

Introduction

Human beings always remain dissatisfied with their mundane pleasures and worldly possessions. Therefore, they search for freedom from this mundane world. All who think and feel their dissatisfaction with mundane objects search for the attainment of immortality. We find many examples of these in the *Upaniṣads*. We are going to cite an example, which relate to the episode of Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyī.

Yājñavalkya: “Maitreyī, my dear, I am going to renounce this life. Let me make a final settlement between you and Kātyāyanī.”

Maitreyī: “Venerable sir, if indeed the whole earth, full of wealth, belonged to me, would I be immortal through that?”

Yājñavalkya: “No, your life would be just like that of people who have plenty. Of immortality however, there is no hope through wealth.”¹

No doubt, this urge of Maitreyī is the inner urge of all times of all humanity, which underlies the concept of liberation. This inner urge manifests through many ways. Sometimes it stands for the attainment of heaven, sometimes stands for the stoppage of rigorous chain of rebirths, sometimes for the attainment of oneness with *Brahman*, sometimes for the cessation of all finites bondage, attachments and imperfections. Almost every *Vedānta* system attempts to define the concept of *mokṣa* along with their metaphysical principles. According to the *Advaita Vedānta*, freedom from the grip of *avidyā* constitutes the very essence of *mokṣa*. Śaṅkara claimed that the attainment of *Brahmanhood* is itself *mokṣa*. *Brahman* in the form of knowledge is of the nature of bliss or absolute happiness. It signifies the cessation of all miseries and sorrow as well as the end of all

types of bondage and transmigration. *Brahman*-knowledge can obtain through the hearing of *mahāvākya*. Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* claimed that- “*vākyārthavicāraṇādhyavasānnirvṛttāhibrahmāvagatiḥ, na anumānādipramāṇāntarnirvṛttā.*”(1.1.2)

‘*Vākyārthavicāraṇā*’ or consideration of the meaning of statements has an important role to play in the entire scheme of the *Advaita Vedānta*. It should keep in mind that the ‘*vākyārthavicāraṇā*’ means a consideration of the *Vedāntic* statements. It is not merely the understanding of the explicit meaning of any ordinary statement. Therefore, here ‘*vākyārtha*’ means *mahāvākyaārtha* and ‘*vicāra*’ means analysis or a critical study.

One may asked that according to the *Advaita Vedānta*, the *Ātman* or Self is ever manifesting itself in all its experiences i.e. walking, dreaming and deep sleep. Scripture declared that all creatures are ever free from bondage and free by nature. They are ever illuminated and always liberated.² Therefore, there is no necessity or possibility of its will be being revealed by any type of *pramāṇas* like *pratyakṣa* or *anumāna* or *śabda* (verbal testimony). According to the *Advaitins*, an individual being is always free but he does not know it due to his utter ignorance. His finitudes arise from his wrong identification with the physical body, the sense organs, mind, and the intellect. This erroneous identification with the nonself arises from ignorance. In essence, the individual being is identical with *Brahman* or *ātman* who is one, eternal, pure, transcendental consciousness. There is no ontological difference between them. Their differences due to the limiting adjuncts of body, senses, mind and intellect, which composed of empirical names and forms, are constituted by the ignorance. Pure Consciousness is the real nature of individual self. The *Vedāntic* dictum *Tattvamasi* shows it clearly. According to the *Advaitins*, the word ‘*Tat*’

means *sarvajñatvaviśiṣṭacaitanya* (consciousness characterized by all-pervasiveness), ‘*tvam*’ means *alpajñatvaviśiṣṭacaitanya* (consciousness characterized by limited knowledge) and the term ‘*asi*’ indicates identity between them.

