CHAPTER VII

THE PROBLEM OF PERFECTION IN LIFE

The idea of perfection is an important notion in the religious thoughts of the world. Most of the religions have, as their goal, the perfection of man, though they differ with regard to the nature of this perfection. Outstanding Greek thinkers seemed to have stressed this and Aristotle's conception of perfection had great influence on the later development of Greek thought. Indian systems, similarly, insist on man's perfection as spirit in the realization of the self or God. In Indian philosophy, the term expressive of this perfection is moksa i.e., liberation from the bondage of samsāra.

The word perfection means 'completeness' 'wholeness' or 'integrity'; it is also used to refer to the achievement of an end or a goal. In all these senses, perfection has two aspect viz., the religions and the moral. The attainment of moral as well as religions perfection is insisted up on by all religions. But the latter is considered to be superior. That is, ethical perfection is not the goal of human life; what is aimed at is perfection of man as spirit which is the aim of religion and moral perfection is a consequence of such a perfection. The Indian conception of moksa is significant in both these senses.

Two views of Perfection

The perfectionists fall into two categories. Some
of them hold that it can be attained only after death. According to them, so long as the body exists and so long as we are in the world of senses, perfection cannot be attained. Dvaita, Viśistadvaita, a few later Advaitins, and semitic religion in general, are all protagonists of this view. Others like Buddhism, Jainism and Advaita teach the doctrine of Jīvanmukti or freedom in this life. Jainism and Buddhism call the perfected Jīna and Ārhat respectively. All these schools have arguments for and against Jīvanmukti, some dismiss it as untenable, while others consider it as the only legitimate concept of mukti.

Videhamukti

Those who are against Jīvanmukti teach the doctrine of Videhamukti - Liberation after death. This is based on their metaphysical position viz., their views on the metaphysical status of the Jīva, and of God and their doctrine of the nature of bondage. Another justification probably is the various logical difficulties involved in the conception of Jīvanmukti. Thus, according to Ramanuja, who is a qualified non-dualist, liberation is also actual liberation from the body. 'The bliss of communion with God' is attained only when the body falls away, for the body is a real thing; it is not adhyāsa. Body and soul are two real distant objects. Since the body-soul relation (which they call aprthagsiddhi) is not 'adhyāsta' but a real one, it exists, as long as one
lives. 1 "...............so long as the soul remains embodied, its relation with the body is real and so it can never have the feeling of 'bodilessness' without which release from worldly sufferings is impossible." Thus a man who has acquired knowledge is not liberated; he becomes only a stita-prajāna with the characteristics of control of sense, purity of mind, freedom from desires and passions etc. This is the limit of perfection an individual can attain in this life. Though he is fully convinced that with death liberation is definite, still, as long as the prārabdha karma lasts one is not liberated 3. This position of Ramanuja holds good even in the case of Madhva as far as the question of Jīvanmukti is concerned.

The concept of Jīvanmukti has been subjected to criticism in many ways. 4 Even among Advaitins some were sceptical about Jīvanmukti. Thus, Sarvajnatmamuni is of the view that Jīvanmukti is only an 'arthavāda', a praise of knowledge and that the real mukti is only videhamukti. 5 Brahmānandasarasaṅvati is of

1 Anima Sen Gupta, A Critical study of the philosophy of Ramanuja, p. 131.
2 Ibid., p. 132.
3 Ibid., p. 133.
4 Vedanta deśika gives six alternatives to the concepts of Jīvanmukti and refutes them (P.N. Srinivasachari, Advaita and Visisṭādvaita, Asia Publishing house, New york, 1961, p.170)
the view that Jīvanmukti is only so called mukti and that mukti in the real sense is videhamukti. Mandanamiśra, though he favours Jīvanmukti is of the view that the stīta prajña in the Gītā is an advanced sādhaka and not a liberated one.

According to some, man becomes perfect only by the attainment of the perfect good and this perfection consists in the possession of God i.e., "in the vision of the divine essence". St. Thomas Aquinas, thus says "A certain participation of happiness can be had in this life, but perfect and true happiness cannot be had in this life". In certain statements he rules out any possibility of divine-vision in life. He says "God cannot be seen in His essence by a mere human being except he be separated from this mortal life. The reason is because, as was said above, the mode of knowledge follows the mode of the nature of the knower. But or soul, as long as we live in this life has its being in the corporeal matter, hence naturally it knows only what has a form in matter or what can be known by such a form. Now it is evident that the divine essence cannot be known through the nature of the material

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7 Ibid., p. XXXVIII.

8 Summa Theologica (Th.) Newyork, p. 610.
things. For it was shown above that the knowledge of God by
means of any created similitude is not the vision of his
essence. Hence it is impossible for the soul of man in this
life to see the essence of God. 9

The ideal of the perfection of man, according to all
these philosophers still remains as a mere ideal which cannot
be demonstrated in practical human life. However much a man
may try, the ideal is never reached in this life; it is a
post mortem affair. But the tenability of this concept
follows immediately from their cardinal metaphysical doctrines
of the self and its association with the body. The soul-body
relation and the nature of moksa determine the question of
jīvanmukti. Death seems to be a necessary condition for
perfection in these systems.

