CHAPTER IV

THE WORLD OF JĪVAS

A. The Reality and Plurality of Jīvas

Understandably enough realism as a general outlook and pluralism in the doctrine of jīvas have gone hand in hand in the history of Indian philosophy. The Cārvākas, it is true, with their positivistic method compromise the spiritual nature of the jīva either by considering it merely an epiphenomenon of matter or by denying its immortal character. However, even they do not reduce all the jīvas to one. The Buddhists on the other hand, being no believers in substance reject any permanent principle which might be called jīva. And the Advaitins, of course, try to reduce ultimately all the jīvas to one—the Absolute Self.

The Jainas are uncompromising in their defence of the reality and the plurality of jīvas. It is the jīva which is the principle of life in man and so it transcends the limitations of the body, while residing in it. We perceive our jīva by direct introspection. By nature a jīva is unlimited in its perception (darśena), knowledge (jñāna), bliss (sukha) and power (vīrya). Unhappily, however, this perfect nature among samsārins is veiled by the veneer of karma matter accumulated from beginningless time.

The Jainas believe that the number of jīvas is infinite. They are also eternal substances. In this world of ours, however, they occupy countless space points, and being of medium size (madhyama-parimāna) they cannot be regarded either as atomic (anu) or as ubitiquitous (vibhu). The jīvas
are classified according to the number of senses they possess, starting from plants possessing only the tactile senses, and reaching up to men who can claim the inner sense organ—manas—in addition to the external five. The Jains moreover believe in a peculiar doctrine that even the four elements are animated by souls. Also the world is filled with minute beings called nigodas. These are believed to be clusters of souls infinite in number, grouped together for respiration and nutrition in common and suffering from excruciating pains. They make good any 'loss' due to release of worthy souls into nirvāna. The samsāra, therefore, can never be empty of living beings.1

Like the Jains, the Sānkhyas too subscribe to plurality of souls or puruṣas as they call them. If souls were not many the birth of one would have been the birth of all, and the death of one would have been the death of all. The puruṣas are without parts, and qualities. They may be manifested in bodies, but the latter do not contain them. They are in fact omnipresent. Hence the Jaina belief of contraction and expansion of the jīva according to the size of the body it occupies is repudiated by the Sānkhyas. Nevertheless the close connection that obtains between the puruṣa and the body or manas gives rise to experience that the mental phenomena are of the soul.

The Sānkhya puruṣa is devoid of all characteristics. But cit pure and simple is what constitutes its nature. Thus the advaitic contention that bliss is also the nature of the jīva and that the phenomenally many jīvas are metaphysically one is rejected by the Sānkhyas. Each individual has his own distinct puruṣa, which he perceives not directly in itself,

1. Dasgupta I, pp.188ss.
but by means of inference he concludes to its presence.\textsuperscript{2}

In the main the Naiyāyika too argues for the existence of the jīva by means of inference. Mere perception in this matter is regarded as unreliable. The recognition of different cognitions as mine, as well as the fact of their centering on one and the same object reveals that there is but one principle behind it all, which is jīva. That principle, however, is not consciousness, but consciousness clings to it accidentally. Consciousness might come and go, but the jīva which is neither produced nor destroyed remains for ever. It is in fact eternal, as well as omnipresent—vibhu. Each individual possesses his own jīva which is unique. Hence the number of jīvas is as infinite as the individuals themselves. The latter inherit at their birth qualities with individual variations which must be ascribed to karma of their past lives.\textsuperscript{3}

The Advaitins draw a distinction between self or ātma and jīva. Only the former is metaphysically real, being self-luminous, pure consciousness. It is moreover identical with the pure unity of all consciousness, or ultimate reality. Whereas the jīva or the individual soul is what passes through the vicissitudes of this mundane life. It is the result of the cit, the highest self, being veiled by avidyā. The veiling is explained in two ways: upādhi or pratibimba and aviccheda. The first is like the sun mirrored in water, with the reflection sharing in both the brilliance of the sun and the impurities and disturbance of the water. These reflections will differ according to the difference in waters even though the sun remains unchanged. According to the second conception the veiling is like the ākāśa within a jar and without it. While the ākāśa in reality does not undergo any modification by being

\textsuperscript{2} Dasgupta I, pp.238ss.
\textsuperscript{3} Op.cit., pp.362s; Iph., pp.144ss
within a jar or outside, we do conceive it as limited by the jar. Either of these conceptions may be applied to the individual self.\(^4\)

Some of the Advaitins believe in what is known as ekājīva-vāda. According to this view there exists but one jīva with his body, and the whole world of the jīvas and of matter is no more than his imagination. As long as that jīva continues in his experiences the imaginary jīvas and the world will endure. Everything is imaginary here, not excluding salvation. The cosmic jīva alone is the awakened jīva. Aneka-jīva-vāda is the opposite theory according to which there are many individuals, each of whom creates for himself his own illusion. There is, of course, no common ground for the illusion entertained by all the people. Ten persons may be frightened by the snake-like appearance of a rope in the dark, and all of them will agree in their illusion although there was no snake in reality which frightened them all.

