CHAPTER VI
PATH OF TRANSCENDENCE

For the removal of bondage, Śaṅkarites prescribe knowledge (jnāna) as the sole and supreme means. The priority of knowledge has been accepted and affirmed therefore to all other means, namely, Karma, Yoga and Bhakti, which have been accepted by others from their respective viewpoints as the direct and surest ways leading to the immortal life that the liberated soul enjoys after the emancipation. And this priority of knowledge - thus maintained by the teachers (Advaita) has been professed indeed, if it is judged without any bias, in the scripture itself. This has been stated in the Upaniṣads that there is no other alternative course for the attainment of salvation, but it is self-realisation alone that can liberate a being. So the teachers of the School (Advaita) entertain knowledge as the sole and supreme means for realising the transcendence and they support their position on the uncontestable authority of the Bruti.

No doubt, the view supporting knowledge as the only possible means for liberating oneself, is just consistent with the idea of freedom which we have dealt with in the previous chapter (Chapter V). Liberation implies simply, so far as the Advaitins hold, the full awakening.

1. Tameva vidityatimtyumeti nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya. (Svetāvatara 3/8)
awakening of spiritual consciousness, which destroys by its radiating effulgence the dark gloom set by avidyā surrounding the self that lies hidden under the shroud of ignorance. Viewed from this standpoint, knowledge and knowledge alone can save us ultimately from all kinds of suffering and from the repetition of birth and death. It is the luminous path of knowledge in fact that leads us directly to that immortal life, where we can enjoy the absolute bliss at the end of all sufferings.

As it has been pointed out on various occasions, the advent of knowledge of supreme reality destroys not only our ignorance, doubt and delusion in the subjective plane, but it is asserted also to bring to an end automatically the fabric of the phenomenal world-order. It is just a parallel case to the ordinary correction of error. The true knowledge of the rope not only destroys our illusion of the snake but also the snake. The knowledge of truth cancels not only subjective error but also the object hypostasised by it. Knowledge of the identity of the individual self with the Absolute Brahman accordingly not only corrects us of our traditional error, but culminates in the eradication of realistic bias, because it entails the cancellation of the phenomenal reality that has been an obsession to the spiritual aspirant. Therefore the knowledge of truth destroys our illusion and leads to the actual realisation of the integral identity with which the liberation is achieved.

-But-
But as far as our practical experience convinces us, erroneous perception is always supplanted or contradicted by the immediate vision that reveals the truth directly to us. Until we can directly experience the truth our illusory perception continues and asserts itself and we are bound to accept that illusory perception - even if our former conviction as to its ultimate validity is shaken by some doubt implanted in our mind by some means other than the glimpse of the truth underlying it.

Therefore, for the cancellation of error we must know the truth face to face. And this practical experience leads us to the conclusion that this play of differences culminating in the appearance of this phenomenal world cannot be wholly rejected as false, and the absolute identity cannot be truly realised until there is the direct revelation of truth. The empirical order of existence may not be real; it may be an illusory show devoid of all truth, still the empirical order appears before us, and we do actually perceive in the plane of mind and senses the multiplicity of forms with their apparent distinctions conceived by our practical mind. Hence, according to our practical experience, the direct or immediate knowledge of truth is necessary for supplanting or contradicting the erroneous perception of plurality and difference, which ultimately end in the total rejection of the illusory appearance.
appearance - the rejection of this whole empirical order. On this ground the Advaitins hold that the direct knowledge of transcendent reality is necessary for realising the supreme end. So knowledge here means pure intuition, the direct revelation of truth. This in fact has been preached also in the Upaniṣads. In reply to the query how immorality can be attained, Yājñavalkya says to his wife that it is attained through the immediate knowledge of the inner spirit. The very word drastavya has been used there for emphasising the fact that the direct knowledge of the supreme truth is the only means for realising the salvation.

Indeed life is greater than logic. Hence theoretical comprehension or indirect knowledge cannot actually lead us to that end which affects our life changing the whole course of existence. So to realise the transcendence truly and actually the spiritual aspirant (Sādhu) should have the intuition so that the revelation of truth will be direct and immediate in nature. As this is an acknowledged fact being plausible from the standpoint of reason; in all the systems of our philosophy, therefore, theoretical comprehension has been accepted as a secondary means for the highest realisation that ensues just after the power of intuition develops. 'Tattvadarshana' has been noted, therefore, as the supreme and ultimate means to get oneself beyond the cosmic life.

1. Atmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ.........(Bṛhadāraṇyaka 2/4/5).

*The word draṣṭavya has been derived from the root 'dr' which means to see.
Moreover as the Advaitins hold there are double effects of avidva. Avidva in the first place screens our consciousness, and by screening our consciousness it conceals from us the real object. So, in empirical life, the individual cannot comprehend the truth of identity.

In empirical life, therefore, a person remains completely ignorant of the fact. And in place of identity, therefore, we accept difference and deny the truth of identity. To empirical consciousness in fact the integral identity that the self or the supreme reality involves seems to be non-existing. And as avidva thus conceals the truth the identity does not become revealed to us. In place of identity we perceive difference all the time which we accept consequently as real. Thus the effect of avidva is both on the subject and on the object. Due to avidva the individual remains completely ignorant of the basic identity and for the same avidva the basic identity remains hidden under the illusory show of plurality and difference.

