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ANANTAKRṢṆĀŚĀSTRĪ'S DEFENCE OF AVIDYĀLEŚĀ

Liberation (*mokṣa*) is regarded as the highest human goal (*paramapuruṣārtha*) by the theistic schools of Indian Philosophy.¹ The Advaitins speak of two kinds of *mukti* — *aparamukti* or *kramamukti*, and *paramukti* or *videhamukti*.² *Kramamukti* is for those people who meditate upon the *saguṇabrahman*. After death they reach the respective *loka* of their chosen deity like *Vaikunṭha*, *Kailāsa*, etc.

Videhamukti is attained by that person who has realized his oneness with Brahman even while embodied. This state is known as *jīvanmukti*. In other words the person who has realized the true nature of his self is liberated here and now. Yet, his body does not fall off immediately : he continues to carry on his activities as long as his *prārabdhakarma*, which has given him this body, is exhausted. Such a person is called *jīvanmukta*. Once his *prārabdhakarma* is exhausted, his body falls and he becomes one with the all-pervasive Brahman.

To the objection — how can a person who has realized his oneness with the all-pervasive Brahman, continue to carry on his activities which involve a sense of duality — the Advaitins reason out *avidyāleśa*

as the cause. The fragrance of a flower kept in a box for a long time continues in the box for sometime even after the flower is removed. In the same way, although the knowledge of Brahman has destroyed the ignorance concealing the *jīva*, yet, a latent impression called *saṃskāra* or *leśa* of *avidyā* continues for sometime. It is only because of this *avidyāleśa*, that the *jīvanmukta* is able to perceive the world of duality for some time.³

The Dvaitins object to this concept of *avidyāleśa* and *jīvanmukti*. Śrī Jayatīrtha of the Dvaita school criticizes these concepts in his *Nyāyasudhā*. Śrī Ananta-kṛṣṇāśāstri presents this criticism of Jayatīrtha as the *prima-facie* view in his *Advaitatattvasudhā* and later refutes it.

Thus he presents the Advaitins as holding that although the knowledge of Brahman destroys *avidyā*, yet, there persists the latent impression of *avidyā* termed *saṃskāra* or *leśa* which accounts for the perception of the world of duality by the *jīvanmukta*. But this is not sound. When the material cause is destroyed, its effect too is destroyed. For example, when thread, the material cause of the cloth is destroyed, cloth, too, is destroyed. Similarly when *avidyā*, the cause, is destroyed by the knowledge of Brahman, its effect *saṃskāra* too must be destroyed.⁴ If it is held that this *saṃskāra* is not sublated by the knowledge of Brahman, it would mean that it is also a real entity apart from Brahman, which is against the non-dual standpoint of Advaita. Further where does this *saṃ-*

skāra exist? The self cannot be its locus as it remains in its pristine nature of *asaṅgatva*, not being attached to anything at the time of liberation. The *saṃskāra* too cannot exist without any locus.⁵

Moreover what is this *avidyāleśa*? 1. Is this a part (*avayava*) of *avidyā*? 2. Is this in the realm of *avidyā*? 3. Is this an attribute (*dharma*) of *avidyā*?

The first one is not possible, because, being a beginningless entity, *avidyā* cannot be admitted to be possessing parts. The second one, too, is not possible, for *avidyā* does not pertain to any realm. The last one, too, is not possible as it is well known that the attribute (*dharma*) cannot exist apart from the locus *dharmi*. Since *avidyā* 'the *dharmi*' is destroyed, its *dharma* the *leśa* too cannot exist.⁶ Hence the Advaitic standpoint of *avidyāleśa* and *jīvanmukti* does not stand to reason.

Śrī Ananta-kṛṣṇāśāstri answers these objections of the Dvaitins in his *Advaitatattvasudhā* thus: When an aspirant has the direct knowledge of Brahman, *avidyā* and its offspring bondage is annihilated.⁷ But when it is said that *avidyā* is annihilated in the case of *jīvanmukta*, it means that of the two powers of *avidyā*, namely, *āvaraṇaśakti*, the power of concealment, and *vikṣepaśakti*, the power of projection, only the *āvaraṇaśakti* is annihilated. As a result, since the obscuring sheet of *avidyā* concealing the true nature of *jīva* is removed, he realizes his oneness with Brahman. On the other hand, the power of projection (*vikṣepaśakti*) of *avidyā* continues to exist.⁸ It presents the world of

duality to the *jīvanmukta*. Since the *āvaraṇaśakti* is inoperative, the *jīvanmukta* sees the world in its true nature as a superimposed entity on the underlying consciousness. The *jīvanmukta* can be compared to a man, who, after realizing that he has mistaken a rope for the serpent remains unaffected by the false serpent.