Pitting himself against the Advaitic teaching Rāmānuja repudiates total identification of the jīva with the Absolute. The individual self may be a mode of the Supreme, but it is real, unique, eternal, endowed with intelligence and self-consciousness. The jīvas are many, as is evidenced from the distribution of pleasures and pains. Till their release they are bound to prakṛti which is like a vehicle to the jīva. Yet the same relationship is also an obstacle for the jīva to recognize its kinship with God.

The jīva remains unchanged in its essential nature all through births and deaths. At each pralaya it may lose even its form, but essentially it remains the same. Its characteristic essence is aham-buddhi—consciousness of self. Constituting the very being of the self it can never suffer destruc-

\(^4\) Dasgupta I, pp.475ss.
tion. Else all the strivings for release would be totally pointless. So it is wrong to hold that the jīva is one with God. It may be regarded as a part of Brahman in the sense that it is comprised within the universal self—like a mode—viśeṣaṇa—of Brahman. The jīva may even be considered an effect of Brahman in the sense that it cannot exist apart from him, and not as though it is produced, like ether etc.5

As we have seen Madhva is relentless in his attack on māyā and avidyā of the Advaitins. If these postulates lack all reasonableness, then the real plurality of jīvas which is sought to be denied on their account emerges unscathed for all the adverse criticism. More specifically it is claimed that differences between jīvas are due to the differences of karma, which are beginningless. But the differences of karma are due to upādhi. Conversely differences in upādhi can be present only if karma in its turn brings in the differences. This is another instance of mutual dependence.6 Further if it is supposed that the Self is but one and that all distinctions are due to upādhi, one should experience no sense of difference or alienation; the same self should experience all the pleasures and pains etc. which arise in all the bodies. For a person does not experience any sense of division from his own body in spite of its having several distinct parts.7 The Advaitin protests in vain with the argument that the experience of differentiation is explicable by mutual separation of the bodies. Even under similar circumstances the self does not

5. Iph., pp.690ss
7. Upāḍhibhedāṅgāṅkāre hastapāḍādyupāḍhibhedeṇa tādga-tasukhaduḥḥādibhokturyathā bheda na pratīyate evamva saṁrādibhedeṇa bhokturbhede nā drṣyate/ sarvadeḥagata sukhaduḥḥādikamekenaiva bhujyeta//--V.T.V., 404
cease to function as a unity. The Mahābhārata states: udya-
tayudhadordandaii patitasvasiro'kṣibhiḥ/ paśyantah pītayanti
śma kabandhā apyaryīnyudhi/ Incidentally it might be urged
also that in this sort of argumentation the self cannot hope
to be liberated by shedding one of its upādhis since it is
associated with a countless number of others. A person may
lose his finger, but that will not bring about his release.9

Madhva then corners the adversary by proposing a series
of protases whose apodoses would be unpalatable to the Advai-
tin. Does the upādhi of the monist seize a part of the one
self, or does it seize the whole? If it is said to seize only
a part the self would by implication be composed of parts.
At the Advaitin's own admission anything composed of parts is
necessarily non-eternal. If on the other hand the upādhi is
taken as seizing the whole self, it can no more be the prin-
ciple of differentiation. But if it is claimed that the self
has parts because of the upādhi and that this upādhi is none
other than the limiting upādhi whose seizing of the self is in
question, we are in for the fallacy of self-dependence. If
finally we smuggle in some other upādhi to introduce distinc-
tions within the self so that the former upādhi could seize
one of the parts thus differentiated we shall have infinite
regress on our hands.10