Now, the indirect knowledge or theoretical comprehension destroys the first effect - the effect of avidva on the subject by dispelling our doubts and misapprehensions and thus convincing us to a certain extent of the supreme identity and of the possibility of its actual realisation. But the identity does not actually become revealed until the power of intuition develops within us. So the effect of avidva on the object remains intact.
intact up to this time. When the truth is known directly, the integral identity that the truth involves becomes automatically revealed to us. And as soon as the identity is revealed and as soon as the individual perceives identity in place of difference, the knowledge of plurality and also its appearance is bound to cease once for all. So, to sum up, theoretical comprehension cannot totally destroy the effects of avidva but only prepares the soul to receive the final realisation. The Advaitins enumerate those double effects (of avidva) as - (1) asat-tanadakajñana and (2) abhanapadakajñana*. The first involves the denial of reality which is counteracted by indirect knowledge (paroksajñana) and the second involves the non-revelation of truth which continues unto the dawn of the pure intuition. Thus for the realisation of transcendence the immediate knowledge of truth is necessary as it negates altogether the plurality and difference and reveals the basic identity. And emancipation implies, so far as the Advaitins hold, the direct realisation of identity in which difference remains contradicted and cancelled once for all.

*Asattapadakajñana - Ignorance leading to the belief in the nonexistence of the supreme reality.
Abhanapadakajñana - Ignorance concealing the revelation of the ultimate truth.

Dvibidham āvaranam, ekam asattapadam antahkaññavacchinnaśākṣinaśādityam. Anyad abhanapadakam viśayavacchinha-Brahmānāśādityam.

(Siddhāntavindu - Daśaskotī - Sl.1)

Tatra ādyam parokṣāparokṣa-sādhāraṇa-pramāṇa-ājñāṇamatreṇa nivarttate ........ Dvitiyam tu sākṣātkarṇaiva nivarttate

(Siddhāntavindu - Daśaskotī - Sl.1)
(b) TRIPLE MEANS

After the Upaniṣad Saṅkarites recommend to the spiritual aspirant the triple means namely, 1) āryavāna, 2) manana, and 3) nīdīḍhyāsana* - which properly practised in due order impart the knowledge that will liberate him immediately.

1) Now āryavāna here implies the hearing of the Vedānta (the Upaniṣads), and as the Advaitins interpret, it implies especially the hearing of the Vedantic mahā-vākya as tattvamāsa etc. According to the interpretation of the Advaita Philosophers, the integral identity is the supreme truth that has been preached all through the Upaniṣads. They have proved it also with the help of six methods applied after the Māṁsaśāstra (See Chapter I). Now in the cryptic expressions as - tattvamāsa etc. the identity of the individual self (jīvātmā) with the Absolute Brahman has been preached directly and overtly and the realisation of the identity is complete with the comprehension of the identity mentioned above. So these cryptic versions have been termed significantly as mahāvākya. They convey to us the supreme philosophical truth which otherwise remains hidden from the ordinary mind. Therefore it is insisted that one should hear specially those texts termed as Mahāvākya.

Now following the tradition, this has been main-

*Atmā vā anya draṣṭavyaḥ srotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nīdīḍhyātavyaḥ
Brahadāraṇyaka - 2/4/5
maintained that those preachings should be delivered for our hearing by our spiritual master (guru) who has already attained the supreme knowledge. A man is entitled to be the spiritual guide of others at the stage when he himself fully comprehends and properly assimilates the supreme philosophical truth inculcated in the holy Upanishads. So we find in the text of the Upanishad that a man seeking the salvation should go to his spiritual master (guru) who, in turn, should be versed in the Vedas (Srotrya) and should have his mind fixed on the constant meditation of the Absolute Brahman (Brahmanistha). Indeed, one who is ignorant himself cannot impart wisdom to the mind of others. So our spiritual master should always be a wiseman - a man with deep spiritual lore. And to such and such a man we should go to hear the Upanishadic preachings as it has been ordered in the scripture itself.

Sekharites, therefore, entertain all those facts strictly following the Sruti. To sum up, therefore, a spiritual aspirant must go to his spiritual master (guru), possessing the highest spiritual knowledge, for hearing the Vedantic preachings which should be duly delivered by the preceptor for the supreme well-being of his disciple; and the disciple should hear those preachings with absolute faith in its efficacy.

(2) Bravana is followed by manana. Manana means reflection or preliminary meditation. After

-hearing-

1. Tadviñānārtham sa guruvevabhīgacchet samītpānīḥ srōtrīyaḥ brahmanistham. Mundaka – 1/3/12
hearing the preachings duly delivered by the preceptor the disciple should devote his time in reflection or meditation upon them. Manana includes reasoning (vukti) which should be followed, at this stage, without flouting the authority of the Shruti. So in the state of preliminary meditation the disciple should try to find out the rationality of what he has learnt from his preceptor and should not therefore accept the creed blindly.

Reflection or meditation in this way gradually dispels all doubts and misapprehension and thus paves the way for further approach. So for dispelling his doubts and errors and also for clear understanding which comes out as a result of such reflection and which is necessary for further approach, the disciple should practice manana and he must stick to it until he comprehends the underlying reason and clearly understands the import and significance of all that he has heard from the revered man acting as his spiritual guide.

