CHAPTER - V

The Ultimate Reality — Paramaśiva

Pratyabhijñā Philosophy being an absolutistic monism admits only one Reality — Paramaśiva. According to this system, a second to Śiva there is none. What Brahman is to the Upaniṣad is Paramaśiva to the Śaivas. Śiva here is described as the dispenser of Pañcakṛtva of creation, maintenance, destruction, concealment and revelation. The entire universe in its phenomenal aspect is revealed by Paramaśiva. Before revelation He holds in Himself the unmanifested Universe as an idea, rather, as an experience of His own which is also the root of all that afterwards becomes expressible in terms of discursive thought and speech (āmasāḥ paranādagarbhaḥ). It may, therefore, be said that before revelation the appearances of the universe are not total non-existence. They continue to have existence in the form of oneness with the absolute consciousness, during this state also. As a great Benyan tree lies only in the form of potency in the seed, even so the entire universe
with all the mobile and immobile beings lies as a potency in the heart of the Supreme (''Yathā nagrodhabījasthaḥ Śaktirūpī mahādrumāḥ/Tathā hṛdayabījastha Viśvametaccarām'')

The Paramaśiva is infinite consciousness and unrestricted independence. He makes the world appear in Himself as if it were distinct from Himself, though not really so. He is actually underlying the world of names and forms, and is the innermost self in all things and beings. But He is unaffected by the objects of His creation as the mirror is by the images reflected in it.

Paramaśiva is said to be cīti i.e., in both masculine and feminine indifferently. Śiva and Śakti are identical. Śakti is the very nature of Śiva. It is the becoming aspect of Śiva. From the point of view of change or multiplicity, the Ultimate Reality is described as Śakti and from the stand-point of being or unity it is called Śiva. By His Śakti Śiva becomes conscious of Himself. Śakti, on the other hand, depends upon Śiva for its functioning. Thus they are essentially one and identical. The introvert Śakti itself is Śiva, the extrovert Śiva itself is Śakti. Introversion and extroversion both are the eternal manifestations of Reality. So there is no scope of duality. Śakti is not something extraneous or mithyā like māyā in Śaṅkara Advaitism.
It is rather inherent in Him by which He becomes conscious of Himself. Śiva is pure light without awareness. Just as the honey is sweet in itself without being aware of its sweetness, or as wine is intoxicant without being so aware; likewise, Śiva is also not conscious of Himself without Śakti. Devoid of Śakti, Śiva would be insentient (jaḍa) and consequently as good as dead (śava). The Absolute is, therefore, conceived in terms of sāmarasya (Śiva-Śakti-Sāmarasya).