Perfection in this Life

Sankara unlike these philosophers is a staunch advocate
of the doctrine of Jīvanmukti. Accordingly moksa which con-
sists in the knowledge of the self and which is set as the
ideal of human life can be attained in this life. This doct-
rine is fundamentally based on certain Upaniṣadic passages
which according to him are suggestive of Jīvanmukti. Secondly

9 Ibid., pp. 57, 58.

10 "Katham punaravagamyate muktoyamidāhīm bhavatīti?
pratijñānādiityāha" X.1.2 (BSB, IV - 4-2).
it is based on reference to certain muktas. Sankara seems to hold that there were many muktas living even during his period. According to him there had been liberated persons like Apāntaratmā Vāksistha, Sanatkumāra and others. In another context he says as an authority to jīvanmukti "just as the present, however knowers of Brahman with the extinction of 'prārabdhā karma' attains kaivalya". Another reference is given in his description of the bliss of a realized person. The question there is raised how a jñāni enjoys happiness without the usual extantal means of happiness. And in answer to this, Sankara says: "The desireless knowers of Brahman destitute of all means of external pleasures are seem to be happy and joyful as if by extental means of pleasures."

In the Upaniṣads, there are passages indicating both jīvanmukti and videhamukti. The kenopaniṣad evidently suggests that immortality comes only after death when it says "The wise, having gone from this world attains immortality". But Sankara here interpretes 'from this world' as meaning "the world in the form of avidyā characterised by the sense of 'I' and 'mine'." The phrases used in the Upaniṣads such as "he

11 "yathācaṇḍartamāna brahmavidāḥ ārabhā bhogaksaye kaivalyamanu bhavanti" (BSB. III - 3-32)

12 "bhāyaḥnanda sādhana rahitā api snīḥā nireṣanā brahmanā bāhyarasalabhādīva sānanda dryṣante vidvāmsah nūnam brahmaiva rasastēśam" (STU. VII - 22)

13 Kena Up. II - 5.

14 "Mamaḥombhäva lokānādāvidyā rūpādāsmallokatvaparamya" (SKEU. II-5).
abandons both pain and pleasure", "escapes from the face of death", "attains to immortality" etc., contains no hints to support Jīvanmukti. The passages such as "atra brahma sama-sūne" etc. speaks also of Jīvanmukti".

It is perhaps Sankara's conception of the means of mokṣa that led him to accept the doctrine Jīvanmukti. Since it is held that jnana alone beings mokṣa it need not synchronise with death. So, even when there is no authoritative and clear Śruti texts for support, he accepts jīvanmukti as a legitimate concept. Thus he says "the bodilessness for the 'knower' even when he lives is thus established" (BSB IV - 1-15) "Brahmajñāna is something which ends in experience" (BSB 1-1-2). "The wise man even when he lives on earth attains immortality. Here, remaining in the same body he attains Brahman i.e., he attains mokṣa or identity with Brahman". (BSB IV - 4,7).

Here, the concept of Jīvanmukti is a direct consequence of his theory of the means of mokṣa. This is in sharp contrast with other systems according to which mokṣa is attained not by knowledge alone, but also through action and devotion. Such systems ultimately hold that mukti is a state produced or newly acquired which, for Sankara, is philosophically unsound. According to him one is already perfect, but does not realize it owing to the ignorance of one's self-avidya. Therefore in the strict sense mukti in Advaita consists in realising the fact that one is already perfect. No other Indian system except Samkhya has such a conception of mukti based on knowledge
alone and in the West Socrates may be instanced as one who though in a different context, held that knowledge alone could make men free. Thus, in Sankara, moksa or freedom comes from Brahman intuition - Brahman in truth being identical with ones own self.

Problems of Jīvanmukti

But there are a number of problems with regard to the concept of Jīvanmukti. Some of these problems Sankara himself raises in his B.S.B. as purvapaksa. But there, such questions as whether a mukta attains happiness by the removal of miseries or whether he sheds all karmas or only certain types of karmas etc., are discussed. But there is no elaborate discussion with regard to the tenability of the doctrine itself.

The Main problem is how far Jīvanmukti can be accepted as a logical concept. The problem is this: The knowledge by which one becomes liberated is the knowledge of identity - a knowledge which completely removes all ideas of plurality as real. Plurality is a product of avidyā. When avidyā is dispelled the view that plurality is real disappears i.e., not only the world of plurality ceases to exist for him, but even the individual 'ego' is destroyed. One loses one's individuality and merges with the Absolute. In such a context there is not only the absence of what we call life, but it is the end of all activity, even mental activity. So 'liberation while living' is considered as a contradiction as far as the Advaitic notion of
mukti is concerned. In dualistic systems though they do not accept jīvanmukti can still explain it, for the duality there does not altogether cease to exist. In Advaita it may be argued that since the knowledge of Brahman is not co-existing with world-knowledge, to say that mukta lives is illogical in any sense of the term.