3) Then comes nididhyāsana. Nididhyāsana means deep concentrated meditation. After hearing the preachings and being thoroughly convinced through preliminary meditation or reflection the disciple should practice nididhyāsana i.e. subduing all other thoughts the disciple should try to concentrate his mind on that one thought - the thought of Absolute Brahman. If our mind remains fixed on some one thought, gradually the object of -

*Vedāntasāra - p - 189, Calcutta Ed.*
thought, however subtle and incomprehensible it is, is revealed before the mind. Speaking properly, *nididhyāsana* implies the focussing of thought on some one idea. At first there is effort in concentrating the mind and there is interruption also. But gradually it becomes spontaneous and the mind remains fixed on that one thought, because all other flow of thought causing interruptions gradually dies out after a length of time. And when ultimately the mind is fixed and the thought of Absolute Brahma flows smoothly without being interrupted at all, it is called *Samādhi*. *Nididhyāsana* leads to *Samādhi* - the state of absolute poise, which as the Vedāntists hold involves two stages - namely 1) *Savikalpaka* and 2) *Nirvikalpaka*. In the state of *savikalpaka* the mind remains conscious of the empirical distinction of subject and object and cognition (*ātman-āvive-dūta*), though it comprehends at the same time the basic identity transcending these differences. But in the state of *nirvikalpaka* no such distinction is comprehended. But the mind remains fixed without a stir of activity and the spiritual aspirant comprehends all the time the absolute homogeneous identity untouched by any differences.

Thus following the Śruti Śaṅkarites maintain *nididhyāsana* as an effective means for the highest realisation, which has been affirmed also in the Yoga Philosophy.

   *Vedāntaśāstra* - p.190 Calcutta Ed.
Philosophy of Patanjali. So in the Sariraka-bhasya Sankara says that the Advaitins reject the dualistic scheme of the Yoga Philosophy, but they accept the course of discipline prescribed by Patanjali because it is recommended in the scripture itself. In fact, the astaṅga-yoga of Patanjali, in which nididhyāsana or dhyāna is an item, has been accepted by the Advaita Philosophers (as we find it in the Vedantasūtra and similar works), on the authority of the Śruti. So the course of discipline prescribed by Patanjali has been accepted in the Advaita system though they criticise and condemn the dualism of Yoga and preach in its place the absolute monism.

Now this is an acknowledged fact that the immediate knowledge of truth cannot be attained directly after reflection or preliminary meditation. So there is no disputation on the fact that manana is subsidiary to āvaya, and nididhyāsana. But the difference arises among the teachers (Advaita) as soon as the question is put whether the immediate knowledge can be attained directly after āvaya or directly after nididhyāsana. The disciples and followers of Sankara have divided themselves into two groups arguing and disputing on this point. And in the Post-Sankara period this old controversy of the spiritual masters has turned to be a problem handled by almost each of the successive philosophers (Advaita).

2. Astaṅga-yoga includes - Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhārana, Dhyāna, Samādhi.

See also Vedānta-Sūra-p.195 Calcutta Ed.
According to the Bhāmati School (of Vācaspati) therefore, the immediate knowledge necessary for effecting the liberation of the soul can be attained through nididhāśana, which in turn should be performed, according to the order maintained in the scriptural text, after ṛeṣevāna and manana i.e. hearing and reflection1. This has been said in support of this view that our mind exists as the central organ of consciousness. And in the field of empirical perception, as it is in the other fields of empirical cognition, the function of mind is certainly important. In fact, without the aid of the mind the perception of empirical forms is surely and totally impossible. Hence we may say that our mind - as the central organ of consciousness - possesses the inherent capacity of effecting the perception. So perception in whatever field it might be is effected by the mind. Indeed, the gross finite mind cannot have the inherent capacity to reveal in perception the transcendent existence which is at once subtle and infinite in character; but then, our gross mind can develop it by the performance of nididhāśana which, as the supporters of this view hold, has been recommended in the Scripture for the same purpose.

Thus in Vācaspati's opinion immediate knowledge of truth is not at all possible without nididhāśana. If

   Vedāntakalpataru - I.1.28, p.218
   Brahmāṣṭra Saṅkara Bhāṣya. Bombay Ed.
it is thoroughly performed, *nididhvasana* engenders the deep penetrating power with which the faculty of perception inherent in the mind grows keener and sharper to the point that it reveals ultimately in perception the transcendent truth which lies beyond the reach of an ordinary mind. So to Vācaspati and his followers the supreme means is *nididhvasana*; and *śravana* is equally a subsidiary means like *manana* because neither of those two means can help us directly by opening the intuition and revealing the truth thereby.

But the *Vivarana* School criticises and condemns Vācaspati's position. According to the *Vivarana* School, the scripture is the only valid means for comprehending the supreme reality far beyond the reach of our practical mind. Knowledge of reality whether it is direct or indirect, cannot be acquired by any other means whatsoever save and except the holy texts or the Upaniṣads. Therefore, the Absolute has the epithet in the scripture as 'Amaṇiṣadapuruṣa'. The epithet implies obviously that the Absolute remains unknown unless and until we get the help of the scripture (the holy Upaniṣads).