Again, in Śaivism, the Parama Śiva has been described as Prakāśavapu or of the sole nature of Prakāśa or revelation. The entire universe of things and beings is His revelation. He appears in the form of souls and constitutes objects for their experiences. He illumines everything including all the known sources of light and is not revealed by anything external to Himself. Both ahantā and idantā i.e., the ego and the non-ego or the subjects and the objects are His manifestations. The idantā or the object is not something other than Him. Other systems consider the idantā to be foreign to the Ultimate Reality. For example, the Sāmkhya considers Puruṣa and Prakṛti to be different. The Advaita considers the ātman to be Viśayī and not Viśaya which is super-imposed. The Ātmakhyāti-Vādīns consider the anātma to be a false appearance or an imposition on the ātma. But Pratyabhijñā considers that the so-called anātma is also
the ātmā. In fact, the single reality is the subject, the object, the knowing and the means of knowing and everything. He is Paramasīva as including everything and Īśvara as Vahirmukha or as creator taking delight in the creation. He has different manifestations as, Śiva, Śakti, Sadāśīva, Īśvara, Suddha-Vidyā and also the manifested universe. The whole reality is homogeneously one (abheda). As Kṛṣmarāja says, the manifestations in time and space do not create any difference in Him ("'ataeva deśakālākāra etat sṛṣṭā etad-nuprāṇītāśca naitāt svarūpāṁ bhettumalam-iti vyāpaka-nityodita-paripūrṇārūpā iyam''). The 'Tantrasāraḥ' of Abhinavagupta in its Upodghāta says, the Paramasīva is of single nature of Prakāśa or revelation (ekaeva prakāśa). He is the consciousness. The revelation of Paramasīva is independent and not dependent on anything else. Diamond is prakāśa; but it is not independent. It depends on some extraneous light that helps it to give radiation. But the prakāśa or manifestation of the Lord is not dependent on such other extraneous inspiration. It is by His will power that He manifests the varied world outside. Prakāśatā of other thing is dependent. But in Śiva this is independent. Phenomenally Śiva reveals everything else, noumenally He is the revelation of Himself and of everything else. So 'Tantrasāraḥ' says, "Svatantra ekaḥ prakāśaḥ ... Vyāpako nityah".
Paramaśiva, again, has been described as 'Sarvākāra nirākāra Svabhāvaḥ'. This means that He is not only the formless Ultimate Reality but is also all formed objects. Even a grain of sand or a drop of water is the form or ākāra of Paramaśiva. Here is the difference between Śaṅkara and the Śaivas. Śaṅkara describes Brahman as nirākāra or formless and all the formed objects are nothing but mithyā or māyā. They are true only from practical point of view (vyavahārika dṛṣṭi), but not real ultimately or from pāramārtthika view point. So the manifested world is a nescience according to Śaṅkara. But the Śaivas do not think so. To them the world is as real as the Lord Śiva as it is within the Śiva in a latent form before its revelation.

The Paramaśiva is transcendent or Viśvottīrṇa as well as Viśvamaya or immanent in this world. He is the Ultimate Reality underlying the world of names and forms and is the innermost self in all things and beings. He is the self-luminous universal consciousness that holds within it all that constitutes the world in all its variety of forms. He illumines everything including all the known sources of light, and is not revealed by anything external to Himself. He is inscrutable beyond the reach of mind and intellect and is, therefore, defined as the absence of all definability. He is eternal and infinite. He is all-pervading and all-transcending having a two-fold aspect — an
immanent one in which He pervades the whole Universe and a transcendent one beyond all manifestations. So it is said:

''Sarvākṛtiḥ Viśvamaya nirākṛtiḥ Viśvottīrṇah''

''Viśvākṛtītivāt cidacīd tad Vaicitrya avabhāsakāḥ''

The viśva or the universe is prakāśamāna, but the prakāśamāna or the revealed is not anything other than the Lord.

The Ultimate Reality is anuttara i.e., beyond Him there is nothing. Hence He is free from all limitations. He is indefinable in terms of ordinary everyday life. Words used to indicate Him fail to convey the idea of His real nature, as words stand for a certain definite idea, but He is indefinite, not in the sense that He is a shadowy nothing or nihility, but much more than the words signify. This conception of the 'anuttara' has a good deal of affinity with the concept of pure Brahman of the Vedānta who is avāṁmanasagocara. Both attempt to give an idea of the Ultimate Reality in its relation to us as the creator. Both admit that no definition of the Ultimate Reality can be perfect and still both attempt to define Him in words, which, according to them, express the Reality in the best possible way.

