

MYSTICISM: WITTGENSTEIN AND ADVAITA VEDANTA

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The main contention of this paper is to explain the concept of mysticism with special reference to Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. Thus in a sense, it is a comparative study in nature between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. The concept of mysticism is a tricky philosophical concept of which there we find different philosophical interpretations. Many would say that mysticism is a bogus philosophical issue and it has no point of justification in the realm of philosophy. Some others would say that mysticism is philosophically worthy and the meaning of life as well as the value of the world is actually associated with the mystical nature of thinking. Mysticism occupies significant philosophical areas both in Wittgenstein as well as in Advaita Vedanta. Therefore, a contrast and comparison between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta is worthy in philosophy. Simultaneously, it would be a stupendous task to find the meeting point between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. Therefore, the task at hand is very challenging. In the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Wittgenstein clearly asserts that what is mystical is inexpressible because it cannot be put into language. Accordingly, it can be said after Wittgenstein that what cannot be put into language would be treated as mystical. This does not make sense to say that p implies q entails q implies p. To make this point clear one has to know what does Wittgenstein actually mean. The term ‘language’ plays a vital role here. Wittgenstein had a different nature of language altogether. Here one has to understand language as ‘my language’. Having said if we go beyond ‘my language’, then, of course, p implies q may not entail q implies p. So there is no point of saying that the logical principle of Transposition is vitiated here. Accordingly, ethics, religion, aesthetics, and in short what lies outside ‘my language’ is mystical for Wittgenstein. In Advaita Vedanta, what is mystical is Brahman. Brahman is unqualified. The very nature of Brahman is sat-cit-ananda svarupa. It is not the quality of Brahman; rather it is the very nature of Brahman. The paper makes a conscious effort to find the meeting point based on mystical aspects of Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. Keywords: mysticism, the meaning of life, sat, cit, ananda, value, Brahman, world

The prologue

The term *mysticism* comes from the Greek word ‘μύω μύο’, which means “to close” or “to conceal”. It has different historical meanings and has Ancient Greek origins. In early and medieval Christianity the term mysticism was used to refer to different dimensions such as spiritual, biblical, liturgical, etc. If we look at the early modern period then we will see that the definition of mysticism includes an ample range of beliefs and ideologies and these beliefs and ideologies were related to extraordinary or unnatural experiences and states of mind. During modern times, mysticism was used to mean the union with the Infinite, Absolute, or God. Therefore, it can be said that the realization of the Absolute, Infinite, or God is recognized as mystical experience i.e. the key element of mysticism. This mystical experience is certainly different from our ordinary experience which is based on this mundane world. If we take the

term mysticism in its broad sense then it can be said that in all religious traditions mysticism must be there; because without mysticism no religion is possible. In other words, all religions are ultimately based on mysticism. Say for example, in indigenous religions and folk religions, in organized religions such as Abrahamic faiths and Indian religions even in modern spirituality, etc. During the thirteenth century, the term mysticism (*unio mystica*) was used to mean the sublimation or rapture, spiritual marriage i.e. the understanding or realization of the prayer. With the view of Romanticism, in the nineteenth century, this ‘union’ came to be known as a religious experience that provides firm conviction that something is the case i.e. the God or a transcendental reality. William James was a proponent of such type of understanding, who said that in mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is called a religious experience according to William James. In the sixteen and seventeenth centuries, the term mysticism was used as a substantive that was new discourse by which science and religion were separated. By the middle of the 17th century, the term ‘mystical’ was used to separate religion from natural philosophy as the two distinct enterprises aiming to discover the hidden meaning of the universe. The traditional writings of different saints or the writings of the lives of saints became denominated as ‘mystical’, moving from the virtues and miracles to extraordinary feelings or experiences, states of mind and as an upshot of this, created a newly coined ‘mystical tradition’. A new appreciation had emerged of the Divine within the human beings, an essence beyond the diversity of religious appearances or expressions. There are various definitions of mysticism. St. Thomas Aquinas defines mysticism “as *cognition deo experimentalis* as the knowledge of God through experience.”ⁱ Distinguishing two aspects of mysticism-theoretical and practical, William Ernest Hocking says, “The term ‘mysticism’ has come to mean two distinct things in the occident-a theory of reality and a doctrine regarding how the human individual may gain union with reality.”ⁱⁱ

