Nijaguna's conception of Ultimate Reality

The Nature of Ultimate Reality

Ultimate Reality, according to Nijaguna Shivayogi, is non-dual. It is an undivided indivisible unity of existence, the infinite principle of Consciousness and Bliss. His non-dual Reality or the Absolute is termed Shambhulinga. Nijaguna Shivayogi has used several synonymous terms to refer to the one and the same Reality, they are: Parabrahma, Paratattva, Paramātma, Sarvādiṣṭana, isuddhacittu, Tatpadalaxyartha, Nija, Nijatattva, aripūṇa, Cinmātra, Arivu and Ātman.

1. Jñānapratipādanasthala 22.5.
4. Paramārtha Geete, 1.2, 6.9, 10.11.
5. Paramānubhava bodhe 4.3.8.
6. Ibid. 4.8.7, 4.8.8, 4.8.9.
8. Jñāna Pratipādanasthala, 15.1.2 and 3.
9. Ibid. 15.5 and 28.2.
This Reality is of the nature of Sat, Cit, Ananda, paripurna, Nitya, Nija, Niratisaya, Nirvikalpa and Nirupādhi. These are the Swarūpa laksānas (indicatory marks or essential description or definition with reference to the essence) of Shambhulinga. All these Nine Swarūpalakṣaṇas have been mentioned in order to avoid the ativyāptidōga or the fallacy of too vide a definition. If, for instance either only one Swarūpalakṣaṇa or only some (and not all) Swarūpalakṣaṇas of Shambhulinga, such as either only Ananda (Bliss) or only Sat (Being), Nitya (Eternal) and Niratisaya (Infinite) are mentioned those laksānas would be seen equally applicable to things other than Shambhulinga or Brahman. For instance Ananda or Bliss or Happiness is a characteristic which can be said to be applicable by some to the worldly pleasures (Viṣayānanda) also. Similarly a mention of only some characteristics like Sat (Being) Nitya (Eternal) Niratisaya (Infinite) can be said to be applicable to a thing other than Shambhulinga or Brahman. Such as Prakriti or Nature. Hence the Ultimate Reality is defined in terms of all the nine of its Swarūpalakṣaṇas.

1. Anubhava Sara, 1.4.3. (Varasacchidananda Paripurna nitya nija niratisaya nirvikalpa nirupadhiya- girutirpudondu Parabrahma)

namely, Sat, Cit, Ananda, Paripūrna, Nitya, Nija, Niratisaya, Nirvikalpa and Nirupādhi. All these characteristics stand for the pure non-relational situation. Shambhulinga is Pure-Sat, Pure-cit, Pure-Bliss etc., all in one. However this does not mean that Shambhulinga is either a mere sum total of them or even a synthesis of them. For, each one of these swarūpalakṣaṇas of Shambhulinga is really speaking all the others also—each Swarūpalakṣaṇa being united intrinsically and organically with all the others in a relation of unspeakable impartite identity. Therefore one of them is really speaking all of them and all of them are really speaking any one of them.

This Reality is Akhanda (distinctionless and divisionless). It is devoid of all distinctions, external as well as internal (Sajātiya, Vijātiya and Swagata bhedaś). Reality does not have any of the above types of differences because it is Niravayava or partless like Ākāśa (space).¹

Reality according to Sri Nījugna Shivāyōgi is 'Jananamarśarahaḥita'² i.e. without birth & death, Nishkriya (actionless), Nirvikalpa (undifferentiated) Adwaya (non-dual) and Achalita (motionless) Principle.³

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1. Jñāna Pratīpaḍana Sthala, 10.1 (Swagatādibhedavatmananānīlīlāventene gaganadantire niravayavanāgī)
2. Paramānubhavabodhe 3.11.4
3. Ibid 3.14.7
It is self-luminous and which transcends the subject object duality and the trinity of knower, known and knowledge and all the categories of intellect. It is the unqualified Absolute. It is the only Reality. Shambhulinga is everything and everything is Shambhulinga and is verily yourself (i.e. Atman) says Nijaguna. This is beyond proof and disproof. This can never be denied, for the very idea of denial presupposes it. It cannot be doubted, for all doubts rest on it. All assertions, all doubts, all denials, presupposes it. It is not adventitious or derived. It is self-proved. This Absolute cannot be referred to either as 'I' or as 'other than that'. There is neither Dr̥kā (seer) nor Drśyā (the seen). This cannot be known either through direct or through indirect way (Ajnēya).