The meaning of 'Pratyabhijñā' is the realization that 'I am Īśvara' and nothing other than Him (aham Īśvara eva
nānya itevam yah sākṣātkāraḥ sa pratyabhijñē-tyucyate).
It is also defined as: "pratipam ātmabhi-mukhyena jñānam prakāṣāḥ pratyabhijñā". In all such statements what is emphasized is that the aham is not something different from the nature of Śiva. The duality of aham and idam does not depend on any extraneous factor as māyā of Advaita or Prakṛti of Sāmkhya. The difference is internal but not involving svagata-bheda, for the aham is idam and the idam is aham. Phenomenally the two involve a duality, but, in fact, there is no duality at all. All the other systems of Indian Philosophy consider ahanta and idanta as opposed to each other and the idanta has been condemned as due to some extraneous factors not belonging to the essence of consciousness. But the Pratyabhijñā points out that the idanta is also Śiva Himself. The example of mirror is utilized in this connection. The reflection on the mirror is not something other than the person himself and hence they are identical. But there is one possibility of error. The mirror is something other than the person reflected in the ordinary parlance. But here in Pratyabhijñā the word 'Śvātmadarpana' is used in order to indicate that the mirror means his own self. So Kṣemarāja says: "Svabhittau Viśvam unmīlayati na tu anyatra kvāpi, prāk nirnītam 'Viśvaḥ' darpane nagaravaḥ abhinnam api bhinnam iva 'unmīlayati'/unmilanaṁ ca avasthitasaiva prakatikaranaṁ/ ityanena jagataḥ prakāṣāikātmyena avasthaṁ Uktam/".
The Śaivites do not only regard Ultimate Reality as Prakāśa but He is vīmārsa as well. So, He is called 'Prakāśa-Vimārṣamaya'. Prakāśa stands for the pure, changeless witness aspect of the Universal Consciousness. On the other hand, Vīmārsa stands for the power which gives rise to self-consciousness, will, knowledge and action respectively. Prakāśa is compared to a pure mirror which serves as a background for the reflection of objects; Vīmārsa represents the power of the mirror to give rise to reflections. Vīmārsa also signifies the capacity of the subject to know Himself in the state of perfect freedom from all kinds of affections. It is the power of self-consciousness or absolute egoity (Pūrṇa ahantā) of the Lord and is called 'āham vīmāra', 'āmāra' or 'pratyavamarṣa'. In its essential nature vīmāra might be compared to the limited power of manifestation of the individual subject at the time of dreaming, remembering, imagining etc. It might also be compared to the Yogin's power of creation. Prakāśa and Vīmārsa are always united together. Just as Prakāśa is always with Vīmārsa, Vīmārsa is also never found without prakāśa. Together they both represent the self-luminous and self-conscious nature of Reality. Prakāśa actually is Śiva, while Vīmārsa is Śakti, the svabhāva of Śiva. It is so to speak, the mirror in which Śiva sees His glory, power and beauty. Vīmārsa is the Kartṛtva-śakti (the power of doer-ship) of Śiva. It is that power by which Śiva is aware
of Himself (ananya unmukhinatva). To the Saivites mere prakāśā cannot be the nature of Ultimate Reality which is a conscious Being. By calling Parama-Śiva as of the essence of consciousness (cidaikasāraḥ) the Śivites (Pratyabhijñā) do not consider the consciousness absolutely static or actionless or niśkriya. It is niśkriya when the world is not there; but it is then potentially active. Consciousness that is not conscious of itself as consciousness is not conscious, but is as good as a dead or inert matter. (Yadi nirvimarśaḥ syāt anīśvaro jaḍaśca prasajyate) Prakāśa, therefore, is not without self-reflection (na hi nirvimarśo prakāśā samaśti upapadyate vā). The essence of Parama-Śiva or His ultimate nature is prakāśā or revelation. The essence of prakāśa itself is Vimarśa or self-reflection (Prakāśasāṣaṇaḥ) and the essence of Vimarśa is also prakāśa.

The Vimarśa is again spoken of as 'Śvātantrya' (svātantryam hi vimarśa ityucyate). The svātantrya is the main power of the Ultimate Reality. It means Absolute sovereignty, the power to do according to one's will. It is the unimpeded, unrestrained flow of expression of the Divine will (Śvātantryam ca nāma yatheccham tatrecchāprasārasya avighātaḥ). This svātantrya is the source of the different manifestations of the Śakti which is homogeneously present in the Śiva.

The Īśvara-pratyabhijñā calls it 'sphuratā' or the essence or the heart of Parama-Śiva. This element of Svātantrya
explains the emergence of the world without any necessity of the Parama-Śiva or imposition on Him by any internal or external factor. Panini says, "Svatantraḥ kartā". So this Svātantrya or independence or self-reflection or self-revelation is the Kartṛtva-Śakti of the Lord. This is the parāvāk of the spandaśāstra. This self-reflection is the reason why Parama-Śiva has been described as pūrṇāhantā or the full egoity.