Besides there is inconsistency in the view maintained by Vācaspati and his followers. And this has been noted by Citsukha and others (who belong to the same group with Citsukhācārya). The inconsistency, according to these teachers, is though our mind occupies the central position in all forms of cognition -even-
even in perception, and though the revelation of empirical forms in perception presupposes always the function of the mind, as it is impossible without the particular function of the mind; still mind itself is not an organ (indriya) for perception. Therefore, the mind cannot perceive anything independent of the organ, which exists primarily, so far as it can be judged from its function, for the perception of forms in the empirical level. The possibility of psychic experience (mānasapravakṣa) which has been maintained by many others, has been denied by these teachers*. In psychic experience the mind perceives without the aid of any other organ. But the validity of psychic experience has been denied by these teachers on the ground that no such experience is possible at all. As Citsukhācārya says - we cannot substantiate or maintain the possibility and validity of psychic experience on the basis of our direct comprehension of pleasure and pain, as it has been done by others—who maintain the possibility of psychic experience and accept the validity of such experience. In Citsukhācārya's opinion pleasure and pain which are but different feelings of our mind are revealed with the mind itself by the illumination of the basic intelligence - the Sākṣin.

The reason for disapproving the psychic experience of pleasure and pain is clear enough. If we maintain the psychic experience in the above cases and if

*Sukhādīnasa sākṣīvarṣa, atmanasca
Svayamprakāśātvāt manasaḥ kvacidapi
Sākṣātkaṅkṣaḥstūpavāmontrapratipadeḥ

Tattvapradīpikā - Chap. III. p. 344.
such experiences are accepted as valid, then the revelation of pleasure and pain in experience should be in usual course, though in this case the mind does not depend on any other organ for revealing the object of perception. And the difficulty or rather the inconsistency in accepting the revelation in this case in usual course with the empirical forms is, before the revelation actually takes place, all those feelings should remain unknown to us for a length of time, however short that period might be. The fact is perception and not only perception but all sorts of cognition in the ordinary course presupposes that something is revealed which was previously unknown (anadhigata). That is the rule in all sorts of experience that takes place in ordinary course, and the validity of cognition whether it is direct or indirect depends on the fact that, the thing which is revealed was previously hidden from us as it was screened by avidva which has been supplanted by the particular function of the mind. Now our psychic feelings cannot remain unknown like an outside object. Nobody can say without risking his sanity that he had the feeling of pleasure but he knew it not. In fact the psychic feelings like pleasure and pain are noticed by the individual as soon as they arise within the mind. And this revelation at the very moment they arise is not possible unless they are revealed by the basic intelligence which involves permanent illumination and which reveals everything even our ignorance, as nothing can be known to exist without being revealed by it. Therefore, the psychic experience cannot
be accepted as it is not possible in this case, and neither can it be admitted for the revelation of the self.

The self is always immediate by nature because the self is identical with consciousness. Nothing can reveal the self which is revelation itself (svanprakāśa) and reveals everything by the light of its own. Thus the theory of psychic experience has been condemned in the above case. In the same manner the power of psychic experience acquired through the yogic discipline has been denounced as a fact totally impossible. The yogic discipline - if it is fully observed - increases the force of will, and a person endowed with this force can do any thing he likes. So, if he wants to know anything which is not present at the moment he can conjure the vision by the force of his will. So, properly speaking, this is not valid experience though neither can it be enlisted as error. Perception to be valid needs the direct presentation of an object which should exist in reality in the spatio-temporal context where we perceive it. And we cannot accept any exception to this general rule because that is without any warrant. Therefore, there is no such thing as psychic experience. So the mind which taken by itself is not an organ for experience cannot reveal in perception anything without the aid of other organs. Hence the view that the mind thoroughly trained by the performance of nididhyāsana reveals in perception the transcendent truth with which...
which no other organ can have any contact, is a fact which is not tenable at all. So Vācaspati’s view that the immediate knowledge of truth can be attained only after nididhyāsana has been wholly rejected as something quite impossible. In our practical life however there are certain cases which may be cited as practical illustration in support of the view professing the possibility of psychic experience. We may note here for example that a person, if he remains deeply engrossed in thought, sometimes actually perceives the object of thought, though that object of thought does not exist bodily in that place so that he could perceive it in the ordinary course. In such cases we cannot do but accept the psychic experience. It is the mind in fact which directly comprehends that object of thought and the experience is wholly psychic in this case because the individual perceives the object with the help of his mind only which reveals the object without the aid of any other organ. But those who reject the possibility of psychic experience hold that all such experiences should be enlisted as error because perception is not possible unless the object that we perceive is present there where we perceive it. In the example we have quoted the object does not exist in reality in the place where it is perceived. In fact, thought conjures the vision that we perceive.

1. Bhāvanāśāhāyasya tu manaso garuḍādisākṣāt-
   Kāraṇaprāṇityanut-pādakatvāt. Tad aparokṣaya ca vidhureparibhāvīte-kamini sākṣāt-kāreved
   Vibhramatvāt. Tattraṇaprādipikā - Chap:III/p.344.
   Bombay Ed.
perceive in such cases; so it is akin to error, because, in error also the object that we perceive does not exist in reality but it is presented being created or projected by the mind. Therefore those who condemn Vācaspati’s theory hold that mind cannot reveal in perception the absolute truth with which no outer visual organ can establish any contact.

Therefore, the Vivarana School holds that the immediate knowledge of truth can be attained not after nididhyāsana but after śravaṇa. And the Scripture, as we have noted before, professes that the knowledge of truth whether it is direct or indirect is not possible by any other means save and except the scriptural texts. So the immediate knowledge of truth is attained after śravaṇa.

