

**SHUDDHAADVAITA AND VISHUDDHAADVAITA:
A PREFERENTIAL ESTIMATION**

MAMATA RANI PATI

Research Scholar, N.O.U.

Baripada, Odisha.

Email: mamataranipati22@gmail.com

Abstract:

The Advaita stand of Sankara has been criticized by Vallabha and Viswanath Baba respectively considering it to be impure. One of the major grounds of considering it to be impure is that Sankara accepts Maya to be positive and it is also connected with the Brahman. Brahman's link with Maya opens the scope for duality and makes the Advaita impure. In the paper, it is intended to examine the claims of both the critics of Sankara and to arrive at a rational choice. Vallabha has advocated a theistic doctrine by treating Srikrishna to be the Brahman. Maya is His power through which He manifests himself to this universe which is neither vivarta (illusory) nor parinaama (transformation). In the other doctrine believing in Mahima parinama vada they consider that the Absolute is the cause of the world as being transformed to this world. The non-involvement of Maya makes their Advaita free from impurity for which they have treated their Advaita doctrine to be vishuddha (pure or unalloyed or sanctified). In defense of Sankara's view, B. Kar's argument has been taken into account. Lastly, it is pointed out that in both the doctrines, Shuddhaadvaita and Vishuddhadvaita the religious leanings are quite prominent. So philosophically less sound as compared to the Advaita stand of Sankara.

Keywords: Advaita, Maya, Shuddhaadvaita and Vishuddhadvaita

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MAMATA RANI PATI

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Introduction

In the vedantic tradition of India *Advaita vada* (non-dualism) has been preferred by almost all the renowned philosophers and their followers excepting Madhva and his followers who have advocated in support of *Dvaita vada*. Nimbarka has advocated in support of both *dvaita and Advaita* and accordingly his view is known as *Dvaitaadvaita*. It is seen that Sankara, Ramanuja, Vallabha, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Biswanath baba even though have advocated in support of *Advaita* they also differ in many other respects leading to different varieties of *Advaita*. Thus Ramanuja's view is known as *Visistaadvaita vada*, Vallabha's view is known as *Shuddhaadvaita*, Sri Aurobindo's view is known as *Poornaadvaita vada* and Biswanatha Baba's view is known as *Visuhddhaadvaita vada*.

In both *Shuddhaadvaita* and *Vishuddhadvaita*, the *Advaita* stand of Sankara has been criticized by Vallabha and Viswanath Baba respectively considering it to be impure. One of the major grounds of considering it to be impure is that Sankara accepts *Maya* to be positive and it is also connected with the Brahman. Brahman's link with *Maya* opens the scope for duality and makes the *Advaita* impure. In the paper, it is intended to examine the claims of both the critics of Sankara and to arrive at a rational choice among the three.

The view of Sankara and his followers

The fundamental consideration of the *Advaita* stand of Sankara is that Brahman cannot be considered as the material cause or the *upaadaana* of the phenomenal world that constitutes concrete objects. So in respect of the creation of the world, the association of *Maya* with the Brahman has been taken into account. The author of *Padaartha-nirnaya* specifically maintains that "Brahman and *Maya* are jointly the cause of the world, Brahman being the unchanging cause and *Maya* being the transforming cause."¹ According to Vacaspati Misra *Maya* happens to be the accessory or *sahkaari* cause and *Maya* resting on *jiva* as associated with Brahman jointly created the world. Thus in Sankara's framework, there has been a positive emphasis on *Maya* in respect of the creation of the world. The acceptance of *Maya* to be positive affects the singleness of the reality attributed to Brahman. But this view is not acceptable to Vallabha who considers Brahman to be the *samavaayi Karana* of the world.

Further, it may be pointed out that taking the view of Sankara given in the commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita* contemporary scholars like G. Misra² and B. Kar have maintained the stand that Sankara was not interested in finding out the cause of the world. How the world has been created is not a relevant question for