8. V.T.V., 406
9. Yathā caikāṅgulyādyapagame'pi na muktirevamekopādhya-
pagame'pi tasyaivāntopādhisambandhatvānna muktissya/—
V.T.V., 405
10. Kim coopādhirātmana ekadeśam graśasyuta sarvamātmanām//
Ekadeśāṅgikāre sāvayavatvam/ sāvayavaśya cānītyatvam tairangī-
krta/ sarvagrasa ca nopaśhirbhedākāh syāt/ upādhikṛtaśa-
kalpene tadupādhikṛtavatvam/ upādhyantarakalpene'na-
vasthā//—V.T.V., 407-08

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Having disposed of the Advaitic attempt at explaining differences among the jīvas Madhva tackles the problem on his own. The older pluralists, we have seen, had all traced the cause of differentiation to the karma theory. Madhva would agree with them—but partly. He would regard the explanation as jejune. For merits and demerits of his previous life might earn a man a particular status in his present life. We may even get further back with the series, in quest of a better explanation in each preceding life. But unless we come across a breaking point we are bound to slide into infinite regress. The only breaking point, as Madhva sees it, is to admit that each jīva is distinct by his very nature or svarūpabheda, as one might call it. This explanation, of course, may not be in keeping with the Saṅkhya conception of the jīvas who are like monads in their nature. But Madhva with his theory of viśeṣas in the svarūpa itself can seek the explanation within the very nature of the jīva, and avoid at the same time any fragmentation of reality. He does it through what he calls yogyatā.

Yogyatā or aptitude is bipolar in its significance. Being a potentiality it is passive to a large extent. In this sense only the grace of God could have it actuated whether before or after release. However, the same potentiality is also positively determined for this or that status, so that a particular jīva can realize only his yogyatā and no other. For it has been so determined from all eternity.

11. Yadvanādīrviśeṣo na sāmpratam kathameva saḥ/ adṛṣṭā- 
deva cādṛṣṭam svikṛtaṁ sarvavādhibhiḥ/ ākasmiko viśeṣaścēda- 
dṛste kvaścidīgates/ sarvātṛā'kasmikatvam svānādīrṣṭaṁ apēkekaśtā 
ḥavet/ adṛṣṭācched viśeṣo'yamanādītvam kuto na tat/ 
—A.V. III, 4, 129ss

12. Anādiyogyatām caiva kalivānIśvarāvadhim/ ko nivārayi-
tum śakto yuktyāgamasabaloḍhatām//—A.V. III, 4, 103
again to these determinations one jīva differs from another 'qualitatively' or in his essence, not only numerically, as the puruṣas of the Śāṅkhyaś do.

A parallel idea and in a way complementary to yogystā is what Madhva calls pratibimba or reflection. God in this conception is taken as the exemplar or bimba, whom each jīva in its own way reflects through its essence. This is undoubtedly a far cry from the Advaita conception where the apparent limitations and differences of the one, undivided Brahman are sought to be explained by means of his reflection through apādhi. Presumably to keep away such Advaitic overtones Madhva asserts resolutely—jīvasya sadrātvan ca cittvamātram, na ca param.13 jīva's likeness consists solely in that it is spiritual by nature, and not in anything else. Also it is in this sense alone that the form of these spiritual essences must be recognized as a reflection. What point is there in arguing then that the resemblance is total, or worse, that it is dependent on upādhi? After all in the analogy of the sun's reflection we do not say that the image of the sun depends on water, but we only understand that it has a relation to the sun which it resembles to some extent. So too the jīva is fashioned as a permanent reflection of the Lord, and the reflection consists in the resemblance of bliss etc. Since the resemblance is of the essence of jīva it can never be destroyed. The mechanism of the reflection, too, points to the same conclusion. For no

![13. Jīvasya sadrātvan ca cittvamātram na cāpaṇam/ tāvan-mātrena cābhāso rūpam esām cidātmanām/ nopaḍhyadātādyaiśca natisamya nidarsane/ kincit sukhādāśrayam apimenesaran rте/ ...jīva ābhāsa uddīṣṭāh sadaīva paramātmanāḥ/ na jālyatāḥ sūryāḥ pratibimbopeṣāvatāḥ/ tadadhīnatvam evet... kincit sadrāyam eva ca/—A.V. III, 2, 125b-29

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destruction of the resemblance is possible if the exemplar, the condition allowing reflection and their proximity remain undestroyed. To be sure the mirror, too, should be real. And what else could be that mirror except the jīva himself who is spiritual by nature? That is why we may rightly declare that each form of the Blessed One is a reflection, and this reflection is called jīva.  