Most other systems of Indian Philosophy, of course, have regarded Ultimate Reality only as Prakāśa, The Eternal Light that never fades, the light from which even the sun, the moon and the stars derive their light. As Kaṭhopanि�ṣad says:

"'na tatra suryyo bhāti na candratārakam
nema Vidyuto bhānti Kutoyam agnih/
tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam
tasya bhāṣā sarvam idam vibhāti/" 12

But the Śaivites do not do so. They do not regard Ultimate Reality simply as prakāśa. To them, cit is conscious of itself as cidrūpinī Śakti which is his Vimarśa Śakti. This Vimarśa is variously called Parāśakti, Svātantrya, aisvarya, Kartṛtva, sphurattā, sāra, hṛdaya, spanda etc. 13 From the point of view of prakāśa Śiva is Viśvottirṇa or transcendent; from the point of view of Vimarśa He is viśvamaya or immanent in the universe. It is because of His Svātantrya that Paramaśiva appears both as experient and the universe and objects.
This appearance or ābhāsa is not the pariṇāma or transformation, Vikāra or change of Śiva. It is simply the expression of His Svātantrya or free will, His unimpeded sovereignty. It is nothing but external projection of the ideation of the Divine.

It is this vimarsa aspect of Śiva (Caitanya) that distinguishes the non-dualistic Śaiva Philosophy from Śaṅkara Vedānta. It is because Śaṅkara Vedānta considers Brahman to be only prakāśa or jñāna without any vimarsa or activity that it has to invoke the help of māyā in order to explain the manifestation of the universe. Brahman is devoid of activity; it is, therefore, impotent to create. It is only Īśvara or māyā-upahita caitanya that can manifest the universe. But what is this māyā? If it is some power extraneous to Brahman or Īśvara then Śaṅkara Vedānta is reduced to dualism. If māyā is only an expression of the power of Brahman then Brahman cannot be divested of activity. Both Śāmkhya and Śaṅkara Vedānta consider the puruṣa or Ātmā to be niṣkriya or inactive, because they take activity in a narrow sense, not in the sense of Kriyā but in the sense of Karma. Surely puruṣa and Ātmā does not work like a potter or watch-maker. Kriyā means activity in a wide sense. Vimarsa or the divine activity is spiritual energy that can express itself in any form from the subtlest to the grossest.
It may be questioned why the world is like the present world or the Paramaśiva constrained to reveal the world as we find it. An interesting comparison may be drawn here between Leibnitz's theory of the compossible and the Śaiva theory of the world as it is. Of course, the fundamental difference between Leibnitz and the Śaivite is that the former is a pluralist, while the latter is a monist. The Monad of all monads of Leibnitz as well as the Paramaśiva are essentially active consciousness. The infinite number of finite monads could be organized in infinite ways. Thus we could gain an infinitely possible forms of the universe out of which God chooses the best possible world. So, for Leibnitz, the given world is the best possible combination of the monads. The Paramaśiva of the Śaivites has also the infinite power of self-manifestation in infinite ways. The Svātantrya-Śakti is inexhaustible and limitless, so Paramaśiva has the power to reveal infinite manifestations of what is in Him in infinite ways. There is absolutely no hindrance to His manifestation. As for Śamkarite also the world partakes of the nature of māyā, which is limited and has no kartṛtva-Śakti. We can not, therefore, think of infinite manifestations of māyā. Moreover, the world of māyā is half real, not real in the fullest sense. But the Svātantrya-Śakti is fully active, infinite in power and possibilities. It is left to Paramaśiva to manifest His being in any way as He
likes as it is one delightful expression of his being. The compossible of manifestations in the Paramasîva are also infinite, but it is left Him to and He is absolutely independent to manifest in the present form or in any other.
References


4. Ibid., p. 21.