Solution

To find a solution to this problem we have to examine the nature of (a) Brahmajñāna (b) and the nature of the sublation. (a) Brahmajñāna in Advaita is the experimental knowledge of identity of one's self with Brahman which is the only metaphysically true entity. In other words it is identifying oneself with the spirit of every creature of this world. It is same sightedness - samadārsana. Here the aspirant experiences a kind of unity, a unity which may be interpreted in two different senses. On one side it is one's identity with the Absolute. On the other side when we accept the plurality of the universe, it is the oneness with the self of every living being. He sees the entire living beings as his own self. He is described as 'Sarva bhūtātmabhūtātmā' i.e., one whose Ātma has become one with the Ātma of all beings. This is logical when

15 SBC IV - 35

16 SBC IV - 7.
there is nothing that can separate the soul from other souls, for Sankara argues that there is no proof to show that the limiting adjuncts of the soul are eternal.\(^{17}\) This same-sight edness is praised in many verses of the B.G. and in one context realization of the self is identified with the absence of the feeling of duality.\(^ {18}\)

But the \(jñāna\) as described above is only that which is manifested. The real \(vijñāna\) is experiential and cannot be described in words. It is a unique experience of the identity of the self where the knower and the known do not exist. All that we can say is how this experience (which is attained only in \(sāmādhi\)) manifests itself, in a \(muktā\). As to the exact nature of this experience we can only catch glimpses from the account given in the Čāndogyopanisad where the clay-example is given. "Just as by the knowledge of the clay everything that is made of clay is known", by the knowledge of Brahman everything else becomes known. But how is it that by the knowledge of something (i.e., Brahman) everything else becomes known? To this Sankara answers - there is no such difficulty for "there is nothing different from \(Ātma\). If there is anything, then

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nāpyantyā viśeṣān ātmano bhedakāḥ santi prati śarīram \\
teṣām sattve pramānānupapattah\] (SBG. IV - 19).

\(^{17}\) SbG. XVIII - 50.

\(^{18}\) Ch. U. VI - 1.4.
that cannot be known but there is nothing else; everything is Ātman. Therefore when Ātman is known everything becomes known\(^\text{20}\). This knowledge, thus, may be interpreted to have two aspects. The knowledge which liberates is the knowledge of Brahman. This refers to the intuitive knowledge obtained only in samādhi. After experiencing this samādhi and attaining the knowledge of the self, there is a complete change in the outlook of the seer. When he comes down to the ordinary level of experience his attitude towards the world totally changes. And this attitude is characterised by a sense of 'oneness'. Everything appear to him as Brahman. There is nothing apart or different from Brahman.

According to the Advaitic dictum 'to know Brahman' is 'to become Brahman' and becoming Brahman which is also bliss (ānanda) is the highest value man can attain. The Taittirīya declares "the knower of Brahman attains the highest\(^\text{21}\). This attainment is also the attainment of ānanda or bliss, for Brahman is essentially of the nature of bliss. "Knowing Brahman as ānanda the seer has no fear where so ever\(^\text{22}\). The absence of fear and 'escape from the pain of samsāra and karma' are often associated with Brahmajñānaa.

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\(^{20}\) "manu katham anyasmin vidite anyat viditam bhavati" naïṣṇa dosah nabhūtam vyntirekeapphire anyat kincit aṣṭi......na tvanyadasti ātmāiva tu sarvam. tasmāt sarvam ātmanī vidite viditam syat. (Ibid).

\(^{21}\) II - 1.

\(^{22}\) VIII - 29.
The nature of Sublation

The problem of jivanmukti depends also on the nature of sublation. Brahmajñana affects ājñana or avidyā; so, what is negatively achieved is the removal of avidyā (avidyā nivṛtti) where as positively it is the attainment of Brahman. The problem in this connection is this. Does ājñana completely remove the idea of duality which is the characteristic of samsāra? Or if ājñana removes all sense of duality from a mukta, is there not at least the appearance of a duality before him though he knows that it is not real? The nature of world-sublation has to be elucidated in this context.

Before that, we have to say a word about avidyā. Avidyā means ignorance and Sankara in B.S.B. identifies avidyā with adhyāsa i.e., the mutual super-imposition of Atma and Ānātma. That is, superimposition of non-spiritual on the spiritual and vice versa is said to be adhyāsa which is identified with avidyā. If avidyā is merely this, then, Sankara's position does not differ much from the Sāmkhya view. For the Sāmkhya also, the spirit is pure, but it identifies itself with the nature and one is liberated by the knowledge distinguishing the spirit from prakṛti. Advaita holds unlike Sāmkhya, that

23 BSB. Intro.
even the non-spiritual which is super-imposed on the self, itself is avidyā. So compared to Samkhya, avidyā has double-aspect. That is, the super-imposition of 'other-than-spiritual' is adhyāsa and is due to avidyā. The other-than-spiritual which is thus super-imposed itself is avidyā. It is this second aspect which creates problems in the case of a mukta.

The nature of sublation will solve this problem.

Brahmajñāna sublates this world. Advaitins world - view is based on the proposition that this world of plurality ultimately will be sublated by Brahmajñāna. Now we have to examine the nature of this sublation. In the Ś. bhāṣya it is said: "just as by the knowledge of the nature of mirage, rope, sky etc., the mirage-water, rope-snake and dirty surface of the sky etc., becomes affected, even so, by the real knowledge, of the self everything produced by avidyā characterised by 'kriya, karaka and phala' gets sublated and one becomes svastha, krtakrtya and 'prasutītām'. "By the samyakārṣaṇa, the mithyājñāna of that man is removed whose knowledge is firmly rooted that the Ksetra (objects) does not really exist but is only an appearance like the magical elephant, like the objects seen in the dream, or like the city of the gandharvas".

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\[24\] \textit{Kuṣṣāṇa} I-3-12.

In another context the world-view of ordinary people and 'paramārtha dārsi' is distinguished. "It is true everyone sees Ātman but sees differently; the man affected by "Timira" sees a number of moons but compared to him, one who sees one moon is meritorious, similarly here also, the man who sees Ātman as unitary alone-really sees". Again, sometimes the world of samsāra is compared to the magic of a magician (SBG. XV-4) or is likened to a dream, mirage water, magic or the city of Gandharvas (SBG. XV-3). In all these, we can distinguish two aspects of this sublation.