Sankara in the context of Advaita logic.³

Shuddhaadvaita of Vallabha

Vallabha has advocated a theistic doctrine by treating Srikrishna to be the Brahman Whose essence is *Sat, Chit, and Ananda*. Brahman by His own will has manifested Himself to matter, soul, and Brahman according to as to His essence *Sat, Chit, and Ananda*. Purusottama's commentary on *Anubhasya* of Vallabha clearly maintains that the relation can be conceived as *taadaatmya* which presupposes that Brahman to be *samavayi Karana*.⁴ Both soul and matter are His real manifestations (*avikrutaparinaama*) which does not include the notion of change. *Maya* is His power. Through He manifests himself to this universe but it is neither *vivarta* (illusory) nor *parinaama* (transformation). There is the relation of identity (*taadaatmya*) between the cause and the effect. From the Existence nature of God, the world has sprung up, from the Knowledge nature of God the atomic souls have sprung up and from God's Bliss nature the *Antaryaamins* (presiding deities of the soul) are the manifestations. God is Supreme Antaryaamin Who is essentially identical with all the three, namely, *Jagat, Jiva, and antaryaamin*. Radhakrishnan has written that "Vallabha admits that *jiva, Kala* or time, and *Prakriti* or *Maya*, are eternal existences; they are referred to as the being of Brahman and have no separate existence. Those who accept *Maya* as the explanation of the world are not pure Advaitins, since they admit a second to Brahman. (i. I. 6) While Sankara traces the world to Brahman through the force of *Maya*, Vallabha holds that Brahman can create the world without any connection with such a principle as *Maya*.⁵

The significance of this system of thought is that it does not accept the world to be illusory as it is conceived in the *Advaita* framework of Sankara. The advocates of this school of thought have treated Sankara's *Advaita* to be *ashuddha* (impure) because of treating the world to be the product of *Maya*. Giridhara, one of the prominent advocates of this school has specifically expressed that *mayasambadharahitam shuddham ityuchate budhaih* ⁶ (wise people have said purity is due to not being related to *Maya*).

Vishuddhaadvaita of Biswanath Baba

Biswanath Baba happens to be the disciple of Bhima Bhoi, the chief exponent of the Mahima cult. The Vedantic stand of this cult also differs from the Advaitic stand of Sankara on the ground of purity in non-dualism. Alike Vallabha Viswanath Baba considers Sankara's view of Advaita to be impure for which reason he advocated in support of *Vishuddhaadvaita* or pure non-dualism. So far as the *Vedantic* framework of this cult is concerned here the ultimate reality is supposed to be *nirguna* and *Nirakaara Sunya* Brahman. The concept, *Sunya-Brahma* has been used

profusely in the writings of the poet-philosopher Bhima Bhoi. In other words, if we assess the metaphysical stand of Bhima Bhoi we can see that he seems to have concentrated on sunya-centric metaphysics. But the sunya-centric metaphysics does not occupy the primary place in Biswanath Baba's writing. Probably it is because of his sufficient knowledge of the Sanskrit language and the knowledge of the metaphysical views of the classical Indian philosophers. It is seen that Biswanath baba has given a systematic presentation of his Vedantic stand naming it as *shuddhaadvaita vada*.

In general, Mahimaites believe that the absolute Brahman was incarnated as Mahima who is known as Mahima Gosain and he is the object of devotion. Mahimaites consider that the world is not illusory or *vivarta*. Believing in Mahima *parinama vada* they consider that the Absolute is the cause of the world as being transformed to this world. In the words of Patnaik "The world is real manifestation of Brahman. It is the one manifested as many. This view is quite different from Sankara's example of the moon reflected in many vessels of water: and appearing as many.⁷ So the world has some reality. It cannot be fully real as its contents are having names and forms. In respect of *the jiva-Brahman* relationship, they maintained a middle stand between the stand of Sankara and Ramanuja. The relation is neither total identity nor there is distinction. When reality is not realized it is different from Brahman and after realization, it is identified with Brahman.

Biswanath Baba in his *Alekh Parama Brahma Darsanam* categorically advocated in support of *Vishuddhaadvaita* by pointing that Sankara has accepted dual principles by accepting Maya to be the cause of world-creation. The acceptance of this dual principle affects the sanctity of non-dualism. Biswanath Baba maintains that the conclusion of the principal Upanisads 'is final' and the Upanisads have established the doctrine of non-dualism. He writes on the 'Nature of Brahman according to pure non-dualism: Advocates of dualism have put forward all such arguments in support of their doctrines. But the Manner in which the principal *Upanisads* describe the nature of Brahman indicates that the main objective of the *Upanisads* is the establishment of the doctrine of non-dualism. Secondly, *Satya Mahima Dharma* subscribes to the doctrine of pure non-dualism.⁸ This is how Biswanath Baba very much in tune with the Upanishadic non-dualism attempted to explain his doctrine as pure non-dualism.