Wittgenstein on Mysticism

Wittgenstein’s notion of *nonsense* or mysticism belongs to the other side of the world. Wittgenstein had a particular dream to fulfil and that is why he made his articulated world. He gave its name ‘My Language and My World’. Now, what does Wittgenstein mean by my language and my world? According to Wittgenstein, *my language and my world* is called the sense of the world or meaningful world which he determines in terms of the proposition. Now the question what about the other side of the world? For Wittgenstein what lies on the other side of my language and my world is called the *nonsensical world*

which is opposite to the sensible world. According to Wittgenstein, what lies outside the world cannot be put into words. As it cannot be put into words, it is mystical. In this regard, Wittgenstein in his book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* says “it is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists.”ⁱⁱⁱ But the question is how does it exist? How do we come to know that it exists? It is difficult to answer because what is mystical is inexpressible and cannot be put into words. For Wittgenstein, mysticism arises when the world is conceived as a limited whole. He then says, “Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical.”^{iv} Therefore, no question can be raised about what is mystical and no answer can be given against the question about mysticism because neither the question nor the answer can be put into words. That is why Wittgenstein remarks in *Tractatus* “what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.”^v

Vedanta on Mysticism

Advaita Vedanta is a philosophy that can be taken as an Indian way of life and Advaita philosophy also leaves to every human being a wide spectrum of real usefulness. There is no other such type of philosophical school in Indian philosophy like that of Advaita Vedanta i.e. *so alive and resonant*. Vedanta philosophy has been playing an important role since *Upanisadic* times by providing the right direction or approach of the worldview of Indians. Advaita Vedanta is a philosophy that is ultimately based on mysticism. The utmost aim of an Advaitin is to attain *brahmanubhava*, which is nothing but the culmination of mystical experience. This is called “pure or authentic experience” that is also known as “the nature of *Brahman*,” i.e. the ultimate reality. *Brahmanubhava* characterized as pure consciousness is free from all kinds of differences and distinctions. It is also considered timeless and uncaused and hence it is the nature of *Brahman*. *Brahmanubhava* does not bring into existence any change anywhere. That means reality remains the same before and after it is realized, only the experience of it changes or differs. Before its realization, one can see the difference and hence undergo from bondage and suffering.

According to Advaita Vedanta, ‘*Brahman*’ is the only Reality. It is considered absolutely indeterminate and non-dual in nature. *Brahman* is beyond our speech and mind. It is inexpressible because no description of *Brahman* can be complete. The best possible description of it can be given through the negative formula of ‘*neti neti*’ or ‘not this, not this’. Although *Brahman* cannot be an abyss of non-entity, it is considered as the supreme self and stands self-revealed as the background of all affirmations and negation. The moment we

try to grasp this *Brahman* in the categories of our intellect or when we try to make this ultimate subject as an object of our thought then we slip the essential or indispensable nature of *Brahman*. Then we cannot consider it as unconditioned consciousness, rather it becomes conditioned as it were. This *Brahman* reflected in or conditioned through *maya*, is called *Ishvara* or God. Therefore God is the personal aspect or a particular part of the impersonal *Brahman*. For Advaita Vedanta this is the most celebrated distinction between God or *Ishvara* and the Absolute which Sankara made following the *Upanisads*. According to Advaita Vedanta, *Ishvara* is also known as *Apara Brahman* or lower *Brahman* as contradicted with the unconditioned *Brahman* known as *Para Brahman* or Higher *Brahman*. In the Advaitic scheme of things, so long as we are the members of the workaday or practical world, we are not at all released from complying with the practicalities. Therefore the world is real enough and that is the result of *maya* which tries to make all our efforts and actions meaningful. In this regard, R. Balasubramanian has rightly observed, “The Advaitin is second to none in emphasizing the value and significance of the empirical realm (*vyavaharika*) in all aspects of our business of life – economic and social, culture and spiritual.”^{vi} Hence, *Brahman* is pure consciousness. *Brahman* like mystical is self-luminous that shows itself. It is the Unqualified Absolute like mystical. Thus Advaita represents the culmination of mysticism.