Certain examples show the complete absence of this universe. Other examples show a completely changed outlook of the seer towards the world. First refers to the vision of the Reality. In this vision which is obtained in samādhi, the whole of the vyāvahārika world vanishes. The spirit alone the absolute reality, shines as one's own self. In this Brahman-experience, all the experience of this world vanishes like a dream, magic or the vision of several moons. When the seer comes down to the empirical existence after Brahman-vision his valuation of the world totally changes. The world which hitherto was real presents itself, but he knows that its being is Brahman, and that in truth the world does not exist. In

26
SBG XIII - 27.
other words, only such a man understands that the world is an appearance. To all others the world is a reality. The man who has realized the truth of the skydirt, mirage-water, and rope-snake etc., knows that they are only appearances. But even after the realization, the rope-snake mirage water etc., presents themselves, only their valuation by that man is changed. Similarly, for a man who has realized Brahman, the world presents itself, but he knows that it is only an appearance on Brahman and that in reality Brahman alone is. Thus he sees Brahman is all things. And only he can declare: all these are verily Brahman - 'sarvam khal-vidam Brahman'.

Problem of Mukta's Body

But even here, the problem how the realized person comes down to the phenomenal world bristles with difficulties. That is, Brahman knowledge should be the end of all experience. There cannot be coming back to the normal state after realizing one's identity with Brahman. It is this difficulty which had led philosophers to accept only videhamukti as logical.

This problem is intimately connected with the problem how the knower of Brahman lives on. Only by giving a satisfactory solution to this problem can we talk of the nature of

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27 Ch. Up. III - 14-1.
a mukta. Though not satisfactory, Sankara explains this state of a mukta by the theory of prārabdha karma - the Karma which has actually started functioning in this life. This is explained by him by two analogies i.e., the analogy of the 'potters wheel' and that of a 'discharged arrow'. Just as the potters wheel rotates for some time even after the potter has ceased to operate it, even so, though avidyā has been dispelled by jñāna, the jñāni lives for some more period by the force of the prārabdha karma. It is also compared to a discharged arrow. The arrow which has been discharged reaches its destination of its own accord. But these, examples, however do not solve the problem satisfactorily.

Probably it may be on account of the unsatisfactory nature of Sankara's answer, that there were great discussions among post-Sankarites on this issue. If jñāna destroys all karmas why not it destroy prārabdha also? If prārabdha cannot be destroyed, then, avidyā has not been completely destroyed. In that case he is not completely a mukta. Such questions were raised and different answers were sought. Thus, according to Sarvanātmanamuni, the mukta has a little avidya (vidyā-lesā) in him and it has no nivartaka. But finally he also confesses "Jīvanmukti obviously exists, but there is a shadow

28 BSB. IV - 1-15; SBG XIII - 23.

29 Samksepa sarirakam, IV - 39.
of duality also, for, both are experienced. In order to
safe-guard the duality that is seen, the avidyālesā is accepted
but with regard to this 'lesā' one's own experience is the
pramaṇa. Thus for both the unrealized and the realized
there is avidya, the peculiarity with the latter being that
he has no 'moha' in him. Madhusūdanasvarāsvāti accepts the
above view. Mandanamiśra and Sadānanda Yati interpretes
Avidyālesā as the impression of avidya, (avidya samskāra).
But according to the former 'though the ajñāna of the jñāni
is completely erased, the ego and the body etc., being with-
out any cause, remains, for they are clearly seen, and what is
clearly seen cannot be ruled out'.

But Sankara does not seem to have gone deep into this
question. It was enough for him to show that Brahmajñāna
affects the ajñāna which need not synchronise with the death
of the body. And this jñāna consists in removing the feeling
of 'I' and 'mine'. i.e., the adhyāsa of the Ātma with all other
material things. As a result of Brahmajñāna, thus, a mukta
does not feel a sense of agency. His will completely merges
with the universal will; he ceases to think that his body,

30
Ibid., IV - 43, 44.

31
Yadyāpi jñānena ajñānena nivartitameva......tathāpi
tadupādeyam ahankāreṇaḥ ādi nirupāpāntaṁ eva yāvat prārabdhakarma
bhogamānuvartate drṣṭatvaḥ eva, nahī drṣṭonupam-pannam nāma
(Advaita brahmasiddhi, University of Calcutta, 1932, p.235).
mind and senses belong to him. But this separation of spirit from non-spiritual need not be identified with the jñāna of the sāmkhyas as interpreted by Zaehner. According to Zaehner, the Advaitic position does not differ from that of the Sāmkhya as far as the practical side of their doctrine is concerned, i.e., to distinguish pure spirit from non-spiritual things with which it has identified itself. In Sāmkhya the jñāni distinguishes himself from prakṛti, which even after realization remains us real. In Advaita the jñāni not only realizes himself as distinct from non-spiritual elements, but considers these elements as unreal, as a false appearance.

Thus the 'prārabdha karma' by which Sankara explains the life of a mukta after acquiring brahmajñāna has to be experienced. It is exhausted only by enjoyment. As far as this prārabdha karma is concerned both the realized and the unrealized are equal, both have to live this prārabdha karma until death removes it.