Pure Consciousness is the real nature of individual self. The comprehension of the self as the ultimate truth is the highest knowledge, for when this knowledge is once produced our cognition of world appearance ceased. According to the *Advaitins*, an individual being is always free, but a question may be raised whether individual liberation is at all a new achievement or awareness of something, which is already achieved. To them this rejection of the suffering is not a new phenomenon but an individual being rejects that which has already rejected. This knowledge of the object already known is possible through the *mahāvākyas*. An individual being is essentially a liberated being but he does not know this due to the veil of *māyā*. As soon as he comes to know that he is essentially same with *Brahman* by the *Vedic* dictum *Tattvamasi*, he suddenly realizes that he is free. It should be kept in our mind that *mokṣa* is not something eternal to be attained through actions or rituals. It is always within us. Knowledge is capable of eradicating *avidyā* or nescience only. All that a seeker of liberation (*mumukṣu*) needed is to get rid of veil of ignorance, which produces ego and desires. The *Vivaraṇa* School³ profound that *mokṣa* is of the nature of unique knowledge, which arises from the realization of the truth contained in the *mahāvākya* such as *Tattvamasi*.

Everything in this world is veiled by *māyā* or ignorance. Through the knowledge, one gets rid of *māyā*. However, here knowledge does not imply the ordinary cognition but the awareness of self-realization. *Jagat* (world) is mere appearance, which is the game of *māyā*. Individual self and *Brahman* are not two different things; individual self is nothing but *Brahman* itself. *Śruti*

proclaimed that the path of knowledge is hard to be trodden.⁴The person who possesses four essential qualities can be a disciple of this path of knowledge. These qualities are:

- *Nityānityavastuvivekaḥ*
- *Ihāmutraphalabhogavirāga*
- *Ṣadsampatti (Śama, Dama, Uparati, Titikṣā, Samādhāna, Śraddhā)*
- *Mumukṣutvam*

The first ever qualification of a seeker of the self is discrimination between real and unreal. One must know that what is eternal and what is not. The seeker discriminates between things permanent and transient. What created is not permanent and hence it must destroy in the next moment. Created things cannot bring happiness at all. The *nitya* or eternal is only one, which is *Brahman*. Everything else is impermanent. This is the determination between real and unreal. Our earth and earthly things like our mind, our brilliance all are *anitya*, impermanent. They are *adhyasta* (superimposed) on reality. That which born dies. That which created will destroy. What is the fruit of something will banish. Thus, everything we taste, smell, sense, hear and perceive is transient. The universe is being created will remain. Therefore, we should seek the real. We should carefully discriminate reality from *anitya* or transitory mundane things.

Now through discrimination one understands that this world is impermanent and we should not get attach to it. But generally there is a belief that heaven is a higher world beyond this world and by performing good deeds one can acquire merits and may wish to enjoy happiness in higher world namely heaven. The objects of enjoyment hereafter, as well as the enjoyment of earthly objects like garland of flowers, sandal paste and sex pleasure are transitory being results of action. They cannot bring permanent happiness. After exhausting our merits that have been earned through good deeds we come back to take birth again. *Śruti* confirms us-. “*tad yattheha*

karmajito lokaḥ kṣīyate ebamebāmutra puṇyajito lokaḥ kṣīyate...” (Ch. Up. 8.1.6). It means whatever has been acquired here on earth by exertion perishes and whatever is acquired for the next world by sacrifices and other good actions performed on earth will perish. Therefore, it is essential for a conscious seeker to be absolute disinterestedness in the pleasure of this world as well as the heaven. Enjoyment of fruits of action in this world and hereafter is not helpful for spiritual progress. Disregard for all of them is renunciation. Renunciation is regarded as second *sādhana*. It is the desire to give up all transitory enjoyments from this world or beyond this. What is the necessity of renunciation? Through discrimination, we understand that this mundane world is impermanent. Therefore, one should not attach to it. Generally, there is a being in higher world beyond this. However, heavenly pleasure too are impermanent and after our merits are exhausted we come back to take birth again in this world. Therefore, the discriminating intellect avoids all pleasures as nothing. Such person knows for sure that *Brahman* alone is real and all else is unreal.

Śama is mind control. It is restraining the mind from going towards sense objects. Our senses are ruled by the mind. By its proper control external senses too come under control. Mind should be kept in check from the pursuit of worldly pleasures. *Dama* is the restraining of the external organs from all objects.

