

Advaita Vedanta

Preface

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This paper has been written by D. Krishna Ayyar who has had the good fortune to listen for now over two decades and a half to his guru, Swami Paramarthananda, who has been teaching Advaita Vedanta at Chennai, India, as regular courses covering Upanishads, Bhagavatgita, Brahma Sutra and prakarana granthas. Writing started during a holiday spent with the writer's granddaughter, Tulsi, at Denver, USA, relying on memory and the very few books on the subject available in the Denver Public Library. The paper has been expanded, altered and refined on return to India with the guidance of his guru and has been checked with relevant texts. The general approach of the topics and the discussion of the philosophy are profusely based on transcriptions of the guru's recorded talks in the Vedanta classes conducted by him and doubts clarified by him. Whatever is good and right in the paper is due to the excellent exposition by the guru. Whatever errors there may be in the paper should be taken as the result of inadequate understanding on the part of the writer.

Sankaracarya is the first and foremost commentator of the prasthaana traya, the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutra and the Bhagavdgita, in the school of interpretation called Advaita Vedanta (non-dualism). The presentation in the main paper and Appendix contains the methodology of teaching (prakriya) called *aabhaasa vaada*. In abhaasa vada, the jiva and Iswara, the two sentient entities on the empirical (*vyaavahaarika*) plane, formed by the reflection of the original consciousness that is Brahman in Maya and intellect, respectively, are regarded as different from and of a lower order of reality than the original consciousness that is the absolutely real (*paaramaarthika*) Brahman. It is important to bear this in mind while reading this paper, because the approach in regard to the concept of jiva and the creator is different in other *prakriyas*.

1. The main paper starts with a preface.
2. Topic I provides an idea of the Hindu scripture.
3. Topic II is an outline of the philosophy.
4. Topic III presents Upanishad passages in which the philosophy is available.
5. Appendix contains notes on various topics relevant for a deeper study of the philosophy presented in the main paper. Some of these are explanatory notes; some are meant for reflection of the teaching (mananam.)

6. Topic I of Annexure is a discussion of the main prakriyas (methodologies of teaching), particularly in regard to the status of jiva and Iswara - the abhasa vada, the pratibimba vada and the avacceda vada.
7. Topic II of the Annexure gives details of the manner in which Sankaracarya, Sureswaracarya, Vidyaranya, Vacaspati Misra and Prakasatman have dealt with the topics of creation, jiva, Iswara and Maya.

The reader may find a lot of repetitions. The approach is to start with a simple presentation, and introduce refinements later. Repetitions are meant to see that the topic discussed is self-contained.

Questions concerning doubts are welcome. Please click on the "Ask a question" link on top of the page. Answers will be attempted to the best of the writer's ability.

Transliteration of Sanskrit words in the text is put in italics, when they occur for the first time. Diacritical marks have not been used, but when the Sanskrit words occur for the first time, a rough indication of the pronunciation is given. Subsequently they appear in the form usually found in simple transliteration.