The admission of 'prārabdha' to explain jīvanmukti is really a problem to philosophy. Here the solutions traditionally offered cannot be logically accepted i.e., shall we say along with Brahmānanda that jīvanmukti is a so-called mukti or shall we accept along with Maṇḍana and others that

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32 Mysticism sacred Profane, p. 146.
even mukta has a trace of avidya which, unlike others, is exceedingly attenuated? In both these doctrines there are difficulties. What Sankara wanted to say is that when once jnana is acquired there is nothing standing in the way of moksa. Jnana itself is moksa. Once this jnana is acquired whether one retains his body or not is immaterial. In other words, Jivanmukti says that death is not at all integral part of release. That is why Sankara accepts videhamukti also. It may be said that really there is no duality of mukti; mukti is only one. We cannot call it Jivanmukti for the "dissolution of the body is neither an inevitable precondition nor an integral feature of mukti". The admission of even prarabdha karma is, thus only an explanation of the fact that a mukta is seen to leave even after getting Brahman-experience.

Another point to be illustrated here is that all that we speak of mukta is from the vyavaharika point of view. Mukta does not himself feel that he has a body. From the metaphysical point of view which is identical with the point of view of a mukta, he has no body. Even the very knowledge that dawns up on him is that he is pure spirit, he had neither birth nor death. To such a person there is no death, he only castes off

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the body like the serpent casting of its slough.\textsuperscript{34} The truth is that the mukta has neither death nor birth, was neither bound, nor an aspirant desirous of getting mokṣa and finally not even a mukta.\textsuperscript{35} So from the metaphysical point of view, it is absurd to talk of the body of a jīvanmukta. Though he apparently possesses a body in truth he is without body-aśārīrah. Sankara says"remaining in the body, he is bodiless and not as formerly with body. Before (realization) he was a human being and was with body because he was identifying his atma with his body as a result of his karma. Since that identification is absent he is aśārīra and amṛta - bodiless and immortal.\textsuperscript{36}

The realization of one's identity with Brahman is the highest ideal presented by Sankara. That it can be reached here and now has great ethical force. It is to give meaning and reality to religious and ethical life that Sankara declares that perfection can be attained on earth.

\textbf{Parékšel in Buddhism}

Thus, perfection in life, in some sense, seems to be a legitimate doctrine in all systems which consider jnāna as the means of mokṣa. A similar conception of mokṣa, existed in Buddhism also. Thus according to Buddhism, there is a double

\textsuperscript{34} BSB. IV – 4.7.
\textsuperscript{35} Gaudapadakarika II – 32.
\textsuperscript{36} BSB. IV . 4.7.
kind of nirvāṇa - a nirvāṇa during ones life-time and a final nirvāṇa. It has striking similarities with Sankara's theory of prārabdha karma. In Buddhism men "who have lived a pure life and have been initiated into Buddha's religion, who have acquired a knowledge of ontology, i.e., of the elements of existence, as taught in that religion can attain a double kind of nirvāṇa, a nirvāṇa at life time, being an annihilation with some "residual substratum" and a final nirvāṇa being an annihilation without any residue. The nirvāṇa in life-time is jīvanmukti. In the Jīvanmukti of Advaitins if there is the force of prārabdha, in Buddhism it is the residue of 'personal feeling' that still remains in a realized person. But what is this Personal feeling? It is "the inveterate instinct of cherishing one's own life". It is the "foundation of our belief in personal identity which is represented by the ultimate elements of our mundane existence". "It is a residue consisting of the pure elements of existence alone delivered from the illusion of an abiding personality. It is compared to a "town in which all criminal gangs have been executed". And what is the final nirvāṇa? "A nirvāṇa in which even this

38 Ibid., p. 232.
39 Ibid., p. 233.
40 Ibid., p. 234.
purified elements themselves are absent is termed final nirvāṇa, a nirvāṇa without any residue of personal feeling, because of the idea that, here, the residue of personal feeling is gone, it is impersonal. It is a state comparable to that of a town, (destroyed) a town which after all the criminal gang have been executed has been itself also annihilated.\[^{41}\] Even the Buddhists, thus, accept that there is something which they call residue, during nirvāṇa in life time. Sankara similarly accepts that there is pūrāṇabha karma in a jīvanmukta and that final release comes with the extinction of this pūrāṇabha.

Grades in Mukti

Sometimes, a classification is made of the realized persons. Accordingly there are four categories of muktas viz., Brahmavid, Brahmavidvāraḥ, Brahmavidvariṇya and Brahmavidvarīṣṭhah. This classification is, however, made by Vidyāraṇya.\[^{42}\] But Sankara does not seem to have accepted this division. The conclusion of Vidyāraṇya is probably based on the suggestion in the Mundakopaniṣad where the word ‘Brahmavidām varīṣṭhāḥ’ clearly suggests that there are different grades in mukti.

\[^{41}\] Ibid., p. 234.

\[^{42}\] Jīvanmukti viveka, Adyar, p. 172.

\[^{43}\] M.U. III - 1-4.
But Sankara while commenting upon this does not make any such distinctions. Moreover, in the Bhagavad Gītā bhāṣya it is said that by realization one attains mokṣa immediately. Moreover, in the Bhagavad Gītā bhāṣya it is said that by realization one attains mokṣa immediately. 44

Probably the intensity of the Brahman-experience may vary and be at the basis of the distinction in question.