For Biswanath Baba Brahman alone is the cause of the world. The world has been evolved due to the greatness of Mahima or Brahman.⁹ The involvement of Maya is unnecessary in the process of creation of the world. The non-involvement

of *Maya* makes the *Advaita* free from impurity for which he has treated his *Advaita* doctrine to be *vishuddha* (pure or unalloyed or sanctified)

In defense of *Advaita* of Sankara Kar points out that “The very statement that world-creation is due to *Maya* rather implies that no explanation regarding the world-creation is necessary because the fact of world-creation, according to this philosophical standpoint, is declared to be not real but apparent. So the non-duality of Brahman is least affected by such statement that world-creation is due to *Maya*.”¹⁰ Adding further in the light of Kar’s thinking it may be pointed out that the grounds raised by Vallabha and Biswanath Baba against the purity of the *Advaita* doctrine of Sankara do not have sufficient strength to affect its non-duality. In Sankara’s ontological framework *Maya* is accepted conditionally in the sense that its function is a superimposition that continues till the realization of proper knowledge. The nature of *Maya* is shadowy which can never obtain the status of reality like that of Brahman to affect its absoluteness.

Now in order to make a rational choice among these doctrines first of all I would take up the doctrine of *Shuddhaadvaita* of Vallabha. The identity relation between Srikrishna and Brahman appears to be either arbitrary or speculative. Why should it be Srikrishna, not SreeRama, not Siva, etc.? Probably no rational justification can be provided to this question. Again the supposition that there is the *taadaatmya* relation between cause and effect is not free from controversy. Neither there is logical identity nor the factual identity between the world consisting of souls and matter and the inconceivable and inexpressible Brahman. Sankara has applied the relation of *taadaatmya* only in cases of *akhandaarthaka vaakyas*. In this perspective, the doctrine looks very sound from theological perspective only. So for me, the doctrine is not suitable for rational choice. It may be appreciated in a theological frame.

Next coming to the doctrine of *Vishuddhaadvaita* we find almost a similar problem that here the ultimate reality *Nirguna, Niraakara* Brahman is identified with Mahima, who has descended to this world in human form and lived in this earth. The chief exponent of this cult has preached this cult to meet the command of his Master, Mahima Gosain. He has developed a sunya-centric metaphysics in all of his poems as prayers. His most remarkable exponent Biswanatha Baba has attached emphasis on *Alekha* (inexpressible) *Parama* Brahma as the ultimate reality. Now what has been treated as *Niraakaara* took some shape and came to this earth who is none-else than the *Parama* Brahma. This gives an obscure picture that can be accepted only in a religious framework but cannot obtain rational justification in

philosophy. But another important observation can be pointed out in respect of the *Vishuddhadvaita vada* in the following manner.

Many recent scholars have attached emphasis to the moral aspect of this cult. It has been pointed out that the *Vishuddhadvaita vada* has a moral link that might be absent in *Shuddhadvaita vada*. 'Shuddha' and 'vishuddha' are normally used as synonyms. But V. S. Apte, in his Dictionary for 'vishuddha' has added another term 'sanctified' (which is free from sin, vice and imperfection) besides the common expressions: 'pure' and 'unalloyed'. In this respect, Praharaj points out that "If we accept these (*free from sin, vice, and imperfection*) to be the specialty with 'vishuddha', then we cannot deny the significance of the term 'Vishuddha' that is used by Mahimaites. We have seen that maximum emphasis has been attached to these factors by Mahimaites while dealing with Mahima dharma. That is *jiva* when becomes free from sin, vices and imperfections become sanctified enough to be identified with *Alekha Parama Brahma* and the identity becomes sanctified too. Hence it is honestly proposed that the English translation of *Vishuddhadvaita* may be 'sanctified non-dualism in place of 'pure non-dualism. On moral grounds, *Vshuddhadvaita* is preferable to *Suddhadvaita*."¹¹

It is Sankara's view that to think about the creation of the world is not philosophically significant which is clear from his words '*srusti chintakaah nirarthakaah*. In fact, how the world has been created is not relevant to talk about the ultimate reality. Since the purity of Sankara's *Advaita* is not affected by his conception of *Maya* his view of *Advaita* can be rationally preferred as against both *Shuddhadvaita* and *Vishuddhadvaita*. Both the other doctrines are good in the religio-metaphysical frame and philosophically less preferable as compared to the Advaitic stand of Sankara.

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