This Shambhulinga is without beginning and end, is beyond bondage and liberation (Taṇḍāluṇa) and there is nothing which is equal to it or which can replace

1. Ibid, 4.8.7
2. Ibid, 4.8.8
3. Anubhavasaṣṭa, 1.6.2

(.... Nīnekēlparamātma)
to it; there is neither Vāk (speech) nor manas (mind) nor any aid to know it. This Shambhulinga is beyond the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas & Tamas, beyond any symbols and beyond Māyā and its āvarana and vāsana and know that this is Pure-cit. This Pure-cit is the Parabrahma or Shambhulinga which is Sat, Cit, Ānanda, Nitya, Mirmala and Swayamjyoti Swarūpa. In this Absolute situation there is neither Dvaita nor Advaita, there is neither sat nor asat, neither Cit, nor acit for it is beyond any expression which remains Ānandada Paripūrna.

In another place Nijaguṇa Shivayōgi sings: "Nija Ṣabāraḍu Sampenna, adu vacanake gōcharamallendu, adu manasake viṣayamallendu." Oh, accomplished one, we should not merely speculate regarding Reality, which cannot be reached by words and by mind. That is the

1. Paramānubhava bōdhe : 4.8.8
2. Paramānubhava bōdhe : 4.8.9
4. i) Paramārtha Geete, 10. 10 (Kudadvaitamdvaitampōgi śnumtōrāde bari bayātiōgi ānandada purjavetānāgi....)
   ii) Ibid, 10.11 (Sattenalillavasattenalilla, Cittenalillavacittenalilla adu kēlbhāvake gōcharamalla....)
5. Ibid, 1.2.
nature of Ultimate Reality. It is not knowable by words, nor is it an object of mind. He has further mentioned about the nature of that Reality as 'Sattyajñāna Sukhātmaka, 'Nityaparipūrṇa' and 'Drṣṭyavilakṣaṇa'. Reality is Pure-existence (Sattya), perfect in knowledge (Jñāna), ever blissful (Sukhātmaka) and unique in appearance (Drṣṭyavilakṣaṇa). On these points the late Prof. R.D. Ranade has compared Nijaguna Shivayōgi's description of Ultimate Reality with Badarāyaṇa's as contained in 2, 1, 4 of his Vedānta śūtras. Mentioning this Sūtra of Badarāyaṇa while explicating the above verse of Nijaguna in his 'Pathway to God in Kannada literature' the late Prof. R.D. Ranade says: "The second point is also a very important one, namely, 'nityajñānaparipūrṇa, drṣṭyavilakṣaṇa, eternal, perfect in knowledge, unique in appearance.' Reality is infinite in both ways, in space as well as in time and drṣṭyavilakṣaṇa, it is entirely unique, i.e., different from what can be either seen or heard or sensed. Now look at the word Vilakṣaṇa 'unique'. That is the word upon which Badarāyaṇa has laid so much stress.

1. Paramārtha Geete, 1, 2, lines 6, 7, 8 and 9.
3. Ibid, P.214
Reality is absolutely vilakṣana: Vilakṣanatvadasya, tathatvamcasabdāt (Brahman is) not (the cause of the world) because this (world) is of a contrary nature (from Brahman) and its being so (is known) from the scriptures." Explicating further the nature of Reality as 'Satyajñāna sukhamāka', as characterized by Nijagūṇa in the above verse, Prof Ranade says: "It has got nothing to do with what we know as the phenomenal world; Nitya (eternal), Jñānaparipūrṇa (perfect in knowledge) and Sukhātmaka (ever blissful) mean exactly what the Sanskrit expression, Saccidānanda does. Sat is Nitya; Cit is Jñānaparipūrṇa and Ānanda is Sukhātmaka. So Reality is infinite both in time and space, the very perfection of knowledge, and is blissful or beatific, saccidānanda-svarūpa. What does it mean? It means what the European Philosophy tells us, i.e., Reality is truth, it is consciousness, and it is bliss; that is exactly what the expression saccidānanda means. Thus, we find that Reality is Drsyavilaksana and Saccidānanda.¹

This Reality — although it is beyond the reach of mind & words — is not regarded by Nijagūṇa as being one which entirely escapes us. For he declares with his

supreme mystical confidence that it is 'Vasya' or 'the one that can be conquered or attained and possessed.' This attainment or realization, he says, is possible through intense spiritual concentration or 'lakṣya' as he puts it. That such an ultimate spiritual realization is possible is also, he says, the contemplated declaration of the entire corpus of the sruti texts (Vasyamidendene lakṣisikottu, manasige-gōcharamendenisutta Jānisi Pūlitu srutigala motta).