Śrī Anantakṛṣṇāśāstri contents that this *āvaraṇaśakti* of *avidyā* alone is referred to by the names of *saṃskāra*, *leśa*, *prārabdhakarma*, etc. The *jīvanmukta* in the state of *samādhi*, does not perceive any name and form of the universe. In the waking state he sees it only as superimposed on Brahman. Hence *saṃskāra* is only the *vikṣepaśakti* of *avidyā* and is not either a part, in the realm or an attribute of *avidyā*.⁹

Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvati in his parallel line of thinking supports this in his *Advaitasiddhi* thus: The lingering effect of *ajñāna* is referred to as *leśa*. It is well known that *apūrva* or unseen merit arising from the performance of a sacrifice persists even after the sacrifice has ended and is conducive in giving rise to the desired fruit of the sacrifice. In the same way although at the advent of knowledge, *avidyā* is annihilated, yet, it remains in its latent form and is referred to as *leśa*. Hence there is no incompatibility in accepting *avidyāleśa* or *jīvanmukti*.¹⁰

Thus while the Dvaitins criticize and object to the Advaitic concept of *avidyāleśa* and *jīvanmukti*, the Advaitins justify *avidyāleśa* through sound reasoning in a realistic sense.

Bibliography

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Notes

1. *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* (pp. 4-6): *iha khalu dharmārthakāmamokṣā-khyeṣu caturvidhapuruṣārtheṣu mokṣa eva paramapurūṣārthaḥ.*
2. *Advaitatattvasudhā* (vol. I, p. 615): *tatra advaitino vadanti: dvividho mokṣaḥ parāparabhedāt.*
3. *ibid.*, (p. 616): *jñānena avidyāyām nivr̥ttāyām api saṃskārātmanā dvaitadarśanānivr̥tṭyati.*
4. *ibid.*, (pp. 615-6): *atreyam nyāyasudhā..... katham avidyākāryatve saṃskārasya nivr̥tṭe 'pi tad upādāne ajñāne tasyānivr̥tṭiḥ?*
5. *ibid.*, (p. 616): *jñānānivr̥tyatvād brahmavat saṃskārasyāpi satyativāt nādvaitabhāvalakṣaṇāmuktīḥ sūpapādā. na hi saṃskārasya tadāśrayo 'saṅgaḥ ātmā bhavitum arhati. na ca nirāśrayaḥ saṃskāra ātmānaḥ labhate.*
6. *ibid*: *sa kiṃ parasya tantur ivāvayavaḥ, pradeśaviśeṣo vā dharmo vā. nādyāḥ akāryatvād avidyāyāḥ sāvayavatvāsambhavāt. ata eva na dvidīyaḥ apradeśatvād avidyāyāḥ. dharmyapagame dharmāvasthānayogāt. na tasyāvidyā dharmatvapakṣe 'pi yujyate.*
7. *ibid.*, (p. 620): *advaitasākṣātkāreṇāvidyāyām nivr̥ttāyām tadupādānakaḥ sarve 'pi bandhaḥ svayameva nivartate.*
8. *ibid*: *avidyāyā āvaraṇaśaktimātram nāśayati na vikṣepaśaktim api.*
9. *ibid*: *vikṣepaśaktir eveyam avidyāsaṃskāra iti, tal leśa iti, prārabdhakarmeti vā vyapadiśyate. jīvanmuktā hi samādhyavasthāyām leśato 'pi nāmarūpe na paśyanti. vyutthitās ca paśyanto 'pi na te tadātmanā te paśyanti.....saṃskāro 'yam ajñānasyaiva vikṣepa-*

vikṣepasaktimātram, na tv avidyāyā avayavaḥ, pradeśaḥ, dharmo vā.

10. *Advaitasiddhi* (vol. III, p. 699) : *yad vā ajñānasya suksmāvasthā leśaḥ... yāge gate 'pi yāgasūksmāvasthārūpam apūrvam yāge sādhanatānirvāhakam aṅgīkriyate, tathā ajñāne gate 'pi tatsūksmāvasthārūpo leśo.... svīkriyate.*