Meeting points between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta

After analyzing the nature of mysticism in the light of Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta respectively, I sense that their views are a bit less similar in nature about mysticism. That is why it is said that from the mysterious nature of the mystical, the conception of mysticism arises. It is observed, “Wittgenstein’s philosophical vision has been influenced by Vedanta thanks to his close affinity with Schopenhauer.”^{vii} As we know that Wittgenstein was an Austrian linguistic philosopher whereas Advaita Vedanta is an Indian philosophical school. So their concept of philosophy must be different from each other. Therefore, it would be a stupendous task to find the meeting points between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. Hence, the task at hand is very challenging. Although there are considerable differences in their philosophical views as reflected after analyzing their philosophical views, still I foresee some meeting points which are as follows:

According to Wittgenstein, “The very existence of the world, is mystical.”^{viii} The secret of the mystical lies in the way of our look at the world. Wittgenstein calls it “to view the world *sub specie aeterni*.”^{ix} This means

seeing the world as a form of eternal reality. Similarly, as we have already seen above the notion of seeing things *sub specie aeternitatis* has been essential to the Advatic way of looking at things. It is shown that this notion plays an important role in Sankara's view of the self and the world. For Wittgenstein, the final answer to the problems of life is god, who is identified with the meaning of life and also of the world. Wittgenstein subscribes that the meaning of life is entwined with the metaphysical subject. Even a full-length treatment of the world in speech and writing cannot capture the essence of it all. Such a subject is essentially beyond the world of facts. All this is mystical i.e. beyond the reach of *reason and science*. What is mystical cannot be put into words. Like Wittgenstein, it seems nowadays from an Indian disciple of Ayer. He believed in the existence of the supersensible reality- the other world and God-but he maintained that it cannot be expressed in language. Wittgenstein's view is that the urge to the mystical comes when science fails to satisfy our wishes. Similar is the story about science in Advaita Vedanta. Vedantins are also of the view that science cannot fully satisfy our life or cannot solve the problem of life. The meaning of life cannot be fulfilled by science. This can only be satisfied or fulfilled by the realization of the mystical or Brahman. In this regard, S. Radhakrishnan remarks, "Man's incapacity to be satisfied with what is merely relative and remains permanently within the boundaries of the finite and empirical reality cannot be denied. Mans stands before the shrine of his own mystery. He enters it the moment he becomes aware of his own eternity."^x

Like an Advaitin, Wittgenstein also speaks of the scientific worldview as an illusion. According to him, the whole modern conception of the world is the creation of an illusion. If we look at Vedanta we will see that the world is created by *maya* and it is nothing but an illusion. For Advaita Vedanta, it is neither *sat* like Brahman, nor *asat* like sky flower. It is called *maya* or illusion. In this sense, the world is an illusion because it is the creation of *maya*. For Wittgenstein, "...the illusion is that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena."^{xi} This means that "people today stop at the laws of nature, treating them as something inviolable... the modern system tries to make it look as if everything were explained."^{xii} But the view of the ancients is clearer in so far as they have a clear and acknowledge terminus. This also shows that Wittgenstein has a leaning towards the world view of the ancients rather than that of the moderns. Wittgenstein has suggested that a real explanation of the world is not possible within the confines of factually or natural laws or scientific laws. Hence, Wittgenstein remarks, "The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time."^{xiii} In the same

way, Vedanta thinks that only the knowledge of the Brahman or mystical is the solution to the riddle of life which lies outside space and time.