The senses run widely towards their respective objects. Their natural tendency is to run out. A sincere seeker must control them. Our senses are the doors to destruction. They lead rather, mislead us to their respective objects, convincing us that the objects-like sight, taste, smell, touch, and sound-are pleasure producing and eternal. We are deceived. Why ‘*samadamaḍi*’ are essential for an aspirant? Śaṁkara deals with this problem. In his ‘*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*’, Śaṁkara

elucidates with examples. The deer, the elephant, the moth, the fish and the black bee-these five have died by being tied by the string of deep attachment, in any one of the sense objects like sound, touch, colour, odour and taste respectively. In this world, every living being becomes subjected to the bondage of sensual enjoyment. Having heard the music of flute played even by the cruel hunter-party but the deer remains unmoved and is trapped by its own excessive attachment of music. Generally, an elephant can hardly be caught but the hunter trapped by using a trained female elephant in lure of whose pleasant touch the male comes close to its partner and caught. The insect sacrifices its life by jumping in the red-flame of fire for its attachments for beautiful colour. The fish is caught by the angling hook because of in attachment for the pleasant smell of the foodstuff scattered in the area. The bee out of its lust for the sweet taste of honey becomes caught by the petals of the flower.⁵ Nodoubt, this is the pathetic condition of every living being owing to their excessive attachment for the sensual pleasure of one particular organ. It is natural that a human being with five uncontrolled sense- organs will be subjected to prolonged misery. Therefore, the advice of the author is to get rid of sensual enjoyment. The wise ones control their senses and bring them back towards the truth.

Uparati is the cessation of the external organs so restrained from the pursuit of objects. The senses and the mind if not given a higher turn, will revert to the world. They must be turned inwards. *Uparati* is placing the controlled mind and senses on inward object i.e. the Self.

Titikṣā or forbearance has considered as the virtue of the seeker of truth. The seeker should attain to such a state that heat or cold, pleasure and pain, suffering and joy all should become same to him. Therefore, he should be able to ignore them absolutely and concentrated on the *ātman*.

Samādhāna means tranquility of the mind. However, it cannot be attained if mind runs after external things. It is constant concentration of the mind. What is concentration? It is making the mind one-pointed on the *ātman*. It is resting the mind calming the mind finally –after ages of turbulence. When the mind is running towards the world, it is restless and fickle. When it runs towards its source i.e. *ātman*, it is calm and composed. When that is achieved, there is no more desire for worldliness.

Śraddhā is none other than the faith in the truth of the *Vedānta* as taught by the *guru* (spiritual preceptor). Spiritual practice without faith never produces the requisite effect. A firm faith based upon the intellectual understanding that the teachings of the scriptures and of some of one's Master are true leads to the realization of the Reality.

Mumukṣutvam is the longing for liberation. This is the ultimate requisite of a seeker. Whatever may be the other qualities in him, if this ultimate quality does not belong to him, there is no hope of realization. When the seeker is equipped with the four above-mentioned *sādhanas*, he becomes able to receive the spiritual guidance.

A disciple equipped with the four pre-requisites should follow the means of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. It is the process by which one becomes convinced that the *Vedas* in their beginning middle and end teach the identity of *jīva* and *Brahman*. The truth of identity can be found out through the enquiry of the great sayings (*mahāvākyas*). They boldly claimed the essential teachings of the *Upaniṣads* namely; the individual self and *Brahman* are the same.

Our thesis is an attempt at a descriptive as well as critical study of the *Vedic mahāvākya*, '*Tattvamasi*'. In this thesis, we are going to discuss on "*Philosophical Significance*

of *Tattvamasi: A Critical Study*". We are already discussing on that *mahāvākyas* are essential in the *Advaita Vedāntic* cult. Generally, *mahāvākyas* are considered as four taken one from the specific *Upaniṣad* of each of the *Veda*. *Prajñānam Brahman* from *Aitareya Upaniṣad* of the *Ṛgveda*, *Tattvamasi* from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* of the *Sāmaveda*, *AhamBrahmāsmi* from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* of the *Yajurveda*, *Ayamātmā Brahma* from the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* of *Atharvaveda* are considered as *mahāvākyas*.

There are some problems, which compel us to think about *Tattvamasi*. Some of them are given below:

The primary meaning of the word '*Tat*' is God who is the creator of the world and who possesses all auspicious qualities. The primary meaning of the word '*tvam*' is the self which is associated with the states of waking, dream and deepsleep and which is an agent. Any identity between the two senses is impossible in view of the contradictory attributes present in them then how the *jīva-Brahman* identity would be established through the statement *Tattvamasi*?