14. Na hyupādhībhīmvasannidhyanāḥ sati ca predaṅgakaśe/ svacyāṃ evaṃ pradaṅgakaśaṃ cittvāt/—G. Bh., II 18  

15. Tasya pratibimbatvam uktvā caśabdena bhedam darśayati/ rūpam rūpam prati rupo babhūva/ bahavaḥ sūryakā yadvat sūrya- svaḥ sadṛśajale/ evam evātmākā loke paramātmasaḍṛśatā ityādi/ ātā eva bhinnatvatadhiṇatvasaḍṛśayair eva sūryakādyupamā/ nopaḥhya-dhiṇatvādināḥ/*—B.S. Bh. III, 2, 18
B. The Hierarchy of Jīvas

Once the jīvas are seen in their individual and distinctive nature we may consider the order they constitute in the spiritual hierarchy. It is needless to state that this hierarchy or tārātāmya as Madhva calls it, refers to an rounds up the notion of yogyātā. Like yogyātā, too, its basis is essentially spiritual in what it is and what it is not, as well as what it can and cannot be. Also like yogyātā it enjoys a certain amount of flexibility, though that flexibility in its turn has its own limitations. In his Tattva-sankhyāna Madhva has adumbrated a scheme, classifying the jīvas in relation to the only thing that ultimately matters, namely liberation.¹

The highest among the jīvas is Śrī, the consort of the Supreme and presiding deity—abhimāṇi-devatā—of prakṛti.² Hence she has been called cetana-prakṛti with respect to the jağa-prakṛti she presides over. Being the favourite—atipriyā—of the Lord she enjoys the highest honour among all the asvatantra beings, which is next only to that of the Supreme. Her status of being the singularly beloved confers a sort of all-round perfection though she still remains infinitely far removed from the Lord.³ Also in her person alone

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1. duḥkhasprstam tadasprstam iti āvedhaiva cetanām/ nityāduḥkhād bhārāmanteyu tu sprṣṭaduḥkhāḥ samastāsah/ sprṣṭadikṣhāḥ vimuktaśca duḥkhasam-sthā iti dvidia/ duḥkhasamstha muktiyogyāḥ yogāḥ iti cādvidhā/ devaśiptinpanarā iti muktās tu pācādaḥ/ evam vimuktiyogyāca tamogāḥ sṛtisamsthāḥ/ iti dvidia muktiyogyāḥ dāityarāṣṭhāpiśācaḥ/ māryādhamāścaturdhāvaḥ tamoyogyāḥ pra-kirītāḥ/ te ca prāptādhatamasah sṛtisamsthā itidvidhā/ --T.S., p.l.b.

2. A.V. II, 3, 90

3. alpa'pi hyamṛta devī śrīṁ pūrṇa'tipriyatvataḥ iti ca/ --Ch.U.Bh. VII 5 (p.454).
we find one who has been left eternally untouched by any contamination of misery or defect. She could be thus characterized as always blissful and knowing. As mentioned earlier, the very essence of Śrī as that of Viṣṇu, being her cognitive organ, knowledge belongs to her by essence, a knowledge that is bounded by no limits, though all the while it is subject to the knowledge of the Lord. We might even go to the extent of declaring that in a way her sway is co-extensive with that of her Consort over Space and Time. That is why she is known as Samanā.

Brahmā, the Four-Faced (caturmukha), who comes immediately next traces his birth to Viṣṇu and Śrī. He is the best of the Brāhmanas, the caste being prevalent even among the gods. Brahmā rules over the universe as a guru or instructor, for knowing as he does the Veda in its entirety he can govern the world in accordance with its prescriptions. In this he is assisted by Vāyu, the very next in command and status. Vāyu is a kṣatriya by caste, though born of Brahmā himself whom he is to replace in the next kalpa. One may describe him as the spirit that penetrates every element in the universe, sustains

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4. prakṛtistena ca'viṣṭa tadvasā na hariḥ svayam/ tato' nantoṣeñāṁ ca balajāpītiṣukhādibhibh/ gunaiḥ sarvaistena' pyaṣya prasadad dosavarjita/ sarvāda sukhārupa ca sarvāda jñānārūpinī/—B.A.U.Bh., III 5, 4 (p.262).