For Wittgenstein, the problems of life are very different from the problems of science. He says, “We feel even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched.”^{xiv} The distinction between the problem of science and the problems of life parallels with the *Upanisadic* distinction between *para vidya* and *apara vidya*. “In the *Upanisadic* tradition of India the distinction between a wisdom which is only of the world, of “all this”, and a quest which is concerned with insight into a higher dimension has been made since the historical beginning of Indian thought.”^{xv} *Mundaka Upanisad* makes this distinction very clearly. It says that there are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired, as indeed the knower of Brahman declares the higher (*para*) and the lower (*apara*). *Para vidya* has the ultimate reality as its content, whereas the content of *apara vidya* is the phenomenal world.^{xvi} Similarly, as an Indian, Wittgensteinian of repute has pointed out, “Wittgenstein declares that science represents the lower level of the intellectual life of man because it only attempts at a mere description of things. It cannot go beyond the phenomenal world in search of the ultimate meaning of the world.”^{xvii} So in that sense science must be regarded as *apara vidya* which cannot go beyond the phenomenal world in search of the ultimate meaning of the world i.e. mystical which must be considered as *para vidya* that is the ultimate reality.

Wittgenstein’s conception of mystical is intimately related to his idea of God. Wittgenstein remarks: “How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world.”^{xviii} It seems to mean that Wittgenstein’s God does not express himself in terms of any fact whatever. But, he is revealed in the “feeling the world as a limited whole”^{xix} which is surely not a fact at all. A great deal of what Wittgenstein wrote about God in the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus* indicates “a radical departure from the Christian concept of God.”^{xx} Wittgenstein’s God is not a personal one, almost in the Spinozistic manner.^{xxi} If God were personal, he would have been contingent like any other fact of the world. God like Brahman is the ultimate reality and the supreme value (*sat-cit-ananda*) and so he belongs to what is higher. So according to Wittgenstein, the meaning of life i.e. the meaning of the world we can call God, and pray is to think about the meaning of life. Thus Wittgenstein’s God is very close to Advaitic *Brahman* in many ways. Another important point that should mention here is that “the transcendence of God” of Wittgenstein’s early philosophy can be easily understood in terms of the difference in perspective (*drstibheda*) as

propounded in Advaita Vedanta. From the standpoint of the enlightened (*paramarthika drsti*), Wittgenstein's conception of God can be understood as the transcendental *Brahman*. According to *Chandogya Upanisad* from the transcendental standpoint, this whole world in substance is nothing but *Brahman*.

Further, for Advaita Vedanta, *Brahman* is *anirvacaniya*. Similarly, Wittgenstein's mystical is "inexpressible". For Wittgenstein, we cannot put into words anything about mystical, and any attempt to say anything about them leads into the result of non-sense. Regarding this non-sense Wittgenstein remarks, "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."^{xxii} It seems to mean that both try to talk of the ineffable. Now, "it is clear," as puts an Indian disciple of Ayer, "that he believed in the existence of the super sensible reality-the other world and God-but he maintained that it cannot be expressed in language."^{xxiii} Similarly, in the words of William James, "the handiest of the marks by which we can characterize a mystical experience that it defies expression that no adequate report of its content can be given in words."^{xxiv}

According to Wittgenstein, "mystical" shows itself and Advaitin speaks of *Brahman* as *svayam-prakasavan*. So, both of them can be characterized as self-luminous. Hence, Wittgenstein said that what cannot be said can be shown. In this regard, Wittgenstein remarks in his book *Tractatus*, "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical."^{xxv} In this regard K.S. Murty has rightly observed: "while no description is possible of *Brahman*, the task of Vedanta is to teach about it and so logically speaking, it is an impropriety, but only in this way can the Vedanta emphasizes the mystery of *Brahman*, which eludes all objective language; and yet it can be dealt with only in the way if *Brahman* has to be talked about intelligibly."^{xxvi} Another important meeting point that should mention here is that Wittgenstein's mystical and Advaitic *Brahman* can be described as "the ladder". It seems to mean that Wittgenstein's concept of nonsensical is neither true nor false, yet it is illuminating. It is like "the ladder", which helps one to "see the world aright". Similarly, according to Y. Mashi, the whole of Advaitic philosophy has been likened to a ladder that helps one to achieve the goal of *Brahman* realization. ...Here all kinds of philosophical reasoning, are for attaining the highest end.^{xxvii} They are like crutches used by a lame man or a staircase for taking one to a certain destination.