In the case of *Tattvamasi*, the *Advaitins* have accepted the indeterminate perception because of the fact that it does not reveal the relation between the two i.e. '*Tat*' and '*tvam*'. It has been interpreted by the *Advaitins* that the statement conveys that an individual self exists in himself in the form of *Brahman*. However, they do not admit relation between two, which is known from the incorporation of the term *vaiśiṣṭyānavagāhī*. Whether is it relation-free i.e. *vaiśiṣṭyānavagāhī*? Whether the *mahāvākya* (especially *Tattvamasi*) will be considered as an *arthavāda*? Whether *Tattvamasi* could be taken as an unnecessary repetition? Are all *Vedāntins* accepted the *Advaitic* interpretation of *Tattvamasi*? In what sense they are different from each other? Can *Tattvamasi* be considered mere a thought?

Therefore, we hope that the present research work will be accepted as a humble attempt to answer the raised questions. The present thesis divided into five chapters exclusive of this introduction and conclusion. As per obvious requirement, the chapters will subdivide into different sub-sections. A brief survey of the tradition has been undertaken in the first chapter. The source of the *Vedānta*, its meanings, the three well known inevitable pillars of the *Vedānta* and different school of the *Vedānta* has been discussed and mainly the main tenets of the *Advaita Vedānta* has been taken for discussion. In the next chapter, an attempt has taken to discuss on the *mahāvākyas*, its number, and brief elucidation about the famous four *mahāvākyas*. An attempt has taken to give an explicit and systematic exposition of different *mahāvākyas*. Whether the *mahāvākyas* will be considered as an *arthavāda* or it will be considered as an *angī*? The third chapter concluded with an analytic discussion showing the metaphysical interpretation of *Tattvamasi*. How the *jīva-Brahman* identity has been established? Following the *Advaita* interpretation, we try to discuss it. However, not all of them hold the same view. As per information the author of the *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* never admit *bhāgalakṣaṇā* for establish *jīva-Brahman* identity. In what ground the departure from the traditional view that should be thinkable. In the fourth chapter, we mainly stress on the *Dvaita Vedāntin's* views. Each branches stands for a different conception regarding *Tattvamasi*. An attempt to bring out the varied concepts of *Tattvamasi* in all the school of the *Vedānta* is not an easy job. The differences are noticed here more specially with regard to the relation of *jīva-Brahman*. Śaṅkara established *jīva-Brahman* identity. Rāmānuja emphasized on *apṛthaksiddhi*. Nimbārka admits difference between them as well as identity too. His followers very much eager to establish such view and they cite many spiritual examples to establish it. Madhva defines it as '*Atattvamasi*'. Now whether there is any similarity among their views. We try to find a common significance among

the different theories. In the next chapter includes an analysis of the question whether *Tattvamasi* has a practical significance or not. If philosophy confines only in theory then it will not touch the life of us. Therefore, practical applicability of *mahāvākyas* would be judged. Western philosophers like Schopenhauer and Paul Deussen also have made some remarkable contribution on *Tattvamasi*. We respect their contribution.

As per information gathered from different sources, it is clear that not so much research work has been attempted in this area. It is true that some light throws on the *mahāvākyas* but an elaborate and detail critical study on *Tattvamasi* has not yet been discussed. Philosophical significance of *Tattvamasi* (including *Advaitins* and *Dvaitins* view) as proposed herein has not been hitherto attempted. Among the works available, the followings are worth mentioning:

K.B. Archak in his book, “*Tattvamasi in Brahmasutra Sankara Bhasya*” deals with *Tattvamasi*. Śaṅkara’s commentaries of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and *Brahmasūtra* comprehensively explain the *jīva-Brahman* identity. The concept scatters in Śaṅkara’s interpretation of the *Brahmasūtras*. The author tried to arrange the different views of Śaṅkara on *Tattvamasi* and systematically synthesize those views.

Tapan Kumar Chakraborty in his book ‘*Vedānta Mahāvākyārtha Vicāra*’ (Bengali book) focused on *mahāvākyas*. The book deals with the metaphysical and linguistic analysis.