That besides the consensus of the Sruti-texts Nijagunā also marshalls the evidence of his own immense and unique spiritual intuition in support of the view that the Ultimate Reality, though non-cognizable by mind and intellect, is nevertheless intuitively attainable we shall be seeing in sufficient measure in our subsequent chapters.
Two conceptions of Ultimate Reality that are traditionally discussed in Advaita are taken up for consideration by Nijaguna Shivyāgī. In the Advaita tradition the nature of Ultimate Reality is considered from two different angles or standpoints, namely, from the Vyavahārika or the ordinary Empirical Standpoint and from the Pāramarthika or the Transcendental Standpoint. Viewed from the ordinary empirical standpoint the Ultimate Reality or Brahman is characterised as Saguna Brahman or Brahman with qualities and viewed from the transcendental standpoint it is characterised as Nirguna Brahman or Brahman without qualities. The Saguna Brahman or Brahman with qualities — who is also called Īśwara in the Advaita tradition — is the creator, the sustainer, and the destroyer of the whole universe. In addition to these three functions of Īśwara Nijaguna adds two more, namely, 'Niyamana' or controlling and 'Anupravesha' or entering into the world. The Saguna Brahman has also been called Īśwara or Mahēśwara or Shiva by Nijaguna Shivyāgī, who, he says, is


2. Anubhavāsara, 2.2.1, 2.2.7, 2.5.2 and see also Paramārtha Geete, 1.4 (last line).
Sarvajña (omniscient), Sarvasakta (Omnipotent), Sarvantaryāmi (Omnipresent), Sarvēśwara (the Lord of all), Sarvaniyantru (all-controller) and Sarvātmaka (the soul of all). ¹

Pure-Cit or Shambhulinga says Nijagūṇa, (which, as we know, is Nijagūna’s name for it at many places), has appeared both as Īśwara and as Jīva due to Upādhi² (Delimiting adjunct). Īśwara is due to Māyā³ and Jīva is due to the ahāmkara which is the modification (avastāntara) of Māyā.⁴ Īśwara is both material and efficient cause for the whole creation (Nimittavumupādāna Vahanāgī).⁵ Like the spider, which is both material and efficient cause for its web, and like Devadatta, who is both material and efficient cause for the nails and hair and like the Jīva who is both material and efficient cause for his nine qualities (i.e. buddhi, pleasure and pain etc.), Īśwara is both material and efficient cause for this creation.⁶ Īśwara as per the above account,

² Anubhava Sāra, 2.2 (see Sūtra)
³ Ibid, 2.2.1
⁴ Ibid, 2.2.3
⁵ Ibid, 2.5.6
⁶ Ibid, 2.5, 8-10
may appear to be undergoing change or transformation. But Nījaguṇa Shivayogī has made it amply clear in his writings, that Īśwara is not Vikāri or the one who undergoes change or distortion. Īśwara, says Nījaguṇa, is not Vikāri. He, says he, is avikāri (changeless). Nījaguṇa compares the avikāratva or the changelessness of Īśwara to the changelessness of the Sun when his rays cause fire by passing through the sun-crystal. In the above mentioned example, says Nījaguṇa, neither the Sun has 'yatna' (effort) nor the sun-crystal has 'icche' (wish) to create fire. In the same way, says Nījaguṇa, Īśwara like the Sun has no 'yatna' or effort and māyā like the sun-crystal has no 'icche' or wish to produce the 'akhila-tattvas' or the elements of the entire phenomenal world which, he says, have emerged like the flames of fire in the above example.1 Again, a question may be asked: "How can this world or 'akhila-tattvas' emerge only out of the Pure-Cit which is one without a Second?".2 For, in the above mentioned example there are two things, the sun and the sun-crystal, and out of them the fire emerges. Nījaguṇa answers the above question with another illustration. Just as the sun who is the

1. Ibid, 2.5.14
2. Ibid, 2.5.15
cause for raining and who reflects himself in the rainwater is neither putting any effort nor is changing his nature, so also Ṣvāra, although he causes or creates the whole world through maya (which is having avinābhūta-sambandha with Ṣvāra) and enters into the Jivas through, remains avikāri or changeless.¹ Nījagūṇa takes the help of a statement from the Taittārīya Upaniṣat in support of the above contention of his and in the next stanza of his poem says as follows: 'Ṭāne Pṛteeśutali tānauvām tādevānu Prāvīsatenute Vṛdavihūdaṇi'.² [having created (the world) He Himself enters into it – as the Vēda states; 'He entered into it']. Thus Nījagūṇa has accepted the Sannidhāna Kartrutva (causing by mere presence) of Ṣvāra and he has neither accepted the Sankalpa Kartrutva of the Naiyayika's according to which Ṣvāra, who is having eternal will, knowledge and effort to create the world—which fact leads to eternal creation and eternal bondage and suffering etc., – nor the general Karma Kartrutva according to which Ṣvāra who, like the pot-maker (Kūlāla), creates the world is subject to birth and death like Kūlāla and to other defects like suffering the quality of creating and destroying his own self or of...