Here, Brian McGuinness's paper on Wittgenstein's "mysticism" is extensively useful. He maintains: "Wittgenstein holds that there is a feeling which may be called *das Mystiche*, an inexpressible feeling to have had, which to have solved the problem of life: those who have had it feel that they know something but cannot put it into words (*Tractatus* 6.522)."^{xxviii} Similarly, the *Brahman* of Advaita Vedanta is inexpressible (*anirvacanīya*). From the worldly point of view, *brahmanubhava* is known as liberation (*moksa*). It is the solution to all bondage and suffering. McGuinness adds further, "...the second was the mystic's conviction of the unity and indivisibility of reality, which is surely parallel with the Wittgenstein's description of mysticism as 'viewing or feeling the world as a limited whole.'"^{xxix} This is nothing but what Vedanta calls *advaitanubhava*, the experience of oneness with reality or the unity of all existence. In this regard, Wittgenstein says, "The honest religious thinker is a tight-rope walker. It almost looks as though he were walking nothing but air. His support is the slenderest imaginable. And yet it really is possible to walk."^{xxx} Here, Wittgenstein's philosophy surely shows strong affinities with Advaita Vedanta.

From the aforesaid discussion i.e. *advaitanubhava* or also called one world soul according to Wittgenstein, the notion of self comes into existence. Wittgenstein in his books *Tractatus* and *Notebooks* mentioned about two types of self - *The metaphysical self* or *Philosophical I* and the *Psychological self* or *Empirical self*. These two types of self play an important role in his early philosophy. The notion of metaphysical self comes into existence in his early philosophy through the notion of solipsism. Hence Wittgenstein says, "What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that 'the world is my world.'"^{xxxi} Regarding the notion of the metaphysical self, Wittgenstein again remarks, "The subject does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world."^{xxxii} Now the question what does Wittgenstein mean by the term 'limit' concerning the metaphysical self? By the term, 'limit' Wittgenstein intends to convey that this 'limit' is the condition of the world. It is a condition because it helps one to see the world aright way. In other words, it is the 'limit' because it tries to capture the notion of totality or totality of all possible thoughts. We cannot go beyond it and that is the limit. In this regard, Wittgenstein says that the self is the boundary (not a part) of the world. In this way, metaphysical subject or self differs from the empirical self and it is concerned with psychology. The empirical self, according to Wittgenstein, is understood as a complex collection of thoughts and this is a feature of all empirical understanding of the self, including those of human beings, the human body, and the human soul with which psychology deals. Therefore, the psychological self only expresses

worldly states of affairs which are also called the world of *maya* according to Advaita Vedanta.

Similarly in the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, we find the same distinction between *atman* and *jiva* which is very much similar to the distinction between two types of self cited above by Wittgenstein. The *Mundaka Upanisad* tells us about the two bards dwelling in the same tree of which one is eating the sweet fruit and the other is looking on without eating (III. i.1). As S. Radhakrishnan has said, “the former is the empirical self and the latter transcendental self.” The “personality,” which we take “to be our most intimate and deepest possession,” is nothing but “a sort of psychological being that answers to our name, is reflected in the looking-glass (*nama-rupa*).”^{xxxiii} Thus the Wittgensteinian distinction between the “metaphysical self” and the “empirical self” is reminiscent of the similar distinction made in Advaita Vedanta between *atman* and *jiva*. Like a *Upanisadic* seer, Wittgenstein says, “the philosophical I is not the human being, not the human body or the human soul with the psychological properties, but the boundary (not a part) of the world. The human body, however, my body, in particular, is a part of the world among others, stones, etc.”^{xxxiv} Here Wittgenstein gives an important insight that is very much akin to the Vedantik way: “whoever realizes this will not want to procure a pre-eminent place for his body or the human body. He will regard humans and animals quite naively as objects which are similar and which belong together.”^{xxxv} This is very close to the vision of a *pure seer*. As *Gita* says that one who sees Me in everything and sees all things in Me-I do not go out of my vision, and he also is not lost to My vision (BG, 6.30). Similarly in the words of Sankara: That man of realization does not get to Me, to *Vasudeva*, because of the identity between him and Me, for that which is called one’s own self is surely dear to one, and since it is I alone who am the seer of the unity of the self in all (BGSB, 6.30). It can be said that Wittgenstein’s approach is not different from Advaitins view of life and the world. As Brian McGuinness remarked, “One who has this insight does not identify himself with the physiological or psychological properties and life of a particular human being. The higher or metaphysical self is identical with the whole world.”^{xxxvi}