But it has been said at the same time that though there is direct revelation of truth just after the hearing of the preachings, still the comprehension of it is sometimes delayed. The fact is there are two types of disciples - namely, 1) kṛptonāsti and 2) akṛptonāsti. In the former case, the previous course of discipline recommended in the śāstra (scripture) has been fully observed. So the gross mind has attained the pitch of perfection needed for the comprehension of subtle revelation of truth. In this case as soon as the

2. Tattvapraudhipikā - III, p.345,346, Bombay Ed.
vision is opened the direct revelation of truth is comprehended at once by the individual. But in the second case the pitch of perfection has not yet been attained. So though the vision has opened the comprehension, the direct intuition of the truth is delayed. For this case manana and nididhyāsana have been recommended in the Scripture because manana and nididhyāsana engender the subtle power of comprehension necessary at this stage. The fact is, the revelation of truth is missed because there are still some doubts and misapprehensions on the part of the subject, or the mind is still engrossed in some worldly concerns. So manana and nididhyāsana are necessarily at this stage to supplant the lingering doubts and errors and to fix the mind in absolute poise.

Thus according to the Vivaraṇa School the supreme means is brañṇa, and the manana and nididhyāsana are two subsidiary means because neither of these two can open the vision; but they help us in comprehending the transcendental revelation which can be missed by the spiritual aspirant unless the mind has attained the pitch of perfection necessary to comprehend this subtle revelation of truth.

1. Asembhāvanā-vipariṭabhāvanā-khyāsya
cittavikṣepalakṣaṇasya da pratibandhasya
nirāsadvāreṇa manana-nididhyāsana yoḥ
phalopakāryaṃ gatayāpi braṇṇaṃ prati
vidhānopapattatē - Tattvāpradīpikā III, P.343;
Bombay Ed.
Vivaraṇa - P.508-510.
Brahmasūtra Sāṅkara Bhāgavat P.I.
Calcutta Sanskrit Series.
Now the question arises whether the direct revelation of truth can be effected at all by hearing the verbal exposition. Vācaspati has denied this possibility on the same ground with the theist-philosophers (of Vedānta). So far as our practical experience convinces us - perception of any object cannot take place if we only hear about it. So in Vācaspati’s opinion Sabha can impart only the vague indirect knowledge of a thing. And, therefore, the immediate knowledge of truth cannot be attained merely by hearing the preachings delivered by the preceptor (Guru). Even the popular illustrations as ṣabdamastvamastī quoted frequently to confirm the possibility of attaining the immediate knowledge of a thing merely by hearing about it, cannot confirm that possibility in Vācaspati’s opinion, because in such cases also the direct revelation of the object in perception is not effected merely by hearing, but in the usual course that we find in the ordinary cases of perception?

But here the fact is, the revelation of truth is different from the revelation of an empirical object in perception. Indeed there is a great difference and this we shall explain at present.

According to the Advaita Philosophers, the experience of an object in whatever field it might be - involves the identity of the consciousness underlying the object (visayavacchitaitya) with the subject-consciousness (pramātitaitya). Now, when we perceive an empirical object this identity is realised through the vyrtti or psychosis - which stretches itself outside through the visual organ and thus establishes contact with the external object. The process, as it has been explained by the teachers, is this - the psychosis or vyrtti carries with it the reflection of the subject-consciousness, because the same consciousness which illumines the psychosis by its own reflection appears as subject being conditioned by the mind within. Now when psychosis establishes contact with the object by flowing outside through the visual organ, it transforms itself into the concrete form of that object and exists pervading each part of that object. And thus the identity of the consciousness underlying the object with the subject-consciousness reflected in the vyrtti is realised and the perception is thus effected*. But prior to all this the visual organ must have its contact with the object. Because, the impression of the object first enters into the mind through the visual organ which can have direct contact with

*Pañcapādikā - p.355-363
See also Viyana - p.358-364;
Brahmasūtra Sāṅkara Bhasya - P.I;
Calcutta Sanskrit Series.
the external object. And as soon as the mind receives
the impression of the object that has passed within
through the visual organ, it becomes active and flows
outside through the same organ in the form of a psycho-
sis. Therefore, we cannot perceive a gross empirical
object merely by hearing that it exists. The identity
without which perception is not possible at all, cannot
be realised unless there is contact of the visual organ
which first receives the impression of the object exis-
ting with gross material form and passes it within our
mind. And then the mind becomes active and flows outside
to establish its contact with the object. But in the
revelation of the transcendent truth the process must be
very different. As the transcendent being is beyond the
reach of our senses so neither the visual organ nor the
gross mind can have any contact with it. Besides, all
those contacts are necessary for realising the identity
without which there cannot be any experience at all. But
the identity, which in the case of the perception of an
empirical object is effected through those contacts, is
an accomplished fact in this case. The Absolute is undi-
vided consciousness (akhandadit) itself. And the Absolute
as undivided consciousness exists as the underlying basis
of the appearances as subject and object. Hence the
identity of the consciousness underlying the object with
the subject-consciousness - which is to be accomplished
for the revelation of an object in perception, is an accom-
plished fact in this particular case. Now the identity
being an accomplished fact the whole process discussed
—before—
before becomes inapplicable here. So the direct revelation of truth can be effected through the hearing of the preachings. In fact for the direct revelation of truth we need only the complete destruction of avidva. The Absolute as pure consciousness is immediate revelation itself. And the Absolute as such needs no other aid for its own revelation. But in empirical life the revelation of truth remains hidden from us because avidva conceals it by screening our consciousness. Therefore, for the direct revelation of truth we need only the complete destruction of avidva.