The Nature of Perfection

The doctrine of Jīvanmukti, as the realization of truth in this life, will have the greatest significance in any religious system. But from the ethical point of view Jīvanmukti has no meaning unless it is conceived also as the Zenith of human perfection. That is, mukti must be designated as human perfection in all its aspects rather than the mere attainment of a religious truth. It is from the doctrine that mukti is the fulfilment of all human aspirations that ethics derive its full significance. The term human perfection has certain connotations, like the absence of misery and the attainment of happiness and freedom.

This idea of perfection was common to all philosophers who have cultivated philosophy as way of life. The word 'perfection' itself implies that we are all imperfect, we are not satisfied, we suffer miseries, we are not free,

44  
Samyagdarśanāt Kṣiprameva mokṣa bhavatīti sarvāśāstra
nyāya prasiddhaḥ" (SBG IV - 39)
but are bound in this world - all is due to our radical imperfection. But almost all agree that happiness is a criterion of perfection. That is, perfection must bring lasting happiness to man. To Socrates it was knowledge that made man perfect and happy. This is not ordinary knowledge but a "state of self determination on the dawn of which virtue becomes just the antethesis of irrationatity".\[45] It is this knowledge that makes man happy.

Plato's ideal perfection is found in the 'just Man'. 'Just men' are those who acquire wisdom and have become like God. That is, man has a rational self and an animal self of temptations and appetites. The 'will' which is between these two can be guided either by rational self or by animal self. When the will is guided by reason and subordinates the lower self, he can be called 'Just'.\[46]

According to Aristotle 'Eudaimonia' or happiness is the realization of man's rational nature, and the life of reason is the sign of perfection. Every object has form and matter; the former always strives for actualization. But, in man, this

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46 Ibid., p. 25, 27, 28.
form is reason, so the actualization of reason is the highest good and perfection.

Jīvanmukti also is conceived as the highest human perfection. But as an absolutist, Sankara holds that perfection comes only by becoming infinite. But what is finite cannot become infinite. But man, according to Sankara, is infinite but does not realize it owing to avidyā. Thus in the realization one only gets rid of the apparent finitude, for Brahman with which one identifies oneself is infinite - amantam brahma. There cannot be any worse imperfection than to be finite. All our ills and miseries are due to this feeling of finitude. Thus perfection consists in getting rid of the false finitude.

But Sankara's jīvanmukti is not merely negative as Naiyayikas would have it, it has both positive and a negative aspect. The conception of misery which is usually designated as Samsāra or Karma is a common feature of all Indian systems. The Karma which causes rebirth and samsāra the experience of pain and pleasure of this world, is totally destroyed in a perfected soul. The Upanisads declare: "the knower of the self crosses sōka, "the who sees one-ness where from does sōka and moha come." 49

47 Ibid., p. 28.
48 Tai. up. II - 1-1.
49 Chā. up. VII - 1-3; Ísa. Up. 7.
Since all the miseries are for ever destroyed moksa is negative.

Moksa is also positive, for the identity of the self with Brahman which is also bliss cannot but be blissful. The declaration of the Sruti is that "know Brahman as ananda." "This is the highest bliss" "knowing brahman as ananda he has no fear from anywhere". Brahman is proved by Sankara to be ananda by resorting to Sruti passages as well as to the experience of realized persons. He says that some great men who have severed all connections with worldly enjoyments and are contemplating Brahman are found to be very happy and that therefore Brahman must be ananda.

The identity with Brahman not only is bliss but also is the highest bliss man can attain. The pleasures of the world are only a particle of the bliss of the self. "Worldly happiness is particle of Brahmanandha, when knowledge is covered by avidya, depending on the contact with senses etc. Brahmananda appears as laukikānanda to all beginning from Brahman. When avidya which is the only hindrance standing in the way of our realizing the self, is removed, the self which is ananda shines forth. And there is no duality of the enjoyer and the enjoyed. Though this absence of duality cannot be logically proved, the ordinary

50 Br. Up. IV-3-33; Tai. up. VIII - 29.

51 STU. VII - 22.

52 STU. II - 7.1.
experience of joy is a sufficient ground to prove it. Thus, a mukta is perfect in the sense that he attains the highest value—**ānanda**—in this very life.

By the attainment of the non-dual Brahman the mukta becomes also **fearless—abhaya**. In the Upanisads the attainment of 'fearlessness' is said to be a unique achievement in mokṣa. In various contexts distinguishes three types of fearlessness. The first is the fear from others i.e., themselves and other objects. Secondly there is fear from God or **Īśvara** who is usually regarded as different from him. For such a man who finds difference in himself and **Īśvara** there is fear. Thirdly there is the fear of one's own existence. Without knowing that he is the eternal self he fears death. “So long as one fears and thinks himself as perishable, one desires to protect oneself. When he knows his self to be eternal and non-dual, who will desire to protect oneself and from what?”

The duality in what ever form it may be, is the cause of all fear. In all these schools which accept duality as real, fear cannot be removed. If, on the other hand, one holds that the whole of the duality is super imposed by **avidya**, like the

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53 Tai. up. II - 7-1.

54 STU. II -7-1.

55 "Yāvaddhī bhayamadhyastho anityamātmanām manyate tavagopayitumicechatyātmānam yadā tu nityamadavītamātmanām vijānati tada kim, kah kuto vā gopayitum icchet". (SKU. II-1-5).
vision of a second moon and therefore is mithya, then logically there cannot be any fear in him.\(^{56}\) For fear is always from another object. One who has realized that there is nothing different from him, cannot be logically shown to be fearing anything. No body fears himself. Even to show this 'fearlessness' Sankara resorts to Sruti as well as to the living muktas. He observes: "Every where the realized are seen to be quite fearless even when there is real cause for fear. If all fears are not removed in Brahman, then this would be illogical. Since we see them fearless, there must be Brahman which is the cause of this fearlessness":\(^{57}\) The perfected, thus, not only enjoys the highest ānanda but also becomes fearless.