Another important parallel between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta concerning self is that Wittgenstein’s metaphysical self is very much akin to Advaitic conception of *saksin* (witness). According to Advaita Vedanta, *saksin* as the ultimate witness has an intermediary role between *Brahman* or *atman* and *jiva*. Though it is pure consciousness like the mystical of Wittgenstein, it maintains the unity among various experiences of the subject. As the *saksin*

plays the role of the pure witness of Advaita Vedanta, in the same way, the metaphysical self of Wittgenstein plays the role of ultimate witness. It can never be an object of experience. Here Wittgenstein's point is that our object of experience is a part of the world but the subject never belongs to the world. Therefore, it cannot be an object of our knowledge. That is why Wittgenstein said, "The I is not an object. I objectively confront every object. But not the I."^{xxxvii} Further, Wittgenstein said in his *Notebooks* that the status of self concerning the world of experience is like the case of the eye and the visual field. Therefore, here we find close affinities between them.

There is yet another even later remark of Wittgenstein that conspicuously brings us back to the "mystical" of the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus*: For a human being eternal, the consequential is often hidden behind the impenetrable veil. He knows: "there is something under there, but he cannot see it; the veil reflects the daylight."^{xxxviii} Here Wittgenstein wanted to convey that a veil often hides the eternal from the sight of the human by reflecting the light and this clearly presents the method and substance of Advaita Vedanta. In Vedantic terminology, *the veil* is similar to *maya*, which not only hides (*avarana*) the eternal (*Brahman*) from the sight of a human being (*jiva*), but it also reflects the daylight and presents the eternal reality as a phenomenal world.

Concluding Remarks

Thus it seems to me that there are some hidden similarities between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. To me, Wittgenstein distinguishes material culture from spiritual culture. He then explicitly expresses his sympathy for the latter. Here Wittgenstein said that the foundation of spiritual culture was eternal values that constitute the core of the spiritual culture of mankind and can lead mankind in the right direction. This is in consonance with the spirit of Indian philosophy. Spiritual culture is the hallmark of Indian philosophy in general and Advaita Vedanta philosophy in particular. This brings Wittgenstein naturally near Advaita Vedanta. I have also seen that both Wittgenstein and Vedanta are not against science as such, but they are only against scientism. They opposed the scientific mentality which claims that science can explain everything and this is the decline of culture. Religion is faith-based on admission and it cannot be proved by science or scientific mentality. There is no relevance of religious epistemology in religion. Wittgenstein wanted to keep religion free from science but at the same time, he did not give any religious color to science. He did not accept any intrusion of science into religion but for him intrusion of religion into science was

welcome. According to Wittgenstein, religion is manifested through the belief and practices of the religious people.

Another important point I should mention here is that when Wittgenstein was talking about culture, he defined culture as a big organization that assigns each of its members a place where he can work in the spirit of the whole. It seems to mean that Wittgenstein has his concern for the welfare of mankind or he had an enormous influence across humanities. Similarly, Advaita Vedanta is not so much teaching (philosophy) as it is practice (experiential knowledge). It concerns the life of a human being and humankind as it is. Therefore, both of them giving emphasize on humanitarian worldview. Wittgenstein was a religious person from this perspective, but not from a conventional sense. Regarding this humanitarian worldview of both these philosophers, B. Kar said: “The man is viewed in essence as not different from Brahman. The expressions like *ekatmabodha* and *sarvabhutantaratma*, seem to have a clear suggestion that Advaita Vedanta is never set at the background of transcending socio-empiric human predicament. It is vitally rooted in human concerns and its primary and sole aim is to attain the welfare of the human society without any division or discrimination (*santa mahanto nivasanti santo vasantavallokahitam carantah*, *Vivekacudamani*, 1.39).”^{xxxix}