For this reason this has been professed by the teachers (Advaita School) that the function of the mind is also different in this case (in the perception of Brahman). In the perception of concrete objects the function is for two ends— for the removal of avidva and for the revelation of the concrete form. Now, as soon as the mind flows outside and the vṛtti or the psychosis pervades the object, avidva dissolves. Then the reflected consciousness in the vṛtti (called cidābhāsa) reveals the concrete form. But in

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1. Vivaraṇa - p.508
Tattvadipana - p.508
Brahmasūtra Sāṅkara Bhāsyam P.I.
Calcutta Sanskrit Series.
the perception of Brahman the revelation is an accomplished fact. So here the function of mind is for one end only and that is for the removal of Avidya. In the perception of Brahman, in fact, the function is rather abstract whereas in the former case the function is definite and concrete.

Thus we find that the whole perceptive process should be different in the perception of reality. And this being the case it seems possible that the revelation of truth can be effected merely by hearing the preachings. The revelation of a concrete object in perception may not be possible in this way. But then the revelation of truth is something different from the revelation of a concrete object. Besides, the removal of avidya, which is necessary for securing the revelation of truth cannot be effected possibly by any other means except by hearing because in this particular case the Scripture is the only source of knowledge.

IX

RENUNCIATION

Now as the Advaitins hold one can approach in the directed path after renouncing all sorts of "Karma".

-In the-

*Pañcabānī - VI/Sls.90, 92*
In the Sarirakabhasya Sankara has discussed when and at what stage the spiritual aspirant is entitled, or more properly speaking, is capable to follow the course of discipline that will lead him ultimately to his desired end.

As Sankara says, first of all - the spiritual aspirant should have the knowledge to discriminate between real and unreal; secondly, he must be totally indifferent to all sorts of enjoyments - whether it is in this life or in the other life awaiting after death; thirdly, he must be perfected by six forms of moral and ethical discipline namely sama, dama, aparati, titiksa, sraddha and samadhan and lastly, he must have the real desire for the deliverance. When all those conditions are fulfilled then and then alone he is capable to take up the above course of discipline and to go ahead for the search of truth; otherwise all his efforts will be ineffectual.

Now the moral and ethical discipline has been enlisted in the above list of Sankara; but Karma has been totally excluded. Shankarites hold that there is fundamental opposition between Jhana and Karma. All sorts of Karma including the religious rites are performed as long as the individual under the spell of avidya accepts the ego as the self. True knowledge, on the other hand, arises to cancel and contradict this error. Therefore, one who is desirous to have

   See also Vedantasara - F.27-35, Calcutta Ed.
the true vision of reality and therefore follows the course of discipline prescribed for it, should necessarily cease to perform all types of karma including the religious rites.

But the religious rites as we find them in the scripture (in the Vedas) fall under three heads, namely kāmya, nitya and naimittika.1 And those who profess the doctrine of Jñāna-Karma-Samuccaya (the combination of Jñāna and karma) condemn the above view of Saṅkara, because according to their view the spiritual aspirant can cease to perform the first type of religious rites i.e. the kāmya-karma, but on no occasion he can exclude the performance of the other two i.e. nitya-karma and naimittika-karma. Kāmya-Karma as the very epithet implies involves the unsatisfied desire of the agent which impels him to perform those ceremonies. And the desire here is the desire to gain something either in this life or in the life hereafter. Now the person awaiting eagerly for the ultimate deliverance cannot have any interest to perform these ceremonies, because, in this state the individual forsakes all his desires. So the first type of karma is naturally excluded. But the nitya-karma and the naimittika-karma involve those purificatory rites which are prescribed in the Scripture for the consecration of the body and mind, and

1. Kāmyāni - sūrgādiṣṭasādhanāni jyotiṣṭomādinī
Nityāni - akaraṇe prayāsvāyasādhanāni sandhyāvandādāni
Naimittikāni - putrajamādyanubandhini jāṭeṣṭyādāni

Besides those three types mentioned above the author of the Vedāntasāra has enumerated another type of karma known as pravaśottakarma.

Prayāsottāntiṣṭaṣādhanāni cāndrayoṣādāni.
Vedāntasāra, p.19-20, Calcutta Ed.
which, duly performed, purge out all evils. Now, this purging and purification is necessary for the supreme realisation because the advancement in the path of spiritual uplift depends on it. So the performance of the purificatory rites cannot be abandoned at any stage of life. Even if a man leads the life of a recluse abandoning all interests in the worldly concerns, he must perform those purificatory rites to purge out all evils and thus to make himself fit for the highest realisation.

But Śaṅkara is of the opinion that even those purificatory rites should not be performed when the spiritual aspirant makes the approach in the path of knowledge. As there is fundamental opposition between śānta and kārma, so Śaṅkara holds that the proposed reconciliation (amuccaya) - in whatever form and for whatever reason it might be suggested - is not possible in any way. In fact to the pure Advaitins the whole of the Scripture is divided into two portions - the exoteric and esoteric; the performance of the religious rites which have been recommended in the first portion i.e., in the exoteric portion is meant for the ordinary mind. But in the esoteric portion kārma has been totally excluded. The esoteric portion dwells mainly on the subject which is purely metaphysical. Hence, though there is definite injunction in

1. Śārīrakabhāṣya - I, 1, 1; p-69-71, Brahma Sutras Śaṅkara Bhāṣya, Bombay Ed.
the Śruti for performing all those rites still from the metaphysical standpoint none of those religious rites can be recommended so that the spiritual aspirant should have to perform them. Besides, viewed from the metaphysical standpoint our bondage is due to avidvā (ignorance). Therefore, what we require to be free is knowledge and knowledge only, which can dispel our ignorance and give us the true vision of reality. So the Advaitins hold that when the spiritual aspirant eagerly waits for the ultimate deliverance he cannot have any interest in performing the religious rites — even if they are purificatory rites. Indeed the sole aim of the spiritual aspirant at this stage is to dispose of avidvā and to do that he requires nothing else but the true vision of reality.