Over and above this, the perfected feels a sense of satisfaction (krtakṛtyata) a satisfaction at having reached his highest goal. Thus, on account of this satisfaction, he becomes perfectly at ease. He is an āptakāma, one who has fulfilled all his desires. "Having realized that I am the very Brahman who is āptakāma and who is devoid of all the evils of Samsara, the mukta finds no need for action".\(^{58}\) "Just as the limited water which serves for drinking, bathing etc., include in a big lake and serves all these purposes, even so, im

\(^{56}\) S.T.U. II - 8-5.

\(^{57}\) "Sarvato hi nirbhayā brāhmañā drāyante satsu bhaya-hetuṣu ānecāyuktam asati bhayatāne brahmanī tasmāt tṛṣṇām abhayadārsāmat asti ābhaya-bhavakarānam brahmeti "S.T.U. II-7-1.

\(^{58}\) Mītareya bhāṣya, I-1, Intro.
the mokṣa phala of a realized person includes all the fruits of the vedas.⁵⁹ Since he has nothing to achieve by efforts, he withdraws from all actions aimed at his selfish interest and remains at peace.

**Sense of Agency**

But most pivotal to religion and ethics is the doctrine that mukta has absolutely no sense of agency and that he is without ego. His 'Kāraka buddhi' is completely erased. The quality 'ahammanābhimāna rahita' - devoid of the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' is usually mentioned as a unique attribute of muktas. In fact one of the most important difference between ordinary people and the mukta is that while the former always entertain the feeling of 'I' and 'mine', the latter is devoid of it. In a context Sankara explains how a mukta loses all karmas i.e., not only the accumulated karma but even the future karmas, will have no effect on him. And, here, he says that it is because he loses all sense of agency that his future karmas do not affect him.⁶⁰ That is, in the future karmas he has no sense of agency at all. "The knower of Brahman understands contrary to the former feeling of "kārtṛtvav and bhokṛtvav

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⁵⁹ SBG. II - 46.

⁶⁰ "aśleṣa iti ca āgāmisu karmasu kārtṛtvameva na prati-padyate brahmavid iti darsayati" (BSB IV - 1-13)
that I am that brahman without it. Even before (realization) I was neither agent nor enjoyer, not at present nor in the future will I be. It is held that the feeling of 'I' and mine itself is a limitation, an imperfection. One becomes perfect only when this ahāmākāra is removed. "In all activities the self becomes the agent only through the means of mind etc. "The self has agency only through its adhyāsa with the limiting adjuncts, not by nature." Since he has no sense of kartrtvā he cannot, in truth, perform actions, for "in the world ahāmākāra itself is seen to be the root of every action." So he does not engage in activities like ordinary people. Only the man who thinks that mirage-water is real attempt to drink water from it. But having known that it is unreal no body goes to drink water. Similarly the man who is convinced that the whole activity is due to avidyā will not engage in actions. Even when the muktas sustain their body by means of alms, they have no ahāmākāra i.e., they do not ask for alms with a selfish motive of sustaining their body. A mukta is 'yadṛcchālābha samtasta' - one who is pleased with what is offered to him. But how is it that they are seen to be receiving alms? To this Sankara says "only by seeing the absence of agency he

61 Ibid., IV - 1-13.
62 BSB. II - 3-40.
63 SBC VII - 4.
engages in the acts of begging. From the point of view of ordinary people he seems to be begging because they attribute agency on him. From his own experience he is non-agent.64

Characteristics of the Perfected

Sankara elucidates the characteristics of a mukta twice in the S.B.C. The description of the sthita prajña in the 2nd chapter and of gunātīta in the 14th chapter according to Sankara are those of realized souls. The question of the characteristics of a realized soul is very significant, for one can ask: How are we to know whether one is a mukta or not? The experience of Brahman-identity and the consequent feeling of 'akartytva and abhoktytva' etc. are of personal nature. Therefore it cannot be put forth as a demonstrable proof of a mukta's experience. The question is: how can we identify a mukta? It is in this context that the description of the traits of a mukta come to our rescue. Such traits may be summarised as follows:65 (1) He will be found immensely joyful without any of the external means of happiness, his source of joy being his own revealed self. (2) He will have no desires such, for example, as the desire for son, wife wealth etc. (3) His senses are perfectly under his control. Not only does he withdraw all his senses from sense objects but also have no attachment to them. (4) He will be equal-minded to all oppositions, such as, pain and pleasure, good and evil, praise and

64 SBC IV - 22.

contempt, friend and foe, and stone and gold. He is not moved by any one of them. (5) He is not moved by the gunas of sattva, rajas and tamas and will be always impartial (6) And finally he abandons all (selfish) actions. Though there are several other traits, many of them, Sankara himself admits, are traits which others cannot understand. Nobody can perceive the absence of desire etc. in the mind of a realized soul.