Moreover, Wittgenstein asserts that what is mystical is inexpressible; likewise Advaita Vedanta asserts that what is *Brahma* (mystical) is ineffable (*anirvacaniya*). For Wittgenstein, scientism cannot give us the true picture of the real world, very similar way Advaita Vedanta says what science asserts, it asserts something in the world of *maya* in the real sense of the term. Thus, it can be concluded by saying after Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta that ‘the solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time’. Therefore from the meeting points between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta, it can be said that these philosophers aim to attain the meaning of life i.e. the realization of Brahman or Mystical. Now the question: what is the way to achieve this meaning of life? What does happy life mean? Here happiness does not indicate any hedonistic doctrines rather living happily means ‘doing the will of god’. That is why Wittgenstein said to live happily I must agree with the world and that is what ‘being happy’ means. Hence, Wittgenstein remarks, “I am then, so to speak, in agreement with that alien will on which I appear dependent. That is to say: I am doing the will of God.”^{xl} Therefore living happily is very much akin to stoicism. It seems to mean that the recipe for living happily is to accept the world and whatever ills it may throw at us; not to rage against our sufferings and our pains but to acquiesce in them. This kind of living a happy life is also akin to the life of *sthith prajna*, *bodhisattva*,

jivan-mukta in Advaita Vedanta. Therefore in living such kind of happy life Mystical or Brahman will appear itself. That is why Wittgenstein said they make themselves manifest. They are what is called mystical. So the meaning of life cannot be expressed, it is what Wittgenstein calls ‘a mystical feeling’ which can also be considered as the aesthetic feeling. That is why Wittgenstein remarks, “the work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*,” and “the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*”^{xli} And once this feeling is achieved, one will understand the “only one world soul”^{xlii} This is nothing but what Vedanta calls *advaitanubhava*, the experience of oneness with reality or the unity of all existence.

Therefore, it can be concluded by saying that what is mystical is completely devoid of factual sense or no factual content can be ascribed to a mystical experience. It is quite impossible to grasp the mystical or its expression within language. Any attempt to capture them in language leads to the result of Non-sense according to Wittgenstein. That is why Wittgenstein said what cannot be said can be shown within the existence of world or existence of a form of life or in a language game because any kind of spiritual activity indicates spiritual practice and any kind of practice is taken place within the forms of life by using ordinary language. So when we are doing spiritual practice, we are doing it within the religious form of life by religious language game. So according to me, if we interpret Sankara by Wittgenstein or vice versa then there is nothing wrong. From the aforesaid discussion one may raise a question was Wittgenstein influenced by Advaita Vedanta? In reply to this question, it can be said that so far as I know, Wittgenstein was not influenced by Advaita Vedanta. He has never gone through or read any Vedantic literature. We have no evidence of direct reference of Wittgenstein by Advaita Vedanta. In this regard, G.H. Von Wright remarks, “One can look for similarities which need have nothing to do with “influence but which may nevertheless illuminate the objects of comparison.”^{xliii} It seems that Wittgenstein’s philosophy has some important similarities with Advaita Vedanta, which cannot escape from our attention. As an Indian Wittgensteinian has observed, “Wittgenstein’s philosophical vision has been influenced by Vedanta thanks to his close affinity with Schopenhauer.”^{xliv} Therefore it can be concluded by following Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* that there are similarities, dissimilarities, criss-cross, overlapping, sometimes overall similarities between the philosophy of Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. In other words, the kinship is just as undeniable as the difference. Of course, one thing should not forget that Wittgenstein has been regarded as a linguistic philosopher and has attempted

to cognize everything from the point of language. He takes language as a philosophical method. This position is completely foreign to the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta.

References:

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