In this way the Advaitins reject the possibility of the reconciliation. In place of karma the Advaitins accept the moral and ethical discipline which is necessary to guard the mind from all sorts of distractions. The Śruti also suggests that the preceptor (Guru) should deliver the preachings to the disciple when the latter has attained the highest pitch of moral and ethical perfections. Moreover according to the Śruti, a person can have the immediate knowledge of the self (atman) after he attains

1. Tasmal sa vidvānupasannāya samyak-praśāntacittāya
   Yenaṁkṣaram puruṣam veda satyaṁ provāca tāṁ
   tatvāto brahma-vidyāṁ
   Mundaka-Paniniṣad - 1.2.13, P - 509
   Poona +Ed.
the absolute self-control, subjugates all desires, remains equally nonaffected by opposite feelings and keeps his mind steady in the thought of the Absolute Brahman. That the person should lead ultimately the life of a saññyāsin has equally been professed in the scripture. Śaṅkara says that there is definite injunction of the scripture to take the vow of absolute renunciation. Therefore, on the authority of the Bruti Śaṅkarites establish that the ultimate means for acquiring the supreme knowledge of the self are the observance of the moral and ethical discipline and the absolute renunciation.

PLACE OF KARMA

Though from the Advaita standpoint Karma including the religious rites, is not the direct means for our ultimate deliverance, and though, Śaṅkara and his followers have vehemently rejected the possibility of reconciliation, still they admit the efficacy of karma. Karma, according to the Advaita teachers, in fact, is the fundamental basis for the growth of spiritual consciousness.

According to the Upanisads the religious rites performed according to the prescribed form --

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1. Brhadaranyaka - 4.4.23, p-304, Poona Ed.
2. Brhadaranyaka - 4.4.22, p-302, Poona Ed.

See also Śaṅkara's Commentary p.302,303, Poona Ed.
engender the real desire for the self-realisation. **Karma** cannot lead therefore directly to the self-realisation. But it awakens the desire for it (vividigā). And impelled by this desire the spiritual-aspirant moves in the directed path renouncing all interests for the worldly concerns. So from the Advaita standpoint, **karma** should be accepted as an accessory means.

In fact the purificatory rites prescribed in the Scripture help the spiritual-aspirant in more than one form though it cannot directly give him the vision of reality. We may note here for instance, that in a pure mind the satyya quality predominates subduing the baser qualities. And with the predominance of the satyya the mind attains the perfect poise and acquires the knowledge that reveals to him the possibility of the superior life beyond the ephemeral existences on the empirical level. So in this state the spiritual aspirant naturally recoils from the worldly life, forsakes all his desires for the ephemeral objects and seeks in earnest the path of ultimate deliverance. So the Advaitins hold that the purificatory rites should be performed to subdue the baser qualities and thus to purify the mind*. Besides, the absolute renunciation is not possible unless one can forsake all the desires and attachments.

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1. **tametam vedāṇuvacanena brāhmaṇa**
   
   **vividigati yajñena dānena**
   
   Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad - 4.4.22
   
   p.237, Poona Ed.

2. Saṅkara's Commentary - Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad - 4.4.22
   
   p.300, Poona Ed.
   
   See also Sārīraśīlī - III.4.28,27, P-396-900
   
   Brahma-Śūtra Saṅkara Dhāśya. Bombay Ed.

*Ajñenatu antahkaranabuddhimārā jñāṇopetpayev
Karmāṇyaṇauṭheṣyāni - tametam vedāṇuvacanena......

*Iti śruteh.

Madhusūdana's Commentary - Bhagavad-Gītā.V.1.
attachments. There are three main roots of desire -
called putraīsana, vīttaīsana and lokaiṣana. Putraī
gā is the desire for progeny, vīttaīsana is the
desire for wealth and prosperity and lokaiṣana is the
desire for power and prestige.

Our active life within the cosmic plane in
its various phases is sustained by these desires. All
actions including the various types of religious cere-
monies are performed by the individual to satisfy any
one of those desires or to satisfy each of those desires
in succession. So these unsatisfied desires impel us to
action. Therefore, all those desires should be forsaken
to lead the life of absolute renunciation. Indeed,
unless one can forsake all those desires the absolute
renunciation on his part is not possible at all. And
as a means to uproot these desires the purificatory
rites have been prescribed in the scripture. The pitva-
karma and naimitika-karma, if they are performed pro-
perly with the faith in their efficacy, purify the
mind. And then the individual can discern how those
desires keep him in eternal bondage. Consequently he
forsakes all those desires. Therefore the individual
at this stage loses his interest to perform those
different types of karma prescribed as a means for
attaining the desired objects in the empirical level.