A Ganapathy in his book, ‘*Tat Tvam Asi*’, discussed on different types of *sāmānādhikarṇya* and its significance and showed what type of *sāmānādhikarṇya* is appropriate for *Tattvamasi*.

Apart from this works, a few research articles have published in this area. Here a few of them:

Swami Pravananda-“That Art Thou”, *Prabuddha Bharat*, vol. LXX, 1965.

Dr Tapan Kumar Chakraborty-“The Advaita view of Identity”, *Lights on Philosophy*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata-6, 2002.

K. N. Neelakantan Elayath-“The Ethical Interpretation of Tattvamasi”, *Perspective of Samkara*, Rashtriya Sankara Jayanti Mahotsava Commemoration Volume; eds. Dept Of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt of India, 1959.

Bina Gupta and William C Wilcox –“Tat tvam asi: an important identity statement or a mere Tautology”, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.34, No. 1(Jan1984) pp. 85-94.

From the above information, it is clear to all of us that none of the works covers the study being proposed herein. Therefore, we hope that this research work will be accepted. The present study based mainly per necessity on the original text of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and its various commentaries done by *ācāryas* and his followers. We have followed the English translation of Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* by Swāmi Nikhilānda and Lokeswarānanda, on the *Vedāntasūtras* by Swami Gambhirānada and George Thibaut. Besides these, we follow some primary books like Rāmānujācārya’s *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, Madvāchrya’s *Viṣṇutattvaviniṣaya*, Nimbārka’s *Daśośloki*, Vallabhacārya’s *Aṇubhāṣya* Sureśwarācārya’s *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, Sadānandayogī’s *Vedāntasāra*, and Dharmarājadhvarīndra’s *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* etc.

Our method is mainly descriptive and very much faithful towards the scriptural and primary text. From this point of view, also the present study assumes special significance. There are many branches of *Vedānta* philosophy. Each of its branches stands for a different conceptions regarding *Tattvamasi*. An attempt to bring out the varied concept of *Tattvamasi* in all schools of

the *Vedānta* is not an easy job. It needs to be pointed out here that the present study focuses on the mainly *Advaitic* view point. However, a chapter will be dedicated on the *Dvaitavedāntins'* views. It will be limited among Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, and Vallabha. We will not confine our discussion only in classical interpretations. We also try to search its modern interpretation and significance.

References:

1. *Bṛhadārṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II.iv.4,
Swami Nikhilananda, *The Upanisads A New Translation*, vol.3 (Mayabati: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), pp.174-175.
2. *Ādiśāntā hi anutpannāḥ prakṛti eva sunirbṛtaḥ/
Sarve dharmāḥ samāvinnāḥ ajaṁ sām̐yaṁ biśāradam// Māṇḍūkyakārikā 4-93*
Upaniṣad, trans. Swami Lokeshwarananda (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Pvt. Limited, 1999), p.454.
3. Padmapāda, a direct disciple of Saṁkara and Prakāśātman are the originators of *Vivaraṇa* School. On Padmapada's *Pañcapādikā*, (commentary on Saṁkara's introduction to and commentary on four sutras of the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*) Prakāśātman wrote his commentary called *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*. These two are the important basic works of *Vivaraṇa* School. Vācaspatimiśra is the founder of *Bhāmati* School. His important works on *Vedāntadarśan* are the *Bhāmati* and *Tattvasamīkṣā*. *Bhāmati* is a commentary on a portion of the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* on Śaṁkara, while *Tattvasamīkṣā* is a commentary on the *Brahmasiddhi* of Mandanmiśra.
4. *Kṣurasya dhārā niśita durartyaya/
Dūrgam pathastāt kabayo vadanti//Kathopaniṣad 1.3.14*
Upaniṣat-Saṁgrahaḥ (containing 188 upanisads), ed.
Prof.J.L.Sastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass,
1970), p.8.
5. *Śabdādibhiḥ pañcabhireva pañca/
Pañcatvamāpuḥ svaguṇena baddhāḥ//
Kurangamātagapatangamīna/
Bṛṁgā naraḥ pañcabhir ancitah kim // Vivekacūḍrāmaṇi-76*
Śaṁkarācārya, *Vivekacūḍrāmaṇi*, trans. Swami Madhvananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), p.35.