1. Anubhavāśra 2.5. 16-17
2. Ibid, 2.5.18 (the original Taitt̄ārīya Upaniṣat statement runs as follows: 'Yadidam Kincherṣṭva tādevānuprāvīṣat' 2.6)
getting created and destroyed by another Īśwara etcetera (anyonyāśraya, chakrikāpatti and anavasthādi).

Therefore, declares Nījaguṇa, the whole world, with its multiplicity, is emerging (Udiṣu) out of the anirvāchanīya māyā in the presence of Īśwara.²

Īśwara no doubt creates, sustains and destroys the whole world. But the world, says Nījaguṇa, is absolutely non-existent from the stand-point of Shambhulinga,³ that is to say this world rests on our ignorance. Description of Iśwara as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world is true only from the practical point of view, that is to say so long as the world-appearance is regarded as real. Creatorship (sustainership etc.) of the world do not constitute Shambhulinga's essence or real nature (Swarupa-lakṣana). That is the description of what are merely accidental attributes (tatastha-lakṣana) of Shambhulinga which do not touch his essence. The world, so long as it

1. See Śiromaṇi's commentary on Anubhava sāra on 2.6.1-4.

2. Anubhavaśāra, 2.6.5 (Adukaṇanadim jagattidu tānanirvachyapadavāda mayeyiṁdiśa sannidhi-yōlūdisuvadanaṁkavidhavāgi)

3. Paramānubhavabodhe, 3.11
appears, is in Shambhulinga, for he is the only Reality. For example, the snake conjured out of the rope is no-where else except in the rope. Shambhulinga, however, is not, really, touched by the imperfections of the world just as the rope is not affected by any illusory characters of the snake. Hence, says Nijaguna, Shambhulinga or Brahman from the transcendental point of view (Paramārthikadristi) cannot be described by the qualities which relate to the world. Shambhulinga in himself is devoid of all distinctions, external as well as internal (Sajātiya, Vijātiya and Swagatha bhēdas). Shambhulinga, in this absolutely transcendent-aspect, says Nijaguna, cannot be described at all and is therefore called indeterminate or Nirguna. From this it follows Sat, Cit and Ananda etc. are not qualities of Shambhulinga as he is nirguna. These only indicate that Shambhulinga is not non-existence (asat), not unconsciousness (jaḍa) and not of the nature of misery (dukha) etcetera.

1. Anubhava sāra, 1.6.5
2. Jnana Pratīpādanaasthala, 10.1
3. Paramānubhavabōdhe, 1.5.1
It is immutable as it is devoid of modifications of properties of characteristics and of all five States. Whatever is experienced is limited, impure, non-intelligent and destructible. Being the nature of pure and absolute eternity, intelligence etc., the nature of Shambhulinga cannot be defined by a mere relational knowledge of these. No expression of it can be affirmed. It can rather inadequately be described, not in positive terms but only in terms of what it is not. Only a negative definition of it as 'not this', 'not this', (nēti, nēti), which again is inadequate, may be attempted. Yet Shambhulinga should not on that account be simply taken to be merely negative, as it is the positive ground of all negations. Nijaguna says: 'Though Shambhulinga, is beyond 'arivu' (i.e. Vrittijnāna) and has not been covered by 'maredvu' (i.e. ignorance) it is not 'baridu' (Sūnya or empty nothing) but is 'meredēkarasa' i.e. it is the positive ground of all these expressions as it is a self-proved (Swayam siddha) and self-shining (Swayam-prakāsha) principle.'2 Shambhulinga, who is 'Ekamēvādviteeya' (the one without a second), is the Non-relational Nirguna Brahman. He is acosmic or nisprapancha. "The non-relative is the 'acosmic' and

1. the five states are: Jāgrata, Swapna, Sushupti, Turīya and Turyātītā. (See Jñānapratipādana sthala, 19)
2. Jñānapratipādana sthala, 33.3
is truly above the positive and negative, above the usual pairs of contraries and contradictories in any scheme of dichotomy or dialectics.\(^1\)