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1. Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad - 4.4.22, p.298; 3.5.1, p.157, Poona Ed.
And sannyāsa in its proper sense, is possible after this. The moral and ethical discipline also cannot be observed strictly unless all those desires are uprooted in the above way, i.e. through the performance of the nitya-karma and paimittīk-karma. Considering all these facts the Advaitins have enumerated karma as an accessory means which purifies the mind by purging out all evil predispositions and thus paves the way for our further progress in the path of salvation. And in this respect Sankarites stand in full agreement with the Bhagavad-Gītā. According to the Bhagavad-Gītā the man who wants to proceed in the path leading to the salvation should depend on karma. And then when he will reach that path he should cease to perform the different types of karma and should lead the life of absolute renunciation.

Besides, following the preachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā, both Sankara and Madhusūdana entertain the niskmā-karma. Actions, if they are accomplished not out of any personal interest to serve but to propitiate the deity, gradually purify the mind and thus lead us to the path of highest realisation.

Therefore, the Advaitins accept two types of renunciation, known as kramasaṃnyāsa and akramasaṃnyāsa.
These two types of renunciation have been accepted indeed on the authority of the scriptures, but this proves how far Śaṅkarites admit the efficacy of karma. According to the kramasannāṣa a person must perform different types of karma prescribed for the three stages of life called brahma-arca, (life of a student), gārhaṣṭha (life of a house-holder) and vānaprastha (life of a recluse). Then at last, if he feels the real craving for the ultimate deliverance he should cease to perform all those actions and should follow the life of absolute renunciation.

According to akramasannāṣa, on the other hand, the individual should take the vow of absolute renunciation and therefore cease to perform all those actions at any stage of his life, if he only feels the real desire for the deliverance. Now, Śaṅkarites hold that the real desire for the deliverance awakens when all those actions that a person should perform according to the sastric injunction in three stages of life as brahma-arca, gārhaṣṭha and vānaprastha are duly performed whether in this birth or in some previous births. Otherwise the real desire for the deliverance cannot arise at all. Hence, when the spiritual aspirant feels the desire, the fact is evident that he has already performed the allotted duties, therefore, he must take the vow of absolute renunciation.

1. Jāmantaranaśṭhitair api gāramakarmabhiḥ sambhavatyeva
Vijaya anugrahah. Saṅkarabhāṣya - III.4.26, p.307
Brahmasūtra Saṅkarabhāṣya - Bombay Ed.
2. Vedāntasāra - p.12,13,21-23; Calcutta Ed.
This shows that though *karma* is not accepted as a direct means still Śaṅkarites admit that it is the first step of entering into the higher spiritual life. Viewed from this standpoint, in fact, *karma* is an indispensable means for the higher realisation because without *karma* one cannot have even the very desire for spiritual uplift.

**UPĀSANĀ AND BHAKTĪ**

From the Advaita standpoint *upāsanā* or the worship of God is only an accessory means for realising the salvation. Following the scripture Śaṅkarites entertain two types of *upāsanā* known as *saguṇopāsanā* and *nirguṇopāsanā*. In the first form of worship the worshipper is always conscious of the empirical distinction that exists between the subject and object of worship. In other words, the worshipper cannot comprehend the basic identity underlying the empirical distinction. In *nirguṇopāsanā*, on the other hand, the worshipper becomes conscious of the basic identity. He then identifies the object of worship (by divesting it of all those predicates that have wrongly been superimposed on it and that differentiate it from his own immediate self) as his own immediate self. So it is also called *ahagrabopāsanā*. As Śaṅkarites hold those two forms of worship performed stage by stage in due order effect the psychic flowering of spiritual consciousness; and thus the worshipper finally enters into the state of *krama-mukti*, which again leads the individual to the final state of liberation.

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The supreme place of bhaktī and ānāmāsa entertained in the Vaishāvā Vedānta has been denied in the Advaita system. According to the Śāṅkarites these are only the accessory means. The worship of God performed with sincere spirit of devotion purifies the mind, widens the vision, engenders the keen concentration so that the individual can readily enter into the path of absolute renunciation and can attain the immediate vision of truth which liberates him ultimately. This is the view of Śaṅkara and this view has been accepted by all of his followers except Madhusūdana Sarasvatī.

Among Śaṅkara’s followers Madhusūdana has slightly deviated from the traditional way of thought. That the liberation is not possible without knowledge has been equally accepted by Madhusūdana. But he has professed at the same time that the knowledge of truth or the direct vision of reality can be attained at any moment by the spiritual aspirant if he can attain the highest pitch of devotion (bhaktī). A man whether he is a Sannyāsin or not must be truly and sincerely devoted to God. And this devotion will enable him ultimately to realise the salvation which comes after the direct or immediate knowledge of truth. In the commentary of the Bhagavad-Gītā Madhusūdana has pointed out his difference on this point with Śaṅkara. In Śaṅkara’s opinion the vow of absolute renunciation is necessary to liberate oneself, as the direct knowledge of truth

*Madhusūdana’s Commentary - Bhagavad-Gītā - 18/S1.66.*
Mes in this way. Therefore, according to Śaṅkara's interpretation, the Gītā says at the conclusion that one should practise the vow of absolute renunciation. I should try to comprehend the basic fundamental entity. Commenting on the same stanza Madhusūdana says that what the Gītā says in this stanza is that one should practise absolute self-surrender which arises from true, sincere spirit of devotion. And this is necessary for all, whether he is a sannyāsin or not.

Śaṅkara's Commentary - Bhagavad-Gītā - 18/61.66.

...... Bhagavadgītā karṣṇatāmātram brahma carl grhasthavanaprasthabhiksunSn
sidharanyena bidhyate.

Madhusūdana's Commentary - Bhagavad-Gītā - 18/61.66.