Moral Perfection

The characteristics of the perfected as described above will show, that though perfection consists in the attainment of moksa it also pre-supposes moral perfection. But the systems which rule out perfection in life also deny the possibility of moral perfection of man on earth. According to them one has to strictly follow the norms of morality whatever may be this spiritual growth. Even the highest sadhaka or realized soul is liable to moral lapses. He is liable to fall at any time. Accordingly till death even the realized persons have to strictly follow the norms of morality like ordinary people. Such a position actually denies the possibility of man becoming morally perfect. The Samuccayavāda which insists that karmas must be done even after realization is an after effect of such a doctrine.

Unlike these systems, Sankara holds that even moral perfection is attained in moksa. But this is not reached as it may be thought, by refraining from evil and strictly adhering to the good. The oppositions of good and evil, is
transcended. The moral perfection, thus, is attained by transcending good and evil. In other words, a realized person is beyond morality and ethics. The word 'beyond ethics' is too often misunderstood and as a result it is usually interpreted as considering both good and evil equal. Thus, for example, Farquhar writes: "morality belongs to the unreal world which the released man sloughs off in completeness on finding release. It belongs to the sphere of change with which he has nothing more to do."66 Again, "the monk was subjected to no moral rules. Morality being no mark of Brahman, it was not demanded of the man who was identical with Brahman".67 Albert Schweitzer distinguishes Sankara's conception of 'beyond good and evil from that of gnostics, and Nietzsche and complains that Advaitins "know only a non-activity which is exalted above good and evil but not a similar activity".68

When Advaitins maintain that a mukta is 'beyond morality' it only means that he has no dominating oughts which form the content of morality. As T.M.P. Mahadevan rightly remarks "it is in the oughtness of morality that its strength and weakness lie. And it is because of this oughtness that

66 The Crown of Hinduism, p. 230
67 Ibid., 256.
68 ITD., p. 44.
Morality cannot be the final of life and can serve only as the foot stall to heaven. In the SBC mukti, is usually mentioned as mukti from 'dharma' and 'adharma' and mukta is one who has been lifted above dharma and adharma. Moksa is the reality where dharma and adharma with their effects are destroyed. To go beyond dharma and adharma means that a mukta will not fluctuate between what is moral and what is immoral. He rises above the vyāvahārika; above the moral ideas of oughts' and ought nots' which belong to the vyāvahārika. The idea of good and bad etc., with which morality is concerned always implies a tension and this tension is not the end of human life. There must be an end to this when we indeed are perfect. The theory that one cannot become morally perfect as a human being undermines the religious life of human beings. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example while holding that by training and practice moral virtues can be acquired, emphasises that they cannot be perfectly acquired. This position, he is forced to maintain due to his theological preoccupations. Of course, when this moral perfection is reached, we can say in a sense that the word 'morality' itself will have no meaning for him. We shall say, along with Bradley: "in the Good

69 P.P.C. p. 43.
70 SBC. IV - 23.
71 BSB. 1-1-4.
72 Sidgwick, History of Ethics, p. 142.
rights and duties as such disappear. There is no more mere right or mere duty, no more particular or universal as such, no external relation of the two. More over, morality is an ideal and when this ideal is reached it ceases to be an ideal, for an ideal is worth the name only so long as it remains unreached. The moment we reach this ideal we can no more call it our ideal. To quote Bradley again "for morality in the stricter sense the object is not real, or if and so far as the moral ideal is taken as real, this ideal if it is to remain moral must not appear as the complete realized good."

Moral perfection, thus implies only the absence of 'oughts'. Writing on this, Manganalak, A. Buch says "the centre of gravity is shifted for the Eastern sages from the Kingdom of actions to the Kingdom of thought and from the sphere of consciousness to the pure gnosis or super-consciousness." And thus, he says: "Thus to a certain extent, it must be confessed that the ethical problems lose that fundamental importance which they possess for the ethical theisms of the West. This view is apologetic and cannot be accepted, when we consider the true nature of a mukta. Ethics, here, far from losing its importance, gain a fresher and firmer foundation. And this foundation manifested itself in all the actions of the mukta. But such actions

73 Ethical Studies, p. 139.
74 Ibid., p. 442, F.N.
75 The Philosophy of Sankara, Beroda, p. 171.
76 Ibid., p. 171.
of a mukta are not impelled by ought. "We must recognise" says Earnest Wood, "that this moral or ethical impulse springs from love, and let the feeling, not the rule of ought always guide us, even when we do not see the practical way in which to express this love." If one were to define morality as a state where there is 'ought' then a mukta may be said to be amoral.

A parallel of this moral perfection may be found in the writings of Henry Bergson who speaks of an 'open and closed morality' in this great work 'Two sources of Morality'. The ordinary morality is called 'closed morality'. Such morality he says is the 'intention of nature' and not the contribution of man. It is closed because it is relative, confined to one's society and prompted by the instinct of self-preservation. Open morality is that which transcends these limitations. But closed morality cannot be simply widened to open morality. Only great men can do it; they "liberate morality from its limitations to a particular society and lay down moral maxims which apply to all men." And it is the special contribution of man to morality. Bergson says, "In all times there have arisen exceptional man, incarnating this morality. Before the

77 Bhagavad Gita explained, p. 29.
78 CCCP. p. 233, 234.
79 Ibid., p. 234.
saints of Christianity mankind has known, the sages of Greece, the prophets of Israel, the Arhats of Buddhism and others besides. It is to them that men have always turned for that complete morality which we had best call Absolute morality. Even according to Sankara the perfected sage alone becomes morally perfect and his nature and actions determined the very norms of morality.

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30 Ibid., p. 234.