.VII REVELATION, REASON AND EXPERIENCE IN GURU-PHILOSOPHY

The \textit{pramāṇās} applied to the validity of truth in \textit{Vedānta} are six:

\textit{Pratyaksa} (perceptual)

\textit{Anumāna} (inferential)

\(^{80}\) Sree Narayana Guru, \textit{Munikarya Panchakam}. Verse 5

Arthāpathi (hypothetical postulation)

Anapalabdhi (impossibility of a conclusion)

Upamānā (analogy) and

Sabda or Āgama (scriptural assent).

The Guru mentions only three pramānās for the purpose of his methodology. These are-

Pratyakṣa (perceptual),

Anumānā (inferential) and

Upamānā (analogy).

The hypothetical inductive approach is omitted by the Guru as ambiguous. All Pramānās, which are ratiocinative in status, are discredited as being of no use for the final means of knowledge of the Absolute principle. He states this categorically in Ātmāpadeśa Satakam

"As a mixture of what is the world and what is the real
That which presents itself before us is a great inequity indeed!
This is what is indeterminate, beyond grasp of word or mind,
How could the course of right reason move within it’s domain?"82

So reason cannot absolutely and completely comprehend Reality.

Spiritual Realization is a matter of experience. It is self-certifying and beyond reason. Experience is the ultimate authority. All others are valuable in the measure in which they lead to it. No demonstrative knowledge of reality is possible.

82 Nitya Chaitanya Yati, The Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru.
Op. Cit., p. 701
Guru-philosophy accepts the broad outline of Vedāntic epistemology in as much as it does not rely wholly on the Pramāṇa sastraśas (the science of valid measures of reason). The man of uhaapoha (dialectical intuition) is the proper authority to unravel the secrets of Ātma-vidya or the science of the self. Sankara categorically stated this in his Vivekachudamani (Crest Jewel of discrimination) in verse 16:

'A superior man of wisdom, well versed and fully specialized in dialectical intuitive understanding (uha apoha) where analogy and its subject are involved, is one qualified for self-knowledge.'

The fundamental problem of religious philosophy is to reconcile revelation, reason and experience. The four levels of experience are conscious state, sub-conscious state, deep Sleep State and finally the highest state (Turiya State). Rational expressions (verbalization, gestural articulation etc.) are the expositions in the waking or conscious state and as such it is an expression of experience. But the experience in the conscious state is not authentic, as it is not paramāṭha. It is only vyavahāra and has only empirical validity.

Revelation is the means of communication to us only in spiritual matters, matters beyond the reach of common experience. The revelations that are set forth in the scriptures are jñāpaka (reminders) for us and not kārakas (makers) of our experience. They are based on direct experience. It is not based on a second-hand report or on an inherited authority. From the advaidic stand point paramārtha alone is
real and the expression at this stage though is dumb silence (*mauna vākya*), occasionally seers resort to revelatory expressions. Revelation at this stage is the expression of the *paramārtha* and is the expression of the summational experience. Hence revelation is deeply based on experience.

There are limitations for the working of reasons. The revealed truth cannot be comprehended by reason. Reason by itself is incapable to accomplish what revelation can achieve. They are at two different realms. But Guru succeeded to comprehend and reconcile reason and revelation. He achieved this by simply referring both with human experience. Unlike Sankara, the Guru was reluctant to interpret the revealed text purely on rational grounds. The revelation is nothing but the recorded statements of religious experience by the great seers. Therefore it is a matter of human experience. Everyone, irrespective of caste, creed and religion are capable of realizing this truth.

Revelation sets its working hypothesis, which is finally accepted after spiritual experiences. Reason interprets, clarifies and works out the implications of the working hypothesis. The spiritual experience of the sages is the premise for reason to work on. The Guru used reasoning to bring out logical implications of non-duality of the absolute realm. This realization reflects in all of his social actions.