This non-relational-Nirguna Brahman is beyond the reach of mind and speech (Vangmanasatīta). Our mind, which works only within the framework of categories of understanding, cannot understand the thing-in-itself which transcends all categories of understanding. Our speech also cannot convey it because it is anaksara and beyond symbol. But it is nevertheless 'Nitya-bodha' or ever-apprehended. Because it is 'Suddha-anubhūti' or pure-experience which ever manifests itself and which is that by which everything else ever gets manifested. In this sense it is nirvisayaka (non-epistemic) because it itself is not presented to any thing else, though everything else is presented to it. In it there is no difference between the knower and the known as ontologically the knower and the known are blended together in it.\(^2\)

1. Advaita : As Philosophy and Religion
   - Dr. K.B. Ramakrishna Rao, (Pub. Prasaranga, University of Mysore; 1969)P. 79

2. Paramanubhava bōdhe, 4.6 (Sutra), see also Jñānapratipādana sthāla 32 opening line and 29.3 last line.
All this may be summed up in the following discriminating and illuminating words of Prof Eliot Deutsch:

"............., human logic is based upon phenomenal experience and thus is incapable of 'determining', without at the same time 'negating', its subject. This condition which the mind finds itself subject to leads to the necessity to distinguish two forms, as it were, of Brahman: Brahman as it is in itself, nirguṇa Brahman, or Brahman without quality; and Brahman as it is conceived by man from his limited phenomenal standpoint, Saguṇa Brahman, or Brahman with qualities. The affirmation of Saguṇa Brahman, however, is not merely an acknowledgement of human limitations; it is also the name for that spiritual experience that harmonizes rather than obliterates distinctions. Saguṇa Brahman is the 'content' of a loving experience of unity; nirguṇa Brahman is the 'content' of an intuitive experience of identity. Saguṇa Brahman is not the highest possible form of experience; nevertheless, it is an extremely valuable experience in that it enables the Advaitin to affirm on one level of being the essential spirituality of everything that has being."¹ Then explaining

the ultimate 'Nirguna' character of Brahman Prof. Deutsch says: "Brahman, ......., is a name for that fullness of being which is the 'content' of non-dualistic spiritual experience: an experience in which all distinctions between subject and object are shattered and in which remains only a pure, unqualified 'oneness'.

The characterization of Brahman as saccidananda — as infinite being (Sat), Consciousness (Cit), and bliss (Ananda) — is intended not so much to ascribe attributes to Brahman as it is to describe the primary moments or features of the non-dualistic experience itself."¹ And it is in this sense of describing 'the primary moments or features of the non-dualistic experience itself', and not in the sense of ascribing attributes to Brahman, that we have to take the following unparalleled encyclopaedic description of the essential nature of Brahman given by Sri Nijaguña Shivayogi, namely that Brahman or Shāhulīnga is Nitya (Eternal), Nirmāla (Pure), Nirāraṇa (Non-covered), Nirmāya (Non-illusory), Nirguna (Non-qualified), Niśkarma (Non-acting), Niśkala (Not having any visible marks), Niṣprapancha (Acosmic), Niragha (Non-guilty), Niśēpa (Non-attached), Niśmāya (Not subject to a limbs), Niravadya (Non-blamable), Nissanga (Non-attached), Nirdwanda (Non-duelling), Nirikula (Plenary), Niśkāmpa (Non-tremulous), Niṣṭattva (Non-categorical)

¹. Ibid, Pp. 13-14
Nirāśraya (Non-supported), Nirāvasēsa (Non-residuous), Niravadhi (Non-dural), Nirupama (Incomparable), Niratisaya (Non-exceeded), Nityānanda (Ever-Blissful), Nirūpadhika (Non-delimited), Nirūlamba (Non-dependent), Niranjana (spotless), Nirūpa (Formless), Paranjyoti Swarūpa (of the Nature of Ultimate Light), Anagha (Guiltlessness), Adwaya (Non-dual), Nityamukta (Ever-Liberated), Satyānanda (Truely Blissful), Anupama (Non-similar), Avirala (compact) Anavadhī (Un-expiring), Aganita (Non-countable), Pūrṇa (Complete), Aja (Unborn), Amṛta (Undieing), Aksara (Indestructible), Achala (Unmoving), Aparināmi (Non-transformable), Aspara (Untouched), Asanga (Un-attached), Abhaya (Fearless), Akārtṛu (Non-doer), Abhोktru (Non-enjoyer), Ajñātru (Non-knower) and Ananthu (Non-ending).

1. Nijaguna Shivayogi: Viveka Chintamani (Ibid), P.267
2. Jnanapratipadanasthala 15. 1-2; 36.4; Paramanubhabodhe 3.14.7; and 16.10
4. Ibid, 32.1
5. Ibid, 32.3
6. Ibid, 32.4
7. Ibid, 32.5
8. The adjectives of Brahman mentioned hereafter are founds scattered in different places in the works of Sri Nijaguna Shivayogi.