5. deśataḥ kālataśca vyāptyā samo na paramapurīṣo yasyāḥ sa samanā/—B.S.Bh., XV 2, 7

6. tato jātaḥ pumān nāma brahmā'yaṁ vāsudevataḥ/—A.V. II, 3, 90a

7. rudrad anye tathā rudrā vāyoranye ca vāyavaḥ/ aṅgexa-vānye ca vasavo vaiṣya ityeva kirtitah/ eka eva harṣijetah parivārvivarjitaḥ/ vāyavāṁ kṣatriyāṁ srṣṭvā punarāpārāṁ graham/ icchān bahuparivāram vaiśyāṁ devan sasārja ca/ tato bahutaranicchan sudrān devan sasārja ca/ asvinau prthivi calva kāla mṛtyava eva ca/ śūdadevāṁ samuddiṣṭā devavāṁ iti smṛtāḥ/—B.A.U.Bh. III, 5 (pp.274-75).

8. Spirit, that is in the original, Latin sense: breath or wind.
it and makes the Cosmos hold on harmoniously. Hence he is known as dharma or the sustainer. Attachment to Viṣṇu, viṣṇu-bhakti, is so much of his essence that he leads other creatures infallibly to the Lord, as a yuvarāja might lead the humblest subject to the august royal presence.  

There are other minor gods too, like the two ministers of Viṣṇu, Garuḍa and Śeṣa. The first is birdlike in form and serves the Lord as his mount; the second is a serpent on which Viṣṇu reposes. And so the list may be continued comprising gods beyond count, even up to those who preside over filth and excrement. But whatever be their nature and function they are all co-ordinated or subordinated hierarchically in their origin and work with the result that the lowest touch those immediately higher to them, and those in turn depend on the correspondingly higher. We saw how Brahmā has his birth in Viṣṇu and his consort, and Vāyu in the Four-faced one. The same Brahmā is the common progenitor of other gods too, like Sadāśiva, Ananta, Garuḍa, Śukra as well as Varuna, Soma, Śūrya and Yama. In the Mādhva conception of yogyātā, particularly bimba-pratibimba, we have another element that binds the jīvas to their source and with one another even more intimately. For as his shadow resembles a man and depends on him, so Brahmā and all the jīvas bear a likeness to the Supreme and depend on him in their appearance, in their movements—in their very existence. But there is a gradation even in this


10. vinmūtrāksyādīmaṇīyino yathā'pabhraṣṭādevatāḥ/ sūryā- dibhyastataivalyaṃ sansārī paramāt prathak/ dehadośaisca duṣ- tavrādabhrāṣṭāhyadevatāḥ/ anyāḥ sūryādidevebhayo hyanugrā- hyāśca taṁ sadā/—A.V. II 3, 82-83
'shadowing'. Ramā is the shadow of Viṣṇu, and Vāyu is the shadow of Ramā. Garuḍa and Śeṣa are the shadows of Vāyu, Indra and Kāma of Garuḍa and Śeṣa, and all the rest of Indra and Kāma. Similarly Brahmā, too, is the shadow of Hari, Sarasvatī of Brahmā, Garuḍa and Śeṣa of Sarasvatī, Indra and Kāma of Garuḍa and Śeṣa, and so on for the rest. In their power as well as in the exercise of it all these jīvas are dependent on one another and ultimately on the supreme Hari himself.\textsuperscript{11}

Besides the gods we have four kinds of jīvas who are saved or will be saved one day. They are the sages (Ṛṣi), the manes (pitṛ), the kings (pā) and men (nara). And finally there is the group of jīvas that are damned, who will never be fit for release, but will either continue their cycle of births in this world for ever, or will suffer in hell for all eternity.\textsuperscript{12}

This last part of the classification has generated so much heat between the admirers and the critics of Madhva that we must needs treat it at length in our last chapter.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} Yathaisai puruṣe ochāyā etasminnetedātatasam/ chāyā yathā puṣpadrā pumadhīnā ca drṣyate/ evamevātmakāḥ sarve brahmādyāḥ paramātmanāḥ/ satāpratītikāryeṣu pumadhīno yathेyate/ ābhāsa evam puruṣa muktāṣcā paramātmanāḥ/ chāyā visno ramā tasyāṣcāyā dhūtā viṣeṣakau/ tasyāṃdrakāmau ca tasyoṣṭoryanve'ktihā api/ harerbrahmā'sya gīṭasyā viṣeṣāvindra etayoh/ māreścā'bhasakāḥ sarva etayostadadhiṃsteḥ/ sarve'lpāṣaktasyāṣcāva pūrṇaśaktiḥ paro harib/ cetenātve'pi bhinnāste tasmādetena sarvāḥ/

\textsuperscript{12} Of. note 1, p.111

\textsuperscript{13} Vide pp. 220 ss

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